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WEDNESDAY, 11 AUGUST 2010 16:05 PAUL DORSZ

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NEGURA BUNGET - Vîrstele Pamîntului

NEGURA BUNGET - Vîrstele Pamîntului CD Review

ARTIST: Negura Bunget

TITLE: Vîrstele Pamîntului

YEAR: 2010

LABEL: Code666

RATING: 7 / 10

REVIEWED BY: Paul Dorsz

When a band goes through as severe of a line-up change as Negura Bunget did, there's an ever-present fear of a drop-off in musical quality. Could the band touch their 2006 opus, *Om*, retaining only one original member? The answer is mixed. The music is still a blend of black, folk, and atmospheric metal, bordering on pagan or nature worship set to electric guitars. The build-ups and crescendos and sweeping musical passages, embraces of somber melodies, and grips of haunting anguish. When it ends, it ends; there is little staying power, with few of the songs remaining in your head long after the album strikes its final notes. The journey is great, to be sure, but the pay-off will leave you wanting more.

Despite the fact that the only original NB member left in the band is the drummer Negru, the new line-up does a wonderful job maintaining the sound that NB created. The tracks on *Vîrstele Pamîntului* are in the vein of the band's previous work, in that they blend the intensity of black metal with the somber elements of acoustic folk music. Album opener *Pamînt* is mostly an acoustic affair, with vocals tearing their way into the song towards the end. Later on, *Umbra* and *Jar* serve as musical stop-overs, the former being a drum-driven, bombastic track with a creepy dulcimer melody, and the latter as a sort of homage to fire and ghosts, with synths layered over ethereal whispers and the gentle crackling of flames. Tracks like *Arborele Lumii* and *Ochiu* with wrath interspersed with acoustic interludes. Blast beats, tremolo guitars, and raspy vocals rage before dropping off to clean

Individually, the tracks are strong. *Dacia Hiperboreana* is stupendous, as it builds up from a spattering of light and clean guitar bass kicks, before clearing away to a choral synth, the melody of which brings a portent of dark clouds. Closing track *Întoar* with flute, as bassist Gadinet complements Corb's clean chants before using the tiny little instrument to carry the melody over the layering of instruments is superb, with most of the harsh black metal passages overlaid by acoustic guitars. It certainly lends organic elements in which all music finds its roots.

Despite this, the album is flawed: the songs just don't stay in your head. Great though they may be, they're not very memorable – yourself whistling – the previously mentioned pan flute melody, for example – but once they're done, they're done. It's strange to can enjoy them fully: relish in their intensity, grip your heart in their misery, and reflect in their atmosphere. But when it ends. After a week of listening to the album, it is most certainly a grower; perhaps in due time, it'll grow to be even more entertaining. Hopefully, it will become greater with time and repeated listens.

TRACKLISTING:

01. Pamînt
02. Dacia Hiperboreana
03. Umbra
04. Ochiul Inimii
05. Chei de roua
06. ?ara de Dincolo de Negura
07. Jar
08. Arborele Lumii
09. Întoarcerea Amurgului

LINKS: