



Dan Reed Network, Thunder albums full of rock and roll heat and drama

"The Heat"
Dan Reed Network
Polygram Records

Just when you thought the temperatures were beginning to cool off, the Dan Reed Network turns up the heat. And "The Heat" is hot.

This mix of rock and roll, funky bass riffs, politics and sex is the third release from the Portland-based group.

The Dan Reed Network uses this album as a medium to voice its views on such things as war and oppression.

But that is not to say that the more frivolous things in life have escaped notice. The romanticism of sex is still as much a part of this album as any other DRN work.

The first track, "Baby Now I," is simply a solid rock tune with no heavy messages to drag it down. Guitarist Brion James gets to showcase some of his talent here as well.

"Blame It on the Moon" is pure funk that tells a tale of a young girl who believes the lies of a young man. "Six weeks later she got the news/ The child was carrying a child/ Gave her momma the blues."

Adding to the political message of "Mix It Up" is the beginning quote from President Bush, "Aggression is defeated, the war is over."

This medium-paced song delivers a strong message about violence and getting along with our fellow man. That we can do and think what we want, as long as we allow others to do the same, is the theme of "Mix It Up."

The best rock and roll tune on this work is "Love Don't Work That Way." Its hard beat and risky lyrics make a person want to dance. This song pulses with energy.

The seventh track is a re-make of Pink Floyd's "Money."

DRN stays fairly true to the original. The main difference is that bassist Melvin Brannon II has made the bass line a bit more prominent.

A letter from a fan inspired Reed to write "Life Is Sex." This song is a rock anthem for lovers. "Life is sex and sex is sin/ Come on baby/ Let's begin." Even the rhythm screams sex.

"Thy Will Be Done" is a funky tune that makes a strong political statement about racism, aggression and making love instead of money. The smooth chorus makes this song one of those that seem to get stuck in a person's mind.

"Long Way to Go" is the last track. It is also the only ballad on the album. The use of acoustic guitar and piano is a welcome change from the electric jams of the other songs. This tune is

about the uncertainty of the future between two lovers.

Dan Reed Network has put forth a great album in this one-hour-plus effort. It has all the elements of strong rock and roll. The live show is also well worth seeing, as Dan Reed puts incredible amounts of energy into performing.

-- Shannon Uehling

"Burning Ditches"
Such Sweet Thunder
Independent Release

"I was with Hercules and Cadmus once, when in a wood of Crete they bay'd the bear with hounds of Sparta: never did I hear...so musical a dischord, such sweet thunder."
— "A Midsummer Night's Dream" William Shakespeare.

Not many people would compare Such Sweet Thunder's music to the baying of the hounds of Sparta, but it possesses all the energy of dogs in a chase.

Since its inception in early 1988, Such Sweet Thunder, from Kearney, has released five albums including its second professionally engineered album, "Burning Ditches."

This is no garage band basement tape. Recorded and engineered in Kansas City, it has the sound quality of any big label release and more drama and energy than much of today's corporate rock.

The album takes off with a rush of energy on the first song, "Bodybag." Drummer Sven Deepe sets the fast and steady pace as bassist Steve Streit and guitarist Dan Ostdiek ride a hard edge. Soulful vocalist Scott Roth tickles the senses with his spine-tingling screams and whispers.

On the softer side, "Ballad of KH" brags delicate arpeggios with a solid, uplifting beat.

The drama continues throughout the album with "Bigger Than Life" featuring a tasty bass solo, the straight-from-the-heart "Song for Spike Lee," and the almost Iron Maiden-ish "Black Sheep."

The energy overflows with the last offering, "Give and Take." After a soft intro, the guitar rips into a fast bluesy riff and is soon joined by a throbbing rhythm section. Whirlwind drum fills and a suspenseful drum break cap off a great song and an even better album.

Such Sweet Thunder could be characterized as a mix of early REM-ish melodies over the base of a powerful Rush/Iron Maiden rhythm section.

"Potent" is the word guitarist Dan Ostdiek uses to describe the mix of styles.

"When we got together, Scott (vocalist) and I were into melodic stuff like 10,000 Maniacs. Doran (former bassist) and Sven were into heavy stuff like Iron Maiden," says Ostdiek.

Over the years, changes in listening styles has affected playing styles. "Scott screams a lot more now and I'm starting to use some heavy metal techniques in my playing." Ostdiek also attributes the band's increasing success to better songwriting.

Such Sweet Thunder plays powerful, ballsy music without falling into heavy metal hell. They also manage to play softer, slower songs without the tissue-grabbing cheese that predominates most ballads.

Such Sweet Thunder masters these techniques on "Burning Ditches" which is more than most bands boasting labels can do. The band also plays with such drama even Shakespeare would be proud.

-- Jeff Kniedler



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