

production. There's plenty of guttural roaring in the vocal department and chainsaw sounding guitar riffs buzz through each song like diamond tipped blades through flesh and bone. The band pays homage to virtually every scene breaker of its time from Carcass style drumming to Dismember leads and Entombed swagger. Listing songs is pointless when you have such an all round beast of an album complete with juggernaut heaviness.

POWERPOINTS: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

MARTIN HARRIS

BADMOUTH
"Heavy Metal Parking Lot"
Genre: Metal
Rambo Live



Badmouth are a Swedish metal band that kind of sound like The Hellacopters, only less intense. They occupy a sort of middle ground between the Swedes and Kiss, but they veer from one style to another, so "City Is Burning" is prime Hellacopters, while "Bottoms Up" is much more Kiss.

Then, just when you think you've got the band sussed, they go all NWOBHM on you. Tracks like "Judas" and "Tired" have definite metallic influences; "Judas" in particular has a very early-Maiden influence. This mix of styles and influences ought to mean that the album doesn't flow too well, but this isn't really the case. The band writes good songs and has enough hooks to keep you interested. They don't have anything that's quite killer enough to take them to the next level, but songs like album closer "Facing My Demons" come pretty close.

One to watch.

POWERPOINTS: 1 2 3 4 5 6

MARTIN HOWELL

AGAINST THE FLOOD
"Home Truths"
Genre: Hardcore
Siege Of Amida Records



Any of the many bands on this planet that sound like Against The Flood outdo them in every respect. Underoath, Architects, Between The Buried And Me... You name them; they're better than Against The Flood.

The reason is that it's all about ticking boxes for these south London boys. They have the disjointed, arching riffs and techy background fizz. They've got the distorted fudge and bizarre time signatures. What they haven't got is any of it in the ace, balls out, Genghis Tron kind of way. Nor even in the appreciative i-hate-that-you're-quite-good Bring Me The Horizon way either.

Terrible vocals, lacklustre lyrics and laughable haircuts... it's unfortunate that Against The Flood will reach a level of success that their hard work may earn – but artistically they owe us. Big time.

POWERPOINTS: 1 2 3 4

MATT INGHAM

MAGE
"Mage"
Genre: Stoner Rock/Doom Metal
Witch Hunter Records



Hailing from Leicestershire, Mage bring a powerful riff driven sound on this, their first EP, which draws its influence from the usual doom crews but is flavoured with the bite of early Paradise Lost. Andy's vocals are clean and raw and sound refreshingly British – a big departure from the majority of these acts who seem to think

that sounding like every other yank act that has proceeded them is a good idea.

Opener "Chariots On Fire" rides a dirty Electric Wizard type riff and features a powerful vocal melody. The rest of this all too brief four-track affair keeps it straightforward with some powerful guitars and grinding bass that should please fans who like their doom with a bit of melody and powerful grooves.

While it remains to be seen if Mage are capable of turning out a full album of this quality, they have certainly laid a decent foundation to be built upon. There are a heck of a lot of bands doing this right now but Mage stand out for their refusal to pretend

to be American and for their ability to meld their influences into refreshing new forms. A bright future could lie ahead for these guys.

POWERPOINTS: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

ROSS BAKER

EXPLORER
"Vengeance Rides An Angry Horse"
Genre: Traditional Metal
Pure Steel Records



I'm amazed that Explorer is still around. I think I saw these guys way back in the early 80s when they played around New Jersey. Their debut from 1984, "Symphonies Of Steel", was a bit of a cult classic amongst some US metalheads. And now they're back after an incredibly long absence with "Vengeance Rides An Angry

Horse" (cool title). Back in the day, we always thought of Explorer as second fiddle to the likes of Obsession and Fates Warning, both of whom also did a lot of gigging in the tri-state area during their formative years. And many years later, not much has changed. Explorer still relies on rehashed, tired metal riffs that will bore the hell out of you. They go for an epic, Virgin Steele approach on some tracks, but are not and never were in the same league as David Defeis' band. I would seek out the likes of Skull Fist, Slingblade, Cauldron, Portrait and other Canadian and Euro traditional metal bands and stay away from banal releases like this.

POWERPOINTS: 1 2 3 4

TONY PIJAR

GRAND DESIGN
"Idolizer"
Genre: Melodic Rock/AOR
AOR Heaven



"Idolatry is really not good for anyone. Not even the idols." John Bach.

Who do you idolise? Did someone say Jordan? Oh, just clearing your throat were you? Alright then...

Anyone idolise Grand Design? They're not really a band you can do that with, are they? I neither come to bury Grand Design, nor to praise

them. This is their second album and it's a really good progression from the first. It's just that they don't get the blood pumping.

Formed to bring 80s music back, that's happening, so job done? Not nearly, and there's actually more than that happening in "Idolizer", as there's a 70s sensibility to tracks like "Stealin' My Love", when the sheer size of the thing makes a glam pretension inevitable, whilst "Let's Rawk The Nite" does, in all those spellings.

They deliver this big sound perfectly and without any shameless virtuosity, but Pelle's vocals are full of assurance and fun. This is not a graven idol, nothing is burnished in gold; these are songs you can work with, touch and hold.

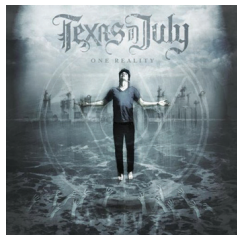
Whilst nothing convinces you to give up your wife and children for a new life in a roustabout's caravan, there are very nice melodic rock examples here, dumb throbbing stuff with gang chants and an absolute conviction that these are the best songs they could produce right now.

You know what, they could be right.

POWERPOINTS: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

STEVE SWIFT

TEXAS IN JULY
"One Reality"
Genre: Metalcore
Equal Vision Records



"One Reality" is the second full-length album by American metalcore band Texas in July. Compared to their previous work, this album is more polished and has some improved melodic content, but really brings nothing new to the table. The guitars are fairly skilful and melodic, as is often common to the genre, while the drums are

a solid standard, with plenty of double bass and industry-standard though competent fills. With song titles like "Dying World", "Our Freedom" and the title track, "One Reality", the album obviously has an important message, which is unfortunately lost in translation through the monotone scream-style vocals. Overall the sound has a nice melodic industrial ring to it, and the

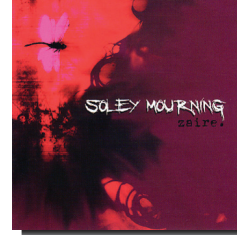
combination of that with the other elements is good for about two or three songs, but any more than that and the simple lack of variety in vocals and riffs just becomes tedious.

That said, this isn't exactly a bad album, it's just that it doesn't bring anything new and exciting to the musical landscape. With obvious August Burns Red influences, "One Reality" will provide a satisfying, if standard listen for most metalcore fans.

POWERPOINTS: 1 2 3 4 5

WILLOW GAMBERG

SOLEY MOURNING
"Zaire"
Genre: Rock
SaltDog Records



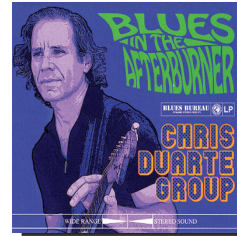
Terrible name. Now that's out of the way, let's concentrate on the CD, which is a mix of styles but they ultimately work; "But If Defeat Was Ever As Glorious" could be an unreleased Live song, whilst "Groundhog Saturday", amongst others, is reminiscent of Maroon 5's more rocky moments, specifically "Harder To Breathe", and "Gimme

Something" has a Southern vibe through the verses and "She's Gonna Make it Shine" recalls 2 Tribes. The similarities between singer Mat Partridge and Maroon 5's Adam Levine are evident throughout the album. Whilst this is a compliment, true metal fans will have stopped reading by now. Overall, the album has a distinct groove, so possibly not one for your standard 4/4 fan, but rather for those broader minded readers. If the above description interests you and you like indie-pop choruses, then I'm sure there is enough on the album to make it worth the purchase. Got to www.soleymourning.com for more info.

POWERPOINTS: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

MATT STEVENSON

CHRIS DUARTE GROUP
"Blues In The Afterburner"
Genre: Blues
Provogue/Mascot



Produced by Shrapnel Records legend Mike Varney, this latest album (his ninth, I believe) from blues star Chris Duarte is head and shoulders above many other recent blues rock releases. With a gorgeous guitar tone that evokes Stevie Ray Vaughan, Eric Clapton and at times Eric Johnson, his playing is absolutely beautiful in everything from its phrasing upwards. Thankfully, he also has a superb voice and some damn fine songwriting skills to play with, too, not to mention an excellent rhythm section in Robert Watson and Aaron Haggerty.

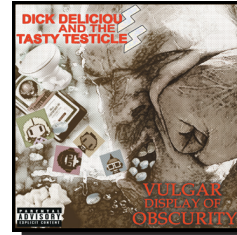
Old school rocking blues with a bit of a 1970s vibe to it, the album rolls along at a steady pace thanks to tunes like "Another Man", "Milwaukee Blues" and "Summer's Child". Add a little psychedelia to the mix and the concoction is potent indeed.

It's very much an album for fans of clean and clear blues guitar, old-fashioned song structures and plain old good songs. There are some Hendrix influences at play, too, both in the quieter moments and the more rocking moments, and the overall effect is an album of extremely high quality presented by very talented musicians and blessed with a splendid production from Varney. From start to finish, it's an absolute winner. This CD is pretty much what 'value for money' means.

POWERPOINTS: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

ANDREW HAWNT

DICK DELICIOUS AND THE TASTY TESTICLES
"Vulgar Display Of Obscurity"
Genre: Metal/Punk
Swinging Pig Records



I received my introduction recently to Dick Delicious And The Tasty Testicles though Nashville Pussy's Ruyter Suys, who was so impressed with the band that she is now a full time member. I must say that if you are looking for something that sounds like NP, then you will be very disappointed, as DDTT is a combination of the Beastie Boys from the "Fight For The Right" era meets a live performance from Strapping Young Lad when Devon launches