



NEGURĂ BUNGET

Progressive black metallers
get it right the second time

OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS, the chic thing in metaldom was for veteran (and barely weathered, in the case of Arch Enemy) bands to re-record not just vital songs, but entire albums. Maybe the motives are pure. Maybe not. But for Romanian black metallers Negură Bunget, reimagining sophomore album *Măiastru Sfetnic* was an absolute necessity. Not because the Timișoara-based trio was looking for an easy out of a contract—the group is still signed to Italian cult label code666, as well as Prophecy Productions imprint Lupus Lounge—or because they have a new lineup they wanted to introduce (which they do). When Negură Bunget finished *Măiastru Sfetnic* in 2000, they had a sinking feeling that it wasn't up to snuff. "We were completely unsatisfied with the album since the moment we left the studio," confirms drummer/mastermind Negru, "both in terms of production as well as interpretation. We planned right then [the] time will come to make this album right. We never thought it would take so long, though." ¶ Although it would take almost a decade and two critically-acclaimed albums before Negură Bunget could

fully focus on the *Măiastru Sfetnic* project again, the wait was absolutely worth it. Re-titled *Maiestrit*, the songs are more powerful, more atmospheric and substantially darker. They capture the air of legendary times, both real and imagined. Songs like "In-zvicnirea Apusului," "A-vint In Abis" and "Al Locului" share the early periods of Enslaved, Samael and Rotting Christ in sound and substance. But Negură Bunget are not simply analogous to their Western European cohorts. There's a mystical side as well, as if Hupogrammos, Sol'Faur and Negru went into the Carpathians, camped for a fortnight, and came back transformed by their physical and spiritual encounters. "We had a very clear atmosphere we wanted to capture on the album," Negru says. "It's hard to explain that in words, but while we missed it on the original recording, I think we came pretty close with the new one. It's more in the spirit of black metal—a

certain atmosphere that makes the music flow a certain way."

Quality art comes at a price, however. *Maiestrit* marks the final recording of the "classic" Negură Bunget lineup. Whatever happened inside the group—Negru says "mixture of elements grew up over time until working together [was] impossible"—they split left of center, with Hupogrammos and Sol'Faur forming Dordeduh, and Negru continuing the Negură Bunget signature. So, 2010 marks the Year of Negură Bunget. *Măiastru Sfetnic* was finally reshaped and a striking new full-length, titled *Vîrstele Pamîntului*, upholds the standards set by beloved albums past. "I'd say it's a bit more straightforward, open and natural," explains Negru of *Vîrstele Pamîntului*. "But that's always for the listener to decide. Our job ends when the album is composed and I don't enjoy, at all, making fancy presentations of the music." —CHRIS DICK