Heavy metal at Castle Donnington

Castle Donnington, site of the recent Live Aid rock concerts, is also the location of the Heavy Metal Mania, a new live album featuring cuts by six moderately successful heavy metal bands, all recorded at the Castle Donnington Rock Fest in England this past summer. Both sides of the recorded lead off with songs by Rainbow, featuring Ritchie Blackmore and bassist Roger Glover, both formerly of Deep Purple. Although the band has lost a little of its power since dropping vocalist Ronnie James Dio for the current sound of Perry Edwards, the song "Stargazer" proves that Blackmore's flailing guitar work still packs the punch evident on their early albums. "All Night Long," from the group's latest LP, Down to Earth, is also enjoyable as Edwards roars the crowd to sing along in varying chants of the title refrain. Rainbow's live round is a perfect precursor for the other hard rock pieces that follow.

Also featured here is the German band Accept, currently riding high on the stateside success of their recent Animal Magnetism album while still maintaining their solid European following. Their contributions are live renditions of "Loving You Sunday Morning" and "Another Piece of Meat," both from their previous release Love Live. Lead vocalist Udo Lindenberg and guitarist Rudolf Schenker are joined by vocalist Klaus Meine, the group's only remaining member from their early days. Meine's distinctive wailing numbers are good loud pieces for most listeners but primary genre fans for heavy European supporters. Heavy metal fans will recognize most of the songs here even through the names of the bands.

Fans of Judas Priest, AC/DC, and anybody who can listen to the live renditions of "Backs to the Wall" by Saxon fill the tracks. The recording by the Manor mobile and is clear and maintains a very distinct live flavor. It is a well-chosen series of cuts by good bands that reflect the cosmopolitan influence of hard rock and the intensity of its live performances.

Acceptance of Castle Donnington, however, boils down to one thing, the acceptance of heavy metal music in general. Fans of Judas Priest, Animal Magnetism, and Van Halen will set it up, while new-wavers and mellow rockers probably couldn't stomach a single chord. In this light, the album should be criticized from the viewpoint of an already established heavy metal devotee. A volume setting of at least six and a joint or six-pack are recommended when playing this disk in order to be prepared for what it is about. If it's dancing or background music you want, listen it, but for good old kick-ass rock 'n' roll, it can't be beat.

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