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metal reissues galore 2



Underground Music Reissues Galore 2!

Here we are again with a new batch of underground music reissues. It seems like more than two decades into extreme music's existence record labels are getting nostalgic and are looking at the past as a way to bulk up their catalogues and why not? cash in a bit. Metalheads can only be thankful for that; looking at the wealth of releases that were issued back in the 80's and early 90's and checking their current retail prices and scarce availability, is easy to realize that these re-releases provide a new way for the younger generation to experience many of the great and the not-so great bands that may be grossly overlooked because of their place in time. Check these out! Or not! You decide.

Besides Flotsam and Jetsam and Sacred Reich the most well-known Arizona metal band is Atrophy. Formed in 1986 in Tucson, Atrophy released two well-received demos before unleashing their debut full-length *Socialized Hate* on Roadrunner Records in 1988. Potently produced by thrash metal staple Bill Metoyer over the course of one month this record features energetic speed metal guitars, a mildly corrosive voice (for today's standards anyway) and double bass drums very likely played with high top Reeboks. Most of the riffing is quite typical for the times; speed is shifted occasionally but the guitars rarely get out of chk, chk, chk mode. In many ways, Atrophy walks a fine line between being technical and merely proficient; this is their biggest disadvantage and it surely positions Atrophy right behind Sacred Reich (because they lacked their sense of melody) and Flotsam and Jetsam (because they lacked a bassist named Jason Newsted) in terms of quality. This re-release includes three tracks from their 1987 demo *Chemical Dependency*; the sound is surprisingly good but the voice of Brian Zimmerman sounds somewhat muffled, as if he was singing with a pillow in front of his face.

Two years later came *Violent By Nature*, the second and last release from Atrophy. Helped by a bigger budget and once again the help of Bill Metoyer this release offers up a second serving from the same recipe. Atrophy clearly liked what they were doing so they stuck with the same formula. Improvements are noticeable in some places, especially in the high quality solo guitar playing of main songwriter Chris Lykins. Opinions diverge of whether this is a better album than *Socialized Hate*. The polished sound may come off to some as less enthusiastic and lacking the spark of the first one, but songwise *Violent By Nature* is by no way inferior. Like Atrophy's debut, this one too adheres a bit too much to the patterns of the genre of the time. Around 1990, Atrophy toured the States and Europe with Sacred Reich and Coroner, soon after Lykins quit. Recruiting a new member the band tried to continue and went as far as pre-producing a third release for the label. The people of Roadrunner apparently lost faith in a Lykins-less Atrophy and dropped the band soon after.

Formed in 1987 in Lynn, MA Disrupt are one of the oldest and premier American crust punk bands. This re-issue of their 1994 LP *Unrest* also includes the ten tracks that made up their 1994 7" split with Deprived, which came out as part of the Relapse Single Series. *Unrest* was recorded in 1992 and this re-mastered release has brought out some of the power to the front. For today's standards Disrupt is a very musical band. The music shares a lot in common with some evolved way of crust punk and the songs, at least as far as the music is concerned, are never void of melody. Clearly, Disrupt was a very political band and the band

splashes that message up front through their blunt critical lyricism, ("Religion is a Fraud", "Green to Grey", "Dog Eat Dog") and their recurrent use of samples which openly displays the band's animal friendly stance. The second half (from the split with Deprived) comes to a startling start with a much more hyper violent approach. "Critics" bites your face in a few seconds and the cuts that follow devour the rest of your cutis like vermin. The riffage is this time around much simpler and circular and as a result the songs have more impact than those from the first half.

The Rest is the two-disc Relapse compilation of Unrest's splits, demos, and vinyl only EP's. Totalling seventy-eight tracks and coming close to the two-hour mark; this release is all one needs to lose appetite and bring out the kicking boots. Disc one includes tracks from their splits with Sauna, Warcollapse, Tuomiopaivan Lapset, Taste of Fear, Disdain, Resist, Crust, Anguished Life and Destroy, along with some unreleased and 7" tracks. The drill is the same; Unrest don't fuck around and dish out the brutal crust in short bursts of hateful energy. Naturally the audio quality varies from recording to recording, but Disrupt don't let up for a second and despite such changes their power is unbreakable and never diminishes. The second disc contains the twelve tracks from their 1988 demo, eleven songs from a 1990 rehearsal and ten live tracks captured in 1992. The 1988 demo is particularly in your face with the visceral delivery of vocalist Pete Kamarinos way up front, while the rehearsal sounds like such and the live tracks round out the most comprehensive release of any American crust band ever. Totally exhausting.

Sweden's Regain Records (a label that rises from the ashes of Wrong Again Records) is re-releasing a few classics from two of the most important European black metal bands; Dark Funeral and Marduk. Up first are Dark Funeral, whose first full-length *The Secret of the Black Arts* was released in 1996 and is here presented with a bonus CD containing the botched recordings from the same album. Initially tracked at Uni-Sound studios by Dan Swanö the band would later relocate to Abyss Studio and re-record the entire album with Peter Tägtgren at the helm. Both recordings have been re-mastered and feature a powerful sound, though their difference is evident: Tägtgren's version boasts a more ambitious and majestic (if you will) sound with several subtleties only audible through headphones, more eloquent orchestration and nice nuances in the guitar department while Swanö's version puts up the guitars up front and somewhat strips the band's work to a mere combination of voice, bass, guitars and drums. Regardless, it's clear why *The Secret of the Black Arts* was such a success upon its release, this record slays and haunts from beginning to end.

Released in 1998 *Vobiscum Satanas* is Dark Funeral's third official recording and second full-length. In it, the band picks up speed and loses some of the dark ambience that makes of *Secret of the Black Arts* such a charming experience. Track after track after track Dark Funeral seems too focused in breaking speed records instead of concentrating on channeling some sort of evil feeling. Tägtgren is once again handling the production but he seems to have refocused his strategy this time opting for the Dan Swanö approach. The stellar guitar playing of Lord Ahrimand and Blackmoon is once again a bit overshadowed, with most of the real work only appreciable through headphones. This reissue contains four live tracks recorded in 1998 at the Hultsfreds Festival; the sound is quite crisp for a live black metal recording.

What can we say about Botch's stunning *American Nervoso* that hasn't been said already? That it has been re-mastered by original producer Matt Bayles and that it sounds better than ever. More actual than never. As if that was possible. Recorded in March 1998 and released on May 20th 1999, *American Nervoso* is an absolute classic of extreme music. Here Botch was truly breaking ground and constructing gorgeous destructive songs out of jagged rhythms and turns that at first spin appear as humanly impossible. The band built such seemingly intricate songs it was easy to envision that it would go over most music fan's heads. But time has been very kind to Botch and this prelude to their masterful *We Are the Romans* displays technique and talent rarely seen in extreme music.

Hailing from Emeryville, CA Christ On Parade was formed in the 80's and in 1985 issued their debut *Sounds of Nature* which came out on Pushead's label Pusmort Records. Christ On Parade belonged to the East Coast wave of underground bands that pullulated the area right after the star of first wave hardcore bands like Black Flag started to dim. This band specialized in violent hardcore with a tinge of dynamic crust punk. *Sounds of Nature* is comprised of thirteen quick and fast tracks; all of which brim with energy and power well-channeled by the no frills approach of vocalist Barrie Evans, who at times, in his quest to keep up with the speed of the music, deadpans his lines. The music is locked at one speed, but the band introduced some variations to their follow up recording, the 7" EP *Isn't Life a Dream*, also included in this Neurot Recordings

reissue. Now featuring former guitarist Noah Landis on vocals (currently of Neurosis), *Isn't Life a Dream* has more universal appeal as the band seems to have found a more personal sound. For instance we have, "Things Are Turning a Different Color", where the vocal delivery and tone reminds of Mike Muir's early crossover work with Suicidal Tendencies and the overall production clearly makes a distinction between bass and guitar.

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