

AURAL ASSAULTS

REISSUE ROW

Marblebog Forestheart Autopsy Kitchen



Marblebog could only make where they're coming from more obvious by having dwarf artists etch the music found on *Forestheart* into tree bark. Their name, lyrics, song titles and even album artwork combine to create a spontaneous orgy of all that is nature-worshipping BM. If that sort of thing is your bag, a trip through this 2005 album — now reissued in a limited run of 1,000 evenly split between CD and LP — will leave you shuddering in post-Burzumic glee. And if this sort of thing bores you to fucking tears, *Forestheart* ain't gonna change your mind, that's for damn sure. The 'bog wisely keeps the song length in check, a true rarity in a subgenre fraught with 70+ minute albums that would've been more powerful and effective had they been trimmed in half. *Forestheart* is awash in the desolate guitar phrasings of early Katatonia, conjures the grandeur of "Dunkelheit" in spots, and does it all without seeming overblown, or that the duo is reaching beyond their means to grasp. Over the course of six songs (counting an intro and epic finale "Closing"), Marblebog breathes forth a world cloaked in the verdant green of the Hungarian forests they call home, taking the listener ever deeper into ancient darkness, trolls shrieking in the distance, or perhaps just around the next bend in the path. You want your black metal shot through with the intensity of punk, the guttural rumble of death metal? Best keep walkin', pardner; this ain't the album for you.

There's nothing mind-blowingly original about what Marblebog do, but they do it so damned passionately that by sincerity alone, *Forestheart* becomes a worthy acquisition. [www.idealismedia.com/marblebog] — Lord Randall

Thrasher Burning At The Speed Of Light Metal Mind



While I never came across this particular project back when it was originally released in 1985 by Music For Nations, the names of those involved were very familiar at the time and considering the steel trap that is my memory, once familiar, always familiar. Thrasher was a project spear-headed by Carl Conedy, the man who produced early works by the likes of Exciter, Overkill and Anthrax and thumped the tubs for The Rods and on Manowar's first demo. Ol' fuzzy shoulders — c'mon, this dude was like a sasquatch in aviator shades and a Motörhead shirt — wrangled some of hard rock's early '80s talent to play on a set of songs he wrote alongside former Blue Cheer and fellow Rods guitarist, Andy "Duck" MacDonald. Each of the tracks on *Burning At The Speed Of Light* features a different lineup; some of the names will probably be familiar to you too, including Billy Sheehan (Talas, Racer X, Mr. Big), Rhett Forrester (Riot), Danny Spitz (Anthrax), Dan Beehler (Exciter), Jack Starr, James Rivera (ex-Flotsam And Jetsam) and Blacklace's Maryann Scandiffio (who I still think is absolutely gorgeous, even when wearing those hideous high-waisted shorts that were so popular in the '80s). Anyway, even though Conedy was responsible for capturing many of the east coast's thrash bands in their woodshopping days, the music he played with The Rods always occupied a strange purgatory between hard rock and thrash, which

made the name of this gathering ever more curious. With his "day job," it was almost like he rejected the uncouth punk/hardcore elements that thrash embraced while simultaneously turning a deaf ear to the extreme polish of what was popular on rock radio at the time. The result is a confused mish-mash of plodding

hard rock and misguided attempts at up-tempo metal. If you've ever wondered what people hated about '80s hard rock and metal, just listen to *Burning At The Speed Of Light*. The album is bogged down in simplistic and lunk-headed 12 bar progressions, enough hitting on the two and four to drive Kenny Aronoff to drink, meandering solos high on the "look at me" factor and ridiculous lyrics based in sexual frustration, tackling such hot-button topics as "Hot And Heavy," "Ride The Viper" (yes, that viper), "Black Lace And Leather" and "She Likes It Rough."

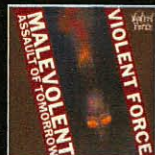
While you have to give it to Metal Mind for reissuing a number of forgotten classics the past couple of years, you really have to question their decision in unearthing this monkey, especially since few cared 20 years ago and it's aged terribly. Why waste the time, energy and money that could have gone into another 500 - 1000 copies of any of the Believer or Blind Illusion albums or the Artillery box set instead of adding 2000 more copies of this travesty for used bins 'round the globe? [www.metalmind.pl] — Kevin Stewart-Panko

Dispatched Motherwar Metal Mind



As an album that slipped through the cracks somewhat upon its initial release, it's a delight to discover that Metal Mind Productions have decided to reissue this debut album by unsung Swedish melodic death metallers Dispatched. Originally issued by Music For Nations during 2000, the band had been together in various formations for most of the eight years that preceded its release. Originally a harder hitting death metal act, something that can be witnessed on their early demos and EPs on Germany's Exhumed and Kshatryas Production imprints, by the time the band got around to recording their first proper full-length they had become a much more melodic outfit, more in line with the sound of early Children Of Bodom. Kicking off with an introduction that incorporates the melody from Beethoven's "Ode To Joy" — apparently done as a tribute to Accept's use of classical music riffs in their guitar solos — the band really hits one out of the park with the album's title cut. It's an absolute corker of a track, with some great frantic riffing, black metal growls and some killer hooks, not to mention a guitar solo that lifts liberally from another classical music icon, Mozart. Most of the rest of the album is nearly as good, with this definitely holding up to the test of time nearly eight years on. The only stinker of the bunch is their cover of Europe's "The Final Countdown," a song so vile that it's impossible to get that keyboard riff out of your head whenever you hear the original. This version isn't quite so bad, as the keyboard part is now riffed out on a guitar, but listening to vocalist Fredrik Karlsson grunt out the words in his guttural whisper hybrid proved so hilarious that when fellow *MM* scribe Kevin Stewart-Panko and I played it on our weekly radio show a few weeks back we were both on the floor busting a gut laughing at the overall weirdness of the whole thing. Thankfully, the rest of the album more than makes up for this misstep, and this new reissue — nicely done in digipak format — is definitely worth searching out if solid Scandinavian melodic death metal is your thing. [www.metalmind.com] — Sean Palmerston

Violent Force Malevolent Assault Of Tomorrow Metal Mind



To read the liner notes to the reissue of *Malevolent Assault Of Tomorrow*, you'd think the world has been waiting since this German band broke up (1989) for someone, somewhere to reissue their only album so the rest of humanity can give a big ol' bear hug to one of thrash metal's most dearly departed and influential acts since a little Danish kid with a bunch of NWOBHM records and a shitty drumkit formed a band in Los Angeles. Ok, if the world was solely comprised of the 75 dudes spread out over Belgium, Chile, Brazil, Poland and Germany who dropped their wives off at bingo and spent the night pulling their puds in front of the computer the night the Violent Force website went live five years ago, then I might consider the enthusiasm of the liner notes infectious. However, I hardly remember Violent Force having much impact or importance — at least this Violent Force, 'cuz with a name that ordinary, I've probably listened to at least 20 Violent Forces — back in the '80s. And I was ob-fuckin'-essed with thrash back then. So, I checked with people who'd probably know better, or at least be more excited, than I: The biographically obsessed www.bnmrmetal.com had one blasé paragraph on the band; the always trusty www.metal-archives.com had a grand total of three lines. Neither of these websites displayed any of the excitement that'd have people running out and hunting *Malevolent* down if they didn't already care. Still, the band was rather good at their chosen craft, and it appears they were one of the many that fell through the cracks for whatever reason. Like breaking up after recording their first album.

I can't see there being much of a run on the 2000 copies of *Malevolent* being thrust into circulation by Metal Mind, but for anyone who grew up on speed/thrash metal in the mid/late '80s, these Velbert-based moustache and mullet farmers are great fun and a rip-roarin' trip down the left hand path of memory lane. And, despite the unremarkable mark this originally made, *Malevolent* is quality thrash that rollicks along like early Kreator, Slayer, Sodom (the band's original drummer was one-time Sodom throne master, Atomic Siff) and Motörhead complete with the juvenile poignancy of the lyrics in "S.D.I. (Suicidal Death Inquisition)," "Destroyed Life" and "Vengeance And Venom." Lots of melody, ripping solos that generally spat on any notion of staying in key for the opportunity to rip some more, a massive sounding drum kit and raspy vocals that sound more like frontman Lemmy (no, not that Lemmy) is just talking really fast instead of actually singing — you gotta love it, especially if you grew up with this sort of sound; more so if you're one of those dudes from Belgium, Chile, Brazil, Poland or Germany. More props to Metal Mind for unearthing this gem. [www.violentforce.de] — Kevin Stewart-Panko

Sadus Illusions Metal Mind



Arguably among one of the most underrated thrash metal bands ever, Metal Mind has breathed new life into Sadus' classic debut full-length. *Illusions* is an obvious reference point influence-wise, yet rather than mimic the über-underlords, Sadus used them as a springboard from which to launch their highly technical thrash that's soaked in a cesspool of evil more prevalent than what you'll find from most contemporary death and black metal bands. *Illusions* very much finds Sadus walking the line between death and thrash. (Even Slayer's *Reign In Blood*, regarded as a thrash masterpiece, sounds more like a collection of death metal riffs in a thrash framework to these ears.) In many spots, in fact, Darren Travis' vocals exhibit a greater lunacy and evil vibe than Tom Araya's — although Travis' vocals sound a bit awkward at times, particularly when he stretches his chords for the extra high notes. Not surprisingly, the much revered bass playing of Steve DiGiorgio steals the show, and unlike many extreme metal bands, the bass lines are audible. Sadus never received their due credit, and yet Trivium has played with Iron Maiden and Metallica? This strengthens the case for Atheists that there is no god. [www.stevedigiorgio.com/sadus] — Jay H. Gorania