

Dragonforce are certainly a band who have a formula. Not only do all their albums sound very similar, so do most of their songs, it seems. Despite that, their reviews are almost always rather favourable. Let's find out why. I'll only be writing about their debut effort 'Valley of the Damned', but as explained, I could pretty much be writing about any of them. First, I'll briefly discuss the album title itself: 'VotD...?' Whenever the word 'damned' is used by a metal band, silly alarm bells should be ringing. It's SO overused. Take for example the following songs: 'Children of the Damned' by Iron Maiden, 'Child of the Damned' by Warlord, 'Child of the Damned' by Hammerfall (ok, that was a cover version of the former) and 'Legion of the Damned' by Yngwie Malmsteen. They are the songs that came to mind immediately. There are countless hundreds of other examples I could have given after a little research.

But what are the songs of Valley called? Well, you get 'Invocation of Apocalyptic Evil', (cheese) 'Valley of the Damned' (again), the impossible 'Black Fire', 'Black Winter Night', the more realistic 'Starfire', 'Disciples of Babylon', 'Revelations', 'Evening Star', and 'Heart of a Dragon'. Most titles are balls in more ways than one, and even a small heavy metal fan could spot why. Evil, apocalyptic, black, fire, night and dragon all suck ass as words. Not only that, they're as confusing as hell. You'd think many of the songs would be dark and evil, instead they are all really upbeat and positive! What a nightmare for the autistic fans who take everything literally. I shouldn't really moan, as I only paid 20p for the record at a local charity shop, and it was in very good condition. I'd have to be a very mean person to walk into the shop and complain. I have seen people be really out of order to waitresses, only for the complainers to get offered a free meal, presumably so they shut the hell up, but a free CD from a non-profit organisation? No. Too far.

The manic solos here aren't as good as they are on later albums; they're too scalic too often. I like the major and minor scale as much as the next man and I suppose it is satisfying the way the intervals of the ascending/descending notes are never larger than a tone. That is in contrast to some harsher Arabic scales that only make occasional appearances in Valley. I also appreciate how there are no dodgy, hard to use tones in arpeggios, but if I want to hear any of the just described, I get out my guitar and play them in private. After a few seconds I get bored though, which is why I never reached expert level, and that is true for millions of other guitarists out there. A musician's job is to inspire other players, not to do what they can but don't care about doing, only faster. If you really want to hear some fast scales, go to a keyboard shop and run your finger down a synth's keys as quickly as you can. If that genuinely excites you, there is something wrong with you and you have no taste. Still though, you might want to consider being a black metal drummer.

I'm not sure what's with the reverb on the singer's voice. Usually that effect is used for more atmospheric bands who play far less extreme tempos. Certainly slower than around 400 BPM which is the kind of speed DF plays at. (Or you could say 200 BPM in double time if you're being boring - personally I like to see bigger, more impressive numbers on sheet music or tab). So yeah, the reverb doesn't sound bad, but is a little unusual. At least all the guy's sung notes don't bleed together too much, as you may expect, though that is because he doesn't go as apes**t as the guitars and drums. He is far more melodic and laid back. If you removed the backing instruments, most would probably suspect he was singing at a modest 100 BPM. Which when you think about it, is kind of odd. It works, though. Okey dokey, what do

I give this album? Let's be fair, it was highly original when first released and is still crazy to this day. I think a good 8 out of 10 is reasonable. Bye!!!!!!! !!