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Stemm

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"Blood Scent" (CD)



"Blood Scent" track listing:

1. Blood Soaked
2. House of Cards
3. One King Down
4. Awake
5. The Devil Walks Among Us ...
6. Broken Face Masterpiece
7. As Real As It Gets
8. Wish
9. Beneath My Skin
10. Never Will I Break
11. Casualty For Prayer

Reviewed by EdgeoftheWorld on August 5, 2009

"I actually enjoyed the fact that there were a few fills that sounded like they might be missing a beat, because they made the music sound organic and alive. "

When I read guitarist and singer Joe Cafarella saying "This new Stemm CD is our 'Vulgar Display of Power'" in the promotional materials accompanying the album "Blood Scent," my heart dropped a little bit.

With each comparison of the band to Pantera I read — and there were several — my expectations got lower and lower. It's been my experience that most bands that try to emulate the Pantera formula only get it half right. They've got the crushing mid-tempo guitar riffs a la the late, lamented Dimebag Darrell, and the ferocious, growling vocals in the style of Phil Anselmo. But what most of them are missing is the great groove that came courtesy of Vinnie Paul and Rex Brown.

Hailing from Buffalo, NY, Stemm is the rare band of Pantera admirers that gets the whole picture, with drummer Dan Nelligan providing a strong backbone to the band. Nelligan strives more for grooves and atmosphere, and less for click-track perfection. I actually enjoyed the fact that there were a few fills that sounded like they might be missing a beat, because they made the music sound organic and alive.

The album starts out with the brutal "Blood Soaked," which really does sound like something from "Vulgar Display of Power," with Cafarella screaming "As my blood falls to the floor, I paint the walls with what was" in a manner that does Anselmo proud. Cafarella and Alex Scouten are no slouches in the guitar department either, blasting out riffs that, whether they're fast or slow, are astonishingly heavy.

"House of Cards," the album's next track, might be familiar to those who watch "UFC Wired" on the Fox Network. It shows off the band's ability to come up with a sound that some might call more commercial while retaining a sense of heaviness. It's also where we see that Cafarella's also quite adept at delivering vocals in a John Bush style.

The sequencing on this album is spectacular, in that there are rarely two songs of the same speed or style in a row. The fairly slow "House of Cards" is immediately followed by the blazing fast "One King Down," which is then followed up by the mid-tempo "Awake," which features a great, but simple riff in the Dimebag Darrell Mode, along with a rock-radio chorus.

It's hard to pick a favorite song — the album really doesn't have any bad ones. But, if I had to choose two, the first would be "Broken Face Masterpiece," which is this album's "Fucking Hostile" (if we're going to continue the Pantera comparisons); the second would be the Nine Inch Nails cover "Wish," which starts off with a drumbeat that sounds like it could be a country shuffle and morphs into something that straddles the line between pure metal and Trent Reznor's mechanized variations on the form.

My least favorite track would be "Beneath My Skin," a ballad which is much better in the reprise at the end of the album's final track, which discards the electric guitars and shows that these guys are just as good acoustically.

With "Blood Scent," Stemm has created a near-perfect album that pays tribute to the band's inspirations while branching off into new and interesting territory.

Highs: Uniformly great songwriting and playing, with "Broken Face Masterpiece" and "Wish" especially standing out.








Lows: The ballad "Beneath My Skin," though not bad, is my least favorite track.

Bottom line: Whether you like your metal in the radio-friendly mode of Disturbed, or in the Pantera/Damageplan/Hellyeah vein, this album has something for you.



Get more info including news, reviews, interviews, links, etc. on our [Stemm band page](http://www.metalunderground.com/bands/details.cfm?bandid=2492) (<http://www.metalunderground.com/bands/details.cfm?bandid=2492>) .

Key

Rating	Description
	Perfection. (No discernable flaws; one of the reviewer's all-time favorites)
	Near Perfection. (An instant classic with some minor imperfections)
	Excellent. (An excellent effort worth picking up)
	Good. (A good effort, worth checking out or picking up)
	Decent. (A decent effort worth checking out if the style fits your tastes)
	Average. (Nothing special; worth checking out if the style fits your taste)
	Fair. (There is better metal out there)
< 2 skulls	Pretty Bad. (Don't bother)

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