



Angel are (left to right):

**Felix Robinson** – bass; **Barry Brandt** – drums; **Frank DiMino** – vocals;  
**Greg Giuffria** – keyboards; and **Punky Meadows** – guitars

Produced by **Eddie Leonetti** for **327 Productions**. Engineered by **Lee DeCarlo**  
Recorded live at the **Santa Monica Civic Center** and **The Long Beach Arena**,  
California Record Plant, LA, Mobile Unit #1

Mobile crew: **Jack Crymes**, **Mark Eshelman**, **Peter Oreckinto**, **Pete Carlson**  
Mixed at **The Record Plant**, LA

Assistant engineers: **Rick (Ricky D.) Delena**, **Kevin "Bud" Eddy** and **Bill Fresh**  
Mastered at **A&M Studios** by **Bernie Grundman**

Remastered in 2006 at **Sound Performance** by **Andrew Thompson**  
"20th Century Foxes" recorded live on location at The Shrine for the motion picture "FOXES"

Tour manager: **Bill Schereck**

For their hard work, a well deserved thanks to our road crew

**Angelo Arcuri**: Live sound mixer; **Robin Meadows**: guitar; **Clay Giuffria**: keyboards;  
**Don Behrhorst**: bass guitar; **Hugh Horn**, **Steve Brooks**: drums; **Barry Wood**:  
Stage manager/wardrobes; **Timmy Meadows**, **Mike Francis**: back breakers; Sound by **Tasco**;  
Sound crew: **Graham Holmes**; Monitors/stage manager crew: **Chris Smythe**, **Brian Hendry**;  
Lighting by **See Factor**; Lighting crew: **Nick Kotos** – lighting designer;  
Electricians: **Abbe Rosenfeld**, **Skip Fisher**

Angel uses Ampeg Equipment Syndrums by Pollard Industries. Thanks to Norland Music and Moog and Robbie Knokoff

Original graphics: **Gribbitt!**

Photography by **Barry Levine**, **Scott Hensel** and **Ron Pool**  
Reprographics by **CLE Print**

# ANGEL

LIVE WITHOUT A NET



DIGITALLY RE-MASTERED



FOR A WHILE, it looked like American rock act **Angel** would break through to the rarefied echelons of the rock and roll Big Time, much like their managerial/record label mates **Kiss** had. They had much in the way of positives to back them up; they were part of the would-be 'M-G-M of music management' stable, **Aucoin Artist Management**, had a glorious stage act that didn't stint on pyrotechnics or technical innovation, and had an audience base that straddled the teen stoner market, and the teenie girls audience - and had better-than-solid musicality to soundtrack the flash bombs and dazzling light show - yet somehow never broke through. By 1980, which is when this excellent in-concert recording, **'Live Without A Net'** was released, there was a feeling that their moment had passed - although listening to the album, you'd never know it.

Angel's record company, Casablanca Records had been sold to the Polygram/Mercury Records conglomerate. Casablanca MD **Neil Bogart** - a seasoned US record industry pro who had cut his teeth at the Cameo Parkway label back in the early 1960s - had left to form the short-lived Boardwalk Records label. Inevitably, when a record label has been absorbed into a larger corporate body, the acts on that label, particularly if they've not pulled up trees in the sales stakes (and, ergo, probably owe their record company a big hit), are more than likely to suffer, if not get dropped. When Angel made their recording debut in 1975 with their sparkling self-titled first album (also available as a top-value two-on-one



collection with their second album on BGO), things had been set fair. True, they had saddled themselves with one of the most ludicrous images of any band in the chequered history of rock and roll - as a kind of wholesome version of **Kiss** but without the kabuki style face make-up, although, in terms of slap, **Angel** certainly larded it on; guitarist **Punky Meadows** even scored a sponsorship deal from a hairspray company for one tour. If the Angel image was over the top, it was at least underpinned by some dazzling musicianship - a playing skill more subtle (when it needed to be) and accomplished than the occasionally crude (both lyrically and musically) approach of **Kiss**.

From their first album, their classic **'Tower'** (featured here) was a genuine tour-de-force, with keyboard player **Gregg Guffria** displaying awesome musical chops, and guitarist Meadows being a powerful riff provider and musical counterpoint to vocalist **Frank DiMino's** stratospheric melismatic gymnastics - they had a sound wherein A Lot Was Going On, but their strongly melodic, tautly-arranged latter-day Prog Rock was also loaded with appeal. As time, and as record releases went on, the band adopted a more avowedly 'commercial' approach - and, if memory serves, even scored a positive album review from the NME's sharp-penned critic **Julie Burchill** in the process - but it brought no more than middling success, a lot of press coverage in teen mags, but little in the way of rock and roll credibility. Ultimately, they are perhaps best remembered in the here and now for the track





'Punky's Whips', by **Frank Zappa and The Mothers of Invention** – a bizarre moment in Zappa's history for sure, and for further info, just do a 'Google' search and see what results you get. So far, so what – but Angel did warrant more than this somewhat dubious claim to fame.

All of the band had paid their dues (a detailed account of the band's history is in the aforementioned two-on-one collection), and had come to the attention of **Kiss** bass player **Gene Simmons** when he stuck his head around the door at a gig in the Washington DC night club, Bogeys. Simmons had just played a show in Landover, Maryland, and was mightily impressed, putting in a call to his Casablanca Records boss Neil Bogart with his wholehearted conviction that they should be the label's latest signing.

Sign them Bogart most definitely did – except Simmons added the caveat that "Angel will never support Kiss", obviously feeling that the band's potent mixture of dazzling stage show, awesome musical chops and pretty boy looks could upstage their more vaunted label mates.

Bogart relocated the band to Los Angeles, and they began a punishing schedule of recording, promotion and touring. Typical of Bogart's method was to have the band release albums on a nine-monthly basis (initially), send 'em out on tour, keep the press fed with stories and little tattle, and keep feeding the audience with regular doses of their Angel fix. It was a punishing schedule, but the band weren't going to let this big break go.

They enlisted the technical support of some of Las Vegas' most talented prestidigitators (that's illusionists to you) to add gob-smacking special effects to their stage show. They became a hot live attraction, but a resounding breakthrough proved frustratingly, tantalisingly elusive. By 1980, when New Wave rock had bitten heavily into the American Rock and Roll beast, it looked like, for Angel, that their moment had passed. Even Kiss were looking like yesterday's men; both their *'Kiss Unmasked'* (1980) and conceptual *'Music From The Elder'* (1981) albums both failed to crack the US Billboard top thirty, it seemed that their time was up, too.

Casablanca was in trouble, too, so the signs were not good. Whilst Angel still owed the label an album, and no doubt not wanting to add to the negative balance sheet, they opted to dust off some live recordings that had been in the can since 1978, which had been bootlegged. However, the band did go 'overdub crazy' in the process of making the album release worthy. The Angel line up for this album was as follows: **Frank DiMino** (vocals), **Punky Meadows** (guitar), **Gregg Giuffria** (keyboards), **Barry Brandt** (drums) and **Felix Robinson** (bass). The shows featured were two performances recorded in Long Beach and Los Angeles, a bit of an Angel stronghold, and the album features a lot of the band's trademark musical jousting between Meadows and Giuffria.

The album track listing reads like a very creditable Angel 'Best Of', mixing material

band's first four studio albums – 'Angel', 'Melluva Band', 'On Earth As It Is In Heaven', and 'White Hot'. The lack of material from the band's final studio set, 'Sinful', reveals its year of recording – 'Sinful' was released in March 1979. It's the earlier material, however, such as 'Tower', 'Anyway That You Want It', 'Feelin' Right', and 'Rock & Rollers' that works best, but the infectious power pop of 'Wild And Hot' and 'Hold Me, Squeeze Me' still score high on the thrill-o-meter.

After the release of the album, the band split with their management, and signed with the giant Leber/Krebs stable, and ditched the white spandex and make up and sought a more credible musical direction. In 1980, they took part in the 'Rock Marathon' package tour, also featuring **Mahogany Rush**, **Humble Pie**, **Russia** and **Mother's Finest**. The idea was that each band would headline on a different night, but Angel only did so once – in Cleveland, Ohio, one of the few epicentres of Angel fandom. New songs such as 'You're So Cold' hinted at a positive new direction, but the feeling was of their name being perhaps irrevocably tainted.

Soon, the band's line-up unravelled – a sad, ignominious end to a band that held much promise. As with many of their contemporaries, they have reformed in recent years, still playing to a loyal US fanbase. 'Live Without A Net' is a powerful memento of their glory days, however.

*Alan Robinson, June 2006*

