



By Tyler Bothe – GJD Contributor

Judas Priest's latest release "Nostradamus", their second with returning vocalist Rob Halford, has caused quite a stir with purists and metal junkies alike. Some praise its adventurous nature, writing a concept album about the 16th century "prophet" and incorporating enough strings to make Metallicas' S&M sound like a couple of old fiddler's diddling around. Others curse it out due to the fact that its more likely to be confused for a new 'Spinal Tap' record than the great metal band of the eighties that created its unforgettable classics.

There's no doubt what Priest was going after here: after you've performed and written songs over four decades its time for a change, and "Go big or Go home" is never a bad mantra for metal gods to follow. Orchestral harmonies, church organs, outrageous guitar synths; I didn't think I've heard anyone croonin' away on a Sitar but it wouldn't be surprising here. What it amounts to more often than not is an album that flourished in the pomp and frills of studio recording instead of the bitter rawness that live heavy metal produces, and for the record, those pomp and frills are mixed and mastered quite well.

Allow me to squeeze in a few words about guitar specifics on this CD. The two most rockin' songs are Revelations and Persecution. Both songs contain 80's style crunch rhythms, lightening fast harmonic minor runs and sweep picking madness. Glenn and KK really made me think of Yngwie on these two tunes; but with their own intensity and better tones. Their duelling lines and harmonies have that video game "thing" going on. Even though these two tunes have a somewhat dated sound, shred fans will not be disappointed.

The mastering on this album is the greatest quality this record has to offer, and while the song writing is by no means in bad shape, it shows how an album can transform from heavy metal album into an overblown, dragged out record more destined and appropriate for the score to an NYU student's horror film. Diehards and loyalists to the cause here will undoubtedly praise this album as a giant leap for the band, and a direction that is different, but an improvement nonetheless.

No criticism for artistic leaps here, but if Priest was planning on throwing a double concept album at its fans, it should have done it earlier than later and not about a man who has become to be known as more of a 'throw it against the wall and see if it sticks' kind of prophet. Think

about it, if you declared anything in the 1500's, chances are that in the next 500 years its going to be possible to compare it to something, although I doubt he envisioned Judas Priest writing a dud 20 years after it was relevant. By no means does this remove the crown that Priest has earned and well deserves in the metal community, it means that sometimes its better to take a step back then forward to get what you need.