

OCTOBER – NOVEMBER 1981

ROCK CANDY LEAFS THROUGH THE BACK PAGES OF THE UK ROCK PRESS TO BRING THE BIG NEWS ITEMS OF THE DAY BACK TO LIFE AND ANALYSE HOW THOSE STORIES REALLY PLAYED OUT...



Poll-toppers Rainbow live on stage at the Liverpool Empire, 3 September 1976

RAINBOW 'RISING' TOPS LIST OF 100 ALL-TIME BEST HM ALBUMS

DATELINE: OCTOBER 1981
MAGAZINE: KERRANG!

IT'S WEIRD TO THINK that Rainbow's second album 'Rising' was just five years old when readers of *Sounds* and *Kerrang!* magazines combined to pronounce it the finest heavy metal album of all time. Yet fully 41 years after its 1976 release, 'Rising' would surely have a great chance of topping a similar poll today. Nowadays we've come up with endless ways to classify the harder end of rock. But back in 1981 the definition of what was and what wasn't heavy metal was still up for debate. In 2017, nobody would dream of voting for Pink Floyd's 'Dark Side Of The Moon' (44), 'Wish You Were Here' (76) or 'The Wall' (81), let alone Lynyrd Skynyrd's double-live 'One More From The Road' (98) in a heavy metal chart. We think that's sad. Those were beautifully naive times.

BUT WOW... what a list. And what a Top Ten those readers voted for! In descending order they went for

'Rising', 'If You Want Blood' by AC/DC, Motörhead's immortal 'No Sleep 'Til Hammersmith', another stone-cold AC/DC classic in 'Back In Black', Saxon's 'Wheels Of Steel', 'Strangers In The Night' by UFO, 'Ace Of Spades' – again by Motörhead, another live album – 'Made In Japan' by Deep Purple, AC/DC's 'Highway To Hell' and, perhaps incongruously, the fourth, untitled, Led Zeppelin album. Rush's conceptual barnstormer '2112' and Black Sabbath's first album to feature Ronnie James Dio, 'Heaven And Hell', both stalled just outside this Top Ten, pushed out of the top rankings by no less than four live recordings, at the time the accepted vinyl validation of a rock band's stature. Whitesnake's 'Live... In The Heart Of The City', Judas Priest's 'Unleashed In The East', Rainbow's 'On Stage', Rush's 'All The World's A Stage' and Kiss's 'Alive' all enjoyed healthy chart placings too. So in amongst such a huge raft of live releases, a

lowly rating of 31 for Thin Lizzy's immense 'Live And Dangerous' is pretty astonishing.

THE NWOBHM was still making its considerable presence felt in '81, with Iron Maiden's debut album at 15 and follow-up 'Killers' at 32. Saxon's 'Strong Arm Of The Law' is at 19, the Tygers Of Pan Tang's 'Spellbound' appears at number 60, Girlschool's 'Hit And Run' at 63, Praying Mantis's 'Time Tells No Lies' at 91 and Vardis's '100 M.P.H.' at 97. Astonishingly, all of these albums are voted way ahead of Van Halen's immense debut at 99 and Aerosmith's almighty 'Rocks', which just sneaks in at 100! There was, however, no sign of Diamond Head or Venom, although Def Leppard's two albums, 'On Through The Night' and 'High And Dry', made relatively decent showings at 61 and 56 respectively. Missing in action? Alice Cooper, Budgie, Accept and Uriah Heep, all conspicuous by their absence.

ROCK CANDY SAYS...



HAS 'RISING' EVER BEEN overshadowed during the four decades since the publication of this chart? We think there's a strong case for saying no. You could argue that both Metallica and Iron Maiden have gone on to make the greatest heavy metal records of all. 1991's 'Metallica' and 1982's 'The Number Of The Beast' wouldn't raise eyebrows were they to sit at the top of a 'Greatest 100' chart today. But 'Rising's combination of Cozy Powell's thunderously heavy drums, Jimmy Bain's thumping bass and Ritchie Blackmore's neo-classical leanings still give it a punch that's hard to argue with. Add in Ronnie James Dio's widescreen vocals, together with keyboardist Tony Carey's epic texturing, and 'Rising' still has any

number of persuasive arguments for being the daddy of them all. It's not as frantic as 'The Number Of The Beast', not as grindingly intense as 'Metallica', but it's got old school heavy metal cred by the bucketload. Just six songs – including the ridiculous, heroic and brilliant 'Stargazer' of course – mean there's not a second of filler, not a moment wasted during the album's 33 minutes and 28 seconds. "There's a hole in the sky/Something evil's passing by. Like a beast in a field he knows his fate is sealed/He runs with the wolf, oh ooh." They don't write 'em like that anymore! To all of us at *Rock Candy Mag*, 'Rising' still sounds like one the greatest hard rock records ever made.

RITCHIE BLACKMORE'S musical path has since seen him take numerous left turns away from this classic HM sound, moving to pop rock with later incarnations of Rainbow and on to medieval/Renaissance music with Blackmore's Night. For years it seemed as if the guitarist was only interested in denying his past. But in July 2016 The Man In Black finally relented and returned to rock with a new version of Rainbow that also performs classics from Deep Purple. Ronnie Dio, of course, sadly died in 2010, so what many consider the classic Rainbow line-up can never be seen again. But it's staggering to see how many of the bands and associated members that populated *Kerrang!*'s 1981 readers' poll are still active in some form or other. How many of us would have predicted that at the time?

WHICH OF the rock bands that have sprung up since 1981 would make a contemporary 'All Time Top 100 HM Albums' list? Well the likes of Mastodon, System Of A Down, Avenged Sevenfold, Pantera, Rammstein, Slipknot and Lamb Of God would surely be in with a shout. But we'll have to wait until 2053 to see if any of them have the same staying power as the bands that dominated this particular poll! Yikes!



Photo: IconicPix/Alan Perry



Y&T putting out some of their "raw energy". L-R: Joey Alves (guitar), Dave Meniketti (vocals, guitar), Leonard Haze (drums), Phil Kennemore (bass)

UNDERDOGS Y&T STEP UP WITH 'EARTHSHAKER'

DATELINE: NOVEMBER 1981
MAGAZINE: KERRANG!

"**Y&T ARE KNOWN AS** the Oakland Raiders of rock," wrote *Kerrang!*'s West Coast correspondent Sylvie Simmons, drawing comparisons between American football – "a strange sport where big and mean boys in helmets and shoulder pads and embarrassing trousers run around" – and a specifically American strain of heavy metal where "grown men are liable to lapse into embarrassing crooning." Simmons meant it in a nice way, we reckon, because she then went on to add: "This lot have balls. They've also got curly hair and very nice spandex trousers."

THE RAIDERS, '81 vintage, were hugely successful Superbowl champions. In contrast Y&T, known originally as Yesterday And Today, had yet to scale any musical heights at this point in time. The band – vocalist and guitarist Dave Meniketti, guitarist Joey Alves, bassist Phil Kennemore and drummer Leonard Haze – already had a seven-year, largely undistinguished history behind them in 1981, but were all set to release their first album under a newly abbreviated moniker. They had a relatively small fan base in their native East Bay area of San Francisco. Apart from that? Pretty much *nada*. So why the somewhat tortuous comparison?

"**WE'RE SUCH** an aggressive band onstage and we put out such raw energy that it makes everyone think we're out there to physically beat somebody, like a football team," explained Meniketti, helpfully.

THE GROUP'S previous two albums – 'Yesterday & Today' (1976) and 'Struck Down' (1978) – had slipped out almost unnoticed on the London label. But the first fruits of a new label deal with A&M Records, 'Earthshaker', was about to change the band's fortunes. Y&T had spent two years writing and demoing the bulk of its contents before hitting the studio, though one of its soon-to-be showstoppers, 'Rescue Me', was a fairly last minute addition. And while the songs the band had written were definitely hook-laden and melodic, the album's raw, face-melting sound (produced by Bob Shulman and David Sieff) was a reaction to the generic, radio-friendly productions favoured by so many other acts at the time.

"**IT'S COME** to the point where all of these bands out here [*in America*] sound exactly the same," complained Meniketti. "The only way to tell them apart is at the end of the tune when the deejay tells you who it is." Sworn against making "middle-of-the-road" music, as Meniketti put it, Y&T knew their future depended on playing the long game. "We've been at that point [*of either splitting up or being forced down the route of seeking hit singles*] many times, but we're not giving up," Meniketti told Simmons. "We know deep down inside that we've got what it takes to make it happen. Hopefully we'll still get that shot." 'Earthshaker's 10 songs, full of highly energised yet agreeably melodic attitude, eventually helped Y&T move from Bay Area cult act status to Stateside household name.

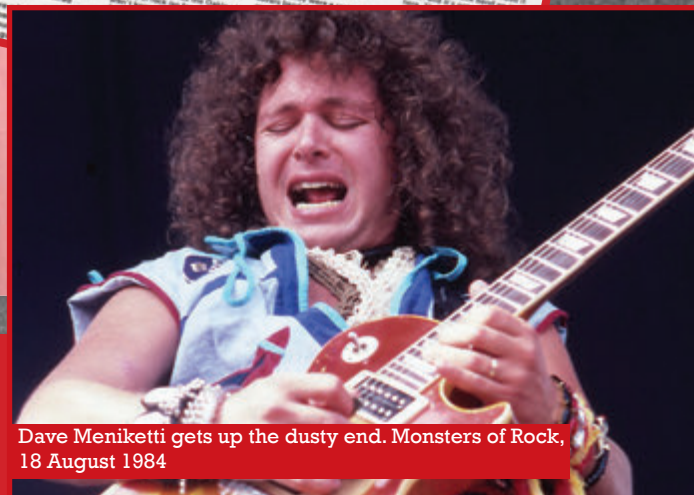
Photos: Getty Images/Paul Natkin; IconicPix/David Plattik

ROCK CANDY SAYS...

JUST LIKE THE OAKLAND Raiders' on-field fortunes since 1981, Y&T's long-term career has been up and down. Still considered by many as their defining statement, 'Earthshaker' would announce the band to the world in an impressive and forceful style. It was one of those all-too-rare releases that can be considered just about flawless; from its two drama-charged big moments 'Rescue Me' and 'I Believe In You' to the meat and potatoes bludgeon of 'Dirty Girl' and 'Hurricane', scarcely a note is out of place. Had Y&T been able to maintain such high standards on a consistent basis, we reckon they would have become an arena act.

TWO STRONG follow-up albums, 1982's 'Black Tiger' and 1983's 'Mean Streak' suggested that Y&T really did have the chops and the staying power. But inconsistency began to creep in around the time of 1984's 'In Rock We Trust' and their final A&M album, 1985's 'Down For The Count'. Ironically, given Meniketti's early distaste for radio rock, Y&T ended up recording songs that sat squarely in that bracket. 'Summertime Girls', from the aforementioned 'Down For The Count' was very well executed AOR fluff.

"**A&M WERE** great for us in Europe and Japan, but in America it was a different story," Meniketti explained years later. "They were constantly on our butts for us to try particular songs or ideas. Any other company that dealt in quality hard rock, such as Atlantic, would have broken us."



Dave Meniketti gets up the dusty end. Monsters of Rock, 18 August 1984

DESPITE MENIKETTI'S claim, new label Geffen issued two more studio sets, 1987's 'Contagious' and 1990's 'Ten', but were equally unable to turn Y&T into stars, as they limped out of the '80s and into the '90s. "There were drug issues, personal problems – you name it," Meniketti said of the group's break up. "For some of us, motivation was getting lost along the way."

THE BAND officially disbanded in 1991, got back together in the mid-'90s to release two more albums (1995's 'Musically Incorrect' and 1997's 'Endangered Species') and then reunited officially in 2001. Nowadays Y&T still tour and even released the well-received 'Facemelter' in 2010, their first album in 13 years. Sadly, Meniketti is the sole surviving original member. Phil Kennemore died of lung cancer in 2011, Leonard Haze also succumbed to lung disease in 2016, and rhythm guitarist Joey Alves passed in 2017 as a result of a bowel problem.

MENIKETTI HAS spoken of the emotional wrench of losing all of his original cohorts, but feels it's his duty to continue the band – now with drummer Mike Vanderhule, guitarist John Nymann and bassist Aaron Leigh. A documentary, *On With The Show*, featuring intimate personal footage shot over the course of the band's long career, will be released towards the end of 2017 as a tribute to Y&T's departed members.