

REVIEWS & LUNATIC RANTS

I've moved to Allentown, Pennsylvania.
[New address posted here!](#)



CRO-MAGS - The Final Quarrel: Live At CBGB 2001 DVD ([Music Video Distributors](#)) Like many a hardcore kid in the late 80s (or even early 90s) Cro-Mags were my all time favorite hardcore band. They pretty much established what hardcore was to become, and surely set the rules for what was to be known as "New York City hardcore". Sadly, they are no more, especially with the strife between founding members Parris Mayhew, Harley Flanagan and Jon Joseph. From the early 1990s into the new millennium Harley and Jon fronted two separate live bands billed as the Cro-Mags with differing musicians under the names Cro-Mag Jam, Cro-Mags-NYC, and even Age of Quarrel. What this DVD bills as the 'last Cro-Mags show ever' is actually the last time Harley, Parris and Jon shared a stage, as Jon Joseph still tours with his own version of Cro-Mags (featuring AJ Novello of Leeway and Rocky George of Suicidal Tendencies - two great old school bands in their own right). It took place at a packed CBGBs in 2001 and goes off like almost no other Cro-Mag show I've seen taped. The crowd is wild, they sing along, the band is energetic, vibrant and plays almost every song off the legendary 1986 album *Age of Quarrel* (plus doing a Ramones cover). The DVD is worth it for this set alone, but it does come with quite a few extras. There's footage of Harley having a jam session with his son, as well as Harley giving a tour of the now famous (and sadly no-more) NY club CBGBOMFUG (rest in peace Hilly!), a slide show and even a full live set from Harley Flanagan's current project Harley's War (which features members of Warzone and Murphy's Law - two more influential old school acts). If you are into any type of hardcore, old or new, this is definitely something that belongs in your collection. (Oct 14, 2007)

SAILOR WINTERS - Red At Morn: The Movie DVD ([Sailor Winters](#)) If you're unfamiliar with Sailor Winters, he is actually one man, Ryan Cox of the state of Georgia. He plays noise / ambient music, and plays it well. His music is sometimes harsh and powerful in the vein of Merzbow, The Grey Wolves or NON, while other times playful and rather upbeat in the vein of Aphex Twin, DJ Spooky or Xiu Xiu. It's basically his entire third release, *Red at Morn*, with accompanying music video and experimental film - we have the marching beat of "Ashe", the fuzzy "Olodumare" (whose video at times reminded me of Boyd Rice's short film *Black Sun*), the tribal, yet droning "Orisha", the quiet and ethereal "Egun", the menacing "Dahomean", followed by the impish "baKONGa", the distressing, though often lush "Yoruban", next is "Maxim Xul" a track that starts loopy and restrained, which almost turns into black metal halfway through, then the rumbung and rumoring "Murmur", the subdued and tasteful "Orre" and ending things off on the punishing and abrasive "Black Noise". All of it extremely well done for what was probably put together on a home computer. Best of all, this is completely self-produced (from the music videos to the disc packaging), and you can get this for five bucks! No, that's no typo. You can buy this directly from his website for \$5. So order up, sit back, smoke a fat one and be prepared for an over fifty-minute, trance-inducing ride. Just make sure your DVD player can play burned discs. (Oct 14, 2007)

WOLVES IN THE THRONE ROOM - Two Hunters CD EP ([Southern Lord](#)) Wolves In The Throne Room is a black metal three-piece from Olympia, WA and they can educate many folks in the BM scene that you don't always have to be neck-breakingly fast and constantly screeching to be dark, brutal and menacing. Their first album, *Diadem of 12 Stars* (on Vendrus Records), was an hour-long, three-song epic record, and this newest work clocks in four songs at over forty minutes. Part Explosions in the Sky / part Emperor - equally mixing Neurosis with Burzum. Shoegazer-ish black metal morphing from classic Gothic black metal to neo-folk and into progcore, doom and more in an Isis meeting up with Ulver and beating up Mayhem in a ritualistic musical bloodsport.

From powerfully crushing metal to quiet swirling lulls, they transition from genre to genre without a hitch. The main vocals are in a witchy screech, while other times there actually is a woman singing, backing up the vocalist. This new CD is a must for the prog-monsters who think Neurosis, or even newer Isis, has gotten a little dull.

And, if you haven't done so, you should definitely pick up their debut as well. What the hell, just listen here and I'm sure you will soon enough. (Oct 14, 2007)

THE FUCKING WRATH - Season of Evil CD ([Goodfellow](#)) Supposedly this Montalvo, CA trio went into the studio on the weekend of 06/06/06 to record *Season of Evil*. If so, thumbs up for that alone. It's always nice for any record - especially a heavy record - to have as much evil jammed into it as (in)humanly possible... and not just in the album title. Also, try selling yourself, and a few records, when you have the word 'fucking' in your band name. Best of luck with that, evil ones! Anyhow, this LP is the debut end-product of three dope-smoking, record store employees that are way into Black Sabbath, Tragedy and very early Metallica. I can hear those three influences the most here, but I also catch moments of Radio Birdman, Infest, Pentagram and Slayer. In other words: it's a lot of grinding thrash with moments of southern-fried apocalyptic riffs. Big guitars in front of mountains of amps, booming, bombastic drumming, often at breakneck speeds, and growling vocals where you know the singer's tasting blood. My biggest issue is that when the eleven songs are over with, which clock in at under an hour, I'm only half way done trashing the place. I need more time and songs to finish the wrecking I've started, so I know it's a bit early to ask, but could you guys hurry up with new album already? Oh well, I'll just have to start this record over (and over) again. (Oct 14, 2007)

500 MILES TO MEMPHIS - Sunshine In A Shot Glass CD ([Deep Elm](#)) These five cowpokes from Cincinnati, OH wail out a mix of hefty riffs (combined with fiddle and steel guitar) with a sorrowful soul. They released an earlier LP on 3rd Silo Records (*Before The Sun Rises*) and got

the notice of the emo-kings at Deep Elm Records. The sounds emitted from 500 Miles to Memphis (a name that comes from the distance of the band's hometown to Elvis' Graceland) may get them classified as alt-country, but there's a stronger rock-n-roll vibe, and a punky backbeat, that will separate them from many of their contemporaries. A few of the songs are slow and bring to mind contemporary and classic folk, while many are fast as pure punk rock fury. The lyrics, many which deal with heartbreak and loneliness, are also a bit different than your average country band, as guitarist / vocalist Ryan Malott croons about a coke-snortin' ex, accident victims asking for the sweet kiss of death and victory in times of (self) defeat. Altogether it's a true separation from your bland honky-tonk, I assure you. This disc, like Deep Elm's release of Clair De Lune's *Assisted Living*

is limited to only 1000 discs to encourage sales through digital downloading (read: not file sharing). Also, it's another of a few that will not be available in stores to spur people to get off their duff and order via mail. This is the CD for those that are into Drive By Truckers, Social Distortion or Lucero, but still want something a little different at the same time. (Oct 14, 2007)

OBITUARY - Xecutioner's Return CD (Candlelight) Let me just say that *Cause of Death* is one of my favorite death metal albums of all time. Everything about Obituary in the early 90s was intense - the riffs were heavy, the drumming was brutal, and the vocals were sheer torturous (for Tardy to produce, not for me to listen to). I really hated it when they tried to jump on the Limp Dicksick bandwagon and attempted to tailor their tunes for a more metal-rap sound. Well, they're back again, and while this new album is no *Cause of Death*, it is way better than what they ended on before the turn of the new millennium. Okay, for those that are unaware, here goes... Obituary is a Tampa, FL outfit which started in 1984 under the name Xecutioner (hence the spelling of the new album title). Throughout the 1990s Obituary held the title of fifth largest-selling death metal band, and released four stellar LPs (*Slowly We Rot* [1989], *Cause of Death* [1990], *The End Complete* [1992] and *World Demise* [1994] all on Roadrunner Records) and one stinker (*Back from the Dead* in 1997 and also on Roadrunner Records). In '97 they split as Allen West formed Six Feet Under and Trevor Peres formed Catastrophic. They regrouped in 2003, releasing a new album (*Frozen in Time*, still on Roadrunner Records) and a DVD (*Frozen Alive* on Metal Mind Productions) as well, and have now switched over to Candlelight for their newest outing (sans Allen West). While I still have a bigger heart for their earlier works, this record is nothing for me to turn your nose up at either. John Tardy still has torturous vocals, Donald Tardy plays drums like no other, and Trevor Peres still has killer guitar licks. Good to hear that older folks - like myself - still have the power and balls to fucking bring it on. (Oct 14, 2007)



MY FIRST TIME: A COLLECTION OF FIRST SHOW STORIES - Edited, Chris Duncan BOOK (AK Press) This was a real fun read. As the title boasts, it's a collection 'first time' stories - first time going to a punk show, that is. The book is packed with over forty storytellers. Some of them are big names from big bands, and others are simply nice folks with no more than a story to tell. There's Blake Schwarzenbach of Jawbreaker and Jets to Brazil (whose first punk outing was actually the movie *Decline of Western Civilization*), Even Worse / Springhouse drummer and magazine mogul (*The Big Takeover*) Jack Rabid (and though not written in the book, he also gave Beastie Boys their first punk gig), Russ Rankin of Good Riddance, author (*Our Band Could Be Your Life*) Michael Azerrad, Anna Brown's first time at Gilman, Ben Sizemore of Econochrist, Al Quint (of *Suburban Voice* fanzine), The Dwarves' Blag Dahlia (who gives the shortest, yet funniest entry), brothers Joe and Bull Gervasi, author (*Going Underground*) George Hurchalla, and the ever popular 'many, many more' too. Some stories are about going to one's first show at the age of twelve, while others started to go at forty-one. Some went drunk or fucked-up on drugs and others were straightedge right from the start. A few photos of the bands spoken of, as well as a flyer or two are peppered throughout, but the book focuses mostly on the words written, and though I do like photos - I'm a man of words. *My First Time* is great for any punk rocker or hardcore kid tired of politics or philosophy, and looking for some light reading. Worth the \$16 (or £11 UK). (Oct 14, 2007)

RAGING SPEEDHORN - Before the Sea Was Built CD (SPV) Raging Speedhorn is a sextet from Northamptonshire, England, beginning in 1998 from the ashes of Soulcellar and Box. They actually made it into the UK singles chart with their single "The Gush" in 2001 off of their self-titled debut LP (on ZTT Records). They then released a few more albums, *We Will Be Dead Tomorrow* (2002, also on ZTT), a two-disc album of live material and rare demos in 2004, and *How the Great Have Fallen* (2005, on their current label SPV Records). With a new singer and a new bassist one wouldn't think their sound has changed all that much from previous efforts, but it has. Though the band is a dual-vocal beast, the new and main vocalist (Bloody Kev, who once fronted Hard to Swallow) brings a very different style than the previous singer, which is now more manic, brutal and in-your-face. Musically they've moved away from the sludgecore sound of their early releases, and are now opting for a more ethereal and intricate sound on *Before the Sea Was Built*, which wouldn't be far off of Isis or Neurosis. The songs aren't as long or epic as the previously mentioned outfits (the entire ten song album is under an hour), but they're in the same sonic tones, as well as structure. It's a good listen for those that are into the postcore sound, but are over the ten-minute stretch of the usual prog-metal tunes. (Oct 14, 2007)

GIVING CHASE - A Cheap Print of A Masterpiece CD (Jump Start) Giving Chase are five guys from the streets of Philadelphia, PA and they sound pissed, but luckily, while being angry enough to put out a hardcore sound, they didn't go the route of the tough-guy chugga-chugga school (ie: Hatebreed). Mixing equal parts California punk rock, old schools hardcore ala New York City, the call-and-response Gainesville sound, and the early emcore sound of D.C. I can hear it all in these twelve tracks: crowds going completely wild, while pissed off dudes are bashing in their own instruments, as the lead vocalist points his finger high in the air and the veins in his neck attempt to break free of his body. I'm trying to think of a band that these guys sound like and I can't put my finger on it. No one in specific, but more like everything Bridge 9 Records put out with a little Hot Water Music. The vocals are mostly screamed in a heavy bark by Mike Woliansky, with two others backing him up - another growler and another who actually sings in the background (or often in the choruses). The packaging is a nice added touch to please the eyes, as the band pleases the ears. If you can't get enough after your CD player has worn out your copy, you can contact Jump Start Records because they also carry an EP (2003's *Nothing Ever Changes*). Seriously though, where the hell did these guys get the sample at the end of "Acceleration Couch" - this LP could be worth it for that alone! (Oct 14, 2007)

DEPRESSED MODE - Ghosts of Devotion CD (Firebox)

Depressed Mode began as a solo project of vocalist / synth player Ossi Salonen from Finland, and featured sampled tracks and keyboards. Somewhere along the line Salonen thought it would be better to add guitars, bass and real drums. Guitarist Tomppa Turpeinen, an old band mate, was asked to fill in the needed roles, and cared for the music so much he asked to be a part of the outfit. It's cool to find out that this was recorded at Salonen's home (with vocals being done in a closet), yet still having dooming sound, tight production and a recording studio feel. The music mixes My Dying Bride gothic doom, Dimmu Borgir symphonic synthesizers, lush female vocals, Obituary-esque death metal growls, piano interludes, and a wall of guitars crunching at a funeral's pace. It's a dark and cold sonic landscape from a place on the map that doesn't see a lot of sun and is almost always sunken in snow. Oh, and track eight ("Dunkelheit") is a Burzum cover! It's a miracle more bands from that area don't sound like this. (Oct 14, 2007)

BUILDING THE STATE - Faces in the Architecture CD EP (Amnot) Impressed. A simple word that says a lot about whomever you're speaking of. And that is what I am at this moment: impressed. For songs of shoegazer-esque indie rock, clocking in at twenty minutes. Building the State formed in 2003 in the hills of Gainesville, FL and are currently residing in the concrete jungle that is Brooklyn, NY. In 2004 they self-released a self-titled, four song EP, and later their debut album, *The Flood is the Feeling*, in 2006 (on Atlas Records), but this newest work totally blows their previous outings out of the water. Lush guitar that brings to mind newer Interpol, emotional instrumental interludes that evoke Explosions In The Sky, and warm vocals that are not far off later Applesseed Cast. A definite for fans of any of the previously mentioned bands, as well as Mogwai, Sunny Day Real Estate, The Velvet Teen, or Maserati. I wish I could say more, but sometimes I get tongue-tied over certain tunes, and this EP almost leaves me speechless. (Oct 14, 2007)

HEMLOCK - Bleed the Dream CD (Candlelight)

It seems that just when you want to cash in your chips on the musical scope of the land of roulette wheels and dice tables, a band comes around to change your mind. Hemlock is based out of Las Vegas, NV, and like four angry pit-bosses, they'll toss your ass right out of the action if you're not careful. They originally formed in 1993, and released two previous records, *Pigeonholed* and *Shut Down*. Their newest work, *Bleed The Dream*, is their third album and is actually a re-release of their self-released LP, but with the drum tracks redone by original drummer, Brian Smith. It's also been remixed and remastered, not to mention it has two bonus tracks ("To the Nines" and "Crooked Smile"). The music is metalcore in the vein of Hatebreed, Lamb of God, Shadows Fall or Max-era Sepultura. The music is beatdown material for wallop-packing while you mosh. The vocals really stand out, and are a trade off between a deep barking growl and a higher pitched scream. This is a good gamble if you're looking for music that could knock you on your rear. (Oct 14, 2007)

CIRCUS MAXIMUS - Isolate CD (Sensory)

Circus Maximus is a Norwegian gang of five that knows what progressive metal should sound like. They originally formed in 2000, in the city of Oslo, and were actually a cover band that was known for tackling exceptionally difficult songs by other power metal outfits. They began to realize their talents were being wasted on performing other's music, so they began to write their own material. In 2005 they released their freshman effort, *The First Chapter*, on Frontiers Records. Their sophomore, *Isolate*, is a prog-metal masterwork - mixing technical guitar wizardry, insane keyboard riffs, amazing drumming and powerful vocals. Everything - from instruments to singing - is at the top of its game. The music ranges from heavy metal ("A Darkened Mind") to epic numbers ("Mouth of Madness") to ballads ("Zero"). The Circus Maximus sound puts out almost as much synth, as guitar work, as *Isolate* is equal parts keyboards and guitars in its mix of gothic metal, power metal and progressive metal, and even treading a path on some new ground. Yet, CM continue to put out a powerful sound that has made them a big name in progressive metal cliques. A must for those that are into Kamelot and Symphony X, and while many may claim that this a carbon copy of early Dream Theater.. well, DT's later work never recaptured their early sound, so CM have just picked up the torch. Great to see this band dump the covers over working on their own talents. (Oct 14, 2007)



FREE DIAMONDS - By the Sword CD (Deep Elm) When I received the first LP (*There Should Be More Dancing*, also on Deep Elm Records) by these three British lads, I was originally put off, but upon further listen, I actually became a fan. I would even put their song "Blind Boys" on compilations so friends could have a listen. When I saw this new album had arrived in my mailbox I was seriously looking forward to checking it out. Boy, I was not let down. Their sound has matured, and they've changed just a little, but it's still Free Diamonds, that's for sure. FD seem to have added more musical styles (rumba, calypso, country) to their already eclectic mix (R&B, garage, punk), of which they can surely call their own. Herky-jerky, start-stop, jangly postpunk meets fast-paced power-pop... think The Vapors having a jam session with The Homosexuals. Haircut 100 or Medium Medium getting beat up by The Blood Brothers or Avenging Disco Godfather. APB remixing Minutemen songs after listening to nothing but The Meat Puppets for days on end. Their newest five inch disc is over an half-hour of catchy, hook-filled tunes with a dual vocal, pseudo-rap attack with pop sensibilities and a new wave flair. This will make it big with the music-nerd crowd, the postpunk aficionados and maybe even the dancefloor whores. (Oct 14, 2007)

N. I. L. - s/t CD (Battle Kommand)

Battle Kommand Records is, without a doubt, my favorite black metal label out there. Their last few releases (Nachtmystium, Obscurus Advocam, Zoroaster, etc) have totally knocked me on my ass, and their newest adventure into the realms of intense bleakness and Satanic terror leaves me in much the same way. N.I.L. is a duo, consisting of original member N. Imperial of Krieg and Twilight fame on most instruments, who formed N.I.L. after a Krieg Euro-tour in 2004, but then soon called it quits. In '06 N.I.L. resurfaced and absorbed into the fold J. Marcheski to handle guitars. While much of their sound stays true to original black metal: heavy, primitive, and very dark, it also has light moments of acoustic guitar and mandolin. The music ranges from blastbeat mayhem and speed-picking insanity to doomy dirge and droning sludge. Vocally, Imperial does a sort of witchy growl - half screeching / half barking, but he also mixes it up a bit throughout certain songs too, so he rarely stays monotone. It's great to hear bands stay true to form, yet venture out a bit from the norm. Hell, they even do a Big Black cover ("Bad Houses"), which is a band I never thought a black metal band would take on. These two should get many props for that alone. I can hear why many a metalhead would give this many props even without that cover track. (Oct 14, 2007)

BROADWAY CALLS - s/t CD (State of Mind)

For the most part, I don't get into much pop punk. I think once it got on Mtv, it got on my nerves. I think the last pop punk band I let into my life was (nationally) MXPX and (locally) 32forty back before the new millennium. Well, I'll give it to a band that knows what they're doing, and Broadway Calls knows how to write a catchy record. These four chaps from Rainier, OR sweat over an forty minute, anthem-filled, fourteen song work of punk pops o'pure sugar. Sweet, if you can handle it. Hey, if a hard-ass like me can get into this, it must be done right. Songs that will make one

jump around their room and wish they were at the band's live show. If you can't get enough of these hooks, State of Mind Recordings also released an EP by Broadway Calls (*Call the Medic*) back in 2006, so you can bounce around to that one as well. (Oct 14, 2007)

TOTAL SYSTEM FAILURE - The Frozen Hour CD (Black Noise) Total System Failure is a duo from... well, who knows where (New Jersey, I think). What I do know is that TSF started in 2005 as the sonic tinkering of one Vinnie Paternostro. Vinnie began to manipulate his saxophone through guitar pedals. He soon self-released a six-song, self-titled CD of his experiment and limited it to a simple 200 copies. A little while later Paternostro was joined by Jay Reeve to process and manipulate the sounds in a live setting. This new CD is an aural document of their collaboration, featuring VP's sax, with real-time manipulations, as well as looped noise and electro-babble. I hear a blend of sonances from this seven song disc, and it ranges from an etho-ambient sound similar to Bryn Jones' Muslingauze to more ritualistic power electronic ala Archon Satani, or even The Grey Wolves. I'm pretty sure this, as are most of the Black Noise camp's releases, limited edition, so if you are into sonic insanity and textured mayhem, you may want to get a move on and order a copy for yourself soon. (Oct 14, 2007)

AVICHI - The Divine Tragedy CD (Numen Malevolom Barathri) I love one-man bands. It's amazing to hear what one person can do on his own, and as well as be surprised by how many instruments one instrumentalist can tackle. Avichi (a name taken from either the Theosophist concept of hell, or from the Sanskrit word for 'isolation') is the 2006 brainchild of a twisted metalhead who goes by the moniker Aamonael (actually the drums are well-handled by a chap called Xaphar). He hails from DeKalb, IL and *The Divine Tragedy* is his debut album. Now, this is some serious black metal folks! Screechy guitar, serious speed-picking, blastbeats, brutally guttural vocals. At times the music is faster than a flood victims drowning, other times as slow as the death of being burned alive. The guitar licks in "Messianic Deliverance" gave me goosebumps. "Prayer for Release" and "Taedium Vitae" were tracks as somber as a funeral march, then leading into the song "Aeonic Disintegration" which is as aggressive as a pitbull attack. While I really dig the sound, I'm also pretty psyched to have a lyric sheet - something a black metal band rarely does. Pick this up to hear what else many current black metal bands are rarely doing: holding my interests. (Oct 14, 2007)

MOONSPELL - Under Satanæ CD (SPV)

If you think this is a new album by Moonspell... you're half-right. Let me explain. In 1994 this Portuguese quintet released their first EP, *Under the Moonspell* (with another seven albums following that - *Wolfheart* [1995], *Irreligious* [1995], *Sin / Pecado* [1998], *Butterfly Effect* [1999], *Darkness and Hope* [2001], *The Antidote* [2003] and 2005's *Memorial*). What they've done here is re-record their entire *Under the Moonspell* release, as well as other pre-*Wolfheart* tracks (the band's early demo tape, *Anno Satanæ*) and released it as a new disc. If you're unfamiliar with Moonspell, they're the only metal band in Portugal with a certified gold record, and they started out as a black metal band, but began to incorporate elements of native-folk, as well as more gothic elements to their music (along the lines of Paradise Lost and Tiamat). This newest work takes their older (read: less mature) sounding stuff and revamps it with their current sound. The last track ("Serpent Angel") on *Under Satanæ* is a pre-Moonspell song that was actually written in '92, and has a bit more of a black metal sound than the rest of this album, but still fits in perfectly. If you like black or doom metal with a bit of musical thought behind it, and a little flair, then this is the LP you should be checking out. (Oct 14, 2007)

JENA BERLIN - Quo Vadimus CD (Jump Start) Huh? I was totally thrown off upon first listen. I put this in, and with the band name, the title, and the look of the release, I expected this to be a girl and her acoustic guitar. Instead I was pleasantly shocked to hear an almost post-hardcore D.C. / Gainesville sound. Jena Berlin isn't a she, they're a they - a quintet to be exact. The name stems from where Karl Marx went to college: the German cities of Jena and Berlin. Forming in Philadelphia around 2003, they developed a sound similar to Fugazi, Small Brown Bike and Hot Water Music. They released their debut album in 2005 (*Passion Waits as the Program Keeps Going* on Watch the City Burn Records) and *Quo Vadimus*

is their sophomore. This newest record is full of heavy grooves, passionate emocore, dueling guitars, call-and-response vocals, and singalong hooks that will leave crowds jumping in unison and people falling over themselves to get to the mic and share the choruses. I can imagine the fun folks have during some of these numbers ("Chelsea", "Motion Sickness", "Sand") in their live set. At the same time, they also play a few emotional numbers that can tug at the heart ("I Swear We're Leaving", "Island Living", "And Another Thing..."), where I'm sure people sway arm in arm and whisper along to the lyrics. (Oct 14, 2007)



AWAKE AND ALERT - Devil In A Lambskin Suit CD (Five One) Awake and Alert formed in 2004 and self-released an EP in 2005 titled *Weight* (which won them tons of praise, and even 'Best Local Rock Release' by *Get Out Magazine*). Even so they managed to pass under my radar, but Five One, Inc. is letting me in on the wonder that is A&A by releasing their debut full length. This four-piece from Mesa, AZ perform some swell shoegazer. Actually, it goes beyond that - there's a touch of contemporary soul, a bit of lush pop, some alt-country, and a boatload of indie rock. There are moments of early Everything But The Girl, a touch of Coldplay, even some blues guitar solos ala Muddy Waters. I hear Fiest, Midlake, Ryan Adams, Sigur Rós and others, but their sound is pretty much their own. Immediately upon the opening track, you know that keyboardist Maya Peart's vocals are going to dominate this release, but everyone else backs up this beauty with strength and grit. The song writing is powerful, the playing is top notch, but one can't help being taken in by Peart's haunting pipes. There are no tracks that stand out and hit me, as the record seems to float from number to number in a sort of constant dream. To those seeking a radio hit, that could be bad, but for a band trying to build an entire album that's memorable, this is what you want. And it is what they've delivered: a damn memorable album. (Oct 14, 2007)

STATIC RADIO NJ - One For the Good Guys CD EP (Black Numbers) This is a quick, but fun listen. Seven tracks - the entire record - under ten minutes. It's all over so fast I hardly know what to do with myself after it's over. I mean, my toes just started tapping. I've barely begun bouncing in my seat, and then it's over in a flash. Static Radio NJ is a fast-paced hardcore punk band the likes of Kid Dynamite, Ensign and Paint It Black, with a touch of singalong flavor similar to New Jersey basement favorites Lifetime. They started in 2002 as Static Radio, but later added the NJ. Their EP was originally released as a five song, one sided 7" on Chunksaah Records and it's still available for vinyl hounds, but this new CD version comes with an extra two tracks ("Can't Keep Us Down" and "Who's Laughing Now"). Static Radio HJ play upbeat, crowd-pleasing, punk-ish anthems that will have crowds of kids falling all over themselves to sing into the microphone. Get either version quick, and empty your room before you listen, cuz I don't want you blaming me for all the broken shit afterwards. (Oct 14, 2007)

ROSETTA - Wake / Lift CD (Translation Loss)

Rosetta tags themselves as 'metal for astronauts'. Well, I've previously tagged this band as 'epic' (their last LP, *The Galilean Satellites* [also on Translation Loss Records], was a two-hour, double disc set), and I'll use that word to describe them again. I compared their earlier work to

Neurosis or Isis (whom they admit are influences - so no harm there), and while some of that still holds true, they have really created a sound all for themselves here.

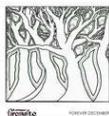
Some of the music sounds as if Explosions In The Sky were not afraid to mess around with vocals and a bit of electronics. The songs are also a haunting mix of heaviness, lush Cure-esque guitar play, a touch of shoegazer, and ethereal instrumentation, blending metalcore vocals, adding a sometimes quiet ambient to booming electro-babble. It took the foursome from Philadelphia, PA two years to create this new masterpiece, and it was well worth the wait. Seven songs (coming in at over an hour) of swirling guitars, heavy riffs, multi-textured metal, and experimentally emotive song writing. If you can't get enough try and find their recently released split with Baboia, titled *Project Mercury*, on Level Plane Records. (Oct 14, 2007)

CLOCK HANDS STRANGLE - Redshift / Blueshift CD ([Team Grizzly](#)) Clock Hands Strangle are five piece friends, which consist of the standard quartet of vocals, guitars, bass and drums, but also adding a multitalented instrumentalist that handles piano, trombone and even a glockenspiel. They're from sunny Melbourne, FL and *Redshift / Blueshift* is their debut LP. Like the title's namesake (two physics terms for light that is traveling away from us and towards us) the album seems to be split into two types of music: acoustic neo-folk ("Redshift", "Sing It!"), and indie rock with a little country flavor ("Elegy for a Star", "Photographer"). It seems that much of this album is influenced by new school alt-bands like Iron & Wine, Ryan Adams and Wilco, as well as older folk music such as Woody Guthrie, Peter Seegar and Joan Baez. While I do hear those influences, much of it plays to me like Pinback, later The American Analog Set, or Peter, Bjorn and John. Lyrically, they're just as complex, as Todd Portnowitz sings of scientific wonder, natural phenomenon, and spouts philosophical ponderings on friendship, religion and the nature of almost everything. Though I can pretty much make out what he's singing, I'm a little bummed there's no lyric sheet, but I'll forgive 'em. (Oct 14, 2007)

VARIOUS ARTISTS - Taking Back What's Ours: The Emo Diaries Chapter Eleven CD ([Deep Elm](#)) I thought this compilation series came to an end, but I'm kind of glad it's back. Ten previous CD releases, with a compiled 135 unreleased emocore gems from bands scoping the globe. I understand why the decided to call it quits in 2004, as corporations like Mtv ruined the term 'emo', but Deep Elm Records has decided to take it back. Rightfully so too, as this series has helped launch the careers of bands like Jimmy Eat World, The Applesed Cast, Planes Mistaken For Stars, Sounds Like Violence and Further Seems Forever. This time around, the span of three years since the last disc has given DE Recs a chance to scour through mail bags of material to pick what's best for your ears. They've included bands from the UK (Above Them, I'm Fashion You're Victim, My Awesome Compilation, etc), as well as from throughout Europe (including Spain's This Drama, and Netherlands' The Beautiful City). There's a ton of bands from the United States: Knockout Kings and While You Were Gone from Texas, The Crash Engine from Portland, OR, San Francisco's The Decoration, NYC's Young Hearts and a handful more. I hear a Chapter 12 is in the works, and I'm totally looking forward to it. (Oct 14, 2007)

THE FIRE THE FLOOD - Truth Seekers CD ([No Sleep](#)) Hailing from Charlotte, NC this quartet formed a just few years ago (2005), the following year they self-released a demo and began a constant tour schedule. The hard work paid off as No Sleep Records noticed and they picked up TFTF for a full LP. I'm surprised to like this, as I thought it would be standard (read: dull) metalcore, but it's a whopper of a record, and musically the band bites down and holds on for life and the love of blood. I know these dudes want to be seen as a hardcore band, and it's heavy and hard to the core, but while I do hear moments of Norma Jean and Botch, I hear a hell of a lot more Cable, Every Time I Die and A Life Once Lost - bands that have hardcore roots, but play more of a southern-tinged hard rock. The weakest aspect are the vocals, which aren't bad, but they never change throughout. The music goes from metal to hardcore, hard rock to thrash, grind to technical, yet the vocals remain in a throaty, raspy growl. Mind you, they are in no way bad, just monotone. Oh yeah, I could also do without the religious agenda, but I'll forgive them - something a Xtian themselves will rarely do. (Oct 14, 2007)

VARIOUS ARTISTS - This Ain't Your Mom's Hardcore: Volume Two CD ([Music Video Distributors](#)) Filmed almost exclusively in the Atlanta, GA area, you can get a feel for what the hardcore crowds are like in the Dirty South: packed, crazy and really into their hardcore. The emotional scream of As Cities Burn, the melodic metalcore of Secret Lives Of The Freemasons, the insane grinding of The Chariot, the dual-vocal attack of The Number Twelve Looks Like You, the rock-n-roll weirdness of Showbread, the blastbeat mayhem of Becoming The Archetype, the sludgy breakdowns of Thumbscrew, the raging stomp of Destroy The Runner, the southern-fried flavor of Maylene And The Sons Of Disaster, the Sunshine State's Remembering Never, and a handful more. Some bands get a single track, while others get two to three packed on here. All of it is shot on multiple cameras, and captured in large clubs, small clubs and even smaller warehouses. A few interviews are thrown in throughout the shows too (Scarlet, Misery Signal, Bury Your Dead, Drop Dead Gorgeous). There's even a few music videos (Twelve Gauge Valentine, Thumbscrew). Altogether it's a near 160 minutes of mad sets, packed crowds and heavy-as-all metallic hardcore. (Oct 14, 2007)



FIRESUITE - Forever December CD ([Firesuite](#)) This is not a band I'd normally expected to come my way, but I am so very happy that they did. This UK outfit formed in 2001, and though they are a four-piece outfit, the sound is so lush and full of textures that I thought there were a lot more players involved. Musically, imagine My Bloody Valentine and a bit of Explosions In The Sky meeting up for some drinks and a jam session with early Radiohead and some Sigur Rós. Better yet, And You Will Know Us By The Trail of Dead crashing their instruments along to a Cocteau Twins song. The vocals are very well sung by guitarist Chris Anderson, and every once in a while they are backed up by piano player Jemima Grace's haunting melodies. The bass guitar (Chris Minor) does a whole lot more here than just keep a steady rhythm, and drummer, Richard Storer, really knows how to work the skins, because there is rarely a simple, steady beat. "When You Were Withered" was half touchingly heartfelt pop / half explosive rock fury. "Crashed" equally brought to mind Interpol, as it did the Deep Elm school of emotional hardcore. The closer, "Blue Wounds" started soft and slow, and built up to a crescendo, which crashes me into the sad reality that the record is over - when I want more. So much more. I can't say this enough, nor anymore seriously, I am shocked this is a self-released EP. If Firesuite has been playing music like this since their inception, they should have been picked up by a label way long ago. There are a whole slew of record labels that are really missing out on something here. Pick up this disc, so you can get in on name dropping, before they're already well known. (July 2, 2007)

SOUVENIR'S YOUNG AMERICA - An Ocean Without Water CD ([Crucial Blast](#)) This is one hell of an instrumental record. It's equal parts Krautrock, musique concrete, ethereal hardcore and shoegazer. Pulsating tribal drumming ala Can and Faust, which are laid behind a shimmering, lush guitar work the likes of Cocteau Twins or My Bloody Valentine, often offset by a doom-laden crunch in the vein of Isis or Neurosis. Souvenir's Young America is from Richmond, Virginia and is a trio now on their third album (the last was the *September Songs* LP with vinyl on Protagonist Records, and a cassette on Perpetual Motion Machine Records, as well as their first self-titled CD on Underadar Records). They had also previously released a split 7" with ambient project Spylacopa, but good luck finding that one. *An Ocean Without Water* holds six moments of quiet ambient music and spacey key riffs, progressive rock-inspired thrust, a garage blues / alt-country twang, and even emotional

elements that bring to mind a gloomy Sunday where you've just left your girl behind in some far-off city to start a new life as a long-distance truck driver. No wait, that last part is actually happening to me. Anyhow, SYA come off as if Explosions in the Sky or Red Sparowes had a lot more electronics involved, and some harmonica too, or if Mogwai become a little more experimental, yet staying pretty accessible. Many think that instrumental music works on a different level since it doesn't have a vocalist, and I agree, but so do SYA, as their soft melodies and altering soundscapes set moods and bring pictures to mind. Lonely, depressive, wrist-slitting pictures, but they're quite colorful and vibrant in texture. Brent Eyestone of Magic Bullet Records lends a hand in the electronics department, as does ex-Rorschach member Nick Forte - so, I guess misery does love company. Have a listen, and let's all be somber together. It'll be totally worth what you'll later need to spend on upers. (July 2, 2007)

GLORIOR BELLI - Manifesting The Raging Beast CD ([Southern Lord](#)) I have to begin by saying that, while I'm a fan of black metal, the BM bands Southern Lord was releasing (with the exception of Leviathan) weren't really cutting it for me - until this record. Glorior Belli's *Manifesting the Raging Beast*

is everything you want in a black metal record, without a lot of what was keeping much of this genre stale. The music stays true to classic BM, yet it goes just a bit outside the boundaries to sound fresh. Also, the recording is top quality - the guitars are crisp, though threatening, and when the double bass drum strikes, it sounds like thunder. This trio formed in 2002 in the French town of Chilly-Mazarin, and the folks behind this project also have their hands in bands such as Disiplin, Black Flame, Merrimack, Wolfe and the blues-y black metalers Obscurus Advocam. In 2003 Glorior Belli self-released their demo, *Evil Archaic Order*, and were picked up in 2005 as a split project between Chilean label Aquilus Cruoris Records for the vinyl version, Italy's Eerie Art Records for the CD version, and Sweden's Satanic Propaganda Records for a cassette version of their first album, *Ó Laudate Dominvs*. Their newest LP is a forty minute mix of doom-influenced gloom, and melodic tinged bestial blackness. The guitars are crushing at times, as other moments they're haunting and often quite touching. The drums scramble throughout between blastbeats and a slow dirge. It's a twisting dichotomy of musical extremes that may remind the listener of Darkthrone, classic Mayhem, or early Deathspell Omega (before their addition of Gregorian chants and choral music). I knew this release would be decent right from the start as the bio didn't say, "One of Sunn O)))'s favorite black metal bands." Hey, I like Stephen O'Malley's work, but his previous taste in black metal was in the toilet. (July 2, 2007)

DAYMARES - Can't Get Us All CD ([Selfmadegod](#))

With the name and the cover art I expected this to be a bit of dark metal or even doom, but I was pleasantly surprised to be completely wrong. Daymares is a hardcore band with a fundamental punk rock fury, and a little ballsy rock-n-roll thrown in. They hold a fast pace, and still keep a mighty groove, while even doing a few guitar solos and hooky riffs throughout. Daymares began just recently in Warsaw, Poland, and upon only the release of a demo were picked up for their debut LP on Polish label Selfmadegod Records. The vocals are almost always doing a gang chant, so you always feel like singing along. I can picture the kids going nuts in a pile of bodes trying to get to the microphone so they can sing with the leads. The music is almost as if they took the dark metallic elements of Tragedy, mixed it with the NYC hardcore power of Cro-Mags, and then fused that with a fast-yet-fun punk rock vibe straight from The Dwarves. "Almost There" gave me goosebumps, as the solo flared. "Falling Down" brought to mind *Kingdom of Lost Souls*-era Damnation AD. "I Shit You Not" was one big rock routine, with a beatdown breakdown made for the mosh pit. "Cult Leader" was just as good for its lyrical content as it was for its hardcore-punk dynamic. The entire album is over in a little over half an hour, so you - like me - are probably going to hit play over and over again. (July 2, 2007)

ROSE FUNERAL - Crucify Kill Rot CD ([Candlelight](#))

Hailing from Cincinnati, Ohio (the city that gave us Ass Ponys, but slapped us with 98 Degrees) comes its new saving grace, Rose Funeral. RF is a monster capturing pain, torture and gore on plastic, and they deliver it all to you like a stab to the gut. A charnel house where moshing is not only allowed, but encouraged. The vocals are a mix of witch-y black metal-esque main vocals, and a lower growling back-up vocalist - yet with both, you can still make out the lyrical content. The music is a flurry of blast beats, heavy guitars and a bit of melody. *Crucify Kill Rot* begins with the title track (which is, to me, a decent track, but their weakest - so it's good to get it out of the way early), and quickly becomes a blend of double bass drum, crunching metal riffs and speed-picking. All of which does not stop until the album's end. They use melody, but ballads you will not find. No wussy crybaby shit to try and soften your heart... instead Rose Funeral try to yank it out of your chest cavity forcefully. This is a must if you're a fan of bands such as The Red Chord, Black Dahlia Murder, Unearth, Dead to Fall, or most Swedish or Florida-inspired death metal. I think it blows much of the newer death metalcore out of the chum-filled water. (July 2, 2007)

THE JESUS LIZARD - Live DVD ([Music Video Distributors](#)) Do any of you miss the good ol' days of Touch & Go and Amphetamine Reptile? Earsplitting riffs, funky noise rock, and furiously

art-damaged indie - man those were good times. After one of my favorite bands from my youth (Scratch Acid) broke up in 1987, singer David Yow went on to Chicago and formed The Jesus Lizard. Eleven albums into it, and a few years into a little major label success, they decided to call it quits. Bands from the likes of Nirvana, Helmet, Every Time I Die, and Liars have claimed them as an influence. This DVD release is great for any of you that missed out on their brand of guitar-driven pseudo-industrial, or like me, just missed out on a live Jesus Lizard show (south Florida can sometimes suck, as bands hate to travel that far down south). Two shows here, on one disc. First is the main show, filmed on multi-cameras in Boston's Venus de Milo Club. Captured in 1994, the set is a little over an hour long and holds fifteen tracks, featuring all original members, the house is packed, and the band goes wild. Yow barks at the audience between song, jumps into the crowd constantly, and threatens everyone - including himself. After one of his rants over earplugs being for pussies, the crowd begins hurling dozens back and forth. The second show is a five song set from 1992 filmed at the now-gone, yet still infamous CBGB. This is the first ever home video release from The Jesus Lizard, so those of you that have been waiting... well, get on up and get on over to your local distributor. Or, just stay in place and order it directly from MVD. (July 2, 2007)

TERHEN - Eyes Unfolded CD ([Firebox](#))

Terhen is a funeral dirge / doom metal sextet, which formed sometime around 2004 in the land of forests and a thousand lakes, Finland. Originally they started under the moniker Thamuz, and leaned more towards black metal in genre. In 2005 they released the *Self Crucifixion MMV* three-song demo themselves, and have since found a home on Firebox Records. At five songs, I thought this would be an EP, but clocking in at a few minutes short of an hour, *Eyes Unfolded*

is a dirge-y long player indeed. One of the more interesting aspects to Terhen's music is that it isn't simple doom, but an amalgam of said genre, with elements of coldwave industrial, a bit of gothic metal, and a touch of Krautrock's more ambient psychedelia. While the guitar plays a large role on this recording (it is doom, you know), the keyboards play just as big of a part in solidifying the sound, and while they are mostly somber, they are sometimes cheerfully playful - coming off like children playing in the ruins of war. The violin (played by keyboardist Marianne Mieskolainen) often give a *Disintegration*-era The Cure feel to the grim doom, as do the lush vocals of Elisa Pellinen on the tracks "Last Moments" and "What Truly Is Real". One good thing I can't do here is point out a musical reference. While it's funeral doom and comparisons can be made to some of Funeral, Thergothon, or My Dying Bride's material, Terhen really stand well enough on their own. I guess you're just gonna have to give Terhen a listen on your own, and figure it out for yourselves. (July 2, 2007)

DERDRAKOS - Lust for Chaos CD ([DerDrakos](#))

DerDrakos is a father / son two-piece from the Czech Republic, who really know how to work the grooves, as well as the atmosphere. First, let me just say I love repetitious key riffs. I guess it was growing up on Moroder-esque Italo-disco, and O Records Hi-NRG - so yeah, I'm a bit of a dancefloor enthusiast, and I like the beats. DerDrakos' *Lust for Chaos* LP is their debut, which holds fourteen tracks and a near eighty minutes of dark synths, trippy keyboards and fast beats. Mixing a bit of speedy gabber (similar to Ultraviolence), a touch of industrial (ala A Split Second, or Front Line Assembly) and a little acid house EBM (Lords of Acid style), it all comes off as a pretty unique cyber-punk spinoff. While it is highly synth-based, they do throw in some guitar riffage ("Out of Control" and the title track), hence the Front Line Assembly reference. A few of the numbers have a lyrical base (with some female vocals provided by Suzy M G), but much of it is sample-laden insanity, and if you think these gents are coming off as misogynist fascists, you're missing the playfulness of song titles like "Dictator Girls Rule", "Joy Thru Fury" and "Her Painful Pleasure". The music is up-tempo and will work great for clubs, but there's a massively dark vibe from beginning to end. It later makes sense when you find the band listed on the Church of Satan's link page (meaning they are members of LaVey's group). I read that their sophomore work is ready to be released any day now, and I'm looking forward to more demons dancing around my room. (July 2, 2007)



THE MEASURE [SA] - Historical Fiction CD ([Team Science](#)) The Measure [SA] are a New Jersey four piece that know how to hook you with both rhythm and melody, and they play a really good catchy, poppy punk rock, though not coming off as pop punk. TM[SA] have released a slew of 7" records starting off with the *Union Pool* EP (2006 on Idiot Box Records), then a few split releases with O' Pioneers (on Kiss of Death Records) and The Modern Machines (Salinas Records), and finishing off the smaller vinyl with 2007's *Old Crow* EP on Los Diaper Records. Team Science Records decided they needed a full length and it's a good thing too. A lot of times with EPs, by the time certain bands pull you in the record is over, and you wind up spinning the hell out of the three to four tracks, often getting tired of the same ditties quickly. Here you can spin the hell out of fourteen tracks, and while it is a quick listen (two minutes shy of a half hour), when you come back to track one (and you will) enough time has gone by to be ready for another round without the songs getting old. Musically, The Measure [SA] bring to mind The Dead Milkmen joining forces with Hüsker Dü, or if Jawbreaker flew overseas for a garage jam with The Pogues. When Lauren and Mike trade off sings there is a sort of Kim Deal / Frank Black vibe which does bring to mind a more punk rock version of The Pixies. Actually, some of the stop-start moments do too, as does a sort of Midwestern indie rock sound. For their namesake, and those of you feeling a CD has distorted it (because the [SA] stood for 'strictly analog'), Salinas Records and Don Giovanni Records have teamed up to release a vinyl version on a 12" slice of wax. Whether digital or analog, you'll find yourself singing or tapping your foot long with the tunes, so go for either. Hell, go for both. (July 2, 2007)

UP UP DOWN DOWN LEFT RIGHT LEFT RIGHT B A START - Worst Band Name Ever CD ([Up Up Down Down Left Right Left Right B A Start](#))

I'm not surprised that this band is putting out material on their own. Their name (no matter how bad some may think it is) is well-known enough for them to try to cash in on it, over letting a label take advantage of them. UUDDLRLRBAS (whose name comes from the Konami Code for game system controllers) are five chaps from New Jersey that already have an album (*And Nothing Is #1* on Ohev Records), two EPs (the CD *Perris, CA* on Limekiln Records, and the *5 Songs 7"* which was pressed by several different labels at different times), two download-only releases (*The Internet EP* and *Girls Names*), as well as countless tours under their belt. Their newest work after a four-year hiatus, *Worst Band Name Ever*, continues in their poppy soft punk sound, where guitars mix with mellow, acoustic guitars. They have toned it down a bit, though there's always an edge of explosion near, but it stays calm throughout (until the final track, "Boise"). The vocals are in Poponi's usual, almost-spoken melody, where each song will tell you a story of love and geekdom. If you're unfamiliar with them and are a fan of bands like Low, Pedro the Lion or Mineral, you might find yourself rather pleased to pick this up. This newest work is also an enhanced CD which contains the music video for "I'll Thank You Later", a mix of eighteen tracks by independent bands they think are worthy of your attention and even guitar tabs to all the songs on this album. A good jam-packed release from a band that packs a good jam. If you're up for this, try to pick it up directly from them, just so they can make that little extra. (July 2, 2007)

RUINER - Prepare To Be Let Down CD ([Bridge Nine](#)) First off, I love self-deprecating humor. With a name like Ruiner, an album title like *Prepare To Be Let Down*, and their previous EP, *What Could Possibly Go Right...* how could I not like this? Seriously though, let down I was not. Ruiner is a Baltimore, MD quintet that formed in summer of 2004 - with ex-members of Farewell Hope - and have been righteously throwing down their 300 bpm full force since. They self-released a demo (*Still Smiling*), in 2005 they released the previously mentioned EP (with 7" wax on Grave Mistake Records / Firestater Records and compact disc on 1917 Records), and later came the split release with Day of the Dead (on Vendetta Records). While the sound is highly comparable to old school acts like Gorilla Biscuits, they also throw in some slower moments, similar to Integrity (*Systems Overload* era). There's a bit of emotional hardcore thrown in and it fully adds to the music, over making it sappy or anything like that, as this twenty-minute slice of vicious hardcore still had me jumping in my seat.

Ruiner can bring to mind hardcore / postcore bands like The Exploder, Torches of Rome, Final Fight or Life Long Tragedy, while still making you think of old school NYHC. Some of the more notable tracks include the punky "The Lives We Fear", "40 Miles North" which was one of the more somber tracks, and the blasting "Repetition". These twelve tracks go by quickly, but they'll stay in your head a bit after it's all over. (July 2, 2007)

SOME MONASTERY - Welcome to the Symmetry CD ([Some Monastery](#)) Some Monastery is the project of Cumberland, Maryland solo (and graphic design) artist Brad Walker. Walker first released a full LP in 2001, then releasing a new one almost every six months after, and he doesn't look like he's gonna stop any time soon. Past releases include the self-titled debut, *Good Friend, Sober Village, The Photographer's Wedding, The Roaring Twenties, Weather Or Not, Origami, I Have Flown Several Times, Ushered Into the Vestibule, Livelihood, I Haven't Laughed In Over A Fortnight, Poorly Planned Escape Routes, Plagiarism Et Al* (an album of cover songs), *Machete Wounds, I'm Obsessed With the Seasons...*,

and now with this new release that makes sixteen albums. This is one hard working chap, not just by the number of releases, but by the quality of the music. I hear a lot coming from this release. The songs mostly have an acoustic feel, with a big college rock / indie sound, and a touch of pop elements floating around. A bit of All Natural Lemon & Lime Flavors, some Broken Social Scene, a pinch of Jett Brando, and tons of Thurston Moore's later material. Though I haven't heard any of Some Monastery's earlier works, this is supposed to be a noisier takeoff from previous efforts.

Even so, it's very accessible, and will (should) probably get loads of airplay if it reaches the right college stations. Something different from the usual hardcore / metal that gets dropped of around here, and pretty well received too. (July 2, 2007)

EDU FALASCHI - *Almah* CD ([A-M-F](#))

Lots of power metal being dropped into my mailbox lately. I'm really happy about it too, as it speaks to the little metalhead child inside me - the one I used to be before my teen years, when I turned into a jaded hardcore punk. Edu Falaschi is originally the Brazilian vocalist of São Paulo outfit Angra (as well as working with his brother's band Symbols, and later Venus), and *Almah* (which means "soul") is his debut as a solo artist. While featuring Falaschi's work as a lyricist, songwriter, and producer, he also brought in a few masters of the craft to help add to the overall sound on this LP. Nightwish guitarist Emppu Vuorinen lends his skill on the six string, as is a guest spot by Mike Stone of Queensrÿche, Lauri Porra of Stratovarius is on bass, and Kamelot's Casey Grillo is beating the skins. The music is a mix of classic heavy metal and power metal the likes of Gamma Ray, Kamelot, Blind Guardian or Masterplan. Admittedly, there are a few ballads I don't care for (I never do), but the moments of metal far outweigh them. Edu's vocal delivery is superb and is right up there with Ronnie James Dio (Black Sabbath), Bruce Dickinson (Iron Maiden), Biff Byford

(Saxon) or Rob Halford (Judas Priest). I also find it rather humorous that his mastery and pronunciation of the English language is far better than some Americans. For those that don't want to pay overseas prices, look out for Candlelight Record's domestic version. (July 2, 2007)

KILL YOUR IDOLS - *Something Started Here* CD ([Lifeline](#)) As many of you hardcore-heads know, last year Kill Your Idols announced that they would break up, and did so this past May. This is a perfect time to release this, and it's a definite for anyone that may miss them too. If you're unfamiliar with the KYI history, they started in 1995 in New York City and carried the torch for hardcore bands from that city, not to mention an era gone by (Youth of Today, Cro-Mags, Gorilla Biscuits, etc). In their ten years together they released a handful of albums and a slew of EPs and split releases of their fast and catchy punky hardcore. *Something Started Here* is a collection of compilation tracks, cover songs, 7"es and songs off EPs - mostly taken from rare and out-of-print material.

The cover songs include their versions of two from Negative Approach, Henry Rollins', I mean, Garfield's S.O.A., Slapshot, Scandal (yes, the 80s band), Voorhees, two from Sheer Terror, the poppy Jawbreaker, the Exploited and NY's Breakdown. The booklet is fat and holds all the lyrics (except to the cover songs), as well as a few anecdotes, and a little history for some of you that need to catch up. I wasn't a huge fan, but it does suck to see a good band go the way of the dodo. (July 2, 2007)

MEMFIS - *The Wind Up* CD ([Candlelight](#))

In 2003 Memphis formed in Kristinehamn, Sweden, and currently features a member of The Colony and Brimstone. In 2004 they recorded two demos (*The Judgment* and *Breathless*), which got them the notice of Sweden's Dental Records. In 2006 they released a 7" vinyl single on Denmark label Futhermocker Records, and later that year originally released *The Wind-Up* through Dental Records. Candlelight's U.S. branch wanted them to get a good hold of North American ears, hence this domestic release. This four-piece post-metalcore outfit will find a few comparisons to Isis and Mastodon, but there are strange little jazzcore bridges in the vein of Dillenger Escape Plan, and lush pop metal moments ("Eternal Failure") similar to The Gathering. Many of the songs have an emotional / melodic build up of a band like Burst, broken up by odd signatures and frenzied time changes. The cleaner vocals will bring to mind Opeth (as does a bit of the music), but the growling, throaty yells will bring to mind Mastodon (as does a bit of the music as well). It all comes off as a great, melancholic, progressive metalcore, but I'm a little surprised this hit the charts in Sweden. (July 2, 2007)

TO THE LIONS - *Baptism of Fire* CD ([Goodfellow](#))

To The Lions hail from Burlington, Ontario (that's in Canada, dummy), and feature former members of Confine, SeventyEightDays, Boys Night Out and Victory Record's melodic hardcore monsters Grade. The quintet got together in 2005 and without so much as a back catalog - besides a demo - they were eyed by Goodfellow Records. The sound is a good early 90s style of hardcore reminiscent of Damnation AD, Strife, Chokehold and Most Precious Blood. Lots of chugging guitars, aggression, chunky breakdowns, and gang chants where folks will be fighting to get to the microphone to sing along. "Ride the Apocalypse", "From Fear and Hate Sets Free", "Amnesia", and "Final Chapter" (which was originally called "Chokehold") can originally be heard on the demo, but get a proper reworking for this release. *Baptism of Fire* is a ten song, half hour of stomping, metal-tinged hardcore. Notice I said 'metal-tinged' - meaning there's an influence, but not an overwhelming factor. Also, I like their attitude, as they claim not to care about fashion, photos, MySpace pages or voting over videos. Hardcore music was, and is supposed to be, about a pissed off attitude over an unfair world. It's hard to take a lot of that seriously when a bunch of Hot Topic suburbanites infiltrated the scene and made it about bad haircuts and tight pants while actually playing speed metal. Hopefully, these boys will help bring back true musical grit, and kill of the trends of posing and dress codes. (July 2, 2007)



CANVAS SOLARIS - *Cortical Tectonics* CD EP ([Sensory](#)) Insane! How can anyone remember time changes, riffs, breaks and bridges like this? Canvas Solaris began in 1999 in the state of Georgia as a technical death metal outfit, but have grown into so much more. Sometime along the way CS decide to drop their vocalist, and as a three piece, focus their talents on instrumental mayhem with a nod to acts like Cynic and Spiral Architect. In 2003 they released their debut, the *Spatial / Design* four track EP, and following it up with 2004's *Sublimination* album (both on Tribal Records). They were soon picked up by Sensory Records (a subdivision of Laser's Edge Records) and gave the world the LP *Penumbra Diffuse* in 2006. On their newest endeavor, *Cortical Tectonics*, they blast through some technical mathrock-inspired grooves ala Don Caballero or The Fucking Champs, with a psychotic jazzcore element the likes of Dillenger Escape Plan, and progressive metal tangents not far off of King Crimson or later Rush. A very unique ingredient to their sound are the additions of Afro-Caribbean world music and even touches of reggae (most notably on "Interface"). To me, "Gamma Knife" and the epic (near 20 minute) "Reticular Consciousness" are the two standout tracks because they incorporate so many everything this band is trying to do: from spastic moments of Voivod metal to quite passages in the vein of The Mahavishnu Orchestra. While this is great for folks into Dysrhythmia or Stinking Lizaveta, Canvas Solaris will probably find just as many new fans in the dark cervices of differing genres. (July 2, 2007)

KORPERSCHWACHE - *A Mountain of Skulls for the Clueless Cowboy 3*" CD-R ([Public Guilt](#)) Korperschwache (which means 'organic decay' in German) is a duo from Austin, Texas - one on guitars and vocals, and another on drums. They started out as a side project of Austin drone outfit, Autodidact in 1995. Korperschwache have been releasing material for over a decade now (nearly twenty LPs and EPs to their credit), but this is the first I've ever heard of this noisy twosome. Very much like Japanese soloists Merzbow and Masonna, plus the Brits known as Whitehouse, Korperschwache drown the listener in waves of droning noise, pools of static hums and an ocean of feedback. Unlike the previously mentioned acts, they keep a steady beat. It brings to mind acts like Skullflower, or if everything in Godflesh went to hell, but their beatbox. I get a huge free-form jazz vibe, but with a lot more insanity going on. This newest release is a single 20 minute track, which was recorded on the third anniversary of the invasion of Iraq. Start the hunt as this release is limited to 110 copies, with only ten going to press dorks like myself (yeah,

sometimes I luck out doing this website). If Baltimore label Public Guilt has done run dry, as usual, you noise-mongers should be scouring eBay. (July 2, 2007)

SEIZURE CRYPT - Hello My Name Is... Madness CD (316 Productions) This Queens, New York five-piece is a musical blast. They are mad with energy, and the music is an infectious, metallic hardcore feral attack, but the vocals are what really do it for me here. Seizure Crypt began in 2004 and released their first album, *City Of New York*, on their own in 2005. The songs are in the vein of late 80s crossover like S.O.D. / M.O.D., Crumbsuckers, and Cryptic Slaughter, with a touch less metal, and a little more straight-up hardcore. It's got speed, a few breakdowns, and it holds groove, as the bass is thick and a good part of the song structures. What I like most are the tradeoff of vocals. I dig dual vocalists, especially when they sound different and sing over one another, whether it's in a gang chant unison, or they're singing two different phrases against one another. That's where Seizure Crypt shine. One vocalist is a growler, the other is a screaming madman, and at times they sing in chorus, and other times they fight one another for lyrical space. Recorded by NYC hardcore legend Don Fury, so you know this has been given the treatment it needs to infect hardcore-heads around the world - not just in New York. (July 2, 2007)

WEEDEATER - God Luck and Good Speed CD (Southern Lord) This is probably the best band within 200 miles of where I live. I have enjoyed (and praised in review) the works of Weedeater for some time, and this LP is no different. Well, it's a little different, but all for the better. Forming in Cape Fear, North Carolina sometime in the mid-1990's, by the ex-frontman / bassist of Buzzov-en, Dixie Dave Collins, this trio has raged on with some massively heavy, southern-fried stoner metal since. In late 2001 Berserker Records released the band's swamp doom debut *...And Justice For Y'all*, and Crucial Blast Records followed that up in 2003 with the *Sixteen Tons* album. Steve 'Big Black' Albini is behind the board to fuzz out a wall of guitar and distort all else to just the right level of ear-crushing insanity (except for one track which is an acoustic banjo number, and was produced by Corrosion of Conformity's Mike Dean). What I meant a little earlier by 'a bit different' is that one of the highlights here is that Weedeater doesn't repeat themselves on this disc. The music is, like earlier releases, solidly punishing sludgecore, while still keeping a fresh sound. Another highlight is the sarcastic wit behind the lyrics, with lines such as 'Mankind is unkind, man,' and 'I've done had my fun, now gimme back my bullets.' Also, the guitar sounds like it should on a doom record: heavy and assaulting the listener, but when the solos crack out, it's a mighty sweet sound. *God Luck and Good Speed* is a must for fans of Iron Monkey, Bongzilla, Eyehategod, and Buzzov-en, but also for more intricate dirge metal maniacs into Melvins, Sleep, Electric Wizard, and Church of Misery. (July 2, 2007)

BIRDFLESH - Mondo Musicale CD (Candlelight)

When I first heard this I thought, "drum machine", but I was wrong, drummer Smattro Ansjoivis is just insane that's all - and apparently never gets tired. Crystal meth? Maybe. Anyhow, Birdflesh began in Växjö, Sweden in 1992 and have been shredding since. They release three demos, more split releases than I can count (with Misery of the Defenseless, Morbid Jesus, The Dead, Catbomb, My Flesh Creeps At Insects, Splatterhouse, Death Metal Karaoke, and a handful of others). They've also set loose on mankind the *Alive Autopsy* LP (on Leather Rebel in 2001 / re-released in 2004 on Razorback Records), 2002's *Night of the Ultimate Mosh* (on Razorback Records), *Mongo Musicale* in 2006 on Dental Records and a slew of EPs. Relentless and unforgiving, almost nonstop grindcore with much influence from the California power-violence scene (most notably vocally). Birdflesh features members (the aforementioned drummer) of Dethronement and General Surgery, so I expected a certain sound, again I was wrong. Birdflesh keeps tripping me up, but I go on listening. Vocally they are better than most bands of this ilk, lyrically as well, as I'm not one who minds humor squeezed into dark music. But the music... it doesn't stop. It just keeps playing and playing, bludgeoning, stomping and hurting. It does not let up, so don't look for any breaks - except the spaces between tracks that are but a brief second of silence... silence before it comes back to pound, thrash and destroy. Twenty-five tracks in all, played in just a few seconds over a half an hour, and then I hit play again on my stereo to relive all twenty-five tracks and endure another half an hour of pain. Why do I do this to myself?! Masochist? No, just a lover of harsh, rotten sounds. (July 2, 2007)

LOOK MEXICO - This Is Animal Music CD (Lujjo)

Look Mexico is four chaps from Tallahassee, Florida, and formed in 2004. They self-released an EP (*So Byzantine* in 2005), and that got them the attention of Lujjo Records who released another extended player, *The Crucial EP*, in 2006. *This Is Animal Music* is their newest work, and it's forty minutes of some well crafted indie-rock... emphasis on the rock. When the horns come in on "I Promise We'll Swing For the Fences" I don't get a ska vibe, and that's good. "I Had A Wrench, and I Hit Him" had a great, yet somewhat very touching, alt-country feel. "Watch Out For This" brought to my mind some of Samiam's slower - and major label - work. "You Ever Get Punched In the Face For Talking Too Much?" made me think of The Smiths, and the follow-up "Me and My Dad Built Her" brought to my head a more serious version of The Rapture (mostly thanks to the dance-y drumming). Come to think of it, wrapped up as a whole record, fans of Modest Mouse's later works would really dig this LP. Also, the sound is also somewhat reminiscent of Deep Elm Records' newest signing Trace A Tiger, yet there's more popcore involved - a little faster on the time signatures, as well as beat, and a little less on the alt-country. Altogether they've done a good record that is heavy on the pop and punk, without being whiny pop punk. (July 2, 2007)

DEAR TONIGHT - We're Not Men CD (Red Leader)

Dear Tonight is a Brooklyn gang of five that's out to rock hard, while trying to make you think about needless consumerism, manifest destinies, seemingly endless wars and punk politics. In 2005 they released the *These Are Wires* CD EP as a split between Slave Union Records and Dark City Records. The band comes off as equal parts Deep Elm Records emotional hardcore (think Brandtson, Lock and Key, or Letterman), and equal parts catchy Gravity Records / San Diego screamo (think Universal Order of Armageddon, Angel Hair, or Heroin). Equal parts harmonious melody, equal parts explosive anger. The vocals are pretty D.C.-esque, with a little Fugazi-ish call-and-response action, but they're filled with much more anger - meaning they're screaming their asses off. There's no one particular track I dig more than another, as like a good Hot Water Music or Small Brown Bike record, it flows from track to track powerfully. Their newest work packs a punch, and by the time you're finding yourself singing along, it's all over. You can do what I did and hit play again, or start to hunt down their tour schedule to see when they're coming to a town near you. Admittedly, I did both. (July 2, 2007)

MUSIC WITH IMPACT DVD (Regain)

A killer collection of videos here. Twenty three music videos for some of today's heaviest band. Many of these you won't or haven't see on Mtv's *Headbangers Ball*. Two from Poland's blackened death metal masters Behemoth, and two from Vader (Helleluyah, brothers!), while the rest are single tracks from Sahg (from Norway), Swedish metalheads Dimension Zero, Arch Enemy (you can get this video on the repress of their first LP, *Black Earth*, also on Regain Records), Embraced, Deranged, Samael, Marduk (probably my favorite track and video here), the awesome Gothic rock sounds of Tenebre, Totalt Jävla Mörker and their death metal-inspired hardcore, the melodic Nightmare, Death S and their sleeper-hold, flying side kick, figure-four leg-lock of a video, a Dark Funeral classic, Dismember, Ragnarok, Necrophobic, Mustasch (if you're a fan of The Spades or Turbonegro I suggest to check these guys out), and Sagatanas Reign. The only track I honestly didn't care for was Bronx Casket Co., and their CGI-ed "Little Dead Girl". My biggest, and actually only, gripe with this release that none of the videos are labeled, so if you smoke a bowl and are unfamiliar with many of these artists, prepare to be lost. Hell, I know many of them, I'm sober, and I couldn't keep track. (July 2, 2007)

TOXIC BONKERS - Progress CD ([Selfmadegod](#))

For a while there grindcore lost a lot of what made it great. Bands began focusing on speed over anger. This is a band and record that is trying to bring that all back - while still keeping it fast as fuck. Toxic Bonkers is from Lodz, Poland and formed in 1993. They recorded a self-titled, self-released demo in 1994, which to date has sold over 4000 copies. They didn't do much else (besides a 7" split with Uhuru) until 1997's *If the Dead Could Talk* LP on Italy's S.O.A. Records (with a cassette version on the Polish label Pop Noise Records). In 2000 they released *Blindness* on Nikt Nic Nie Wie Records, and were then picked up by Selfmadegod for the album *Seeds of Cruelty* in 2004. While the band stayed hard at work throughout, they didn't gain much notoriety outside of Poland, let alone Europe. It's a shame many missed out on their early-Sepultura sound, but this newest work could change things for them. The growling main vocals are good, but the witch-y backing vocals add just as much to the music. The album's opener, "Emptiness", is a punky metal meltdown. The drumming on "Manifesto" is like a machine. The keyboards on the mid-paced title track were a nice addition to the pummeling heaviness. Many of these songs could also bring to mind a band like Bolt Thrower or Aborted, but they stand well enough on their own. I hope this album finally gets this band a bit of recognition in the States. They deserve it. (July 2, 2007)

DEATH BEFORE DISHONOR - Count Me In CD ([Bridge Nine](#)) This Boston quintet are back to level the place with their metallic hardcore. Starting in early 2005, they were quickly picked up by Boston's Bridge Nine Records for their debut EP, *Friends, Family, Forever*. So as I write this I shake, and bounce, tap feet. It's all a pretty good sign. The music seems a very old-school hardcore influenced by Cro-Mags or Sick Of It All, with heavy elements of metalcore ala Hatebreed. A lot of what DBD does is sorrow and anger musically personified. It's a lot of speedy beats, gang chants and a few mosh breakdowns - three things that always get a crowd of hardcore kids really going. Chugga-chugga! You know exactly what that means... heavy, downtuned riffs. The title track and "Curl Up and Die" really takes it back to the old school. "Nowhere to Turn", "Fuck it All", "Nothing But Agony" and "Take Me Away" are my favorite tracks here, but every song is about equally as catchy, pretty heavy and totally anthemic. The unlisted track is a cover of Cock Sparrer where the chorus is changed to "Boston belongs to me." This will be big with the bald, wifebeater-wearing crowd, and rightfully so. (July 2, 2007)



FALL OF THE LEAFE - Aerolithe CD ([Firebox](#)) Fall of the Leafe began in the small Finnish town of Uusikaupunki in 1996, as a melodic death metal band. They released a tape demo (*Storm of the Autumnfall*) and were quickly picked up by Defiled Records, who released the band's debut album in 1998 (*Evanescent, Everfading*). Though Defiled went under, that very same year FOTL was then swooped up by Argentinean label Icarus Music (releasing *August Wernicke* in 2000 and *Fermina* in 2002). In 2005 Finland's Firebox signed them for the next few releases (2005's *Volvere*, and *Vantage* LPs). Well, it's 2007 and on *Aerolithe* are gone any of the remaining black metal elements. What Fall of the Leafe now seem to be are a Tool-esque, keyboard-heavy, almost power metal outfit. With that said, I don't want you to think this is a change for the worse - it isn't bad at all. In fact I really, really enjoy this record. Tuomas Tuominen's vocals are very similar to Maynard James Keenan, meaning he can actually sing, though at times he does bring about a throaty growl. The music is basically power metal, but keeps a lot of the heavier aspects of bands like Katatonia and Anathema, yet also have a poppy keyboard tinkling throughout most tracks. Upon first listen, this really threw me for a loop, but something told me to give it repeated listens. I actually started to fall for this on only the second time around. I guess I just needed to get the first one out of the way to remove a bit of the shock and confusion. I can hear this being big with those into Symphony X, Dragonforce or Edguy, but strangely as well as those into Pearl Jam or later Soundgarden. My biggest complaint is that I can also see this being swallowed up by fans of Linkin Park, Nickelback and Alice in Chains. (July 2, 2007)

MARTRIDEN - s/t CD EP ([Candlelight](#))

Harlowton, Montana's Martriden originally began as Pale Horse in 2004. After the name change they recorded a self-titled EP at metal-master Dave Otero's Denver headquarters, Flatline Audio, which Candlelight heard and decided it deserved a proper pressing and decent distribution. This twenty-five minute EP is a raging four song, 5" disc of extreme Euro-inspired metal. While staying true to the likes of Emperor, Opeth and Enslaved, they also have tremendous breakdowns of the metalcore field ala Dead to Fall (the vocals also bring them to mind), or As I Lay Dying. I wish I could say more, but at only four tracks, all you need to know is that I keep hitting play over and over again. (July 2, 2007)

SPHERIC UNIVERSE EXPERIENCE - Anima CD ([Sensory](#)) Ladies and gentlemen, I love power metal. It also turns out that the more experimental it is, the more I like it. Enter Spheric Universe Experience. They're a French quintet, which originally began in 1999 as a three-piece instrumental progressive metal band. In 2001 they added keyboards, then produced a self-titled demo under the band name Amnesia. They soon changed their name, and in 2003 added vocals, broke up, then reformed and released *The Burning Box* demo, which got them adequate management and label notice (Replica Records) who released their first LP, *Mental Torments*. The band recently flipped over to Sensory Records, which is now giving us their *Anima* album. This record is a scorching blend of New Wave of British Heavy Metal, technical metal, progressive rock and, believe it or not, ambient trance. While the guitars thrash you about, the keyboards sound almost as if they are bubbling along to their own song, yet mesh really well with that's going on. Speaking of which, the guitar playing is top notch technical wizardry - strong on power chords, heavy down picking, amazing solos and packed with time changes. The music is powerful, though highly melodic, as the guitar, keyboards and well sung vocals all deliver power, as well as emotion. This will hit the spot for fans of Dream Theater, Pain of Salvation and Symphony X, but also those who like Tool, Vancouver's Art of Dying, or A Perfect Circle. (July 2, 2007)

DESTROYER DESTROYER - Littered With Arrows CD ([Goodfellow](#)) In 2004 five Oklahoma City kids got together to make a tumultuous cacophony of metal. They succeeded too. First came the split EP *The Spiderbear Tales* with Vessels Cast From Crippled Hands (on Cunning Linguist Industrial Technologies), and following it up with their first LP in 2006, *The Dead Sleep Like Us For A Reason*, on Debello Recordings. DD grind and stomp their way onto your eardrums and into your head with a technical metalcore not that far off of Daughters' grindcore madness, or maybe even Psyopus or Ion Dissonance, but they'd have to be hooked on ice or crank to get the right balance of haste and psychosis that Destroyer Destroyer drip from every pore.

The vocals are very J Bannon (Converge) which is my least favorite aspect of DD. How the hell do this freakshow know when one song is ending and another must begin? They can go from crustcore to melodic metalcore and back again like no one's business. The drums are either in an almost nonstop blast beat, or doing lightning quick fills. This LP pulverized me. DD really push the limits of extreme music, as well as the boundaries of fatigue, as by the end of the 30 minutes of this album I was tired. I wanted sleep. I was bruised and banged-up good. Do I need a break, or need to hear this again? I think I'll go for 'again'. (July 2, 2007)

U. D. O. - Mastorcutor CD EP (A-M-F)

Before I looked at the bio I thought this was a band with a name in homage to horror actor Udo Krier, but it's actually the solo project of Udo Dirkschneider. Dirkschneider was at one time the frontman for heavy metal outfit Accept, which originally formed in 1976, so you know he's got the old school cred down. UDO released *Animal House* in 1988, and throughout its history released another ten or so albums and EPs, even though Accept reformed once or twice, and also released a few new records. To think that this chap is over fifty (born in 1952), yet can still wail with the best of them. His voice is still in top form, with its raspy growl and high pitched singing ala Bruce Dickenson or Ronnie James Dio. The music is powerful power metal with a touch of classic heavy metal and a bit of the New Wave of British Heavy Metal, and is highly comparable to Saxon, Helloween and Blackie Lawless' W.A.S.P. UDO has also recently released *The Wrong Side of Midnight* EP, so there's more new material out there for you to check out. Candlelight Records has decided to help fans in North America by releasing this album stateside, in case you're one who doesn't want to pour dollar over dollar on import prices you can track that down. And that's great too, because the value of the \$ (US dollar) is at one of its lowest points since the Carter / Reagan years of inflation, which is coincidentally a time this album could mentally bring you back to. (July 2, 2007)

KAMELOT - Ghost Opera CD (SPK)

Kamelot was formed in Tampa, Florida in 1992 by guitarist Thomas Youngblood. In no time they were picked up by Noise Records and released their freshman effort, *Eternity*. It wasn't until 1996 that they released their sophomore *Dominator*, which was then quickly followed by *Siège Perilous*, and later by *The Fourth Legacy* (and the live album, *The Expedition*), all released on Noise Records. In 2000 they made the switch to Sanctuary Records and produced for them 2001's *Karma*, but went back to Noise for the *Epica* LP (2003). In 2005 they were signed onto the SPV / Steamhammer roster for the release of *The Black Halo*, and the DVD / CD release of *One Cold Winter's Night* (2006). Their newest release, *Ghost Opera*, still finds them on SPV and seemingly pretty thrilled, as the music is as explosive and epic as ever. With the newest addition of keyboardist Oliver Palotai (of Doro and Blaze), Kamelot find themselves putting out just as much synth, as guitar play. *Ghost Opera* is equal parts gothic metal, power metal and progressive metal, as their newest album forges a path on some new ground, yet Kamelot continue to put forth a sound that has made them a forerunner in power metal circles. This is a good band to pick up for those that have recently found Dream Theater or Symphony X, and want to find something new and along those lines that's as powerful. There's also a limited edition digipack that includes an extended booklet, a bonus cut ("The Pendulous Fall"), as well as a bonus DVD containing a music video for the LP's title track, plus a behind the scenes making of the video. (July 2, 2007)

PANTHEON I - The Wanderer and His Shadow CD (Candlelight) Good stuff here. Dark and threatening, yet very melodic with harmony. This Oslo, Norway five-piece forged in 2002, and holds ex-1349 guitarist, André Kvebek. They quickly released the four song, promo-only demo, *Demo MMIII*. After that got them a bit of press, they finally gave some music to the public through a self-released 7" single with two brand new tracks. In 2004 Japanese label World Chaos Productions released their first album, *Atrocity Divine*, and that caught the ear of Candlelight Records. This newest work is a masterwork. It has all the elements of a good black metal record, but also adds new sounds to an unsuspecting ear. Brutal, fast, melancholic, complete with speed picking, dissonant dueling guitars, and harsh vocals. It also has very jazzy interludes that one doesn't often hear in black metal. Also, a whole lot of melody (check out "Coming To An End" - track four). Yeah, black metal is often melodic, but here it's equal to the punishing riffs and blastbeats. While it should appeal to many a black metal fan, I can't pinpoint any band they sound very similar too. Yes, there are moments of Gorgoroth, or 1349, but there is a whole lot of technical mayhem and discordant harmonics to differ from either as well. I can see this being just as big with the Neurosis and Isis crowd, as with fans of Wolves In The Throne Room. (July 2, 2007)



EINSTÜRZENDE NEUBAUTEN - Palast Der Republik DVD (Music Video Distributors) This is something very special for me, and I'll explain that towards the end. I have seriously loved this band since I got my hands on their only vinyl available in the United States back in 1986. The slices of wax were the "Yu Gung" 12" and the first *Strategies Against Architecture* album, and I got them on the word of - of all people - Henry Rollins. Earlier that year he did a spoken word show on Lincoln Road in Miami Beach (Wet Paint Cafe). I had always noticed his EN tattoo, but didn't know its significance. After his performance he walked the club and talked to folks, so I approached a group he was chatting with. As the group waned out, I asked him about the tattoo, and besides haranguing me about being so young and having a beer in my hand (his friend D. Boon of Minutemen had just died in an auto accident where drinking was possibly involved) he let me in on one of his favorite bands that Nick Cave turned him on to: Einstürzende Neubauten. That is my history of being turned on to them, so let me try to turn you on. Einstürzende Neubauten (meaning 'collapsing new buildings') almost single-handedly coined the phrase 'industrial music', as their tunes were an amalgam of bass and guitar mixed with power tools and scrap metal. They began in 1980 Berlin (Germany), as a simple noise band, and with a few original members leaving (both female) they absorbed new blood from the German punk band Abwärts - a lineup which they stuck with for a near two decades. For this show, filmed in November of 2004, singer Blixa Bargeld and percussionist N.U. Unruh are the only two of the originals left, but their flames of passion, flair for improvisation, and sparks of ingenuity have yet to fade out. The concert took place in the skeletal remains of East Germany's former DDR Parliament building, hence the title. I really wish they had played a few of their older tracks ("Tanz Debil", "Seele Brent", "Kalte Sterne", and the aforementioned "Yu Gung"), but I guess after twenty years of already playing these they're quite sick of the old stuff. Still, they do play a lot of new material that I really like ("Youme & Meyou", "Perpetuum Mobile", "Was Ist Ist", "Alles" and the beautiful "Sabrina" - though sadly, "The Garden" is absent). Just to see how half of these tracks are done live was exhilarating, and makes me want to bang on sheets of metal, PVC tubes, chains, plastic cups and copper pipes. It was also great that the concert was captured on multi-cameras, as some band members didn't just stay on the stage, but climbed rafters (to use as instruments) and ran around the audience (with instruments in tow). This concert DVD contains a few extras such as a commentary by Blixa in both English and German, plus an encore of two songs which are in addition to the hour-and-a-half concert. The reason this disc is so special to me is that as long as I've been a fan of the band, I have yet seen them live in person, so I collect and view as much as I can - from official releases to shitty bootlegs (anyone got any I haven't seen?). Oh, and for fans and newbies alike... don't forget to visit - and support - the band through their Internet project at neubauten.org.

THE GLASSPACK - Dirty Women CD (Small Stone)

The Glasspack are a band you should know, and if you don't, let me introduce you. They're a Louisville, Kentucky hard rock outfit that began sometime in 2000. They released their first LP in 2001 (*American Exhaust* on Riverrock Records), they soon garnered the notice of Small Stone over in motor city, Detroit (which released *Powderkeg* in 2002 and '04's *Bridgeburner*). I'm a big fan of the band, and I've enjoyed their Small

Stone works, but I felt they hadn't matched the power of *American Exhaust* on later works. That is until this new record! This is, by far, their best work. I hurt after every listen, and it isn't from the aural ass kickin', but from the bouncing and thrashing I do. Dirty Dave Johnson and crew know the true art of making you head-bang. The tunes are amazingly catchy guitar-oriented grooves. Sometimes slow and sludgy ("Lot Lizard"), sometimes fast and punky ("Ice Cream, But No Reply" and "Play It Loud"), but always pure rock-n-roll dope. Johnson's vocals match well with the music (grungy and distorted, but well in tune and melodic), though some of The Glasspack's most outstanding moments are the instrumentals ("Fastback" and "Super Sport"). I think it's because Dirty is a true guitarist at heart and when he isn't pushing out lyrics he really knows how to let his guitar talk for him - and that thing goes on like some freakin' know it all. Though clipped with the 'stoner rock' tag, they go well beyond this simple moniker. They are a

blend Monster Magnet meeting up with MC5 for a few bong hits, to later find The Von Bondies and The Gaza Strippers in a junkyard parkinglot for a good ol' southern stick-brawl (only using six-strings instead).

A Jim Beam and Drambuie cocktail holding the riffing power of Karma to Burn with the speedy hooks of Turbonegro and balls out rock of The Stooges. Now, I don't know why they named themselves after something to drown out sound (a style of car muffler) when they want to - and should - be played really loud. Indulge them, and yourself, and do so. (May 5, 2007)

MANES - How the World Came To An End CD ([Candlelight](#)) It's hard to believe that this Norwegian act was once a black metal outfit. Together since 1992, they released their first album (*Under Ein Blodraud Maane* on Hammerheart Records in '99) as a two-member line up, and it was a true masterwork of atmospheric black metal, with progressive rock influences. Their second release (*Vilosophe* on Code 666 Records), added a few extra members, and was another great work, but completely different from their black metal roots. Their sophomore effort was more a mix trip-hop, some jazz and electronic elements with only a touch of metal, along with clear vocals. This really upset many in the black metal music scene. Their newest work, *How the World Came To An End*, follows the path of their second release. The first track ("Deeprooted") is a mix of power metal and synthpop. The next is hip-hop in the vein of Candiria - though much of it is in French. "Last Lights" had a lick of Mos Def's smoother moments meeting Bad Brains reggae material. "Nobody Wants the Truth" was a bit of a shoegazer number with a seeming nod to My Bloody Valentine. "The Cure-All" went back and forth from a dream-pop song to an industrial metal crusher, and "Transmigrant" had moments of drum-n-bass. An interesting blend for fans of Ulver, In the Woods or even Radiohead, from a band that's left their past behind in skid marks. They're already working on their next LP, which is so far titled *Be All / End All* - looking forward to see where they take their sound. (May 5, 2007)

BARONESS / UNPERSONS - A Grey Sigh In A Flower Husk CD ([At A Loss](#)) This is a split CD between two powerful Savannah, Georgia bands. I'm familiar with the work of Unpersons through their past LPs (the self-titled album, *III* and *IV-Self Portrait* on both Life Is Abuse Records and At A Loss Records). They formed back in 1997 and have been crushing eardrums and souls with their sonance since. Baroness, on the other hand, is new to me. Baroness formed in 2003 from the remains of punk-metal band Johnny Welfare And The Paychecks. The quartet has put out two EPs (*First* and *Second*, 2003 and 2005 respectively, on Hyperrealist Records), but this is the first time I've had the pleasure. This disc opens with two tracks from Baroness that are sludgy-yet-punky - a mad mix of math rock, hardcore and stoner rock. Heavy, yet playfully intricate. Hard with the riffs, but with a few challenging guitar licks. I hear elements of Mastodon and Isis, along with Jihad or His Hero Is Gone, and just a wack of Don Caballero or The Fucking Champs. Word is they've been picked up by Relapse Records and I can hear why. Next up is the aforementioned Unpersons who sling out four sonic attacks. Everything I've ever written about them still holds. They're a rampage of *Protestant-era* Rorschach, Racebannon-esque madness, Neurosis-like beauty, and City of Caterpillar screamo violence. A touch of rock groove, a lick of prog-metal, and demented vocals from the bowels of the underworld. I can see why these bands were paired here... two twisted sounds, that sound great together. (May 5, 2007)

HÄVOK ÜNIT / AND OCEANS / THE SIN:DECAY - Synæsthesia -- The Requiem Reveries CD ([Vendlus](#)) This three-way split release is a bit more than just a simple ménage-a-trios, as it puts to rest old names and brings to light new bands. Plus, while there are the three bands listed, this disc also contains remixes from other artists as well. Hävok Ünit (which is basically andOceans under a new moniker) starts things off with an original track blasting a Skinny Puppy meets Mastodon vibe. Repetitious riffs with overlaid samples and distorted vocals - pretty unique and done very well. Their next track, "Regime Equinox", is a remix from Finnish artist No Xivic, and while bringing Apex Twin to mind, it was a bit more evil sounding (Is that possible?). The last HÜ track is another remix, this time by ATYD, another Finnish artist which gives the track an industrial meets Metalheadz drum-n-bass workover. Next up on the roster is the legendary andOceans with one original and two remixes. The original, "Yerushalayim Érez haQodes", is the last song to be released under andOceans' name, and it does the decade-long existence of that outfit much justice. The following track is "Tophet" and is remixed by another artist from Finland, Niko Skorpio, who runs the label SomePlaceElse, and also played in Thergothon and This Empty Flow. The remix is a coldwave, ambient soundscape not unlike Archon Satani or The Grey Wolves. The last andOceans track is a funky remix of "ha-Shoah" from Finn ATYD. The last three ditties are from The Sin:Decay, a four-piece outfit from Finland that features a member of AndOceans / Hävok Ünit. Their three tracks brought to my mind images of Deathstars or Rammstein - sort of industrial metal with poppy keyboards. In addition to the music, this CD contains two music videos, one by HÜ and one by andOceans (for the original tracks listed) so as to please the eyes and the ears. One release with a triple threat of musical mayhem. Oh, the three remix artists... make that a sextet threat. Oh, the music videos... a freakin' octet threat. (May 5, 2007)

IREPRESS - Samus Octology CD ([Translation Loss](#))

Pronounced 'i-r-press', over 'e-re-press', and after listening you can probably see where this may stem from. I say that because I hear a touch of Bad Brains and Into Another here. I may be wrong, but the reggae vibe is there to everyone I play this for (who also try to snatch my only copy). A touch in the guitars, but also in the drum playing. Either way, Irepress hails from Boston, MA and this five piece's CD was originally release in 2005 by All Indians, No Chiefs Records. It didn't get the attention it rightfully deserved, so Translation Loss Records is making sure of it this time around with better media coverage and distro for this Massachusetts quintet. Irepress play instrumental numbers that many will compare to Explosions In The Sky and Isis, and while those comparisons are apt, they push the sound a little further (especially with the aforementioned reggae). Most often they play a lush and somewhat dreamy rock in the vein of shoegazer bands similar to Cocteau Twins and The Church, but every so often it explodes into a barrage of ethereal hardcore the likes of Tool or Neurosis. Another thing that brought Bad Brains to mind is the guitar sound, which for the heavier moments has an *I Against II Quickness* sound that cuts the riffs clean, though well distorted and heavy as all. Complex and extremely well laid down epic structures that aren't all that far off from the math rock camps, yet not so punky. Still, they're putting forth a new amalgam of styles, and bless them for something fresh. (May 5, 2007)

TRANSMISSION 0 - Memory of A Dream CD ([Go Kart - Europe](#)) This Dutch five piece outfit (featuring ex-members of Reveal and Void) are back from a two year hiatus after their last album, *0 (Zero)*, gained them a bit of good press. Their first release was in 2004 on - of all labels - the usually punk rock Go-Kart Records, and though this is an import, metal label Candlelight Records is releasing a version for North American audiences so they don't have to pay overseas prices. Either way, I can see why either record presser picked this up, no matter what musical styles the label is known for, as these guys really rip. The newest work by Transmission 0, *Memory of A Dream*, stays true to form to their debut work, and though still highly melodic they picked up the pace somewhat, and don't go into as much electronic play as in *0*, but it's all for the better. Transmission 0's epic song structure is a blending of an ethereal hardcore the likes of Neurosis and Isis, with an industrial metal ala Godflesh or

early Pitchshifter, along with savvy shoegazer elements much like Cocteau Twins or My Bloody Valentine. The track "Paracas" is the best example of this as it's very bass heavy, with swirling psychedelic guitar, adding moments of lush keyboards in the vein of *Disintegration*-era The Cure - not to mention clocking in at a near-ten minutes. The brief "Dream 1" and "Dream 2" both sounded like Transmission 0 took pages straight out of *The Pink Opaque* or *Blue Bell Knoll* songbook; dreamy, but it fit the record really well. Much of this is perfect from those that wish Explosions In The Sky had vocals. Epic, but should hold one's interest. Trippy, but seemingly well structured. Man, those green crops must be getting better every year in The Netherlands. (May 5, 2007)



MONARCH! - Dead Men Tell No Tales DOUBLE CD (Crucial Blast) This is a re-release that had to be. Hailing from Bayonne, France (a Basque country town which gave its name to the bayonet), these big amps and little lady will knock buildings down. Three gents and the hottest black metal maiden from the European landscape creep forth walls of feedback and drone, with slowly pummeling riffs and punishing doom. Crucial Blast brings you the North American version of their newest double CD (the import version is from Spain's Throne Records). The Crucial Blast version on disc one is a CD re-release of Monarch!'s vinyl-only LP *Speak of the Sea* (which was limited to 666 copies), and holds an extra track, "Dead Men Tell No Tales" from their 2005 debut (also on Throne). At just three tracks it's close to an hour in length, so prepare for riffs as slow, yet as hot, as lava. The second disc in this set is their newest work, the *Die Tonight* LP, which is also a vinyl-only release from the Spanish label, and limited to 666 copies. At two tracks clocking in at forty minutes, expect much of the same riff-indulging madness, but more matured and knowing better when to strike and when to back off and regroup. Music-wise these ex-members of Miercoles and Gasmask Terror slowly bleed tunes that are comparable to Sunn O))) asking Melvins to provide more musical structure, or if The Goslings began to incorporate more black metal influences. Imagine Burning Witch and Corrupted tag-teaming NON and Tangerine Dream for a match inside an Orange amplifier. Though having a femme fatale lead (ex-Electronic Funeral) she growls and shrieks like the best of the death metal clans, yet whispers and sings as well - sometimes in front of the sludge, other times buried deep beneath the debris. I'm so in love, but I'm not sure which more - Monarch!'s music or Monarch!'s lead singer. Either way, thanks Crucial Blast! (May 5, 2007)

PERMANENT - Sink / Swim CD (6131)

With the cover art and look of this release I expected a bit of alternative mush or maybe some challenging college rock. Being as old as I am, you'd think I'd stop assuming what inside by what's on the outside, but I'm guilty. Well, not just guilty... but wrong. Permanent are a quartet from Richmond, Virginia and they feature ex-members of Bracewar, Hold Me Back, High Stakes and Out For Justice. In '04 they began jamming and self-released a demo, which got them the notice, all the way across this country, of California's 6131 Records for the *Sink / Swim* LP, not to mention Rise and Fall Records who also released an EP on CD and 7" titled *Sleeping*. Oh, and mushy alternative nor college rock do they play, but instead they're a hearty mix of hardcore fury along with indie-rock hooks. The opening track ("Void of Course") breaks this release open and keeps the pace high. "Sidestepping" had some of the best reggae licks from white-boys I've heard in a while. "My Efforts Toward Disaster" slow things down in a heavy, yet melancholy way, and "Virtue of Vices" closes things off powerfully. Altogether, it's a good mix from four young dudes delivering metallic hardcore, with a touch of rock-n-roll, and a little bit of melody. For you vinyl freaks and collector nerds 6131 put out a few 12" on clear wax (600 copies) and another few are colored (400), so you can start that hunt now. (May 5, 2007)

ANDY THE DOOR BUM - The Mt. Holly Sessions CD (Afterbirth Casserole) Not to far away from where I currently stand is a red-bearded cat that wails like his soul is on fire, and tells stories through rambling poetry via acoustic tunes in Charlotte, North Carolina. That cat man's the door of the Milestone Club, and though known as Andy the Door Bum or Ugly Dobro his birth name is Andrew Fenstermaker, and you should give a listen to what he wails. This is the second release for The Door Bum, as he earlier let the world in on what's inside his head via his 2005 release *Door Booth Album*. "Parrot Anthem" and "Alamissibamassippi" both had a touch of Delta blues ala Robert Johnson (the infamous musician that sold his soul to the devil) or Big Bill Broonzy. "Eyes" and "Horace Wells and the Chloroform Junkies" still kept a bluesy sound, but also incorporated catchy pop-punk hooks. "Black Snapper" was pure punk rock fury, while "Look It" is a garage rock anthem. In between his vocalized tracks are a few instrumental numbers that could be considered abstract or avant-garde as they emit a quality of cut-up tape-loops. Though I do have to point out that while I like the wild amalgam of music Andy brings to his latest work, it's his lyrical content that I've enjoyed most. If you're into philosophical songs about drinkin', lovin' 'n' losin' and wanting to kill the dude that broke into your car, by all means, take a trip up to The Milestone Club - or just send Andy some dough and ask (nicely) for a copy of his newest work. (May 5, 2007)

JON ZAREMBA - Vigilante Romance CD (Exceliza)

While I like this, I don't think I do in the way JZ intended me to. The onesheet sent along with the disc describes the music being influenced by Manowar, Aphex Twin and Alec Empire, and wants to be aligned with metal over techno (the last track is a cover of Italian power metal outfit Holy Knights). I don't think this falls into either camp, as I league it in with the chiptune genre or liken it to Nintendocore, sounding like FirestARTer, c64 Messiah and ComputeHer. Cheesy 8-bit sounds, MIDI keyboards and old-school beatbox drum machines make this less of true techno, and pushed into the school of micromusic or bitpop on labels like 8bitpeoples Records or Bleepstreet Records. The only techno reference I can equate Jon's sound to are the *Speed Limit: 140 BPM+* compilations, and those are a bit outdated even for that style of music (1992 - 1995). A lot of this comes off sounding like J-pop and picopop with closest references I can make are to bands like Plus Tech Squeeze Box, Cubismo Grafico or Mac Donald Duck Eclair, while other parts come off as straight gamewave or bitpop like Mr. Pacman, Nintendude or Press Play on Tape. *Vigilante Romance*

has a running theme of 70's cop shows, Italian vigilante movies and B-grade revenge flicks, which are some of my favorite types of viewing, and the samples peppered throughout enhance the trip this disc will take you on. I do wonder how genuine Zaremba is, as another influence he admits to is Operation ReInformation, and because their rotation on WFMU you have to ask, 'Is this all serious?' I guess it doesn't matter, cuz I had one hell of a time. (May 5, 2007)

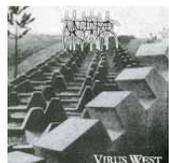
DIAGNOSE: LEBENSGEFAHR - Transformalin CD (Autopsy Kitchen) This is a very interesting release, especially from a black metal label. Though I do see a larger and larger meeting up between the music worlds of dark metal and those of noise / ambient music. When you think about it (or listen to it) some black metal is so distorted that it almost sounds similar to power electronics. Still, this is no simple power electronics project. Diagnose: Lebensgefahr is the side-work of Swedish black metal vocalist Nattraamn (of the band Silencer). Self-releasing a limited and hand numbered CD-R demo (of 50 copies) in 2005, it caught the ear of Indiana label Autopsy Kitchen in '06. *Transformalin* is an eleven track descent into true industrial ala Throbbing Gristle or early Current 93, not to mention a bit of a reformation of said genre. At times it's electro-sizzle drowned in a sea of modulation, with waves of feedback as cracks and hisses pop in and out of audio range ("The Level Beyond Human" or "Mani Vs Apati"). Other times it has a beat and marches to new dawn of pain and suffering, as the vocals reveal a psychotic twist of sadism and

masochism entwined (as in the title track and "Situazion: Lebensgefahr"). While others still, make a beautifully haunting wash of soundscapes and ambient lulling drones of calm that wash over the listener into an eerie sadness ("Flaggan På Halv Stång I Drommens Västergård" and "Tillsammans Men Ensam I Stillhetens Kapell"). As much as I thought Silencer was pretty good, I'd rather have that band stay disband and keep this project going, instead of reforming Silencer and seeing this go the way of the wind. (May 5, 2007)

TRACK A TIGER - We Moved Like Ghosts CD (Deep Elm) I'm kinda surprised I dug this as much as I did, but I did. TAT started as a solo project in Chicago around 2003 from acoustic guitar tracks written by founding member Jim Vallet. A few years into it (2006) Track A Tiger released their first LP, *Woke Up Early The Day I Died*, on Future Appletree Records. It wasn't until that year that they developed into a full-fledged band.

I do admit, I'm not that big on alt-country much, and while it's the biggest atmosphere this record produces, the pop elements of certain tracks really had me. "Light", "All These Accidents", "Not Far From This Anger" and "Summer's End" were highly comparable to The American Analog Set, a band I really like, and Yo La Tengo. Some songs have more of a Low or Belle and Sebastian sound to them, while others bring to mind neo-folk and alt-country stalwart Iron and Wine ("Sometimes Love Runs Out" and "Without Fail"). There's lots of acoustic and slide guitar, soft drumming, lush keyboards and a wonderful trading (as well as melodically sharing) of male and female vocals. This is the record for those that know dynamically spirited and sonically vibrant don't always mean loud guitars. Not to get off track, but this release is another in Deep Elm Record's limited series to promote purchasing straight from the label, as well as downloading albums (legally). *We Moved Like Ghosts* is limited to only 1000 copies via mail-order, afterwards the tracks will only be available as digital downloads. If you are into atmospheric indie-rock or well-textured slowcore, say 'hello' to a possible new favorite. (May 5, 2007)

OCTAVIA SPERATI - Grace Submerged CD (Candlelight) From Bergen, Norway comes five ladies and one gent that mix up the many schools of metal to produce a tangle I'm happy to get caught up in. Forming in 2000, self-releasing a demo (*Guilty*) in 2002, following it in 2004 with a few unreleased promotional tracks (though "Lifelines of Depths" found its way onto a few compilations, as well as being made into a music video). Five years later (that's 2005 for those that can't count) they were picked up by Candlelight Records, who released their first proper album, *Winter Enclosure*. While many will lump them along Nightwish and The Gathering, there's a bit more to Octavia Sperati on this release. "Moonlit" had elements of doom, and instances of ethereal hardcore the likes of Isis. The verse of "Going North" has a punky hook, though the choruses are solid power metal (complete with elegant piano), and there's even a straight-up hardcore breakdown that closes it off. Admittedly, I didn't care much for the ballads ("Don't Believe A Word" and "Dead End Poem"), but they were surrounded by such powerful tracks I forgave and forgot. "And Then the World Froze" brought to mind *Disintegration*-era The Cure - that is, if The Cure had played metal with crunching guitars on that album. "The Final Rest" had moments of speed-picking, and were then balanced by sludgier points. The vocals on the entire disc are sung, and never crack a scream, so there is a pop element to this release, but it works to the album's favor. I hadn't heard *Winter Encloser*, but this newest work has made me curious enough to check it out as well. (May 5, 2007)



NAGELFAR - Virus West CD (Ván)

First off, let's get something straight, Nagelfar is a German black metal band, and is usually confused with Swedish act Naglfar. When hunting each band down remember that Nagelfar is from German-E, while Swedish Naglfar has no 'e'. That aside, *Virus West* is a repress of their 2001 release on Ars Metall Records. This output is quite different from this band's freshman and sophomore efforts (1997's *Hünengrab im Herbst* and *Srontgorrth* [1999], both on Kettenhund Records). More straight forward black metal, and less of the arty patchwork of epics they gave us on *Srontgorrth*, plus tighter, better put together and structured than on *Hünengrab im Herbst*. Mind you their second LP (at five tracks in way over an hour) is still a very good record, and though the mixture of ambient interludes and industrial beats was an interesting blend for a black metal band, sometimes just straight-up BM / doom works so much better.

Hence on tracks like "Sturm Der Katharsis" where it opens with a depressing, though melodic intro on into a set of stoner rock-ish doom riffs, until blastbeats and speed-picking kick in, then a quiet break and back to a 300 bpm fury that melts into an almost hardcore groove only to come back to the melody and Gregorean-like singing - all in a marathon of nearly nine minutes. "Fäcen des Schnicksals" opens like a black metal track should (fast and furious), on to a breaddown that will make many dance wildly in the pit, which is suddenly interrupted with more blasts and speed, and back to groove again to make the dancefloor go nuts - back and forth, back and forth for seven minutes until your a bruised and tired mess left in the middle of a moshing crowd. The album's closer ("Meuterei") captures some great guitar riffs and double-bass drums at both moderate and fast-as-fuck tempos - all with horns blasting in the background. This is a beautiful work that really did need to be re-released, and it's a total shame that the band went their separate ways back in '02, because this repressing is going to make them a minion of new fans. (May 5, 2007)

SWALLOW THE SUN - Hope CD (Spinefarm) History first, and then I'll gush like a little school kid with a crush. In the beginning of 2000, Finland outfit Swallow The Sun emerged from the ashes of Plutonium Orange through the work of ex-members Juha Raivio and Pasi Pasanen and went on to absorb a few members of Finnish fellows, Funeris Nocturnum. It took Swallow the Sun three years just to release a demo, *Out of This Gloomy Light*, but the work was worth it as they were soon picked up by Firebox Records who put out their first LP, *The Morning Never Came*, in 2003. In '05 Firebox released StS's second album, *Ghosts of Loss*, and it won them a spot in the Finnish charts for six weeks. For those unaware, Swallow the Sun's sound is similar to many a gothic doom and operatic metal band out there, but they hold well enough on their own merits. The music, like Amorphis, Paradise Lost and My Dying Bride, is quite heavy doom: slow and pounding with the metallic riffs. Like the aforementioned they also filter in parts of melancholic bitterness and sorrowful lush melodies - sometimes gloomy, sometimes symphonic. The vocals are a highlight, as they range from death metal guttural growls to black metal screeches and shrieks to gothic singing. Last year they switched over to Spinefarm Records and released this new, depressingly dark masterwork. The *Hope* LP has also been released in North America by Candlelight Records, but that version lacks the track "These Low Lands" which is an (English translated) cover version of Finnish Sabbath-worshippers Timo Rautiainen & Trio Niskalaukaus' "Alavilla Mailla". Guest appearances on this record include Amorphis' Tomi Joutsen (vocals on the TR&TN cover) and Jonas Renske of Katatonia on "The Justice of Suffering". If you don't want to pay import prices I would opt for the later, but you'll be missing out, and with this newest release you'll want to hear every spirit-crushing and soul-blackening note. (May 5, 2007)

TOTAL FUCKING DESTRUCTION - Zen and the Art of Total Fucking Destruction CD (Translation Loss) This is almost like a triple release. It's a grindcore EP, an acoustic / unplugged EP and a live music video EP. Let's examine the band first, shall we? TFD was started by Brutal Truth drummer Richard Hoak, and this Philly-based four piece make a mass of thrash noise comparable to Napalm Death in an auto accident with The Ex, or if power violence trio Spazz had a word or two in an alley with leather thrashers Hirax. Their latest work (with previous three demos released on one CD as *Compact Disc Version 1.0* by Bones Brigade Records in '04) is a re-release originally on Japan's Ritual

Records in 2006, and is a musical half-hour split in two - nine originals and a Terrorizer cover (with standout tracks being "Mad Pig Disease" and "Corpse Position") in a unique blending of grind and groove. Following those ten metal masterpieces are four tracks that could air on college radio. Groovy bass leads and almost blues-inspired guitar twang. Admittedly, the lyrics are rather simple, especially when tracks like "Nihilism, Emptiness, Nothingness, Nonsense", "Grindcore Salesman" and "Bio-Satanic Terrorist Attack" spew forth little in words other than their titles' sake. That aside, they're still socio-political jabs at mass herdism, as well as drug addiction and consumerism. After the tunes are done, take the disc and put it in your computer to watch a full set (on Quicktime video) of nine songs live at Hazel's (West Philadelphia), where you get four from the record and five from earlier works. Does it make me less of a man that I kinda like the acoustic stuff almost as much? Well, it makes me less of a metalhead, that's for sure. (May 5, 2007)

THE MENTORS - El Duce Vita DVD (Music Video Distributors) The masked trio known as The Mentors formed in Seattle during 1976, and later hightailed it to become an L.A. mainstay in 1978. They say it was for bigger shows and a better music scene, but it may have been that they were chased out of the liberal city for coining the musical genre of 'rape rock'. Even so, they didn't release material until 1982's *Get Up and Die*, also known as *The Trash Bag* EP (on Mystic Records), but they haven't stopped since. And though they're still around today, it's without their best known member, El Duce, who was killed when he didn't hear the train's whistle blowing. For many (many!) of you, this will probably be the first time you've ever seen a Mentors music video. No, I ain't talkin'bout live footage, I'm talking full-blown music video. Remember though, it's The Mentors, so you may already know that if you haven't seen 'em it's because of tons of curse words, violence, mature content and, of course, nudity. These videos are freakin' hilarious!! "On the Rag" has a bit of bleeding from... guess where? "Forty Ouncer" has tons of drug use. "Golden Shower" has El Duce bearing it all, along with girls taking the stream along with a steam (if you get my drift). "DonkeyDick" had women going down on a rather large floppy dildo. "When You're Horny, You're Horny" was the tamest of the bunch with barely any nudity. "All Women Are Insane" was like a mix between band documentary and Discovery Channel doc, with shots of the band's life combined with footage of animals humping. "Sex Slave" was my favorite, for it's lyrics as well as half-a-dozen dancing naked chicks chained with dog collars. Between the videos there's interview clips with El Duce himself, Sickie Wifebeater, Gen from the Genitorturners, as well as clips from the U.S. Senate's 'Porn Rock' hearings from 1985. Aside from the seven rare music videos, you get three live shows - one at 7th Street Entry in Minneapolis, one at The Country Club in Los Angeles, and another in Austin, TX at some unknown juke-joint all filmed sometime in the early 1990s. Fun? Well, knowing it's all a sick gag - you bet. Misogynistic? Hell no, I love women and think everyone should own one! (May 5, 2007)

SONS OF PERDITION - The Kingdom Is On Fire CD (Gravewax) Damn, this is a brimstone and hellfire of a record! I'm getting ahead of myself. Sons of Perdition is more fittingly a son of perdition, as it's basically Denton, Texas local Zebulon Whatley with help of friends and enemies alike. This is their debut record, though Sons did previously release a track (Anhelio" - also found on this disc) on Gravewax's compilation *Yell's From the Crypt*. If there is such a style as Gothic country, this is it - well, at least half the record is. Step aside Hank Ray, as the first half of this debut is a funeral march of depression wash in moonshine, blood and the Bible. A few comparisons have been made to Nick Cave, and I have to agree. A lot of the tracks bring to mind The Bad Seeds if they had gotten into more Americana. For the second half of this CD, Sons of Perdition waltz through some pretty straight Texas country (yes, many states do differ in their brand of C&W... honky tonk, lubbock, neo, red dirt, etc), and while it travels well, I do so love the first half a hell of a lot more. Thirteen tracks (how fitting) of the blackest and bleakest country and western tunes moaning about the depths of Hell in the human spirit, sea monsters, and the Civil War. A few guests appear like apparitions, such as Lonesome Wyatt of Those Poor Bastards lending a hand on "Blood in the Valley", and additional violin on "Burial at Sea" from Tamara Cauble. This album is an aural ride through the most parched sections of our country indeed - a sort of Hank Williams meets The Birthday Party. Now where in tar nation is my whiskey? (May 5, 2007)

MAN OR ASTRO-MAN? - Time Bomb DVD (Cherry Red) Another great concert of a band I wish I had the pleasure of seeing live. Sadly, south Florida wasn't a big attraction to many bands - and I understand it, cuz it's so far out of the way. 400 miles to get there meant 400 miles back to anywhere else. That's why you have to love many of these Cherry Red live shows. You get the chance to experience the fun and sometimes fury of a live set by bands you may never have seen or will get to see. For any dummies out there, Man or Astroman? was a mix of synthpunk and surf-rock with running themes of sci-fi, B-movies and film noir. They started in the early 1990s and released their first LP (*Is It... Man or Astroman?*) in '93 and put out another seven before disbanding around 2002 (though reforming briefly in 2006 just for the 25th Anniversary of Touch & Go Records). Their almost-lyricless approach helped focus on the music, which became an almost psychedelic swirl of garage rock with speedy surf guitar and trippy keyboards, peppered with samples of strange and unknown movies from years long forgotten. Many liken them to Shadowy Men On A Shadowy Planet or The Monomen, and I would have to agree, yet they're faster and a little more experimental than either. This concert was shot at the Edinburgh, Scotland venue Castle Rock in 1994, so it was early enough to catch them in their prime, yet late enough to still have them playing a few of their crowd favorites and singles ("Time Bomb", "Cowboy Playing Bombora" and "Destination Venus"). So, yes, the theme song from *Mystery Science Theater* is here! (Now bring back that show!!). The seventeen song, fifty-five minute set was captured on multi-cameras at many angles from all over the place - in crowd and up on stage. The crowd is equally energetic, as is the lightshow, which helps thrust the set of space-punk tunes into a frenzy. I hear the band are requesting fans to submit live footage to compile another DVD, but until then get beamed up by this live slice of garage-damaged, surf-prog. (May 5, 2007)

HIGH COUNCIL - Motion Denied CD EP (High Council) This is a good second outing for this band. High Council is a quartet from Philadelphia that play power metal, with a touch of Tool. They formed in 2004 after the breakup of drummer / keyboardist and guitarist / vocalist's first project. High Council self-released their debut (the *All Rise* EP) in 2005, and have done the same with their follow-up EP, *Motion Denied*. The songs have a operatic power metal vibe along the lines of Edguy and Blind Guardian (they even play flute throughout), with some NWBHM (new wave of British heavy metal) elements ala Iron Maiden (especially on track three, "Dystopia"). The Tool comparisons come around when the band goes heavy - then guitars crunch and the vocals become more powerful, giving vocalist Saunders a Maynard-esque quality (most notably on the opening track, "Samsül's Blizzard"). The highlights of High Council are the vocals, plus the guitar solos (major thumbs up on "Too Late Shall It Be Known Unto You"), though the song structures themselves are nothing to sneeze at. I mean, they're not highly technical or extremely complicated, but are very well written and quite powerful. Also, while these numbers are recorded well, if HC had label backing, not to mention a big bucks producer, the sound would improve a hundred-fold and probably be pretty bombastic. High Council remind of a lot of the newer material on Candlelight Records, and it's a shame they're not from Finland or Norway, as they might get a bit more notice. It seems that while power metal is big in the states, no band from the U.S. playing this style gets any credit. Almost as if you had to come from northern lands of ice and mountains to be taken seriously for playing such tunes. Well, it sounds like the streets of Philly are a good place to start looking into it. (May 5, 2007)



SAXON - The Inner Sanctum CD / DVD (SPV) Yes, this is the band from the late 70s! 1977 to be exact, and from Yorkshire, England. It sounds like time has served them well, as the music is powerful and the vocals are superb. Saxon, for those that don't know shit, were (and still are) a big part of the New Wave of British Heavy Metal that washed upon the U.S. shores in early 1980, along with the likes of Iron Maiden and Judas Priest. Their newest release is an amazing amalgam of power metal, speed metal and NWOBHM. Double bass drum beats, dueling guitars with excellent solos (Paul Quinn is still here, baby!), and very well-sung vocals by original lead Biff Byford that never misses the mark. While hauling their old sound into maximum overdrive, they've beefed it up with contemporary crunch and speed, probably thanks to new drummer Nigel Glockler. Though there is one ballad number on this LP ("Red Star Falling"), the rest of the tracks are usually high paced and pretty powerful. Along with the new album CD disc, this release comes in a limited edition version featuring a second disc, which is a DVD and plays for your eyes and ears live tracks, music videos, outtakes, as well as interview footage, and film of the vocalist's house on fire (which canceled their first tour in 1980). While that second disc is a sweet addition, this new release stands well enough on its own without the extras of visuals. Nice to hear folks aging with grace, yet remaining as vicious as when they were only lads. (May 5, 2007)

MARDUK - Dark Endless CD / MARDUK - Those of the Unlight CD / MARDUK - Opus Nocturne CD / MARDUK - Heaven Shall Burn... When We Are Gathered CD (Regain)

This black metal outfit's releases haven't been easy to get for many in North America, but Regain Records has decided to change all that. Formed by Morgan Steinmeyer Håkansson around 1990 in Norrköping (Sweden), Marduk set out to write some of the bleakest and darkest music available in those days. They fared pretty well in that area too. In 1991 they released two demos (the self-titled and *Fuck Me Jesus* tapes), later getting label notice and releasing full albums in 1992 until today. These four discs are the North American re-releases of their first four albums from 1991, 1993, 1994 and 1996 (originally on the Swedish label No Fashion Records, and later on French label Osmose Records) along with new covers and bonus material. It's fun to review these all at once because I'm playing every album back to back and witnessing the growth of a band from seeming imitators to constructive creators. Their first LP, 1991's *Dark Endless*, is good, but for black metal it seems more influenced by the American school of death metal, though the lyrics fit along BM lines. This release is very fast-paced, and there's not a lot of melody around the lines of Burzum or fellow Swedish acts, but more like Tampa-based bands. The extras on this disc is a live show of five songs from the same year as the album. Up next is *Those of the Unlight*

from 1993, and shows years of growth in only a brief span of time. The speed-picking is great, the blastbeats are just as fast, though moments of slower material seeps in, as well as melody (especially on tracks like "Wolves" and "Echoes from the Past"). The guitar solos smoke, and the song structures are much better balanced. A way better sophomore effort, and it's probably my favorite of all the Marduk discs. Oh, the bonus material is live footage from '93 you can view by popping this disc in your computer. In a simple year it seems that the speed was increased even more so and a more black metal structure found it's way to Marduk's third album *Opus Nocturne*. Wonderful overlaid guitar work, one buzzing with the vocals, as one melodically structuring the blastbeat tempos into oblivion. Many tracks feature operatic and symphonic keyboards that bring to mind a bleaker and devilish playground for our lost souls. This is the release that picks up their status as black metal heavyweights. The extras included with this LP are four studio rehearsal tracks from a session in early 1994. Last of the Marduk represses is *Heaven Shall Burn... When We Are Gathered* (1996). The music seems even faster than on any of the previous releases, and the beats are almost machinelike and remind me of early Bathory, but faster.

The vocals are still well done in the half-growled / half-shrieked insanity the likes of Dimmu Borgir or early Cradle of Filth. Calls to Impaled Nazarene or some Immortal tracks may abound, as they have grown leaps and bounds past their first release. The bonuses on this are six tracks that did not appear on the original release (on Osmose Records, which contained only eight). That was a fun near four hours that really took me back to the old school of black metal, yet still stands up fairly well today. (May 5, 2007)

VORKUTA - Into the Chasms of Lunacy CD EP (Paragon) Hailing from Pannonia, the European land of the Huns, currently known as Hungary, Vorkuta is a four-piece, which started in 2002. Originally calling themselves Fjord and self-releasing the demo *Apocalypse*, they were unpleased with the results and decided to start anew. Along with the name change came the self-pressed 2003 demo *Where Only Darkness Dwells*. That finally got them the notice of several labels, and they put out a slew of material appearing on split releases with Verdeleth in '04, Osiron and later Hell in '05. Those splits lead to more collaborations and split releases with Morbid Audial Plaguestorm and Helldrinkerz II in 2006, as well as appearing on the Bathory tribute record put out by Black Goat Records. On their debut EP they combine the traditional black metal structures of Darkthrone and Bathory, with (and this might throw a few black metal fans for a loop) a lush, textured and sometimes dreamy guitar work that many shoegazer acts use, as well as *Disintegration*-era Cure. For example: track five ("Vorkuta") opens up like a Cocteau Twins song, only to kick in to Burzum-esque metal then onto a Converge-like screamo dirge and back to lush guitar works. Still true to the black metal sound, yet going a bit beyond it. There's tons to come from this busy Hungarian camp, as they are planing more split works with Abigail, Marblebog, Kratonas and Inferno. (May 5, 2007)

WRNLRD - Cperadt CD (Small Sacrifice) This is the fourth CD release for Wrnlrd (*Mask of Hate*, *Mldthr* and *In From the Night Herd* - all previously being self released) and the first release for Small Sacrifice. Wrnlrd also shared a split 3" disc with Buer titled *Avulsion* (a limited to 50 disc of a live performance). Wrnlrd is a black metal / noise project by one unnamed soul from Arlington, Virginia, and with his previous EP (*In From the Night Herd*) I thought this would be a little lighter listening, but Wrnlrd has returned to the band's original roots. Both *Mask of Hate* and *Mldthr* were intense mixes of improvised programmed drums, speed picking guitar, and tortured vocals buried in a cemetery of feedback, drones and more feedback, while *In From the Night Herd* was closer in the lines of ambient music and sonic landscapes than the first two. With the newest release Wrnlrd has taken what he's known for best and pulled it together to present his best work yet. Punishing, insanely fast-paced, loudly distorted guitars and vocals, with moments of electronic fuzz and calm. Twelve tracks of improvised grinding black metal (and thirteenth track - possibly a cover song, but I'm not familiar with it) played in a very unique, as well as threatening way. (May 5, 2007)

MASTERPLAN - MKII CD (Candlelight)

This power metal album threw me for a loop. Now, if I grew up on Dokken, Judas Priest, Warlock and Iron Maiden, why did Masterplan's *MKII* throw me?

Well, it's great melodic power metal, but has a few pop (and even gospel) elements in some of the choruses, and even in a few of the keyboards

riffs... and more so because it actually works. Pretty well might I add. Masterplan started up in Germany back in 2002. A few changes have been made as members have come and gone - and gone is original vocalist Jørn Lande, and replaced by Mike DiMeo (of The Lizards, and Riot). Masterplan also added ex-Rage member Mike Terrana (who also recorded all the drums here as their drummer split before recording). I have to admit I have not heard, or even heard of, their previous works, *Masterplan* (The End Records, 2003) and *Aeronautics* (Candlelight Records, 2005), so I'm not sure if they're treading new ground, or if they've been kicking this sound around for years, but I feel fine being schooled when the tunes are this good. The poppier moments are on tracks like "Lost and Gone", "I'm Gonna Win" and "Heart of Darkness", but then they seriously rev up the metal on tracks like "Warriors Cry", "Watching the World", "Enemy" and the excellent "Masterplan". Imagine if Queensryche had larger musical testicles, if Iced Earth cheered up a bit and smiled a little more, or if Helloween had a more modern sound. If you can picture any of that, then you may already be a fan of bands like Symphony X, Edguy, Dragonforce or Blind Guardian, so I suggest you check out Masterplan if they've yet to be spotted by your radar. (May 5, 2007)

DESTROY ALL MONSTERS - Grow Live Monsters DVD ([Music Video Distributors](#)) *Grow Live Monsters* isn't just another collection of music videos. *Grow Live Monsters* isn't just another short film collection. It's a wild amalgam of both... and then some. Destroy All Monsters is an art collective from Ann Arbor, Michigan which began in the very early 1970s, as a hodgepodge of Futurist / Dadaist multiplicity, German psychedelic Krautrock, and the film stylings of Kenneth Anger and Jack Smith. *Grow Live Monsters* was originally released on VHS in 1995 to coincide with the 20th anniversary reunion of DAM, and now it gets the proper DVD treatment of a re-release (meaning it comes with a whole lot of extras!). You get the original collection of fourteen short films found on the tape, which ranged from 1971 to 1976. A no-to-low budget mix of 8mm, super 8 and 16mm films that catch the eye, tickle the rib, challenge the ear and boggle the mind. The disc extras include "Monster's Redux" (five short films from 2005 blending a collage of outtakes, concert footage, band photos and flyers, with soundtrack excerpts from their 3 disc box set, *DAM 1974 - 1976*), "Shake A Lizard Tail" aka "Rust Belt Rump" (a 1996 film produced as a backdrop for their Japanese performances featuring latenight TV ads, stage dancers and clips from forgotten monster movies), "Seattle Invasion 2000" (pre-show, show and after-show footage of a three hour performance at Seattle's CoCA gallery), and a huge gallery and slideshow of photos entitled "Hometown Horrors". This release also comes with a glossy booklet containing an interview with DAM mastermind Cary Loren from a 2003 issue of Grey Matter (#14), as well as a filmography. You know you missed out on the original tapes, so here's your chance to play catch-up - and you get all those freebies to boot. This DVD is a must for any experimental film freak, a must for lovers of the avant-garde, and a must for most fans of noise music and no wave. (May 5, 2007)

STREET SMART CYCLIST - s/t 7" ([Our Neighborhood](#)) Street Smart Cyclist is a sextet from Bethlehem, Pennsylvania that throw around emocore hooks and poppy singalong catchiness with a call-and-response urgency of the DC scene. One of the things I like about these tracks is their minimal use of the riff. I mean, they have them, but the guitarists (three of them) are mostly fiddling round and picking high, rather than just pumping out chords. The raspy, yet emotional, vocals fits the music well. Their formula may bring bands like Braid and Cap'n Jazz to mind, maybe even some of the slower material from At the Drive-In or Joan of Arc, though many of the uninitiated will lump them along the Gainesville sound of Hot Water Music. The highlight is the A side ("Hoods Up!") with its hand clapping and chanting chorus. The artwork for the cover is so thick it feels like velvet, and the vinyl is blue - and while those are nice touches, this sucker is limited to only 300 copies, so you may not get the chance to please the ears and the eyes. Hurry, and you can sing along with me. (May 5, 2007)

YEAR OF NO LIGHT - Nord CD ([Crucial Blast](#)) From the first few moments of the opening number ("Sélénite"), I knew I was going to just fall in love with this CD. I totally understand why Crucial Blast Records wanted to re-release this LP for North American ears. It needed to be done - we were totally missing out, folks! Simple as that. Now, before I go on and on, let me tell the story of Year Of No Light. YONL is a Bordeaux, France five-piece gathering some time in the year 2001 from the ashes of Metronome Charisma, Deja Mort and Nexus Sun. In 2004, French label Radar Swarm Records released their eight song demo (which I urge everyone to hunt down after they pick up *Nord*, but at only 150 copies made, I wish you luck, though you can download all the tracks via the band's [website](#)). In 2006 Year Of No Light released a proper full length album, again on Radar Swarm Records (with a double-vinyl version from Atropine Records and E-Vinyl Records), but it was mostly available in Europe. That's where the good people at Crucial Blast Records realized we silly Americans were once again (as in the case of Monarch!) missing out on good music. This is a record of epic proportions... in song structure, and to gab at length about. "L'angoisse Du Veilleur de Nuit D'Autoroute les Soirs D'Alarme à Accident" is a mix of Neurosis ethereal hardcore, Neil Perry screamo, and My Bloody Valentine shoegazer atmospherics. "Traversée" almost had me in a puddle of tears, as the dynamics between gloomy guitar play, crushing dirge metal, and extremely tortured vocals all played on my emotions. "Tu as Fait de Moi un Homme Meilleur" had such a bold melody constantly being rent asunder by a hooky repetitious doom riff. "Somnambule" opens up to pummeling the ears and tugging the heart strings using the, by this track, familiar dueling guitar work of doom and gloom, only to morph into a quiet, almost-ambient wonder in the vein of German duo Troum. "Par Économie Pendant la Crise on Éteint la Lumière au Bout du Tunnel" is the best comparable track to Cult of Luna, Isis Mastodon or Knut, though the lush keyboards do bring to mind The Cure's highlight, *Disintegration*. The disc closes with "La Bouche de Vitus Bering", a funeral dirge of piano, painful screaming, and a wall of guitar. Crucial Blast's presentation of this release does it justice, with its multi-panel foldout and eye-catching art. This is one of the top three records, along with Sound Like Violence's *With Blood On My Hands* and Nachtmystium's *Instinct: Decay*, of the past twelve months. (May 5, 2007)



GIDGET GEIN - The Law of Diminishing Returns CD / GIDGET GEIN - Suspension of Disbelief CD ([Gidget Gein](#)) For those unfamiliar with Gidget Gein's work, he was originally a member of Florida band The Spooky Kids (Marilyn Manson's original outfit), and later moving to NYC to form Dali Gaggers. Upon return to Florida he threw himself into artwork becoming a part of the Unpop Art Movement, but music was still in his veins, and here we have the proof. This is a review of two separate releases, so first I'll cover *The Law of Diminishing Returns* CD release, which is a forty-five minute work of ambient structures and avant-garde cut-up music, with guest vocals from LA drag queen Squeaky Blonde.

This disc is an accompaniment to a G. Gein art piece by the name 'Incase of Emergency Break Heart', of which a small photo is contained in the layout, and the musical work is a very trippy and spacey, yet haunting and eerie excursion into ambient music, tape loops, psychedelic guitar-play and swirling synths. Gein supplies the track's rhythmic lullful fuzz bass, as well as accordion, and jews harp, while guitar and coproduction were courtesy of Brian Butler. I'm looking forward to the books that

are supposed to shed more light on this work (*Rigs, Gimmicks and Other Sets of Works, Gollywood Babylon and Euphoric Recall*). The CD release is Unpop artist's *Suspension of Disbelief*

and is a (de)composition of the sounds Gein heard while creating his 'UnPoP Can' painting (which is his take on Andy Warhol's 'Soup Cans' prints). This recording is way more bizarre than the previously reviewed piece, though delightfully so. It's structure and sound is highly inspired by the Parisian Dadaists of the early 1900s, with its sample-heavy looping of animal noises (feral and domestic), unintelligible speeches, laughing children, and a Sousa-like symphony march that at times is separated and at times crashes and collides. Unlike *The Law of Diminishing Returns*, no instruments were used besides antique toys, a gramophone and a Mac computer. Again, more info will be released via the aforementioned books, but until then you can listen and make up your own story to what's behind these creepy and crazy cacophonies. (May 5, 2007)

BLUTCH - Materia CD ([At A Loss](#))

Raging from the town of Doms (in Belgium) these three doom hounds are slowly paving everyone under with their Melvins-esque tinged doom-metal. Before *At A Loss* Recordings got a hold of this European trio they had already self-released two CD demos, as well as later releasing two full-length albums on a Belgium label, *Enjoy your Flight* (on Delboy Records 2001) and *Fra Diavolo* (2003, also on Delboy). Forming at the very end of the last millennium, they're been carving a sludgy path forward with their downtuned guitars, as it wasn't until this release that they've gotten a good hold of North American ears. Definitely don't judge this by the opener, cuz it's over within seconds. "Beguiling Comer" is an epic ocean of wave after wave of oncoming riffs. "Masamune" is a sludgy mass of metal ending in an almost tribal drone. "Moving Ground" picks up the pace a bit with its beat and screams, but only until the closing ambient track ("Confutatis") lulls you off the record with its eerie hums and echoing clacks. The band seems very 'hands-on' because a members had a hand in everything from the recording to the layout (done by drummer Pask Storme) - just one of the many freedoms of independent labels. I'm sure many an American and Canadian will be thrilled to now have the pleasure of their ears being rent asunder by the hard rock / doom riffs of Blutch. (May 5, 2007)

BIG AUDIO DYNAMITE - Live: E=MC2 DVD ([Cherry Red](#)) There's a line from the Big Audio Dynamite track "E=MC2" that I always use, 'Somebody I never met, but either way I know,' and with greater use of the internet, especially with the rise of [MySpace](#), I use it more than ever. I agree with post-modernist thinker Michel Foucault, in that we are now more connected, yet disconnected, than ever before. Wait... where was I? Oh yeah, Big Audio Dynamite. In late 1983 The Clash, prodded by their manager Bernie Rhodes, decided to give Mick Jones the ax. It was probably alright in Jones' book, as he went on to form Big Audio Dynamite with film director Don Letts (*The Punk Rock Movie*), and luckily had nothing to do with The Clash's 1986 release *Cut the Crap*. Soon after the split with Strummer and crew Mick's new project took off in alternative circles, as it was a mix of what he was later bringing to The Clash's table: hip-hop, reggae, and a bit of dance rock. In 1990, Jones scrapped the lineup and reformed the band as Big Audio Dynamite II (later in '94 changing it to simply, Big Audio). This disc is actually B.A.D.II, and contains a near hour of the band shot (on multi-angle cameras) in London's Town and Country Club in front of a sellout crowd. They play all the early songs I really like "Medicine Show", "E=MC2" and "The Bottom Line", as well as the later chart-topper "Rush" and even a Prince cover ("1999"). This was a great video captured for fans, as well as for folks - like me - who never got to see the band live. (May 5, 2007)

VARIOUS ARTISTS - 910 Noise: Volume One CD ([910 Noise](#)) This is the first release for this noise label, and it's a damn good one at that, providing an aural outlet for many unknowns in the 910 area code (North Carolina). The tracks range from simple ambient to harsher elements of power electronics and even avant / cut-up method acts. The CD disc (which looks like a record, complete with grooves) opens with one track from Mr. Stonecipher, which is a mix of power electronics and an almost IDM sound similar to Aphex Twin - very good stuff. Uva Tena provide a double dose of ambient synths and humming drones, while Barefoot Machete follow them up with two almost danceable numbers. Next up is a single track from Double Suicide (Mike B) and his depressingly delightful guitar-driven almost-shoegazer sound. A shame only one song, as his work is one of the highlights of this disc. Puke on Mike deliver two tracks of an industrial-meets-noise cut-up, and Subterrene (another highlight) bring to mind an eerier sound of what you might find played at a rave's 'chill room'. Vanishing Cream play two near-child-like keyboard frenzies just before Lath comes in with two industrial-meets-noise numbers in the vein of early SPK. Carl Kruger tinkers with knobs as sweeteners screech the highest of pitches, all as bass hits its lowest levels. The awesome Mindcrosser begins the wrap-up with two looped soundscapes that bring to mind a cold wasteland of hopelessness. Authorless provides the disc's outro with a lo-fi distortion of field recordings and found sounds. I hear there's already a Volume Two in the preparation stages, and by what's in Volume One, I can hardly wait to hear what keeps coming out of the 910 area code. (May 5, 2007)

SASQUATCH - II CD ([Small Stone](#))

This Los Angeles trio began to turn up their amps a few years back, forming in 2001 and their love of metal still runs from the member's old hometowns (City of Steel, Philly and Motor City, Detroit) through their veins. In '04 Small Stone released their self-titled debut of fuzzed-out jams and 70's inspired hard rock, and second time around is just as powerful of a match. Their newest LP is a fifty minute, near dozen, hook-laden, riff rockers the likes of stoner rock bands Atomic Bitchwax or Colour Haze, with possibly the biggest comparison most will throw around will be to Kyuss or Unida. Sasquatch bring a bit more to the table as they also have an old-school Soundgarden feel to their tunes - SST Records-era Soundgarden that is (*Ultramega OK*, etc). Dollars to dope if Keith Gibbs doesn't sound kinda like Chris Cornell. They also have a great guitar sound that reminds me of *In Search of...* or *The Action is Go Fu Manchu* - deep with crunch, a little dirty and distorted... just right for rock-n-roll. Sometimes the music is steamrollin' hard rock ("Seven Years to Saturn" and "Off the Rails"), while there are also slower moments of groove and guitar wizardry ("The Judge" and "What Have You Done"), and even a few lush numbers ("Nikki" and "Catalina"). They say third time's the charm, so with two rockin' albums to their credit, number three should be exploding heads clean off shoulders. (May 5, 2007)

FIFTY CALIBER KISS - Armor Class Invincible CD ([Universal Warning](#)) This Reading, Pennsylvania quintet are going to set the hardcore-metal world aflame. Seriously, with the record hardly out yet, they've already had their music featured on The Discovery Channel's *Great Biker Build-Off*, as well as producing a very sexy, yet awesomely morbid [music video](#) for their album track, "Hide the Razor" (featuring God's Girls, a racier version of Suicide Girls). With ex-members of Mushroom, Out to Win (on guitars), and Wolfpac (on bass) this new outfit is musically and vocally comparable to Every Time I Die, Poison the Well and Evergreen Terrace, putting forth a mad hardcore energy with a great metal thrust, and a hidden rock groove underneath it all, fronted by throaty yells, as well as a bit of melodic backing vocals. They even do guitar solos that scorch - something which is rarely found in metalcore acts. Highlights of this disc include "Hide the Razor", "Epicness of Saganess" and my favorite from these guys, "High Is the New Low". If You Tube ever crashes and you need to see the fine ladies in FCK's well-worth watching video, you can always pop this disc into your computer and replay the enhanced video over and over again (especially that blue-haired beauty in the bathroom scene). An excellent debut, that makes me interested in seeing where they take their sophomore already. I gotta be patient. Hell, I'll just watch the video a few more hundred times. (May 5, 2007)

ARCH ENEMY - Black Earth CD ([Regain](#))

In 1996, upon the ashes of Carcass, guitarist Michael Amott (also ex-Carnage and Spiritual Beggars) decided he still wanted to get a lot of anger out, and created the Swedish behemoth Arch Enemy to mix melody, mayhem and technical skills. Asking his brother, Christopher from Carnage, Johan Liiva from the band Armageddon (though in 2001 he was replaced with metal babe Angela Gossow) on vocal duties, and a few others to

thrash out. *Black Earth*

is a North American reissue of their first album from 1997, previously only available as an import from the European label Wrong Again Records. Musically, Arch Enemy take elements from many schools of metal - from death metal they reap speed and power, from thrash metal they take groove and structure, from black metal a bit of melody and bleakness, and finally from the Scott Burns' school of Tampa metal they take tons of progressive breaks, technical fills and enterprising bridges. To hear all of that mashed up as one number, check out track five ("Cosmic Retribution") with its metal groove and neo-folk interlude. Some are long crawlers of thrash ("Eureka" and "Fields of Desolation" are five minutes or more), while some of the heavy hitters ("Demonality" and "Time Capsule") are but a minute long. It only being their first album, you can hear why they are still around today, as good music is meant to play on. This re-release holds three extra tracks not on the original ("Losing Faith", "The Ides of March" and "Aces High") as well as a music video for the album's opening number ("Bury Me An Angel"). Nice to see that those in the States can get their hands on a few classics without paying the overseas prices, especially with some extras. (May 5, 2007)

ENSIFERUM - Victory Songs CD ([Spinefarm](#))

Ensiferum (being Latin for 'sword bearing') is a neo-folk Viking metal band hailing from Helsinki, Finland. Founded in 1995 and calling their style 'heroic folk metal', as their lyrics are inspired by literature and poetry, such as the Finnish epic *Kalevala*. They released a demo in 1997 and two more in '99, which got them noticed by Spinefarm Records, who released Ensiferum's self titled album in 2001, their sophomore *Iron* (in 2004) and a 2006 EP (*Dragonheads*). Their newest work doesn't stray far from the formula that got them the notice they deserved. While it brings to mind bands like Amon Amarth and Windir, it also makes me think of power metal bands like Dragonforce and Symphony X. Metallic gallop, excellent guitar solos and riffage thrust ahead, while backed up by keyboards, and traditional folk instruments like flutes and bagpipes. The vocals (former Norhter member Petri Toivonen) range from tough growling to cleaning singing, and are often backed by spirited folky chants and beer pub choruses. Though I am familiar with Viking metal, power metal and thrash metal, I can't say I've ever heard a band like Ensiferum. This is a rather unique take on genres that have been around some time, but have never before been blended together like this. Oh, and for North American audiences who don't want to pay an import price, Candlelight Records is releasing it for you domestically. (May 5, 2007)

**ZWEIZZ - The Yawn of the New Age CD ([Vendlus](#)) First off - I love the pink on black layout. Still, I won't judge this book...**

er, CD, by its cover. Svein Egil Hattevik is the man behind the Zweizz tag. Once a part of Norwegian black metal act DHG (Dødheimsgard), as well as Fleurety, he decided to trek out on his own around 2003 (though also a current member of Pronounced "Sex" and Umoral). He released his first work as Zweizz in 2004 with the 7" EP *Black Necrotic Obfuscation* (also on Vendlus Records), and now comes at us with a thirteen track work of electronic mayhem. *The Yawn of the New Age*

is a somewhat trance inspiring, fear inducing ride that mixes gabber techno, power electronics, minimalist ambient IDM and gamewave. When I listen to some tracks ("Thank You In the Face" and "Catacombe Dei Cappucini") I'm taken back to my childhood, running around a playground and sharing good times with friends now gone. Other times (during "Nowadays Only the Boring Everything Is So Frustrating" or "Big Black Dick") I feel like I'm being chased by infected zombie-like hoards not that far off of *28 Days Later*. While others still ("Musick is Organized Sound") were a mix of both - making me feel like a sweet, innocent child running from monsters. Interestingly, track four is Zweizz's own take / cover version of Immortal's "Blacker Than Darkness". While this won't be a hit on the dance floor or the mosh pit, I see this making a great movie score. Better mind-music, than body-music, I guess. Play this looped, while reading a good horror book. You won't be disappointed... just creeped out. (May 5, 2007)

THE RUINS OF BEVERAST - Rain Upon the Impure CD ([Ván](#)) Talk about black metal... I had to go outside just to read the insert. The black letters on glossy black paper give me a preview of the CD's dark and bleak music enveloped by an almost as dark layout. The Ruins of Beverast is a German act that consists of one man, ex-Nagelfar drummer Alexander Von Meilenwald. Beginning with the 2003 demo, *The Furious Waves of Damnation* and on to the CD / double LP, *Unlock the Shrine* (2004, originally released by Ván Records, and now re-released by Battle Kommand Records), this newest slab is possibly the lengthiest recording I own (at a few seconds under 80 minutes). The music is as black as Satan's soul, with moments of blastbeat-mania and others with crawling doom. Whether slow as sludge or kicking in your head with mad beats-per-minutes, the music is covered in feedback, and at times flows with an operatic feel, complete with pagan-esque horns and Gregorian chanting. I hear early Mayhem and Burzum, as well as later Blut Aus Nord, Lurker of Chalce and Nihil Nocturne, in a sort of Nordic metal blending with shoegazer talents, or if pagan metal absorbed even more Gothic elements. The vocals flow from growling and grunts to an almost wolf-like howl singing (which admittedly I've never heard before and works really well) and on to an echo-laden Gothic speak-sing found in bands like My Dying Bride. Vocals and music together on this release can inspire trances or riots, meditation and mayhem. A true highlight in the black metal scene, and possibly this year's best release in this genre thus far. (May 5, 2007)

STALAGGH - Projekt Misanthropia CD ([Autopsy Kitchen](#))

This power electronic / black metal band began in Holland (around the year 2000) and takes their name from the German stalag prison camps (short for Stammlager), while adding a 'g' and 'h' at the end to abbreviate 'global holocaust', as their message is total human annihilation. While they hate the comparisons to Abruption, they are apt (though Abruption uses lyrics). Stalaggh's methods, as well as layouts, and ideology are usually the same: black layout with a face on the cover cover (the artwork of Netherland artist Jeroen van Valkenburg), digipack limited to 1000 copies with titles such as *Projekt Terror* and *Projekt Nihil*

(originally released by New Era Productions from Holland, and Total Holocaust Records in Sweden), along with a thirty to forty minute composition of harsh noise under violent screams of pain, with a little bass, drums and guitars leaking through every now and again - usually improvised. This is their final release, and a good one, but nothing that far different from past efforts. This, plus previous works, is a true insight into harsh noise, as well as dementia. (May 5, 2007)

DECLAN DE BARRA - Song of a Thousand Birds CD ([Translation Loss](#)) This definitely isn't what I, nor probably anyone else, expected from metal label Translation Loss, but it's a good change of pace (and a calm one) from much of what's been coming in to the *FHF* mailbox lately. Declan de Barra was originally a member of the Australian progressive heavy metal outfits Boticelli's Angel and Non-Intentional Lifeform (N.I.L. was on Roadrunner Records), and later began singing for folk / rock quartet Clann Zú (with two albums on G7 Welcoming Committee). With each release it seems de Barra wants to take the volume down a notch - not that it's a bad thing. On his first solo record he does a bit of percussion and guitars, but takes the helm at vocals and composition, and puts forth an LP full of Celtic-tinged neo-folk. "Apple Tree" was a great track that made me think of Nick Cave with a touch of Sigur Rós, as did the track "Slow Dissolve". "Leaves in the Autumn" brought to mind *Towards the Within*-era Dead Can Dance. "Welcome" and "Three Days from Now" both had an alt-country feel the likes of a more depressing Ryan Adams or

Neil Young. A few of the songs have a pop sound, though I don't see the masses making de Barra the next big pop idol (and again - not that it's a bad thing). Other numbers have a gothic, or even apocalyptic folk vibe that made them all the more dark. A decent change of pace from the ear-destroying works I usually get. (May 5, 2007)

STINKING LIZAVETA - Scream of the Iron Iconoclast CD ([At A Loss](#)) The Papadopoulos brothers Alexi (upright bass) and Yanni (guitars), along with beat-provider Cheshire Agusta are back for the fifth time - at least album-wise. This Philadelphia trio poke and provoke many a music critic, not to mention listener, to pigeonhole them to a single category; whether metal, rock, prog, jazz, or doom. And no luck they shall have, cuz these three know how to change it up all over the place. I ain't talking about where one song is metal, and the next one is jazz, but each song an mixture of it all. Picture King Crimson's Fripp having a guitar battle with Theoretical Girls' Branca. A landscape of sensational sonance as if DNA were masters of their instruments or if Melvins decided to add a boatload of jazz licks to their repertoire. The album's title track was a psychedelic metal mix of swirling riffs and funky groove, while "Unreal" (track 6) had the guitars feigning the sounds of violins. Elements of power metal, arena rock, and even reggae ("Soul Retrieval") sneak into tracks every now and again, amongst what's already jammed in there. As with their first release, Big Black / Shellac noise-monger Steve Albini is back behind the soundboard. This new hour of work (as was their last LP, *Caught Between Worlds*) is on At A Loss Recordings, but you're gonna want to groove to so much more, so also check out *III* on Tolotta Records (2001), along with their first two (*Hopelessness and Shame* and *Slaughterhouse*, which have been re-released with bonus tracks). You'll be thanking yourself when caught in the midst of the swirling musical trip that is Stinking Lizaveta. (May 5, 2007)

VARIOUS ARTISTS - Cover Your Tracks CD ([Deep Elm](#)) There's an interesting concept to this release: newer artists on the Deep Elm Records' roster cover tracks from the label's older back catalog. Desert City Soundtrack does The Applesseed Cast. Clair De Lune do Benton Fall's "Angel On Hiatus". Lock and Key deliver "Blindspot" by Brandtson. Free Diamonds perform their take on Muckafurgason. Dan Phillips of Slowride does an acoustic take of The Applesseed Cast's "Fishing In the Sky". Settlefish give us their version of "Will the Violins Be Playing?" by Last Days Of April. And strangely enough, Sounds Like Violence were good enough (they sure are) to be placed on here without covering anyone, but do unleash a previously unreleased track ("No One Knows What We've Got"). While there are a few tracks that blow the others far, far away, I must say that there isn't a stinker in the bunch. Every track on this release is a winner (even the 30 second, unlisted extra track, which got me giggling), and they all pretty much differ in sound, which is a plus for any comp of artists off a single label. There's poppy emocore, hard rock, the Gainesville sound, college / indie rock, postpunk, alt-country, and lush pop. Like the newest Track A Tiger and Clair De Lune CDs, this compilation is limited, so you better not delay, or you'll be missing out. (May 5, 2007)

AMERICAN CHEESEBURGER - s/t 7" EP ([Tsunami](#))

What a fun, though short, ride this was. I would had been a little longer had I not realized to switch from 33 to 45 rpm (that's 'revolutions per minute' to the CD-only crowd). A bit reminiscent of a lot of the early bands on California label Slap-A-Ham (Tsunami Records is from the other coast - Maryland). American Cheeseburger is a four-piece from Athens Georgia featuring drummer Jason Griffin of Tres Kids, and they rock the power-violence for thrills and thrash up songs within a minute or so - sometimes less. The track "Cheeseburger" being the shortest and funnest song on the disc, while the 7" record's closer ("Idle Hands") was the longest track at around two minutes. The music is in the vein of Infest or Spazz, with fast, punky thrash parts usually sliced in half by slow, moshy breakdowns. The vocalist - James 'Equalizer' Greer - does an almost gargling shriek I find more on black metal projects than anything else, though you can make out the lyrics here, but it works for AmCheese. By the look of their MySpace page the road gigs are long and packed together, so these kids are busy, and that's what makes a good band even better. They're on the right track with the tunes and the work-ethic. Thrash on American Cheeseburger... just make mine a soy patty. (May 5, 2007)

BLOOD TSUNAMI - Thrash Metal CD ([Candlelight](#))

What an apt title for this forty minute ride of thrash metal mayhem. This Oslo, Norway quartet feature new blood, as well as an ex-member of Emperor (drummer Faust Eithun). Forming in 2004, and with the release of only a demo they were touring all over their home country, and soon got the notice of some labels. On Blood Tsunami's debut LP much of the riffs and breakdowns bring to my mind newer schools of metalcore the likes of Darkest Hour, Dead to Fall and As I Lay Dying, but the awesome guitar solos are pure old school in the vein of Overkill, Exodus and Testament. There are moments of European thrash (Sodom, Kreator) and American thrash (Slayer, Nuclear Assault), and the vocals (done by Pete Evil, host of Norwegian Mtv's Headbanger's Ball) are a raspy screech more familiar with black metal, but they fit here just fine and bring something newer to the thrash table. While they do have slower moments, and the previously mentioned breakdowns, they usually keep the beats fast and furious at over 300 bpm. They get my praise alone for the ten-minute "Godbeater", which is a punishing mid-paced, riff-mad instrumental featuring guitar solo after guitar solo. The Saxon-esque cover work is also top notch. This is a killer debut of retro-thrash that makes me wish I owned some spiked wristbands and a denim jacket. (May 5, 2007)

METALIUM - Nothing To Undo: Chapter Six CD ([Crash Music](#)) These Germanic metalheads have been releasing almost one album a year, as they formed in 1999 and are now on Chapter Six in 2007. How I wish there were more acts like this one. There's a word I use for music like Metalium's music: 'Slayerific'. Crushing, speed metal beats, fast thrash guitar licks, hot guitar solos, half-spoken vocals with moments of high-pitched banshee wailing... you know, similar to Slayer. Much of the blazing git work also brings to mind early (and better) Metallica, Megadeth and Testament. Anyhow, this quintet (three original and two new members), keeps the metal fresh. Since *Millennium Metal: Chapter One*, each LP tells the story of Metalian, and has developed quite a lyrical following, as much as it has for its musical prowess. You can follow Metalian's story line through *State of Triumph: Chapter Two*, *Hero Nation: Chapter Three*, *As One: Chapter Four*, *Demons of Insanity: Chapter Five* (all on Europe's Massacre Records) and now the newest installment. In the vein of Destruction, Whiplash, Testament and, yes, Slayer, this new Metalium record will make you wish there was more space in your room to start a mosh pit, while you pump each fist and flashing the 'sign of the horns'. The tracks "Spirits" (track two) and "Straight Into Hell" (track four) alone are going to make you listeners hurt yourselves. Use caution. (May 5, 2007)

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