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[Negura Bunget: If Brilliant Blackened Folk Metal Falls in the Forest...](#)



The 2006 release by Romanian folk-inspired black metallers **Negura Bunget**, titled simply *Om*, was a landmark for those who heard it. Up and down, the record was praised for its masterful balance of influences, its groundbreaking genre-defiance, and the fact that, where so much “folk metal” is goofy beyond repair, **Negura Bunget** seemed able to affect a serious and dark atmosphere that was neither laughable nor steeped in black metal cliché (some would argue the two aren’t mutually exclusive).

The story goes that after *Om*, the central parties responsible for **Negura Bunget** – namely multi-instrumentalist/vocalist **Hupogrammos Disciple’s** (real name **Edmond Karban**), guitarist **Sol Faur** and drummer **Negru** (real name **Gabriel Mafa**) – had a falling out, and the band effectively broke up in 2009, only to be revived by **Negru** alone, with a new lineup, whose first album together is *Vîrstele Pamîntului* (Aural Music/Code666). Joining **Negru** in this new **Negura Bunget** are guitarists **Corb** (also vocals and dulcimer) and **Spin**, bassist/flutist **Gadinet**, keyboardist **Inia Dinia** and vocalist/percussionist **aGer** (real name **Ageru Pamîntului**), who’s been in the band since 2003 and also handles pan flute and sundry folk instrumentation I’m not even going to pretend to know the first thing about.

In a way, it’s silly to expect this lineup of **Negura Bunget** to be able to top the majesty of a record like *Om*, since *Vîrstele Pamîntului* is more like a band’s first album than it is their fifth – though it should be noted that **Negura Bunget**’s *Maiestrit*, which showed up earlier this year, is not a new full-length, but rather a re-recording of 2000 opus *Maiastru Sfetnic*, so technically speaking this isn’t the first time we’re hearing this new incarnation of the band, just the first time we’re hearing them perform new material. In any case, to think these players will be able on their first outing to stand up to the fully realized vision that was *Om* is nonsensical. Rather, in listening to *Vîrstele Pamîntului*, one hopes **Negru** will be able to get his band to that point again, or even surpass it in terms of style and atmosphere.



For now, *Vîrstele Pamîntului* shows marked potential for **Negura Bunget** to do just that, and for anyone who's never heard the band before, which should be plenty of people, they'll be thrilled to discover the moments where the band issues sonic references to **Enslaved**, **Drudkh** or even early **Opeth**, deftly switching back and forth between black metal and folk, and, at its finest moments (see the eight-minute "Ochiul Inimii"), blending the two so seamlessly that the listener doesn't think to question what they're hearing. The blending of acoustic and electric guitars (they often play simultaneously) heightens the folk ambience without sacrificing sonic heft or distortion, and there are plenty of black metal squibbly lines to keep the purists in line.

The production, always a sticking point for black metal, introduces **Negru**'s double kick bass drum so gently almost three and a half minutes into "Dacia Hiperborean?" that you almost don't notice when it shows up amidst the flute, keys and vocals. I point this out not as a complaint, but rather as an example of the intricacy of *Vîrstele Pamîntului*, on which the ambient/folk moments of "Umbra" and "Jar" are every bit the highlight as the blasting, blistering metal of "Arborele Lumii." Despite essentially having to be reborn, **Negura Bunget** are able to pull off a complicated sound and present an album that, while given to flights of incredible self-indulgence, also stands up to anything any lineup of the band has accomplished prior. *Vîrstele Pamîntului* is the kind of record you could sit for a week and point out all the sonic turns and twists, which elements are in what balance where, but what it all adds up to is the spirit of not being held into one genre is alive and well for **Negru** and company, and especially for those who never encountered **Om** or any of **Negura Bunget**'s previous work, this latest outing should land with a remarkable impact.

I don't speak Romanian and I don't consider myself much of a fan of black metal, but **Negura Bunget**'s sheer creative will and obvious drive to follow inspiration wherever it takes them is respectable no matter what you listen to on any given afternoon. *Vîrstele Pamîntului* is a work of impressive depth and scope, and if you take anything away from listening to it, take away the impression that this band, this **Negura Bunget**, are only getting started.



[Negura Bunget on MySpace](#)

[Code666](#)

[**PLEASE NOTE:** There are certain accents in the band name and album title that wouldn't show up when I originally went to publish the page, so I took them out and replaced them with the plain letters. This was done for the sake of readability, and I am sorry for any inconvenience it may cause.]

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