

It won't be an exaggeration to say that increasingly more Danish bands are gaining well-earned praise and recognition lately. Black metallers from **Afsky**, the hardcore group **EYES** or my absolute favourites from the death/doom **Konvent** are just a few examples of bands well worthy of your time.

Similarly, the return of **Solbrud** is nothing short of spectacular – the Danish band has very recently released a double album which, symbolically, is entitled simply **IIII** as the fourth studio album in their discography. For this record, the four members of the band have, individually, composed music (and also written the lyrics) for one vinyl side each – this way, the vinyl sides from A to D ended up each composed by a different artist playing in **Solbrud**. In total, these four different versions of their music reach the impressive length of an hour and a half.

Before the album release, the single tracks have already promised an intriguing full-length, but it isn't until a thorough listen of **IIII** that one can really go through an emotional rollercoaster. To cut a long story short, side A could be described as the calm before the storm with its atmospheric black metal spirit, while side B - as the band's trademark sound filled with tempo changes, which build tension and even suspense. Next comes side C, another variety of the band's sound, overflowing with ideas and sonic madness spanning over genres (which itself is enough to make one's head spin), and finally side D is an impressive final of the album. To cut a long story very short: every avid listener of black metal should find something for themselves on this record.

Masterful arrangements are among the album's strongest suits, which one can hear already on the opener **Hvile**. A serene, acoustic intro gradually moves into proper atmospheric black metal, transforming into the sound which most of **Solbrud**'s listeners are already used to. Melodies are in abundance here, just as Scandinavian darkness and the harsh, emotion-filled vocals which sound just like ripped straight out from the throat.

It all works together perfectly and stays in a good balance, since almost every time the music speeds up to near-cacophonous aggression, it is confronted by a calmer, sometimes even ethereal sounding-parts. Ideas gathered on **IIII** tend to be complex and multi-layered, and the black metal core of the band's music also has an atmospheric (and even doomy) side to it.

There are some surprises as well – such as side B with the composition divided into four parts (yes, the number four makes an appearance once again!), entitled **Når Solen Brydes Del**. The acoustic motif, which begins this 'new chapter' of the album, resembles a campfire tale told at nighttime, leading the listener further into the record, which features melancholy-tinged post-black metal. The pace slows down at times, creating an eerie ambiance, and parts sung by choirs are another element which fits perfectly into the dark atmosphere created by the band.

Still, sides C and D were what ultimately stole my darkness-loving heart. The multitude of ideas on the former one can be heard on **Ædelråd**, where cacophony and melancholy create a chilling ambiance or **Sjæleskrig** providing for the perfect combination of post-metal with atmospheric black metal - and even venturing towards more prog-inspired soundscapes at times. The latter of these tracks is an instrumental through and through, without the harshness typical to metal or dense wall of sound. Without a doubt, it's a completely different side of the band's own style, which stays cold and grim enough to stay within **Solbrud**'s unique sound. Speaking of the band's style, one absolutely can't ignore my favourite on this album, **En Ild Som Tusind Sole**. The slow, ominous intro is at the same time simple and effective as hell. The track is packed with sulphurous black metal and bone-chilling riffs, and doesn't fail to entertain - and even surprise - the listener with changes in tempo. The work of destruction is complete when a shrieking, tormented vocal hits with full force, and later on we can even expect a wink at the listener with the repetition of the motif from **En Ild Som Tusind Sole**. It eventually returns on the final track, aptly entitled **Postludium**.

Regardless of what the listener expects from **IIII** – a noisy, black metal assault and downright cacophonous wall of sound such as the one on **Aske**, serene passages just like **Hvile** and **Sjæleskrig** have to offer or eclecticism arranged with a great deal of creativity (**Ædelråd** and **En Ild Som Tusind Sole** are perfect examples of it) – **Solbrud** have a lot to offer. Just as importantly, the band manages to immerse their audience in the soundscape which they so masterfully create. All of the parts that create their newest full-length work together like magic and hit the listener with cold, rawness and a reasonable amount of melody all at once.

Rating: 8/10