Motorhead packs a vicious thrash-metal punch with 1916

By J. DEVIN MACKENZIE

Motorhead. Sony Music.

After a period of Thin Lizzy releases, Motorhead is back with 1916. Motorhead forged the thrash-metal hybrid of punk and heavy metal. Well as an appreciation for the British punk attitude of the Sex Pistols as well as the thrash metal of Deep Purple's "Machine Head" and Black Sabbath's "Paranoid," Motorhead forgot the thrash-metal musical form into being. Since then, bands like Metallica, Megadeth and Testament have explored and refined thrash's raw, expressive power. These bands have produced some excellent material, but 10 years later, much of the original vigor of the thrash-metal genre has died out. Luckily, Motorhead has returned to forefront with this shot of fresh, rejuvenating material.

On 1916, the band is in top form. Crushing guitar riffs and meaty percussion power the Motorhead music machine behind Lemmy "Boozed Sgoffem Csmalz since I was 3" Kilmister's gritty bowl. The high points of the album are the blazing opening track, "The One to Sing the Blues," the diabolically textured "Love Me Forever," and the genuine, rocking tribute "Ramones.""The One to Sing the Blues" showcases the tight, driving percussion of drummer Phil "Philly Animal" (son of Mr. and Mrs. Animal) and the aggressive, twin-guitar attack of Phil Wizzo Campbell and Wurzel Bierison. The song kicks in with a tumbling drum flurry and then breaks into an open highway jam. Past time changes and abrupt pauses display the band's adroit, accurate musicianship and contribute to a fresh, live atmosphere.

Surprisingly, Motorhead effectively adopt their fast, raw sound to the slow, melody-based "Love Me Forever." With the opening line "Love me forever, or not at all," Kilmister's lyrics set the stage for a pained, grinding plea for loyalty and honesty in a world of chaos and corruption. The dark mood of the song is tastefully accented with a soulful lead break from guitarist Campbell. With soaring dynamics and a tasteful treatment of tone, Campbell's solo complements and enriches the melancholic texture of the song.

"Ramones" begins with the infamous "one, two, three, four..." and jumps straight into an adrenaline-pumped celebration of that band. The lyrics and the song structure are both modeled after the Ramones' distinct, playful format. This song suggests an interesting link between the Ramones and Motorhead. Motorhead has mixed punk and heavy metal in the same way that the Ramones blended punk and heavy metal. Of course, the song lasts an entire one minute and 20 seconds.

Other interesting spots on 1916 include the hilarious "An Angel on Ice." Here, Kilmister mocks the Los Angeles glamour-rock superstars with passages like, "I wanna grow my hair, live in Bel Air, lose my head, keep a live snake in my bed, I wanna backstage pass, drink Boar Jorv's, boost for free." The lyrics are backed up by a 12-bar, Chuck Berryish stomp complete with nappy, blue-scale guitar doodling.

Unless the novelty of "Ramones" catches on in a big way, you may never hear 1916 on the radio. This is probably because it is the first Motorhead album in which the play time is usually inversely proportional to substance. 1916 might finally put the first wrinkle in Dick Clark's eternally youthful face.

If the patchy rock of MTV puppets like Poison and Slaughter have left you flat, the comic-strip raving of thrashers like Anthrax have lost their charm, and you want something that absolutely will not be replaced for the next Tene Loc album, this is it.