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## Warren Zevon – Stand In The Fire – Speakers Corner

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by Audiophile Audition | Jan 1, 2020 | Pop/Rock/World CD Reviews | 0 comments

**Warren Zevon – Stand In The Fire – Asylum Records ASYLUM SE-519 (1980)/Speakers Corner Records (2019) 180-gram stereo vinyl, 42:37 \*\*\*\*1/2:**



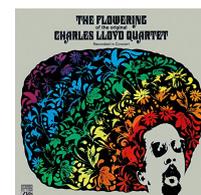
(Warren Zevon – piano, guitar, vocals; Zeke Zirngiebel – guitar, vocals; David Landau – guitar; Bob Harris – synthesizer, piano, vocals; Roberto Pinon – bass, vocals; Marty Stringer – drums)

Warren Zevon forged a career of relentless hard-edged rock music,

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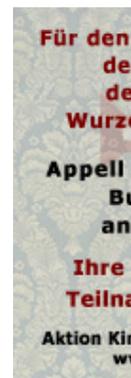


only matched by his equally reckless lifestyle. Born in Chicago, he moved to California and at one point briefly studied piano with Igor Stravinsky. But late 60's wanderlust took over and Zevon moved to Los Angeles. There he became the band leader for a re-formed Everly Brothers. His initial success as a songwriter and recording artist proved elusive as his 1969 debut, *Wanted Dead Or Alive* did not chart. But in 1976, *Warren Zevon* (produced by Jackson Browne) provided critical acclaim, if not robust sales. Songs like the junkie lament, "Carmelita", Americana-infused "Frank And Jesse James" and rockers like "Mohammed's Radio" and "Desperados Under The Eaves" made him a favorite of contemporaries (Bonnie Raitt, Linda Ronstadt, Browne, Glen Frey and Don Henley). Several covers by Ronstadt provided a mainstream outlet for his rocker legacy. Zevon played piano and guitar while delivering vocals with a strong baritone voice. Subsequent albums like *Excitable Boy* ("Werewolves Of London", "Lawyers Guns And Money") and *Bad Luck Streak In Dancing School* were relevant, but never brought sustained record sales. Additionally his "erudite sociopathy" became rooted in a self-destructive lifestyle that resulted in strained relations and long hiatuses. He collaborated with notable songwriters (Bruce Springsteen) and counterculture writers (Hunter Thompson, Carl Hiaasen). The dysfunctional contexts of his life translated into memorable songs like "The Mutineer", "Life'll Kill Ya", and "Detox Mansion". Though he would have an occasional second or third wind, broad stardom never happened. His untimely death in 2003 ended a truly unique legacy.

Speakers Corner records has released a 180-gram re-mastered vinyl of Zevon's 1980 live album, *Stand In The Fire*. This album was recorded in August 1980 over a five date residency at the famed Roxy Theater. Many rock performers have meticulously crafted stage personas that differ from their real lives. Zevon is not one of them. He performed as he lived, unrestrained and at times, over-the-top. Side One opens with a new title song. The up tempo hard rocker features prominent rock guitars (with a touch of synthesizer), a catchy "call and response" first chorus, and droning coda. Zevon intones, "All I wanna do is rock you...". Continuing to rock out, "Jennie Needs a Shooter" (from his then current album *Bad Luck Streak*) is co-written with Springsteen and explores working class romanticism with factory girl and outlaw references. Of course, there is some Zevon mayhem in the mix. Switching to piano, the band delivers the jaunty hooks of "Excitable Boy". Zevon delivers malevolent imagery with jagged vocals and trademark scream. The band shines with doo-wop back up vocals and dramatic stops. There is minimal repartee from the singer. In a lyrical transition, "Mohammed's Radio" is self-reflective and updated with topical subjects like Jimmy Carter. At the core, it is signature Zevon with rolling piano, complex



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lyrics and sparkling 2-part harmony at the finish. “Werewolves Of London” is a song for the ages. It is quintessential to this songwriter. The allusions to bizarre cultural touchstones like Lon Chaney, Trader Vic’s and beef chow mein are comically adroit. He refreshes the context with call outs to Jackson Browne, Brian DePalma and James Taylor in relating the story of a creature, mutilating an old lady in Soho, or Kent, or Mayfair, England. The band is tight and Zevon’s vibrato is a nice touch.

Side Two amps up the rock spirit of this live music. “Lawyers, Guns And Money” are the perfect metaphors for Zevon’s songwriting. The 3-chord anthemic bedlam is represented with crashing guitars and growling vocals. It is a gritty film noir narrative that is unique to this performer. The band sustains the hard-charging dynamics on “The Sin”. Zevon’s verve is similar to punk music. It would influence his later work. Another terrific composition, “Poor Poor Pitiful Me” may be the ultimate L.A. rock opus with weird nods to Jesse James and a waring blender. Lines like “...These young girls won’t let me be. Lord have mercy on me...” distills the essence of rock and roll lifestyle. On a seemingly autobiographical note, “I’ll Sleep When I’m Dead” with a thumping beat is a celebratory, not cautionary tale of excess, replete with Bombay gin, “medicine” and a 44 magnum. On this track, the band is incendiary. The finale (“Bo Diddley’s A Gunslinger/Bo Diddley”) is a two-part homage to a rock and roll pioneer”. With Zevon-esque flair, Bo Diddley appears at the O.K. Corral. The “hand jive” tempo riff is timeless and artists continue to feed off this hook to this day.

Speakers Corner Records has done their customary superior job in re-mastering *Stand In The Fire* to 180-gram vinyl. The stereo separation is excellent. The overall mix is clear, but still exhibits some of the rawness of live acoustics, especially with the trio of guitar players. Zevon’s deep voice is centered in the mix and is both crisp and gruff depending on the moment. In the words of Zevon “ain’t that pretty at all”, but it has a visceral resonance. The vinyl pressing from Pallas/Germany is flawless with no hisses or pops and minimal surface noise.

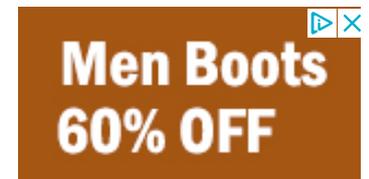
#### TrackList:

##### Side One:

Stand In The Fire  
Jennie Needs A Shooter  
Excitable Boy  
Mohammed’s Radio  
Werewolves Of London

##### Side Two:

Lawyers, Guns And Money



New

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—Robbie Gerson

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