

Metallica resurrects head-bang epic rock

BY JOHN HITZEL
Reviewer

Metallica released "Death Magnetic" on Friday Sept. 12, selling almost half a million copies and making Metallica the only band to have had five albums debut in the U.S. at No. 1. The North American tour for "Death Magnetic" begins Oct. 21 in Canada.

Metallica has conjured up a storm of fist-clenching, head-banging epics on "Death Magnetic," rediscovering speed, moving away from hooks and embracing the "chung-chung-chung-chung" and the "chugguda-chugguda-chunk" that the band embraced on such albums as "Ride the Lightning," "Master of Puppets" and "... And Justice for All."

The first track, "That Was Just Your Life," explodes as one of the heaviest first tracks in album history. Within the first minute, Metallica silenced all my questions and calmed all my doubts raised by 2003's "St. Anger." Metallica still is part of the ruling class among the dark legion of American metal bands and once again is making the kind of music that made it one of the torchbearers and trailblazers of its genre when the band was into thrash and speed in the '80s.

"Death Magnetic" is a return to that warpath — to blackness and demons, lies and death, war

and rebellion. Musically, think of everything up to and including 1988's "... And Justice for All."

The focus on hooks that characterized the group's '90s catalogue has been scaled back, but that's not to say this album is void of face-melting and troll-summoning guitar work outside of the solos. "The Unforgiven III" has a Satriani-esque, high-climbing riff that brings a clenched jaw and a happy grimace to listener's faces.

"The Unforgiven III" and "The Day That Never Comes" are the slowest tracks on the album, evoking memories of 1991's Metallica, a.k.a. "The Black Album." Both tracks manage to crank it up past

11 as they develop — the latter quickening the tempo and halving the time, moving into a thrasher's nightmare of lightning-quick finger-picking and long, one-chord burns, and the former hammer-smashing the listener's face with a wall of banshee-wail wah-pedal. "My Apocalypse" is reminiscent of "Damage Inc." from 1986's "Master of Puppets," and its opening sounds like a B-side from 1984's "Ride the Lightning."

There is a tinge of hopefulness in the album's early songs despite all of Hetfield's groaning and grunting. During "The Day ..." Hetfield dwells on how "the slave becomes the master." During "Broken, Beat and Scarred,"

Hetfield snarls "What doesn't kill ya, makes ya more strong" and compels the listener to "Show ... Your ... Scars!" Hetfield returns to the war imagery of Metallica's '80s albums on many tracks.

Kirk Hammet arguably has done some of his best work with Metallica on this disc. His past study under Joe Satriani is magnificently demonstrated on "Death Magnetic." Check out the solos on "The End of the Line," "All Nightmare Long," "The Judas Kiss" and "Suicide and Redemption." In some places, his guitar sounds like whammy-produced lasers.

"Death Magnetic" is full of pleasant surprises for die-hard fans. Seven of the 10 songs on this album are more than seven minutes long and feature multiple solos, extended heavy bridges, spacious odysseys between verses and proggy chop-intensive jams. "The Day That Never Comes" and "All Nightmare Long" feature some high notes I previously didn't know Hetfield's over-40 pipes could hit. True to classic Metallica form, the bass nearly is missing in the mix throughout. Bringing back an old standard, the band even does precisely one instrumental, "Suicide and Redemption" — the first to grace an album since "... And Justice for All."

When I popped the CD into my computer, the track info came up in all capitals. How very metal. Could the fact that Metallica considered fans' computers into the launch of its first album after its lawsuit against Napster signify an attempt at making peace with technology? Admittedly, that's not really what the unholy frost giants that I like to imagine Metallica as

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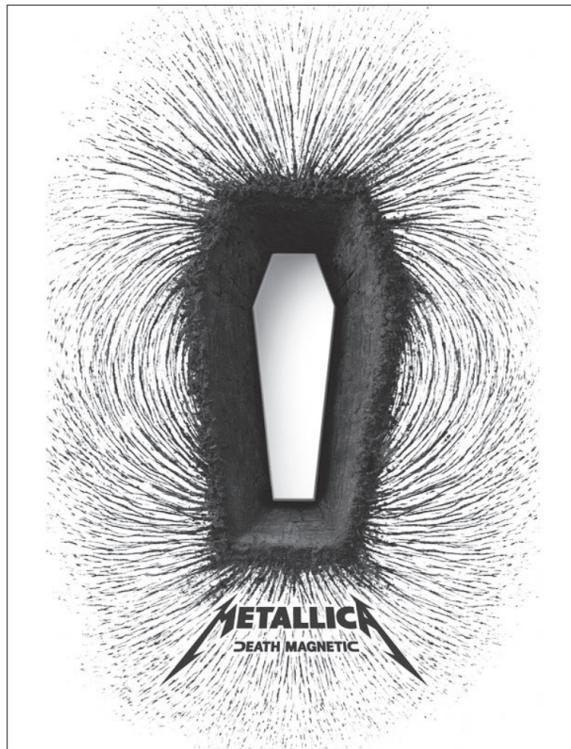


Photo courtesy of Metallica.com
Metallica released its ninth album "Death Magnetic" Sept. 12. The album sits at No. 1 on the Billboard 200 chart this week.



music review

album **"Death Magnetic"**
artist **Metallica**
label **Warner Brothers Records**
release date **September 12, 2008**
rating **★★★★☆**

would do. Perhaps Metallica is just trying to vie for attention in the endless sea of MP3s after having lost so many fans to the double-whammy of Napster and "St. Anger's" tanking.

"Death Magnetic" is a center-

ing action for Metallica. Props to Rick Rubin for tapping whatever beast has remained dormant inside the collective minds of Hammet, Hetfield, Ulrich and new bassist Robert Trujillo and creating the best Metallica disc in decades.

Singles hint at gold to come, CD lacking

Reviewer begins college music round-up with three of this week's newest releases

BY HARRY BURSON
Reviewer

Ben Folds — "You Don't Know Me" [CD Single] (Epic 2008)

During a show sometime in 2002, Ben Folds looked down at his hands and noticed he was playing a piano. He suddenly realized he could no longer play the embittered, ironic, sometimes cloying pop-rock he had essentially perfected with his first solo album "Rockin' the Suburbs." He remembered pianists were serious musicians with serious thoughts. There wasn't any room for frivolity on a Ben Folds record.

Soon he released a slew of throwaway EPs. Then he made a serious record, 2005's "Songs for Silverman," in which the tempos were never too fast and the subjects were never too silly. Death to Randy Newman! Long live Billy Joel!

Then sometime last year in Japan he hit his head before he went on stage. He promptly forgot his revelation and got silly again. Oh yeah, and he got a divorce.

His new single "You Don't Know Me" (featuring Regina Spektor) is a refreshingly upbeat ditty about said divorce driven by a catchy string riff. Spektor plays the part of Folds' former lover as he complains at her. Dynamite!

"He then moves on to complain about males in American Apparel, biting the hand that feeds in some garbled message about what is likely his core fan base."

The B-side of the album is a plodding faux-live track intentionally reminiscent of Elton John's "Benny and the Jets" called "Hiroshima (B B B Benny Hit His Head)" in which Folds sings about getting an X-ray in Japan after cutting open his head during a show. It doesn't really go anywhere and ends abruptly, but it's better than the schlock he's been foisting on us.

Dead Confederate — "Wrecking Ball" (TAO Records 2008)

Hailing from Athens, Ga., newcomers Dead Confederate sport beards so listeners know they are a decidedly southern band. Like My Morning Jacket and Kings of Leon, Dead Confederate consciously cultivate a sort of rustic mysticism in an attempt to place their music within the context of our country's great, mysterious roots music.

Unfortunately the band's reference points aren't Harry Smith or even Lynyrd Skynyrd. Dead Confederate's debut "Wrecking Ball" owes heavily to early '90s grunge and mid-'70s psychedelia.

The songs are heavy on guitar sludge and spacey atmospherics, but light on memorable hooks or, say, strong songwriting.

Lead singer Hardy Morris does his darndest to sound like Cobain, but even Kurt knows southern music better than these guys — remember his killer rendition of "Where Did You Sleep Last Night?" from Nirvana's "Unplugged" album?

Anyway, Athens, Ga., has given us the B-52s and Of Montreal. How gritty and pastoral



Photo courtesy of Bighassle.com

Ben Folds' new single "You Don't Know Me," which is available now, precedes his full-length CD "Way to Normal," which should be released Sept. 30.

could it be?
TV on the Radio — "Dancing Choose" [CD Single] (Interscope 2008)

After the critical success of "Return to Cookie Mountain" and the terrible embarrassment of being involved with that Scarlett Johansson album, TV on the Radio is back with its first single off its heavily-anticipated new album "Dear Science."

The track begins with a buzzing synth bass and a chintzy drum machine before front man Tunde Adebimpe bursts in with some choppy, Saul Williams-like chanting.

Adebimpe seems to be addressing contemporary culture in his manic rants, apparently railing against our country's current complacency with what he sees as the dire state of the newspaper industry.

He then moves on to complain about males in American Apparel, biting the hand that feeds in some garbled message about what is likely his core fan base.

I say "seems" and "apparently" because it is frustratingly unclear just what Adebimpe is trying to say as he rushes through seeming non-sequiturs before slowing down for a sung chorus that begins "in my mind I'm counting butterflies." Dude, huh?

The rest of the group keeps the track propulsive with the entrance of some synth-saxophone in the second verse, but by the time Adebimpe gets to a garbled line that seems to be about "foaming jets and Axel Rose," I give up trying to understand and give in to the beat. Like their hero David Bowie says, "Let's dance."

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Miscellaneous

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