

Richie Kotzen - Cannibals (2015)

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01. Cannibals 02. In an Instant 03. The Enemy 04. Shake It Off 05. Come On Free 06. I'm All In 07. Stand Tall 08. Up (You Turn Me) 09. You 10. Time for the Payment Richie Kotzen - Writer, Arranger, Performer, and Producer dUg Pinnick of King's X - Vocals(track 6) Billy Sheehan - Low Harmony Vocals (track 7) August Eve Kotzen – Piano (track 9)

Richie Kotzen is a music-making machine. Twenty solo records, formerly part of the bands Poison and Mr. Big, ongoing work with the power trio the Winery Dogs, frequent touring – Kotzen does it all. He was most recently in the spotlight last fall for the release of his first solo collection *The Essential Richie Kotzen*, and now he's back with *Cannibals*. Comprised of material invented specifically for the album and unused song ideas from earlier in Kotzen's career, *Cannibals* reveals as much about Kotzen's work ethic as it does about his musicianship. How many artists can keep up such a pace and seem no worse for the wear?

"I feel like I've reached another level on this record," Kotzen explained during a Blues Rock Review interview last August. Aside from meticulously mashing new and old song ideas together, Kotzen also sought outside inspiration: "You" in particular was co-written by Kotzen's daughter August, who contributed the ballad's beautiful piano segments and appears in the music video. Kotzen also collaborated with Doug 'dUg' Pinnick of King X and Pinnick Gales Pridgen on the slow-boil rocker "I'm All In," another *Cannibals* highlight.

The title track serves as one of the album's most memorable songs. Created in a moment of inspiration inside a restaurant (hopefully not in reaction to the cuisine), "Cannibals" features a recurring bass riff that's fast and rhythmically magnetizing. Kotzen's guitar skills shine on "In an Instant" around lyrics that assess the circle-of-life nature of life's hardships. Though *Cannibals* has its moments of musical ingenuity, the focus of this record is really on its lyrics and vocals. Right on through the tenth and final track "Time for the Payment," Kotzen's voice is the album's

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dominant force.

Following Cannibals' release on his private Headroom-Inc. label on January 8, Kotzen will be playing a few shows in Japan in early February. Looking forward, Kotzen is expected to reunite with the Winery Dogs to begin work on a follow-up record in the coming months, though nothing has been confirmed. Until then, Kotzen fans have his recent collection and the new material on Cannibals to satisfy their hunger. --- Meghan Roos, bluesrockreview.com

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