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New England: Greatest Hits Live

New England's *Greatest Hits Live* is like a trip down memory lane, when pomp rock was in abundance. Yes folks, we are talking about the period from the late 70's to about 1984, when you had bands like Ambrosia, Styx, Avary, Journey, Angel, Sparks, and of course New England, all who took the theatrical, glitzy, symphonic, and commercial appeal of bands like Queen, The Beatles, David Bowie, and ELO, to new levels. After three studio albums, *New England, Explorer Suite*, and *Walking Wild*, the band called it a day and moved on to other projects (bassist Gary Shea and keyboard player Jimmy Waldo joined Graham Bonnet and Yngwie Malmsteen in the much heralded Alcatrazz). *Greatest Hits Live* is a recently discovered live show from the band from the early 80's, delivered in raw, unedited format. While it's not the best sounding live recording you will ever hear, the talent of the band shines through, and it's great to hear how well they recreated the orchestral yet hard rocking sound perfected in the studio, live on stage.



Labeling this as a "greatest hits in a live format" is right on the money. Many of the bands best songs are included here. From the catchy crooning of "Alone Tonight", featuring a hot guitar solo from John Fannon, the hard rock stomp of "Shoot", which sees some muscular guitar work from Fannon and Waldo's thick organ, to the soaring "Hello Hello Hello", one of my personal favorites from the band. This one has a very strong ELO feel to it, with loads of lush vocal harmonies and plenty of symphonic keyboards. In fact, Jimmy Waldo is a pretty underappreciated talent, as he whisks plenty of wild synth leads in this set as well as searing organ and waves of Mellotron. Other highlights include the catchy glam rock of "Encore" (complete with an unaccompanied guitar solo from Fannon), the poignant balled "Shall I Run Away", the driving synth & Mellotron laden rocker "Nothing to Fear", the unforgettable single "Don't Ever Wanna' Lose Ya", and the progressive rock gem "Explorer Suite".

New England's time in the spotlight was pretty brief when you look back on their short career. Many might have remembered seeing them open for bands like Kiss, AC/DC, Journey, Styx, or Rush, as well as hearing them on the radio when "Don't Ever Wanna' Lose Ya" cracked the US Top 50. With *Greatest Hits Live*, those new to the band's appealing sound can revel in some of their best material, filled with catchy & melodic vocal hooks, tasty guitar licks, and plenty of symphonic progressive rock styled keyboard work.

Track Listing

1. Alone Tonight
2. Shoot
3. Hello Hello Hello
4. Last Show, The
5. Encore
6. Hey You're On The Run
7. Shall I Run Away
8. Nothing To Fear
9. Don't Ever Wanna Lose Ya
10. Explorer Suite
11. P.U.N.K.
12. You'll Be Born Again

Added: September 25th 2007

Reviewer: Pete Pardo

Score: ★★★★★

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