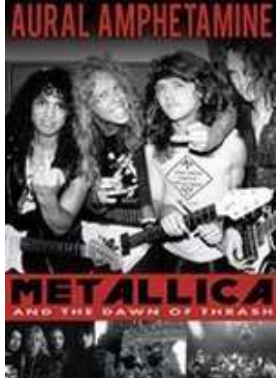


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Aural Amphetamine: Metallica And The Dawn Of Thrash DVD (Sexy Intellectual)

Review by Steve Green



Yes, this is a very interesting documentary, but one I feel that was done on a shoestring budget. This is a 90+ minute documentary that tells the story of the NWOBHM and the beginning of the Thrash scene up to about 1986. Which obviously leaves scope for a sequel if this release does well.

I found the early part of the story, which concentrated on the birth of Metal in general and then the NWOBHM very interesting, probably as it was a time that I too was discovering this great new invention. Heavy Metal. This then leads onto Lars Ulrich's love for the genre, his meeting with Diamond Head etc... the early days of Thrash, the Bay Area scene and then the focus mainly concentrates on the first three Metallica albums. The story is very well put together, despite a few sloppy moments. Using a picture of the Ripper era of Judas Priest when talking about the 80s version of the band and a couple of pointless

interviewees who have absolutely nothing to say and the sound quality of Joel McIver's interview pieces is way below standard, which does cheapen this release a little. But overall, this is an interesting trip down memory lane, with good narration and a nice flow throughout. And no subject seems to be taboo either, as the death of Cliff Burton and the drink problems of Dave Mustaine are both covered, as is Metallica's hatred for the LA Glam scene. I just wish a little more care had been taken with the project as a whole. But despite any quibbles I have with this DVD, it still comes recommended and is a great excuse to, once again, relive your youth. www.chromedreams.co.uk

Avenged Sevenfold - Dear God (Warner Bros) Review by Revis Doherty



First time I heard this I was like 'For God's sake, another stupid, soppy acoustic, about how much the singer misses their girlfriend.' And that is exactly what it is, but it's better than all the other pieces of crap you get, which I shan't name. This is last track of their latest self-named album, it seemed like an awful way to end a brilliant album. But it most definitely isn't. It's still a rock song, but one that has been mellowed down with acoustic guitars. And it is not a sell-out. And I'm glad of it. I have vowed never to listen to bands who work just for the money, not the fans, and if A7X did that, I'd be so pissed off I can't describe it.

This is a departure from the norm from the rest of their material, but it's still just as good. www.avengedsevenfold.com

Brocken Moon - Das Märchen Vom Schnee (Northern Silence) Review by Steve Green



Northern Silence and its collection of sub-labels are fast becoming one of my favourite sources for new music. In the last year or so, they seem to have developed this great knack of discovering underground bands and re-issuing their works which would otherwise be buried deep in the undergrounds murky soul. This time around the object for your desires is Brocken Moon, an ambient Black metal project from Germany. I have to say ambient as this isn't just a fiery homage to our old mate Satan. This has haunting acoustics, whispered vocals and oodles of chilled out atmospherics and in places, is actually quite beautiful.

The album is one 50 minute song, broken down into 6 pieces, each one is represented by a number. Part III bears a striking resemblance to the melody from Neil Young's Like A Hurricane, albeit in a fuzzy Black Metal kind of way. The comparisons end after the four minute mark as the vocals change to that of an irate crow that's been shot in the ass, (well that's how they sound to me) and Wotan's Return by In The Woods springs to mind. And a coarser version of In The Woods, with maybe a little early Ulver mixed in wouldn't

be a bad comparison to make. Apart from the the final number which is a slow, hypnotising piece that floats serenely for a full 20 minutes, bringing your mood down to one of complete mellowness. Which is a very nice way to end the album on.

www.northern-silence.de

Darkest Era - The Journey Through Damnation (Eyes Like Snow) Review by Steve Green



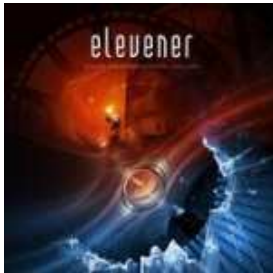
I've had this cd a while, and yes, that means this review is a little late. Apologies all round. But I'm more upset with myself for not discovering this gem a little earlier. Darkest Era are from Northern Ireland and they blend a very obvious Irish sound with more traditional Metal fare. Kind of like mixing Primordial with (Metal nutters) Conquest of Steel. This is epic, jaw dropping Metal, with an earthy Celtic heart. Music that warms your heart with its passion and pride. Fuck, I just love this kind of thing. I may have left my homeland a good 20 years ago, but a passionate Celtic fire still burns through my veins. From the impassioned cry's of battle to more atmospheric moments, this is a short, but joyous

journey that you cannot help be sucked into. Music that is played from the heart cannot be faked and this is about as real as it gets. Considering the band have only been together a short while, this is almost as good as Primordial's To The Nameless Dead... I did say almost.

Look guys, (and gals) four tracks is not enough. A full length album is needed asap. Darkest Era are most definitely a band to watch and are maybe the next big thing from the Emerald Isle.

www.northern-silence.de | www.myspace.com/darkester

Elevener - When Kaleidoscopes Collide (AOR Heaven) Review by Dave Baynam



Remember those "soft metal" compilations from years ago? These guys do. Elevener is two friends from Sweden, Johan Bergquist on vocals, keyboards and bass with Andreas Broden on guitar and drums. Bergquist plays keyboards with M.ill.ion and was previously in Scenario, while Broden has done session work. Both are talented but just as important is the way that it comes across that they really love this kind of music. So we have here an album that is wall to wall quality 1980's AOR, only made now. The vocals are smooth and multilayered, the keyboards shimmer and the guitar sound is sweet. There are two tracks that the casual listener would mistake for Toto, along with a fair amount of Journey and

Foreigner sounds in the mix. All of which makes for a fun album. In fact another of the appealing qualities of this is how upbeat and bouncy it is. There are catchy choruses, and tunes I found myself humming on the way to work. The lyrics are as one would expect about girls, lost love and memories and have a soft centre of sentimentality running through them. If you like melodic rock / AOR then this is a great example from a new act who deserve encouragement. www.myspace.com/elevener | www.aorheaven.com

Ereb Altor - By Honour (I Hate Records) Review by Chris Davison



Some things ye should know about Ereb Altor before we start the review in earnest. One: they are from Sweden. Two: They like Bathory. A lot. Which is nice. They like the Bathory I like, which is to say not the rubbish early Venom worship (sorry Crin!), but the later "Woooooo-Ohhhhhh" laden epic Viking sound. Three: Ereb Altor was a supplement for a Swedish RPG. Apparently. It's also an anagram for ROBE ALERT. Ok, so the last two things you probably didn't need to know, but hey, it's all knowledge, and it's all free right? Think of me as the metal equivalent of Radio 4. Except without gardeners question time.

So. Back on topic, this is a fantastic, evocative album dripping with atmosphere. It comes as no surprise to me that I Hate would pick something up like this; it's more cult than sacrificing your only son to an effigy of the late Aleister Crowley while listening to a split Manilla Road / Vondur split 12", inflected with doom and (I wouldn't be surprised if) the CD is actually so metal that it will disrupt the magnetic fields of your home electrical equipment. All of which is a needlessly wordy way of saying that this is a rather cool release. Those of you who are not of a beardy, axe wielding disposition need not be upset though. There is more to

Ereb Altor than mere Bathory worship, though there is that in spades. You will also experience the same leaden, downbeat and somewhat ethereal vocal style “popularised” by the first two Isole albums, and more than a hint here and there of the more epic moments of Solitude Aeturnus.

Calling this album “epic” is a bit like calling Genghis Khan “a bit aggressive”. If there's one thing that this album does, it's paint huge aural landscapes in your head; snow peaked mountains, frozen lakes, weary warriors returning home. The pace of each track varies from almost-jogging through to crawling in pain over smashed up glass, though the songs never become tedious. The riffing, while effective, uses that trick so often employed by Black metal outfits of using minimal changes and hypnotic repetition to slowly ensnare the listener. This then is the kind of music that Abbath probably uses to wind down to after he's had a hard day hammering nails through his boots and scuttling about on stage like some demented frog / crab hybrid. There are some tasty guitar solo moments, most memorably on the stirring “By Honor”(sic). The two mysterious boys who make up Ereb Altor (Mats and Ragnar) aren't afraid to make things heavy either; the opening portions of “Winter Wonderland” (and it's testament to the band that they can carry off a song title like that) are as war-hammer heavy as anything I've heard from I Hate this year. The production is clear, with plenty of prominence given to the clean, choral vocals.

Something like this is always going to be a niche release, but let's be honest, I Hate, Ereb Altor and you and I like it that way don't we? We don't want our music popular. We don't want it bastardised, pasteurised or sodomised (Sodom excepted). We want it cult. We want it ROBE ALERT. www.ihate.se

Flotsam and Jetsam - Once in a Deathtime DVD (Metal Mind) Review by Chris Davison



So, it seems as if Metal Mind productions are continuing their never-ending quest to ensure that any metal band that has ever released any record have a live show in Krakow recorded onto DVD. For those of you who don't know, Flotsam and Jetsam are famous for two things. Firstly, (and to my my mind most importantly), they recorded the stone-cold classic “Doomsday for the Deceiver” album way back in that most classic of thrash years, 1986. It's a brilliant album, and any of you neo-thrash kids could do much worse than put your Evile record away for a few plays and track down a copy of it. Younger readers may not know that Kerrang! Magazine used to review heavy metal bands rather than eye-liner wearing punk bands, and they gave the album an implausible 6 Ks out of 5Ks. Secondly, they (infamously) lost Jason Newsted to some no-hoper band that soon became the laughing stock of the heavy metal community at large.

To my shame, perhaps, I lost track of Flotsam and Jetsam to some extent. Occasionally I would see that they had released another new album in an advert in magazines or whatever, but I never really heard how they sounded. This DVD, which dip samples the impressive nine album discography of the band is an excellent starting place to catch up with some true survivors of thrash.

Of course, with this being a Metal Mind production, as you would expect the vision is outstanding, with excellent lighting, outstanding production and editing and impressive shots of a hungry (and packed) crowd. The sound is also quality, being much clearer than on the earlier releases on the DVD series. Of course, this isn't a band who are young, and so it's to be expected that some of the band look a little like grizzled veterans – but they also look as if they are having a blast playing for such an enthusiastic crowd. A crowd, which, may I add, seem to know the words to every song. It's an energetic performance of classic thrash tunes – and even those songs that I wasn't au fait with seemed to stand the test of time very well, which is often hard for heavy metal tunes to achieve on first listen.

There are some criticisms however. The extras are a bit spartan, confined in this case to a miserly interview, which though of some interest is kind of flat in tone. There are the usual discographies and biographies, but no bonus footage or camcorder footage which are rapidly becoming the industry norm on DVD releases. There are only 12 songs here too – which is a shame because having watched the main concert three times, at the end of each play I was still left with the feeling “I could watch some more of that”. I suppose the old showbiz maxim of “leave them wanting more” might apply to some, but not to me, because I'm a metal glutton I'm afraid.

This then is likely to appeal to hardened Flotsam and Jetsam fans first and foremost, with those with a wider interest in thrash metal perhaps taking a peep if they should come across it. Me ? I'm glad that they sent it to me, not least because it has shown me what I have been missing. I don't think Mrs D is going to be a huge

fan of course, particularly when the mail order parcels of their back catalogue CD's start clattering through my letter box... www.metalmind.com.pl/index.php?jezyk=en