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### August 2010 Best Heavy Metal CDs

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Summer is ending with a bang. June was a great month for new metal releases, July not so much, and August rebounds with another really strong month. Iron Maiden tops the monthly list, a spot they are no stranger to. The rest of the list is a mix of the stoner/doom sound of The Sword, the slick power metal of Blind Guardian, the southern flavored metalcore of The Showdown and the more underground sound of Negura Bunget. Here are our choices for the best CDs released in August, 2010.

#### 1. [Iron Maiden - 'The Final Frontier' \(Universal\)](#)



Universal Records

*The Final Frontier* is a complex, intricate, epic, challenging and ultimately fulfilling effort. When a band has been around for 30 plus years, there usually aren't going to be many surprises in their sound, and with each successive album, it becomes more difficult to avoid repetition. And while *The Final Frontier* fits firmly in the Maiden sonic pantheon, there are enough twists and turns to set it apart and give it a distinct identity.

One of those twists is the opening song "Satellite 15...The Final Frontier." The beginning is an interlude of sorts, with guitars piercing bombastic drums before Bruce Dickinson starts singing about 2 and a half minutes in. It continues building before finally kicking into Maiden mode about halfway through.

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#### 2. [The Sword - 'Warp Riders' \(Kemado\)](#)



Kemado Records

*Warp Riders* succeeds because of its staunch defiance against the creative prisons and stylistic albatross' which formerly confined the band to mid-paced semi-doom and mystical, *Conan*-obsessed meanderings. Instead, *Warp Riders* relishes in varied tempos and an kinetic energy; one which harnesses the riff-hungry Sword so joyously evident on *Age of Winters* and infuses it with a classic rock phoenix, rising from the *Gods of the Earth* ashes into a stronger, leaner form of fully actualized beast.

Yes, The Sword have truly come into their own and delivered the defining album of their career; one which harnesses intricate and involved guitar work into its established stylistic framework and makes it fit on the band's own terms. *Warp Riders* is a focused epic which draws as much inspiration from '70s prog and proto-metal as it does from contemporary caveman metal, with the results being simply this fantastic, flowing piece of music.

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#### 3. [Blind Guardian - 'At The Edge Of Time' \(Nuclear Blast\)](#)

For a quarter-century, Germany's Blind Guardian has been one of the pre-eminent bands in power metal. They've released some of the essential albums in the genre, and have been very consistent over their career. That is also the case with their ninth and latest studio CD *At The Edge Of Time*.



Nuclear Blast Records

Blind Guardian's sound is very dramatic and cinematic. *At The Edge Of Time* kicks off with "Sacred Worlds," a 9 minute epic (the longest song on the album) originally written for a video game. "Tanelorn (Into The Void)" features a diverse vocal performance from Hansi Kursch. He showcases everything from spoken word to moderate mid-range crooning to powerful high pitched nearly glass-shattering belting. "Road Of No Release" has some progressive elements along with bombastic power metal.

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#### 4. [The Showdown - 'Blood In The Gears' \(Solid State\)](#)



Solid State Records

The Showdown has experimented with their sound over the years, going from metalcore to southern rock to southern metal. Their fourth CD *Blood In The Gears* continues and refines the groove metal sound of *Back Breaker*.

*Blood In The Gears* starts appropriately enough with the revving of a Harley engine, then rumbles into "The Man Named Hell," a groovy mid-paced song with plenty of punch and also plenty of catchy riffs and hooks. "Bring It Down" is balls out thrash, with galloping riffs and some screaming solos. The Showdown still has a little metalcore in their blood, and likes the pinch harmonics (guitar squeals), but the Pantera southern groove is their main style.

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#### 5. [Negura Bunget - 'Virstele Pamintului' \(MVD\)](#)



MVD Records

*Virstele Pamintului* measures up very well to the best work from the former version of Negura Bunget. *Virstele Pamintului* is a wonderful combination of progressive, dreamy black metal with loads of atmosphere. There are plenty of harsh moments, but *Virstele Pamintului* heavily emphasizes acoustical guitars, flutes and mild keyboards, and other atmospheric effects.

*Virstele Pamintului* is at its best when able to weave together the different elements into songs that ebb and flow amidst folk melodies, achievable with the cadre of strong musicians and songwriters that Negru has managed to assemble after the breakup of the previous incarnation of the band.

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