

# AURAL ASSAULTS DVD REVIEWS

## Estradasphere *Palace Of Mirrors - Live The End*



Now is not the time to be talking about Estradasphere's music because, frankly, time and space doesn't allow for it. Plus, if you get a chance to feast your eyes on this DVD production, you'll see that the Santa Cruz, CA band's persistent genre-crossing is mirrored by their incorporation of just about every instrument they can get their hands on. If you bought the album, *Palace Of Mirrors*, when it was originally released last year, you'll have noticed the accompanying booklet photos that related a *film noir*-inspired tale of some quizzical art-house description. And if you witnessed the band live as they toured for the record, you'll have noticed the short film those pictures were grabbed from playing on video screens behind the band as they performed the cinematic odes that may or may not be considered its soundtrack. *Palace Of Mirrors - Live* meshes footage of the band playing live in their hometown (I believe) with the visuals taken from director Chip Yamada's short film to create an almost overwhelming viewing/listening experience, especially for those not used to Estradasphere's deeply involved and diverse compositions. Add to that a film which a long time ago crossed over into being a surrealist's wet dream (one I'm not even going to pretend I understand) and you have a DVD production that is as stupefying and confusing as it is compelling and engaging. On the DVD, you essentially get the *Palace Of Mirrors* album played all the way through and, being someone who has seen Estradasphere live numerous times in their various incarnations, it's always a mind-blowing treat to watch their incredible talent at work, and twice as exciting to have the opportunity to do so in the privacy of my own home without having to deal with drunks calling out for Mr. Bungle songs (Estradasphere's early albums were released on Trey Spruance's label and members play in Secret Chiefs 3). Also included is the "Opening Set" section which has the band playing covers of Chopin, Sam Cooke, Bernard Hermann, plus the lengthy "Hunger Strike" composition. You also get a "Production Documentary" which offers a look behind the scenes at the year-long writing and recording process of *Palace Of Mirrors* and short snippets of life on the road when you're carting around as much gear as these guys do. Highly recommended. [www.estradasphere.com] — Kevin Stewart-Panko

## Kettle Cadaver *Among The Damned Horror Rock*



Really, what the fuck is up with kids today? If they're not roaming the streets with the crotch of their pants hanging around their ankles, they're smoking dust, finger banging each other like the use of their knuckles is about to become illegal, robbing convenience stores for lottery tickets and proclaiming themselves bisexual by the time they hit 14. And if they make it out of this phase without scoring themselves a STD, a bun in the oven, being thrown in juvie or with burn marks and singed hair from attempting one too many blue flames,

they're getting weird haircuts and forming really bad emo and metalcore bands. And if they make it out of that phase and what was supposed to be short-term residency at a trailer park of their step-mother's choosing, they then get into extreme wrestling and metal without actually learning how to wrestle or play metal properly.

Kettle Cadaver's Edwin Borsheim is a seemingly sociopathic, self-harming masochist with a flair for the conspicuous, biceps the size of my waistline and pectorals big enough that he might as well have his own page at boobpedia.com. He likes to abuse himself by sticking syringes where syringes shouldn't go, using staplers on things other than paper (including "Little" Edwin), and generally doing whatever it may take to experience pain and get on-lookers to say, "hol-ee shit!" My guess is that he wasn't hugged enough as a child and is on a first-name basis with the night staff at the local emergency room. In addition to being half-mountain/half-lunatic, Borsheim is the frontman and driving force for this California-based, part-horror punk, part-metal, part-violent performance art outfit who have issued this collection of videos for your viewing pleasure. Or disgust.

Basically, *Among The Damned* is a collection of 16 promo videos for songs that may or may not appear on record, but they went ahead and made videos anyway. While the production value is pretty top notch stuff, especially in the sets and editing department (more so when you consider this is a DIY production), the accompanying music is pretty worthless. This very magazine has, in the past, referred to Kettle Cadaver as a cross between Samhain and Marilyn Manson, which could be true if you remembered to include every bad songwriting cliché the cover band at your local bar used that one time they tried to write original music. There you have Kettle Cadaver; the band that makes The Genitorturers sound like Yes. At the same time, there's no way anyone is buying this for the music. You sick fucks want to see Borsheim cut himself with hunting knives, wrestle in a homemade, barbed wire and fluorescent light bulb adorned wrestling ring; you want to see the implied BDSM, girls dressed as dominatrixes, the guns and ammo he has kicking around his post-apocalyptic, Mad Max-style ranch. You might want to see him fire staples and bolts into his schlong and bleed over, well, everything. There's probably a deeper significance or message here about the body as a canvas in a post-modern artistic age and the juxtaposition of pain and pleasure, but all that shit gets lost and forgotten once Borsheim nails his foreskin to a wooden board. [www.horrormetallrecords.com] — Kevin Stewart-Panko

## Vader *And Blood Was Shed In Warsaw Metal Mind*



*And Blood Was Shed In Warsaw*, recorded in early 2007, features more lights than an airport, a wildly appreciative crowd and Poland's favorite sons of death metal, Vader, pulling out all the stops. There's not much pit action in the nearly packed house, but that may just be how it's done in Poland. Nonetheless, Vader is at the top of their game both sonically and in terms of showmanship. "Shadowfear" leads off the set with all the intensity the band can muster, Piotr and Mauser in total sync, as bands of this sort must be. (Being a death metal band gets you nowhere if the guitarists aren't on the same page.) "Silent Empire" shows Vader at its arguable fastest during the verses, injecting a near hard rock chorus before slicing leads inflict their damage. While never being a band in need of ego ramps or elaborate stage sets, each of the three members on the frontlines work the hype machine well, as evidenced by the incessant "Vader!" chants between songs. "Blood Of Kingu" has been a personal favorite since

its release, and its appearance here is more than justified. A trip through a sonic minefield, "Carnal" is littered with pinch harmonics and pure DM explosions. With drummer Daray's assistance, Vader are now able to include in their performance the electronic elements and samples of late to good effect. A regal "Para Bellum" leads into "This Is The War" from the *Art Of War* EP which let us know that the Vader of old were back and ready to do damage. Concert fave "What Color Is Your Blood?" stands strong here as a guaranteed pit-starter, choppy riffwork doing battle against an anthemic chorus. The live portion of *ABWSIW* ends with an invigorating cover of Kat's Polish BM classic "Wyrocznia" featuring a guest appearance by current vocalist Henry Beck.

Extras: The concept video for "Halleluyah! (God Is Dead)," as well as the piece shot for "Sword Of The Witcher," a song featured on *The Witcher* PC game. Unlike the normally boring Metal Mind interviews, the segment with founder/vocalist Piotr is both engaging and revealing. The label shift is discussed, as is both press and band reaction to *The Beast*. That Vader showed their more experimental side on said album without going all *Cold Lake* on us is a testament to their steadfastness. The unfortunate passing of Doc [Krzysztof "Doc/Docent" Raczkowski] is spoken of at length, showing Piotr to be both thoughtful and hopeful that through that misfortune, others may learn.

As with most DVDs, those not so familiar with the band should start with the albums. For Vader fans, though, *And Blood Was Shed In Warsaw* is yet another vital component to their arsenal of DM weaponry. [www.vader.pl] — Lord Randall

## Various Artists *Bang Your Head Festival 2006 Locomotive*



Set to present its 13th consecutive lineup in 2008, the Bang Your Head Festival is one of the longest running hard rock/metal festivals in Europe. Known for its diversity in acts, the upcoming version looks just as good as any, with bands like Saxon, Obituary and Tankard already booked to play. New on store shelves now is a two-DVD set capturing snapshots of the 2006 edition of the festival. It's a collection that has definite ups and downs, with the positives (narrowly) beating out the head scratching moments included within.

The good parts are really good: Strong performances from the likes of Leatherwolf ("The Calling!"), Armored Saint, UK hair-mongers Vengeance, Communic and Unleashed demonstrate a variety in styles and unity in the crowd, who seem to eat everything up. A number of performances offered are a bit more questionable however. The usually energetic Lips, frontman for Canadian veterans Anvil, has a tough time ripping through classics "Forged In Fire" and "Metal On Metal" while others like Stratovarius and Helloween just look kind of tired. But that's nothing compared to the excruciating pain of having to endure Raven *twice* from separate performances: Two songs from the once-great trio on the big stage and another two from the festival's after-hours club gig found in the bonus material. Altogether that's an astounding four songs, while bands like Beyond Fear (their debut gig!), Death Angel and Y&T (a killer "Midnight In Tokyo") are ghettoized to a single track each. The inclusion of Foreigner on the DVD and the song selection chosen for first night headliner In Flames are also boggling. The former just released their own DVD a few months ago of their entire set at the festival, so what's the point of including songs here as well? As for In Flames, their newer material just doesn't hold up next to their classics, so the decision to include songs from their last two albums is a definite letdown. Despite my grumbings, there's a bunch of good stuff here, although it seems this collection could have and should have been better. [http://eng.locomotive.es] — Sean Palmerston