

Album Charts

College Music Journal

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Stone Roses
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WXYC

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A looser Dylan gets back to his roots

Bob Dylan

Oh Mercy

CBS Records

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After several lackluster releases, Bob Dylan is back with *Oh Mercy*, his finest album in a decade.

It seems as if the Traveling Wilburys helped Dylan to loosen up and concentrate on music again. Certainly, he is not trying so hard to be Bob Dylan on this one. *Oh Mercy* contains more fully-realized, longer songs than on recent Dylan albums; and he is once again sharp, loose and focused.

Dylan has surrounded himself with an all-star entourage. Daniel Lanois, best known for his work with U2, produces and plays guitar, dobro and lap steel. Mason Ruffner is the featured guitarist on several tunes, while Cyril Neville, Willie Green and Daryl Johnson add percussion.

Side One is the more upbeat half of the album.

The opener, "Political World," has a quick tempo and features Lanois' bluesy dobro. "Where Teardrops Fall" is slower, with catchy playing of the

BRIAN SPRINGER

album

lap steel — again, courtesy of Lanois. The first single, "Everything is Broken," makes use of a vibey guitar and a distinctly '60s approach.

"Ring Them Bells" contains organ reminiscent of "Knockin' on Heaven's Door." The song recalls Dylan's Christian period, with the lines "Ring them bells for the blind and the deaf/Ring them bells for all of us who are left." "Man in the Long Black Coat" has a sparse, swampy sound.

On Side Two, Dylan uses a stripped-down, brooding sound. "Most of the Time" finds Dylan in a reflective mood, singing, "I can survive and I can endure/And I don't even think about her/Most of the time." Dylan is introspective in the moody "What Good am I?"

On "Disease of Conceit," Dylan notes, "Conceit is a disease/That the doctor's got no cure/He does a lot of research on it/But what it is they're still not sure." Dylan avoids the temptation to fall into the self-parody which has marked many of his recent releases. "What Was it You Wanted" finds both Dylan and the

listener wondering "Are you the same person/That was here before?"

With this album, Dylan has overcome the urge to recreate the past shown on "Silvio" from last year's *Down in the Groove*. At the same time, he doesn't attempt the high art which flawed such work as "Brownsville Girl" from *Knocked Out Loaded*. Instead, Dylan seems to have stopped trying so hard. The natural, less-belabored sound is classic Dylan.

Oh Mercy is a fine example of an artist returning to his roots. The album displays a sharp dichotomy of moods, with consistent songwriting marking both sides. Bob Dylan has never been a great singer, but his voice is better than it has been in ages. By not being so forcefully Dylanesque, for the first time in years, Dylan avoids becoming a caricature.

On *Oh Mercy*, Dylan turns in loose, fully-realized performances, with the strong songwriting of years past intact.



In Concert

Bob Dylan will be in concert at 8 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 8 in Cameron Indoor Stadium on the Duke campus. For ticket info, call Ticketron at 1-800-453-3041.

The Ratings

- — miserable
- — mediocre
- — enjoyable
- — quite good
- — unmissable

Axemaster's unique style triumphs in 'Trial by Fire'

Yngwie Malmsteen

Trial by Fire: Live in Leningrad

PolyGram

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Take Jimi Hendrix and throw in some Beethoven. Now add a little bit of Monty Python's Flying Circus. And just a touch of H.P. Lovecraft. What's the result? Of course it's Yngwie Malmsteen and his Rising Force.

Yngwie (pronounced *ing-vay*) Malmsteen is right up there with Jimi

ALISA DEMAO

album

Hendrix and Joe Satriani in the Heavy Metal Trinity of Axemasters. In an age of copycat, formula music Malmsteen creates a truly new style, combining such diverse influences as Bach and Beethoven with Hendrix and Richie Blackmore to create a classical-metal technique which has spawned a host of imitators. "I like the melodic and harmonic feel of classical music and the logic behind it," he says, "but I love the aggres-

sion, the impact, the noise and the extreme power of metal."

Trial by Fire: Live In Leningrad allows Malmsteen and his band, Yngwie Malmsteen's Rising Force, to display their unique style in a truly virtuosic fashion. Recorded in SKK Stadium in Leningrad during several sold-out performances (which, incidentally, along with his sold-out dates in Moscow's Lushniki Sportspalace, gave him a total audience of 240,000 — the largest ever for any artist, Soviet or Western, in the USSR), the album gives Malmsteen an opportunity to prove himself a master of his craft without the benefit of studio takes and re-takes.

Citing classical violin as his biggest influence, Malmsteen is very much a technician. But he doesn't let that get in the way of being a musician.

Filled with Malmsteen's guitar licks, what this album lacks (and for the best) are the gratuitous musical acrobatics so common in today's metal. Malmsteen plays from his heart and his soul, imbuing his music with an uncommon depth of feeling.

Vocalist Joe Lynn Turner, formerly of Rainbow, has a tone richness that fully complements Malmsteen's music. On their last album, *Odyssey*, Turner joined Malmsteen in the creative process, co-writing tracks such as "Heaven Tonight," which appears

on *Trial*. And yes, it still sounds like Journey on speed. Or acid. Or both.

The rhythm section, Barry Dunaway on bass and Anders Johansson on drums, provide the same richly full background, balancing the guitar focus with a powerful beat and acting as a foil for Malmsteen.

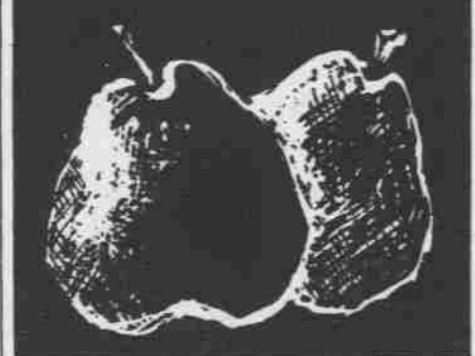
And how many metal groups have a full-time keyboard player? Bon Jovi, Guiffria? Come on, *real* metal, not bubblegum. Keyboardist Jens Johansson (brother of drummer Anders) is an integral part of the group.

Malmsteen himself writes, arranges and produces his work. His strength is in composing, however.

While Side A of the album is still his unique classical-metal blend, there is more of an emphasis on metal technique, resulting in hard rockers such as "Liar" and "Deja Vu" which nevertheless retain some kind of integrity.

It is on Side B that Malmsteen's classical background becomes more evident, particularly on the blending of styles in "Dreaming," featuring an acoustic theme inspired by Bach, with a touch of ... could it be jazz? And break out your tie-dyed shirts and bell-bottoms for the Hendrix tribute "Spanish Castle Magic."

Trial by Fire: Live In Leningrad is one of the best metal albums to be released in a long time. Which is only to be expected — it is merely another in a long line of Yngwie Malmsteen's triumphs.



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