



JUNE 2008

DEAD CHILD

Attack

(Quarterstick Records)



The Neolithic throb and scorching metallic licks on



Attack blare like a medieval war anthem, fueled by chunky riffage, a plodding bottom end and lead singer Dahm's British power-metal screech. The groove's heavier than the psychic toll on Britney's kids, with Dead Child churning through tracks like the bubbling, ferric "Rattlesnake Chalice," the rugged thrasher "Twitch of the Death Nerve" and the sludgy gathering storm "Never Bet the Devil Your Head." While a bit more classical than your typical stoner metal jams (thanks largely to Dahm's histrionic Dio-esque howl), there's still a thick, resin-caked thrum underscoring the thunder.

Leading the riff parade are guitarists David Pajo and Michael McMahan, switching readily from high-wire arpeggios to monolithic throb, ever in service to the shadowy arch darkness of their sound. It's hard to say what possessed Pajo—a member of seminal post-rock acts Slint and Tortoise, and a collaborator with alt-country icon Will Oldham—to throw down like this, but he also cast his lot with Billy Corgan in Zwan, so he's clearly willing to try anything. There's nothing to suggest this is a joke, but metal is so frequently over-the-top, how could you tell?

Certainly, the musicianship is tight and the sonics suitably hefty. The Chicago quintet splice freely between genres: "Eye to Brain" blends the ballast of black metal with flights of prog-metal fancy, while "Wasp Riot" feels like British power metal, though the rhythm's more hardcore. Dead Child's *Attack* is relentless without being overwhelming, the insistent, piston-like pulse feeding piledriver guitars and a cymbal-shaking rumble. All in all, an impressive debut.—Chris Parker