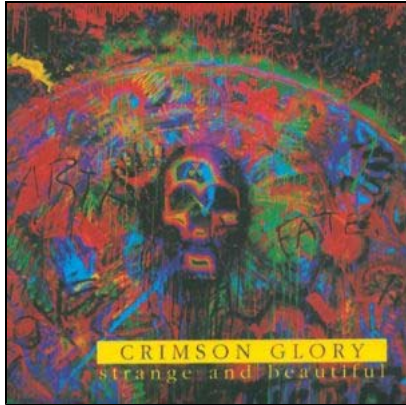


REVIEWS : ALBUMS : CRIMSON GLORY, "STRANGE AND BEAUTIFUL [REISSUE]"



CRIMSON GLORY
STRANGE AND BEAUTIFUL [REISSUE]
 METAL MIND RECORDS
 2007

BAND INFORMATION

Official Website

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The eponymous debut album (which came out my senior year in high school, 1986, a vintage year for metal!) and the follow up "Transcendence" put Crimson Glory on the prog metal map for good. By the time the third album came around (originally released in 1991, a bad year for metal as the Flannel Tsunami gathered strength) they'd retired the silver masks they'd been wearing on stage and parted ways with Ben Jackson and Dana Burnell (guitar and drums, respectively). "Strange and Beautiful" was recorded as a four piece, with new drummer Ravi Jakhotia adding a different, looser feel to the rhythms. Lyrically they dropped the themes from the previous albums and concentrated instead on writing psycho-sexually themed songs.

It didn't go over very well at the time with the long time fans (the Crimson Militia), which is understandable if you've heard the first two albums. Changing musical directions wasn't something that concerned the band. "Every artist tries to widen his horizons, to evolve all the time," said John Drenning (guitar) at the time. This re-issue, courtesy of Metal Mind, gives fans a chance to listen with the benefit of hind-sight. I have to admit, I hated this album when it came out, but hearing it again I'm impressed by what Crimson Glory accomplished.

Ravi's excellent drumming sets the tone, and the songwriting feels organic. Midnight gives a great vocal performance. Jeff Lords' bass pops all over these songs, the clean, even production giving him plenty of space. Drenning's guitar parts are all over the place, from rock to blues to metal to progressive, but never dominating, as clearly the songs are the central focus. It's a slick, well done album, aching with earnest AOR intentions, much more hard rock than prog metal. The lyrics are an abrupt change. For geeky guys who like swords and dragons and haven't gotten laid all decade the songs about lust and desire are a bit foreign and out of place, but anyone who's been on the rollercoaster of love can relate.

Drastic style shifts usually work both for and against a band. The old die-hard fans generally hate it but the more numerous new fans love it... the Metallica Syndrome. Unfortunately for Crimson Glory, "Strange and Beautiful" would mark the end of first part of their career before reforming with Wade Black (the hardest working voice in metal) behind the mic for "Astrononica" in 1999. If you like meticulously produced intelligent hard rock that's filled with lusty but somewhat obscure imagery, "Strange and Beautiful" is well worth picking up. This reissue comes with a booklet with the lyrics and some helpful background information about the songs from John and Midnight.

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