

A review of maybe the worst album of all time

First off, let me lay it straight: I think most forms of Satanism in general are about as pernicious as a Weevil in my trusty bag of Signature Range Weetbix. In particular, the more theatrical forms of nefariousness (and it is pretty easy to tag Anton LaVey's Church of Satan as such) are perhaps most fittingly measured inversely against other pseudo-modern theologies, for instance the noxious brand of evangelism Jerry-built preacher Brian Tamaki propounds from his bling bling pulpit, very convincingly providing the act of faith with a bad name. Strangely, invert this model and I'm sure you'd possibly be close to Anton LaVey.

What am I talking about here anyway? Well, I believe I may have recently downloaded and listened to one of the most terrible (or close to it) LPs of all time, Anton Szandor LaVey's (1930-1997) 1995 album *Satan Takes a Holiday*. Give it a whirl (you may want to indeed use it as a frisbee) – it should be easy to find free to download on-line although it's also been recently re-released on CD due to enormous popularity with Satanists of varied ilks no doubt.

Apparently recorded in his kitchen on a porta-studio, it shows. LaVey is often rumoured to be the true identity of famous yet mysterious 50s organist Georges Montalba, a legend which humorously owes a lot to the grandiose, dishonest king-making habits of his organization. The talent of a great organist in this instance is sadly lacking however. The only ditty I was capable of sitting through is the classic Tommy Dorsey-penned title track which rounds up the album and on which LaVey thankfully doesn't sing, providing however the repetitive pulse of cheesy backing organ for the singer's hilarious female soubrette, delivered in old-school burlesque fashion:

The Devil started dancin'
He was entrancin'
When he did the "Jangle: his own way
His bones were rattlin' loudly,
As he began to shuffle proudly,
That's the way that Satan takes a holiday

Growing up in Whangamata on the Coromandel Peninsula as a teenager, there still existed the archetype of post war old timers living out their days peacefully. One day when I was about fifteen, I got sucked in to visiting one of the neighbours. Bill wrote poems of the old mining days and lovingly recorded these to into his mono tape deck, accompanied by ukulele. Bill and I had no doubt regarded each other as old man and annoying teenager. But we had anyhow become fast friends after he discovered I had severely face planted in the nearby walkway one evening due to a barrier pole the council had injuriously erected just before dark that very



Anton Szandor LaVey. Image taken from Not Like Most magazine. <http://www.purgingtalon.com/nlm/>

day. The same pole, as it turned out, had apparently caused a bruising encounter with Bill's scrotum the same evening, being placed at such convenient height. I had henceforth become Bill's weapon in fighting the local Council. So I got kind of stuck there for a few hours occasionally with Bill and his cool pair of usually caged love birds. Ever since those visits I've had a relatively keen ear for nice old guys and their reminiscences. In other words, I'm no snob to Burl Ives for instance nor to any 'ole' timers provided they are talented or least interesting. Anton LaVey is, for me anyway, no such old guy.

So far I've written this review without listening to the album again. Really, there is so much better stuff to listen to. Man, this album just depresses me. I thought it was funny for a couple of listens. I've thousands more tracks to listen to, so why has it been haunting my iTunes library for months

now? Such is the way of real bad albums. I guess we savor such moments of vulgarity occasionally for varied reasons and purposes, some of which I'll attempt to address soon.

Anton LaVey was a dyed-in-the-wool charlatan. Founder of the very dubious organization The Church of Satan, LaVey is not scary compared to much cooler Satanists like Alastair Crowley and Kenneth Anger (my faves); but in a sense one has to admire LaVey's dubious lifetime of obtuse achievements in the theatrical sense at least (he was sharp enough for Marilyn Manson to jump on board as a COS priest). After spending a few minutes looking over his resume one thinks LaVey could have been a cool artist had he applied himself to a Bataillean concept of Pop or Surrealism. As the stories go, LaVey's life was apparently one big lie. He claimed at various times to have slept with Marilyn Munroe, been a city hall organist (including being the 'pseudonymous' Georges Montalba), a police photographer and a psychic investigator among other things. All of these claims, I should mention, are highly disputed.

I can't recommend sitting right through Satan Takes a Holiday in case you head off down the road to strangle house cats or something like Black Sabbath may have reputedly induced in the 70s (due to back-masking or something). But in a way really awful music is good for you – at least for making undesirable visitors depart your premises on schedule. It's like suffering Paul Holmes after eating well-salted greens with your grandparents. Perhaps that's what this late Prince of Darkness secretly intended it for. I can imagine the subliminal message if you rolled it backwards at the right spot could amount to: "go home now, we don't like you here in our home anymore, this music scares you" playing secretly in reverse to his awful rendition of Nat King Cole's 'The more I see you.'

As an 80s/90s teenager, I was your run of the mill dumb ass country kid. For a while I was headed down the path of becoming a puritan, scared by devil worshiping stories about The Eagles and the Beatles White Album. Later on my proudest possessions were punk mix tapes dubbed together from mates respective visits to Auckland. Had I not adopted Jello Biafra, Sonic Youth, Black Flag and for a short while, Death Metal, I hesitate to think what sort of nationalistic loser I may have been by now. Religion wise, I hesitate very briefly to describe myself most likely as an Agnostic Humanist, hence anything to do with questioning moral and social structures was of interest to me from a relatively young age.

This self-searching brings me around to why I downloaded the thing in the first place – a kind of inverse sentimentality. These days I can look back mostly in humour recalling the ill-fated trip to Taumaranui around '93 when we got stoned on strong Coromandel weed, on the road in a mate's Mitzi Mirage. Somewhere around Matamata into the head deck was inserted a dubbed tape of militaristic bagpipes which, probably due to some no doubt troubled elder brother, had an insane LaVey spoken word LP on the reverse side, for all I know possibly containing some infamous Satanic Rites. The

King Country was never so outrageously evil to me and such a complete freak out ensued that it has always stayed with me. Fittingly, the trip was to become a disaster of decent proportions for our smelly young hides.

After the hell voyage into National country, we ended up at a party in Taumaranui. The venue was great – a freezing old house out in a paddock with the local first fifteen, surrounded by crates of Lion Red and Waikato. It was a dilapidated old villa exactly like the one in that recent drink-driving ad, with the guitar toting rugby heads and a dog out on the porch with the gumboots. The party was construed of dense-as bogans wearing Swannies and rugby jerseys, except for us, no doubt clad in over-sized yet similarly unwashed Stussy or Billabong threads. I recall we stuck it out for a while until our driver decided he would take us to the end of the dirt road and we'd all crash at Sloane's place. My mate got DICed. It turned out the local fuzz knew we were all out near the old farmhouse and waited halfway down the rough-shod metal road to catch the first driver. Bad vibes indeed. To top it off it was especially bad getting our ride impounded and having to beg parents to drive 300km for a lift back home on a Sunday morning, after hanging out in the main drag of Taumaranui in the dead of winter all night.

No doubt I'm now more likely to be hunted down, drugged, tied up and temporarily threatened with a garrote by ill-informed Satanists now, so hopefully you enjoy Satan Takes if it ever comes your way (though it's more likely you won't).

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