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metal reissues galore IX



Underground Music Reissues Galore IX!

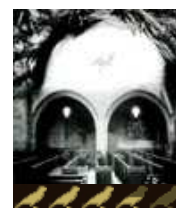
Poland's Metal Mind should be awarded something like the Nobel prize for taking on the huge job of unearthing all these classics. Below we present you some of their newest releases, from thrash to prog to crust, these dudes give us no break. Read on and spread the word!

Flotsam and Jetsam is one of those thrash metal bands that initially seemed to have huge potential, but who ultimately and because of their pretty uneven output in part resulting from so many line up changes, did not really lived up to it. Their debut *Doomsday for the Deceiver* was for a first album chock full of promise. Unfortunately, soon after its release a tiny ass band named Metallica would recruit the band's main lyricist, bassist Jason Newsted. And gone was some of the talent. Frankly, judging by some of the albums that would follow, it seems like much of the enthusiasm went out with him too. Metal Mind is reissuing Flotsam and Jetsam's third album *When the Storm Comes Down* (MCA, 1990), which is quite frankly, a pretty fucking average thrash metal record. Hailing from Arizona probably granted Flotsam and Jetsam with a sound that wasn't at all similar with the more energetic thrash of the Bay Area. Instead, Flotsam and Jetsam sounded a little more technical and paced. Also, there isn't a lot of energy to the songs, a fact that founding guitarist Ed Carlson blames on the bland production of Alex Perialas.

A couple of years after its release I bought the *Cuatro* CD (MCA, 1992) through the BMG service. All I remember is thinking it was the lamest album Flotsam and Jetsam ever made. To this day, my opinion stands. *Drift* followed three years later (MCA, 1995) and fortunately signified an improvement in some ways. The first thing noticeable is the progression in their sound; at this point Flotsam and Jetsam was no longer a thrash metal band. Instead, they sound like a modern 90's second tier progressive metal band (on parts pretty similar to bands like Fates Warning), going so far as to include some pretty well-applied keyboards to a song like "Empty Air". The production of Neil Kernon (Dokken, Britny Fox, Heaven's Edge...yikes!) definitely helps. Some songs are quite awful ("Pick a Window") though, but the majority of the record is pretty solid. This is definitely the path Flotsam and Jetsam should have followed. Following the release of *Drift* MCA dropped the band. Soon after, they were snapped by former label Metal Blade.

Yes, I too, like any self-respecting metalhead recognize the influence and talent of the late Chuck Schuldiner. Death is hands down one of the greatest and most influential underground metal bands in history. Schuldiner was ground breaking in the way he helped expand the extreme sounds of death metal. And his ability as a guitarist is inarguable. But Schuldiner was a classic metal fan at heart, and with *Control Denied* he tried to channel that passion. At the time he had taken Death into a still extreme, but also extremely technical path. With *Control Denied* Schuldiner wished to create a modern sounding progressive metal band, but in order to achieve that he needed a vocalist who could sing. So he recruited vocalist Tim Aymar and went about toying with epic songwriting. The result was the band's sole output *The Fragile Art of Existence*; (Nuclear Blast, 1999) which was packed with long complicated songs, each one built with several moods and tempos. Obviously the performances are stellar; (at the bass was Steve DiGiorgio (Sadus and others), at the drums was Death's Richard Christy and rounding up the line up was guitarist Shannon Hamm (Death)), but for every great piece of a song we can expect two more passages that will follow and shatter the mood created. With this approach expectations are built and tore down constantly.

Those that read the previous installment in this reissue series might remember Acrophet; the Milwaukee band that played crossover quite competently. *Faded Glory* (Triple X, 1990) was their second and last album and surpasses their debut *Corrupt Minds* in every aspect. The production is much better and the playing is flawless. Quite technical for a crossover band, Acrophet because of that leaned more towards a thrash metal sound. The vocals of bassist Dave Baumann are also much better this time around, with him taking a less singing/more



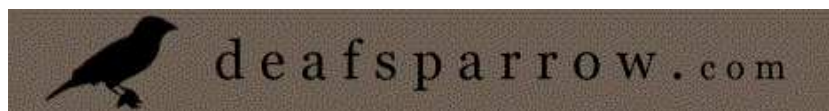
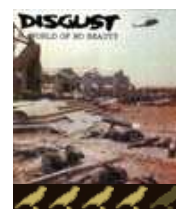
speaking in a loud voice approach. Acrophet was a tight band, no doubt about it. By 1990 they had been together for seven years and the results show that. Like a lot of the crossover bands (think DRI, early Anthrax) Acrophet didn't exactly make catchy music. That and the fact that Triple X Records, despite their left of center roster, didn't know what to do with them helped bring the band to a prompt end.

Metal Mind is really doing some good work here. And Swedish death metallers Gardenian are surely getting the royal treatment. Their second and third efforts are being reissued in a gorgeous double digipack and is highly recommended for those in love with melodic death metal. *Soulburner* (Nuclear Blast, 1999) followed their debut *Two Feet Stand* (Listenable, 1997) and features a very polished sound courtesy of Studio Fredman (every one from At The Gates, to Dimmu Borgir, The Haunted and Opeth have passed through its halls). *Soulburner* was actually produced by Gardenian themselves but none other than Fredrik Nordstrom handled the mix which should help explain the very Swedish death metal guitar tone. Overall, *Soulburner* is a solid album, but in a more general scope it's certainly more ambitious than what the rest of the melodic Swedish death metallers were and are doing. Or we could say that it's kind of cheesy, especially in the vocal camp. Yeah, musically *Soulburner* is killer, but the female vocals on "Powertools" are a horrible touch and the clean/power metal vocals soften this metal rocking mutha to a marshmallow state.

Much like *Soulburner* was different from the debut *Two Feet Stand*, *Sindustries* (Nuclear Blast, 2000) is also a bit of a departure. This time around the songs are more accessible. In other words they are more commercial. This whole evolution in sound reminds me of the softening up of their countrymen In Flames, except *Sindustries* never goes as far say *Soundtrack to Your Escape* or *Come Clarity*. Another disadvantage are the guitars, in songs like "Selfproclaimed Messiah" and several others, they are simplified to nu-metal standards. No, Gardenian didn't sink that low, but for the most part the NWOBHM guitar tandem the Swedish updated to their death metal is gone from here. And with that, the best tasting spice Gardenian had to offer. Soon after *Sindustries* was released this band broke off their Nuclear Blast contract and after under going line up changes they called it quits in 2004.

Aaahhh yeah!. This is what I need to counter balance the polish and clean cut sheen of Gardenian. The UK's (careful! There are several bands with this name) Disgust (pictured above) level everything in sight with the abusive sounds of *A World of No Beauty*, their Nuclear Blast release from 1997. Yep, a strange home for a band as crusty as this one. No wonder they got dropped immediately after this one hit the streets. Disgust was originally formed in 1994 and released their debut (*Brutality of War*) through the (at the time) much more appropriate Earache Records. Three years and two new members later came this massive improved sophomore effort. *A World of No Beauty* is a one note affair and is tightly packed with twelve original sounding classics. This is high caliber crust core, these are tunes that run you over with their one sided negativity and their overwhelming pace. This Metal Mind reissue adds eight bonus tracks recorded live in 1994 in Germany. Nice. Since the release of *A World of No Beauty* there has been very little activity in the Disgust camp with one album entitled *The Horror of It All* being released in 2002.

Who can resist the charms of The Great Kat? Not me. That's for sure. Whether I like her music or not is a different matter. But let's start with a few quotes from her very own lips; 'suck my dick', 'I'm only about 200 years ahead of my time! Let's see how fast you can catch up, moron!', 'Wake up', 'gummi bears rule, dammit!'. Yeah, she sure is deranged, but can she play? Yeah, she can play fast as fuck and to prove that she plays that Jackson at a very impressive speed, gives the melodies a classical touch and names her tunes ambitious titles like "Beethoven On Speed", "Sex & Violins", "Guitar Concerto in Blood Minor" and "Bach to the Future". *Beethoven On Speed* was released by Roadrunner back in 1990 and as a metal record is a fun listen for a few minutes, but songwise, it has very little to offer. As comic relief, it kinda rules. For like ten minutes.



Contact Deaf Sparrow at
editor@deafsparrow.com