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RITUAL Valley Of The Kings SLIPCASE [CD]

Cena	51,90 zł
Dostępność	Dostępny
Czas wysyłki	3 dni
Producent	High Roller Rec.

Opis produktu

The history of Ritual is a sad tale of circulating rumors and sheer ignorance by the British music press. It is high time to get some things straight! Ritual could have been HUGE. Now, some thirty-six years after forming, it looks as if mastermind Re Bethe (guitar, vocals), bassist Phil Mason and drummer Rex Duval finally start to get the recognition they deserve. With their two albums "Widow" and "Valley of the Kings" having recently been blessed with a vinyl re-release by High Roller Records, the broader public begins to see the band in a totally new light: as innovators of a totally unique style of heavy rock music. But let's start at the very beginning. The year is 1973 ... the birth of Ritual is nigh ...

In the early '70's, in Great Britain outfits like Black Sabbath, Black Widow and Atomic Rooster played some form of heavy music labelled occult rock by the music press. Over in America, a group called Coven had shocked the public with their "Witchcraft destroys Minds and reaps Souls" album (originally released in 1970). The same year Sabbath unleashed their brilliant "Sabbath bloody Sabbath" longplayer, Gypsy Re Bethe set out to form his own band: "I don't think we ever classed ourselves as an occult rock band. I think we were more of a heavy rock band. But obviously we watched what was happening around us at the time. I think early Ritual was somehow influenced by Black Sabbath. You know, I wanted to do something that was a cross between Purple and Sabbath. Those were the only two rock bands I ever listened to, really. I think Black Sabbath and Deep Purple had it pretty right."

The very first live appearance of Ritual took place in September 1973 at "The Café des Artistes" just off Fulham Road in London, as Re Bethe remembers quite vividly: "It was sort of an underground rock club and it was just 50 pence to get in. That was the first sort of official Ritual gig. We played there quite a lot over the years. The first name gig we did was at a place called 'The Temple' in Wardour Street. We were on the same bill as UFO and The Pretty Things. A lot of the name bands were doing the same gigs as us. In London you'd go to the Greyhound or the Golden Lion and there would always be one name band and we would normally do support."

Ritual, however, was not the first band for the young Re Bethe: "Yeah, I played in a few bands before Ritual. Zeus was one of them. They were all quite small, not local, but semi-pro. It was not Curtis Knight's Zeus though, not the same band Fast Eddie of Motörhead played in before he met Lemmy. The Zeus that I worked with was very local to London. At the same time I was doing a lot of solo stuff as a Flamenco player. In London work wasn't easy to get in the clubs in the '70's. As a solo player you actually could earn more money. Basically, that was it, really." As a matter of fact, Gypsy Re Bethe is still playing Flamenco music today. "Yeah", he laughs, "I actually never stopped doing that. To be honest with you, I did not really expect it to last, once I formed Ritual. It was very hard to earn a living with rock music in the '70's and '80's in England. Therefore I was trying to keep up the solo stuff all the way through, really. My solo stuff has also somehow influenced what I was doing with Ritual. There are a lot of acoustic bits on the Ritual material. There is also a lot of light and dark and some sort of drama. I think that it is the drama of Flamenco which has influenced my approach to rock music. Even when I was a kid, I loved Flamenco. It requires different disciplines. Today's rock players come from blues and that kind of stuff. That's why people may ask themselves: why doesn't he do more technical stuff with Ritual? That is basically because I am doing it all with my fingers. It is just a different technique. The only person who is kind of close to me technically is Mark Knopfler. He is also doing a lot of finger-picking with Dire Straits, which is exactly the school where I was coming from. Flamenco players have to have two quite educated hands, not only one!"

In 1981, some eight years after having been formed, Ritual did release their debut vinyl, a 7" single called "Burning". It was put out by Legend Records, as Re Bethe recalls: "Yeah, Legend Records was pretty much our own label. We formed the label and had someone else to sort of run it for us. It was our idea. We put out the single and it didn't sell very many. But it did get a lot of airplay by Tommy Vance and Alan Freeman. They both really liked it. It got played on the 'Friday Rock Show' half a dozen times. I think we only pressed a couple of thousand, something like this. It just had a black sleeve with Ritual printed on it. But as I've just said, we sold very few."

When Ritual released their debut platter back in 1981, the legendary New Wave Of British Heavy Metal movement was already in full swing. Did the band see what was going on there back then? "Yeah, we did see what was going on with other bands. We felt that we were part of something. Ritual are often compared to bands like Samson, Quartz or Pagan Altar. But

actually we belonged to the generation of bands which formed directly before the punk years and couldn't get much work all the way through it. We were suffering from the same problem that all the other bands were suffering from. Trying to get a deal was impossible, trying to get distribution was impossible. It was just very hard. You could not get any commercial backing, it was really awful."

You might call it coincidence but at the peak of the N.W.O.B.H.M. other bands like Hell, Witchfinder General, Witchfynde or Pagan Altar were doing something quite similar to Ritual. The only difference was that, by then, Ritual had been doing it for well over ten years already ... Gypsy Re Bethe: "We thought Witchfinder General and Witchfynde were really good. We weren't too impressed with Pagan Altar because there were carried along on a wave of publicity. The actual substance, the music of the band, didn't really live up to the publicity."

In stark contrast to Ritual, of course. However, the threepiece did not have an easy time with the UK press at all: "The press used to write a lot of nonsense about us. Actually, they are still writing nonsense about us in the British press nowadays. You know, Malc Macmillan in "The N.W.O.B.H.M. Encyclopedia", he has almost re-printed the review done by Malcome Dome from Kerrang! word by word. He is still printing the same rubbish. I have got a couple of journalists on my list I really need to have a little word with one day. Music journalists in this country have a lot to answer for ... For instance, Malcome Dome in Kerrang! in 1983, he gave us the worst review I've ever read for anybody. Because of that we couldn't get distribution. It is people like him who are actually responsible for holding us back. We couldn't find a company that hadn't read the review. Talking of Malc Macmillan, don't get me wrong, it is a good book, that "N.W.O.B.H.M. Encyclopedia", but the author has insulted my name and my musical integrity. That kind of thing does not go down well with me at all. I don't really care, if he likes the record or not but if he hasn't got anything new to say, he should not have published what somebody else has said. In the thirty years since the "Widow" album I have not had one single phone call. Nobody has actually asked me about it personally. Everybody in London has heard of the band. We rehearsed at Rich Studios or at John Henry's. Those are two of the biggest, most famous studios in all of London. Malc has just not done his research."

What Re Bethe is talking about is basically the confusion surrounding the band's name, which goes back to the release of their 1983 album "Widow". 1,500 copies of the 2,000 albums pressed somehow got printed without the Ritual logo on the front cover, which led some people to believe the name of the band was actually Widow (and not Ritual). A fatal mistake which has found its way into almost all books featuring the band. Now it's the time for Gypsy Re Bethe to make things clear once and for all: "When the copies came out and they didn't have the Ritual logo on the record, some of them went missing. Most of the stock, however, was destroyed. Okay? When we lived in Richmond, in Surrey, we had a fire and a lot of the stock was destroyed. Somehow somebody got hold of the no-logo ones and then an enterprising collector perpetuated the myth to keep the price of the records up. Everybody knows by now that it is a Ritual record. That is just crazy! If I could be bothered, I mean, there would be so many lawsuits involved ... The "Widow" album has been bootlegged so many times, there is a Greek bootleg, all sorts of stuff, on vinyl and on CD. This week I found the album on two illegal download sites. I have never earned much money from the record, all I've had from it was a lot of problems. I had quite a few copies with the logo but unfortunately all the copies which seem to get out there are the ones with no logo. That is silly, isn't it? In one way that has given us a lot of notoriety. I can't complain, really ..."

Ritual did release another 7" single called "Into the Night" (with a black cover and a golden emblem on it) on Romany Records in 1989, followed by the CD "Valley of the Kings" in 1993. It seems the band never really went away, which is exactly as Re Bethe portrays it: "I think the band has always been a concern. It was always hard work for me, trying to find backing for the band. I mean, to be honest with you, it is such a struggle in this country ... What actually happened was, our drummer, John Gaster, died in 2001. At that time, we sort of stopped. But don't get me wrong. If somebody calls me up tomorrow and says he wants to organize a Ritual re-union concert, we would do it. That is not a problem at all. I could put the band on the road within a week. I would be quite happy to do that. Never say never." With only two singles and one album on vinyl, plus the mentioned CD, it might look as if Ritual did not put out releases on a regular basis throughout their rather extensive recording career. However, that is far from the truth, as a lot of stuff, especially in the '70's, has only ever been issued on cassette. A format which was still popular in the '80's: "In fact we really did put out another full-length album just on tape. It was called "Gypsy", that was back in 1985. It was very popular and I don't have a copy of that. That was actually quite a good album. It was done at Wave Studios in London, very expensive. We spent a lot of money recording it. On one of the records some production work was done by Lee Kerslake of Uriah Heep fame. He is an old buddy of ours. This is what I'm saying: How can people say they don't know who Ritual is? That is ridiculous. Just ask Lemmy! When Motörhead was formed, Ritual and Motörhead rehearsed at the same studio in Victoria, London. They rehearsed right next door, we talked to them, we knew them. In the studio on the other side, there was UFO. In the very early days we used to rehearse in an old pub in Battersea, where Free was rehearsing also. Those guys all used to know us."

With a band history of thirty-six years behind them, the re-releases of "Widow" and "Valley of the Kings" might only be the tip of the iceberg. Gypsy Re Bethe nods with his head: "Listen, there is so much stuff there, even very late stuff from two years ago. You know, we only need a record company to come along and say they would pay for this. And bang, you would have a new Ritual album. It has come to the point where I can't fund the projects anymore, it has to be done by a proper record company. I've got books and books of songs. I've got enough material for another three Ritual albums easily. And I've got enough material for another three or four solo albums."