

## UNSUNG HEROES

### CHRIS CHANTLER HACKS THROUGH THE BATTLEFIELD OF CULT METAL REISSUES

#### SORCERY

##### 'Sinister Soldiers' MONSTER

If you don't have a grand to spare for the original 1978 double-vinyl, this CD reissue is an ideal way to get acquainted with this cult-as-fuck archival curio vaguely describable as melodic Sabbathian doom with a dash of the distant, gothic alien beauty of 1978-era Priest, pointing the way for the epic fantasies of Manilla Road *et al.* Inscrutable dynamics and cerebral darkness come together most powerfully on the ten-minute 'Snowshit', making this an artifact well worth unearthing. **8**

#### WINTERHAWK

##### 'Revival' MONSTER

Smooth heavy rock from 1982, Winterhawk were a showcase for the sublime talents of Illinois' local six-string hero Jordan Macarus, whose vibrant, emotive axe-craft is all over this record. There are plenty of fluid passages of intriguing, heartfelt guitar playing, and good songs too, notably 'Sanctuary', with its 'Into The Void'-on-uppers riffing, and the Skynyrd-ish epic ballad 'Free To Live', which gives way to a blissful upbeat duelling-lead solo. **8**

#### ULTRA

##### 'Ultra' MONSTER

Recorded in Texas between 1975 and 1977, this is sun-kissed heavy Southern rock, the twin guitars of Galen Niles and Larry McGuffin (you can't make names like that up!) wrestling and racing like alcohol-fuelled bikers at a truckstop diner where Thin Lizzy and Blackfoot are on permanent jukebox repeat. Ultra are an authentic choice discovery for anyone who digs the vibe of whippersnappers like Atomic Bitchwax or Alabama Thunderpussy. **8**

#### FULL MOON

##### 'State Of The Artist' MONSTER

Another 'complete works' package, Full Moon's eponymous debut was released in 1980. In Pennsylvania. This doesn't quite reach the heights of other Monster reissues, the band seeming like a muted, mid-tempo Lizzy/UFO tribute, but it's a spinnable enough little twin-guitar nugget, some smokin' biker rock ditties in the shape of 'All On Board' and 'Sergeant At Arms', but a little too plodding to quite rattle out of third gear. **6.5**

All CDs available through [www.monsterrecords.com](http://www.monsterrecords.com)

## MANOREXIA

### 'Volvox Turbo' ECTOPIC

When describing the works of Jim 'Foetus' Thirlwell the one word that comes to mind is 'prolific'. His latest side-project Manorexia is an epic instrumental project of sound that he created over an intense six-week period, a personal writing record. 'Volvox Turbo' is composed very much like a film soundtrack but without an established story or visuals to accompany it. Integrating ominous sounds and strange effects, Thirlwell weaves mysterious Moroccan-flavoured world music, tribal drums and syncopated white noise and static into an electric symphony of 14 movements that seamlessly dissolve into each other. At it's most claustrophobic this has much in common with the group Goblin and their eclectic scores composed to accompany many of Dario Argento's horror films. Weird and exotic, urgent like a chase sequence in a James Bond film and then throbbing with tension conjuring paranoid visions of sci-fi invaders from Mars, 'Volvox Turbo' builds and ebbs eventually dissolving into a final denouement that is minimalist like a John Carpenter theme. Thirlwell has created a compelling modern symphony armed with the power to ignite your imagination and whisk you to an alternative dimension. **[7.5] MARION GARDEN**

## MARZ

### 'Lung Fu Mo She' E-MAGINE

Marz is the brainchild of one Zlatko Hukic, former guitarist/studio technician for Ministry and Peter Gabriel, who couldn't be persuaded by either to stick around. Despite the odd nod to the Chicago industrialists, 'Lung Fu Mo She' is an hour of full-on rap metal. But before the groans commence, it bears little relation to the formulaic nu-metal sounds, instead concocting a savvy mixture of processed guitars, gutsy rhymes and brutal delivery. Hukic gladly avoids dipping his toes into pop territory, coming across like House Of Pain had they permanently injected guitars into their sound, although they do share a hefty and unwelcome dose of misogyny ('I need a bitch I can fuck in the mouth' he roars on 'In the Mud'), which jars considerably with the spiritual 'philosophy' laid forth in the liner notes. Hukic will protest that he 'loves the laydeez'; I say that despite a fairly impressive first outing Marz are not quite the finished article, and that the good ideas on this album are few and far between. Available from [www.emaginemusic.com](http://www.emaginemusic.com)

**[6.5] DANIEL LUKES**

## MAYHEM

### 'European Legions' SEASON OF MIST

It's hard to credit that this is the same band that cut 'De Mysteriis Dom Sathanas' all those years ago. Wait a minute, it isn't! With the jury still out following 'Wolf's Lair Abyss' and the fearsome Tiziana Stupia of Misanthropy Records furiously talking the band up, most were willing to wait and see what happened next. The ensuing 'Grand Declaration Of War' was trying to be a little too clever for it's own good and reading between the lines with this release, it seems that, for the label at least, the hoped-for cash cow has turned out to be something of a let-down. What other reason could there be for shoving out a shoddy live effort like this and, in what looks like an act of desperation, tacking on 'pre-production' versions of recent studio album tracks? Is the version of 'Grand Declaration Of War' languishing in the CD racks of the faithful definitive or not? The live portion of 'European Legions' sounds wafer-thin and watery, the bass non-existent and the tinny, misfiring drum triggers nothing less than irritating. Furthermore, the task of unifying music from the three very distinct ages of Mayhem (80's novelty mini-album, early 90's glory days and post-millennial identity crisis) proves too much for the current line-up and as a result they fail to ignite or inspire the audience in any meaningful way. **[5.5] DAMIEN**

## MESHUGGAH

### 'Raretrax' NUCLEAR BLAST

If I were to continue my post-graduate psychology career, a study I might consider would be 'The Correlation Between Collective Sense Of Humour And Musical Invention And Ability In The Metal Musician'. Ever notice how the best bands are always the zaniest people? For 12 years, Meshuggah have shown themselves to be musical innovators, consistently cranking out some of the most mind-bendingly complex and rhythmically challenging music this side of a jazz café. As this collection of rarities illustrates, they've always had that touch of uniqueness, even within the confines of decade-old thrashier anthems. They've also shown over the years (and here) that they're ready to take the piss out of everything. Check out the boys at work and play via the MPEG videos and ponder whether these are same musical auteurs who created 'Destroy Erase Improve'. Also think about how the band just devalued every one of the 1000 copies of their debut 'Psykisk Testbild' by including most of it here. I'm sure they're sorry. But they're probably not sorry for making you sit through 'War' and 'Ayahuasca Experience'. It seems that these Swedes only show some semblance of seriousness when playing music. Thank God they do what they do so well or they'd be dismissed as nothing but pests, not heralded as musical

futurists. By the way, 'Raretrax's cover is pretty ridiculous as well. **[8] KEVIN STEWART-PANKO**

## MINUS

### 'Jesus Christ Bobby' VICTORY

Where the bloody 'ell did this come from? To be coy and semi-exact, Iceland, but frankly (and most accurately), fuck if I know. What I do know is that 'Jesus Christ Bobby' is, as the band puts it, 'disgusting music.' Right. Hardly heavy metal *per se* but most definitely heavy, Minus land at the locus of 'extreme' with this, their sophomore outing (and first worldwide release). Not so much 'music' as a collision of frequencies both foreign and familiar, the quizzically titled album revolves around a caustic axis that's simultaneously bludgeoning and belittling, direct and directionless, catchy and cantankerous, contemptuous and tempting, ugly and beautiful, riddled with paradoxes, unanswered questions, and statements coded in an undecipherable language. A mess? Maybe. Like Ink & Dagger had they listened to Darkthrone instead of Danzig, Minus know very well where to steer their sledgehammered art-damage, stuttering and slugging away at a stultifying stretch: a maze of torment, with no map in sight. Quite simply, this is the epitome of extreme, and a new gold standard for all subsequently falling under that ripped'n'torn banner. **[9] NATHAN T BIRK**

## PETER MURPHY

### 'Alive Just For Love' METROPOLIS

The eternal Peter Murphy returns, triumphant, from the Hollow Hills with this, his most haunting release yet. 'Alive, Just For Love', recorded quite appropriately in the Los Angeles - the City of Angels - is carried to us as if by feathered wings. It perfectly captures the essence of an intimate show, featuring highlights of Murphy's 15-year solo career, which, in his own words, have been "stripped of all decoration", laid bare, exposed.

Indeed, His voice is still as sharp as his cheekbones as it cuts across a delicate web of gossamer strings and unearthly wind instruments. 'Marlene Dietrich's Favorite Poem' is still rich in sentiment, yet somehow less detached than previous versions. That special 'moment' comes with 'A Strange Kind Of Love'. It's a moment choked with emotion, where, for the first time the true intent of the lyrics can really be heard without being suppressed and strangled by fancy production. Bauhaus fans will be moved by the bonus CD, an impromptu reunion for Murphy and David J, as acoustic versions of 'All We Ever Wanted' and 'Hope' are immortalised. Love lies there still. **[7] RONNIE KERSWELL**

## SHORTS

### SUNNSHINE

#### 'Engender' UNDERDOGMA

Virginia's Sunnshine's amp-derived monicker rather gives the game away: It's Stonehenge-sized, cranked-up stacks and crushing Sabbath-styled riffing all the way round their place, with tinges of early Soundgarden in Jow Deleon's beefy Cornell/ Ben Ward bellow, not to mention some nicely drawn-out cosmic sludge on 'Bound'. But there are hundreds of bands doing this kind of thing around at the moment, and though Sunnshine have potential, they ain't any more likely to really make you want to part with your hard-earned greenbacks. **6 [JM]**

### TENHI

#### 'airut:ciwi' PROPHECY

Tenhi are undergoing a perceptible shift in focus after the gentle pastoral tones of their debut 'Kauai'. The ghostly, dream-like atmosphere opening this 20-minute mini-CD presages a darker and more mournful mood, with less of the folk flavouring and more shamanic, hypnotic overtones. It's a bleak vision, and one whose careful arrangements make it appear surprising that there were so many musicians involved. Tranquil and yet strangely unsettling. **7 [NM]**

### WINDFALL

#### 'Loud With The Windows Open... So The Neighbours Can Hear' SMORGASBORD

This isn't what I was expecting from Jeff - ex-of-SXE-legends-Upfront - Terranova's latest group - catchy, melodic rock with the merest of leanings towards that hardcore way of doing things, all topped off with powerful soaring female vocals. Somewhere between X-Ray Spex and the vastly underrated Life... But How To Live It?, both comparisons are largely due to the range and ferocity of Jennifer's voice, and when the rest of the band hit their stride, Windfall are sublimely beautiful. By recording this live in the studio, they've managed to capture a very real and genuine instinctive energy. **7 [IG]**

### THALIA ZEDEK

#### 'Been Here And Gone' MATADOR

This brings back memories from the time that indie broke. We were all punks and/or metalheads and suddenly came Pixies and opened a challenging new world of infinite quirkiness. Thalia Zedek was there too, fronting Live Skull; Come and other acts. Her solo work is still centered around her slightly less cigarette-soaked Marianne Faithfull sounding voice, but the instrumentation is acoustic, atmospheric, reeling, melancholy. This could appeal to lovers of alt-country, Nico, Nick Cave and PJ Harvey. Sad and warm night music with an echo of post-rock pioneers Codeine. **7 [AP]**