



CANDLEMASS

'Dactylis Glomerata' / 'From The 13th Sun'
PEACEVILLE

Here we have two reissued albums from a period of decided uncertainty in the Candlemass camp. In the illuminating new liner notes to 1998's 'Dactylis Glomerata' [6.5], Leif Edling is admirably honest about the record's relative weaknesses – chief amongst them being that it was never intended to be a Candlemass album, originally conceived as a follow-up to the Abstrakt Algebra debut. Initial fan reaction was muted – unsurprising, as it was a long-awaited Candlemass reunion album yet retained little of the band's distinct identity. With the benefit of hindsight it's a pleasant enough listen, containing a handful of quality tunes ('Dustflow', 'Karthago', 'I Still See The Black') and a respectable (if sporadic) experimental flair, but despite the presence of Mike Amott on guitar it still lacks a certain dynamism and weight. This reissue, however, is made more tempting by the inclusion of the full original 'Abstrakt Algebra II' recordings, which are rougher and more eccentric and make for an interesting contrast with the more polished and heavy Candlemass version.

1999's 'From The 13th Sun' [7] was on much firmer orthodox doom territory. Plenty of Candlemass fans love this album, but in truth it still sounds like the group were in the midst of an identity crisis. It seems odd that a band with such a firm, original personality and style of their own should concentrate on replicating the sound of Sabbath circa '71 so slavishly. It's a consistently entertaining, effortlessly listenable spin, but also quite unassuming and low-key and, inevitably, not up to the standard of their early work (although in truth they've never come close to reaching those heights since). It deserves reappraisal, though; especially as its retro-fixated, frosty, Swedish live doom rock sound manages to eerily presage the likes of Witchcraft almost by default.

CHRIS CHANTLER

DEATHSPELL OMEGA

'Manifestations 2000-2001'
'Manifestations 2002'
NORTHERN HERITAGE

When one considers Northern Heritage's attitude towards selling black metal on eBay™ – that's erm, outright loathing – it is odd that this highly sought-after material took so long to reappear. The lacking supply fuelled by Deathspell Omega's mysterious existence and motives drove prices to ridiculous levels. Would you pay \$300 or more for the 350-issue Deathspell Omega/Moonblood split 12"? Someone out there has. So while they get to enjoy the fact that they have too much disposable income the rest of us now finally get to enjoy this decidedly grim material for the first time. The 'Manifestations' reissues compile Deathspell Omega's super-limited End All Life split releases onto single discs. With the '2000-2001' edition [8.5] you get five scathing tracks from the Mutilation and the aforementioned Moonblood splits and one song from the 'Black Metal Blitzkrieg' compilation. The '2002' [9] edition features eight compositions "written and recorded



shortly after 'Inquisitors Of Satan', that was "initially intended to appear on a split LP with Cantus Bestiae and on the 'Crushing The Holy Trinity' compilation." Wonderfully composed and conceived even at this early stage DsO operated on a level far above their respective peers. Sure, it is traditional 'orthodox' black metal, but the attitude, feeling and gravity are proper and performed with sincerity and utmost respect for the style. The true treat comes midway through '2002' with 'Monotonous Ecstasy Of Death', which is where we begin to hear the proto-cinematic, progressive epic sounds that mark their astounding, critically acclaimed 'second phase'.

JOHN MINGEMOYER

BROCKEN MOON

'Das Märchen Vom Schnee'
NORTHERN SILENCE

It's rare to find a band willing to compromise their kvlt status by re-releasing an album less than six months after its initial release, but this move was clearly driven by artistic rather than commercial motives. 'Das Märchen Vom Schnee' (roughly 'the fairytale of the snow') is comprised of a single song split into six unnamed tracks, apparently based around the concept of a fairy girl witnessing the decay of her environment as the seasons change. But don't let that put you off. This is ice cold, atmospheric black metal that strikes a delicate balance with mellow acoustics and synth work, though the opening strains are highly evocative of Gallic neighbours Celestia. Vocalist Grim employs a far more impressive range than Noktu however, moving from blackened rasp, through Ulver-esque chanting and up into a torturous shriek falling somewhere between Varg Vikernes, Natramn of Silencer and Zakrathor of Nazgul. While the final track drags on a bit, Ulver's current direction means this is the closest to a 'Bergtatt' part two we're ever likely to get.

[8] JAMES MINTON

CARNIVORE

'Carnivore'
'Retaliation'
METAL MIND

A hearty mix of testosterone, furry loin cloths, and bad attitude, Carnivore circa 1986 were fighting, feasting, and fucking all they could. Lucky for us, Metal Mind has decided to pay homage to their legacy by re-mastering these cult classics. 'Carnivore' [7] is NYC punk does NWOBHM à la Venom with more than its share of ROTFLMAO moments whereas 'Retaliation' [7.5] sees their NYC roots and Sabbath influence become more dominant. And whilst the tunes are enjoyable, it's in the lyrics department that Carnivore really excel. Admittedly, there's quite a bit to be offended about but if you read carefully it's obvious, to this scribe at least, that a lot of their racist, misogynist, patriotic bullshit is tongue-in-cheek. Still, any self-respecting feminist or reasonable human being will likely cringe in disgust after lines like "Don't call me your brother/We fell from different cunts/And your skin's an ugly colour." Basically, if you can get past the objectionable content, Carnivore's primitive alpha male display is a bloody treat.

JILL MIKKELSON

FINNTROLL

'Jaktens Tid'
SPINEFARM

It's hard to imagine that it was a whole decade ago that Finntroll burst onto the scene with their vibrant debut 'Midnattens Widunder'. It may be only recently that the pagan/folk-metal genre has truly exploded into a hugely popular entity, but the scene undoubtedly owes much to the pioneering Finns. Thus in such a climate Spinefarm has seen fit to re-release their sophomore effort and breakthrough album 'Jaktens Tid'. Neither as black as its predecessor nor as anthemic as the trollhammering follow-up 'Nattfödd', it nonetheless remains a landmark album. 'Födosagan' charges down the mountain with a deliciously dark keyboard riff, 'Slaget Vid Blodsålv' is a humppa-metal masterpiece (unashamedly plagiarised by Turisas) and if you're not convinced by the Danny Elfman does Zelda of 'Bakom Varje Fura' then you never will be. While unfortunate events would mean this line-up would never record another album, they by no means overshadowed the success of this classic. You won't find a better album to bash heads, quoff mead and dance round the tavern to. Apart from 'Midnattens Widunder'. Or maybe 'Nattfödd'?

[9] JAMES MINTON

REVEREND BIZARRE

'Crush The Insects'
SPINEFARM

No keyboards, no synthesizers, no flutes, no violins: straight from the source!" Oh true doom, you are a one. Still, employing purity as a *modus operandi* served Finland's recently defunct Reverend Bizarre rather well; if anyone ever suggested an Opeth influence would benefit them, they were surely laughed out of town. 'Crush The Insects', Rev's second album, was originally released in 2005 and confirms that it's become canonical with good reason. Opener 'Doom Over The World' is their incongruous crack, seemingly, on Quo-ish boogie that closes with 30 seconds of manic giggling. A sturdy pace is maintained until 'Slave Of Satan' – the first track to surpass their trusty ten-minute mark and where the jaws really start clamping. Funeral velocity is married to Albert's vocals, which are so deliberately enunciated it sounds like Brian Blessed learning to read. Histrionic and consciously absurdist, yet always shirking the shackles of goth windbagery, trueness doesn't get much better than this.

[8] NOEL GARDNER

ENEMY SOIL

'Casualties Of Progress'
RELAPSE

While Enemy Soil may have been a minor blip during their actual existence, former members eventually popped up in Pig Destroyer, Agoraphobic Nosebleed and Drugs Of Faith. This re-issue of the 'Casualties... 7"', with bonus tracks, is essential for those interested in grindcore's second wave, how ES influenced the third wave, the role of powerviolence and the limits of mid-'90s drum machine technology. A solid history lesson, if nothing else. [7] KSP

HORDE

'Hellig Usuart'
METAL MIND

The tenth anniversary reissue of one of the most infamous Christian (un)black metal albums is an awkward reminder that, despite the obvious paradox, very 'untrue' individuals can still make very dark, brutal and evil-sounding music. Ignore the indecipherable lyrics and you have a ridiculously raw and aggressive slice of early '90s black metal. A guilty pleasure then. [8] RH

MORDICUS

'Dances From Left'
TEMPLE OF DARKNESS

Available again fifteen years after its initial release on Thrash Records, along with six bonus tracks, Mordicus' (yeah, please shoot whoever came up with that name) only official full-length may not be THE quintessential Finnish old school death metal album (leave it up to either Demigod or Amorphis' debut), but by surfing in the same swampy murky waters as their compatriots Convulse, 'Dances From Left' still kind of rocks. [6] OZB

THE VSS

'Nervous Circuits'
HYDRA HEAD

Screaming from the ashes of the wonderful Angel Hair and later morphing into Pleasure Forever and Year Future, The VSS didn't equal that first band's legacy, but were a sight better than the last two. Their niche – sassy, epic-build post-hardcore with droning synths – was somewhat akin to a punkier Six Finger Satellite. Hydra Head have snagged the reissue and done a tidy job. [7] NGa

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