The Darkness - One Way Ticket To Hell ...And Back (2005)



1. One Way Ticket - (4:28) 2. Knockers - (2:45) 3. Is It Just Me? - (3:07) play *4. Dinner Lady Arms - (3:18) 5. Seemed Like A Good Idea At The Time - (3:46) 6. Hazel Eyes - (3:27) 7. Bald - (5:33) 8. Girlfriend - (2:35)*
play
9. English Country Garden - (3:08) 10. Blind Man - (3:25)
Personnel Justin Hawkins – Lead/backing vocals; Lead/rhythm guitars; Piano; Hammond organ; Mini-moog; Synths; Sitar Dan Hawkins – Rhythm/lead guitars; Bass guitars; Tubular bells; Marching drums; Tambourine; Triangle; Backing vocals Richie Edwards - Bass guitars; Backing vocals Ed Graham – Drums

From the moment the pan flute fanfare on "One Way Ticket" kicks off One Way Ticket to Hell...and Back, it's clear that the Darkness still believes that more is more. If anything, the band believes that even more is even better: with the help of producer Roy Thomas Baker, they make their second album incredibly glossy and expensive-sounding, with layers of sitars, marching drums, bagpipes, and tubular bells on top of their already-powerful guitars, drums, and keyboards (and, of course, Justin Hawkins' formidable falsetto). But while the band's excess succeeded on Permission to Land, it loses some of its potency here: nothing on One Way Ticket to Hell...and Back is as immediate as "I Believe in a Thing Called Love." The band's debut celebrated and inflated the rock clichés of sex, drugs, and partying; this album's best songs are about longterm relationships, getting clean, and balding. The soaring power ballad "Dinner Lady Arms" highlights the good-natured streak running through a surprising amount of the Darkness' songs, while "One Way Ticket" is an episode of Behind the Music, complete with cocaine snorting, turned into a pop single. More than occasionally, though, One Way Ticket to Hell...and Back just sounds unremarkable, despite the songs' elaborate sonics. Tracks like "Knockers" -- which should be a fool-proof Darkness song just based on its title -- and "Girlfriend" sound like they were made from bits and pieces of Permission to Land rejects, while overblown-yet-slight ballads such as "Blind Man" and "Seemed Like a Good Idea at the Time" sound too much like stale Meat Loaf. Still, there are moments when the Darkness still sounds like the smartest, dumbest band around: "Is It Just Me?" has a chorus that rivals their best; the flamboyant Celtic rocker "Hazel Eyes" shows off both Justin Hawkins' over-the-top vocals and

his brother Dan's over-the-top guitar licks; and lyrics like "English Country Garden"'s "I cherished you and you tolerated me" show that the wit that made their debut so much fun isn't entirely missing on this album. Not so much a letdown as a comedown, One Way Ticket to Hell...and Back just shows that the giddy highs of Permission to Land aren't so easy to get the second time around. --- Heather Phares, allmusic.com

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