

When a band like August Life speaks of time, they don't whisper, they construct it. On 'Passage of Time', their 2nd full-length, that construct is both hourglass and eternal. The music is weighty, intricately carved, and let's grit fall through its fingers at the precise moments that sting the longest. This is **prog-tinged heavy metal** that smells of vinyl and old rehearsal-room coffee, but which has been polished enough to let the individual personalities of the **veteran Dutch players** glow. The record asks you to stop and read what's written between the beats. A banger!

COMFORTABLE WITH GRANDEUR

From the opening bars of „**Guidelines**” you sense that this is [a band](#) comfortable with grandeur. **Gert Nijboer's guitars** cut with tone-rich leads and fine chordal lines that lay a foundation broad enough for the record's theatrical flourishes. Opposite him, **René Kroon** adds **keyboard** textures that never overshadow but provide richer colour, sometimes an ambient glare, sometimes adding towering drama. Their interplay makes the record feel like a widescreen movie score, powerful and meandering with drama and (neo-)progressive pomp.

Bryan Ketelaars is the kind of **frontman** who knows how to tell a story. His delivery on 'Passage of Time' walks the tightrope between melodic clarity and theatrical urgency. One moment he's laying down a plaintive, vulnerable line, the next he's belting over multi-part harmonies. His vocals shift shape constantly, at times recalling Tate, at others channeling Dio's powerhouse vocals, tapping all the registers of classics in metal. It's the interplay between Bryan and the guitars that pushes the dynamics of the album. The trade off in dynamics is what makes the songs burst with stride. „**Guidelines**” packs so much turmoil and explores equally diverse terrain, anchoring the epic track in the best progressive metal traditions. The weeping guitars and bold riffs display Nijboer's exquisite style and alternating time changes, and chordal explorations are a nod to Petrucci's overarching style.

THE NEW GROOVE MACHINE

Rhythmically the record is anchored by the new groove machine consisting of **Harry den Hartog** on **bass** and tasteful **drumming** of **Richard van Leeuwen**. Den Hartog holds the bottom end and colours it vividly. There are moments where his lines push against the guitars in a waging counter point, and Richard answers with beats that are as muscular as they are narrative. His fills are tasteful and tell where the next twist in the song will land. The result is a backbone that reads like a reliable map, even when the harmonic terrain changes unexpectedly. Those players' chemistry after decades of seeing stages and studios, is the glue that cements 'Passage of Time'.

A CONVERSATION BETWEEN ERAS

Displaying the band's skills and talents they manage to not only clock long running epic drama's but also create tracks immediately bursting into flames. „**Blackened Ground**” packs tempo shifts and drama while it discharges with anger-laden accolades and Ketelaars executing roaring out loud.

The **title track** rides in the middle of the tracklist like a small epic. The song trades predictable classic verse-chorus architecture for symphonic movements. Building drama through unexpected keys, instrumental sections like mini-suites, and vocal lines that return in new colours. The song stacks dramatic turns and soaring melodies atop the dramatic constructed songs. At times it feels like Queen flirts with Dream Theater. It makes the album feel like a conversation between eras. Erecting vintage metal swagger arranged with modern prog sensibilities.

RIFF-FIRST

There's a lot of riff-first momentum while leaning into progressive structures. Tracks like the riff propelled „**Constructing Monsters**” and the hammering „**Tidal Waves**” are blistering **modern metal** tracks with intense melodies flourishing underneath soaring drama. The constructions are forged in titanium, while the musical marksmanship touches a wide array of progressive and neo-pro giants. Subtle moments breathe air into the thick-crust metal stance. The instrumental marksmanship is phenomenal and well captured by renowned **producer Markus Teske** (Vanden Plas, Saga, Symphony X, etc.), who guides the song through the sonic shifting landscape.

Now don't expect the typical dense Vanden Plas atmosphere here, as Teske created a unique sonic experience encapsulating the drama with an open and transparent rumble. It echoes classic metal. That choice suits the material: guitars bloom instead of intense glare, the low end carries weight, and the mixes allow for detail, with a whispered harmony, a brushed cymbal, a keyboard pad. There's a lot of detail resonating.

Lyrically the album treats the theme of time, yet not with the philosophy of a concept record. Instead, 'Passage of Time' approaches 'the now' and it's short stretch through metaphors and personal reckoning. Water that wears down cliffs, air that carries memory, the slow construction of regret captured in a whirl of prose. It's not heavy-handed, and August Life prefers smaller, clear images the listener can easily relate to.

COLLECTIVE MUSICIANSHIP

The interplay across the line-up is the album's real currency. A lead guitar answering a vocal phrase with a sympathetic bend, a keyboard filling a harmonic notch left by an abruptly halting guitar, a bass line depleting a nesting countermelody. You hear seasoned professionals making choices that elevate the music from a collection of

songs to collective musicianship. This is the work of people who have earned the right to place a note where it matters most. Exemplary is the wonderful „**Lost in Nothing**“, kicking off with tasteful piano that transcend lightly ominous.

The increasing low drone wells into a **Sabbath-like growling guitar section** that shoots a riff-intensity forward, that is unparalleled. Nijboer displays his power with blistering short solo bursts and licks deployed in the raw and ravishing core of riffage. Stacking layers, the song starts to have keys raining into the mix and the spectacle gains momentum when Bryan adds his powerful vocal chants. The dazzling guitar section returns in a towering solo with energy scattering from the vocals as the song revolts its core grit. It's an impressive 7-minute track that is stacked majestic turmoil and clinging multi-melodies.

MEMORABLE MELODIES AND HOOKS

It bridges momentum into the dabbling intro of „**The Water**“ that lulls on for 4 minutes. Before rising its levels for its 4-minute-long finale full of memorable melodies and hooks. Nijboer touches with Satch on the elevating licks. The pace and tone of the song maintains a baleful radiance. It is however also where I these epic long sections beg for an edit to tighten the narrative and create a more power-packed short formula. Though its indulgence is the charm on its own, immersing the listener in sonic hyper-states.

Dying with wreckage the sea takes a dominant role in the song's dying minute before the album's epilogue „**Air To Breathe**“ returns the lyrical topic to the fold. It's a tasteful acoustic guitar-vocal interplay between Nijboer and Ketelaars, rounding out the album's 'concept' of time passing.

AUGUST LIFE - THE CONCLUSION

In the end, '**Passage of Time**' is an album made by seasoned hands who understand the architecture of heavy music and aren't afraid to take the time to build something that lasts. It's not revolutionary, but it is honest, **well-played, and arranged** with the tasteful restraint that comes from experience. If you live for big choruses, tasteful guitar interplay, this one will more than repay your patience. For fans demanding constant surprise, album sprinkles these surprises throughout. **Fans of melodic metal with a keen twist**, they will find a very well-crafted prog-metal record in 'Passage of Time'.

On vinyl, the blue-limited pressings are a real thing, made deliberately collectible. That warmth translates into an analogue intimacy. And the vinyl brings out midrange textures and makes the record feel like an honest to roots living room intimacy rather than a stadium performance. Whether you prefer the crispness of digital or the slight, humanized noise of wax, the production lets both extremes exist without betraying the songs.