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Frankie Banali and Friends

The Tribute to Led Zeppelin MVD

by John Kindred
Staff Writer



Comments: Never mind that tribute records are assailing us from all directions. Or that you rather hear new music from your favorite bands. For some reason the rise in popularity, or ease of creation or that your favorite artists is gambling that you will buy anything they create especially another tribute CD because their on it.

Here again is another questionable delivery of Led Zeppelin cover songs driven by Quiet Riot drummer Frankie Banali with Tony Franklin by his side and a host of "who is who" in rock and metal. Banali's "friends" consist of guitarists Doug Aldrich (Whitesnake, Burning Rain), Steve Fister (Lita Ford), Reb Beach (Whitesnake, Winger), Bruce Kulick (Kiss), Gilby Clark (Guns and Roses), Bill Leverty (Firehouse) and vocalists Alex Ligertwood, Glenn Hughes (solo, Deep Purple), Don Dokken (Dokken), Robin McCauley (MSG), Paul Shortino (Rough Cutt), Mark Boals (Yngwie Malmsteen, Ring of Fire), Bobby Kimball (Toto), Kevin DuBrow (Quiet Riot), Chas West (Bonham) and Joan Frealey.

That is a firestorm of "friends!" And before we pigeonhole Banali as someone feeding off the harvest of such a great band as Zeppelin, you have to understand that Banali's recreation of Zep classics was a labor of love and a bonafide tribute. In his own words Banali says it best "So, why do a Led Zeppelin tribute CD? Because it's music worth remembering and honoring. Jimmy Page, Robert Plant, John Paul Jones and John Bonham have left the world a musical legacy that is to me unequalled and unparalleled." (Excerpt taken from Banali's essay that appeared on Classic Rock Revisited. <http://www.classicrockrevisited.com/Interviews07/247365.htm>)

Let's just say that the tribute records have become a tired endeavor. Honestly, it takes a lot of effort to breathe new life into classic rock songs. So the caliber of musicianship really must exceed that of just your average fleeting flavor of the month. And with the current lineup of performers staying power is evident in the long careers of all Banali's "friends."

What the musicians bring to the table is a solid recreation of Zep classics that come close to the originals while highlighting each person's own spin on familiar themes. You will find more flaws with the vocalists than guitarists simply because Plant is a hard singer to emulate. His range during the band's swan song is far reaching into the stratosphere and it usually falls on a female vocalist to nail those ascending vocal lines.

Unless you stand face to face with someone performing the riffs of Zep classic songs, you have little understanding of the complexity and subtle nuances created by Page. The songs aren't simple power chord driver anthems. But moving riffs, with time changes and specific grooves built upon the backbone of John Bonham and John Paul Jones.

So, the wide range of musicians, whose heyday was during the '80s and '90s, simply surprise you with their virtuosity and adapt skills at recreating the music. Should there have been any doubt? They grew up listening to the music, while musicians such as Glenn Hughes and Alex Ligertwood were creatures born from a similar mold and time frame as Zeppelin.

Look, you know the music. A song by song break down isn't necessary. If you are buying this CD, it is probably because one of your favorite artists is making an appearance. The music although not recorded by the legendary Zeppelin is performed with honest attempt to truly pay homage to great and influential band. Banali serves up the goods with class. Hat's off to him.

Track listing:

1. The Wanton Song - Alex Ligertwood (Santana): Vocals - Doug Aldrich (Whitesnake): Guitar.
2. Four Sticks - Glenn Hughes (Black Sabbath/Deep Purple): Vocals - Steve Fister (Lita Ford): Guitar - Frankie Banali (Quiet Riot): Drums/Djembe/Doumbek- Neil Citron (Hero): Keyboards.
3. Kashmir - Don Dokken (Dokken): Vocals - Michael Lardie (Night Ranger/Great White): Keyboards - Steve Fister: Guitar.
4. Out On The Tiles - Robin McCauley (Michael Schenker/MSG): Vocals - Reb Beach

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(Winger/Whitesnake): Guitar.

5. Ramble On - Paul Shortino (Rough Cutt/Quiet Riot): Vocals - Steve Fister: Guitar.

6. The Ocean - Mark Boals (Yngwie Malmsteen): Vocals - Bruce Kulick (Kiss): Guitar.

7. The Immigrant Song - Bobby Kimball (Toto): Vocals - Gilby Clarke (Guns N' Roses/Rockstar: Supernova): Guitar.

8. Royal Orleans - Jeff Scott Soto (Yngwie Malmsteen/Talisman/Soul SirkUS): Vocals - Gilby Clarke: Guitar.

9. Gallows Pole - Kevin DuBrow (Quiet Riot): Vocals - Steve Fister: Guitar/ Mandolin /Banjo.

10. Custard Pie - Chas West (Bonham): Vocals - Bill Leverty (Firehouse): Guitar.

11. When The Levee Breaks - The 24/7 Overture- Levee Guest Vocalist: Joan Fraley.

12. (They Were) The Eye Of God - Frankie Banali: Drums & Hand Percussion - Neil Citron: Guitar/Bass/Keys/Stringed Instruments

HRH rating: 7.3/10

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