

REVIEWS

[Home](#) | [News](#) | [Tour News](#) | [Reviews](#) | [Live Reviews](#) | [Interviews](#) | [Black Metal](#) | [Contact Info](#) | [Cradle Of Fun](#) | [Site News](#)

Abigail Williams - In The Shadow Of A Thousand Suns (**Candlelight Records**) By: Dave Schalek



Given that my views of deathcore have precipitously dropped of late (not that I was entirely enamored with the genre in the first place, mind you), I approached the long overdue debut full-length from Abigail Williams (the band has recently gone through numerous line-up changes) with some trepidation. Although I gave their debut EP, "Legend", a good review awhile back, I was almost positive that I was in for a grueling session of mediocre deathcore with "In The Shadow Of A Thousand Suns", the band's debut full-length released on Candlelight Records. I was pleasantly surprised to find that my anxiety was misplaced.

The deathcore influences that appeared on "Legend" from 2006 have largely been excised, at least in terms of the music. Instead, the symphonic black metal influences already present in Abigail Williams have been greatly emphasized on "In The Shadow Of A Thousand Suns", right down to the album's cover art. Yeah, Abigail Williams is more than just borrowing a page from Dimmu Borgir, Emperor, et al, with shredding guitars, blastbeats galore, and plenty of keyboard work and melody, but the band's high quality of musicianship and overall good songwriting skills briefly let you forget that you've heard all of this before. Worth noting is the exceptionally good keyboard work with interesting compositions and an ability to provide extra emphasis to the melodies present without becoming overbearing or saccharine. Also of note is the excellent drumming from Samus (apparently, Trym also has a hand in here); however, the vocals are still a rather annoying deathcore shriek.

In short, "In The Shadow Of A Thousand Suns" is a good example of symphonic black metal (I've also recently warmed to the debut from Sothis, more so than my review from a few weeks back). I do think, however, that Abigail Williams would be better off if they dispense with the deathcore "aesthetic" that still seems to surround them.

www.candlelightrecordsusa.com | www.myspace.com/abigailwilliams

Artas - The Healing (**Napalm**) Review by Steve Green



With Napalm having dubbed this "Modern Metal", I really did fear the worst. As much as I love the label, I'm never too enamored at their signings that stray too far from the underground, and this is no exception.

I liked the opening number Babossa, which is in your face modern Thrash. Then came a take-it-or-leave-it piece of bouncy Thrash, which reminded me of Sepultura... although this Austrian band decided to sing in Spanish. Then comes a cover of Coolio's Gangsta's Paradise, which is ok, but sounds too contrived and veers too close to bouncy nu-metal shite for my liking. But then, thankfully, we get a few decent songs in a row. But it doesn't

really matter what comes next as I'm always expecting another clanger to be dropped. And then the band moved onto their third language, this time German.

Truth be told, Artas could be a good band, as I like the core of their sound, but it feels as if they are trying to fit too many styles and ideas into a small hole. This lack of direction leaves this a little messy and to be honest, I've no idea what sound Artas are trying to achieve on The Healing. As the old cliché goes, "Less Is More", and this album is in need of a serious de-clutter. www.napalmrecords.com

Beehoover - Heavy Zooo (**Exile on Mainstream/Southern**) Review by Metal Mark



Beehover are a bass and drum duo that play an offbeat style of heavy music. Now they adore some good, raw and heavy riffs. Most of their songs begin around their love: a big, meaty riff. After establishing that they then slowly begin to venture of his other directions yet they never lose site of that riff. At first I took this approach as being somewhat repetitive, but I don't think that's fair. It's more like the main riff is their hive and the two instruments do at times leave that hive and go off in other directions, yet they always return. Many of the songs start off in a very simple manner but they soon divide and bring different sounds and styles into the expanding mix. There is often a sense of subtlety because they

know that they can amaze and astound your senses without having to beat you over the head. They were probably raised on equal doses of Budgie, Sabbath and ELP and they probably love Tool and OM as well. They still manage to create their own addictive and bizarre interpretation of those influences. This band obviously love some down and dirty doom, but they embrace prog-rock as well. So they end up combining the two into an oftentimes uneven marriage of sorts that somehow manages to work.

This is not an album for everyone because it does require patience because they are taking their own time about building these songs exactly as they see fit. However if you sit back and enjoy ride then you are in for bone-rattling, mind-numbing experience.

Black Metal Satanica - DVD (Cleopatra Records/ MVD Video) By: Dave Schalek



A month or two ago, I gave the totally silly “documentary” entitled “This Is Black Metal” a rather dismal review, mostly for its inanity and lack of seriousness in its treatment of the subject matter. As an interesting juxtaposition to that DVD is yet another black metal themed documentary from Cleopatra Records, this one entitled “Black Metal Satanica”. The juxtaposition is warranted as “Black Metal Satanica” purports, at least, to be a much more serious look at some of the current, most definitely “true”, bands working out of Sweden, mostly, today.

A rather short film at about 90 minutes with no extras included whatsoever; the focus of “Black Metal Satanica” is not really to showcase the music, as very little is actually presented during the film. Instead, the film allows members of such bands as Watain, Shining, Ondskapt, and others to describe the ideological thinking of the current scene.

Along with these one-sided conversations, as the interviewer’s questions are rarely filmed, is some narration (probably the only distracting element of the film as the narrator uses a rather forced, sonorous intonation that comes across as unintentionally humorous) explaining different aspects of the black metal genre and the usual historical background information on the first bands to come out of Norway (Burzum, Mayhem, et al). Worth noting is some emphasis placed upon Bathory (some rare photos and footage are presented), and Quorthon’s contributions in general, along with descriptions of Viking cultural influences in black metal. Probably the best moments of “Black Metal Satanica” occur when Erik Danielsson and Kvarforth, in separate interviews, talk at length of their personal ideologies and their effects upon the music. As Danielsson and Kvarforth explain with an obvious personal devotion, black metal is so much more than just music and you do get a pretty good sense of that with these interviews that come across as totally sincere, and not as theatrics designed to sell records (as other “true” bands seem to do, in my opinion). Other interviews featuring Svartahrid, Ondskapt, and Vreid are also compelling and genuine, as is an interview conducted with an unidentified member of the scene who has participated in Scandinavia’s spate of church burnings (the interview ends on a rather strange note with an almost “Blair Witch” feel).

Needless to say, whether or not you choose to totally buy in to what various figures are saying throughout the film, “Black Metal Satanica” is one of the more serious looks at the genre (that may change as more films about black metal are being produced, such as the just released “Until the Light Takes Us”, and as the pre-production frenzy swirling around “Lords of Chaos” continues to grow), and the film does so without descending into condescension or frivolity. For that reason alone, I highly recommend “Black Metal Satanica”.

<http://mvdb2b.com> | www.cleorecs.com

Crematory - Pray (Blistering Records) By: Joe Florez



I have to say that I have had a real love/hate relationship for a long time with this German band. I know a lot of fans were there in the beginning when they were considered more or less doom/death metal when it was all the rage in the early 90's. Felix growled his way from track to track and album to album. I didn't care for it until I saw the video for "Shadows Of Mine" which was more melodic, but managed to still pack in a wallop. From record number two and onward, the keyboards were used more and their sound became more accessible for someone like myself while others perhaps flew away. It would be Act

Seven and Believe where things got more commercial and synthetic, but happened to just work. I cherish those records the most. Also, that is when Matthias would join the band as a new guitarist and clean vocalist. When the more techno sounds were incorporated into the mix on Revolution, that's when I called it a day with them and pretty much never looked back. I knew of their new album Pray, but had no interest in hearing it until it was mailed to me. And now, the new journey begins.

"When Darkness Falls" is up to bat first. The guitars are very melancholic and relaxed. Katrin's keyboard work provides great atmosphere as always and the vocals are spoken very softly in the beginning that is until everyone comes crashing in with full force. I have always liked Marcus's drum style because it's very strong, solid and tight and even technical at times. Both Felix and Mat collide during the chorus between the clean and harsh singing. This is how I remember the guys. They manage to be heavy, dark and yet catchy and melodic. While this may not sound like their humble beginnings, this is still entertaining. The eerie vibes continue to crawl all over "Left The Ground" and this one has a more pop/commercial feel. Mat handles the verses/bridges perfectly while Felix only chimes in for the chorus. Fans from the past may want to gravitate toward "Alone" which brings back the sludgy sound that is slow and creepy. Very doom like. It's funny to hear a melodic death metal ballad and "Sleeping Solution" is it with the growls. After a few songs inserted in the middle that kind of bring things down to a halt, "Burning Bridges" picks up the pace to a more mid range setting and keeps it there. The main problem I have always had with this band is...Felix. All he ever does is growl and it very monotone. It has never changed since day one. I would like for him to change it up just a little to add some freshness to the band. I have always thought of these guys as talented musicians who were always tight and on point with their sound. I think that by taking a few years off from this band proved to be good because I missed their sound and this is a pretty damn record. Now with American distro, fans who haven't been able to get their stuff since their Nuclear Blast days can once again complete their Crematory Catalogue. Melodic/doom/death/goth is still alive and well.

www.blisteringrecords.se | www.crematory.de

Elite - We Own The Mountains (Folter Records) Review by Crin



3rd full length from this Norwegian band who formerly resided on the cult No Colours label. Here we find the band thundering onwards with their fiery thrash meets Immortal style of choppy Black Metal. The pagan subtleties of past works is all but replaced with a more direct "Bash 'em up" musical barrage that straddles the fertile line between wanton Mayhem affiliated ear dismemberment and the more polished aural hacking of Aura Noir. There is a flickering of Kampfar in the mix, that certain Nordic identity that reaches out during the mischievous guitar arrangements. The barking vocal snarls add nothing new to what seems a band in need of direction as the initial three tracks plod through familiar

territory. Fast bits woven into slower parts, fusing together harsh dynamics with intricate guitar sections. It isn't until track five, Rovnatt, that a cleaner vocal is applied and the album attempts to vault into life. Here we find the strengths of this band used to better effect. This is pure Norwegian pagan Black Metal at its finest.

As the album rolls into its end, there is a further surprise from the Bathory-like, Fodt til Vanvidd. This slow burner is an up-tempo arrangement that will drag you into a head nodding metal orgasm, as will the hypnotic "Vi Skyr Ingen Strid". This is an album that necessitates you hearing its entire contents to grasp the full

potential of its, at times, fantastic music. The album's strengths reside in the latter half of its construction. Elite are a Norwegian band that inhabit that middle area alongside the likes of Kampfar, Helheim, Hades and the likes. They will never slither into obscurity, but equally they will never burst into the upper levels of mainstream Black Metal. Elite will always produce what I call a reliable, well meaning, passionate onslaught of decent [and on occasions quite resplendent] music without changing the world as we know it.

Enforcer - Into The Night (Heavy Artillery) Review by Metal Mark



The first time I heard Enforcer was last year on the "Speed kills...again" compilation on which they contributed two songs. They were signed to Heavy Artillery Records and their debut was actually towards the top of my list of releases that I was most looking forward to in 2008.

The opener "Black Angel" comes pounding on like early Exciter only with slightly higher vocals. Right away I know that I am going to love this album. "Mistress From Hell" is on next and this is more like Raven's first few albums, which is a refreshing change as not enough bands acknowledge their influence on thrash. After that, the influences go back and

forth including a huge dose of early Iron Maiden, more Exciter, Kill 'Em All era Metallica, Savage Grace and probably a few NWOBHM bands as well. One of my favorite tracks is the instrumental "City Lights" which begins like something from Iron Maiden's "Killers" and then halfway through switches to be more like something from "Piece of Mind". Much of this album sounds like it could have come right out of 1983 with the blend of NWOBHM influences and early thrash bands. However, Enforcer are more than just a time capsule because they do blend styles and bring a smoothness and energy to their style. They have their own ideas and they how to weave those ideas in with their influences. This results in a spectacular blend of some of the best styles of metal's past coming together. Many of today's retro-thrash acts look only to the sounds of about 1986 and later, but Enforcer dig into the roots of the genre which happened earlier than that. I think one of my favorite aspects of this album is just their unbridled fire as they just plunge ahead and go. I will say the vocals are higher than many typical thrash bands and I think they work fine, but I can see some thrash purists not being big on them. Personally, my only complaint is that I had to wait until now for this to come out because I think originally they thought it would be out a few months ago. This is a fantastic release that captures the sound and spirit of some of my favorite sounds in metal. www.myspace.com/enforcerswe

Enslaved - Vertebrae (Nuclear Blast Records/ Indie Recordings) By: Dave Schalek



I must admit that it took me a couple of listens of "Vertebrae", the latest full-length from Enslaved on Nuclear Blast Records, to really get into it. A challenging band, Enslaved have now moved pretty far from their roots as "Vertebrae" could only loosely be called Viking metal, mostly just in terms of the ethnic origin of the musicians if nothing else, and are now solely a progressive band with some similarities to Opeth and with a focus upon melody, variation, and minor psychedelic touches.

Fellow L4M scribe Crin, in a different review, recently described Enslaved as forever morphing into a contorted version of Pink Floyd. His description is certainly apt as the

Pink Floyd touches that have been increasingly present on Enslaved's last few releases are now very much at the forefront of the music with more emphasis placed upon the clean vocals and, notably, very fluid guitar soloing that takes more than a page from David Gilmour's playbook (I'm greatly reminded of Gilmour's early solo albums). As is expected from this veteran outfit, the songwriting, musicianship, and production are all of exceptionally high quality along with an interesting theme prevalent throughout the album. Therefore, the only question really remaining is whether or not you're going to like it; that is, those of you that have been with the band for awhile, as well as anyone else taking a look at Enslaved for the first time. Well, those of you that bailed out prior to "Isa" will probably continue to stay away since the blastbeat era of "Blodhemn" and so forth is long gone, but those of you that enjoy the band's current direction will find much to like on "Vertebrae". In addition, newcomers may be surprised to find that all of the progressive touches really no

longer label Enslaved as an extreme act.

As I mentioned, however, I did have to warm to the album as the first track or two are passive and melodic with some quirky songwriting. By the time the title track arrives, though, "Vertebrae" really hits its stride with excellent variation ranging from faster paced tracks mixed with the psychedelic, thoughtful, progressive touches.

Overall, I do recommend "Vertebrae" as an excellent example of an album that transcends genre boundaries, but those of you looking for a harsh blast of Viking metal, and nothing more, will probably be disappointed.

www.enslaved.no | www.nuclearblast.de | www.myspace.com/indierecordings

Exciter - Thrash Speed Burn (Blistering Records) By: Joe Florez



With the resurgence of thrash and how much of a fan I have been of this genre for many moons now, I have to say that I am ashamed of myself for not listening to Exciter more often than not. Yes, I have always known of this band and possess one of their records and even played a track or two when I worked at a radio station, but I simply never investigated into this band much. I believe that this is their 11th studio record with new vocalist Kenny Winter and hot damn! This is thrash at its finest.

"Massacre Mountain" (wouldn't that make for a cool band name, no?) just decimates your speakers and ear drums with sinister riffing, quick drumming and vocals that hit the high pitch range

at times. Jesus Christ, this track will make your flowers wilt because this is music with a shot of steroids injected into it and this is raw too. No slick production here. This is old school with better use of recording equipment, but keeping the old vibe and spirit alive and well. The solo on here made my ears bleed. I love it! Each track on here simply gets faster and more primitive as we progress. These Canucks simply don't know the meaning of quit and deliver the goods on all fronts as far as I'm concerned. They pull no punches as make no apologies for what they do. This is simple and straight up thrash, the 80's way. Hey, I know many of you out there are being lured by the current crop of kids creating music that is older than they are. Do yourselves a favor and get one of the originators of the scene and they will show you how it's done. Dig in.

www.blisteringrecords.se | www.hemidata.se/exciter