

from LET THE MUSIC DO THE TALKING (1980)

1. LET THE MUSIC DO THE TALKING 4:42
2. CONFLICT OF INTEREST 4:43
3. DISCOUNT DOGS 3:42
4. SHOOTING STAR 3:40
5. BREAK SONG 2:06
6. ROCKIN' TRAIN 6:02
7. LIFE AT A GLANCE 2:41

NON-ALBUM B-SIDE (1980) - never before on CD

8. BONE TO BONE 2:06

from I'VE GOT THE ROCK'N'ROLLS AGAIN (1981)

9. EAST COAST, WEST COAST 3:07
10. I'VE GOT THE ROCK'N'ROLLS AGAIN 4:34
11. NO SUBSTITUTE FOR ARROGANCE 3:25
12. BUZZ BUZZ 3:42
13. SOLDIER OF FORTUNE 3:06
14. SOUTH STATION BLUES 4:08

from ONCE A ROCKER, ALWAYS A ROCKER (1983)

15. ONCE A ROCKER, ALWAYS A ROCKER 2:58
16. BLACK VELVET PANTS 3:20
17. KING OF THE KINGS 4:02
18. BANG A GONG 2:53
19. WALK WITH ME SALLY 3:14
20. NEVER WANNA STOP 4:32

- Album compiled by Ian McFarlane, with thanks to Lespie' Larry L. • Issued by arrangement with Sony Music Australia and Universal Music Entertainment • Mastered by Warren Barnes at the Raven Lab
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THE the best of JOE PERRY PROJECT

the music STILL
does the talking



Needless to say, with such a heavy schedule taking its toll in combination with the prodigious drug and alcohol intake of various members, relationships within the band had been strained to breaking point. This period of dissent came to a head with the backstage row between Perry and lead singer Steven Tyler, which resulted in Tyler declaring "I'll never play on stage with that guy again!". To compound matters for Perry, the band's managers had just handed him an \$80,000 room service bill!

With no money, no band, no recording contract and no management to back him, Perry set about getting his solo career off the ground. He guested on some sessions (David Johnson and Gene Simmons), assembled his new band, the Joe Perry Project, which comprised lead singer Ralph Morman (ex-Durley Warburton), bass player David Hull (ex-Dirty Angels) and drummer Ronnie Stewart, and launched himself on the Boston college and club circuit. At that stage the Joe Perry Project was something of a rough'n'ramble affair, an undisciplined, raunchy bar-band playing a mix of Aerosmith songs, R&B covers and Perry originals in the same vein. Yet, playing the club circuit gave Perry the metaphorical shot in the arm needed in order to overcome his recent disenchantment, and to restore his zest for arena-level rock'n'roll.

By early 1980, Perry had negotiated a deal with Aerosmith's label, Columbia Records, who supplied a modest budget for the band's debut album. With veteran Aerosmith producer Jack Douglas at the controls, the band members crissed The Hit Factory in New York; within six weeks they had completed the album, and come in under budget to boot! Issued in March 1980, *Let the Music Do the Talking* was bristling of scabrous,



Joe Perry Project - 1980
(left to right)
Joe Perry, Charlie Farren,
David Hull, Ronnie Stewart.

swaggering, binky rock'n'roll. If tracks like *Let the Music Do the Talking*, *Midwest Days* and *Life as a Glass* showed Aerosmith's brash riff-heavy take on arena rock, then they were all the more exciting for their flaccid dynamics and barely contained rock energy. As the band's sole guitarist, Perry also pulled out all stops with his fiery licks on *GasBar of Interest*, *Shooting Star*, the funky R&B stomper *Reelin' Train* and the whip-lash instrumental *Break Song*. The band issued *Let the Music Do the Talking* as a single, backed with the non-album cut *Beer to Beer* (an instrumental retake of a song previously recorded by Aerosmith for *Night in the Ruts*).

With moderate support from Columbia, and virtually no commercial display, the album managed to peak at #47 on the US chart, selling a more-than-respectable 250,000 copies in the process. By that stage the Joe Perry Project had hit the touring circuit across the USA. Unfortunately, with his excessive alcohol intake

getting the better of him, the volatile Ralph Morman proved incompatible with the road. Notwithstanding his own legendary drug and alcohol abuse, Perry sacked Morman and replaced him with the testier Joey Mala (ex-Resolver) for the rest of the year.

With the band's touring commitments out of the way by December, Perry found a permanent frontman in the shape of ex-Balloon singer Charlie Farren. Farren was also an expert rhythm guitarist and songwriter, which helped lighten the load on Perry all round. Tuned to perfection after a year on the road, and primed to flashpoint by the arrival of Feltner, the Joe Perry Project was bursting at the seams to record a new album. Utilising the services of the Record Plant's mobile truck and producer/engineer Bruce Botnick, the band cut *For God the Rock'n'Roll Again* inside the elegant but decrepit Boston Opera House.



Despite its lousy chart placement of #100 (June 1981), the album remains the perfect synthesis of the Project's primal bar-band chops, arena rock aspirations and finely honed sense of rock'n roll dynamics. Hall and Farron contributed a couple of blazing, yet accessible rockers, including *Axe-Head* (Hall) and *Bad Company, Bad Company* (Farron) which were respectively lifted as the A and B-sides of the album's single. Farron also co-wrote, with Perry, the title track and the suitably named *No Substitute for Experience*. As for Perry himself, he contributed two of his strongest compositions to that time in the blazey *Sabbath of Pentons*, and the astonishingly agile *Smith Station Blues* which had started out as a 30 second piece called *She Wears Sluffie* that Aerosmith used to loosen up with.



With the album failing to sail, and Perry falling deeper into debt, the only response was to go on the road, which the band did for the rest of the year (supporting the likes of Heart, ZZ Top and the J. Geils Band). By early 1983, despite the tightness of the band's playing, Farron, Hall and Stewart had all handed in their notice, leaving Perry to pick up the pieces. When things fell into place, Perry described the new line-up (Cowboy MacGyver on vocals, Danny Hargrove on bass and Joe Per on drums) as a bunch of "young guys who don't give a shit, the wild men, fuckin' pieces. They just get in the van and go."

Naturally it comes as no surprise that, in a repeat of the legendary Aerosmith perchance for on-the-road excesses, the members of this Joe Perry Project are said to have gleefully abandoned all notions of decency. If the breathless reports of the day are to be believed, a roaring drunk Bill took to periodically parading around in the nude, creating havoc. Meanwhile, Perry was not unfamiliar with the Keith Richards state of rock'n roll revelry mode - pumped full of sufficient substances to not always know what was going on around him. The band's roadies also joined in the rabble-raising, all of which combined to get the Project banned from a string of Holiday Inns and locked up in jail on several occasions.

The stuff of which rock legends are made, to be sure, but not necessarily conducive to business (over show business). Amongst all the road madness, the band's tour manager, Tim Collins, managed to secure the Project a new record deal

with MCA. This last ditch effort to keep the band in the public eye failed, with the 1983 MCA album *Once A Rocker, Always A Rocker* falling by the wayside unpromoted and unheard.

It barely sold 40,000 copies. It's certainly the band's most unsexy album. Nevertheless its raw, under-produced and basically live sound helped lift tracks like the neo-Faces cover of *Black Heart Party*, the rilly *King of the Kings* and a playful cover of the old T-Rex glam classic *Bang a Gong (Get it On)* out of the mire. Possibly the album's prime cut is another of Perry's patented blues shufflers, *Never Wound Up*, in which the guitar master gets to show off his bottleneck slide technique to full advantage.

On the touring front, Perry's former ace partner in Aerosmith, Brad Whitford, joined the Project for a run of dates at the end of 1983. Having also left Aerosmith, and with his own Whitford St Holmes Band failing to get off the ground, Whitford contributed an amazing burst of energy to the Project's on-stage attack.

Unfortunately, with no record company support forthcoming and the band's reputation in tatters, Collins found it increasingly difficult to book gigs. The band continued to play intermittently into 1984, but by March it was all over for the Joe Perry Project. By then Perry (on the verge of being hounded into jail by the relentless L.R.S.) had patched up his differences with Steven Tyler, and the former Toxic Twins talked about going back together.

The reformed (and drug-free) Aerosmith went on to unleash a string of hit albums (*Precious Reaction*, *Pump and Get a Grip*, their first American #1) that

saw them in direct competition with a bunch of newcomers they had influenced in the first place. Then, after 10 years with the Geffen label, Aerosmith returned to Columbia Records for a deal worth a staggering \$10M. If the band's hit-making status wasn't already confirmed, then the icing on the multi-million dollar cake came in 1993 with the world-wide #1 smash hit *I Don't Want to Miss a Thing* (from the feature film *Armageddon*).

As for the Joe Perry Project, all that remains are three underrated albums, a bunch of tightly coiled, energetic rock songs (the best of which are compiled right here on this CD) and, no doubt, a mess of faded memories. The story of the Joe Perry Project is a classic tale of high hopes and expectations, of rock'n roll excesses, of excruciating lows and missed opportunities. Were it not for Perry's tenacious will to survive in the face of overwhelming odds, then this compilation may well not exist.

IAN McFARLANE, JANUARY 1999

