



April / May / June 2011



ABANDON KANSAS

AD ASTRA PER ASPERA

Abandon Kansas, due to the name, reminds me of the movie, *The Wizard of Oz*. That being said, because of word association, Abandon Kansas should also bring to mind the band, Toto. Fortunately, Abandon Kansas has nothing to do with *The Wizard of Oz* and sounds nothing like Toto. This is good news for fans of modern rock. Can one imagine the band that played "Rosanna" and "Africa" putting out a disc full of 2011-styled rock and roll? If anything, the lead guitar work, vocals and overall anthemic, emotional feel of the 10 songs on Abandon Kansas' *Ad Astra Per Aspera* are more akin to the work of Snow Patrol, with more hooks stirred into the mix. Producer Mark Lee Townsend definitely had rock radio firmly in mind when helping the band craft the record. There are plenty of power chords, but they are lower in the mix, with nice melodic lead lines taking the reins. The drums sound huge, without being overpowering and the bass has a nice midrange feel, allowing some of the gentle growl of the strings to shine through. The vocals ride the mix like a well-watered horse, keeping the pace, adding intensity but never overdoing it. "Heaven Come My Way" shines the brightest. Its chorus part, verses and bridge all pay testimony to what Abandon Kansas does best—sincere modern rock with just the right amount of bombast and intensity.

[GOTEE] CHRIS CALLAWAY