

# AURAL ASSAULTS

## REISSUE ROW

### Pestilence Mind Reflections Roadrunner



The reissue of *Mind Reflections* once again gives thrashers the chance to pick up a decent one-stop CD encompassing all points in the career of Pestilence. This legendary Dutch band made a name for themselves in the days when European thrash was giving way to early '90s death metal, but when they called it quits after 1993's experimental *Spheres* album *Mind Reflections* hit the shelves, a best of collection with 10 hand-picked songs from throughout the group's brief history plus six live tracks from Dynamo '92. Now it's back with the "Mind Reflections" video clip, giving you over 70 minutes of vintage thrash.

Most of the tracks are pure metal, or almost pure metal, and they've got that unmistakable late '80s sound with the mids scooped out. The vocals are hoarse and guttural, the tempos and leads are fast and the drums are appropriately flat and pounding. If you listen closely you can actually tell exactly which songs come from which period in the band's discography. Tracks one and three are from their '89 effort, *Consuming Impulse*, so they're early death metal all the way. Sandwiched between them is "Twisted Truth" from 1991's *Testimony Of The Ancients* and you can hear the experimental, progressive weirdness starting to seep in as orchestral keyboard work surfaces. Next up is "Parricide" from their '88 debut and the production and songwriting are very thrash sounding. After that is "Mind Reflections" from *Spheres*. If you like your death metal full of keyboards and weird, dissonant riffs that aren't heavy it should be right up your alley.

The tracklist arrangement on this collection is strange because there's nothing chronological about it; the tracks jump from one album to the next with the only identifiable theme being that there's never two in a row from the same album. Even if you just throw it on in the background, you'll find it impossible not to notice the obvious differences in production. Thankfully there's only one selection from *Spheres*, so the disc will keep your head banging for the most part. The obvious weaknesses are the softer, more experimental tracks from *Testimony Of The Ancients*, when straight metal began giving way to other influences. The half dozen live songs tacked on the end sound good, but there's nothing remarkably different about Pestilence on the stage and Pestilence in the studio. These tracks are only worth it if you're truly a Pestilence fanatic or dedicated thrash historian.

For the re-release of a best of collection like this many fans might be hoping for a nice, fat insert stuffed with photos, scans of old flyers and other goodies, but all you really get is a two-page account of Pestilence's story and four blurry photos, plus the lyrics. The cover art is intricate and atmospheric but it's overkill when you see it reproduced on every page of the booklet. A definite missed opportunity.

If you're curious about Pestilence, this makes for an interesting snapshot of the band, giving you at least one offering from each major release. On the other hand, if you're thirsting for the glory days of '88 you should skip it and track down *Malleus Maleficarum* and *Consuming Impulse*; it's the only way to hear the full run of Pestilence at their heaviest. [www.myspace.com/pestilence]

— Keith Russo

### Atrophy Violent By Nature Displeased



This is a reissue of the sophomore effort (originally on Roadrunner) by underrated late '80s Arizona thrashers Atrophy, who basically broke-up/dissolved when guitarist/songwriter Chris Lykins decided to pursue medical school. He's now a plastic surgeon (Dr. Metal, for real) and his six-string partner, Rick Skowron, is an avionics engineer. Dumb metalheads, eh? While there are no bonuses (songs, liner notes, photos) to be had here, the band's penchant for writing about real life problems, like chemical dependency, urban decay (both titles from the superior *Socialized Hate* debut) and nuclear proliferation are no less effective today.

Where the band's debut seemed to be inspired by the sudden success of fellow Sun Devil thrashers, Flotsam And Jetsam, just a couple years later, the band/material seemed to opt for tinges of the crossover tact taken by another politically conscious Arizona crew that had enjoyed success: Sacred Reich. Opener, "Puppies And Friends" concerns animal testing, long before siding with PETA was a PR opportunity. "In Their Eyes" decries the lost innocence that comes from growing up. The soft, pizzicato guitar beginning "Too Late For Change" showcases a vocal weakness of Brian Zimmerman and the repetitive, shouted titular chorus seems out of place compared to their other works. It also sounds sonically hollow, compared to the rich textures of today, even in more extreme metal. That said, the best part of Atrophy was the guitars and even on a flub track like the aforementioned, the fretwork sizzles. None too surprising, given the intellect within the band, "Slipped Through The Cracks" discusses how teens (particularly urban kids) would rather do drugs, or play sports, than get an education. I'd love to reconnect with Lykins, after all these years, to get a renewed outlook, given his metal to medicine transition. 17 years ago they wrote about federal/state debt and how it's partially tied into keeping convicted death row inmates alive for decades' worth of appeals ("Forgotten But Not Gone"), overpopulation ("Process Of Elimination") and the self-explanatory "Right To Die" is still an unsettled argument despite the passage of time.

There were more technically proficient acts, better songsmiths and certainly bigger success stories in '80s metal, but for erudite social commentary through thought-provoking lyrics, Atrophy should not be forgotten. Thankfully a new generation of fans can (re)discover their handiwork. [www.displeasedrecords.com] — Mark Gromen

### Holy Moses Finished With The Dogs Locomotive



In a perfect world, Germany's thrashaholic semi-legends Holy Moses should be mentioned in the same breath as their better-recognized countrymen Kreator, Sodom and Destruction. Unfortunately though, despite having released consistently neck-wrecking material since 1980, the name Holy Moses seems reserved for those steel-laden scholars who remember names of other (though no less killer) Teutonic also-rans like Living Death, Deathrow, Darkness and Violent Force.

This is a shame, because this reissue of The Moses' fantastic 1987 release, *Finished With The Dogs*, possesses enough frantic riffwork to easily earn it the right to be mentioned alongside such shaggy-headed thrasherpieces such as *Terrible Certainty*, *Infernal Overkill* or *Obsessed By Cruelty*. Andy Classen's guitar work always possessed a strong punk/HC influence to it, appealing just as much to DRI/Corrosion Of Conformity fans as it did the dyed-in-the-wool headbangers of the '80s, and *Finished* is a prime example of both the classic and the crossover meeting with glorious, boot-stompin' aggression.

Of course, what Holy Moses review would be complete without mention of the demonic, hellish snarling of frontwoman Sabina Classen? Simultaneously seductive and sinister, Ms. Classen makes mincemeat out of modern pretenders (I'm looking in your direction, Ms. Gossow), while also proving — particularly for the time period — that a woman can charismatically and convincingly front a band of this intensity just as well as any man. Classen's hissing rendering of the album's title track ("Finished with zee dooogsssss!!") is essential listening.

Locomotive's reissue job (complete with four bonus live tracks taken from the band's 2001 festival stint) is solid, and breathes new life into this already minor classic, providing a new lease on life and a way for fans to check out some of thrash metal's unsung history. *Finished With The Dogs* serves as a career high point for the band, and a fantastic place to start if you're unfamiliar Holy Moses' discography. Bottom line: Without some Holy Moses, your thrash collection will seriously be lacking. Don't miss out on picking this one up! [www.holymoses.de]

— MetalGeorge Pacheco

### Flotsam And Jetsam Doomsday For The Deceiver (20th Anniversary Edition) Metal Blade



Argue however you want, Arizona's Flotsam And Jetsam will always be subordinate to Slayer, Metallica and Megadeth, but there's simply no denying the quintet, led by current Voivod/ex-Metallica bassist

Jason Newsted, were one of the top 10 US thrash metal acts when *Doomsday For The Deceiver* was released in 1986. While many treated Flotsam And Jetsam like, well, flotsam and jetsam after the release of 1990's *When The Storm Comes Down*, even if it did feature the crushingly catchy "Suffer The Masses," the group's pre-MCA repertoire definitely deserves another painstakingly closer look. Thanks to Metal Blade, a whole new era of metallers will get the chance. Re-released for the first time in 20 years, the Flotsam And Jetsam reissue of *Doomsday For The Deceiver* is jam-packed with more must-haves, extras and surprises than normally accompany a (label-convenient) redux. For starters, the original mix and a remix/re-master of the album are provided in full, which is something that seems to escape most labels/bands vying for a chunk of the reissue cash-in. Bravo! The original mix is nearly fucking perfect, actually — new dudes...er, dudes like Trivium, Shadows Fall et al. could really learn a few tricks in this department — while the remix/re-master offers the usual volume punch-ups, cobweb clean-ups and "modernization." To be fair, there's no real reason to explore the remix/re-master unless you didn't experience *Doomsday* the first time around. Then there's semi-faithful transfers of demos *Iron Tears* and *Metal Shock*, bound to make aging, white high-top wearin' heshers headbang like it's 1985. Awesome! At this point, Metal Blade could've stopped, but they decided to throw in a DVD full of grainy live footage, oddball interviews (the journo in the suit is a doppelganger for Bob Saget), and a photo history that shows Flotsam And Jetsam's transformation from glammed-up Mötley Crüe (*Too Fast-er*) attire to full-on thrashers in tight jeans and black t-shirts. The entire Bootleggers show makes toggling through the amateur DVD menu (made in 1986?) worth the work, and watching A.K. purposefully wail and sway (like it's 1976) through one-offs of "Iron Tears," "Hammerhead" and "She Took An Axe" are pure metal gold. Excellent! While the lot of you are looking for originals of Slayer's *Seasons In The Abyss* bloodpack, Metallica's *Garage Days Re-Visited* and Megadeth's 1984 demo, Flotsam And Jetsam have literally hit the ball out of the park with the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition of *Doomsday For The Deceiver*, and for that it's definitely worth your time to check out these titans of thrash one more time. Now where's that *No Place For Disgrace* reissue? [www.flotsam-and-jetsam.com]

— Chris Dick

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