

## REALM

*Endless War & Suiciety* (reissues)

### [Metal Mind](#)



I remember when *Endless War* originally came out. And, like many others I'm sure, the most memorable moment for me was the band's supercharged, faithful cover of The Beatles' "Eleanor Rigby." I didn't pay too much attention to them beyond this track, but it was memorable enough (in a good way) that I jumped at the chance to grab both recent reissues of Realm's albums for review. 17-19 years after the fact, I've finally come to a proper appreciation of two wall-to-wall technical thrash-a-thons that deserved my proper attention before now. Guitarist Takis Kinis describes their approach as incorporating "the progressiveness of Rush, the harmony guitars of Maiden, the rapid fire quick lead exchanges of Judas Priest, and the speed and power of Slayer." That's a fair approximation, and the musical prowess on display is pretty much undeniable.

After multiple listens to *Endless War* I'm still getting used to Mark Antoni's often OTT high-pitched melodies. He's got a pretty dramatic vibrato that may be the dealbreaker for some listeners...somewhere in the neighborhood of Savatage's Jon Oliva but without the slightly rough edge. And sometimes it almost sounds like he's going for any high note to finish off the lyric. The rest of the band, however, churns out some remarkable and progressive thrash with plenty of cool time changes, heavy riffs, and tasteful leads. When I say "progressive," though, don't panic; the songwriting is economical, with only 2 tracks exceeding 5 minutes in duration. And "Mang," a :46 ditty, sounds like it might be just as at home on an early Whiplash album. The low end on this recording is a little dodgy (particularly the kick drums), but for a 1988 indie budget--Roadrunner then was hardly the big label it is today--the results are perfectly within reason.



1990's follow-up, *Suiciety*, corrects the shortcomings of the debut and documents the band's strengths coming into fruition. The extra time they were allotted on this project shows up quite dramatically in the final product. This is the Realm album you should check out first, as the mix is much bigger and clearer, the songs (still progressive but economical) more memorable, the performances more

authoritative, and Antoni's melodies are slightly reined in and more purposeful. Surgically precise, wildly technical, and certainly a visionary presentation of thrash. Bonus track here is a cover of King Crimson's "One More Red Nightmare."

Given the demand for these vintage Roadrunner titles (I know of one kid who spent nearly \$100 on a used copy some years back), Metal Mind could easily have cheated out and slapped together a second-rate, bare bones campaign for a quick buck and gotten away with it. Instead, no effort was spared to give the fans the definitive presentation of all of the licensed titles: liner notes for each by guitarist Takis Kinis, band bio, full-color expanded booklets, individually numbered digipak cases (full color inside and out) with a handsome flood coat of dull varnish, and bonus tracks (although the one "bonus track" on *Endless War* did actually appear on the original CD). These were also remastered, but I don't have an original pressing of either title to tell you what, if anything, has been improved by it. All in all, for the limited production run (2000 of each title) and fair price, Metal Mind earns top marks for going to such lengths to deliver a worthwhile product.

**B** (*Endless War*)

**A-** (*Suiciety*)      -Mark Fields