

NEW WAVE OF BRITISH HEAVY METAL

THE SLIGHTLY OBSCURE BUT STILL MORE THAN WORTH CHECKING OUT

For those of you who may not be too sure – the New Wave of British Heavy Metal (or NWOBHM for short) was a musical phenomenon which arose towards the end of the 1970s in Britain. NWOBHM was (and is) highly influential, put heavy metal back on the map and spawned great bands such as Def Leppard, Iron Maiden, Diamond Head, Tygers of Pan Tang, Witchfynde, White Spirit, Angelwitch and a load more.

Whilst the above names might be the ones which are the most well-known from the NWOBHM era, the movement gave many, many other superb heavy metal bands which for various reasons had the chops but not the breaks. And they must not be forgotten, which is partly what this document is all about.

I grew up with the original New Wave of British Heavy metal. It forged my musical tastes which still remain to this day with a significant portion of my music collection being NWOBHM as well as “classic” rock as you just can’t beat rock music from the 1970s and 1980s in my opinion.

To do my little bit to keep NWOBHM out there I started <http://newwaveofbritishheavymetal.com> – on the blog you’ll find my own views and recollections from the old days of the bands of the time together with a sprinkling of news, reviews and stuff like that. Check it out – some people think it’s actually quite good.....

On the following pages you can read posts from the blog about some of the lesser known (but still great!) NWOBHM bands. Posts from the blog featuring NWOBHM bands you never heard of, think you might have heard of but can’t remember for sure, have heard of from the old days but have forgotten about, have heard of and want a refresher, or you’re a heavy metal fan who just wants see what NWOBHM was all about.

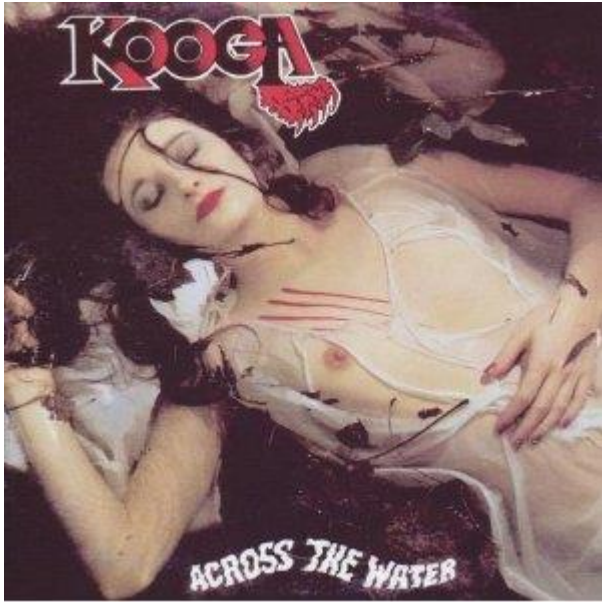
Have a read – discover (or get back in to) Kooga, Tank, More, Savage, Grim reaper, Vardis and some more too. And don’t forget to visit the blog

Now, scroll down and see what’s what.....

Andy.

<http://newwaveofbritishheavymetal.com>

PS: Don’t keep this to yourself.....please feel free to pass it on to your friends, give it away from your Facebook page, to your Twitter followers or anyone you think might find it interesting.



Kooga: Across The Water. Hidden Gem From The NWOBHM Days.

Ok then. Hands up. Who can honestly say they've heard of Kooga before? Top marks if your hand is up. And if it's not then here's something for you to discover. A vastly under recognised mini-classic from the fag end of the original NWOBHM. If one can call 1986 that, which was the year Kooga's sole album – [Across the Water](#) – was issued.

New Wave of British Heavy Metal might not entirely fit either. More like NWOWHM (that's New Wave of Welsh Heavy Metal.....!) with a bit

of pomp rock chucked in. Think Fire of Unknown Origin Blue Oyster Cult crossed with Grand Illusion Styx with a sprinkle of Point of Know Return Kansas. Well, sort of. It's a tricky album to properly pigeon hole other than to say it should have been bigger than it was. It's a storming slab of (now) re-released on CD.

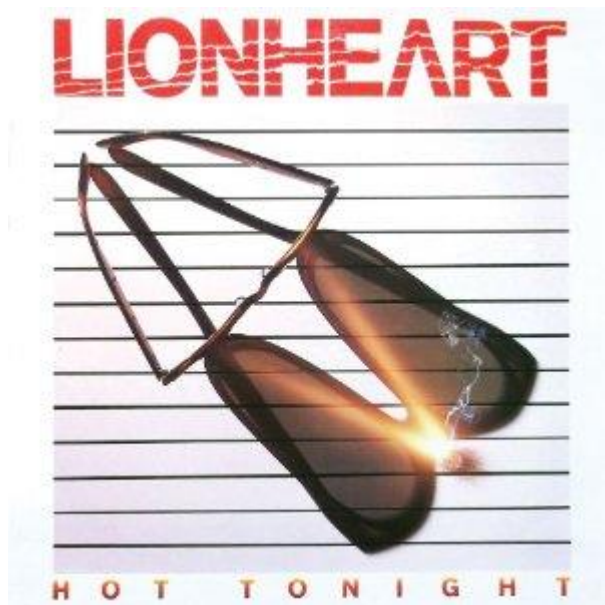
Kooga were so under the radar that the US Air Force got the idea for stealth bomber technology hoping to create an aircraft that was as invisible as Kooga was to the music industry. The band (to begin with called Preacher I think) originated out of Wales in the early 1980's building up a steady local following through gigging. The line-up solidified in to Neville MacDonald (vocals, guitar), Neil Garland (keyboards), David Howells bass) and Martin Williams (drums).

Realising that they needed to get out of Wales to grow, Kooga did just that and hiked around the UK touring and getting people to sit up and take some notice though sadly for them not sufficiently to bag a record deal until signing with a small independent French label, Black Dragon (well, at least a sort of Welsh connection – dragons and all that) who released [Across the Water](#) in 1986.

The more rock-oriented UK music press at the time (for example Kerrang magazine) favoured Kooga and the band played the prestigious reading Festival in 1987. And that's, sadly, as far as they went as after that things went in to a bit of a decline. Some line-up changes followed, momentum was lost and Kooga was no more within a couple of years of the Reading appearance.

However, pleased to say that today you can enjoy all they Across the Water offered for your aural delectation thanks to the CD re-issue. The title track chugs along at a nice pace with some nice understated guitar breaks interspersed with those pomp-style keyboards and on it goes from there.

You'll find it a real pleasure if you like your mid-80's predominantly guitar-based rock/heavy metal with a touch of AoR/pomp thrown in so think Grand Prix and Magnum as well as period BoC. Like Lone Star a few years before them, Kooga were another band from Wales who had all the chops without getting the breaks. More than worthy of a place in anyone's CD collection.



Lionheart Hot Tonight

And for today's piece of New Wave of British Heavy Metal (not so) total recall we'll take a look at [Lionheart](#). Suppose you'd call them something of a NWOBHM "super group" given the collection of various well-connected names which passed through the ranks and put out just the one album – Hot Tonight – in 1985.

Formed in 1980, Lionheart boasted Dennis Stratton (ex-Maiden) and Jess Cox (ex-Tygers Of Pan Tang) to give some weight to the "super group" tag with the line-up also consisting of Steve Mann (ex-Liar), Rocky

Newton and Frank Noon. A none-too-well received debut at the Marquee saw Cox shown the door with Rueben Archer replacing him. Archer was in Lautrec thus keeping the NWOBHM connection intact.

With the support slot to Def Leppard secured in 1981 it looked like Lionheart were set for the big time though the line-up changes were somewhat frequent as ex-Judas Priest drummer Les Binks replaced Noon who went on to Wild Horses as did Archer for a while then Clive Edwards came in the opposite direction (Wild Horses to Lionheart) shoving out Binks. Confused? Yeah, me too.

Anyhoo. It didn't quite happen for them although they did bag a deal with the American arm of CBS eventually which saw yet more personnel upheaval and a new singer (Chad Brown) and yet another butt on the drum stool in the form of Bob Jenkins. And lo, their one and only album was created. Given the band's rich NWOBHM pedigree, **Hot Tonight** turned out to be something of a radio friendly AOR-tinged offering perhaps aimed at the American audience.

Sadly for Lionheart, Hot Tonight did not do the business in terms of sales though the band did sterling keeping the HR department busy whilst temporarily soldiering on. Two former members of Grand Prix came in (Phil Lanzon and Andy Bierre) for a bit though it made no difference and Lionheart disbanded in 1986 after a brief but promising career.

Although Hot Tonight is not exactly out-and-out NWOBHM, don't let that put you off. Whilst more melodic than power-chord crazy, it is a fine piece of NWOBHM-related obscura (not sure if that's a real word) worth the curiosity of checking out. It's sort of in the [Stratus](#) territory – another NWOBHM "super group" of a similar time.

Hot Tonight has recently been re-mastered and reissued by the marvellous Rock Candy records featuring also (as they usually do) a page full colour booklet 3,000 word essay, enhanced artwork, memorabilia, rare photos. For NWOBHM completists or fans of period Boston/REO Speedwagon/Foreigner/Styx it's right up there.

Vardis. The World's Insane



OK then. Continuing the trawl through the NWOBHM days, here's a band for ya! Vardis. Oh yes. Who remembers Vardis then? Shame on you if you were around in those far away halcyon days when bands like this were springing up in every nook and cranny. However [Vardis](#) had more talent and musical ability than most, although like many of their counterparts of the time didn't make it as big as they should have

done.

Vardis originated in Wakefield (that's in Yorkshire folks) sometime around 1978 until disbanding in the mid-80s. In between that time they build up a healthy following and some recording output which is now quite hard to find. Main man Steve Zodiac (Fireball XL5 anyone?) could most certainly play guitar and play it very fast. Might have something to do with their debut album being called **100MPH**.

In addition to Zodiac (that's clearly a non-de-plume in case you were wondering dear reader) the band was made up of Alan Selway (bass) and Gary Pearson thumping the tubs. Frantic gigging soon gained them a reputation of a live act not to miss not least because of Zodiac's guitar work but also his stage look. Barefoot, bare chested, long blond hair. Musically it was somewhere between Motorhead, Hendrix and a bit of glam too.

An attempt to capture the frenetic live shows was made with the release of **100MPH** – a debut live album. Got them noticed too and they took the stage at the Heavy Metal Holocaust held at Port Vale's football stadium in 1981 with such heavy metal luminaries as Ozzy Osbourne, Triumph and Mahogany Rush.

A second album was released by the name of **The World's Insane** though then the not-unfamiliar rock band curse of "management difficulties" started to eat away at things with the end coming a few years later. Vardis dissolved in the mid 1980s amid lengthy legal disputes with former management.

I have some recollection of seeing Vardis on a couple of tours supporting bigger names. One of them might have been Hawkwind, one might have been Rory Gallagher though I am happy to be corrected if I've got that wrong. Well, it was over thirty years ago.



Tank : War Nation

Here's yet another NWOBHM original with considerable longevity. Tank. Still active with a new album – [War Nation](#) – just released. Formed all the way back in 1980 by former Damned member Algy Ward, Tank do display some punk influences which was often compared to Motorhead.

Algy started things off as a bit of a power-trio together with Pete Brabbs (guitar), and Mark Brabbs (drums) before adding a second guitarist – Mick Tucker around 1983. This was a reasonably stable line-up apart from a Spinal

Tap-esque rotating drum stool with skin beaters coming and going. In true Mick Shrimpton style Mark Brabbs rejoined oh so briefly a couple of years ago. He didn't hang around long with even ex-Helloween tub thumper Mark Cross putting in a stint. As I type I think Steve Hopgood is in situ and/or played in the new album though I'm a bit confused and things could have changed before I post this.....

Even Algy isn't there today. Ex-Rainbow/Malmsteen and various others vocalist Doogie White on shouting duty. But does it matter – it's just great that Tank lives on adding to the New Wave of British Heavy Metal legacy. Oh – almost forgot – recording output.

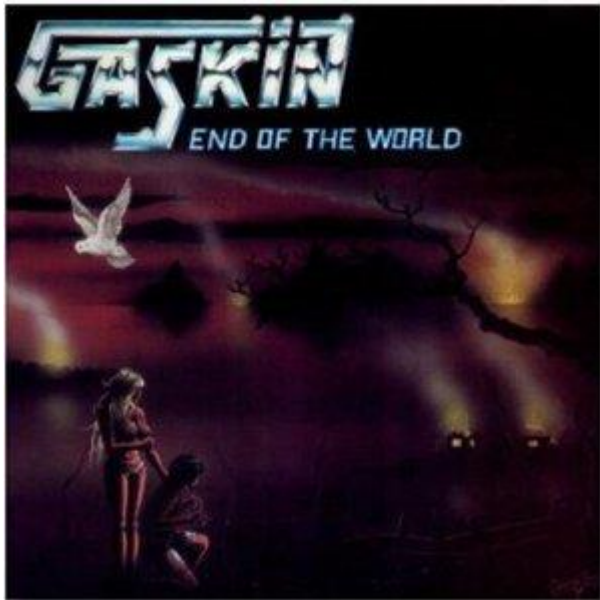
The debut album engagingly titled Filth Hounds of Hades appeared not long after formation reasonably quickly followed by The Power of The Hunter. Both classic NWOBHM and hard to find these days though it can be done. Try the box set – I think that has everything in there.

Regular albums appeared through This Means War, Honour and Blood. During this spell they were up there on the brink of big things even bagging a support slot with Metallica on a European tour. Another album – simply entitled Tank – appeared in 1987 though after that I guess the band took what we'll call a lengthy sabbatical before bursting out again with a comeback album Still At War. And continuing with the military themed titles War Machine sprouted forth a couple of years ago.

And so it goes on with Tank still busy and still recording with [War Nation](#) out earlier this month. Mightily well received it is too. Doogie of course is a great vocalist. Everyone's on top form and it's crisp heavy metal all the way with things bang up to date. No living in the past here (though the old stuff's great too.

Check them out and discover another in the long link of NWOBHM-era bands who had and still have) the chops without enjoying the breaks.

>> TANK: WAR NATION. AND MORE TANK CDs HERE <<



Gaskin End of the World

And now here's a bit of a potted history of Gaskin. Yet another NWOBHM pioneer act who promised much for a relatively short time without getting the breaks. Taking their name from their very talented lead guitarist – Paul Gaskin – they formed in 1980 when the New Wave of British heavy Metal was arguably at its peak.

Along with leader Paul, the other members way back then were Stef Prokopczuk and Dave Norman. They cut a demo in 1980 which was engineered by Ron Neave who had a connected

with another NWOBHM band named Witchfyde (a personal favourite of mine – check out the article about them on this blog). Through the Neave connection Gaskin talked with Rondolet records (Witchfynde's label) though nought was to come of that as I recall.

Gaskin was somewhat championed to an extent by the legendary Neal Kaye who is said to have advised them to get themselves a frontman on the vocals to free up Paul Gaskin for guitar duties only. Steve Mills would eventually become that frontman. Touring with classic rock band Wishbone Ash and fellow NWOBHM'ers Girlschool didn't do them any harm.

In 1981 a single was released which was followed by their debut album entitled **End of the World**. And that's about the time it all started to go wrong. Various line-up changes ensued over the usual stuff like musical differences and direction. A new line up recorded their follow-up to End of the World which came out in 1982 and entitled No Way Out. Despite being good stuff – a sort of Judas Priest (ish) style though with a sound of its own – both Gaskin albums didn't see too much commercial success.

After No Way Out the Gaskin did struggle on with more revolving door style comings and goings on the personnel front though enough became enough with a farewell gig in Scunthorpe.

It proved not to be quite farewell as almost two decades later with NWOBHM enjoying a bit of a renaissance some Gaskin stuff found its way on to compilations and the like and Gaskin was resurrected and even played at the Wacken festival at one point. Sporadic activity followed with various rumblings about new recordings though nothing has seen the light of day other than the issue of Stand or Fall which is a sort of "comeback" album from 2000. Quite an oddity these days and good luck if you can find a copy.

Despite Paul Gaskin's abilities as a guitarist, that alone wasn't enough to see the band through to success in the NWOBHM hotbed of the time and they became somewhat lost in the chatter. A

shame as their two albums stand up with anything else with the debut – End of the World – (for me) the best of the two with some great guitar work.

>> MORE ABOUT GASKIN'S END OF THE WORLD ON AMAZON <<



Witchfinder General Friends of Hell.

Witchfinder General was but just one of many influential bands of the NWOBHM scene and perhaps a pioneer of what would become Doom Metal – arguably a more intensified version of heavy metal, evoking a sense of impending doom and despair. Growling and screaming are typically performed as vocals, given traditional doom metal additionally emphasizes desperation and pain.

Their music back then was both raw and powerful with the band being arguably better known for their album covers give their

controversial nature and depictions. Think what Spinal Tap wanted for Smell The Glove then add a bit and you'll be in the general area. The image of the [Friends of Hell](#) cover (to the left) will give you an example.....!

The band originated from Stourbridge, England circa 1979. Heavy Metal Records, being only recently established in 1978, initiated their career through recording and releasing the band's first album "Burning a Sinner". The original line-up featured Phil Cope on guitar, Zeeb Parkes as vocals, Johnny Fischer as bass guitarist, and Steve Kinsell on the drums. Steve Kinsell, Phil Cope, and Rod Hawkes had experience in the band scene as they performed in a band known as "Electrode" at a young age.

Steve Kinsell and Phil Cope were cousins, and both 16 years old when Witchfinder General started to form. The first gig the band had was located at a pub known as "The Crown". These were just kids performing on a stage, unknown to the audience in the though the performance would put them on the road to NWOBHM path beaters.

The band's popularity was fuelled not so much by the actual music they recorded, but the controversial sleeve art on the covers of their albums. On Soviet Invasion EP, the cover featured a photograph of a graveyard mock-sacrifice scene with a somewhat well known model posing covered in blood- practically nude. The band gained much publicity from the cover work, and the UK tabloids had a fit over the controversy.

When the album Friends of Hell was released in 1983, the cover work featured not one but multiple topless models being sacrificed in the front yard of a church. Witchfinder General was not acknowledged for its involvement in the forefront of NWOBHM until long after the group disbanded in 1984.

They did reform in 2006, without the return of Zeeb Parkes, and had some success with their new album "Buried Amongst the Ruins" with Gary Martin as the new vocalist. Although the band would not tour live again, they did release another album titled "Ressurrected" in 2008.

WitchFinder General has remained largely inactive since 2008 though their legacy as NWOBHM pioneers lives on and their early stuff – and those risqué covers – are still available if you're curious. If you like Sabbath with a sense of humour you'll find this lot right up your street.

>> CHECK OUR FRIENDS OF HELL ON AMAZON <<



Savage Sons of Malice

Savage is yet another band from the NWOBHM days enjoying something of a renaissance as the genre's resurgence in popularity continues. After a ten year hiatus, Savage is back with a new album entitled [Sons of Malice](#), but first a brief history lesson.

The band originate from the Mansfield area. A mini-NWOBHM hotbed at the time with, as I recall, Witchfynde being from around the corner just the other side of the A38/M1 junction in to Derbyshire.

Perhaps best remembered for what over the years has become a signature song – Let it Loose – Savage chugged along in fits and starts with talent hampered by smallish record companies they signed with not really having the muscle or resources to back the band with big money. Not an unusual occurrence back then.

Aligned with Ebony Records, early recording output in/around 1982 included their debut album entitled "Loose And Lethal. Critical and press acclaim followed though without the record label support to follow that through, Savage left Ebony in favour of Zebra Records.

Some impressive touring support slots were secured – notably opening for Metallica in the US which was followed by an EP and a second album – Hyperactive issued in 1985 – though things started to dwindle away and Savage all but disappeared for ten years or so until a couple of small beer label releases in the mid-1990s.

Spring forward another decade and a bit – and Savage are back with a hot new album, Sons of Malice. Reports suggest it's classic old school NWOBHM and it's always great to see a band from "back then" doing good stuff now. The New Wave of British Heavy Metal never goes away....!

[CLICK HERE TO CHECK OUT SONS OF MALICE BY SAVAGE](#)



Grim Reaper – See You In Hell

Grim Reaper burned briefly but brightly in the NWOBHM days and enjoyed some commercial success in America rather than here in the UK. Formed by very talented guitarist Nick Bowcott, **Grim Reaper** could also boast a fine singer in Steve Grimmett. However a short career was marked by just a two album output – but fine albums they were.

An initial one track offering – The Reaper – appeared on the notable Metal For Heroes compilation stood out from most of the other stuff and the band toured and toured playing

small venues up and down the UK.

Next was a recording deal with the independent label Ebony and the release of the debut offering entitled See You In Hell in 1984. This was picked up and given worldwide distribution by the powerful RCA label.

Touring followed which included a performance at the Texxas Jam to a massive audience. A second album was then recorded and released – Fear No Evil – which had more than respectable sales mainly in America and mainland Europe.

Respectable sales indeed with **See You In Hell** selling in the region of 250,000 copies and breaking in to the top 100 album charts in the US. Sadly for Grim Reaper, the follow-up album did not match the sales of their debut album. RCA's support dwindled and without that the band had little hope of a breakthrough and became yet another notch in the "could have and should have had more success" column which is filled with many of their NWOBHM-era contemporaries.

The metaphorical towel was not thrown in and grim reaper slugged on with an all or nothing third album in 1986 Rock You To Hell. It was far from badly received and did, all too briefly, appear in the lower reaches of the US top 100 albums chart. And that was that for Grim Reaper.

However such is the resurgent interest in all the good stuff from the New Wave of British heavy Metal days you can get your ears around Grim Reaper and see, well hear, how good they were. Great artwork too!

[CLICK HERE TO DISCOVER GRIM REAPER ON AMAZON](#)



More: Blood And Thunder But No Success

More was another New Wave of British Heavy Metal band that had all the talent but none of the breaks. Just two albums – [Warhead](#) and Blood and Thunder – before it was all over in a mess of management and legal issues. Thought for a while it did look like their chops would take them far.

Believe it or not, original vocalist Paul Day was briefly in a very early incarnation of Iron Maiden as both bands have London roots. More gigged far and wide building up a following and

noticed by all the “right” critics. They contributed one track – Soldier – to a compilation album Metal Explosion which was one of many that would appear to cash in on the MWOBHM phenomena.

A signing to big label Atlantic followed and produced their debut Album entitled [Warhead](#). Such was the band’s emergence at this time that they even got to open the Monsters of Rock festival at Castle Donnington on 1981. I might even have been there – can’t remember – went to a few back then though who was on I have no idea it was so long ago. But that doesn’t matter.

On the back of Donnington and support slots with some of the major names of the day it did look like More could have it all and recording began on what would become their second album – Blood and Thunder. However in true rock music tradition this is when it started to fall apart. Day got a better offer and went off during recording to join Wildfire.

In came new vocalist Mick Stratton though apparently re-wrote the lyrics causing some delay in recording. Other line-up changes came about before the album saw the light of day and changes didn’t stop there with perhaps the most notable one being Laurie Mansworth leaving to form Airrace.

And that was pretty much that for More and even a couple of attempted reformations came to naught.

Whilst it is always a shame to see a NWOBHM band who could have risen from the pack not doing so for various reasons, the better news is that the band’s brace of albums have been re-issued and can be enjoyed again. I hope they sell truck loads.

[PLEASE CLICK HERE TO CHECK OUT THE MORE RE-ISSUES ON AMAZON](#)