

AURAL ASSAULTS

REISSUE ROW

Akimbo Harshing Your Mellow Alternative Tentacles



AKIMBO HARSHING YOUR MELLOW

What Akimbo have developed a knack for doing over the last couple years is taking otherwise familiar crusty noise punk, amping the hell out of the riffage and making old new again. And granted, it's hard for me to listen to this record without wishing it had been called *Harshing Your Mellow*, but Akimbo are experts when it comes to grabbing the attention of even the most mild-mannered listener.

Originally issued in 2001 through Dopamine and Seventh Rule Recordings, *Harshing Your Mellow* is young Akimbo, less solidified in their sound than on 2006's *Forging Steel And Laying Stone*. But what they lack in finesse, they more than make up for with raw anger, as a track like "Lick The Knife" will demonstrate.

There are also bright glimpses of what they would become in the form of songs like "The Sound Is Dead" and "When I Am King I Will Spit On The Corpse Of Ray Manzarek" — which, admittedly, could have been a recording of the band washing their hands and I'd still dig it — but the main order of the day is pure under-produced aggression. Even in that harsh environment, as this album shows, Akimbo managed to thrive and evolve into the beast they are today. [www.livetocrush.com] — JJ Koczan

Disrupt Unrest The Rest Relapse



This duo of re-releases culling everything the classic Boston crust/grind band ever committed to tape is a completist fan's extreme wet dream; or as an acquaintance of mine terms it, "a cowboy's wet dream."

"What's that?," you ask. Apparently, it's when, "you wake up and you're still shooting."

Disrupt formed in 1987 and went through an inane number of lineup changes. *Unrest* was recorded in '92 and released in '94, almost a year after the band broke up. Clocking in at 30 tracks in 50 minutes (nine of 'em being bonus additions), *Unrest* only tells a part of the story as this entire collection totals 108 tracks. Even though it was their only full-length, *Unrest* was but one release of a total of 12 — four 7"s, a 12" and six split 7"s. Disrupt's style was meat-and-potatoes crust grind; bottom-heavy, thick and catchy guitar riffs powered by a jackhammer drummer who apparently only played one beat over the course of six years and an unhinged dual vocal attack. Their music, inspired as it was by Extreme Noise Terror, Siege, Discharge, Doom and a little bit of Cryptic Slaughter, wasn't on the cusp of an originality revolution. They simply wrote solid two minute songs addressing the issues crowding the political landscape of the late '80s/early '90s: Religion, corporate greed, globalization, the environment, police brutality and, especially on *Unrest*, vivisection. And just as the topics that bands were screaming, yelling and growling about some 15-20 years back haven't changed all that much, neither has the effectiveness and impact of heartfelt, DIY punk/grind as this is nearly three hours of sonic battering that somehow never gets boring, even on *The Rest*, when you're listening to live and 7" versions of demo tracks. A testament to just how un-fuck-withable Disrupt were and are. [www.myspace.com/officialdisrupt] — Kevin Stewart-Panko

Sadus Swallowed In Black Chemical Exposure A Vision Of Misery Metal Mind/MVD



California's Sadus sat firmly on the fence bordering thrash and death metal due largely to the group's frazzled, ultra-high energy output on *Swallowed In Black* and *Illusions* (later re-titled *Chemical Exposure*). Part *Hell Awaits* Slayer, part *Seven Churches Possessed*, part *Pleasure To Kill* Kreator and part *Schizophrenia* Sepultura, Sadus made no room for compromises or complacency in its merciless attack. While the quartet may be more known for hiring out bassist Steve DiGiorgio, it's Sadus' early discography that stands the test of time, thanks to Polish reissue giant Metal Mind. Wrapped in exquisitely printed, hand-numbered digipaks, with a 24-bit mastering on gold discs to boot, the Mind's careful handling of Sadus' first three albums deserves applause.

Swallowed In Black will always be remembered as part of a deluge of now-classic titles like *Obituary's Cause Of Death*, *Death's Spiritual Healing* and *Entombed's Left Hand Path* among others. Unlike its peers at home and abroad, Sadus offered speed in favor of heaviness. Tracks like opener "Black," the riff-insanity of "Last Abide" and frantic "Good Rid'nz" launch volley after volley of unbridled aggression — guitarists Rob Moore and Darren Travis weave a complicated, often dizzying, web of riffs (check out "False Incarnation") that are often offset, punctured and nearly driven off course by DiGiorgio's rhythmic sleight of hand; in hindsight, if Sadus wasn't so caustic, *Swallowed In Black* could've paired up with *Atheist's Piece Of Time* quite nicely.

It took Roadracer a year to reissue the re-titled *Chemical Exposure* effort, but it certainly was worth the wait. What it lacked in maturity it made up in sheer visceral ferocity. There's no respite here, as "Certain Death," "Sadus Attack," "Twisted Face" and "Illusions" test thrash/death metal's velocity limits. Listening to *Chemical Exposure* now, some 16 years after the fact, it's hard to believe a few Cali kids can render 99% of contemporary black metal ineffective — listen to the demo tracks "Desolator" and "Torture" to hear a tormented, maladjusted and pissed Sadus (Travis is unreal!) in all its proto-black metal glory. No posturing, no fake philosophy, no bullshit. *Chemical Exposure* is the real fuckin' deal.

When *A Vision Of Misery* was released in 1992, Sadus was a more refined outfit, with DiGiorgio's fretless bass leading the charge. The album marked an exploratory phase, where complex structures, tempos and soloing motifs ("Valley Of Dry Bones" and "Machines" are but two great examples) matured without losing sight of *Swallowed In Black's* manic nature. While never regarded as a progressive thrash/death metal album, like *Death's Human*, it certainly deserves to be regarded as such, as it has plenty in common with artists of similar style and timing; again *Atheist* is a parallel. If there ever is a category for an unsung prog death metal album it's *A Vision Of Misery*. Excellent stuff.

If you're wondering about the bonus tracks, Metal Mind, at the behest of Sadus, have split up the *DTP* demo to the *Swallowed In Black* and *Chemical Exposure* releases, appending two out of the six to each. Similarly, the *Certain Death* demo is affixed to the end of *A Vision Of Misery*. While Sadus nutters probably have the originals or *Karmageddon's DTP* 2003 reissue, the value of the Metal Mind versions is a clear cut example of quality over quantity. *Swallowed In Black*, *Chemical Exposure* and *Vision Of Misery* should definitely be part of any discerning metalhead's collection. [www.stevedigiorgio.com/sadus] — Chris Dick

Cannibal Corpse Vile Metal Blade



The endless debates about the legitimacy of Cannibal Corpse without the vocal talents of Chris Barnes began in '97. Following up watershed release, *The Bleeding*, bassist Alex Webster, guitarists Rob Barrett (now back in the band) and Jack Owen (now in Deicide), and drummer Paul Mazurkiewicz decided it was time to change vocalists and snagged Monstrosity's George "Corpsegrinder" Fisher to record *Vile*. The result was the start of a new era marked by continually improving musicianship and songwriting, and a vocalist that still ranks among the best in the death metal business. And yes, he is a better vocalist than Chris Barnes, so let it go; it's been 10 years for fuck's sake.

One of the first of Metal Blade's reissue series commemorating the label's 25th anniversary, the Scott Burns produced (with the band and Brian Slagel) *Vile* comes with an effective re-mastering job and a bonus DVD of near-bootleg quality live performances from the 1997 tour. As for the original content, *Vile* is unquestionably classic Cannibal Corpse and rivals many of the albums that came before and after. Both the speed-killing "Devoured By Vermin" and the almost catchy "Mummified In Barbed Wire" are vintage Corpse crushers. The frantic "Puncture Wound Massacre" and tempo changing "Monolith" and "Perverse Suffering" are right there as well, not to mention another in a long-line of vaginal-centric songs called "Orgasm Through Torture."

It is on the slower material that the band achieved a new kind of sickness though. "Disfigured" and "Badlands" slither like snakes through mounds of human entrails, many of the lines (i.e. "I despise what I see in the mirror," from the former) are difficult to purge from the mind. Something about the group's guitar tone took a ghastly turn for the better and is distinctive to this day, the ooze factor most notable on the slower paced material.

Finally, the bonus DVD contains 18 songs filmed on February 3rd and 4th, 1997 at The Berkeley Square. As expected, the sound is not exactly of stereo quality. Along with acceptable single-camera work, the DVD accomplishes what it was intended to accomplish: To capture the feel of a new era for one of death metal's elite acts. [www.cannibalcorpse.net] — Scott Alisoglu

Heathen Victims Of Deception Metal Mind/MVD



I have to admit I should be flogged for not owning *Victims Of Deception* when it came out in 1991. For some reason, greats like Testament, Exodus, Death/Dark Angel, Forbidden, Vio-Lence, Mordred, Defiance, and even fucking Lääz Rockit were in heavy rotation, but Heathen escaped me. Well, live and, with Metal Mind's help, learn. Like all of Metal Mind's excellent Roadracer/runner reissues, *Victims Of Deception* is top-notch. A monofold digipak, a full color 10-page booklet, liner notes, bonus tracks and, the capper, a 24-bit mastered gold CD for extra longevity makes discovering it some 16 years later even better.

I'm sure if you've read this far, it's likely you — like me — are new to Heathen. The quintet, like many San Fran peers of the time, focus on a bass-heavy melodic crunch, soaring vocals, piercing solos and an anti-establishment/religion lyrical bent; so familiar in its approach, some of Heathen's songwriting couldn't originate from anywhere else, but the Bay Area. "Hypnotized" and "Opiate Of The Masses" have vestiges of "Infinite" and "Brain Dead," respectively, for example. But where Heathen differs, like *Frolic Through The Park*-era Death Angel and *Fool's Game*-era Mordred, is in the quirkiness of its smooth/jagged songwriting and David Godfrey's vocals. Though tried and true, Heathen aren't terribly staid. Tracks like the aforementioned "Opiate Of The Masses," "Fear Of The Unknown" and "Mercy Is No Virtue" are surface-level thrash with a few unorthodox (riffs, vocal patterns) twists. In fact, *Victims Of Deception* is full of unexpected turns. Buttressed by the balladry of "Heathen's Song" and standout cut "Prisoners Of Fate," the cover of Rainbow's "Kill The King" is excellently rendered, but seems a bit trad metal compared to the first three cuts; Heathen had a history of covers, as Sweet's "Set Me Free" on '87's *Breaking The Silence* indicated. Perhaps the main point of contention with *Victims Of Deception* is its uneven production. It sounds as if the first half is different from the latter; it's particularly evident on "Timeless Cell Of Prophecy" and Japanese bonus track "Hellbound."

While *Victims Of Deception* won't overly excite nouveau thrash dudes into Trivium or Shadows Fall, it certainly will appeal to the nostalgic or those wanting to replace dust-covered cassettes. If you own early albums from Testament, Exodus or Death Angel, there's absolutely no reason you shouldn't own *Victims Of Deception*. It's worth it for "Hypnotized" and "Prisoners Of Fate" alone. [www.heathenmetal.com] — Chris Dick