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Artist: Hellfighter
Title: Damnation's Wings
Type: Album
Label: Heavy Metal Records



Without a doubt, a lot will be made from the fact that Hellfighter has a massive legacy to live up to in so far as it is an evolution of classic UK thrashers Xentrix, a band that along with Onslaught challenged the US dominance of that genre. However, to do nothing but compare their sound is unjust, 'Damnation's Wings' having a massive layered sound that is a long way from the often stripped back attack of their esteemed roots. What is instantly apparent from playing this album is just how good the sound is, an undoubted combination of seasoned and expert musicians and the unmatched production skills of uber producer Andy Sneap. Every note blasts out hard and heavy, but without sounding like it has been polished to death, a sign of the mixing expertise of said Sabbath and Hell guitarist and engineer to the stars.

But what of the songs that make up that sound? Mixing lashings of thrash with a strong traditional sensibility, Hellfighter deliver ten of the best new British metal tracks you're likely to hear this year. Album opener 'Tower of Sin' blasts out with in your face riffs and guitar squeals, masterfully supported by a concrete solid rhythm section, a quality of musicianship that is matched by the power of Simon Gordon, a man possessed of some of the best metal vocal chords in the business, easily the equal of a young Halford. This all out attack is followed by the deceptively gentle opening of 'A Lesser God', before the drums blast out with the beat that full sound that runs throughout the album without ever drowning out the complex twin guitar riffs.

Themes of distrust in religion and politics dominate the lyrics of the album, from 'Legacy of Hate', through 'Faith in Lies', and in the standout title track 'Damnation's Wings', the soaring vocals railing out angrily at an un-trusted establishment. All this culminates in the seven minute plus closer 'Firewalker' where the guitars are given free rein to develop some truly blazing solos to intersperse their neck wrenching riffs.

Hellfighter has produced an excellent album free from pretence and gimmicks, and laden with a power and anger that sets a challenge to any younger band to match. At the moment the band's website only lists two live shows for the year; a shame, as music like this demands to be heard live to inspire some epic moshing.

<http://www.hellfighter.co.uk>

Spenny Bullen

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