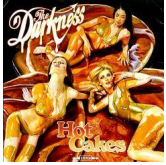


The Darkness - Hot Cakes (2012)

Written by bluesever

Saturday, 01 September 2012 16:28 - Last Updated Friday, 12 January 2018 20:16

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01. *Every Inch Of You* (3:05) 02. *Nothin's Gonna Stop Us* (2:45) 03. *With A Woman* (3:41)
04. *Keep Me Hangin' On* (3:01) 05. *Living Each Day Blind* (5:07) 06. *Everybody Have A Good Time* (4:48) 07. *She Just A Girl, Eddie* (3:47) 08. *Forbidden Love* (3:50) 09. *Concrete* (3:52)
10. *Street Spirit (Fade Out)* (3:07) 11. *Love Is Not The Answer* (3:42) Musicians: Justin Hawkins – vocals, guitar Dan Hawkins – guitar Frankie Poullain – bass guitar Ed Graham – drums + Ian Anderson – flute

It's hard to discuss the 2012 album from satiro-hard rock band the Darkness without taking into account how the disc comes on the heels of much anticipation and hardship. The years after the Darkness released their last album in 2005, the sophomore effort *One Way Ticket to Hell...and Back*, were rough ones for the usually gleeful ensemble. They had parted ways with bassist Frankie Poullain during the recording process -- a fact that didn't sit well with fans -- and though the album sold well, its recording was delayed and purportedly costly. Further, while the band's 2003 breakthrough debut, *Permission to Land*, brought the group praise for its knowing mix of purposely over the top songs that toyed with such rock themes as cheating, big boobs, and partying on spaceships, *One Way Ticket to Hell...and Back* wasn't as well received critically. The overall impression was that the Darkness were on a steady decline from the dizzying success of the previous two years. So, in some ways it was not surprising when, in 2006, lead singer Justin Hawkins entered rehab for alcohol and cocaine abuse. It was a shock, however, when in August of that year Hawkins announced he had left the band. His departure essentially spelled the end of the Darkness, as it was his operatic yelp, magnetic stage persona, and exuberant sense of humor that defined the band. So it was with heated anticipation that the public reacted to the news in 2011 that all four original members of the Darkness, including lead singer Hawkins and bassist Poullain, had reunited and would record a new album. Perhaps nobody expected the band to ever match the giddy, karate-kick high of *Permission to Land*, but the group's comeback album, *Hot Cakes*, is definitely worthy of throwing more than a few devil horns the band's way. While the Darkness have always reveled in the hedonistic clichés of heavy metal, at their core they are a pop band, capable of delivering some of the catchiest, most expertly crafted radio-ready singles this side of ABBA. For every AC/DC blues-rock, crotch-thrusting groove on *Hot Cakes* -- and there are a few -- there are just as many

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sparklingly slick, sugar-coated laser-beam melodies that light up the happy place in your brain. The beauty of the Darkness' approach is that their pop side and cock rock side pretty much come from the same inclination: get listeners moving. In that sense, this album will continue to draw the band well-earned comparisons to Queen -- which speaks mainly to the band's songwriting and musicianship. And while Hawkins does have Freddie Mercury's vocal range, his sweet lyricism often sounds tonally more like a mix of Queen guitarist Brian May's voice and ELO's Jeff Lynne. Tracks like the propulsive "Nothin's Gonna Stop Us" and the rousing "Everybody Have a Good Time" are deliciously catchy anthems that definitely bring to mind the contemporary pop/rock of '80s-era Queen. Similarly, cuts like the epic Boston-sounding "Forbidden Love" and the passionate "Love Is Not the Answer" are surprisingly earnest love songs that stick in your head as good as any hair metal-era MTV single. ---Matt Collar, allmusic.com

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