

'Cowboys from Hell', by Pantera - a classic album. So why have I only just recently bought it? I hate to sound shallow, but the album title kind of put me off. Anything with the word 'hell' in it is a red flag for me. It's just so overused in metal and it suggests a lack of creativity. Similarly, if I ever hear of a band name with 'death', 'power', 'fire' or 'skull' in it, etc., chances are I won't give the group a listen. (I like Deftones, but note the spelling difference). Even without doing the slightest research, I can say with a fair degree of certainty that there is a band out there, famous or otherwise, called 'Power Skull' or 'Fire Death' or whatever. Furthermore, chances are they sound very typical for their genre and they suck. BUT... As previously stated, 'Cowboys from Hell' is a classic album and it's also very good. 'CFH' is also the name of the first epic track on the LP. However, maybe that was an anomaly. It's not so weird that every now and then a sucky song title goes with a decent piece of music. Let's have a look at the other tune names to see if they're any better.

Track number two: 'Primal Concrete Sledge'. I have to give it too Pantera, THAT'S different. Maybe the somewhat cliched 'concrete' could be replaced with a material equally as heavy or heavier, though. Maybe 'Primal Ununoctium Sledge' would be an improvement, though that could be interpreted as pretentious. As the song currently stands however, the band get a solid 'B'. No. 3: 'Psycho Holiday'. Again, 'holiday' isn't exactly a very metal word, but wouldn't 'Crackbrained Holiday' be better? No. 4 is called 'Heresy'. If the band were a black metal band, that name would be UNBELIEVABLY typical. It would be even more extreme than 'death', let me tell you. In fact, it would probably be around as common as the word 'the'. 'Dark Heresy', 'Goat Heresy', 'Witch Heresy', you name it, it's most likely been done. Fortunately however, the supergroup aren't black metal they are (well were) groove metal. Still though, 'Heresy' isn't particularly new for bands like them either, now that I think of it.

We move on to track 5's name, 'Cemetery Gates'. Again, that is more black metal sounding than anything. No. 6's 'Domination' on the other hand could be a super-conventional title in pretty much any metal genre. It would work in doom metal, power metal, traditional metal, even polka metal. Consequently, it needs a renaming urgently to give it more character. Let's see if a thesaurus can help me... As an alternative, we have 'control' - kind of a weak word, 'dictatorship' - a word that could be associated with nazi music :S, 'dominance' - pretty much the same word... It seems I'm stuck. Maybe 'despotism' would be an improvement, but hey. Next up is song 7's 'Shattered'. Once again, a stereotypical title for countless styles. The elaborated death metal interpretation would perhaps be 'Shattered Bones', the black metal one could be 'Shattered Soul', but they're still too similar to the original one-worder, right? How about the distinctive 'Fragmentalized' as an alternative? That's a tip for everyone.

Keep with me, don't get bored. We're nearly there now... Song 8's 'Clash with Reality' could be a title more fitting for the trippy Pink Floyd. So far to the layman, it could look like Pant' are a psychedelic, progressive blackened death metal band, but to absolutely clear, they are simply GROOVE METAL, sometimes with elements of thrash. I'm confused too, don't worry. No. 9, then: 'Medicine Man' is a creative title, for sure. Most metal bands write about killing people, not healing them, though track 10 brings the listener back down to Earth with the far from interesting 'Message in Blood'. The second to last song 'The Sleep' follows, which is ironically far from peaceful. The paradoxes continue with closing song 'The Art of Shredding', which

actually has relatively little shredding in it. However to be fair, 'shredding' is a bit of a vague term nowadays. It used to mean really fast scalic speed picking, then just fast guitar playing, then just kind of guitar playing in general. The word has lost all meaning it seems to me at least, so maybe TAOFS does have lots of shredding in. Who knows?

Ok, that's the album reviewed. Well, it's a review of the song names at least. But then again, seeing as it's very easy to find everyday critiques of this release, maybe me going a bit avant-garde is what you want, deep down. I'm sure I have touched upon at least some issues no one else has. However, rating this record is a challenge. Do I score the actual musical content or what I've been writing about? If I did the former, the rating would have no explanation behind it. Well screw it, here is a micro summary of the riffs, solos, etc: 10/10. I can't fault this work. The song naming however gets... ohhh... I don't know. 5/10? I'll wrap things up by giving enhanced titles, here goes... Cowboys from Hospital Waiting Rooms (they suck, right?); Primal Ununoctium Sledge; Crackbrained Holiday; Heresy should perhaps be started from scratch, as everything even distantly related to the word has all been done; Pet Cemetery Gates; Despotism; Fragmentalized; Dispute with Reality; Medicine Man is fine; Message in Haemoglobin; The Snooze; and finally The Art of Playing Guitar. That's it! Bye!