

Michael Schinkel's Eternal Flame - Smoke On The Mountain (2018)

Written by bluesever

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1. Ignition 2. Smoke On The Mountain (feat. Mark Boals) 3. This Is My Life 4. Queen Of The Hill 5. You Can Save Me 6. Whatcha Gonna Do 7. I Believe In This Miracle (feat. Mark Boals) 8. Got A Rock & Roll Fever (feat. Goran Edman) 9. Out In The Dark 10. Dreaming 11. Take Me There For A Night 12. Tease My Love (feat. Goran Edman) 13. Close To The End
Michael Schinkel - vocals, guitar Helmut Kohlpaintner - keyboards Thomas Keller - bass
Michael Hencky - drums + Mark Boals - vocals Goran Edman - vocals Ritchie Kelly - guitar
Ossy Pfeiffer - keyboards Christian Tatsek - keyboards Robert Lipp - bass Gerhard Blum - bass
Makeus Grünzer - bass Andy Dick - drums

There is a fine line between a nice tribute to an influence and being a blatant rip-off. This is most obvious in the world of shred guitarists. You know the type I mean: those that make their career out of making albums that are either total note drenching guitar pieces or songs slapped together in hopes of achieving success with fast-paced solos and lyrics about dragons and shit. I happen to be a fan of both styles, but let's face it: how many more albums do we need with guitar calisthenics? Of course, it's going to be a never-ending cycle. However, if imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, Yngwie Malmsteen should love Michael Schinkel's Eternal Flame. Truth be told he won't though because Schinkel is a bit better in so many ways, at least in regards to Yngwie's most recent efforts. Don't get me wrong, I've been a diehard supporter of Malmsteen since the first time I saw his name and thought, "How the fuck do you say that," followed by picking up his first few albums and loving his stuff, dating back to the early to mid-80's. (It also helped to have Jeff Scott Soto belting out the vocals too.) Frankly, it's been a long time since I have been truly excited by one of his releases (less so now that he's singing,) which is one of the points why Eternal Flame > Yngwie Malmsteen.

If you look at promo shots of Michael on his website, it's clear he loves the guy down to his signature Fender to even doing the Yngwie leg stretch. I didn't see all that until well after playing Schinkel's latest offering Smoke On the Mountain a number of times. He's got the Malmsteen chops, but he's a much cleaner and emotive player (closer perhaps to Blackmore.) He also has

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a great voice with a good range (not to mention utilizing former Malmsteen singers Mark Boals and Goran Edman on some tracks doesn't hurt either.) I greatly respect the fact that Schinkel's solos don't always have to be blisteringly fast, and that he's able to construct melodic songs that have great solos instead of forming songs around so many notes. Tracks like the soulful "You Can Save Me" where he taps into a Gary Moore-ish sort of sound to the balls out metallic assault of the incredible title track to the extremely melodic and catchy "Got A Rock & Roll Fever." He's also got a great backing band not hidden in the background, who is also immensely talented, and some outstanding guest appearances as well.

I don't mean any offense to Yngwie. I still like and respect what the guy has done for the metal world, and though I don't love all of his recent albums, I don't outright hate them either. And because there are some striking similarities between Schinkel and Yngwie, that's all there is. Personally, I think Eternal Flames Smoke On the Mountain comes off as more of a Deep Purple style album more than anything else. If you love great catchy classic-style hard rock with stunning lead guitar and vocals, then you will appreciate this album quite a bit. ---Chris Martin, myglobalmind.com

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