



CARCASS

'Necroticism: Descanting The Insalubrious'

EARACHE

Perfectly timed to coincide with Carcass' long-awaited return as a live act, Earache's decision to re-release the band's back catalogue may be viewed with cynicism by some, but it has to be said that if 'Necroticism...' is anything to go by, at least they're making sure to do it properly. Released on digipack dual-disc (those unnervingly thick double-sided DVD/CD discs), the original album has been joined by the excellent 'Tools Of The Trade' EP as well as a half-hour documentary, which although unlikely to win any prizes for innovative filmmaking, nonetheless proves to be an endearing and reasonably enlightening look at the opus and the four men who created it. So what of the album itself? Well chances are – given the magazine you're reading – you'll already own, or at the very least have heard, this album. If not, then you should, it's really that simple. Though the album marked the nail in the coffin of their classic goregrind days, 'Necroticism...' is nonetheless the arguable peak of the band's career, a fact highlighted by its continual high-ranking in polls throughout the years. Featuring a new member in the shape of one Mike Amott (whatever happened to that young Swede?), the clinically tight delivery and restrained melodic flourishes on tracks such as 'Corporal Jigsore Quandary' and 'Incarnated Solvent Abuse' find a perfect balance between the band's early visceral chaos and the more refined, trad metal-inspired follow up 'Heartwork'. Now, where's our scalpel?

[9.5] ROSS HOON



AT THE GATES

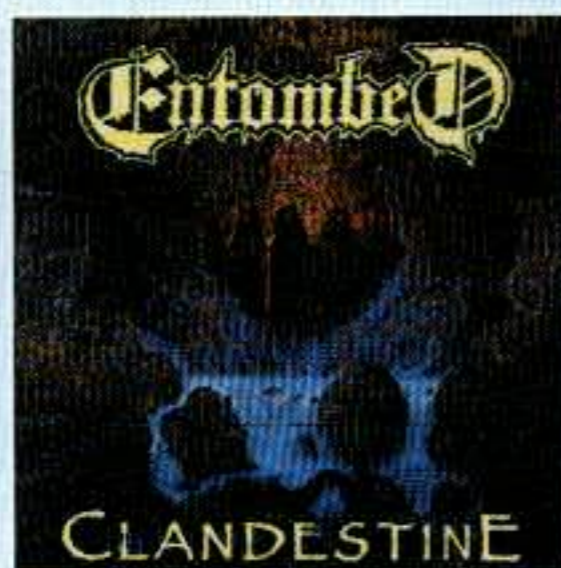
'Slaughter Of The Soul'

ENTOMBED

'Clandestine'

EARACHE

Varying editions of At The Gates' seminal, template-setting 'Slaughter Of The Soul' [8] have been knocked out more times by Earache than Hammer 'Dracula' sequels, and it's not like we need to be reminded of those galloping firestorm riffs, intricate soaring melodies or bludgeoning shrieks – we're forced to listen to them every single time we go to a gig and the support band has a name made up of more than two words. This time



however, in addition to the bonus tracks of the 2002 edition, and the 'making of' of the 2006 edition we get cracking live footage from Krakow – current rumours have it that the 2012 edition will contain a vacuum-packed dreadlock.

What 'Slaughter...' was to Gothenburg, Entombed's 'Clandestine' [9] well, really *wasn't* for Stockholm, but it came pretty bloody close; characterising it perfectly as a blend of atmospheric menace, songwriting showmanship and intoxicatingly heavy freight-train riffage, yet failing to spill over to scatter its fertile

nectar onto the rocky ground of rival genres. Yet what it lacks in greater recognition, it more than makes up for simply by being a stronger album, having managed that delicate balance between out-and-out unquestioning brutality and memorable songwriting that many bands still seem to pull blank uncomprehending faces at the idea of seventeen years on.

JAMES HOARE

CAVITY

'Laid Insignificant'

HYDRA HEAD

Cavity were always a band in possession of that certain *je ne sais quoi* to mark them out from the murky fray of belligerent late-'90s sludgecore, namely a combination of genuinely depraved, irascible invective, an agreeably experimental mindset and an ability to lurch menacingly from sprightly pace to cretinous crawl. Thus, although a reissue of this enjoyably unpleasant ten-year-old document, complete with rather dated dialogue samples, is hardly the most essential antisocial quagmire one can subject their stereo to in the year 2008, it still kicks home in a suitably gnarly manner; a hostile yet technically adept stir-fry of Eyehategod dirt, sped-up Buzzov*en bile and the slow-building less-accommodating moments of Neurosis. '99's 'Supercollider' was a greater triumph, adding stargazing wonder and ambient ornamentation to Cavity's lead-weight ballast, but that doesn't stop 'Laid Insignificant' from being a worthily wanton history lesson, both in '90s hardcore's morphing into depraved shapes anew, and the simple pleasures of good ol' gut-level punishment.

[7] JIM MARTIN

FLOTSAM AND JETSAM

'When The Storm Comes Down'

'Cuatro'

'Drift'

METAL MIND

Flotsam And Jetsam – yep, that band with the dude who used to be in Metallica. To this day, those Arizona thrashers are still reduced to being remembered as a decent band whose debut album was good enough to supply metal's biggest act a bassist after the tragic loss of Cliff Burton. The worst is that affiliation does not end there: not only were the Four Horsemen an obvious influence in their early work but it was in the wake of their growing success that their label MCA started signing a bunch of metal acts in the 80s, among them F&J who went on to release three albums to no avail, leading them to re-sign with Metal Blade before slowly sinking back into mediocrity... Still firmly rooted in classic thrash and the last with Newsted's first replacement Troy Gregory, who later joined Prong,

'When The Storm Comes Down' [5] hasn't aged that well. But a mere two years later, things were about to change: Just like everybody else, the Flots were trying to give birth to their own 'Black Album' – 'Cuatro' [6]. By far their most complex work, it's a slower, more melodic and overall more ambitious record. But the third of these reissues is a charm and everything its two predecessors failed at, the lost gem that is 'Drift' [8] included one of the band's best song in the form of 'Smoked Out' and a much deeper lyrical content dominated by bass player Jason Ward's depression over his older brother, and former Ministry/Nine Inch Nails drummer's suicide in 1993.

OLIVIER 'ZOLTAR' BADIN

HARKONIN

'Ghanima'

BATTLEGOD

Do not let the black and white cover showing four staked, severed pig's heads planted before a copse of winter-stripped trees fool you. You may think Scandinavia, but you would be mistaken. Harkonin hail from Missouri, a self-described "rare black metal group that sounds right at home in Midwestern bars", they also promote their "unrepentantly rock 'n' roll rhythm section." 'Ghanima', a reissue of their third full-length originally released in 2006, which also includes a remix of their 2005 effort 'Sermons Of Anguish', gives interested parties a taste of Harkonin's black metal posturing before a full-length containing new material is released in early 2009. Harkonin channel blackness via mid-paced death/thrash that carries equal parts melody and violence reminiscent of Destroyer 666, especially the 'Sermons...' material. Harkonin may be black metal in lyrical content, but their sound is too varied to be pegged strictly black metal. Not revolutionary by any stretch, 'Ghanima' is still a solid release.

[7] JOHN MINCEMOYER

HYPOCRISY

'Catch 22'

NUCLEAR BLAST

Many who love Hypocrisy seemingly have reservations for 'Catch 22', or at least it was arguably the poorest-received record they released when it came out in 2002. So why have metal maniacs Nuclear Blast decided to re-release what was at the time nobody's favourite? Well given the fact that 'Catch 22' wasn't a poor record *per se*, it was more to do with the fact that Peter Tägtgren and co decided to do something a little different, but then again perhaps 'Catch 22' was a little ahead of its years the first time round? Maybe now, with a new generation of metal fans, the gleaming production

and dynamics of the record will be appreciated? Whatever the case may be, it is a record that should be treated by itself, in the same way that a side-project would. Even if it doesn't contend with Tägtgren's best.

[7] WILL STONE

LURKER OF CHALICE

'Lurker Of Chalice'

SOUTHERN LORD

Originally issued in 2005, and shrouded in mystery, rumour swirled before black metal adherents discovered that Lurker of Chalice was in fact the alter ego of Leviathan's Wrest. Once the Lurker tag became attached to Wrest this effort disappeared quickly, remaining out of print until now. Unlike the suffocating savagery marking his Leviathan canon, Lurker exhibits Wrest's more depressive, experimental side. Still, Wrest's unique approach triggers admiration and no small sense of awe, so much so that many seem to prefer Lurker to Leviathan. Here ambient noise layers affect surreal detachment with eerie results. Revealing not only his methods, but his madness, everything here elongates as Wrest subtly warps and bends reality: metronomic tempo seems non-existent; the blast appears fleetingly, his drumming, with a few exceptions, exhibit no rigid pattern; distorted, effect-laden vocals haunt; and guitars float through the subtle rumbling ambient murk all coalescing into infinite darkness sublime. For a title 'Vortex Chalice' perfectly describes the unsettling power of this otherworldly vessel.

[9] JOHN MINCEMOYER

MUDHONEY

'Superfuzz Bigmuff: Deluxe Edition'

SUB POP

By the time that Mudhoney had rampaged through the UK in the spring of '89, they were poised for true world domination. They had everything; being signed to the hippest label on the block, patronage of John Peel and Sonic Youth, an adoring press, bags of attitude and most importantly, some truly killer music in the shape of '88's 'Superfuzz Bigmuff' and its predecessor single 'Touch Me I'm Sick', which easily backed up the hype. Despite blowing the door of grunge wide open, after the following singles 'Hate The Police' and 'You Got It' Mudhoney were never quite able to recapture that x-factor spark of true greatness. Thus overshadowed by Nirvana's explosion, it falls to this twentieth anniversary reissue to reaffirm the band's true greatness. The aforementioned recordings are all here as are demos, an extra disc of live recordings, all of which retain their visceral swagger to this day. Classic? Most certainly.

[9] GUY STRACHAN