

AURAL ASSAULTS

REISSUE ROW

Decapitated *Winds Of Creation* Earache



Released around the same time as the tragic death of drummer Vitek, this debut album from one of the best modern death metal bands almost got one whole decade to sink in before a reissue was tossed out on shelves with a bonus DVD. 2000's *Winds Of Creation* is a great album from a then (super) young band, which eventually grew into a monster with each subsequent release. Taken on its own, though, the album is a solid death metal record with great examples of how to make the genre catchy and listenable. Vogg's guitar work is intricate and will catch you off guard from time to time, and Vitek more than holds his own on drums even in his mid-teens. Unfortunately, Sauron's vocals don't have the same effect that the instruments do. One-dimensional grunts may tickle some metal-heads' fancy, but for semi-technical death metal, the vocalist needs to be at the top of his game, too.

Thankfully for Sauron, the DVD included in this reissue was recorded in 2004, after he had some time to hone his vocal skills, and they come across as powerful if nothing else. The footage is clear and sounds great, but as with most live metal DVDs, there's about a million cuts between the members and long shots, which makes viewing more headache-inducing than anything else. What metal DVDs need to start offering is a multi-camera-angle feature, wherein the viewer can choose which member they would like to watch (or if they just want to watch the whole band at once). For a gifted band like Decapitated, this would have been a blessing. Now, the DVD will just be the other disc in the *Winds Of Creation* reissue on my CD rack. [www.metalmind.com.pl] — Dave Hofer

Black Crucifixion *Promethean Gift* Paragon



Recorded during the heyday of black metal, *Promethean Gift* was Black Crucifixion's 1993 debut EP, selling out quickly, probably because BM really was all the rage back then. Black Crucifixion was one of BM's first pure "cult" acts, running alongside other "cult" (a term we must apply lightly given the context) acts such as Beherit and Thorns. As was the case for many BM bands Norwegian and Finnish, the band took their good ol' time in coming up with a follow-up, recording *Faustian Dream* in 1996, then completing it in 2006.

Such an unproductive run did add a certain level of fascination with BC, which no doubt helped *Faustian Dream* achieve its much-deserved critical acclaim. Still, claims in the album's bio that *Promethean Gift* "might be the first true black metal recording" seem a bit unfounded, given how much we know about the late '80s and early '90s black metal scene.

Faustian Dream is a strong mixture of *Into The Pandemonium*-era Frost (especially the vocals) and eerie, mid-tempo, necro aesthetics that in spite of its 10-year recording period, still hold up today. *Promethean Gift* is what you'd expect out of black metal EP — non-existent production values, a go-for-broke reliance on speed and fragmented song structures, none of which demonstrate the development the band made on the excellent *Faustian Dream*.

Nevertheless, kudos to Paragon for mining this nugget from the vaults and greater kudos to bandleader Forn for scribbling down some in-depth comments for the liner notes. Forn's recollections of this time and place cancel out the horrid production values, giving *Promethean Gift* some weight and measure that should spark interest the world over. [http://paasto.com/bc] — David E. Gehlke

Trojan *Chasing The Storm* Metal Mind



Originally released on Roadrunner in the mid-'80s, I can just barely remember seeing this in stores at the time and wondering what the hell it was all about. The album's cover, depicting a hangman's noose being circled by bats under the watch of a demonic figure, had a decidedly evil tinge to it but as an import it was far too expensive for my teenaged paychecks. Recently unearthed by Metal Mind as part of their ongoing Roadrunner reissue campaign, it's nice to finally discover what eluded me the first time around. While the back cover photo on the digipak — featuring all four members in (yikes) matching white jackets — makes them look like a bunch of AOR wannabes à la Heavy Pettin' or (gasp) Canadian pop stars Glass Tiger, I'm happy to report the band offers a solid enough brand of NWOBHM. Unfortunately, by the time they finally released it (1985), the musical climate was moving away from traditional UK power metal and more in the direction of thrash. It was unfortunate, because really, this is decent enough stuff. Fans of mid-'80s offerings from the likes of Satan and Grim Reaper will be happy with this release if, and it's a *big* if, they can get their head around the vocals. Singer Graeme Watt is a challenge to listen to. He tries to sing at the higher end of his own register with middling amounts of success. When he's on, as he is on third track "Only The Strong," he's somewhat reminiscent of an early Eric Wagner. Unfortunately however, he often tries to overextend his own range (see "Hypnotized") and sounds more like a screeching bird than a classic metal singer. If you can deal with that — and the fact it sounds like the whole album was recorded in a tin shed, even now after remastering — there's a fair number of decent riffs offered up here by guitarist Pete Wadson, who must have been a busy boy in the studio. There are loads of guitar layers all over this platter; methinks they should have had a second guitarist. Perhaps that's why they never succeeded. Anyway, this is definitely worth picking up if you are a fan of traditional sounding or obscure British metal and need a fix, but by no means is it essential. [www.metalmind.com.pl] — Sean Palmerston

Sigh *Gallows Gallery* The End



To say that Japan's Sigh comes out of left field would be a gross understatement. Sigh is one of the most fearless, adventurous, free-spirited metal bands I've ever heard. Considering the band's relatively pure black metal origins, their development has been astonishing. Yes, they've fused oldschool thrash, traditional heavy metal pomposity and much more, but what's really impressive is that their seamless synthesis of said styles is well-executed and somehow makes sense.

Evidenced on the reissue of 2005's *Gallows Gallery*, their over-the-top antics in "Confession To Be Buried" reach into Queen territory, and the shoegazing, spacious atmosphere of "The Tranquilizer Song" sounds like Portishead had they grown up worshipping metal. Guest performances by members of Firewind, Dark Tranquillity, Necrophagia, The Red Chord, Yakuza, *Meads Of Asphodel* and Thine only add to *Gallows Gallery's* charm. A solid release on every level. [http://sigh.gospel-virus.net] — Jay H. Gorania

Testament *Demonic* *The Gathering* Prosthetic



While the world anxiously awaits the brand new Testament album *The Formatio Of Damnatio*, due next month via Nuclear Blast, Prosthetic Records has reissued two classics that until now were out of print: 1997's *Demonic* and 1999's *The Gathering*. Initially released on the now-defunct Burnt Offerings and Spitfire Records respectively, both albums continue to eclipse the majority of modern metal releases. Vocalist Chuck Billy and guitarist Eric Peterson are the only original members remaining on these recordings. For *Demonic* they enlisted one of metal's heaviest hitters, drummer Gene Hoglan (Dark Angel, Death, Strapping Young Lad). Also appearing on the album is bassist Derek Ramirez, who would later join Peterson in Dragonlord, and guitarist Glen Alvelais, who played on '93's *Return To The Apocalyptic City*. *Demonic* has undergone a facelift with a new cover — albeit the original artwork was much better — and each of the 11 songs has been remastered.

The Gathering saw drum god Dave Lombardo (Slayer, Grip Inc.) sit in, as well as the return of guitarist James Murphy, who can be heard on *Law* and *Live At The Fillmore*. Bassist Steve DiGiorgio (Dragonlord, Iced Earth, Sadus) rounded out the lineup. Included in this reissue is the instrumental track "Hammer Of The Gods" that until now had only been available on the Japanese version. Bit of a goof up in the booklet, as the order in which the lyrics are printed does not match the running order of the songs. But it's the music that matters most and to quote Dimmu Borgir guitarist Silenoz, "*The Gathering* was a sledgehammer to the face when it came out and still is to this day! Sheer rawness and power combined with catchy, groovy patterns and monstrous thrash riffs proves Testament as one of the most influential metal bands ever to grace planet earth. I sum this album up in one word: Authority!" [www.testamentlegions.com] — Aaron Small

Atrocity *Todessehnsucht* Metal Mind



Todessehnsucht has been one of my favorite albums since its release in 1992. Released as *Longing For Death* in America, *Todessehnsucht* was recently reissued by Metal Mind with liner notes in a limited edition, numbered digipak. The liner notes read more like a review of the album, offering little insight into the history of the release or the band, and there are no bonus tracks to be found, so this reissue is only worthwhile to those who don't already own a copy.

That said, everyone should own this album in one form or another. Atrocity's *Hallucinations* debut, although a wonderful and powerful release, can't hold a candle to this, their sophomore effort. Bridging the gap between technicality, melody and dark horrific themes, *Todessehnsucht* is one of the few progressive metal records that can retain a dank, almost obsessively morbid atmosphere without ever falling into the trappings of prog wankery or overindulgence. The album boasts Wagnerian bombastic qualities, and drips with tension, but again, not in a pompous Therion style. Incorporating elements of classical music and experimenting with opera singers, strings and odd time signatures, Atrocity blazed their own path when most death metal bands were too busy cloning Cannibal Corpse or Napalm Death.

Fans of Cynic, Death and later Pestilence are sure to consider this album a classic, and for those who find technical metal too polished and showy, this record will convert you for this is one of the darkest albums I own. I've completely ignored what the band has done since this offering, shuddering at their '80s covers and reeling from their lacey goth influences of late. *Todessehnsucht* was arguably their last album, and I am more than happy with that. They left on a high note. [www.atrocity.de] — JWW