

Good and bad on new Lizzy disc

Record Review: **Live Killers** by Thin Lizzy

by Michael McCarthy

When I was a wee lad, they used to make EP's (Erstwhile Platters) the size of singles, and played them at 45 rpm. Now, they take the same number of songs (usually six) and put them on an LP size disc, playable at 33 rpm, and package the whole thing like an album. Far be it from me to suggest that contemporary record makers are hoping that buyers will mistake their product for a full-length album at a low price and snap it up. And I am suitably impressed that this particular EP has 29 minutes and 28 seconds of material on it. However, I still have a chilling feeling that manufacturers are hoping to pull a fast one, reducing prices to attract more buyers, but reducing the amount of music

as well, so that the public are getting no more, and possibly less, for their money than before. Then they may phase out LP's altogether, since the prices are discouraging purchasers.

At any rate, Thin Lizzy has released a live EP entitled **Live Killers**, recorded in 1977-1980. Led by bassist/songwriter Phil Lynott, Lizzy is an Irish heavy metal band who learned to play at the same school as early Queen, with repetitive, simple rhythms, flashy upfront guitar work and a fairly smooth-voiced singer. They can be both pretty good and pretty bad, and this record manages to include pithy examples of each.

Side A starts off with a track entitled "Bad Reputation," and is likely to give the band just that. It consists of bad heavy metal, i.e. the worst of Deep Purple/Black Sabbath, but with more fluid guitar work. I'll bet you

thought we'd passed the days of boring, obligatory "live" drum solos. Wrong. This one is way too long. Way too dull. Sort of a blind impression of a cattle stampede. The song ends with a pathetic musical splash/barrage of all the instruments, highlighted by total lack of credible commitment.

"Dear Miss Lonely Hearts" is much better. Lynott is in his best "lost soul" voice, replete with teenage wistfulness, in a melodic high level Lizzy tune, with terrible lyrics. There is a quintessential Lizzy instrumental break with simple, extended note riffs and prominent guitar from Scott Gorham and Snowy White. A pseudo-50's heartthrob spoken verse has a good bass and drum background, and Lynott draws lots of cheers by mentioning Bob Geldof (Boombtown Rats) and Dublin (where this song was recorded). This is followed by an almost trans-

cent up-tempo jaunt to the wind-up.

"Opium Trail" is one of two tracks recorded in Toronto, if that stirs your patriotic sentiments. Similar to the sound of Lizzy's **Jailbreak** album, it features a superlative guitar bridge, impressive, emotive guitar flash in the background throughout, good rollicking rock, and a compelling, low-key urgency in Lynott's voice. The lyrics are also there.

In "Chinatown" (on side two) Lynott dips deep in the well of profundity and comes up with the revelation that people are "living and dying in Chinatown." That's hitting the nail right on the head, there, Phil. And sending it screaming, begging you to stop. As if the lines weren't bad enough already, he repeats most of them, for no discernible reason. The music is repetitive with some guitar histrionics.

The next song is probably the

best one. "Got to Give it Up" has catchy power chord sequences and Lynott's vocals are in his most successful trageo-romantic vein of helplessness. The rock is smooth for the most part, vaguely similar to the fluidity of Dire Straits at times. A powerful extended virtuoso break has a great energetic guitar blitz and a romping bass.

The final track, "Are You Ready?" is abysmal. If I hear just one more song that is written around trumped-up excitement and periodic shouts of "Are you ready to rock?..." This is boring, clutter of manic monotony, with only a brief splurge of speed guitar to recommend it.

All in all, not a bad effort from Thin Lizzy who are a sometimes exciting and affecting, if never very original, rock band. Their guitars are great, as usual, but their songwriting (especially their lyrics) needs improvement.

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