

Witchcraft – Firewood (2005)

Written by bluesever

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1. *Chylde Of Fire* [2:50] 2. *If Wishes Were Horses* [3:16] 3. *Mr. Haze* [3:41] 4. *Wooden Cross (I can't wake the dead)* [4:46] 5. *Queen Of Bees* [5:13] 6. *Merlin's Daughter* [1:32] 7. *I See a Man* [3:59] 8. *Sorrow Evoker* [5:44] 9. *You Suffer* [2:43] 10. *Attention! (together with bonus track 'When The Screams Come')* [11:40] Magnus Pelander - Vocals, Guitars John Hoyles - Guitars Ola Henriksson - Bass Jonas Arnesén – Drums

Swedish retro psychedelic/hard rock/doom metal band Witchcraft released sophomore album 'Firewood' in 2005; only a year after their popular self-titled debut album was released. Stylistically, it's the same. The Pentagram and Black Sabbath worship, the late 60s/early 70s feel and the gothic/occult theme are all present. Musically, it's not too different from the debut album either. The band thrives on playing the simple, old school riffs. They're not loud, crushingly heavy and all that evil like many doom riffs are, but are somewhat mellow and melancholic, as well as melodic and catchy. There are some good leads and solos here and there; nothing too flashy, but effective and memorable nevertheless. The "catchiness" and diversity can be heard on tracks such as "Mr. Haze", "Merlin's Daughter", "Sorrow Evoker" and the very cool blues-driven "Attention!". Catchy, melodic riffs and acoustic guitars thrown into the mix to great effect. The drums are mostly simple, but do an excellent job. I must say that the bass is much better on 'Firewood' than on 'Witchcraft'. It grooves on some of the tracks! I'm a big fan of Magnus Pelander and his voice. The Bobby Liebling influence is great, and while I admire Liebling and all the work he has done for the underground metal scene, Pelander is simply a better singer.

This brings me to the production. The production on 'Firewood' is, like the basslines, better than on the debut album. While I don't mind the very thin, hazy analog production on the 'Witchcraft', I feel that the production on this record brings out the sheer amount of quality that Witchcraft possesses (no pun intended).

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While the fellows in Witchcraft certainly improved as musicians in the little year between 'Witchcraft' and 'Firewood', I think there is something extremely charming and magical about the self-titled debut. Be it the very retro production combined with the sometimes sloppy jamming and the mysterious howls and groans from Liebling Junior; I don't know, but Witchcraft had a lot to live up to with their second record. Despite the music being simplistic, it was mostly the atmosphere that would be hard to recapture, but I think the band managed to conjure another most excellent album. I prefer 'Witchcraft' over 'Firewood' by a hair, but this album goes highly recommended to fans of the darker side of the 70s rock and metal. --- Cozy darkness, metal-archives.com

Ask a group of doom metal or stoner rock enthusiasts what band was the blueprint for the doom/stoner field, and the vast majority will -- without hesitation -- say Black Sabbath. So when a band is as Sabbath-influenced as Witchcraft, it is understandable that some headbangers would describe them as a doom band. But Witchcraft isn't nearly as forceful or as heavy as Eyehategod, Orange Goblin, or Toadliquor, and Firewood isn't typical of what has been considered doom metal and stoner rock in the '90s and 2000 -- actually, this 2005 release shows no awareness of post-'80s metal or even post-'70s metal. Rather, Firewood is a total throwback to the heavy metal, hard rock, and psychedelic rock of the late '60s and very early '70s. Black Sabbath's first few albums with Ozzy Osbourne are a strong influence, and the Swedish band's other inspirations include Jethro Tull, Cream, Uriah Heep, Led Zeppelin, Jimi Hendrix, and the great but underexposed Budgie. If one didn't know for sure that Firewood was a 2005 recording, it would be easy to assume that the disc was recorded around 1969 or 1970 -- even the production is totally retro. And while Witchcraft's melodic offerings aren't the least bit groundbreaking, they are enjoyable; this derivative outing won't win any awards for originality, although it leaves no doubt that these Swedes are good at what they do. Firewood isn't in a class with the best albums that Sabbath, Tull, and Hendrix had to offer back in the Richard Nixon years, but it's a decent, worthwhile example of Witchcraft's desire to re-create the early years of heavy metal and hard rock. ---Alex Henderson, allmusic.com

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[back](#)