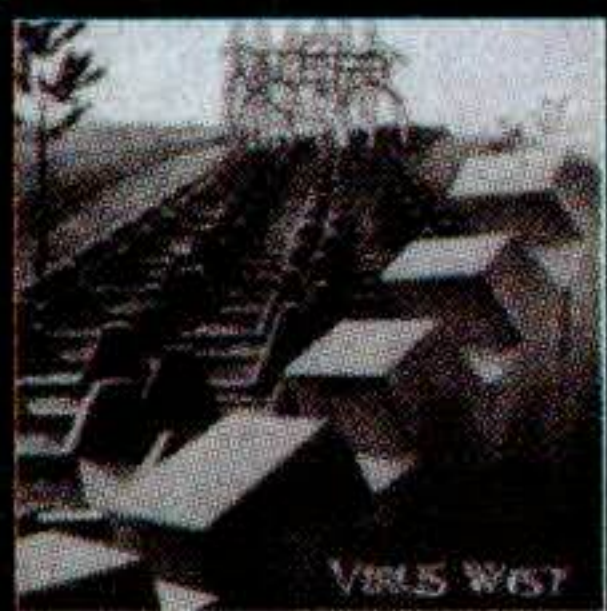


**Nagelfar  
Virus West  
Ván**



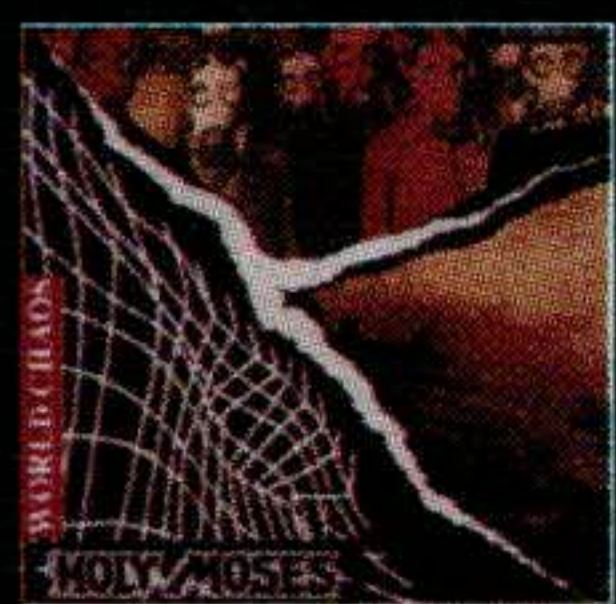
Originally released in 2001 by Ars Metalli, *Virus West* was the swan-song LP from this underrated German black metal act.

While earlier albums such as *Hünengrab im Herbst* failed to showcase the band's proper potential, *Virus West* displayed Nagelfar as a fully-actualized unit, whose songwriting had truly progressed into its own unique, diseased form. Consisting of seven tracks and clocking in at over an hour, there's a lot to digest here, but it is oh so worth it. The album builds upon a traditional black metal framework (think the early Norwegian scene with a hefty Viking-era Bathory influence) by utilizing some sinister samples and evoking a dilapidated, urban image not unlike some of today's forward-thinking blasphemers like Blut Aus Nord. In this sense, *Virus West* also serves as a link between Nagelfar and the outfit they would eventually morph into, the malevolent mindfuck known as The Ruins Of Beverast. It is a transitional album in the best sense of the word, and can appeal to both fans of the old guard (Immortal, man...Immortal) as well as the new (Deathspell Omega). Hell, I even hear a bit of Bethlehem and Godflesh here and there!

Gushing aside, *Virus West* has aged pretty well. It was as serious as a heart attack then and lends the ears an even more savage beating today. The sinister, minor-chord riffing of Alexander Von Meilenwald still slices 'n' dices, while Zingultus' hideous howl manages to creep right up one's spine, in particular due to the tight and martial German delivery.

So, if you're in the market for an undiscovered black metal gem, or simply wondering where The Ruins Of Beverast acquired their taste for the perverse, *Virus West* should be high on your "to get" list. [www.van-gbr.de] — MetalGeorge Pacheco

**Holy Moses  
World  
Chaos  
Locomotive**



This newly expanded edition of *World Chaos*, originally released in 1990 by oldschool thrashers Holy Moses, is worth a quick look if you're first discovering the realm of '80s and early '90s speed metal, but if you've been thrashing for decades there's not much you haven't already heard.

The disc starts off strong with the opening title track but loses steam in the tracks to come, displaying mostly competent thrash that's not quite as pissed. Singer Sabina Classen doesn't have the greatest voice but it fits the genre while ex-husband Andy Classen delivers plenty of solid riffs oftentimes reminiscent of Sepultura's *Arise*. Of exceptional note is the production here which, even in its remastered format, retains the compressed, early '90s feel that typified the genre at that time. The guitars are flat with the mids scooped out, the solos are shrill and the drums sound compact and a bit low in the mix.

While "World Chaos" and "Jungle Of Lies" represent good moments there's unfortunately some low points that severely detract from the album. A cover of the Dead Kennedys' "Too Drunk To Fuck" is obnoxious, unnecessary and annoying, especially in the middle of the CD. It could be overlooked if not for a second ridiculous cover in the form of Beastie Boys anthem "(You Gotta) Fight For Your Right (To Party)." Aspiring thrash maniacs take note, the best way to completely and utterly destroy your credibility is by following a decent thrash disc with a Beastie Boys cover.

The bonus material on the new edition is hardly worth mentioning. You get a live version of "World Chaos" from Wacken 2003, a live version of "Too Drunk To Fuck" from Wacken 2005 and a video version of that same lackluster cover song from Wacken 2001.

If you're a thrash collector and this one managed to escape you, go ahead and take a listen. If you've already got it or already heard it, you may want to track down some of those Sadus reissues instead. [www.locomotiverecords.com] — Keith Russo

**Behemoth  
Chaotica: The  
Essence Of The  
Underworld —  
Storms To Unleash  
Metal Mind/MVD**



Evidently, Behemoth and Metal Mind are at an impasse with regards to *Chaotica: The Essence Of The Underworld* — *Storms To Unleash*, a two-CD collection of the entire *Sventevith* (*Storming Near The Baltic*) and *Grom* albums, plus the *And The Forests Dream Eternally* and *Bewitching The Pomerania* EPs, two cover songs and demo songs. Originally released in 1999 (according to best estimates) to trail *Satanica* or precede *Thelema.6*, *Chaotica*, on the surface, appears legitimate, with liner notes (allegedly) from Nergal blaming ex-labels for mishandling releases; there isn't a date attached to it, nor do I have the original 1999 release to confirm if anything has changed. So, taken at face value, *Chaotica* is certainly a bargain. The material, largely Norwegian-inspired black metal of sundry shades, is quite charming when not compared to anything after *Bewitching The Pomerania*. It's quite clear the early incarnations of Behemoth owed much to Mayhem ("Freezing Moon" is featured here), Darkthrone, Burzum (most of disc one) and more symphonic outfits like Emperor, Gehenna and Dimmu Borgir (most of disc two). As far back as *Grom*, Behemoth weren't content with aping, or residing in the shadows of, its influences — tracks like "Spellcraft And Heathendom" and "Grom," replete with cringe-worthy (think *Vinterskugge*-era Isengard) vocal incantations and acoustic guitar work, demonstrate this progression. On the physical side of things, the packaging on *Chaotica* is fantastic; at 14-pages, with lyrics, rare photos and full-color to boot, the booklet is almost as valuable as the music. Whether or not there's an obligation to confirm *Chaotica* is legit is largely down to the consumer, as it appears anything not listed on Behemoth's official site isn't endorsed by the band; I doubt anyone wants to read contracts between label and band in Polish even if they were available for public consumption. Then again *Chaotica* is a quick and complete way to discover Behemoth in its nascent stages, and for that reason alone, the compilation is recommended. [www.mvdb2b.com] — Chris Dick

**Christ Agony  
Elysium  
Metal Mind/MVD**



Originally released in 1999, *Elysium*, the fifth album in Christ Agony's storied career, fits right into the mentality that black metal needn't be ultra-fast, poorly produced or full of goofy imagery to be an effective instrument against Christianity. Now, the few — pre-*Eternal Samael*, *Non Serviam*-forward Rotting Christ and Alastis — who took the left-hand path were predominantly influenced by Celtic Frost's groundbreaking *Into The Pandemonium* effort, so it doesn't come as a great surprise that five albums in Christ Agony, in almost every respect, uses the Tom G. blueprint. If it isn't broken, don't fix it, so the adage goes. As for how *Elysium* compares to its predecessors, the songwriting is definitely more mature and organized. Songs like "Fiery Torches," "Demon's Lover," "Immortal Dust" and "Eternal Stars" center on a hook that's typically as catchy as it is forlornly evil. The mid-paced tempo does wear thin after eight-nine songs, but initially it affords the Poles space to weave a black magic mix not far from "Necromantical Screams" and "Beyond The Nothingness."

Vocalist/ringleader Cezar is quite the frontman — his throaty croaks and half-rasps (think Vorphalack and Big Boss) sound positively awesome, especially on the title cut. Rhythmically, Christ Agony hired former Vader drummer Krzysztof "Doc" Raczkowski (RIP) to perform on six tracks. Raczkowski, usually found happy at hyper-speed, shows considerable restraint on opener "Sadness Of Immortality," "Fiery Torches" and "Eternal Stars." If there's one real complaint it's in the lack of variety. Opener "Sadness Of Immortality" has a cool strummed/ethno-beat to it, but apart from that the majority of *Elysium*, while good, could've used similar out-of-box thinking. On a final note: Metal Mind, currently in grand reissue mode, felt that *Elysium* deserved one more chance in the spotlight, and even though there's no difference between this version and the original, the label's right: Christ Agony, now known as Union, shouldn't be left for dust. [http://christagony.metal.pl] — Chris Dick

**Abruptum  
Evil Genius  
Southern  
Lord**



Isn't it funny how things that used to scare you when you were a kid seem so trivial and silly when you're all grown up? That's kind of how I feel about this record. That's not to say that this Swedish project — consisting of Marduk's Morgan "Evil" Håkansson, Jim "All" Berger and the infamous metal dwarf, Tony "IT" Sarkka — ever truly frightened me, but I'll admit: The idea of a bunch of black metal dudes beating the shit out of each in a quest to create that perfect Satanic ambience seemed pretty damn cool to me when I was 17. Ten years later, however, I'm painfully reminded as to just how pedestrian and childish all of this noise sounds. Abruptum doesn't create much in the way of music; it's more of an art project designed to unleash some righteous black hell. In this sense, *Evil Genius* succeeds, as the affair as a whole is pretty damn extreme, especially for the early '90s, when most of these demo recordings were originally released. And I admit, much of *Evil Genius* holds some sentimental value for me.

I'll also admit, however, that as far as musical enjoyment goes, Abruptum is severely lacking and the joke/fright gag gets old quick. What we are left with are walls of guitar noise/feedback piled atop snail-paced drums and a gaggle of shrieking, screaming and moaning. If you really want to hear what Abruptum was capable of, I suggest skipping right to last track, "De Profundis Mors Vas Cousumet." This track, originally released on Necropolis' *Nordic Metal: A Tribute To Euronymous* compilation, was easily the act's most diabolical tune.

In the end, hype tends to go a long way and this record will most likely sell more copies now than it ever did "back in the day," which is fine. With the current glut of black metal bands achieving notoriety based upon controversy and "kvlt factor" alone (see Striborg or the Dutch dudes in Stalaggh, who've been running with a similar MO as Abruptum for quite a few albums now), I almost welcome it. It brings me back to those childhood days when I, too, sought salvation through the scary. [www.myspace.com/soundsofHell] — MetalGeorge Pacheco