

AURAL ASSAULTS

REISSUE ROW

Meshuggah Nothing Nuclear Blast



You know all these highly technical noise metal bands currently fighting for cherished Fuse/MTV2's *Head-banger's Ball* airtime? Well, most of them owe a huge debt to Sweden's Meshuggah. Back when most of these similarly styled bands were still watching *The Great Space Coaster*, Meshuggah was creating a sound that combined the intensity of metal (especially of the thrash variety) with the complexity of prog (without coming off like *Dungeons & Dragons* snobs). Many fans point to their 2002 release, *Nothing*, as being the group's high water mark, and with good reason — this was the release where the group's sound truly came together in an all-original fusion. But one little problem: Their guitars didn't have enough strings at the time. Sounds like a goof but it's true. Guitarists Fredrik Thordendal and Mårten Hagström were utilizing instruments comprised of a mere seven strings for *Nothing*. Upon getting some brand new shiny eight-string instruments, an idea was hatched to re-record their parts for an all-new and improved version of *Nothing*. Although most times when bands go back to tinker with past works it falls flat, this 2006 *Nothing* version is definitely an improvement over the original, as the de-tuned guitars on "Closed Eye Visuals" and "Nebulous" are even more molar-rattling. And if you're still not convinced to replace your well-worn original CD version of *Nothing* with this new one, here are some other factoids to consider: It's been remixed and remastered, and also includes a bonus DVD of live performances and video clips. All the crucial vitamins and minerals that a growing metalhead will need can be found in this fine *Nothing* reissue. [www.meshuggah.net] — Greg Prato

Slaughter Lord Thrash 'Til Death Invictus



Invictus gives diehard thrashers another chance to return to the glory days with this reissue of *Thrash 'Til Death*. Well, maybe not quite the glory days, depending on how you look at it. Australia's Slaughter Lord never had anything out in the '80s except demo tapes, meaning they've mostly been forgotten by now. That doesn't detract from the experience. *Thrash 'Til Death* is a collection of the old demo material, 40 minutes of it to be exact, and if you missed this CD in '98, here's another opportunity to hear some raw, underground thrash the way it was meant to be played.

Sound quality varies among the nine tracks as they're scraped together from different sources. "Destructor" starts things off sounding pretty good, and you may even be surprised that it's not from a real album. The guitars are clearly audible with the mid-range dropped out, the drums sound pretty decent and the Kreator-like vocals are up front with an effectively evil reverb affect. "Slaughter Lord" is of the same caliber, with fast riffs that progressively twist and turn through the track for some good, old-fashioned thrash.

Things change considerably for "Die By Power," when suddenly your mental image will shift from one of pissed off kids on stage with flashing lights, black Sodom t-shirts and clashing white Nike sneakers to that of those same kids a little younger, practicing in a dingy basement. That doesn't mean this section of the disc is a waste. This is thrash in its purest form and there's nothing even remotely commercial about the sound. Even with thin drums and a comparatively weak guitar tone, the songs are well-written and undeniably evil. "Die By Power" is a good effort with a great chorus, and anyone who yearns for Sepultura to sound heavy again will surely be satisfied with "Taste Of Blood." Crossover maniacs who still wear denim with Destruction and DRI patches on the back won't complain about the mixed punk and metal vibe on "Legion," one of the album's most interesting songs.

"Slaughtered Corpse" ushers in the next section and the ensuing change in production is a mixed bag. The instruments sound noticeably better and clearer; the problem is that the vocals have practically been lost in the mix. Tony Noel's growls are still there somewhere, albeit obscured by the slightly dissonant guitars and pounding drums. The vox actually make a return on the next track, "Slaughter," but after that they're once again submerged in the cacophony. Sound aside, the most interesting thing about the last four tracks is that they prove Slaughter Lord was highly consistent. The production and tone change throughout *Thrash 'Til Death* but the style never does, proving that these Australian thrash maniacs were a dedicated bunch in their years together.

There's really no doubt that *Thrash 'Til Death* is a diamond in the ruff. For all those seeking the savagery and energy of pure '80s thrash it should be just what the doctor ordered. [www.invictusproductions.net] — Keith Russo

Vader De Profundis MVD Audio/ Metal Mind



Now considered a classic of the genre, the thrashy death metal of Polish juggernauts Vader on 1995's *De Profundis* was arguably the starting point for what would become a long and storied career. The follow-up full-length to 1994's decidedly rawer and less confident *The Ultimate Incantation* and the *Solthis* EP from the same year brought the key elements of the Vader sound together in one gloriously brutal package. Early Slayer-influenced speed and aggression, death metal's relentless pummel, led by Doc's (R.I.P.) thunderous double-bass attack, fierce whammy bar dive-bomb solos and Peter's distinctive vocal bite (which would get more guttural on later releases) add up to pure aural violence.

Absolutely relentless from start to finish and consistently strong (though not varied) songwriting, including classic "Silent Empire," shows why *De Profundis* has stood the test of time. It's the kind of record you should avoid if you prefer *not* to have the fillings rattled out of your teeth and your chest cavity collapse from the sheer weight of the compositions.

Now reissued by MVD Audio, the remastering gives the album a much bigger punch. As the original recording was not exactly sub par, there's little reason to purchase the reissue unless you absolutely must own everything Vader has ever done. A couple of bonus tracks would have been nice (the oddly chosen cover of Depeche Mode's "I Feel You" does not count, as it was already included on the *Conquest* release). Be that as it may, those that do not already own *De Profundis* and desire to collect some of death metal's seminal albums or simply would like to hear a band in the midst of finding its identity would do well to pick up this reissue. [www.vader.pl] — Scott Alisoglu

Silencer Death Pierce Me Autopsy Kitchen



Originally released in 2000 by Prophecy Productions, this cult beast of a record was recently reissued by the fine folks at Autopsy Kitchen, the merchants of all things bewildering and evil. To unsuspecting souls unfamiliar with the first pressing, Silencer's *Death Pierce Me* is quite possibly the most depressingly suicidal, cult black metal album of all time. I mean really, even the most soul-scathing albums from the likes of Weakling, Leviathan, Xasthur etc. can't top the brilliantly desperate feel of this oeuvre. The disc, conceived by one mentally disturbed individual known only by Natramn, was written over a five-year buildup to the year of the supposed Apocalypse and though Silencer and *Death Pierce Me* in particular is faster-paced than anything you'd likely get from the aforementioned acts, it beholds a similar, soul-polluting, tonal depression.

Beware: Pulsating swells of agony captured by its amazingly black-blooded guitar drones have a true, physical effect on the psyche when drawn into the mournful, loathsome atmosphere the record emits. Mid-paced double bass underlies much of the outing, congealed with maniacal cymbal crescendos and snare work in both the slower wrist-carving buildups and the rampant exorcisms soloist and session drummer Steve Wolz (AKA Leere) seem to undergo during the record's faster moments. But the factor that stands out like Nattefrost in ass-less chaps at your little sister's communion are the wailing, *tormented* vocals that echo through the recording. Picture a half-dozen or so people covered in acid left to rot in some desiccated, pitch black well, their unheeded cries void of any natural human tone and you kinda get the idea. And it's all recorded as crystal-fucking-clear as the coldest, windless winter sky conceivable.

You can scour the annals of BM excursions of bygone years but *Death Pierce Me* is a hard fucker to beat out. Also be aware of Natramn's newest outing *Diagnose: Lebensgefahrl* coming at you via AKR as well. Get evil with your music, kids; really goddamn evil... [www.autopsykitchen.com] — Dave Brenner

Today Is The Day Temple Of The Morning Star Relapse



When Relapse originally released *Temple Of The Morning Star* back in 1997, it was the first time I was able to totally immerse myself and experience the eclectically wacko and emotionally tormented world of mainman Steve Austin. Sure, I had heard bits and pieces from their previous AmRep recordings, but that shit was hard to find and friends were understandably very reluctant to lend out those albums for extended periods of time (By the way, Pete, I want my vinyl copy of *Live Undead* back, you douche drinker!), always demanding them back before I could really absorb the festivities. Similarly, I seemed to always show up at a record store a day after the last copy of *Willpower* and *Supernova* had been sold. Anyway, enough about the history of my record buying woes, as what we have here is a remastered version of the album that exploded TITD to a wider audience. It's also the album that competes with *In The Eyes Of God* in the "best work of the Relapse years" category. (*In The Eyes Of God* is definitely musically superior, though it's not as emotionally disconcerting or dysfunctional.)

If you're not familiar with TITD, listening to the band is quite the experience as it's the totality of the TITD concept and the expression thereof that makes this so compelling, unnerving, awesome and terrifying at once. *Temple* is an album that slingshots from country-tinged interludes to violent sexuality to melodic guitar grating (the riff in the last 30 seconds of "Kill Yourself" never fails to get me air-guitaring to this day) to noise rock to just plain noise to bongo-infused tribalism to uncomfortably harrowing expressions of anguish, Satanism and turmoil and back again. The remastering job by Austin allows for more of the sonic layers and subtle nuances of his psychotic creativity to come across, something you can really hear in the more spacious and minimalist interludes on tracks like "I See You," "Satan Is Alive" and "Hermaphrodite." Also tacked on is a cover of "Sabbath Bloody Sabbath" and "extensive liner notes and expanded photography," which probably — I say "probably" because the booklet wasn't sent with this review copy — includes a Steve Austin-penned treatise on the right to bear arms and a bunch of pictures of him firing off his guns. Or not. [www.todayistheday.org] — Kevin Stewart-Panko