The Jeff Healey Band – Hell To Pay (1990)

1 Full Circle 2 I Think I Love You Too Much 3 I Can't Get My Hands On You 4 How Long Can A Man Be Strong 5 Let It All Go 6 Hell To Pay 7 While My Guitar Gently Weeps 8 Something To Hold On To 9 How Much 10 Highway Of Dreams 11 Life Beyond The Sky Backing Vocals – Kat Dyson, Sass Jordan Bass, Backing Vocals – Joe Rockman Drums – Tom Stephen Keyboards – Paul Shaffer Lead Vocals, Guitar – Jeff Healey + Organ [Hammond B3] – Bobby Whitlock (1,3,4,5) Backing Vocals, Guitar – Mark Knopfler (2) Backing Vocals, Acoustic Guitar – George Harrison, Jeff Lynne (7)

In this record, Healey went more in a rock direction, and the result is a record I absolutely love. I first heard it 16 years ago when I was learning to play guitar. I was into metal stuff like Marty Friedman's 'Dragon's Kiss' and early Malmsteen records. Basically, I was an heavy metal guitar player. But I'd listen to any good music and this record by Healey floored me from the first second I have heard it. I immediately recognized a truly expert and brilliant guitarist in this record. And after so many years, I am still of the same opinion. A nice variety of moods and tracks, where Healey showcasts his talent for nice, well-structured songs and stupefying guitar solos. If you'd like to hear a cd when you drive your Chevrolet car or Harley Davidson bike with your girlfriend, this record is better than perfect. Also, guitarists like Mark Knopfler and George Harrison play in the record too. A classic. You can't afford not to own this brilliant cd.
---amazon.com

A sorely disappointing follow up to the wonderful debut album See the Light. It is not that this album is overly bad, but I think I speak for many Jeff Healey fans when I say I was expecting a lot more from his second album. Hell to Pay is far more conservative than I was expecting. These eleven tracks are all very radio-friendly emphasizing a vocal driven, verse-chorus-verse

style coupled with Healey guitar solos. These solos, although technically impressive, fall somewhat flat in delivery. Part of the problem is the fact that he is a better performer than an entertainer, delivering in concert but lacking energy in his albums. This was one of the issues I mention when listening to See the Light but this is even more amplified on Hell to Pay. With the exception of the unique Healey sound, there is just too much 'cookie-cutter' blues rock here to warrant anything above an fair rating.

As with their debut, the group performs a John Hiatt track, "Let It All Go." Unfortunately, the results are not as favorable as "Confidence Man" or "Angel Eyes." Hell to Pay does slightly beat See the Light in one category; original material. There are six original Healey creations here and unlike before, the other two band members play a key role in writing this music. Perhaps this is why there is a decrease in musical quality? The highlights of this album are tracks seven, eight, and nine. The group's cover of "While My Guitar Gently Sleeps" did take a few listens to appreciate, but I have come around. I think the biggest obstacle with this track is Healey's vocals. I have become so accustomed to hearing the Beatles do this track that Jeff's vocals sounded too foreign at first. However, I have grown to tolerate the singing efforts and have really enjoyed the added life that he brings to the guitar part. Jeff's attention to technique and his unorthodox style of playing boost the instrumentation to new levels. Also, George Harrison adds backing vocals to this track. "Something to Hold On To" is the only original track that I really enjoyed. It is not quite as overly friendly and predictable as some of the other blues rock tracks, especially on the first half of the album. The same can be said about the ninth track, "How Much."

For as average as this album sounds to me, it does have its moments. The solos often seem too constrained and I do wish for a more primal approach, but I still find enjoyment in listening to them. Some of his bends he rips out are absurd and as with See the Light, he offers some great vibratos. This is nowhere close to essential blues rock material, but fans of Jeff Healey may find some enjoyment. ---Rocky_Sullivan, rateyourmusic.com

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