

DVD REVIEW

Tiamat The Church Of Tiamat Metal Mind



Ok, before we all go crazy over the abundance of DVDs coming from the same soundstage in Krakow, Poland (thanks to Metal Mind), Tiamat show it can have a different look. But then again, not everyone has an eclectic frontman like Johan Edlund. The bald, crazy-eyed, contact-wearing guitarist appears bare-chested wearing wrist-to-elbow armbands and one of those Scandinavian "dresses." He's predominately filmed in pink light. Not sure what statement he's making ("We're definitely not a death metal band anymore?" perhaps), but it works on film. The 15-track performance is, for the most part, chronologically backwards, with goth-pop "Vote For Love" coming first and the ethereal "The Sleeping Beauty" and "Gaia" closing the show. Elsewhere, only "In A Dream" and "Whatever That Hurts" come off the requisite (aka metal) early releases (and both off the penultimate *Wildhoney*).

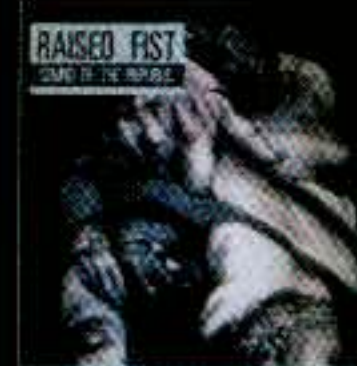
For fans on board prior to Edlund's Manson-lite fixation, the extras are the real lure, including a 23-minute interview and 13 clips comprised of live footage, honest-to-goodness promo videos (some really whacked out ideas, the likes of which would never get shone Stateside and should be viewed just for that reason alone, regardless of interest in the band) and an animated short for "Do You Dream Of Me?" If played one-after-the-other, Edlund adds commentary, every couple of songs. This feature is not present when viewing individual tracks. Overall, the enjoyment will depend on how far reaching one's love of Edlund/Tiamat is, but as the crowd reaction proves, the vast majority (count the mainman out) appreciate the dreary, older stuff most. [www.churchoftiamat.com] — Mark Gromen

Bloodlined Calligraphy Ypsilanti Facedown



Bloodlined Calligraphy, who hail from Ypsilanti, Michigan, (hence the clever title?), are fronted by one Ally French, a girl with a set of brass fucking lungs. If we didn't just give the information away, you'd never be able to discern Miss French's gender from the way she roars on *Ypsilanti*. She doesn't sound like a girl; rather, she growls like an accomplished, experienced death metal dude and she's the first female metal singer I've come across that matches up to Walls Of Jericho's Candace Kucsulain. Bloodlined Calligraphy play dark, mosh-worthy metalcore and they aren't afraid to incorporate Swedish style riffs into their already toxic mix; ultimately, they're like the bastard spawn of Hatebreed, As I Lay Dying and The Haunted. "From Here On Out" boasts a breakdown with balls that hang down to its knees, while "It Can't Rain All The Time" is a cocktail of spit, piss, venom, blood, bile and any other nasty bodily fluid you can think of and features French toying with her vocal range. *Ypsilanti* is a visceral, in-your-face record from start to finish, and Bloodlined Calligraphy never take things down a notch nor do they waste too much time trying to play the melody card. *Ypsilanti* is a brass knuckles and razors affair all the way around. And did I mention that frontwoman Ally French slays? [www.blcmosh.com] — Amy Sciarretto

Raised Fist Sound Of The Republic Burning Heart



To use just one word to describe Raised Fist, it's surely "powerful." Luckily there are several hundred thousand more choices in the English language, so take your pick from harsh, precise, brutal, innovative, intense and most of all, completely underrated. Sweden has long been a breeding ground for unique and frighteningly proficient musicians but Raised Fist has really taken extremity to a new level with their previous three studio albums. *Ignoring The Guidelines*, released in 2000, was as important as anything Refused ever released, yet seemed to pass by unnoticed. Maybe it was too fast, too sledgehammer crazy; perhaps they were just too good. Like the best bands who only a select few individuals ever truly "get," Raised Fist must have felt deflated to release such a classic album only to be largely ignored. Their last album was 2002's *Dedication*, which once again carved metalcore a new asshole. Few bands are worthy of the genius tag but this multifaceted Swedish beast is so far above other bands who worm their way into popular consciousness that it's simply upsetting they're not given their due. Perhaps *Sound Of The Republic* can change that, for it is clearly their most ambitious recording to date. The staple ingredients of a Raised Fist blow to the head are: Alexander's [last names are for divas] shredding vocals, guitars to floor a rhino courtesy of Daniel and the rhythm behemoth of Matte and Marco. Yet there is greater emphasis on experimentation and serious injections of melody, this time clearer and more rounded than ever before. Thus, the likes of "Killing It" could belong on a "commercial" punk record, but for Raised Fist addicts, well, y'all know this is no fluke — the band can turn their hand to anything and here, they finally submerge their 100% full-on speed tendencies to immense effect. Buy, kill, steal or cry to get this record. [www.myspace.com/raisedfist] — Paul Stenning

Elvenking The Winter Wake Candlelight



You know, just when I was thinking "the world is really lacking a truly dynamic power metal band to kick everyone in the ass," in waltzes Italy's Elvenking with *The Winter Wake*. With a history that dates back to 2000, this LP happens to be the quintet's third full length effort and contains an intensely energetic and charismatic style which will likely appeal to the average, traditional metal fan.

A lot of this stems from the band's catchy (if a bit predictable) songwriting, which leaps from the speakers from the opening strains of "Trows Kind" to the very last echoing refrains of "Disillusion's Reel." The guitars chug along with a surprising heaviness, while Zender's spot-on drumming pushes each track forward with the speed and urgency of a bullet train.

The music possess just as much dynamic as it does velocity, however, and these moments are punctuated well by the tasteful synth/violin performance of Elyghen, while lead vocalist Damnagoras provides all of the sing-a-long choruses any melodic metal fan may need. As a special bonus, Destruction's own Schmier makes an appearance on the title track, trading off vocal lines to superb effect. Said track also benefits from having a particularly crunching intro/verse riff, resulting in a true standout composition within an album that just happens to be chock full of 'em.

The Winter Wake really doesn't let up for a second and utterly succeeds in every way a band like Dragonforce fails in that they combine musicianship, memorability and energy into a near-perfect power metal package. With an album this strong, it should only be a matter of time before Elvenking truly breaks out of their niche and into the realm of mainstream acceptance currently inhabited by said overrated Brits. [www.elvenking.net] — MetalGeorge Pacheco

Jungle Rot War Zone Crash



Jungle Rot hasn't seen many changes in their sound, attitude and direction through a dozen years of existence, and death metal devotees will be glad for the consistency upon hearing the Chicago four-piece's latest, *War Zone*. An 11-track, 32-minute offering of stayed but hateful metal, *War Zone* is not only an excellent follow-up to 2004's *Fueled By Hate*, but also a logical addition to your collection in combination with the recently re-released *Darkness Foretold* CD, with either (or especially both) leaving you armed and ready for combat.

Unlike *Fueled*, *War Zone* brings you straight to the frontline as "Victims Of Violence" kicks things off with no intro and no delay, giving you the band's trademark simple brutality and no-nonsense style of riffing right out of the gate. There's some speed picking going on, but for the most part the pulse of the music doesn't change as Rot leads you through the trenches, with clear production and solid backbone drumming keeping the rhythmic breakdowns punchy. "Cut In Two" continues the journey in much the same style, and highlights the effectiveness of vocalist Dave Matrise's strained voice as he delivers a potent performance that's undeniably guttural but also highly understandable, allowing the listener to hear plenty of the enraged lyrics and how well they suit the music. Tracks like "They Gave Their Lives" and "Fight For Life" are good examples not only of how JR can dish out riffs reminiscent of a tripod-mounted machine gun sounding off staccato bursts, but also of how the band straddles the line between sounding like crossover appeal candidates for fans of tough guy hardcore and oldschool death metal alike. This (perhaps unique) situation is the result of surprisingly groove-oriented riffs mingling with refreshingly simplistic guitar work listeners might expect from an early '90s DM band out of Florida or Sweden, plus the band has an overall vibe of death and suffering not unlike the days when groups like Cancer offered up disturbing subject matter and didn't seem to care about morality or social consciousness one way or the other, simply describing the grit and gore like an impassioned observer.

Previously recruited fans will certainly be anxious to roll out with *War Zone* blasting from speakers in all directions, but anyone who has yet to experience the callous cruelty of Jungle Rot may find the release of this album, the band's fifth full-length, an ideal time to sign up and enjoy the battle. Even if you're not familiar with Rot's penchant for combat-themed material, their fondness for the subject should become painfully obvious as soon as you get your hands on this one, as the packaging is rife with images of explosions and devastated streets, and the stripped-down cuts will hold appeal for anyone who's looking to declare war on overly technical or melodic metal. [www.crashmusicinc.com] — Keith Russo

Cult Of Death The Grand Torturers Of Hell Reissue Battle Kommand



This is a re-release of the Chicagoan war/black metal act's first LP, originally issued on Warhammer Records. Packaged with bonus tracks and new artwork (the mix has been cleaned up a bit too, it seems), *The Grand Torturers Of Hell* plays like a new release, and serves as a proper introduction for neophytes unfamiliar with the act. Originally formed in '99, Cult Of Death was one of the first of a new wave of American BM acts following in the footsteps of Finnish brutalizers Beherit (the band even covers "Sodomantic Rites" here), and thusly deliver a raucous blast of noise, drenched in feedback and bass-heavy riffage. Featuring Nachtmystium/ex-Krieg drummer Wargoat Obscurum, Cult Of Death puts forth quite the racket, and should go down a storm with fans who demand nothing but the most blasphemy for their dollar. [www.deathcult.qjb.net] —MetalGeorge Pacheco