

DISPOSABLE UNDERGROUND

Issue 26

Championing the musically jaded for over a decade

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BENÜMB IS A FIVE PIECE DIRTY, fierce grindcore band from sunny California. Among other releases they have two cds out on Relapse Records, *Soul of the Martyr* and *Withering Strands of Hope*. Here Pete Pontikoff, the vocalist and lyricist, by phone speaks out.

DU: Talk about how you are trying something different this time with the vocals.

Pete: Yeah, I'm just going back into like probably an older type thing

that I've done in the past, like when we started Benümb originally, that was just like the more straightforward vocals—I think you described them as monotone—that type of thing, where it's just everything

turned up to ten, just scream my—not screaming, just yell, y'know, as hard as I possibly can. Basically I was like listening to some of the older stuff, and I was just goin', man, some of the higher stuff just ... it doesn't cut it with me, it just weakens the whole ... obviously the music or whatever like that. I mean, these guys are pourin' out this heavy stuff, and all I'm squeakin' out is this "squeak squeak squeak" stuff, where, how do we say, it doesn't sound like a blender, it sounds like Barbie's First Blender, you know, that type of thing. It doesn't do justice to the hard work that they've put behind it or anything. I mean, people [who] can do the higher voice just make them sound killer. I mean, look at Matt Harvey, the master. I mean, you listen to Decapitated, you listen to, y'know, Exhumed, and he's got

Benümb

that stuff wired down perfectly. Another master is I think, uh, what's his face, Travis from Cattle Decapitation. That guy's got an awesome voice too. Along with [the singer] from Impaled. He can like go between, y'know, both the highs and lows and do it

really successfully, where it's just I'm unfortunately smack right there in the middle. I have no real lows, but at the same time my highs just

aren't ... up to par, whatever like that. So what I sat there and tried to do on this is concentrate on my strong points as opposed to struggle with my weaks.

What are your listeners going to say when they hear the record?

Well, I hope they don't get bored. And I think ... there's a lot of good musicianship that went into this one. The songs are a little bit longer, I'd say, at some points, but at the same time—I think we've topped out by two minutes—there is no eight minute song on here. And everything else is in the fifty second range, that type of thing. So I think it stayed true to form, but we also went somewhere else [to record] as opposed to



Bart [with whom Benümb recorded in the past]. We were really impressed with the Vulgar Pigeons' album, *Summary Execution*, so we went to record with our friend Larry Santiago. Y'know, just does a really good job and really knows how to handle the 808 [drum program], that type of stuff.

So the die hard noise fiend Benümb fan, is that person going to start rumbling a little bit, afraid that Benümb's not going to be total rotting grind because it's passed the two minute mark more than three times on the record?

Um ... that's yet to be determined, I'll put it to you that way. I've played it for some people who've loved it and I've played it for some people who just didn't like it. They were just all like, "I liked the old stuff that was more spastic and everything like that," and it's just like, okay, y'know, that type thing. It'll be interesting to see. I don't see some huge transition because, I mean ... um, yeah, we have gone longer in some sections. Hopefully it'll keep the interest, that type of thing. I mean, I really really really hope people still dig it and stuff like that. Yeah, I hope for the best, but I don't see anybody really getting too thrown off by it, I'll put it to you that way.

Do I remember you saying you were trying to work out a concept for the new record, lyrically?

Um, not that it was supposed to be like a concept type thing, but just I wanted to take more time lyrically, y'know, that type of thing, because this time around we are printing lyrics, and I just wanted it to be good.

There wasn't a lyric sheet on all the records in the past.
Exactly.

Do you find yourselves put into a certain group because of what is perceived as your lyrical content? Do people try to put you on political shows?

Honestly, no, lately we just get on all types, that type of thing. These lyrics aren't saying much different than like we've really said in the past and everything. A lot of the stuff is just a lot of social commentary, this type of stuff.

Without being labeled socially conscious?

Yeah, exactly, 'cause like ... we don't embody any definition of one area. I mean, as far as like straightedge, I mean, please...

Oh, I know you're not straightedge.

[laughs] Nooo ... I mean, there's stuff we touch on, but as far as like ... being an activist, that segment of life or that thing of life, no, I can't really say too much. I mean, outside of worker's rights, because I'm in the union and I'm involved with that type of stuff, that's something I do feel strongly about, um ...

And drug abuse with the last record.

Yeah, that's another thing. I ... how do I put it this way: I dabble. I transport backpacks from this church to the Haight/Ashbury Youth Outreach team that helps people either, like with needle exchange, with living on the street, that type of stuff. And these backpacks are full of like clothes and like toothpaste, y'know, just toiletries like that. And just recently—what I should say to make myself completely clear is Haight/Ashbury Youth Outreach Team puts out a survival like booklet to live on the streets and everything like that—I recently recently recently have been bringing them over to [924] Gilman [Street, the venue in Berkeley] and just like leaving them out for people to pick up and stuff like that. But again, this is major dabbling. It's not something I've spent any week after week after week [on].

Tell me a little bit about the challenges you guys face having two members of the band in another band, and one of those people is also a sibling.

Um, honestly, considering that we're all such good friends, it doesn't amount to nothing. Paul, my brother, and John [who are in both Benümb and Vulgar Pigeons], they pace themselves really good. If they're feeling burned out, then they just like step away from one for a little while, just concentrate on the other, y'know, that type of stuff. Again, because we're such good friends with Vulgar Pigeons, it's just like, okay, they got a show next week, we don't practice this week, that type stuff, so they can concentrate on that. And if we've both got shows at the same time, we just like double up on the practices, y'know, where like the first two hours or whatever like that's dedicated to Benümb, then the next few hours is dedicated to [Vulgar Pigeons]. It all works out really cohesively.

What are you guys going to do now?

Oh, right now we're practicing, and we're just boning up and just making sure we know these songs in and out, everything like that. And we're just gonna play play play play. This is, y'know, like similar to what we did with *Martyr*, where we just made it to the east coast a bunch of times, the one off weekends type things, and also just play locally as much as we possibly can. And [in 2003] we're gonna be hittin' the Metalfests plus whatever we can get besides that.

CBGBs?

Basically anywhere. Sterling, Virginia is where I wanna do it [laughs]. The basement in Sterling, Virginia. We're gonna do places we haven't done before. I got shitloads of vacation time and I plan to use it all.

Benümb's new full length for Relapse to be released in January 2003 will be called By Means of Upheaval. ■

Get it or Die! with Pete Pontikoff

Pete enlightens as to what he's heard lately that he would recommend you purchase ... or else.

"Okay, definitely the Lock Up. Um, what else have I been listening to that just has blown me away? Also, Cattle Decapitation [the one on Metal Blade], that's really resonably priced. If you're more into that polished death metal type stuff you would dig this stuff. But the musicianship on there is really good. Y'know, I was really impressed with that. Oh, definitely Municipal Waste. Oh my god! I'd just seen them live and it was just incredible. In-fricking-credible. Just great.

"Also, I want to bring up some other bands that are coming up or just coming through, that type of thing. Max has started a project with my brother and also Spencer who used to be in Vulgar Pigeons called I Shit You Not, so we have something interesting to expect from there. What else what else what

else what else ... Oh, End of All is like a new hardcore death metal type thing a la Cryptopsy, y'know, that type of thing. People, you gotta check this out. New local band—they don't even have their demo out. Another thing, [members of] Cripple and Word Salad, they have a new band type thing, and that's called Watch 'em Die—pretty good. Pretty damn damn damn good. Lemme think, what else ... oh, Animosity, it's more of the hardcore-slash-deathly type stuff, and they're incredible too. And oh, cool! There's another band, members of Sworn Vengeance, it's called First Blood. Incredible. They just played their first show with the Cro-Mags. Can you believe that? But I didn't make the show because again, I was tired and old."

VIRGINIA'S CRESTFALLEN HAS RELEASED a new album, out on both Magic Bullet on cd and Hand Sand on vinyl, called *Streaks of Terror*. The recording features a rough, young sound, vicious songs, and excellent lyrics. Like many other bands, Crestfallen has gone through musical evolutions over the years as bandmembers have left and/or been replaced and as their influences have mutated. Although a band looking at itself from the inside might not have a clear view, Crestfallen discusses the suggestion that after a certain point the band's sound changed and became more metal than before.

"It's still like punk rock, though," says Will, the drummer. "It definitely got some metal ass riffs."

"When I joined the band it got way more metal," the bass player, Mike, points out.

"You think [the riffs] got more metal?" asks Nathan, one of the guitar players.

Mike: "Yes, definitely."

"I think we got less metal," Nathan responds.

Tim, the singer, adds, "It used to be much more like metalcore. I think the old stuff had more metal guitars. But this [new] stuff's ..."

"It's metal being pumped through a punk filter," Mike offers.

"Yeah, that's a good way to say it," agrees Will. "Definitely the music that we like to listen to affects the way we write songs."

Nathan continues, "We went through this weird 'we thought we were black metal' or somethin' phase, and that was real shitty."

Tim jumps in, "I really think that was when the band was most metal, when they [Christian, the other guitarist, Nathan, and Will] only listened to Cradle of Filth and like Emperor, and it was all like blast beats."

Crestfallen started their recording history with a four song demo tape, during their metalcore phase. One song from that session appeared on a split seven inch ep with the band Waifile.

"That first recording we did in Jake Cregger's basement, Dungeon Studio," Tim remembers. "It's



something we spent three months doing, just after school, like for an hour a few nights a week. We were writing the songs kind of as we went along, even changing as a band over the three months ..."

Nathan continues, "By the time we were done recording it we were playing different songs live."

"There was a period also when we started writing like much prettier stuff too, more melodic stuff, more like long-winded instrumental stuff when they were listening to Godspeed You Black Emperor!" Tim says. "It's only a recent thing that we've actually kind of started to think about what we want to play. And we've been trying not to say we want to sound like such and such band."

At some point Crestfallen became interested in thrash metal such as Germany's Kreator or the old San Francisco Bay scene. *Streaks of Terror* fea-

tures a cover of a song by Violence.

"At least personally, I always like the fact that we had longer songs that were more instrumental based and



then the more thrashy kind of songs," says Tim.

"The brand new songs that's not recorded are like totally a lot more punk," Will explains, "but it's melodic type stuff, Tragedy, stuff like that."

Mike laughs, "No, it's not like Tragedy, it's like Born Against. Let's dig really deep. It's more like Mission To Burma meets Godspeed You Black Division!"

"Crestfallen is metal being pumped through a punk filter. How did that happen? 'Cause we're punks."

A criticism has been leveled at Crestfallen that they were within that group of bands that was a pg.99 clone, a curious happening in the

punk/screamo music scene where different bands draw a significant influence from the band pg.99.

"I agree with that," admits Nathan. "That wasn't really something that we were trying to do, but I can definitely say a couple of songs are definitely fuckin' pg.99 songs."

Mike laughs. Nathan continues, "I think the seven inch [song] is a pg.99 song."



Photos courtesy Crestfallen

"The one song I heard, I definitely heard pg.99 [as an influence]," Mike reveals, "but I think that's awesome."

Will says, "Well, we were also sixteen when we recorded that, so ..."

Mike elaborates, "I think it's awesome because it represents the scene goin' on at the time. Every band's bein' influenced by each other. We [pg.99, Mike's other band] rip off bands. I'm not sayin' that it [the Crestfallen song in question] wasn't a ripoff, but—"

"It was a ripoff," Nathan cuts in.

"I think also when we recorded that song, that pretty much the stuff that pg.99 was doing, and Majority Rule [both from Crestfallen's

local scene], like, if we haven't been playing with those bands, we really wouldn't've been a band," Tim reveals. "We like them a lot."

"They're my two favorite bands," agrees Nathan.

"We wanted to do what they were doing," Tim explains. "I think like in that whole screamo scene or whatever, really the only things we appreciate are pg.99 and Majority Rule, which aren't really screamo bands."

Mike proclaims, "Virginia bands conquer."

Write Nathan at nzaxxx@hotmail.com or Christian at zagasux@hotmail.com. ■

IMPALED IS A DEATH METAL BAND with a new album called *Mondo Medicale* which features solid production, impressive art direction on the sleeve, and infectious songs, both lyrically and musically. They are a talented group of musicians, and as with many bands of any genre, have their own set of priorities, for example, whether or not they choose to be concerned with being unique or having their own sound.

Via email, Ross comments, "Impaled has its own unique sound, at least after we all eat a plate of refried beans. As far as music is concerned, comparisons are fine. Fans of Carcass—or, at least, fans of their first three albums—will have the knowledge they need to go and spend their hard earned cash on us and fill our coffers."

Impaled has however been accused of being what is referred to as Carcass clones. "Well, President Clinton called for a ban on human cloning in 1997, the same year that Impaled formed," Ross responds. "See, we're such rebels right since the beginning, even sticking our noses up at a presidential edict! Take that, Clinton, you philandering rake! On a tangent, the main proponent of human cloning is named Dr. Dick Seed. True story. How cool is that?"

Impaled seems to have somewhat of a goregrind influence in the vocals if not in other departments. On the surface goregrind as a genre doesn't really have a sense of humor (Exhumed excepted), but evidently Impaled doesn't take itself all that seriously, which is refreshing. It's potentially difficult to balance the gore and horror of the lyrics, the extremity of the music, and the shall we say tongue in cheek side of the band, but not for Impaled it seems. "No, it's not hard," Ross explains. "Horror and gore and death are funny. It seems like a natural combination to me. And as far as serious bands, if they are anything like us, they sit around, drink beer, watch dumb movies, complain that girls won't talk to them, forget to bathe, lose jobs. I mean, what's particularly scary about that? To know us is to laugh at us, but not with us."

On the new album the strength of the lyrics has improved since the



last full length, for example with the addition of almost narrative directions in some of the songs. Ross explains, "The inclination towards a cohesive narrative within the songs was definitely there during the writing process, because I looked at it like this: through porn. See, plenty of Gonzo porn comes out every day. You know, *Hit Her in the Shitter*, *Up and Cummers*, *Real Life California College Coeds*. But are these non-narrative pornos ever remembered past the two minutes in which it takes some balding forty year old with dandruff to jack off to them? Oh no, the pornos that are remembered are *Autobiography of a Flea*, *Debbie Does Dallas*, and *Behind the Green Door*, constant best sellers that had an entertaining plot, with natural chicks having hot, sweaty sex on film."



Impaled at table courtesy Necropolis

There's been press reports on Impaled's records being banned because of the cover art. With any group a situation like this may generate pressure to keep the shocking covers coming, or pressure to downtone the sleeves to make distribution easier. "We actually thought our covers have toned down since the beginning, but seem to get more press as we go on," Ross reveals. "I mean, our first demo had a guy—or girl, I could never tell—covered in shit and puking. Our first album [*The Dead Shall Dead Remain*] had huge amounts of guts seemingly coming out of somebody's ass into a toilet. For some reason, the *Choice Cuts* cover, which we thought was fake looking but amusing nonetheless, drew the most ire, with people denouncing our label and us, because we killed a toy doll, which, I might add, is the same doll Papa Roach used for their stupid cover, as well. JSR, a major tee shirt company, wouldn't print shirts of it, and the manufacturer refused to assemble the cd. Now, we have *Mondo Medicale*, our tamest cover yet, and SPV in Europe wouldn't distribute it, even with a censored cover over it. Century Media has had to print the booklet without the actual cover at all. Now, because of contractual obligations, our next album cover will be a photo of a young kitty-kat hanging from a tree branch, and it will be called *Hang In There, Baby*." ■

DISPOSABLE MUSIC REVIEWS

Agathocles update

Clocking in at about the length of a 7", the Agathocles/Din-Addict split cd is fun because of Din-Addict from Hungary. They're a riot because they're so over the top extreme. They don't play especially well, but you can hear what they're playing, which is rare for goregrind, and the two vocalists have many crazy effects going on to spice up their performances, some familiar and some not so common, which is good. And they have a great "outro." Din-Addict definitely makes this worth it. Agathocles delivers, for them, a sub-par three

songs. Even their artwork is shoddily slapped together, which, given, isn't all that unusual. Agathocles' *Bomb Brussels* cd (Heavy Metal Rock/No Fashion) is much better. Good, raw sound and conviction, evident in the performance. The layout looks pretty above average too. Originally broadcast from a radio station in Brussels, Belgium, this recording, featuring previously released material, better represents what Agathocles is about when they're on their game: simple yet strong and reliable grindcore. Asberg 8, 2400 Mol, Belgium

The Blue Line *The Blue Line Says How Are You?* (Blue Pen)

I'm impressed with this DC band. The vocals remind me of some 80s pop singer, whom I can't place. They have a warm, dry, textured, harmonic sound. The songs move with soft to subdued to pronounced energy, the guitars, bass, drums, and vocals contributing their riffs, beats, and lyrics to make a gem of a demo. Having said all that, The Blue Line is at its best when it plays its brand of rock, which is represented on two of the three songs here. The third is a very mellow shoe-gazing number that is much less interesting.

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Burnt By The Sun *Soundtrack to the Personal Revolution* (Relapse)

For those of you who have not heard their self-titled ep or their split with Luddite Clone, BBTS features severe blasts, hardcore vocals, guitar and bass acrobatics, and solid, heavy rhythms. I think I prefer their ep because it was more extreme—barely controlled chaos. This new cd doesn't have that charm, but it still rocks.

Carrion *Baptized by Fire* (Lysergic Soul Drain)

I haven't heard a band like this in a long time. It reminds me of inventive underground music I came across in the late 80s. You didn't hear popular mainstream bands playing challenging music, and for that matter you still don't. Carrion is influenced by metal and emo rock and prog rock among other things. They take chances, they're heavy, their arrangements are complicated without being technical, they're good musicians, but above all they write awesome songs, ones that have a lot of hills and valleys. It's a treat to hear a band with a wide musical vocabulary like Carrion.

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Cattle Decapitation *To Serve Man* (Metal Blade)

Well, Cattle signed to Metal Blade. I guess they don't give a fuck about their true fans, and let us all give out one big yawn. This album was recorded at Trident Studios by one Juan Ortega from Vile. One thing I've noticed: most recordings that come from Trident have a very clean and sterile quality to them, as well as this album. I prefer a more harsh sounding element, like Pig Destroyer's *38 Counts*, but in the same sentence, I can appreciate the craftsmanship on Mr. Ortega's part to create this sound. The first time I witnessed this band was a show in L.A. when Gabe from The Locust was still in the band. Let me say honestly nothing could come close to them. They were beyond sick. Now Gabe has left to focus on The Locust. One element is definitely missing, but the quality of musicianship isn't. This is quality tech/death metal. (Please excuse my lack of terminology. To keep up with the current catch phrase would require me to give a shit and I don't.) For those who love Carcass, this album is a must. Like gore? Buy this album. Just buy it for crying out loud. If you get a chance to see them, do it. (by Pete)

Corn On Macabre 2002 album (Magic Bullet)

Most records I hear are by bands I've never seen live. Corn On Macabre is an exception. I didn't like them when I saw them live and that's putting it mildly. I'm much more into them on record than in concert; I can kind of understand them now that I've heard their recording. They're a dissonant hardcore band with joke lyrics, hence the name Corn On Macabre. They have a few blasts and have generally short, fast songs. Instead of focusing on a particular tune—their music isn't like that—you sort of listen to the band's set or records as a whole block of music. Having said all that I can't recommend you spend your money on Corn On Macabre.

D.U.

Danzig *I Luciferi* (Evilive/Spitfire)

Danzig is back again with a new record. Compared to what Danzig has done earlier in his career this shit sucks, so I'm trying to forget that I know that he is capable of much better than this while listening to it. And it isn't THAT bad ... Glenn is singing about some evil shit over some stale rock riffs. The real disappointments about this record are when the guitars go from stale rock riffs to stale "new metal" riffs. You know, the "chugga chug eeeee chugga chugga chug eeeee" riffs that we're hearing way too much of these days. Danzig still loves the devil.



Danzig PHOTO: Carlos Batts

In the insert of the cd all the band members have their own page where they get to salute the dark lord by throwing up the horns to the camera. There is also a few tasteless photos of Glenn and the boys ravaging a scantily clad female in the name of Satan. But I have noticed in the photos that Glenn is starting to get a little chubby but still insists on being shirtless in the photos. It might be time for him to either start hitting the gym again or start wearing a shirt. No one wants to look at a fat midget ravaging the ladies, or at least I don't. This record is definitely very far away from any of Glenn's work with the Misfits, Samhain or early Danzig records, but it's really not that bad. At least its not the techno shit I was expecting. (by Jeff)

Dark Funeral *Diabolis Interium* (Necropolis)

Licensed from No Fashion Records, the latest album from these black metalers, who make their first appearance in these pages since issue 21, is a competent effort of the genre. There's nothing particularly special about it, however. The lyrics don't say anything that Venom didn't say well over a decade ago, the sound has the famous crisp Abyss production, the performance is that of breakneck speeds and vocal screams, both sustained for long periods, but there's nothing shocking here. A bonus for computer owners is the inclusion of two videos, but Dark Funeral is one of the bands contributing to the complacency and stagnation of the black metal scene. There's only one standout track ("Goddess of Sodomy"), only because the tempo is different than that of the rest of the record and the lyrics are sort of creative.

Decapitated *Nihility* (Wicked World/Earache)

Here's the second Decapitated record on the Earache imprint. Like the last record, I don't like it, but I can appreciate its strong points, few that they are. I think they are thinking more about song arrangements now in their so far brief career. They are repeating song parts and trying to tie things together to make their songs more cohesive, which is a good thing. Their last record showed as does this one that these kids are good musicians and they're tight as Fort Knox. They just have to learn to do something interesting; with such a young band with a huge recording contract, the potential could be there to make something new and original instead of copying older bands that have come before them.

Deceased *Zombie Hymns* (Crook'd)

I've been waiting for this for a long time. There's a great collection of cover tunes here that Deceased has committed to tape over the past ten years. Iron Maiden, Mercyful Fate, Metal Church, Slayer, Venom, even The Doors among others get the treatment, twenty

tracks in all. Deceased isn't the kind of band that interprets other bands, so these songs are pretty much straight up.
PO Box 25, Jamestown NC 27282, USA

December *The Lament Configuratrion* (Earache)

Earache has been releasing bands like this for the past few years: dry production, technical songs, metal and grind influences, distorted vocals. Think December Wolves and Cadaver Inc. The actual music is choppy metal, which slows to crushing Meshuggah-esque grooves or speeds up to shredding grind metal. December, from Nevada, doesn't let you catch your breath; some of the sections will tear your face off. One of the reasons these guys pummel effectively is when they take a riff and repeatedly beat you over the head with it. The drummer's very fancy but holds down the beat and doesn't get too showy. The riffs are technical but not to the point of being stupid, and the screamy singer has a hardcore yell he switches back and forth to. Now, having said all that, December's songs, while good on paper, and impressive though they may be, don't have enough hooks to make me need to come back for another listen. It's only good for one.

December Wolves *Blasterpiece Theatre* (Earache)

Wow ... these guys really need to get Earache to pay for them to go to a real studio. This record sounds like shit. Drum machines used in grindcore can often make a band go to shit real fast if they don't know how to make the thing sound good. There is absolutely no low end in this recording. It sounds very tinny and computerized. They also use a sample of something, whether it be just a wierd sound or a quote from a movie, probably every five seconds, which is extremely annoying. This music could be interesting if it was recorded better and some quality control was used in the sample department, but I've heard bands do this many times before—and much better. (by Jeff)

Entombed *Morning Star* (Koch)

I guess Nicke and Lars left for greener pastures a couple of albums ago, but L-G, Uffe, and Alex have new partners in the tomb in Jörgen and Peter, and they've hit us with a solid metal album which features strong, pissed off playing and good lyrics. I should say the last record I heard from Entombed was *Wolverine Blues*, but I think the band is going in the right direction, playing more aggressive, for



Entombed with their ride courtesy Koch

them almost experimental (there's even acoustic guitar and piano) metal. In a way, attitude wise, it reminds me of Slayer's *Divine Intervention*, when that band tried a different approach. I'm impressed.

Ephel Duath *RePhormula* (Earache/Elitist)

So this is "black metal for the computer generation" as it's been described. I find that description very amusing. That very concept goes against everything the old black metal scene in the late 80s

stood for. To go along with that, Ephel Duath sucks. I don't know what's worse: the horribly produced, raw to the point of incompetent black metal of old or the slick, keyboard-damaged, castrated black metal of today. Finally, I guess it's cool that these idiots from Italy's demo and dancy remixes (for chrissakes!) are included here to give more bang for the buck, to soften the blow to a clown paint-wearing PC jockey from suburbia of having bought this lame excuse for black metal that employs synth and drum machine.

The Exploited *Beat the Bastards* (Spitfire)

I've never been an Exploited fan, and this reissue of their 1996 album *Beat the Bastards* is definitely not going to win me over. Very generic music and lyrics. The songs are very "punk" and simple. Some songs have a "thrash" feel to them but that doesn't make the songs any better. The cd's press release claims that The Exploited are the "only band from their era not to o.d., rot in prison, or drink themselves to death, or fade into oblivion." As far as I knew they did fade into oblivion almost 20 years ago. I don't know one person who likes this band or who cares what the fuck these has-beens are doing. (by Jeff)

The Forgotten *L' Aldila* (Paragon International)

The Forgotten is a metal band with keyboards and lyrics about death, the soul, fire, damnation, et cetera. I winced while listening to this cd. Not because it was so good; quite the opposite. This band has gone into the studio too soon, or perhaps I should say recorded themselves too soon, as this release is poorly produced, poorly performed and poorly composed. The Forgotten has no business putting out a full length; they need to go back in the rehearsal room for a good six months at least and get their shit together. They have a couple of good ideas in rare places, and these need to be fleshed out. If this was a demo tape that would be one thing, but it's absurd to promote and sell this release as a fully realized album.

PO Box 354, Commack NW 11725, USA

Green Carnation *Light of Day, Day of Darkness* (The End/Prophecy Productions)

Apparently Green Carnation has connections with Emperor and In the Woods. In places Green Carnation reminds me of The Gathering and Orphanage. This album is one song, which is one track, and is one hour long. It's very good. It has many hills and valleys and the lyrics aren't bad. I suppose they could have broken this thing up into a bunch of songs but it wouldn't be the same. The record doesn't sound forced like, say, Disembowelment, who had way long songs but their arrangement skills were nonexistent. Very tasteful and grandiose and epic.

Hate Eternal *King of All Kings* (Earache)

I must mention that Hate Eternal is comprised of Erik Rutan, formerly of Morbid Angel and Ripping Corpse, along with short lived Morbid Angel frontman Jared Anderson, and Derek Roddy. They now have two albums out and have been touring for the past couple of years. Hate Eternal's new record, *King of All Kings*, is proof that death metal still has some blood in its thinning veins. With certain releases by faceless, nameless acts that have been forcing boring tech riffs onto cds with cheap, abstract thoughts for lyrics, we all have needed something to step in and deliver the real goods. Not to say that Hate Eternal's first album was not doing this, but this new record shows that the crew is back with a second course of blood red metal meat to stuff down your gullet. The older material had a few flaws but with this album they have repaired what can be fixed and served up something new. Songwise the slower parts (of which there are few) are put together with more thought and the fast parts are faster than before. The structures are still very similar but when you buy a Hate Eternal record you're buying death metal and that is what you shall get. As for the sound, I feel that the drums sound better, with the exception of the unneeded snare trigger on certain songs (I say

unneded because you can hear the mic'ed snare trigger simultaneously). The kick drum trigger is quieter and the guitars have a great high end yet meaty scrape to them that you could shave your nuts with. And just like Morbid Angel and earlier Hate Eternal you get more of Erik Rutan's heartfelt, winding solos. In the end this is a fast, grinding death metal album, not a fast grinding tech album. If you're into music that is undeniably extreme without all the pretentiousness of modern death/tech metal, then get this record. Otherwise just continue listening to the new Origin record and don't stop eating my anus. (by Jake)

Human Remains *Where Were You When* (Relapse)

A real nice gem to own, *Where Were You When* has tons of stuff—two cds worth. It's quite enlightening to hear how this dyslexic, grinding, innovative, original, misunderstood, amazing, and overlooked band went from point a, their first demo, to point b, their mini lp on Relapse. Some of it is rare, some of it's ugly, but all of it is important.

Mike Hymson update

The drummer for Apparition/Sorrow and later a weird band called Dystopia One had some projects that he put together over the years to keep himself busy. First there's Girlfriend Material from 2000 which is a fun pop band with cute vocals, keyboards and a drum machine. Six tracks in fifteen minutes. It's like contemporary alternative rock or new wave type stuff. Rocket Romano from 1998-1999 is a lot of fun. Really goofy distorted dissonant rock, this time with what sounds like a more full band. "Jews Against Chinese Food," the first track, is ten seconds. I guess it's kind of got the attitude of Atom and His Package but more rock. Some of it has a Ramones tinge. Another song is "I Hope You Get Hit by a Train." Twenty tracks in thirty minutes. Finally Leech Implant from 1995-1996 is a more serious affair, with sludgy riffs collapsing out of uptempo crunch verses and fast, simple hardcore sections, accompanied by moaned or screamed punk vocals depending on the riff. Some of the songs have an 80s punk feel too. This band definitely has the most depth. There's variety within the the sound of Leech Implant, in tempo and vocal delivery. This music kind of makes one nostalgic for the old days. Hymson doesn't hit the drums hard—that's his style—but the vocals give the music the snarl it's going for. By today's standards some listeners might find this cheesy or silly, but I can appreciate it a lot. Eight tracks in twenty-two minutes. If you send a few dollars for postage, Hymson will burn you a cdr of all this material.

36 Central Park Rd, Plainview NY 11803, USA

Incision *Beneath the Folds of Flesh* (Earache)

Well, when I saw the cover of this cd I had a pretty good idea what it was going to sound like. It took me a couple minutes to figure out what the name of the band was because of their logo. At first I thought it was an Amorphis record because the logo is very much a rip off of that. But nope ... it's Incision. Incision plays death metal. Nothing more, nothing less. If you like death metal, you might like this. But I don't like death metal so this did nothing for me. Every song sounds very similar. Nothing new is being done here. There's a couple really cheesy samples. One is of a woman screaming then the song kicks in over the scream. Brutal, eh? Kind of sounds like a wimpy, watered down version of Carcass to give you a frame of reference. (by Jeff)

In Aeternum *Past and Present Sins* (Necropolis)

Back again in these pages, this European band offers for your consideration a compilation of some cover tunes, live cuts, ep tracks, and what sound like demo songs, going back to 1995 and up to 2001.

D.U.

Their old material is slower but more dynamic and more charming than the newer stuff, which is faster, more extreme, and much better performed. In Aeternum has the ol' goats head as pentagram in their logo and describes themselves as superior black/death metal. They are indeed a very good band, although the live songs here I don't like so much, perhaps because of the production on them. They do however warn on the sleeve: "Play this record as loud as possible or we'll destroy your pathetic life."

Jesus of Nazareth 2002 demo

Avant grind? Maybe. To me it's harsh ambient noise. There's a large fistful of samples and disturbing noises throughout, some going on top of oneother, and then deranged, distorted vocals, and disjointed, grinding drums playing along, oblivious, making me imagine the drums are playing themselves. This release is rather shoddily put together, but the "music" on the cdr is well worth sending for. I've never heard anything like it this side of Scorn's *Colossus* record. fileunderkid@hotmail.com

thekevorkiansolution 2001 album (Deathstill)

Near as I can tell this band has a drummer, singer, guitarist, and keyboardist. With this combination they play very fast music (there's twenty-nine songs on this cd), but they try to mix things up with writing odd riffs and abrupt time changes along with strange, almost goofy sound effects and extended electronic noise pieces. Thekevorkiansolution isn't a band to write home about, but it's good that they're going for something different, beyond the ordinary. And anyone that samples "Dune" is okay in my book! PO Box 633, Dagenham, RM8 3A2, UK

Khanate 2002 album (Southern Lord)

Being a longtime fan of James Plotkin's OLD, and having recently been floored by his absolutely unhinged collaboration with Discordance Axis/Burnt By The Sun percussion god Dave Witte on the Atomsmasher lp, I was chuffed to see this in the review pile. With ex-Burning Witch guitarist Stephen O'Malley in tow, Khanate bridges the gap between "classic doom" such as St. Vitus, Winter, and O'Malley's former outfit with the noise gluttony of early Swans. Imagine Godflesh circa *Streetcleaner* and *Sore*-era Buzzov-en slowed to a sluggish crawl, combined with a drunken, wholly nihilistic bent:



Khanate PHOTO: Sheri Hankins

guitars swell and lurch forth, collapsing into discordant sludge, repeating and somehow growing more looming and powerful through repetition; the perfect soundtrack to entropy. Honestly, this is the first record since Impaled Nazarene's debut that's genuinely creeped me the fuck out; if it's not the harrowing, locust-swarving guitar noise of Plotkin and O'Malley, it's Alan Dubin's feral howling and serial killer prose. The percussion here fits perfectly, reminiscent of Swans' *Filth* opus, somehow sounding as cold and "industrial" as a machine, though less predictable. A remarkably harrowing listen deserving of your attention and awe. (by Mason)

Maggott Colony *Prepare to be Colonized*

A grind death three piece that just rips your face off. I saw them last week and they were heavy and fast as fuck. Labels, would one of you grab your balls and check these guys out and put their stuff out, like, yesterday? (by Pete)

maggottcolony@msn.com

Mental Horror *Proclaiming Vengeance* (Deathvomit/Necropolis)

Proclaiming vengeance? More like proclaiming incompetence. I really can't understand why Necropolis, a label who generally has some taste, has signed this band. Is it simply because they're from Brazil, and therefore can be mentioned in the same breath as Krisiun? Well, this band is even worse than Krisiun, a monumentally boring metal band in itself. These Mental Horror musical idiots can't song-arrange themselves out of a brown paper bag. The drummer is amazingly unimpressive, the guitarist is mind bogglingly unoriginal and has no grasp of the artistic point of guitar soloing, and as for the bassist/singer, mediocre more than encompasses his musical contribution. Hard to believe these guys have been around since 1993. In the time they've potentially had to develop, they have come up with absolutely nothing to offer.

Mercenary Musik/*World War III Records*

Dawn of Dreams *Darklight Awakening*. The German band is a mix of death metal vocals, black metal and death metal influenced music (some old Cradle of Filth, a little old At the Gates), plenty of melody and time changes, and some keyboards being an occasional presence. A solid band, not the best of their of their style, delivering a good album. | **Belphegor** *The Last Supper*. We haven't heard from Belphegor since number eight of my zine. This Austrian band is one of those which is walking the line, on this record, between black metal and death metal, leaning more toward the former, although the vocals are growled, which is unusual. They're obnoxious and monotonous and raw the way a black metal band should be. Once in a while they'll throw in a keyboard part or slow down, but mostly it's fast, fast, fast. It seems they've included some ep or demo tracks here as bonuses too. | **Belphegor** *Blutsabbath*. The guitar work is much better on this, the vocals are a mix between the old style and the usual black metal kind, and the production is even more like a black metal band and less death metal, as is the attitude. A shame, really, because they lose part of their charm this way. | **Entety** *Cadaveric Necrogrind*. Well, this is interesting: some way old school death gore grind. It kind of sounds like the first Brujeria 7". Apparently this band formed in 1990 in LA and at some point recorded two sessions, one of which was unreleased until now. The over the top whammy bar, the flanger effect on the guitars, the way low bass, and the ridiculously low, monotone vocals make this collection something completely raw and antiquated (in a good way). A trip down memory lane for sure. | **Hate Theory** 2002 album. Listening to this I'm thinking of a shirtless high school band playing a beer party in a field in front of five drunks. Hate Theory sucks, if for no other reason than simply by virtue of playing music in the vein of Mushroomhead or other hate rock shit metal bands. The single off the record, which sounds nothing like the rest of the songs (read: the band and label's crass ploy to pull the wool over the listener's ears), is quite possibly the worst so called "metal" single I've ever heard. A bunch of talentless musical retards from Ohio's "aggrometal" scene, Hate Theory went into the studio and group-defecated and then World War III released it on album. That's what this record sounds like. | **Headhunter Death Cult** ...*And the Sky Turns to Black...* Here's another dated brutal metal record, this time from Brazil. This sounds like it was recorded like ten years ago. I would have probably liked it at the time, because of the music and the production quality both. Actually this is a good record. Bands don't play like this anymore, and again it very much reminds me of the old days. Headhunter D.C. varies things quite a bit to hold one's

interest, with somewhat reminiscent of Dark Angel death thrash, blast beats, and slow, crushing sections, along with hyperactive drums, throwing in an apocalyptic keyboard riff here and there. Also there's growly vocals. There's two old school (of course) covers included too. | **Mystic Circle** *Infernal Satanic Verses*. Well, the music isn't bad at all, actually, and quite melodic, with keyboards and guitars out in front. In places they remind me of the first Gathering album and to a much larger degree old Cradle of Filth, except, refreshingly, they aren't that fast. They have the requisite blast beats but their blasts aren't that fast. The main thing I don't like about Mystic Circle is the lead vocalist. He ruins the atmosphere created by the backup singer and the rest of the band with his screechy death metal vocals. The guitar, bass, drums, keys, and backup vocals work well together, and some of the record has peaks and valleys, the guitars dropping out and letting the keyboards and bass lead. The guitar leads are also unusual for this style of music, giving the band more of its own style. | **Mytile Vey Lorth** 2002 album. This is intricate black metal from Australia. It features Immortal-esque vocals with some oddly placed female "operatic" work. It blends Cannibal Corpse material with old Satyricon riffs. Then to add some mood a keyboard is included. Nothing on this cd is very notable and noone in the band seems very capable with their respective instruments. In addition the female vocals seem to have been added more on principle than anything else. Overall a lot of this would sound better if the general sound were better, but the sound can only help so much. I am not trying to be cruel; it's just that there are some problems with this record that should have been addressed before its release. Then again even with these problems fixed that would only help so much. (by Jake) | **Throes of Dawn** *Blinding the Spirit*. Finland's export going back to 1994 has some good points and one bad point. The former are the musicians: the keyboardist, guitarists, bassist and drummer lay down some quite competent and darkly pleasing progressive metal. The music is almost folksy in places when the acoustic guitars dance around the keyboards and the drums trod along. Also there are some melodic vocals that compliment the songs a great deal. The latter is the shitty black metal singer. This nimrod is perfectly ruining the record. I suppose Throes of Dawn feels it's necessary for his inclusion for some metal cred, but I hope they grow up and kick his dead weight ass out as soon as possible, or at least shut him up, and let the mellow vocals into the forefront.

Morose/*Narcosis split 7" ep* (Deathstill)

Morose vomits out some killer grindcore with a death metal edge. They're one of those bands that have both quite low and quite high vocals. The riffs are downtuned and evil. The band plays ripping fast parts and then downshifts into sludgy groovy parts to change things up. Narcosis' riffs are more complicated and they vary things more with the tempos, but have more of a hardcore feel. PO Box 633, Dagenham, RM8 3A2, UK

Nile *In Their Darkened Shrines* (Relapse)

I've always appreciated the hard work Carl Sanders and company have always put in their craft. I must acknowledge the new vocalist/bass player and drummer are both technically proficient, and both carry Nile to another level, and both have more talent than I do if I live to be a hundred. But I must say I miss what both Chief and the old drummer Pete brought to the table. The only gripe I have about this album, and believe me, I had to get a bulldozer and dig, is that I didn't like the spoken word thing in the middle of the album, waaaaaaaah! This is a flawless, kick ass death metal album that should put Nile up there with Cannibal Corpse, Morbid Angel, Deicide and Origin (yuk yuk yuk). (by Pete)

October 31 *Visions of the End* (Old Metal/RIP)

October 31 will mainly appeal to an old school heavy metal crowd,

although no matter how old you are, if you are into metal for the right reasons you'll be into October 31 from the start. Certain songs stand out much more than the others, such as "The Chosen One" or "Legend of the Haunted Sea." Keep in mind that I am not saying that the other songs are lacking, but everyone will have their own favorite. From beginning to end the guitar work and the vocals prove to you that this is serious metal and that October 31 means business. Look elsewhere for blasts and low grunts, but look no further for classic solos and riffs with a lot of attitude. So if you're into Arch Enemy, Warlord or Deceased, this is a release for you. (by Jake)
RIP Records, PO Box 41182, Chicago IL 60641, USA

Phobia Serenity Through Pain (Deathvomit/Necropolis)

These beer-swilling homies have delivered another platter of grindcore. Twenty-three tracks of rage. My favorite stuff is still the *Return To Desolation* ep, but *Serenity Through Pain* is good too. Lots of tasty movie samples and a few surprises here and there, like for example "God is Grace," "Welcome to Violence" and "Soverign."

Place of Skulls Nailed (Southern Lord)

Former Pentagram guitarist Victor Griffin is back in action following an aborted reunion attempt with his former bandmates and an extended hiatus "cleaning up personal problems," according to the band's bio, finding a home on Southern Lord for his new band's debut. To put it simply, Place of Skulls is to Pentagram what Spirit Caravan is to The Obsessed. With this batch of songs, Griffin seems to place less emphasis on the outright Sabbathesque doom embraced by his former band, instead concentrating more on incorporating vintage 70s elements into an otherwise rather traditional heavy rock album. Griffin's vocals are powerful and the man still knows how to lay down a pretty bad-ass lead, and his formidable backing band delivers classy performances all around. The comparison to Spirit Caravan is hard to shake, with Griffin and Wino having collaborated in the past (unfortunately to no avail), although while Wino has steered his band away from pure doom towards a odd flirtation with 60s psychedelia (much like later Trouble), P.O.S. are happy to reference their alma mater, with evidence of Pentagram-style plodding doom running throughout *Nailed*, much to my delight. Any fan of classic doom will certainly find Place of Skulls' debut a worthwhile purchase. (by Mason)

Pro-Pain Shreds of Dignity (Spitfire)

I'm surprised how uptempo this record is. Maybe Pro-Pain has more range than I thought. I'm not, however, surprised how stiff and stale is the music or how dull are the lyrics: "The bleeding hearts convince us to be P.C. / Their sentiment just don't mean shit to me." Wow. The vocals are monotone as well. The unimaginative cover art only helps to demonstrate how boring is this record. Hardcore's been worse, but it's also been lots better.

Roadsaw Rawk N' Roll (Lunasound/PHD)

With songs titles such as "Bad Ass Rising" and "That's Mr. Motherfucker to You" it's safe to say that Roadsaw is a hunker down and get down to business kind of band. The singer has a slight amount of John Bush and Chris Cornell in his voice. They're suitably dirty but don't really kick out the jams until they pick up the tempo (when they really shine); several of their songs are toe tappin', kickin' tunes. Their slow stuff isn't as interesting, and a little dull. I get the impression they listen to Sabbath, Kyuss, and Kiss among other things.

Rotten Sound Murderworks (Deathvomit/Necropolis)

An excellent record of unabashed, unadulterated grindcore. There's more variety in the music than on their godly *Still Psycho* record,

which is a good thing. There's fourteen tracks and three videos on this cd of fuzzy guitars and bass, pummeling drums and colorful vocals. Interestingly the producer added some ambient sounds to the record, a counterpoint to the brutal onslaught of the songs.

Scalplock Spread the Germs ... Over The Human Worms (On The Verge)

Finally, the new Scalplock lp! They've improved a great deal. Scalplock mixes it up in order to break up the songs, so as not to breed complacency in the listener. The vocalist screams his lyrics (capitalism, personalized politics, society). They tear it up with their dirtily, almost lo-fi brief, straight up grindcore. I liked it more the second time I played it, and I'm sure it will grow on me more, however they'd be more enjoyable with proper production. Standouts are "Pedagogy For the Oppressed," "I Conform," and "Hyperbole."
Orchard House, Breeds Rd, Gt Waltham, Chelmsford, Essex CM3 1EE, UK

Scholomance The Immortality Murder (The End)

Another one of those somewhat overcooked—scratch that: tragically overcooked heavy handed progressive metal bands with a deathly touch. Keyboards and guitar gymnastics abound, as well as vocal workouts and a drum machine. A double cd set, the first one suffers from the same malady which infects most progressive metal bands: no sense of restraint or subtlety or the very important concept of "less is more." The lyrics are interesting; to read them you'd detect no rhythm or rhyme at all. They read like some kind of very stylish exposition or something. Cd two is more of the same but instrumental.

Severed Savior Forced to Bleed (The End)

Let me say I've known most of the kids in this band for years; my brother grew up with them. Severed Savior is one of the SF area's best death metal bands hands down. End of story. This disc is a comp. of two recordings. And here I go griping about the clean recording style, but regardless the guitar work by guitar virtuoso Mike Gilbert—yes, you heard me right: guitar virtuoso Mike Gilbert—cannot be matched; pure genius. The drummer Troy Fullerton, much like Dave Witte or John Longstretch (Origin) is purely unstoppable. Rounding off the lineup is Jared Deavor, formerly of Deeds of Flesh, Dusty Boisjolie, the poster child of death metal, on vocals, and Murray Fitzpatrick on bass. To get an idea of how fuckin' intense these guys are toward their craft, they practice like three times a week, and the days they're not band practicing they individually practice. People have accused Severed Savior of not being original. Oh, boo fuckin' hoo. What is? Severed Savior will have a new disc out on Unique Leader Records entitled *Brutality is Law*. Fans of Cannibal, Suffocation, Dying Fetus: prepare to have your face caved in. (by Pete)

www.severedsavior.com

Social Infestation update

Mike from SI writes via email: "Yes, Eric [Crowe, also of Marax] quit the band and actually Troy [bass] and Chris [guitar] took over vocals. I'm just the damn drummer. We are in the middle of recording our third full length. Hopefully after the new stuff comes out, we'll hit the road a lot. Nobody is slated to release it as of yet though we've had an offer or two ... we'll see. You can still get *Lasciate Ogni Speranza* on cd and 10" from either us or Goatlord Records. *Redemption Is Only Skin Deep...* is tough to come by. I think we have a few copies left but that's it."

www.socialinfestation.com

Solarized Driven (Meteor City)

Solarized is another one of those down 'n' dirty rock bands with a 70s

esthetic that have been getting attention lately: "Dig the Ride," "Southbound," "Born of Fire" song titles and fuzzy guitars. They don't doom it out or aren't particularly extreme in one way or the other. This stuff is pretty by the numbers and doesn't push any buttons. There's other bands in the current revival that play better than this.

Son-Dha Red Sector A Speeds Up Alio Die (Release)

Apparently Son-Dha is the guy from Red Sector A and Alio Die. This record is one of those remix records. It's good stuff: electronic chill-out music, ambient in places, with a minimal groove. It reminds me of music you'd hear while watching computer animation videos. Quite pleasant.

Sunn O))) *Flight of the Behemoth* (Southern Lord)

Giving any release bearing the Southern Lord name less than a stellar review feels just plain unnatural, but I'm afraid I'm gonna have to, for once. Thankfully, Sunn isn't characteristic of Southern Lord's current stable; in fact, aside from the band's creepier-than-your-gay-uncle aesthetic, Sunn appears to have more in common with Merzbow than they do Burning Witch. Granted, whereas Merzbow's intention is to provoke grand mal seizures, tongue swallowing and smoldering speaker wires, *Flight of the Behemoth* is something like mood music for somnambulists, its warm-milk effect evidenced by the fact that at some point during my first spin of the record I was lulled to sleep by the sub-woofer's bowels-of-Hell groan. The emphasis here is on the unholy "drone," kind of a demonic take on Indian raga music; guitars tuned to Y sustain ugly-ass notes for eons, bass feedback suspended for so frickin' long you can hear the strings rusting, reverb-sick amps and truncated fragments of incidental noise tossed in and trampled for good measure. Unfortunately, unless the intention is to create an antidote to insomnia (and in that department, it sure as hell is, NyQuil be damned!), I guess I'm missing the point of this, much as I did with Boris' very similar *Absolutego* cd from a couple years back. While I can understand the appeal *Flight* might have to anyone with an appetite for mind-altering substances, my appreciation of all things doomy hinges on the presence of the almighty Riff, something which Sunn O))) isn't even remotely interested in. Recommended for those intrigued by the prospect of "ambient doom." (by Mason)

Today is the Day *Sadness Will Prevail* (Relapse)

Ok, first thing's fucking last ... I tried to separate the song titles that were typed out fully-justified across the entire back of this cd case, but lost track/interest around song eight or nine. I refuse to go to the website to get the individual track titles, because I believe any cd, or book, or movie should be able to stand on its own without having to refer to another source for explanation. Likewise with lyrics. If the lyrics aren't important enough to be included (which I would assume, in a supposed "concept" cd such as this, they WOULD be), then they aren't important enough for me to read. I mean Rush's *2112* was a great concept album about saving the world with rock and roll, but it didn't NEED to be a concept album. Lyrics weren't supplied, nor did they need to be. But Styx's *Kilroy Was Here*, while similar in concept to *2112*, was far too complicated in its scope to survive a listen without the inclusion of lyrics. You know, concept albums are just weird. I digress ... I also refuse to go to the website because I'm lazy and have better things to do. I have precious little time to spend on the web anyhow, but when I DO get the chance to hop on, I'd much rather browse a BB to see what people are talking about or even go to that cute little website with the dancing Jesus guy. That site's funny. This new TITD cd is not funny however. It's evidently a concept album about sadness. It made me sad. Seth Putnam screaming over a piano

loop and wind chimes in a track called "Butterflies" is VERY sad. Noisecore with the string section from Amber Asylum is also VERY VERY sad. I flushed over 120 minutes of my time right down the growler. You tell ME you wouldn't be wicked sad. So, I guess TITD is right after all. (by Scott)

Today is the Day/16 *Zodiac Dreaming* split cd (Trash Art)

It is a hard task to admit what has been shown to me, but it is official: Today is the Day has truly lost its venom. The same venom that once coursed through my veins and yours alike has been diluted and spoiled, possibly by drugs and maybe writer's block. One thing is for sure, and it is that the unbridled and naked aggression that was shown on such great records as *Willpower* and *Temple of the Morning Star* is no more. The technical ability is there, and the new drummer filled Brann Dailor's monstrous shoes fairly well, but the material just does not cut it. The lyrics lack the vulnerable backbone that was so apparent with Steve Austin's vocals, and the musical content is just not heavy enough to stand next to the older stuff. It seems drawn out and forced. This is really beyond what I will accept from Steve Austin and I never thought I would say that. I was into the slow/mid-paced heaviness of 16's songs; they have real honest anger pulsing through the tracks and that's pretty much what I expected. If you're into Helmet's *Meantime* and maybe some Jesus Lizard, then you may like this 16 stuff. It's good and heavy and that is what a lot of people are looking for. 16 is definitely good enough to stand on its own without the former "Amphetamine Reptile Lords" Today is the Day.

PO Box 725, Providence RI 02901, USA

Uphill Battle 2002 album (Relapse)

Let me first say I think it's so fucked when you read reviews by some jerkoff who starts trashing a band when he or she doesn't even listen to the particular genre. I will be honest: I am not really into this type of music. I apologize to Uphill Battle for throwing a lameass label on them, but the math thrash post-hardcore thing isn't my cup of tea. But this doesn't take away the fact that they are tremendously talented musicians, more than I am or ever dream of being. I played the disc for friends who do appreciate this brand of music and the general vibe is that Uphill Battle has enormous potential, that like The Dillinger Escape Plan. In southern California, where Uphill Battle is from, they have a huge draw, and as a booker I wouldn't hesitate for a second to put them on a show. As with Time in Malta, The Locust, et cetera, if you do appreciate this brand of music, I have good word from reliable sources that this disc is well worth the price and then some. (by Pete)

V/A *Created to Kill* (Bones Brigade)

This is a four band split cd. All of the bands fit more or less under the death metal or grindcore genres. First up on this cd is Drowning from France who play pretty generic but well executed death metal with plenty of blast beats. Their drummer is pretty good, but overdoes the double bass a bit. There's really not a whole lot interesting going on here. Next is the US band Brodequin. They are one of the worst death metal bands I've heard in a really long time. The recording quality is horrendous and the vocals overpower everything else and have obviously been doctored with effects to sound evil. But this is a truly horrible band. Not a second of their three songs (two of which are covers) is worth listening to. Aborted from Belgium provide the next two songs on the comp, one of which is a cover of Napalm Death's "Suffer the Children" and is pulled off well. Their original song is in the vein of Napalm Death with some more "tech metal" guitar parts. Really not anything I'm into. Finally on this cd is Misery Index from the US, definitely the highlight of this comp. This is the first time I've heard Misery Index, and I was quite impressed with what I heard: a very eclectic mix of different styles of

metal and hardcore to form a sound that is very much their own. They are all over the place, from melodic guitar harmonies that sound similar to At the Gates to excellently executed hardcore breakdowns. The thing I probably like the most about this band after listening to the rest of this cd is that they have restrained themselves from using irritating stereotypical death metal vocals unlike the rest of the bands. This cd is worth it for the Misery Index tracks. (by Jeff) BP 31, 62140 Hesdin, France

Vediog Svaor *In the Distance* (Paragon International)

Another horribly produced record on Paragon. Slightly black metal in the riffs and drums and vocals, but these guys couldn't arrange a song to save their lives, their songs structures are so bad. Strangely some of their vocals are like alternative rock. This release, sounding like a sub par demo, is a horrible cd. Again, as with The Forgotten, if it was packaged like a demo and they were charging a dollar for it, it would be okay.

PO Box 354, Commack NW 11725, USA

Vehemence/Total Fucking Destruction split ep (Deathstill)

The UK's Vehemence serves up some hateful meat and potatoes grindcore with samples from *Fight Club* and *The Shining* inbetween songs. No frills, kind of muddy, either chunky or fast riffs. TFD's side features their old lineup and is straight up TFD. I like the production they have on this ep because you can hear the instruments pretty well. TFD is always a good time.

PO Box 633, Dagenham, RM8 3A2, UK

Vulgar Pigeons *Summary Execution* (Deathvomit/Necropolis)

Bias, unibas, who fuckin' cares. If you don't own this album go get it

now. Stop reading, get it now now now now. Flawless pure grind perfection leaving you with a major erection. The guitar work by guitar virtuosos Jeff Lenormand and Mike Gilbert (Severed Savior): sick as fuck. Both guitarists compliment each other at every turn, twist and break. Both Jeff and Mike share vocal duties and do the job everyone including myself should be doing. Rounding off the vokill barrage is Paul Pontikoff (huuummmm, why does that name sound so familiar?) who is quite the bass prodigy and no, not because he's my brother! John Gotelli's drumming only has gotten faster and more innovative in time and no, not because he plays in Benümb. This album just kills. Take my word on it, it's hard to say your younger brother kicks ass on what you do and hope to do. And if there's anyone who is out there that is bothered by me reviewing my brother's band, try finding a life and a sense of humor. It helps. (by Pete)

Without Face *Astronomicon* (Earache)

Without Face is part of the whole Earache "thing," which means if you are looking for Morbid Angel or Napalm Death, keep looking. Not all new Earache is horrid but I was not expecting much from this release. If you are looking for tunes along the lines of Tristania, Amorphis, or even Rush, this is your band. Without Face is very melodic with male/female vocals alongside lots of keyboards and synth intros. This stuff is much more elaborate than I anticipated and the instrumentation is quite good. The whole group and mainly the drummer is very influenced by Rush while some of the vocals remind me of Tori Amos. Without Face is not what they seem and I was pleasantly surprised by what they have done. As the silly cover art, which is quite bad, may suggest this album is not setting out to brutally punish you with metal, but to apply atmosphere with a prog/metal vibe. (by Jake)

If you didn't see your release reviewed here, it's because a) I didn't want to review it, or b) it didn't make it this issue and will appear next time. Thank you for your patience. ■

Jeff submitted the following interview with Hot Cross.

Hot Cross is a great emotional hardcore band that has quickly been getting quite a reputation all around the world. Though they are often compared to their previous efforts in bands, Hot Cross definitely holds their own compared to their previous endeavors and this band will surely continue to make a name for themselves in the coming years. Matt Smith, who fills the role of guitarist in the band, was kind enough to agree to this interview via email for *Disposable Underground*.

D.U.: Do you feel like there were any expectations of your band when you first started, given the previous bands that some of you have been in?

Matt: Yup. People were like, "Oh, the new Saetia/You & I/Neil Perry/Off Minor band" which is a blessing and a curse. We never tried to play it down or flaunt anything, or use it to "market" Hot Cross or whatever, but some of our bands have this weird post-mortem popularity. It was just weird that people wanted to hear us despite us being such a new band and us not really having paid our dues. With the whole ex-band thing you have an instant audience, but also an instant set of expectations. I'd really rather people don't acknowledge our old bands as comparison only because it is the past and this is what we're up to now. But when kids book shows, they'll write "ex-whatever" because there's a better chance kids will show up. It's just the way things work I guess. We're proud of what we did, but actively riding that shit to garner interest in stuff that isn't really related is rather dispicable. I've seen hardcore



bands use their history to sell their weird projects that really have nothing to do with hardcore, and while it's cool to do new things, you'd think saying "ex-brutal hardcore" to sell, say, your post-indie electronic noodlings or Brit rock worship is a bad idea, but people do it. I don't get that shit at all.

You all just did a short European tour this past summer. How does playing punk shows in Europe differ from the US?

We'd heard stories about bands going over there and having lots of fun, but we weren't prepared for how enthusiastic the kids would be, or the degree to which that continent has its shit together where DIY hardcore is concerned. Every night, we'd get to the venue, get fed a huge vegan meal, play, hang out, go to sleep and when we woke up the next day, there was breakfast waiting for us. The way things were set up, the venues were usually squats, but not like we have here. These buildings were in good condition, there were ridiculous pro sound systems in all the squats (i.e. we'd get our drums mic'ed and everything), there were bunks upstairs (and often laundry facilities) for the bands to use, and kids just seemed a lot more stoked about what was going on. Bands seemed more appreciated, and kids would come right up and talk to you, even if it was to say that they thought you sucked. The whole nihilism and fashion ridiculousness doesn't seem to have caught on over there the way it has here, and there are people of all ages involved as opposed to having people drop out as soon as their collegiate career is over. Their spaces have all the ben-

efits of a professional club without all the bullshit. Also, kids get pissed if you play for fifteen to twenty minutes, and unlike here, only two to three bands will play any given show. Their scene isn't so supersaturated that every show has to be a minifest and as a result people are less likely to get overexposed and bored by the time the last band goes on seventy-four hours after the show starts.

If you could hand pick a show for Hot Cross to play, who would the show be with and where would it be?

I'd want to play with I'd say Misfits circa 83, *Master of Puppets* era Metallica, Emperor, The VSS, and pretty much any band Level Plane has released a record for, in Saarbrücken, because that place was ridiculous when we played there. Everyone knew our lyrics even

though we were in a different country not speaking their language. What's up with that?

What are your feelings on the possibility that you will be balding and have grey hair while jumping around with a punk band?

Probably about equal to my feelings on having a growing gut. It's weird; there are times I start feeling like the weird, creepy old dude in the scene. It sucks. I still haven't figured out why I haven't outgrown this shit yet and moved onto insipid, jaded indie-rock at this point and cashed in.

Hot Cross' new cd A New Set of Lungs is available from Level Plane Records, PO Box 4329, Philadelphia PA 19118, USA or www.levelplane.com ■

Disposable Underground zine by Richard Johnson unless otherwise noted. 2002. Contributors: Jake Cregger, JR Hayes (who also helped with the crossword), Scott Hull, Jeff Kane, R. Mason, Pete Pontikoff.

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Scene from the New England Metal Hardcore Fest, 2002

Disposable Crossword Puzzle answers from #25



Musical Darwinism with JR Hayes

We went "in the listening room" with JR and played him some records. Here are his first impressions of each...

Incantation *Blasphemy* (Necropolis)

"It's hard to think of something interesting to [say] when there's nothing interesting about the record. It's death metal by the numbers, definitely. The production's not bad. I don't know how many records they have, but they've made this record before, there's no doubt. If you like Incantation, you'll like this record."

The Berzerker *Dissimilate* (Earache)

"The snare drum sounds like someone hitting a Folger's coffee can with a fountain pen. The riffs aren't bad. The production is really sloppy. The drums have less balls than Sandra Bernhardt. This band has no balls whatsoever. The weak point is definitely the drum machine if I had to pick one."

Zeromancer *Eurotrash* (Cleopatra)

"They're talking about '1-800-Suicide.' That's what I want to call right now. [The] definition of Orgy clone is pretty dead on. When you can't even be better than Orgy, you've got problems. Ugh. These guys are so fuckin' fake they put lipstick on their fuckin' butthole. Fuck this band."

Alchemist *Organasm* (Relapse)

"I definitely don't like the vocals. The music's got a little bit of atmosphere. These guys are idiosyncratic the way Atheist and Cynic is. They're definitely different. It's alright. I don't know that I'd go so far as to say I'd buy it, but I'm definitely down with it."

Overpowering *Basura Electrónica*

"This is what I would describe as underground. It's a pretty ghetto recording. It's what you'd record on two soup cans and a piece of string. When I think of bands that are really super tight, I think of this band and the Mentors. It's like metal written on a Commodore 64. As Scott would say, can you turn down the shit knob?"
Alfonso Sedano, C/Rivera No 15, 2a 14300 Villaviciosa de Córdoba, Spain

Virgin Black *Sombre Romantic* (The End)

"It's definitely different. I don't know what they're trying to do. Dude, violins and piano are so sad and depressing and dark. If there was a temple of shit, these would be its monks. Are you kidding me? Is this for real? This sounds like Pavarotti singing for some fake ass Norwegian black metal band. What the hell is evil and dark in Australia [where the band is from]? Don't they sing about kangaroos and boomerangs? King Diamond would find this melodramatic."

Hate Cain's Way (World War III)

"I'm so old and jaded. This could be the Incantation record for all I care. This is good for death metal, but who needs death metal anymore? This is two thousand and fuckin' two. Whatever. If you're really into death metal, this is more death metal for you. I don't know what else to tell ya. It's alright. I'm sure Satan is very proud. I mean, it's better [than the last album] but it's fuckin' weak and fuckin' unoriginal." ■