

The Winery Dogs – The Winery Dogs [Special Edition] (2014)

Written by bluesever

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Disc 1: 1. *Elevate* 5:01 2. *Desire* 3:41 3. *We Are One* 4:32 4. *I'm No Angel* 4:03 5. *The Other Side* 5:41 6. *You Saved Me* 5:13 7. *Not Hopeless* 5:04 8. *One More Time* 3:36 9. *Damaged* 3:29 10. *Six Feet Deeper* 4:12 11. *Time Machine* 4:44 12. *The Dying* 6:06 13. *Regret* 4:49

Disc 2: 1. *Elevate (Live)* 5:08 2. *Criminal (Live)* 5:08 3. *Time Machine (Live)* 4:56 4. *I'm No Angel (Live)* 4:02 5. *Not Hopeless (Live)* 6:11 6. *Stand (Live)* 4:43 7. *You Can't Save Me (Live)* 2:04 8. *Shine (Live)* 4:41 9. *Fooled Around And Fell In Love (Live)* 5:38 10. *Desire (Live)* 7:05

Richie Kotzen - lead vocals, guitars, keyboards
Billy Sheehan - bass guitar, vocals
Mike Portnoy - drums, percussion, vocals

Steeped in the bluesy and beefy swagger of classic rock icons like Led Zeppelin and Cream, the instrumental pyrotechnics of mid-'80s pop metal, and the groove-heavy riffage of bands like Soundgarden, Black Stone Cherry, and Velvet Revolver, the eponymous debut from American hard rock trip the Winery Dogs, which feature the technical prowess of industry veterans vocalist/guitarist Richie Kotzen (Poison, Mr. Big), bass player Billy Sheehan (David Lee Roth, Mr. Big, Steve Vai), and drummer Mike Portnoy (co-founder of Dream Theater), features 13 hard-hitting, fun, yet meticulously crafted slabs of 21st century rock that manage to celebrate the past while simultaneously kicking open new doors. --- James Christopher Monger, allmusic.com

A 'Dog' according to the BCG Matrix, is the unit with a low market share in a mature/slow glowing industry. Indeed, the newly-formed super-group from New York has all the right reasons to believe that they are still unknown to people, in an area of the music industry with so many bands around, that distinction in these days becomes a Herculean task.

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The Winery Dogs are listed as another band/project that drum mastermind Mike Portnoy puts into his portfolio since leaving the 'theater of dreams' a couple of years ago. Along with the duo of Richie Kotzen (guitars/lead vocals) and Billy Sheehan (bass/backing vocals) -both previously collaborating on the band Mr. Big- they have formed a powerful trio dedicated to deliver classic rock tunes. If you have followed Portnoy's music paths after Dream Theater you will observe that not everything he has done was universally accepted by the audiences: Adrenaline Mob had a heavy metal approach, Transatlantic and Liquid Tension Experiment had a progressive style, while the more recent Flying Colors project was inclined towards a more radio-friendly alternative rock sound.

All who are familiar with Kotzen's guitar playing know what this guy is capable of. What it has emerged though through this record are his vocal abilities: a mixture of Glenn Hughes's nuance and Chris Cornell's depth, capable of making you wonder whether this guy was always a singer or not. The album is divided into three types of songs: the powerful rockers, the groovy ones and ballads. There are of course songs which combine a mixture of the two (or three) and that's a pleasant thing to hear. Diversity makes an album interesting, enjoyable and worth listening. Songs such as the energetic "Elevate", the emphatic "Six Feet Deeper", the enthusiastic "Other Side" and the formidable "Desire" show the adventurous side of the trio. This pre-released track ("Desire") could also fit in another type as it's splendid basslines are mixed with a catchy chorus and some guitar squeals to make you wonder whether this is the album's top track or not.

On the other hand, songs like "One More Time" and "We Are One" show a different image of the band: the former has a more funky attitude whereas the latter has a catchy tone and some positive lyrics, characteristics which are undermined to some extent by the lengthy solo towards the end. Fortunately this does not happen regularly throughout the album, but when it does it leaves you with no question as to the technical abilities of these guys. However, there are moments in this album such as the Audioslave-like "Damaged" in which the trio has tried to play as simple as it gets and the outcome is simply sensational. If you were not convinced then "You Saved Me" will surely do it. From the neat basslines of Sheehan and the tranquil hi-hat touches of Portnoy, Kotzen will take this song by the hand and make it one of the most captivating moments of this one-hour work. If nothing of the above excites you, there is still the chance through "Criminal" and "Not Hopeless" to give some positive comments about this record and consider giving it another spin.

Clearly, 'The Winery Dogs' do what they promised to do: that is to reignite the classic rock spirit. They might have gone a bit further and become hard rockers in some moments but they have not gone too progressive or too soft. They have kept songs at a duration of an average of four minutes, they have avoided circus-like complex patterns with their instruments and songs were

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spread out in a way to keep you constantly interested. Whether they have achieved to draw attention and distinguish 'The Winery Dog' from the typical 'Dog', record sales and concert halls will show. We will have to wait and see. --- Antonius, sputnikmusic.com

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