

## REFUSED<sup>9</sup>

REFUSED ARE FUCKING DEAD

BURNING HEART / EPITAPH

Don't even front  
like you were there



Former Refused guitarist Kristofer Steen continues in the grand tradition of Ingmar Bergman with his documentary-style exploration of the seminal band's quick critical rise and equally mercurial downfall. The mood-enhancing devices he employs as a director owe more to *Wild Strawberries* and *The Seventh Seal* than the expected documentary tropes: every spare moment—even something seemingly innocuous, like a band member brushing his teeth—is filled with the utmost portent. It helps that Steen's former bandmates have aged out of some of the inter-personal hostilities that sunk the group and seem game to support Steen's portrayal of Refused—a brief scene where the band members are depicted watching Refused concert footage in an empty screening room is ultimately more purposeful than pretentious.

The danger with this sort of post-mortem, especially one where

the band's hands are all over it, is that a soft-focus lens always threatens to obscure truth. Objectivity isn't even on the radar; *Refused Are Fucking Dead* is singularly focused on portraying the group as extremely progressive and equally undervalued during its peak. Mammoth egos and martyr complexes aside, that's the undisputable truth. *The Shape of Punk to Come* tilted hardcore on its axis: Refused were heavier, louder and more soulful (in all senses) than anything else during metal's wilderness years in the '90s. Watching the documentary portion of this DVD a second time after synthesizing the bonus materials is an absolute must for context: the Refused anthem "Rather Be Dead" is perfectly serviceable as a video, even more rapturous in a live setting, and becomes a defining moment in the interrupted performance that closes the film. "Sometimes punk rock is beautiful," remarks Steen during the introduction and in Refused's somewhat reluctant hands, it really was. —NICK GREEN

## THERION<sup>8</sup>

CELEBRATORS OF BECOMING

NUCLEAR BLAST

Mega, Mega Therion



What better way to look back on a solid, nearly 20-year career than by giving fans an absolute treasure trove of video archives to binge on to their hearts' content? That's

exactly what Therion have done with this lavish six-disc set. Comprised of four DVDs and two CDs, *Celebrators of Becoming* offers a dizzying, yet neatly organized array of live footage and archival material spanning their career from a humble death metal band to their current incarnation as symphonic metal innovators.

The centerpiece is a complete, two-hour live set filmed and recorded in Mexico City in August 2004, presented on one DVD and in audio form on the

two CDs. For all the bombast (nine members onstage, including formidable mezzo soprano Karin Fjellander), it's a lively, unpretentious performance in front of a very receptive young crowd, as guitarist/founder Christofer Johnsson holds court, lead guitarist Kristian Niemann showcases his solo prowess, and vocalist Mats Levén howls away with his tremendous power metal pipes.

The world tour footage on disc two is fun, highlighted by a sojourn in Bolivia involving frigid weather, oxygen tanks and police escorts, while the third disc includes, among other nuggets, a spirited set at Wacken in 2001 and a fascinating, detailed look at the recording of the sprawling *Lemuria/Sirius B* albums. However, the best of the entire lot is the fourth disc, offering a detailed home video timeline of Therion's evolution from 1989 to 2001, with literally dozens of recorded performances. A superb, exhaustive collection, and a guaranteed fan pleaser. —ADRIEN BEGRAND

## VARIOUS ARTISTS<sup>7</sup>

METAL'S DARKSIDE: THE HARD AND THE FURIOUS, VOLUME 1

MUSIC VIDEO DISTRIBUTORS

A headbangers ball with an emphasis on banging



First thing's first: despite her provocative dark angel pose on the cover, this is not a porn video featuring Jasmin St. Claire and

a waiting room of nubile death metal dudes. It is, however, her own director's cut recasting of *Headbangers Ball*, beginning with a laughably demonic blue screen backdrop and St. Claire's disclaimer: "I'm going to be your guide as we venture to the headbanging depths of the hidden musical underground. Now sit down. Because I'm going to rock your world!" She means well—the premise of the show is presenting bands MTV2 and Fuse would never touch, such as Cannibal Corpse and a reunited Death Angel—but the following 50 minutes are as campy as an *Ernest Goes to Ozzfest* video.

This is good and bad, of course. The good: a calm, articulate Corpsegrinder talking about censorship while serenely stating, "We're not criminals. There is something wrong with a violent criminal, you know! Most of the stuff is about zombies. I don't think they're real." The bad: St. Claire's overzealous approach to interviews and the subject at hand. Props to her for providing a venue for the pseudo fringes of extreme music, but she really needs to calm the fuck down to avoid being that annoying fangirl with the mouth of a trucker. Simply put, St. Claire is trying way too hard ("Britney Spears should fucking die!" and "Support your local extreme metal scene or fucking die!"). Yes, we know people kill people, not Satyricon or Cannibal Corpse records; that parents should instill morals in their children rather than Morbid Angel. But we don't need to hear this argument regurgitated for the millionth time by a DVD that doesn't even pass the hour mark. How about you use that time to show more videos, like shit that isn't Death Angel performing before a boo-scary storm backdrop, complete with faux lightning effects? St. Claire just might have the answer herself: "Don't ever attend a New York City private school, because you'll end up like me."

—ANDREW PARKS