

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

A Brief History of Venom:
The Venom ReviewCraig St. Jean
Contributor

Here's a brief history of Venom: In 1978, some kids from Newcastle got together to get drunk and play fast, sloppy, Satanic punk rock. Somewhere along the line they inadvertently gave birth to both thrash metal and, although just in name only, black metal (the title of their career defining 1982 album). As seminal as they may have been, Venom were never all that good. Their overly simple song structures, silly posturing and pseudo Satanic lyrics left quite a bit to be desired from the band who had a direct influence on, in my (very correct) opinion, many of the best bands of all time.

And yet, like a foul, lingering odour, Venom are still around. They've put out 16 official releases over the course of their career, without evolving their sound very much at all. And now, they give us "Metal Black." In order to herald their "return" (from where? Oh, 6 years since the last non live album), they've cleverly rearranged the words from the title of their most noteworthy release. I honestly just shook my head when I first read about this. But now I'm shaking (banging!) my head in a different motion, and much more vigorously, because, amazingly, this album is really damn good. The lyrics are still ridiculous, and the band's appearance (especially now that they're almost in their 50s) is something that any self-respecting person should totally laugh out loud at, but the music can hold its own with any modern metal release, and it's honestly heavier than the majority of them. Take my (well listened) word for it.

Songs like "House of Pain" (horrible title, yes I know), with its bastardly heavy rhythmic stomp, see Venom incorporating some modern elements into their sound, though they retain a decidedly old-school bent. The title track is the album's highlight, as these impossibly old (well, for this style, anyway) guys rip through chaotic rhythms and awesomely lame lyrics at some seriously sick tempos. Yes, the album is full of cheese (but of the hardest, heaviest variety!) and scores of albums will come out this year that'll offer something much more



Photo: courtesy of Google

Venom

artistically captivating, but Metal Black will likely be one of the most fun. Maybe it's partly because my expectations were so low to begin with, but I'm glad I gave this old band another chance. Satan calls you!

New EP and a New Hometown for
Two Hours TrafficKent Aitken
Reporter

Liam, Alec, Andrew and Derek from Two Hours Traffic had this for a schedule last week:

Friday: Isolator EP release show at The Guild.

Saturday: Another Isolator EP release show at Stage Nine in Halifax.

Sunday: Move to Toronto and make a run at cracking a label and rock stardom in general.

It was a big week to say the least.

"It'll let us branch out for touring, and I think it'll be a good writing environment," said guitarist O'Hanley about the move to Toronto.

The four musicians plan to live together and devote more time to writing and playing music, and hopefully get some widespread exposure.

They hope the move will help them to further their careers.

"To be signed and to be able to tour consistently. (We'd) love to not have day jobs,"

O'Hanley said.

All of this on the heels of a string of shows promoting their new EP, *Isolator*, a six-song mix of their well-executed pop-rock heart with some adventures in several different directions.

The CD opens with a slightly heavier, distorted offering, closes lightly with a subtle nod to the East Coast's Celtic roots and is filled with immensely listenable songs in between, including "Stuck for the Summer," an immaculately put together warm-weather anthem that was destined for the radio, but in a good way.

"You'd think that with only six songs you'd have less freedom, but in some ways it's the opposite," O'Hanley said, "I think we took more chances on this one."

Hopefully those chances, and the pilgrimage to Toronto, pay off.

Isolator can be ordered from MapleMusic.com.

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