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Kawabata Makoto & The Mothers of Invasion - Hot Rattlesnakes Review

by Mark Hensch

Cult-hero Kawabata Makoto has done pretty much everything a man can do on an electric guitar. The Japanese axe-man is best known for his Acid Mothers Temple collective, a revolving door of talented Eastern instrumentalists who attack psychedelica and stoner rock with fresh vibes everytime. Though Acid Mothers Temple is his most respected outlet of musical expression, Makoto has also appeared on a huge number of solo albums, soundtracks, and the like, as well as formed other projects in virtually each and every genre.

Formed in 2001, The Mothers of Invasion were originally gathered so Makoto could release his urge for guitar improvisation without backlash. Apparently craving a freedom AMT's slightly more conventional song-structures could not offer him, Makoto now had his own psychedelic jazz to explore realms of trance-inducing sonic fusion. Considering just how popular AMT is in some circles, I was surprised that the Mothers of Invasion have remained virtually dormant since 2002 when Hot Rattlesnakes got Western distribution courtesy of the British Paratactile Records label. Now reissued after its initial printing run, it now appears that more people can appreciate free expression in its purest form.

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And therein lies the problem of Hot Rattlesnakes in a nutshell. This might be art in its most basic form, yet despite all this, it really doesn't lead anywhere remotely interesting. At a whopping fifty-three minutes, the pressure is on for Makoto and his band of like-minded individuals to perform; after three songs and an entire disc of extended, incoherent jam-sessions, you might start to wonder if you've been cheated. I firmly believe that Makoto has ignored The Mothers of Invasion for almost five years, and this disc shows why; the music is barely entertaining to listen to, let alone play.

The foolishly huge "Theme of Hot Rattlesnakes" is a perfect example. At about twenty-seven minutes in length, the song just ebbs, flows, and oozes throughout the entire time frame in an absurd wankfest. Yes, everything here is really "far-out" and spacier than a Hawkwind performance; it just doesn't amount to anywhere. In fact, "Theme of Hot Rattlesnakes" for all its pretension is not unlike the NASA program; a whole lot of effort leading to a bunch of empty, blank space. Once listeners get past the fact Makoto is a talented guitarist surrounded by equally strong musicians handling everything else, they'll probably start to let their minds wander as nothing exciting really happens. It is a drawn-out, self-indulgent guitar festival and nothing else.

The annoyingly titled "Fripien Flipped Over Nifty Their King of Fifty" is supposed to be some vague King Crimson reference, but in all honesty that one flew over my radar and I do not get it. Come to think of it, that is how I actually feel about the song itself. "Fripien" is about ten-and-a-half minutes of meandering, pointless, and bland psychedelia chords that just mumble and drone. It has no fun to it at all, and is really good for falling asleep to. Maybe if it had some actual weight behind it, I could dig this track in a Sunn-O))) kind of way; for now, it just isn't cutting it for me.

"French Sweet Sugar House" is probably the best track, which still isn't saying much. There are some weird ambient effects, but the band really shines with its hippie-dance/jazz fusion collision, the likes of which manages to be delightfully manic and utterly chilled out at the exact same time. The percussion is hurried, frantic, and tight, the kind of jazzy stuff drumming fans will enjoy. At a light sixteen minutes, the track seems to go much further much faster due to the relative speed of the instruments and the length itself. A stoner rock opus with some pretty sweet stuff to it, and probably the only lasting portion of the disc in the annals of time.

I know I'm knocking on this album a lot, and with good reason. There are simply too many great psychedelic/stoner/space-rock acts in existence to have another one come and goof around with pointless guitarfests straight into an endless black hole. If you want to zone out to some hazy, bong-gripping stuff, bands like Sleep, Hawkwind, or Pink Floyd are where it is at. I guess the one solid part here is that

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Makoto still manages to show off his excellent guitar virtuoso chops while the rest of his band also gets a share in the lime-light. If you really like jam bands, J-Rawk, or psychedelic grooves anyways, you may want to try this out. Otherwise, this is barely interesting and for such Hot Rattlesnakes this is dangerously lukewarm. Approach with caution folks.

Tracklisting

1. Theme of Hot Rattlesnakes
2. Fripien Flipped Over Nifty Their King of Fifty
3. French Sweet Sugar House

CD Info and Links

Kawabata Makoto & The Mothers of Invasion - Hot Rattlesnakes

Label:MVD

Rating:4.5

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