

Judas Priest – Nostradamus (2008)

Written by bluesever

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01. Dawn of Creation 02. Prophecy 03. Awakening 04. Revelations 05. The Four Horsemen 06. War 07. Sands of Time 08. Pestilence and Plague 09. Death 10. Peace 11. Conquest 12. Lost Love 13. Persecution 14. Solitude 15. Exiled 16. Alone 17. Shadows In the Flame 18. Visions 19. Hope 20. New Beginnings 21. Calm Before The Storm 22. Nostradamus 23. Future Of Mankind Bass – Ian Hill Drums – Scott Travis Guitar [Guitars & Synthesized Guitars] – Glenn Tipton, K. K. Downing Strings – Pete Whitfield Vocals – Rob Halford

On 2005's (almost) divine comeback album *Angel of Retribution*, Judas Priest fans got a modern day update of the band's genre-bending 1976 classic, *Sad Wings of Destiny*. The New Wave of British Heavy Metal legends return to the mines for 2008's *Nostradamus*, though this time it's another band's treasure they're looting, specifically Iron Maiden's 1988 concept album, *Seventh Son of a Seventh Son*. Heavy metal's obsession with seers, sorcery, and anything else that falls under the nebulous blanket of the "dark arts" is legendary, and Maiden's loosely knit tale of a visionary "chosen one" provided listeners with one of the last great albums of the pre-grunge, epic metal era, due in part to some truly memorable songs that remain fan favorites even to this day. *Nostradamus*, on the other hand, manages to live up to nearly every Spinal Tap cliché (non-deliberate, laugh-inducing cover art; melodramatic spoken word interludes; rhyming "fire" with desire). At nearly two hours long, one expects a certain amount of filler, but the dated keyboard strings, soft piano, and bluesy, minor-key guitar licks that populate every nook and cranny in between (and often throughout) each track sound like discarded incidental music from *The X-Files* or an RPG video game "cut scene." The songs themselves are hit or miss, with the emphasis falling on the latter, due mostly to an over-reliance on three-chord, midtempo filler, but as is the case with nearly every Priest offering, when they're on they're dead on. Disc one closer "Persecution," after a lengthy organ/guitar intro, unleashes *Nostradamus*' finest six minutes, boasting one of the best choruses the band has produced since 1988's "Hard as Iron" (few things sound as natural and satisfying as Rob Halford's metallic voice running through a phaser, and his signature scream, when it arises, still has no equal). The predictable but effectively apocalyptic "War" (taking a cue from Holst's *Mars, Bringer of War*) spawns one of the few great orchestral breakdowns on the record, while both "Death" and the nearly

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seven-minute title track feature stunning guitar work from Glenn Tipton and K.K. Downing. None of this, however, can save Nostradamus from the fact that even if it were reduced to a single album (it should have been), its flaws would far outweigh its triumphs. Excess and metal go together like blood and guts, but even gore loses its ability to draw a reaction after the umpteenth beheading. ---James Christopher Monger, AllMusic Review

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