

Album Review

Katchafire - "Revival"



Introduction

Katchafire is a Pacific reggae band from New Zealand. They were formed in Hamilton, NZ, in 1997. The band has 8 albums, and has been credited to bringing Pacific reggae back to the mainstream in New Zealand. *Revival* is the band's debut album, released in 2003 (although it is listed on Spotify as 2006). The album would kick off the band's influential career, although they are not well known outside of New Zealand.

About the band

The original three founding members are Grenville Bell, and his sons Logan Bell and Jordan Bell. They originally started out as a Bob Marley and the Wailers cover band. They got their name from Bob Marley and the Wailers 1973 album *Catch a Fire*. They would tour around New Zealand performing Bob Marley and the Wailers songs at small venues like pubs and restaurants. They would go on to sign with MaiMusic, a record label local to Auckland NZ. The band has 8 albums, with 6 being standard studio albums, one being a compilation album released in 2013 and the other being a collaboration album featuring other local producers remixing their songs released in 2006. The band is known for their unique sound and backing vocal harmonies.



Members

The bands lineup has altered over the years but at the time of *Revival* the lineup consisted of:

Logan Bell - guitar, vocals, frontman of the band



Grenville Bell - lead guitar



Jordan Bell - drums, vocals



Haani Totorewa - keyboard, vocals



James Ferguson - saxophone, vocals



Ara Adams Tamatea - bass



Track list:

The album *Revival* consists of 12 tracks, and includes one cover song. Many of the songs of the album became local hits, and some of their best songs are featured on this debut album. Songs like “Get Away”, “Who You With”, “Collie Herb Man” and “Seriously” were all major contributors to the bands success, with “Collie Herb Man” still being the bands most popular song.

Track list:

1. “Reggae Revival”
2. “Get Away”
3. “Who You With”
4. “Colour Me Life”
5. “Lose Your Power”
6. “Collie Herb Man”
7. “Sensimillia”
8. “Done Did It”
9. “Seriously”
10. “Giddy Up”
11. “Bounce”
12. “Redemption Song”

Production:

The band would win festival award from MaiFM, a radio station based out of Auckland, NZ. This award would lead to them signing with record label Mai Music (associated with MaiFM). They would release the songs “Giddy Up” and “Who You With” as singles leading up to the release of their first ever album in 2003, *Revival*. They would include one Bob Marley and the Wailers cover (“Redemption Song”) but the rest of the album would be original songs. They would record the album with rotating bass players until they settled on Ara Adams Tamatea, who would become the bands bass player for the next 3-4 years.

Reception:

Revival was received with very positive feedback, and would become a local hit. After three weeks it would reach gold in New Zealand and would go on to hit platinum. The album sparked a revival (no pun intended) of Pacific reggae in New Zealand. It kicked off the band's career and would lead to their rise in popularity in NZ.

Notable songs:

Due to the smaller nature of Katchafire's audience compared to other bands, there is much less in-depth information on songs, however there is still information about songs that has been revealed by the band. These four songs are the songs I would recommend listening to (although the whole album is excellent).

“Get Away” - One of Katchafire's first hits, “Get Away” features a heavy bass and a hook played by James Ferguson on saxophone. The lyrics are about the mundanity of everyday life and feeling the need to get away from it.

“Who You With” - Track #3 on *Revival*, and follows “Get Away”. The lyrics, while partially about a woman Logan Bell was with, it is mainly about marijuana. “Who You With” is one of the best displays of the group's vocal harmonies. While Logan Bell sings the lead, it is broken up by harmonies from the rest of the band. The phrase “Wrap it up”, as well as others are sang between Logan Bell's lyrics, then Logan Bell and the rest of the band all harmonize the line “Who you with, who you with” to end the chorus.

“Collie Herb Man” - Track #6 on *Revival*, “Collie Herb Man” remains Katchafire’s most popular song to this day. Like “Who You With”, it also displays the bands harmonizing abilities. The term collie herb man is used in reference to the marijuana dealer. The song also features a part played on a marimba style instrument, which is uncommon for the band.

“Seriously” - Track #9 on *Revival*, “Seriously”, is another great example of the bands harmonizing ability, with backing harmonies throughout much of the song. It remains one of Katchafire’s most popular songs.

Conclusion:

Katchafire’s debut album *Revival* has a unique and interesting sound, and although I personally have a heavy bias to this album due to its significance to me, in my opinion it does not have a bad song. Scores out of ten are not a great way to rate music as it does not properly show the strengths and weaknesses of an album and the reviewer is often biased in favor of or against an album, if I had to rate Katchafire’s *Revival* out of ten I would give it an 8.5/10. In my (biased) opinion it is heavily underrated and personally, and is one of my favorite albums of all time.