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features

Metal Reissues Galore XVI

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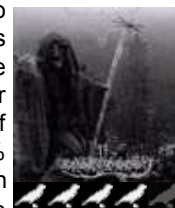
METAL REISSUES GALORE XVI

Wow! Hard to believe that I am already writing the sixteenth installment of Metal Reissues Galore, but yep, time has flown and I am still battling it out alone, like Don Quixote without his Sancho Panza, like Batman without his boyfriend Robin, like Superman without his masturbating right arm. Read on and spread the word...

Fran Marder is the first full-length of Arckanum, the Swedish one man cosmic black metal 'band' that was spawned from the mind of Shamaatae, a once member of Grottesque. Initially conceived as an actual group; like in several people actually getting together, hanging out and practicing, Arckanum quickly became a solo project only six months after its inception. Fast forward three years and four demos later and *Fran Marder* was released through at the time American black metal powerhouse Necropolis Records in 1995. Now, French label Debemur Morti are doing the honors and giving the treatment to Arckanum's first three records. And let me tell you, they are all worth revisiting. Especially if you were taken aback by the quality of Arckanum's latest slab of cosmic satanism *BBBBBBBBBBBB*. The debut was produced by Arckanum and by Hypocrisy leader Peter Tagtgren who certainly gave the sound a solid bottom on the drums and a slaying edge on the guitars. One jokes a lot about one man black metal projects, but Arckanum is unfuckwithable. For reals. Even back then, Shamaatae was playing it all by himself and doing it better than most veterans. Certainly, there is so much consistency in the songwriting that it becomes repetitive after a while but for a debut, *Fran Marder* is a little gem. BTW: The cover image is from the first release and not the reissue which features an all black sleeve. **MySpace**



Kostogher came in 1997 (Necropolis) and it features a wider vocal palette vocals and a more experimental sound. And by experimental, I mean it occasionally borders on straight up folk metal. Whether that constitutes the big and cheesy suck factor, it's up to you. One only needs to steer away from the first song to steer clear. On "Skoghens Minnen Vækks" the vocals range from Shamaatae's typical necrotic angle and invite melodic female vocals to take turns. For a change, the songs break out of the one gear mode of the debut and offer mid tempo to slow passages that are colored by violins. If that scares you away, then I say give this at least one spin, this album is about 98% killer. *Kostogher* is widely regarded as Arckanum's finest hour. It certainly is an ambitious piece of work where Shamaatae was expanding his horizons and those of the genre. BTW: Cover image is from the original release and not the reissue which features an all black sleeve. **MySpace**



In 1998, Arckanum released *Kampen* (Necropolis) and with it, Shamaatae proved that he was a master at writing hyper fast songs that rolled at the same revolutions but somehow sounded all different. Like its predecessor, *Kampen* also guests melodic female vocals in "Kamps Tekn". They are of the ghostly and ghostly kind, but are melodic and pseudo operatic all the same. That could turn some people off, but if you are of those that can block shit out, I suggest you give *Kampen* a try. The guitars are still in lightning fast mode and the barrage of drums feels like an ear pummeling applied by one thousand Maori drummers. These reissues have been remastered by Holy Moses' Andy Classen. The improvement makes the sounds really vital, especially in the last two releases, which were not produced by Tagtgren. **MySpace**



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Metal Mind is a relentless rehashing machine. Fucking awesome. I have already spoken about my fascination for the brutal death metal of Tampa's own Brutality. To me, they wrote much more imaginative songs than most of the big names of the time, but somehow it feels like this quintet always got the shaft. *In Mourning* was their third and last full-length (Nuclear Blast, 1996) and it packs a punch and a wallop like few classic death metal bands. The riffs swivel in warped ways and seem to coil like frying worms, the solos are crisp clear and top quality and the voice of Scott Reigel though guttural and somewhat generic, violently serves its purpose. Brutality (pictured above) kicks ass. Apparently, guitarist Larry Sapp said in an interview that bassist Jeff Acres broke up Brutality because he didn't like *In Mourning*. 'Bullshit' screams Acres. 'Sapp don't know his ass from a hole in the ground'. Literally. Apparently Sapp had a sex change and now goes by the name Mausolus Arguelles Von Kiszka. Yeah, that's a mouthful but to each his own. Or her own, I mean. **MySpace**



I always thought myself to be pretty well-informed. But I never knew of Kinetic Dissent until now. This prog metal quintet from Atlanta got their only album out through Roadracer Records back in 1991, which was about the right time considering that bands like Atheist were getting recognition and Fates Warning were expected to achieve Dream Theater-like stature. But please, I always thought Fates Warning sucked a big one. They definitely did suck more than Kinetic Dissent. Seriously, *I Will Fight No More Forever* is actually quite decent. Like with most prog metal bands of the time, the vocals kind of suck. It is not that the vocalist (Dwight Bales) can't sing, but the song structures are so fractured and intricate that the phrasing usually sounds out of place and hectically and forcefully placed. So, dude has a tough job. Musically, the four dudes behind him could write some fluid prog metal though and their range was quite broad. A bit of thrash here, standard hard rock softening the proceedings there and strict heavy metal add salt to an already tasty dish. I gotta give it up for Kinetic Dissent. Oooops, there it is! **MySpace**



I bought this album when it first came out and I never knew whether it was good or not. All I know is that I could never listen to it all the way through. Amen's second album (Roadrunner, 1999) does have some good ideas ("Drive" is pure energetic rock and roll), but once you get deep into it you realize that whatever it is that makes it kinda good, actually blows. Leader Casey Chaos sang and played guitar and bass in the record. Such efforts are always appreciated, but slow down the tunes a little bit and come to the realization that most of them tunes sound like sped up nu metal and we all know that nu metal was like the worst shit the world ever puked. OK, let's give him the benefit of the doubt. After all, Chaos could rip a few holes in the ozone layer with his vocals. And producer Ross Robinson did move far away from Limp Bizkit to give this self-titled record a durable sound, but on tracks like "No Cure for the Pure" those guitars sound so nu metallish that I just want Casey Chaos to jump out the window and splatter against the concrete. **MySpace**



Awatar is Turbo's ninth full-length (2001) and was in fact, originally released by Poland's Metal Mind. Not surprisingly, Turbo hail from Poland. Totally surprisingly, *Awatar* features a modern sound that's very cushy on the guitars. Actually, on occasions it kind of reminds me of the fluffy guitar tones that characterized the despicable nu metal movement. Fortunately, the rest of the song structures are more in a traditional heavy metal vein. In counted instances, the dudes even accelerate to a thrashy gallop, but those are few and counted. Turbo was founded in 1980, you see, so they are legends in their own right and land. Experience counts a fucking lot and without lifers the genre would get no respect. So the greatest part of *Awatar* is spent in mid-tempo mode, shaping melodic passages that remind me a little too much of many power metal combos. Also, I think the drummer has a lazy eye. **MySpace**



And to finish up this latest piece on reissues I bring you another 'classic'. *Endless War* (Roadrunner, 1988) was the first full-length of Milwaukee's technical thrash power band Realm. If the sole idea of mixing thrash metal with power metal gives you nausea then maybe you are a pussy. Yeah, vocalist Mark Antoni has a high pitch similar to Toxik's Charles Sabin, hence you better go hide all your crystal before spinning this album, but the music kicks ass in all the right ways. *Endless War* is a complicated album; it's got more turns than a maze, more highs than the Andes and more fingerwork than a thousand pornos starring eunuchs but it's far thrashier and heavier than all the Fates Warning records combined and for that, it deserves your respect. **Official Site**



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