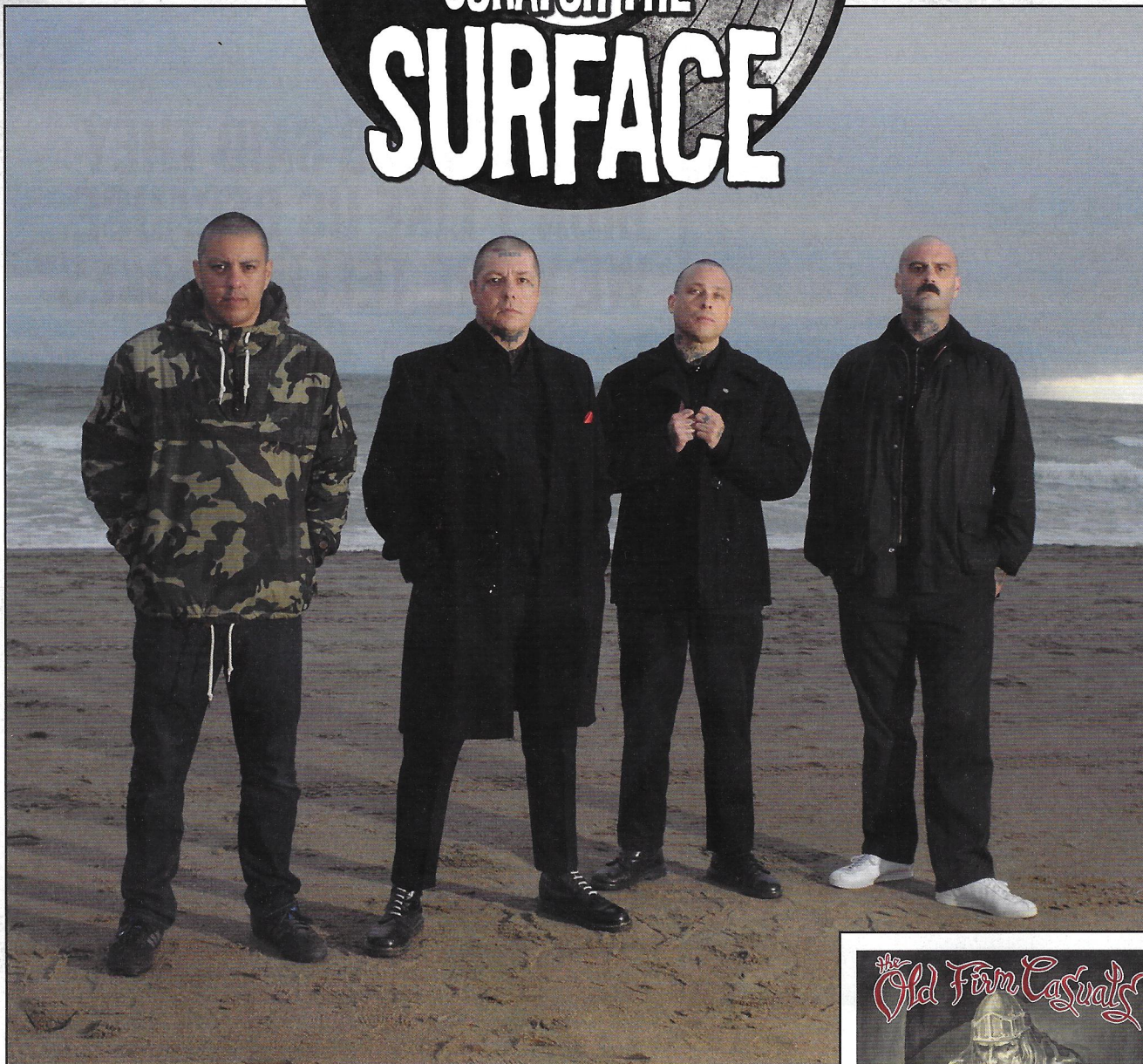


# SCRATCH THE SURFACE



## THE OLD FIRM CASUALS

HOLGER DANSKE

(Pirates Press / Demons Run Amok)

Top-shelf street rock n' roll from Lars Frederiksen and his merry men.

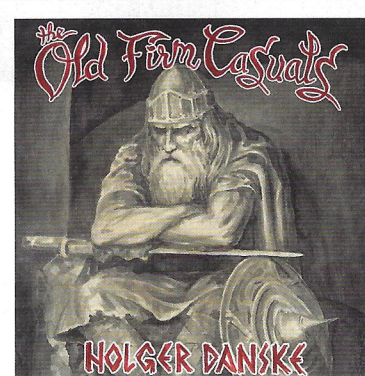
8/10

So it turns out that this is the second full-length from the Old Firm Casuals but in all honesty it feels like they've been around for much, much longer. The musical chops on display here are so brash and confident that it feels like the work of a band who are at least a few decades into their existence. It helps that the man steering the ships is one L. Frederiksen, one of the most gifted musicians of his generation showcasing some of the best songwriting of his career on his latest release. 'Holger Danske' (named after the legendary knight of Charlemagne, or so it says here) is so on-point that if you didn't know better you'd swear it was a Greatest Hits compilation. It's just one banger lined up after another, in that magical sweet spot where Agnostic Front and early Slade peacefully co-exist in some sort of musical utopia. What I like most about these guys is how they pay gleeful homage to their inspirations but aren't afraid to turn out something utterly fresh and new, as is the case with album highlight 'Casual Rock n' Roll', which sounds like AC/DC gone Oi!, with a chorus custom-built for crowd singalongs while everyone gets tipsy at The Underworld.

Elsewhere, the band does its own unique take on everything from hardcore (the storming opener 'Get out of Our Way'), to power rock ('Thunderbolt'). The whole thing rattles along merrily before winding to a close with

the epic, apocalyptic 'Zombies'. To quote fellow DFL scribe James Batty: "If there's one thing I hate, it's too much fanning about" and this album is one of those rare beasts with no fanning about whatsoever. Not a single second of music is wasted or feels throwaway. There's no going through the motions or karaoke here, every track feels alive and engorged and the sounds on offer suggest that this is less a side project and more an outfit with total mastery of their sound. Lars has had an amazing run with Rancid (one of the most important bands of the last few decades - fact) but here he sounds like he has rediscovered his muse and fallen back in love with the records that he cut his teeth on growing up. This is the sort of record that feels like it was made by angry young men with something to prove. Provided the world doesn't actually end in 2019 (and there are no guarantees on that front), a lot of people will be popping this in their end-of-year lists.

JAMES GATES



**"BRASH AND CONFIDENT"**