



Metal may be one of the most experimented with music genres. Different types of metal have been tried and loved by many, but none have the style and artistic value that symphonic/orchestral metal has. This style of metal uses the sounds of an orchestra to create almost psychedelic music. Many bands have done this form of metal before, but honestly not many have been known for it as much as *Dream Theater*. *Dream Theater* was formed in the mid-eighties by John Petrucci, John Myung and Mike Portnoy while they were attending the Berklee College of Music. They were originally known as *Majesty*, because Mike Portnoy commented that the Rush song “Bastille Day” sounded “Majestic”. In 1986 the name Dream Theater was suggested by Mike Portnoy’s father.

Dream Theater consisted (at the time) of John Petrucci, Mike Portnoy, Charlie Dominici, Kevin Moore, and John Myung and in 1988, they signed their first record contract with Mechanic. In 1989, Charlie Dominici was let go and in 1991 replaced with James LaBrie as vocalist. In 1994 Keyboardist Kevin Moore quit Dream Theater to concentrate on his own musical interests and he was replaced with Jordan Rudess. This was the band they had until 2010 when Mike Portnoy left the band and was replaced with Mike Mangini on drums.

They reached gold record certification in the USA and platinum in Japan for the album *Images and Words* (1992) and in 2005 they became the last group to use the Hit Factory Studios which closed on April 1<sup>st</sup> of that same year. *Octavarium* peaked at number 15 on the Canadian Albums chart, number 36 on the US Billboard 200 and number 2 on both the Italian and Finnish Albums Chart in 2005. Its lowest ranking was on the UK Albums Chart only peaking at 72.

Octavarium was produced by Mike Portnoy and John Petrucci and was the band's final release with Atlantic Records. They wanted to create a classic Dream Theater album and drew from their various styles. The album begins with the song "The Root of All Evil" which was the third of Portnoy's Twelve-Step Suite, which were a series of songs that were to describe his journey through Alcoholics Anonymous. The title track "Octavarium" is the longest track of the album being 24:00. Petrucci said they wanted to write an epic song that thematically developed and used an orchestra.



The artwork of the album was provided by Hugh Syme and the cover art (A Giant Newton's Cradle) was from a discussion Syme had with Portnoy. And through the album's booklet there are many references to the numbers Five and Eight.

There are eight songs on the album, with the shortest being 4:29 and the longest being 24:00. Both "The Root of All Evil" and "Octavarium" were split into parts although were played as the same song. Basically the song is played as a whole, but the lyrics are in separate parts. The songs were written by the band members themselves with the exception of John Myung and Jordan Rudess. "Octavarium" itself was written by LaBrie, Petrucci and Portnoy and was split into five parts.

• "I. Someone Like Him"	• Petrucci	• 8:47
• "II. Medicate (Awakening)"	• LaBrie	• 5:01
• "III. Full Circle"	• Portnoy	• 4:37
• "IV. Intervals"	• Portnoy	• 1:23
• "V. Razor's Edge"	• Petrucci	• 4:08

The song starts with a somber instrumental opening, which has a few psychedelic tones and is really relaxing. This is followed by soft vocals from James LaBrie, they fit the tone of the opening perfectly. As each part begins and ends the music and vocals keep getting more and more intense and louder until it metaphorically explodes and goes back to the softer instrumentals and some echo-ey vocals. It's very reminiscent of the psychedelia era of the late 1960s even if unintentionally.

Each section of the song tells a part of a story, the first part is told in a first person perspective about a man who lived an extraordinary life and reflects upon it. As he looks back he wishes he was an ordinary person. It's again starts somber, but as it goes on it gives a blast of energy when LaBrie sings the Lyric, "As far as I could tell/There's nothing more I need" And it only goes back to being somber when the segment of the song comes to a close.

The second part of the song, “Medicate (Awakeing)” starts with an upbeat bass line that has sort of an elastic sound. It has the story of somebody in catatonic sleep for 30 years. It is a straight-forward part of the song, but it still has shifting music as at one point it could be a heavy bass and short guitar sounds and then in the middle of the song the temp could change without warning. It’s probably the only part of the song with a chorus as some lyrics are repeated at the end of the segment.



The third part of the song “Full Circle” was written by Mike Portnoy and is his ode to progressive rock and contains several references to some of his favourite things. Many of these references are to bands like Pink Floyd, The Beatles, Wilson Phillips, The Who, The Doors and Genesis. It starts with an intense guitar solo and then it goes into a more electric guitar sound more reminiscent of Black Sabbath. This is the part of the song where the song gets more of a hard rock sound. It is another part of the song with its own chorus as the lines are repeated in both the song and lyrics in the album booklet.

The fourth part of the song, “Intervals” was also written by Portnoy. This segment transitions well from the last almost seamlessly, it transitions better than the rest of the song, they transition well, but you can tell when they transition by the different tempo. In each stanza a different song off the album is referenced. For example “The answer’s been right in front of you” is in the second stanza, and the second song on the album is called “The answer lies within”.

This segment has less of a progressive rock sound and more of a hard rock/heavy metal sound. It evolves into the sound as the vocals get angrier and louder. In this segment LaBrie doesn’t seem to be singing in the traditional sense, more like Leonard Cohen where it is in more of a spoken tone. It ends with LaBrie screaming the line “Trapped inside this Octavarium” four times, each one putting more strain on his voice. There is one second when on the final repeat of the line the music stops dead on the line “this” for less than a second. It’s also a nice touch that he delays the third time of singing this line. An even nicer touch is that Portnoy says words though the segment, nothing major but it’s still a nice touch. See if you can hear them. Hint, the first word is “Root”.

The final segment, “Razor’s Edge” returns to the softer, more orchestral sound of the first part. It ends with theme of everything beginning where it ends. Also similar to the album how it ends with the same melody that “The Root of all evil” begins with. For this one song alone, the album is worth listening to even if you’re not into hard rock or heavy metal.

Rating: Five identical Dream Theater logos arranged horizontally, representing a five-star rating.

Five band logos out of five.

Remember This Story ends where it began.



OCTAVARIUM

DREAM THEATER