

if this is an idea that Stellar Master Elite can expand upon. It would certainly help them strike out on their own if they were to further embrace their experimental instincts, as you can't help but feel they are holding them back. For now, "Destructive Interference Generator" is an interesting diversion, but the best is surely yet to come.

POWERPOINTS: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

ROSS BAKER

MYSTICUM
"Lost Masters of The Universe"
Genre: Black Metal
Peaceville Records

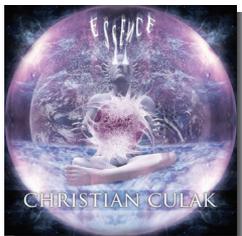


This compilation was released in 2004 under a different label but is getting another go with the same demos included, but this version also features the addition of the "Piss Off!!!" promo instead of contributions to tribute albums like previously. This act was one of the first to take black metal and use a drum machine to brilliant effect, and one listen to this rather excellent album will confirm that for you. Having caught the band live in October 1996 supporting Marduk, I can confirm that the band were indeed very strange, disturbing even, and their bone brittle barbarism is laid to bare on this reissue, which covers seventy-minutes-plus of black nihilistic terror. Incredibly creepy and haunting, the guitar riffs on the songs comprising the "Wintermass" demo are depressively intense and focalised with dark entrenching rage. The same applies to the songs on "Medusa's Tears", both demos originally being from 1993, and the utter despair and nightmarish perniciousness throttles the life out of you. The "Piss Off!!!" demo from 1995 showed how the band was leading up to their monumental debut, "In The Streams Of The Inferno" in 1996, the vitriol being delivered with such emotionless dementedness that it really makes you shiver at the utter stripped down ghastriness. Cruel, pervading music.

POWERPOINTS: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

MARTIN HARRIS

CHRISTIAN CULAK
"Essence"
Genre: Instrumental Metal/Progressive Post-Rock
Independent Release



Beautifully realised it may be, but the music of multi-instrumentalist Christian Culak ultimately leaves me cold. It's delightfully composed, and Christian's guitars, bass, drums, piano and effects are all superb, but the compositions themselves fall into that main pitfall of instrumental music: waiting for the vocals to start. "Catharsis" sounds like Nevermore jamming with Planet X, while "Eclipse", "Abstract of I" and the rest all showcase the depth and breadth of Christian's exemplary talent, but the tunes aren't there. Mixing metal, post-rock, shoegaze, shred, jazz fusion and doom into a melancholic whole, the man has some serious talent, but at times loses his way.

POWERPOINTS: 1 2 3 4 5 6

ANDREW HAWNT

IDLE CLASS
"The Drama's Done"
Genre: Punk Rock
Black Star Foundation



Germany's Idle Class are a very lively punk rock act and "The Drama's Done" reflects the band's ability to write catchy tunes with plenty of rock, big hooks and sing-along, gang styled choruses. Right from the outset, Idle Class take off with "Essence Of The Night", a track with Rancid like vocals and a familiar, friendly feel to the number. The vocals are perfectly suited to this style of music and the track reminds me of other more commercial punk rock acts, such as Blink 182, NOFX et al. "Chances Are For Poets" opens with a nice rocking guitar intro before the vocals and gang choruses. This formula that Idle Class use on each song is addictive riffs and melody lines that are traded with the group choruses, which adds a nice touch to the album. The band don't stray far from this trademark sound, as all ten tracks on "The Drama's Done" use a similar style of the gang choruses and a punk rock attitude. As a result, the album does sound a little repetitive, but this is a small

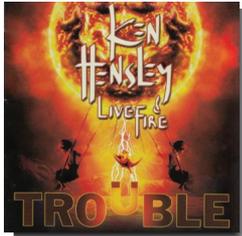
point, as the listening experience is very enjoyable.

"The Drama's Done" is a very upbeat and enjoyable listening experience and is one that's not to be missed if you like your punk rock to be sing-along and fun.

POWERPOINTS: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

GLENN BUTLER

KEN HENSLEY AND LIVE FIRE
"Trouble"
Genre: Rock
Hear No Evil Recordings



Ken Hensley is more than just a highly respected, immensely talented musician. With more than fifty albums under his belt and a career that spans more years than he probably cares to remember, Ken has been an ever present as the story of rock has unfolded over the decades. He is part of the fabric of the music that we all hold dear... and he's still crafting records as fine as "Trouble" Cultured and classy, "Trouble" is a collection of quality songs delivered with poise and panache. There's nothing brash or obvious about songs like the title track or "It"; they unfold gracefully and subtly work their magic on you over repeated listens, ensuring the album's staying power and longevity. Roberto Tiranti deserves special mention for his sweetly measured vocal delivery – Ken really seems to have found the perfect voice for his songs. There are definite flavours of Uriah Heep throughout "Trouble", which is only to be expected, as Ken was such an integral part of that band, and I would urge any Heep fan to explore what Ken and Live Fire have to offer.

POWERPOINTS: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

CHRIS KEE

DEROGATORY
"Above All Else"
Genre: Death
FDA Rekotz



Graaarrrgh. There's always something particularly vicious about Californian death metal, oft evoking the ferocity of earlier east coast batterings, and this LA quartet is no different. The imaginatively-titled "Intro" has a sinister Cult feel, with chiming Duffy-esque tones, afore annihilation ensues with careering speed, punishing violence from undulating riffs, squalling leads and a fearful scour from Christian Ordonez, which is so dry as to be a deadly whisper. "Cryopreservation" is old school death with a wicked groove and ferocious, withering rhythms, whilst the chiming leads, chopping riffs and shifting gears of the title track don't detract from a savagery, aided by the harsh, sparing production that lends a frosted atmosphere and jagged edge to the harmonies. A little like luring Slayer, Exodus and Bolt Thrower into a trap wherein the monstrous Suffocation awaits to devour, this is best exemplified by "Foretold In My House of Seance": a murderous battery underpinned by phenomenal yet understated stick work from Jose Coyton, occasionally waylaid by chaotic leads and joyously unexpected NWOBHM bridges.

There's an angry young mob banging at your door, insisting that you stay true to the old values. On this form, they'll soon be pretty unstoppable.

POWERPOINTS: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

PAUL QUINN

THE FALL FROM GRACE
"The Colours Of Change"
Genre: Post-Hardcore
Independent Release



I want to like this a great deal more than I do, and it's only due to the sheer quantity of post-hardcore releases that are hitting the shelves that this won't break through. Because when all is said and done, there is nothing wrong with "The Colours Of Change" other than its lack of significant hooks; the material here is deftly played, expertly crafted, and well presented. It's just that The Fall From Grace are up against too many killer releases to make it worth their while. But taking this as a single specimen, you get a set of rather morose tunes full somber melodies, clean vocals that break now and then into a tortured scream, and guitar riffs that throw the genre back to the day of giants like Thursday and Funeral For A Friend.

Tracks like "Static Conclusion" and "Resistance Is Futile" are The Fall From Grace firing on all cylinders, and if all their material was as strong as tunes like these, then you'd be looking at a higher score. As it stands, the band need to strengthen their vocal hooks to keep the listener engaged.

POWERPOINTS: 1 2 3 4 5 6

BRUCE TURNBULL

DEATH ANGEL
"The Art Of Dying"/"Killing Season"
Genre: Thrash Metal
Nuclear Blast



Quite why Nuclear Blast felt the need to re-package Death Angel's 2004 and 2008 albums is a bit of a head-scratcher. Having released "The Dream Calls For Blood" on the same label earlier this year, DA are back in full flow. Back in 2004, Death Angel re-appeared after a fourteen-year gap. One of the early forgers of the death metal scene burst back into life with "The Art Of Dying", opening with the uncompromising statement of intent that is "Thrown To The Wolves" with furious guitar work by the returning Rob Cavestany and new cohort Ted Aguilar, and the unmistakable growls of Mark Osegueda. The pummelling "No" and "Famine" are full-bodied statements of intent.

It was a solid return but with some weaker moments like the dull "Spirit" and nu-metal-like "The Devil Incarnate". It was four years later, with the release of "Killing Season", that they fully came back to life. Louder, harder and faster than its predecessor, "Killing Season" is the true 'we're baaack' message for fans.

"Dethroned", "Carnival Justice" and "When Worlds Collide" are furious, invigorating thrash metal blasts full of frantic guitar work and aggressive vocals. The songs are superior, but sadly a weaker production reigns "Killing Season" in. A strange time to release this double album package, but it's never a bad time to be reminded of a great thrash band.

POWERPOINTS: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

DAN BOND

EIDOLA
"End Of The Spectrum"
Genre: Hardcore
Independent Release



The life of a freelancer is often an impecunious one. One would perhaps think that it was reward enough to receive free music all the time, but put yourselves in our place, and you might soon come to disagree. Especially when forced to listen to the umpteenth band that most likely thinks they are doing something of originality, or even value, but in essence, sound exactly like a dozen other bands that you have already been forced to listen to in the same week. Still not getting it? Imagine watching hours old paint dry, with your eyes forcibly propped open.

It's not that bands like Eidola are necessarily bad; it's just that we've heard it all before. A hundred times before. No, a thousand times before. If this Californian hardcore lot wants to stand out and make a difference, then they really have to try much, much harder. No pun intended. Thankfully "End Of The Spectrum" is only an EP, because quite frankly, I'm starting to get a headache. Still, the hardcore kids might just disagree.

POWERPOINTS: 1 2 3 4 5 6

MARK GRIMSHAW

IRON GLOVE
"Break The Chains"
Genre: AOR Rock/Hard Rock
Independent Release



German quintet Iron Glove clearly have a lot of welly and gusto behind them. That's unquestionable. The guitar-driven, chugging numbers being road tested aboard this inaugural effort are far from terrible; with sound technicality, the gents are evidently capable of churning out a thumping, classic-esque formula. The giggling trouble is that it's all a little underwhelming, in the nicest possible way. It's a tad safe, a smidge generic and a wee bit repetitive. Based on their mastery of simplicity and slickness in composition, and on