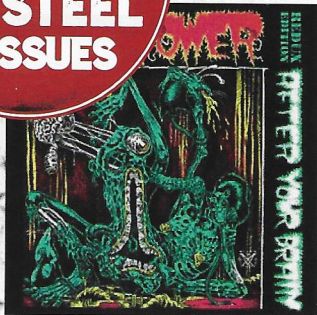


WHEELS OF STEEL REISSUES



RAW POWER AFTER YOUR BRAIN

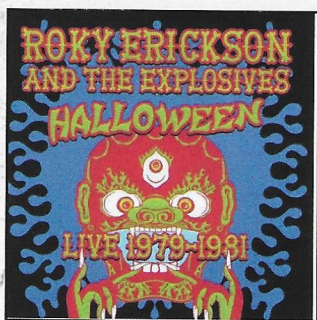
(Back On Black)

A timely reminder of just how intense Italian hardcore was in the eighties.

8/10

Hardcore music has always been exciting by definition, but the Italian scene of the Eighties took it to a whole new level. Bands like Wretched, Indigesti, Negazione, Declino, Peggio Punx, Impact and Cheetah Chrome Motherfuckers were all pushing the envelope as far as manic intensity went. And Raw Power were at the top of the tree, arguably peaking in 1985 with their 'Wop Hour' 7" and 'Screams From The Gutter' LP. Dizzilyzing fast, but ridiculously tight, and with great leads, they gave a knowing nod to the cross-over genre blowing up in the USA. 1986's 'After Your Brain' just grabbed the baton from those classic releases and kept running with it. From the explosive opening couplet of 'You Are Fired' and 'Dreamer', through the anthemic 'We Shall Overcome' and chugging rocker 'Keep Out', the band always live up to their name, combining unbridled speed with ferocious fervency and killer musicianship. Your brain won't know what hit it.

IAN GLASPER



ROKY ERICKSON HALLOWEEN 1979-81

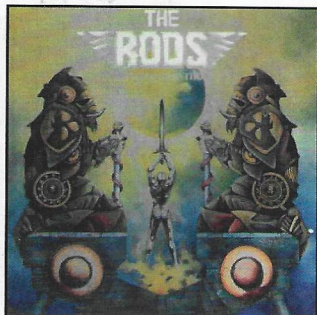
(SteadyBoy/Norton)

Happy Halloween...

7/10

There isn't that much Roky and the 13th Floor Elevators stuff from the studio. There are loads of box sets and compilations. Dominating his musical life of course were his mental issues, but he got a lot done with a variety of bands. This one is the Explosives, who backed him regularly and sound both rough and very ready. And blimey, this is tough! 'Two Headed Dog' has a bass that could break girders, they come off it a little for a more friendly 'Bermuda' and the poppy 'Starry Eyes' is greeted with great glee. There are gritty guitar workouts here, 'The Wind And More' fades out on a flowing rager and 'Bloody Hammer' rollicks along with a Thin Lizzy feel and those six strings are burning here too. We veer from pleasingly poppy to raucously rocky and that's exactly right, sharp 'You're Gonna Miss Me' opens with a sloppy shout, the character of Erickson, unbridled but keen to please, is on show beautifully. Visceral, violent and very vibey. Halloween, candy and creepiness.

STEVE SWIFT



THE RODS HEAVIER THAN THOU

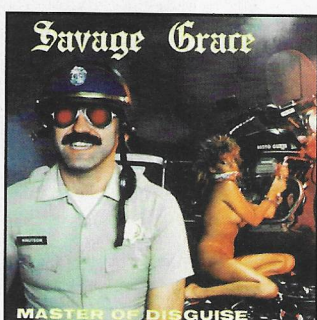
(High Roller)

The last in line before the extended break.

7/10

The Rods infectiously solid riffing, melodic '80s vocal croons, concrete pounding rhythms, and intensely favourable song structures make for a truly magnificent platter of quality traditional old school hard rock/heavy metal. The grand architectural intro opening this opus creates the near perfect setting for the eleven songs that follow on. Bumped up to a four-piece for this [their seventh album] with the inclusion of Shmoulik Avigal now taking lead vocal duties gave the American band an additional boost of dynamism. Sounding highly polished and beaming with arena rock prowess 'Heavier Than Thou' doesn't hold back with any of the crucial essentials. If you didn't get it back in '86 then now is your chance to experience pure rock fury in the making. The Rods were at their peak and poised to achieve great success. Those in the know will grasp the Elf and Ronnie James Dio connection also.

MARK FREEBASE



SAVAGE GRACE MASTER OF DISGUISE

(Hammerheart)

Deluxe double edition of '80s speed metal ripper.

8/10

Opening with some stellar fret shredding, 'Lion's Roar' uses its one-minute intro to showcase Savage Grace's instrumental chops, eschewing that tedious 'mood setting' atmospheric nonsense that most bands front load their albums with. Another point in the favour of Savage Grace's 'Master Of Disguise' is that the band were clearly having a blast recording it; it's all passion, youth and speed. Reissued by Hammerheart in deluxe double CD format, 'Master Of Disguise' has been remixed and remastered while the artwork has been restored. Not only that, but alongside crystal clear versions of the likes of 'Bound To Be Free', Hammerheart have also packaged the rare 'The Dominatrix' EP and a host of demo versions from 1982 with the release, now coming in a slipcase. One of the bands that fell through the cracks of the 1980s, here's hoping that, with the reissue of 'Master Of Disguise', they get the recognition they deserve.

JAMES SHARPLES



TANKARD FOR A THOUSAND BEERS

(Noise)

Raise a tankard to one of Germany's finest thrash bands.

9/10

FORMED in 1982 by classmates, Andreas Geremia, Axel Katzmann and Frank Thorwarth, Tankard has come a long way since their first gig in a classroom in '83. After releasing their first demo, they toured with Sodom and then signed with Noise Records on the strength of their second demo 'Alcoholic Metal'. In that time they've released over seventeen studio albums and EPs and are still a going concern to this very day. regarded as one of Germany's big four in the world of thrash, Tankard's manifesto of beer and fast metal has served them well as this compilation will prove. Containing all of their releases on Noise International between '86 and '95, 'For A Thousand Beers' is an impressive collection of Vinyl and CD, coming housed in a case of beer box. From the initial charm of their debut, 'Zon Attack', in '86 through to the darker edged 'The Tankard' from '95, it's been a journey that has seen them rise through the ranks with their rough-hewn and rudimentary thrash. For most fans will be their late eighties, early nineties output that saw them at their most blistering as albums 'Zombie Attack', 'Chemical Invasion' and 'The Morning After' saw them making their mark with a trio of albums that have hardly been bested by the band, peaking with '87's 'Chemical Invasion'. This lavish set contains seven studio albums, a live concert DVD and a forty page, hardback book celebrating the band's tenure with Noise, a period that is arguably their most definitive.

ROB E



SIX FEET UNDER DEATH RITUALS

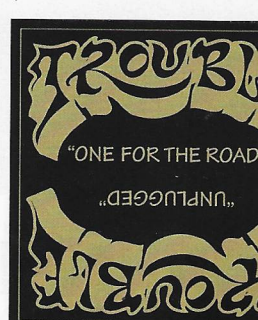
(Back On Black)

Time to give Chris Barnes a break?

5/10

I don't know what it is about Six Feet Under that rubs me up the wrong way. It's probably the bad taste that the 'Graveyard Classics' series left in my mouth. I can't remove it no matter how many times I give Chris Barnes's post-Cannibal Corpse outfit a blast, and despite the classic albums he cut with the masters of gore-splattered stupidity, I just can't forgive him for the hack job he did on 'Holocaust' and 'A Dangerous Meeting'. Nevertheless, here we have perhaps the one serviceable record he made with Six Feet Under reissued on splatter vinyl, and it's surprisingly listenable. 2008's 'Death Rituals' takes the same dumb, groovy, almost nu-metal approach to death metal as the rest of his oeuvre, but the riffs in 'Seed Of Filth' and 'None Will Escape' aren't as offensive as past embarrassments. Sad to think this is SFU's best, though.

BRUCE TURNBULL



TROUBLE ONE FOR THE ROAD/UNPLUGGED

(Hammerheart)

Here comes Trouble...

9/10

The band that should, by all that's good and unholy, have been as big as Black Sabbath, Aurora, Illinois' Trouble emerged in the late '70s/early '80s. They went on to help shape the sound of doom with some much loved albums such as 1984's 'Psalm 9', 'The Skull' ('85), 'Run To The Light' ('Trouble' ('90) and 'Manic Frustration'). However, following the release of 'Manic Frustration', they were suddenly released from their contract with Def American Recordings. Dusting themselves off and heading out on tour around Europe, 'One For The Road' limited edition (1,500 copies) EP released to coincide with the dates. With the Trouble catalogue being re-released by Hammerheart they've lovingly remastered the EP for audiophile vinyl for the first time, packed with the full album version of the 'Unplugged' sessions, showing a stripped down side of the band. If you're a Trouble fan this is without doubt an essential purchase.

JAMES SHARPLES