



PICK HIT—CRUSHED

It's rare—make that *very* rare—when a **Hit Parader** feature about a new band begins by discussing that unit's producer rather than the group members themselves. But when the producer in question is none other than Mike Clink, the man who helmed Guns N' Roses' legendary **Appetite For Destruction**, such a break from "tradition" is not only acceptable... it's expected! You see, when the band Crushed began work on their debut disc, **My Machine**, this Arizona-based goth-metal unit could only think of one man they'd like to have work with them on their initial effort; you guessed it, the aforementioned Mr. Clink. Much to the surprise of vocalist/guitarist Mark Lauer, guitarist Mike Halland, guitarist/keyboardist Harry McCaleb, bassist Mike Brown and drummer Jeff Garten, when their representatives approached the legendary producer about working with Crushed, he enthusiastically jumped at the opportunity.

on disc

"We quickly found out that Mike only works on one level—and that is top-notch professionalism," Lauer said. "We're obviously a young band, so having someone with his experience working with us made all the difference in the world. He encouraged all of us to dig deeper than we ever have before, and that's what made **My Machine** turn out as well as it has."

With its intriguing blend of metallic riffs and darkly melodic interludes, **My Machine** is indeed a fine representation of Crush's artistic intent. With songs like *Nocturnal*, *Hovering* and *Crash Coping* providing ample room for this unit to display their abundant instrumental skills as well as their finely honed sense of song craftsmanship, it is clear that Crush have every intent on making an immediate impression upon the contemporary music world. And according to Lauer, what fans hear on their album provides only an indication of the energy and enthusiasm the band brings to the concert stage.

"We've been playing some of these songs for quite a while," he said. "And as good as they sound on the album, there's another element that's added when we play them live. It's something you just can't capture in the studio... no matter how hard you try. For us, every show we play is a true event."

SHOOTING STARS—AUTUMN BLACK

No question about it, we're living in strange rock and roll times. With more than 40 years of rock history to study and draw inspiration from, many of today's budding hard rock attractions are claiming an impressive—though somewhat baffling—list of influences when questioned about their musical pedigree. Take, for example the young Los Angeles-based hardcore/metal outfit Autumn Black, a unit that proudly cite everyone from Black Sabbath to Pink Floyd to Killswitch Engage to the Cure to Slipknot to Metallica to Depeche Mode to Motorhead as their primary sources of inspiration—oh, of course, with a tad of classical music thrown in for good measure. Just thinking about such a musical melange is more than enough to make your brain hurt!

But rather than serving as any sort of deterrent, brothers Ruben and Albert Platt (the vocalist and bassist who serve as this unit's creative core), find the incredible diversity provided by such bands to be a never-ending source of amazement. Indeed, it is the wide-ranging styles presented by these units that have continually served to light a fire under Autumn Black's creative efforts. Teaming with vocalist Kaelo James, guitarist Jonathan Koch and drummer Chris Daigle, the Platt brothers set out to make Autumn Black's debut disc, **Beneath the Shadows**, more than a wall-shaking homage to their varied influences. They wanted to try and make their initial outing a disc that carried those sounds to new artistic frontiers.

"There's so much going on within this band," Albert Platt said. "Of course, you do have all the music that we've listened to and loved over the years. But I think more importantly, you have the experiences that each of us bring into this group. Kaelo is a BMX (motorcycle) rider, while Jonathan has studied therapy. In the mean time both Ruben and I are still in college. So we had a lot of things that we had to shift to the back burner in order to get this band going. But we're all glad we did; it's nice to know that we each have something to fall back on, but right now this band is the most important thing in our lives."

It's not as if Autumn Black came together out of thin air. While Albert and Ruben had landed a recording contract even before establishing their band identity, in the back of their minds they always knew exactly who they wanted to fill out their fledgling unit. Indeed, all five of the group's members first met when they were performing at various L.A.-area clubs during the early part of this decade. Slowly but surely they each began to realize that their shared artistic vision—as well as their varied interests and pursuits—were perfectly suited for forming a band. Thus Autumn Black was formed. And as shown throughout the strident, razor-edge and powerful music that fills **Beneath the Shadows**, all of this unit's varied influences and interests have come together to create a very impressive debut.

"When Ruben and I decided to put together a band it was with one thing in mind—we wanted people who were as serious about music as we were," Albert said. "This is not an easy business. Things don't happen overnight. We needed to find people who were willing to go through whatever was necessary in order to make things happen. Luckily, we found just the guys we were looking for, and when we made the album everyone really stepped up and did their job."

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COMIN' AT YOU
SAME QUESTION,
DIFFERENT BANDS

