

REVIEW**CD Review: Darzamat - *Transkarpatia***

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Darzamat is a protective deity guarding gardens and forests in Slavonic mythology. This makes a fitting name for a band that creates dense, forest-like compositions of gothic, doom, and black metal. Not typically my genre of choice, but I have always been fascinated by the melodies and cohesiveness that underlies the surface chaos of the black metal genre.

My first exposure to Darzamat came earlier this year, specifically, with their one-song contribution to the Metalmania 2005 DVD release. I thought the sound was intriguing, but it came off as frustratingly repetitive. Now, I have had the chance to listen to their latest full-length release, *Transkarpatia*.

The first thing that jumped out at me was the epic cinematic nature of the album. A dark, evil film filled with the occult and vampirism that plays out to a soundtrack of the damned. Whether or not there is an concept at work behind this album, I do not know. I would surmise that the answer is yes, but so many of the words are unintelligible to this listener.

The strongest evidence to the concept idea is the track "Letter from Hell" that comes midway through the album. It is a narrated account of the torture of an accused witch, and her subsequent,



and vehement admission. It is an interesting interlude, if somewhat laughable in execution. It is performed by one half of the vocal duo, Nera, who puts a lot into the performance, but it somehow seems as if she is trying to channel Bela Lugosi's Bulgarian accent.

The album flows with a relentless combination of brutality and melody. An interesting combination to be sure. Fronting the band are Nera and her male vocal counterpart, Flauros. He has an odd voice, it is a rather high-pitched, throat-driven growl. It is a growl that I have come to expect from this style, but the higher pitch is new.

The twin vocal interplay works very well, from the growl to Nera's smoother style. Behind them are the ever-present guitar wall of Chris and bass from Bacchus. Keeping the songs lurching forward are the drums from Darkside, one of the strongest instrument presentations. Then, filling in the gloomy atmosphere, and providing some well orchestrated interludes, is keyboardist Spectre. Together they have crafted a fine experiment in crossover gloom and doom.

Songs to focus on include the initial blast, "Vampiric Prose," which serves as an introduction to the band in top form. Other prime gloomers are "The Burning Times" and the down tempo epic, "Virus."

Bottomline. Much better than I expected. I may have to check out some more from the back catalog. I was impressed by the cinematic layers and the deadly serious tone that plays throughout. I noticed that, upon multiple listenings, the various layers become more evident. Nice work.

Recommended.



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