

Nekromantix: “WHAT HAPPENS IN HELL, STAYS IN HELL” (CD Review)

Written by Trevor Parker

Tuesday, 04 October 2011 10:12



Psychobilly. It’s like the lovable hipster uncle of the punk rock family, sitting atop a stack of old Cramps records and watching old black-and-white monster mashes while talking your ear off about the warm analog appeal of a plucked upright double bass. Still, despite the accessible pop sensibility and distinctive fashion sense of the psychobilly phenomenon as a whole, it feels like the scene has stuttered into a bit of a slump lately. Now that psychobilly godfathers Nekromantix have cruised back into town with flattop haircuts intact and new album in hand, can they manage to refresh what many have dismissed has a hopelessly moribund musical style?

Four years in the making and their fourth outing on Rancid founder Tim Armstrong’s Hellcat label, WHAT HAPPENS IN HELL, STAYS IN HELL continues the Nekromantix habit of drastic personnel-juggling between albums. Lead guitarist Troy Destroy and drummer Andrew Martinez have been replaced by Franc and Lux respectively, and in the latter, the band has secured a petite powerhouse to drive the beat (check out the YouTube videos of her thundering flawlessly along to Slayer and Megadeth tracks while wearing six-inch stiletto heels).



The production of WHAT HAPPENS acknowledges this with the drums coaxed to a heavier prominence than in the mix of prior albums. Opening track “Bats in My Pants” kicks things off with bandleader Kim Nekroman growling over some speedy riffing by Franc, a quickness soon topped by the awesomely breakneck “Demonspeed.” Shimmery surf-guitar chords on

Nekromantix: "WHAT HAPPENS IN HELL, STAYS IN HELL" (CD Review)

Written by Trevor Parker

Tuesday, 04 October 2011 10:12

"Sleepwalker With A Gun," a whistled intro on "Love You Deadly" and the all-instrumental workout of "Triskaedekaphobia" demonstrate that Nekro and co. are, to their credit, intent on further bulging psychobilly's boundaries.

While strong as a whole, WHAT HAPPENS does lack an obvious lead single—the kind of instantly memorable anthem with which Nekromantix's excellent 2007 album LIFE IS A GRAVE...AND I DIG IT was positively swollen. The band's double-time fretwork and MUNSTERS-level song-title puns (e.g. "I Kissed a Ghoul" and "MonsterBait") haven't changed much since they last checked in, and a cast of atomic supermen, somnambulating sharpshooters and some devilishly alluring ladies enliven the tunes' storylines. And while nobody listens to Nekromantix expecting Dylanesque poetical profundities, it's now pretty much a definite that lead songwriter Nekroman has plateaued in terms of his lyrics. Granting that English is not Danish Demon's mother tongue, a number of songs on the album are shackled with some seriously lazy couplets ("I tried to calm her down, but she was mad as f**k/She said she hoped I dropped dead or got hit by a truck," promises "I Kissed a Ghoul").

WHAT HAPPENS IN HELL, STAYS IN HELL is overall a welcome return; it never threatens to reinvent the psychobilly wheel, but it comes with enough new angles and tweaks to keep old fans grinning and the sock hop shaking. We can only hope to hell that next time they don't wait so long in between albums.

