

# REVIEWS

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## Allerjen - No Guts No Glory (Psychophonic Records) Review by Marco Gaminara



This UK trio harking from Manchester consists of John Dower on vocals and bass, Paul Wilkinson on guitar and vocals and drummer Paul Tarbuck. And they are damned heavy. Musically they are thrash with the occasional blast thrown in for good measure, but vocally there are coarse and guttural growls that are as low as the detuned bass guitar and then slightly higher pitched growls in the range of the guitar. Originally recorded for another label in 2006, but only after severing those ties and whatnot, did it get released now. Opener and title track "No Guts No Glory" is a statement that these guys are willing to put everything on the line to make this as heavy as possible and then they proceed to do so. A simple guitar

riff over pounded drums starts "Courage Will Find You" 'til the guitars kick in with full force and step everything up a notch. A funky slap bass intro takes us to "Scorch" where the guitars assist on the tune, and dual vocals of growls and deeper growls bounce along to the staccato beat. Plodding along like a mammoth, "Anger Personified" carries itself in a way that the better Bolt Thrower tracks do, with long drawn out growls and smashed snares. Slow and melodic from the outset "The Heartbreaker" pounds into "Demise Of The Prophecy" which keeps a similar pace at first and then steps things up to a great headbanging beat. The fast drumming on "Fallen" misleads you into thinking that everything else is fast too, but the slower guitars and vocals work well over their tempo giving it an interesting dynamic. If it weren't for the death vocals on "Resurrection", I would say it's very rocky at first, but ends very thrashy, which "Until All Are One" does the whole way through. Very choppy rhythms for "Fire In The Sky" are punctuated by sharp snares and a solid backbeat which actually sounds better live. And speaking of live. Added to the original album recording are two live tracks in the form of "The Heartbreaker" and "Fire In The Sky (Barry Is A Spoon)" which are on the album itself. [www.allerjen.com](http://www.allerjen.com) | [www.psychophonic.net](http://www.psychophonic.net)

## Arsis - We Are The Nightmare (Nuclear Blast) By: Dave Schalek



Damnit, I really want to like this album! In 2004, melodic death metal was stagnating, to say the least, and was straying too far from death metal to continue to hold my interest. Arsis' monstrous debut and the follow up EP, "A Celebration Of Guilt" and "A Diamond For Disease", respectively, blew just about everyone away and the future looked very bright indeed for this young group from Virginia. 2006 saw the band not slowing down with "United In Regret", an album that I really liked but was looked at as a lateral move by most everyone else.

A jump from Willowtip to Nuclear Blast soon followed and has now led to the release of

the band's third full-length, "We Are The Nightmare". This album absolutely shreds up the technicality with all over the map riffing interspersed with melodious guitar work, precise drumming with plenty of tempo variation, and vocals evoking more than a hint of Angela Gossow. In short, a near seamless blend of melodic death metal on the Arch Enemy side of the genre with plenty of technical death/ thrash thrown in for good measure. But, damnit, something is lacking.

An emotional response to the music is absent. Also, the songwriting, while slick and professional, is soulless. I hate to say it, simply because everything else is present in spades, but I'm ultimately somewhat disappointed by what I hear on "We Are The Nightmare". It took me a couple of listens to put my finger on it, but Arsis has failed to deliver an emotional impact with "We Are The Nightmare". Yes, I do find myself tapping and nodding along to the songs and I'm somewhat warmer towards the album than I was with my first run through, but Arsis has failed to deliver that breakout album that would've solidified their place in the pantheon of great bands. I'm actually a little pissed about that. [www.nuclearblastusa.com](http://www.nuclearblastusa.com)

## Asia - Phoenix (Frontiers/EMI) Review by Metal Mark



Back in 1982 I couldn't afford albums yet, so my main exposure to music was the radio. I was only 12 so I easily soaked in what was coming in to my room through the various rock and pop channels of the day. The radio would eventually lead me to bands like Van Halen, Judas Priest, Dio and others. However a number of pop, AOR and other forms also came to me. One of those was Asia as I was taken in by the melodies and highly polished hooks of songs off their self-titled debut. Subsequent albums like Alpha and Astra didn't quite have the same formula or appeal for me. They have bounced back and forth with various releases over the years, but now in 2008 we get the first release since 1983's Alpha to

feature the entire original line-up.

The opener "Never Again" comes on with a smooth and steady approach that was pleasing enough, but maybe a little flat. At this point I was thinking that it wasn't a bad start and if they could pick it up a little that this album might be something. Unfortunately, that wasn't the case as "Nothing's Forever" is an appropriate title because it's sappy vocals and damp music had me thinking that this band didn't have a whole lot left. It's gets worse though as track three "Heroin" is stomach churning, mind-killing sap at it's worse. It's so bad that it sounds like it could be a spoof of 1980's love songs, but they are actually trying to be serious so it really is that bad on many different levels. Several other songs after this fall into the same vat of syrupy worthless pulp as well. It just seems like Asia forgot about strong song structures, hooks and building up anything on this album. Instead it's full of a few brief flourishes of music here and there with lots of clichés and filler taking up the bulk of the time. The closer "An Extraordinary Life" might have some genuine life to it or it may just seem better than it is because many of the other songs before it are so poor and empty of any spirit. Overall Phoenix serves as a strong reminder that you can't always relive the past. Asia may be hoping that this album picks up on their success in the early 1980's, but one play will quickly have listeners thinking otherwise. <http://originalasia.com>

## Belphegor - Bondage Goat Zombie (Nuclear Blast) By: Dave Schalek



The always solid Belphegor return with yet another full-length, their third in three years while still taking the time to exhaustively tour the U.S., and elsewhere, quite extensively. This one's entitled "Bondage Goat Zombie" and continues the stylistic assault of blackened death metal with the organic, rough edge that the band is known for.

Not much changes on this album with regards to their last few full-lengths, and that's just fucking fine with me, frankly, as I've needed a serious dose of blackened death metal to light up my day recently. Chock full of Satanic sexual imagery, bondage, and sadomasochism, "Bondage Goat Zombie" has a great range of mix of songs overlaying a

solid blackened death metal base. Organic riffing, all out blasts (continuing the band's penchant for burning through drummers), a great, dual vocal delivery with an original, understandable growl and screech, some thick bass, variations in tempo, you name it, are all present on "Bondage Goat Zombie", probably the best written of the stylistic triumvirate of the band's last three full-lengths. In addition to the all out blasts, there are some nice variations in tempo with plenty of heavy dirges intermixed with the assault and even a few moments of, dare I say it, melody with some definite concentration upon liquid guitar work and the odd solo or two. The result is a great mix of catchy songs while still keeping the focus on flattening the listener with a Satanic, sexually laced death metal assault. The album also has the nice quality of increasingly growing on you with each listen, rather than finding your interest waning with time.

For some reason, I always find myself comparing Belphegor to Behemoth, although the two bands are somewhat stylistically dissimilar. I find that Belphegor's less technical, more organic approach to blackened death metal is particularly effective and I eagerly await the band's releases. You can't go wrong with "Bondage Goat Zombie"; buy or fucking die. [www.belphegor.at](http://www.belphegor.at) | [www.nuclearblast.de](http://www.nuclearblast.de)

### Crimson Glory - Self Titled Re-issue (**Metal Mind**) Review by Metal Mark



Back in the mid 1980's before progressive metal was even really a label, there were a few pioneers who were establishing the sound that would eventually become it's own genre of metal. Queensryche and Fates Warning get a lot of credit, but one band that is too often overlooked is Sarasota Florida's Crimson Glory. They formed in 1982 as Beowulf, but would soon complete their line-up and change their name. By 1986 they had developed their sound which included a soaring double guitar attack, a solid rhythm section and some impressive vocals. Sometimes this band tends to get knocked aside for being too much like Queensryche or some people just can't forget the silly masks these guys wore for a while.

Hearing this re-issue is a bit of a re-visiting for me as I had not heard this one in some time. It's actually better than I remembered because I had forgotten just how active the guitars are. Some progressive metal gets so caught up in itself, but every song here is moving forward with a lot power in tow. They don't stop for self-indulgent passages, every part is directed towards the goal of strengthening the song. Although the music is involved, it never comes over as being too much. They knew how to keep themselves in check and everything is just building and constructing the songs.

Metal Mind's re-issue includes the bonus track "Dream Dancer" and a booklet with full lyrics and a band biography. A good package for a solid debut that probably too many people have either overlooked or have yet to discover. [www.metalmind.com.pl/index.php?jezyk=en](http://www.metalmind.com.pl/index.php?jezyk=en)

### Crimson Glory - Transcendence Re-issue (**Metal Mind**) Review by Metal Mark



By late 1988 Crimson Glory were set to release their sophomore effort. This album is heavier, has stronger writing and higher production values than their 1986 self-titled debut. Everything about this album seems very well planned as the band seems to know exactly where they are going. This direction allows the listener to really be able to soak in all that is transpiring as the band winds their way through some solidly crafted material. The guitars this time around have some definite rhythms mixed in with the flurry of sound that ruled the first album. Vocalist Midnight sounds more in control on this album and knows when and how to best use his voice. The debut was good, but I quickly got the sense that with this

album they wanted to build the momentum and the emotion more. They not only accomplished that goal, but they made it look pretty easy. This was easily their best album, but unfortunately they didn't follow the direction that this album was heading. Like the debut, this album is even better than I remember it as it's heavier and far more active. I actually remember first buying this on cassette when it came out and probably wore out my copy by the early 1990's. Metal Mind's re-issue includes a booklet with full lyrics and a band biography plus the CD includes a re-mixed version of Lonely as bonus track. Probably a top ten metal album of 1988 and certainly one worth owning. [www.metalmind.com.pl/index.php?jezyk=en](http://www.metalmind.com.pl/index.php?jezyk=en)

### Dperd - Regalero Il Mio Tempo (**My Kingdom Music**) Review by Steve Green



Dperd are an Italian duo consisting of vocalist Valeria Buono and Carlo Disimone, who handles most of the instrumentation. If you are expecting something heavy, forget about it. I feel this is more akin to the soundtrack of a smoky jazz club than that of a Metal gig, but those of you that like the darker side of life might quite enjoy this one. Particularly those with a keenness for 4AD's 80s roster.

This is a very chilled out album and one I tend to play later in the day, especially when the Missus has lit her daily quota of a 100 candles, although it's an album that's confined to my headphones as she wouldn't appreciate this at all. But as a solitary listen, I can still enjoy its

beauty and dare I say it, its romantic attributes. The majority of the songs on this album are stunning, albeit in a laidback, sleepy manner. Valeria rarely raises her voice about a sultry croon and the music never hits a BPM worth mentioning, with the bass and piano, quite often, dictating the leisurely pace. So who is this going to appeal to? Probably old school Goths and those with an interest in the darker side of the 80s. Neanderthals and Philistines should give this a wide berth. [www.dperd.com](http://www.dperd.com)

### Farmakon - Robin (Candlelight Records USA) By: Dave Schalek



Yet another band from Finland, Farmakon, is a recent addition to Candlelight Records' ever expanding roster. Does Candlelight intend to sign every band from Finland? At any rate, I was unfamiliar with Farmakon's prior output until the release of "Robin", the band's second full-length. Immediately upon hearing the opening track, "Time Tables", you can't help but make obvious comparisons between Farmakon and Opeth. The same up tempo, progressive style of death metal with serious attention to riffing, time changes, and song structures that Opeth have patented over their career is present in spades on "Robin". In addition, vocalist/bassist Marko Eskola is a dead ringer carbon copy of Mikael Akerfeldt's

vocal style.

The Opeth comparisons continue with plenty of acoustical interludes, a few moments of clean vocals (not nearly as well done as those of Akerfeldt, however), melodies, a loud bass, and excellent musicianship. All of this is pulled off fairly well, but a pure Opeth clone will start to wear thin pretty quick, particularly if you, like me, can only take Opeth in measured doses. Luckily, Farmakon does differentiate themselves with some unique twists present in their music. First, unlike Opeth, Farmakon does incorporate a few fast moments, even the odd blastbeat or two. These moments have definite leanings to a more technical death metal style, rather than just the straight up progressive style of Opeth. In addition, there are a lot of jazz-like moments and interludes present on "Robin", with the inclusion of strummed acoustical guitars, a prominent bass, and saxophone. Some of these moments alternate between some sort of lounge act type of music, and some rather bizarre, meandering saxophone that you'd find in some basement jazz club at 3 o'clock in the morning. Kudos to Farmakon for playing around with some original elements, but the result is rather mixed as the weird combinations present within songs can be quite jarring. Overall, some of these songs, particularly later in the album, just don't gel together very well into a cohesive whole.

I can't really say that I can recommend "Robin" for anyone who's not already seriously into Opeth. I found that some of the more technical death metal leanings present early in the album were well done, but I found myself getting annoyed and somewhat disinterested as the album wore on. Eh.

[www.candlelightrecordsusa.com](http://www.candlelightrecordsusa.com) | [www.farmakonband.com](http://www.farmakonband.com)

### Herrschaft - Tesla (Code666) Review by Steve Green



Concepts are, for the most part, completely lost on me. So if you want to discover the parallel universes the band have created, then visit their website, which they've separated into two worlds: The Chaotic Landscapes and The Sterilized World. Me, I'll just stick to enjoying the music.

Herrschaft are an Industrial/Electronic outfit from France, and I have to say that I really like this album. It's a mixture of Dark Electronica, pulsating EBM and possesses more twists and turns than your average soap opera. If I were so inclined, which I'm not, I could quite easily dance along with this. Human Soul is a combination of Ibiza style dance/trance music

and bouncy Industrial flourishes. Quite rightly, the band have included it on their Myspace page as it's one of the albums strongest songs and it's also a good representation of their overall sound.

The danceability factor is very high throughout and I find that quite refreshing, it reminds me of an extreme version of Jean Michel Jarre, with harsh, almost Black Metal vocals, just to make it sound a little more fucked up. The Defender follows this pattern to the letter, but with a strong Teutonic presence in the backing vocals. Which in turn is completely at odds with the music, but it works brilliantly. The title track

adds an Arabic twist which sounds like Cristina Scabbia on Lacuna Coil's early albums (pre-selling out). Hey, it might even be a sample. But it matters not, as it keeps the album interesting and fresh. And this album does feel very fresh and exciting. Herrschaft have incorporated various styles of extreme music to create one seamless entity. If you are fed up of the same old shit, give this one a try. [www.h-noise.com](http://www.h-noise.com) | [www.myspace.com/hnoise](http://www.myspace.com/hnoise)

### Kerbenok - Der Erde Entwachsen (Gewollte Wunden) MCD (Northern Silence) Review by Crin



The debut mcd from this German pagan Black Thrash meets death act, a strangely enchanting release from Germanys Kerbenok. The three tracks here amass to a lengthy twenty three minutes. The music is melodic, atmospheric Black Metal set to a mid-tempo beat. Thick guitars surge onwards, dragging the thick sound across well constructed riffs and twisting arrangements. The flute also plays an important part in the overall musical vision of Kerbenok. There is no blatant genre categorizing here as the band are pretty much doing their own thing. One needs to absorb the songs in their entirety to appreciate the musical vision here. Dark atmospheres set to misty hillsides and a darkly aura of a pagan

winter melts from the music's raging soul. When the pace is increased, the Black Metal malign bites like a rabid boar ripping at your flesh. Severe riffs merge with sharp vocal rasps in a melee of rage and blistering guitars. With three tracks running at various levels of intensity, it seems like five or eight have passed when the mcd ends. Quite mesmerizing stuff. [www.northern-silence.de](http://www.northern-silence.de)