

Morrissey Ringleader of the Tormentors (Attack, 2006)

By Dan Schneider

Morrissey said his new album was going to be a bit harder, more of a pure rock and roll collection, than his last...

Ringleader of the Tormentors has a very similar feel to Morrissey's last album, *You are the Quarry*, but leaves something to be desired at first listen. On the other hand, "Tormentors" picks up where the last left off and does a lot with the feel of Morrissey's recent work.

Throughout the album Moz uses more vocal effects than usual and then backs them up with what sounds like a children's choir on several cuts. The vocal effects have a splendid effect, especially the cathedral-big, deep-in-the-well-of-my-solitude super-reverb, but seem strange on some cuts.

Where the ex-Smiths frontman does well is on those promised rockers. The first track, "I Will See You in Far Off Places," has a strong beat and expert bass line bringing power to the synth-laden, Middle Eastern central riff. It calls to mind Eric Serra's soundtrack for the film "The Fifth Element," and in a very good way.

"You Have Killed Me," is a down-tempo but ballsy tune. Among Morrissey's best, it calls to mind his early solo hit, "Every Day is Like Sunday."

"The Youngest Was the Most Loved," "The Father Who Must be Killed" and the title cut continue the strong theme. If you dug "The First of the Gang to Die," you'll dig "The Father Who Must be Killed."

Most evident among the angst-dripping tunes here is "Dear God, Please Help Me," which follows up on *Quarry*'s "I Have Forgiven Jesus," coming from Moz's unique well of despair and strewn throughout with overt sexual references.

"Life is a Pigsty," one of Morrissey's more repetitive whiners, continues the slow bit of *Tormentors*.

The rest of the record is strong and rocking. Look for Morrissey's talented side on "I'll Never be Anybody's Hero Now," "I Just Want to See the Boy Happy" and "To Me You are a Work of Art," which evokes the spirit of *Quarry*'s "Let Me Kiss You."

The combination of heavy vocal effects and the children's choir is at least interesting on "At Last I am Born", but is, at most, disappointing.

Morrissey continues his criticism of the U.S. with

references in "I Will See You in Far Off Places," although with tongue planted more firmly in cheek this time.

Overall, Moz seems more upbeat on this record – even more so than on the last. Could he finally be happy?

Lyrical weaker than *Quarry*, *Tormentors* still has a number of high points. Look for some stellar guitar moments nestled in the gaps throughout the

album. The musicianship on the disc is excellent, though a couple tracks leave some depressingly

unfilled gaps. ... and he delivered.

