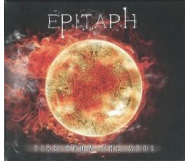


Epitaph - Fire from the Soul (2016)

Written by bluesever

Wednesday, 27 November 2019 15:34 -

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1 *Nightmare* 5:36 2 *The Way It Used To Be* 5:20 3 *Fighting In The Street* 5:00 4 *No One Can Save Me* 4:57 5 *Any Day* 4:24 6 *Man Without A Face* 4:52 7 *Fire From The Soul* 8:52 8 *Spark To Start A Fire* 3:55 9 *Love Child* 4:34 10 *Sooner Or Later* 4:25 11 *Rondo Alla Turca* 0:36 12 *One Of These Days* 4:55 + 13 *Villanova Junction* 6:18 14 *Nightmare (Radio Edit)* 3:47 Backing Vocals – Achim Poret, Catherine Jauer Cello – Orkan Tekbacak (tracks: 7) Drums – Jim McGillivray Electric Guitar, Acoustic Guitar – Heinz Glass Grand Piano – Agnes Hapsari (tracks: 7) Piano, Organ [Hammond] – Klaus Henatsch Violin – Pete Sage (tracks: 2), Tim Reese Vocals, Bass – Bernd Kolbe Vocals, Electric Guitar, Acoustic Guitar – Cliff Jackson

Epitaph have a long history stretching right back to their 1969 debut. Back then, while opening for the likes of Black Sabbath, they built a strong reputation as a psychedelic progressive rock outfit. Through personnel changes and a continued search for the 'breakthrough', they soon evolved through hard rock and metal, without any great success. Numerous attempts at hitting the big time came and went along with record label implosions and future members of Victory and Saxon, before the band seemed, during the mid 80s, to be gone for good, the underrated Domain formed from their ashes. More reunions and break ups have occurred since, this German led by an Englishman outfit coaxed back once more for some reunion shows and their first album (*Remember The Daze* in 2005) in over two decades. *Dancing With Ghosts* followed in 2009 and now we have *Fire From The Soul*.

The band's early days of prog may now be long behind them, but that doesn't mean that Epitaph aren't an eclectic lot, for while you can certainly file *Fire From The Soul* under melodic rock/AOR, there are also some meaty riffs and progressive elements. In fact, if anything, it's the band's desire to mix things up on this album that proves its undoing. "Nightmare" kicks things into gear, roaming bass chugging, guitars rolling along on a Magnum meets Styx hand clapping hybrid. "The Way It Used To Be" screams 80s rock, the hopes this sound could still fill arenas clear even if I can't help but be reminded of the slower Statue Quo output of the late 70s at the

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same time. Before "No One Can Save Me" takes a strange left turn into chanty pirate folk rock with hopeful Queen like backing vocals (if there's such a thing); proving catchy enough in the process, even if the helping of cheese its served with is hefty.

It's the first big missed step in what has been a reasonably enjoyable, if unspectacular journey up till now. However the lengthy title track begins to show real holes in Cliff Jackson's vocal armory and again, the backing vocals give off an unwelcome 'yo-ho-ho' feel. Which is all the more disappointing given how convincing the upbeat urgency and excellently multi-vocal layered "Spark To Start A Fire" and almost Dare like "Love Child" undoubtedly are. However "Sooner Or Later" spoons on the schmaltz once more, not sure whether to gather you round the camp fire, or aim for power ballad bombast, while the closing "One Of These Days" decides to intentionally pastiche the MHR/AOR sounds of days gone by. The opening riff harks to "Into The Fire" by Dokken, before moving onto a Magnum meets Styx pomp surge, Deep Purple strut and Kansas fiddle excursion. However it's the clever reworking of David Lee Roth's "Just Like Paradise" chorus (the rewording as "Paradise, I'm looking for paradise" suggesting that unlike Roth, the search still goes on for Epitaph (and the rest of us)) that really hooks you in and confirms the smile inducing homage.

In the cold light of day Fire From The Soul is an enjoyable, but throwaway set of songs that, with one or two exceptions, have you singing and tapping along as you listen. However rather than make you want to investigate the band further, you are inspired to dust down the albums by bands from years gone by that seem to have so strongly influenced this CD. Which, given that Epitaph are older than nearly all of the obvious touching points on this release, seems to defeat the purpose somewhat. ---Steven Reid, seaoftranquility.org

Początki Epitaph sięgają roku 1969, choć pierwszy album ta niemiecko-brytyjska formacja wydała dwa lata później. Był to nie tylko jeden z najefektowniejszych gitarowych heavy/progresywnych twórców na ówczesnym niemieckim rynku, ale w tej kategorii grania równał do największych bandów tamtych lat. Pomimo, iż grupa nigdy nie zyskała poklasku na miarę swych brytyjskich odpowiedników, choćby z podobnych Wishbone Ash. Oczywiście nie zestawiając kropka w kropkę artystycznych osiągnięć obu zespołów, bo jeśli ktoś pamięta dla przykładu przecudną balladę "Visions" - z pierwszego longplaya pt."Epitaph", to grupie wówczas bywało także blisko do dokonań King Crimson.

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Muzycy Epitaph zawsze skłaniali się ku rozbudowanym formom, często wykraczającym poza obszar stereotypowych rockowych piosenek. Najważniejszą rolę pełniły gitary, w dawnych czasach wspomagane brzmieniem zacyjnego melotronu, jednak z czasem melotron został zastąpiony brzmieniem pianina, organów Hammonda, bądź efektownymi partiami skrzypiec - o czym również dowodzi ta oto najnowsza płyta "Fire From The Soul". Po siedmiu latach od bardzo udanej "Dancing With Ghosts" - z m.in. tak cudownymi kompozycjami, jak: "Ride The Storm" lub "On Your Knees".

Najnowsze dzieło Cliffa Jacksona, Berniego Kolbe i ich kompanów, przynosi blisko godzinną porcję muzyki, która tylko utrwała słuchacza w przekonaniu o wielkości tego zespołu. Być może młodszemu audytorium ten rodzaj grania wyda się niemodny i mocno anachroniczny, ale proszę niech zatem wskażą ewentualni niezadowoleni godnych im rówieśników. Epitaph grają melodyjnie, pomysłowo i zmysłowo zarazem, do tego różnorodnie, bogato i z wielką klasą. Poza tym, głosów Jacksona i Kolbego nie naruszył nic a nic żąb czasu. Cóż to za piękna płyta. Po wielokrotnym posłuchaniu naprawdę trudno cokolwiek wyróżnić, bo tyle tutaj dobrego. Że o odrzuceniu czegokolwiek mowy nie ma. ---Andrzej Masłowski, blognawiedzonego.blogspot.com

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