



Lucem Fero Album Reviews

**Dead Throne Monarch by Rhino**



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LACUNA COIL



**Release date : November 2008**

**Reviewed by Mark Fisher**



Background information

Review



**Background information**

Rhino was formed during December 2004 in Bilbao, Spain by guitarist / vocalist Javier Gálvez



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(ex-Burial / ex-From the Cross / ex-Left Hand Riders) and drummer Julen Gil (ex-Subliminal / ex-Positiva). The demo *Name the Horn Bearer* was issued in January 2006, and featured Miguel Moral handling bass. At 2007's beginning, and after having shared the stage alongside groups such as Moho, Shisha Pangma, Bort, Moksha and Warchetype, Sergio Rubles usurped Moral upon bass. Produced by Rubén ZeaMays, debut full length *Breed the Chosen One* was issued via Odio Sonoro and 7th Gate Records in April of that year. Since that time, Rhino has performed at summer festivals like Portugal's Bracara Extreme Fest, and performed upon bills with the likes of Gorefest, Monarch, and Lords of Bukkake.

In early January 2008, it was revealed that Rhino had inked a record contract with Arctic Music Group. During late March, *Dead Throne Monarch* was disclosed as being the title of the act's sophomore album. At WorkShop studios in Bilbao, and The Room studios in Barcelona, the full length was recorded. Mixing and mastering, meanwhile, was handled by Gorka Dresbaj at The Room. Via the outfit's official MySpace page, a rough mix of "Reins of the Warlord" was available for streaming during mid June. By late July, *Dead Throne Monarch's* track listing had surfaced. Designed by illustrator Rafael Garrés, who has previously worked with DC Comics, the album's cover artwork materialized in late September.

## Review

Boasting an inflammatory title and inflammatory cover artwork, *Dead Throne Monarch* marks the label debut of Spain's Rhino. As a matter of fact, if you judged this "book by its cover" so to speak, then you'd certainly assume that *Dead Throne Monarch* boasts Black Metal of the most deranged order. Or perhaps Grindcore in the vein of Birdflesh or Mchetzo, even. Possibly, you might even lump the album against groups like Morbid Angel and Deicide. If you opted in favour of any of the aforementioned assumptions though, you'd be wrong. In fact, Rhino are extremely similar to the Melvins, but happen to be much angrier at the world surrounding them, which garners more interest than your average Metal group, if nothing else.

The title cut inaugurates *Dead Throne Monarch*. Beginning through the sound of dry heaves (vocalist Javier Gálvez is likely mouthing something though), the track nonetheless quickly evolves into a somewhat irritable though bizarrely likeable sludgy riff monster which, interestingly, attempts to bridge the gap between Grunge and Stoner Metal. Additionally noteworthy, "Earth Reclaims the Usurper" wholly embraces the Stoner Metal ambience which a few of *Dead Throne Monarch's* other tracks touch upon. Only Attila Csihar-esque vocals hold back the buzzsaw guitars and straightforward rhythm section, vocals which usually provides joy, yet they seem to detract from the number more than anything else.

Maintaining a heavier bottom end as well as a more "Metal" sounding vocal approach, "Wolf Among Black Sheep" and "Reins of the Warlord" fare slightly better, though aren't a million miles from the aforementioned tracks. As soon as you assume that you have Rhino's musical stylings mapped out though, the group confronts the listener with something entirely unexpected: an acoustic ballad. If this just elicits the response "What the fuck?", then the outfit have accomplished their mission. Practically, "Wendigo" materializes from nowhere in this hurricane of chaos, darkness, and destruction to mellow all. Albeit still dark (think of anything lifted from Alice In Chains' *Jar of Flies* dropped right into the middle of a Southern Lord Records release), the group's acoustic explorations lend some much needed depth to *Dead Throne Monarch*, and resolve any issues regarding exactly how talented this group may or may not be.

Generally speaking, Rhino is one of 2009's great surprises. Though far from perfect, *Dead Throne Monarch* maintains the listener's interest from its beginning to its conclusion. The Melvins vibe rapidly separates this album from the pack, but that vibe additionally lends the full length an immediately wide appeal in this reviewer's opinion. For an Extreme Metal group, Rhino casts their net fairly wide, and it'll be interesting to see who gets caught within that net. Fans of dark Alternative Rock, Noisecore, Stoner Metal, and all things extreme will likely find this most appealing, though the Grunge factor is irrefutable as well, yet is just less sonically accessible than many of the more popular Grunge acts from yesteryear.