

Witchcraft – Witchcraft (2004)

Written by bluesever

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1. "Witchcraft" – 6:00 2. "The Snake" – 2:48 3. "Please Don't Forget Me" (Liebling) – 2:13 4. "Lady Winter" – 2:58 5. "What I Am" – 3:45 6. "Schyssta Lgner" – 1:57 7. "No Angel or Demon" – 3:28 8. "I Want You to Know" – 3:16 9. "It's So Easy" – 3:53 10. "You Bury Your Head" – 4:40 11. "Her Sisters They Were Weak" – 6:00 Jonas Aenésen – Drums John Hoyles - Guitar Ola Henriksson - Bass Magnus Pelander - Guitar, Vocals

Unlike most doom bands, Sweden's Witchcraft aren't content to remake Black Sabbath's original heavy metal blueprint -- doleful, deliberate, scary stuff -- at ear-shattering volume and distortion. Rather, they take it a step further by ensuring their eponymous 2004 debut (which they proudly claim was recorded "in a basement" using only vintage equipment) sounds no more recent than, say, 1971. Sure enough, the results are so eerily authentic that fans of modern doom may at first find themselves wondering if Witchcraft even qualifies as such (strictly speaking, I suppose they don't) -- only to realize, if they know their history, that Sabbath themselves sounded no heavier on their seminal debut. And clearly, it's that unique and genre-founding article, with its looser, at times almost jazzy arrangements, which informs much of the contents here: from the wonderfully simple but effective riffs driving the band's eponymous title track, to the reedy, Ozzy-like vocal swoops punctuating ensuing numbers like "The Snake," "Lady Winter," and "What I Am." Witchcraft have a little more spring in their step than the original Sabs, and therein lies proof of their additional influences in '70s folk and hard rock -- particularly legendary proto-doomsters Pentagram. To wit, "Please Don't Forget Me" is a cover version of a tune by Stone Bunny -- a ridiculously obscure band which later evolved into Pentagram; and first single (and veritable *raison d'être*), "No Angel or Demon," was in fact recorded as a tribute to Pentagram leader Bobby Liebling. Included here, it sounds somewhat at odds with its surroundings -- partly due to its exceedingly energetic gait, partly because its familiar closing riffs leave one expecting Dylan's "All Along the Watchtower" to kick off. Back to more familiar, but no less inventive terrain, "It's So Easy" offers yet another multi-faceted and mesmerizing trip, "You Bury Your Head" suddenly cuts loose with ripping bass and heavily distorted guitars, and the cryptic "Her Sisters They Were Weak" sweeps along medieval melodies on its way to a chilling music box coda, its words recited and printed backward so that one must hold the CD booklet to a mirror in order to reveal a devilish parable! In summary, as

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much as their admirable songwriting chops, it's often Witchcraft's loving recreation of a sorely overlooked era in underground music that makes this album such a special treat to behold. --- Eduardo Rivadavia, allmusic.com

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