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**MICHAEL SCHENKER - TEMPLE OF ROCK (B+)** in-akustik, 2011

14 tracks, RT: 58:01

[ <http://www.michaelschenkerhimself.com/> ]

[ <http://www.in-akustik.de/> ]

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Guitar god Michael Schenker is back to doing solo albums, and yes, this thing actually begins with a 72-second intro featuring William "James T. Kirk" Shatner intoning over orchestral music... and it's actually pretty cool! The music then launches with the driving "How Long," and we're off and running. Most of the tracks are sung by golden-throated Michael Voss (Mad Max, Casanova, Silver, etc.) and six feature the killer all-star lineup of Voss and Schenker plus a rhythm section consisting of the guitarist's former cohorts Pete Way on bass and Herman Rarebell on drums. (Maybe the next release will be Michael Schenker Group with these guys?) Other guests include Schenker's Scorpion brother Rudolf popping up on two songs to contribute "additional rhythm guitar," and such notables and/or former Schenker collaborators as Robin McAuley, Paul Raymond, Carmine Appice, Don Airey, Doogie White, Neil Murray, Simon Phillips, Chris Glenn, Wayne Findlay, Brian Tichy, Chris Slade, and Elliott "Dean" Rubinson. The album is chock full of melodic rockers with nary a ballad in sight, save for the slow burn of "With You;" most are pleasantly mid-tempo with the exceptions of the heavier/faster "Storming In" (once you get past the extended intro), "The End Of An Era," and the solo section of "Speed." "Scene Of Crime" has a wickedly spooky vibe, and "Before The Devil Knows You're Dead" (with White singing) has some satisfying stomp and heft. TEMPLE OF ROCK closes with an extended version of "How Long," subtitled "3 Generations Guitar Battle Version" and featuring additional solos from Mountain's Leslie West and Arch Enemy's Michael Amott. Highlights include the aforementioned, cookin' "The End Of An Era," the swirling, catchy single "Miss Claustrophobia," the chugga-chugga, McAuley-sung "Lover's Sinfony," the silly party rocker "Saturday Night" (featuring Rarebell on cowbell!), and the building "Hanging On." I totally dig the way Schenker has reached back into his past to re-team with friends and former band mates, and the way he leans on Voss for most of the vocals, so despite TEMPLE OF ROCK maybe lacking those one or two absolutely killer tracks, it's a worthy inclusion in his storied legacy.

- Tim Wadzinski ([tsw512@...](mailto:tsw512@...))