UPFRONT

STEP BACK IN TIME

OCTOBER–NOVEMBER 1981

Rainbow ‘Rising’ Tops List Of 100 All-Time Best HM Albums

DATELINE: OCTOBER 1981
MAGAZINE: KERRANG!

IT’S WEIRD TO THINK that Rainbow’s second album ‘Rising’ was just five years old when readers of Sounds and Kerrang! magazines combined to pronounce it the finest heavy metal album of all time. Yet fully 41 years after its 1976 release, ‘Rising’ would surely have a great chance of topping a similar poll today. Nowadays we’ve come up with endless ways to classify the harder end of rock. But back in 1981 the definition of what was and what wasn’t heavy metal was still up for debate. In 2017, nobody would dream of voting for Pink Floyd’s ‘Dark Side Of The Moon’ or Metallica’s ‘Master Of Puppets’ in a heavy metal chart. But back in 1981 the definition of what was and what wasn’t heavy metal was still up for debate. In 2017, nobody would dream of voting for Pink Floyd’s ‘Dark Side Of The Moon’ or Metallica’s ‘Master Of Puppets’ in a heavy metal chart.

BUT WOW… what a list. And what a Top Ten those readers voted for in descending order they went for:

1. ‘The NWOBHM was still making its considerable presence felt in ’81, with Iron Maiden’s début album at 15 and follow-up ‘Killers’ at 32. Saxxon’s ‘Strong Arm Of The Law’ at 19, the Tygers Of Pan Tang’s ‘Soulbound’ appears at number 60. Giuffrida’s ‘Hit And Run’ at 68. ‘Praying Mantis’ ‘Time Test No Lies’ at 91 and Vardis’ ‘100 M.P.H.’ at 97. Astounding!

2. ‘Rising’ still has any number of persuasive arguments for being the daddy of them all. It’s not as frantic as ‘The Number Of The Beast’, but it’s not old school heavy metal cred by the bucketload. Just six songs – including the ridiculous, heroic and brilliant ‘Stargazer’ of course – mean there’s not a second of filler, not a moment wasted during the album’s 33 minutes and 28 seconds. ‘There’s a hole in the sky/Something evil’s passing by. Like a beast in a field he knows his fate is sealed/He runs with the wolf, oh ooh.’ ‘Rising’ still sounds like one the greatest hard rock records ever made.

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STEP BACK IN TIME

UNDERDOGS Y&T STEP UP WITH ‘EARTHSHAKER’

DATELINE: NOVEMBER 1981
MAGAZINE: KERRANG!

“Y&T ARE KNOWN AS the Oakland Raiders of rock,” wrote Kerrang’s West Coast correspondent Sylvie Simmons, drawing comparisons between American football – a strange sport where big and mean boys in helmets and shoulder pads and embarrassing crests run around – and a specifically American strain of heavy metal where “grown men are liable to lapse into embarrassing crooning.” Simmons meant it in a nice way, we reckon, because she then went on to add: “This lot have balls. They’ve also got curly hair and very nice spandex trousers.”

THE RAIDERS, ‘81 vintage, were hugely successful Superbowl champions. In contrast Y&T, known originally as Yesterday And Today, had yet to scale any musical heights at this point in time. The band – vocalist and guitarist Dave Meniketti, guitarist Joey Alves, bassist Phil Kennemore and drummer Leonard Haze – already had a seven-year, largely undistinguished history behind them in 1981, but were all set to release their first album under a new label deal with A&M Records, ‘Earthshaker’, which was about to change the band’s fortunes. Y&T had spent two years writing and做梦 the bulk of its contents before hitting the studio, though one of its songs to be dropped was ‘Rescue Me’, a fairly last minute addition. And while the songs the band had written were definitely bombastic and melodic, the album’s raw, face-melting sound (produced by Bob Shulman and David Staff) was a reaction to the generic, radio-friendly productions favoured by so many other acts at the time.

“IT’S COME to this point where all of these bands out here (in America) sound exactly the same,” complained Meniketti. “The only way to tell them apart is at the end of the tune when the deejay tells you who it is.” Sworn against making “middle-of-the-road” music, as Meniketti put it, Y&T knew their future depended on playing the song exactly the right way, we reckon, because she then went on to add: “This lot have balls. They’ve also got curly hair and very nice spandex trousers.”

THE GROUP’S previous two albums – ‘Yesterday & Today’ (1976) and ‘Struck Down’ (1978) – had slipped out almost unnoticed on the London label. But the first fruits of a new deal with A&M Records, ‘Earthshaker’, was about to change the band’s fortunes. Y&T had spent two years writing and dreaming the bulk of its contents before hitting the studio, though one of its songs to be dropped was ‘Rescue Me’, a fairly last minute addition. And while the songs the band had written were definitely bombastic and melodic, the album’s raw, face-melting sound (produced by Bob Shulman and David Staff) was a reaction to the generic, radio-friendly productions favoured by so many other acts at the time.

“WE’RE SUCH an aggressive band onstage and we put out such raw energy that it makes everyone think we’re out there to physically beat somebody, like a football team,” explained Meniketti, helpfully.

THE BAND officially disbanded in 1991, got back together in the mid-’90s to release two more albums (1995’s ‘Musically Incorrect’ and 1997’s ‘Endangered Species’) and then reunited officially in 2001. Nowadays Y&T still tour and even released the well-received ‘Facemelter’ in 2010, their first album in 13 years. Sadly, Meniketti is the sole surviving original member. Phil Kennemore died of lung cancer in 2011, Leonard Haze also succumbed to lung disease in 2016, and rhythm guitarist Joey Alves passed away in 2017 as a result of a bowel problem.

MENIKETTI has spoken of the emotional wrench of losing all of his original cohorts, but feels it’s his duty to continue the band – now with drummer Mike Vanderhule, guitarist John Nymann and bassist Aaron Leigh. A documentary, On With The Show, featuring intimate personal footage shot over the course of the band’s long career, will be released towards the end of 2017 as a tribute to Y&T’s departed members.