Black My Heart - Before The Devil (2005)

1 We Weren't Brought Up Right 2 What You Know About 3 My Way 4 Did It All 5 Remember Me 6 Tick Tock 7 Thick As Blood 8 Antonio Ricci 9 Before The Devil
Wheeler - vocals Tyler Joutras and Rob Wolfe - guitars Ben Snodgrass - bass Keith Dece - drums

Black My Heart, is a new generation hardcore band from Boston, that I had been hearing alot of buzz about at hardcore shows. After buying the disc, I can see what some of the talk is about, but the cd does fall short of the often used "amazing" adjective. Before the Devil is an above average release that has a fairly unique feel but still uses very common hardcore formulas. These songs will make for a fun live show more than they will wow through your car stereo. If you want a (hardcore) dance friendly cd with plenty of two step, mosh, and sing-alongs, you won't be let down.

Now if you are looking for over the top innovative musicianship, then look to another band, and another cd. This is straight forward "mosh n' roll" and these guys aren’t trying to be anything else. There are some pretty neat riffs and arrangements on this disc, the best of which (unfortunately) are found on the first track, so the album does plateau a little the rest of the way. Many of the later riffs and song structures while still catchy, will fail to stand out from eachother.

The overall sound or style of the album is drop tuned guitars, drop c. most of the guitar riffs are power chord riffs, not much in the way of single note, metal riffage. There is a very small amount of metal influence, but certainly not enough for the dreaded "metalcore" label. The vocals are a little weak on the album, they just dont have the guts of Jamey Jasta, or a Pete Kowalski, (but in fairness, the vocals sounded much more powerful live, so its possible that the vocalist has improved since the recording) Never the less, the vocals do deliver conviction to the lyrical themes of friendship, brutal loyalty, and being straight edge. The guitar tone is very

gritty and dirty, the playing is solid. There is a little too much of the mid tempo, Duun dun dun dun dun riffs however that just make too many songs sound too similar. The drums again, are extremely solid, he plays for the parts well, but, are nothing to write home about. The bass finds itself in the common role of bass in heavy music today, backing up the guitars.

The highlight tracks on the album are definately track one, "We Weren't Brought Up Right" due to some very effective tempo changes, and arguably the most creative riffs on the album. Track seven, "Thick As Blood" also stands out as a mosh pit anthem, with the climax of the song ending in a chuggy breakdown, led by gang vocals saying; "These are my friends, I have their backs, they are the closest thing to blood that i have" A solid recipe for a big "Pig Pile" on stage at the end of a set.

Production wise, the cd is a little lacking. When compared to the new hardcore/metal standard set by producers like Adam D. and Zeus, Before the Devil is below today’s expectations for album sound. However, the production in now way makes the album unlistenable and is much better than many hardcore and punk classics (Hatebreeds "Under the Knife) which were painful to get through.

This album is fun to listen to, even though the production might not fully get the bands point across as much as you might like. BMH does however slam their point right into your face during their live performance. This is one of the most intense bands i have seen live, they left EVERYTHING they had on that stage. The songs on this album are definitely meant to be enjoyed live, where i would dare you not to get sucked into a breakdown, or a pile-on sing-along. The reason for mentioning the live show in this case was because these songs were successful in getting the point accross more live than on the cd, so i would encourage people to check out a show before writing the band off completely.

In closing, the lackluster production definately gets in the way of this cd's songs' full potential. Seeing the songs played live gives you a whole new apreciation for them. With the staggering pro tools production standards, it’s hard to find a band that’s actually as good live as on disc nowadays. It’s too bad though that in this case, the cd production had to be a little sub par in order for that to happen. So in terms of the band wanting to write songs that can make for an exciting live show, the band has done the job, as far as an entire album that stands on its own merit when its just you, the cd, and the stereo... not quite as well. --- Burnyourface, sputnikmusic.com

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