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Boris - Smile (Southern Lord) By: Dave Schalek



Believe it or not, after whom the Hell knows how many releases, "Smile" is about the only exposure that I've had to gigantic Japanese trio Boris with the exception of "Altar" and bits of "Amplifier Worship". I have copies of a few of their other albums lying around, but just haven't gotten around to listening to them. I know, that is a travesty in the eyes of many of you, but I've always tended to skew towards Sunn O))) and Earth for my tastes in drone. As most of you know, drone only just begins to describe the enigma that is Boris, a trio that has made a name for themselves through their unique combinations of drone, funeral doom, psychedelics that harkens back to the late 1960s, sludge rock a la the Melvins, and who

knows how many other genres and influences.

As I'm also aware of, most Boris fans (Ray Van Horn, Jr. and Skull come to mind) go absolutely apeshit for this band, but, frankly, I just really don't get it (well, I sort of am getting it now). In addition, I may not be the best staff member at Live 4 Metal to review this album since the Melvins and similar bands just at the edge of post-rock/ sludge rock/ metal are not really my forte. Also, I can't really make comparisons to previous efforts, not being familiar with them to any great extent.

At any rate, "Smile" comes to me as an incomplete promo from Southern Lord with only seven tracks from a purported eight and, on some issues of the album, at least ten tracks will be presented. Also, the promo's artwork is different from other art that I've already seen.

OK, enough already. The seven tracks on "Smile" range from up-tempo sludge rock with melodic vocals in Japanese to a few drone-like, psychedelic tracks with periodic moments of gigantic riffs. Opening with "Flower Sun Rain", a song that wouldn't be out of place on "Piper At The Gates Of Dawn", the succeeding five tracks alternate between the aforementioned genres of sludge rock and mild psychedelics. The crushing riffs periodically make appearances and that's where I really sit up and take notice, most notably on "My Neighbor Satan" and "KA RE HA TE TA SA KI- No One Grieves". Although not my genre of choice, most of these tracks are at least interesting, but the one track that really grabbed my attention was the seventh, untitled track, with it's hazy atmosphere, crushing riffs that build to intensity near the end, and a decided similarity to latter Earth albums minus the vocals and distortion; that is, replete with huge harmonics, and drone.

Is this album enough to make me a Boris fan? Perhaps. I'm sure that many of you would suggest that I really take the time to let this album grow on me, which it is, as well as delve deeply into the trio's back catalogue for more exposure prior to forming a strong opinion. As for the purposes of this review, can I recommend "Smile"? Yes, with some clarification. Existing Boris fans will not be able to find a reason to not add "Smile" to their collection, and fans with casual interest can't go wrong with using "Smile" as a means of an introduction to Boris. Will I go get the full-length of "Smile"? Yes. www.southernlord.com | <http://homepage1.nifty.com/boris/>

Crom - Hot Sumerian Nights (Underdogma Records) Review by Chris Davison



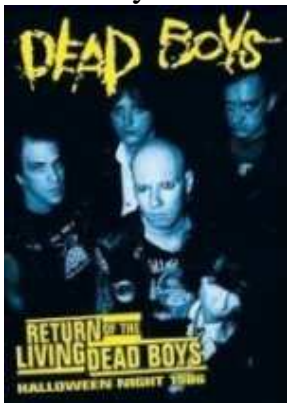
As any fool knows, the most metal of all soundtrack albums EVAR is the Conan the Barbarian CD. Basil Poledouris knew more about creating the awesome atmosphere of decapitating enemies with a two handed sword than any dozen German power metal bands you can fling at me, (which by the way, you shouldn't, for I don't wish to feel responsible for throttling Blind Guardian with my own be-freckled hands). Now, what could possibly make the music of Conan be any more metal than it already is? I mean, it already accompanies visual images of a young Arnie dismembering bad guys with his mighty weapon of doom. Well, the answer is

simple: just add CROM!

Cutting it simply to the quick, Crom mix snippets of awesome, thrash inspired riffs, horrendous screaming and shouting with snippets of everyones favourite hyborean barbarian, snatches of rousing orchestration and...erm...random samples of dialogue from MCs at live metal gigs. Like an unholy coupling between Slayer circa Hell Awaits, the madder parts of Strapping Young Lad and the attention deficit metal of modern grindcore acts, this is one bizarre, if exhilarating ride. Some of the riffs are nothing other than fist-in-the-air crowd pleasers, such as the main guitar motif to "wemon", but the agony of it all is that given that the average song here weighs in at something like a minute and a half, they seldom get to sit around long enough for you to get acquainted with them. Now, I'm not necessarily against short songs, nor funny tracks, with S.O.D.s debut being a particular favourite with me. What is quite annoying is that there isn't anything in the way of a lyric sheet to be found here, and so whatever hilarity is to be found in their wordsmithery is a little lost on me.

The songs are short and punchy, and the production adequate, if never really rising above the level of something done on a definite budget. The inlay cover, depicting the band in full metal warrior regalia is pretty amusing, but while this CD raised a smile from me on a number of occasions, I can't help wondering what they'd do if they could put their tongue back in their mouth rather than in their cheek, start taking the Ritalin and consider writing proper songs rather than fucking about with samples and sound effects. As it is, it's a curious piece of fun to play to your mates, but you aren't going to be listening to it regularly. Not if you're sane, anyway. www.underdogma.com

Dead Boys - Return Of The Living Dead Boys DVD (MVD Visual) Review by Metal Mark



Punk/glam legends the Dead Boys were a band that influence a lot of bands including the such varied artists as Hanoi Rocks and Overkill. This is a reunion show they did in New York on Halloween, 1986. Joey Ramone introduces them and they slash into Sonic Reducer and just keep moving from there. The music is very much of that mid-late 1970's style of early punk rock, but the Dead Boys were probably a bit more into early 70's glam than were some of their peers. Stiv Bators comes over as a bit more moody and low key than I figured at first, however he guides the chaos and keeps things going. The set is tight and straight forward and they waste very little between songs and instead just charge ahead making the most of their simple approach. The crowd seems to be a mix of people who look like they could have been fans in the 70's, plus teenagers who constantly dodge bouncers as they spend their second or two on stage before diving into the wiggling mass of

fans. The sound quality is strong enough and fairly consistent through the entirety of the fifty minute set. The picture quality is okay enough, but flickers in and out a few times early on. The Dead Boys probably relied as much on swagger as they did on angst in their performance and that's largely what makes them different from a number of other early punk bands. Guitarist, Cheetah Chrome moves back and forth never coming close to showing much expression, but his music speaks for him and he twists and pulls notes at will. The rest of the band bounces here and there with a fairly constant amount of energy. By the end of the show Stiv Bators comes dangerously close to exposing himself, but neither he or the audience seems very shocked and the show wraps up. The disc also includes a 1980 interview and a rare early video for "Sonic Reducer". A really cool show overall that makes me wish I had be there to see them then and earlier to soak in all that they were really doing.

Degradead – Til Death Do Us Part (Dockyard 1) review by Sam Thomas



Til Death Do Us Part is the debut album from Stockholm-based Degradead. They've been playing in their native Sweden for quite a while, apparently, but their big break came when a certain Jesper Strömblad developed an interest in them. Next thing you know, they've been whisked off to (where else?) Gothenburg, and are being produced by Jesper and friends Björn Gelotte and Daniel Svensson. Given that this unholy trinity are all members of In Flames, you can see where this is leading to... The icing on the cake is, of course, that Degradead have been invited to tour with Dimension Zero, the side project formed by members of (wait for it!) In Flames.

So it goes without saying that this is a very well produced album and also that it sounds quite a lot like In Flames. I'd go for "Reroute to Remain" era In Flames myself, which is kind of a back-handed compliment, as that's (probably, as they say in Sweden) my favourite In Flames album.

Curiously enough, the promotional material that came with this album picks out Mikael Sehlin's vocals as being in a "unique style". I honestly thought that Anders Fridén was responsible for the vocals on at least a few of the tracks, so either my hearing is crap (more than likely true) or Mikael's vocals aren't as unique as they might be.

How you view this release really depends on whether you want to consider it as a debut release in its own right, in which case it's pretty damn good, or whether you want to be cynical and look at it as an In Flames clone, in which case it's still pretty damn good, actually. After all, why shouldn't Degradead get themselves produced by Jesper and co? It's catchy, melodic death metal at its best. This is exactly what I expect from Gothenburg – strictly non-brutal death, with horribly catchy little tunes that you find your foot tapping along to all too frequently. I can't help wondering what the raw product sounded like, but in its finished form, this is a very polished debut offering.

www.degradead.com

Incubator - LieBISSlieder (Massacre) Review by Steve Green



Although I'm a big fan of German Metal, I'm not really a fan of German Metal that is sung in its Mother tongue. I normally find the language much too harsh a listen, except in this situation. Chris Mummelthey's abrasive Teutonic brogue suits Incubator's rampaging Death/Thrash perfectly.

The groove laden drive of Narzist bulldozes everything in its way like an out of control version of Slayers South Of Heaven, hellbent on killing everyone on sight. As does the Thrashy follow up, Frei. Track 3, simply titled "S" carries on the bands unique brand of Metal, before we are hit with the curveball of Stapellauf. From Death and destruction, we

are presented with a slice of pulverizing Doom, complete with melodic female vocals!!! The change in direction has left me speechless, but I have to say the song does work within the confines of the album, even if it is a little left of centre. A normality, of sorts, is restored with the Sepultura influenced, and extremely bouncy, F**k Mich.

Der Weg is a much more intense number and harks back to the heyday of 80s Thrash and because of the driving guitars and battering ram rhythm section, it battles with Narzist as my favourite song on the album. Danke is full of bravado and hints towards a more hardcore direction, before the Slayerism's and the slick guitar work return with Instrumentalstück, which, even if you don't speak German, is obviously an instrumental number.

The mid-paced Schon, is the first number that fails to win me over, although Mischa Wagner's drum work is superb. And it's the drums that drive forward Fur Immer, which isn't a cover of the Doro/Warlock classic, but is an upbeat Thrash meets Punk diatribe, which simply kicks ass. Final number is a cover version, but I wouldn't know the original if it smacked me around the head. Anyway, the cover of Richhofen's industrial tinged Der Jungste Tag, is a tame way to end the album and in all honesty, it should have swapped places with Fur Immer.

This isn't a straightforward Thrash album as Incubator do possess a modicum of originality. So if you like it hard and heavy, and just a little different, then this album is for you. www.massacre-records.com

Lair Of The Minotaur - War Metal Battle Master (Southern Lord) By: Dave Schalek



Thematic subtleties are nowhere to be found on the third full-length from Chicago's war machine Lair Of The Minotaur, entitled "War Metal Battle Master", on Southern Lord. Storming out of the gates with a dirty combination of thrash laden doom similar to that of High On Fire, and old school death metal reminiscent of Bolt Thrower, but with considerably less polish, "War Metal Battle Master" is a ferocious album from start to finish.

War metal, a somewhat ill-defined genre within metal that crosses styles but usually rears its head in death and black metal, is obviously in play here, with Lair Of The Minotaur

generously lacing their lyrics with Cimmerian barbarian themes and adorning the album's layout with plenty of pencil artwork using inspiration from Frazzetta and Vallejo. Demons, warrior princesses, settling differences by swinging a battleaxe, you name it, are all represented here and are buried within a ferocious attack of mostly mid-paced death metal with a decidedly dirty sound. Fast riffing, variations in tempo with a concentration upon bashing the shit out of the snare, throaty rasps and growls for vocals which vary in pitch, and a loud bass are all beefed up by a huge production on "War Master Battle Metal", an album that demands to be blasted at high volume. Of particular note is a decided "Morbid Tales/ Emperor's Return"-era influence from Celtic Frost, not just thematically, but with some definite similarities in songwriting and riff structures.

Lair Of The Minotaur has been successfully building upon this sound throughout their entire career, but what may have been lacking before; that is, a concentration upon interesting songwriting, has been made up for on "War Metal Battle Master". If this is a band that needs a breakout album, this may just be that album. Highly recommended and, you guessed it, buy or die. www.southernlord.com | www.lairoftheminotaur.com

Meshuggah - Obzen (Nuclear Blast) By: Joe Florez



I hate to say it, but for a long time I felt like I lost touch with my boys from Sweden. In my opinion, Destroy Erase Improve was their last fantastic release. All the other ones were spot on with their technical proficiency, intense screaming and killer grooves, but I think some of it become too much to handle. And with the explosion of the metal/scream core scene that I believe started the whole movement without even trying, I simply didn't care as much. I, which was an E.P. that contained only one song and lasted for about half an hour was somewhat a return to form and that was about four years ago give or take. Well, the

time has come to determine if they have created a memorable piece of work or will it be something shelved and never to be heard again?

Immediately, I found something appealing with "Combustion." I can hear the groove of the bass licks and Fred's off the wall riffs and Tomas Haake's simple yet aggressive approach to drumming on this particular song. I don't know how Jens continues to scream like this without blowing out his vocal chords once and for all. The six or seven or eight string solo on here remains insane as only Fred can play, but you can hear and feel that it's performed with emotion. What really blew my mind was the fact that it was a very short song. It didn't drag on forever and it was right to the point. Impressive. The intricacies that the band have been known for are put into use on "Electric Red." The low tuned bass strumming is heard crystal clear here and the skin bashing contains some off the wall timings that Tomas makes sound so easy to play. There is also an atmospheric vibe that Mr. Thordendal performs so well here and actually is part of the signature sound. I like the way that the songs are placed on here because the intensity slowly build up with each track. "Bleed" contains some ludicrous riffs, pluckings or double bass drumming techniques. I can't tell which is it because it's so tight and fast. I would love to see them do this one live simply for the fact that when you hear this you can tell that there is zero room for error. It's one of the slower songs, but the heaviness remains a 10. There is something absolutely hypnotic on here that had me in a trance for the duration. I am happy to report that these mathmetalmaticians are back in form and quite frankly, this should have been the

successor to DEI. The musicianship is top notch as always and just as accessible as ever if you are into unpredictable music. The songs for the most part are short, but more compact and zero filler. Thank God they still have it. Here's a thumbs up to not only my album of the month, but a possible album of the year too.

www.nuclearblast.de | www.meshuggah.net

PetroChemical Accelerator - Dead Disco EP (**Rundown Records**) Review by Steve Green



More quality Metal from the Irish Underground. I'm sure it must be the Guinness, as we rarely get a duff cd from the Emerald Isle. PetroChemical Accelerator are a 4 piece from Dublin, who have an infectious groove, than I'm sure was born from the ashes of Thrash metal, in particular, early Metallica and very early Megadeth, there's also a bit of Phil Anselmo in the vocals. First track, out of four, Lost has such a cool chorus that I know it's going to be swimming around in my head for days, and that seems to be the winning formula for PCA. Cool, neck snapping rhythms and although the music is heavy, there's always a good melody to latch onto. It's pretty obvious from the off, that these guys know what they

are creating here. They've even ended the EP with an eight minute plus epic, which shows that the band are full of confidence. Hey, and why not? If you've got it...flaunt it!

I hope that this is the first of many PCA cds that make their way into my possession because these guys are seriously good. www.myspace.com/petrochemicalaccelerator

We're All Gonna Die – Kiss the Ground, Curse the Sky (**Underdogma Records**)

Review by Luke Goaman-Dodson



Despite their name, We're All Gonna Die are actually quite an energetic and invigorating band, and were described by this site's webmaster as being similar to a riff-heavy Soundgarden. The influence of the aforementioned Seattle band is present right from the opening number 'Brown Rabbit', a mostly instrumental song, apart from a few screams and 'oh yeah's from vocalist and guitarist Jim Healey, who sounds like a dead ringer for Chris Cornell. WAGD's sound is a mix of traditional hard-rock, grunge, and stoner-metal. 'Bled Out', probably my favourite track on the album, is an absolute stomper that reminds me a bit of High On Fire. 'Elevator Down', about a recurring nightmare, swings around an

infectious harmonic-minor riff. 'Dusk And Done', 'Nothing to Say', and 'On the Sea' are all bluesy, semi-acoustic ballads that provide some space in between the charging metal tunes. 'Guns of August' has a strong Down influence, while 'Burn' has an epic feel to it. Turning up the bass-expander on my stereo, it became apparent that the bass presence on this album is staggering – my walls were shaking even at low volume, as befitting a stoner-ish sort of band.

All in all, this is a highly recommended release from a band that will hopefully get much more recognition in the future, and considering the music industry is saturated with trendy rubbish like Wolfmother, some authentic hard-rock like this is desperately needed. www.myspace.com/wereallgonnadie |

www.underdogma.com

Zifir - You Must Come With Us (**Poem Productions**) Review By: Ryan Ogle



For someone whose knowledge of black metal, less than five years ago, started with Emperor and stopped with Cradle Of Filth, I've come a long way, baby. Seriously though, this blasphemous little sub-genre of metal is quickly becoming one of my favorites as of late and Zifir is perfect example of why. The eclectic twist this Turkish band puts on their blackened sonic art is one that sets them far apart from any of their corpse-painted peers. After a demented intro that includes a distant sounding classical guitar, desperate wails and bestial grunts, the disc explodes into

the ultra-distorted “Honour.” Starting off with dissonant chords of Meshuggah-like math metal, the song twists down a slightly more conventional black metal path, though the overall vibe is more than slightly scathing compared to what I’ve heard recently. Zifir continue to push black metal’s envelope with “My Greatest Weapon” and “Final Solution Of The (K)” by dabbling further in dissonance and time signature molestation. Midway through the disc, “Circus” proves Zifir to be one of the most unconventional and twisted groups in the genre; which is saying a lot considering this is black metal. As far left of center as this disc can get, it still has a few surprises to offer; such as the Islamic prayer track “Ashab-Y Mesheme” and the haunting “Emic Suicide.” Other, more traditional songs, “The Day” and “4” still fit Zifir’s modus operandi and proves they can play black metal just as well as they can warp into something almost completely new. Zifir is not an ideal starting point for those of you who are just discovering black metal as their acerbic and oddly unique tendencies may prove to be just a little *too* far out of reach for most ears. However, if you’re as twisted as I find myself to be from time to time, then this little gem is right up your alley.

www.myspace.com/zifir | www.poemproductions.com