

Graveland - 1050 Years of Pagan Cult (2016)

Written by bluelover

Friday, 27 September 2019 15:00 -

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1 *The Night Of Fullmoon* 6:51 2 *At The Pagan Samhain Night* 7:00 3 *Born For War* 4:51
4 *The Gates Of Kingdom Of Darkness* 5:56 5 *Hordes Of Empire* 4:39 6 *Thurisaz* 8:22 7
For Pagan And Heretic's Blood 2:51 8 *Thousand Swords* 7:56 9 *Black Metal War!* 2:05
Rob Darken - vocal, keyboards Sigrunar - drums Mściśław - guitar, bass guitar

For more than 20 years, Graveland has been putting out Pagan black metal albums, but in 2015, it's sole member, Rob Darken, returns with a new lineup and intentions of cleaning up the old with a newer sound. "1050 Years of Pagan Cult" is an album of re-recorded Graveland classics, but does it do the old material justice and how does it fit in with today's Pagan metal releases?

In my opinion, the track selection is great. I was happy to see two tracks from their '94 demo, "The Celtic Winter". Thankfully, Graveland don't overkill with the runtime of the album. They could have easily had a 20 song album, but at 9 tracks coming to up to 50 minutes, the album can be sat through and enjoyed. The standout tracks are "At the Pagan Samhain Night", "Thousands of Swords" and "Born For War". The listener certainly gets a Bathory feeling, although the production is polished. For most, this is the dealbreaker, would you rather a cold raw version of the songs or a cleaned up bigger sound? Personally I feel the mix does the songs justice, as there are many synths and keyboards being used, therefore a clean and proper mix makes it easier to listen, as well putting every instrument in it's place.

The performances on the album are great. Darken sticks to the keyboards and vocals for this one, leaving the new lineup to show why he recruited them. While the instrumentation is well done, some of the songs contain riffs that are all that bit too much and it is hard to get a clear idea as to what the guitarists are doing, but this is only minor and not the fault of the musicians themselves as these are older songs.

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While technically a compilation, the theme of the album is fantastic as it doesn't only take on Viking/Norse paganism but Graveland even incorporate Celtic themes into the album. The only downside I feel is that every song is about battle and warfare. While I adore historical warfare, for the whole album, it feels too expected halfway through the album.

However, Graveland still manage to bring some moments of inspiration with their songwriting. While most of the songs are made up of symphonic intro and blast beats, there are certain moments when a different instrument is layered over, or a drum break last that much longer, however the dynamics of the album are limited to this formula.

Unless you despise modern production, if you are Graveland fan, this is for you. For anyone who enjoys black metal leaning towards viking metal, I guess this might be for you also, however don't expect too much branching out. What makes this album good in one sense is that Bathory fans have something fresh in terms of mixing and mastering to listen to. The album has limited replay ability but this is a case of preferring some songs to others. Don't expect too much but expect a solid rework of classic Viking metal songs. It will be interesting to see what this new lineup can come up with their next release when all members are involved in writing. ---DaithiOCorcaigh, metal-archives.com

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