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LILLIAN AXE
S/T & Love + War [Remasters]
Metal Mind Productions 2008
www.lillianaxe.com

Genre

Melodic rock / pop-metal

The Good

To celebrate 20 years in the business, the first two Lillian Axe albums have been remastered and re-released on limited edition gold CD pressings. Only 2000 of each CD will be made available.

Some of you may be asking, just who is Lillian Axe? Well, just ask them and they'll tell you they're the most under rated melodic metal band you've never heard of. That remains to be seen, but Lillian Axe arrived on the metal scene back in 1984, paying their dues on the club circuit, until 1988 when they released their debut self-titled album. The album was produced by Ratt's Robbin Crosby, and has plenty of that 80s melodic metal sound that you would expect.

"Dream of a Lifetime" is heavy on guitars and vocal melody. "Inside Out" keeps the melodic vocals intact, but adds more crunch to the guitar riffage. "Picture Perfect" sparks comparisons to Ratt, Poison, and LA Guns with its catchy chorus, simplistic lyrics, and hard rocking edge. "The More That You Get" has a great sing-along chorus. "Misery Loves Company" is still a Lillian Axe live show standard. It's anthemic in its presentation. The group inserts back-to-back ballads with the acoustic based "Nobody Knows" and the keyboard heavy "Hard Luck."

Lead guitarist Stevie Blaze, vocalist Ron Taylor, rhythm guitarist Jon Ster, bassist Rob Stratton, and drummer Danny King return with bandanas, high hair, and mascara all intact for 1989's Love + War. The opening chords of "All's Fair in Love and War" will have you believing that Lillian Axe is abandoning their guitar based music, but there's a quick shift back to the meaty riffs and enduring vocals the band set forth in their debut. "She Likes it on Top" is pure 80s metal cliché and metaphor, but still quite memorable. If you didn't have a track named after a girl in the 80s, then you weren't a band in the eighties. Lillian Axe's contribution is "Diana."



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"The World Stopped Turning" has an epic feel to it that is dominated by acoustic guitars and top-notch vocals. The track is delivered through various emotional changes. If your toe doesn't tap to the opening riff of "My Number," then you must be dead. The song itself recalls some of the great sleaze rock of the 80s. It's more great riffage on "Fools Paradise." This one is sure to get you moving as well.

The Bad

I swear to God that "Vision in the Night" has a slightly altered riff than "Inside Out". "Diana" has to be the worst tribute ballad I've ever heard. I hope no one in the band married her. I would have liked to have seen separate album notes for each release, not the same ones.

The Verdict

Is Lillian Axe the most under-rated melodic metal band? Maybe, but I would steer more in the direction that they were the most over-looked band of that era. Lillian Axe had everything all the "it" bands of the late 80s and early 90s had (killer riffs, smooth rhythms, melodic vocals); they we're certainly better than some of them too. I think what the group might have been missing, was a gimmick, a over-the-top sappy ballad, or that gimmicky anthem track. Of course those things were just that...a ploy to rope you in.

Lillian Axe had real talent, but sadly peaked at a time where talent wasn't really taken into consideration. You had to have the look or the sound. Once you're put in a particular group, you're stuck there, no matter how different you are. Kind of like how Queensryche and Def Leppard are lumped in with hair metal bands.

Lillian Axe's debut is heavy on melody and catchiness, but does show signs of a band still trying to improve; especially with their lyrics. The album also sounds a lot like Ratt thanks to producer Robbin Crosby, but without the awful vocals. *Love + War* shows signs of improvement. The band chooses to up the guitar quotient, and it works for them. The melodies are still there and stronger than ever. If you long for the good old days of melodic metal, and already have your favorites in tow, check out Lillian Axe for something great and something new that you probably missed the first time around.

I also recommend their 2002 live album. It's a masterpiece. You can also hear the improvements on their early work.

Did You Know?

The band's name was inspired from a character in the Stephen King movie *Creepshow*.

Rating:



out of 5 for Lillian Axe



out of 5 for Love + War

--George Dionne



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