

# In Flames ignites metal scene



SHAWN MILLENDER  
REVIEWER

In the early 1990s, In Flames had a novel idea. "Gee," they thought collectively, "we think more people would listen to death metal if it had some sort of recognizable melody, and maybe, if our calculations are correct, our music will appeal to more people if our singer doesn't sound like he's giving birth to livestock."

Truly, the members of In Flames are visionaries. They produced death metal songs with catchy melodies and a sound that could be best described as "Iron Maiden on steroids." So successful were they, in fact, that they set off a powder keg in their hometown of Gothenburg, Sweden. So many bands in the area emulated them (Dark Tranquillity, Soilwork and Arch Enemy foremost among them) that melodic death metal is now generally referred to as "Gothenburg Metal."

In its seventh full-length album, "The Soundtrack to Your Escape," the group violates several fundamental rules of metal while producing a solid album.

Rule No. 1: Do not use any sort of play on words in song titles. Metal bands take themselves way too seriously to do this. This album's opening track, however, is a song called "F(r)iend" (They also have a song called "In Search for I" and an album entitled "Whoracle." Cleveland, you quickly forgive this heinous violation though, as the song is so heavy that it may have prompted me to soil myself.

Rule No. 2: Under no circumstances will the first single off your new album be a soft rock, radio-friendly elevator hit. Metallica made this mistake (twice) and its career has never been the same. In Flames' "The Quiet Place" turns the corner from "career-destroying" to "riot-inducing" about halfway through, so it's OK.

Rule No. 3: Guitars will be the main musical focus. A lot of Scandinavian bands have taken the keyboard out of its role as an accent piece and moved it to the forefront. Bands such as Children of Bodom and Insane Clown Posse are using concert-grade pianists and even (gasp!) giving us piano solos. The guitars are still there, though, so have no fear. They're going to evolve into Manheim Steamroller any time soon.

In "My Sweet Shadow," the keyboardistry is not very ambitious; it's just one riff played over and over. However, In Flames found some of that magical mystery riff that you can listen to for hours at a stretch, and it will not get old. One thing that was gratifying to hear was drummer Daniel Erlands-son's heavy use of the wood block as a percussion instrument. If there were one lasting imprint that 1980s progressive rock band Rush need to bestow on the realm of rock and metal, it was that. Well, also about the French Revolution and the dynamics among the trees in a given forest.

Singer Anders Friden turns in another solid performance, once again exhibiting my completely normal, non-creepy and heterosexual manliness on him.

Overall, this album represents a continuation in the evolution of In Flames' sound. It sounds slick and polished; some would posit that it comes with the veneer of selling out. Audiences will be divided over whether this is a good thing.



## ROCKEN ROLL THUNDER

In Flames  
The Soundtrack to Your Escape  
Nuclear Blast Records

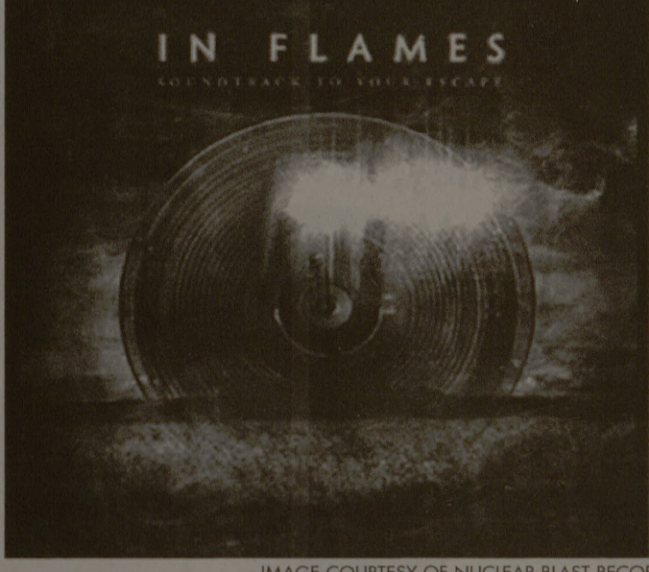


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"The Soundtrack To Your Escape" features piano solos and wood blocks.

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