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Hi guys-
Metallica. Wow. Bang-zoom-

Talk soon, yr pal, Perri

Metallica: Death Magnetic CD review
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The long-awaited new Metallica CD, *Death Magnetic*, is being released worldwide today, September 12, 2008. It is one high-octane, high-concept, super-charged unit to say the least. From its yonic symbol cover art to its final jaw-busting track, it's a pure heavy weight act. The album clocks in at almost seventy-five minutes of music on one disc and contains a 24-page booklet with all lyrics and lots of Man Ray/early Warhol style, black and white photographic art.

Writer Samuel Beckett once explained human life in a metaphor where a pregnant woman is giving birth to her child directly above an open grave. As the newborn child drops into the awaiting ditch, it exists only for an instant, and unaware of anything. The cover art of *Death Magnetic* appears to be telling us pretty much the same thing that Beckett wanted to get across to us. The graphic art obliquely depicts the open birth canal as a deep burial plot with a coffin in its center. James Hetfield, the band's songwriter, has taken this concept and run with it. His lyrics have always been noir and neurosthenic, bordering on the guignolesque. This CD is no exception to the rule. Allusions to Absurdism, the work of Beckett, and a dash of Freud can be found throughout the work.

The album begins with the track, "This was Just Your Life." Like many pieces from Metallica's previous work, it begins with a floating, minor key, slightly ominous intro. It then blasts its way into their signature dry-toned, crunchy, tight power-chord arrangements full of jack hammer fills, thunderous romping and shifting time-signature tempos.

"The End of the Line" follows with Metal-zone stomp box, ultra-super compressed tracer bullet riffing and lots of startling stops and starts. Hetfield's vocals have always had a forceful, dogmatic finality to them, which is the group's core, identifying feature. This track is a snapshot of his continuing vocal prowess, it is classic Metallica and one of the highlights of the CD. "Broken, Beat and Scarred" is a straight-on headanger that caps the onslaught first third of the disc.

The CD then progresses to "The Day That Never Comes." which somewhat slows down the introductory, break-neck pace. It begins as a *Waiting for Godot*-esque power-ballad which evolves into a high-speed, layered, half-step fretboard workout. The theme of waiting is everywhere in the track: waiting for love, revenge and death are central to the piece's content. Musically, the guitar runs have a Joe Perry meets amphetamine-based Robert Fripp feel to them. The soloing is as complex as any etude written by Rachmaninov or Chopin and the constructions are as tonally minimalist and diverse as pieces by Schoenberg, Berg or Webern from the early 20th century Second Viennese School of Music.

"All Nightmare Long" is a speed-of-light piece that sounds like an industrial-sized, tree-shredding machine running on full-auto. "Cyanide," like many of Metallica's songs, uses almost no reverb on the

guitars and has little or no chord sustain which gives this song, and the listener, a soulless-empty sense of isolation.

"Unforgiven III" begins with a pensive piano and bass intro which morphs into a mid-tempo rocker. Lyrically, this song has the most heavy Beckett influence on the album. It closely echoes the writer's famous line from *Waiting for Godot*. "I can't go on, I'll go on," is almost a dead match for Hetfield's "He could just be gone, he would just sail on, he'll just sail on." It's brainy stuff that mirrors a lot of the great 70s anthems of isolation and dementia like Alice Cooper's "The Ballad of Dwight Frye," and Grand Funk Railroad's "Closer to Home." The difference being that Metallica always seem aware of their mental and psychological deterioration and are always willing to describe, in minutia, how they feel about the situation. Alice and Mark Farner used broader, metaphoric import in their pieces, and let the listener create their own mental scenarios of the proffered songs.

"The Judas Kiss" is a real toe-tapper which throws piles of epistemological and ontological craziness about demons, belief systems and radical subjectivity into a kitchen blender, which is then put on the "liquefy" setting. The outcome is a unique auditory experience for each listener. "Suicide and Redemption" is the one instrumental piece that showcases the individual members titanic musical virtuosity. Metallica has been a touring and recording band for 27 years and their chops are as dazzling, tight and complex as when they were kids. They haven't lost a step on any level of playing. "My Apocalypse" ends the CD. It is the ideal way to finish a Metallica record: a thrash blow-out that stuns the listener with its sheer energy and digitally-timed construction and craftsmanship.

This new CD, besides being a red hot cannonball of musical adrenaline and talent, is also a thought-provoking and intellectually challenging piece of literary material. Sigmund Freud opined that all of Mankind has an inborn deathwish, or longing to return to an inorganic state. Ergo, this is why thoughts of sexual activity are so uppermost in our minds. As one comes closer to the manifest of congress, the more self-less or death-like we become. *Death Magnetic* embraces this concept perfectly. From its concept art to libretto, to flawless performance it brings us closer to an aesthetic climax, thus bringing us, at least on a psychological level, more near to our ultimate inorganic state.