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**Stryper**

Reviews

**Greatest Hits: Live In Puerto Rico  
(Music Video Distributors/  
Fifty Three Five Records)**

Let's face it; if you ask almost any self-respecting Hard Rock or Heavy Metal fan how they feel about the Christian Metal genre, they will almost assuredly tell you that outside of Deliverance, Tourniquet and perhaps Whitecross, they have little--if any--use for religion in their music. Don't get me wrong...I personally appreciate well-executed music, regardless of its various lyrical connotations, from a variety of far-flung sources. However, despite my now infamously long-winded pleas for acceptance amid the notoriously closed-minded "Hard Music" communities, many are still militantly hesitant to readily welcome anything beyond their often unintentionally limited tastes. Not surprisingly, when I first became aware of the latest from Orange County, California-based veterans Stryper, I knew I had to help spread the word.

On the stellar *Greatest Hits: Live In Puerto Rico* (2007), an expertly assembled fourteen song collection of instantly memorable concert footage (taken from the group's apparently sold out March 6, 2004 show in, you guessed it, Puerto Rico), each track, beginning with the maddeningly infectious "Calling On You", and the thunderous "Free", immediately commands the rapt and undivided attention of all parties involved--myself most definitely included--with a mostly mid-tempo barrage of soaring vocals, searing fretwork and imaginatively punishing rhythms. Engulfing both new and established listeners alike amid a ridiculously airtight ensemble that will, with a little luck, inspire multiple spins, the group's now trademark, hook-fueled delivery drives home the group's key focal points without sounding overbearing or '...preachy...'

Continuing with the blistering "More Than A Man", and the emotion-laden "You Won't Be Lonely", the steadfast--to say the very least--combination of vocalist/guitarist Michael Sweet, lead guitarist Oz Fox (a.k.a. Richard Martinez), bassist Tim Gaines (who has since been replaced by the slightly less anonymous Tracy Ferrie) and drummer Robert Sweet effortlessly glide forward at what can only be described as a carefully calculated pace, further solidifying the roaring grassroots momentum initiated with the release of the group's brilliant 2005 "comeback" *Reborn*. Still looking for a band that showcases their talents without dry-humping the average listener to death amid an avalanche of mind-numbing, Meshuggah-inspired foolishness? Well, look no further folks...your latest chance for '...salvation...' just arrived.

Fortified throughout by rare archival footage from 1989, including solos from Oz, Tim and Robert as well as noteworthy performances of "Always There For You", "Keep The Fire Burning" and "Rockin' The World", other standouts, including the laughably-titled--albeit highly effective--"To Hell With The Devil", and the decidedly syrupy power ballad "Honestly" (which continues as the group's best-known song, having peaked at #32), only add to an already impressively potent overall package. Although perhaps not the most instantly compelling release of the group's already surprisingly long existence (I'll continue to reserve that distinction 1988's controversial tour de force *In God We Trust*), the end result is ultimately as effective as it is lasting, a characteristic that continues to separate the group from their few contemporaries.

Okay, okay...so Jesus, Pat Robertson and the late Jerry Fallwell *might* think they freakin' suck, but seriously...who cares? Even if you somehow can't forgive the group of their Bible-tossing, bumblebee suit-clad past (c'mon...you gotta admit some of that shit was, to say the very least, embarrassing and tacky as hell), one must, at the very least, sincerely admire the much-maligned

foursome's seemingly unique ability to effectively recapture the musicianship, passion and spirit of the past without solely relying on nostalgia. Needless to say, if you've once again found yourself in search of a less-than-likely '80's Rock fix that won't leave you feeling '...coyote ugly...' the next morning just for enjoying it, then this, my friends, might just be the user-friendly cure for what ails you. Trust me, you won't be disappointed.

#### Select Discography

Greatest Hits: Live In Puerto Rico (DVD) (2007) \*

Reborn (2005) \*\*

7 Weeks: Live in America (2004) \*

Seven: The Best Of Stryper \*

Can't Stop The Rock (1991) \*

Against The Law (1990) \*

In God We Trust (1988) \*

In The Beginning (Video) (1987) \*

To Hell With The Devil (1986) \*

Live In Japan (Video) (1986) \*

Soldiers Under Command (1985) \*

The Yellow And Black Attack (EP) (1984) \*

\* features bassist Tim Gaines

\*\* features bassist Tracy Ferrie

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