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Grave

Enraptured (MVD)
by **Tim Den**

Even though **Grave** are one of Swedish death metal's founding fathers, they've never had their live show properly documented and presented. Yes, there was a live album from '97 (*Extremely Rotten Live*), but it sounded like a meat grinder locked inside a coffin, not anywhere near representative of what the band are capable of. Now, with *Enraptured*, loyal fans will finally be able to witness Grave's power via multiple well-shot angles, superb sound quality, and a ferocity unmatched even by the band's studio records.

Indeed, Grave sound more menacing and crushing here than ever, with guitarist/vocalist Ola Lindgren particularly roaring like a lion on cocaine. Whereas their last few albums have buried the vocals within the mix, on *Enraptured*, you can hear every word, Ola leading his troops into battle. And his voice is so brutal that one can't help but wonder why they would be mixed so low on studio albums. Regardless, the rest of his band is not far behind in terms of giving all they've got, pummeling the crowd, song after classic song. Every album is represented here with the exception of the criminally underrated *Hating Life* (I still stand by my opinion that it's their best), with about three songs from each record in the set. The Polish crowd (the DVD was filmed in Warsaw) is, as expected of European metal faithfuls, perpetually full of energy and response, reacting to every chord and beat with swirling mosh pits and crowd surfing. I have to wonder if Grave think American audiences are pussies, cuz god knows we certainly don't go fucking berserk for over an hour at every show like our overseas brethren do.



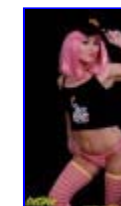
A few noteworthy observations: 1) The concert is recorded entirely live without overdubs, to the point that, when Ola and bassist Fredrik Isaksson's instruments get unplugged during encore "Into the Grave," there is no post-production to fix it. *Enraptured* is all natural, my friends, which is all the more frightening considering how fucking air-tight Grave are live. 2) Now-departed drummer Pelle Ekegren does a splendid job of playing the old stuff, but comparing *Enraptured's* renditions of old songs to the original recordings quickly reveals that original drummer Jensa Paulsson had a particularly melodic style that really gave the tunes a distinct feel. Without his meaty back beat and signature fills, Grave's material does lose a bit of its identity.

But no matter, cuz it's obvious that Grave in the 21st century are as bad ass and destructive as ever. And if the 16-song set (not counting intermissions) here doesn't fully satisfy you, there are two extra live songs taken from Party.San Open Air 2004, a music video for "Soulless," and an interview with Ola and guitarist Jonas Torndal (which, really, doesn't tell you anything you don't already know). So what are you waiting for? Get into the grave and become enraptured. (www.musicvideodistributors.com)

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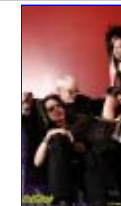
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