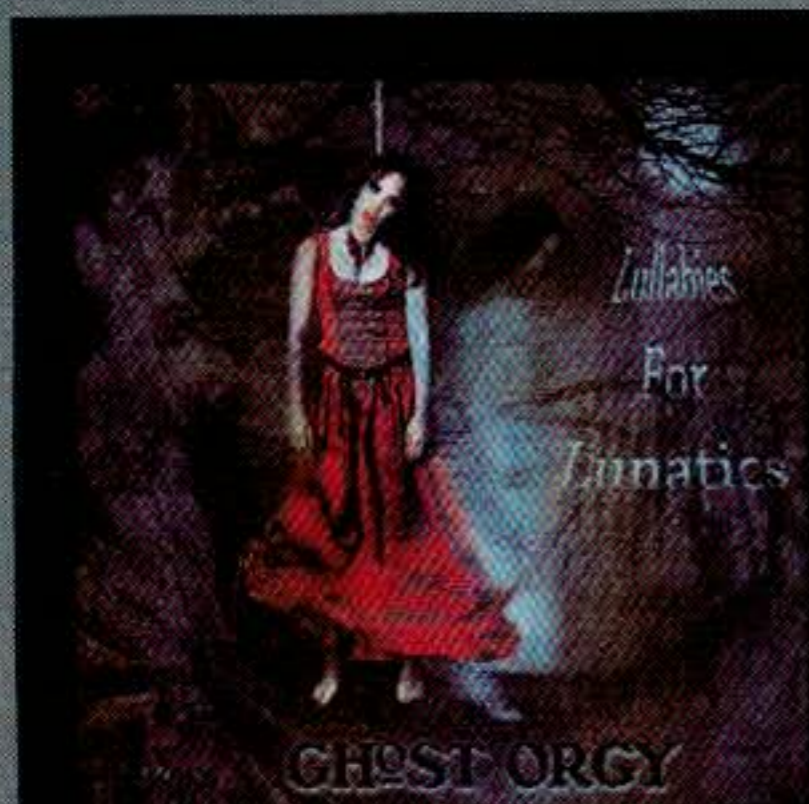


AURAL ASSAULTS



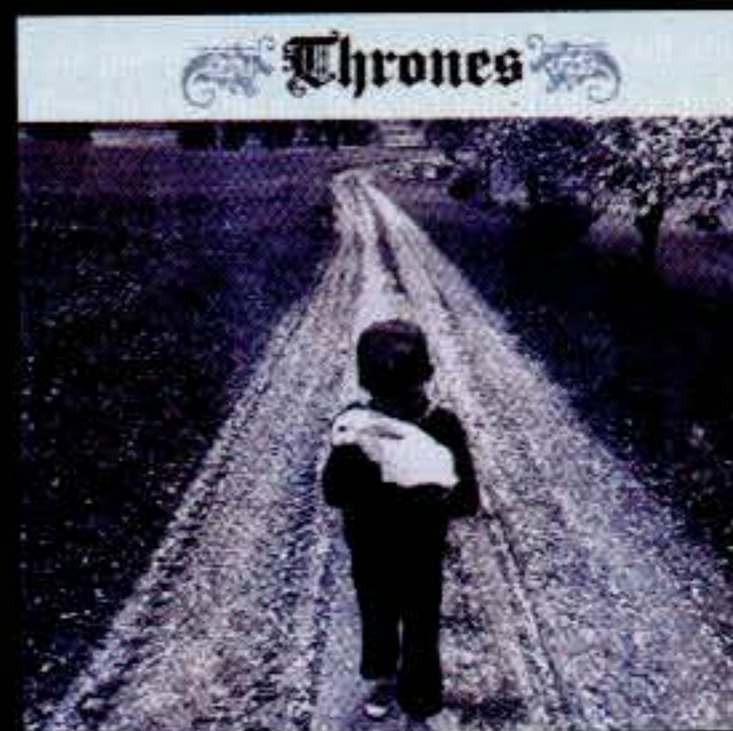
Ghost Orgy *Lullabies For Lunatics* Thoth

Listening to this interminably plodding butt-rock laced with meandering viola and female vocals sorta reminds me of being dragged to melodramatic film screenings by a perpetually-angry art-school ex-girlfriend. *Lullabies For Lunatics* is pretentious, needlessly proggy in an irritating start-stop way and laced with

nauseating lyrics right out of a high school Goth-head's spiral-bound notebook. Strip away Dina Concina's histrionic vocals and Elena Doroftei's weirdly distracting viola (she often sounds like she's playing a completely different song), and you've got dull-as-dishwater Eurotrash metal, Christian Death as imagined by Tiamat fans. There's clearly some talent here, but the whole thing is a scattered mess right now, evoking no atmosphere and inducing only mild headache. I'm usually all for a band trying to color outside the lines, but this whole thing has the ambience of a garbage can full of cymbals being kicked down the stairs. A little focus — or even reining in the vocals and viola to be in key with the rest of the music more often — might make for a more evocative, less nerve-jangling and irritating listen. [www.thothrecords.com]

Thrones *Day Late, Dollar Short* Southern Lord

As you might expect from a man whose resume includes, Melvins, Earth, Sunn O))) and, at present, High On Fire (and a disc that's a collection of very hard to find and unreleased one-offs dating back as far as 1994), there's going to be a fair amount of alienating, unlistenable nonsense and inside jokes put on the plate here. Joe Preston, the (mostly) one man wrecking crew that is Thrones, acknowledges this in the brief liner notes he provides for each of the 19 tracks that make up *Day Late, Dollar Short*. The wink-wink-nudge-nudge behind the Blue Öyster Cult cover of "Black Blade" ("My second favorite BÖC song. No sense in fucking up my favorite."), the TV theme tribute "Epicus Doomicus Bumpitus" and the alien folk march of "Silverly Colorado" get de-mystified to a certain extent as Preston's grimy underbelly proceeds to span between experimental clatter-bang and fuzzy-bass 'n' catalytic converter-driven stoner/doom/blues; you can guess which side of that fence The Residents and Rush covers fall. There's a lot to digest in a *Day Late, Dollar Short's* 78 minutes — some of it musically astute and challenging, some of it hilarious, some of it total crap, all of it a must for Thrones/Preston fans and completists. The rest of you? Well, that depends on how much you're intrigued by songs self-described as, "one winter afternoon with an Alesis HR16 and some plummeting self-esteem" ("Simon Legree"), or, "therapy can help, why wait until tomorrow?" ("Algol"). [www.southernlord.com] — Kevin Stewart-Panko



DVD REVIEW

Various Artists *Metalmania 2004* Metal Mind/MVD

The Metalmania festival has been a Polish underground tradition for many years. Held in the city of Katowice, the festival has seen the likes of such underground luminaries as Nuclear Assault, Holy Moses and Armored Saint among its lineup, not to mention Polish legends such as Kat, Turbo and Vader (R.I.P. Doc Raczkowski).

This DVD, courtesy of Metal Mind Productions, is a recap of last year's festivities. Dealing primarily with the main stage visually, the package also contains a bonus audio disc of second stage bands, including Asguard, Immemorial and Spinal Cord. As is the case with all of Metal Mind's DVD products (especially Carpathian Forest's mandatory *We're Going To Hollywood For This* DVD), the presentation and picture is exquisite and crystal clear and full of little extras which make for some interesting viewing, even if one isn't a particular fan of the band in question.

Specifically, the main stage section of the DVD includes performances (two-three songs each) by Poland's own Trauma, Esquarial and TSA, as well as songs from Tiamat, Moonspell, Michael Schenker Group, Krisiun, Enslaved and Soulfly.

In addition to the live clips, there are interview segments with each band (and biographic data) as well as background info on the festival (which includes a list of every lineup the fest has ever had, going back to the late '80s), desktop images and a photo gallery. While it would be better in my opinion to include actual *band* desktops as opposed to Metalmania logos, I suppose it's the thought that counts.

At any rate, this is a quality DVD, though it could have been made better with some visual footage of the second stage, where many of the up and coming bands are featured (and a more varied lineup all around). Still, this is probably the closest many North Americans will ever get to this festival, so if Polish metal and the goth/death genres are your thing, this DVD is a solid investment. [http://mvdb2b.com] — MetalGeorge Pacheco

Rigor Sardonicus *Apocalypsis* Damnare Paragon

So doom it's almost laughable, this duo (joined here by the bassist from Evoken, who they make sound like Herman's Hermits by comparison) literally sounds like a record played with the turntable set on the wrong speed. The vocals are murky, subsonic gurgles, completely indecipherable, while the guitars lurch like a molasses avalanche, lo-fi, droning and repetitive. Clanging cymbals (teeth-rattlingly loud in the mix) add a slo-mo sense of chaos to this otherwise utterly minimalist effort, apparently re-recorded this year after a 1999 release. Fans of Winter and early Skepticism who haven't yet asphyxiated themselves will likely be the only ones who can handle this 47-minute endurance test. The rest of the world will likely slip into a coma upon exposure to *Apocalypsis Damnare* — whether that'd be from a sense of unfathomed, evil despair and hopelessness, or sheer plodding boredom, is anyone's guess. This is funeral doom-as-science experiment — how ludicrous can we get? — creating no atmosphere besides a vaguely uneasy ennui and the sense that someone, *somewhere* is being swindled. Slowly. [www.paragonrecords.net] — Keith Bergman

