1349 - Revelations of the Black Flame (2009)



1. Invocation 6:14
2. Serpentine Sibilance 4:35
3. Horns 3:05
4. Maggot Fetus... Teeth Like Thorns 3:47
5. Misanthropy 3:33
6. Uncreation 7:00
7. Set the Controls for the Heart of the Sun 6:13
8. Solitude 3:38
9. At the Gate... 6:53
Ravn - Vocals, Drums, Guitars, Bass, Strings Archaon - Guitars Seidemann - Bass Frost - Drums

After a massive workload of three albums in as many years, it was a comparatively long period of time between albums for 1349. The band went away and whatever happened in that time, something happened within the psyche of the band which appears to have softened them up a bit, because it shows in this album – and the outcome is fucking brilliant.

‘Invocation’, the introduction to the album is quite peculiar. A long scream leads into an extended period of ambience, for around three minutes before the emergency of some quite sombre, down-tempo black metal – all within one six-minute track. This form of black metal however, is not only fantastic, but leaves the listener wondering whether it is actually the same band that released the intense yet fanatically boring ‘Hellfire’.

The album continues into ‘Serpentine Sibilance’ with much more of a slow black metal style. It’s by now blatantly clear that the band has significantly changed their musical direction, at least for

this album. The production isn't as good in some respects – especially the drums – but this works in the albums favour. The drums feel a lot warmer and have a much more human aspect to them, rather than being too digital or computerised. Whilst the guitars are clearer and the bass is more audible, the style of riffs is so different that you won't help but be sucked in to find out what this new musical direction is all about.

One thing that really irked me about the previous record was the vocals – but this is no longer the case. They stand out much more over the music and rather than sounding like a mindless noisy other instrument, the vocals add another, better dimension to this new musical style. They're not too different to a mainstream style, yet they're somehow so much better. The tone and pitch work in conjunction with the music better and impress rather than frustrate.

There really is quite a lot of dark ambient and non-metal music on here, and it works in fantastic conjunction with the metal parts. 'Horns', which is an all-ambient track, invokes a brilliant atmosphere and although its position in the album being so early is strange, the track itself is spectacularly dark and evil, and its only problem is that it isn't long enough. 'Misanthropy' is a similarly dark and sombre, yet interesting piece – consisting solely of a piano in the distance which fades into some utterly frightening ambience and distorted guitar chords. This track too, shows another different side to the band – that they are not afraid to try new things and have a fresh side to the music.

The slower tempo of the album, rather than being boring, really builds an excellent atmosphere, and with so much variation, the listener is bound to keep enjoying the atmosphere and sheer unpredictability of what's on here. Tracks like 'Uncreation' and 'At the Gate' are slow almost the entire way through and build up a brilliant and almost Burzum-like ambience, whereas tracks like 'Serpentine Sibilance' build up similarly but then suddenly delve into the chaotically fast style of the older albums. When this happens, the switches are made effortlessly and without much disruption to the flow of the album.

'Revelations of the Black Flame' is an amazing black metal effort. The production has so much more heart and soul, and the result is that it has a much more pleasant feel to it. It feels like a true black metal album, rather than a mindless clone product of all their predecessors. With 'Hellfire' it just felt like the band were showing off, and the whole vibe of the album came off as completely self indulgent, whereas this album feels much more like they wanted to reconnect with their fans. Even the faster parts and guitar solos are significantly more listenable than this time around.

Whereas sitting through ‘Hellfire’ was an unbelievable chore and I found myself put almost to sleep by the end, listening to ‘Revelations of the Black Flame’ was a thoroughly enjoyable experience. More length in the ambient tracks would have given this album a higher rating, as would a little bit of a depressive aspect to the guitar riffs, like the ones found in ‘Solitude’. Other than this, I’m now very interested in what this band will release in the future. I definitely recommend this album if you’re on the lookout for something different to the mainstream black metal scene. Great work, 1349. ---immortalshadow666, metal-archives.com

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