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Heathen
Victims of Deception
Metal Mind/Roadrunner
<http://www.heathenmetal.com>

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Has there ever been an album that you loved as an angst ridden teenager that you haven't listened to in years? For me that would be Heathen's one true album, Victims of Deception. I'm not sure exactly when or why I stopped listening to it but the wise folks at Metal Mind have reissued it and as I'm writing this review I am attempting to kick myself for ever filing it away. This is quite possibly one of the best metal albums ever made. Oh, and I can still sing along with 90% accuracy, for those wondering.

The late eighties/early nineties was a great time for metal music and most of it was being released by Roadrunner Records (Obituary, King Diamond, Mercyful Fate, heathen, Sadus, Xentrix, Last Crack, Atrophy, etc.). Heathen stood out from the pack in a Megadeth sort of way in that they were very musical and much more talented as songwriters than a lot of metal bands from this era. Much like Xentrix, they also had a bit more commercial appeal which makes the fact that they never exploded like Megadeth or Testament did even more odd.

The album opens with the sound of a sermon, probably audio taken straight from an eighties televangelist. The album rips into "Hypnotized" and "Opiate for the Masses" and by the end of the latter you are nearly spent. "Heathen's Song" kicks in next and Mustaine's name again comes to mind until Darren Minter kicks it into gear leaving the more popular bands of the day in the wake of Heathen's destruction. Other highlights include...well everything. Personal favorites include "Mercy is No Virtue" and the slightly more epic sound of "Prisoners of Fate." The only slight misstep here is "Guitarmony" but on an album like this, one mediocre song is nothing to be concerned about. The reissue of Victims of Deception also includes the bonus track "Hellbound" which has a little more of an early eighties pop metal feel to it but is still pretty frickin' amazing.

Heathen are unrelenting on this album and it more than stands the test of time. If you don't own this album, you need to. However, be forewarned that, though you may attempt to resist, this album still causes sore necks and backpain on every listen. Simply one of the best metal albums ever made.

Key Tracks:

Reviewed by Mark Fisher

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