

REVIEWS : ALBUMS : XENTRIX, "FOR WHOSE ADVANTAGE [REISSUE]"



XENTRIX
FOR WHOSE ADVANTAGE [REISSUE]
 METAL MIND RECORDS
 2007

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When I was a junior in college, I did a semester abroad in London. There were about sixty five of us living in a Serbian owned hotel in South Kensington, which was a pretty posh area for a bunch of college students. Needless to say, we quickly became the terrors of the neighborhood and on first name basis with the local constabulary. I hadn't taken much with me, mostly just clothes, so I was pretty happy when my roommate Brendan The Beautiful bought a crappy boom box at one of the open air markets. Needing a good fix of metal, I tottered down to the Virgin Megastore and picked up a bunch of new metal. As I recall, I got "Rust in Peace", which had just come out, "Seasons in the Abyss", Sacred Reich's "The American Way", and some UK thrash band I'd never heard of.

After a quick stop at Earl's Court tube stop and the Three Kings pub for some slightly illegal goodies, I made my way back to the hotel to get my metal on. Figuring that I'd have plenty of time to listen to the bands I was already familiar with, I popped the "For Whose Advantage" tape into Brendan's boom box and cranked it up. Nine songs later, I had a new favorite thrash band that no one at home had ever heard of.

Xentrix hail from Leyland, England, northwest of Manchester; due to horrible economic situations, the kids up there didn't have much work. So Chris Astley started up a metal band called Sweet Vengeance which persevered through line-up changes to do enough shows and demos to garner the attention of Roadrunner. Live, the band was a force of nature; they consistently showed up the bands they were opening for. After the initial Roadrunner album ("Shattered Existence"... look for my review soon!) and some more touring, the lads from Leyland got back into the studio to take a crack at the new songs.

Strongly reminiscent of the American speed/thrash scene, especially the Bay Area thrashers, Xentrix brought their own peculiar bent to the formula. "Questions" starts it off with lots of nice riffing from Chris Astley and Kristian Havard, and features a nice solo from Kristian. The parts all flow together, the mature composition of these songs immediately evident. The title track is a six and a half minute tour de thrash, a bit more restrained and mid-tempo with a brilliant middle section. Sure, there are similarities from track to track; but just enough to be consistent, not boring. "The Human Condition" is one of my favorite songs; I love how the guitars drop out during the first part of the verse, leaving the bass and drums pounding along, and then coming back in at full chug. Kristian's solos are very short but melodic and fit the songs. "False Ideals" is pretty cool, but it feels like a total set up for the thrashtastic "The Bitter End". "New Beginnings" is a short acoustic instrumental, leading into "Desperate Remedies" with its galloping riffs. "Kept in the Dark" is another classic with a chorus that gets stuck in my head for days. The album closes with the hyper blast of "Black Embrace". Now my cassette didn't have the "extra" song, a cover of Gillan's "Running White Faced City Boy"; but the Metal Mind re-issue not only has that one but also includes the "Dilute to Taste" EP, which features two new songs and four live cuts, including the (very silly) cover of "Ghostbusters". Since I'm such a fanatical Ian Gillan fan, I flipped out to hear a metalized version of "Running White Faced City Boy". My friend Brian Turner (a.k.a. Brain "It's Not A" Tumor) has always maintained he likes the Gillan version better, but he's not as metal as I am.

Metal Mind has done a fabulous job with these Roadrunner re-issues, and having all three Xentrix albums get the 24-bit re-mastering treatment (numbered, limited edition digi-packs with gold discs,, not to be missed,, get yours now!) is a dream come true for me. I pulled out the original tape and my old CD version, and this is spanks them both soundly. "For Whose Advantage" captures Xentrix at their thrash best. Listening now with over fifteen years of hindsight, I'll admit that this sounds a little dated. But for an old thrash dog like me, this hits the sweet spot like martinis on an empty stomach. Pick this one up and revel in the days when thrash titans ruled with a metal fist!

STANDOUT TRACKS

All

S.GREGORY



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