

Marilyn Manson
The Golden Age of Grottesque
Nothing/ Interscope Records



By Dan Marek
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If you took every clown at a Ringling Brothers Circus, gave them a couple hits of acid every hour while sitting them in front of a television airing nothing but war, sex, drugs and religion for a straight month, you might just get a proper glimpse of the world Marilyn Manson creates on each of his albums.

Viewed as a hell spawn by many (the Church of Satan founder even gave him the title "Reverend"), this shock-rocker carved out a name for himself with 1996's industrial-glam *Antichrist Superstar* kicking off a style in music that dreary Goth kids could rock out to while keeping a communal connection alive with popular dark visions of death, sex and living life on the edge.

A strong proponent of free speech and a target for most middle-aged soccer moms (not to mention their Senators), Manson ran into political trouble in 1999 after many opponents blamed him for the shootings at Columbine High School and unexpectedly canceled the rest of an already unstable tour in support of *Mechanical Animals*.

Late in 2000 he released the somewhat autobiographical *Holy Wood* featuring Manson on the cover in a Christ pose missing his jaw. The album's theme revolved around the pressures of fame, government, religion and greed on a rock star melded between *Antichrist's* industrial edge and *Animals'* devil inspired operatic songsmithing.

This year we finally see the shock-rocker find steady ground. He's already scared the shit out of right-wing advocacy groups and now it's time to really have some fun. The *Golden Age of Grottesque* takes all of the best elements in Manson's past projects and turns them into an art-filled explosion of sex, hate, aggression and vaudeville freakiness that is sure to make your skin crawl with goose bumps.

Starting off the album with quite a satirical look at his shocking self with the opening line of "This is the New Shit," with "Everything has been said before/Nothing left to say anymore/when it's all the same/you can ask for it by name." Then, like a Coop "Street Rod" driving off the stage, the forceful break guitar plows over the chorus while Manson screams out to a responsive crowd wanting more.

Blasting into the first single, "mObscene," Manson continues his flair for creating a metal song that almost teeters on the edge of pop with washed out three chord guitars. The chorus takes on the Faith No More cheerleader chant from "Be Aggressive" and changes it to "Be Obscene, be, Be Obscene" in Oscar Wilde fashion.

Another dramatic change to his sound has to be accredited to the addition of co-producer Tim Skold (formerly of KMFDM) who replaced long-time bassist Twiggy Ramirez. With Skold behind the wheel on the production, many songs like "Use Your Fist Not Your Mouth" carry the classic metal meets techno crunch that Skold mastered on albums like *Boots*, *Attak* and the kidneytheives' *Phi in the Sky*.

For "Para-noir" Manson held open-auditions in which women were recorded while answering the reasons why they might sleep with him. The haunting voices behind his repeated four-line verse make the song sound like a slutty version of Sara Goldfarb's head in "Requiem for a Dream."

Those who buy the CD early will get a bonus DVD featuring a 20 minute noir-film created by Manson called "Doppelgangers," which features himself in various mind-tripping scenes including many with a sexed-up Siamese-twin adorned in true Manson-style nude costumes.

With the *Golden Age of Grottesque*, Manson bleeds his art like a freshly tapped vein and in its livid imagery, you have to believe him when he says that, "The genius of art finds sanctuary among children and madmen to survive."