

Epitaph - Outside The Law (1974)

Written by bluesever

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01. *Reflexion* (Cliff Jackson) - 5:14 02. *Woman* (Cliff Jackson, Bernd Kolbe) - 4:16 03. *Big City* (Cliff Jackson) - 5:52 04. *In Your Eyes* (Cliff Jackson) - 2:49 05. *Outside The Law* (Cliff Jackson, Klaus Walz) - 6:06 06. *Tequila Shuffle* (Bernd Kolbe, Cliff Jackson, Klaus Walz) - 4:58 07. *Fresh Air* (Cliff Jackson, Bernd Kolbe, Klaus Walz) - 9:00 Personnel: - Cliff Jackson - lead guitar, acoustic guitar, vocals - Klaus Walz - lead guitar - Bernd Kolbe - bass, vocals - Achim Wielert - drums, percussion + - Fred Kaz - Grand piano (03,04) - Billy Shaw - organ (06)

Epitaph's best album (actually, many would argue it's their only good album), 1974's *Outside the Law*, was produced during the German-based, English-fronted quartet's brief sojourn in America, while benefiting from the patronage of tiny independent label Billingsgate Records. Having just lost their deal with mighty Polydor following two nondescript LPs filled with progressive excess, the bandmembers now seemed motivated to edit themselves, and emerged from Chicago's Omega Studios with a far more focused and engaging set of songs, marked by fluid, mid-paced grooves, radio-friendly choruses, and dual-guitar harmonies often backed by acoustic rhythm guitars for added sweetening. The resulting sound -- epitomized by the boogie-happy standouts "Woman" and "Big City" -- was often reminiscent of contemporary bands like Stray and Wishbone Ash, but the biggest surprise may have been how Epitaph's European membership managed to pull off some convincing Southern rock twangs for opener "Reflexion," the title track, and the Allmans-esque, piano-based ballad "In Your Eyes." They even snuck some simulated lap steel into the album's most aggressive number, "Tequila Shuffle," which otherwise resembled Uriah Heep thanks to its nestled organs and aggressive guitar work -- a testament to Epitaph's creative range. And even though they finally relinquished their newfound economy for the nine-minute finale of "Fresh Air," Epitaph were on such a roll, for once, that every last note was worth the effort. Sadly, *Outside the Law*'s impressive songcraft never had a chance to connect with consumers, as its marketing and distribution soon became embroiled in the bankruptcy of Billingsgate Records. Epitaph were forced to beat a hasty retreat back to Germany, broke up, and thus their best shot at possible stardom was doomed to cult appreciation forever after. --- Eduardo Rivadavia, allmusic.com

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