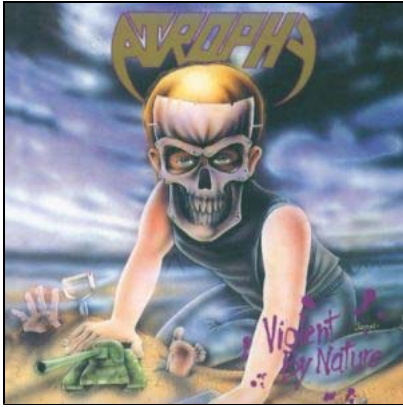


REVIEWS : ALBUMS : ATROPHY, "VIOLENT BY NATURE [REISSUE]"



ATROPHY
VIOLENT BY NATURE [REISSUE]
 METAL MIND RECORDS
 2007

BAND INFORMATION

Official Website

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Krazy Ken's grandmother lived in Arizona, and he was always heading out there on vacation with his family. This explains why Ken was so familiar with the Arizona thrash scene, championing bands like Sacred Reich, Flotsam and Jetsam, and Atrophy... bands we'd never heard of before. Good thing Ken had his stubby ears to the ground!

Atrophy's second album arrived in 1990, the beginning of the last decade of the 1900's, and though we couldn't know it, the musical landscape was verging on a complete transformation. Metal, which had been making steady progress throughout the 1980's, was about to be a victim of its own excesses. While the underground continued to thrive and be a viable source of good metal music, commercially oriented metal bands had been riding a wave of hair spray and makeup, a wave that was crashing under its own weight.

Not that any of this bothered Atrophy has they prepared to record "Violent By Nature". They had a bunch of new songs, all the touring they'd done had honed their skills, and with the "Socialized Hate" recording experience to build upon, Atrophy went back to Los Angeles and Bill Metoyer. The results were exactly what the band had hoped for; tighter playing, even more mature song writing, and nine great tracks. Some critics and fans took them to task when this came out, claiming that Atrophy had become slick and had lost the intensity of the previous album.

I disagree now, just as I did then. If anything, I'd say the intensity was ratcheted up a few notches by NOT cruising along at hyper speed. I've long maintained that what makes a band heavy is dynamics, not super speed or drop tuning or songs about raping burning sheep while stabbing your brain with a fork. Atrophy could do the high speed riffing thing in their sleep, but knowing when to apply it for maximum effect was a welcome addition to their grab bag of tricks. "Too Late To Change" wouldn't sound so good at the back end of the song unless the beginning had been a bit restrained. Not that they'd forgotten how to jam... Chris Lykins and Rick Scowron's guitar work is blazing and ferocious, Tim Kelly's drums relentlessly bash away (check out "Forgotten but Not Gone"), and once again James Gulotta's bass drives the rhythms. And once again, Brian Zimmerman turns in a classic thrash vocal attack.

The first three tracks, "Puppies and Friends", the title track, and "In Their Eyes" blast away, but you can tell there's a bit of thought going to into each construction. When "Too Late To Change" rolls around in the clean-up spot, opening with 12-string guitars (credited to Kevin Sparks), our suspicions are confirmed... Atrophy have grown into their large metal boots. How fans and critics could have found fault with this album is a bit beyond me, as I've always considered "Violent by Nature" to be superior to "Socialized Hate" in almost every way. Sure, it's not as raw, but it's not exactly Elton freakin' John, either. The aforementioned "Forgotten but Not Gone", "Slipped Through the Cracks", "Process of Elimination", "Right to Die", "Things Change"... these are stellar thrash songs.

I can't believe it's been seventeen years since this came out. It's aged well, though, like any fine product that gets better with the passing of time. This Metal Mind reissue is, like the others, 24-bit re-mastering on a gold disk in a limited edition digi-pack. Bonuses include the demos for "Suicide Pact", "Product of the Past", and "Beer Bong", plus a bootleg video of the band ripping through the song "Violent By Nature". The songs sound great, even the demos have their goofy charm. Krazy Ken lives in central Texas now, and I haven't seen him since... jeez... when we went to Houston a few years back to catch Iron Maiden. But he's still a metal maniac, and I know he'll be happy to pick up these Atrophy re-issues... as should you!

STANDOUT TRACKS

All

S.GREGORY

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