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## metal reissues galore



### Classic Thrash and Speed Metal Reissues Galore

Polish label Metal Mind Productions has recently re-issued a few of the most important thrash and death metal releases from the late 80's/early 90's originally released by then flourishing Roadracer Records. Founded in 1987 MMP, besides being active in promotion and music publishing, is also the main concert promoter in Poland. The label has in its lifespan bought about 1,000 licenses and has sold more than 10,000,000 records. Most of the reissues come in Digipack form, have been remastered and include bonus tracks and liner notes. They are also numbered and limited to a run of 2,000 copies only. Think you know your extreme metal? Well, knowing the past will help you understand the present. Check these out....



Released in 1988 *Chemical Exposure* is Sadus' first release. Produced by Metal Church guitarist John Marshall and initially released with different artwork under the name *Illusions*

and on the band's own Sadus Records, this recording would eventually get them signed to Roadrunner Records. It would be re-released by the same label in November 1991 with new artwork and under its new name. *Chemical Exposure* features plenty of death/thrash/speed metal; a style that the band would continually refine through subsequent records. Clearly, speed was the main concern here, as the band plods through ten songs in twenty-nine minutes and a blurry guitar sound that unfortunately buries Steve DiGiorgio's killer bass playing. Two bonus demo tracks finish off this reissue.



*Swallowed in Black* is Sadus' second album and their first under their contract to Roadrunner. Their style was clearly defined by then; technical death/thrash metal with growling vocals. What gained Sadus the most recognition was the amazing dexterity of virtuoso bassist Steve DiGiorgio (he'd go onto playing with Control Denied, Artension, Testament, Iced Earth, etc) and the relentless speed of the band. *Swallowed in Black* was produced by Michael Rosen in May and June of 1990 and though at the time of the release it captured a respectable audience it failed to launch the band to first rate status. One very distinctive aspect of this release is the cover artwork, which needless to say is downright ridiculous, I mean what the fuck is that? A chocolate monster? This reissue includes the two tracks from Sadus' 1986 *D.T.P. (Death to Posers)* demo.



Released in 1992, *A Vision of Misery* is Sadus' third full length and signifies a slight departure for the band, who for the first time in their career ventured into longer ("Facelift" lasts seven minutes), accentuated grooves and slower tempos ("Slave to Misery"). But for the most part Sadus' continues to deliver highly technical fast thrash/death metal. Musically the band has improved a great deal and the solos of Rob Moore are especially good. Recorded, engineered and mixed by Bill Metoyer (Slayer, C.O.C., WASP, Trouble, Cattle Decapitation, The Mentors, Cryptic Slaughter, etc) *A Vision of Misery* is the best produced record of the band up to this point. In 1993, bassist Steve DiGiorgio quits the band to focus on Death but returns the following year to record a

demo. By this time he is highly recognized as one of the best bassist in extreme metal.

Later on guitarist Rob Moore quits the band, Sadus becomes a trio and in 1996 the band signs to Germany's Mascot Records. To some, the best period of the band is clearly over.

Up next is the UK's (Lancashire, North West England to be more exact) Xentrix (pronounced Zentricks), whose 1989 debut *Shattered Existence* garnered them much well-deserved press coverage and positive word of mouth around the world. Crafting an outstanding brand of melodic thrash metal is easy to realize why this was the most exposed British thrash band of the time; the music is outstanding and the vocals of guitarist Chris Astley though mildly gruff are comprehensible and lifting melody. Their style fits alongside that of the Bay Area Thrash movement and shares many direct stylistic parallels with the best work of Testament. On the surface Xentrix sounds very much like your typical thrash metal band of the time, but *Shattered Existence* does great use of a well-developed sense of dynamics. The remasterization has definitely enhanced the punchy performance and the production job of John Cuniberti, whose resume includes Journey, Train, Huey Lewis, Jefferson Starship and a ton of cringe inducing releases alongside a few greats from Possessed and Forbidden. Included here are the three songs that made up their 1990 *Ghostbusters* single, which spawned controversy for their unauthorized use of the movie's logo.



*For Whose Advantage* was released in 1990, entered the UK rock charts at #2 and was given a five K review by Metal Hammer magazine. Produced by Cuniberti and engineered by Mark Flannery, the band's second full-length does not have the enthusiastic impact of *Shattered Existence*. Much of the riffage has replaced melody with far more generic patterns and a more simplistic open riff structure. The songs mostly follow a demarked pattern of verse, shouted chorus, verse. Not sure if it is because of the masterization or because of the original production job but *For Whose Advantage*



does not have the same updated values of the band's debut re-issue. In 1991 Xentrix released the part live, part studio EP *Dilute to Taste* also included in this reissue. "Pure Thought" the first cut from it, has this bombastic drum sound that was typical of the time but the song itself is not up to par to anything the band had put out previously. The portion of the EP fares much better serving up cuts from Xentrix' first three recordings.

In the band's own words 1992's *Kin* 'lacks passion and energy', a statement that is in evidence right away with the tired pace of opener "The Order of Chaos" thus far the most unimaginative work of Xentrix. *Kin* is the perfect reflection of a band that's lost its enthusiasm. Not only is the paced exhausting and its quality lackadaisical but the lack of imagination dissuaded the band to record one of the most boring and dull metal ballads ever, the totally fucking horrid "No More Time". It was probably time to call it quits. Unfortunately only one of their members wises up and following up a tour with German belligerent drunks Tankard vocalist/guitarist Chris Astley exits the band. Remaining members then recruit a vocalist and a guitarist to replace him and in 1993 signed a deal with Heavy Metal Records. In 1996 the band releases *Scourge*, a record that to this day many Xentrix fans do not even know exists. With the UK thrash scene dead by then Xentrix finally puts their legacy to peaceful rest. In 2006, the band original line-up reunites for a few live dates. Soon after, they announce they are retiring and have no intentions to reform in the future.



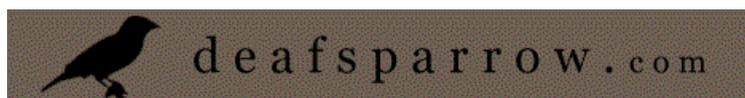
Next up is San Francisco's Heathen whose second full-length *Victims of Deception* saw some jaws dropping because of its dexterous guitar work. The band was formed in 1984 by guitarist Lee Altus and drummer Carl Sacco and saw passing through its ranks some very talented metal musicians. Guitarist Jim Sanguinetti left the band in 1985 to form metal funksters Mordred and was quickly replaced by Doug Piercey (Control/Angus Chorus). Around the same time, vocalist Sam Kress was replaced by Blind Illusion's David Godfrey and a couple of years later Godfrey himself was replaced by Paul Baloff of Exodus fame. After a demo (*Pray for Death*), a full-length (*Breaking the Silence*) and more line up changes *Victims of Deception* was released by Roadracer Records. The sound of Heathen was by then far from Altus' and Sacco's



early NWOBHM influences, displaying mostly a highly technical and rather dull brand of Bay Area thrash metal. By far the most outstanding feature of *Deceptions* is the guitar work of Altus, whose solos elevate the music way above the average thrash metal work of any other unknown band crafting the style at the time. The rest falls flat, the vocals of former Dissident Aggressor member Dave White remind of Anthrax' Joey Belladonna, both in its banshee quality and in the way he bended syllables to adjust and fit the guitar work. The best track is by far their cover of Rainbow's "Kill the King".

Out of Westchester, New York came Toxik, another technical speed trash metal band that would drop two records and quietly vanish of the scene after their 1992 break up. Formed in 1985 and initially christened Tokyo, this band was led by guitar whiz Joshua Christian and completed by bassist Brian Bonini, drummer Tad Leger and vocalist Mike Sanders. After catching the ear of Roadracer Records Toxik would head to Tampa's famous Morrisound Studios to record their debut *World Circus* released in 1987. The album received mixed reviews mainly because the vocals of Mike Sanders aren't only high pitched as fuck, but because his delivery was quite monochromatic. Musically, Toxik was as awe inspiring as Texas' venerated sons Watchtower, but the dwarf on helium like voice of Sanders simply flattens the record almost to the point of well-deserved mockery. Josh Christian is brilliant though, his riffs at times are so fast they verge on the ridiculous ("Door to Hell"), but there are several brilliant breakdowns, deconstructing patterns, and enough riffs to fill seven discs by seven different run of the mill speed metal bands. Extras of this reissue include a demo version of "Machine Dream" that is quite horrible and a short radio interview from 1989 where the band introduce second vocalist Charles Sabin and announces much better sophomore effort *Think This*.

The second and last release from Toxik finds the band doing an almost total about face. Much of the excessive masturbatory guitar work has given way to melodies and incessant tempo changes. More importantly, the band makes good use of the superior range of new vocalist Charles Sabin who does not let up and carries the band with much more personality than his predecessor. Still, all throughout *Think This* guitarist Josh Christian leaves his mark well-carved and reminds us that Toxik is a guitar band any way you see it. With amazing technique he leads the band through intricate mazes like "Machine Dream", the stunning title track and "Spontaneous". With the aid of second guitarist John Donnelly, *Think This* is a more complete record. Donnelly takes some of the load off Christian's shoulders, this way at solo time we still have a full band backing up the tech tag, the speed tag, and the metal tag. *Think This* is a true classic that has lived up to the times and has aged quite gracefully.



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