

AURAL ASSAULTS

REISSUE ROW

Coalesce 012: 2 Relapse



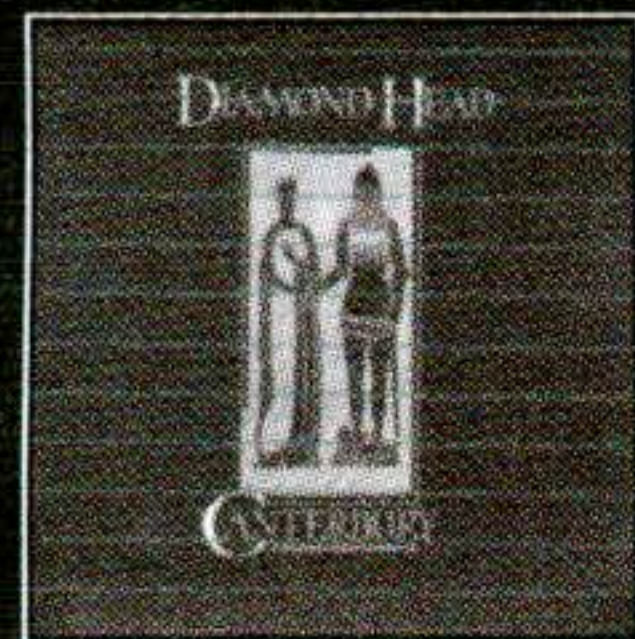
012: Revolution In Just Listening was the 1999 swansong from Kansas City, Missouri's heaviest and most volatile metalcore proposition, the mighty Coalesce. After multiple breakups and reformations, *012* was the official, final straw for the band. However, if Coalesce were going to go out, they certainly went with the proverbial bang — this nine-track disaster is enough to loose your bowels and crush your kidneys with its pummeling heaviness.

Predating the currently fashionable death and tech/metalcore genres by more than a couple years, Coalesce successfully experimented with complex time signatures as well as the odd cover tune or six at the time, (the band delivered an album of Led Zeppelin covers the same year *012* was issued which was recently reissued by Hydra Head) consistently blowing minds all along the way.

The band's secret weapon, however, was always the voice/roar of frontman Sean Ingram. With a bellow as deep as the Atlantic and a razor-sharp lyrical wit to match, Ingram and Co. led the charge against musical complacency with all the fury of a charging bull as *012* so boldly boasts. Hell, I'm still waiting for a band heavier than Coalesce to come along.

Though the band is rumored to have — once again — reformed, it's still well-advised to look this one up. [crashandbang.com] — MetalGeorge Pacheco

Diamond Head Borrowed Time Canterbury Metal Mind

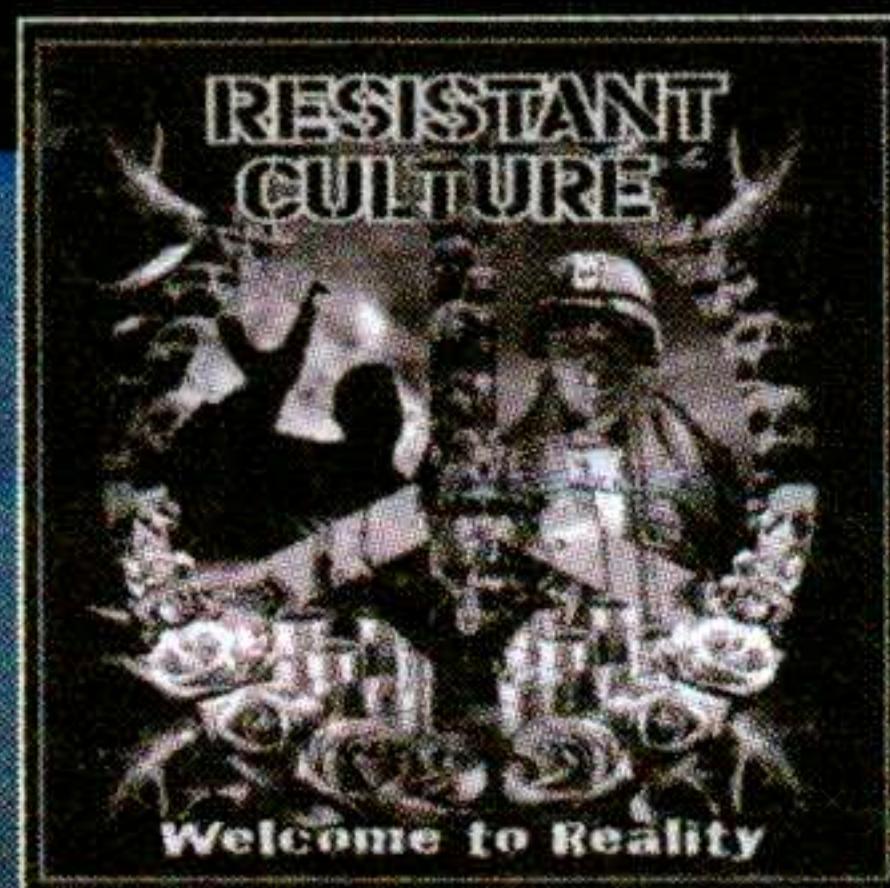


Nearly all diehard fans of heavy metal, and many casual ones as well, know the echo of well-worn Diamond Head classics such as "Helpless", "Am I Evil?", and "The Prince." Fewer can claim familiarity with the band's work of only a few years later, despite its high-profile release via MCA Records. Some of the reasons for this are obvious: A lack of exposure being the first, lack of context perhaps being another and of course the fact that no band from California ever dared play a cover of "I Need Your Love." Yet some of Diamond Head's lesser-known material certainly bears revisiting, and thanks to Metal Mind's seemingly-endless reissue campaign, that material is now back within reach of fans worldwide.

To get things off on the right foot, let me say that I've always considered 1982's *Borrowed Time* LP to be a flawed-yet-fantastic piece of music. Perhaps the album goes a bit too far to indulge all of the people making Led Zeppelin comparisons at the time. Nevertheless, it doesn't remotely fail in doing so, and let's remember that Diamond Head vocalist Sean Harris and guitarist Brian Tatler had already muttered a few Zeppelin comparisons of their own. It's the later Zeppelin albums like *Presence* and *Physical Graffiti* leaving their opulent, exotic touch on *Borrowed Time*, with the exception of full-blown blues ballad "Don't You Ever Leave Me." After opening with the intense atmospheric rocker "In The Heat Of The Night," the album kicks into its highest gear (and indeed one of the band's finest recorded moments) during the second half of "To Heaven From Hell," a movement I would consider worth the asking price in itself.

What *Borrowed Time* may lack in energy it delivers in elegance, wrapped in album artwork by Rodney Matthews that is nothing short of a masterpiece. However, many fans were underwhelmed by the record upon its release, perhaps because *Borrowed Time* included updated versions of "Am I Evil?" and "Lightning To The Nations," the latter being the title track of the band's self-financed debut LP of 1980. (That LP was itself already a fan favorite, despite efforts at the time to construe it as an unofficial or demo-grade release.) Without those two tracks and "Call Me," which had already been released as a single ahead of *Borrowed Time*, the album delivered only four new cuts. The new edition goes a long way to remedy that, smartly including the entire *Four Cuts* EP and *In The Heat Of*

Resistant Culture Welcome To Reality SOS/Seventh Generation



This band has been around in one form or fashion since the late '80s and given that they come from the crusty punk/D-beat side of the spectrum, have the slogan "In grind we crust" all over their website and cover Discharge's "Hear Nothing, See Nothing, Say Nothing," chances are they probably haven't changed their clothes since then either. Oh, come on; you knew I was going to go there. I always go there. If you were in my position, you would've gone there as well.

Anyhoo, *Welcome To Reality* was originally released in 2005 and has been reissued with supposedly better distribution, a bonus track/video and booklet that not only contains the lyrics, but a merch catalog with some relatively pricey items. Featured are Anthony Rezhawk on vocals, who you might recall as the frontman for Terrorizer's ill-everything second album and the late Jesse Pintado, who also slung six-strings for this outfit and brought a grizzled Nopalm Death guitar sound (ya think!) to the fold. However, what of their "tribal grind crust" self-billing? Well, this essentially amounts to lyrics focused on the environment and the plight of the native American with the occasional ease up on the D-beat in favor of tribal drum patterns, chanting ("It's Not Too Late"), a woodwind instrument/acoustic guitar interlude called "Elder Wisdom" and the instrumental "Land Keeper" where the chanting and woodwind hold their own alongside a gritty riff. As minor as these additions and re-jigging may seem, it's good to hear someone taking a few chances with the established awesomeness of the D-beat, which if things kept trucking along, threatened to suck much of the awesomeness from the D-beat. Maybe a re-release with better distro wasn't such a bad idea. [resistantculture.com] — Kevin Stewart-Panko

The Night single, bringing the total number of tracks to 14.

Perhaps there was pressure for the follow-up to outperform *Borrowed Time* sales-wise, and perhaps the departure of the long-serving rhythm section from the band gave the songwriting nucleus of Harris and Tatler occasion to reconsider the band's musical direction. For whatever reasons, 1983's *Canterbury* found the group idling, if not fumbling, in the direction of ordinary rock music. Truthfully, the band and producer Mike Shipley were highly qualified when it came to crafting the recording, but the problems were in the material itself. Songs like "Makin' Music", "Out Of Phase" and "One More Night" made previous pop radio entry "Call Me" sound like a downright headbanger. And while the band stretched its own imagination wide with the likes of "Ishmael," "The Kingmaker" and the title track, it ultimately only revealed its own limitations by doing so. Diamond Head's longtime fans were unmoved by the changes, and the radio-rock field of the day was simply too competitive for the band to make any compelling impression on a wider audience.

There are several redeeming aspects to the album, noting "To The Devil His Due," "Knight Of The Swords" and of course Sean Harris's legendary voice. Taken in whole, however, *Canterbury* found Diamond Head unable to recover its charm of a mere one or two years earlier. Not surprisingly, despite the band's own anticipation for yet another LP, MCA was not so keen, dropping them in 1984 and effectively ending their original career arc. The current reissue reminds us that *Canterbury* was less of a disaster than a quiet failure, a proverbial "dull thud." The highlight of the disc's otherwise uninteresting bonus material is a truly smashing version of "Sucking My Love," culled from the band's 1982 performance at the Reading Festival.

Of the NWOBHM groups taking chances on a more radio-friendly direction, Diamond Head surely falls in the "failed" category, alongside an overwhelming majority that notably includes Jaguar and Tygers Of Pan Tang and *Canterbury's* ill-conceived "maturity" is probably as much a failure today as it was upon its 1983 release. But *Borrowed Time* carries my high recommendation as a timeless

and fitting closure to the band's utterly magnificent adolescence. [diamond-head.net] — Professor Black

Today Is The Day Today Is The Day Supernova Supernova



Listening to *Today Is The Day's* first and third albums, reissued with handsome packaging and bonus tracks, it's only a matter of time before the brain maggots start to crawl. Which is not to knock Steve Austin's genius, but rather to salute it, or at least try to define its viral drift. *Today Is The Day* is the stick that stirs the maggots, which resemble snow drifts beside the road; you want to keep driving, thinking happy thoughts about nature, maybe recalling a poem by Robert Frost — miles to go before you sleep, that sort of thing. You neither want or need to know about the body the maggots lunched on then in order to resemble snow now. Happy thoughts.

Lovely as denial can be — and it can be gorgeous, never mind the stentorian voice of that 12-Step counselor — you cannot live there. Something or somebody will roust you out, at which point familiarity with *Today Is The Day's* back catalog will serve you much better than 10 canned margaritas. The road back to humanity begins with self-awareness, with songs that hammer the message "born alone/die alone" ("6 Dementia Satyr") back into your brain. Add jazz-fusion moves, white supremacist soundbytes and jackboot stomp and you're in *Supernova* country.

Today Is The Day are so much more than hardcore; they are sound artists, directors of mental film, slamming bristly fuzz-tone guitar against a wall of shimmering white light, anchoring the angst in precise rhythms. The fluid mosaic of *Supernova* shifts with each hearing, from the balls-to-the-wall Black Sabbath punch of "The Kick Inside" to ambient, Fripp And Eno turf ("Blind Man At Mystic Lake"). Steve Austin's vocals at times recall the helium whinny of TITD compadre Jello Biafra, which is a matter of taste (I happen to like it).

Tighter in terms of song boundaries and apparently more conventional in structure, *Today Is The Day* begins with the charming injunction "kill your children/burn their souls" ("Kai Piranha"). The band has become a corrosion engine now, the voice of total entropy: "I see them bugs" ("Bugs/Death March"), "You are a coward/you have no spine" and whisper the maggots ("Marked"). No escape from the body by the roadside. Slow down. Turn back. Look again. Now lie down. It gets easier with practice. [todayistheday.org] — Alex S. Johnson

Leviathan A Silhouette In Splinters Moribund



I've never understood the appeal of bands like Leviathan and Xasthur and the whole bedroom black metal movement. It seems these artists rely on bad production to create atmosphere when a truly great artist can use a bad production to enhance the atmosphere created with their already great material. *A Silhouette In Splinters* is not your typical Leviathan album, nor your typical bedroom black metal album, but alas it is just as bad.

Originally a limited vinyl-only offering, this compilation album was recently re-released by Moribund Cult. Six tracks of unoriginal and uninteresting ambience that brings to mind the mid 90's, when black metal musicians and fans first started discovering and creating ambient music and started ordering CDs from Cold Meat Industries. Bands like the dreadful and unnecessary Shadowcaster and to a lesser extent Serpent Eclipse. Most of the artists simply do not understand the craft that goes into making quality ambient music, but I digress...

The one saving grace for *A Silhouette In Splinters* are its sparse instrumental passages like album-closer "Blood Red And True: Part 2;" that while repetitive are at least well executed. Overall this one falls short. Pass. [moribundcult.com] — JWW



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