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TALES FROM THE



Underground Metal Reissues Galore XII

Reissues keep on coming and I keep on giving them space. To the much lauded efforts of Metal Mind, we now give space to I Hate Records whose second collaboration with Brazilian powerhouse Vulcano just saw the light of day and to Nuclear Blast who is reissuing Meshuggah's first effort for the second time. Read on and spread the word.

Nice to know that there are still cult bands that need to be championed so they get enough mileage out of it to subsist in the underground for at least one more decade. Some may have been discovered by just a handful and championed by two or three but it takes the gentle efforts of people like the nice fellows of Southern Lord to bring them up to our attention. Such is the case of Gore, a Dutch trio that played their very own primitive take on instrumental heavy rock at a time when instrumental heavy rock didn't exist. There is a lot of repetition going on here, and even though the tunes are short so are their compositions which all in all may take about twenty-five seconds. Multiply that by three or four and you get complete songs. Their simplicity is upfront, the tunes move mid-tempo and there is logic to the whole thing; it zombifies the listener. From vantage point, despite its simplicity Gore sounds like a very influential band. They may have been influenced by the likes of Husker Du, but on their own near-denthal way, Gore has surely influenced plenty of the instrumetal bands of today. This Southern Lord two-disc reissue is exhaustive; it includes the only two albums (*Hart Gore* and *Mean Man's Dream*) Gore ever recorded and as a bonus includes over twenty live songs. The liner notes from bassist Rob Frey are detailed documentation of the band's existence and the 32 page booklet includes several photographs so that we get an idea of how underground rockers looked like back in the day.

Contradictions Collapse, Meshuggah's 1991 debut, is the first album I heard by this now legendary, revered and highly influential Swedish band. At the time a friend of mine owned a record store and he made me a tape. I remember being totally blown away by the radical riffs and the angular manner in which this quintet molded its music. At the time I was a huge Pantera fan and I thought of Meshuggah as a more mechanized Pantera. A couple of weeks later a friend of mine borrowed my tape, his house got broken into a few days later and the thieves ran off with his boombox and my Meshuggah copy inside. Wait a minute I've told this story before! That's because Nuclear Blast has reissued *Contradictions Collapse*, along with the EP *None* before. The only difference is that this 2008 reissue comes in a really nice jewel case. No extra liner notes, no extra pictures, no extra bands pics. Just a nice fucking jewel case. Oh yeah, I guess I should mention that *Contradictions Collapse* is a pretty awesome album. Yes, Meshuggah hadn't found itself yet, but the coldness almost industrial aspect of their music is already being shaped here. The last four tracks belong to 1994's *None* which displays their evolution in sound in full-blown. The formula is laid here; the exact almost jazzy and totally progressive interaction between instruments is in morph mode here.

Mortification's Wikipedia page claims the band is Australia's most successful extreme metal band and also the most successful Christian extreme metal group in the world. Would some Australian please stand up? Yeah, the first claim is arguable, (The Berzerker may be just as successful and I am sure there are some others), and I would bet that in the Christian extreme front Living Sacrifice were at some point just as big, not to mention, infinitely superior. But no doubt about it, for a death metal band Mortification were big and for a Christian death metal band they were fucking humongous. That may also have been their biggest selling point because listening to their music it's obvious



CUTOUT BIN VIII

The Record Industry May Be in Shambles But We Feel No Guilt.

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Some Germans, some Brazilians, some Christians, some weirdos walk into a bar...

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Some Germans, some Brazilians, some Christians, some weirdos walk into a bar..

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UNDERGROUND METAL REISSUES V

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BULLDOZER

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TALES FROM THE CUTOUT BIN VI

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MORE FEATURES

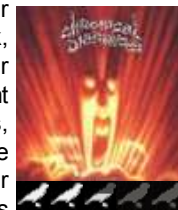
there is nothing that justifies their success. Throughout their career Mortification never failed to deliver subpar album after subpar and mediocre album. *Triumph of Mercy* dates back to 1998 and lyrically focuses on bassist vocalist Steve Rowe bout and subsequent triumph over leukemia. It's pretty descriptive stuff. The title track includes lines like '*chemotherapy was just a 1% chance but if I could find a donor with identical stem cells, I could find a 25-40% chance of cure...*' And then it goes on endlessly about his ordeal. Nothing wrong with that, but Rowe's literal song writing has little in the way of artistry. The music is mild death metal played with competency. Like most Metal Mind reissues, *Triumph of Death* comes in a nice digipack including liner notes, lyrics, photos and four bonus tracks.

One year later, in 1999, came *Hammer of God*, Mortification's thirteenth release. This one's got a less ridiculous cover artwork and sees the band taking a stylistic shift towards a trashier style. It actually fits Mortification better. Steve Rowe's raw vocals are naturally closer to thrash than to the super humanity of death metal, the solos are outstanding and the overall songwriting, especially the riffs, is more solid. Sure, some of the lyrics are very Mortification-like, '*god rulz, god rulz, god rulz, god rulz, god rulz...*'. Repeat that about a dozen times, but what do you expect? There is also some keyword work prevalent in several songs, but it's all treated with care and it never overwhelms the proper heaviness of *Hammer of God*.

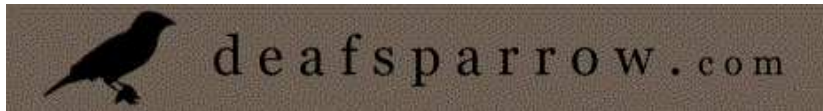
Only a few weeks ago while aimlessly walking the downtown streets of Lima in search for old metal I saw a guy walking around sporting a Vulcano t-shirt. I was surprised. I'd never see a Vulcano t-shirt before. It made me think of the first time I heard this legendary Brazilian band. It was 1988, I was a naïve young pup and their third official full-length *Who Are True?* had just been issued by Cogumelo Records. My other point of reference for Brazil were Sarcófago, Dorsal Atlantica and Sepultura. Of the four, I reasoned Vulcano (pictured above) was the one with the most chance of making it outside their land. They had the chops, plus I always thought their moniker and logo were killer. *Tales From the Black Book* dates to 2004, was first issued by Renegados Records and besides the excellent 2006 split with Nifelheim (also courtesy of I Hate) is their latest offering. For those who lost track of Vulcano, *Tales From the Black Book* definitely signifies a step in the right direction, especially since 1990's *Ratrace* was so lame it even featured another logo. Dudes are in great form here, speed/thrash metal riffs fleet by, deadly grooves gel the songs together, a Celtic Frost on uppers feel invade tunes like "Face of the Terror" and the vocals of the ironically named Angel cause you to step back only if you need not get bitten.

Germany's Warhammer might have formed as a Hellhammer tribute band and listening to their songs is frankly just as good an experience. These fuckers absolutely rock and sound just like Hellhammer did back in the day. This, despite the fact that Warhammer was formed a good decade after Hellhammer disbanded. The voice immediately makes you think of Tom Gabriel Fischer and the guitars have the same ultra basic structures that Hellhammer had in their first recordings. The wise minds of Metal Mind are reissuing all of Warhammer's full-lengths plus their demos and I know I'll be going backwards by first covering *Curse of the Absolute Eclipse* (Grind Syndicate, 2001), but it goes to the band's credit that this being their fourth full-length still sounds like any band's first. It's super basic stuff. Rudimentary metal that mixes doom with early black metal. Good shit. It makes you think that perhaps the world does not need Hellhammer anymore. Somewhere in the liner notes it says that this album shows the band's progression. If so, I can't wait to hear how the demos sound. It may just be pots and pans and a dude shitting himself. Warhammer broke up soon after the release of *Curse of the Absolute Eclipse*, only to reform in 2005.

When you hear their name you kind of think they must be a joke. When you see the artwork that disgraces their recordings you get totally convinced. And when you hear their music you kind of just want to kick their asses for sucking this half-assedly. Ok, there are some decent moments in *The Last Judgement*, Chronical Diarrhoea's (Nuclear Blast, 1990) second full-length and final recording but they are short and you can count them with one hand. The artwork for this album is actually not that bad. Silly as shit, yes, but not sillier than their loose around the edges and all throughout inside crossover. The drums sound like tin cans and in some parts they sound as if someone was finger tapping on formica and the rhythms, velocity and vocal delivery are as forgettable as Michael Jackson's manhood. Still, bands with silly names make for good conversation.



Now this is a band worth talking about. Rigor Mortis hailed from Texas and wrote some pretty fucking good thrash metal. I would highly recommend their two full-lengths along with their EP *Freaks*. Their self-titled debut provided many afternoons of joyful violence during my youth and their second and last album *vs The Earth* (Triple X, 1991) absolutely slays. The album is laid down in typical fashion as it starts with a guitar intro and violently breaks in with "Mummified", a speedy cut that musically owes a big debt to Slayer. These guys had great technique, the guitars were colorful and the solos were not only melodic but also pretty inventive. Vocally, Doyle Bright is not of the most talented individuals, but thrash metal has never been known as a subgenre of vocalists. There is only one Chuck Billy, you know what I mean? Rigor Mortis covers The Ramones' "Psycho Therapy" and is one of the few metal covers that I wouldn't be embarrassed to blast at a party of non-metallers. Main guitarist Mike Scaccia would go onto play with Ministry and the Revolting Cocks.



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