

The members of the late 1970s hard rock band *Detective* earlier in the decade travelled in similar circles in London, so it was practically inevitable they would have end up in a group. But they couldn't have known that Lionel Richie would be their base, and Led Zeppelin – the world's most successful band at the time – would be their benefactors of sorts.

Forty-five years after its original release in 1977, *Detective*'s self-titled debut album gets a new lease on life here, in re-mastered glory for a new generation to savor. The urgency of their mission was made clear from the lyrics of the opening track, "RECOGNITION, is what I want," followed by lead singer Michael Des Barres. He obviously could be speaking on behalf of the entire band of journeymen, assuming stardom awaited after being signed in 1976 by Led Zeppelin's label Swan Song.

In 1973, the Des Barres-fronted Silverhead played a gig in Birmingham, England. "There were twenty people in the audience, four of them Led Zeppelin," remembers Des Barres. Zeppelin drummer John "Bonzo" Bonham owned a farm nearby, and Silverhead parted with Zep for three days. Meanwhile, since 1969 Hyde sang in several Los Angeles bands including Hokus Pokus, which was signed in 1973 by MGM and also featured guitarist Michael Monarch, who played in Steppenwolf during its late 1960s heyday. Hyde and Monarch – both Americans – were fed up with MGM's lack of four support and quit, and looked to try their luck in London, where Hyde remembers at some point crossing paths at a London rehearsal space with Des Barres and Silverhead.

Soon thereafter, Monarch and Hyde returned to Los Angeles, where Englishman ex-pat Des Barres beckoned. In 1976, Monarch met Des Barres backstage at a Lionel Reed concert and decided to form a band, whose early lineup included Denny Seiwell (of Paul McCartney's Wings) on drums and Chris Stewart (of Spooky Tooth and Frankie Miller) on bass guitar.

Monarch asked Hyde if he'd be interested in writing material for this new band. Impressed by what he heard, Hyde collaborated with Monarch on a few songs. Soon thereafter, the rhythm section didn't work out, and Monarch called Hyde to audition to be their drummer. Although Hyde had not played drums for some time and no longer owned a drum kit, he auditioned on a borrowed set at the rehearsal studio. Des Barres and Monarch agreed that Hyde had the right feel for how the drums should sound, and Hyde understood the concept for the direction of the band. For bass, Hyde suggested Bobby Pickett, who had played in Sugarloaf and lived in L.A. Pickett's funky playing won over the rest of the band at an audition, and he subsequently left Etta James' band to join *Detective*.

One night Jimmy Page happened to drop by at another rehearsal. The legendary guitarist ended up jamming with them for a few hours. Page loved what he heard, prompting a conversation about the possibility of signing the band – by then christened *Detective* (Des Barres's idea) – to Zeppelin's new label Swan Song, whose stable included Bad Company, Pretty Things, and Maggie Bell. Page urged *Detective* to record some demos, which were made at the Record Plant in L.A.

Columbia Records was also interested in signing *Detective*, who ultimately went with Swan Song as the label's first American act, partly because of Page's original intention to produce them. "We were enamored with the notion of Led Zeppelin, as anybody would be, that's why we went with them," reflects Des Barres. But A-List rock gods sometimes get torn in other directions.

"We waited for a year [for Page]," Des Barres remembers. "That year was pretty creative." Production duties eventually fell to Jimmy Robinson and Andy Johns (engineer on six Zep LPs from II to Code). Yet keyboardist Tony Kaye rounded out *Detective* late into the debut LP's recording, which was actually recorded twice. "We had time and money," Des Barres laughs, "and we spent it."

Any resemblance to Zeppelin's tempo, especially on "Got Enough Love" and "Grim Reaper," was no a conscious decision, according to the band. The Zeppelin vibe, however, "was in the atmosphere," admits Hyde, who Jimmy Page once invited to jam with Zeppelin because Bonzo wasn't feeling well. "I never felt more nervous," recalls Hyde, who used Bonzo's drums. "We jammed for hours and I remember playing 'Kashmir'..."

*Detective* hit the road with Kiss, and shared the bill with acts like Blue Oyster Cult, Journey, and Hall & Oates, among others, including a co-headline tour with legendary Australian rockers AC/DC.

A second album, *It Takes One To Know One*, was released by Swan Song only seven months after the debut. Soon thereafter, it was agreed that perhaps Atlantic Records, Swan Song's distributor, should handle fully a third album, to be produced by Tom Dowd (Ariella Franklin, Allman Brothers, Derek & The Dominos). Four songs were recorded but Des Barres decided to leave *Detective* and the band broke up.

In hindsight, Hyde and Des Barres both agree they never played with better musicians. "There were tons of talent in that band," Hyde says. "Michael Des Barres is just an outstanding singer and Michael Monarch is one of the most phenomenal musicians I have ever played with. Bobby Pickett was way ahead of his time as a bass player and a fantastic singer. I'm not even including myself, just looking at the three guys, it was a super-talented band." To which Des Barres adds:

"The band had so many ideas. Our rehearsals were glorious and we were very serious about the music."

Jimmy Page acknowledges as much in a 2018 *Uncut* interview. "*Detective*, they were good. That first album of theirs, it was really good. It should have been more popular, it should have sold better, shouldn't it?"

LARRY JAFFEE



Tracks 1, 4, 5, 7, 8 produced by Andy Johns & Detective  
Track 2, 3, 6, 9 produced by Jimmy Robinson

Recorded and mixed at Record Plants in Los Angeles, and Sausalito, and Sound City Studios, Los Angeles.  
Assistant Engineers: Andy Zane, Demi King, Doug Rider, John Henning, Pete Carlson

Tape restoration by Dan Johnson at Audio Archiving Services  
Mastered by Dave Gardner at Infrasonic Mastering

Original Art Direction by Koshi

Reissue Art Direction and Design by Jeremy Fury

Photo on Back Cover by Norman Seeff

Photo on Inner Sleeve by Sam Emerson

Inner notes by Larry Jaffee

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