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Notez Horror Metal Scallywagz Morgue Rantz Pix Linx Contax



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ABSENTIA LUNAE

Historia Nobis Assentietvr

ATME



Absentia Lunae's most recent release, *Histroua Nobis Assentietvr* (History Will Prove Us Right in English), is a mostly unrelenting black metal attack. Aside from the electro/noise/ambient intro and outro, the remaining five tracks here are comprised of brutally evil sounding black metal - it feels as if the music is calling you to war at times (I think the frequent use of the marching snare drum helps to convey this feeling). For the most part, you're getting slammed around by some insanely fast riffs, quick, yet repetitive drumming, and viciously shouted vocals. Sure, there are times where the music slows down and some melodic bits come out - even including some clean vocals from time to time (see "The Timeless Call - Cruelly does it resound!"), but overall, I was getting lost in the sea of sameness while listening to this disc.

It is sure to appeal to some, but I won't be clamoring to listen to it again anytime soon.

C

-Goz

GRADE CODES

A+	=	A Classic
A	=	Outstanding
A-	=	Great
B+	=	Very Good
B	=	Good
B-	=	Above Average
C+	=	Average
C	=	Okay
C-	=	Below Average
D+	=	Poor
D	=	Very Poor
D-	=	Sucks
F	=	Crap

AETERNAM

Disciples of the Unseen

Metal Blade Records



Quebec metal troupe Aeternam bow forth with their debut disc, *Disciples of the Unseen*, on Metal Blade Records. Having never heard of this band before, I rely on the labels promo blurb to educate myself on what to expect. Comparisons are made to Behemoth, Nile, Melechesh and Septic Flesh. Three out of four ain't bad, so I am all in with this one. Are the comparisons warranted? Let's give a listen and see.

I'll skip the intro and head straight into the first proper song, "Angel Horned". Holy Behemoth worship Nergal! This song almost sounds as if it could have come off of any of the last three Behemoth discs, although the drumming isn't quite up to Inferno's caliber. The riffs are precise and biting, the vocals (both in tone and phrasing) are VERY reminiscent of Nergal's, and the guitar leads are well done and well placed. I even get the Septic Flesh comparison a bit on this one, with they keyboards that add a bit of a symphonic element at times. "Esoteric Formulae" follows a similar vein, but they also chose to throw in some "clean" vocals in this song. The are done in an almost Alice In Chains style, and, to me at least, it detracts a bit from the song

here. I suppose they grow on you, though, because I couldn't stand them at all the first few listens. Now I basically just ignore them. Maybe after a few more listens I'll actually like them. The instrumental intro "Iteru" showcases some middle-eastern influences (hello Nile and Melechesh comparisons). "Angel Horned" is definitely the best track on here, although "Circle in Flames" gives it some pretty brutal competition.

Production on this disc is done quite well - everything is clear and the mix is spot on - even the drums sounds good here, which is unusual in this digital/triggered age. This disc contains some absolutely great music, but it is hindered by the poor clean vocals that are a bit overused to my ears. If you don't mind them, or you can ignore them quite well, you're in for a treat with *Disciples of the Unseen*.

B-

-Goz

AOSOTH

Ashes of Angels

Agonia Records



French black metal duo Aosoth is the mastermind of vocalist MkM (also of Antaeus), who is joined here by Bestial Satanic T (ex-Aborted, Balrog, etc), who handles all the instrumentation. *Ashes of Angels* is the bands second full-length release (they also have a few splits out there), following last years self-titled debut.

Aosoth plays unrelenting black metal from start to finish here. Walls of buzzing guitars, lots of blast beat drums, and angry, overly reverbed vocals are what you're dealt. While there are some strong points to the disc (notably the title track, which is really damn good), there is nothing really here that jumps out at me and beckons me to listen with any regularity. Aside from the title track, I would say that they best songs on here are "Teaching/Erasing", which has a slower, doomier and moodier feel to it, and the discs closer, which is a cover of Antaeus' "Inner War". I guess it kind of sums up my thoughts on the disc when the best song on it is a cover song from the vocalists other band.

C

-Goz

ARCANA COELESTIA*Le Mirage De L'ideal***ATMF**

Melodic Gothic Doom in the same vein as My Dying Bride and Anathema, is what Arcana Coelestia is all about. Piano passages add a nice touch to the gloom on a few songs as do occasional female vocals. "Tragedy & Delirium Part II - The Delirium" is a dark spoken word piece with semi-experimental atmospheric background music that fits the Italian(?) spoken words. I can't say there is much new ground broken here but that isn't necessarily a bad thing, especially if you're a fan of old-school Gothic Doom.

B

-Matt Smith

ARCKANUM*Fran Marder**Kostogher**Kampen*[Debemur Morti Productions](#)

pppppppppp

[Debemur Morti Productions/Moribund Records](#)

Arckanum is a Swedish one-man black metal force, consisting solely of Shamaatae. To coincide with the bands latest release on Moribund Records, ppppppppppp, Debemur Morti Productions has also seen fit to re-issue remastered (by Andy Classen, no less) versions of the bands first three albums - 1995's *Fran Marder*, 1997's *Kostogher*, and 1998's *Kampen*. I'll mainly be focusing on the new release, but will touch briefly upon the re-issues here as well.

Arckanum's debut, *Fran Marder*, is an uncompromisingly brutal collection of raw black metal. Vicuous, fast, and raw as a freshly cut side of beef, this disc is just a glimpse at the intensity that Arckanum can unleash. Check out "Grava Fran Trulen" and "Trulmælder" for a taste of some of the hauntingly good sounds that emanate from this disc.

Kostogher shows the band following in a similar manner to its predecessor, but also adding in a little bit more technicality to the mix. This isn't to say that they've gone and started noodling guitar solos all over the place, just that some of the guitar riffs seem to be more involved and technically put together. "Gangar For Raþan Vinder" and "Kri Til Dødha Doghi" are the tracks to check out if you're not going to listen to the whole thing.

When *Kampen* was first released, its songs were grouped together in longer segements on the disc, supposedly screwed up by the record label. Here on the re-issue, the 12 tracks each have their own index on the disc, making it easier to skip around if need be. This disc reflects a maturing band, although the main idea stays the same - vicious black metal meant to evoke the gnostic beliefs that Shamaatae studies. While I wouldn't call this music "polished" necessarily, it definitely has a cleaner feel to it than the previous releases. The riffs are a bit more prominent and up front in the music - check out "Frana" for a good example of what I mean. "Minir Natz Fughlir" feels like it could be a Judas Priest song (at least the main riff does). There really seems to be quite a bit of NWOBHM influences going on here, if you ask me. After this release, Arckanum put out a few splits, eps, and the amazing Antikosmos (in 2008).



Arckanum's latest effort, ppppppppppp, is an even more matured collection of 11 songs at just over 50 minutes of music. Like Antikosmos, this disc also features Set Teitan (ex-Dissection, if you didn't already know) on guest guitar for some tracks. The riffs here are much more precise and the melodies that they create are much bigger and more noticable than any of the bands previous works. Just listening to the first track, "bórhati", you can hear right from the start that the music here is much more riff driven and catchy. Mind you, it still has the chaotic and vicious sound of the band previous works, but at the same time has some more memorable stuff that will stick in your head. "þjóbaugvittr" has a slower pace and super heavy riffing, feeling downright doomy compared to some of the really fast paced stuff. "þriandi" shows some of the NWOBHM influences that were present on *Kampen* quite nicely as well.

I highly recommend everyone pick up at least one of these releases from Arckanum. If you're only going to get one, then the obvious choice is ppppppppppp, but you should really check them out from the beginning, since everything is now readily available and sounding better than it ever has. Chaos will always rule!

A-

-Goz

ARMOUR*Armour*[Hells Headbangers](#)

Finland's Armour release their self-titled debut disc, courtesy of Hells Headbangers Records. Armour is another in a long line of projects by Vince Venom (aka Satanic Warmaster Mutilator Werewolf of Black Vengeance and Sexual Hammer, Satanic Tyrant Werewolf, Nazgul and many many other silly stage names). This time, though, the band he is heading up is playing throwback 80's metal - in the vein of WASP, Exciter and the like.

Everything on this disc screams "classic" 80's metal. Look at these song titles - "Rock'n'Roll Tonite", "Sex Demon", "Roll Out (Or Get Rocked)" and "Heavy Metal Drinkers" - they all scream 80's. Speaking of screaming 80's, the vocals on this disc do just that. Kind of a cross between Brian Johnson, Blackie Lawless and the guy who sings for Cinderella. The music is equally throwback, with basic, yet catchy riffs carrying the songs, some decent guitar leads, and basic drum and bass providing the backdrop for everything to come out of. Even the production on this disc sounds as if it comes from the 80's. Since that is what they were going for, they've

done it all quite well here.

Armour isn't showing us anything even remotely new here, but they nailed the style they were going for pretty damn well. Fans of classic 80's metal and rock should definitely check this out to get a fix for the retro sound they crave. For me, I'll probably never listen to this again, but it was a slightly entertaining trip down memory lane - and a reminder why I was never the biggest fan of this style of

music to begin with.

B- -Goz

BARN BURNER

Bangers

Metal Blade



Melodic Metal similar to Life of Agony via a Stoner Rock route. Barn Burner is an appropriate name for these guys as these songs really can be described as barn burners, smoking guitars, driving drums and bass and a strong vocalist that carries the songs in sing along, almost hard core fashion at times. "Runnin Reds" has a nice slow break down in the middle that adds dynamics to the song and "Brohemoth" has a nice mellow part in the middle of the song. "Old Habits" starts with a real classic Doom feel to it and just adds more versatility to a solid album. For fans of Stoner Rock, and especially fans of the late great Seemless, I highly recommend this disc.

B -Matt Smith

THE BEAST OF THE APOCALYPSE

A Voice from the Four Horns of the Golden Altar

Transcendental Creations



Ok, so there is a huge movement right now with a ton of metal bands bringing back the old school sounds. I am fine with this, and even enjoy a lot of it. Back when the old school was current (late 80's through early/mid 90's when I was in my formative years as a metalhead, that is), I never really got too much into black metal. The shitty production that sounded as if the band was a mile deep in the woods and the recording equipment was setup alongside a highway somewhere, barely picking up anything distinguishable from the band is one of the main things that kept me from liking the style. In more recent years, I've grown to like a good bit of black metal, but still, that crappy sounding stuff eludes my tastes.

This brings me to the current offering - the debut disc from The Beast of the Apocalypse, entitled *A Voice from the Four Horns of the Golden Altar*. The sound here makes old school stuff sound new school. This is pretty much an interchangeable wall of sound that lasts for about 45 minutes, with no real change from one track to the next. I tried to pick out some interesting bits of some of the songs, but I gave up during the title track and just tried to figure out if there was anything that I would find redeeming in this at all. The answer to that elusive question is - nope. I am sure there will be certain fans who will clamor on about how great and old school and kvlt this is and whatever, but I won't be one of them.

F -Goz

BESTIAL MOCKERY

Christcrushing Hammerchainsaw

Hells Headbangers



Originally released in 2002, the long out of print full length debut from Sweden's Bestial Mockery, *Christcrushing Hammerchainsaw* (brilliant title), is now available again thanks to Hells Headbangers Records.

Clicking in at a bit over 25 minutes long, the 10 songs here fly by at the speed of a full throttle chainsaw. Speaking of chainsaws, the guitars have a very chainsaw-esque tone to them, and the chainsaw sample in "Morbidity Inversion" and the title track is a nice addition as well. The music here is basic thrashy black metal with a ton of punk rock thrown in. Totally basic, stripped down and primal, the music is vicious, and anything but catchy or melodic (aside from a few very small bits here and there). Saying that, there is much to like about this disc, mostly due to the sheer ferocity of the whole thing. There isn't a single bit of wasted noise to be found here. No intro, outro, or crappy filler at all. From the opening notes of "Bestial Warfare" to the final attack of, well, "Final Attack", Bestial Mockery doesn't leave a single moment for you to catch your breath or lose your attention. This is all out musical war, from beginning to end.

Fans of old school, primitive pink laden metal should drop the needle on the vinyl version of this, "Raise the Chalice" and ride this chainsaw straight to hell.

B+ -Goz

BLACK BREATH

Razor to Oblivion

Southern Lord



Raw old-school Thrash is what I felt when I put on this disc with a hint of NWOBHM thrown in to the mix. Loud raw guitars and drums with screaming vocals make this an intense listen and I can only imagine how much more intense they are live. Blitzkrieg is one band that comes to mind but with a much powerful punch. "Beneath The Crust" has one of the most genuine breakdowns I've heard in a long time and would put any Deathcore band to shame. This is only an EP so the four songs on this disc go by quite fast but the impression they make on these songs is more than I've heard on a full album of similar wannabe music.

B -Matt Smith

BRAINSTORM

Just Highs No Lows (12 Years of Persistence)

Metal Blade



The greatest hits package- especially in the current market- just screams contractual obligation.... Or another way for the casual follower to get sucked in to buying everything while said band carries on with a new label



deal. *Just High No Lows (12 Years of Persistence)* compiles this German power metal acts finer songs through the Andy B. Franck led timeframe, along with some closing bonus material consisting of b-sides in foreign territories and live renditions of older songs.

If you are a newcomer to Brainstorm's style, I would say they closely resemble the traditional riff heavy sound of brethren like Rage along with a strong dose of American influences, especially in the strong rhythmic department a la the classic Vicious Rumors 1988-1991 period. They gravitate between faster, more double bass driven material like "Blind Suffering" and "Shadowland", more mid-tempo melodic fare such as "All Those Words" or "Fire Walk With Me" as well delving into exotic, epic numbers such as "Soul Temptation" and "Beyond My Destiny".

I especially enjoyed "Voices" in a live setting, Andy's vocals matching the musical intensity much better than their former vocalist Marcus Jurgens. As far as the other bonus material, "Breathe" has that distinct Far Eastern guitar blitz attack and probably represents the closest to what ardent Brainstorm followers come to expect from the band. You'll get 32 tracks and over 2 hours, 30 minutes of material, so prepare for the long haul when investing in this particular outing.

Consensus? Love the band, hate the idea behind the product. We could have done just fine with a single album of live tracks and the bonus material- and yet I know it's not the band's fault.

B+ -Matt Coe

BROWN JENKINS

Death Obsession

[Moribund](#)



Death Obsession is Brown Jenkins second, and final full-length, posthumously released about a year after they disbanded. Mainman UA was the sole contributor on this release, and he has since started a new project, The Ash Eaters, which is said to be heavier and darker than Brown Jenkins. Good luck with that.

This music is the definition of darkness. Darkness encompasses each and every beat, every guitar note, every vocal line. I feel as if the sun might be scared into setting if I were to play this before dark. The music here is heavy, droning and all encompassing. While it is massively repetitive, it somehow drags you in deeper with each listen. Yes, you are hearing the same buzzing, jangling guitar lines over and over, but there is something there that won't let your ears wander. The reverbed vocals are used somewhat sparsely, but just add to the dark and forboding feeling.

Drop this disc in on a dark, dreary night, and be prepared for it to get even darker. Better yet, try listening to it on a sunny day and see if it causes an eclipse.

B -Goz

CLUTCH

Strange Cousins from the West

[Weathermaker Music](#)



Hmm, what can I say about Clutch that I haven't already spieled. I'll try to strip this one down for you if I can. If you haven't heard good things about Clutch, then you probably haven't heard anything about them. They remain one of the best kept underground secrets, even though we're doing a terrible job keeping this secret because they're selling out venues repeatedly.

If you have ever heard anything negative about Clutch it would have likely come from a long-time Clutch fan. Some fans prefer the older material which was somewhat heavier and grittier. Along the years they became more and more diverse, such as adding some funk, guitar/stoner rock and jam elements. Recent studio albums lean more towards roots rock, punk, a little southern rock and primarily blues. The blues has always been there, at the forefront or not. They've invariably possessed a healthy groove and dole it out in large, mosh or dance-frenzying doses. The soul within their music, lyrics and vocals is unmatched. That core formula is present on any Clutch album, and I'm sure always will be. They're just a little more sophisticated than they used to be and lately their studio albums focus more on their roots.

What that long-time fan may not have told you, or may not realize, is that Clutch still plays the old stuff. They're one of the hardest touring bands out there. They've been playing the earlier material for so long, they've honed it to perfection. Those original recordings from when they started out are now powerfully magnified when you hear them live. They have drawn the energy of the crowd's reaction and developed a fervor that wasn't captured fifteen years ago. Everything grows with age. Birthdays are inevitable. So is evolution.

So, *Strange Cousins from the West* is only their most recent studio album. With Clutch, one album cannot embody the whole. The reason I'm not negative about their recent releases is because... I'm a sucker for the Blues. I love the soul in it. I've discussed this album with a couple other veteran Clutch fans and will say that their initial reactions are not always positive. Later after giving it another couple go-rounds, they change their mind and appreciate it more. Some albums are like that though. I'm sure I still haven't heard this album enough to find all the jewels in it. (Theres even a hidden, bonus track, "Metroliner Special" available online only [here](#).) Which is another reason I admire Clutch so much. You take to a couple songs, then listen through a few more times and other ones seep into your heart and stick there. Like on a previous album, Robot Hive: Exodus, I loved "Gullah" right off. Then I went through a bunch of 'second bests' until finally discovering how "Small Upsetters" and "Gravel Road" were as good, too. Their soul isn't always that easy to unveil until you get to know them, but their diverse and uncanny musicianship is always obvious. Saying they're catchy just doesn't do them justice.

I think *Strange Cousins from the West* is starting to turn back toward the old *Pure Rock Fury*- *Elephant Riders*- *Blast Tyrant* vibe again. "Freakonomics" and "The Amazing Kreskin" would fit right in on any of those three albums. I'm hearing the old funk and mystic stuff come back into their music. Especially toward the end of this album. "Freakonomics" is fast and funky. "Witchdoctor" was the first song I thought was my favorite pick. Then the mega blues fan inside me sniffed out "Let A Poor Man Be" as my favorite for the groove and sexy slide guitar. Next was "Abraham Lincoln" and "Motherless Child" but I'm still exploring and I don't plan on stopping. (Well, when the next release comes out I may take a break.) Favorites tend to change all the time for Clutch fans. It's near impossible to pick just one. Unless it's one per day.

For fans of the heavier music/metal, I'd recommend starting with the live albums and earlier releases first and work your way to present or jump around if you want. For fellow blues hounds and anyone open to variety in their music, *Strange Cousins from the West* [or any of their albums for that matter,] would be the perfect place to start. A small taste of everything and a whole lotta blues. Just to warn you, for many of us who put in the time and really get to know Clutch's music, we turn into 'freaks' called Gearheads. This is because their music reaches deep into your own soul and lives there and affects you the way music is supposed to. Especially live. It's an imminent infection. A friendly, life-augmenting parasite that I'm proud to host.

A- -Alesha

DARK FUNERAL*Angelus Exuro pro Eternus*[Regain Records](#)

It's hard to believe that Dark Funeral's self-titled debut EP came out a decade and a half ago. Since that time, there have been numerous releases, line-up changes and tours by the band. Since their last release, they took a little bit of time off and also have a new drummer - did the time off bring anything new from the band, or are we going to get what we'd expect from Dark Funeral?

The first two songs will remind you instantly of Dark Funeral - hyper speed black metal is pretty much all these tracks are about. Tremolo picked guitars, blasting drums and vocals that spew more venom than a pissed off viper. "Stigmata" is where the album starts to open up a little bit. The track slows things down (at least for some of it), and also incorporates a bit more melody and some different vocal styles. It is still pretty unmistakably Dark Funeral, though. "My Funeral" is a track many are probably familiar with, as the band made a video (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TEVodXzNmPM>) for it that was promptly removed from Myspace due to the graphic imagery in the video. The song is definitely a departure for the band, with its

mid-paced tempo and almost catchy chorus. A good song, but it may not appeal to long time fans of the band that would rather see them not change a thing. If you belong to that category, you may want to skip ahead to the closer, "My Latex Queen", because the band throws some more varied stuff at us with "Demons of Fire" and "In My Dreams".

Angelus Exuro pro Eternus is a good album, no doubt. As mentioned, it shows the band branching out a bit from their trademark sound, which to me is a good thing. The fact that they can progress and incorporate some different elements into their sound and have it come across this well just shows how good the band is.

B+

-Goz

DISFIGURED DEAD*Visions of Death*[Hells Headbangers](#)

Hells Headbangers Records is a label that purely focuses on old school metal. Whether it's death metal, black metal, thrash just plain old heavy metal - everyone of the labels releases is all about the old school, 80's metal sound. Enter New York upstart death metal band Disfigured Dead. Although only formed in 2008, the band sounds as if they've been at it since the late 80's, and possibly recorded this disc back then as well.

Bringing in a good range of influences, the band brings us back to the dirty, gritty sound of early death metal. Autopsy comes to mind right away - just listen to the opening trio of "Beyond the Darkness", "The Gates of Hell" and "Screamatorium" for proof. Sludgy, doomy, punky and rank all come to mind when hearing these songs. These are all good things if you ask me, too. Sure, I like me some new, more polished stuff, too, but the sounds on here are what my metal roots were planted and fertilized with. Lyrical topics cover all the good stuff - horror, gore, death and the like. The best track here for me is "Possessed Dead". From the killer riffs, to the great Evil Dead themed lyrics, this one just stands out for me.

Disfigured Dead surely stirs up *Visions of Death* with their debut disc. The band shows that they have what it takes to pay homage to the originators of the death metal style, while adding in little touches that make this disc their own.

B+

-Goz

DYSE*Lieder Sind Brüder Der Revolution*[Exile On Mainstream](#)

Germany's Dyse angular avant-garde approach to Metal reminds me of Thought Industry At times and Jesus Lizard at others but comes right back to the punishing reality they are not copy cats by any means, Progressive at times and absolutely Hardcore at others. If King Crimson and Shellac collaborated it would probably not sound much different from this album. "Krakenduft" is a total departure from the other tracks on the disc and shows us the extremes this band will go to while "Hans Georg" is an epic track complete with horns and weird bird noises. If you like your Metal progressive and out of the ordinary I would check this disc out!

B

-Matt Smith

EGYPT*Egypt*[MeteorCity](#)

Stoner Metal by way of time machine, and the aptly named Egypt is just what the doctor ordered for this time and age of the pathetic state of mainstream Rock and Metal. Before I wax too nostalgic about Egypt I should also mention they are no longer a band, and even the line-up list on the disc says "Egypt was: Aaron Esterby - vocals and electric bass, Chad Heille - percussion, and Ryan Grahn - electric guitar" and this album was recorded in 2004 so as you'll figure out this is an official release of a band that wasn't around long enough for them to see a proper release of their debut album. With all this being said what you get here is a classic Stoner Metal sound similar to St. Vitus, Trouble, and Pentagram with a heavy Sabbath influence, but that kind of goes without saying.

Warm and satisfying riffs with smoking wah-wah guitar solos and drums and bass that are equally warm and a solid fit to the overall sound. Aaron's vocals kind of sound like Eric Wagner from Trouble without as much screech to his voice. "Queen Of All Time (Red Giant)" is probably my favorite track on the album and

considering there are four songs to this 32 minute disc all of the songs are definitely epic in approach, but this one is probably the MOST epic of the four. For fans of old-school Doom seek this disc out, you will NOT be disappointed!

A

-Matt Smith

THE ELECTRIC SINNERS*Memento Mori**Reality Impared*



This has to be one of the scariest discs I've ever listened to. No track listings, the stark black and white cover sports some sort of religious statue. With band member names like Meow Meow Kitty on Drums, Dick Drano and Crash Corrigan on Guitar, and Crispy Ambulance on Bass; you'd think this would be a joke band, but there's nothing funny about the Sinners.

Call it Drone or Dirge metal, this hypnotic CD surrounds you with repetitive riffs layered upon layers of sound. This disc will either, drive you to suicide or take you on a euphoric ride on the astral plane without the use of drugs, add drugs, and you are on your own. Be warned.

Every time I listen to this disc I hear something different, it's almost as if spectral hands manipulate their own instruments from the netherworld. The disc is mostly instrumental, but when someone does end up singing, the despair in their voice drives you nearly insane.

The best thing about The Sinners is that they don't give a fuck. They get together, set up recording stuff, and play till they can't play anymore. They don't spend hours overproducing their sound and making sure everything sounds right, if they fuck up or someone is out of tune; it just adds to the total sound.

This disc isn't for everybody, your average Joe couldn't listen to 5 minutes of it without deeming the disc a piece of shit. But there's some real art behind all the noise, these guys aren't just some jokers who think they can play and want to be arty, they're real musicians, who've been playing for decades and now just make music for themselves. If you love despair, then this is the disc for you. You can find them on Myspace, but I'm fairly sure they don't play out much, but if they do; I'll be up in front.

A -Choppy

ENTHRONED

Pentagrammaton
Regain Records



When I think of Belgium, I usually think of three things - beer, chocolate, and amazing architecture. When I was there a while back, I was amazed by the quality and sheer awesomeness and omnipresence of these three things. When I think of Belgium and music, the first thing that comes to mind is Agathocles, as I've been a fan of theirs for a LONG time. Next up would be other longtime bands Aborted and Enthroned. Enthroned is back with another release, and another revamped lineup for the band to go with it. They must have a revolving door in the bands rehearsal space, because they seem to have members coming and going on a near constant basis. That said, *Pentagrammaton* is their latest effort, and it delivers us 10 tracks of blasphemous blackness, which is pretty much what we'd expect from the band.

Of course, the album starts with the requisite intro track, which I chose to skip over after the initial listen through. "The Vitalized Shell" is the first proper song, and it delivers as you'd expect - heavy, fast guitar lines, blast beats from the drums, and not quite raspy vocals delivering the evil message. There are quite a few slower parts with more interesting and catchy guitar riffing strewn throughout, which makes this a much better listen for me. Have a listen to "Ornament of Grace" for an example of the good riffing that the band can put together. In fact, the band is moving towards a more blackened death metal sound nowadays, evidenced a good bit in the title track (and many others on here, for that matter). Whether this is a good thing for you or not is up to you to decide. I am sure many long time fans will not like it, and think that the band should have stayed the same, but progression isn't always a bad thing, if you ask me. And, while Enthroned isn't making anything entirely new or groundbreaking here, what they are making is still very listenable and entertaining.

Yes, it can be said that the band changed a bit with the departure of founding member Sabathan a few years back. The fact is, though, they are still making pretty damn good music, even with the slightly more blackened death metal sound that they seem to be leaning towards now.

B- -Goz

EYEWITNESS DEATHCOUNT

Eyewitness Deathcount
Self-released



This 5 song EP is skullcrushing. Nothing overproduced, just fuckin' great metal. Punchy tracks of old school thrash without sounding dated or like every other crappy band out there. They throw a little stoner metal in there too on one of the best titles for a song, "You Had Me at Armageddon". The track "The Largest Cult of Death" makes me want to punch people in the face immediately.

Raw, aggressive, and totally real; Eyewitness Deathcount is a band I look forward to checking out live someday. I'm sure some people will get hurt at that show. I'm also looking forward to hearing a full album from them cause 5 songs is just not enough. Look for them on Myspace and try to get your hands on this disc cause it's fuckin' amazing.

A- -Choppy

FEAR FACTORY

Mechanize
Candlelight Records



Fear Factory has been idle for a while, with their last release (the mediocre at-best *Transgression*) coming some 5 years ago. To be truthful, I had pretty much written them off after hearing the bands 2001 release, *Digimortal*, which I found to be pretty boring. Of course, I am discounting *Concrete*, since that was all stuff recorded before the bands amazing debut, *Soul of a New Machine*. I am sure you have all heard about the legal nonsense surrounding the current incarnation of the band. Early last year vocalist Burton C. Bell rejoined forces with original guitarist Dino Cazares and recruited drummer extraordinaire Gene Hoglan (while retaining bassist Byron Stroud) and formed a new Fear Factory. *Mechanize* is the resultant album, recorded and released in less than a year. How does this hold up to the "classic" Fear Factory releases that I liked so much? Will it help me to forget about their last three releases?

The title track kicks things off, and right away, I hear what I am looking for. Biting, deep guitar riffs, pounding and unrelenting drum attacks, and of course Burton's very recognizable voice. From the deep growls and mid-range shouts to the clean singing, Burton nails the vocal performance here, as you'd expect. Check out the varied vocals on "Industrial Discipline" for a great example of his range. "Powershifter" sounds as if it could be a long lost FF song from one of the first two discs, slightly updated with a touch of Divine Heresy thrown into it. "Oxidizer" brings the industrial sounds full force, with all sorts of mechanical clicks, clacks and thuds bouncing around throughout the track. The disc ends with a couple of quieter, more melodic tracks in

"Designing the Enemy" and "Final Exit", with the latter, at 8+ minutes, being the longest Fear Factory song ever (aided greatly by the 30-second intro and 3+ minute fade out at the end).

The production on this disc is near perfect. The guitars are vicious sounding, the drums are mammoth and all encompassing in their sound, and the vocals are mixed in right where they need to be. The bass, however, is pretty much obliterated by the guitar and drums...poor bassists always seem to get the shaft. While Mechanize may not be as earth shatteringly good as *Soul* or *Demanufacture*, this is the Fear Factory I want to hear. Welcome back! Now get out on the road for a tour of the States.

A- -Goz

FREEDOM HAWK

Freedom Hawk
MeteorCity



I could make a corny joke about the name similarity to "Freedom Rock" but I won't, instead I'll say Freedom Hawk play groove filled Monster Magnet inspired Stoner Metal with some Ozzy influenced vocals. Songs about drinking and contemplating life's every day problems in "Universal" and "Hollow Caverns" is one of the mellower tunes on this disc but most of them rock pretty hard.

Great playing throughout the disc and even though there's nothing overly original here that doesn't matter because it cranks in a serious Psychedelic Stoner Rock/Metal way. For fans of Orange Goblin I would recommend this disc. "Freedom Rock", huh-huh, I kill me.

B -Matt Smith

ICHABOD

2012
Rootsucker Records



Finally, Ichabod's latest release, *2012*, has seen the light of day. Originally slated for release in 2008, and delayed numerous times since, Rootsucker Records delivers us this slab of heavy, stoner doom and psychedelic laced rock. So let's take...I mean take...this one for a ride and see where it leads us.

"Sleeping Giants" is the wakeup call for the disc, and it starts with some wartime sound samples, planes and gunfire and such, then slowly climbs from its slumber into a nice little psychedelic bit with guitar and bass providing most of the sounds over minimal drums. Fear not, fans of heaviness, as you will be treated to plenty of that at the halfway point of the song. Sludgy riffs erupt from the trance like sounds, and the vocals change from clean and mesmerizing to pissed off screams. "Giving Up The Ghost" starts off with some kickass wah-wah laden guitar work with some spoken word stuff that sounds almost like a carnival barker. Of course, since Ichabod's music always seems to be centralized around some sort of great riff, we get one dropped on us here as well - maybe the best one on the disc, too. This song is just a perfect summation of Ichabod to me

- strong psychedelic elements at times, massive sludgy elements at others, and immense riffs tying it all together. Do you really need anything else?

"Gentlemen of the Choir" slows things down a little bit, going for a more tripped out feel than anything else on *2012*. There is some great drum and bass work in this song, and a flute solo that would put Jethro Tull to shame. Ichabod likes to do covers of bands that influenced them. In the past, they've covered Eyehategod's "Jackass In the Will of God" and Negative Approach's "Evacuate", and here on *2012*, they do their own take on Pink Floyd's "Nile Song". This is probably the heaviest song Floyd ever recorded, so it is a wise choice, and Ichabod does a good job putting their own spin on it. The original is just over 3 minutes long, yet the version here clocks in at 10 minutes. So what do they in all that extra time? Well, they basically jam on for 6+ minutes, with all sorts of trippy stuff going on. Some may find this excessive or whatever, but I think it's a perfect interpretation of the song. The jazz feeling "New Year's Prayer" segues into the title track, which is sure to prepare you for the end of the world. The Black Sabbath inspired riff roars along through the first half of the song, while the second half trips out with some crazy psychedelic chanting bringing it to a peaceful end. The outro is 6+ minutes of samples and acts as a solid bookend for the disc.

The presentation of the disc is great, with various panels of the foldout booklet containing Mayan art, a band photo, and the main focus - the 2012 Collage, which has all sorts of Mayan symbology in it. You could probably look at the collage a million times and still be finding new stuff in it. Production is also top notch - far and away the best production Ichabod has achieved on any of their releases thus far. Now that I finally have this disc, I think it will be in my standard rotation for a while.

A -Goz

IHSAHN

After
Candlelight Records



As much as I love Emperor, their breakup spawned the creative force that is Ihsahn. The band had stagnated creatively, and outpoured a flood of unique ideas and compositions; Ihsahn had gone solo, and the metal world was a better place. After two strong solo albums, the Norwegian madman has continued his unique and genre bending output with *After*. In all seriousness, this album is unlike ever put to disc before. It combines black metal, progressive death metal, and jazz to create a dizzying masterpiece. Ihsahn is unquestionably metal's most iconoclastic composer, and the artist to watch for this coming decade.

I'm really at a loss for words as how to describe *After*, as there is so little to base it on. It bears some similarity to the quirky and proggy black metal-ish stuff that Ihsahn wrote for his previous album, *aNGL*. That's only the beginning though. These riffs spiral upwards and downwards, forcing you to exhaustively grasp them, even if unable to. Then the jazz influences begin. Their sultry nuances seep into every crevice of

the album, evoking a sexy richness rarely found in heavy metal music. After multiple listens, I know there is so much left to be discovered on this album. The gorgeous solemnity of the title track, the brilliance of "Undercurrent," and the exoticism of "On the Shores" are only the stepping stones to the creation of this monumental work.

As a metal fan, you'd be doing yourself a great disservice by missing this album. Go get it now!

A -Adam

I KILLED THE PROM QUEEN

Music for the Recently Deceased

Metal Blade

Adelaide, Australia's I Killed The Prom Queen sounds like our own melodic American metalcore/deathcore. Complete with lots of meaty breakdowns, guitar shredding and mainly growling vocals with a small smattering of clean vocals. You may recognize the guitar personality here, especially if you're a fan of Bleeding Through. *Music for the Recently Deceased* was the last studio album before IKTPQ's "hiatus" after guitarist Jona Weinhofen left to join Bleeding Through for a short stint, and some trouble with a replacement for vocalist Ed Butcher. Following this album, they also released a live CD/DVD in March 2009, *Sleepless Nights and City Lights*.

The main reason I bought this album was because of the album title. One of my favorite movies as a teen was Beetlejuice. You all must remember the "Handbook for the Recently Deceased" that guided the recently dead Maitland couple through their new, wacky afterlife. *Music for the Recently Deceased* immediately brought a smile to my face and I thought "what a great album title!" Their song titles were clever as well, and I was correct in assuming the lyrics would follow suit (though I did expect them to be somewhat funny rather than all morbid).

IKTPQ certainly seem obsessed with death and killing women. The inside jacket is filled with images of caskets and a cold, dead vampire-victim. Likely a prom queen. Also being highly morbid and depressing lyrically, leads me to think this maybe be a concept album all about death. It could almost be considered borderline emo with the added 'kid' vocals, but the kid-sounding, clean vocals harmonize more later in the album and it doesn't dominate the music like so much of our modern American metalcore tends to.

I was pleased that they left out all the clean vocals in a healthy amount of the tracks on this album. Those were the tracks I liked the most as there wasn't anything detracting from the good, melodic hardcore base. On average, they did this for about every other song. My most memorable being "Bet It All On Black", "Like Nails to a Casket", and then opener "Sharks in Your Mouth". There was also a quick instrumental closing out the album "There Will Be No Violins When You Die."

The most endearing traits of *Music for the Recently Deceased*, other than the well written titles and lyrics, were the very talented guitars and percussion. The guitar talent is all over the album and quite obvious. The percussion caught my attention, and held it, after the intro for fourth track "Your Shirt Would Look Better With a Columbian Neck-tie". I'd definitely revisit this album more often if there wasn't all the 'kid' vocals mixed in. Minus that one small flaw, IKTPQ reminds me very much of Unearth musically, so I may go back and give it the old college try. Either that or I may just rip the half that was easier on my ears.

B -Alesha

IMPIOUS

Death Domination
Metal Blade Records



Sweden is a country well know for producing some of the best death metal ever. Entombed, Dismember, Grave, Unleashed, Edge of Sanity - I could go on forever and ever. While I wouldn't put Impious into the same category as those bands, they are from Sweden and they play some pretty killer thrash tinged death metal on their latest, *Death Domination*.

Things get going with the best track on the disc, "Abomination Glorified". Fast, brutal and catchy riffs will hook you in, while the blast beats will cause your eardrums to work overtime to keep up with the sonic mayhem that is ensuing. "I Am The King" is another standout track - great catchy riffs and some pretty good guitar lead work. I guess I could say something similar about pretty much every song on here, and that is the main problem I have with this release. Once you've hear one of Impious' songs, you've pretty much heard them all. They all follow the same pattern, which makes this short (36 minute) disc seem longer as they songs just kind of blur together in their sameness.

There are some really good parts to this disc, but as a whole, everything seems to run together and nothing really grabs your attention. That said, this is still really good death metal, and I am sure fans of the genre will get some enjoyment out of the music.

B- -Goz

INFERNO

Black Devotion
Agonia Records



Czech black metallers Inferno have thus far released a bunch of eps, splits, and live albums, with *Black Devotion* being their fifth-full length studio effort. They play straight up black metal with no compromises at all. If you like Emperor, Watain, and 1349 (aside from their latest debacle), then I have no doubt you'd like this latest effort from Inferno.

After the intro track, we launch right into one of the catchiest riffs on the disc - that is the opening to "Superior Will". Freakin' great riff that is right there. You know what to expect from the rest - fast, distorted riffs, blasting drums, and effect laden vocals. Not a whole lot new going on here, but they do it so damn well that you won't care how many times you've heard this before. Speaking of amazingly good riffs - check out the monster in the middle of "Holy Poison". You'll know what I'm talking about when you hear it. I'd be remiss not to mention "Eaten By Rats Forever", simply because that is a damn good song title, and the music is pretty damn good as well. "Message To Ages" has a wartime, marching feel to the music that always helps get

me more into a song.

This Inferno scorches your ears for the 47-minutes that it takes to listen to this disc. This is a must for fans of the aforementioned bands, and for black metal fans in general.

B+ -Goz

INGESTED

Surpassing the Boundaries of Human Suffering
Candlelight Records



Formerly known as Age of Suffering, UK slamming brutal death metal quintet Ingested break us down with their debut release, *Surpassing the Boundaries of Human Suffering*. The music here is pretty straightforward and typical for the style, so let's just get into what I liked (not much) and what I didn't like (most of it) about this disc.

The first thing that grabbed my attention was how bad the drums sound here. They are thin, clicky, and just plain flat sounding. Check out the fill at the beginning of "Coproemesis" and the fill in the middle of "Pre-Released Foetal Mush" for the best examples of how weak the drums are here. Also, the incessant and overly loud double bass drums do nothing but overpower everything else that is going on here. Sure, the guy



seems like he can play fast, but who knows if he is really playing it that fast at all - it sounds like it could be straight up programmed drums if you ask me.

Next up is the overuse of pretty much everything that I consider bad about the whole "Slamming brutal" (whatever else you want to add in there) death metal sub-genre. Bassdrops, breakdowns and a overabundance if pinch-harmonics (so they can say they are "technical", too, I guess) are thrown in all over place, and typically feel like a crutch when they are used, as if they couldn't find a better way to transition from one part of a song to another. Speaking of transitions, there are a couple of weird sounding ones in "Contorted Perception" that sound as if there are bits of the song missing - kinda like jump cuts in a movie. They are a bit jarring to say the least.

Ok, so what else to say about this. The guitar tone is pretty decent, although not put to really good use since most of the guitar work is quite generic and the songs are pretty much indistinguishable from one another. The lyrics are pretty standard fare - gore and defiling women are the main topics covered, and in quite graphic detail.

I am sure this will appeal to fans of Devourment, Waking the Cadaver and bands of that ilk. To me, though, this is just flat out not that interesting at all.

D -Goz

IN MOURNING

Monolith

[Pulverised Records](#)



Sweden's In Mourning started their life as more of a gothic/death band, but have since progressed to where they are today, which would be more of a melodeath band with some slight gothic edges that just barely remain.

The band does mix a good amount of stuff into this disc. Take the opening track, "For You To Know", as an example. A really nice melody line is laid out on top of chuggy, staccato guitars, and the first verse is hammered through by way of pretty harsh vocals. The chorus comes in, and things slow down a bit, clean vocals join in the mix, and the melodic guitar becomes a bit more prominent. Following the chorus has one of the best riffs on the entire disc, too. "The Poet And The Painter of Souls" is a bit more melancholic overall, even with the blast beats that they sneak in towards the end of the song. If it is melancholy that you are looking for, however, then look no further than "The Smoke", which is full of moody melodies and meandering misery. I would be remiss to not mention the use of the organ (maybe even a B3) in the last track - the 13

minute monolith called "The Final Solution (Entering The Black Lodge)". Why I need to mention this, I am not sure, but I just love the sound of it, and it fits in really nice in that song, even if its appearance is very brief.

Recommended for fans of Katatonia, new(er) Hypocrisy and to a lesser extent Scar Symmetry. Not recommended if you are looking for some truly brutal death metal, but if you were, you probably would've quit reading this review a while ago. They might not be the best at what they do, but they are quite good, and they have plenty of time to improve.

B -Goz

THE CANDIDATE

Until We Are Outnumbered

[Napalm Records](#)



The Candidate bow forth with their debut disc, *Until We Are Outnumbered*, on Napalm Records. Led by former Hatesphere vocalist Jacob Bredahl, The Candidate (formerly known as The Downward Candidate) plays a crossover thrash/hardcore sound, with the music being mostly thrashy and the vocals providing a strong hardcore element. This is almost what I would imagine a cross between Sick of it All and Slayer sounding like.

The songs here are mostly short and punchy, with "Distress and Decay" being a perfect example. At just over 2 minutes long, the song gets to its point quick and painfully, not wasting so much as a note on anything other than powerful, fast riffs and snappy in your face vocals. Lacking in power The Candidate is not. "In Hell" is a bit longer, and has a much thrashier musical feel to it. A good back to back attack from the band there.

If you want some pretty violent sounding crossover thrash, The Candidate delivers. A definite must listen for fans of Hatesphere, but others should give it a listen as well.

B- -Goz

KAREN PAGE

Karen Page

[Rotten Records](#)



Karen Page unleash their self-titled, second release (the first, *Operator Operator, the Phone is Dead!!!*, has become known as "one of the greatest albums of all time", according to their PR), via Rotten Records. The band plays a wild array of musical styles - based in deathcore, but throwing some jazz, reggae and toy piano into the mix at times to make things a bit more interesting (or confusing).

Ok, we get started with all sorts of stuff coming "Out of the Woodwork". Blasting drums, chaotic vocals, rapid-fire start/stop guitar with all sorts of noodling, and then a slowdown and the infamous bass drop comes in. So far, I am not all that impressed with this, although the drummer has some good chops here and there. Next up is "The Icebox". Check out the shredding guitar (woo! I can do sweep arpeggios! Look at me!), and then the completely out of place reggae breakdown. I'll be right back, I need to go visit my own icebox to refill my beverage - maybe the next song will actually be well written and not just a complete mess of musical ideas that don't mesh together at all. I thought "All Sixes" was the song I was looking forward to, even with

the clean-ish vocals that I didn't think sounded all that good - then came the little breakdown in the middle. I was expecting him to start singing "I'm the ice cream man, so stop me when I'm passing by", but they never did. "Bag of Nerves" and "Nailbiter" both have a lounge/jazz feel to them for a good bit of the song, but of course they delve off into the crazy "look at me" flailing at some point.

If you are a fan of Iwrestledabearonce, Arsonists Get All The Girls, The Tony Danza Tapdance Extravaganza and others like that, then you should definitely check out Karen Page. For this style of music, Karen Page does a really good job, and gets an ok score because of it. If you aren't a fan of the chaotic stylings of those bands, then steer clear.

B- -Goz

MÅNEGARM

Nattväsen

[Regain Records](#)



Sweden's Månegarm take a slightly different approach to their version of folk metal than many others (Elvenking, Eluveitie, Ensiferum, etc) - leaving a good bit of their heavier black metal roots intact, rather than going for the more poppy folk sound that many of the bands steer towards today. This, to me, is a good thing, and I'd much rather have my folk metal be metal first and folk second (or even third or forth).

The music here is heavy (check the beginning of "Mina Fäders Hall (My Father's Hall)" for proof), catchy, folky and melodic (middle of the same song), and at times it is all of these at once (the opening of "Nattsjäl, Drömsjäl (Nightsoul, Dreamsoul)"). Of course, there are numerous examples of all of these elements, but those are the ones that you will hear first. Also, be sure to check out the great wah-wah laden guitar solo at the end of "Bergagasten (Mountain Ghost)".

Månegarm is a good mix of metal and folk, with metal taking the front seat. While I'm still not sold on the whole "folk metal" thing, this is much preferable to the more folky bands out there. I would love to see these guys live, as I think this would translate really well in a live setting.

B+ -Goz

MARIONETTE

Enemies

[Listenable Records](#)



Gothenburg Sweden's Marionette embody the spirit of melodic death metal on their second album *Enemies*. Founding the band in 2005 the sextet's average age was that of 16- so they still are bursting into adulthood through these 13 tracks. I hear elements of At The Gates, Dark Tranquillity and the off time shape shifting poly rhythms within Meshuggah through instant ear removal material like "The Silver Spoon" and "Anthropomorphism".

Keyboardist Linus Johansson chimes in with more of a speed and power nature, giving certain songs that accessible Scar Symmetry/ Soilwork appeal, especially within the opening riff and chorus of "Stench of The Herd" where drummer Jimmy Olausson lays down some serious pit inducing grooves. Vocalist Axel Widen keeps the proceedings discernible with his forceful sandpaper-like screams and word sprint barrage.

The group certainly know how to walk the tightrope between blazing blasts and catchy refrains- one listen to "Unman" can back this statement up with the twin harmonic guitars taking center stage in this roller coaster death metal arrangement. The first half of the album holds up longer than the second half, where there's a tendency for Marionette to sink into conventional metal core breakdown modes that aren't really necessary for the talent contained within the six piece.

Enemies contains enough viciousness and adept playing to keep my attention, although I wonder in the grand landscape of the metal scene if there are enough who will like the obvious reference points to push for this band in droves. Marionette will hopefully expand and explore on subsequent efforts- for now *Enemies* will keep the hunger alive for the veteran releases in this sub-genre which should hit the streets throughout 2010.

B- -Matt Coe

MASTER'S HAMMER

Mantras

Self-released



I distinctly remember when I first head Master's Hammer. I received a promo copy of *The Jilemnice Occultist* from Osmose Productions. The few releases I had gotten from Osmose up to that point had been completely raw black metal, and in one package I got this disc along with Pan.Thy.Moniums *Dawn of Dreams*. When I put these discs in for the initial listen, I was completely floored by what I heard. Both bands were completely different from what I was expecting to hear, and I was immediately drawn in by the complexities and uniqueness of their sounds. I went and ordered *Ritual* immediately, and continued to listen to (and play on my radio show) both of those discs a million times over the next couple of years. I also remember picking up *Slágrý* as soon as it was released, and being completely disappointed with that I heard on the disc, but the band was pretty much dissolved at that point anyway. Enter 2009, and all of a sudden I was hearing that Master's Hammer was back together and releasing a new album - and here it is in the form of *Mantras*. Will they return to their classic for of the first two releases, or will they disappoint as they did on *Slágrý*?

Right from the start with "Typograf", this is pretty much the classic Master's Hammer sound that floored me some 17 years ago. The tympany rolls, the freaky organs playing their black march, the crazy guitar leads popping up all over the place, and the insane and unique vocals of Franta Storm are everything I remember and loved about this band. Epic, orchestral, and pretty much completely different from anything else out there. "Az Já Budu V Hrobe Hníti" opens with some downright scary sounding organ work - this is the music I imagine would be playing at the entrance to hell. They even have a re-recorded version of the track "Jáma Pekel", from *Ritual* - sounding better than ever now.

All I have to say is this - welcome back Master's Hammer. It's been a while since I listened to you, but listening to this brought back fond memories from times long past, and it also made me dig out my copies of the first two discs to be added to my frequent listening rotation. I'm really at a loss for words about how good this disc really is. Available from the bands website and a few select distro's only. Very very highly recommended that you get yourself a copy of this.

A+ -Goz

MEGASUS

Megasus

[20 Buck Spin](#)



This is a band formed by four guys who worked together at Harmonix, the company that created *Guitar Hero* and *Rock Band*, one of them being Brian Gibson from Lightning Bolt on drums. Apparently they have two songs on *Rock Band* and *Guitar Hero* from this disc, which was originally released as vinyl only last year before 20 Buck Spin approached them about releasing the album on CD to a wider audience.

With all this being said, Megasus craft a brand of Metal that is half parts Stoner Metal and half Noise Rock that blends into a psychedelic stew worthy of any adventurous listeners ears. The riffs are tasty and the vocals border on a Stoner scream and Hardcore yell without the macho posture. At times they even have a Swedish Death Metal vibe and at others they have an old school SST band vibe. "Red Lottery" has a nice breakdown riff in it that could easily get a frenzied mosh pit spinning if the crowd was up for it and "Iron Mountain" has a massive hardcore sludge riff that would please any High On Fire fan, including me!

B+ -Matt Smith

MORTEMIA

Misere Mortem
Napalm Records



Founder Morten Veland ventures out of his band efforts with the solo outing Moretemia. Handling all of the vocals, instrumentation, songwriting, production and mixing duties, *Misere Mortem* sounds much darker and more doom-influenced than his work within Sirenia. "The Malice of Life's Cruel Ways" contains those somber riffs and classic bridge choirs to take away any of your sorrows while "The New Desire" begins with U2-like echoing guitar refrains before Morten's deep growl adds a touch of street credibility to the heavier number.

For me a one man band exposes many limitations- computer programming on the drum parts, a singular vision that may not be hyper-critical of the material at hand and oh, yeah: the fact that Mortemia doesn't veer far away from what Morten can explore in Sirenia. You hear one haunting keyboard funeral line, you may have heard them all.

Probably best served for people who must own everything Morten Veland- which doesn't include me.

D

-Matt Coe

NORIEGA

Desolo
Viable Records



California based Noriega slam down their debut EP, *Desolo*, thanks to Viable Records (this is also the first release for Viable). Clocking in at just under a half-hour, with 12+ minutes of that time occupied by one song, this is a fairly quick and to-the-point release.

The band crosses a few boundaries with their musical style, with post-metal/rock clashing violently with some strong metalcore influences (especially the vocals) and a slight touch of stoner rock thrown in as well. The opener, "You Are God Songs" begins with drums and bass creating a dingy landscape, and then the screaming, overbearing vocals join in the party for some violent sounding fun. Midway through, the song changes pace totally, with some blasting drums and monotonous guitar riffing providing the mood change. At the end, it is back to just the bass to drone us out to the end. Kind of a weird tune, but it sets the tone a bit for what to expect. The next tracks, "Bernard", "Detriment" and "Life By Myself" all have somewhat similar feelings to them. The guitar work is heavy and repetitive, with a lot of open string riffing carrying through the songs, and the vocals are screamed and violent sounding. "Ballacast" is the 12+ minute closer to the disc, and it is a slow, droning affair with some brutally heavy bits, with some quieter interludes thrown in at various times. Halfway through the song, it strips down to just drums, vocals, and guitar feedback (with a very occasional riff), which carries to the finale.

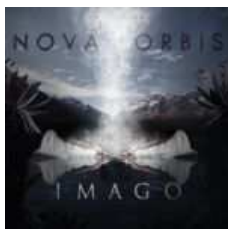
Overall, this is a decent debut effort from Noriega. I am not the biggest fan of the vocal style used here, but most of the music is decent. I'll be into checking out what they do next and see if they improve and mature from this release.

C+

-Goz

NOVA ORBIS

Imago
Self-released



Columbian gothic/progressive metal sextet who surprisingly have no lineup changes in their four year history. Their debut Nova Orbis demo hit the streets in 2006, and since then they've been playing widely across their country. *Imago* represents their debut full length, 10 songs that run the gamut from straightforward progressive material to more exotic gothic fare, even including some traditional Columbian instrumentation such as the tiple and bandola in the song "Change".

Keyboardist David Martinez for instance will filter in natural piano to make the arrangements more dramatic, especially in the forward thinking "Unstable Mind" which gives the song the feeling of navigating a ship against an impending ocean storm. At other times the guitar and drum work takes a page right out of Dream Theater's playbook, especially the opening/ main riffs within "Dark Delusion" that wouldn't sound far removed from Awake.

Main vocalist Ana Maria Barajas has one of those serene angelic voices, deeper with her enunciation much like a doom metal singer who sustains notes comfortably. I did hear nods to the symphonic old school, going back to Grand Illusion - Styx with those Dennis DeYoung finger flourishes during some of the extended solo sections.

Based on the overall professional presentation, the full production and excellent grasp of the English language (very poetic), Nova Orbis should enter the ranks of label artists within the next year or so through *Imago*. It's as if they took the best elements of Nightwish, Within Temptation and Dream Theater, added a heavier guitar veneer and birthed a special group.

A-

-Matt Coe

OVERKILL

Ironbound
Nuclear Blast/E1



Better than two of the "Big Four" metal bands in my opinion, Overkill have never received proper kudos in the metal community. Their obvious intent with *Ironbound* is to embrace us old-timers while making the new generation of thrash metal fans stand up and take notice...then kick them square in the teeth!

I personally haven't been this excited about a new Overkill album since 1991's *Horrorscope*. I knew they had it in them, but never expected *Ironbound* to be as good as it is. Lots and lots of meat on the bones of this release with old-school, bass-heavy song structures by maestro D.D. Verni. Blitz's voice is well-seasoned, yet still screams his balls off here. Favorites include the catchy pounding of "Give A Little", "The Head & Heart" complete with Bobby doing his best death metal growling, and the Motorhead worshipping of "Bring Me The Night", the band's new video track.

The stand out here - without a doubt - is the disc's title track, which may very well be the BEST metal song written in the past 15 years! "Ironbound" has every element that we flock to as fans of this musical genre. I really could gush on and on, but you just need to hear it for yourself...simply AMAZING!

Catch them on their KILLFEST 25th Anniversary US tour this Spring.

A -Mike**PERVERSOR***Demon Metal*[Hells Headbangers Records](#)

From the first look at Chilean band Perversor's logo, you know you're in for an old school metal treat. The fact that they are on Hells Headbangers Records solidifies this fact, even before you pop in this 5 song, 17 minute long EP. What follows is a total face ripping, ass shredding, ear drum destroying blend of black, thrash and death metal. Think what would happen if you combined Hellhammer, early Slayer, Bathory and Venom - then added even MORE leather and spikes to the mix. This mutant of metal would be Perversor.

"Detonate" is the opener, and it is a fitting song title. Merriam-Webster defines detonate this way "to explode with sudden violence", and that is exactly what this song does - for close to 4 minutes. There is no time to relax during this song, it is just a constant force of severe violence created by lightning fast drums, rapid fire guitars, and vocals - a combination that will cause blood to flow freely from your ears. By the time you "Mark to the Temple of Doom", you will probably have bloody ears, a sore neck, and be ready to kill someone, but keep listening, as this song is my favorite on the disc. While it is mostly a similar breakneck pace like the rest

of the disc, there are a couple of segments in it where they slow down and have actual mosh parts. A good change of pace, and yet they don't compromise on the power and violence that is being delivered.

I highly recommend picking this one up, as well as their debut disc, *Cult of Destruction*. Your ears will thank me for the suggestion.

A- -Goz**RAISE THE RED LANTERN***Raise The Red Lantern*[At A Loss Recordings](#)

Powerful riff-driven melodic Metal with a touch of old school thrash and stoner metal is what makes up the basic sound of Raise the Red Lantern. Aggressive vocals, crunchy guitars, dynamic drumming, and driving bass permeate the 8 tracks on this disc. Progressive in some ways and utterly punishing in others, RTRL has a sound all their own. "Deliver Us/Deliverance" is a kick-ass bass solo that gives more than a slight nod to Cliff Burton while "Wilde Stallion" and "Seduction Of Slumber" has some Iron Maiden-esque dueling solo riffs that are a good indication of the influences happening within this band. These guys are on to something unique, if you're bored with the same old Metal then check RTRL out!

B -Matt Smith**SANCTUS NEX***Aurelia*[ATMF](#)

"Exordium Of The Apostate" kicks off this disc with a slow Black Metal instrumental before it breaks into the second track, "In Pursuit Of Albion", a fast paced brutal Black Metal song that is fairly color by numbers but is interesting enough not to bore me. Melodic interludes that slow the pace down add much needed dynamics to the faster stuff. They have many elements of old school Black Metal like Bathory but they also are reminiscent of Wolves in the Throne Room and Kralllice.

Atmospheric at times and utterly punishing at others, Sanctus Nex create a backdrop of creepy imagery and soundscapes that could leave you haunted if you let them seep into your psyche. Serene passages occur in the middle of the songs but don't last too long before they bring you back to the brutality. Three out of four of the songs on this disc hit the eleven minute mark so that should give you an idea of the epic songwriting involved here. If you like your Black Metal intelligent and well written look no further than Sanctus Nex.

B -Matt Smith**SECTIONED***Purulent Reality*[Paragon Records](#)

Purulent Reality is the debut of old-school death metal act Sectioned. The promo sheet that came with it said it was for fans of Death, old Morgoroth, old Pestilence, Grave and Dismember. Ok, that sums me up pretty damn perfectly, so this looks like it's a disc meant for me. Does the music step up the the bar set by the promo sheet?

From the opening track, "A Lonely Grasp of Winter", through to the albums title track finale, Sectioned doses out heaping amounts of Florida and Sweden derived death metal. Slow, chugging, catchy riffs, guttural and brutal vocals, and plenty of guitar solos are there to keep the appetites of old-school death metal satiated. Sounding a good bit like Obituary at times (check "Behind My Eyes" for a good example), and at other times a bit like Grave ("Mirrors" reminds me of them a lot), Sectioned isn't breaking any new ground with their sound, but they are carrying on the sound of the bands that helped form death metal in the first place. That is pretty much what they set out to do, so what more can you ask for.

Production on here is suitably old-school as well. The sounds isn't perfect, but it fits the music nicely, and for a change, you can actually hear the bass on a death metal album. Sectioned's debut disc should suit any fan of the old school sound quite nicely.

B -Goz**SEMEN DATURA***Einsamkeit*[ATMF](#)

After (and during) my first listen to Semen Datura's latest, *Einsamkeit*, I wasn't all that impressed with it.



While I thought there was some good stuff going on there, it just didn't all seem to fit together too well. The root of the music seemed to be black metal, but there were all sorts of other elements in there that didn't play well together - lots of progressive bits, rock riffs, and even some industrial sounding bits. I put the disc aside and figured I'd listen to it again at a later date to give it a further shot.

Then something strange happened. I was at work and suddenly a riff popped into my head, and I couldn't place it. I knew it must have been something I listened to the day before, but I had no idea what it was. I racked my brain for the rest of the day, and immediately upon getting home I put in a few discs from the previous days listening pile. After a bit of hunting I came upon "Mental Outlaw", the fourth track from *Einsamkeit*. It was a bit of the heavy beginning chugging, then the riff that starts at about the 35 second mark in the song that I had been playing over and over in my head. I guess good music does that to me. Anyway, I gave it another listen (or ten) and discovered that, while the music here is quite varied, I really liked what I heard. What I heard before and didn't think fit too well together was now bridging seamlessly together. I was digging all the rocking riffs, the quirky melodies, and the seamless transitions from one musical idea to another. I was not so instantly converted to a fan of this disc.

If you want to hear some good black metal with a ton of progressive elements thrown in, get this disc. If at first you don't care for it, try it again. It may just grow on you, like it did with me.

B+ -Goz

SHADOWFOST

Essence//Mindscape

ATMF



Italy's Shadowfost deliver their debut disc in the form of *Essence//Mindscape*, on ATMF. Blackened death metal with a slight industrial feel is what they bring us on this 8 song release.

After an intro (which is decent), "Deceiving Faith" gets things moving in a fairly generic blackened death metal vein. There are some decent bits to be heard here, but they don't dive too far into the originality pool, and overall this song doesn't pique my interest too much. The disc continues on like this for the remainder. Again, there are occasional bits that are interesting, and some bits that are just flat out strangely placed (like the little acoustic bit in "Forget Not Forgive").

This was a largely forgetful effort from Shadowfost. I've even forgotten what clever little line I was going to end this review with. Hopefully I'll be forgiven for that.

C- -Goz

SIGH

Scenes From Hell

The End Records



Right off the bat Sigh have out done them selves with the first track off this disc. Orchestration in a Death Metal song, damn it's like Behemoth collaborated with John Zorn! I can't tell you how much I love this mixture of Death/Black Metal, Classical, and Jazz, if you will. The same brutal vocals but they sound even more nasty with the horns backing them up amidst the crunchy guitar riffs and breakneck drums.

"The Red Funeral" has a nice spoken word and piano intro before it kicks into a heavy-ass groove riff with ranting vocals. "The Summer Funeral" sounds like a song from a Death Metal Opera and "Musica in Tempora Belli" is like a Horror B-Movie themed song trilogy. Classical overtones really make this a truly remarkable album, not only for extreme Metal but for the music world in general.

Honestly it's been a LONG time since a Metal album has kicked my ass so completely as *Scenes From Hell* has! I think I have a contender for my Top 10 of 2010 already!

A -Matt Smith

SIX FEET UNDER

Graveyard Classics 3

Metal Blade Records



Six Feet Under return with their third installment of cover songs, with the aptly titled *Graveyard Classics 3*. The band chose to cover tracks that were released when the members were "just fans of heavy music", before they started playing in bands. What we get from that is a wide range of songs, from Mercyful Fate's "A Dangerous Meeting", to 'lica's "The Frayed Ends of Sanity" all the way to the Ramones "Psychotherapy".

Musically, the band pretty much nails all the songs down quite well. Vocally, you get Chris Barnes standard growling most of the time, with a strained scream thrown in once in a while that sounds painful. The growling is a bit off-putting at times - it really throws you for a loop when the vox kick in on "A Dangerous Meeting", and Van Halen's "On Fire" is just flat out tough to listen to. It does, however, work well in "The Frayed Ends of Sanity", "Destroyer" and to a lesser extent "At Dawn They Sleep".

While this is definitely more listenable than *GC2* was, there really isn't a whole lot on here that would bring me back to listen, except for the novelty of it all. Maybe that is what they are going for, and if it is, they

succeeded quite well.

C -Goz

STONERIDER

Three Legs of Trouble

Trustkill Records



StoneRider is L.A.-sounding, guitar-rock from Atlanta, Georgia. Picture a cross between Nazareth, Stevie Ray Vaughan and Buck Cherry with quite enough sleazy glam vibe in there to cheese it up a little bit. They could be closely related to stoner or southern rock for their blues-infused, classic-rock base. But outwardly their product is good, catchy guitar-rock smothered with tons of sexual innuendos. I'd have to classify this as sleaze rock.

I must mention, StoneRider have a totally, anti-glam appearance. More classic rock/grunge with their dress code, but I got the hair metal vibe from Matt Tanner's vocal style. He seems to want to sing about sex all the



time. After several listens, it seems he's completely ignoring drugs and rock n' roll in favor of singing about ass. Constantly trying to seduce the audience with throaty, breathy vocals and lyrics that border on crude and probably need censoring. But like Buck Cherry makes all the chicks happy, Matt seems to know what to do with a microphone. And does it often. All over *Three Legs of Trouble*. The downside of this is it reminds me too much of the 80's to take it one hundred percent seriously, but it's pretty good rock n' roll regardless of the subject matter.

What immediately stands out in talent for StoneRider would have to be the guitar. Somehow, the guitar seems to sound more respectable and slightly closer to classic rock than the rest of the hair metal style dominating the album. Excellent blues-laced, riffs and Telecaster twang amid sensual guitar solos easily match the sexy vibe that all the singing is about. It pulls all the elements together, makes up for all the dirty talk, and then rubs you the right way in case the singing didn't do the job. Their catchy guitar style reminds me a little of Stevie Ray Vaughan or Slash. It's as good, or better, than half the stuff that prospered in the 80's.

The album started strong and catchy. My first hint at an influence (and they hid it well) didn't surface until the third track "Ramble Down," which reminded me of Nazareth's "Hair of the Dog". Then three songs later, I wasn't too surprised when I heard StoneRider's cover of "Hair of the Dog." After that was my favorite pick of the album "Bite My Tongue" for it's bluesy groove and clever, memorable chorus. "Wild Child" was a close second and the closer "Shut My Mouth" deserve mention (and not for it's raunchiness, though I can't say it wasn't amusing).

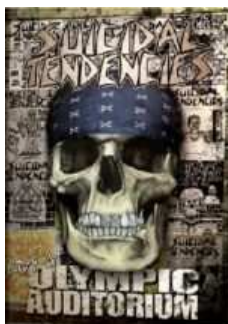
StoneRider brings to mind bands I didn't get to explore as much as I wanted to such as Tora Tora or Dangerous Toys among others. They maybe have a little Hendrix or Bachman Turner Overdrive style in the mix as well. I feel the singer's need to sound seductive in every song was a little bit too cheesy to take seriously all the time. It's a pleasant album, if a little too L.A., but not extremely memorable. *Three Legs of Trouble* would be something I'd definitely play at a party or cookout or such function (you know, when you have guests who don't like heavy metal blasting at them constantly) as long as everyone there wouldn't be horrified at the overabundance of sexual lyrics. With lyrics like "she shut my mouth with a piece of her pie", this album is not for the timid or for those who blush easily. Or is it?

B -Alesha

SUICIDAL TENDENCIES

Live at the Olympic Auditorium (DVD)

[Suicidal Records](#)



The first time I saw ST was on their first tour when they came to the Channel. It was a good show, but the band played *Institutionalized* in the middle of the set and everyone walked out, not because the band sucked, it was just the punk thing to do. A few years later they returned during their *Join the Army* tour and the place was packed. I saw something that night I have never seen before and will probably never see again, double pits. There was a pit up near the stage and one the next level up near the bar. You kids today have no idea what a real pit is, this was the real "moshing". For a glimpse of what I'm talking about check out this DVD, there are some circle pits goin' on especially at the end during "Pledge Your Allegiance" when their whole crew moshes on the stage. I guess folks in Cali haven't forgotten what this shit is all about.

This DVD marks several history making milestones, first of which is that this is the first DVD the band has ever put out, and the next is about the Olympic Auditorium which has its own subsection of history. The Auditorium was the first place ST played live and was a regular spot for the band for several years before the band was banned from playing in L.A. so it's like ST was coming home again after all these years. The other part of history for the Auditorium is that after that show, it is being converted into a Korean church making this concert the very last show played there.

The DVD itself starts out with a short interview with Mike Muir, who talks about the history of ST and how hated they were in the beginning, but lived to show them all. Peppared with footage of legions of ST fans waiting to get into the show, it reminds you a bit of the *Heavy Metal Parking Lot* video, but for skate punks.

The concert itself takes a bit to get started and I can honestly say that I've never seen such an entourage as the one ST has, there are more people onstage than there are band members almost by 20 to 1. Once started, the band sounds like it hasn't missed a beat in all the years. All the favorites are there; "War Inside My Head", "Possessed to Skate", "I Saw Your Mommy", and of course "Institutionalized", which the band plays second to last. But even if they did happen to play the song somewhere in the middle, not one person would even turn their back, their fans are rabid for anything ST does and their loyalty is endless.

Between each song Muir tends to get preachy or at least sound like he's a televangelist, even during "Institutionalized", the once whiny kid is replaced by an Oral Roberts type stand-in. Muir does have a lot of great things to say in-between songs, he offers positive choices to their fans and encourages them to think for themselves, which is a quality I've always liked about ST. They never cared if anyone liked them or if they fit into the punk rock mold, they broke the mold and made their own kind of music. They always offered some sort of positive message at least more than once in their recordings and had fun doing it. They believe in family and taking care of their own which sets them apart from many bands, but also sets their fans apart as well. Maybe that's why the folks moshing in the pit looked like they were having fun and not trying to kill each other.

In general, it's a good concert and it reminds me of why I used to love the band so long ago. The whole band has such incredible energy including Mike Muir, who practically moshes through the entire concert and even goes out into the crowd at the end of their set. If you've never experienced Suicidal Tendencies, this is a great DVD to check out, hear some awesome tunes, and see what real moshing is all about. One of the best concert DVDs I've ever seen and a must have for any ST fan.

A+ -Choppy

SYBREED

The Pulse of Awakening

[Listenable Records](#)



Sybreed calls themselves an apocalyptic sound machine which for any metalhead doesn't usually bode well and after listening to this album, I wonder why they are on the label Listenable Records when they should be on, Giant Lump of Shit on a CD Records. If attempting to fuse some sort of douchie techno with the lamest metal on the planet was their goal, then they succeeded beyond their wildest dreams.

My first inclination that this album was probably going to suck was the title of the first song "Nomenklatura", any band that intentionally fucks up the spelling of a word to be cool is a giant bunch of douches. Other winning titles are "Human Black Box", "I Am Ultraviolence", and "Love Like Blood". All of which adds up to a stinking pile of dogshit that's barely music at all. I thought about throwing this CD straight in the trash, but I think I'll save it and give it as a gift to someone I really hate or keep it in my car to torture my passengers on an extremely long drive.

F -Choppy

THROUGH THE EYES OF THE DEAD*Skepsis*

Prosthetic Records



Through The Eyes Of The Dead's third release, *Skepsis*, comes some three years after its predecessor. Although they've gone through many personnel changes, the band now seems to have a stable lineup, so hopefully they can stick together for a bit as is. Deathcore is the name of the game here, and that is a genre that I am not overly fond of much of the time due to the seemingly generic and overall copycat sound of most of the bands, so lets hope that TTEOTD can keep me interested with this release.

A useless intro starts things (as usual), and then "Dementia" kicks in. The opening riff here is freakin' cool - kinda of a Morbid Angel meets Bolt Thrower feel to it. The drum sound is a little overpowering, which I find to be the case in a lot of deathcore stuff - especially with the incessant and overused double kick drums. Overall, though, this songs moves along really nicely, with some damn good guitar work and decent double tracked vocals. Then comes the breakdown, and it hits a roadblock. This is one of the things that I just don't get in

deathcore. You take a perfectly good song that is running along nicely, and then just stop the momentum with a crappy, generic open string breakdown that we've all heard done a million times before, almost always with the same song crapping results. I hope this isn't a trend on every song, because its a major detriment to my enjoyment of this otherwise good track. "Perpetual Defilement" is a song that doesn't have such a roadblock in it, instead opting to keep the momentum of the song going for the entire length. The guitarists get a really good workout on this song, with some massive guitar leads peppered throughout the track. There is a breakdown here, and it's pretty much in the same spot it is in every song, but it isn't the generic, open string chug chug-chug type, it instead actually has some musicality to it, thankfully. This is my favorite track on the disc.

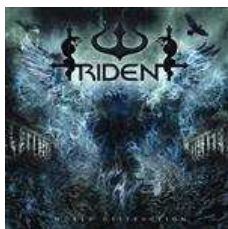
Skepsis is definitely a step in the right direction for TTEOTD. While I still feel that the generic road block style breakdown is overused here, they've definitely toned it down a bit since *Malice*. The band seems to constantly be on the road, so maybe I'll check them out when they come around and see how they sound live now. At worst I'll get to see all the -core dancers in the pit fighting the invisible ninjas.

B-

-Goz

TRIDENT*World Destruction*

Regain Records



Trident may be considered a blackend death metal supergroup of sorts. Comprised of guitarist Johan Norman (Soul Reaper, Dissection), vocalist Tobias Sidegård (Necrophobic), drummer Jonas Blom (Grief Of Emerald), bassist Alexander Friberg (Necrophobic) and relatively unknown lead guitarist Ewo Solvelius. Any band with a couple guys from Necrophobic combined with an ex-Dissection member is bound to be good, right? Let's have a listen and see if *World Destruction* lives up to the promise of its name, and to the bands pedigree.

What the band delivers is a good mix of blackened death songs with a lot of intricate guitar work and some slightly different song structures than just the basics. While the opening two songs are pretty straight forward (although with some pretty good guitar work in the mid-song lead part of "Jaws of Satan"), the band gets a little bit more technical with the slower, doomier "Luciferian Call". The first half is slow and drawn out, with a wall of sound feel to it, and some slightly melodic breakdowns, while they change things up a bit mid-way to

bring in a heavier, more riff oriented part, complete with a vicious death grunt to delineate one of the mood changes in the song. "Black Velvet Wings" follows, and features a couple riffs that many good old rock n' roll bands would love to be able to match in terms of its catchiness and just sheer goodness. "Stockholm Bloodbath" is an all out black death track that would have fit in well on the latest Necrophobic release. Those three songs right there are a trifecta that make up the middle of the disc, and that is the strongest part here, in my opinion.

Is Trident going to destroy the world with their debut album? No, but they are likely to attract a good bit of attention, and are deserving of it.

B

-Goz

TROLL*Neo-Satanic Supremacy*

Napalm Records



The on again, off again Troll finally return with their latest effort of symphonic black metal, *Neo-Satanic Supremacy*. Formed way back in 1992 when mainman Nagash was only 14, this release is the bands fourth full length, following up the 2001 release, Universal. The delay makes a bit of sense, since Nagash (aka Stian Arnesen, Lex Icon, Shagrath, etc) is also in Dimmu Borgir, Chrome Division, The Kovenant and possibly other projects that take up a good bit of his time. Apparently, the delay also brought the band back to their more symphonic black metal sound of their debut, and away from the more industrial feel of their middle two releases. Thank someone for that (god/satan/whoever you chose to thank is fine with me).

The standout track on here is "Burn The Witch", which makes the best use of both the black metal riffage and the symphonic elements to create a thoroughly entertaining song, complete with chant along "BURN BURN BURN BURN, Burn the fucking witch!" chorus. The title track and "At the Gates of Hell" are both vicious, shorter blast of blackness that feature minimal symphonic elements, creating a good break and slight contrast

to the surrounding tracks. "Age of Satan" is a good final track for the disc. It provides a good culmination for the entire disc, with its powerful riffs and catchy chorus.

Troll's latest will satisfy your desire for symphonic black metal, for sure.

B

-Goz

URNA*Iter Ad Lucem*

ATME



The words Esoteric Funeral Doom jumped out at me on the back of the CD and gave me such great hope, but after about 5 seconds of listening, I realized that it was all bullshit. What the fuck is Esoteric Funeral Doom anyways, funeral doom sounds pretty cool, but the definition of esoteric is something that is only for a select few and that few is the band itself.



This band tries so hard to be both scary and deep that it in fact has the reverse effect on the listener. I can dig dirge and even some ambient stuff, I enjoy a vast array of musical styles, but when a band overachieves, that just puts me right off.

I gave the album a second listen, but I still came away with the same feeling. The whole album is completely boring, there's nothing original here or even remotely interesting. Nearly every song sounds the same with the exception of the last track which tries to pep it up and get a little thrashy, but even that is boring as hell.

Look for it in the "who the fuck do they think they are" section of the record store incase you want to get some sleep and you ran out of Tylenol PM.

D+ -Choppy

VALKYRJA

Contamination

Metal Blade Records



Contamination is Swedish black metal group Valkyrja's sophomore release, and their first since signing with Metal Blade Records. Two of the bands members are also in Ondskapt, but the black metal that band produces is a bit different from what Valkyrja creates. I would say that Valkyrja's form of black metal is a bit more "accessible", along the lines of Watain.

After a brief intro, "Oceans to Dust" launches with some pretty killer and catchy riffs, while the double bass drums and blast beats make sure that the pace of the song is on the fast side. The killer riffs and great drumwork carry throughout the song, and there are also some killer vocal lines thrown in as well, especially during the slowdown in the latter half of the song. The next track, "Catharsis (Contaminate the Earth)", was the track that initially brought the Watain comparisons to my mind. The riffing, drumming, and melody lines here are very reminiscent of Watain, and the vocals are eerily similar. I don't consider this a bad thing, mind you, since I think Watain is a great band that I listen to often. "Welcoming Worms" gives us a needed change towards the end of the disc. A bunch of songs leading up to this one are paced very similar, and have pretty much the same structure. "Welcoming Worms" might be a slight deviation from the bands norm, but it is welcome. The more frequent blast beats, tremolo picked riffs, quicker pace, and shorter running time make this song stand out from the rest.

Valkyrja has some really good music on *Contamination*. Overall, it is a good listen, but the similarities from song to song can make it drag on a little bit, especially through the middle three songs or so. Hopefully they will keep progressing on their next disc - if they do, it could be a remarkable release.

B+ -Goz

VAN CANTO

Tribe of Force

Napalm Records



A Capella speed/ power metal from Germany here. *Tribe Of Force* represents their third full length, shifting to more original material and less of a reliance on cover versions. I know a lot of times in the metal world you think everything has already been done- well this sextet certainly tip the idea of instrumentation on its ear.

Outside of a real drummer, all of the voices handle the bass, keyboard and guitar parts- along with multi-part vocal harmonies. You would think the material wouldn't translate to a heavier setting, but thanks to Charlie Bauerfiend's production thump this feels less like a barber shop quartet and more of a larger, theatrical effort (minus the cheesy Rhapsody-orchestral symphonics).

Guests include Grave Digger's Chris Boltendahl. on Van Canto's interpretation of "Rebellion" and Tony Kakko appears on the faster "Hearted". As far as the original material, "To Sing A Metal Song" intrigues me with the shifting bass/ normal voice riffing dexterity over the lyrical ode to concert audiences while "WaterFireHeavenEarth" contains more of their female led gothic side, more in line with current Nightwish. You do get the occasional injection of lead guitar lines, while drummer Bastian Emig showcases his skills in traditional, power, speed and thrash kit work throughout.

The highlight for me was their insane interpretation of "Master of Puppets". Low vocals growling out the bass and furious instrumentation, other vocals handling the time changes with the greatest of ease, they really understand how to tackle complex, classic tracks. The way they explore choirs for harmonies, the seamless transitions- Van Canto illustrate that open-mindedness exudes confidence and originality.

When I need something left of center, *Tribe Of Force* will be the album to return to again and again.

A- -Matt Coe

VARG

Blutaaar

NoiseArt



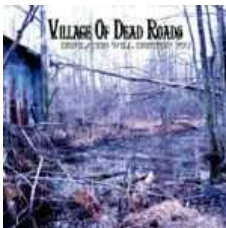
German Viking metal band Varg release their latest full-length, *Blutaaar*, on the newly formed NoiseArt label. Apparently, the band had signed with Nuclear Blast to release this disc, but something happened and they split with the label. Enter NoiseArt to save the day and get the disc released.

This was my first time hearing Varg, so I wasn't sure what to expect from the "viking metal" label that they are given. Sometimes this translates into really heavy stuff with some melody (ie Unleashed), and other times it leans more towards the folk side of things (ie Ensiferum). Varg falls somewhere in the middle, although maybe leaning more to the heavier side, which I consider a good thing. They still incorporate a good bit of folkly melodies - just listening to the opening track "Viel Feind viel Ehr" will get you plenty of that - but the band knows how to tie those melodies in with some heavy riffing and really good use of dual vocals. Every song has some sort of classic, folkly melody in it that you will instantly recognize, but at the same time, the heavier parts will crush your skull in - it's a juxtaposition that doesn't happen very often in music, but here it is pulled off without a hitch. Check out "Zeichen der Zeit" for a good example of what I mean. I actually find the latter half of the album to be stronger, as the songs seem a bit less derivative and are overall a bit heavier than the first half.

Overall, I was very impressed with Varg's sophomore effort. Viking metal, but without the overdone flutes, lutes, violins and stuff like that. They keep the metal at the forefront, but using the addictive and familiar folk melodies to hook you in - and they got me right through the kill with this one.

B+

-Goz

VILLAGE OF DEAD ROADS*Desolation Will Destroy You**MeteorCity*

Taking a page from the book of Neurosis and smearing it with the blood of the Melvins is the best way I can describe Village of Dead Roads. Meaty riffs, screaming vocals, pounding drums mixed with some fast paced tempos make this a most heavy listen. Melodic in structure, the songs have enough dynamics to hold my interest, and that is always something I look for in heavy music. "Giving The Snake Its Venom", "Servants Make The Best Assassins", and "Halo Becomes A Noose" are all clear indications of the subject matter in their songs, which needless to say aren't very pleasant.

I could easily use this disc as a wake up album or to motivate me to work out or do something that requires using my physical strength. Check this out if you want something heavy and melodic without being overbearing in your face.

B

-Matt Smith

VOIVOD*Tatsumaki: Voivod in Japan**MVD*

Voivod's second official home video is a live concert from their 2008 Tour of Japan which incidentally was their first trip to the land of the Rising Sun. The sad part of this is that Piggy, the late founding member and original guitarist wasn't there to fulfill his dream of playing this show with his band. Instead, Voivod has recruited Dan Mongrain, another French Canadian Metal musician from the band Martyr, who fills Piggy's shoes admirably. I mean, I was skeptical of Voivod replacing Piggy, not that he EVER would be replaced, but I must admit that Dan does an incredible job recreating Piggy's signature sound and licks, not to mention solos, which he plays note for note. In fact, I believe Dan brings a new energy to Voivod, as is evidenced in this live concert. I should also mention that founding member Blacky is also back on "Blower" bass once again, having been on hiatus from the band since the early 1990's. The crowd is just as energetic as the band, who plays a set list that is a true Voivod fan's dream. For instance, they start off with the title song of the band, "Voivod" off their debut album *War and Pain* and then go right into "The Prow", off their highly underrated album *Angel Rat*. "The Unknown Knows", "Ravenous Medicine", my favorite, "Tribal Convictions" as well as "Tornado" which they rename for the Japanese crowd as "Tatsumaki", you guessed, Japanese for tornado. The band is extremely tight and back is that classic Blacky bass sound that was so much a part of their sound in the 80's and early 90's. Honestly, I closed my eyes a few times during their set and really wouldn't have guessed it wasn't Piggy playing the show.

The extras are very cool too. You have a short set from July 17, 2009 that is just as sweet as the main set on this DVD, an interview with Dave Grohl, waxing nostalgic and poetically about how he first got turned on to Voivod and how influential they were to him and many people in the Metal and music community in general. It's cool too to hear him talk about how his "Probot" album took off from just a tiny idea into a full fledged album. There is also a slide show of photos from the band's Japan visit and a half hour mini-documentary about two film makers trying to get a budget for a Voivod documentary. Although it is cool I had a hard time reading the subtitles because they were in bright yellow and very small and hard to read. But it is cool because they do some interviews with the band that are short but revealing. I especially like the interview with Dan on how he learned to play guitar by listening to Voivod and recreating the riffs and solos. In the end the "real" documentary went to another company that the film makers in this documentary are not too happy about.

I eagerly await their next DVD release, as it is supposed to cover the latter part of their career and hopefully be a more full tribute to Piggy, as they only have a few clips of him on this DVD. If you're a Voivod fan this DVD is a MUST! Voivod LIVES!!!

A

-Matt Smith

VOLBEAT*Guitar Gangsters and Cadillac Blood**Mascot Records*

Volbeat is driven. Motivating. Have you ever desired to hear the old 'sock-hop' style rock n' roll, sped up and riddled with healthy doses of distortion and... more POWER [ohrrr arrr arrr]? (OK, bad joke. I'm sorry.) Imagine Glen Danzig singing Elvis-era rockabilly, and playing on top of some old school thrash riffage. Maybe what The Stray Cats would've sounded like if they were heavily influenced by early Metallica. Volbeat does exactly this, without losing any of the pristine, up-beat simplicity of early rock n' roll. *Guitar Gangsters and Cadillac Blood* is pleasantly addictive and never lacks emotion.

The whole Volbeat vibe is centered around the birth era of rock. Sure, rockabilly has been done before, but for some reason, Volbeat has this stand-out quality that is tough to match. They are so good Metallica even invited them to support them on tour. Volbeat expertly blend in a lot of early punk, and thrash with smooth grace. Part of this could be due to the flawless and pristine production of *Guitar Gangsters and Cadillac Blood*. Underneath all of that, I hear nothing but talented, clever artists at work. They're not overly country-

sounding. They expertly incorporate influences from every decade since the beginning of rock n' roll. And I have to say I haven't heard anything this fascinating, within shooting range of this genre, since I fell hard for the 'dirtcore' masters; Graveyard BBQ.

Whereas Graveyard BBQ tends to sway more on the heavy, gritty, southern metal side, Volbeat is more punk-rock, mixed with their classy, sock-hop rock n' roll. They both sound extremely sexy and have a ton of high-energy, drive and mega-memorability right down to their theme and appropriately costumed appearance. Two totally different animals, in the same class, that are almost neck and neck on my admiration chart.

Volbeat may be borrowing an old-school formula, but like everything molded after the primitive, this unique, modern rock is much improved by it's ancestors. Stripped down, basic rock n' roll isn't that way to be purposely simplistic. Sometimes it's just less contaminated and easier to listen to. Catches a wider audience. I really admire how Volbeat manage to sound wholesome, yet add plenty of distortion and energy. Like Elvis drank a case of Red Bull and someone gave him a distortion pedal to play with. Once again, going back to your roots, proves to be massively endearing. Bravo, Volbeat!

Lots of Misfits and early Metallica undertones poke through often. Frontman (and former Dominus leader) Michael Poulsen sounds just like Glen Danzig one moment, and the next he sounds exactly like James Hetfield, like he did purposely in "Wild Rover of Hell". "Still Counting" was instantly my favorite song on this disc. Right off, it made me smile, then it was funny, then the song just soared to heights I didn't expect. It started out funky, up-beat, then went heavy, and slid back and forth without losing my attention for a second. "Hallelujah Goat" was another favorite because it was so heavy and groovy, man. Excellent vocal style. Very different and innovative. "Mary Ann's Place" is another very motivating track and includes some excellent female back-up vocals that surprised me. I keep finding myself drawn to other songs for totally different reasons than the last favorite. "A Broken Man and the Dawn", "Maybellene I Hofteholder" and "Soulsweeper" were fantastic as well. "Rebel Monster" and "Find That Soul" were heavy and enlightening at the same time. Simply

amazing album.

Good, heavy metal constantly surfaces throughout *Guitar Gangsters and Cadillac Blood*. I can't think of a single thing I didn't like. Every song induces some kind of bodily movement, or singing along. This album makes me very, very happy. A special limited tour edition release of this album is also available. All releases feature their covers of Hank Williams' "I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry" and a bonus Social Distortion cover of "Making Believe" (originally by Jimmy Work). The limited edition also has the two live bonus tracks "Rebel Monster" and "Soulsweeper #2" from earlier albums and includes three bonus live videos.

Nothing detracted from any part of this album. No song skipping necessary. Every song is easily identifiable. Without leaping a cluttered variety of genres, Volbeat seems to make every song a separate and special individual. I have to say that at least half of this album is A+ songs and the rest is only slightly behind them. There's definite sing-a-long attributes. It's dance-infusing, heavy metal-laced good ol' rock n' roll. Sounds like they're trying to make the chicks scream and swoon like they did for Elvis or the Beatles. I think these guys have totally surpassed Elvis. Just like our technology advances and gets better, sharper, faster... so does our rock n' roll, my friend. Volbeat certainly know how to cook us up some fantastic, extremely pleasant and memorable music. Rebel rock n' roll with a crisp, crusty punk-rock coating all over the outside and tons of sweet, juicy, glistening heavy metal filling in the middle. They may not be doing anything new but it's damn good anyway you slice it. And an absolute pleasure I'd return to any time it crosses my thoughts. Which lately, is very often.

I've lost count of how many times I've played this album and I still can't get sick of it. Anything you would need to be motivated through would be a breeze with this CD. A great one for the gym. As long as you're open-minded about your music, enough to not mind a little happy-go-lucky aspect in your metal once in a while, *Guitar Gangsters and Cadillac Blood* is guaranteed to brighten your life.

OK go! Get this. Don't waste anymore time. I'm going to go delve into Volbeat's earlier material. I'll meet you there somewhere.

A+ -Alesha

WALKEN

Walken
Self-released



I'm really split on this album, the music is kickass. It has elements of some old school thrash mixed with some hardcore and melodic with today's spin on it. The vocals are ripping, but can be a little standard in today's market. My problem is the harmonies, they ruin the whole disc. The band can't harmonize for the life of them. Without the harmonies this would be a pretty promising disc, but as it stands; I tend to cringe every time they come up.

There's some really great stuff here and I think if they took a little longer than 5 days to record the album, maybe they could have worked a little more on the rough spots. The track "Running Out of Time" is pretty sweet. The instrumental "Thunder Paws" has some really nice work on there. "In the City of No Seasons" is really interesting; the music is melodic juxtaposed by the guttural vocals with some nice lyric work. "Dylan's Song" is another instrumental that takes it down and mellows you out quite nicely. "Right At Home" is not bad, it does have some harmonies, but somehow they work, almost making the song really depressing. The

Album ends on the very doomy instrumental "The Bridge".

I will say that they use some of the same riffing quite a bit, they try to hide it a little, but it's definitely noticeable. What's funny about Walken is that they sound like they should come from Iceland or some other Nordic type metal haven, but they're from San Francisco. The other thing that grabs me is that there is no reference as to Christopher Walken which I thought of immediately when I saw the name. My friend Paco thought it would have been really cool if the song titles were something like; "Hanging Out with Christopher Walken" or "Christopher Walken and I are Going to Punch You Out" or something like that.

All in all, it's not a terrible disc. I can tell the band was really trying to forge their sound and do something different. I hope that on the next disc, they work on their harmonies or lose them entirely. It's definitely a disc that's worth checking out.

C+ -Choppy

WHITE

High and Mighty
Self-released



I think of White as soft-metal slash love-metal. Similar to classic rock and hair metal of the 70's and 80's. High and Mighty sounds more like a modern Led Zeppelin, for it's prominent bluesy base with some pop and sing-a-long qualities overlaid throughout. Jonny P. looks like Jim Morrison and sounds like Robert Plant. His vocal style has a modern, sexy edge that could be compared to Puddle of Mudd or Buck Cherry, only without the extra sleaze. This might embrace a larger female audience, but his style is the unique factor in White and is met and matched well with the backing instrumentation. A powerful draw for anyone who enjoys blues-laden classic rock or light metal.

The album opened with a few rocking tracks; "High and Mighty", "Some Kinda Love" and "Mama Told Me...". The remainder of High and Mighty was half ballads like "Sex n' Cigarettes" and "16 With Butterfly Eyes". The other half was catchy, up-tempo hard rock numbers, such as these enjoyable tunes; "Starve" and their heaviest track "Alone". I really admired the influential attributes throughout the album. "Sex n' Cigarettes" immediately brought the Beatles to mind, while "Some Kinda Love" reminds me very much of Led Zeppelin. Late in the album, White does a very good Zeppelin cover "Immigranza Esperanza" before closing with yet another rock ballad "Sweet Marie".

"Mama Told Me..." was my favorite song on the album. It did have a little too much dressing on it that I had to try to ignore. The first six notes of the song were a quick keyboard riff in the foreground that repeated throughout much of the song. The background keyboard during, the chorus and solo, blended better with the extremely memorable, feel-good vibe of the song, but that lone repeating riff was distracting and not cohesive with the rest. I felt it unnecessary, though still a very good song otherwise. Without that little riff, the song could be a fabulous hit. Good enough to be the most memorable and catchiest track.

High and Mighty was a little too love ballad-y and primarily soft metal to make it into my favorite studio bands, but admirable enough to re-visit once in a while. Especially for Zeppelin fans and anyone who loved the 80's. White has plenty of gusto and great style with an impressive use of influences. They've molded this album into a good catch. Though I much prefer seeing White live as opposed to their studio albums and I 'high and mightily' recommend you do so if you get the chance. They have put on dazzling performances while leaving most of the slower numbers for your personal music player.

B -Alesha

WHITE MICE

Ganjahovahdose
20 Buck Spin





"Passsthefisst", "Ganjahovahdose", "Placenta the Crotchtower", "The Crupture", "The Shroud of Urine", just by the titles of these songs you probably get an idea of where White Mice are coming from. Blasphemous in lyrical nature, noisy in Metal nature you won't rest easily with this listen, in fact if you're faint of heart you may be downright turned off by this disc.

The artwork and layout of the disc is very inventive, and appealing to any one that finds blasphemy humorous. The music is very chaotic, repetitive, and noisy to the point of unlistenable at times, but don't get me wrong, for what White Mice are doing they do it very well and not haphazardly. Controlled chaos would be a good term to use for the songs, schizophrenic would be another one. "Onth' Raggnorock" is a perfect example of what they can do with their twisted sound, heavy yet very analog synth-like in it's noise level. While I can't say I don't like this, I just really couldn't find myself listening to this very often, maybe I'm getting old or maybe I'm not doing enough drugs these days.

C

-Matt Smith

WHITE WIZZARD

Over The Top

[Earache Records](#)



LA based White Wizard seek to bring back the sound of NWOBHM with their debut, *Over The Top*. They previously had an EP, and since that release, the bands lineup has changed quite a bit, but they still march on in the name of rock n' roll to deliver their music.

Sounding like a combination of numerout NWOBHM bands, although the most prominent sound you'll hear is Iron Maiden, likely due to the marching feeling we get frequently from the bass lines. You get all the stuff you'd expect from this style of music - dual guitar leads all over the place, high pitched vocals, and silly, mystical lyrics that are pretty cheesy at times. Do you like the cheese? Then you'll like "Live Free Or Die" - it's definitely the most Velvet track on this disc. If you like extra cheese, pair it up with "Out Of Control", which is also whey cheesy.

This disc isn't going to win any awards for creativity or originality, but there is a whole retro thing happening in metal right now, and White Wizard might just be able to ride the retro wave right *Over The Top* to the cheese shop.

B-

-Goz

WORMROT

Abuse

[Earache Records](#)



I am a huge fan of grindcore. The problem, though, is the lack of good grindcore bands around right now. Sure, there are a plethora of grind bands, but most of them severely suck. I tend to try and listen to as much of the grindcore that passes through as possible, but most of it I just can't make it past the first few songs because it is just that bad. Then comes Singapore's Wormrot, freshly signed to Earache Records, the label responsible for some of the best early grindcore releases - I mean, just look at the first 10-20 releases from Earache, a bunch of them are grindcore classics. Wormrot's debut disc, *Abuse*, soon to be unleashed worldwide by Earache, could someday be considered classic grindcore, almost 400 releases removed from the labels start.

Wormrot play the type of grind that I like. They waver on the edge of control the entire time, yet never lose it. The music is precise and tight, yet completely chaotic sounding at the same time. Riffs are present and can at times even be catchy, the drums are relentless in their pounding, and feature some truly amazing blast beats.

The dual vocals have always been one of my favorite parts of grind - here the lows are deep and guttural, while the highs are nice and screechy, but not screamy of squealed in the least. Basically, this is pretty much grind delivered exactly the way that I want it. Its as if I made a blueprint for a perfect grind disc and Wormrot followed it exactly as written. I usually try to pick out a best song or whatever on a disc, but since the 23 songs here only total about 22 minutes of music, just set aside that amount of time, crack this one up, and enjoy. Then repeat, over and over again.

If you are a fan of grindcore at all, you need to have this disc in your collection. Trust me. I can almost say with certainty that this will be in my top 10 list for 2010.

A+

-Goz

