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dUg Pinnick - 'Naked' (RockArmy Records)

CD Reviews

Written by Ben Hughes

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Best known as frontman of the influential and highly underrated King's X, the hard working dUg Pinnick has amassed a wealth of material over the last 30 years or so.

As well as 12 studio albums with King's X and a bunch of solo albums, he has been involved with various low key 'supergroup' side projects over the years, including The Mob with Winger's Reb Beach and Tres Mts with Pearl Jam bassist Jeff Ament. This year sees him release his latest solo album, 'Naked', this happens to be the third album he has been involved with so far this year along with Third Ear Experience and the highly recommended Pinnick Gales Pridgen album.

No one can accuse dUg of resting on his laurels while his band are on a break, 'Naked' was written, performed and produced entirely by dUg in his home studio.

I think it is the general consensus amongst fans of established musicians that they are comfortable, wealthy and have no worries about paying their bills, but unless you are the likes of stadium giants Bon Jovi or U2 this is really quite far from the truth. Take dUg for instance, a highly respected and influential musician who will be celebrating his 63rd birthday this year. He now finds himself in a position where he has no health insurance, struggling to raise the funds for a much needed hernia operation. Fans and friends have even set up a Fundraiser to help raise the \$25,000 to cover the medical costs. There is it seems no justice in a world where the likes of One Direction are millionaires (and not of their own making) and yet true talent like dUg Pinnick and a sea of artists like him that we love and respect tirelessly release quality music and are left with just cult status. But you will never hear an artist like dUg complain, as long as he can carry on making music and there are people like us to appreciate it then his life is full of great richness indeed.

'What You Gonna Do?', the opening track of 'Naked', sees dUg cover this subject. The dark, sludgy grunge riff kicks in followed by dUg's unmistakable velvet toned voice that permeates the gloomy vibe with the deep lyrics. "Everyone thinks I got a whole lot of money cos I play in a rock band, but I'm broke...but I spend my whole life doing what I want to do." He's not complaining though, it's not a bitter diatribe, just explaining he's just like everyone else, trying to figure out how to pay the bills. It's a mid-paced groove of an opener with a message "At the end of the day all you got is you, what you gonna do?"

'Naked' is a deeply personal and dark sounding album overall. The title is a reference to the man stripping things bare emotionally, these songs were written during a change in his life,

after moving to LA to figure out what he wanted to do with his life. Weighty in sound but thankfully not in length, with just 11 tracks and a shorter running time than his previous releases, it is an easy album to get deep into.

'Speeding Love' has that trademark deep groove that is so familiar when listening to dUg material, an almost hypnotic, heavy bass groove with a choppy guitar riff that grinds along over the top. There is lighter, more commercial material such as 'Ain't That The Truth', but it's the weighty, groove heavy material that sticks out the best. Take 'The Point' for example, it's a poignant look at death and mortality, "a wake up call that one day I'll be bones, ashes and dust," he sings.

For me the stand out tracks bring up the rear of the album, the 8 minute plus 'I Hope I Don't Lose My Mind' is a powerful yet slow beast with some great multi-layered vocals and some top guitar playing, it didn't stand out at first but after several plays seems to me the centrepiece of the album. An epic, bluesy one man workout that has dUg crooning his heart and soul out until the climax.

The following 'Heart Attack' has that mid-period King's X feel, it flows on a solid bass riff that just sounds ultra cool and you feel it deep in the bones when played loud (as recommended in the CD packaging). 'I'm Not Gonna Freak Out' closes the album with a slow, funky bass line and some real dirty guitars going on, dUg emptying his lungs like the emotional animal we know he can be, and as the last bass note fades I am left with the overall feeling that the journey has been a good one.

Although slightly disappointed at first that 'Naked' treads no new ground, it is as with many of his releases, a grower that slowly digs deep under the skin. It is business as usual for dUg Pinnick, a quality album of tight, groove heavy tunes that are soulful and deep, both lyrically and musically. A solo album in the true sense of the word and an essential purchase for fans of King's X and dUg's many other projects, long may he continue to shine.

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