

music

When it ranes, it pours

THE HOPE SEED; FROM THE VINE, Vols. 1 & 2

rane
Tides Records

"Leave 'em wanting more" is apparently not a concept familiar to the band rane. Instead of releasing one new album, the

Hartford-area group has just put out three at once: "The Hope Seed," "From the Vine, Vol. 1" and "From the Vine, Vol. 2." It's an impressive and ambitious project, though with more than two hours of music, it comprises a daunting amount of material for listeners to sort through.

Since releasing "Camelopardalis" in 2000, rane has kept busy

writing and revising songs, to the



SCOTT SANTE

THREE NEW CDs from Rane: from left, Alan Veniscofsky, Bruce Menard, Kurt Rinaldi, Ryan Bowman and Dan Prindle.

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point where the musicians discovered they had nearly 30 tunes to choose from for a new album. Rather than pare down that number for one record, the group opted to group the songs thematically over three discs. "From the Vine, Vol. 1" is a jammy, acoustic-based album, while the second volume is a livelier affair that features more prominent electronic elements. "The Hope Seed" combines the styles.

The material is surprisingly strong — and with 25 songs spread over three discs, it's reasonable to expect some filler. Although the differences are subtle at first, there is enough variety to keep the records from growing stale.

Each disc has its own best moments. "The Hope Seed" opens strong with "Forwards, Onwards," as the musicians

lock into a tight groove that mixes funky bass with subtle slide guitar and an exotic acoustic guitar riff. "The Rambler" is a laid-back melange of styles: jazzy accents on the drums, a well thought-out guitar solo that grows from coy noodling into a raucous romp and a glockenspiel interlude so out of place that it works perfectly.

The meandering "No Hablo" on "Vol. 1" features flute from Jon Blazawski of Adios Pantalones, and "Blue" is a short, moving instrumental tribute to India Blue, the Hartford Advocate photographer and music fan who died in a car crash in November.

Highlights from "Vol. 2" include lovely, low-key vocal harmonies on "Rain," a zig-zagging riff that steadily

builds on "Broca's Aphasia" — perhaps the best tune overall — and a gutsy guitar lead on "Hazelnut."

There's much more, of course, and that's the only real downside — with such a wealth of worthy material, it's too easy to overlook some of it. That's the risk rane took with so mammoth an undertaking, though, and it's an open question whether three concurrent new albums will help or hurt the band's career. From an artistic standpoint, though, "The Hope Seed" and its complementary elements are most certainly a success.

To hear excerpts from "The Hope Seed" and both volumes of "From the Vine," go to www.ctnow.com/music.

— ERIC R. DANTON