

Legendary Tales by Rhapsody, (now called the more spicy if cliched Rhapsody of Fire). I remember showing this album (or one of the group's others - they mostly sound the same) to one of my friends, many years ago. I said to him something like 'listen to this, this is awesome!' and he just laughed in my my face. :(Whilst I disagreed with his lack of open-mindedness to put it mildly, I wasn't surprised by it. This album isn't the coolest thing to listen to, it would take balls to blast it out of your car in a crowded city. Who wants to admit liking listening to songs about elves in times of war, with recorders playing much of the time? This stuff isn't like black metal where you have to train the ears to appreciate the super lo-fi production, it's music where you have to train yourself to ignore the cheese. If you're particularly skilled, you can imagine the woodwinds are highly distorted parts from Flying Vs. If you can do that, you will be like a true wizard. Oh, that's a cheesy thing to say. I guess you're stuck, then.

But there is hope! Fun neoclassical melodies and riffs are almost constant in the verses and they rock. Very Yngwie Malmsteen. And that's not all!... Actually no, that one thing is all the hope there is and it's short lived. That's because the refrains are never far away. Once familiar with the songs and during the pre-choruses, one gets a sense of what I describe as 'impending cheese' and 'unavoidable non-belonging'. I'll explain. Despite their anthemic nature, the following I guess what you can call 'singalongs' shouldn't really be performed in churches, as they are far too heavy and non-traditional. However, they don't really fit into most people's idea of heavy metal, as... well... they're cheese. (I promise to stop saying the word so much). Once again, you as a listener are stuck. So what do you do? You eat that metaphorical cheese (whoops) till you like it! It's like drinking beer; you most likely didn't like the taste at first (unless your diet was particularly unsavoury before hand, maybe) you had to keep exposing yourself to the stuff. Then you reaped the rewards, by getting drunk. (Well, actually I did love this album on my premier listen, but that's what I recommend to everyone else, as it's quite possible no HM fans will like this at first. But if you are a new admirer against all odds, don't force the music on people too much, that doesn't work - I've tried).

What's really weird is that this music should have much less of a following in these times of more sensible Eurovision contests, without the silly costumes and dance routines. In these times of more sensible songs in general, now that I think of it. (Actually to be honest, I have no idea how serious modern commercial music is on the whole. If it isn't serious let's just pretend it is, for the sake of this review). Anyway, the music does have a good fanbase! Why could that be? It might be because people into church music have become radicalised. Just as crime rates are going up for some mysterious reason, Christians along with everyone else are also going apeshit and are getting into harder and harder stuff. Well, that's the theory. If that IS the case, surely Rhapsody's previous heavy metal audience would have deserted them, as they are now more into brutal death metal and goregrind? And if THAT'S the case, what do old brutal death metal fans listen to now? Super-duper-ultra-brutal-death metal? What the hell is that??

To sum up, I'm weird so I give this a solid 9/10. Despite the high rating, this music paradoxically makes a great practical joke. Tell someone this music is great and prepare for some endless laughs, possibly right in your face. Hypothetically speaking, you shouldn't get mocked if you show this to now hardened churchgoers,

but don't take my word on that, that's just a theory. It's possible near-deaf, holy OAPs might think they're listening to genuine, though fast hymns in hard rocking Rhapsody churches, (if they exist, which I think they should) so they shouldn't bother you at all, either; they'd just carry on as normal... Again, in theory. Lastly, I say the choruses are kind of lame, but I actually like them and so should you, you must! Whoops, I've been trying to force this stuff on people again. I do apologise. Byebye!

..... 9/10.