

Bow Wow — Signal Fire (1977)

Written by bluesever

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01. *Prelude* — 1:24 02. *Get On Our Train* — 4:21 03. *Just One More Night* — 2:46 04. *Silver Lightning* — 10:22 05. *Electric Power Up* — 4:42 06. *Rock 'N' Roll Drive* — 5:14 07. *Rainbow Of Sabbath* — 4:23 08. *Tell Me Tell Me* — 5:08 09. *Signal Fire* — 5:24 10. *Still* — 8:00
Kyoji Yamamoto — lead guitar, lead vocals, percussion Mitsuhiko Saito — guitar, lead vocals Kenji Sano — bass, vocals Toshihiro Niimi — drums, percussion, vocals

Mere months after their eponymous debut single-handedly rescued Japan from hard rock purgatory, Bow Wow were storming the gates of hard rock heaven with their forceful sophomore album, *Signal Fire*. Released in mid-1977, the record was sandwiched between experience- and fan-building tours in support of Aerosmith and Kiss, but the bulk of its improvements upon the previous year's first effort ultimately came down to Bow Wow's enviable work ethic, which saw them sharing the same house and devoting every waking hour to hammering songs into shape. This process yielded a wealth of powerful material, ranging from hook-laden heavy rockers like "Get on Our Train" and "Just One More" to mid-paced groove powerhouses like "Silver Lightning" and "Tell Me Tell Me" to blistering speed metal romps like "Electric Power Up" and the vocal-free title track -- all of which offered eye-opening evidence of Bow Wow's far more focused songwriting vision, fast-improving English lyrics (not that Bob Dylan had anything to worry about just yet), and astoundingly tight instrumental chops. In fact, such is the white-knuckled intensity provided by Mitsuhiko Saito (vocals/guitar), Kyoji Yamamoto (lead guitar, vocals), Kenji Sano (bass), and Toshihiro Niimi (drums) that it's not really until the bluesy intro licks and dreamy lull of album closer "Still" -- a dreamy ballad sung by Yamamoto -- that one remembers to inhale once again. Now keep in mind that Bow Wow were hardly reinventing the hard rock wheel here, but they already showed a flair for mixing and matching their influences into a signature sound of their own, and even a suspicious title like "Rainbow of Sabbath" barely hints at the sound of either of these British metal icons. Likewise, although it didn't quite light up the domestic pop music charts (certainly not overseas, where it caused measly ripples), *Signal Fire* helped solidify Bow Wow's standing as Japan's premier hard rock band, with many more triumphs still lying just over the horizon. --- Eduardo Rivadavia, Rovi

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