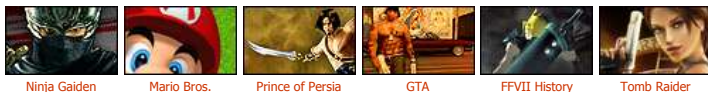




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Michael Schenker Group - In the Midst of Beauty Review

Uncanny axe-master's stunning return to form.

by Jim Kaz

May 16, 2008 - Michael Schenker has had one helluva turbulent career. But, it hasn't always been that way. The guitar prodigy's distinctive tone, masterful sense of melody and skillful shred have endeared him to scores of adoring axe-slingers including Zakk Wylde, Slash, Dimebag Darell and Kirk Hammett, among others. In his mid-teens he joined his brother Rudolph's band The Scorpions only to be snatched up by the then-bigger UFO in the mid '70s.



But Schenker has always had a knack for self-sabotage, first evidenced by his mysterious disappearance from UFO at the height of the band's popularity. Then when dream auditions for Aerosmith, Ozzy and The Rolling Stones materialized, the eccentric German found reasons not to go. Instead, he launched the promising Michael Schenker Group (MSG) in the early '80s with a world-class lineup including vocalist Gary Barden. After a few strong offerings, Barden would lose his job while Schenker traversed different singers, drifted in and out of UFO and pawned newer, inferior versions of MSG to various indie labels, tainting his legacy in the process.

In a surprising turn of fate, this new album makes up for all the missteps...and then some. With Barden back in the picture and top-tier oldschool players Neil Murray (Whitesnake/Black Sabbath) on bass, Don Airey (Deep Purple) on keyboards and Simon Phillips (The Who) on drums, the band has pulled off an album that showcases Schenker's lead guitar work as well as a clutch of superior songs. The album fits squarely within the modern metal scene that's prominent in Europe these days.

Each song is loaded with major hooks, Schenker's signature licks and Airey's organ flourishes. "City Lights" opens with a sonic blast of power and melody courtesy of a screaming lead piece. "Competition" is a driving number with an addictive chorus and a modern twist. The ballad "Summer Days" sounds like something you can't quite put your finger on, but in its air of familiarity and bittersweet refrain, it's instantly appealing. "End of the Line" moves like a freight train with a pulsing groove, while "I Want You" has a distinctive Deep Purple feel in its gypsy riff.

In all 12 songs, there really are no duds, although "Cross of Crosses" begins to run out of steam in its anti-climatic chorus. But things pick up nicely with "Ride My Way" which closes the album with a Hendrix-esque guitar intro and anthemic chorus. Overall, In the Midst of Beauty is best experienced in its entirety, and is the first authentic MSG album in nearly two decades. In all of the chaos surrounding Michael Schenker's career path, something musically stunning has indeed emerged. To the scores of Schenker diehards, that's a beautiful thing.

Download Worthy:

1. "City Lights"
2. "Competition"
3. "End of the Line"
4. "Summer Days"
5. "I Want You"
6. "Wings of Emotion"
7. "Ride on My Way"

IGN's Ratings for In the Midst of Beauty

out of 10

[click here for ratings guide](#)

Details for In the Midst of Beauty



Artist:
Michael Schenker Group
Release Date:

CD: May 13, 2008
Genre:
Metal
Explicit Content:
No
Label:
Inakustik Music



Ratings for In the Midst of Beauty

9.0 Outstanding
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9.0 OVERALL



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Hell yeah! Great album, and good for IGN for posting reviews of real metal icons. Good one kaz.

Schenker in Manowar? I never ever heard about that.

Posted by: [gunnenut](#) on May 19, 2008 09:27 PDT

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Blowpops, Chinese, Manowar FTL.

Posted by: [Reign_of_Prairie](#) on May 16, 2008 21:46 PDT

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Eh come on now. Michael Schenker was in Manowar at one point so he is fine in my book.

Posted by: [GameMaster2113](#) on May 16, 2008 21:34 PDT

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Aww c'mon - UFO was a great band. Sullied by having Bot mention them.

Posted by: [Bolt_Thrower](#) on May 16, 2008 20:10 PDT

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Blowpops are interesting.

Anyway I'd probably say the Chinese if I had to make a decision. Technically, Japan is a US land anyway since they still rely on the US...

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Posted by: [posnco](#) on May 16, 2008 19:50 PDT

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