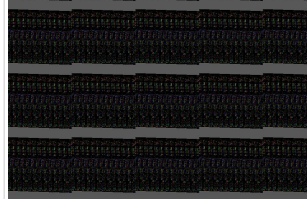


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Its nice to think this piece is going up on the shiny new blogcritics.org.

This is the site I have had the pleasure to write reviews for since its inception and I am pleased to see it continue on its successful road. I want to thank Eric for giving me the space for this weekly (ish) column on the best in heavy music.

Draven: *Eden*

Named after a character in “the Crow” and featuring identical twin brothers you might expect a few things from this band. And no, they don’t sound like a heavy Proclaimers or are they a bunch of mournful Goths with pasty faces and forlorn expressions. In fact, it's just a bunch of guys doing a decent job at cranking out some proper metal.

In the PR there are hints of southern-rock and cowboy bar-brawl, neither of which I hear here. Once you stop worrying about what people are suggesting the band to be and just listen, you will find this quite a good release. There is no rapping, no screamo vocals, just straight-ahead heavy rock that Britain does so well when they really try.

The twins are from Surrey and come from a musical family, it shows. There is a sense of timing, pace, and musicality that many bands lack on their debut.

The fact that Kevin Shirley (Iron Maiden, Metallica, Aerosmith et al.) produced the CD lends credence to their talents. It's all good on this release but the title track is certainly a highlight. Oh, and it's a concept album based on Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Don't let that scare you away, as the tracks stand up together and on their own. (Something that fails so many rock and metal “concept” albums.)

Rarely will you hear such a solid debut from a new band. This is certainly one to seek out when it's released at the end of next month.

Rhino: *Dead Throne Monarch*

This bunch of Spanish nutters play metal that is as heavy as their namesake. This is not for the faint-hearted and the band deliver it with lots of meaning and force. This is heavy in the stoner sense, but instead of down-turned sludge. it's far more thrashy than you might expect. There is a clear sense of combining grunge and modern metal with traditional thrash metal styling.

They have honed their chops on the European festival scene. They have managed to get quite a bit of notice from the extreme/heavy metal masses and publications alike. This, their first major label release, shows off Rhino's talents to those who might not have known them before or seen them live as of yet. It's a solid effort that shows a band that has the talent and clearly wants to be considered alongside the big boys of metal.

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