



## LILLIAN AXE

S/T reissue

Metal Mind Productions

LILLIAN AXE is one of those “what if” bands from the eighties, one who, in the beginning, did everything expected if you were an aspirant hard rock group looking to get a piece of the pie that MOTLEY CRUE, DEF LEPPARD, RATT and POISON had grabbed for themselves and were still licking the filling residue from their fattened fingers. LILLIAN AXE possessed as much hair spray in their arsenal as they did punchy riffs, memorable hooks and eloquently understated guitar solos from band founder Steve Blaze. With none other than RATT’s late bassist Robbin Crosby handling the console for LILLIAN AXE’s self-titled debut that was realized after a long hard road to L.A. through the South, the album should’ve by rights of the times become a major success. As it was, *Lillian Axe* was a modest winner over their second-tier competitors, all of whom eventually lost out to the grunge era.

With a quick strike radio-friendly hit, “Dream of a Lifetime” opening the record, LILLIAN AXE then goes on a succession of formula-driven rock numbers like “Inside Out,” “Vision in the Night” and “Misery Loves Company.” The latter sounds like a prime DOKKEN cut while “The More That You Get” follows the ingredients that brought KIX, Y&T, KEEL and even ROUGH CUTT to a nationwide audience. So what happened that *Lillian Axe* only got so far on its ducks?

“The More That You Get” is a no-brainer instant single, yet why didn’t it show up on MTV and rock radio back in 1988? The song is upbeat, chorus-addictive and it has the perfect Blaze-ing solo to implant itself on the brains of would-be fans. How then, did LILLIAN AXE miss out on the big party when WARRANT and FIREHOUSE were extended invitations? This is the question that haunted LILLIAN AXE on this album as well as their smart follow-up, *Love & War*. The mishandling by their former label MCA Records is the key story behind keeping LILLIAN AXE relegated to cult status.

Granted, they eventually went in a more progressive direction that culminated in last year’s elder statement piece *Waters Rising*, an album in the making all the way back from *Love & War* plus their later year records *Psychoschizophrenia* and *Fields of Yesterday*. Still, despite the fact that *Lillian Axe* and *Love and War* relies heavily on the eighties’ honored tradition of sex plying and relationship torching, their steady anthem “Nobody Knows” and the sharp, melancholic songwriting on “Waiting in the Dark” (hailing shades of Ozzy’s “Mr. Crowley”) were signals of what was to come for LILLIAN AXE after they tanked in a bid for mainstream metal sovereignty. In that regards, listening to LILLIAN AXE’s debut makes one realize they had as much of a shot to succeed as any; it’s a shame that for all of their slugging in the trenches it all came crashing down due to corporate bullshit.

- Ray Van Horn, Jr.

