



# ROOT AND THORN



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A MAGAZINE ABOUT MUSIC

Why *Sunbather* is good,  
and you should get over it

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SUN  
BATHER

Other great albums of 2013 † Current & Upcomming Tours  
Deathwish catalogue represses? † Special on Drone/Doom





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## EDITOR'S NOTE

Here it is. This magazine is the amalgamation of work from writers, designers, photographers and musicians, who all have an undying passion for music and everything it encompasses. We put our blood, sweat and tears into this and we wanted to make this everything it could be, and we sincerely hope you enjoy it.

Root and Thorn is our attempt at a music magazine that goes against the current culture of music magazines, which seem to be degrading into celebrity rags with each release. This magazine is for the music fan whose music collection exists outside of their computer, who still goes to record stores and purchases physical media, sees concerts and just loves music; regardless of genre. If that sounds like you, this may be your magazine.

Marcus Gunn,  
Editor



✿ Across rock, under sky, over root and thorn, ✿  
our reach is ever growing, spreading like a moss.

## Why *Sunbather* is good and you should get over it

*Deafheaven's Sunbather was released in June last year and it has received both critical acclaim and distain. I'm going to tell you why it's good, and why everyone should stop arguing about it.*

Deafheaven are a San Francisco band that released their sophomore album *Sunbather* on June 11th 2013 through the record label Deathwish. It was recorded as a follow up to their 2011 album *Roads to Judah* and was an attempt to progress and develop their unique sound.

After the album was released its genre was quickly labeled as black metal by the uninitiated. That opened the floodgates of criticism by metal purists who were quick to hop on their blogs and write scathing articles about how the album is poor excuse for black metal. Simultaneously, other music outlets like Pitchfork were quick to write about this 'genre defying' black metal album, listing it in their "Top 10 Albums of 2013".

Both of these responses helped perpetuate the idea that *Sunbather* is a black metal album. Yet when if you were to analyze it, you would be quick to realize that it is not at all black metal. It is truly closer to indie rock than it is black metal.

Most of the time when someone states that *Sunbather* is not metal, they usually chalk it up to the fact that; they wear no face paint, because the album art is pink, because they're not Satanists or church burners, or their lyrics are very personal.

Those aren't the defining reasons, because there have been, and are, plenty of widely accepted black metal bands that fit the description above, bands like Plebian Grandstand, Bosse-De-Nage and Wolves In The Throne Room. Though they appear to be similar, there is a great sonic difference between the aforementioned bands and Deafheaven.

When an uninitiated listener first listens to Deafheaven, they are met by droning and screeching guitars, followed by blast beat drums and then harsh screaming vocals to top the whole cacophony off. Though those elements are the building blocks of all black metal, it's Deafheaven's execution is what sets their music apart.

Firstly, the guitars, though dron-

ing and grating, lack the darkness that really constitutes black metal guitars. Every progression is an uplifting, major climb, and the only time there is any real drama or dissidence is when they utilize a suspended 9th chord, but even then it gently resolves into a nice major chord.

Secondly, the harsh vocals would be indicative of black metal if this album was released in the early 2000's, but in today's musical climate, George Clarke's screams could fit into any genre from the confusingly named 'post-hardcore' to indie rock.

With all that said, that sound only accounts for half of the album; the songs 'Dream House', 'Sunbather', 'Vertigo', and 'The Pecan Tree'. The other half of the album 'Irresistible', 'Please Remember' and 'Windows' are shoegaze inspired ambient pieces that consist of only guitars, distortion and sampled voice clips. These songs could easily be written off as interludes, but they take up a considerable amount of the album, lasting 12 minutes collectively, and also leaking into the tracks 'Vertigo' and 'The Pecan Tree'. These songs are slow, and if it has not been made apparent, are not black metal in the slightest.





Taking all of the above into consideration, the only genre one can comfortably give Deafheaven is indie rock. That label isn't given due to distaste for their music, but because what they create is dimensionally different from any and all black metal, they use beautiful washes of chords and a tasteful amount of feedback to separate the grinding onslaughts of their heavier tracks. They use chords progressions that could easily fit into a song by The Cranberries, but play it so fast and punishingly that it distorts to a sound that the screaming vocals of George Clarke can fit right at home in.

It is no question that what they created was a conscious effort on the part of George Clarke and Kerry McCoy, the two core members. Conscious in the sense that the two were aware that there were taking facets of black metal and utilizing them in something that is completely different. To explain further, Clarke and McCoy aren't two musicians who stumbled into accidentally making music that sounds so similar yet not quite is black metal. Obviously fans of black metal bands like Emperor, Thorns, and Enslaved they were able to lift aspects of the genre and seamlessly

combine it with shoegaze and post-rock of bands like Whirr.

This combination of metal and post-rock has left many feeling Deafheaven have bastardized their favorite genre so the tired trope of internet metal heads rears its ugly head and people start to argue about what is 'true/trvue/cult/kvlt/' which seems almost comical because Deafheaven never branded themselves as a metal band, let alone any specific sub genre. Their album was released on Deathwish records, a label owned by the singer and head of the well renowned hardcore band Converge. Some of the other albums they released in 2013 were Oathbreaker's 'Eros/Anteros', Touché Amoré's 'Is Survived By' which is lyrically emotional "emo" post-hardcore and Modern Life Is War's 'Fever Hunting' which is pretty classic hardcore punk. Sufficed to say, Deathwish is not a label that would release a black metal album. If it was released on a label like Southern Lord maybe it would make a bit more sense that people would interpret the album as black metal since Southern Lord is home to bands like All Pigs Must Die, but even then it would still be a stretch.

The whole argument of what is and is not 'true' is very silly and juvenile. Clarke said it best, stating, "I remember being 14 or 15 and having arguments about what was 'legit.' I literally couldn't care less any more." This is something one would assume comes with age, but there are still bloggers and writers like the internet's "Sergeant D" who feel it necessary to point out why Deafheaven isn't true metal and why it's bad despite the fact that he has been a part of the metal community for over 15 years and knows just as well as any other person that listens to metal that everything about Deafheaven's pre-



sentation shows that they don't even attempt to be black metal.

When was the last time a black metal album was released with a cover that was almost entirely pink? There never has been, and there probably never will be, because that is an aesthetic that no black metal would strive for, and yet Deafheaven strives for it.

Deafheaven have never tried to insinuate they were black metal; nothing about what they have done is black metal. Is that a bad thing? No, absolutely not, because what they have done is amazing. They are just victims of the genre game that plagues our current music generation where people feel that they have to categorize everything they listen to, when it is just not necessary.

It's hard to deny that half of the fame that Sunbather has garnered has been due to the fact that people are putting it on a pedestal, saying it's a genre defying album, which is unfortunate because it really distracts people and is propelling the album in to popular culture for the wrong reason. It shouldn't be popular because the album cover is pink and the music is aggressive (Plus Boris already did that in 2006), or because an author interprets the album as

a big middle finger to black metal, but because the music is fantastic and a skillful fusion of distinct sounds that should belong in a genre by itself rather than a near dead European music movement.

So it may not be Darkthrone or Burzum, but it is damned good. So you should get over it, and get into it. ♦

Words:  
Marcus Gunn  
Images:  
John Vantine



## OTHER 2013 DEATHWISH RELEASES



Oathbreaker  
*Eros/Anteros*



Touché Amoré  
*Is Survived By*



Modern Life Is War  
*Fever Hunting*



# OUTWIT OUTLAST OUTBEER

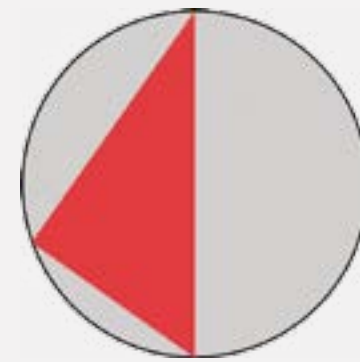
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# Why you need a new Turn Table

With the progression of technology in the recent years, it has come to a point where that nice Rega turntable you bought for \$900 back in the 80's is now obsolete, because of this day and age of vinyl being a hobby of audiophiles, turntable technology has evolved by leaps and bounds, and unless you own a \$1500+ Bang & Olufsen, chances are you need a new turntable. And probably a 180 gram repress of your favourite Pink Floyd// The Beatles// Led Zeppelin album.



## Cartridges

New improvements in the science of magnetic cartridges has made them almost 4 times as light, and have twice the sonic range as they once did. The electromagnetic magnet of yesteryear's ceramic cartridges has been replaced by a permanent magnet.

Without going into the scientific mumbo jumbo, this means that weight of the tracking force can be greatly reduced, which reduces the wear on your records.

## Preamps

Preamps prepare the signal coming from your turntable for your amplifier. They can drastically increase a sound system's sonic range, and reduce sibilance. Further effects can be heard when a tube amplifier is used. The tubes from the preamp help strengthen the turntable signal even further, making what is played sound more full. Every record playing setup can benefit from a preamp, and they are essential for the best sonic experience.



## Tone Arms

Some of the best bang for your buck, modern tonearms are made from carbon fiber, which reduces the force needed for your tonearm to follow the grooves of the vinyl. This results in less degradation of the grooves of your record.

They are engineered to avoid standing wave reflections (feedback and interference), and almost all use a Linn standard mounts so creating a custom turntable is very easy.

## Acrylic Platters

Platters are the spinning piece of metal or ceramic that a record spins on when being played. When a platter is made of acrylic, it greatly reduces resonance, and dims the very bright, almost twangy high end sounds some records have. Their benefits are heard best when paired with a Ortofon 2M Red, Blue, Bronze or Black Cartridge.



## Tracking-Weight

Tracking weight is used to keep the needle of a turntable in the groove of a record and preventing it from jumping out, all whilst not putting too much pressure on the record.

As was mentioned before, with the new iterations of Magnetic Cartridges, the required tracking weight of your tone arm is greatly reduced, therefore old tracking-weight systems can be far too heavy, so the benefits of a new tonearm extend past what was mentioned before.

## Virgin Vinyl

When records were mass produced in their heyday, it wasn't uncommon for a pressing plant to recycle old, vinyl and repress it into new records, so to get the absolute best sound from your new system, buying a 180 gram represses of your favourite albums will allow you to hear your favourite tunes on fresh, clean sounding, virgin vinyl. And who knows; maybe it'll be pressed in a cool colour?



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# Current & Coming Tours



## MAY

- Comeback Kid
- The Slackers
- Down
- Acid Mothers Temple
- Planet Smashers
- Seahaven
- Edwin Holt
- CALVAIIRE

## JUNE

- Sage Francis
- The Toasters
- Tigers Jaw
- Menzingers
- Cults
- Belvedere
- The Fall of Troy
- La Dispute

## JULY

- Subhumans
- Daggers
- Lo-Pan
- Tycho
- Cloud Kicker
- Sycamore Smith
- Albert King

## AUGUST

- Boris
- Silver Mt. Zion
- Musicmans
- Typhoon 24
- Lionize
- Koji
- Eugene "Hideaway" Bridges
- Gordian Knot





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