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CD REVIEWS: APRIL IN METAL I

DAVE STEED

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**Album: Ufomammut, Oro: Opus Primum****Label: Neurot****Release: April 17, 2012**

After Sleep released *Dopesmoker* in 2003, countless bands have tried to recreate the droning stoner doom sound of that legendary group with very few succeeding. Sleep themselves moved on to two critically acclaimed bands, High on Fire and Om – both excellent but a little different from the parent group. When Ufomammut released *Eve* in 2010, with one fantastic 44-minute track on it, you could hear a band that could finally emerge out of the shadows of that band and take over the reins. It was like listening

to “Dopesmoker II”. A lot of bands can create this sound once but the key to it is maintaining and improving the sound over the course of a few records.

That said, I’m finally ready to admit that we might have a new master of this genre. *Oro: Opus Primum* is the first of two records which are essentially one track, each record however broken up into five parts. Opening track, “Empireum” sets the tone for the entire record with this circling keyboard reminiscent of something Burzum might put out. The same piece is woven throughout other tracks, especially “Magikon” which almost brings the record right back to the beginning. Around that track you get a drone-doom sound that’s as fantastic as Sleep used to be. And I don’t mean to say they are clones or keep nutting all over Sleep either but this is truly the first record I’ve heard in ages that brings me back those glory days.

I don't usually copy things from press releases but this one explains the concept of the record so perfectly that I it almost seems unfair if I try to word it any differently;

The concepts behind Oro are expansive and multi-faceted, mutating the Italian palindrome which translates to "gold" with the Latin translation of "I prey." Oro explores the concept of knowledge and its power; the magical stream controlled by the human mind to gain control of every single particle of the World surrounding us. Oro is the alchemical process to transform the human fears into pure essence; into Gold. Although Oro's two chapters will be released months apart from each other, they must be considered as a single track in which the musical themes and the sounds show up and hide, mutating and evolving, progressively and increasingly stratifying culminating in the crushing final movement. Oro is like an alchemic laboratory in which substances are flowing, dividing and blending themselves in ten increments from the alembics and stills, culminating into the creation of Gold.

In September, the band will release *Oro: Opus Alter* and if it's as good as this disc we could be talking about one of the best two-part doom records ever recorded.



Album: Secrets of the Moon, Seven Bells

Label: Lupus Lounge

Release: April 10, 2012

Secrets of the Moon have always been an intriguing band. This German black metal group has been around since the mid '90s releasing their first LP in 2001. Over the years, they've slowly gotten better and more polished while gaining more fans along the way. While they are always rooted in black metal, each album sounds a little different from the previous one as they try to push the genre forward a bit. A rotating

lineup that now consists of no original members of the band at all probably has a hand in the changing sound as well.

The last album they put out was *Privilegium* in 2009 which was their most polished record to date but also marked a step backwards for the group as it ended up being a pretty monotonous and boring disc overall. *Seven Bells* has them pushing forward once again though, this time getting Tom G. Warrior (Celtic Frost) to produce the album. And you can absolutely tell that he had a huge hand in crafting the sound of the group. There are simply so many elements of this record that sound like the final Celtic Frost album that's it's hard to ignore. I loved that record, so this

isn't necessarily a bad thing but you have to wonder if Secrets of the Moon are creating their own music here or what Tom's vision of their music is. It's not like this is uncommon in the world of music though, I mean you pick your producer for a reason and no matter what *Seven Bells* ended up sounding like the end result is one of triumph.

There's certainly more to like on *Seven Bells* than on the previous record. It's interesting, doesn't drag at all and has some seriously great moments like the 12 minute opus, "Nyx." It definitely has a better sound quality to it than most black metal, so it ends up being quite easy to digest. Some might say a little too easy. But if you thought they had fallen off a little bit a few years ago like I did, then this should please you. It's not *Carved in Stigmata Wounds* but it's well worth a spot in your collection.





Album: Ignitor, *Year of the Metal Tiger*

Label: MVD

Release: April 10, 2012

I love making fun of things and there are just so many humorous things about the new Ignitor record that I can resist. First up is the fact that it's called *Year of the Metal Tiger*. See, they recorded this record back in 2010 which was the year of the tiger according to Chinese zodiac signs. But since it isn't getting released until 2012, you'd kind of think they would have updated it to Year of the Metal Dragon or something similar. There's the dot matrix printer photoshop artwork, or the band shot on the back cover which has four of the five members in all

leather and arm gear while the bassist is lounging in the back with a black t-shirt on (did someone forget to tell him it was leather day at work)? But my favorite is the fact that "Heavy Metal Holocaust" is in part about [Ozzy Osbourne](#), yet whomever wrote the lyrics in the liner notes (I'm assuming a 17 year-old Ke\$ha fan) spells his name "Ozzy Osbourn" without the E at the end. To write a song about a metal legend and then spell his name wrong in the notes, especially when the album took two years to get out is actually less funny than it is a horrible, horrible error.

Here's the thing though – albums like this always sound like dirty balls when you get down to it. *Year of the Metal Tiger* doesn't. In fact, it's Ignitor's best album by a fucking longshot. Since their formation in 2003 they have always been a very traditional heavy metal band and there's certainly nothing wrong with that. But it wasn't until 2009 when they replaced their former female lead singer with ex Watchtower and Dangerous Toys vocalist Jason McMaster that everything started clicking. Ignitor has always been on my radar as well thanks for Stuart Laurence (aka Batlord) on guitar, who also played with the underrated Agony Column.

With *Year of the Metal Tiger* you get some blistering riffs, crazy falsettos and well written sing along melodies. It's only seven tracks, so it would have been nice to see a few more here but all of them are quite good. "The Kaiser" is probably the group's best song based off of a pretty amazing guitar riff. Not counting the misspelling, "Heavy Metal Holocaust" is also a total headbanger. You don't have to be a genius to understand that you aren't getting anything new here but sometimes it's not about innovation, rather simply rocking your ass off and *Year of the Metal Tiger* certainly does that. Four albums in and Ignitor have finally hit their mark!

Album: Fastway, *Eat Dog Eat*

Label: MVD

Release: April 10, 2012

Speaking of releases that absolutely break no new ground but rock your goddamn ass off, it's a new one from Fastway! Yep, that's "Fast" Eddie Clarke's band made popular in the '80s. *Eat Dog Eat* is the first Fastway release in 21 years and features Little Angels vocalist and now rock producer Toby Jepson on

vocals. Whereas Fastway could have been considered metal back in the day, they certainly aren't now. The new record consists of a bunch of super melodic rock tunes that end up sounding like some hybrid of [Soundgarden](#), Buckcherry and Black Country Communion. The disc literally feels like Clarke has been saving up all his favorite records from the last two decades and is trying to blend them all together.

Even if you've heard it before (and you've *definitely* heard it before) the record still plays out as a good top down summer driving record having a cool laid back rocking vibe while being completely inoffensive to anyone. Fast Eddie can still play the shit out of the guitar and although I have to admit that there isn't a whole lot of knock-em-down wow moments on the disc, his playing is near perfection. It's hard to forget that the guy was part of Motorhead's classic lineup and played on "Ace of Spades" for christsakes. *Eat Dog Eat* doesn't have that edge but it has moments where you realize that Clarke isn't simply an old man. "Dead and Gone" is a highlight, starting off as a rock ballad before turning into a ballsy rocker. First single "Leave the Light On" is the centerpiece of the record and has a radio ready feel to it, albeit a 1991 radio feel.

Eat Dog Eat ends up being catchy as hell from start to finish. And despite the lack of in your face hard rock on the album, Clarke and Jepson put together a fine disc. Twenty One years later and with a whole different band, that usually screams disaster or worse yet, re-recordings of old material but neither of them is the case here. It won't win any awards but it's a solid rock record.

"Leave the Light On"



Albums currently on the potential best of 2012 list:

Christian Mistress, *Possession*
Goatwhore, *Blood for the Master*
Human Toilet, *Human Toilet*
OSI, *Fire Make Thunder*
Terrorizer, *Hordes of Chaos*
Ufomammut, *Oro: Opus Primum*
Woods of Ypres, *Woods 5: Grey Skies & Electric Light*

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About the author: Dave Steed

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Dave Steed is all about music; 80's and metal to be exact. His iPod will shuffle from Culture Club to Slayer and he won't blink an eye. He's never heard Astral Weeks but thinks "Dazzey Duks" by Duice is the bomb. It's an odd little corner of the world he lives in.

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