Metal Inquisitor – Ultima Ratio Regis (2014)

1. Confession Saves Blood 04:40 2. Burn Them All 04:04 3. Call the Banners 04:01 4. Black Desert Demon 03:51 5. Bounded Surface 02:35 6. Death on Demand 04:52 7. Self-Denial 04:08 8. Servant of State 03:49 9. The Pale Messengers 04:33 10. Second Peace of Thorn 07:48 Blumi - Guitars El Rojo - Vocals Havoc - Drums T. P. - Guitars Cliff Bubenheim – Bass

Formed in the late 90s by lead guitarist Blumi and drummer Witchhammer, Germany's Metal Inquisitor have plodded along steadily through the years, releasing a batch of decent albums best described as full on heavy metal. Although Witchhammer fled the nest in 2000, the band has been prolific when it comes to fist-pumping metal.

It's been four years since 2010's Unconditional Absolution, however, on which Blumi was accompanied by drummer Havoc, guitarist T.P., bassist Kronos and vocalist El Rojo. Kronos departed in October 2010, and was replaced by Cliff Bubenheim. With Ultima Ratio Regis, Metal Inquisitor are once again armoured to the hilt for another ride into battle.

Metal Inquisitor are not ashamed to wear their influences on their sleeve. With so many classic bands being paid homage to over the last few years, Metal Inquisitor show the pretenders how it's done, racing through solid compositions which bring to mind the traditional strains of Saxon, Iron Maiden, et al.

Each of the songs on offer here gallops along with denim-clad energy. Thankfully, they haven't succumbed to the depths of modern technology, which means that Metal Inquisitor sounds like an 80s metal band in its prime, and that's a big compliment. Album opener 'Confession Saves

Blood' is a rollicking rocker of racing drums that builds steadily from the initial simmering intro, and with that chugging riff of fire and flailing bass, it's a sure-fire winner as an opening salvo.

'Burn Them All' shimmers in with a trickling bass and molten melody before the blazing structure takes hold; again, there's a hint of Saxon with more epic strains, hinting at majestic classic German metal. 'Burn Them All' epitomises Metal Inquisitor's style with those chest-pounding vocals – which are clear and intense – while the riffs blaze off into the night, leaving a vapour trail in their wake.

'Call The Banners' is equally anthemic, again resorting to that traditional gallop we've come to know and love of numerous New Wave Of British Heavy Metal albums. However, the band isn't just a one-dimensional beast – far from it, in fact. 'Black Desert Demon' is a chunky affair of ominous melody and weighty aplomb, while 'Bounded Surface' and 'Death On Demand' are extremely fearsome, the latter hinting at some thrashier structures, reminding me of a lethal mix between Metal Church and Blind Guardian.

Although the likes of 'Self-Denial' could be deemed a tad generic, there's real purpose about Metal Inquisitor; no real frills, but just sound and sturdy metal anthems that dig in deep and get the blood flowing. 'Servant Of State' lowers the tempo slightly, while 'The Pale Messengers' offers a tidy chug and bouncing bass, leading us to the closing 'Second Peace Of Thorn' – the truly epic track on the opus. Running for nearly eight minutes, it showcases the more imaginative and majestic side of Metal Inquisitor.

To be honest, I'm slightly saddened that the guys didn't inject a few more simmering passages of this ilk into the opus. But having said that, the main aim of Ultima Ratio Regis is to rock hard, and that's exactly what it does. This is full-blooded metal that takes no prisoners, and 'Second Peace Of Thorn'' really is the icing on this cake of glimmering steel. ---Neil Arnold, metalforcesmagazine.com

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