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## Harley's War - Hardcore All Stars (CD/DVD)

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It could be said that Harley Flanagan is an under-appreciated icon of music. Considered the youngest punk rock star, he got his start at age 12 as the drummer of The Stimulators. Several years later, he founded The Cro-Mags, an influential hardcore punk band turned thrash, which since 2002 has not included him in the constantly changing lineup.

Along with these, he also has a thriving "solo" project under the name Harley's War. This project consists of music he has created through collaborations with other big names in the hardcore scene. The highlights of these collaborations are featured on *Hardcore All-Stars*, the first release (which includes both a CD and DVD) under the name Harley's War.

The CD portion of the release comes in three parts: the studio album itself, Harley Flanagan's 1982 solo demo, and live CBGB recordings. The first few tracks, up to "Hardcore 'nyhc-og'", feature ex-Cro-Mags Ryan Krieger and Gabby Abularach, on drums and guitar, respectively. These are easily the heaviest songs on the album, much different than any music the Cro-Mags produced. From the powerful blast beats of "Hardcore L.A.M.F." leading seamlessly into the appropriately haunting "Nightmare", to even the hip-hop infused "Hardcore 'nyhc-og'", these are best oriented to those with metal preferences.

Beyond that, the hardcore punk aspect that fans of Flanagan's work has frowned to love returns with a vengeance. The next few feature work of Jay Vento from Warzone and the familiar "under-the-vocals" lead guitar work of Rocky George of the Suicidal Tendencies, most noticeably in "Last Days."

In "Spirit of '77" Micky Fitz of classic UK hardcore band of classic UK Oi-turned-Hardcore band The Business takes the mic, alongside Harley Flanagan. Vinnie Stigma of Agnostic Front is also featured in this song on guitar, and these three talents manage to come together and recreate the true original punk spirit, complete with a small tribute to the Ramones' "Blitzkrieg Bop."

The studio portion of the effort ends on a lighthearted note, with "NYHC X-mas." Again featuring Vinnie Stigma on guitar, this track is a medley of traditional Christmas songs adapted lyrically and musically in honor of the New York hardcore punk scene.

The demo portion of the release includes four songs from the 1982 demo, at least two of which were eventually used by the Cro-Mags themselves, featuring the 16-year-old Flanagan on all instruments. This inclusion in this compilation is very interesting, allowing for a listener to hear the young musical vision of a legend, and the ability to compare two eras, and observe the progression and changes that Harley Flanagan has made since then.

The live portion, from the last Sunday Hardcore Matinee at New York's CBGB, holds a bittersweet feeling throughout. The listener tends to focus on the fact that this is both from the last recording of any Cro-Mags material in the now defunct club. Appropriately, much if not all of the music was from the Cro-Mags "glory days", and it proves to be nothing less than exceptional, and a good way to end a legendary era in hardcore music. The DVD portion of the release is *The Best of Harley's War*, including live performances from Germany, Japan, and New York. It features both Harley's War original songs, as well as songs originally performed by the Cro-Mags. In each live performance, the viewer can see the passion and love Flanagan continues to have for what he does. It also has a bonus section, including Harley's own personal account of the CBGB club, and a one-on-one interview with the man himself.

*Hardcore All-Stars* is, hands down, an excellent release. Naturally, however, it's not for everyone. I mean, hardcore punk, a genre based around a message as opposed to ability, isn't the genre for those looking for supreme technical capability or vocal virtuosity. But

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