

Ronny Munroe - The Fire Within (2009)

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1 *Far* 4:34 2 *What You Choose To Call Hell (I Call Home)* 5:36 3 *Deafenning Hypocrisy* 5:02 4 *Rebuild The Ruins* 4:06 5 *Delirium* 3:08 6 *Demon Opera* 5:02 7 *Across The Sea Of Souls* 5:26 8 *Desperate Man* 5:54 9 *Ivory Towers* 4:16 10 *Evil Genius* 4:12 11 *Ride Me* 3:46 12 *Man On The Silver Mountain* 4:28 Ronny Munroe - Vocals Rick Pierce - Guitars David van Zandt - Drums Izzy Rehaume - Bass Johnny Ringo - Drums

'The fire within' is a CD that may some day be looked back on as something of a victim of circumstances. Originally foresaw as a side project for Ronny Munroe to his work in a resurgent Metal Church, it ended up being released only a few months before the surprise winding up of the legendary power/thrash band. Being his only active project at the time, the application of extra pressure not normally piled onto these sort of extracurricular events was probably inevitable as the gulf left by his old band loomed overhead.

And while it's true that it definitely doesn't hold up to Metal Church – either classic period or the refreshed-sounding final releases – it remains a fairly decent stab at traditional U.S. power metal where fans of Ronny's old band and their contemporaries should be able to find at least a few things to their liking.

Like has happened so often before, the stunning opening song "Far" had me fooled into thinking that something far greater was in the offing here - I really need to stop falling for that trick - but it ends up being the stand-out moment shoved into first position for very obvious reasons.

The couple of songs that follow, "What you choose to call hell (I call home)" and "Deafening hypocrisy", give a more accurate impression of the CD, as both are quite decent but on the

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whole nothing special, which is the CD's chief flaw. A few hairy moments towards the end aside, there's nothing to really complain about, but with so many songs on a similar level of quality stacked up side by side, it can become a bit of a chore to get through them all. One happy exception is the stunning epic ballad "Sea of souls", which makes good use of atmospheric keyboard effects to compliment a spine-tingling vocal display. "Desperate man" is another that amps up the atmospherics and is also one of the stronger songs here, featuring a really excellent guitar solo that channels the spirit of 'Seventh son of a seventh son'-era Adrian Smith.

The reason some of the songs fail to inspire is partly because, while Ronny's rasping vocals never fail to impress, musically there often isn't a great deal going on, with too many songs relying on only a couple of riffs to see them through, and some drum patterns that become maddeningly repetitive. A slightly thin guitar tone overpowered in patches by the drums only serves to reinforce the rather simplistic nature of the music. The lead guitar however is usually far more impressive. The all-German promo leaflet that came with my copy of the CD unfortunately doesn't give much away in regards to who plays what, but with Queensryche's Michael Wilton (who, converse to Munroe, actually seems to be doing better work away from his main band in recent years) and Rick Van Zandt amongst those involved it goes without saying that the solos are going to be impressive pieces of work.

Things do derail a little as 'The fire within' reaches its conclusion, with the groove-laden chorus to "Ivory towers" a little baffling, and the more rocking vibe on "Ride me" - the last original song before a by-the-numbers cover of "Man on the silver mountain" rounds things up – more than a little out of place.

Still, on the whole these are among only a couple of weak moments on an otherwise solid CD. I would hope, though, that Ronny either finds a more permanent home for his vocal talents, or that the ante is upped on the follow up to this CD, as while it is a decent little diversion with a few impressive moments, on the whole there isn't a great deal to write home about.

---Radagast, metal-archives.com

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