

Anthrax - Spreading the Disease (1985)

Written by bluesever

Sunday, 13 March 2011 10:04 - Last Updated Saturday, 07 October 2017 19:32

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1. "A.I.R." 5:45
2. "Lone Justice" 4:36
3. "Madhouse" 4:19 [play](#)
4. "S.S.C./Stand or Fall" 4:08
5. "The Enemy" 5:25
6. "Aftershock" 4:28 [play](#)
7. "Armed and Dangerous" 5:43
8. "Medusa" 4:44
9. "Gung-Ho" 4:34

Musicians:

Joe Belladonna (vocals);
Dan Spitz, Scott Ian (guitar);
Frank Bello (bass);
Charlie Benante (drums).

"Young and free, something you'll never be!". The first lines of Anthrax's sophomore output resume the band's spirit back in the days very well. The East Coast thrash metal legend performs carefree songs full of enthusiasm without any compromises. Stylistically, the band sounds still much closer to the New Wave of British Heavy Metal than to the pitiless thrash metal between liberatingly humorous lyrics and socially critical statements on later outputs. The cool main riff of "Madhouse" could be taken from a Judas Priest record of the early eighties while the harmonious guitar play and the high pitched chorus of "S.S.C./Stand or Fall" have obvious Iron Maiden influences. New singer Joey Belladonna offers his most enthusiastic performance and isn't afraid of high notes or fast passages. His technical struggles here and there are outpowered by his charming juvenile spirit. The tight rhythm section of bass guitar and drums harmonizes well and grooves, pushes and rushes us through nine vivid tracks. The guitar work is extraordinary as one can hear both tight heavy metal riffs and orgasmic melodic

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high-speed guitar solos in all tracks of this fun ride.

Despite numerous influences from other bands, Anthrax always manages to add a surprising note to each song and keeps a high degree of original diversity without losing the carefree guiding line. Especially the opening moments of most tracks are courageous, entertaining and original. The humorous radioplay overture of the charismatic "Madhouse" reminds me of the thought provoking drama *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. The acoustic guitar opening of "S.S.C./Stand or Fall" almost recalls traditional flamenco influences. The drum play and sound effects in the beginning of "The Enemy" make almost any metal fan play air drums and bang his head. The folk infused sounds in the beginning of "Armed and Dangerous" that are carried on by appeasing acoustic guitars and heartbreaking electric guitar solos are atmospheric and progressive but nevertheless related to classic heavy metal. This is one of the most melodic and also outthought tracks ever written by the band. On the other side, Anthrax closes the record with its fastest song ever which is the chaotic and humorous "Gung Ho" where all instruments break loose towards the intentionally random ending.

There are only two songs I enjoy a little bit less on an otherwise incredibly strong output somewhere between classic heavy metal, American power and thrash metal and a small dose of hardcore punk. "Aftershock" has some interesting lyrics and can be seen as a hint at more politically inspired texts to come from the band but the chorus lacks energy and originality and the usually emotional guitar solos on this record are missing on this tune. "Medusa" is slightly better because of a solid heavy metal main riff and a great melodic vocal performance in the verses but the slightly psychedelic and noisy chorus is rather off-putting and plain weird as it doesn't fit at all to the rest of the song. If these two tracks weren't on the record, it would maybe be the best American heavy and power metal album of all times. Despite these two average tunes, this album still is a classic must have for fans of the aforementioned genres.

There is only one thing left to talk about. I would like to know what happened to Mister Brown. The mentally disabled patient welcomes his medicine with hysterical laughter in the beginning of "Madhouse" and one can hear him again during the chaotic and liberating party that is going on during "Gung Ho". Maybe he was able to escape from the madhouse as one can hear him again in another crowd during the performance of "Bud E Luv Bomb and Satan's Lounge Band", a b-side of the band's third record. As far as I know, he was never heard of again after his appearance during this crazy concert with a couple of drunkards in a social club. What happened to Mister Brown? I hope this secret will get revealed one day and that we might hear of him again on Anthrax's next studio record.

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