Black Sabbath - Never Say Die! (1978)



1. Never Say Die
2. Johnny Blade
3. Junior's Eyes
4. A Hard Road
5. Shock Wave
6. Air Dance
7. Over To You
8. Breakout
9. Swinging The Chain
Ozzy Osbourne Vocals (lead) Tony Iommi Guitars, Vocals (backing) (track 4) Geezer Butler Bass, Vocals (backing) (track 4) Bill Ward Drums, Vocals (lead) (track 9), Vocals (backing) (track 4) + Don Airey Keyboards John Elstar Harmonica

After going their separate ways for a brief period following the emotionally taxing and drug-infested Technical Ecstasy tour, Black Sabbath and singer Ozzy Osbourne reconciled long enough to record 1978's Never Say Die! -- an album whose varied but often unfocused songs perfectly reflected the band's uneasy state of affairs at the time. Even the surprisingly energetic title track, which seemed to kick things off with a promising bang, couldn't entirely mask the group's fading enthusiasm just beneath the surface after a few repeated listens. The same was true of half-hearted performances like "Shock Wave" and "Over to You," and there were several songs on the record that sound strangely disjointed, specifically "Junior's Eyes" and the synthesizer-doused "Johnny Blade" -- as though their creation came in fits and starts, rather than through cohesive band interaction. But when it came to wild, stylistic departures, one's disappointing realization that the lurching, saxophone-led "Breakout" came from -- and then went back to -- absolutely nowhere was easily offset by the stunningly successful oddity that was "Air Dance." Arguably the most experimental song in Black Sabbath's entire canon, this uncharacteristically mild-mannered and effortlessly evocative ballad saw Tony Iommi's normally bullish guitar giving way to simply mesmerizing piano flourishes performed by leading session keyboardist Don Airey. If only it had represented a bold new direction (albeit one that die-hard

fans would never have accepted) rather than just another sign of the band's quickly fraying sense of identity, Black Sabbath's original lineup may have found a way to save itself -- but Never Say Die!'s incoherent musical aggregate in fact betrayed the harsh reality that it was indeed too late. So even though those same die-hard Black Sabbath fans and completists will likely find some redeeming value in Never Say Die! after all these years, the original lineup's final gasp will hold little interest to the average heavy metal fan. ---Eduardo Rivadavia, AllMusic Review

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