

Alice Cooper - Paranormal (2017)

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2-1 Genuine American Girl 4:27 2-2 You And All Of Your Friends 2:42
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2-3 No More Mr. Nice Guy 3:10 2-4 Under My Wheels 2:56 2-5 Billion Dollar Babies 3:44 2-6 Feed My Frankenstein 5:02 2-7 Only Women Bleed 5:12 2-8 School's Out 6:10
Alice Cooper - Primary Artist, Vocals, Vocals (Background) Michael Bruce - Guitar Demi Demaree - Vocals (Background) Tommy Denander - Guitar Nick Didkovsky - Guitar Dennis Dunaway - Bass Bob Ezrin - Keyboards, Organ, Sound Effects, Vocals (Background) Chuck Garric - Bass, Vocals (Background) Billy Gibbons - Guitar Parker Gispert - Guitar, Vocals (Background) Roger Glover - Bass Tommy Henriksen - Guitar, Keyboards, Percussion, Sound Effects, Vocals (Background) Steve Hunter - Guitar Larry Mullen, Jr. - Drums Adrian Olmos - Horn Johnny Reid - Vocals (Background) Ryan Roxie - Guitar, Vocals (Background) Jeremy Rubolino - Horn Jimmie Lee Sloas - Bass Neal Smith - Drums Glen Sobel - Drums Nita Strauss - Guitar, Vocals (Background) Chris Traynor - Horn

Some things never change -- the sky is blue, two plus two equals four, the sun rises in the east, and Alice Cooper will make albums where he sneers out spooky lyrics as long as he can draw breath. Cooper hadn't had anything resembling a hit since the mid-'90s, but the man clearly had no desire to retire, and though he was 69 years old when he released *Paranormal* in 2017, he still sounded admirably spry and hadn't lost his voice or his charisma. *Paranormal* was released not long after Cooper reunited with surviving members of the original Alice Cooper band for some surprise shows, and the advance word on the album had it that Cooper was going to write and record with them. While bassist Dennis Dunaway and drummer Neal Smith pop up on a few tracks of *Paranormal*, the two songs they wrote with him, "Genuine American Girl" and "You and All of Your Friends," appear on *Paranormal* as bonus tracks, and anyone hoping for a blast of sleazy glory in the manner of *School's Out* or *Killer* will be a bit disappointed. (Then again, when the Coop brought a bunch of the original guys on board for 2011's *Welcome 2 My Nightmare*,

no one noticed, so maybe the fans have faulty expectations.) While it features Dunaway, Smith, and producer Bob Ezrin (who was at the controls for Cooper's best '70s work), Paranormal more closely resembles Cooper's hair metal-flavored work of the '90s, though Ezrin has given this material a more up-to-date sheen. Thankfully, Paranormal is a livelier and more entertaining listen than Trash or Hey Stoopid, and while he aims for high spookiness on "Dead Flies," "The Sound of A," and the title track, he seems to be having more fun with wittier numbers like "Dynamite Road," "Private Public Breakdown," and "Fallen in Love" ("and I can't get up!"). The band delivers the goods with admirable precision and some honest enthusiasm, while the guests include Larry Mullen from U2, Billy Gibbons of ZZ Top, and Roger Glover from Deep Purple (and who would've guessed that those guys would ever be on an album together, let alone with Alice Cooper?). Paranormal isn't the return to form one might have hoped for, but it's no embarrassment either, and Cooper appears to be having a grand time while giving his fans a good show for their dollar. ---Mark Deming, AllMusic Review

After the cavalcade of risks and fresh sounds that populated Welcome 2 My Nightmare, Alice Cooper decided to circle back around to regular, ol' rock'n'roll of the type that everyone can grasp immediately. I'll admit to some disappointment that Paranormal doesn't quite see Alice reinventing himself for the umpteenth time, but with that said, this is a 27th album that is enjoyable and doesn't drag, so I'll take it.

"Dead Flies" and "Fireball" pick up the album with a fat, heavy, vaguely psychedelic blues-rock sound that Alice largely avoided back when bands like Deep Purple and Uriah Heep were hitting their stride, and one that, for this reason, doesn't feel like a return to roots so much as Alice simply trying on a new hat that's already quite old. That's not a knock, merely a curiosity, and I'd say "Fireball" is one of the highlights (no surprise that Dennis Dunaway receives primary writing credit). Paranormal mostly comprises like-minded nostalgia pieces: pounding, three-minute heavy rock tunes tempered in some measure of wry humor or raucous troublemaking. This album embraces a very comfortable sound for Alice; the songwriting follows from albums like Along Came A Spider and Dirty Diamonds, but with an even more polished and laidback production, taking Alice even further away from The Eyes Of Alice Cooper, the album that started this trend. "Public Private Breakdown" hits closer to the Alice of old, and the jazzy, upbeat "Holy Water" and ghoulish "Dynamite Road" (a descendant of "The Devil Went Down To Georgia," I think) make for good fun, with deliveries reminiscent of the last album.

Unsurprisingly, the two best songs on the album are the singles and nothing else quite reaches the same level of quality, but it is a great pair of singles. "Paranoiac Personality" has a stomping

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swagger reminiscent of "Go To Hell" and, yes, it sometimes sounds like "Cult Of Personality"; meanwhile, much like DaDa, the title track opens this album with a sinister and fascinatingly creepy specter that promises great things, if only the rest of the album would continue in that direction. Once again, not so, but I'd love to hear an album's worth of material done in the style of "Paranormal"; after the monumental power of songs like "I Am Made Of You" and "Last Man On Earth" from Welcome 2 My Nightmare, it's clear that Alice still has a lot to gain from experimenting with different styles.

Paranormal reunites the surviving members of the original Alice Cooper on several tracks, a move precipitated by "I'll Bite Your Face Off," "A Runaway Train," and "When Hell Comes Home" from Welcome 2 My Nightmare. Dennis Dunaway, Neal Smith, Michael Bruce, and Steve Hunter make scattered appearances throughout the album, but they join together with Alice as a band for two bonus tracks, "Genuine American Girl" and "You And All Of Your Friends." The two songs are stylistically quite similar to what can be found elsewhere on the album, but Alice himself sounds so much more enthusiastic to be back with his old bandmates, and while the songs aren't as conceptually interesting to me as the aforementioned singles, they stand a cut above the rest of Paranormal. I said I'd like to see Alice experimenting again, but just as much, I'd like to hear a full album's worth of reunion material.

Paranormal isn't a very deep album, and it won't take more than one listen to understand the album's spirit, or more than a few songs to sense the direction. Still, Alice is nearly 70 and can still make raucous rock'n'roll to match the best of them, and even on album 27 there are a handful of songs I'll count among his career best. ---ScreamingSteelUS, metalstorm.net

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