

WARRIOR SOUL

The five-year span between Warrior Soul's 1990 Last Decade Dead Century debut, 1991's Drugs God And The New Republic, 1992's Salutations From The Ghetto Nation, 1993's Chill Pill and 1995's Space Age Playboys bespeaks a fascinating continuity. You can hear the curve. If the debut had that trippy Doors feel to it, complete with singer/songwriter Kory Clarke's spoken-word poetry and his angry politics, by the time he was a Space Age Playboy, he just wanted to rock 'n' roll.

In revisiting all five releases for digital re-mastering sessions, Clarke considers the criminally ignored body of work as "obviously cohesive yet I got a lot of criticism," he says, "for not sticking to one certain kind of style. I always argued that [eclecticism] is my style."

Vocally, there's no known precedent for Clarke's caterwauling. The cat can sing. If you had to, you could draw a direct line from Johnny Rotten to Clarke, except, of course, Clarke has the far superior pipes. In fact, taking it one step further, there are those who wondered what all those wonderful Bowery bands from 1977 would've sounded like in that initial intoxicating rush of heady punk rock furor had they really been able to play their instruments. The answer: Warrior Soul.

The '91 follow-up was more streamlined—no poetry. It's harder, heavier, faster and made its points in a more succinct way. It's tighter, as if Clarke just gave his sound a haircut. "I just wanted to frame it a little bit more," he says. "The debut took two years to write. I wrote six of the songs alone. On the follow up, I produced and co-wrote, and you can hear the difference when I blend my ideas within collaboration."

The '93 effort contains the most muscular kick-out-the-jams guitar riffing of the five. It's a headbang treasure that has the guitars jumping forefront out of a clean production that locks in on every hi-hat ping. Deeply satisfying, thoroughly groove-laden, Clarke glides above the mix without losing his righteous indignation. "Geffen dropped the ball on that one," Clarke ruefully says. "That's why I went to war with those assholes."

Clarke's mix of his more misterioso tendencies and his politically-charged yowl of discontent predated such metal protesters as Rage Against The Machine's Zach de la Rocha and Korn's Jonathan Davis who took their anger all the way to the bank and who—knowing

it or not—copped some of Clarke’s more obvious moves in the process. Warrior Soul, then, is the antecedent to the politics of the nu-metal generation. “I fought harder than anybody for truth,” Clarke says, “and everything I warned about has come to pass...and more.”

A clue to the key that unlocks the secrets of Warrior Soul is in the extreme projects Clarke undertook in his native Detroit and then in New York City. Whether drumming for The Trial in 1982 while showing stolen autopsy footage from the Detroit Morgue juxtaposed with McDonalds commercials and hardcore porn or his one-man performance art gallery openings in Soho where he’d read his poetry amidst flickering images of Nazi atrocities and Flintstones cartoons, Clarke brought that sensibility with him to Warrior Soul. “I figured I’d go for broke because who the hell was gonna sign an artist like me? Then when I got signed,” he explains, “I figured I’ve got to go as far as I can.”

So with bassist Pete McClanahan, guitarist John Ricco (replaced by Peter Jay, then X Factor) and drummer Marc Evans (replaced by Scott DuBoys), Kory Clarke (“it’s impossible to keep a band together over a five-year period when members start flipping out when the band doesn’t break big”) proceeded to tear down the wall of rules surrounding what you do and what you don’t do upon being signed to a major. These five albums are testimony to that vision. They don’t back down. They’re like an indisputable chain link fence between the ‘60s artists who mattered, ‘70s punk, ‘80s nihilism and ‘a twisted ‘90s go-for-it-all aesthetic that cannot be denied. It’s a body of work too good to be ignored any longer. It’s an all too-common scenario: like great art that’s bedeviled upon inception yet heralded decades later, Clarke’s five-headed hydra of albums spans the gamut of what good solid rock ‘n’ roll is supposed to be all about. A little dangerous. Incendiary. Provocative.

The journey continues. Clarke has zigzagged from Detroit to New York to Europe to New York to Los Angeles. Warrior Soul may yet live again. But, for now, we have these five incredible statements of pure needle-to-the-arm adrenaline.

Sometimes it tastes even better a day later.