Magazine old Heart

By Drew Blakeman

"Mushroom Records regrets that a commercial dispute has made it necessary to complete this record without the cooperation or endorsement of the group Heart, who have expressly disclaimed artistic involvement in completing this record."

This ominous statement appears on the back cover of Heart's latest album, Magazine, which can only be found in limited supply in the Boston area. The record is being sold as a bootlegged import, at prices ranging upward from $6.98. The story behind Magazine is complex. Between Heart's first two albums, a change in management and personnel prompted the group to capitalize on Heart's quickly growing popularity.

Because Mushroom is a minor label, and since they anticipated legal problems due to Heart switching companies, they contracted to release the record through the London-based division of Arista Records as an import. The group sued to halt distribution of this controversial album - About Nothing, but it is not receiving airplay. The record can curiously be found in only a few stores in the area, at prices ranging upward from $6.98. Because of the legal difficulties, it is not being advertised, nor is it receiving airplay.

It is easy to see why Heart is attempting to halt distribution of this controversial album - Magazine is not as good as their two previous records. It is a collection of old recordings which the group never intended to make available to the public. It appears to be either an abortive attempt at an album which was scrapped in favor of Dreamboat Annie, or more likely, trial recordings done to solidify the group's style and experiment with various studio techniques. Some of the songs on Magazine are of the same mold as cuts on Heart's other albums. Heartless and the title track both highlight the screaming vocals of Ann Wilson and the Jimmy Page-inspired guitar riffs which the group found success with on Magic Mountain and Barracuda. Just the Wine and Here Song show the development of Nancy Wilson's excellent acoustic guitar work which is manifested in songs like Dreamboat Annie and Sylas Song.

Magazine also demonstrates Heart's attempts at heavy blues. They do not perform this type of music particularly well, and eventually abandoned that style. Delight and a medley of Mother Earth and You Shook Me Babe demonstrate the problems the group has with blues. The songs in the medley were not written by the Wilson sisters, who wrote all of the songs on their first two albums and most of the ones on Magazine.

Two other numbers not written by Heart round out Magazine. Without You, a hit for Harry Nilsson, and Fox Got the Magic in Me, Kiki Dee's hit, are performed well by Heart. Ann Wilson's vocals lack something on both numbers, but the instruments make up for any deficiencies there. Magazine is a good, if flawed, album which helps show the development of Heart's music. It is worth getting if you really enjoy Heart and are interested in the roots of their music, but pass it up if you like only their more current material.

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