

WHITE HOT:

Angel is:

Frank Dimino – vocals

Punky Meadows – guitar

Greg Giuffria – keyboards, Moog, IIIIC Synthesizer

Felix Robinson – bass

Barry Brandt – drums

Produced by **Eddie Leonetti**

Engineered by **Dee de Carlo** assisted by **Rick Smith**

Recorded and mixed at the **Record Plant, Studio C, Los Angeles**

Mastering: **Bernie** at **A&M**

Remastered in 2009 at **Sound Performance, London** by **Andrew Thompson**

All arrangements by **Angel and Eddie Leonetti**

Studio rules, regulations and inspiration by **fabulous, fantastic Junior**

Syndrum by **Pollard Industries**, Polymoog courtesy of **Buck Munger, Norlin Music**

Choral backdrop on *'The Winter Song'* by the **California Boys Choir**

'Broken Wings' inspired by **J.P.G. & R.** yeah, yeah, yeah

Original cover concept by **David Joseph** and **Chris Whorf**

Photography by **Barry Levine/Mirage**

Original graphics by **Vito/Gribbitt!**

Cover portrait by **David MacMaken**

Reprographics by **CLE Print**

Hard work and well-deserved thanks to our tour manager **Bill Schereck**, and our crew, **Peter Oreckinto, Lon E. LeMaster** and **Barry Wood**. Special thanks to **Rose** at the **Record Plant** for all her help – and thanks to everyone at **Casablanca**; **Wally, Jimmy, Marilyn, Jeff, Bill** and all at **A.T.L.**; **Warren, Pat & George** at **Toby**; **Bill & Joel Jacobson, Denny Campbell**, and thanks to **Rick & Eddie** for lending us their vocal chords. Where's **Bruce**?

ANGEL

On Earth As It Is In Heaven

White Hot



DIGITALLY RE-MASTERED

IN ANY discussion on Seventies US rock bands, a mention of Angel would probably result in a blank stare from your average 40-something hard-rock fan. The band is not one that immediately springs to mind. However Angel have been re-evaluated over the years and are now widely recognised in classic rock circles as one of the most influential bands of the early AOR genre. They could almost define the term 'cult band'.

In their heyday they were that rare breed – a group of musicians that not only served up excellent songs and dazzling musicianship but also, just as importantly, understood stage showmanship. Aurally Angel bridged the late-Seventies gap between the earlier glam-rock fizz of Kiss, the sugary pomp of Styx and the contemporary technical pizzazz of early Van Halen. They also arguably paved the way for the catchy AOR pop-metal sounds of Eighties 'hair rock', as personified by the likes of Poison, Warrant, Winger and Bon Jovi, which dominated American music and MTV channels for a decade.

Angel had their genesis with Maryland-born guitarist Edwin 'Punky' Meadows. In the early Seventies, his band Bux gained a reputation on the live circuit around Washington DC, Capitol Records signing them up to record 'We Come To Play' in 1973. Meadows and bassist Mickie Jones quit soon after, unhappy at both Capitol and their management. The LP would not be released until 1976.

Meadows and Jones then teamed up with a highly proficient keyboard player from New Orleans

called Greg Giuffria. The trio looked to recruit a vocalist and drummer to complete the new and as yet un-named band. They found a drummer acquaintance of Jones called Barry Brandt, who had been in Jones' previous band Max. That outfit's Boston-born singer, Francis Dimino, was given the frontman job.

Deciding initially to call themselves (for some insane reason) Sweet Mama From Heaven, the far more simple Angel was soon agreed upon, inspired by the Hendrix song of the same name.

Angel started out playing the US club circuit, gaining momentum and quickly building up an underground following. After a showcase gig Kiss bassist Gene Simmons rang Casablanca Records President Neil Bogart at 3am in the morning, insisting he sign up the group without delay. Duly contracted, Angel soon set about recording their first album.

Under the production guidance of former Deep Purple/Wishbone Ash producer Derek Lawrence and legendary session guitarist Big Jim Sullivan, the quintet were soon hard at work. 'Angel' appeared in October 1975. With lyrical leanings towards sci-fi, fantasy and Dio-esque dungeons and dragons the complex, almost prog-style music was astutely counterbalanced by one or two more immediate commercial rock songs. The sweeping epic that was 'Tower' became a signature tune and their set opener for many years to come. Overall the LP was an impressive debut and regarded as one of their best.



The band's tours through 1976 soon garnered a groundswell of attention as word spread that not only had the band got the necessary musical chops but also an innate sense of showmanship. The band adopted an angelic appearance worthy of their name, all-white stage costumes and stage set proving Angel were aware of the need for visual entertainment.

The follow-up album, 1976's 'Helluva Band', was again produced by Lawrence and Sullivan and proved weightier and more developed than the debut. The supporting tour earned Angel the award of 'Best New Group' in the *Circus* magazine readers' poll that year, ahead of the likes of Heart and Boston despite the latter's huge debut album.

The third Angel long-player featured Kiss cohort Eddie Kramer at the production helm. Casablanca essentially wrote a blank cheque for the recording budget and March 1977's 'On Earth As It Is In Heaven' (Casablanca CAL 2002) was the result. Understandably, given that Casablanca was the home of Kiss, the album package was a reflection of the ultra-professional commercial and corporate awareness of their record company.

This was the first album to feature the amazing and easily identifiable Angel logo (conceived by fan Bob Petrick) where the band name could be read upside down as well as right way up. Musically the band's songs were moving onward too, away from the old fantasy imagery

in favour of a more easily digestible mix of rock and commerciality.

Album highlights are many and varied, from the Bowie-like 'You're Not Fooling Me' to the epic sweep of synth-heavy closer 'Just a Dream'. 'Can You Feel It' opened the album with a hard-rocking declaration of intent. The slightly funky pretensions of 'White Lightning' gave a nod towards Stevie Wonder's 'Superstition' while 'Telephone Exchange' is a nice change in pace, its tasteful melodic touch predating Steve Perry-era Journey. Drummers should check out the thunderous Brandt *tour de force* that is 'On The Rocks'!

The glam strut of 'Big Boy (Let's Do It Again)' nods towards Kiss, while what was left of the previous sword-and-sorcery direction can be heard on 'Cast The First Stone' and the Gothic melodrama 'Just A Dream'. Kramer's production work brings Meadows' guitarwork more to the fore than previous albums, keyboards providing substance and layering rather than softening the guitar's brittle edge. The album didn't sell well, however, attaining a Number 76 chart position.

If long-term Angel devotees were hesitant about the musical direction, the stage show took the band towards new heights of complexity and showmanship. Huge sums of money were spent on creating an on-stage concert phenomenon, with illusionist Johnny Gaughn hired to design illusions and tricks. As the over-the-top intro started, each show opened with the stage crew stacking Perspex boxes on top of each other,

forming five separate cases from which each member of the band would then miraculously appear. At the end of the show the band would then collectively step into a 15-foot album sleeve/platform behind a curtain which would rise into the air and suddenly disintegrate, the band seemingly 'disappearing' into thin air.

By mid-1977 pressure of work meant the band had started to fragment, with Mickie Jones' tenure over following their return from a tour of Japan (the only time Angel ventured out of the US). He was replaced by multi-instrumentalist Freddy 'Felix' Robinson, recruited from Californian band The Word.

Angel's ongoing quest for even more outrageous visual impact meant fashion designers were commissioned to clothe the quintet in ever more eccentric costumes. Punky Meadows even secured a contract endorsing hairspray! The band also founded a fan club along the lines of labelmates Kiss, called the 'Angel Earth Force'. Things were getting slightly ridiculous...

The new line-up toured the US constantly through 1977, pausing during October to work on fourth album 'White Hot'. Pressure was on the band to break big in terms of sales, as Casablanca continued to expend huge amounts in promotion and touring costs. Produced by Eddie Leonetti, 'White Hot' (Casablanca CAL 2023) saw the band take the direction started with 'On Earth As It Is In Heaven' several steps further. The album featured a collection of songs with unashamedly teenage lyrics and a more

accessible pop-rock sound. In hindsight the style was an understandable reaction, given the pressure exerted by a record company desperate to recoup its expenditure.

Released in January 1978, 'White Hot' was preceded by a Christmas single, the sugary 'Winter Song'. Recorded with the Californian Boys' Choir, the song was a gem of archetypal festive gush and, despite the band performing the song on the high-profile *American Bandstand* TV show, was a flop in the US, although Germany and Japan saw some success. Radio stations were bizarrely sent a promotional single consisting of a re-titled version of the same song, this time called 'The Christmas Song', with re-recorded lyrics. Sales for 'White Hot' were correspondingly poor, the opus stalling at Number 55 in the US album charts.

The first strident keyboard chords of opener 'Don't Leave Me Lonely' showed Angel could rock as hard as ever, although the other songs in this collection take a more mellow trail; the frantic 'Hold Me Squeeze Me' comes closest. The album-lifted single 'Ain't Gonna Eat Out My Heart Anymore' charted at Number 44 in the States (Angel's highest position) as Dimino vocally hints towards an almost Mott the Hoople sensitivity before 'You Could Lose Me' weaves around a 'Houses Of The Holy' Zeppelin-esque riff. 'Got Love If You Want It' strays into Santana/jazz territory for a few Moog-driven moments. The wistful, string-heavy 'Flying With Broken Wings' could almost be a John Lennon outtake, while I dare anyone not to listen to the

infuriatingly catchy 'Stick Like Glue' and not be singing it for days afterwards!

In hindsight, the album was attempting – with some aplomb – to straddle the worlds of hard rock and electronic-driven pop. The effort inevitably confused their potential crossover audience, where rockers saw the effort as 'rock-lite' and the pop world still dismissed Angel as a hard-rock outfit.

During the supporting tour it was obvious that Angel's real strength – for their American rock fans at least – was performance. A live album release was proposed but was shelved as the band got involved in the teen flick *Foxes* starring Jodie Foster, Scott Baio, ex-Runaways' vocalist Cherie Currie and Adam Faith. Filmed in 1978, Angel's part was relatively minor, the quintet playing the backing band to Currie. Two Angel tracks ('20th Century Foxes' and 'Virginia') were placed on the soundtrack album for the movie although the LP otherwise features mundane disco tracks.

'20th Century Foxes' was in fact Angel's commendable attempt at success with the disco genre and pre-dates Kiss' more successful 'I Was Made For Loving You' by six months! In 1978 the band worked on their own cinematic project, an in-concert film *Angel – Live At Midnight*, but this too was shelved and remains unreleased.

By their fifth studio record, 'Bad Publicity', the band members had ditched the all-white image, appearing on the album cover in 'normal' street

gear. The record company eventually revamped the cover art and re-titled the set as 'Sinful' before release. Musically, the album attracted praise from the press, but failed to sell anything like the units required. In early 1980 Bogart sold Casablanca to PolyGram, with Angel contracted for one more album.

Under new ownership, they decided to work up the live recordings made in 1978 for a double album. 'Live Without A Net', cherry-picks the best of two shows, from Long Beach and Los Angeles. Although over-produced, overdubbed and severely edited, listeners at least got some impression of the musical potency of the band, especially with the abundance of Meadows and Giuffria's guitar/keyboards interplay. Following its release Angel signed with the Leber/Krebs organization (Aerosmith's management), determined to emphasise the strength of their music and virtuosity in the future.

Despite a 1980 tour, and with no new record deal in the offing, frustrations in the camp began to grow. Robinson and Dimino both left, to be replaced by bassist Rudy Sarzo and ex-Trillion singer Dennis 'Fergie' Frederikson respectively. Sarzo was soon replaced in turn by ex-Babys bassist Ricky Phillips.

By now it was obvious to all that Angel had had its day, and the strength of continuity brought by the original line-up was lost. Frederikson left for Toto and, though Meadows and Giuffria seemed determined to soldier on and put a new band together for CBS Records, the pair eventually parted ways.

In 1984 Giuffria launched a new Angel, although he was the only original member. With his former bandmates threatening legal action over the name, a change to simply Giuffria spawned a deal with MCA and some chart success with a successful debut album. The project mutated into the mega-successful House of Lords by the end of the decade but splintered in 1993.

Dimino meantime formed the Ruffians before working with producer Giorgio Moroder and recording for the *Flashdance* movie. (One song, 'Seduce Me Tonight', appears on the soundtrack).

Dimino, Brandt and Meadows did team up again in late 1985 in an attempt to resurrect Angel without Greg Giuffria, but lasted only a few months. In recent years there have been several tries by Dimino, Brandt and Robinson to resurrect something approaching a bona-fide Angel line-up, one effort actually gigging in Los Angeles. In 1998 the latest reformation (Dimino, Meadows, Robinson and Brandt) released a new album called 'In The Beginning' online through the band's management, Giuffria's place taken by Gordon Gebert.

Although selling 'only' three million albums, Angel still occupy a position of significance in the history of American hard rock some 35 years after they formed. Now, if we could only find that lost concert film footage from '78...

Roy Davies
June 2009

ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN:

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Frank Dimino – vocals
Punky Meadows – guitar
Greg Giuffria – keyboards
Mickie Jones – bass
Barry Brandt – drums

Produced and engineered by Eddie Kramer
Recorded on location at The Emerald Castle, Hollywood, California
by Raymax Recorders
Tape operator: Rick Smith
Synthesizer programming: Dan Wyman
Tech assistants: Art Kelm and Richard Landers
Additional tech assistants: Peter Orecktinto and Lon LeMaster
Mixed at the Record Plant, New York City
Mastering: Allen Zentz
Remastered in 2009 at Sound Performance, London by Andrew Thompson

Original cover concept by Susan Munao and David Joseph
Photography by David Alexander
Original graphics by Gribbitt!
Angel logotype by Bob Petrick
Reprographics by CLE Print

Special thanks to Neil & Joyce Bogart, Joe Pollard, Gary Kellgren, Wally, Marilyn, Peggy, Barry, Larry, Susan, Linda, Phyllis and Kenny. And especially to our tour manager Bill Schereck and the Crew, Nick Kotos, Peter Oreckinto, Lon LeMaster, Michael Hefner and Charlie Batton