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1977 - Rock 'n Roll (Play It Again Records) Review by Metal Mark



These days it seems that you cannot turn around without running into a tribute band. 1977 fortunately take a slightly different approach. Instead of merely knocking out cover songs, these guys opted to create an album of all originals. The hook is that they have crafted their songs to sound like KISS did back in 1977. Actually I think the sound here is similar to all the KISS albums from 1976 and 1977. The guitar tone is very much like the way Ace Frehley played back then. The vocal harmonies are close to Paul and Gene's style. Obviously these guys spent many an hour listening and absorbing those classic albums from the mid-late 70's. Many of the songs presented here are so close in style to classic KISS

tracks that you could compare track listings and draw lines matching up which songs that 1977 were inspired by. They keep it interesting though probably due to their love of the band that they are emulating. They pay attention to detail as every little twist and turn is geared to sound like it was done twenty plus years ago. Even the little pops and hissing between tracks appeal to me as a long time vinyl fan. Simple it may be, but the songs are easy to get into and a fun listen for sure. After playing the disc for a second time I found myself inevitably singing along with the choruses like I had known these lines for years. In the end the approach of doing originals based firmly on the KISS style sure beats hearing the umpteenth cover version of "Cold Gin" or "Detroit Rock City". The band's enthusiasm and love for this type of music certainly shines through in all aspects on this album. Let's face facts it's been a long time since the real KISS have done a studio album this honest and enjoyable. So KISS fans and fans of 70's hard rock should really check this one out.
www.myspace.com/1977themusic

Bad Habit - Above And Beyond (AOR Heaven) By: Joe Florez



Bad Habit is a five piece band hailing from Sweden whose history dates back to 1986. They never made it huge worldwide, but had moderate success in their homeland. The band has released seven records to date and their existence has been very start and stop and have been consistently active for the past few years now. All I know about this band is that the CD was produced The Flower Kings Jonas Reingold and features drummer Jamie Salazar who if you follow the prog world and melodic scene that he has played with The Flower Kings and countless other bands. With that said, we now forge ahead with the review.

Right off the back, I am annoyed with the nasally and slightly high pitched vocal work of Bax Fehling. I don't mind if your lung work range is slightly above others, but try to sound manly 'cause this is weak. The opener "I Don't Want You" has potential, but is limp in so many ways and a poor way to open your set. It has a decent and mild pacing and there are moments where the guitars manage to shine and the rhythm section adds life to the composition, but it's safe and doesn't add much life to the song. It should have been used toward the middle or end of the disc. "Just A Heatbeat Away" and "A Lot To Learn" shows potential with great background singing and nice harmony vocals and the singing patterns are quite nice, but again it just doesn't have a strong leg to stand on. Grant it, I don't have to have all of my songs be hard and full of fireworks (it's nice though). I like songs light as well, but this just doesn't cut it. A band in my eyes who have nailed the AOR formula is another unknown band called Heartland. I just get pissed and aggravated with this band because each track does have potential, but after 30 seconds in and it just goes down the tubes. I don't expect much from this record and the way the industry is right now, if you want to stick around for more than a month then you will have to strengthen your next release with a no nonsense producer. Damn, let me in the studio. I throw some weight around. Sorry, won't be playing this one again anytime soon.
www.aorheaven.com | www.badhabitvip.com

Covered Call - Money Never Sleeps (**Blistering Records**) By: Joe Florez



Blistering Records is a start up label that is quickly making a name for themselves in the U.S. by not only licensing other titles for other labels, but signing new talent as well. The latest is from Sweden which is also home to the label. The band name refers to a term in the stock market business (look it up). The intriguing part of this is that this group is comprised of musicians that are in the trade by day and also features vocalist Thomas Vikstrom who has made his presence known with bands like Therion, Candlemass and many others. The songs on here are hard rock/AOR which will cater to the likes of Bon Jovi, Journey and the ilk.

“All Because Of Me” starts off pretty promising the licks are for the most part melodic, simple and catchy to a degree. The rhythm section is also a basic 4/4 beat with slight changes. I am not used to Thomas singing in a more hard rock environment as opposed to metal like the bands mentioned above. The song is mostly in the mid range with spikes of energy injected here and there. It’s not going to blow the roof off of your house, but it’s effective enough. “Til’ The End” is much punchier than the opener and the guitars aren’t as sleepy. They really pick up the pace and are much more lively. After rocking you out of sorts for half the disc, we get thrown into the mix “Anything You Want” which is accapella meaning only Thomas singing with the help of a piano and nothing else. It’s ok, but just drags after a while. The rest of the disc finishes out with plugged in instruments that rock out at a so so pace. The disc begins ok, but then once I get into it for more than 20 minutes I don’t care that much about it. The problem with this is that it’s too safe and there’s nothing exciting going on anywhere in here. I know nothing is original anymore, but try to look and sound alive when you perform. I sort of wanted to pass out afterwards. I think this disc could have showed promise, but they drop the ball here. If they are going to record again in the near future, they are going to have to inject some steroids into themselves and their instruments if they want to make a name for themselves in any way. This is mediocre at best and would prefer something from else from this label like the new From The Inside or Jorn.
www.blisteringrecords.se | www.myspace.com/coveredcall

Deathspell Omega- Veritas Diaboli Manet In Aeternum: Chaining The Katechon (**Norma Evangelium Diaboli**) By: Dave Schalek



Just to tide you over in between full-lengths, the mind altering trio of Deathspell Omega once again release an EP. The EP in question, with the tongue twisting title above, consists of one 22-minute long song simply (luckily) entitled “Chaining the Katechon”.

DSO are an absolutely premier French black metal band from one of the genre’s most vibrant scenes. Playing very disjointed black metal somewhat reminiscent of fellow countrymen Blut Aus Nord, DSO seamlessly manage to write challenging songs. “Chaining the Katechon” is no exception in that traditional black metal genre elements such as all out

blasts and greasily rasped vocals are incorporated into a sprawling 22-minute opus with moments of introspective atmosphere and dissonant soundscapes that seem to cascade into everlasting chaos.

“Chaining the Katechon” is broken up into several distinct movements that give the listener the impression that he or she is listening to a full-length consisting of several songs. This strategy also gives the impression that the EP is a lot longer than it really is, but in a good way, as the song’s different movements effortlessly segue between the aforementioned traditional and disjointed elements. Backing it all up throughout “Chaining the Katechon” is a very fluid, dynamic bass that gives the song great depth.

Those of you hungrily awaiting DSO’s next full-length will be more than satisfied with “Veritas...” In addition, anyone wondering what all of the fuss is about regarding DSO are wholeheartedly encouraged to start their challenging, mind altering listening experience with “Veritas...” Essential.

www.deathspellomega.com | www.noevdia.com | www.theajnaoffensive.com

Deceiver - Thrashing Heavy Metal (**Pulverised**) Review by Chris Davison



For those readers of a non-British persuasion, you'll need to be made aware of an advert which was shown over here in the eighties and nineties for a rust-resistant paint. Their slogan was "it does exactly what it says on the tin". You may not be surprised after reading this that I am going to suggest to Deceiver that this ought to be the strap line for "Thrashing Heavy Metal". At least you know what you're going to be buying when you pluck it from the shelves!

In fact, I think I probably over simplify the sound of Deceiver, who it seems are a cult band from 2004 or so, and have members and ex-members from the Serpent Obscene /

Maze of Torment / Flesh, Swedish cadre of musicians. Long time readers will know that I am a big fan of Pete Flesh (of the latter two bands), who is now the singer and guitarist for the reactivated Deceiver.

Recorded at the famous Abyss studios, this is the self proclaimed "latest and last" album of the band, which on the strength of this release seems to be a really big shame. Thrashing Heavy Metal is exactly the kind of album that is going to be a cult favourite with the forum-dwelling fans of the underground. At its heart, this is thrash with a black heart, sounding not unlike at times (and in particular on the stand out track "Graveyard Toxication") a melding of prime Mercyful Fate, Destroyer 666 and some of the icy, sinister atmosphere of Dissection with some of the more fragile, brittle guitar melodies.

If that little description hasn't already got you sat uncomfortably due to involuntary boner disease, there's a good chance you're reading the wrong site. (Or you're a woman, in which case the production of an involuntary boner should prompt you to seek immediate medical assistance). Thrashing Heavy Metal positively reeks of old school aggression and a "fuck you" attitude. The guitar tone is extremely grimy and filth-ridden, while the drums are pounding and unrelenting in the extreme. The bass sound is satisfyingly sickening, while Pete Flesh provides his usual gravel-laden gravelly rasp over the guitar melodies which abound, providing the patches to the musical denim waistcoat. Even more impressive is the fact that Deceiver are a three piece, though the guitar melodies frequently bring to mind twisted, perverted versions of classic NwoBHM guitar duels. This is essential, though almost none of you will ever get the chance to hear it. Cult? Oh yes. www.pulverised.net

Ekpyrosis - All You Can Eat (Self Release) Review by Steve Green



Austrian band Ekpyrosis have been around for about 20 years now. They've had a couple of deals which haven't worked out, they've actually supported a decent amount of big bands, including Deep Purple and this self released double album is their 5th release. There ends the very condensed history of Ekpyrosis.

They lost their deals with a Nuclear Blast sub-label and with Mausoleum Records due to poor sales and the such like, but I'm going to guess that's because the band aren't easy to pigeonhole. Vocal wise, and melody wise, this is melodic Hard Rock, but laid over that glossy sheen is a hard hitting veneer which at times borders on industrial and that in turn is

covered by a wall of keyboards which wouldn't be out of place on a Power Metal album. There's even a punky edge to some of the songs. So the big problem is, who is this going to be marketed to?

That's a tough call. Especially as this album is pretty inconsistent, which is mainly down to some very average song writing, which shouldn't be happening to a band that have been around for 20 years. Yet for all of these complaints, there are some genuinely decent songs wedged in amongst the flotsam and jetsam.

Which also makes me wonder why the band thought it necessary to release a double album, as this would have a lot more impact as a single 40 minute release.

I'm actually a big fan of Christian Gruber's voice and when the band get it right, I can see they have a lot of potential, but there's far too much wastage on this album, which coupled with a lack of direction makes them destined to remain in Austria's underground for the foreseeable future I'm afraid. www.ekpyrosis.com

Enchantment - Dance the Marble Naked (Peaceville) Review by Chris Davison



Peaceville continue their re-release schedule up with this rather obscure but also rather pleasingly little slice of British doom metal history. Originally released in 1994, this was the first (and subsequently only) album released by Blackpool based doomsters Enchantment. Amusingly, it would seem that Century Media had signed Enchantment to a six album deal (!), though this was the only official release that they ever put out.

The mid nineties were really the halcyon years for the “big three” of the British doom/death explosion. My Dying Bride released “Turn Loose the Swans” the same year, Paradise Lost had just released their mammoth “Icon” and Anathema had released their

breakthrough “Serenades” just a year before. Enchantment really do fit into this tradition of fog-bound miserabilism, with thick, downcast riffing and hoarse, lovelorn singing. I can actually see why Century Media would sign them to a multi-album deal, as “Dance the Marble Naked” can hold its head up high among the afore mentioned peers. Indeed, I would really describe Enchantment as the missing link between Anathema and The Blood Divine, sonically. Note, of course, that this album predated “Awaken” by a good two years, sounds a much more mature and accomplished album, and yet has not received any widespread acclaim unlike that opus.

Starting with the atmospheric “Kneading with Honey”, the satisfyingly depressive guitar tones and clear, punchy production bring you to your knees with the sheer quality of the music. The vocals are generally extremely reminiscent of Darren White and his gruff bellow, though there are clear moments during which tension and a sense of dynamism are conjured. There are also some nice progressive touches with clear, melodic guitar breaks and relatively upbeat passages throughout, though of course, this being doom metal, you won't find any tempos that break much above “crawl”. It goes without saying that those seeking an adrenaline fix would be best advised to look elsewhere!

Less maudlin than Anathema at the same time, less lace-hanky than My Dying Bride and with no pretensions of being the next Metallica (a la Paradise Lost), this was probably the most inventive and mature sounding doom/death album of the time. I'm not quite sure of how or why it has been unearthed by those nice folks at Peaceville, but perhaps now, 15 years after the initial release, Enchantment might finally see some of the plaudits which they richly deserved coming their way. Even if they do now run a hook a duck stall down at the pleasure beach. Grim. www.peaceville.com

EndeverafterR - Kiss or Kill (**Powerage**) Review by Strawb



Imagine, if you will, a journey from Spalding to Lincoln. Across the flat fenlands, to the slightly rolling hills north of Sleaford. At least numerically it is now possible to utilise the a15, a16 and a17, although not in chronological order. I've been making this trip for almost 30 years, and take it from me, depressingly boring hardly does it justice. So on the most recent enforced participation I looked to EndeverafterR and their debut album to ease the temptation of accelerating to 100mph and then looking for roadside furniture or an oncoming forty plus tonner to provide deceleration.

This is the first release I have had to review from the Powerage Rock label. No boring and

untrue PR blurb from these boys, just a CD and a link in to the website for brief details of the band – in summary 4 chaps from Las Vegas playing Rock / classic rock / metal. The intro to the website indicates that 80's posing survives stateside, and then informs you that the opener, and stand out track, ‘I wanna be your man’ has been used as the backing Music for the arrival of Courtney Cox in the series Scrubs. If you visit a concert, expect geeks to be in the audience as the quartet have also managed to get the same track outed as a plastic instrument classic on Rock Band 2. The rest of the album may not be up to the standard of the opener, but does reveal a broad spectrum of the bands talents, from the catchy, through AOR to the downright cheesy. Guitar solos are there, and harmonic vocal chorus' spring from most of the songs. Mrs S. found it palatable and at times compared it to ‘sort of seventies’ and ‘like The Darkness without Justin's vocals’, both of which are track specific comments, but are in there.

This CD made the journey almost a pleasure, and even got airtime on the return. It may even get the odd play when the ipod is on random. Could be that Kiss or Kill is for you, so check EndeverafterR out at

www.endeverafter.net

Exciter - Self Titled **Re-issue (Magnetic Air/MVD)** Review by Metal Mark



I remember buying this one on vinyl twenty plus years ago. The original cover had a patch with the Exciter logo on a black leather jacket. My hope was that it be a return to the style of their first three releases. I think that the band had begun to go more mainstream on 1986's "Unveiling the Wicked". Unfortunately that was a trend that continued on this the band's fifth album which is sometimes known as "O.T.T." . Drummer Chuck Beehler gave up vocal duties to new member Rob Malnati as the band became a quartet for the first time. That decision made little sense to me. Nothing against Malnati, but Beehler's screaming vocals helped define Exciter's sound. Malnati can hit similar levels, but he also

has more of a hard rock voice and he just does not have the touch that Beehler did. To accompany his voice the band spent about 2/3 of these tracks sounding like an accessible, big hair rock bands ala Dokken. Not that there is anything wrong with Dokken. However Exciter had established themselves as one of the founders of speed metal. With this change in style on this album they were going soft and they seemed to be taking step back what they previously established. I think by 1988 that they found themselves falling behind in the thrash genre and being replaced by bands they had influenced just a few years earlier. Yet instead of progressing and building on their sound instead they chose to slow down and try to make mid-tempo anthems. Some are decent, but some are just rather ordinary and even a little old by 1988 standards. All in all it is a rather average album at best. Exciter would eventually get back to their roots and they are still going at it today.