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## SuperNova Records

Steve Austin's new label is poised to explode



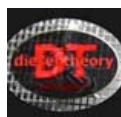
By : [Etan Rosenbloom](#)

Consider the past year in the life of Steve Austin a big middle finger to middle age. The respected extreme metal producer/engineer (Lamb of God, Deadguy, Converge) and creative force behind semi-legendary metallic noiseniks Today Is the Day hit forty in 2006, but these days he's more active than ever. Amid moving his base of operations to Nashville, writing and recording Today Is the Day's first album in three years, prepping for a month-long North American tour that finds him fronting two bands, and keeping up his knobwork for other acts, Austin launched his own record label, SuperNova.

Judging by its first two sets of releases, SuperNova looks to follow in the tradition of SST, Dischord, Earache and Southern Lord, all of which were founded by influential musicians as homes for their own bands' records (in part) and ended up carving out identifiable sounds in their respective musical words. Austin takes full advantage of his CEO status by beefing up the Today Is the Day catalog with a slew of reissues, DVDs and a long-awaited new album. And given his penchant for producing and engineering only the best in outre metal, it's no surprise that Austin's a great A&R dude, too. Though the first few SuperNova signees are unknown outside of their local scenes, they've each got something to say, and *loudly*.

Only time will tell whether SuperNova will have the same success as the aforementioned labels. For right now though, the average quality of the music is pretty high. As an aid to navigating the onslaught of stuff, here's a look at the two recent batches of SuperNova releases -- released August 7 and September 18. Earplugs required.

### August 7



#### **Diesel Theory** **Diesel Theory**

The music of this New Jersey two-piece is streaked in the grubby black and gray hues of urban decay. A drum machine pounds with indomitable force; rhythm guitars chug along in simple, relentless lockstep; lead vocalist Tom Jack delivers his pain-fueled lyrics in a hoarse bark that suggests a lifetime of sucking down coal dust and factory soot. If it's all a bit monochromatically grim, that's in keeping with the industrial grind of Diesel Theory's progenitors, such as Machine Head and Prong (the band even covers the latter's "Rude Awakening"). Life in a post-apocalyptic wasteland is ugly, blunt and forceful. Same goes for Diesel Theory's debut album.

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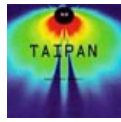
## Hoodies & More

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Band: <http://www.dieseltheory.com/>

Audio: <http://www.myspace.com/dieseltheory>

"Law of the Fishes" MP3:  
[http://www.supernovarecords.net/core/media/mp3/dt\\_lawofthe.mp3](http://www.supernovarecords.net/core/media/mp3/dt_lawofthe.mp3)



**Taipan**  
**1002: A Rock Odyssey**

Steve Austin recorded the debut album for his side project Taipan in 2001, around the same time he was prepping the double-disc *Sadness Will Prevail* with Today Is the Day. *A Rock Odyssey* is the yin to *Sadness's* yang, a short, concentrated slab of punky, old-fashioned rock 'n' roll compared to *Sadness's* sprawling noise-rock experimentation. It's refreshing to hear Austin and his bandmates (Today Is the Day bassist Chris Debari and Iron Boss drummer Pat Kennedy) drop the cerebral creativity for a second and indulge in guitar solos, rock backbeats and country ballads. Of course, this is a Steve Austin project, so there's plenty of evidence -- from the inane lyrics of "My Big Dick in Your Mouth" to the aggravating high-pitched frequency playing throughout the country-western romp "Nashville" -- that the man is serving up his meat and potatoes with a wink and a smile.

Audio: <http://www.myspace.com/taipanrocks>

"Hyenas" MP3: [http://www.supernovarecords.net/core/media/mp3/taipan\\_hyenas.mp3](http://www.supernovarecords.net/core/media/mp3/taipan_hyenas.mp3)



**Today Is the Day**  
**Willpower**

Originally released in 1994 on the mondo important noise-rock label Amphetamine Reptile, Today Is the Day's second album, *Willpower*, is its most cohesive, and probably its best. Tracks like "My First Knife" and "Sidewinder" hemorrhage with misshapen structures and spiraling noise riffs that lurch and threaten to topple over, mirroring the slow descent of a man struggling -- and, by the sound of it, failing -- to hold his shit together. This remastered version preserves *Willpower's* emotional savageness (more "heavy" than "metal"), and adds two unlisted bonus tracks. The first is a throwaway "Amazing Grace" cover, and the second is the devastating "Execution Style," recorded during the *Willpower* sessions but never before heard. This is the perfect inaugural release.

Band: <http://www.todayistheday.org/>

Audio: <http://www.myspace.com/todayistheday>

"Sidewinder" MP3: <http://www.todayistheday.org/mp3/sidewinder.mp3>

**Today Is the Day**  
**Willpower Live DVD & Today Is the Day Live DVD**

All the footage for these concert DVDs was shot live at two mid-'90s gigs in support of two of Today Is the Day's early albums, *Willpower* and its eponymous third full-length. Unfortunately, the sound quality (acceptable on the *Willpower* disc, execrable on the *Today Is the Day* disc) and home-video-style filming take away from what should have been two documents of Steve Austin and company in their prime. There are no chapter divisions, so we're forced to sit through each DVD all at once or spend a lot of time fast-forwarding. The track listings aren't quite accurate, the personnel listing misidentifies keyboardist Scott Wexton in the *Today Is the Day* liner notes, and a production defect keeps an annoying high-pitched noise bleeping intermittently for the first few minutes of the *Willpower* DVD. We do get plenty of evidence that Today Is the Day's first drummer, Brad Elrod, was a motherfucker of a musician. Other than that, these DVDs are inessential, even pointless. *Willpower* was already reissued through SuperNova, and the self-titled reissue is coming soon, so you gotta wonder why these DVDs weren't just attached as value-adds rather than wasting two separate releases on them.

## September 18



**Christine**  
**Badasser**

The stench of a thousand sweaty bikers commingles with the pleasant aroma of warm beer and pot smoke on the second full-length from Nashville's Christine. "Hell yeah!" moments abound as the hard-charging punk-metal of "How We Roll" collides into cosmic Kyuss worship on "Jaundice" and a seriously damaged southern doom blues jam, appropriately titled "Motherfucker."

Maybe it should be the measure of a great metal band that it can throw in a beautiful ballad amid the jackboot rhythms without coming off as contrived (Christine does it with "Grave Lily"). Christine does everything right on *Badasser*, and that includes the vocals, which alternate between the bluesy, ballsy pipes of siren Stephanie "Stevie" Bailey and bass man Devin Pena's convincing hell bellow. "Badasser" isn't really a word, but we'll let Christine have it.

Band: <http://www.christinefury.com/>

Audio: <http://www.myspace.com/christine>

"Conquistador"

MP3:

[http://www.supernovarecords.net/core/media/mp3/christine\\_conquistador.mp3](http://www.supernovarecords.net/core/media/mp3/christine_conquistador.mp3)



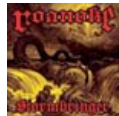
**Defcon 4**  
***The Bad Road***

The "Defcon" scale measures the level of readiness of the U.S. military and intelligence divisions. The members of Boston's Defcon 4 probably had the scale inverted -- number four is just one level more secure than the standard during peacetime conditions -- because their third album, *The Bad Road*, grinds and chugs and spits like the band's ready for some large-scale carnage. Defcon 4 tosses unrefined chunks of sludge metal, filthy noise-metal grooves and O.G. hardcore (drummer James Powers was a member of seminal Boston punk band Last Rights) into a nuclear centrifuge till they're separated into four "acts," each documenting one man's downward spiral. It's an unpredictable, chaotic vomiting session of an album. *The Bad Road* contains just more than twenty minutes of artful destruction, guaranteed to leave a mess.

Audio: <http://www.myspace.com/defcon4>

"Act III: Plotting and Planning" MP3:

[http://www.supernovarecords.net/core/media/mp3/defcon4\\_plottingplanning.mp3](http://www.supernovarecords.net/core/media/mp3/defcon4_plottingplanning.mp3)



**Roanoke**  
***Stormbringer***

Every metal imprint worth its weight in lead needs a sludge band, and Steve Austin's unearthed a damn fine one in Roanoke, from Portland, Oregon. This re-release of the trio's debut deals a risky opening hand with the title track, built of three tectonic riffs that are repeated incessantly and with minimal variation over an endless thirty-two minutes (give or take a couple on either end for some abyssal rumblings). The experience should be painful even for doom fanatics, but those three bottom-dwelling riffs shake down through the spine and into the earth, becoming the very foundation we walk on for half an hour. The band's snail-paced chug feels just as elementally heavy the fiftieth time as it did the first, and leading man Todd Janeczek's hoarse death-metal growl is just right, sounding like his lungs have collapsed under the weight of his own guitar playing. The two tracks exclusive to the SuperNova release are shorter but just as brutish: The rhythm section swings like a medieval mace to the head in "Right Hand of Stone," and "Frostheart" plows through the early Sabbath playbook before disappearing into low-end feedback. *Stormbringer* is grim, primal and suffocating -- everything a sludge metal album should be.

Band: <http://www.roanokenoise.net/>

Audio: <http://www.myspace.com/roanokedoom>

"Right Hand of Stone" MP3:

[http://www.supernovarecords.net/core/media/mp3/roanoke\\_righthandof.mp3](http://www.supernovarecords.net/core/media/mp3/roanoke_righthandof.mp3)



**Today Is the Day**  
***Axis of Eden***

The big story on the eighth Today Is the Day album is that Steve Austin tapped uber-qualified Derek Roddy (ex-Nile/Hate Eternal) for the rotating drummer position, formerly occupied by Mastodon's Brann Dailor and the Esoteric's Marshall Kilpatric, among others. He sounds great, but the bigger story is that *Axis of Eden* is fucking fantastic. It out-heavies the band's venomous previous album, *Kiss the Pig*, and its varied tempos and instrumentation dole out the punishment in every way imaginable. *Axis of Eden* is a grand summary of Today Is the Day's entire history, grafting the emotional expanse of the band's early records with the outright brutality of its later ones. Austin's strangled vocal tracking and the album's odd, midrange-heavy mixing are at first a bother, though after a while the tinny production becomes the only barrier between *Axis of Eden* and your imminent demise.

"Broken Promises and Dead Dreams" MP3:  
[http://www.supernovarecords.net/core/media/mp3/titd\\_brokenpromises.mp3](http://www.supernovarecords.net/core/media/mp3/titd_brokenpromises.mp3)

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November 7, 2007

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