

Greg Rapaport: *Wyrd*

2001, Rapaport / Splinterhead Productions

CyberHome: <http://www.GregRapaport.com>

Rapacious Greg Rapaport takes it straight to the listener on his 2001 release *Wyrd* with an onslaught of his unique brand of aggressive, hard-edged shred / metal. But, Rapaport does not limit himself to his speedy shredding metal. He also draws from other stylistic influences such as jazz and fusion, throwing in some well-phrased jazz voicings to contrast his thundering power chord riffing, aggressive sweeps, gritty patterns, and blazing runs. The overall affect is a coherent mix of shred and fusion that, though unusual, is pulled off without a hitch. The integration of the different elements that Rapaport pulls together are striking because they pull from genres that are typically viewed as segregated. But, this is part of what impresses me about Rapaport's vision because he has a lack of inhibition for boundaries imposed by conventional thinking.

Rapaport deploys crunching power chords that articulate driving, sometimes maniacal themes based on outside harmonies. Layered on top of this foundation, he projects a mixture of bold, searing melodies, raucous patterns, and unconstrained, speedy passages. But, Rapaport does not fall into the pitfall of narrow vision by limiting himself to these types of shred devices. He also integrates more conventional, straight-laced themes and jazz-oriented musical ideas. I'm not sure I would label it as fusion with the presence of the jazz element because of the dominance of the pugnacious shred element. But it is a sort of fusion that is closer to the shred metal end of the spectrum and is a little more raw and aggressive than the nominal center of the jazz fusion genre. The wide range of tones that Rapaport applies keeps the composition interesting and prevents the shred aspect of the music from becoming too oppressive or repetitive. I found this aspect of the music to be very important because it enables the music to stay interesting on successive listenings. Also, the clean, clear nature of Greg's playing kept the aggression real by not allowing it to get muddled in distortion as many shred guitarists fall prey.

The last track, "Dark Matter", brought a smile of understanding to my face because of the recognizable influence from Led Zeppelin's classic "Achilles Last Stand." Rapaport modernizes the original concept with his scorching melodies augmented with a more modern take on the development sections by applying advanced technique and blistering speed to drive his point home for his finale.

Greg Rapaport has a unique angle and vision that he approaches music. This unique angle allows him to present shred-based, hard-edged metal in a manner that merits consideration because of the manner he deploys it as a tool in his arsenal rather than as the objective. Rapaport fits his shreddy metal into a broader context that gives it a more legitimate value than some of the other shred players that give shred a bad reputation because they just run wild without real direction, precision, or musical vision. Greg's attention to composition and arrangement pays off nicely for the listener because it allows the music to transcend the technical by imparting a distinctive musical vision.

I project that shred fans will enjoy this CD on a large scale, provided they can accept shred that is not totally dominated by speed. Perhaps some fusion fans with an inclination for speed and raw aggression might find this CD interesting as well. Rapaport has done a good job putting this solo effort together with the uncanny balance he has struck between shred and fusion.