

Motley Crue
Saints of Los Angeles CD review
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The new Motley Crue CD, *Saints of Los Angeles*, (SOLA) is by far the most ambitious, sophisticated, thought-provoking, and listener challenging material they've ever released. It is something of a quasi-concept record about rock n' roll excesses/successes/objectified social roles/desiring subjects/desired objects and piles of other brainy stuff that will be dealt with in upper level humanities courses for years to come.

However, and I do mean however, it is a 100% certified bonecrushing, balls-to-the-wall, sonic-glitz blowout Motley Crue album. Cars will be crashed, knuckles will be busted and vocal cords will pop from bloodlust primal screams while people listen to this titanic piece of work. It is their first release in more than ten years and it's outstanding beyond words. Even the flaws are great, like Marilyn Monroe's classic facial beauty mark, and that's really hard to do.

Concept albums have always been a precarious crapshoot in the rock genre. There are no "just ok" concept records. They are either conceptual masterpieces like David Bowie's *The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars*, or goofed-out, self-congratulatory dreck like Rush's *2112*. SOLA deals with a bar band who starts from nothing and makes it really big.

However, the real journey of the record is one of self-discovery. The singer/narrator/narrative voice of the songs eventually arrives at the awareness level of understanding the inextricable symbiosis of simultaneous artistic greatness and pathological material sickness. Frank Zappa once said that, "business is the only area where your creative efforts are rewarded."

Multiply that quote by a thousand and you have some idea of what the record is about.

The CD starts with a cheesy horrorshow futuristic prologue entitled. "L.A.M.F." It echoes Bowie's "Future Legend" from his *Diamond Dogs* LP, a disc which Nikki Sixx, Motley Crue's principal songwriter in his biography *The Heroin Diaries*, hailed as one of the greatest albums ever made. In *L.A.M.F.*'s non descript, amorphous terms we learn, in the larger sense at least, that only a few of life's participants achieve any great amount of fame, great goals, etc. The rest of us are just a bunch of normal, sad guys who are painfully aware of our losses and limitations.

However, the price for this monumental success is slowly becoming a cheap imitation of yourself, and eventually arriving at a complete loss of personal identity.

Sixx tries to resolve some seemingly unresolvable paradigms such as, how can a kid band, who has nothing, not want to achieve recognition, wealth and fame? In contrast, how can a man who has achieved greatness not, even for a moment, remember when he was struggling to achieve his high position and realize that he, too, was once one of the little guys? How can his greed be tamed? If money is freedom, can one have too much freedom? Isn't all of human history simply a

story of the selfish doing everything possible to get what they want? I really give Sixx credit for addressing these difficult topics in his music. What other rock stars of his calibre are even trying to do so without making us puke from their mewling, ersatz, plastic concern and god-awful self-adoration?

No matter what theoretical lenses you opt to use, or criticism you apply to SOLA, it is still a fantastic, butt-rockin', hip-shaking, supersonic joyride of a record that is never boring for one second. Outstanding tracks include, "MF of the Year," "Welcome to the Machine," "Face Down in the Dirt," and "Just Another Psycho."

In 1981, when their first record, *Too Fast for Love*, was released I made up my mind, after the first listening, that Tommy Lee was the finest drummer in rock n' roll. Today, in 2008, I still hold that belief. The rhythm section of Nikki Sixx on bass guitar and Tommy Lee on the traps, are the most solid, dependable engine room a band can ask for. They provide a perfect platform for Mick Mars, who is the best belt-fed, muted pick-dust, ashcan guitarist in metal. He's cool-flash and fire whose blues-based style of play is danceable and sexy, but still thrilling to hear in its virtuosity. Vince Neil's vocals are as brash and neon-grimed as ever. He's one of the truly great hard rock/metal frontmen.

SOLA is a record that will keep you dancing and guessing for some time. Is it a high-gloss, big production, electric salvation of Mankind or a sleaze-glitz chronicle of the downward spiral where all you can do is keep fighting 'till you drop? No matter what it is, it rocks. And take my word for it, in the end, that's all that really matters.

