

have a very modern, almost industrial sound, with looped drums and assorted special effects. **Cronos** has stated that he didn't think the style worked well for the band. But I disagree, **Venom** did the quasi-industrial thing better than most. At the time, many veteran metal bands struggling to survive tried their hands at this (**Mötley Crüe** and **Judas Priest's Rob Halford**, among others), to try and fit in with the alternative bands of the day. And to some degree, some of these artists pulled it off stylistically, but none succeeded in selling it to the public. In **Venom's** case the style worked well when sandwiched in between 14 songs of sinister, devilish mayhem. To me, **Venom** was merely a punkish, heavy rock band with aspirations greater than what their abilities ultimately allowed, but that hell-bent naïveté is what ultimately made them special.

Yep, this year has been a great one for the reemergence of classic, dark-metal gods. Like **Venom**, **Slayer** and **Motörhead**, **Celtic Frost** was the reason for hordes of unkempt derelicts to pick up guitars and start bands of their own. **Celtic Frost** not only stretched the boundaries of heavy metal, they annihilated them all together, tossing classical, death rock and progressive elements into the acidic brew.

At first, I was skeptical about the latest album *Monothest* (CenturyMedia.com). I was convinced that it would either be a

blatant rehash of the band's '80s glory days, or a half-assed attempt at being contemporary with a batch of blasé, nu-metal numbers. Fortunately, I was wrong on both fronts. Songs like "Progeny" and "Ground" are mesmerizing in their sheer weight and sonic executions, leaving the equilibrium a little battered and frayed. "Drown In Ashes" has the esoteric, symphonic feel of the band's late '80s repertoire, and "Obscured" is a gothic epic along the lines of the Sisters of Mercy with its eerie intro and grand chorus. *Monothest* is a valid representation of **Celtic Frost's** twisted, avant-garde take on metal, and will hopefully bring the band back to the forefront.

Seattle stalwarts **Queensryche** reestablished themselves earlier this year with the long-awaited

sequel to their biggest album *Operation: Mindcrime* (1988). And surprisingly (to me, anyway), the new album (*Operation: Mindcrime II*) has sold quite well—which goes to show that the pendulum has finally swung, and traditional metal is back in style. Capitol Records has reissued the original classic in a deluxe package that also features a bonus disc of a live versions, plus the previously VHS-only companion, *Video Mindcrime*. As a kid, I liked their heavy, medieval style, but when they got all sophisticated on us with this magnum opus, I was already on to other things. But in listening to this grand rock opera now,



I can appreciate what they were trying to do: expand the parameters of heavy metal, in a smart, polished manner. This album would prove to be influential in the realm of progressive metal, and establish the band—albeit briefly—as a major force in popular music. The crisp, remastered sound of this reissue is excellent, and the plush packaging includes

a booklet and slipcase. If you're a fan of the original, you should be all over this; it's got lots of extras—good extras.

Ex-**Deep Purple** vocalist **Ian Gillan** has been back in the public eye lately with a couple of new releases. One of the great voices of heavy rock, what he may have lacked in technical ability he more than made up for in style and charisma. In heavy metal circles, he's a screamer par excellence; up there with the likes of **Rob Halford** and **David Lee Roth**. And as a lyricist, **Gillan** is razor-sharp, having penned some of the wittiest lines in rock 'n' roll. And the fact that he also did some time with **Black Sabbath** on the *Born Again* album also makes him extra legendary. To commemorate **Gillan's** 40 years in the business, Immergent

Records (Immergent.com) has released *Gillan's Inn* in DualDisc format, so you get a CD on one side, and DVD content on the other. When I first saw this CD I gasped at the ridiculous cover artwork that has **Gillan** standing barefoot in the snow in front of a laughably tacky Photoshop'd setting. But behind the corny cover is a collection of tracks teaming Sir Ian up with a bevy of metal all-stars, performing songs from various points in his vast career. **Gillan's** vocals are in fine form, and he sounds particularly commanding on the **Sabbath** tune "Trashed," with **Tony Iommi** in tow, as well as on **Purple's**

"Smoke on the Water," with both virtuoso **Steve Morse** and the **Goo Goo Dolls' Johnny Rzeznik** on lead and rhythm guitars. On the DVD side you have the option of mixing in leads from **Morse**, **Joe Satriani** or **Jeff Healey** on that song. For **Purple** fans or followers of **Gillan's** solo catalog, this is a treat, and goes to show that you truly can't judge a book by its cover.

A DVD featuring vintage **Gillan** live material has also recently surfaced from MVD/Angel Air (MusicVideoDistributors.com/AngelAir.co.uk). *Live in Edinburgh 1980*, features a decent set



filmed for TV from **Gillan's** solo band. The set features only five songs and runs around 30 minutes. One of the show's saving graces is its inclusion of guitar gypsy, **Bernie Tormé**. **Tormé** had the hip street swagger of **Keith Richards**, but also had chops that rivaled the best metal had to offer. He eventually went on to

play with **Ozzy Osbourne** for a short stint. The live set here comes off well, with some energetic performances, especially on the break-neck "Unchain Your Brain." The DVD also has some archive footage of—you guessed it—"Smoke on the Water," which is of pretty poor quality. Bonus features include interviews with all band members but **Gillan**, and it's pretty funny to hear them trash him, mostly over financial issues. All in all, this DVD would've benefited from a longer live set, as this era of **Gillan's** solo stint was top-notch.

Speaking of **Bernie Tormé**, check out the reissue of his own album *Back To Babylon* (Lemon Recordings). Originally released in 1985, the album was produced by former **Gillan** bassist **John McCoy** and features ex-**Girl** and future-**LA Guns** front man **Phil Lewis**. As a fan of the legendary **Girl**, I shelled out big bucks for an import of this unsung album at one point. This raunchy, hard rock album is full of snazzy licks and sleazy anthems like "All Around The World" and "Hardcore," and came out right smack during the period where metal was splintering between thrash and the pop variety. Rather than choosing sides, *B2B* straddles the line between dirty and melodic, and is one of the better releases of the period. This reissue rocks with boosted sound, and an informative insert. For more info, go to Cherryred.co.uk.

The South will rise... it actually did, some 30 years ago. Southern rock and heavy metal walked shoulder to shoulder during the late '70s and '80s. What started out as a rockier take on country and blues eventually churned out a heavier contingent with bands like **Lynyrd Skynyrd** and the **Outlaws** giving the sound a



harder, jammier edge—the former with its triple-axe attack and the streetwise lyrics of **Ronnie Van Zant**. The **Outlaws** even toured with **Black Sabbath** on the *Mob Rules* tour, and a revitalized **Lynyrd Skynyrd** hit the stadiums with **Deep Purple** a few

years back. Powerhouse bands like

Pantera and **Raging Slab** have also incorporated Southern rock bits into their respective sets. A few reissues have recently hit the shelves that merit inclusion in this installment.

Molly Hatchet was one of the heavier Southern rock bands to hit the scene in the late '70s. Emulating the **Skynyrd** approach, the band employed three guitarists and was fronted by a ball-busting vocalist by the name of **Danny Joe Brown**. The band's signature tune "Flirtin' With Disaster" has been a standard on mainstream radio for decades. I remember being intrigued as a kid by the band's fantastical album cover artwork that often looked more "metal" than the band actually was. A couple of the band's mid-career albums have recently been reissued by Gott Discs (Gottdiscs.com). By the release of the band's fourth album *Take No Prisoners* (1981), they were fronted by the more accessible-sounding **Jimmy Farrar** (Brown had exited after the second album). This album would also be Farrar's last. The album is a solid Southern rock set, but there's nothing in particular that stands out, except for the cover of "Long tall Sally." This reissue features great remastered sound, plus an essay chronicling the period.

1984's *The Dead Is Done* was the band's second album with **Danny Joe Brown** back in the saddle. Unfortunately, **Hatchet** chose to

emulate the then-current pop-metal sounds of the day, and all but abandoned Old Glory. I'm sure the label had a hand in bringing in outside songwriters and co-opting **ZZ Top's** high-tech production style to compete with the commercial sounds of bands like **.38 Special** who had also been riding the charts with a string of radio-friendly hits. Opening with the campy, keyboard-drenched "Satisfied Man" (Can't you just smell the **ZZ Top** comparisons?), the album is a slick and polished affair, far different from the band's early offerings where the songs were served straight up, no chaser. But, this is not to say *The Dead Is Done* is a bad album by any stretch. It's still a pretty rockin' offering, with some great guitar work, and just enough grit to still be potent. It's just a smoother experience, if a little watered down in spots. This reissue comes in a nice slipcase with an informative booklet.

Next on the redneck hit list is the excellent reissue of *Doc Holliday Rides Again* (1981) from Rock Candy Records (RockCandyRecords.com). **Doc Holliday** played with all the big names in the Southern rock corral—and even opened for **Black Sabbath**—but failed to have the commercial impact of their colleagues. Nevertheless, *Doc Holliday Rides Again* is one of the era's better offerings, and has impeccable



hard rock credentials, as evidenced in the freight-train assault of "Last Ride." From there, the music varies between hard rock and more traditional Southern boogie. Other standout cuts are "Good Boy Gone Bad" and "Don't Go Talkin'." This remastered reissue sounds excellent, and includes bonus tracks,

plus a 16-page booklet with notes from label founders and famed metal journalists **Derek Oliver** and **Dante Bonutto**.

As you can tell, I've included an eclectic range from all different corners of the hard rock universe. So depending upon what kind of mood you're in there are lots of things here to keep your stereo rockin' and ears throbbing. For questions, comments or suggestions, drop me a line at: retrohead77@yahoo.com. See ya next issue. Cheers! ☛