

## Untimely Demise

"City Of Steel" CD

(Sonic Unyon Metal)

★★★★★



This Saskawawan metal band has all the classic thrash elements down well, and "City Of Steel" is their full-length debut. Produced by former King Diamond/Megadeth axeman Glen Drover, "City Of Steel" is a driving set of energetic and evil tunes that recall both the excesses and economy of Megadeth as well as the Accused (with the shrill,

bilious vocals). Not a bad mix, if you ask me! "Hunting Evil" is ripe with wild guitar solos, whereas the title track is a potent and speedy assault of riff and rhythm. "Unmaker" begins as a melodic ballad at first, before erupting into a fury of anthemic metal mayhem. Superb work, and at only 32 minutes, a concise trip into a mad metal world.

— Todd Zachritz

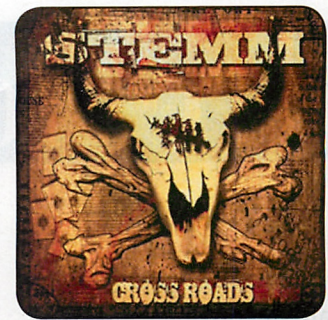
## Stemm

"Crossroads" CD

(Catch 22/MVD Audio)

★★★★★

Mainstream heavy rock with its feet firmly entrenched in metal, Stemm's clean, punchy, melodic sound reminds me at times of Metallica, other times of Pantera, and other times of Creed or Nickelback, unfortunately.



"Dead Inside", for example, is a total concession to radio, being a clean and catchy modern ballad. Ugh. I can see that Stemm are capable of some potent and heavy sounds, but littering it with power ballads does nothing to convince me. Not even a fairly reasonable cover of Sabbath's "Supernaut" can save this one. No, thanks.

— Todd Zachritz

## 5stars

## Wolves In The Throne Room

"Celestial Lineage" CD

(Southern Lord)

★★★★★



Opening with the ethereal ambiance of the 12-minute "Thuja Magus Imperium", complete with female vocals, it's evident that this isn't your typical black metal album. If anything, "Celestial Lineage" is a post-black metal album, delivering much more than just blasting beats and demonic vocal stylings.

Underneath it all, these eco-warriors eschew the genre's trappings, and create majestic songs that herald a new age of back-to-nature idealism. In fact, both members (and their families) even live (and work) a natural lifestyle and grow their own food. But that's beside the point. The music here blends black metal with ambient, psychedelia, post-rock, and drone in an unusually cohesive fashion.

"Subterranean Initiation" is a bruising and fiery tempest of rolling metal that opens up to a low-and-slow psychedelic/krautrock thud, like a mix between Neurosis and Can, before refueling back to a torrent of cascading black metal stylings. "Woodland Cathedral" is a beautifully evocative stab at medieval Popol Vuh-style ambiance that conjures just what the title implies. "Astral Blood" is another dynamic and masterful 10-minute journey that blasts, lulls, and blasts again. The closing piece, "Prayer Of Transformation", is an epic swell of symphonic post-metal rich with bombast and beauty. A tremendous work, "Celestial Lineage" is Wolves' sonic tour-de-force.

— Todd Zachritz

