

Godsmack - 1000hp (2014)

Written by bluesever

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01. 1000hp 02. FML 03. Something Different 04. What's Next? 05. Generation Day 06. Locked & Loaded 07. Living In The Gray 08. I Don't Belong 09. Nothing Comes Easy 10. Turning To Stone
Sully Erna - lead vocals, rhythm guitar, production Tony Rombola - lead guitar, backing vocals Robbie Merrill - bass guitar Shannon Larkin - drums, percussion

It's been four years since Godsmack released 'The Oracle,' their most recent studio album. Which isn't exactly an eternity, but when taken into account that their album prior to that, 'IV,' was separated by another four year gap, it starts to feel like new music from the Boston-area bruisers doesn't come too often. This makes the arrival of '1000hp,' their new effort and sixth overall, seem almost like the reemergence of an old, familiar acquaintance.

And indeed, the band, led by tattooed spark plug Sully Erna, seem to belong almost to another musical era. Their grunting, stripped-bare riffs and straightforward rhythms, not to mention Erna's unadorned blue-collar yawp, harken back to a time before, say, metal fans used words like deathcore or djent. Which is not to say that '1000hp' sounds musty. In fact, in this scattered and splintered musical age, it more often comes off as surprisingly fresh and vibrant.

This point is driven home by the sheer godsmackiness of the new album's title track, a raging hard rocker that kicks off '1000hp' in appropriate fashion: a motorcycle engine roars, drummer Shannon Larkin whips up a shit-kicking, four-on-the-floor beat, and guitarist Tony Rombola and bassist Robbie Merrill lock in on a practically one-note groove-rock riff. Erna's vocals tell the band's origin story ("Time to rewind/Back to 1995"), leading to an explosive chorus that hinges on the lyric, "Turn that shit up louder!"—a phrase that will be no doubt shouted by thousands of fans each night during Godsmack's headlining sets on this year's Uproar Festival tour.

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In tone and delivery, “1000hp” is up there with defining Godsmack tunes like “Whatever” and “Keep Away” in terms of demonstrating how the band skillfully molds gripping and anthemic hard rock out of the simplest of musical ingredients. The song’s power is matched by new album cuts like “FML,” “Locked & Loaded” and “What’s Next.”

Which is not to say that ‘1000hp’ is straightforward to a fault. To the contrary, Godsmack push their boundaries on several cuts. “Nothing Comes Easy” features a recurring instrumental hook that, with its haunting guitar drones and overall evocative vibe, sounds like the work of an ‘80s goth-rock act. And then there’s “Something Different,” which, true to its name, offers up a slightly more nuanced take on the traditional Godsmack sound, with a verse built on a gentle, undulating Rombola riff and a reserved Erna vocal giving way to a chorus that takes an unexpected turn from a minor to a major key. For good measure, there’s also a cello solo at the song’s mid-point.

But ‘1000hp’'s best track might be its final one—the unabashed cock-rocker “Life is Good,” which rides a metalized Aerosmith-style funk-rock riff into a chorus in which Erna commands his audience to “Hold your fists up high/And turn your fingers to the sky.” It’s a fitting sentiment from a band that, over the course of almost 20 years—and despite rapidly changing trends and an ever-shifting musical landscape—continues to just do what they do, and to ridiculously successful ends. With ‘1000hp,’ Godsmack offer up a few new sounds, while at the same time remaining firmly resolute in their musical mission. Now turn that shit up louder. ---Richard Bienstock, revolvermag.com

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