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REVIEW**CD Review: Dies Irae - *Sculpture of Stone***

August 10, 2006

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Dies Irae (translated "Day of Wrath") is a band named after a 13th-century Latin poem that describes the day of judgement, where all will stand before God. The phrase was also used in the Roman Catholic Requiem Mass, prior to 1970, when the liturgy was adjusted according to Vatican II. It is a fitting name for a band that stands as mighty as this black metal all-star band of sorts, made up of members from Vader, Behemoth, and Sceptic. I am not sufficiently familiar with them to really make any comparisons, except to say this album more than stands up to scrutiny as an original work of extreme metal.

This album is heavy, with a massively thick guitar sound, a singer who seems as if he is about to give up a lung, and skull-battering drum bashing. My first listen through, I wasn't sure I was going to like it. A few more times through and I have been won over, although I am still unsure if I fit into this genre, as whole.

Sculpture of Stone is nearly 40 minutes of black metal with strong production values and a resulting sound that can crossover in a few directions. I could see this being a success not only in the black and death realms, but also in other areas, such as that dominated by bands like Meshuggah. There is a crushing technical progressiveness that is pervasive throughout the album.

I have never been a big fan of the unintelligible growling vocal style, on the basis that I never have any idea what is being said. Still, I have always been intrigued by how the vocal sound is mixed in as another sound element, it is something I am not sure I can adequately explain; suffice to say, I have given up listening to it as a word conveyance, preferring to see it as another layer of pure sound. It is fascinating how well it works.

What has really sucked me in was the interplay between the two guitarists, Mauser and Hiro. The two team up to deliver crushing riffs that are distinct for each song, while trading solo spots. There is a lot more progressive technical work here than I would have imagined. Combine that with the precision bashing of drummer, Doc, and you have the makings for an impressive metal outing. Not to be forgotten is Novy, providing the low end on the strings, plus delivering the guttural growl.

Bottomline. This is a band I was introduced to on the Metalmania 2005 DVD, and this only strengthens the positive impression I had from that pair of songs. This album features some head-banging riffs that are as heavy as they come, plus some screaming solos, an impressive outing that is definitely worth your time.

Recommended.



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Article

- » Published on August 10, 2006
- » Type: [Review](#)
- » Filed under: [Music](#), [Music: Metal](#).

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