



**ALEX SKOLNICK**

I knew **ALEX SKOLNICK** as the hotshot Testament lead guitarist who always wanted more. Talented to the teeth, this kid had Guitar Hero written all over him. I was right. I used to talk to him about his lofty ambitions of playing jazz fusion with a metal framework. He's since lightened up on the metal but, damn, has he made a name for himself with the Alex Skolnick Trio performing dazzling jazz-rock instrumentals for wildly appreciative world-wide crowds! And now add *Last Day In Paradise* (Magnitude) to his impressive resume. With such impeccable musicians as bassist Nathan Peck and drummer Matt Zebroski, Skolnick—who plays electric, acoustic and 12-string, as well as a whistle and loop programming—shines whether on his own original material or covering Rush's "Tom Sawyer" or Black Sabbath's "Revelation (Mother Earth)."

Influenced as much by European Renaissance music as jazz and heavy metal, you can throw the rock rulebook out the window! To that end, there's even a Latin version of Testament's "Practice What You Preach" called "Practica Lo Que Predicas."

When he left Testament, he moved from San Francisco to be near the New York jazz scene and go back to school. Earning a Music Degree from New School University, he put his smarts to work exploring (and turning inside-out) music by artists as diverse as Jimi Hendrix, "Mahavishnu" John McLaughlin and Miles Davis, all the while adding elements of metal, swing and funk. All of this resulted in his 2002 *Goodbye To Romance: Standards For A New Generation*

debut. Then came the aptly-named *Transformation* where he practically reinvented the music of Deep Purple, Judas Priest and Pink Floyd. With *Last Day In Paradise*, Skolnick can lay claim to the kind of reverence usually reserved for people like Yngwie.



**ABORTED**

**ABORTED.** Even the name is nasty. *Slaughtered & Apparatus: A Methodical Overture* (Century Media) is Belgian gore-grind, violent, putrid, reeking of sickness. I loved it. Bassist Peter Goemaere, guitarists Matty Dupont/Sebastian Tuvi and vocalist Sven de Caluwé went into a Denmark recording studio and really let the fur fly. Producer Tue Madsen (The Haunted) is as much to blame for this as any of the Aborted guys. With guest vocals by that ex-Carcass dude Jeff Walker and that Hatesphere guy Jacob Bredahl, and with totally inhuman drumming (literally: it's all done by machines), this is the sickest slab of musical terrorism so far this year.

It wasn't until the fourth album—2003's *Goremageddon*—that Aborted really hit its stride. It was an album that had a similar impact to Entombed's *Left Hand Path*. All of a sudden, underground bands all over the world were scurrying to add their particular personalities to a game-plan worth savoring. In 2005, though, Aborted deviated from that template with the stunning *The Archaic Abattoir*; innovative and exciting, it garnered international accolades.

As far as the new album is concerned, Sven tells *Metal Edge*, "Expect an album which more or less condenses what we've been doing over the last three albums, with

some fresh elements added in. It's definitely a lot more extreme, with more solo mayhem than the last one, while still retaining the groove and melodies we have been building on. We promise that you will not be disappointed."

Tour wise, the band, after thrilling thousands of stateside headbangers in '05 on the road with Suffocation and Cryptopsy, will hit the states yet again later this year.

**DVD WATCH:**

*Prophecies Denied* by **Sinister** (MVD) features 15 songs of technical death metal (videos plus onstage action from a Warsaw show, animation, an interview, bio, discography, photo gallery, memorabilia, desktop images, web links and a bonus documentary ("Angels Of The Apocalypse") in its two hours and 40 minutes. The band—singer Aad Kloosterwaard, guitarist Alex Paul, bassist Bas Van Den Bogaard and drummer Paul Beltman—formed in The Netherlands in 1988, broke up in 2004, and has since regrouped.



*Goodbye To The Gallows* by **Emmure** (Victory) rocked my socks off with a halfhour of nonstop blackened hardcore deathcore that had me panting and sweating after 10 minutes! Short, concise, to-the-point and totally bludgeoning, guitarists Ben and Jesse, bassist Mark, drummer Joe and nasty-ass singer Frankie make it so real, I had to play the whole thing over again...and that's the whole point, isn't it?

The self-titled **Xasthur** EP (Moribund Cult) is a bit of a letdown. Black metal? Hardly. This dreary soundtrack music couldn't raise the dead with a cattle prod. Hardly psychedelic, its only attribute is pure despair, played for laughs. Keep it around as background music when you kill yourself.



Much better is the action-packed *What Demons Do To Saints* by **Beneath The Sky** (Victory). Here, the Cincinnati death metal band—singer Joey Nelson, guitarists Jeff Nelson/Chris Profitt, keyboardist Matt Jones, bassist Nick Scarberry and drummer Brandon Sowder—has honed what it has obviously been practicing hard since 2004.

"We knew each other when we were in different bands," the singer tells *Metal Edge*. "Over time, we first became friends, and, eventually we decided to create our own band. It was similar to the music we were playing early on, only that we wanted to be a little more melodic. From the start, we wanted to create a different sound. We knew we had it right after the first show. Everything just clicked. [For this debut], we used four old songs, and the rest are new. One of

the older songs we recorded completely different. It shocked us to hear the final version. We couldn't believe it was the second song we ever wrote ['Falling In Love With Cold Hands']. In all, we just wanted to make the best possible album we could make, and I think we accomplished that goal.

"It all gets bigger and better from here," he concludes. "We'll get out there, play hard, and get bigger tours. One thing will lead to another. For Beneath The Sky, even the sky isn't the limit!" •