



IN THE REAR REVIEWS

it's likely that with *Griefshire*, they've reached a peak they'll never revisit. **JASON FERGUSON**



Firewind ALLEGIANCE

(CENTURY MEDIA)

★★★

Much of this mediocre new full-length demonstrates these Greek power-metallers' virtuosic (see wanky) musicianship, and the Pat Benatar-ish female vocals on "Breaking the Silence" pique mild interest. But *Allegiance* is more cock rock than metal, and more cock than rock, at that. Good power metal pumps you up to grab your broadsword and charge into battle; this mediocre full-length will, maybe, energize you enough to finally go change your underwear. **GERRY MAK**



Mnemic PASSENGER

(NUCLEAR BLAST)

★★★★

If this had been released in 1998, the welding of Meshuggah-esque poly-rhythms to soaring Fear Factory-style choruses would have been quite devastating. But this is 2007, and while Denmark's Mnemic pack a solid punch, they never wholly transcend the sum of their parts. New vocalist Guillaume Bideau possesses a convincingly toxic larynx, and joined by Napalm Death bassist Shane Embury and ex-Carcass voicebox Jeff Walker on "Psykorgasm," he and his cohorts expel some real vitriol. But the sense of déjà vu ultimately undermines any true sense of exhilaration. **DAN SLESSOR**



The Photo Atlas NO, NOT ME, NEVER

(STOLEN TRANSMISSION)

★★★★

At least the Photo Atlas aren't shy about their influences: The Denver band's major-label debut shows off their love of everyone from At the Drive-In (their skittery bass lines and mild air of artiness) to Fugazi (ditto) to Jawbox (remember them? No?). But good taste doesn't always lead to great music, and *Never's* swaggering post-dance-punk-whatever never lives up to the band's heroes, despite lead singer Alan Andrews' love-it-or-hate-it, Perry Farrell-on-helium voice and a handful of standout tracks, like the hiccupy "Handshake Heart Attack." **ALLISON STEWART**



Therion GOTHIC KABBALAH

(NUCLEAR BLAST)

★★★★★

Epic is an overused descriptor in metal circles, but in the case of Therion's 13th studio record, there really is no better word. While the Swedish four-piece's brand of symphonic metal takes important cues from black, death, and dark folk, Therion owe most of their debt to bands such as Nevermore and Hellow-



Therion

een, titans of that most epic of subgenres, power metal. Like those groups' best work, *Gothic Kabbalah* is full of spirited, sprawling constructions that bridge the gap between metal and opera. No small thanks to the two female choral vocalists on the disc—neither of whom, despite what the album title might suggest, is Madonna in "Frozen" mode. **ROBBIE MACKAY**



Switchfoot OH! GRAVITY

(COLUMBIA)

★★★★

Given these San Diego alt-rockers' fondness for heavy subject matter, *Oh! Gravity* makes an appropriate pun. Yet as singer Jon Foreman wrestles with such topics as the morality of American culture ("American Dream") and the allure of power and money ("Faust, Midas, and Myself"), what keeps Switchfoot's sixth album from crashing under the weight of its ideals is the music—particularly the lighthearted interplay of guitars and synth. By performing each part as if it were a hook in its own right, Switchfoot evoke the textural intricacy of prog without its leaden excess—which in itself is pretty uplifting. **J.D. CONSIDINE**



Wold SCREECH OWL

(PROFOUND LORE)

★★★★★

Mysterious Canadian trio Wold makes lowest-fi blackest metal that sounds as magnificently muddled as an Emperor con-

cert recorded on a camera phone. Everything is peaked out into a devastating mush where guitars lose their defining properties, vocals distort into white noise, and churning loops split the difference between My Bloody Valentine's beautiful fuzz and Whitehouse's impenetrable scuzz. The bandmates say they chose the name *Screech Owl* because the fowls are "both uncanny and earthly," "subtle and grand." And, yes,

TURN THE PAGE

REVOLVER BOOK CLUB

Nina BY BLAG DAHLIA

(SCAPEGOAT)

★★★★★

As frontman for San Francisco shock punks the Dwarves, Blag Dahlia showcased his perverted brand of humor on such classic albums such as *Blood, Guts & Pussy* and *Thank Heaven for Little Girls*. For his second novel, he's channeled it into the story of desensitized teenage delinquent Nina West, who seduces the babysitter, molests a dying deli robber, and finally loses her jaded cool in a kitchen showdown with a Jehovah's Witness. Needless to say, *Nina* is never boring. In fact, you'll want to keep this one under your mattress, not in your bookcase. **JASON BUHRMESTER**



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