

White Skull - Under This Flag (2012)

Written by bluesever

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01. *Hunted Down* (4:29) 02. *Bottled Mind* (3:09) 03. *Red Devil* (4:58) 04. *Lost Alone* (5:17)
05. *Under This Flag* (4:28) 06. *A.O.D* (5:07) 07. *Prisoners of War* (5:14) 08. *War After War*
(5:01) 09. *Nightmares* (6:33) 10. *Freedom's Not Here* (3:50) 11. *You Choose* (3:12) 12.
Redemption (5:07) Tony "Mad" Fontó - guitar Alex Mantiero - drums Federica
"Sister" de Boni - lead vocals Danilo Bar - guitar Gio Raddi - bass

As the year progresses, new albums will come to my attention and I will inevitably give them a listen, regardless of any given band's notoriety or musical style. (As long as it's metal!) So when I came across this album and gave it a listen I was very impressed by this band, but was initially unaware of one important aspect. The vocalist of this band is a woman. Of course this is a point of contention for many metal heads, with the majority of metal heads being decidedly weary of a female fronted band. While this may not be a fair judgment, it is a common conception none the less. Of course a female fronted metal band is not an issue so long as the band's music is good, and White Skull does indeed have strong material.

White Skull is an Italian power metal band that formed in 1988, so I'm sure that at least a few of you reading this have heard of them. Being a power metal band, they have all the normal traits of the genre, with strong and heavy riff driven material, catchy hooks and anthem-like choruses, complete with drawn out, expertly executed solos. The band also has an abnormally heavier side to them with regard to power metal, and that is the raw and heavy feel this album has. At times it would seem that White Skull almost seem to have a knack for thrashing as well as for power metal, due to the albums energetic and brutally fast material. The album also has good production, with a strong guitar tone, audible bass, and a good mixing that allows the whole band to be heard clearly. The track listing is also adequate, with the songs flowing together seamlessly. There is no filler material here, and each song builds upon the last, giving the album a more whole and complete feel.

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The band members themselves are all quite talented. The guitarist plays expertly, and the drumming and bass is exceptional, but the one member that really shines is the vocalist. Federica De Boni, the bands vocalist, has a voice like no other. She is able to sing clearly and beautifully, but she can also shout with an evil sounding growl, giving her more versatility and range than many other power metal vocalists. At times you might even forget that the vocalist is female due to the harsh growls and shrieks, but you are then quickly reminded by her beautiful and clean singing that is casually thrown in with the harsher vocalizing.

Of course the album does have a few weak points. Namely this being that a couple songs may fall flat compared to the rest of the material. However, the main point of contention here may be that this is by far one of the most stereotypical power metal album I have heard in a long, long time. The band plays to the genre's typical strengths and traits, hardly ever branching out or trying anything new here. To some like me, that may be enough to satisfy your urge for a metal record, but for many, it simply isn't, and this is most understandable.

Regardless, this album was a pleasant and welcome surprise that I will certainly hold on to. This is a guitar-heavy album that has good vocals to boot. Nearly everything about this album is stereotypically awesome, and I am glad to have stumbled upon it as I did. I highly recommend it to my fellow power metal fans. At least give the songs below a listen or two, you won't regret it.
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