



Bio information: **BUBBLEMATH**

Title: **EDIT PEPTIDE** (Cuneiform Rune 434) Format: CD / DIGITAL

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FILE UNDER: **ROCK / ECLECTIC PROG / AVANT-POP / TECHNICAL METAL**

**Fifteen Years in the Making, Minnesota Eclectic Prog / Avant-Pop / Technical Metal Quintet
BUBBLEMATH's Sophomore Sequence, *Edit Peptide*,
Proves a Worthwhile Wait with its Frankenstein's Monster-Formula of Lively Textures, Wacky and
Virtuosic Musicianship, Hypnotically Robust Vocals, and Charmingly Astute Attitudes.**

Radical yet refined composer and songwriter **Frank Zappa** once remarked, "Progress is not possible without deviation," and if he were alive to hear them, he'd almost certainly agree that Minnesota fivesome **Bubblemath** exudes his philosophy (and daring spirit) with every unconventional rhythmic change, off-the-wall timbre, and multilayered melody. Like 2002's debut LP, *Such Fine Particles of the Universe*, the band's long-awaited second sum, *Edit Peptide*, equates to a masterful medley of artful aural arithmetic. Blending the in-your-face intricacy of **Between the Buried and Me** and **The Mars Volta** with the eccentric experimentation of **Mr. Bungle**, the dense and poppy harmonies of **Umphrey's McGee** and **Echolyn**, the symphonic vibrancy and tongue-in-cheek foundation of **Beardfish**, and the forceful fluidity of **Bent Knee**, **The Dear Hunter**, and **Emanuel and the Fear**, **Bubblemath** ensures that the sequence builds upon itself with enough intriguing discipline to make **Fibonacci** proud (you know, if he listened to this kind of thing).

The current **Bubblemath** line-up (vocalist/keyboardist **Kai Esbensen**, vocalist/drummer **James Flagg**, vocalist/guitarist **Jon Smith**, guitarist/keyboardist **Blake Albinson**, and bassist **Jay Burrit**) came together in 1998. Naturally, they recognize that having so many years between albums could be—as **Esbensen** jokes—"[an] advantage or a detriment. Maybe both!" He reflects that the group originally thought it'd be "a breeze" to follow-up *Such Fine Particles of the Universe*, an album that won them **86,000 MySpace** followers and **Minnesota Music Academy's "2002 Best Eclectic Recording"** award. However, a series of setbacks, ranging from "broken equipment, to broken promises, to loss of funding, to loss of partners and pets and parents, to incompatible mix engineers, to extended sabbaticals, to extended medical emergencies," made it difficult to accomplish that ambition. Add in the fact that "for several years, [they] were only able to commit about three hours a week to working on the album," as well as various issues regarding engineers and recording quality, and it's easy to see why *Edit Peptide* gestated for so long. In reaction to the skepticism of devotees, **Esbensen** jovially declares, "We absolutely weren't crying wolf! We wouldn't wish this kind of delay experience on our worst band-enemies. Not that we have band-enemies. But if we did, we would not wish it on them!" Ultimately, the lengthy hiatus did prove positive, though, as it allowed "all five of [them] to become better musicians" who are capable of yielding a more striving, unpredictable, and colorful collection. They couldn't be prouder of it.

Cleverness has always been a cutting part of the **Bubblemath** brand, and *Edit Peptide* keeps the blade sharp. Just as their moniker "is a tip of the hat to the branch of physics that deals with the mathematics being the surface tension of bubbles," the name of the LP "relates to the idea that music and ideas can modify body chemistry through emotion." **Esbensen** adds, "We like the name because we have a penchant for chemistry and physics . . . also, it's a palindrome, which ties into our penchant for recursion and wordplay."

Along the same lines, several of the track titles contain subtle wordplay, and while **Esbensen** doesn't want to reveal the best ones yet ("We want to give people a chance to discover it for themselves"), he's happy to give a few hints. For instance, "**Routine Maintenance**" toys with its common connotation by making "routine" a noun instead of an adjective to conjure both "the maintenance of routine itself, and the importance of being attentive and taking action in order to maintain one's sanity throughout the ebbs and flows of the daily grind." Later, "**Perpetual Notion**" tells the tale of "a man who is always falling for investment scammers . . . peddling a perpetual-motion / free-energy machine," while "**Making Light of Traffic**" examines "people who gather to observe a shimmering light that appears nightly on a heavily forested horizon." Without actual investigation, they proffer all sorts of explanations—such as it being "a ghost . . . [or] alien technology"—while skeptics undermine those inferences by "putting forth equally untested claims of rare natural phenomena." In the end, though, it turns out to just be car lights driving down a far-off

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highway. In this way, **Bubblemath** evokes the elaborate storytelling of, say, **Camper van Beethoven**.

Such concepts need extremely fitting lyricism to soar, and luckily, *Edit Peptide* is bursting with it. Throughout the disc, the quintet channels the various social commentaries of **Chuck Palahniuk's *Fight Club*** with lines like "Routine, where there's no distinction between the unwholesome and unholy motions of the everyday machine" ("Routine Maintenance") and "See the perfect people in that ad. They leave you longing for the things you lack. That artificial wish'll drive you mad." Elsewhere, they provide subtly smart quips like "Can't we all just get a lawn? No, we're not gonna take any mower" ("**Get a Lawn**") and "Sell out, compromise, hacking each human right down to size. Trespass, intervene, shut your eyes to what you've never seen" ("**The Sensual Con**"). From beginning to end, *Edit Peptide* captivates with its words alone.

Of course, the arrangements are arguably the most important part of any record, and **Bubblemath** "edits the hell out of all your peptides" by fashioning one of the most complex yet alluring sequences you'll ever hear. Pieces like "Routine Maintenance" and "Perpetual Notion" explode with the biting riffs of **Metallica** and the grandiose zaniness of **Native Construct**, never letting up as they shift movements with an array of gripping melodies and timbres (including flutes, pianos, and miscellaneous effects), keeping your ears glued and your jaw dropped. In contrast, "**Avoid that Eye Candy**" and "**A Void That I Can Depart To,**" while still immensely decorative, are lighter in tone, focusing mostly on luscious yet quirky interlocking harmonies (although the latter piece also incorporates some '80s synth vibes and death metal vocals, a la **Haken's** recent *Affinity*). There's even a warm jazz-fusion aesthetic to "Making Light of Traffic" (thanks mostly to spurts of saxophone and a major sense of freeform playfulness), plus a staggering amount of rhythmic dexterity and dynamic temperamental deviations throughout "**Destiny Repeats Itself.**" (Seriously, just *try* to count all of the time signature changes.) As clichéd as it is to say, there's not a dull moment on *Edit Peptide*, as each second offers an exuberantly exhaustive sonic pool in which to swim.

It's not often that a band releases a new album after such a long hiatus—we're looking at you, **Tool**—let alone something that exceeds expectations beyond fans' wildest dreams (still looking at you, Tool!). Somehow, though, **Bubblemath** has done just that with *Edit Peptide*. By conducting so many divergent styles, refining their songwriting and compositional skills, and most of all, sticking to their guns when it comes to crafting highly challenging and adventurous, but also quite hypnotic and welcoming, tunes, the quintet proves just how perfectly a band can fuse the familiar and the fresh. As rewarding as any record by any of the aforementioned analogous acts, *Edit Peptide* also stands as its own idiosyncratic statement of purpose and possibility, making it an invaluable tool to conquer both the stagnancy of mainstream music and the absurdity of the world around us.

For more information on Bubblemath:

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