

Bonfire - Free (2003)

Written by bluesever

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1. *On and on* 2. *I Would Do Anything for You* 3. *What About Love* 4. *Rock 'N' Roll Star* 5. *Free* 6. *Preachers and Whores* 7. *Love Can Conquer All* 8. *Give a Little* 9. *September on My Mind* 10. *Friends*

Claus Lessmann - lead vocals, rhythm guitar Hans Ziller - lead, rhythm & acoustic guitars, sitar, talk-box, slide Uwe Köhler - bass Jürgen Wiehler - drums, percussion

Bonfire are really giving their fanbase something to talk about with this album. The reaction has been rather mixed and it's taken me more than a few listens to decide for myself. Bottom line is that I am disappointed. But I'm not a die hard Bonfire fan, so I can have some appreciation for some of the tracks here. I know others that have been alienated by this release though. Why? Because the album really lacks energy. The band has updated their approach to a more modern, sometimes darker style than the sound their 80's melodic hard rock heyday. The guys have a deal with BMG to release this across much of Europe, but it's not ground breaking or different enough to garner any new fans. But it's unfortunately different enough to displace original fans looking for some solid European Bon Jovi style hard rock.

It will be interesting to see what the wash up is after this release has been out for a while. To be blunt □ the quality of the songs, style aside, just aren't strong enough. The album as a whole has a modern feel, but is rather laid back in reality. Many of the tracks are slow to mid-tempo at best. The opening track *On And On* is the album's heaviest and also the most modern and aggressive track, but the chorus just goes, well □ on and on. The poppier *I Would Do Anything 4 U* is better □ it features some solid guitar playing and a good solo and a catchier chorus. *What About Love?* is better again. This acoustic driven modern pop/rocker features a good moody vibe and a memorable chorus. *Rock 'N' Roll Star (Born To Rock)* kills the momentum built by the last couple of tracks. This modern rocker just doesn't rock. This album is a mixture of hit and miss. *Free* is a hit. A big hit. This is my favourite track on the album. *Free* is a big rock ballad with a modern feel to it, but a great rocking chorus that is pretty much an instant hit.

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Preachers & Whores is another song about wanting to rock, but just doesn't have the energy or a cool chorus required to make it work. Love Can Conquer All is an easy going mid-tempo ballad that has a better sound and a catchier chorus. Give A Little Love is similar in tempo and approach. No need for the same song twice, even if it is ok. September On My Mind is a little heavier and has a more modern tone. But is that lyric really saying "we are all American"? Clearly this is a homage to Sept. 11, but the track really doesn't include any memorable hooks. Friends closes the album. It's unfortunately a long and featureless acoustic ballad.

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