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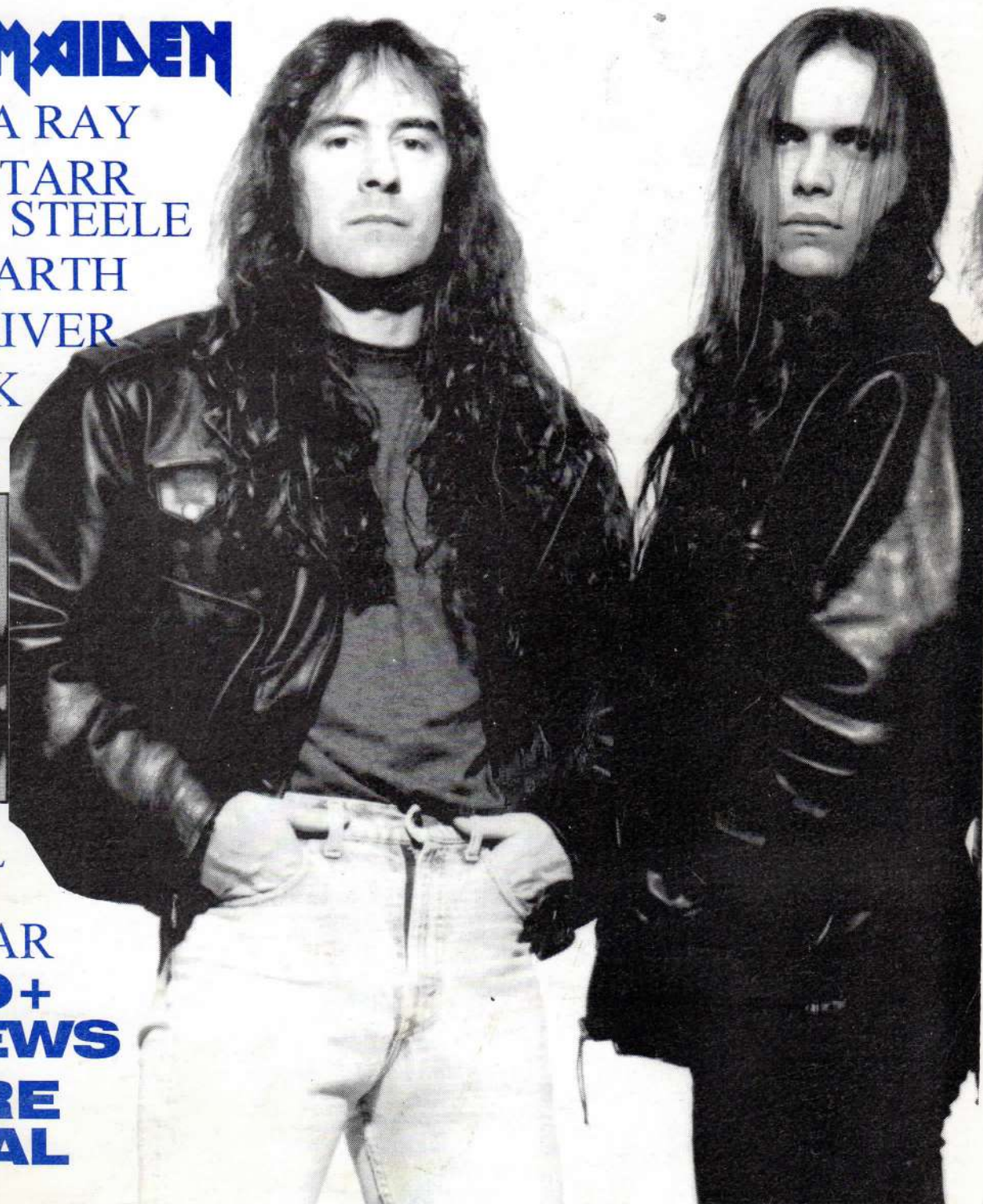
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EDITOR'S NOTE

Hello, and welcome to another issue. As you can see, SENTINEL STEEL has again doubled its page count, bringing you even more true metal. But I can't do this again--280 pages would be a bit crazy, wouldn't it? I'm going to do my best to release SENTINEL STEEL #4 within 6 months of #3's release. I have several articles set to go (HELSTAR Part 2, Jack Starr Part 2, and a few other surprises). We'll see what happens. This is my full time job now (combined with the mailorder catalog and the record label), as I've put my art career on hold. I thank everyone who expressed interest in my work--I've done a cover or two for other zines, and demo/CD illustrations may appear here and there, as art will always be my first love (and I will return to it eventually).

But right now, I've got a bigger concern in front of me: the return of real metal to America. It's getting easier to buy the music these days, but there is still a major lack of shows, and radio/TV promotion. With the SENTINEL STEEL MUSIC label now active, I am going to do my best to set up some 'true metal' shows here on the East Coast. There's some great bands around this area, like AGRESSOR, SYMPHONY X, RIOT, MANOWAR, ADVOCATE, CROSSFIRE, VIRGIN STEELE, MERCURY RISING, ZANDELLE, SHADOW GALLERY, and, of course, GOTHIC KNIGHTS (plus many other bands--sorry for the miss!). These shows will be strictly power/progressive/traditional metal--and besides the music there will be a gathering of other local zines (hello CROM, METAL CRUSADE, etc!), labels, etc. Does that sound cool? Attendance is very important--not only because you're gonna have the time of your life--but because it shows the club owners that 'real' metal is happening. And that means more shows, and better conditions for foreign bands to cross the Atlantic. I can see GAMMA RAY, ANGRA, and others coming to the States. Let's see what we can do together, okay? I'll keep you posted on the shows....

As you look through this 3rd issue, you will notice that it looks and reads very nicely. I'm very proud of this issue. Not only does it entertain, but it informs, and makes a statement. I like that. The immense contributions of Craig Wisnom and 'contest winner' Natalie Vlahovic are a big part of the success of this magazine. I want you to remember that. They devoted countless hours to this project, when they could have put out more copies of their own newsletter (Craig's wonderful 'Ascendant Strains') or raise their GPA several points higher (Natlle and Babson). Many thanks go out to the other SENTINEL STEEL contributors, too.

Because of the volume of mail I receive, it is getting more and more difficult to write back to casual correspondences...please realize that letters with pressing urgency or business will receive priority handling, while letters with general questions (like 'whatever happened to...' or 'what do you think of this...') will receive replies that might take a couple of months. I'm sorry about this, and I thank you for your patience. I handle all day-to-day operations myself, and that necessitates juggling a few jobs at once. I am continuously expanding SENTINEL STEEL, as you know.

Thanks for your time and enjoy the mag. If you see a guy wearing a SENTINEL STEEL shirt at a GOTHIC KNIGHTS show (or someone who you think may be me), don't leave without saying hello.....Denis

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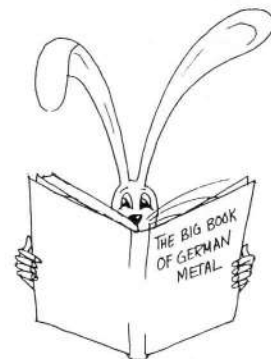
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- ANGRA-Holy Land
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 - RAGE-Black In Mind
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GAMMA RAY



Finally! After Kai Hansen cleansed himself, experimenting with all the metal styles he wanted to touch upon (in the albums *Heading for Tomorrow*, *Sigh No More*, and *Insanity and Genius*), the gifted German musician (ex-HELLOWEEN guitarist for all you newcomers!) finally delivered in 1995 with the near masterpiece *Land of the Free*. Quickly GAMMA RAY's most successful disc to date, Kai is riding the skies in 1996, celebrating with a new EP, a live album, and 2 songs (one with Scheepers) on the PRIEST tribute collections. Kai Hansen, one of heavy metal's greatest heroes, possessing virtuous talents on the guitar, and a hugely memorable voice, fulfills one of my dreams, and speaks to SENTINEL STEEL (in between mouthfuls of Chinese food, no less!) from his recording studio.

What are you doing right now in the studio?

At the moment we are working on our live tapes. We recorded five shows on the Europe tour, and we're going to take the best parts out of it and put it on one live album.

That will be the new thing after the EP?

Exactly.

And so now you have this new EP, has it come out yet?

Uhm, it's on the way, not yet. It should have been, I think it will come at the end of February, could have been a little earlier but they fucked something up with the cover.

Ah.

The colors were not as they should have been, so I had to stop it, and do it again.

What's the title of the EP, and what songs will be on there?

Ok, the title is *Silent Miracles*, and it's basically, like, well, like say pompous ballads, ethereal anthems. That was an alternative title. Uhm, anyways, it's four ballad like songs, one is "The Silence" from the *Heading For Tomorrow* album, a new version, with new vocals, and uh, little different arrangement.

How many songs total?

Uh, four. The playing time is well over twenty

minutes.

Except for "The Silence", it will be new material?

Uhm, one is taken from *Land of the Free*, "Farewell", it's only remastered; the real new ones, are one song called "Miracle", which is in fact a ballad version of "Man on a Mission." Different lyrics, different vocal lines, total different arrangement, but you can hear the chorus. I mean the chorus line is basically the same. It just happened, because we were fucking around in the rehearsal room with that song, and playing a ska version, a blues version, whatever, so finally we had this slow ballad type version. We all liked it very much, so on the recording for *Land of the Free*, we recorded already drums and bass and rhythm guitars, so we didn't make it to put it on the album, but now we finished it, so it's going to be on that EP. And the fourth song is basically piano and vocals, which was born on one night when Dirk and me were in the studio, and he was playing piano, and I was just singing along, and we had the idea. We had it since *Land of the Free* recordings, but we actually made it to recording, put some orchestral sounds on top, so it's just a short dream away thing.

You apparently recorded a JUDAS PRIEST cover with Ralf Scheepers?

No, not with Ralf, we recorded one just for us, or just by us, recorded "Victim of Changes", it sounds pretty much like between the old album, what's it, *Sad Wings of Destiny*, yeah, I think so, or was it *Sin After Sin*. I don't remember which album. And the *Unleashed in the East* album. Something in between that. But it has come out very, very

good, we're satisfied. What we're going to do later on is we're gonna make a version of "Desert Plains", and Ralf's gonna sing on it.

"Desert Plains"? Yeah, because Century Media has been telling me that when they put out the JUDAS PRIEST Tribute collection, it's going to be billed as Ralf Scheepers and GAMMA RAY, or GAMMA RAY and Ralf Scheepers.

Yeah, that's for part two then, because we can't make it for part one. There's two parts planned, and "Victim of Changes" is going to be on the first part, as it's planned now, and the song with Ralf, "Desert Plains", is going to be on the second issue.

So you're still getting along with Ralf, there's no problems?

No, definitely not, it was in the beginning, it was a little okay, it's like if you break up a relationship it's always some strange feeling that's left for sure, and we all had our point of view, which were for sure a little different here and there. But we are grown up, we are able to get along, and with Ralf it's no problem, he's a real nice guy. I wish him all the best for his future.

He'll be on his own?

Yeah, right exactly. Yeah, he's thinking about a revival of TYRAN PACE.

That sounds interesting. But the JUDAS PRIEST gig isn't going to happen for him?

Uhm, I don't know, I can't say, because he doesn't know more than I do, or anybody else, the situation

is that **PRIEST** finally, I've read in an interview with the band, that they have new songs, going to be better than **Painkiller**, even more aggressive and brutal, so they have their 8, or 10 or 11 singers are left, from a hundred and so and so. I don't know if Ralf is between these 8 or 11 guys. They don't give any information out.

Okay, all these...The EP, the Live disc, were these done with Charlie Bauerfeind?

Uhm, you mean **Silent Miracles**, and the live recordings, is he going to be? No, that's totally different, the EP, what was left to record and mix was done by Dirk and me, and the live thing will be, the recordings were done by Charlie's brother, and a guy he works with, they have a mobile, and they recorded it, and the whole post production is going to be done by Dirk and me.

Now didn't you self produce **Heading For Tomorrow**?

Yep, exactly. I was not engineering that, so this time we are producing and engineering.

Who engineered **Heading For Tomorrow**?

Uh, it was an unknown guy called Ralf Krause.

Okay, because I think **Heading For Tomorrow** has the cleanest sound, but also it has the best, I mean the drum sound, the guitar sound, it's very like clean and precise.

Yeah, that's what I wanted in these days, I was like, we took a long long time to set up the sound, I knew exactly what I want, I wanted a sound in the way, in

a seven piece direction, not so huge from the frequency spectrum, because if you play while you listen to other modern productions, it sounds small, but it's very direct, that's what I wanted, very compact and uhm, it's in the end what I wanted at that time.

I also liked **Sigh No More** and that was done with...

Tommy Newton.

Yeah, that also had a great sound, very heavy, very heavy sound, that was good too, I'm not...you may have read in **Sentinel Steel 2 I'm not the biggest fan of Charlie Bauerfeind, I don't like his sound, it's too, it doesn't have good clarity, and your rhythm guitar on Land of the Free was very..**

Exactly. He's very much hi-fi, you know, I call it, it's not so much mid range, it's not heavy metal, to sum it up in the end.

So you probably won't use him again?

Uhm, I don't know, at the moment I don't want to say no, or yes, it's just like I don't think so, but..

What's the chances of you working again with Hansen or Newton, or even Harris Johns? What's the chances of that happening?

Harris...the thing is that, I mean, like you go out for a studio, really works out very well, it's always that for a big production of the album we might need a helping hand, somebody who's the final decision between Dirk and me and the rest of the band. With Hansen, I think it would be strange because

he's now like home producer of **HELLOWEEN**, it would be a strange situation there's still this comparison and all that. And basically, I like the sound of **Masters of the Rings** was good, but the new one sounds awful.

Oh it does? I haven't heard **The Time of the Oath**. Did Hansen produce it?

Yep.

And it sounds terrible?

Yep.

Because, **Master of the Rings**, soundwise was great, the songs were okay,

Yeah, the sound was really good, I was really impressed, I was like, WOW! But in the end, with Tommy Newton, I didn't hear from him for a hundred years, the last thing he did was I think **CONCEPTION**, I didn't like the sound of that one as well. So **Sigh No More** was okay to do with him, but in the end it could have been better...Not soundwise, the sound was okay, but the guitars were not too much my favorite. It could have been more fat. But in the end, the sound is not always to be planned, sometimes things just happen. You can't always have what you want to have.

Do you have new material ready to go for the next studio album?

We have ideas, nothing fixed yet. And we can take our time for it, because now we have the live thing going on now. It's a good thing to get these things out. It's like the more I hear it, the more I have the

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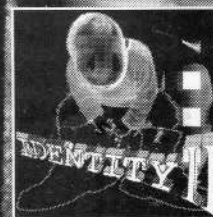
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CONCEPTION 14. ROLL THE FIRE 15. AND I CLOSE MY EYES
16. THE PROMISER 17. PARALLEL MINDS 18. BLACK ON BLACK



feeling that it's going to be really, really good.

Were you happy with the *Power of Metal* performance and sound?

No, not at all.

Why, tell me.

Because the *Power of Metal* was a thing, it was basically the whole recording situation, we just recorded one show, right, and it was video and audio recording, so the problem with that was all the band was kind of nervous, then it was in our hometown, Hamburg, which makes it even more difficult, you know...the prophet's in his own land. Sometimes strange, it's... So, we had the sound on the tapes was not really good, the guy who recorded it didn't really do a good job. And we had to do a lot of editing, and somehow we lost a lot of what originally our live performance could be.

I thought, like on the fast songs, "Tribute to the Past", "Before the Storm", and especially on the little *HELLOWEEN* medley, I thought it was really, really great, and some of those songs even sounded like intense *Walls of Jericho* type material, it sounded really good. But then the slower material.... I don't know if you captured that.

No, no not really, the atmosphere was not there, and that's for the slower songs we need always need some kind of res- I don't know, there must be some magic, and if it's not there, you can't reproduce it in the studio, no matter what you dub or do, it's not possible. I know what you mean with the live, with the fast songs. But if you listen to what we have now on tape, at that time we had to do a lot of dubbing, and editing, as I said, and it was so not real live, live-live. It was live studio live. You know. That was a pity. This, what we have now is very rough, and some songs, it's exactly what you say, we choose a version of, I can choose between a version from Milano or for Madrid for "Ride the Sky", we choose Madrid, because from the playing, it sounded so much like the type of playing on *Walls of Jericho*, very, very energetic

Is that going to be a complete "Ride the Sky", or a medley?

No, no medley.

Ah, so from the *HELLOWEEN* days there'll be "Ride the Sky"...

Yeah, we have a recording of "Future World", but we're not sure if we're gonna use it for this album, or maybe not.

Uhm, any other *HELLOWEEN* songs, or medleys show up?

No.

Do you have an idea of what the track listing is going to be?

Oh my god, no. I mean, I can tell you which songs we played and recorded, but what, what on the album, what's going to be on the album is not set, because we keep it open to decide after the mix, to hear what comes out best, or what comes best in the road together. Because we have material for 90 minutes, and on a CD you can put 72, I believe. We don't want to make it too long. I don't like long

albums. That's the real pity of the CD, you know, because people, for these bonus track situations, always have to put 2 more songs on it, or 3 or 4, and everyone's releasing so long CD's, and after 50 minutes, I'm fed up with any band, no matter how I like it. It's like, alright, enough now. I'd rather listen to shorter albums, which are really good, catchy, and which I play, if I have listened through, I put it on from the top again, because I like it so much, that's what I rather like.

Oh I agree, I agree 100 percent, and I think that's what hurt *RAGE* and *RUNNING WILD*.

Definitely.

Yeah, their albums are way too long. Because nobody in America can see your concerts, what songs do you play live?

Okay, I can get my track list...We have "Land of the Free", "Man on a Mission", "Rebellion", "Space Eater", "Fairy Tale", "Tribute to the Past", "Heal Me", "Saviour", "Abyss of the Void", "Ride the Sky", "Heading for Tomorrow", "Gods of Deliverance", "Future World", "Heavy Metal Mania", "Lust for Life", "The Silence", and sometimes "Rich and Famous"...So that's what we play on these Europe shows.

I can't wait to get that live CD, that'll be great.

I guess you'll like it, it's gonna be really good.

Ok, the biggest question, everybody calls me up asking me about this big rumor about a *Michael Kiske, Adrian Smith, and Kai Hansen* piece of work; is there such a thing? Is there such a group?

Yeah, that's true, that's happening, or already happened, because it's basically Michael's solo project after quitting *HELLOWEEN*, so he did some work on *Land of the Free*, "Time to Break Free" and so in return, he had the idea before I asked him for "Time to Break Free", that he called me and asked, "You know, my solo project, I want to get it going, would you like to play some guitar on it, or maybe write a song or something," and I said, "Yeah, cool, I'll do it." And so finally it happened that Adrian, Michael and me wrote one song together, at least, and Adrian and me, we played a lot of guitar on his album.

Was that something special for you, playing with one of your heroes, Adrian Smith?

Oh yeah, sure, I grew up on *IRON MAIDEN* and all that, so it was really cool, I have a good understanding with Adrian, he's a real nice guy, good guitar player. So we were like, it was really fun working with him, because we like picked up abilities like of each other, directly processed them on the album.

What kind of a sound does the whole album have, is it a *HELLOWEEN*ish sound, is it a rock and roll sound?

No, it's going to be different, I mean, the whole project, Michael has a big variety of songs, they are from basic heavy metal to grungier sounds, or grungier songs, and some experimental things with, well, more, I don't know, etheric..

So it may be like *Chameleon* possibly, with lots of

different influences. Like the **Chameleon** album.

A bit, a bit like that, but I think it's better.

Anything is better, I think; I didn't like **Chameleon**.

Yeah, me neither.

And that Michael Kiske solo CD has, I believe, come out in Japan; is that going to be the only release, in Japan, or do you know? Will it come out in Germany and Europe?

It will come out in Europe as well, for sure, so the deal was fixed very late now, but I think he's on Castle Communications as well.

You get along very well with Michael, is there any possible projects where he sings more on your albums, or is there any possibility of him actually joining **GAMMA RAY**?

No, no I don't think so, I mean you never know, I would never say never, therefore I have experience too much of groups, in the music business, but at the moment it's like he has his thing going, and his musical taste is different, like his way of going through music, but anyways, you know, I'm not so close to only one thing that I wouldn't say, I wouldn't say no now. But I don't think he would join **GAMMA RAY**, so that it's just gonna be on projects or whatever. Because **GAMMA RAY** is finally now on a way where we have found a style or where we have our own identity, which is good for us.

I think so too, because **Land** was your most successful, is that right? So far how many units have you sold?

I don't have any numbers, I only have numbers from Japan, but from Europe I'm still waiting.

How did it do in Japan?

Japan was, nearly 80,000 now.

I shouldn't make comparisons, but I think **Land** was stronger than **Master of the Rings** and **Master of the Rings** did 120 or 150.

Yeah, but they had the bonus of like uniting the **PINK CREAM '69** fans, and **PINK CREAM '69** was strong as well, and even **Chameleon** sold 80,000. **HELLOWEEN** is still this strong, they're a big name, you know, so because people tend to just like buy names, and not music.

Exactly, exactly. Is there still a little bit of competition between **GAMMA RAY** and **HELLOWEEN**? Do you feel any competition? How do you get along with (Michael) Weikath? There's a lot of rumors you know, bad rumors, about...

To be honest I don't like the guy, and I'm not talking to him.

Just personal differences.

Yeah.

Because, in America, we never get any news here, so it's always just 2nd or 3rd hand information and sometimes things are untrue, so it's bad for European bands sometimes.

I could give you some help with our fan club, because we're releasing like, every 3 months, called News of the Rays, it's like, well, like a little fanzine. There's a lot of information in there, because some of the articles or some stuff is written by ourselves, some is by the guys, so it's always a good mix. And they've got a German and an English issue.

That would be great if I could be on your mailing list. I could tell people about the fan club, and they can write to the fan club.

Definitely, so we got two varieties, it's like, it's called the **GAMMA RAY** Schizoid Clan, and we've got the normal planners, and the active planners, and they pay like now, \$50 a year, and they can obtain, if they ever get to a concert they can get backstage, and get free entrance, or get cheaper merchandise, or they can get News of the Rays.

How's your relations with Karl Walterbach?

Uh, so far quite good, I never had big problems with Karl, always, I know he's a businessman, and all that, and he's a good businessman, that means that you always have to take care of your side, if you just let things go, people take everything from you; and I have a good basis with him, I'm able to talk with him, and if there's things going wrong, we always have sorted it out somehow.

So what was this about **Keeper Part II, Keeper Part I**, about the gold records and stuff, I mean you've read his interview where he talks about the **IRON MAIDEN** management coming and wanting to have **HELLOWEEN**, what's your views on that?

It's very hard to say. In general, it's always like that, management costs money, and we had a German management, and finally we had the **IRON MAIDEN** management, which took a lot of money for their work, and tried to, to get more influence on the band on everybody, so the problem was that the band was no union, there was no unity, and uhm, most of the guys didn't care about what was happening around, I mean business wise, just as long as there's some money every month, and that's not all, I mean, therefore you have so responsible for yourself.

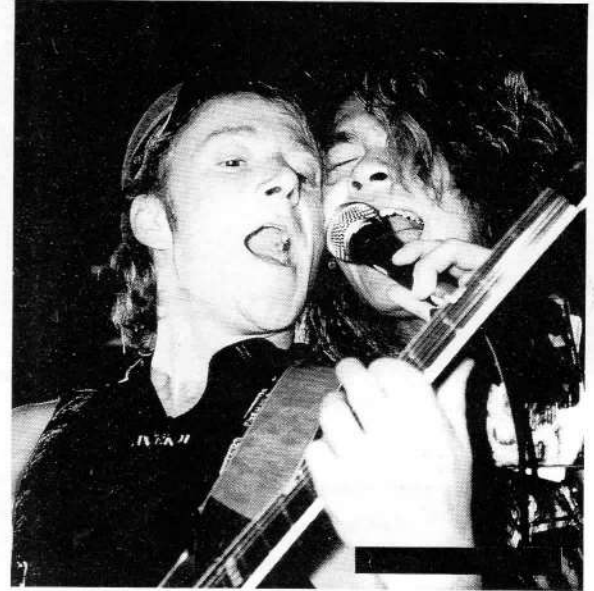
So regarding all the gold records, Karl Walterbach was right in saying that this was all just said to split from Noise.

I mean they [Sanctuary Music] brought the band to the situation, you know, and uh, I was not there any more, when the split with Noise came, I was already out, so I was not involved in that, I was just looking on it from the outside, and then I saw that the band didn't have any, they didn't know shit, you know, it was just like the management says alright, the record company or they have made mistakes on the accounts, so yeah...It was just like the band believed everything they said.

Ah, okay. So, by the time **HELLOWEEN** and **Noise** had all their arguments you were doing **Heading For Tomorrow**.

Exactly.

And your relations with **BLIND GUARDIAN**? **Imaginations from the Other Side** seems to be very popular here in America. I didn't like it at all, but, how did your relations with **BLIND GUARDIAN** happen, and what did you think of the



'87~'89

MICHAEL WEIKATH (g)
KAI HANSEN (g)
MICHAEL KISKE (vo)
MARKUS GROSSKOPF (b)
INGO SCHWICHTENBERG (ds)



new album, which doesn't have you guesting on it for a change?

Well, I got to know the guys some years ago, like on the first album, which I worked on, I hopped in the studio, the guy who owned the record company they were on at that time asked me.

Charly Rinne?

Yeah, Charly Rinne, he asked me if I was willing to play some guitar, on their album, you know, if I wouldn't mind to use my name for promotion as well. Well if I like the music and the band I will do it, and so I had a look in the studio and I liked the band and I liked the music, so it was just like the beginning of a friendship.

And what's your favorite BLIND GUARDIAN album?

Mmmm, the one before...*Somewhere Far Beyond*...

You wrote a song with BLIND GUARDIAN on there, I believe. My favorite is Tales from the Twilight World. What did you think of Imaginations?

Mmm..

I mean, they used a big name producer, Flemming Rasmussen, and what...

They didn't use him for the big name, they used him because they liked his work.

Oh yeah, I mean, he did great work...before.

But in the end, it's, I don't, the production is okay I think.

It's horrible, horrible production.

You think so?

Oh, I mean, it doesn't sound like a Flemming Rasmussen production, if you compare it to Master of Puppets or ARTILLERY or to CHROMING ROSE...

But that's not up to Fleming, **BLIND GUARDIAN** tend to put a lot of overdubs and stuff in their music, and the more you put on, the more fuller the sound gets, and the heavier it is to mix it, to get a clear sound. Less stuff on it you get a more clear sound. But anyway, that's their style. I thought, the only thing I have about *Imaginations* compared to *Somewhere Far Beyond* it's not so catchy.

Exactly. It's like, they have very nice melodies, and very nice ideas, but they don't have flow...they don't have flow to the songwriting. But I'll save that for the BLIND GUARDIAN interview if I ever do one. Let me go back over the Death Metal compilation, was that the first appearance of HELLOWEEN on vinyl ever?

Exactly.

How long had HELLOWEEN been around before Death Metal, which was 1983, 1984?

Not, only short before that, we formed actually, I was before that with Ingo (Schwichtenberg) and Marcus (Grosskopf) a long time.

What was the band name?

We had many. **SECOND HELL**, before that we had...

GENTRY?

GENTRY, exactly. **GENTRY** and **IRON FIST**.

IRON FIST (Chuckles) You were playing in the late 70's, early eighties, when did you first become serious about being a musician, what year?

Serious? Hmm, good question. I picked up a guitar at 12, I started to take it more serious...I started with Marcus when I was 16, 14, something like that..

How old are you now.

(Chuckles)

In your thirties

Thirties. 33.

Well, you're still very young, don't worry. Okay, so you made an appearance on the Death Metal compilation, with "Metal Invaders", and "Oersnt of Life". This is another big question, what does 'Oersnt' mean?

Earnest.

Earnest. Earnest of life, that's all that means?

Yeah, just like that. Seriousity, seriousness of life. It's maybe not so common in America, but in Germany we have a saying about that, when you get out of school, it's like the earnest of life starts.

But like Oersnt, O-E-R-N-S-T, isn't a German word, is it?

No, it was just a joke, you know.

Well, will that song ever be redone, rerecorded, or is it pretty much dead?

I don't know, I don't think so. It's well, away...It was coworked with Weikath and me, and none of us are like... Maybe if once the trouble is gone

Well, hopefully the trouble will be gone, because you and Weikath had magic in the guitar playing. I am wondering if you and Dirk will ever have more dueling guitar work, you know, like harmonies; in Walls of Jericho, some of the guitar passages were just incredible. And like now, in GAMMA RAY, you are the main guitarist, and Dirk is your partner.

Exactly, you're right, I know what you mean, but, it's maybe a compromise between, something like competition, unwilling competition and good friendship.

So between you and Weikath, you had a little thing between you two where you were always competing...

In the beginning it was a healthy competition, you know, which I think is very good because it pushes you, it's very needful, and very useful, you know it's always good, but it came to a point where it was like too, it was getting too heavy. I don't know it was

starting when **Keeper Part I** came out, and I had most of the songs on **Keeper Part I**, that's where it was getting some kind of problematic.

Right now you're too friendly with Dirk to have any of that healthy competition maybe, huh?

Yeah, not really.

*Back to the **Death Metal** compilation, I asked Karl Walterbach this, and maybe you might know, who was **DARK AVENGER**?*

It was a band from Berlin, and they only existed I think for that sampler, and after that they split up.

*After the **Death Metal** compilation, did you appear anywhere else, on any other compilations, anything else, like any singles or anything, any independent releases or anything. How many demos, for instance, did you do as **HELLOWEEN**?*

Hmm, none.

No demos?

No, only rehearsal room tapes. That's what we sent to Noise actually, rehearsal room recordings.

*And then after the **Death Metal** compilation, did you do anything else before the first EP?*

No.

*And then of course, your band history after **HELLOWEEN** is pretty easy. Mike Kiske, you got him from the band **PROPHECY**, is that right?*

Yep.

*Now how did you go about finding him, and discovering him and bringing him to the band. In fact were you going to have another vocalist for **Walls of Jericho**, is that right?*

Hmm, no.

No?

No, not really. It was after **WALLS OF JERICHO**, because on tour I discovered that singing and playing live was very hard for me to do, and though my heart was more like, well, I don't know, at that time it was very important to be a guitar hero I think, or go in that direction. So I was headed for that rather than being a good singer. You know, so that was my decision to say alright, I don't mind to just play guitar, let's look for a real good singer. You know, but it must be someone really good. It was very hard, we searched for a while, and there was no one who could replace me somehow, or make it even better, and Michael (Kiske), was -- Weikath picked him up somehow, and brought him to the band. And in the beginning it was very strange, we had to get used to it, I mean, he was very young.

18?

Yeah, 18. His singing style was not that professional at that time, you know. But then after a while, it was like, yeah, let's give it a try, for **Keeper Part I** it was great working with him.

Yeah, it worked out very well, and is it true that he sang phonetically, that he couldn't speak English, so he sang it by phonetics?

Uhm, no, I don't know.

I mean, Michael Kiske, he could speak English no problem.

Yeah right.

*Because in American magazines, when **Keeper Part I** came out, everybody was saying that Kiske had to sing by phonetics; he couldn't speak English, he had to sing it a different way. But I guess that wasn't true.*

Oh, well, I don't know. (Mutual Laughter)

That may be it, except, very very bad news in 95 was the passing of Ingo, and your feelings on that?

Well, I believe what I had to say was in "Afterlife", what I can't say somehow. I was... I had still contact with him going, I was seeing him more and more, with ups and downs, he had a psychological problem, he was in therapy, and then it was better, and then again you couldn't actually really talk to him because he was somewhere else, in another world. So it was going up and down, and the final hit was when he was fired from **HELLOWEEN**, and when his father died, and so that was, that was what made him go to the train. So hard because it was at the time when we were in studio, and working on **Land of the Free**, and it came a little unexpected. Everyone knew that he's strange and hearing voices and stuff, you know, but then when his girlfriend came to us in the studio, and said well, she doesn't know what to do because Ingo is not there, and uhm, two days later she knew what happened. So finally, the theme of **Land of the Free** was so much related to all this, you know, unwillingly, there was no plan, at that time, when then when we had the song "Farewell", or "Land of the Free", all these songs that deal with these other dimensions where you might go after death, it was getting such a deep meaning suddenly...it's really strange.

*Yeah, in a way, **Land of the Free** is a good farewell to Ingo. I'm sure he'll look down from where he is and say thank you...*

Yeah, that's what I finally thought, I had a long time, it took a long time, because I grew up with Ingo, it took a long time to get through it, in the end, I've summed it up, alright, he's better off where he is now, he's somewhere, and there he's doing fine.

And you're a believer in heaven and the higher power, I suppose?

Hmm, basically I'm a believer in that I know nothing, because I think everything's possible, but for me there's no proof, and I don't have to believe that I go to heaven, to make, to give my life a sense. My life gets a sense from being here and doing what I do, and following my heart, and the big question doesn't have to be answered, it might remain a question, sometimes I would like to have an answer, but in the end it's not important. We will see, so somehow there is a belief, I believe in the miracle of nature, that there is something special, but, it might be just circumstance or by, just happening, it's a big plan maybe, of an all knowing power, you can call it God, whatever, it's not important how you call it, or what it is actually. But it might be there, and that's enough. There's a whole. And it must have positive and negative sides, to be in balance.

Exactly.

It's like a band, like band chemistry, or relationship, life in general, everything has its good and bad sides, and therefore it gets one whole thing. Cause only one side wouldn't be in balance, it would tumble around.

Exactly. That's the beauty of the earth. That's the balance. And then on the cover, everyone here calls him Fangface, I don't know what you call him, but,

Fangface, exactly.

Was that a little tribute to your past?

Yeah, sure. Heh heh, definitely, because I think, it's basically because the last time it appeared was on **Walls of Jericho**, and now I'm back to vocals, and the music somehow in that style, and so I thought it might be a good idea to let it appear again, because...I don't know it's related to that.

*Yeah, it gives the cover that little special magic, that **Walls of Jericho** magic, and I like it, I like it a lot. Well, I'm about winding it down. What's your top albums of 1995, what did you like, what stood out to you?*

Oh my god. Hmmm. I mean I always know what I like, but anytime anybody asks me, what's the album, it's like, hoo, hmmm. Okay, let me try to get something together. I like **Balls to Picasso** a lot, I like **Pride and Glory**, **Zakk Wylde**. Uhhh, I liked **Ozzy**.

Ozzmosis?

No, the one before. Or was that 94?

Yeah, that may have been '94.

Anyways, I liked it.

Okay, yeah, tell me what you like.

Uhm, I don't like the new **IRON MAIDEN** very much.

Why? The vocals, the production, the playing?

No, the production is something you can get used to, the first hearing it sounds strange, then it's like the playing you could get used to that as well, but in the end I can't get used to the vocals.

Yeah, that's what everybody says.

Yeah, I really tried, because maybe he's got something, but in the end, in the whole atmosphere on the album, it's so, I miss a little of, a lot of the energy, it's very depressive, very dark.

*So what's your favorite **IRON MAIDEN** album?*

I think it's still **Killers**.

How about from the (Bruce) Dickinson era?

Uh, **Number of the Beast**, definitely.

*After **Number of the Beast** was 1983, and the **Death Metal** compilation, you had your own career going. Is there anything else you want to say? This is your interview for America, I mean*



everybody's waiting for this, and they're waiting for a **HELLOWEEN** interview too from me.

Okay, you do the **HELLOWEEN** interview?

Have I done one? No not yet.

You gonna do one?

*I think so, because I think **Andi Deris** and **Weikath** are coming to the States for a little promotional tour, because **The Time of the Oath** is going to be released world wide at the same time. So I may do it, it just depends if...*

Okay, just if you talk to Weikath, I'm pretty sure that he'll tell you that I'm a complete asshole, heh heh, I leave it up to you to believe that I'm not, in the end. I just, that's the point where I don't get along with him, cause he's always like from the backside, intriguing, that really fucks me up man, I don't like that.

Yeah, Michael Kiske did an interview in a German magazine, and somebody translated it for me, and that's what Michael said too, was that he talks behind people's backs, and he calls people names, so...I mean, I don't know you too well, I don't know Weikath too well, so I'm very objective, and I'm glad that there's two bands instead of one.

No but anyways, what do you think is interesting, what do people want to know?

*Well, let me ask you this, are you disappointed that you don't have a US release, that Karl Walterbach is going to put out all these trendy bands in America, like **PUNISHABLE ACT** or **SHIHAD**? America has tons of bands which sound like that, but there's no bands that sound like **GAMMA RAY**.*

I know, and I know that's our big advantage, you know, that's the thing that gives us a chance to I always call it, if the people in the States are finally fed up with their own trends, they might be looking over the big sea and see that there's something else there that might be worth listening to.

Yeah, absolutely.

I thought it was 170,000, I think.

*In America? 170. That's great, I mean that's really good. But that's because **HELLOWEEN**, nobody sounded like **HELLOWEEN**, when **HELLOWEEN** was popular in America.*

And it was a time when heavy metal in general was very popular. You don't have to, you can't forget that.

Yeah, and you had your videos played, "Halloween", and "I Want Out", those were on MTV, and that helps a lot. MTV.

MTV now is, merely considering heavy metal, is dead.

Oh, absolutely. Do you still do videos in Germany, and have MTV or Viva play them?

Yeah, we have Viva playing them, we have MTV, last time, I don't why it didn't happen, it didn't happen, it was in the rotation already, the preview for the rotation, without any extra payment by the So I hope, sometimes you never know what happens, sometimes it could be suddenly German heavy metal, or power metal, or epic metal whatever you want to call it is suddenly very trendy or popular, sometimes it can come strange ways. I'm only waiting for that day, and that's the point where I don't agree with Karl and everybody else anyways, if there's a trend, only run after it, and follow it, with...Especially America is a very tricky thing, every band that ever came from Germany and tried to sound American never had a chance there.

Exactly...

Or it was the point when they started to sound, to try before they had maybe their own German sound, and then they tried to go for the American market, they lost, if it was **ACCEPT** or the **SCORPIONS**, everybody failed, but there's a reason for that.

*But the **SCORPIONS** still sell a good number in the States, and at their height the **SCORPIONS** did very well, **ACCEPT** did very well, **Keeper Part I** and **Part II** sold, I don't know the sales figures, how many did you sell?*

record company. But they tend to go for, they play your video, if you make, if you put adverts, if you pay money, you get played. Otherwise as a heavy metal band you don't have a good chance for that.

*They play bands like **GAMMA RAY** and **BLIND GUARDIAN** in Germany, at least they play heavy metal somewhat. So what videos have you done for **GAMMA RAY**, from each album?*

We have done, from **Heading for Tomorrow** we have done "Space Eater", for **Sigh No More** we have done "One with the World", from **Insanity and Genius**, we have done "Gamma Ray", and from **Land** we have done "Rebellion in Dreamland", in a cut version.

*Did you tour Japan for **Land of the Free**?*

No, not yet, we're about to do, we're going in May.

***Land of the Free** did very well in the charts, in **Burn!** magazine. When's the release date for the live CD?*

Uhm, I think beginning of May, in Japan, definitely before we tour. The first show is the seventh of May, so I guess it would come out before.

And then the EP will be coming out any time at the end of this month. Any idea who you'll be touring with in Japan?

Yeah, there was a big thing going on, we're doing some festival shows this time as well and the bands who's going to support us from Europe is **CONCEPTION**, first it was **GRAVE DIGGER**, this did not happen, hm hm hm, finally we had **CONCEPTION**.

And **CONCEPTION** is a good band. Except I thought their last one, their third **In Your Multitude** was kind of slow, and boring.

Yeah, kind of slow, exactly.

Thank you very, very much for the cool interview.

You're welcome. Okay, let's get back to heavy metal!

Saga of the Seven Keys

by Sharon Lyneis

Concept albums are somewhat of a commodity in heavy metal music. The concept album can be a risky endeavor for any band. First, the concept story has to be interesting and imaginative enough to keep the listener's attention for roughly an hour. Also, the individual songs of the concept should be strong enough to stand on their own outside the realm of the concept. Lastly, the band stands the risk of sounding pompous...God knows there have been more than enough bands to fill that void.

A few of my favorite concept albums are: IRON MAIDEN's **Seventh Son of a Seventh Son**, QUEENSRYCHE's **Operation: Mindcrime**, SAVATAGE's **Streets**, and last but certainly not least, HELLOWEEN/GAMMA RAY's **Saga of the Seven Keys**.

What's this? You haven't heard of this album? Well, you can't purchase this album in any of your local record stores, nor can you scour any import lists to search for this gem. The reason...it doesn't exist.

Before you think you're reading the ramblings of madwoman, let me explain. You see, if you are a fan of HELLOWEEN and GAMMA RAY and own copies of both of HELLOWEEN's **Keeper of the Seven Keys** albums and GAMMA RAY's **Land of the Free**, then you have the ingredients needed to create the concept album I have dubbed **Saga of the Seven Keys**.

I have always enjoyed listening to the story that began with "Halloween" and "Follow the Sign" on the first **Keeper** album, and continued on the second **Keeper of the Seven Keys**. There was one problem with it though; it was a pain in the neck to switch discs to continue the story. I wanted to listen to its brilliance without an interruption or pause. I therefore taped all three songs onto one cassette. Ah, what bliss! Now I could put on my headphones, close my eyes, and have the songs become one to the mind's eye, where the story of epic proportions stays for roughly 30 minutes without interruptions. That cassette has been a favorite of mine for the past few years, but that changed when GAMMA RAY released **Land of the Free**.

When I purchased **Land of the Free**, I was immediately bowled over by its brilliance. The very first few notes of "Rebellion In Dreamland" gave me goosebumps, but by the end of the song, my goosebumps has manifested themselves so often that they now had grandparents several times over. This musical orgasm continued with each song. By the time the CD had finished playing, I knew this would easily become my favorite album of the 90's. I was that floored.

I quickly went to the store and purchased a blank cassette to record this masterpiece, so I could listen to it whenever I wanted. My favorite time to listen to the tape is when I take a walk during my lunch hour at work. I would drive a few blocks to a local park, put on the headphones of my walkman and walk the pathways of the park getting lost in the music for an hour.

It was during one of these walks, as I was listening to the song "Abyss of the Void", that I first made the connection between some songs on **Land of the Free** and the **Keeper of the Seven Keys** story. Also, the line "his armour still shining though it's torn by fights" played, and a lightbulb in my head flashed to life. Hmm, I thought to myself, doesn't **Keeper of the Seven Keys** have a line in song that goes, "put on your armour ragged after fights". I wondered if this was a continuation of the story that began with "Halloween".

I continued with my walk, all the while thinking of other songs on **Land of the Free**, and if they too were linked to the **Keeper** story. Well, the song "Farewell" tells the tale of someone losing a quest from the land of darkness and despair. Also, "Land of the Free" is a triumphant song of victory and a return to light and freedom. A story began to unfold in my head incorporating these new songs and the original **Keeper** epic.

Upon my return home, I reviewed the lyrics of all the songs I mentioned, and figured out the proper track running order as the story played in my head. I recorded the songs and even added the two instrumentals from **Land of the Free** for dramatic effect.

Not to toot my own horn, but I was surprised at just how well the songs worked together to tell the complete tale. I realize the songs were written by different members of both HELLOWEEN and GAMMA RAY (Kai Hansen, Michael Weikath, and Dirk Schlächter), but the songs work as though they came from one mind, one voice.

The following is my complete version of **Saga of the Seven Keys**. I have listed the song running order, as well as a synopsis of each song as it pertains to my concept of the story. (Please note that I say "my version". I know you imaginative folks out there might put together a different version. Have fun. Experiment.)

1) "Halloween", the rather conscious intro leads us into a seemingly innocent tale of a young man participating in the rituals of Halloween set in a distant land. He knows his fun will be short-lived, for many years now his village and all his land have been cast in darkness, despair, and disease.

As he wanders the streets of his village, he begins to hear his name being called in the wind. Frightened, he returns to his home where in the instant he closes the door behind him, there is a knock. Trembling, he opens the door and is immediately thrust into a void of total darkness. The young man begins questioning where he is, when suddenly he sees a light coming near him, glowing in brightness and intensity.

Revealed in the light is the Seer of Visions, who shows him the true evil power behind this land's destruction. The Seer then tells the young man that he is the only one who can save his land and his people from doom.

The young man is then tempted by Satan, with promises of power and wrath. The young man turns his back to evil and prays for the strength to deliver mankind from this evil.

2) "Follow the Sign". The young man is given the seven keys by the Seer of Visions, which will enable him to complete his quest.

3) "The Savior" is a musical passage during which the hour of the quest chimes closer and closer. The young man is sent home to prepare for this journey. You can almost see him walking with his head held high as the chimes of doom strike nearer to the hour of his quest.

4) "Abyss of the Void" The young man returns to his village to prepare for his journey. There has been advance word, and his village has already learned of his mission.

The villagers gather around the young man and proclaim him to be their savior. They begin to sing songs of upcoming battles, and they sing of sure victory. The young man gets caught up in the excitement and confidently ensures his victory.

5) "Farewell". As the young man is leaving his village, he pauses to bid a farewell to his village and friends he is leaving behind. Memories come flooding into his mind of his youth in the village. Doubt then begins to seep into his thoughts. He doubts the mission and whether he will ever return.

A villager assures him that he is the one to return to his land of freedom and light. Drawing strength from the villagers' words, the young man once again finds hope and then confidence in his quest and his safe return. He then bids a final farewell and starts his journey.

6) "Keeper of the Seven Keys". The Seer of Visions prepares and sends the young man on his quest. From the beginning, his quest is besieged by evil spells and evil doers, but the spirit of the now blind Seer guides and protects the young man.

After a long and difficult journey, the young man reaches the first sea. He must throw one of his keys into each sea to lock away the evils pertaining to that sea. The first sea he reaches is the sea of hate, where he is almost overwhelmed by the sheer magnitude of hatred awaiting him from the sea. Despite this, he throws the first key, which locks the sea of hatred.

The young man visits the next five seas in turn, each filled with its own hazards and torments, but he succeeds in locking each sea.

Finally, he reaches the shores of the seventh sea, where he finds Satan waiting for him. Satan immediately casts a sickening spell on the young man. Satan, brimming with confidence, degrades and threatens the young man to the point where the young man begins to waver.

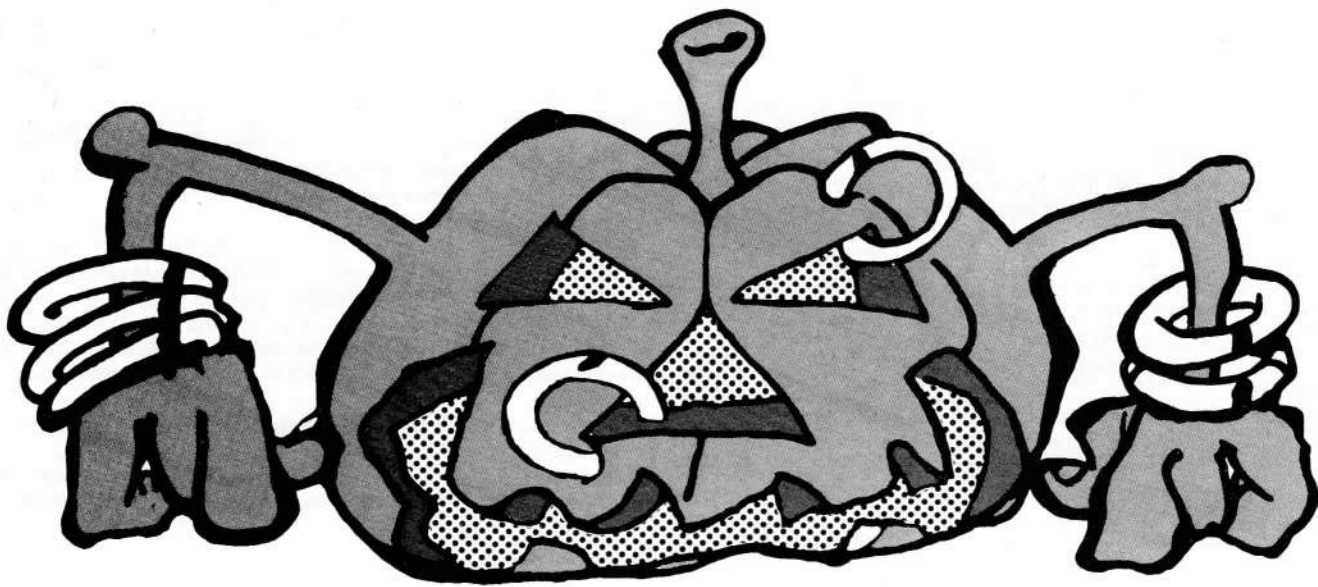
Suddenly, the young man hears and feels the spirit of the Seer, who urges him to throw the seventh and final key. With his last ounce of strength, the young man hurls the key towards the sea.

The key reaches its mark, landing in the seventh sea, and immediately causing eruptions and earthquakes. Satan, whose reign of terror on the land is over, is swallowed by the earth and cast into his eternal abyss. The young man is victorious, saving mankind from demons and their dreaded diseases.

7) "Rising of the Damned". In this musical passage, you can hear and practically see the rising of goodness and light from the ashes of despair and darkness, as the Keeper of the Seven Keys completes his quest.

8) "Land of the Free" is a song of victory sung by the villagers as the young man triumphantly returns from battle. They have been released from darkness and despair to a land of light and freedom.

I hope you've enjoyed **Saga of the Seven Keys**. Remember, this is my version of the story; experiment and incorporate other songs as they pertain to your vision of the **Saga**. I do believe that if a **Saga** could be released professionally, it would be a treasure for all fans of **HELLOWEEN** and **GAMMA RAY**. Imagine how good it would sound if this could be mixed by professionals and released in a complete package with lyrics and artwork. I can imagine Kai Hansen singing the part of the young man, the Keeper of the Seven Keys, and Michael Kiske singing as the Seer of Visions, with other members of the band taking roles as the villagers, Satan, etc. and even adding more orchestration or an additional song or two. That would truly be the heavy metal concept album to beat all heavy metal concept albums. Oh well, that is just a fan's dream, but you can make the tape a reality, so record the tape, play it in your imagination, and ENJOY!



I have just completed my book **"HEAVY METAL; THE VINYL YEARS"** a complete discography listing all known records issued on vinyl between 1970 and 1990: The book contains over 2500 groups, and over 8000 records. This is the most complete listing ever compiled of Heavy Metal records; from complete discographies of **JUDAS PRIEST** and **METALLICA**, to the most obscure 7" 45s of unknown **NWOBHM** bands such as **BOLL WEEVIL** and **CHARGER**. All 5 different colored vinyls of **VENOM'S** "Black Metal" LP are listed, as well as picture discs, shapes and other collectible rareties. Scores of photographs of rare album and 7" sleeve's are also included.

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RAGE

by Tony Zangara

The year was 1987. I was recovering from the disappointment of *Keeper of the Seven Keys Pt 1*, being a HUGE fan of early HELLOWEEN, and I was wondering who the next great metal genius was going to be, a title formerly held by the pumpkinmeisters. I was heavily getting into German power metal at the time, and I got a hold of a copy of *Reign of Fear* by RAGE. I put it on. A neat little tune raced by me called "Scared to Death", and I immediately knew something special was happening. Here was a song quite out-of-the-ordinary. What cool vocals! What a neat, inventive riff! I advanced the needle to "Hand of Glory", and the rest is history. No one besides HELLOWEEN have ever written such a song of technical speed frenzy. I rushed over to all my friends' houses, proclaiming RAGE to be the future of metal! The intangible spark was there! "Echoes of Evil" was another technical thrash feast that had me frothing at the mouth. Here was talent defined!

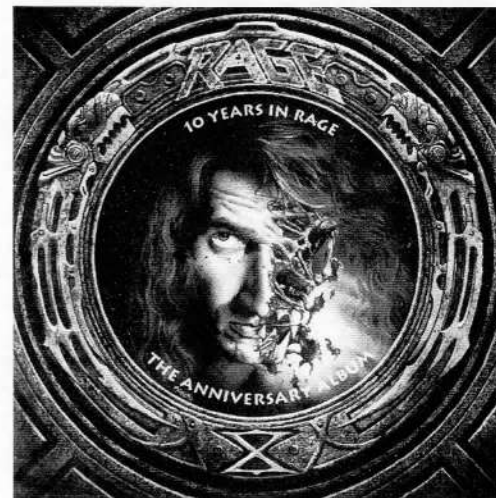
When their next release *Execution Guaranteed* came out, I plopped down the needle eagerly. Sure enough, "Down By Law" showed the same touch of genius, and I knew RAGE would be HUGE! I now think that E.G. was RAGE's weakest album, but still songs like "Deadly Error" and "Mental Decay" showed an innovative sound dominated by growling Satanic speedsters, like the excellent DESTRUCTION and not-so-excellent SODOM/VENOM/POSSESSED, etc.

RAGE were a band doing something new, yet still retaining awesome speed and power. Despite my fondness for these albums, I somehow lost interest in RAGE over the next year or so. I was into the extreme, fast, heavy death at the time, (including SODOM/VENOM/POSSESSED, whom I worshipped!) and tended to dismiss anything with melody as poseur-fare. RAGE in my mind became a rather brilliant, but tame band, and I was heavily into anti-Christianity, and thus a band did not hold my attention unless they constantly held for the inverting of crosses and defiling of churches. You know what I mean. It was left to my good friend Chris Dadd to reintroduce me to RAGE. He constantly kept telling me how great this *Perfect Man* CD was. Finally, I got over to his house, and he put on the *Perfect Man* while we hung out at his house. It sounded great to me. I borrowed it and I was irrevocably hooked forever. It wasn't tremendously heavy or tremendously fast, but it was sooo MELODIC, powerful and emotionally stirring. The vocals of Peavey Wagner carried you along on a wondrous journey on classics such as, "Wasteland", "Sinister Thinking", "A Pilgrim's Path", "Don't Fear the Winter"... This was not a perfect album at all; I acknowledge some unlistenable messes such as "Round Trip". And the guitar work, while ingenious and inspired, did have its sloppy moments. But the magic talent of the newly formed threesome of Peter "Peavey" Wagner (bass/vocals), Manni Schmidt (guitar), and Chris Eftimiadis (drums) was breathtaking.



Next up was the *Secrets In a Weird World*, which began to cement RAGE in my mind as the Gods of Metal. Previously, I thought HELLOWEEN should still hold the title, for *Keeper Pt 2* was a fine album, but after *Secrets*, it was RAGE who reigned supreme! I had hundreds of records and tapes, but Peavey spoke to me like no other had done; then and now. "Time Waits For No one", "Distant Voices"...all superb, but still the CD was not perfect, as there were a couple of filler songs like "She" and the annoying "Inner Search", which I skip whenever I play this CD. Perfection would be achieved by the Gods, but not yet.

The next offering was the last RAGE CD released domestically, as it came right before Noise collapsed in the US. It was, of course, *Reflections of a Shadow*, a rather controversial CD among RAGE fans, as it was a bit slower and more commercial than previous records. The dazzling talent of the threesome showed through on "Saddle the Wind", "Waiting for the Moon", and the title track, although there were some dubious songs. Consumption was still not at hand; *Reflections* was a step back from their previous two releases. The noble forces of ultimate metal ecstasy were still gathering their powers, but sadly, *Reflections* was the last I heard of RAGE for a couple of years. I mourned for the lost greatness, and



whenever I played *Secrets* or *Perfect Man* over the next couple of years, I sighed and wondered, "what became of the Holy Trinity of Peavey, Manni, and Chris? Finally, I heard that they were still together and had a new CD, called *Trapped!* I ordered it instantly, and several months later was holding it in my hand. To say I was excited as I tore it open and put it in the CD player is a vast understatement! What followed was one of the premium moments in music history! (Or at least should be!) As the music poured over me, I was flabbergasted. It was glorious beyond my wildest dreams. The guitar was razor-sharp, as Manni tore through the riffs with awe-inspiring speed on "Medicine", "Solitary Man", "Power and Greed"...the beautiful interplay of melody and aggression of "The Body Talks", "Questions", and the incredibly wondrous blend of Peavey's passionate vocals and magnificent melody on the anthems "Enough Is Enough" and "Not Forever" put me in heaven. But even this astounding assault of melodic power was surpassed on the next offering *The Missing Link*, perhaps the greatest metal album to be released by anybody. Indeed, my top three of all time would be: 1) RAGE-The Missing Link 2) HELLOWEEN EP/Walls of Jericho/Judas EP 3) BLIND GUARDIAN-Tales From the Twilight World. Number Two had the moving blend of technical speed, power, striking vocals, and brilliant solos. Number Three had that wondrous interplay of tremendous choruses and superb speed riffs, and Number One has the perfect blend of almost unbelievable heaviness and power, with tremendous melody, passionate vocals, and mind-boggling song writing. The first song "Firestorm" bowls the listener over with sheer power and melody. The music is so dense and overwhelming, yet so melodic and beautiful...classic after classic keeps coming on. The fantastic "Refuge" with its simple, yet amazingly endearing main riff, as well as crisp, sharp transitions, grabs the listener on a roller coaster of musical bliss. Speed and time changes are also the mainstay of the superb "Who Dares" and lyrically, the band pull no stops as they tackle science fiction and fantasy on "Lost In the Ice" (one of the greatest epic song ever), "The

Missing Link", "The Pit and the Pendulum". Innovation, immensely successful innovation rears up in "Raw Caress", which features the time changes from slow to fast power, each accentuating the other perfectly. Really this is an absolutely flawless CD that should be the very definition of a "10". Peavey Wagner is indeed God--such songwriting abilities! And his vocals are one of metal's wondrous unique experiences. A joy to listen to, they bring such feeling and conviction and make the songs into something miraculous. Now comes the impossible. As the force of **The Missing Link** soaked into my being, I began to acknowledge that this was the standard, and that RAGE could never release a follow-up that could be quite as good. I prepared myself for a decline, for a CD better than TML was unimaginable.

RAGE released **Black In Mind** a year later, and well, as expected from Peavey, it was only a modest step back. For me, the first few songs of BIM aren't really up to standard. They are very fast, heavy, and powerful, but they are lacking so much of the melody so prevalent in their classic material. But then comes genius once again! "Sent By the Devil", while racing by at light speed, has all that melody and is superb. Then, the thoughtful "Shadow Out of Time" is absolutely brilliant! But wait, there's more! "In a Nameless Time", a ten minute trip into the Twilight Zone and beyond, is beyond words; melody, time changes, EVERYTHING is flawless. The CD is worth the money for this song alone! Well, to save space, I won't exalt the virtues of every song; I'll just summarize by saying that BIM is marvelous and a great sequel to TML. While it may not have surpassed it, what could?

For the collector, RAGE have also released several EP's, **Invisible Horizons**, **Extended Power**, **Beyond the Wall**, **Refuge**, and a collection, **10 Years In Rage: The Anniversary Album** of remade and never-recorded material. The band have also released on CD the AVENGER albums; **Prayers of Steel** and the **Depraved To Black EP**, both on one CD. RAGE was initially AVENGER before the pitiful NWOBHM AVENGER forced the name change. For space reasons, I have not gone into these in depth, but if you like RAGE you'll get these anyway!

Computer geeks can check out the following site:

<http://www.aracnet.com/~adavey/rage.html>

which is all the information you ever wanted to know about RAGE and other power metal bands. It was all created by Doug Suttles, who has provided complete track lists, discographies, concert photos and a lot more, including addresses/phone numbers of metal resources, such as *Sentinel Steel*, *Dream Disc*, etc...



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ON TOUR WITH ANGRA

Editor's note: This **ANGRA** tour story is over a year old, but I think you'll enjoy it nonetheless. With the chances of a band like **ANGRA** touring the States pretty slim at the moment, this interesting article is the next best thing.

Day 1-Thursday, May 18, 1995
Hamburg, Germany Venue-Logo

It's raining in Hamburg -- so what else is new?--and lots of last minute tour preparations are happening. Limb and I arrive at the venue at around 7:30 pm. The band is just finishing up their soundcheck. The doors open around 8:00 pm and the first people are arriving including **Kai Hansen (GAMMA RAY)**. Turnout for the first show is at 100+ which is definitely an ok start. The show starts at 9:30 pm sharp and the band seems to be in very good spirits. Show opener "Carry On" is followed by many selections from the *Angels Cry* album. New songs include "Nothing to Say" as well as an updated version of "Queen of the Night" which was first recorded back in 1992 and can be found on the *Reaching Horizons* tape. Both songs are scheduled to appear on **ANGRA's** second album. The show is running smoothly and the audience is into it. **ANGRA** finish off their first European show at 11:00 pm with two encores including "Painkiller" (**JUDAS PRIEST**) and "Run to the Hills" (**IRON MAIDEN**). Definitely a good tour start! Our tour bus arrives around midnight and equipment is being loaded. Due to some additional gear that is needed for the tour, we decide to park the bus just outside of Hamburg at a rest stop to return to the city early in the morning. After returning to the rest stop we have a quick snack before everybody returns to the bus to go to sleep (4:00am).

Day 2- Friday, May 19, 1995
Kamp-Lintfort, Germany Venue-Alte Schmiede

Bus leaves rest stop at 8:45 am to drive back to Hamburg. Arrival at Amptown (rental company) an hour later. Equipment is loaded and we finally leave Hamburg. Unbelievable, but it's actually a nice sunny day outside. Breakfast on bus, and we are off to Kamp-Lintfort which is located about 400 km southwest of Hamburg in the "Ruhrrport" (huge industrial area with lots of coal mining, etc.) After a brief lunch stop at 3:00 pm we arrive at the venue at 5:30 pm. Immediate load in and sound check. Attendance is about the same as in Hamburg, and after a 45 minute set by opening act **ECSTASY**, **ANGRA** hits the state at 10:30 pm. The show went well, although there were a number of technical problems. **ANGRA** again performed "Nothing to Say" which received a great crowd response. Also included in tonight's show was "Freedom Call", another new song, that **ANGRA** performed live for the very first time. The show ends at 12:05 am. Overall an acceptable performance. Following the show the band mingles with the crowd, signs autographs, etc. A dinner is served at around 2:00 am and we leave Kamp-Lintfort at 4:15 am.

Day 3-Saturday, May 20, 1995
Wacken, Germany Venue-Open Air Festival

Arrival on festival grounds at 10:00 am. We have all day to relax, as **ANGRA** is not due to perform until 8:30 pm. The festival kicks off at 12 noon. There are two stages, with continuous entertainment. The band conducts various interviews during the day, but otherwise just "hangs out". The weather is sort of cooperating, although it is cool with a little rain here and there. Late afternoon, I am sitting on the bus backstage, **SOLITUDE AETERNUS** starts their set. Wow, what a killer performance. The absolute highlight during their show was the **SABBATH** cover

"Heaven and Hell." I am impressed! Oops, back to **ANGRA**. Their set is moved forward by 1/2 an hour. The band seems a little nervous, well maybe they are just anxious to get on stage. 8:00 pm. Showtime!! Opener "Carry On" leads into "Time" and to "Angels Cry." The band is putting on a solid performance, although the sound was less than satisfactory. Halfway through their performance I spot someone waving a huge Brazilian flag. The show ends after 50 minutes and one encore. One of the highlights, along side all the great **ANGRA** tunes is "Painkiller" which closed the show. Wow, what power!! Attendance during **ANGRA's** set was roughly 2,500. Not bad. After the show everybody walks over to the hospitality tent for dinner. The band conducts more interviews, including one for TV. In the meantime, the headliner, **D.A.D.** hits the stage. Still very popular in Europe, the band put on slick but lifeless performance. I am disappointed!! We leave Wacken at 2:30 for Rotterdam. Sex is happening in the back of the bus (sort of), where some cheesy porno is running on the TV. Everybody got a good laugh out of it and some maybe more.

Day 4-Sunday, May 21, 1995
Rotterdam, Holland Venue-De Blokhut

Arrival in Rotterdam, Holland at 10:30 am. The club won't open till about 3:00 pm, so some of us decide to go out for breakfast. We find a cafe, sit outside, and enjoy this sunny Sunday morning. Hours later, the band and others arrive. Following breakfast we find a nearby public indoor pool for the much needed shower and shave. We get back to the venue at 3:30 pm for load in and set up. The club is very cool. Huge stage and lighting rig, and as it later turns out, great sound. But most of all, a very nice staff and good catering (food; very important!!). Soundcheck is set for 6:00 pm. This is a real treat. The band is going through a number of **MAIDEN** tunes, including "Wasted Years", "Run to the Hills", and others. I just hope **MAIDEN** does not get wind of this (Andre's singing!!). The doors open at 8:00 pm and a very enthusiastic crowd enters the venue (100+). Showtime is at 9:30 pm, with a support act. **ANGRA** play a 95 minute set that is definitely their best to date. The band is very aggressive on stage and the audience is totally into it. Great show!! After the show the bus takes us down to Rotterdam's "red light" district. We are in search of some fun and a McDonalds. Neither happens, it's 2:00 am Monday morning. We end up at this Chinese take out place and make their day.

Day 5-Monday, May 22, 1995
Tuttlingen, Germany Venue-Akzente

We arrive at Tuttlingen (Southern Germany) around 12:00 pm. The bus is having transmission problems and drops us off at a restaurant just outside of town before heading to the garage to be worked on. We are having a great lunch and just hang. It's a beautiful and sunny day. The bus, still not properly fixed, picks us up at 4:00 pm and takes us to the club. Quick load in, set up and then soundcheck at 6:00 pm. A good dinner follows. Local support act **SALVATION** starts their set at 9:00 pm. **ANGRA** follows with a short 60 minute set at 10:20 pm. Turnout for the show was somewhat disappointing at around 60. We leave at 1:15 am, and again no McDonalds that is still open. What a drag!!



ANDRE MATOS(v)

KIKO LOUREIRO(g)

Day 6-Tuesday, May 23, 1995
Paris, France Venue-La Locomotive

The bus pulls into Paris at 10:30 a.m. Rush hour. But who cares. It's a beautiful sunny day in one of the most vibrant cities in the world. We are late, and there is no time for a soundcheck (soundchecks at La Loco are held at 7:00am due to the levels of "noise" generated!!) Oh well. On the brighter side, the venue is monstrous. A huge club with concert sized stage and lighting rig and a capacity of 1,200. This is gonna be a cool gig. We relax backstage, eat, take showers, etc. There are tons of interviews scheduled, which are all held at the club. It's 3:30 pm and time to take quick 15 minute taxi ride to **ANGRA's** first and only acoustic show on this tour. The show is scheduled for 5:30 pm followed by an autograph session. It is held at some art gallery and is being recorded for possible future use. A line forms outside around 4:00 pm and when the doors finally open the room is filled in no time by about 350 people. **ANGRA** puts on a very entertaining and well received 50 minute acoustic set that really showed off the band's exceptional musicianship. Where other bands would strictly duplicate their electric sound with acoustic instruments, **ANGRA** came up with different arrangements and incorporated various other musical styles into their songs from Latin to jazz. Following the set the band signed autographs for approximately one hour before returning to La Loco. We all joined for dinner at an Italian restaurant at 8:30 pm. Back to the venue where doors open at 11:00 pm. It took slightly over 2 hours before everybody in line had entered the club. The turnout is amazing and estimates are well over 1,000. Wow! **ANGRA** takes the stage at 1:15 am and puts on an amazing show. Show end is close to 3:00 am. We are being told by many people that the turnout and response to **ANGRA** tonite can only be rivaled by a recent show here by Pearl Jam. Wow!! Load in is completed around 5 in the morning after which everybody heads out for a morning dinner. We leave Paris at 6:30am. What a day, what a city!!

Day 7- Wednesday, May 24, 1995
Lucerne, Switzerland Off Day

A well deserved day off, especially for the band. We cross the border into Switzerland early afternoon and arrive in Lucerne around 3:00 pm. Half the group decides to spend the afternoon at the "Vierwaldstätter See" a huge Swiss lake, the other half goes into town. It is a warm but hazy day with the most amazing scenery in the back: The snow covered Swiss Alps!! Both groups meet back at the bus at 9:00 pm and we take a short walk to downtown Lucerne. We stop at a Chinese restaurant for dinner. This place is run by a bunch of Portuguese, is overpriced (\$30.00 a plate) and the food sucks. The atmosphere though makes up for it. We are sitting outside surrounded by ancient buildings, narrow streets. You would think we were in another time. After dinner we split up to explore Lucerne's nightlife. Pretty lame, but it's Wednesday. Everybody back at the bus at 12:30 am. We leave around 1:30 am. The highway leading to Milan takes us through many tunnels underneath the Alps. In one such tunnel, the 17 km long Gotthart Tunnel, we encounter a major traffic back up. The air in the bus is immediately turned off and it takes us about one hour to get through this. Major claustrophobia for many. We'll live.

Day 8- Thursday, May 25, 1995
Milan, Italy Venue-The Factory

10:00 am arrival in Milan. We must be in Italy, everything is in disarray (no offense, I am half Italian). It's a muggy and hot day. There's no catering, no showers. The promoter ends up booking a hotel room so everyone can shower and gets cleaned up. Catering at the venue is promised for 4:00 pm. We find a little street cafe up the street from the venue and order cappuchino and sandwiches. Early afternoon Luis, Rafael and myself are driven to the hotel for showers. Eddie, the driver, is supposed to pick us up at 2:00 pm and take us to a local record store for a signing session. 2:00 pm and no one's there. He finally shows up close to 3:00 pm and races us over to the autograph session. Good turnout, nothing like Paris, but ok. Following the signing, Andre and Kiko as well as Terence and Eugene from tonight's support act **ELDRITCH** visit a local radio station for interviews, while everybody else returns to the hall. Still no food. We walk back up to the cafe for more sandwiches. We return to the venue at 6:00 pm for the soundcheck. A line is starting to form outside and the band starts signing autographs. Shortly after the soundchecks by **ANGRA** and **ELDRITCH** the doors open. The crowd charges into the building. Attendance is around 800. Excellent! **ELDRITCH** takes the stage and puts on a fairly rusty performance. Anybody who has heard the band's debut album (released in Europe in April '95) knows that the band is capable of so much more. The crowd though was totally into it. I was disappointed. After a roughly 30 minute set, the band closes the show. After a quick set change **ANGRA** hits the stage and totally dominates the audience. This is by far the best show on this tour (I did not see the Paris show). The band is in total control. The audience is singing the songs word by word. This is absolutely amazing. I can't believe my eyes and ears. After about 90 minutes **ANGRA** closes the show with, well, what else, "Painkiller." Man, this was great. After a short cooling off period the band reappears and starts signing autographs. I walk outside for a minute to get some fresh air and what do I see: A couple of guys selling **ANGRA** bootleg T-shirts. What a country!! We finally leave the venue at around 1:30 am. It's raining. We stop off at a local restaurant for a late dinner. This is the first real meal of the day at 2:00 am. The pizza is good. Well, we are in Italy. After dinner we make a quick stop at a local hotel to pick up Andre who had spent some time with his family who were visiting Europe. We leave Milan at 3:15 am for Heidelberg, Germany.

Day 9- Friday, May 26, 1995
Heidelberg, Germany Venue- Schwimmbad

Arrival in Heidelberg at 11:00 am. Well, sort of. About 25 minutes outside of Heidelberg, the bus makes a quick rest stop. Some of us get off the bus to do their thing. I am one of them, and to my amazement after leaving the facilities, I see our bus drive off. Without me!! Not to worry. After calling a cab that never showed up, our soundguy Mike, who lives in Heidelberg comes by to pick me up. Everybody gets a good laugh out of it. The venue for tonight's show is located right next to an outdoor public pool which of course we take full advantage of, including their shower facilities. Later that afternoon set-up begins with a soundcheck at 6:00

pm. Although **ANGRA** is headlining tonight, the band will go on first. Doors open at 9:00 pm and showtime is at 9:30 pm. The band, barely fitting onto the small stage, is playing to a packed house (about 350) and puts on a great show. This is the best German date on this tour. After the show we all get dinner and hang out. No doubt that we are back in Germany as it is starting to pour (heavy rain) outside. We leave Heidelberg at approximately 4:00 am for Hamburg after saying goodbye to Mark (tour manager), Mike (Sound Engineer), and Skull (Guitar and keyboard tech). All three live in Southern Germany. The bus is a lot lighter now (if you know what I mean). Arrival in Hamburg around 12:00 pm on Saturday.

SUMMARY

This was an amazing tour that went way above anybody's expectation. I'd like to thank everybody that was involved, with extra special thanks going to the band for their great music and amazing talent, as well as their coolness and ability to stay on the carpet.

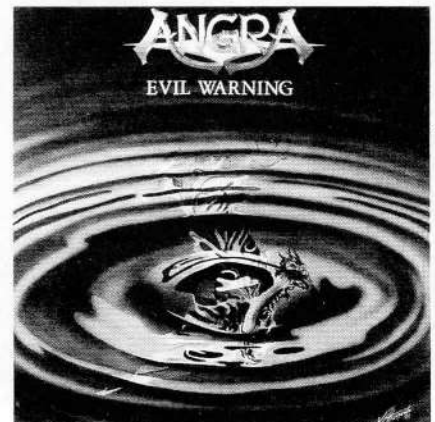
Rafael: It's amazing, but you totally lost your accent!!

Thanks for the great and productive time!! Good luck in the studio!! Till next time!!

Oliver Laudahn's claim to fame was that, as an employee of WEA Germany, he refused to release Dawn Crosby's **FEAR OF GOD** debut in that country. Also, Oliver Laudahn was an original member of the German political punk band **SLIME**. Residing in the Western U.S. with his cat (who throws up a lot), Oliver anxiously awaits his annual **DEEP PURPLE** phase.



Pic: Rainer Drechsel



ATTACK



Comprised of influences ranging from (old) **IRON MAIDEN**, **HELLOWEEN**, **RUNNING WILD**, and **MANOWAR**, **ATTACK** became an instant favorite here at the **SENTINEL STEEL HQ**. Checkout the **ATTACK** album reviews in this issue and **SENTINEL STEEL #2**. The group is led by bassist/vocalist **Ricky Van Helden**, the only constant member of this 12+ year old German group. **ATTACK** has produced 6 studio albums to date, and a compilation of unreleased/best of tracks called *Revitalize*. A complete **ATTACK** discography can be found in this interview. Note that some Japanese pressings include bonus tracks; on the other hand, the German pressing of *Revitalize* has 3 extra cuts. Also, the packaging art is different, and the European versions lack lyrics. Ricky, breaking through the language barrier through sheer grit, explains all. We open with *The Secret Place*.

How has Germany responded to A Secret Place?

In Germany, I don't know, but in South Europe--Spain, Greece, Italy--we have good reviews and many sales. In Germany, it's different. Ha ha. Because we are a German band, and they like more American bands.

Why is it that RUNNING WILD and BLIND GUARDIAN became big in Germany, and you came out around the same time as these guys, but you never got big? I think that, for instance, Return of the Evil blows away the first RUNNING WILD albums.

We have problems, because we [Iceland Records] aren't a big company, and the media and the fanzines don't take notice of **ATTACK**. But, I hope it will be better next time. All the bands have reviews in *Metal Hammer*, *Rock Hard* [and other zines], but nobody wants to make an interview [with us].

That's terrible. So, there have been no improvements over the years, in terms of good publicity for you?

I think the German fanzines need big companies after the bands who make articles in their fanzines and have to pay for that...little pensions. In Germany, it's not so good. In other countries, we have big stories in fanzines, *Metal Hammer* (Greece), or in Italy, or Japan, but here [in Germany], it's a problem for us.

Iceland Records is your own label. Are you happy with what L.M.P. has been doing with you? I'm sure you're satisfied with the Japanese front, but in Europe/Germany...

Not so much as [compared] to other countries. He is the publisher for us. He sends copies of the CD's to fanzines, and that's all. But I think he is a nice guy. He has other bands like **ANGRA**. He does more for **ANGRA** than **ATTACK**. They have more sales.

I hope things will get better for you! The Secret Place is a great CD. Your production skills have improved ten-fold.

It's the first time we recorded digital--not with analog machines, but digital machines. And so it's a little better, and hopefully next time it will be even more better.

Are the drums and bass guitar digital?

The drums are not, but the bass guitar and electric guitar, vocals are all digital.

Sometimes when you record in all digital, you get a very cold sound.

Yes yes--like plastic.

But, The Secret Place sounds nearly perfect, except the snare could've been a touch bassier, i.e. more powerful.

The snare was one thing [that I was not satisfied with] on *The Secret Place*. But last

time I heard the record from the band TAD MOROSE, and the album is very plastic for me.

Still, The Secret Place has the best sound of all the ATTACK albums, but why the drum solo in the middle of "Tsoukata"? It disrupts the album.

The problem was, we had to go into the studio quickly, because JVC in Japan wanted a new album, and so I had not made so many songs. I need time! And the other thing was, on every album we had guitar solos, and so I wanted to give our drummer a chance to play. I know [the drum solo] is a little bit of a problem [for the listeners], but for the drummer it sounds really good. On the last MANOWAR album, there was a drum solo, too!

Oh, MANOWAR had too many filler songs on their last few albums. Back to the album...Why use a drum machine on track 10, "Warp Speed Now!"? I was disappointed with the drums, but the music is fantastic, the guitar playing. I wish you had real drums.

Ha ha. It was a problem in that time. We had made it at home, in my home studio with a drum machine, and then we had no more time to play the drums on it. But, not everyone knows it's a drum machine! I'm surprised that you know it!

"Heroes Die Young", is that the same version that appeared on Revitalized?

It's a new mix. On the Japanese version of *Revitalized*, we do not have "Heroes Die Young" on it. We mixed it down again, and put it on *The Secret Place* for the fans in Japan.

That's weird that you had bonus tracks for the German edition of Revitalized, but not for the Japanese!!!

Ha ha. All bands like RUNNING WILD, etc. [always] have bonus tracks on their Japanese CD's. We got the other way, because [JVC] called and faxed us every day, saying, "we need the tape. We need the tape," so they have not so much songs as the European fans.

The Japanese label and L.M.P. seem to be rushing you a lot. Will you be taking your time for the next release? Do you have new material ready?

We work on it. We compose new songs and hope to go into the studio in April to record our new album. It will be more progressive, more classical influences.

Still powerful? Still speed metal?

Yes, yes, but more progressive themes in the titles, and longer songs, like DREAM THEATER, but much harder.

In my opinion, DREAM THEATER's best work was their first, When Dream and Day Unite. What's yours?

Some songs off of *Awake*, and *Images and Words*, but it's much too clean...little bit pop music!

My favorite song off The Secret Place is "The Prophecy".

Oh yes, the people here like it, too, but the fanzines I read say it's like HELLOWEEN a little bit.

It's much better than current HELLOWEEN, though!

Most people here like "The Prophecy" and "Warrior". You did the review of *Revitalized* in *Sentinel Steel*?

Yes.

Thank you! That was very great! I have much fan post from South America because of your article. They want to buy our CD's from Brazil, Argentina...they wrote to me sending me dollars.

What kind of lyrical themes do you cover?

Oh, utopian stories from the Middle Ages with some autobiographical experiences. Do you like the film, CONAN? This time play our lyrics, our stories.

The Dark Ages...speaking about history, let's do yours. The first thing ATTACK ever put out was a 7" called Mouse In a Maze. Back then your style was more heavy rock?

Yeah, like RUSH and MICHAEL SCHENKER GROUP.

Do you have any more copies left of the 7"?

No, no more.

After that, you put out Danger In the Air, which had a keyboard player.

Yes, [in fact] he is right here [in my home] as a guest. Yes, we had a keyboard player, one guitar, one bass, and drummer.

You played the bass parts, of course. Who played the drums?

I, too.

Danger In the Air came out in...?

1984.

It was on a small label. Was that yours?

No, it was distributed by SPV.

In 1985, was Return of the Evil on the same label? Did you play drums on this, too?

Some songs, ha ha. But we had another drummer for *Return of the Evil*. We had many fanzines from the USA [get in touch with us]. From San Diego...



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So, on this album, you had a totally different line-up?

That was a problem for ATTACK every time.

You produced Return of the Evil. Did you produce Danger In the Air?

Yes, with the keyboarder.

What's the story behind your 'lost' album, Beastkiller, and are you ever going to release it.

We had a contract in these years, 1986, with a studio and a company, and we recorded this album. After that, the co-producer went away. We don't know where he is! I want to have master tapes to bring it out on CD, but I can't [find him]. The Japanese company calls me every week to find these tapes, but I can't get them.

Do you think you'll ever get the tapes back?

I hope so. It was our hardest album ever made. A little bit more than JUDAS PRIEST, harder than what ATTACK is today.

The difference between Return of the Evil and Danger In the Air was big. Return of the Evil was much heavier. Was that because you had different influences?

At the time of Return of the Evil, I heard music like IRON MAIDEN-Number of the Beast, and Powerslave, so it was a little bit, with two

guitars, heavier.

IRON MAIDEN is a big influence on you.

Not today. I don't like the new singer [Blaze Bayley] on The X Factor.

The music is boring, too.

Yes yes! I like the singer, Bruce Dickinson, his style. I like Steve Harris' bass style, but IRON MAIDEN could be a bit harder. The guitars are not so hard. My favorite albums are Number of the Beast and Piece of Mind and these older albums.

Do you like Seventh Son?

Yes, a little bit, but I think MAIDEN had too much money that time, Ha ha. So they are not hungry. All the albums later are too over-produced.

I agree. I just saw IRON MAIDEN live on Friday, and Steve Harris' bass guitar was so loud, and the electric guitar sound was low.

Do you like the singer?

No, but he sung the old songs OK. "Hallowed Be Thy Name" and "Two Minutes to Midnight". They sounded good.

I haven't heard the album, The X Factor, but I saw some songs on MTV, and I don't like the

singer. He sings like a school band singer. Ha ha.

He does not have a powerful range, I agree. You have a better voice. Did you try out for IRON MAIDEN?

No, too big for me! MAIDEN needs an English singer. I'm German, and my English is not so good.

But when you sing, virtually no accent comes through. You're convincing!!!

I can't believe it!!!

No, seriously, BLIND GUARDIAN, RAGE have obvious accents. Many German bands have that flavor to their vocals, but when you sing to the fast songs, it's good! That's why I'm worried when you do progressive, maybe slower...

NO! Not slower! Progressive is when we have more themes in songs, more rhythms in the songs, not just one.

OK, like "The Prophecy" and "Forgotten Dreams".

Yeah, a little bit more [in our new material].

Like more time changes, OK. Can you name some songs off Beastkiller, since no one knows about this album?

One song was, "The Last Battle of King Henry

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IV", another title is "The War Machine".

Now, you co-produced this album. What does it sound like?

From *Beastkiller*? It was heavier and speedier, more riffs.

Why did Destiny of War come out three years later?

I moved from Hanover and [bought] another house and I looked for a new line-up. We had a new contract with another company.

And then Seven Years In the Past came out three years later.

In 1990, we made a tour in Germany [and the year before in Hungary and Poland], playing live more. Then the band split. I was alone, but I had my own studio. I had some new songs, and I recorded them, which is now *Seven Years In the Past*.

You played all the drums. How do you feel about your drumming on Seven Years?

Ooh, not so good. I was alone in my studio, recording and playing. I'd run to the recording machine and press 'start', then quick to the drums, and play, ha ha. I didn't want to bring the album out. It was only for me! But a little record company called Hellion Records, they sold it to Japan, and suddenly we were on the import charts with *Seven Years In the Past*, and two days later, JVC called me to have this album. So, we were in the Burren! charts.

Where was Zacki when you recorded Seven Years In the Past?

I wanted to make *Seven Years* for me, so we had played these songs live with Zacki [prior to *Seven Years*].

Will Danger In the Air be put out on CD?

We will try it. We want to play it a little harder [in other words, re-record it. -DG], then bring it out in Japan. Today I have one guy here, by me [the original keyboardist], and I talk with him on this theme to bring out *Danger In the Air* with a new harder sound, with two bonus tracks.

Was the song "Danger In the Air" on Revitalize a new version?

It was a new version with Zacki.

Your CD covers are different in Japan than in Germany. Why?

I think the Japanese companies don't like our German covers. It's too much cliché, Ha ha.

That's true, as you do these MANOWARish album-style covers for Germany.

On *The Secret Place*, not.

Has ATTACK toured enough?

DISCOGRAPHY

- Mouse In A Maze (7", Good Time Records, 1984)
- Danger In The Air (LP, Pro-Sound-Rec./SPV, 1984)
- Return Of The Evil (LP, Pro-Sound-Rec./SPV, 1985)
- Beastkiller (LP, Sonic/Polygram, 1986)
- Destinies Of War (LP/CD, ZYX/Mikulski, 1989)
- Seven Years In The Past (CD, Iceland-Records, 1992)
- Return Of The Evil (CD, Iceland-Records, 1993)
- Destinies Of War (CD, Iceland-Records, 1993)
- Seven Years In The Past (CD, JVC/Victor, 1993)
- Destinies Of War (CD, JVC/Victor, 1993)
- Revitalize (CD, JVC/Victor, 1994)
- Revitalize (CD, Tin Can Discs/EWM, 1994)
- The Secret Place (CD, Tin Can Discs/EWM, 1995)
- The Secret Place (CD, JVC/Victor, 1995)



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We need better promotion. We are a little band, we need a better company. The fans who *know* us, like us. I see this in the fan posts. I want to get more fans, more people to *hear* our music.. I need the fanzines and radio stations, but I don't know so much, so I hope Limb can make more. I hope so.

OK, well, that's all I have to ask. Did you have anything else to add?

Oh, uh [struggling for words], I find the metal scene is a little bit different [today]. I hate hip hop metal and rap metal. I don't like when heavy metal musicians go on stage in shorts, ha ha. I like powerful, melodic metal; metal is my life! And the scene today, bands like ATTACK are not up -to-date.

Oh, that's OK! You've got a certain sound, yet you are still creating interesting new music, forging ahead. Bands like RUNNING WILD are stuck in place. Their new album, Masquerade is very mediocre.

Yes, I like their older albums, some music.

Do you like RUNNING WILD? What's your favorite albums by them? Mine are Branded and Exiled and Death or Glory.

I don't hear RUNNING WILD, not much. ha ha. I listen to other bands.

Like?

SAVATAGE, DREAM THEATER, JETHRO TULL, MAIDEN, PRIEST, MANOWAR...from the German scene, like RAGE.

Which album?

Secrets In a Weird World.

From here, we continued talking, discussing drum sounds. Zacki is a natural drummer, and dislikes sampling and triggers immensely. He was born in Greece, but has lived in Germany most of his life. Job-wise, Ricky is a musician full time, producing bands from metal to punk to reggae. He has recorded with UNLEASHED and other death metal bands. He is also a music teacher. Zacki's day job is a chair designer.

After this interview was conducted, ATTACK drummer Zacki left the ATTACK camp, wanting to explore the jazz/fusion style, saying ATTACK's style was too fast. Frank Ullrich, formerly with GRAVE DIGGER, X-WILD, HOLY MOSES, and LIVING DEATH, has taken over the drumming stool. ATTACK is currently in the studio, preparing their follow-up to *The Secret Place*. A late 1996/early 1997 release date is expected.



pic : David Tan

Riot In New York

(or: When You Don't Have Rodney King, You Have To Make Do With What You Have)

by Matt Johnsen

Before they embarked on a Japanese tour to support their newest recording, **Brethren of the Long House**, legendary metal band RIOT played one show in NY as a sort of dress rehearsal with their sound man. Realizing this might be our last chance to see them, Denis and I made the trek to Long Island to witness the event, and this is the sordid tale of the trip.

We arrived at the lovely Roxy in Huntington, NY at about 11:00, and though we heard rumors of eight bands, I'm pretty sure the band we saw first, calling themselves REMORSE, were the first act of the evening. REMORSE are probably the best and most popular heavy metal band in their high school, and their set was highlighted by the somewhat metallized cover of the SIMPLE MINDS' "Don't You Forget About Me". Brilliant...Brilliantly bad. When they left though, they took about 75% of the audience with them, which if nothing else, cooled the club down a bit.

Following REMORSE was STEEL REIGN. They were a very tight unit that played very eighties-sounding Bay-area thrash. They even used eighties guitars, flying V's like Randy Rhoads used. Denis thinks they would have been very popular if they had released a CD eight or nine years ago, but I think that's like saying KINGDOM COME would have been a smash if LED ZEPPELIN never released anything. STEEL REIGN is tight, but too derivative and too dull for my tastes.

The next band, called LIBERACE or FIBBONACCI, or JOANIE AND CHACHI, or some such thing, got the crowd moving with their unique brand of trippy dippy alternative rock. When I say "unique", I mean completely derivative and bland. I was not sad to see them go. They took another 50% of the crowd with them when they left. Good riddance, I suppose.

While FIBBONACCI (or whatever) were bad, their successors to the stage, WINDOW PANE, were like a half-hour preview of eternal punishment. They played noisy, unpleasant music like a seventies prog-rock band with no talent or vision. Adding insult to injury, the drummer played a pink drum set and wore a white sport coat like the kind Don Johnson wore in Miami Vice. They too, like their predecessors, took most of the remaining spectators with them. This show was like a lesson in exponential decrease.

Finally, at 3:30 AM, RIOT took the stage. Now, I must admit, I'm not very familiar with their work. I picked up a copy of **Thundersteel** a few years ago and love it, but I'm told by people in the know that that is an atypical RIOT album. It doesn't matter much, since they played nothing from that album. Denis, who had the foresight to photograph their set list (which was just lying about), tells me that the bulk of the set was from their last two albums, **Nightbreaker** and **Brethren of the Long House**, especially the latter. They played a few old songs, which were a little too rock-y for my tastes, and a DEEP PURPLE cover, which did nothing for me, but for the most part, their set was to the ears very enjoyable. I was so impressed that I left the concert hall wanting to hear more RIOT than I have, and that doesn't happen often for me at concerts. The performance itself was good, though I suspect the band was a little reserved, given the nature of the show, the late hour, and the size of the crowd (by that point about 35 persons). Their set was also pretty short, clocking in at about sixty minutes. Musically, every man in RIOT is more than accomplished, and we were treated to no end of tasty guitar and bass solos, as well as a five-minute drum solo, which could've well been omitted. In all, they made the trip worthwhile and gained at least one new fan, and if you haven't checked out RIOT yet, now's the time to start.

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LETTER FROM THE PILEDRIVER

C-Y'all SOON, Rock Yer Faces Off!!!



Editor's note: This interview was submitted by J.B. Mestad of *Molten Metal Mailorder*, out of Minnesota. A regular contact of **Gord Kirchin** (the voice of **PILEDRIVER**), J.B. Mestad hooked up Germany's Jochen Heinlein (publisher of the awesome *That's It!* metal magazine) with Kirchin for an interview. Jochen published a slightly condensed version of the interview in *That's It!* #7. With the kind permission of J.B. Mestad and Jochen Heinlein, SENTINEL STEEL is proud to publish the complete, uncut (well, minus a couple of lines of lyrics that would have offended what few female readers SENTINEL STEEL has!) version of this interview. Here's a fascinating look at what really...never was.

Well, I had the number... "Should I call now or maybe tomorrow?", I thought to myself. I had heard that he can eat people through the phone, kind of like Freddy Krueger's phone French kisses!! What the hell, here goes, anticipating what to expect from the nastiest, wickedest death metal vocalist who re-defined a whole genre. "Hello, is this **Gord Kirchin**, the musician?", I asked. Oh now, here he comes through the phone to gobble me up in a single bite!! The voice at the other end answered, "Yes, this is Gord." Well I was still here in one piece, and speaking to the f**king **PILEDRIVER** to boot!! What the hell do you ask the vocalist whose LP *Metal Inquisition* received the incredible honors as TOP ALBUM OF 1985 by the cult mag *Kerrang!*. "So, what the hell happened to you after *Stay Ugly*?" I inquired. Hmmm, little was I to know what a can of worms that had just been opened!! In no particular order you may be interested to know that:

1. **PILEDRIVER-Metal Inquisition** was done as a bet, a challenge, to a pop musician from a record exec who said that as long as you have a cool record cover on a metal album it will sell like hotcakes!!
2. *Metal Inquisition* was produced by one musician who played all instruments (guitars, bass & programmed the drum machine). The "Pile" (Gord) wasn't even brought in to lay down the vocal tracks until the album was basically completed.
3. Yes, it was the "Pile" who did vocals on the **CONVICT-Go Ahead, Make My Day LP!**
4. Yes, Gord has 2 other albums out after *Stay Ugly*. His band **DOGS WITH JOBS** released *Shock* in 1990 (an absolute ballbuster which would have made a worthy follow-up to *Metal Inquisition*) and *Payday* in 1993.
5. NO, he had nothing to do with **EXORCIST-Nightmare Theater**. The back-up band for *Stay Ugly & Nightmare Theater* was none other than the inimitable **VIRGIN STEELE**, so of course the correlation was made between them. **Dave DeFeis** 1/2 tracked his voice on the *Nightmare Theater*, other than that they are the same back-up band. You **ORIGINAL SIN** freaks out there were also fooled by Dave DeFeis' sister with (once again) **VIRGIN STEELE** as a back-up band!! (Dave, you were really busy in '86!! Instead of putting out a putrid lineup of sleazy albums, couldn't you have concentrated on one killer follow-up to *Noble Savage!*!). Sorry Dave!! [JB! How can you forget *Age of Consent*, **VIRGIN STEELE**'s finest moment in their history?-Denis] Going back to '79,.....at this point Gord takes over in his answers to Jochen.

-J.B. Mestad

(In response to a written interview by Jochen Heinlein)

DogBite Records

Dear Jochen,

Thank you for your interest, and the chance to let Germany and Europe know who I was, who I am, what I've done, and what I'm doing! I am touched by your wish to do a four page story about me, and hope that I can help to fulfill this desire for you. I will answer your questions by giving you a chronological history, specifically addressing your questions, you can use what you want and discard the rest!

I began my 'professional' music career in 1979 in Ottawa, Ontario, playing bass and vocals with a band called **INCOGNITO**. We were a three piece doing original metal, and covering material from such bands as **ALICE COOPER**, **JUDAS PRIEST**, **AC/DC**, **BLACK SABBATH**, **KISS**, **DEEP PURPLE**, early **SCORPIONS**, **RONNIE MONTROSE**, and even **ZZ TOP**. We lasted about a year, then I helped form a band that we called

A.W.O.L. in which we did mostly originals with covers much like in **INCOGNITO**. Neither of these bands ever recorded albums or anything more than very simple demos. From early 1982 to early 1983 I was playing in a commercial Top-40 cover band called **MAINSTREAM** (who are now a recording act known in Canada as **1-2-1**), that was headed by guitarist **Leslie Howe**, and singer **Louise Reny**. **MAINSTREAM** was quite popular in the Southern Ontario area, and was quite busy. I was asked to join their band to broaden their spectrum by performing the heavier commercial music such as **AC/DC**, **KROKUS**, **JUDAS PRIEST**, etc.

Towards the end, in early 1982, **FIST**'s founder **Ron Chenier** was often in our audience checking us out. Leslie Howe became curious because he said the only reason Ron would come to see a Top-40 band was because he was interested in scooping one of his musicians. Ron, it turned out, was interested in me to replace both his bass player, as well as his vocalist. Leslie warned me that Ron was well known for changing the line-up of his band frequently, and that if I was to leave **MAINSTREAM** for **FIST** that I had better think good and long about it because it was sure

that it wouldn't last for long in **FIST**, and my position in **MAINSTREAM** would be filled. Ron eventually got around to asking me to join, and I figured that playing in an original recording band for a questionable amount of time suited me better than playing in a Top-40 cover band for a long time. We started rehearsals in the basement of a church outside of Ottawa (Yeah, imagine rehearsing "Open the Gates" in a CHURCH!!!) Ha-ha ha!! in January of 1983 for what was to be a 3 month winter tour of Western Canada for the *In the Red* Album. I was to perform **Jeff Nystrom**'s bass parts, and **Dave McDonald**'s vocal parts. Ron remained the only original member of **FIST**, playing guitar and vocals, with **Mike Whetmore** on drums, **Laurie Currie** on keyboards, and now, myself on bass and vocals. The tour started in Thunder Bay, Ontario, and was to finish in Calgary, Alberta. Along the way I was noticed by much of the audience, and we were often told that I added a new dimension of excitement and power to **FIST**. Ron seemed to be jealous of this, as he told me that when I wasn't singing to stay close to my amp and to keep still and not move around so much as it was distracting the audience. I always thought that was the point of

being on stage: to entertain! Ron recorded every gig and listened to the tapes by himself in his hotel room. Whenever we asked to have a listen, or to have a copy of a performance we were particularly proud of, Ron refused, saying that he wasn't sure that we wouldn't just go out and bootleg the tapes. Paranoia can be a stupid thing! When we reached Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, we had finally hit our stride as a band and gave the best performance of the tour so far. After the show, as we were packing up our gear, Ron said that he wanted to have a talk with me in the dressing room. Once we got there he threw a bus ticket to Ottawa on the table and said it was for me, that I had played my last night. I was confused as I had just given my best performance ever, and the crowd went nuts over us! He said I was fired because I was moving around too much on stage, and too many people were asking for my autograph, so he was going to fly in his old bassist Jeff to replace me. Oh well, his loss.

Upon my return to Ottawa, I rejoined my old **INCOGNITO** band-mates in a band called **U.N.** Again, we were a cover band, but we threw some originals into the set. We went on an Eastern Canada/U.S. tour in the spring of 1984. **Ivan the Subhuman (Blair MacDonald)** who used to be the sound man for **MAINSTREAM** (and was eventually supposed to be head of the **PILEDRIVER** crew) was the sound man on that tour. We were playing in Gander, Newfoundland, when Ivan was speaking with Leslie Howe on the phone when the subject came up that he was trying to get a commercial music record deal from Maze Music. During his dealings with Zoran Basic of Maze, Zoran told Leslie that 'any heavy metal album with a wild cover on it would sell a minimum of 20,000 copies', and that they should do a metal album 'just to make money.' It was their idea that this album would be the wildest metal that ever was, with a crazy leather 'n' spikes madman in a mask named **The PILEDRIVER** for a singer. Zoran felt that **KISS** had a great thing going with the hidden identity gimmick, and that since they took off their masks, that **PILEDRIVER** could take over from them in the arena of anonymous metal gods. Zoran gave Leslie some **VENOM** and **SLAYER** albums to show him what kind of metal he was talking about, because Leslie wasn't really into metal that much. Leslie and Louise studied the albums, then he wrote the music, and she wrote the lyrics for **Metal Inquisition**. Now they needed the heaviest vocals on earth to really pull it off. Leslie remembered my voice as being the heaviest he ever heard, and called Ivan to find out if I would be interested in singing on an 'album only-no band' project. I was very eager to do it as it would be my first chance to get on vinyl, every young musician's dream! I was to go to Leslie's 8 track basement studio (Zoran said it was Belgium rather than Ottawa on the album just to fool everyone into thinking that this was a big time band) to add the vocals to his bed tracks the very minute I returned to Ottawa after U.N.'s tour.

In August 1984, I went to Leslie's studio, went over the lyrics with him and Louise, and recorded the vocals in two days. I then met Zoran and signed a contract for 10¢/copy for my first album. I was excited! Even though there would not be a live band, finally people all over the world would hear my voice!!! Months later, I talked with Zoran about putting a band together, and he told me that, for him, the **PILEDRIVER** project was just to make easy money, and that if I wanted to put a band together and run it, it was entirely up to me.

In September 1984 I moved to Montreal, Quebec, to play in a band called **ICE** which had an extremely heavy guitarist named **Andrew Brunet** who I thought I could get into the idea of helping me form the real **PILEDRIVER** band. Months went by and through a ton of auditions and meetings I realized that there were very few people that wanted to get involved in a band that had no label support of any kind, not to mention that at the time, many thought that the mask/spikes gimmick was silly, and didn't really want to get involved.

Meanwhile, the album was getting manufactured, and I was supposed to go to Toronto to get fitted for the **PILEDRIVER**'s costume, and shoot the album cover. Zoran, being the cheap bastard he is, did it without me even knowing. He had some friend of his pose on the cover, then once it was all manufactured, he mailed me a copy. When I received and opened it, I almost fainted when I saw it. I couldn't believe how cheap it looked with that stupid hose on the guitar, and empty mic plugs hanging down in the drums, let alone the shock that he went ahead and did it without even including me, the fucking singer!!! I phoned him to ask him why he did it like that, without me, and he said, "Hey, that's rock'n'roll, besides, no-one's gonna know..." Well, at least he included the great names on the cover that I made up for the band members. Andrew Brunet quit **ICE** in November 1984, because of problems between him, the drummer, and the bottle. I then went on to play for **Brian Greenway's SWEAT BAND** (of **APRIL WINE**; one of Canada's most successful bands). This was during a time when **APRIL WINE** was split up for a while, and Brian was doing mostly bluesy-rock cover tunes, and he wasn't allowed to do any **APRIL WINE** material that he himself didn't write. We played almost exclusively around the Montreal area. He was working on his solo album at that time, and I was once again pained to learn that he had no plans of including me on his album. Well, that's rock'n' roll...

Meanwhile the **Metal Inquisition** album was taking off much bigger than anyone expected, and Zoran had me doing interviews with American radio and magazines all over the world to try to support the lie that this **PILEDRIVER** thing was real, so that it would keep up album sales. I had to make up all kinds of wild stories to keep up the charade so that the press would believe that **PILEDRIVER** was worth spending ink and airtime on. I had developed a completely wild and crazy character for **PILE**. He was to be the most insane, filthy, opinionated and obnoxious character that ever drew a breath. (I had never heard of **EI Duce** and the **MENTORS** at that time, ha ha ha!!!) I think I did a pretty good job of it, as the press we received was always very good. **Kerrang!** magazine even voted **Metal Inquisition** as the best album of 1985! Often the questions of live shows and tour dates came up, and I had to basically bullshit the press in order to maintain the illusion of reality. Zoran told me to say anything at all, even that it was the label's fuck-ups, just to pull the wool over their eyes and not blow our cover. Believe me, this was not easy to do, even with my creative brain.

In early 1986, Zoran was so happy that he had pulled off his little **PILEDRIVER** scam, that he called me to sing on yet another one! I figured 'why not', as I was having a hell of a time getting musicians to do **PILEDRIVER**, and my day job was sucking the life out of me, so why not get my vocals on another piece of vinyl. This time, he wanted to do something more commercial, as he mistakenly thought it would sell even better. **CONVICT** was the next rip-off of the public. He hired a guitarist in

New York named **Conrad Taylor** to write and record the music, and brought me down there to do the vocals. I had an extremely bad cold at the time and those sessions almost ruined my throat forever (believe me, I'll never be able to sing "Sodomize the Dead" again), but, I was determined that I would do whatever it took to make it happen so the world would hear me. In the United States, the distributor refused to release **Metal Inquisition** with some of the rude songs on it (this is the reason "Alien Rape" was changed to "Alien Raid"), so Zoran had some of Conrad's songs ("Twister", and "Devil's Lust") put on the domestic release of **Metal Inquisition**. I told him that people would be able to tell the difference of the writing and recording, and that it was a mistake, but he didn't care. It was just his pathetic attempt to clean it up for the masses. In the end, I was proud of my painful performance on that album, even if the music was somewhat lame.

In late 1986, Zoran called me to sing on the second **PILEDRIVER** album, **Stay Ugly**. I told him the only way I would ever be interested is that I had to be on the cover! I wasn't going to stand for just being an anonymous voice, that I deserved at least to be on the cover since I wasn't even getting the royalties I was due! (He always told me that sales weren't all that good, and that the project wasn't making any money, even though reports are that **Metal Inquisition** sold more than 250,000 copies in 1985 alone!!!). Zoran, the golden-tongue, once again sweet talked me into it. When it came time for the recording, I couldn't believe that he didn't have Leslie and Louise writing the material. He had **Dave DeFeis** and **Eddie Pursino** of **VIRGIN STEELE** now writing for **PILE** (as well as for a **PILEDRIVER** rip-off called **EXORCIST**). I couldn't understand why he would disregard the successful writing team that was behind **Metal Inquisition**. Oh well, that's rock'n'roll. Once again, I flew to the States to record my parts, this time in a cheesy studio in a garage. I had a pretty good time with those guys, but I always thought that **Stay Ugly** should have been released under a different band name because it just wasn't **PILEDRIVER** in my mind without Leslie and Louise's writing, because the album had a completely different sound than **Metal Inquisition** in both sound and style, I felt the need to change the names of some of my fictitious band members to give some sort of reason as to the drastic changes. I found that the lyrics lacked the sick humor that Leslie, Louise, and I shared, and that the songs all sounded alike, except for "The Executioner" which is my favorite track from that album. I made a few changes to Dave DeFeis' lyrics to better fit the **PILEDRIVER** style, but still, for me, it wasn't really **PILEDRIVER**.

Months later I finally got to do the photo session as my evil alter-ego the **PILEDRIVER** for the **Stay Ugly** cover. These were the only photos taken for the **PILEDRIVER** outside of the impostor that posed on **Metal Inquisition**. Once again I learned another rock'n'roll lesson: Zoran did not use the album liner notes and credits I had written for **Stay Ugly**'s cover, and just put a list of his own friends on it. In the following years I had no luck in getting a band together because no one wanted to be in a recording band that had no support from the record label. I also thought that it would be best if the next **PILEDRIVER** album was done by someone who really understood what **PILEDRIVER** was all about: sex, violence, alcohol, drugs, anything vile and repulsive and it had to have **PILE**'s brand of sick, twisted humor. I figured since I developed **PILEDRIVER**'s personality, I should be the one to do the next **PILEDRIVER** album. Zoran basically told me that I could do it, but that I had to

do it on my own. My hands were tied, I was broke, so I had to get a second job to get the money to go into the studio. At my day job I met a guitarist/singer who was doing some commercial rock who needed someone to produce his demo tape. When I went to record him, his lead guitarist **Sean Abbott** and I got along very well. A few months later Sean and I were working together on my ideas for what was to be the third **PILEDRIVER** album, **Shock**.

In March 1988 I was fighting Zoran for payment for the three albums I had already done for him. He only forked over a little more than \$2,000 over 5 years in tiny little dribs and drabs here and there, basically whenever I stalked out his office and begged him for money to buy me food, or pay my rent. I knew that with all the press attention that we were getting that we were selling respectable amounts of vinyl, but Zoran once again sweet talked me into believing that the albums did not make any money, that most of the people were listening to bootlegged cassettes and not actual purchased copies of the albums. I was young, I was stupid...I believed him! (I should have had the sense to get a lawyer, but I could never afford one). I found it funny that people were paying up to \$30 US for copies of the albums. As you can see, I never got much of this money, let alone what was legally mine by rights of the contracts. However I am extremely proud that so many people appreciate my voice, and that is what keeps me going on and staying in this wicked business. I have long ago given up the childish dream of being a rich rock star, but as long as people will listen, I will try to put out my own brand of metal. If even one single person thinks that what I do is worth putting on their stereo, that is enough to keep me going. And to know that people hundreds of miles, even continents away, are doing exactly this blows my mind every single day!!! I may not have made a successful living with my music, but my fans have made me rich in my heart.

By September 1989, Sean Abbott, new members guitarist **Randy Deeg** and drummer **Bernd Quieser** and I had the **Shock** material rehearsed and ready for the studio. Just a month before we went into the studio, Bernd got a promotion at his job and quit the band. Then two weeks after that, Randy Deeg quit the band for personal reasons. I had to work 24 hours a day programming an Alesis HR-16 drum machine to be ready to do the album! Lucky for us I played drums for 7 years when I first started in this crazy business as a kid, and could make the machine sound at least acceptable. (By the way, an EMU Systems 'Drumulator' was used on **Metal Inquisition**...and even though they sound fake, those are real drums on **Stay Ugly!**) So, here we were, Sean Abbott on the L channel guitars and backing vocals, and myself on vocals, bass, drums, and R channel guitars. At least I got the songs recorded after all!!! Then, when we were at the mixing stage of the album, Zoran decided that because I wouldn't simply give away this album (I wanted a cash advance), that he wouldn't put it out after all, that cheap bastard. After all the money that went into his pockets because of my vocals!! I decided then, "FUCK HIM!!! I'll just get another label to put it out." This was much easier said than done, though. While I was hunting for a record company to release the album, I had brought in my brother **Randy Kirchin** to play guitar, and we had found a drummer named **Ruston Baldwin**. I finally signed a deal with Fringe Product in 1989. We used Randy's and Bernd's pictures on the album because we didn't think we would be taken very seriously with just a picture of Sean and myself.

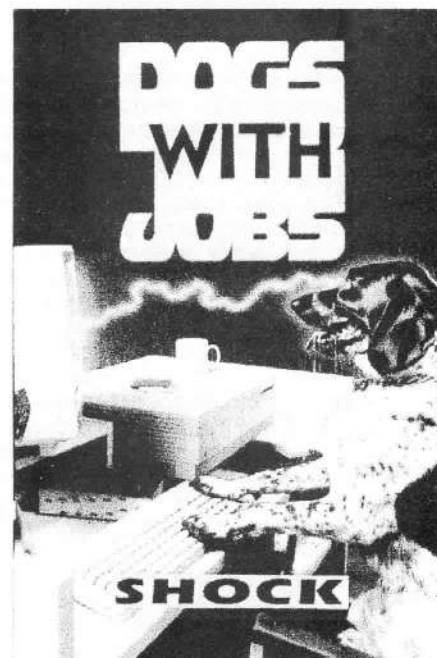
The name of the band **DOGS WITH JOBS** came about, because, for one thing, I was not going to use the name **PILEDRIVER** because Zoran owned it, and also, I decided to break from the past and get on with the future. When I played with Brian Greenway years before, I thought of the name **DOGS WITH JOBS**, because that's what we all are. We learn about our little tricks (trades) to please our masters (Bosses), and if we perform them well we get our rewards (paycheques). If we shit on the carpet (break society's rules) we get put in the doghouse (Jail). Many musicians live the life of a dog. I mean this in the best sense, of course. You might have noticed that many musicians live off their parents or a generous girlfriend, and don't have many redeeming qualities other than their musical talent and their easily attained love, and, I always found this to be a parallel to a dog that is dependent on his master for food and housing, and can only perform rudimentary tricks, while giving unconditional love to whoever will put up with his sniffing at their crotch. Well, now I had the chance to use this name, as I had an album to release, and I wanted a divorce from **PILEDRIVER**.

Here's another little tidbit for you...back when **Shock** was still supposed to be a **PILEDRIVER** album, the song "Dogs with Jobs" had a different name, and a completely different set of lyrics, but the same exact music. Originally the song was called "Road Pigs", and it was about all the sluts of the road. Unfortunately, most of the people we played it to found the song to be disgusting and offensive (exactly what **PILEDRIVER** was supposed to be...), so the guys in the band convinced me to change it to allow a wider audience to hear the album. The **DOGS WITH JOBS** album **Shock** was released in October 1989 to very little fanfare.

The metal scene in Toronto is very tough, and we had a hard time getting heard. Over here there are extremely few club owners that will take a chance on a band that no-one is familiar with, especially if the band is into very aggressive heavy metal! It's funny, but since agents would rather book a cover band that plays other people's music than an all original metal band, we often felt we would have a better chance for bookings by calling ourselves **SHOCK**, and billing ourselves as a **DOGS WITH JOBS** Cover band. They figure it is easier to get people to come and drink beer if it is **LED ZEPPELIN's** or **AEROSMITH's** music than **DOGS WITH WHAT?'s** music.

We did a video for the song "Dogs with Jobs" that got a little airplay on our version of MTV; Much Music. I did it on weekends while I had a job as an industrial video editor, with Mark Clermont, a commercial video editor friend of mine. We have received many comments from fans that they like the humor in our video, and that it is very different from most heavy metal videos because we do not use a shitload of tired clichés like rainy streets, atom bomb explosions, cemeteries and sluts in cheap skirts. It's basically just us having some fun with the lyrics.

Through that editing job that I had, I met a film producer named Jalal Merhi that was putting out a martial arts movie called **Black Pearls**. The biggest star in the movie was Jamie Farr; Corporal Klinger from the American TV show **MASH**. He was looking for some heavy music for a bar scene and I told him about my band and our albums. Yes, I did get paid for that...\$250 cash!!! I've seen the movie...it was pretty bad so I was glad that the cheque cleared! I've also heard rumors that it has been re-released with a different soundtrack, without our song on it, but I haven't seen that



version myself.

Payday, our second album, like **Shock**, had its cover concept based on the plight of the working 'dog'. Because **Shock** had more of a fantasy cover, I wanted to ground **Payday** by showing that in these times, finding a silver dollar on the street was like having a second payday after the government took their cut from your wages. By finding that coin, you were now closer to your goal of putting some food in your mouth, or buying that CD you wanted, rather than funding some bureaucrat's illicit schemes. The lineup on **Payday** was myself on bass and vocals, with **Shawn Tilley** on drums, and **Dave Copeland** on guitar.

DOGS WITH JOBS has been through many lineup changes over the years of its existence due to the fact that there are not many musicians left in the world that are willing to pay their dues, and often give up easily and quit when the going gets tough. I have had many members quit because being in a band requires years of hard work, work that they are unwilling to do. Even my guitarist Dave, who I thought I had really made a connection with, became the laziest person on the planet. He began to refuse to show up for sound checks, he never would help us putting up posters or distributing tickets for our shows, and even in the end refused to put solos in songs because it was too much work! So many feel that after a few short months they should be driving Lambourghinis and living in luxurious penthouse condominiums. So many young, MTV-impressionable, inflexible minds...It seems to me that no-one does it for the music anymore! They all expect to get rich quick! Either that, or their brains are fucked up on drugs or alcohol. Don't get me wrong, I enjoy a good joint, but, when your habit controls your life, that's not a way to live or work. The last drummer we had was hooked on Crack, and that not only fucked him up, but it fucked up the band when he could barely function on stage. After our repeated requests to drop the dope, he decided that the solution for him was to quit the band, not his drug habit. We held drummer auditions for months, but could not find a single decent one. (Does no one learn how to play their instruments before they try out for bands anymore?) After not finding a drummer right away, Dave started refusing to pay the hall rent, reasoning that since the band wasn't making him money, he shouldn't put any money back in. Nice fucking attitude!!! Maybe I am from the 'old school', or maybe I'm getting too old, but, I refuse to wipe their selfish asses, hold their hands and finance their careers. Hey bud, this isn't the factory with a paycheque and a dental plan...this is rock 'n' roll! So after 4 years of dealing with a massive stomach ulcer, I decided to take care of #1, and shut down the band. I no longer have my ulcer! Now, don't get the idea that I am disillusioned and bitter about this business to the very core of my soul, because if I was, I wouldn't even be working on a new album or writing this letter. It's just that since ten years ago I have been the only member of my band with any real experience in the business and had to try to bring young 'green' musicians up to speed, and most of them had very hard heads (I guess I did too, when I was younger...) They chose to ignore the experience of my years, and to forge their own path with all the pitfalls and bad choices that inevitably came with it. But, in the end, I have a circle of ex-DWJ members in my life that I can still call very dear friends, and can call on at anytime to suck back a few pints and have a good laugh with!!! The truly bad apples were fairly few in number, and the others remained very close to my heart.

As I mentioned, I am presently working on a

new album. Since I don't believe that 'THE GORD KIRCHIN BAND' is the way to go, as I find that a little too egotistical, I am calling the project 'SOFA-Q'. (Say it five times really quick, and you might get the joke...). I am thinking of calling the album **...And Then Some**. The material will not be any kind of radical departure from what I've always tried to do: aggressive metal, with a sarcastic, humorous edge. I have 6 songs completed for it so far, and numerous others at various points of completion. Some of the finished titles include "Scum of the Earth", "Shut Yer Trap", "Who Needs an Enemy?", "Last Day of the Weak", "Go Fast...Turn Left", and "The End." I am also working on an instrumental that has the working title, "Constantin's Tiny Gray Window" that was inspired by a long and depressing letter I received from a fan in Russia. At this point, I think I will play all of the instruments myself, and will bring in some guests to perform various solos and background vocals.

I hope to have it recorded and on the street in early '96. If all goes well, I will put a band together to perform it live, as well as **DOGS WITH JOBS**, and maybe even a bit of **PILEDRIVER** material! And if there is little or no interest in it, well, I guess I'll just have to keep writing until I come up with something that grabs everyone by the balls and forces them to take notice!!! And if THAT doesn't work, I might join someone else's band! (Any takers???)

In your letter, you asked if I have had any contact with **ANVIL**, or **EXCITER**. I am from Ottawa, **EXCITER**'s home town as well, and I knew **Dan Beehler**, although not extremely well, many years ago before I became the **PILEDRIVER**. I doubt he even remembers me, but we have had many conversations in many bars. I once opened up for them years ago in Ottawa when I was in

INCOGNITO. Regarding **ANVIL**, it's kind of funny you asked. You see, a little over a year ago, **Lips** asked me to join **ANVIL** for a European tour, but since I would not have been involved in any of the writing or singing, I decided not to go for it as these are areas that I feel are my strongest, and basically being a bass-puppet sounded kind of boring and **FIST**-like. I felt a need to try to go the distance with **DOGS WITH JOBS** because I had invested so much time and effort in it. Since then I have remained in contact with them, and have even gone to a few of their rehearsals on a social basis. (Let me tell you, their new material is so much heavier than anything they have ever done!!! Have you heard their album **Worth the Weight?** Their new material is even **HEAVIER!!!**).

Well, hopefully I have provided enough information for you to edit down into a story that you can use. Once again I thank you for your interest in my music, and everything that goes with it. Please send me a couple of copies of the story if you can, I would really appreciate it.

Thanking you,
Gord Kirchin/**DOGS WITH JOBS**

DOG BITE RECORDS
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M8W 3V8

P.S. Please let anyone who ever wrote to **PILEDRIVER** and never got a response know that I only received a tiny little fraction of fan mail from Maze/Cobra Records, and that I would like to correspond with everyone!!! Especially if they are fans of **DOGS WITH JOBS** as well!!! Thanks!!!
ROCK YER FUCKING FACE OFF!!!

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CONTEST WINNERS



This contest worked out much better than I expected! Because of the quality of their work, and their proximity to New Jersey, both Natalie Vlahovic and Jim Hutchinson were "hired" to become regular contributors to SENTINEL STEEL, based on their outstanding contest entries. SENTINEL STEEL#4 will feature both more prominently. Thanks also to winners Brian Reddish, Alexis Gagnon, and "Ike Are" for their fine entries. All have received prizes from the SENTINEL STEEL awards division. Thanks too to all the people who sent in their reviews.--Denis.

NOISE REVIEWS

CELTIC FROST-Morbid Tales 12" (Noise)

It would be wrong to say that *Morbid Tales* is one of the best Noise Records releases. More accurately, it's one of the best records ever! Early CELTIC FROST has influenced countless bands in many genres, including thrash metal, death metal, black metal, and punk. Although the group photo on the back cover of *Cold Lake* sends a shiver down my spine every time I think about it, CELTIC FROST still remain one of my favorite bands. The following paragraphs are taken from my forthcoming book entitled, *1001 Reasons Why Celtic Frost Were One of the Greatest Bands Ever: A Work In Ten Volumes*.

Immediately, you notice the cover of *Morbid Tales*. Simple, yet effective. The trademark CELTIC FROST heptagram graces the cover in a pleasing red-on-black color scheme. Turning to the back cover, you have individual photos of the three members of the band, complete with bullet belts, spikes, leather, and even a hatchet! If you are as fortunate as I am, your copy of this record will include a huge fold-out poster with lyrics and even more photos. The lack of a poster may take away from the full effect of the record, but don't despair! Put it on the turntable and pay attention to the music.

Once you get through the introductory soundbite, the first song, "Into the Crypts of Rays", kicks in and doesn't let up for another four minutes and nineteen seconds. The most noticeable feature of the music is Thomas Gabriel Warrior's unique guitar sound. Attempts have been made to copy his style of playing, but none have succeeded. Odd chords and a perfect combination of heaviness and thrashiness make Warrior's playing immediately recognizable. My favorite CELTIC FROST drummer was Reed St. Mark, but Stephen Priestly certainly holds his own on this record. I rarely hear drum production that's this good, and the double bass drum playing comes off as original and inventive, which is uncommon these days. Tom Warrior's vocals manage to be powerful without being over the top. He doesn't need low death growls or piercing screams to deliver the vocals with extreme force and conviction. Last, but certainly not least, is Martin Eric Ain, the bass player and the scariest looking of the three members in the back cover photos. The Warrior-Priestly-Ain lineup is second only to the classic Warrior-St. Mark-Ain lineup

(which produced *Emperor's Return*, *To Mega Therion*, and *Into the Pandemonium*, all classic records worth paying large sums of money for.) After the opening track, you get four more songs, broken up by the odd "Danse Macabre", which is a bit too long to be enjoyable. "Return to The Eve", "Visions of Mortality", and the slower "Procreation of the Wicked" are all FROST classics, and the closing track, "Nocturnal Fear" is one of the greatest songs ever, if only because Tom goes "Uhh!...Uhh!...UHH!" during the guitar leads. (You really have to hear it to appreciate it!)

To sum it all up, CELTIC FROST was one of the greatest bands ever to exist on the face of the earth, and *Morbid Tales* is powerful proof of this. Of course, Noise Records ended up being the lucky bastards who got to take credit for unleashing this band upon mankind. CELTIC FROST often get labeled as a "thrash metal" band, but that's too narrow to do justice to their music. CELTIC FROST is one of the few bands that really created their own unique sound. The number who owe their existence to Tom Warrior and company are living proof of the greatness of the band called CELTIC FROST.

-JIM HUTCHINSON

RUNNING WILD-Gates To Purgatory (Noise)

When I think of TRUE heavy metal, bands like IRON MAIDEN, MANOWAR, and particularly RUNNING WILD come to mind. Their first LP, *Gates To Purgatory* is a real classic in every aspect; pure speed, astounding melodies, and true old style metal power; all the ingredients to make it a true, yet underrated, underground milestone. Graced by simple yet well thought lyrics in the old 80's fashion, they seem childish, but beyond this imagery lies profound and dedicated lyrics. Rock n' Rolf's vocals may not be the most memorable you'll ever hear, but they fit perfectly with the feeling displayed throughout the album. It seems so ordinary and simple, but it grabs you by the throat and doesn't leave you; it sticks in the depths of your memory, especially the classics, "Diabolic Force" and "Genghis Khan", without forgetting the memorable closing anthem, "Prisoner of Our Time". So, if you don't have this album yet, but it now and put it beside your copy of *Powerslave* and *Sign of the Hammer* where it deserves to be--among the most brilliant and inspiring true heavy metal albums in existence!

-ALEXIS GAGNON



RUNNING WILD-Port Royal (Noise)

First, let me make one thing perfectly clear-- I LOVE RUNNING WILD!

There, now that I got that off my chest, on to the album. From the album cover to the song titles, you know what you're getting right off the bat--Great Heavy Metal! *Port Royal* is a great album, much better than the previous *Under Jolly Roger* (my opinion). The overall sound and production are clearer and crisper. That's what experience does for you. Without a doubt, the best song (and my personal fave) is the anthemic "Conquistadors", with its galloping riffs and historical lyrics.

The rest of the album ain't bad either with other stand-out tracks being the exceptional "Port Royal" and "Raging Fire", "Uaschtschun" and the fine instrumental "Final Gates". There really aren't any bad-songs on *Port Royal*, but the rest of the album isn't nearly as good as the above mentioned songs.

How does Rolf do it? Again and again, he comes up with the goods. I guess that's what happens when you don't bow down to the masses and give in to what everyone else wants you to do. All hail Rock n' Rolf and RUNNING WILD!

Now that Noise has opened up its catalog again *Port Royal* and other RUNNING WILD albums are easy to get. All hail Noise! (9 mushroom clouds)

-BRIAN REDDISH



As the old cliché goes, "the pen is mightier than the sword." However, with SABBAT, both are equally powerful weapons gracefully utilized to stab one with lyrical and musical intelligence. Martin and his unique pagan horde delivered a brilliant second masterpiece matching, if not emulating, the intensity of *History of a Time to Come*.

One should not dismiss SABBAT as merely one of those long-gone 80's thrash bands like that pointless cacophony called OVERKILL. They encompass so much more; every note is dense with unrelenting passion, and every lyric carries within it a thousand meanings. The production is so tight that one barely has breathing room, but it is beneficial to the record by keeping the unleashed fury in a box, cohesive and focused. The riffs may be a hundred miles a minute, and one may wonder is Simon's arms ever tire from pounding those drums at such a speed; even so, this album never goes over one's head. Between such lyrical profundity and musical dexterity, one is left only with questions answered by repeated listening experiences.

Songs like "The Clerical Conspiracy", a "conversation" between Eappa, Brand, and the Brothers of the Holy Order, articulates so well the theme of Christians' attempt to brainwash pagans and heathens. It is definitely not your average and lame "rape-the-virgin-Mary" wannabe blasphemy. All of the songs are poetry complemented by structured music; how could one deny a line like, "very little more than the sky for a blanket, the earth for my bed." Martin, in all his lyrical prowess, shows us that he can also sing in a mellow tenor in "Advent of Insanity", as well as scream in his notorious staccato growl.

This little English treasure called SABBAT made timelessly classic soundscapes paralleled by no other in the thrash genre. How other bands reeking of cheese like ANTHRAX and EXODUS could ever be lumped in the same genre as SABBAT is beyond me. How some of those worthless thrash bands devoid of substance ever gained fame while SABBAT remained in the shadows is unfathomable. No review could ever do this band justice, but it can only give their albums the exposure now that they deserved back then.

-NATALIE VLAHOVIC

METAL BLADE REVIEWS

FATES WARNING-Night on Bröcken

I just picked this one up at Best Buy for \$3.99. There's nothing like top-notch metal finds in a bargain bin! This was my first FATES WARNING (don't lynch me), because I have always figured them to be too MAIDEN-influenced. But, now that I am playing in a MAIDEN-influenced band (finally), my former heroes ACCEPT have long been dethroned as clones themselves, and metal has become more scarce, *Night on Bröcken* was a welcome discovery. Vocalist John Arch sounds like Bruce Dickinson when he's on target, but when John is not, he sings in a high and clear but somewhat generic voice. "Kiss of Death" is the third stand-out track with its heavy, unprocessed Marshall guitar sound that made ACCEPT'S *Restless and Wild* such a killer album. This is power metal! The production is so natural that it sounds as if FATES WARNING is playing in your room, if you

turn it up long enough. None of the over-processing so common in today's metal here! Sometimes the cymbals are too loud and the riffs too muddy, a sign of the eleven year old low-budget recording, but at other times, the power jamming is truly amazing. Before you know it, another killer riff has passed you by.

Bröcken is a HELLOWEEN-ish affair that would be a classic (well, it is a classic) without the not-so-good harmony vocals. This album has no appeal though; there are no top one hundred hooks or sing-along choruses. There are also no track timings. After the brief classical guitar interlude "S.E.K.", FATES WARNING rocks in true second-rate power metal fashion with "Misfit". I noticed that in the solo break, one guitar player plays an excellent solo, while the other one sucks! "Shadowfax" is a MERCYFUL FATE-style instrumental that I thoroughly enjoyed, even if it is too short at a little over three minutes. For a longer instrumental, I recommend TANKARD'S "For a Thousand Beers", but that's another review!

The eighth song on *Bröcken*'s nine offerings is "Damnation" that mixes ARMORED SAINT with QUEENSRÛCHE in a way that must be a real head-banger live. One of the six fold-out pages (one is the cover), of this '84 recording is dedicated to Metal Blade merchandise. Interesting are the "Heavy Metal Will Never Die" T-shirts, take heed! The last track must have inspired Metal Church, because it could be on *The Dark* (minus the production). This one's called "Soldier Boy", and it is their most mature song (if you can call a heavy metal song mature) and shows promise for better things to come. I can't wait to buy more FATES WARNING albums. Up the Irons!

-IKE ARE

HELSTAR-Nosferatu

Upon first listen, I was entranced by the classical beauty of *Nosferatu*. The very same emotion coursed through me when I heard "Don't Break the Oath" by MERCYFUL FATE for the first time... Literally floored, I collapsed, blissfully exhilarated and emotionally drained; the music was magic. I have sifted through many albums in my time, but in that vast shore of sand will one ever be lucky enough to find a gem buried deep beneath the clutter of musical debris. While FATES WARNING'S *Perfect Symmetry* was hyped in the late 80's, where were the ads for *Nosferatu*? Again, one of the most incredible power metal albums in existence is as underrated as LETHAL'S *Programmed*. (and *that is pathetic!*) However, let us not speak of such things, for *Nosferatu* is to be exalted from hereon.

A concept album this (sort of) is, with its vampiric imagery, hearty nourishment for the hungry Gothic soul. Confident vocalist James Rivera soars like a gentle but powerful wind, interweaving his vocal mastery with Larry Barragan and André Corbin's guitar legerdemain. This is, indeed, passion at its most fervent, and prowess at its height.

Lyrical, these black-hearted souls may write about their twisted vampiric fantasies, but they do not stray away from reality, either. "Harsh Reality" is a perfect example of this, with its general rant about the state of our Armageddon-bound planet. One also notices the slightly different musical style of this song; it is more

thrash-based than all of the other cuts on the album, with few of those melodic, classical guitar textures:

It is very seldom that one finds songs like "To Sleep, Per Chance to Scream" or "Aielaria and Everonn", the most godly song I've heard since "Chosen to Stay" by AGENT STEEL (or "Immune" by LETHAL, and "Eternal World" by CRIMSON GLORY for that matter). The unbelievable melody on this album was created not by mere mortals, but GODS, whose timeless music shall tenaciously last through the depths of infinity. As I sat there experiencing this piece of fine art genius, I groped for the ever-present box of tissues I needed to soak my flooding emotions...this is the sort of album I have been searching for my entire life...the perfect balance of delicate, yet ferocious vocals and music (listen to the way he sings "Someone hear my...cri-I-IES!" with that guitar melody... AAAARRRRGH! HELSTAR are GOD!) No one can here this unmoved; one would have to be completely lobotomized to hear this and not fall dead speechless.

If you are a power metal devotee, and do not own this album, buy it immediately, or poseur you shall forever remain in the dark pit of ignorance.

-Aielaria Ann
Princess of the
Winds she commands"

KING DIAMOND-The Spider's Lullabye

KING DIAMOND, one of metal's most intriguing personalities, returns with yet another album. As early as the late Seventies, King had already begun to create his image of make-up and Satanism, long before the modern day "black metal" trend came along with its "corpse paint"! Although MERCYFUL FATE was a hugely influential band, I enjoy King's solo work far more, and this record is no exception. I don't think that the *Abigail* LP can be surpassed, but *The Spider's Lullabye* comes pretty damn close and is the strongest effort from King Diamond since the departure of extraordinarily good drummer Mikkey Dee (who, by the way, plays on *Sacrifice*, the best MOTORHEAD album in ten years.)

This time around King has a band of unknown musicians, with the exception of Andy LaRocque. King took a big chance by reorganizing the lineup to this degree, but it has certainly paid off. This new group of musicians work very well together, and I'm sure their playing as a band will improve with time. The music successfully switches from slower, moody passages and faster, melodic sections complete with double-bass drumming which brings to mind the style of Mikkey Dee. Andy LaRocque is in top form on this record, and it shows in his soloing. LaRocque and new guitarist Herb Simonsen complement each other perfectly, and when they solo together, as on the song "Eastmann's Cure", the rest has an almost AN IRON MAIDEN-ish feel. LaRocque wrote the music for three of the ten songs on the record, with the rest being penned by KING DIAMOND himself.

What I like most about KING DIAMOND'S work is his one-of-a-kind vocal style. For those of you who have never heard King's singing, immediately go out to a record store and buy his *Abigail* CD. If anyone knows how the man can sing the way he does, please tell me. The only theory I have come up with so far s demonic

possession! Not only does King have an extremely wide range, but he continues to use his trademark technique of vocal overdubs. The effect of several vocal tracks working together simultaneously is haunting, and when King's voice switches rapidly between high and low, the listener has to keep reminding himself that there is only one vocalist. Occasionally, King tries out something new with his voice, as with the way it wavers in the songs "Moonlight" and "To the Morgue" and the intentional off-key clashing of the vocal tracks at the beginning of "From the Other Side". He uses many more pitches this time around, up to the amazing eight different vocal tracks at the end of "To the Morgue"!

Of course, no KING DIAMOND record would be complete without a story. The first six songs are independent of each other, but provide interesting stories in themselves. "Six Feet Under" tells of a person whose family has decided to dispose of him by burying him alive in a glass coffin. The family members watch as he tries to claw himself out of the and eventually suffocates. The last four songs tie together into a morbid tale of a man trying to find a cure for his arachnophobia. He finds a doctor who tries to cure him, but it ends in tragedy. Buy the CD to find out what happens, because I'm not going to give it away!

Some reviewers have complained that **The Spider's Lullabye** sounds stuck in the past and doesn't differ much from anything else King has done. I think that this is something that deserves much respect. KING DIAMOND has not sold out with this record, and I know he never will. He continues to hold the torch for true metal in a time when bands are changing to death metal, industrial metal, and black metal. **The Spider's Lullabye** is a *metal* record, something that is becoming more and more rare nowadays. KING DIAMOND's sound has not changed, but there is certainly enough progression from the last album that any true fan will give this record many listens. **The Spider's Lullabye** is one of King's best albums to date, and he has managed to maintain his integrity, while others are giving up or giving into trends.

-JIM HUTCHINSON

LETHAL-Programmed

It seems as if people have either never heard of this band, or they *severely* underrate them, but we who actually *know* of LETHAL, absolutely adore them. I suppose by reviewing such an obscure band, I am taking the path less traveled. However, LETHAL never got the recognition in 1990 that they so rightly deserved; henceforth, in 1996, I want to publicly extol this album as much as the space in this magazine provides.

To many, this album would instantly bring to mind a heavier **Warning-era** QUEENSRYCHE, with a bit of **Rage for Order** as polish, and to some extent, this is valid. Nevertheless, with LETHAL, it goes a bit deeper than that. Tom Mallicoat's vocal strength is a high-pitched force not to be reckoned with. His impassioned wailing has an *almost* Gothic tinge when sung in mid-range, as on "Obscure the Sky". Mallicoat is an unusual vocalist, as crystal-shattering as Midnight, but more operatically vibrato. The musicianship is more than competent here, with a lot of variety and clarity; the songs are not predictable and boring at all. It is not as classically based as ANGRA, but not as hollow as

TITAN FORCE; it lurks somewhere in between, borrowing a little from both styles. Musically, it is sort of akin to **Awaken the Guardian** without the twin guitar harmonies. Production-wise, it is solid, but with enough looseness for one to explore the individual parts that comprise the whole.

One thing that constitutes a truly gifted band (besides their musical talent,) is intelligent and sincere lyrics. LETHAL definitely take a different non-fantasy route, as in the sorrowful, introspective social commentary (!) of "Immune". That is *by far* the best track on the album, with the title track, "Another Day", "Obscure the Sky", and "Killing Machine" following close behind. This album is quite mood-swingy as well, ranging from sorrowfully cynical to frustrated and angry; each song is a different emotional trip. There is even the acoustic "Pray For Me", which is perfect tranquility after the full-force anguish (read: beauty) of "Immune". (I cannot shut up about this song.) All in all, a perfect conclusion to a near-perfect album. The only weakness is the first track, "Fire in Your Skin", which is just an introduction anyway...

Ever since I first heard **Programmed**, I could not wait to dig my claws into more of their divine material. Unfortunately, their newest offering, **Your Favorite God** is anything but. A true pile of shite this album is with its lame PANTERA-ish riffs and horrible balls-caught-in-the-elevator-door vocals, all of this laced with Easy Cheez lyrics that make your skin crawl. Ah, how the mighty have fallen, but we will always be able to indulge in **Programmed**. I implore everyone to scour those used CD bins. (Instead of re-releasing SLOPPY SECONDS, Metal Blade...*why don't you re-release something good like LETHAL, HELSTAR or CANDLEMASS, eh?!*)

-NATALIE VLAHOVIC

LIEGE LORD-Master Control

Metal Blade has a long history of putting out great albums by great bands that go so grossly unnoticed and appreciated. Unfortunately, LIEGE LORD's **Master Control** is one such album. I discovered this little gem in the bargain section of the local Camelot music. It was among several bargain tapes I purchased that day (I am a sucker for discount heavy metal!) Not caring that much about playing it that day, I neglected it for a while. That is, until a few days later when I decided to pop it in the ol' tape deck, not expecting much for the \$1.99 I paid for it (it was a cut-out). I was pleasantly surprised, to say the least, at what came out of my speakers.

From the opening notes of "Fear Itself", with its powerful guitars and fist-clenching lyrics, to the epic "Eye of the Storm", and the equally dazzling "Master Control", (not to mention the masterful cover or RAINBOW's "Kill the King", a metal classic, I just say!), **Master Control** is an exciting album of great intensity and class.

Singer Joseph Comeau's raspy, yet majestic vocals give the songs a sense of foreboding urgency. The guitar work of Paul Nelson and Tony Truglio is simply stunning--the right balance of power and speed, I love it!

You may not find it for \$1.99 like I did, but if you're a fan of epic, majestic heavy metal, do yourself a favor and seek this one out. It's a worthy addition to any fan of true heavy metal.

(8 1/2 mushroom clouds)

-BRIAN REDDISH

WARLORD-Best of Warlord

WARLORD was a progressive heavy metal band who, back in the early to mid eighties, played some truly amazing music. Operating in the same hemisphere as FATES WARNING, and early QUEENSRYCHE, WARLORD somehow failed to gain the status or acclaim of the other two. The reason for this had to be WARLORD's failure to play any live shows. They were a "studio only" band who could have amassed a sizable following had they played live.

My first taste of WARLORD was via the song "Child of the Damned" off one of the Metal Blade compilations, **Total Destruction**. After only a couple of listens, I was hooked. The amazing playing and vocals blew me away, and it became a favorite song of mine.

I wanted more, so when I saw this **Best of Warlord** CD for sale in the Metal Blade catalog, a couple of years later, I had to have it. I was not disappointed. In fact, I was shocked at how good the rest of the songs were.

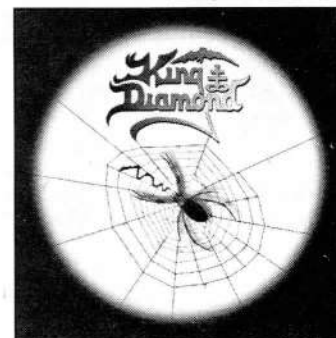
Containing thirteen tracks, the **Best of Warlord** is truly *the best*. It contains WARLORD's entire first album, **Deliver Us**, plus all the rest of the songs they recorded. The songs "Deliver Us", "Winter Tears", "Child of the Damned", "Penny For a Poor Man", "Black Mass", "Lucifer's Hammer", "Mrs. Victoria", "Aliens", "Lost and Lonely Days", "Soliloquy" and "1984" sound as fresh and vital today as they must have ten-plus years ago.

Some songs, "Deliver Us" and "Black Mass" especially, have an almost medieval feel to them, with the classical-style guitars and pounding drums, courtesy of Mark Zonder. Other songs, like "Aliens" have an almost "spacey" sound.

There is also a slight resemblance to the band YES in some parts, with WARLORD's singer sounding like an American version of Jon Anderson, the vocalist of YES. WARLORD's drummer, Mark Zonder later joined FATES WARNING, beginning with their **Perfect Symmetry** album. There was a rumor a while back that WARLORD may have a reunion. If they can come up with anything half as good, I'll be the first one in line.

(10 mushroom clouds)

-BRIAN REDDISH



Three Lords of 80's German speed- BRAINFEVER, ATLAIN, NOT FRAGILE

by Tony Zangara

There should be a name for the similar style played by these three German speed/power bands; BRAINFEVER, ATLAIN, and NOT FRAGILE, but I can't think of a perfect term for it. It's like, if you took classic MAIDEN albums and (I mean from the glory years: Killers-Powerslave, here), sped the riffs twice or thrice as fast, and added a Euro-sounding higher-pitched Bruce Dickinson... Just speedy riffs and lots of fast, polished chord changes, one right after the other, speeding right by you with a moderate dose of power... Not bludgeoning like DESTRUCTION, not complex like CORONER, for here the emphasis is on simple speed (especially NOT FRAGILE, who write the greatest number of fast songs of the three) played with conviction and topped with passionate quality vocals (especially in the case of BRAINFEVER). If you haven't heard this style of German mid-80's speed, then you need to check out the masters of the art, namely the above-mentioned three bands.

BRAINFEVER is perhaps my favorite; they have three releases out: **Capture the Night** (1984) which was re-released on CD simply as **Brainfever** by the reformed Mausoleum, **Face To Face** (1985), and the four-track EP called **You** (1988). The musicians on the first two albums are: Horst Neumann (vocals), Marco Boettcher (guitar), Heinz Schreiber (bass), and Frank Marowsky (drums). C.T.N is chocked full of classics such as, "Brainfever", "Tool For the Show", "Danger of the Night", and "Into the Sky", in which the vocals of Neumann lift the listener to new impassioned heights of metal ecstasy. Even better is the subsequent F.T.F., one of the best 80's metal albums of all time--such technical speed frenzies like "Devil's Eyes" are a delight to behold, as Neumann soars higher and higher, the guitars roar faster and faster, and each verse of each song seems better than the last. This stuff is for real! "Black Jack" is unbelievable; guitarist Marco Boettcher's fingers fly over the fretboard as the vocals soar into the stratosphere, and take you with them. Then comes the powerful, but more restrained "Face To Face", with its brilliant, impassioned chorus, then back to the speed train of the superb "Savior". Next, the slow but moving "Memories of Tomorrow"...I can't say enough about this brilliant album. It ends with the utterly unbelievable "Caught By the Fire", one of the most memorable metal songs ever written. I challenge you to listen and not sing along. This band had it all! So, of course they disappeared after this album, to resurface with the **You** EP in 1988. After the line-up has changed, and the most noteworthy alteration is the replacement of Horst Neumann with Mario Simon. This is exactly what -OSTROGOTH did on their reunion album, **Feelings of Fury**; they replaced a great vocalist with a less capable one, and the parallel continues further. Both added keyboardists. On **You**, Simon does his best to sound like Neumann, but there is no comparison, and hence the EP makes you realize how truly special Neumann was. So, although there are two fast excellent tunes, "Hoist Up the Sails" and "You" on the EP, all I can think about when listening to them is: if only Neumann were singing this!

(Ratings: **Capture the Night**-8 rabbits, **Face To Face**-9 rabbits, and **You**-6 rabbits)

ATLAIN is a band similar to BRAINFEVER. To my knowledge, they have two releases out, the classic **Living In the Dark** (1984) re-released on CD by the reformed Mausoleum, and the little-known G.O.E (Guardian of Eternity--1985). The musicians are: Peter Mueller (vocals), Joerg Pryztaraski (guitar), Andreas Buettner (guitar), Andre Chaplier (bass), and Chris Midias (drums). As with BRAINFEVER's F.T.F., the second ATLAIN has not yet appeared on CD; hopefully this will be remedied soon, as G.O.E. is the superior ATLAIN album, just as F.T.F. is the superior BRAINFEVER. ATLAIN's brilliance is easy to see on their speed classics "Hallowed By the Priest", and "Sphinx" from L.I.T.D., and there is more of the same on G.O.E. in the high velocity "Space and Time" and "Break Down Your Neck". When the tempo is set to maximum, ATLAIN is one of the maestros of German speed metal; first-class riffs, solos,

hooks, and choruses. But, ATLAIN is not quite as good at the mid-paced songs, which is where BRAINFEVER also excels; ATLAIN just don't get the same amount of soaring passion into them. Yet, that's not to say the "Living In the Dark", "Satanica", and "Demons' Feast", etc. won't have you cranking the volume and grabbing the tennis racket (whether to play air-guitar, or to smash your roommate's Pearl Jam records, according to your preference).

(Ratings: L.I.T.D.-8 rabbits, G.O.E.-8 rabbits)

NOT FRAGILE is another superb speed outfit. On vinyl, I just have the **Who Dares Wins** (1988) album, which is quite brilliant in places with the soaring, neck-breaking "With All My Might" and "High Into Heaven" and the BRAINFEVER/ATLAIN-type vocals of Torsten Buczsko. I have since come across two CD's, **Lost In A Dream** (1993), and **Hard To Be Alive** (1992), both packed with wonderful mid-80's European speed metal at its finest. While NOT FRAGILE do not reach the heights of BRAINFEVER in my opinion, they are still formidable. Each of the aforementioned CD's has 20 tracks, and almost all of them are one excellent songs after the other. This is a very talented band, much more so than ATLAIN, and it shows, since the list of NOT FRAGILE's superb songs would be too long to attempt. So, get one of these CD's if you can. There is a lot of duplication; the first half of **Hard To Be Alive** is on **Lost In a Dream**, and the second half of **Hard to Be Alive** is the **Who Dares Wins** album.

Although these CD's have 90's dates, the music is from the 80's. NOT FRAGILE have recently reformed and put out another CD, called **The Return**, which is quite a good comeback. The band now consists of: Torsten Buczko (vocals, guitars), Wolf Rambatz (guitar), Matthias Belter (bass), Markus Köhn (drums). There are several nice speedy anthems true to the mold of traditional NOT FRAGILE. Any previous fan will love these. However, there are also a few uncharacteristic songs, such as the unplugged (gasp) version of the speed classic "W.I.R." and the mid-paced commercial sounding "Hungry For Love". But these are tolerable songs, and overall, fans of this music should get into this CD, even if it isn't quite up to the old standard. I know I will keep it and listen to it quite a bit, as well as cranking the old material, for I really love this style of music that NOT FRAGILE still convincingly execute like the masters that they are.

(Ratings: **W.W.I** LP-7½ rabbits, **H.T.R.A.** CD-8 rabbits, **L.I.A.D.** CD-9 rabbits, **The Return**-7½ rabbits)

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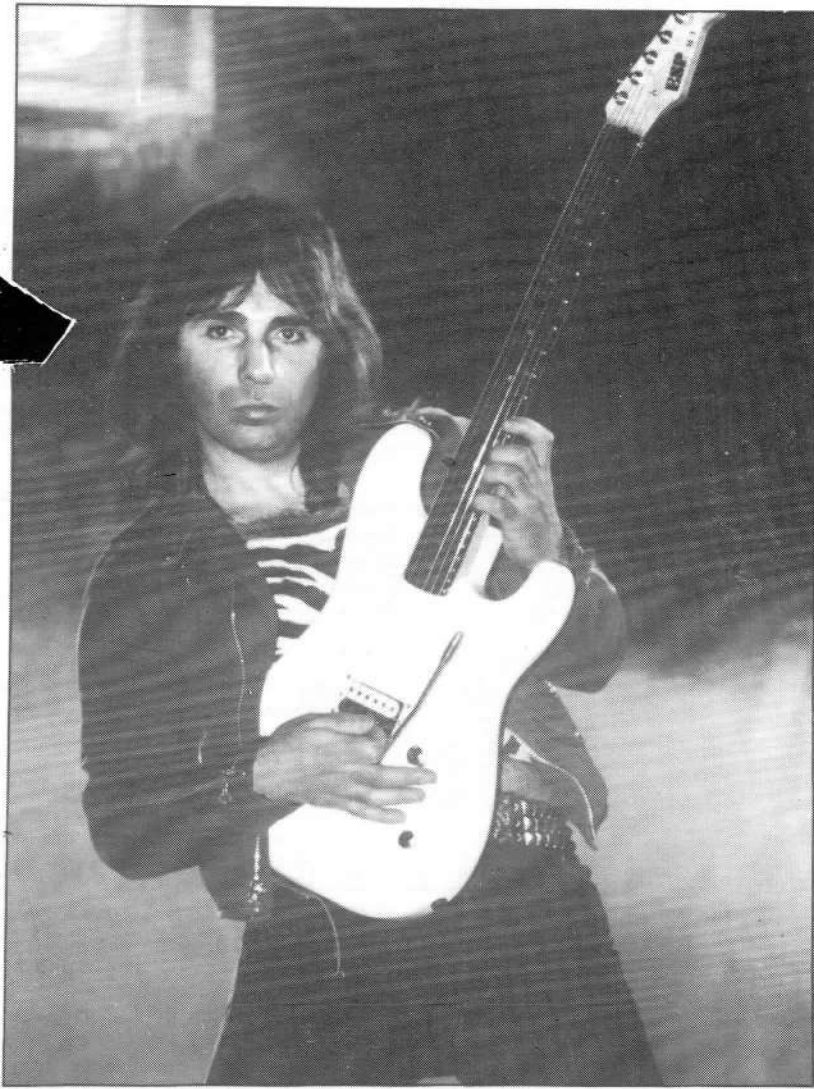
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JACK STARR'S BURNING STARR



I chanced upon Jack Starr's name in a local music paper, and made the necessary moves to get in touch with the guitarist, to see what he had been up to all these years. Little did I know what I was getting myself into! A massive interview ensued, (the first part featured here), motivating Jack to get back into the scene (look for his VIRGIN STEELE/BURNING STARR output to be reissued). Jack Starr is a veritable heavy metal icon, having seen it and done it all in his ongoing career--the man is known and loved by many here in the New York area. Personally, my favorite work by the man is his fantastic 3rd BURNING STARR album, *No Turning Back* (1986), which is easily his most powerful work to date. Leaving behind the bluesy leads'n'riffs, Starr delivered neo-classical fretwork, fronted by the magnificent operatic vocals of young kid Mike Terrelli. *No Turning Back* is definitely one of the standout "true metal" albums from the mid-eighties. It should be out on CD soon--and better yet, Jack is writing new material in the same vein! But we'll take care of the present in time...now for the beginning..

PART ONE

VIRGIN STEELE'S ORIGINAL AXE MAN IS BACK!!

Could you first list what albums you played on in your entire career and pick apart each one...you can also give years..

I'll try to go back in order. The very first thing I appeared on was *US Metal Vol. 2*, which was on Shrapnel Records, put out by Mike Varney, the guy from *Guitar Player*. Basically I answered an advertisement in *Guitar Player*. I think the ad was something like, 'Looking for America's best unsigned guitar player to shred and rip and create mayhem'. (ha ha) I think it was something along those lines, and I said, 'this sounds like it's right up my alley.' I like the way he had phrased it, you know?

Yeah...

I had sent him a tape. I had just been in this band VIRGIN STEELE literally for...I started this band six months prior, and I sent him the tape and within three of four days, he

called me back again. He was totally knocked out by the song we had sent him, and he wanted to use me on the album. The only thing he had asked was that the solo be longer. The solo that I sent him was a 30 second solo, and a weird coincidence was the solo that we had sent him was actually the edited version where we cut the solo down. So I had the other version ready to go, which had, like, a minute or a minute and a half long solo. So, I said 'that's no problem; we've got that', and I sent it to him, and he was happy, and we got our start that way.

So now this was VIRGIN STEELE...

Right...

I mean, it says something like, "Jack Starr of VIRGIN STEELE doing the song...what was the song?"

"Children of the Storm..."

OK.

When I played a festival in Europe, METALLICA was on the same bill...one of the guys, the guitar player...

Kirk Hammet...James Hetfield...

James Hetfield... he came up to me and told me that that was one of his favorite songs...

Ha Ha ha...

That was interesting in retrospect. I didn't think much of it back then, because I wasn't really a METALLICA fan...only the first album *Kill 'Em All*...but in retrospect, it's a compliment, because the band's really evolved tremendously.

Yeah, definitely...

Even though some people might like their earlier work better...

Yeah...

But as far as I'm concerned, I see a definite evolution. So that's the story with the first album. That led to the first VIRGIN STEELE album, because being on that *US Metal* Shrapnel release opened up all the doors for us. When we put out our own album, we were able to call up all the distributors and say, 'it has the same guy that was on the *US Metal* album, and blah blah blah, and if you like that cut that was on that album, you might like the whole album', and sure enough, it did work. Then we were able to sell out the first printing really, really quickly. We were able to get it signed to a lot of labels.

So, how many did you print up?

We initially printed up 20,000, which was a big big run for...

20,000?!

20,000!

Oh man!

We went through that really, really quickly. A tremendous amount. I mean, it literally filled up a suburban double car garage! I'm talking stacks and stacks of boxes, and they all moved...those got sold real quickly. I think being on the Shrapnel release was an instrumental factor, plus the fact that that whole type of metal was really just starting to explode. So, that led to deals with Music For Nations. The interesting thing is that we were actually Music For Nations 001...we were their first release!

Oh wow...So didn't they change the cover artwork or did that remain the same?

It did get changed slightly for the English release...the back cover, and the liner notes. It also got changed slightly for the Japanese. They sub-licensed it in Japan to King Records, and then it got further sub-licensed to a ton of other labels. So that album really was available all over the world, even though that wasn't on a major, it was almost like being on a major, because of all the different labels that picked up on it.

Do you think that with VIRGIN STEELE it was all a matter of being at the right place at the right time?

Yes, I definitely think that was a part of it, and I think too sometimes that when you're so over the top, it's like you can't be denied. I'd have to say that it was the combination of the fact that we were very over the top. It's kind of like, when you do something, and you do it with such an air of urgency, people

pick up on it, and people that are into that are definitely going to relate to it. Also, the review in *Kerrang!* was pretty ecstatic on the first one.

So what was that...1980-?

It was early '83 or late '82...

I don't have my LP in front of me, so it's probably '82.

Actually, you're right because we were past *Guardian*...we were doing an EP back then, which was called *Wait for the Night*, and in England it was called *A Cry in the Night*.

Well, that was the name of the song, "A Cry in the Night..."

Yeah, which was like a melodic ballad. So not to digress, there was the first one--the Shrapnel Records, then there was VIRGIN STEELE 1, then there was the EP [*Guardians of the Flame*] and then the EP came out with those two separate titles and totally different artwork.

Yeah, Guardians had different covers, too. I had at least two different covers for...but backtracking, before US Metal, was it you and David and who else...?

Well actually it was me, David, a drummer named Joey Ayvazian, and a bass player named Joe O'Reilly. And incidentally, none of them are in the band anymore. There are no original members in VIRGIN STEELE, except for David. So basically it's as much a David DeFeis solo album as it is anything else. I sold the name VIRGIN STEELE. There was litigation. We didn't have a happy split up. We had an angry, bitter split up, and I found out that they were going to use the name that I had copyrighted and that I had come up with. I don't think it was Dave's idea...I don't have any bad feelings towards Dave today. When we see each other, there's no problems at all. We even jammed as little as a month ago in a club on Long Island. So there's no problem; it's just that there's a problem, because of the manager who intervened and who basically told Dave to "hey, use the name and screw Jack", and that manager's name is Zoran Busic. I don't care about saying it in the interview, because it's all water under the bridge. He was managing a band called SAGA, which I don't know if you remember...

Yeah...

I contacted Zoran. I said, 'if you like SAGA, I think you'll dig where we're coming from.' He really did. When he took over the band, I think he found it easier to deal with David than with me, or Dave and me together, so he figured divide and conquer, so he kind of

pushed for my ouster and so on and so forth. Ha ha.

So this was during what time period?

He came after the EP.

OK.

I would say; when did *Noble Savage* come out? The first album I wasn't on...

'85, I believe...

Yeah, so then he came at the tail-end of '84...Now he had a label called Maze in Canada. I contacted him first, and I'm the one that basically brought it on myself by involving him, and it's regrettable, but it happened. I ended up having a lawsuit with him, and I did win the lawsuit. I got paid for the name, and it reverted back to Dave. Dave is really the only one left, and he still seems to like to use that name. But that's great. But I thought of the name, and I thought it was a good name at the time. I was trying to come up with something that had a light and heavy image, sort of like LED ZEPPELIN, IRON MAIDEN, and ANGEL WITCH...

SAVAGE GRACE...

Yeah, exactly. I wanted to have a kind of a dichotomy.

Yeah. Well it definitely worked, and it's one of those classic names in metal.

Yeah, it's funny, because I was looking in a French metal encyclopedia the other day (because I'm originally born in France, and I came to America when I was 10 years old, and I read French, and people send me stuff in French...)...it was under the thing 'VIRGIN STEELE,' and it basically said, 'could've been a great band, but the split up with Jack Starr signaled their being relegated to the second class status in the rock hierarchy.' And that was pretty much it, and you realized that...you know, I think sometimes there's magic, there's chemistry, and it doesn't mean that any particular member's great. It just means that for some strange reason, these particular members clicked together, and they're able to be greater than the sum total of the parts.

Yeah.

Which in bands like the STONES, the BEATLES, and CREEDENCE CLEARWATER, you're basically talking about musicians that were pretty poor, but together, they would just be able to have this incredible magic. I mean, if you ever listen to some of the BEATLES' stuff, the early BEATLES stuff, playing out of tune and out of time, ha ha...CCR, they went on to sell, like, a 100 million records, and that was an

awful band live! It's magic...And then you get the RAMONES...and the SEX PISTOLS couldn't even play, but they were just awesome. So, I think if there's magic, and you fuck with that magic, you end up paying the price. But I think I'm going to start to rekindle some of the magic

Cool, well I'm sure waiting for it! So, getting back to Maze...Guardians of the Flame was renamed and it has different tracks in Canada; it's called Burn the Sun...

Right...

Why was that? Why were the track listings different?

OK, basically, I really don't know. I think that he may have had an ulterior motive for doing that. Now, refresh my memory, are there additional cuts on the Canadian release?

Yeah, there's extra songs, but then there's a few missing from Guardians of the Flame, so it's missing a couple, but it's got like three or four different extra songs...

I think what he did is he took some of the stuff on the EP that he really dug and maybe that he felt were stronger than some of the other stuff, and then he created his own order. He decided that he could do that, so that's what he did.

So, label-wise back in these early days, you had the first one, the first VIRGIN STEELE was on your own label...

For about two months...

For about two months? In the US it got picked up?

Yeah, it got picked up by a label called Dutch East India, which was called Napalm back then.

OK...

They picked it up in the US, and then it got picked up in Europe, and Scandinavia and the Benelux countries...it really got picked up everywhere.

And then on Guardians, in the US, it was on Mongol Horde...it was the first release on Mongol Horde...

...which was also a continuation of Dutch East India.

OK, so same company...

Same company.

And in Europe, it was still Music For Nations?

Right.

And they changed the cover artwork and...

...they put a green cover...

While the US had the hand and the sword, the British cover had a painting on it.

Yeah, I think I like the US version better. It's a question of taste. Some people might have liked the British version. But they were all better than the French version...you didn't see it?

No. I haven't seen it.

It was blue with the VIRGIN STEELE logo, and it just wasn't really good. It was just kind of a stripped down version of it.

So, who put it out in France?

In France, it was out under Bennett Records, which was part of CBS.

Oh, CBS, OK.

And, in Japan, it was on King, and in Sweden, it was on Sonnet, and Roadrunner put it out in the Benelux countries through...

When you say Benelux...

Like Belgium, Luxembourg, Holland, those are called the Benelux countries. And the only reason I know that is from having it drilled in my head when we were doing these deals way back when.

During these years, who would you tour with? You went to Europe obviously...

We went to Europe, and we also did some promotional tours, and basically what was happening was the band was drifting apart. Me and Dave were basically locking heads a lot, y'know what I mean? Like locking horns...what's the expression...kind of 'butting heads...' Dave was more into wanting to put in keyboards a lot, and I was more and more into wanting to make it into a guitar thing. My writing was sometimes just not really meshing with Dave's at times. So basically Zoran came in the picture. At the time too, they felt that my image was bad. I mean, I was kind of overweight and stuff (ha ha) and you know, so now I'm thin, but back then I was a little bit overweight. They were basically going to use a lot of pretenses to engineer me getting out of the band. So, he was kind of emphasizing a lot of the differences. So that was really the reason, if I have to explain why.

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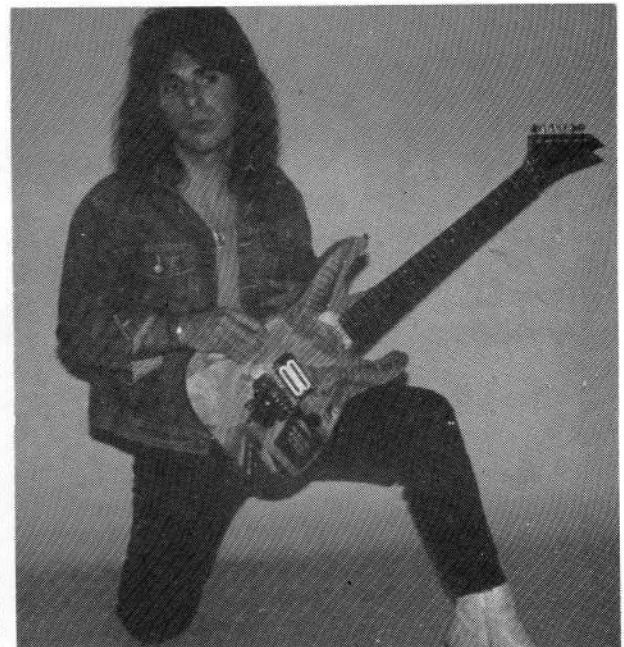
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So, it was just simple musical differences, and Zoran came in and made sure that the split happened.

Exactly. For his own reasons. I'm sure he benefited from it, because he also had some deals going on with the Canadian government. See, I don't know if you realize that, but in Canada they subsidize art, and I think at one point he might've even gotten financing from the...like an endowment for the arts kind of deal. Yeah, a lot of strange things occurred which I really was not aware of, just whatever information trickled my way. You know what I mean?

Yeah.

But that was that, and at the time things were really looking up for me, because I was able to walk into the offices of really the biggest independent label in America, which was Passport in the 80's. I was able to walk in there and get myself a solo deal, and then I was able to do my first album, *Out of the Darkness*. When I came back from the studio, because I was recording upstate, I was with Rhett Forrester. I was not told I was out of VIRGIN STEELE at that time. I was just doing a solo album, and nobody told me that they wanted me out of the band. But when I came back, I distinctly remember me and Rhett went into this restaurant and we were talking, and the waitress was, like, a girl into heavy metal, and she comes to take our order, and we're talking and she goes, 'Oh, you're Rhett Forrester,' going to Rhett, and 'you're Jack Starr. You used to be in VIRGIN STEELE.' (ha ha) And I go, 'Wait a minute? I used to be in?' So that's how I found out about it.

Oh.

And that was kind of weird. So then I realized that in my absence, when I went to

record my solo album, they had gotten another guitar player, who is still in the band now.

Yeah. What's his name?

Eddie Pursino.

Pursino, OK.

And I have no problems with Eddie. He's a nice guy.

So you did *Out of the Darkness in Rochester.*

Right.

And Carl Canedy produced it, and he also played drums.

Right.

And...

And he helped me line up some other talent too. He helped me get Gary Driscoll, who was on the first RAINBOW album, and Gary was a great drummer. He also got me his bass player from the RODS, Gary Bordonaro, and Gary Bordonaro was just a great bass player. So I got Rhett on my own, because I basically was in touch with Rhett's manager at the time.

RIOT is based in New York now...

Yeah.

Were they back then, too?

Yeah, they were.

And now this was after their album, *Born in America.*

Right.

Was Rhett on *Born in America*?

Yes, he was.

But then after that, *RIOT* was just kind of in limbo.

It's true. Us doing a solo album had repercussions in terms of a lot of things, because somehow or other, after that solo album, he was no longer in RIOT or not that I know of. I think they had gotten someone else. I was no longer in VIRGIN STEELE, and the RODS were no longer period.

So *RODS* ended before *Out of the Darkness*?

I'm not even sure. Actually no, because they did put out something afterwards, which was also on Passport, thanks to my introducing Carl to Maury Scott, who was the president of Passport.

Was that *Long Live Metal*, or...

I think it was *Let them Eat Metal*. Or maybe *Hollywood*. Maybe they got two albums on Passport.

So, you worked with Rhett Forrester in the studio. You told me what happened to him recently, but another person told me that he'd be snorting stuff in the studio. Is that something common in your circle of musicians or...

No, I would have to honestly say that Rhett was not, at the time when we worked together, he was not by any stretch of the imagination a drug addict. He definitely liked to drink the six packs, but it made him sound really good though! He was very functional. Like, Rhett could literally drink, like, two six packs or two 12 packs and still be up walking around and be totally in



control. He had a tolerance to alcohol that was just unbelievable. You could just not chill this guy; I mean, literally, it sounds kind of weird to say this, but...he died...but he was really a tough guy. And he was a really nice guy, too. And it was with a lot of sadness when I read what happened to him. We weren't really in touch for the last couple of years, so it was just like a shock you know. But he was not a drug addict at the time. I later heard that he started becoming one when he moved to Hollywood, so this was probably a good three years later.

Yeah, because after *Out of the Darkness* he put out a few solo albums.

Right

Gone With the Wind, I think.

Right, and that came as a result of when we went to Europe. He hooked up with a label I was on in Europe at the time, Bernett. When we came back to America, we didn't really continue. And then I started another...I actually started a 'BURNING STARR' band, whereas *Out of the Darkness* was just called 'JACK STARR'. So then I, for a while...this is a bit of metal trivia, but for a while I had the first singer of ANTHRAX.

Ha ha...Neil Turbin!

As a matter of fact, I'll tell you a really funny anecdote. This is going to be a long interview, if you want to hear all this stuff.

Yeah, that's the fun of it. I'm going to publish it all, so keep on talking.

Well basically, before I knew that Rhett was going to do my project [*Out of the Darkness*] or not, before I knew that everything was going to be cool, I started talking to Neil. Me and Neil hit it off really well. Neil is a really funny guy. I mean, he's a character, and we got along really good. So, we were rehearsing and hanging out, and he was coming out to Long Island, and I told him I've got some festivals coming up in France, and the French label wants us to come out there, and I said, 'if you're interested in doing it, you know, everything will be taken care of...your accommodations, plane flight, you'll have a per diem every day.' He was really up for it, so he said, 'OK, "I'm there. If you want to use me to do the shows, great.' Then...this is like a plot out of *I Love Lucy* or something...then Rhett calls up nearly two weeks later, and he says, 'you know what, I really dig your songs. I want to be a part of it. I want to do the record with you, and I want to do the shows', so I said, 'oh wow!' To make a long story short, they both went with me to France, and they were both on the plane, and there was actual tension on the plane. In fact, some of that tension got written up in a *Hit Parader* article in 1984,



where they alluded to strange behavior on an airplane going to France...

...Uh oh...

And basically, Rhett pretty much told Neil that he had to sit on the other part of the plane, and that he was not to sit anywhere near him, and it put me in a really weird situation, because I had to apologize to Neil, and I had to tell him, 'look, this isn't going to work out. There's no way that you can do a couple of tunes and Rhett could do a couple of tunes, because Rhett's not going to go for that.'

Yeah...

So basically, Rhett laid down the law, and I went with it, because I felt that I needed Rhett. I needed him to do the album. And Neil took a plane back, like, a couple of days later, and it kind of soured my relationship with Neil.

So, this was a show (or shows) prior to *Out of the Darkness*.

It was prior, yes. The album hadn't actually come out. It was recorded, but it hadn't come out.

OK, so Rhett had recorded the album, but he hadn't given you any commitment for...

...Doing any shows or anything. So then I was thinking, well, if Rhett wasn't going to tie himself down to some shows and commit himself, who else is there? Then I thought of Neil, because already we were on a couple of compilation albums with ANTHRAX. One of them might be *Wango Tango*.

Ha ha ha...

And we had actually done some shows. In fact, one show where ANTHRAX opened up for my first band, for VIRGIN STEELE, was at L'Amour's in Brooklyn. So, I don't know,

that was a pretty interesting show. We got along with them OK. There was no problem. You know what it was? We weren't really doing the same kind of music. They were doing the forerunner of what would be thrash. They were doing it, METALLICA was doing it. We had a couple of songs that fit into it on our first album, but our first album also had other bits...something that wouldn't totally appeal to that style.

So, who else did you play with back in those days...

Names you might have heard of?

Mm hm.

was like he was kind of still in SAVATAGE, or had just left whatever before. On the album, we put his picture, but under bass we put 'Thumper'.

Oh, OK.

So if you see that you'll...it's very very clear that it's Keith. If you have any SAVATAGE albums, and if you have *No Turning Back*--any of the European releases, you'll see that it's Keith. For about a year, he was living in Long Island, and he's just an incredible bass player. It was really good having him in the band, and at the same time, if you want me to give you some more that you might have heard of, I had a guy at the time who...he is the drummer for RAVEN now...

Oh, Joe Hasselvander!

Hasselvander, that's it! Joe was playing with me at the time for about a year. What we did when Joe was with me is, you know, some of those albums you spoke about...

PHANTOM LORD!

That's Joe playing drums and actually singing on some of it, so it kind of gets complicated.

All right so, *No Turning Back, I mean, Out of the Darkness did well, and No Turning Back came out, and PHANTOM LORD*

Well later on, now we're going a few years into the future, around the *No Turning Back* time, I've got the bass player Keith Collins, SAVATAGE...

Yeah!

...the original bass player. He's on the German release of *No Turning Back*. Now this gets confusing, because when I say 'the German release', there's been a lot of different releases on every one of these albums: a French release, a German release, an English release, American, Japanese. He was on the French and German releases.

Those were later releases or earlier releases?

It was the same record, but it had different artwork, different covers.

..So did he play on *No Turning Back's* German and English versions?

That's right.

He only played on those two versions.

Exactly.

And of course his picture was on those...

And it was kind of interesting because, it

came out before or after *No Turning Back*?

PHANTOM LORD came out after.

So *No Turning Back* was...

But, there was something before *No Turning Back*. It was the second Passport album, which was called BURNING STARR--*Rock the American Way*.

OK, so that came out in between ...

Right, and that album I think unfortunately disappointed a lot of people...wait a minute! Now, I'm totally giving it to you incorrectly...let me retrace the steps...*Out of the Darkness* was the first solo album. Second solo album was *Rock the American Way*...these two are on Passport. Then, after *Rock the American Way*, came *No Turning Back*.

***No Turning Back* was recorded at Sonic Studios February '86.**

Right.

And *Out of Darkness* was in '84. OK.

And in between those two was *Rock the American Way*, and that was the album I said disappointed a lot of people, because they were looking for Part 2 of *Out of the*

Darkness. And *Out of the Darkness* has some really immensely heavy moments in it on "Chains of Love" and "Concrete Warrior". In fact I think there was a fanzine from Holland called *Concrete Warrior*, which was a pretty cool fanzine at one point. It was really a heavy album. Eighty percent of the album is really heavy. And then I followed it up with something that bore no resemblance to it. A bad career move...

Well, who sang on it?

A singer from Long Island named Frank Vestri. Now, Frank was a nice guy, but he didn't have any killer instinct on vocals. He was more destined to be a BON JOVI kind of singer, more like Steven Percy, but not even as heavy as Steve Percy, more like a BON JOVI guy, you know? And then the music took a turn, and then I realized through all the fanzines in the world, because it did get heavily reviewed, but they weren't really good reviews. So then I said, 'screw all that, let me go do the heavy stuff', and then I did *No Turning Back*, and that just really got an incredible reaction.

So, at this point, you have Mike Terrelli on vocals?

Right.

Great, great singer, and where does he come from?

PHOTO BY MARK WEISS/MWA



JIM HARRIS

BASS FAIRCHILD

MIKE TIRELLI

JACK STARR

ED SPAHN



Mike was in a band on Long Island called LAST LICKS and they were really, really young. And when I say young, I mean, like, Mike was 17 and some of the guys in his band were, like, 15 and 16. People in the business were kind of questioning my sanity; 'are you sure you want a 17 year old kid that's never really sung on anything?' And I said, 'yeah, he has sung on something. He's got an EP out with his band, and he's got some pretty over-the-top screaming, and why not?' Mike wasn't even sure he'd be able to do it. He was just like, 'are you sure you want me to do this, because, you know, I'm not Rhett Forrester'. And I said, 'I know you're not, but you're something else; you're more like this new guy from Seattle named Geoff Tate. I see you're more like that'.

Yeah...

..And I think that guy's going to be really big, and by the way, not to digress, but let me just go back here and mention the Geoff Tate thing. When I was signed, with VIRGIN STEELE going back to the time of *Guardians*, we had been marketing our first album. I came into contact with Kim and Frank Harris who managed QUEENSRYPHE, and they owned a record store called Easy Street in Bellvue, Washington. And anyway, to make a long story short, we're moving tremendous amounts of VIRGIN STEELE 1, and I mean, like, they literally filled, like, a thousand pieces off of one store, and this was in Bellvue, Washington. They were ordering cases and cases of VIRGIN STEELE 1. Then one day I'm on the phone with Frank and he said, 'we manage a band in Bellvue who're really similar to you guys and they have a singer who's similar to David DeFeis. You want to hear a tape?' And I go, 'yeah, send me a tape!' And anyway, they had no American deal, and I got them their first American deal on Dutch East India...

Cool!

And this is a documentable fact, because I have the pamphlet from 1984, so the very first label that signed QUEENSRYPHE was actually Dutch East India. And I think they were literally on the label for a month...

Yeah, before they got picked up...

They got picked up really really fast. I still have the pamphlets. And they put out this ten-page booklet. In the booklet are ads for VIRGIN STEELE, QUEENSRYPHE, a band called TAKASHI...

...From New York...

Right, another band called ALIEN, and SISTERS OF MERCY...

SISTERS OF MERCY?!

...who also became big, and another original punk band that never made it called the NIHILISTICS (so why are their CD's now in Tower Records?! -Natalie) But that was it, the booklet. So, it's kind of interesting that I had a small part to play in the whole QUEENSRYPHE thing. And that's pretty wild isn't it? To be honest with you, I'm kind of disappointed in terms of...I didn't expect money or a commission or anything like that, but a 'thanks' would have been nice, or some kind of acknowledgment. It could be that the guys themselves don't know it, although they did send me a letter in '84 which I still have, saying that they really dug the album. I think it was, like, because I was helping the band, and they probably really did like VIRGIN STEELE 1. We were definitely doing similar stuff.

Do they have the same management still?

They have different management now. As of maybe two or three years ago, they switched management, but it's kind of an interesting little aside isn't it? And if we get together, I'll give you a copy of the booklet.

Yeah, just a Xerox would be cool...That reminds me of the story of the MISFITS and METALLICA. METALLICA was playing some metal stadium gig here in Jersey, and Jerry and Doyle of the MISFITS...this was like in '89 or '92...but they went over there, and they thought METALLICA was going to bring them out as special guests, and they were going to do some MISFITS tunes with METALLICA on stage, but METALLICA just totally snubbed them. They didn't even acknowledge them, really.

That's a shame, because I knew they used to be tremendous fans of the MISFITS, and I think that QUEENSRYPHE definitely dug the first VIRGIN STEELE, from the letter. They all signed the letter and they said they all dug it quite a bit, so that was nice, you know? And I had no problems at all helping them, because I dug what they were into. I thought it was a very strong EP. "The Lady Wore Black", I just thought it was like a fucking bolt of fresh air coming onto the metal scene, and I think that they were doing what we were doing, and they were out there, and we were in New York, and in some ways, they might have taken it a step further.

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REVIEWS

CDs: 37-79....TAPES/DEMOS: 82-89....7" VINYL: 89....BOOKS: 89....ZINES: 90-92....LATE REVIEWS: 81, 93, 94

ABIGHOR-Anticlockwise (Lucretia Records)

It's too bad ABIGHOR share the same name with a black metal band (well, there's a difference; the Satanic spewers lack the 'h' of the Italians' moniker) Oh yes, ABIGHOR are Italian, and contrary to what their adverts state, sound *nothing* like HELLOWEEN or BLIND GUARDIAN. Instead, I find ABIGHOR suitable for the genre that includes ELDRITCH, BLACK JESTER, SKYLARK, i.e. progressive keyboard metal. Production-wise, ABIGHOR could learn a thing or two from ELDRITCH's book, as the sound lacks in certain areas, with the unpleasant snare, etc. The singer has the ailment of being a touch too obvious with his accent and singing in an uninstructed manner—not an appealing combination. The songwriting is well enough but could also use some professionalism. I like "Respect Me", with its unlikely gallop and shouted choruses. The next song, "Slaves and Dictators" is very good too, with the promised speed coming through, at times reminding me of what a Japanese power metal band would sound like; hear the harmony vocals in the chorus. The best here is the ferocious speed metal of "The Anger", which is oddly the last song. The rest of the cuts are pretty average, and songs like "Mrs. Death" and "Nobody's History" are downright bad. I can't fault the group's playing abilities, but some maturation would help a bit. Does the band want to write more stuff like "The Anger" or Elvis-style numbers like "Mrs. Death"? (Rating: 7 pumpkins)

ACACIA-Deeper Secrets (Underground Symphony)

Check out my review of ACACIA's **Introspection** demo last issue. That tape got the group signed to Underground Symphony, the up 'n' coming Italian prog rock/metal label. As stated in my previous review, ACACIA create a mellower DREAM THEATER sound, with singer Franco's voice a bit more gritty; the accent hasn't disappeared either. I recall liking "I Don't Believe" on the demo, but this CD version doesn't offer much. I'll have to go back and compare the two. "Behind the Lies" doesn't have the necessary hooks either, and this trend continues for the rest of this CD. One would expect some growth, but it appears the group have made very little headway in between recordings. The sax that begins "The Day Begins To Droop" is too much like DREAM THEATER, and it's no fun when the song continues in its mellow, boring form. Franco's voice suffers when he gets too involved in what he's singing, like in the song "Why" (with another saxophone section—echh). ACACIA have put out four demos, and it's sad to say this, but a fifth (or sixth) may have been a good idea. This lightweight prog metal album is not that good. (Rating: 5 pumpkins)



ADVOCATE-World Without End (Revolution Records)

I received an advance of this CD some time ago, and the band and I corresponded for a while. However, a parting of ways ensued, as the NJ band requested a 'perfect' review or no review at all. I told the group their CD was good, but not 'perfect'. I never heard from them again, which is too bad because ADVOCATE play true metal, and I doubt they'll find great acceptance locally (and across the U.S.). I recently picked up a finished copy of their **World Without End** CD, which is very nicely packaged, presenting five songs at about 27 minutes. Soundwise they're like an early ARMORED SAINT, but singer Dan Stanley is nowhere near as grating/bluesy as John Bush. "World Without End" and "The Final Hour" are the best songs, delivering all-American traditional power metal. On "Agony", singer Stanley sounds like OMEN's J.D. Kimball, and if ADVOCATE had more noodly/neo-classical parts, the music would bring OMEN to mind, but ADVOCATE are a more straightforward metal outfit. This disc should do very well in Germany, embodying the classic U.S. heavy metal sound. (Rating: 8 pumpkins)

Write to: ADVOCATE ARMADA / P.O.
Box 396 / Avenel, NJ 07001 (\$10.00 CD, \$7.00
cass., payable to Joe Stanley)

AFFLICTED-Dawn of Glory (Massacre)

This disc created a buzz before its release. The thought of a death metal band going "metal" is always intriguing, and I got caught up in the interest, too. Well, **Dawn of Glory** is an honest attempt, I suppose, but nothing to get excited over. Tomas Skogsberg's production is pretty atrocious, rendering the guitars unintelligible and the bass overridden. In fact, the production has all the markings that MANOWAR suffered from in their early days. And, with song-titles like "Raging Into Battles" and "I am Vengeance", that's who AFFLICTED aspire to be. Unlike MANOWAR, AFFLICTED are sloppy musicians. The songwriting is average too, with its moments of MANOWAR and harder-edged NWOBHM. (Rating: 5 disappointed pumpkins)

ALIAS-Metal To Infinity (RTN)

This disc was originally released on the band's own label sometime around 1990. This Sarasota-based group had their nice piece of work take on a second life when RTN re-issued it on CD in 1994. The CD has two additional live songs. ALIAS, not be confused with the AOR band of the same name, fall in line with that JAG PANZER sound of **Ample Destruction**, with occasional swings into CRIMSON GLORY/SANCTUARY territory ("Stormy Eyes"). Personally, I like the powerful numbers like "Ultra Violence" and especially the awesome "Alpha Omega", comparable to PANZER's "Symphony of Terror". The production is drum-heavy with a bit of compression. Towards the end of **Metal To Infinity**, the songwriting tends to commercialize a bit with "You're on My Mind", and "Fantasy", playing it safe, for my tastes, a la TITAN FORCE's second disc. Solos are superb, played with skill, and vocalist Carl Hayden deserves attention. What ever happened to these guys? A fine true metal CD worthy of a look by JAG PANZER/CRIMSON GLORY fans. (Rating: 8 gleeful pumpkins)

ALLEGIANCE-Time To React...Live (Independent CD)

I traded away their first CD after I reviewed it, so I can't make a decent comparison between the two. There are nine songs on this live-in-the-studio CD, with decent sound (for a "live" recording anyway). ALLEGIANCE's delivery is a mix of METALLICA, XENTRIX, and PANTERA, which is not my taste anymore. It's tight thrash, and about eight to ten years too late. This CD is solely available through the band's live gigs and mailorder service.

Write to: ALLEGIANCE / P.O. Box 97 /
Armdale, 6112 W.A. AUSTRALIA.

Wanted tape and videotraders (VHS/PAL). I'm mostly into heavy/speed/thrash/death/power/progressive metal. My faves ate All BAY AREA stuff, King Diamond, Helloween, Death, Savatage, Tiamat, Flotsam And Jetsam, Crimson Glory, Skyclad, Dream Theater and hundreds of more. Send your lists and you'll get mine. No fuckin' ripoffs!!!!

ADDRESS: Marko Mellanen
Kiekkokatu 1 D 32
15800 LAHTI
FINLAND

ALYSON HELL-Alyson Hell
(LIGA)

In America, bands usually break up and disappear. In Germany, when bands break up, the members form new bands. So, here we have ALYSON HELL with former members(s) of German groups FORCED ENTRY, ENERGY and MAD AXEMAN. While the production isn't one of the big budget variety, the group are clearly veterans with solid performances. The music on this disc reminds me of the better Shrapnel Records output, like RACER X, early FIFTH ANGEL, and early VICIOUS RUMORS...you know the sound...i.e., nice guitar playing with snappy 2x bass drums and classy, semi-high vocals--Melodic US power metal. The songs are all top-notch and deserve a bigger, higher production to really come across. How about it, LIGA? CENTAUR uses Ralf Hubert; let Ralf have a go with the next ALYSON HELL (and while you're at it, why not get a pro artist to fix up ALYSON HELL's CD packaging--the cover is especially bad.)
(Rating: 7½ pumpkins)



ANGRA-Holy Land
(Rising Sun)

Due for a release in the fall of 1995, **Holy Land** finally surfaced in the spring of 1996. The delay was due to Andre Matos' minor illness, which forced his vocal tracks to be recorded at a later date than planned. As expected, this is a solid album, though it does not match **Angels Cry** on any level. For ANGRA to top **Angels Cry** would have been nearly impossible. No songs on **Holy Land** are comparable to **Angels Cry's** "Carry On" or "Evil Warning"; the new fast songs like "Nothing To Say" and "2.I.T.O." are good, but...well, I shouldn't put the two up against each other, as **Holy Land** is a good disc and stands by itself. However, I have reservations. The second half of **Holy Land** is a step down from the first half; only the speedy "2.I.T.O." stands out. Excepting "2.I.T.O.", tracks five through ten are slow, mellow songs, and the balance that was present on **Angels Cry** is just not on here. **Holy Land** can be called a "pretty" album, as not only is the "metal" ingredient light, but Andre's promise of a more powerful vocal delivery does not happen. Speaking about "power", Bauerfeind (you all know Charlie the producer) has never produced a weaker rhythm guitar sound!!

Angels Cry, because of the brilliant material, transcended the less than desirable production; on **Holy Land**, a big sound was needed, and it's not on the CD. There is a rumor that Andre will not work with Bauerfeind ever again, but that does not come from an official source. Let's pray that Andre (and Kai and everyone else) think twice before using Bauerfeind (who is said to be a good "arranger" of music, so why do people let him engineer?). Besides the hidden rhythm guitars, Andre's voice is above everything else in the mix, unbalancing **Holy Land** further. The worst thing on the disc is "Lullaby For Lucifer", which closes the disc; Andre sounds horrific on this acoustic piece, as his accent, nearly unnoticeable in the faster songs, is embarrassingly clear to the listener. This is a filler track that was not necessary.

What's needed on the next album? A different producer who can give this band a spacious, heavy sound; a better balance with the disc's content; Andre with an improved mid and low vocal range; and a tour of the U.S.! Well, three out of four wishes won't be bad, I suppose. Yes, I give my approval to **Holy Land**, but don't expect **Angels Cry** "Part II".
(Rating: 8½ pumpkins)

ANTHRAX-Stomp 442
(Elektra)

From the album cover, to the band's new fashion sense, to the profligate use of Dimebag Darrel on this album, I can't help yearning for the incredible stories **Spreading the Disease** and **Fistful of Metal** told. My favorite THRAX are those purest metal albums, seconded by the band's more unique sound of speed and rhythmically cutesy choruses. This release's lyrics seem to fall into the modern abyss of frequent desultory rage, and the album demonstrates powerfully the loss of a lead guitarist. It really sounds like someone is not there at band practice. The music just seems to be lost in the generic "new metal" sound, which I find pretty dreary. The production is also weighted too much towards the industrial side, with a constant mechanical buzz on a lot of the songs. But somehow, John Bush's auditory humanity and vocal melodies (perhaps the only melodies on here) redeem this album somewhat, infusing each song with a memorable and comprehensible chorus. After a few listens, I found this album much more palatable, though I'm utterly disappointed with the direction they've taken. But at least I'm left feeling that this album could have been made so much better, rather than wondering why it was made at all.

-Craig Wisnom

ANTHRAX-Stomp 442
(Elektra)

Y'know, these guys used to be good. Much like CHASTAIN, ANTHRAX was a 'true' metal band, but they leaped for the groove/blues ticket that sickens me. I can't see any of ANTHRAX's fans making their way through cuts like "Fueled" and "King Size", much less the nine other cuts. What separates ANTHRAX from all the other MTV garbage? Nothing! "Riff master" Scott Ian comes up with every known 90's groove riff done by hundreds of other bands, and John Bush can't stop whining about the state of the world.
(Word up, homeboy. -Nat)

(Rating: 0. Or, perhaps a mob of a hundred fuming pumpkins)

APOCALYPSE-Apocalypse
(Independent CD)

APOCALYPSE's debut is a strong performance throughout, carrying on the QUEENSRYPHE tradition with a touch of progressive rock, falling into the genre occupied by bands like DIVINE REGALE, etc. At the seven-song, 50 minute mark, the songs tend to drag a bit. It doesn't help that the tempo throughout is slow to mid-paced. While the songwriting does have its moments, there are times when the material is kind of boring in a "background music" sort of way. Careful repeat listens are a good idea, because I doubt APOCALYPSE will convince upon the first listen. The production's good, and the playing is fine. A keyboardist will be added in 1996, which should be a good idea to beef up the band's sound. As mentioned, a solid debut that gets better after five or so listens.

Available from Dream Disc or write to:
Luepnitz / 7490 Moe Rd. / Middleville, MI 49333

APPOMATTOX-No Doubt?
(Independent CD)

APPOMATTOX put out two demos prior to **No Doubt?**, a three-song EP. The group began as a more straight-ahead power metal band and evolved into a sort of DREAM THEATER/PRETTY MAIDS hybrid with prog-like tendencies here and there. Personally, I like the quality of the recording, as it sounds like it was done live in the studio, using no effects. The sound is very clean, unpolished, and heavy. "No Doubt?" is the first song, with a solid mid-tempo rhythm and sweet chorus, a characteristic of all the songs. Singer Matthias is not a high-pitched singer, but has more in common with prog-rock singers of YES, IQ, PENDRAGON, etc, who cover the mid-range with a hint of the high. "Door To December" boasts another accessible chorus and the very heavy riffing (try playing this song loud!). "Portrait of Ages" is an epic number, just under eight minutes in length and sounds very much like a song off of **Images and Words**. APPOMATTOX add their own ideas into the familiar main riff, which is like the previous songs, paced at half-step. Faster sections would be welcome, just to add variety, but there are enough time changes in these songs to keep my interest. Overall, a pleasant taster for this young band, but I doubt it will ever get them signed. APPOMATTOX have made their first steps in the progressive metal field and will need more time to lay down the groundwork.

This CD is available from *Sentinel Steel* mail-order for a special price of \$5. See the *Sentinel Steel* music catalog for details.

AREA-The Falcon
(Clockwork/CMV)

This is kind of an obscure CD by a German QUEENSRYPHE (circa **The Warning**)-style metal band, and they're quite good! AREA have crisp, marked QUEENSRYPHE-style riffs with a high caliber vocalist, though he's no Tate or Kiske. There are fast songs such as the excellent "Killing Fields" and "Renegade", my favorite songs. However, most of the album is mid-paced. I don't really know any details about the band, as the CD comes with minimal information, but the material is definitely above

average. It is not as essential as LETHAL'S **Programmed**, by any means, but it is much better than many other bands of this genre, like the sub-average (to be kind) VENI DOMINE and the slow, boring APOCALYPSE.

-Tony Zangara

ATHENA-Inside the Moon
(Pick Up Records)

Italians serving up a lukewarm plate of DREAM THEATERish spaghetti; the nasally vocalist holds the group back. Otherwise, a good start. (Rating: 7 pumpkins)

ATTACK-Return of the Evil
(Iceland 1985)

This, ATTACK's second album (preceded by **Danger in the Air**) was left out of my ATTACK overview in the last issue. As with **Destinies of War**, ATTACK blend the MAIDEN-esque melodic structures with early RUNNING WILD/HELLOWEEN rifferama, making for an enjoyably consistent adventure. Remade versions of "Warriors In Pain" and "Dirty Mary" were on the group's 'best of', **Revitalize**, while an updated version of "Indian Lady" appeared on **Seven Years In the Past**. The rest of the material is just as good, mixing NWOBHM with German power metal styling. Personally, I find much German metal from the early 80's to be average (with the exception of HELLOWEEN, STORMWITCH, etc), but **Return of the Evil** is easily one of the better discs from the era. The group remains something of a cult act, even in their own country, and that leaves me puzzled. Perhaps a lack of touring?!

(Rating: 8 mighty pumpkins)



ATTACK-The Secret Place
(Iceland Records)

Ricky Van Helden is back with his new disc (actually a follow-up is scheduled for late 1996-early 1997), and it's a fine piece of work with a few holes plaguing it, a similar ailment of **Seven Years in the Past**. As mentioned in the ATTACK interview, this is easily ATTACK's best sounding disc to date, as Van Helden has clearly excelled in the area of sound recording. With a snappy, tight production, the first four cuts do the German blitz in a mighty way. "Light in the Dark", "I Know", "Forgotten Dreams", and "The Prophecy" are some of the best Van Helden has written. All the songs are short and to the point, but have a few unpredictable parts and satisfyingly euphoric choruses. "Walk Alone" is an epic medieval ballad and is charmingly crafted.

It's from this point on that one gets the impression that ATTACK ran out of time or ideas. The quick "Mortal Energy" is great in the typical ATTACK tradition, as is the solid "The

Warrior", but Van Helden can write stuff like this in his sleep. The seven minute BACH-inspired "Tsoukata" would have been a great instrumental, had it not been for the unnecessary and lengthy drum solo in the middle. "Heroes Die Young" is a previously released track, and not as strong as the other ATTACK tunes. **The Secret Place** closes with another instrumental called "Warp Speed Now!" which would have been breathtaking, if not for the drum machine handling the rhythm chores. Sigh. Still, **The Secret Place** is an above-average piece of work, but I await the album that Van Helden and Co. will do without any time constraints, i.e. ATTACK's masterpiece! Kai Hansen finally took care of business--and with the RAGE, RUNNING WILD, GRAVE DIGGER, and BLIND GUARDIAN rotting away, it's time for Ricky's little band to rise above the crowd. Come late 1996-early 1997, we shall see. (Rating: 8½ pumpkins)



AT THE GATES-Slaughter of the Soul
(Earache)

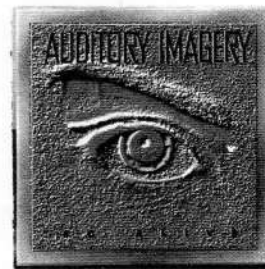
Oh, the glory of experiencing something so vicious and yet so beautiful; another AT THE GATES album! What **Terminal Spirit Disease** whispered, **Slaughter of the Soul** shouts. Combining ferocity, anguish, and melody, AT THE GATES created another somewhat NWOBHM-inspired labor of love that elevates one to a lunar plane of pure ecstasy.

Slaughter begins with the emotionally-draining "Blinded By Fear" and never stops from there. On "Cold", Tomas shouts "I feel my soul go cold...only the dead are smiling...", which is enough to send the listener groping for the nearest tissue to dry the fountain of tears he will weep upon first listen...and then, as if that weren't enough, the lead guitar on "Cold" is by none other than Andy LaRocque (!!!) Some of the riffs echo other opuses like "Lack of Comprehension" by DEATH. "Nausea" perfectly encompasses the dichotomous beauty found on **Slaughter**; "nausea, oh sweet nausea" screams Tomas, summing up exactly what the album conveys through its elegant agony and violent bliss.

Anyone who appreciates lyrics for the tortured soul merged with music which sends chills up and down the spine, will surely be in the most satisfyingly self-indulgent abyss of despair, but at the same time will experience the ever-present rapture that AT THE GATES always seem to elicit with their finely crafted music of sheer brilliance.

(Rating: 9 moved pumpkins)

-Natalie Vlahovic



AUDITORY IMAGERY-Reign
AUDITORY IMAGERY-So Alive
(Independent CD)

This MA group, AUDITORY IMAGERY, have gained some recognition for their progressive metal output. My CD version of **Reign** has the five original songs plus five bonus tracks (recorded, I believe, after **Reign** and prior to **So Alive**). The first five from **Reign** are excellent samples of crunchy, guitar-oriented progressive metal with a powerful double kickdrum bringing up the rear. Song lengths average four minutes--the song writing is sharp and catchy. The second half of **Reign**, the newer half, features a suppressed (by just a hair) power aspect, with a concentration on more offbeat rhythms and technical parts. The catchiness factor suffers; the choruses are somehow lost in favor of time changes.

So Alive still contains the metal element, but it's in the background, as the band now dabble with jazz/fusion/blues; the vocals of Paul Wabrek have drifted from an inspired heavy metal demeanor to one of a flat prog rock nature. Only "Blizzard" recalls the earlier work of this U.S. band. **Reign** is recommended, but **So Alive** is not.

Write to: AUDITORY IMAGERY / P.O.
Box 581 / Avon, MA 02322-0581

AVALANCHE-Here Comes the King
(Independent CD)

The German metal scene appears to be drying up, with many young bands releasing CD's when they should be investing more time in the practice room. AVALANCHE are surely on their way, as their hard work has paid off; their disc, **Here Comes the King**, is a worthwhile independent release, unlike many others flooding the market these days. AVALANCHE are a very "happy" sounding **Keeper Part 2**-flavored band, with the usual smattering of HEAVENS GATE, old CHROMING ROSE, and even a dose of HELICON's cheerfulness. The production is a touch thin, but it's not trebly or even remotely annoying. The proceedings are not all that exciting, but even more predictable numbers like "The King" and "United" make for a good listen. Vocalist Guido is on the verge of something great, as his voice is noticeably above average, bordering on Kiske excellence ("Neverending Flight"). As mentioned, the guitarwork in particular needs some more energy, but that doesn't stop me from saying how much I like the faster tracks like "Flame of Life" and "Private Guardians". Perhaps a better production would have made AVALANCHE come on with more confidence, but what's done is done, and this is a fine first effort.

(Rating: 7½ pumpkins)

This CD is available from Dream Disc.

AVALANCHE/Poststr. 12/59439
Holzwickedede/Germany

THE AWAKENING-Invictus
(Independent CD)

THE AWAKENING (a.k.a. AXEMASTER) have made it onto CD, albeit toning down their sound (with the help of a new vocalist). I like "As the Winds Blow", but the rest of *Invictus* is too 'light metal' (and even alternative heavy rock) for me. Trebly production, and the guitars are behind in the mix.

CD \$10.00, cassette \$8.00 (add \$1.00 for foreign orders), payable to: Joe Simones / 1300 Brimfield Rd. / Apt. D-11 / Brimfield, OH 44240

BELLADONNA-Belladonna
(Mausoleum)

BELLADONNA's solo debut is not much better than the new ANTHRAX, but at least it doesn't annoy, trying to be something which it is not. On the other hand, BELLADONNA is strictly pedestrian mid-tempo metal. The music is played with as much enthusiasm as a turtle running a marathon, and the songwriting is equally as bland. As for the production, considering Alex Perialis's credits (TESTAMENT, OVERKILL, MEANSTREAK), this weak work is unlike him.
(Rating: 4 bored pumpkins)

they are a quiet and mellow listen perfectly suited for nighttime relaxation. For lack of a better way of stating it, *Diary of a Blind Angel* is the sort of thing to chill out to, but not in a "background music" way; this is actually *good* music. The only quail I have with it is that the vocalist is weak and tone deaf. Ah, but the instrumentation is so competent that I simply ignore the vocals when I listen to this music.

(Rating: 7½ pompous pumpkins)

Welcome to the *Moonlight Circus* is quite different from the first offering, though. It is much more guitar-heavy and less atmospheric. Personally, I find both releases endearing for different reasons, but if you have a natural disposition towards the metallic end of the spectrum, you will definitely enjoy *Moonlight Circus* much more. The production is much clearer and up-front, which aids in the emphasis of the guitar and rhythm sections. Also, the album is quite a bit more technical/progressive in a *When Dream and Day Unite* manner; that riff on "Mirrors Song" was directly usurped from the song "Afterlife". (Are BLACK JESTER pulling a STRATOVARIUS on us?!) The song, "Glance Towards the Sky" reminds me more of late 80's top 40 music than I care to admit, as those flamboyant keyboards seem to possess that element. Well, nonetheless, the musicianship is competent once more, and the mostly out-of-tune vocalist is now only sometimes out of tune, which is a nice improvement. Fans of all things pompous and wonderful will love this keyboard-laden artistry by BLACK JESTER.

(Rating: 7½ pompous pumpkins)

-Natalie Vlahovic



(l. to r.) Volker Krawczak, Axel Rudi Pell<g>, Jeff Scott Soto<vo>, Jörg Michael<ds>, Kai Raglewski<key>

AXEL RUDI PELL-Black Moon Pyramid
(SPV)

Former STEELER (Germany) guitarist Axel Rudi Pell is back with his seventh release, titled *Black Moon Pyramid*. Drummer Jörg Michael, who has appeared on every single album recorded in Germany (just kidding!), supplies the skinwork; his former RAGE bandmate Peavey makes a guest appearance, playing bass on the album's first and best song, the furious "Gettin' Dangerous". As with all the Pell records, B.M.P. has the usual mix of power metal numbers, heavy rock compositions, and classy ballads, with Jeff Scott Soto's timeless lungs taking care of the vocal chores. As one can guess, I prefer the faster tracks, in which Pell's energy and Soto's voice mesh well: "Gettin' Dangerous", the contagious "Hole In the Sky", and the Taffola-like instrumental "Sphinx Revenge". Even less intense moments like "You and I" and the ten minute arabesque epic "Black Moon Pyramid" (a la SABBATH's "Headless Cross") are good too. With this type of music there are always the cliché moments, as in "Fool Fool", "Silent Angel", and the irritatingly bluesy "Aquarius Dance", just to name a few. For fans of MALMSTEEN, DEEP PURPLE, and recent SABBATH, B.M.P. should be a worthwhile purchase.

(Rating: 7½ pumpkins)



BLACK JESTER
Diary of a Blind Angel
Welcome to the *Moonlight Circus*
(WMMS)

Since pompous progressive keyboard rock has developed into a recent musical fetish of mine, I was quite happy to discover the band BLACK JESTER. They infuse various elements of YES' and MARILLION's more somber (?) moments with the sensibility of clean progressive metal. It would be redundant to mention DREAM THEATER's *When Dream and Day Unite*, but I shall anyway. Well, unlike DREAM THEATER, there is an *overtly* indulgent plethora of keyboards on both of these albums, since that fits this particular kind of music.

The first offering, *Diary of a Blind Angel*, is very soft and atmospheric, sometimes more progressive than metal, but definitely enjoyable. The production is of an ethereal nature, and the songs flow evenly into each other with grace;

BLIND GUARDIAN
Imaginations from the Other Side
(Virgin, Import)

I am later coming to these teutonic metal Valkyries (Valkyries are female. -Nat, virgin warrior daughter of Odin) than others, but I understand now at last what I am missing. I have two of their previous albums, *Tales from the Twilight World* and *Somewhere Far Beyond*, which are both stunning examples of classic, fantasy, power metal glory. This is the fifth studio album by this German four-piece, and after a few listens, I was fully captivated by this masterpiece. This album is true to its predecessors, but darker than the other work I've heard from them. *Imaginations* is pure metal at heart, playing fast, aggressive, yet melodic music, full of fantasy emotion and Wagnerian choral glory. The lead vocals are a bit rougher than you usually get in the power metal vein, closer to HELLOWEEN's first EP and SCANNER's "The Law" than the Kiske/Tate style singers, but they are buttressed on the choruses with grand and swelling backing vocals. The overall style is probably fairly close to HELLOWEEN's early work, but garnished with the proficiency and maturity of four previous albums. The guitar leads are fast, incisive, yet melodic. The rhythm section is generally thunderous and unrelenting, and when it's not, it's slowing down for some epic grandeur. The album journeys from the blazing speed of the title-track which extols the virtue of dreams and fantasy, through the elegant, medieval mood of "A Past and Future Secret" which begins the album's Arthurian theme, to the choral masterpiece of "Script for My Requiem."

While this album definitely has the credentials for the kind of metal I approve most of, it succeeds most on a far more visceral level. These tunes have

all captured my heart with exquisite magic, touching me, compelling me, and leaving me yearning for more, more, and more of this album, and each time I hear it, a new chanson enters my soul. It reminds me of the joy I used to get from listening to albums when I had less music and more time. This album is a bit rawer than its predecessors in production, but it works surprisingly well with this aggressive yet beautiful material, and as much as I love the two previous discs, this album is my favorite by them for the potent and acerbic emotion it evokes. Ultimately, I can't describe what makes this album so magnificent to me, and stand out above so many other good discs I've heard, but I utterly recommend it.

-Craig Wisnom



BLIND GUARDIAN
Imaginations From the Other Side
(Virgin)

Somewhere Far Beyond was an excellent release, but not quite as good as *Tales From the Twilight World*, which I consider to be one of the premier metal releases of all time. Soon afterward, I heard the *Past and Future Secret* EP, and I became very worried indeed. This EP had no fast and heavy songs at all; what made BLIND GUARDIAN so great was the interplay of intense neck-breaking speed with their little acoustic ditties. Take *Tales*--between the awesome speedsters, "Good-bye My Friend" and "Welcome To Dying", you have "Lord of the Rings"; on *Somewhere Far Beyond*, you've got "Theater of Pain", "Time What Is Time" and "Ashes To Ashes". And then, after your heart is about to burst, keeping up with "Ashes To Ashes", you can cool off again with "The Bard's Song".

Since the EP contained no traditional BG fast songs with those huge, catchy, ingenious choruses, I thought BG were no longer going to be the band I loved. But *Imaginations* quieted those fears, because there are many terrific speedy moments. The inspirational "I'm Alive", the majestic "A Script For My Requiem", the fantasy-laden "Born In a Mourning Hall", and the passionate "Another Holy War" were all power speed songs of exceptional quality. Interspersed as usual are the more acoustic and sedate tunes found on the EP, such as the title-track and "A Past and Future Secret", as well as "The Wizard" (found on the Japanese version).

The low points on the CD would be the commercial and boring "Bright Eyes" and the muddy production, which is for some reason inferior to the previous BG releases. So, overall I would rank this CD as a fine power/speed album, but not as good as their earlier work. Probably my least favorite among the five BG studio albums, but still heads and shoulders above 80% of the rest of metal. (Rating: 8 fuzzy rabbits)

-Tony Zangara



BLIND GUARDIAN
Imaginations From the Other Side
(Virgin)

Prior to its release, I hyped *Imaginations From the Other Side* to a great degree. After all, my expectations deserved to be high, for BLIND GUARDIAN had just come out of the studio with their most diverse album yet, *Somewhere Far Beyond*. Their live CD followed it up, allowing the group to rest, and they secured Flemming Rasmussen (METALLICA, ARTILLERY, PRETTY MAIDS) to produce IFTOS. What could go wrong? I figured Flemming Rasmussen would help tighten BG's delivery, straighten out their songwriting, and most importantly, give the German foursome a mega-production (that Kalle Trapp could never achieve.)

Well, you guessed it, my expectations were smashed to bits by this BLIND GUARDIAN bomb. The production is the immediate criminal, as it veers from wretched to horrible, and not much better in between. The band reportedly shelled out big money for Rasmussen, and I'm not the only one questioning where the dough went--maybe up the guy's nose? No, that would be unfair to Rasmussen, whose track record is near perfection; I think the culprit is BLIND GUARDIAN themselves. It somehow makes sense now, as Rasmussen's production is not that distant from Trapp's styling, as if neither producer could better the material they had to work with. Trapp, who's been doing this work since the early 80's (at least) never achieved a good sound with BLIND GUARDIAN; the sound was mostly cluttered, with a disjointed mix and tinny drums. Well, I thought Trapp's sound was average, but Rasmussen's IFTOS is really poor, with a noticeably weak rhythm guitar sound, plus the same cluttered production.

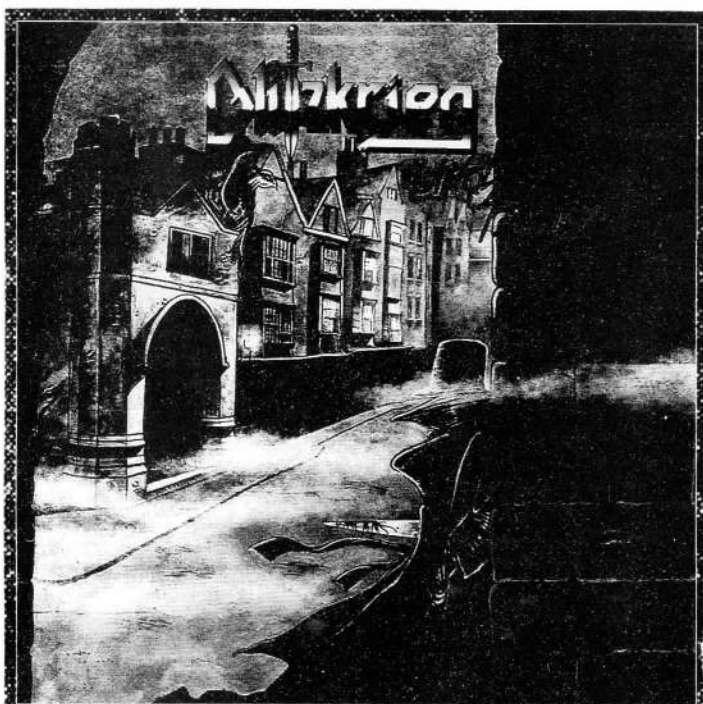
The songwriting, which I was hoping Rasmussen would round out, is once again a mishmash of great and not-so-great riffs, along with lots of drum fills, senseless double bass, epic lead guitar melodies, and those characteristic growth-inhibited vocals of bassist Hansi Kürsch. It's all the

same old stuff, done up extra average with, as stated, no growth in any area. Rasmussen's one of the greatest drum engineers around (check out what he did on ARTILLERY's *By Inheritance* and CHROMING ROSE's *Pressure*), yet Thomas Stauch continues his irregular, hurried thrash beats, with none of that Rasmussen touch of strong rhythmic. Hansi Kürsch, like RAGE's Peavy, GRAVE DIGGER's Chris, RUNNING WILD's Rolf, has a voice that is at the mercy of the music behind it. Kürsch and Co. reached their creative peak songwriting-wise with *Tales From the Twilight World*, which has the catchy, melodic speed metal that complemented the vocals. As the band began writing slower sections, Hansi's funny accent began to show through, and worse yet, the guy clearly proves that he cannot sing. Ballads like "Past and Future Secret" show him to be a drunken Joe Cocker sound-alike. After five studio albums of the same vocal style and the same vocal lines, it gets annoying, y'know? Weak vocals, trebly production, bits and pieces of songs strung together...this is clearly a bad album.

I liked one song, that being "Bright Eyes", which is probably the most accessible thing they've ever done. In contrast, songs like "The Script For My Requiem", "Born In the Morning Hall" and "Another Holy War" are irritating speed metal numbers, with that booming Wagnerian chorus that comes out of nowhere. How many times can the foursome dish that kind of stuff out? Reused riffs, tepid thrash drumming, and sadly enough, the leads are clearly of the recycled variety by the time "And the Story Ends". It's one thing to play in the same style your whole career, and it's another to re-use the same material for future albums.

As far as I'm concerned, *Tales From the Twilight World* is the ultimate BLIND GUARDIAN album, with their first, *Battalions*, following a distant second. The rest: *Follow...*, *Somewhere...*, etc. sit somewhere between good and the ugly (IFTOS). It'll be interesting to see if BG use Rasmussen again. Hell, I hope they do, and produce that album that IFTOS should've been. Right now, BG is in the SPINAL TAP zone, arm in arm with Rock N' Rolf and Peavy. (Rating: 6 disgruntled pumpkins)





BLITZKRIEG-Unholy Trinity
(Neat Metal)

CHASTAIN-Sick Society
(Leviathan)

I'd like to explain this NWOBHM band's background, but one look at their family tree would frustrate one in doing so! Let me just say that this current BLITZKRIEG have former members of AVENGER (England) and SATAN, who may have gotten their starts in the original incarnation of BLITZKRIEG! It's kind of confusing; get the CD yourself and figure it out. As far as I can tell, **Unholy Trinity** is all new material, with 15 full compositions presented. Brian Ross, whom I know sang on SATAN's *Court In the Act*, is his semi-monotone self, i.e. singing in the classic NWOBHM tradition. But, his lungs match the music, which is heavy metal at its most basic, stripped-down quality. The production supports this, as veteran producer Keith Nichol engineers a consistent, if somewhat flat, basic sound, which leaves the songs to do their work. Cronos does a guest duet with Ross on BLITZKRIEG's cover of "Countess Bathory"... This is a worthwhile release, as **Unholy Trinity** is pure metal, no frills, and good songs. In an age where whiny bands exist (Seattle), where machines take control of the instruments (industrial), BLITZKRIEG is a must.

(Rating: 8 content pumpkins)

CENTAUR-Live In Spain
(LIGA Records)

I've grown to really like CENTAUR's second studio effort, **Power World**, reviewed in the last issue. Having lived with this disc for a while now, I'd like to raise the disc's score to an 8 or an 8½. The German group's brand of melodic keyboard power metal is, as I stated, in the catchy PRETTY MAIDS style (**Red, Hot 'N Heavy, Futureworld**). **Live In Spain** is a nice sampling of CENTAUR's metal, having a balance of tracks from both of their albums, and even has a new song in the form of "Hard Times". But, this 10-song live CD has a major fault, that being the complete lack of CENTAUR's metal in the mix. Everything else sounds fine, but I really wish the sound were fuller in parts. In any case, it's a convincing showcase of the band's talents, but because of the lack of rhythm guitar, may not be a wise choice for a CENTAUR starter.

(Rating: 7 pumpkins)

David Chastain hinted at what was to come in the interview in the last issue, and it's true; this is a groove-drenched, mechanically-riffed blues album. Out of place in *Sentinel Steel*? You betcha. I find very little to like on here, but those into PANTERA, BIOHAZARD, and tight grunge should like this. I think CHASTAIN's catching onto the tail end of that trend, but...well, Leviathan reissued the more traditionally oriented **7th of Never**; pick that up instead. Meanwhile, I hope CHASTAIN plays with more imagination on his next release, using his fine talents, formulating melodies, harmonies, and catchy songs. On the bright side, the production is flawless, but that's it. (Rating: 0 true metal pumpkins)

David T. has gotten a new singer on this album, Kate French, to replace mainstay Leather. Kate doesn't seem to offer too radical a change to the style, as she sounds quite reminiscent of Leather most of the time. She does add an extra strength and resonance to that similar style, and on tunes like "Every Emotion" she deftly shifts gears and does a surprising Geoff Tate impression laden with more polished vox. But, the style of the band has changed tremendously from the pure neo-classical heavy metal of its past. When I first heard the way the riffs and songs had slowed down so much, I was despondent, thinking they had fallen into the modern trend of PANTERA disciples. But the album has not taken that extreme of a direction. Instead, it has followed a much stronger blues influence, and after a few listens, I found the combination very effective, as bludgeoningly heavy metal riffs convey a brooding, pulsing lament, in a slick and crunchy production. Unfortunately, every song is weighed down by this excessive slowness and instrumental simplicity, except for the ballad "Every Emotion", and it simply gets redundant halfway through the album. What could have made for two or three very powerful change-up songs ends up depressing the entire disc. In the end this is a minor disappointment, considering this band's past, especially with what the new vocalist could have added.

-Craig Wisnom

CHINCHILLA-Who Is Who
(German Independent CD)

CHINCHILLA has former LETTER X singer Martin Obermeier, so it makes sense that CHINCHILLA have many characteristics of LETTER X. The songs have the patented LETTER X medium clip pacing and the big Germanic choruses. The production is very good on this five song EP, as is the playing. **Who Is Who** is outclassed by LETTER X's superb debut **Time of the Gathering**, but CHINCHILLA show much promise. Now that they are on the L.M.P./Empire roster of bands, watch for their full length debut in the near future.

(Rating: 7½ pumpkins)

For info write to Empire or contact the band's drummer at: Mike Kühner / Altingerstraße 29 / 71126 Gauferden / GERMANY.



(l. to r.) Stefan Lohmann (g), Christoph Wei (key), Reiner Schützler (ds), Rainer Kuppers (vo), Markus Lenzen (b)

CIRCLE OF ELEMENTS-Reflection of
Kontrast

Following in the footsteps of MAYFAIR and SANCTUARY are Germans CIRCLE OF ELEMENTS. Singer Bernd Brand has a more mid-to-low range than the siren-like power of Warrel Dane, but Bernd sings similar vocal lines as the once-great SANCTUARY singer did. **Reflection of Kontrast** is a four-song offering of dark, mysterious metal which is produced well, with the lyrics enclosed. Pacing is mostly mid-tempo, at times hinting at a doom metal atmosphere, as in the title-track. My only reservations about this disc are the occasional vocal limits of Bernd and the lack of any speedy sections to add variety. Because of the straightforward approach of a SANCTUARY and doom metal mix, I foresee this band attaining a cult status. A bit too dark for me, but for you...?

I've got a number of this disc available for \$6.00 each (see the latest Sentinel Steel mailorder catalog) or you can write to: Bernd Brand / Bahnhof 1 / 88400 Biberach-Riß / GERMANY.

CONCEPTION-In Your Multitude
(Noise)

It seems like CONCEPTION came out of nowhere, releasing their debut, **The Last Sunset** in 1991 on an independent Norway label. Noise quickly snapped them up, releasing the superb **Parallel Minds**; a repackaged re-issue of **The Last Sunset** was also put out into the market. Both discs are recommended, especially **Parallel Minds**, with its tight songs and ultra-precise power/prog styling. After touring with GAMMA RAY (appearing on the 2 CD live set of **The Power of Metal** CD), CONCEPTION confidently established themselves in the European metal market.

So, it comes as a surprise and a disappointment to see the release of **In Your Multitude**, a disc that just doesn't capture the same magic of the two previous discs. A pessimistic attitude permeates this disc. The one-dimensional rhythm riffs seem distant and unexcited, and the use of keyboard special effects lay on a false polish on the recordings. Roy Khan's vocals, on the other hand, are much improved, with a nice amount of variety in his tones. There are a couple of good songs, like "Retrospect" and the sweet "Some Wounds". Both songs hearken back to the last album. The rest of the album is lethargic, albeit in a glossy fashion.

(Rating: 7 frowning pumpkins)



CONQUEST-The Killing Time
(Krystal Rose Music)

"If you like PANTERA, FIGHT, MEGADETH, or METALLICA... you will like **The Killing Time**." A seven song CD and cassette from Missouri. Pedestrian run-of-the-mill MEGADETH thrash, like a third-rate DEAD ON style. Only one PANTERA sound-alike tune--no FIGHT or METALLICA. Very 80's.

CD \$9, cassette \$7. Payable/write to: KRYSTAL ROSE MUSIC / 78 Grove Ave. / Wilmington, MA 01887



CRONOS-Venom
(Neat Metal)

I'd be an unlikely candidate to like VENOM, but I must admit, **Calm Before the Storm** is a damn fine power metal album. Of course, VENOM purists disagree, as Mantas was no longer in the band at that point (1987), and **Calm Before the Storm** was (GASP!) melodic. Massachusetts native Mike Hickey and his guitar partner did a great job on **Calm Before the Storm**, proving VENOM to be a musical entity and not "noise" (well, "Manitou" is a great song, one of the few from the Mantas years I like). Anyway, after **Calm**, bassist/ vocalist CRONOS left to form...CRONOS the band, taking Hickey with him. **Dancing In the Fire** was his solo debut, of which half was superb ("Fantasia", "Vampyr", etc.), and the rest was somewhat cliché metal, but still good. **Rock N Roll Disease** followed, which I never heard, and **Triumvirate** is CRONOS' 1996 studio release. This **Venom** CD collection is a 16-song compilation of definitely the best of the CRONOS material, with a few VENOM remakes to spice things up. I've no idea why the boring "In League With Satan" opens this disc up, but the good fast stuff comes in rapid succession. The songs are "Superpower", "Vampyr", "Lost and Found", "Fire" (remade and lacking the power of the original), "1000 Days In Sodom" (the remake is good!), and many more. Like BLITZKRIEG, this disc is metal in its purest form; highly enjoyable. In contrast to their labelmates, CRONOS and Co. are a bit more lyrically and musically aggressive. This disc is 65 minutes long.

(Rating: 8 pumpkins)

CRUSH-Kingdom of Kings
(Independent LP)

I'm working off a dubbed copy of this LP, and it sounds muddy as hell. It could be a bad dub, but I have a feeling this Greek band CRUSH (ten years old, from what I hear) did not have a major budget for this recording. Another "problem" (with me anyway) is that **Kingdom of Kings** is only available on vinyl, which is a shame because that format will hold them back. Sure, it's nice for vinyl purists, but the majority of metal buyers these days have CD players, and I would have loved to have had a copy of this CRUSH album on CD. Oh well.

"March of the Deads" (after intro "Beyond the Gates") is the first song, and it's a boring epic, with the singer heavily accented and noticeably out of tune. But what do we have here? The next song, "The Gloriest Night", is excellent, recalling classic HEXX and even HELSTAR. The CRUSH singer changes his style completely, and the aggressive stance works! The title-track "Kingdom of Kings" is another anthemic number, but it's very catchy and rather good. "Run To the Highway" uses that gritty vocal style again, but it's a typical metal song, like an average RUNNING WILD jingle. Side two's "Unborn" is akin to faster RUNNING WILD, with that snarling voice completing the music to form a high quality song. Nice harmony lead work, a la IRON MAIDEN. "Flag of Hate" is another epic anthem which does little for me, and "Princess of Hell" is rather static, sounding alarmingly like a CELTIC FROST "Morbid Tales" leftover. Really! The obligatory ballad "Ballad of Sorrow" closes out side two with some promise (the chorus wasn't bad), but overall, **Kingdom of Kings** is not that great. The production is poor, the songs miss their marks, and the singer needs some improvement. If I was the band, I'd concentrate on the faster, more aggressive style of writing, versus the slow style where the group's weak points show through.

This LP is available from the SINGING SWORDS crew for \$17.00 postpaid from Greece; see the fanzine section for my very positive review of SINGING SWORDS #2, a *fantastic* true metal mag).

DAMIEN-Angel Juice
(Independent CD)

"Shadows In Darkness" is a deceiving opening track, having the potential to turn off fans of this band's **Stop This War** and **Every Dog Has Its Day** albums. "Silent Rage" is back to the group's PRIEST-inspired style and is perhaps the best thing band leader and guitarist Chuck Stohl has penned to date for DAMIEN. "The Politics of Pain" is note-for-note an early 80's Metal Blade song and well done in the 'classic' metal style (which Angel Juice reeks pleasantly of). Excepting the boring "Death March" and the 90's metal wannabe "Vlad", the new DAMIEN disc is a solid piece of work in the typical DAMIEN style. The drumming is noticeably more adventurous than **Stop This War**, and guitarist Stohl has improved his solo work; not enough to give his inspirations any competition (Schenker, Iommi, Malmsteen), but at least the guy tries to play above himself, which can't be said about most U.S. bands. As usual, the production and lyrics are workman-like, but that adds to the pure 80's feel.

Fan club: M.S. Productions / 69 Cooper Square, Suite 1102 / New York, NY 10003.

DAMIEN-Angel Juice
(Independent CD)

This New York band returns with their third outing. Their second album **Stop this War** was a solid 80's metal album. This new disc shades some of the songs with more modern influences, like a touch of PANTERA circa **Cowboys** here and there on songs like "Shadows in Darkness" and "Vlad", but these songs are elevated by talent and some catchy riffs and choruses. Tracks like "Silent Rage" are wonderfully nostalgic, the kind of track you would have likely found on an 80's Metal Massacre. The album has a lot of very driving and speedy metal tunes. Most of the songs don't have the fiery passion of the great European power metal bands these days, but they are still effective. The ending track, "The Legend of Trots", is probably the best, a magnificent instrumental epic, of elegantly classical and melodic heavy metal. New vocalist Scott Miller adds a bit of Jon Oliva-esque harshness to the band. The production is unobtrusive, with a robust tone to the guitars, and not enough vocal prominence. A very good independent release for fans of straight forward metal who want to hear something with an eclectic feeling to it.

-Craig Wisnom

DAMIEN LEE THORR-Sonic Brutality
(Independent CD)

If someone's going to bring back the sound of OMEN and SAVAGE GRACE, it'll be Florida's DAMIEN LEE THORR. From start to finish, this **Sonic Brutality** is a neo-classical speed workout, with hyper-speed Smith/Murray melodies and guitar harmonies. THORR handled all of the instruments himself, programming a drum machine to simulate the skins. The nine songs on this CD were all recorded on a less-than-desired budget, so the sound quality is akin to a poor demo sound. This is unfortunate, because all of the songs are great, and THORR is an incredibly talented guitarist. He also does the vocals in a very rough UDO fashion, which at times can be burdensome, but on tracks like "Hear the Angels Call", the vocals affect the fluid guitar harmonies in an interesting way. The man is looking for a proper singer, ("is Kiske doing anything?" he asks), and I hope he finds the final piece to finish this band puzzle, as THORR has the vision. As I said, **Sonic Brutality**, though it is on CD, is not the best example of the man's awesome capabilities, since the sound is a major letdown.

This disc is available from *Sentinel Steel Music* for \$6. Write to Damien Lee Thorrr at: P.O. Box 23216 / Fort Lauderdale, FL 33307

DARK TRUTH-Dark Truth
(Independent CD)

This New Mexico five piece band conjures up an interesting cross between DANZIG and basic traditional heavy metal on this seven song self-titled release. It's not as intricate as I'm used to hearing in the progressive/power scene these days, but on a few listens, it's quite effective, with a definitely original feel that doesn't stray from metal purity. Like DANZIG, the vocals are especially prominent in the mix, which makes the mystical lyrics a lot more accessible than on most metal releases.

-Craig Wisnom

DARK TRUTH-Dark Truth
(Independent CD)

This is a mix of DANZIG's dark visions with no-frills US metal. The pacing is mostly plodding to mid-tempo in nature, but the songs are tight and accessible. The guitars are a touch behind in the mix, but this is still a respectable effort. It has seven full songs and is 30+ minutes long. Fair songs are "Darker Side Samantha", and "I Become" (which begs for a heavier guitar sound).

Contact: DARK TRUTH / P.O. Box 6242 / Albuquerque, NM 87197



DEATH-Symbolic
(Roadrunner)

Wow. Yet an even *more* towering height of maturity and greatness from the mighty DEATH! **Leprosy** was one of the first death metal albums I bought...I thought the lyrics so bad-arse and the growls so acidic...ah, we have both come a thankfully long way since then! While so many founding fathers of the death metal genre continue to yodel about festering innards and Satan's praises, DEATH transcend them all with their resplendent new opus, **Symbolic**. Chuck may never rid himself of battery-acid vocals or that horribly outdated logo, but he and the rest of the band always do improve with age. Here is an album that is almost *perfect*, containing the right amount of melody, complexity, and lyrical substance without becoming either pompous or simplistic.

The first song, the title-track, is God pantheistically personified within the almighty RIFF...the tempo changes: the way in which the song draws you in and elevates you, and then gently throws you back down to earth via slower-paced rhythms and melodies. And then there's the rest of the album! Wheeee! The remainder of the songs continue in the same fashion, sucking the life out of the listener while he enjoys every last gorgeous drop of the experience. The production tight, the music solid, and the lyrics supreme...what more could one ask for?

The only teeny-tiny little fault with **Symbolic** is the second-to-last song, "Misanthrope"-beautiful title, boring music that is lost after one listen. However, even DEATH cannot be *perfect*. Every other song is godly in its own right and needs almost no refinement.

Maybe this isn't exactly **Human**, but it is damn near flawless, surpassing most in the death scene that sail the seas of cheese...it can safely be said that DEATH are the best American death metal band (no, MORBID ANGEL are incredibly lame) and that **Symbolic** is one of the best DEATH albums. May DEATH and their music continue to live long and deservedly prosper. (Yup, that's where AT THE GATES got it...now we know!)

(Rating: 9 introspective pumpkins)

-Natalie Vlahovic

DEJMOR-Cutback
(Independent CD)

This 12-track CD is 70 minutes long and is divided between soft, balladesque/bluesy tunes and razor-riffed power metal assaults. I love the power/speed metal songs, crossing over from STRATOVARIUS to a modern RUNNING WILD sound. The production is excellent, once again recalling RUNNING WILD. K.C. Tian and Alex Zimmer are the brains behind this Austrian outfit, with K.C. handling the vocals, and both sharing the guitar duties. The best songs are the RUNNING WILD-style "I've Warned You", the anthemic "Two Sides", the crunchy, rolling "Metamorphosis", the STRATOVARIUS-ish (**Fright Night**) "Persecuted By the Smoke", and the head-spinning speed metal instrumental "Victim of the System", which has a length of 6:24 and never a dull moment! All the other songs are sappy ballads. Now that I think about it, nearly every other cut on this CD is a ballad! There's not the best selection of material or the smartest sequencing formula. There are not enough ballads for DEJMOR to compete with NELSON and not nearly enough power metal tracks to completely take in a power/speed metal fan like myself. My hope is that K.C. and Alex have realized their mistake and come up with a consistent CD on their next release.

Write to: Christian Kremser / A-8443 Gleinstätten 190 / AUSTRIA / EUROPE

DEMENTIA (Holland)-Watching the Dawn
(Independent CD)

This Dutch foursome, not to be confused with the Illinois band, play a variety of thrash that is annoyingly common in the NY/NJ scene here. I can go to a number of clubs locally and catch dozens of bands playing this type of music. Guitar riffs with the groove element and "feelings" vocals with that hardcore/shout-it-out style, and plain depressing songs. Maybe DEMENTIA caught me on a bad day, but there is no denying that these guys will have to do something drastic to separate themselves from the hordes of other bands. Pro-packaging, good production, eight songs.

Send \$15 to: Arno Burtner / Obrechtstraat 75a / 2517 VN The Hague/ HOLLAND

DEPRESSIVE AGE
First Depression (Gun, 1992),
Symbol For the Blue Times (Gun, 1995)

Lying In Wait, DEPRESSIVE AGE's second release, was reviewed in *Sentinel Steel* # 1. **First Depression** is their debut and captures the group's early thrash sound with singer Jan Lubitzki's unique vocal style. These lighter progressive moments, soon to be featured in a large way on **Lying In Wait**, are just hinted at here. Harris Johns, perhaps Germany's finest thrash metal producer, gives the group of East Germans that razor-riffed sound a la PARADOX or POLTERGEIST. Of course, D AGE have a much more unique outlook than the other two bands. **First Depression** is an excellent melodic thrash release.

Symbols, on the other hand, is predominantly mellow, fitting in with PSYCHOTIC WALTZ and the like. (Rating: 8, 6½ pumpkins)

DIVIDING HORIZONS-Seizure
(Rockwerk Records)

German progressive metallers DIVIDING HORIZONS come up with six songs plus an instrumental on what I believe is their first CD release. The production is thin but gets better as the disc moves along. This five-piece take a page out of DREAM THEATER's book; they're not copyists, but for comparison's sake, DREAM THEATER is mentioned. "Alone" is more prog rock than metal, with harmony vocals, and it does not do much for me. "Second Sunrise" has some nice parts also, but the singer's typical monotone prog rock vocalization lacks the passion that bands like LABYRINTH possess. "Domination" follows through without fanfare, as does the filler instrumental (2:26) "Remembrance". "Soul Trap", like the other songs, balances lighter prog rock moments with heavier DREAM THEATER sections. As usual, the vocals are kind of flat during the passages without harmonies, and there is a noticeable lack of memorable choruses. "Deep Within a Sigh" is memorable, with very cool fret work and picking and solid songwriting. If I had to pick a single from *Seizure*, track six would be it. Lastly, there is "Always & Forever", the token prog epic at nearly nine minutes in length, which leaves the listener on a higher note than expected. Still, it is kind of average. DIVIDING HORIZON's *Seizure* is a good start, but should appeal to the hardcore prog completist more so than the average prog metal fan like myself. Improvements need to be made in the areas mentioned: production, vocals, and songwriting. (Rating: 7 pumpkins)

Write to: DIVIDING HORIZONS /
Miesenbacher Str. 58 / 66877 Ramstein /
GERMANY

DOFKA-Toxic Wasteland
(Black Dragon)

Toxic Wasteland was originally released on CD and vinyl in France; I believe Jim Dofka did a recent pressing of this on cassette in the U.S. Dofka should be familiar to all by now, as his projects SCREAMER, BRICK MISTRESS, and currently PSYCHO SCREAM have gained attention worldwide. The guitarist is a neoclassicist, and my favorite work by him is this *Toxic Wasteland*. While BRICK MISTRESS and PSYCHO SCREAM (who should have a deal soon) are decent bands, they are in a more commercial IMPELLITERI and MALMSTEEN style than a power metal spectrum. *Toxic Wasteland*, originally released six years ago, has the more fluid vocals and powerful songs that I prefer. "Doctor of Death", "Toxic Wastelands", and "Dragons" are masterpieces of neoclassical melodic power metal! How I wish Jim Dofka could compose a complete album with these types of songs....

(Rating: 7½ pumpkins)

To get info on what he's up to, write to:
Jim Dofka / 1200 Valley View Ave. / Wheeling,
WV 26003

DREAMLORE-Confined To Destiny
(Independent CD)

Confined To Destiny is the work of one David L. Christy, who plays all the instruments. This disc was originally released in 1992 but appears

to have been rediscovered by Brian and Brent at DREAM DISC, prompting Christy to repress his work. As mentioned, David Christy is multitalented, and it's rare to find a good vocalist with equally as good guitar abilities. This disc is melodic progressive metal with songs in a conceptual format. The ten songs average about six minutes each. Sometimes DREAMLORE reminds me of GYPSY KYSS, with light guitarwork and soothing vocals; other times, such as "One Dark Night", Christy shows he's no wimp with some speedy guitarwork (for a few moments anyway). But *Confined To Destiny* is mostly lightweight progressive metal. This is probably too mellow for most, but if GYPSY KYSS or maybe PSYCHOTIC WALTZ (without the weirdness and more commercial) is your thing, then DREAMLORE may be for you. DREAM DISC has these in stock.



ELDRITCH-Seeds of Rage
(Inside Out)

I praised ELDRITCH's promo tracks way back in *Sentinel Steel #1*, as the playing was superb with a crisp, full production. A number of those songs made it onto ELDRITCH's debut. "Incurably Ill", "Under This Ground" and "Chains" all begin this 10-song disc, and the CD sequencer made a smart decision in grabbing the listener with the familiar elements. The production is magnificent, which is a surprise coming from an LMP band (no Bauerfiend here!). Particularly, the drums stand out, the engineering capturing the sharp snare and crisp kickdrum. This is not only the best production

done in Italy to date, but a triumph for LMP.

After the initial excitement of the first tracks dies down, ELDRITCH settle in and write memorable song after memorable song. The average length is under five minutes, which is thoroughly refreshing compared to other progressive metal bands, who irritatingly find the need to write long songs. ELDRITCH write pointed songs, but their technical pomp abilities revolve around the songs. Refreshing!! And ELDRITCH are not prone to spacey abstractions or jazzy garbage either. They are amazingly powerful and somehow define the genre known as progressive POWER metal. *Seeds of Rage* is not perfect; I hope ELDRITCH can strengthen the vocal hooks in their choruses. Otherwise, this is a fine debut, encompassing the early DREAM THEATER *When Dream and Day Unite* sound with perhaps the vigor of PRIEST's *Painkiller*.

(Rating: 8½ pumpkins)

ELEGY-Lost
(TT Records)

Have ELEGY made the big leap ahead that I was hoping for? Nope. Yet again, we have an album with three great songs and the rest marred by filler. Final speed ripper "Spanish Inquisition" is awesome, but too late. Sure the instrumentation is amazing, but that doesn't make up for the lack of songs. Style-wise, the group come up with their usual mix of MALMSTEEN, HELLOWEEN, and DREAM THEATER. Vocally, Eduard has shown very little growth, singing similar vocal lines on the last two albums. I was hoping for him to stretch his range out and come up with better lines. Nope. Still, cuts like "Lost", "Clean Up Your Act" and others are excellent pieces, hummable for the first verse to the last. Singable? Nah, as yet again the group seem mesmerized by the cliché LA-style lyrics. With such musical talent, it continues to frustrate me that their lyrics are so shallow

(Rating: 7½ pumpkins)



EMBARGO-Children of a Lesser God
(D&S Records)

EMBARGO's first release, **Panem Et Circenses**, was a very good power metal CD, fast with some nice subtle melodies. It took me a while to get into, but I was hooked enough to try this, their second CD. And BAM! I was blown away! Every once in a while you hear music that makes you feel that life is worthwhile, and I don't know why this EMBARGO CD does, because the lyrics are rather depressing, but it is such a powerful album that I feel fortunate every time I listen to it. The overall tempo of the album is fast. It cranks right off with the mighty "Revolution", and instantly the precise guitar work and fervent vocals tell you that the CD is going to be something special. Vocalist Marc Wagner is superb in packing the songs and choruses in particular with intense emotion. Marc also plays guitar, and is complemented by Stephen Daniel. The other members are Peter Bronnsack on bass and Christian Sauber on drums.

I mentioned depression, and there is a rather glum aspect to this album, but the overall speedy pace prevents you from dwelling in melancholia too long. The effect is a rather swift assault with thought-provoking ideas. For example, "Flatline" concerns the feelings of a terminally ill hospital patient, and no, they're not cheerful, but it whizzes by in such a glorious speed blitz that while you're reflecting the band's message in a song, you're also cranking it up and grabbing for the closest guitar-like object. Fast songs aside, though, the thing that really makes this album a '10' are two fabulous power ballads. "Cage of Glass" starts off with some

beautiful acoustic guitar and heartfelt singing; then the power kicks in, and you're taken on a roller-coaster of emotions as the song goes from acoustic to speed riffing--one of those songs that makes you stop whatever else you're doing and LISTEN!

Well we've come to the end, and I need to justify the '10' rating for my friend Chris Dadd, who thinks it's a mere '9'. I just love the overall sound, so European, yet so emotional, so modern, yet so 80's-sounding. And there's no arguing that the songs are all first class. The clincher is, I thought if I were allowed 10 CD's, what would they be? An EMBARGO release, without a question, would be one of them. What other definition of a '10' is there?

-Tony Zangara

ENDLESS TEARS-Emotion
(Independent CD)

ENDLESS TEARS are under-produced French progressive metallers with a slight jazzy/avant garde edge. The snare drums and rhythm guitar are near inaudible, and the lyrics and songwriting are too sappy/weird for my tastes. Lyrics are a mix of English and French.

ENDLESSTEARS: Nicolas Ramaget / 12 Bd
Du Maréchal Leclerc / 21240 Talant FRANCE



ENOLA GAY-F.O.T.H
(Shark Records)

German bands complain to me about their lack of good studios and producers in their country, but ENOLA GAY contradicts these claims. Sure, Germany has Charlie Baurfeind, arguably the worst metal producer right now, but Oliver Grosse Pawig and TT Studios have done an incredible job on this disc. ENOLA play powerful metal, like a German version of VICIOUS RUMORS. Doodly German melodies take the back seat to thick, robust guitar riffs and clean vocals with a touch of grittiness to them, somewhere between a Carl Albert and RAGE's Peavy. On first listen, I wasn't too enthused with the two openers, "Fly Off the Handle" and the anti-fascist anthemic plod of "Close-Cropped Head", but "Bad News (Are Good News)" picks things up, structured like a heavy QUEENSRYCHE in its verses, with singer Peter doing a nice job on the vocal lines. Once again, the lyrics are excellent this time, attacking the validity of violence in news media, among other things. "Lost Generation" with its explosive chorus is another good one. The pace swings back and forth, but the songs remain consistently good, except for the rather embarrassing ballad "Never Be Without a Friend", and the tired half-step of "Welcome". With a final tally, I came up with six above average songs, and four that veer into average territory. So, they get a 7½...I thought of an 8, since F.O.T.H is a pro release in every department, but the average songs bring down the score. By the way, even though ENOLA GAY are German, don't expect any HELLOWEEN/RUNNING WILD clones here, as the group play American-style power in a convincing fashion.

(Rating: 7½ pumpkins)

ENTROPY-Become a God
(Gorgon/Da/Inline)

Here's another European band playing progressive rock/metal. ENTROPY hail from the Netherlands, and it's hard not to miss the Dutch accent in the vocals. The tempos throughout remain predominantly at the medium clip, and the rhythm guitar is mostly uninspired crunch riffing. I think ENTROPY show promise, but the guitar work has to rise up a few notches, and vocalist Casper needs additional voice expression, plus better ideas, when it comes to vocal lines. The songs really need structure too, especially missing strong choruses and verse-to-bridge-to-chorus interplay. The group should have demoed for a year or two more.

(Rating: 6½ pumpkins)

ETERNITY-Mind Games
(Independent CD)

I got this CD from Dream Disc (described as "old QUEENSRYCHE/SAVATAGE), only to find out they're a New Jersey band--and I've never heard of them. They've had three audio releases since 1991, quietly honing their sound. "Firestorm" is an uptempo QUEENSRYCHE style tune and a catchy opener that showcases this band's fine playing abilities right from the start. The sound quality is crisp... "Mind Games" is too uneven for my tastes, lacking the hooks that make "Firestorm" a success. After the bass solo ("The Chase"), is "The Savior and the Disease", which is also disjointed and a bit more mean-spirited, like MEGADETH. "Despair" is an optimistic, even 'pretty' ballad. "Crawl Before You Walk", like the songs before it, mixes the slow with the more intense and is more of a 'conceptual' song than a straighthead composition. I prefer ETERNITY's writing on "VIPER II", a power metalter with some of that ETERNITY penchant for frills (a chorus vocal effect, keys, etc.). But to follow it up, ETERNITY does "Faith", an acoustic guitar song, which is very different from the cut preceding it. A Bach piece (the same one is on the GOTHIC KNIGHTS CD!) opens "Endless Journey", another rock opera-ish track--rock opera! Now I see the point in Dream Disc's reference to SAVATAGE. "Eulogy" closes the curtains with the acoustic guitar. Very strong, personal lyrics throughout **Mind Games**, and in the rock opera context they work very well. But I look for complete songs, and this ETERNITY disc may be a masterpiece to some (it does have that quality that reviewers like to give high accolades to), but it does not have the initial interest to get me into it. However, fans of **Operation: Mindcrime** and **Dead Winter Dead** may consider **Mind Games** as a worthy acquisition.

Get it from Dream Disc or write to: P.O.
Box 38 / Cliffwood, NJ 07721-0038



EVERON-Paradoxes
-Flood
(Si-Music)

I have to admit I am not a fan of German rock music in general. I dislike it mostly for all the reasons our cherished Editor-In-Chief loves it. But, I also have to admit that there are a few

Natalie Vlahovic/Babson College/Box 2315/Babson Park, MA 02157
Craig Wisnom/10651 E.Timeless Dr/Tucson, AZ 85748
Jim Hutchinson/368 Walnut St/Shrewsbury, MA 01545
Iron Mike/3105 Atlantis Dr/Holiday, FL 34691

notable exceptions. Uli John Roth's RISING SUN records were well-crafted postulations for individuality. His brother Zeno's records were whimsical and overflowing with detail within well-defined parameters. And then there's SECRECY's short-lived Euro-power metal. EVERON fit in with the holy triumvirate with notable exceptions. Their music could be best described as progressive power rock that could appeal to all of you who are into stuff like SAGA, IT BITES, and ASIA. Now, EVERON don't have any of the above-mentioned bands' trademarks. They do not employ SAGA's compressed guitar staccato, the British roughness of IT BITES, or ASIA's classic pop prettiness. No, EVERON have a lot of qualities that could make them one of the best melodic acts worldwide, especially since ASIA are slacking off. Odd time signatures and bombastic, symphonic passages make these albums distinctive enough. The two releases distinguish themselves mainly through compositional elements. The arrangements on **Paradoxes** are long and convoluted. They don't seem too accessible during the first listen, whereas the songs on **Flood** are short and to-the-point. I personally like both albums for their own merits, but in favor of greater recognition, **Flood** is definitely the album to buy. However, supposedly Si Music declared bankruptcy recently, so you may have problems tracking down these albums.

(Rating: 9½ pumpkins, 10 pumpkins)

-David Boller



EVIL WINGS-Evil Wings
(Underground Symphony)

Bringing together DREAM THEATER, progressive rock, and symphonic metal are Italian foursome EVIL WINGS. As with other Underground Symphony product, the packaging of this disc is excellent. Franco Giaffreda, who doubles on lead vocals (doing the mid-range thing like British prog bands) and guitar, writes most of the music. He is an absolutely stunning guitarist. I regret not being a musician as my descriptions fall short sometimes, but imagine that DREAM THEATER influence with WATCHTOWER, and you get the idea. EVIL WINGS do tend to overindulge themselves in their material, which can make for uneasy listening, but it's Franco's voice that bothers me the most, as his grasp of English is poor in some sections and borders on being an annoyance. Also, *one* "epic" song is usually the limit for my attention span in the course of one CD, but EVIL WINGS has two, one over ten minutes ("Behind the Sky") and another over 16 minutes in length

("Enigma"). "Behind the Sky" is a finely crafted composition, with unique usage of female vocals to connect stanzas, but "Enigma", after ten or so listens, is beyond me. Lesser cuts such as "Chrysalis" and "Fairies" are the exceptions to technical goodies like "Rise To the Sunlight" and "In the Dream". Above average fare for Mensa metal heads.

(Rating: 8 pumpkins)

Underground Symphony / Maurizio Chiarello / CP 39 / 15060 Basaluzzo (AL) / ITALY

FATAL OPERA-Fatal Opera
(Massacre)

Massacre has quickly become a haven for "comeback" metal in Germany, so it's no surprise that ex-MEGADETH drummer Gar Samuelson is on Massacre with his FATAL OPERA project. I had heard that this is actually the FO demo pressed on CD (which Massacre is known for doing), but the sound is more than passable, so no complaint from me. Samuelson and Co. play a jazzy sort of technical metal, mixed with psychedelics, raw heaviness, with David Inman's expressionistic, free-form vocals. The lyrics are introspective, but without much hope seen. Knowing *Sentinel Steel* readers, I'd recommend staying away from this work. On occasion, it reminds me of LAST CRACK, and MIND OVER FOUR, which I *know* is the music I try to stay away from. (Rating: 4 pumpkins)

FATES WARNING-Chasing Time
(Metal Blade)

A nice and tidy 'best of' FATES WARNING disc is what **Chasing Time** is. The 78 minutes of songs contained herein are pretty much available on studio discs, except for the "At Fate's Fingers", which should sound familiar to many, the remixed "We Only Say Good-bye", and the somewhat dull "Circles". All albums are

presented well, but the flow of the disc is a bit uneven, as can be expected, and **Awaken the Guardian** is underrepresented; it is one of those metal masterpieces that should be in everyone's collection. For the later stuff, I feel Ray Alder finally matured with **Parallels'** his songwriting was nothing short of superb. It's not really a metal album *per se*, but the tunes are catchy, further proven by the band during their shows. Honorable mentions go out to the good **Spectre Within** and **Perfect Symmetry**.

Chasing Time is solid, albeit a few cuts that could've been left off...I do not know why "Monument" was the lead off track! Good disc, but I would have preferred a live package instead.

(Rating: 7 pumpkins)

FERNGULLY-Tunnel Visions
(Independent CD)

Unbelievable cover art--cartoony gingerbread men, creamed muffins, and a bakery chef do not represent heavy metal! The artwork is hilariously bad, as is the bubbly pink band logo. FERNGULLY write serious power metal songs, and yet they let a cartoon represent their music. I can't figure it out. Anyway, this group has former members of PILLOWKILZ, who had some early ties to BLIND GUARDIAN. How, I do not know, but it's been documented in German and Japanese magazines. There are six full-length numbers on this disc; excepting the average opener "Bad Conscience", **Tunnel Visions** is an excellent German power metal opus that *does not* sound like BLIND GUARDIAN or HELLOWEEN. Vocalist Oliver Hohendorff has a nicely textured voice, with convincing feeling that other foreign groups lack. It was Oliver's voice that made the PILLOWKILZ material so memorable. You gotta love the guy--he looks like a cross between Jon Oliva and Meatloaf!! But I digress... For those who enjoy



the work of INSANIA and HEAVENWARD, I recommend FERNGULLY.

Contact the smiling singer at: Oliver Hohendorf / Ludwig-Jahn Str. 39 / 47918 Tönisvorst / GERMANY

FIRST STRIKE-First Strike
(Independent CD)

Sharing the same home as SEVENTHSIGN are FIRST STRIKE. Their debut CD is a seven-cut affair, totaling 35 minutes. "Tears" is a typical melodic metal number, and I winced with annoyance--not another negative review! Thankfully, tracks two through seven are much better, in a QUEENSRYCHE style--soft prog metal, but appealing. Some heavier and speedier moments would do the band some good. Roomy production, solid booklet (cheesy cover art!).

Write for info: P.O. Box 30792 / Albuquerque, NM 87190-0792

FORBIDDEN-Distortion
(Massacre)

This, FORBIDDEN's third studio CD, was never properly distributed in the U.S., as MASSACRE closed shop at the time. I've heard that the demos leading up to *Distortion* were good; this album is not, combining the group's melodic thrash with typical 90's groove and inner city pessimism. The pace is laborious, with a dark and ineffective bitter taste.

(Rating: 4 pumpkins who've been there and done that)

GAMMA RAY-Land of the Free (Noise)

In *Sentinel Steel 1 1/2*, I reviewed GR's last effort, *Insanity and Genius*, stating my disappointment that Kai Hansen had yet to create a "great" album. Well, let me eat my words, because *Land of the Free* is a great album--not perfect, because of the blemish known as "Time To Break Free", but this is the disc Kai had to make. Besides the one bad track, sung by Michael Kiske incidentally, the production leaves something to be desired. That's no surprise as Charlie Bauerfeind, (said to be a good arranger), is by far the worst "name" producer in Europe today. Still, the sound is not bad, but it's so consistent with Charlie. In other words, it makes me wonder what the bands that keep using the man are thinking. Why do these bands go back for more? For the arrangement talents of Bauerfeind?

Well, *Land of the Free* is brilliant in its arrangements; that's for sure. This is easily Kai's most complete album since his HELLOWEEN days, and that's going back a number of years. *Land of the Free* combines the exhausting intensity of *Walls of Jericho* with the spectacular melody of *Keeper Part 1's* "I'm Alive", "Twilight of the Gods", and the epic "Halloween". *Land of the Free* begins with a near-nine minute epic of "Rebellion In Dreamland", not a faster number by any stretch of the imagination (which is how Kai and HELLOWEEN usually began their discs.), but somehow the sequencing is perfect. Classical music composers almost never start a piece in a



swift manner, instead allowing the instruments to create a slow and dramatic build. Kai, our visionary of the 21st century, does just that with an incredible build on "Rebellion". The track ascends, leaving the listener standing on top of a mountain with track two, "Man on a Mission". It is nearly indescribable in its euphoric ferocity. It's just such a masterpiece of a song that few musicians will ever come to equal. With the standard set, Kai and Co. complete this master opus with the newly penned classics, "Gods of Deliverance", "Salvation's Calling", "Abyss of the Void", and many others. In writing this review, I feel like I am saying the obvious, because all of you already have this disc, and if you don't, what are you doing reading this mag, when you should be out buying *Land of the Free*?!!

(Rating: 9 1/2 mightily soaring pumpkins)

THE GATHERING-Mandyllion
(Century Media)

Finally! An album with *decent* female vocals that actually don't make your skin crawl or shatter the glasses in your kitchen cabinets (3rd AND THE MORTAL, anyone?). Anneke van Giersbergen, new lead vocal goddess of THE GATHERING, is proof that more women should enter the male-dominated genre of power metal.

With a voice as angelic as that of Lord John Arch, and reminiscent of DEAD CAN DANCE's Lisa Gerrard during her mellow

moments, Anneke now gives THE GATHERING that little extra something that would have complemented their first album, *Always*, perfectly. The songs "Leaves" and "In Motion #2" have those beautiful vocal harmonies similar to those found on songs like "The Apparition" by FATES WARNING; they are soft, yet convincing.

Mandyllion has the same ambient PINK FLOYD quality found on TIAMAT's *Wildhoney*, but it is a lot more guitar-driven. The title-track encompasses the *slightly* Middle Eastern style of DEAD CAN DANCE and weirdly enough, some of KING CRIMSON's darker moments (!). Most songs are quite similar in nature, actually...they are slow to mid-paced but with more atmosphere. "Sand and Mercury" echoes the song "In Sickness and Health" on *Always*, with all of its piano tidbits, as well.

If you are a power metal fan that wishes to broaden your horizons with other ambient soundscapes, this is a perfect album for doing so. However, if you strictly listen to AGENT STEEL and JAG PANZER 24 hours a day, stay well away from this. I am definitely not one for female vocals, but this album is actually well done and does not sound completely wimpy. This is one of those albums that satisfies the occasional mood for extremely mellow music, but it isn't something that one would have continuously rotating in the CD player.

(Rating: 7 pumpkins)

-Natalie Vlahovic

GLOBAL CONNECTIONS: Project Sound
Expansion Vol. 1
(Siegen Records)

This is a promotional compilation put together by MYSTIC FORCE's Keith Menser. 14 bands are included; the highlights are MYSTIC FORCE's "A Step Beyond", which is only let down by a weak production; SURREAL's "Evil Lies", which is slightly thin also, but it sounds like GARGOYLE with keyboards -- excellent!!; NY's CROSSFIRE, with their superb "Murderous Education" -- a new vocalist would be the final piece in their nearly completed puzzle -- this is excellent U.S. power metal; and TREASON's "Reflections of Insanity" (last seen on the MOLTEN METAL MONSTERS compilation; it's too bad the band is still selling the same song!). Honorable mention goes to FORTE and MERIDIAN, who finally have a new singer, I guess, but the production on their song "The Meridian" is horrific, and their FATES WARNING (Alder era) fixation is annoying.

For info on this compilation and other MYSTIC FORCE and Siegen Records products, write to: GLOBAL CONNECTIONS / P.O. Box 28452 / Baltimore, MD 21234 or FAX 410-426-3018

GOTHIC KNIGHTS-Gothic Knights
(Sentinel Steel Music)

Some may question the validity of my doing a review of a band that is on my record label, but having no more than 125 CD's in my collection, I think I'm qualified. I'm picky! And if I'm going to invest in a band, they have to be great! For the GOTHIC KNIGHTS, the road to greatness was a difficult one, but this Brooklyn-based outfit (and myself) came through; now we've got a great CD for the world.

After the *To Hell and Back* demo (reviewed in the last issue of *Sentinel Steel*), the GOTHIC KNIGHTS, true to their word, entered a Manhattan area studio to record their debut CD, financed by themselves. Deep into the recording, the band realized they were being ripped off, as the studio equipment was crap, being a pale shade of what they were told was going to be available. The recordings the band made in this time period were unusable, and the band lost all of their money. Dejected and flat broke, the band managed to scrape together enough cash to go back to Electric Plant Studios in Brooklyn (where they recorded *To Hell and Back*) and cut an album's worth of material with a solid demo quality sound. John Tsantakis, the GOTHIC KNIGHTS' guitarist, sent me a copy of this tape, and I was blown away. New songs like "War In the Sky" and "Bridgekeeper" convinced me that this was *the* band to launch a record label with. I immediately offered John and the GOTHIC KNIGHTS a chance to remix the recording, but the remix failed to bring the songs up to a quality I wanted. Fully committed to the band, I decided to rerecord the entire album at End Result Studios, also in Brooklyn.

And so we entered 1996. With the financial support they needed, the GOTHIC KNIGHTS recorded their guitar, bass, drum, and vocal tracks in the comfort of the newly-opened 32 track End Result Studios facility. I came in during the mixing and mastering stage, learning much and contributing to the final sound of the album. Two songs were cut from the disc, namely, "No Mercy" and "Demons Within", both

of which will be revamped for the second GOTHIC KNIGHTS CD.

With a completed eight-song recording in hand, the band and I shopped a few pressing plants, before deciding to go with Audio Dynamix in Fort Lee, NJ. Once again, the band and I went through an educational roller-coaster, learning the different processes of making CD's.

The cover painting of a sorcerer conjuring up a demon is the perfect bait, drawing one into the epic power/80's-style metal of the GOTHIC KNIGHTS. Few bands have truly great covers; the GOTHIC KNIGHTS have one of those few. "Creature of the Dark" is the opener--so potent a cut on the demo, it *had* to begin the CD. Rick Sanchez's awesome vocals, and guitarist John Tsantakis' breathtaking solos make this song a definite classic, up there with the best (MEDIÉVAL STEEL, WARLORD, etc.) "Bridgekeeper" raises the pulse-rate higher, with a fast riffy verse recalling a raw ICED EARTH, before climaxing into a barrage of double bass. "Nightmare of the Witch" is a mid-tempo crusher; once again, Sanchez's vocal lines and performance are just brilliant, offsetting the thick crunchy rhythm section. His true spotlight comes in with the power ballad, "Heart of Sorrow", whose lyrical ideas mirror themes presented in the movie *Rosemary's Baby*. After a classical Bach introduction, we're back to the fast stuff on "The Magi", which sports a sing-along chorus of epic proportions! Some say it sounds HELLOWEENish, but whatever you think, we can all agree that this song is too short! "Demon Eyes" follows, as it is classic 80's-style metal all the way, with straightforward structuring and that knack for catchiness that eludes most

other bands. Track seven is probably my favorite GOTHIC KNIGHTS song to date, that being "War In the Sky". The crunchy hook-laden riffs of Tsantakis, coupled with Rick Sanchez's genius vocal melodies (and what vocals!) will make one stand and listen in awe. This band may not be the most polished in the world, but with songs like "War In the Sky" the GOTHIC KNIGHTS create *magic*, and traditional power metal fans are lucky for that. "Darkest Knight" is the closing song, an anthemic chanting piece with riffage reminding me of TYRANT's (US) "Preacher" tune. Very heavy stuff, sounding not unlike a song *pirates* would sing, according to some people.

Of course there are a few details I could nit-pick about, like that the CD could be a touch louder. The rhythm section could have been a tad cleaner, but that's it. I'm immensely proud to be associated with this project, and let me assure all of you into 80's epic power metal that this GOTHIC KNIGHTS CD is a must have. Is it a perfect 10? Absolutely not; the band warmed up with their demo, and they are getting hot with their debut CD. By the time the next disc comes out, they'll be boiling, incorporating more time changes, melodies, and memorable songwriting. The GOTHIC KNIGHTS will be melding their epic metal sound with the 90's European giants, and the results may be mind-blowing. Watch out!

(Rating: 9 Gothic pumpkins in shining armour)





1. TEARS OF MADNESS
 2. SHADOWMAKER
 3. THE GRAVEDANCER
 4. DEMON'S DAY
 5. WARCHILD
 6. HEART OF DARKNESS
 7. HATE
 8. CIRCLE OF WITCHES
 9. BLACK DEATH
 10. DOLPHIN'S CRY*
 11. DON'T BRING ME DOWN*
- *BONUS TRACK FOR JAPAN

GRAVEDIGGER-Heart of Darkness
(G.U.N. Records)

As a follow-up to *The Reaper* (discounting the EP *Symphony of Death*), *Heart Of Darkness* comes as a let-down. GRAVEDIGGER have never been a band to challenge the mind, having harsher UDO-like vocals relay their usual brand of inane heavy metal lyrics. Well, the lyrics improved a bit here in the second half of the 90's, and there is plenty of foreboding atmosphere to darken the mood, but who wants to sit through nearly 70 minutes of GRAVEDIGGER on one CD? Especially when all but two or three songs are slow anthems? What made *The Reaper* a fun listen was the cardiac arrest-inducing speed and repetitious catchy choruses. HOD has "Shadowmaker", "Warchild" (with a dreary chorus, though), and "Hate" that try to emulate the success, but only "Shadowmaker" is of the same songwriting caliber as *The Reaper*. Besides these three songs, there are tunes like "The Grave Dancer" and "Circle of Witches", which are major medium-clipped bores...when I mean boring, I mean it in a big way. The pacing is dull, the riffs are lifeless, and singer Chris is annoying with

slow stuff, screeching like Miss Piggy in certain sections. I like his clean voice, but he uses his newfound talent as a real singer sparingly. The biggest joke on HOD is the title-track itself, where the singular guitar riffs scrape the bottom of the barrel; we're talking ultra generic. And, the shout-it-out layered choruses are found on every song, rendering them flaccid. A terrifyingly bland release...along with RAGE, RUNNING WILD, and BLIND GUARDIAN, GRAVEDIGGER have achieved a level of non-enthusiasm and non-creativity with their newest release.

(Rating: 6 uninspired pumpkins)

GRAVEDIGGER-Heart of Darkness
(G.U.N. Records)

This is a more serious offering from GRAVEDIGGER than last year's excellent comeback CD, *The Reaper*. While *The Reaper* is basically all speed, *Heart of Darkness* settles things down a bit and concentrates on the power aspect. The result is a more mature, serious album that is highly successful. That's not to say that there aren't

any fast songs. "Shadowmaker" and "Warchild" are five to six minute speed blitzes, and "Hate" is a great speedy tune, but the strength of the CD is the killer riff of "The Grave Dancer", the great 12-minute epic "Heart of Darkness" and the eight minute "Circle of Witches". These are all power metal songs of a very high order, and in my opinion, give this CD the edge over *The Reaper*. Just listen to the title-track! This is a wonderfully intense song that builds to numerous crescendos, a serious and thoughtful metal epic about mankind's Heart of Darkness, which is warfare. You won't find a song of this caliber on any other GRAVEDIGGER release. Similarly, the band have never written such a riff as on "The Grave Dancer"--wonderful! When I heard this song, it was in my head for a week!

There are a couple of faulty songs like the lyrically moving "Dolphin's Cry" which is a musical failure and, even if it were a good song, would be totally out of place amidst "Black Death" and "Hate". The last track is forgettable...whatever it's called. Although not perfect, *Heart of Darkness* is another fine effort from a very good band.

(Rating: 8 cute little lop-eared rabbits)

-Tony Zangara

HADES-Exist To Resist
(Black Pumpkin)

HADES have been known to follow trends in a big way, and so it comes as no big shock that **Exist To Resist** is a modern metal album, with downtuned guitars and an annoying Alan Tecchio trying to deepen his vocal delivery (not enough, according to CLUTCH fan and HADES guitarist Dan Lorenzo). Excepting "Rape of Persephone", "A", "The Other", and "The Leaders?", this disc is a downtrodden, sludgy bore. The production is great though! There are four bonus tracks, all culled from NON-FICTION (a groove- / doom- / grunge- oriented project by HADES members) which true HADES fans would probably despise. What HADES try to do with **Exist To Resist** is mix all their previous bands (HADES, SYSTEM ADDICT, NON-FICTION, but minus POWER and WATCHTOWER) into a singular vision, and it sure as hell does not work for me. Then again, I've never been a fan of this New Jersey group, finding Tecchio to be a mostly bad vocalist (his work on POWER's **Justice of Fire** is his best), and the songwriting average to just plain boring. I admit the group were a one-of-a-kind deal with their debut **Resisting Success**, but... off this new disc "Doubt" is a Seattle grunge song, so that shows you how much they stick to their guns. Well, the group are no more, as this was a goodbye disc; Dan Lorenzo has sold his equipment and cut his hair, finding himself a real job. Good luck to him, and if you, the reader, have any luck, you won't come in contact with **Exist To Resist**. To order, send \$15.00 payable to BLACK PUMPKIN Records / P.O. Box 4377 / River Edge, NJ 07661.
(Rating: 4 black pumpkins...tee hee.)

HANKER-In Our World
(Independent CD)

In Our World made a big noise upon its discovery. The Canadian band were immediately compared to JAG PANZER, similar in that early 80's style of playing and the somewhat Conklin-ish vocals of Pascal Cliche. Pascal, being the Frenchman that is, has a quirky accent that brings to mind DEAF DEALER but not The Tyrant. While HANKER have a nice collection of songs, they don't touch **Ample Destruction** by a wide margin. Still, I can't deny that "I'd Like To Know" and especially the speed metal thrill of "Bloodbath In Heaven" are fine tunes--just pure, traditional heavy metal at its best. The pacing slows up a bit in the middle of the 11-song CD, deflating the adrenaline rush that track two ("Bloodbath...") produces. "Gardeners of Pain" (track four) is another good cut, as is the anthemic "Disturbing the Brain", the simplistic yet speedy "Fight the Light" (sounds like it's right out of '84!), the no-holds-barred blaze of "Pay No More", and the WRATHCHILD AMERICA-influenced "Lethal Liar" (it's the reference to "Hell's Gates"!). There are also two ballads, which are better than most. HANKER have come up with a classy first disc, and with that strong foothold they now have in Europe, these French Canadians' futures look bright.

Write to: HANKER / P.O. Box 302 / Ste-Anne de Beaupré / Quebec / CANADA G0A 3C0

HEADHUNTER (an envoy)
(Major Records)

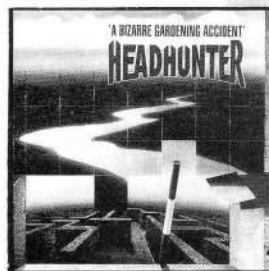
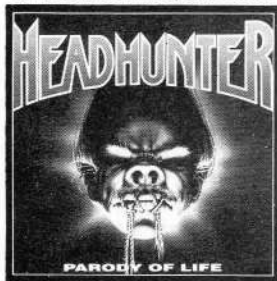
Schmier was the brains behind the trend-setting 80's power band DESTRUCTION, so it was no wonder that after he left the band, DESTRUCTION's post-Schmier offering was abysmal. Schmier's new band is HEADHUNTER, and to my knowledge, they have three CD's out: **Parody of Life** (1990), **Another Bizarre Gardening Accident** (1992), and **Rebirth** (1994). HEADHUNTER consists of: the brilliant Schmier on bass and vocals (like in DESTRUCTION), Schmuddel on guitars (and he is good), and the famous Schmörg, I mean Jörg Michael (RAGE, RUNNING WILD, GRAVEDIGGER) on drums. HEADHUNTER's best work by far is their first one, **Parody of Life**. This is a fast-paced power/speed offering that blazes by you much like the consummate **Eternal Devastation** or **Infernal Overkill**. Now, **Parody of Life** isn't quite the supreme model as those two DESTRUCTION classics, but it is a damn fine album that will please any old DESTRUCTION maniac. Highly, highly recommended.

The next, **A.B.G.A.**, is a big let-down. There are a couple of good fast tunes like "Deadly Instinct" and "Signs of Insanity", but there are too many slow and boring songs that bog the CD down. Here, Schmier concentrates on moody subjects like the downfall of German civilization, like on "Two-faced Promises", and it makes the songs kind of depressing and boring.

These trends continue on **Rebirth**, with songs like "Unhuman World", "Mistreated" and "Are We Mindless", etc. **Rebirth** is a musical improvement over **A.B.G.A.**, although there are still too many slow songs and it does not come close to **Parody of Life**. That's not to say that "Armies of the Blind" from **Rebirth** isn't absolutely brilliant, but overall, the CD is kind of average.

(Ratings: **Parody of Life**-8 rabbits, **A.B.G.A.**-6½ dwarf bunnies, and **Rebirth**-7 rabbits)

-Tony Zangara



HEADS OR TALES-Eternity Become a Lie
(Black Mark)

Swedes HEADS OR TALES embrace the style made popular by groups such as CONCEPTION, DREAM THEATER, and TAD MOROSE: chunky riffs, progressive time changes, and honest melodic vocals. The production is roomy yet clinical (see TAD MOROSE and MEMENTO MORI), and the playing is confident. Song lengths average six-and-a-half minutes.
(Rating: 7 pumpkins)

HELICON-Mysterious Skipjack
(Noise)

Polka power-metallers HELICON return! **Mysterious Skipjack** makes me want to go back in time and give HELICON's first CD, **Helicon** (reviewed in *Sentinel Steel* #2), a 6½ instead of the 7½ it received. See, **Mysterious Skipjack** is a huge improvement for HELICON, but is still doesn't achieve above average status. HELICON's sophomore effort thankfully has a legit producer Heimi Mikus (JESTERS MARCH, RISK), and a real drummer in Andre Ostapeschen. As for the songwriting, vocalist Uwe Heepen still retains his "worst lyricist" awards for two years in a row, even the label agrees by not printing the lyrics! However, in the area of musical composition, Heepen does come up with some killers, especially in the first half of **Mysterious Skipjack**. (What the hell is a "mysterious skipjack?") Ignoring the lyrics and songtitles, tunes like "American Fever", "Streetgang", and "Power Magic" are catchy, hook-ridden melodic power/speed numbers. The highlight of Heepen/HELICON's career to this point is the title-track "Mysterious Skipjack". Heepen's high voice gains an aggressive tone with HELLOWEENish/Kai Hansen melodies and hard-driving R. WILD/G. DIGGER slamming riffs. Something like epic polka power metal! Once again, I can't go out of my way to recommend this, as it's pretty cheesy by any standards. Even with the improvements, the playing is a bit sloppy in areas, and the drummer loses his time now and then, forcing the guitarists to catch up. HELICON are kind of likable in their amateurishness; the songs are catchy, but I'm getting picky when it comes to this now, and HELICON need to improve further to compete.
(Rating: 7½ polka-loving pumpkins)

HELLOWEEN-The Time of the Oath
(Castle)

I got an advance description of this disc by the fellows at *Heavy*, *Oder Was!?* magazine; they said that the production was poor, but the music fell into a **Walls of Jericho** and **Keeper Part 1** amalgam. Oh boy, was I excited!! Well, **The Time of the Oath** fell short of what I was expecting, but in the end, this is a better disc than **Master of the Rings**. Yeah, as Kai Hansen said in his interview, the production is a hack job by the usually brilliant Tommy Hansen (Why, Tommy, why? **Master of the Rings** was so good!), but the songwriting is the important thing, and Weikath and Co. come through--most of the time. There are two ballads this time, neither a step up from the **WINGER** and **BON JOVI** crap, but bearable. "We Burn", "Steel Tormentor", "Power", the frenzied genius of "Before the War", and the equally as good (almost!) "Kings Will Be Kings" are the definite high points of this disc, offering all the power, speed, melody, and great hooks that define what **HELLOWEEN** is all about. "Wake Up the Mountain" (super harmony work in the all-of-a-sudden fast solo section), "A Million To One", the ultra-heavy "Mission Motherland" (a nine-minute epic that grows on you), and the ponderous, nearly as heavy "The Time of the Oath" make up the good-to-above average moments. "Anything My Mama Don't Like" is horrendous, just embarrassing pop music. Unlistenable. And the production is funny too, but Weikath and Grapow's work make up for it (this album is all about balance, and the good does outweigh the bad), as the German duo finally come into their own. As mentioned, the harmony leads in "Wake Up the Mountain" sound fresh, mostly because of their spontaneity, and the doubled melodies in "Before the War" are spectacular; Weikath doesn't need Kai--he's got Grapow to play with! Sure, I'd take Kai's work in **Land of the Free** over Weikath's in **The Time of the Oath**, but it's personally fulfilling finally to see **HELLOWEEN** somewhat competitive. I'm now convinced that Andi Deris should be ditched in favor of a singer with more range, but again it's good to see Andi use backing and harmony vocals ("Kings Will Be Kings", "The Time of the Oath") to smooth out his throat and give the impression that he's better than he is. See, Deris is very limited in his talents; he'd make a great blues singer, but not a long term **HELLOWEEN** prospect. Anyways, I shouldn't get on the guy's case; like Blaze Bayley, I doubt Deris will be in his current band for much longer. To end this long review, let me say that I taped "Sole Survivor" and "Where the Rain Grows" off of **Master of the Rings** and put it on the sale block. **The Time of the Oath** is a more interesting replacement. It could be shorter (12 songs, several of which are filler), but that's life.

(Rating: 8 happy, sleeping little pumpkins)
P.S. Fantastic pumpkin cartoons! Check out the funny (and adorable!) booklet!

HOUSE OF SPIRITS-Turn of the Tide
(GUN '94)

HOUSE OF SPIRITS is a continuation of the legacy started by **JESTERS MARCH**. Vocalist Olaf Bilic and bassist Martin Hirsch keep the **JESTER** spirit alive with Uwe Baltrusch on guitar and Jörg (RUNNING WILD, GRAVE DIGGER, etc) Michael



on drums. Now as much as I loved the first **JESTERS MARCH** (*Beyond*), their second, **Acts**, didn't exactly blow me away. I don't find this **HOUSE OF SPIRITS** album to be as fresh as **Beyond** either, but there is a certain minimum that Olaf Bilic and Co. achieve that sets them above most other bands. Olaf's unique voice, for one, is much like a German version of what Warrel Dane does best. Olaf Bilic has natural instincts that make him a fine listen. Musically, the group have the melodies of **SANVOISEN**, yet the rhythm guitar is thick, longing for a **CONCEPTION** crunch. **HOS** have an air of majesty, like **CRIMSON GLORY**, and the anthemic choruses of a band like **LETTER X**. My one complaint (which will probably fall upon deaf ears, as the songwriting makes up for it), is the pacing of all the songs. There is too much mid-tempo in evidence which makes the proceedings a bit monotonous. **SANVOISEN** and **MIND ODYSSEY** are good examples of bands with strong pacing; **HOS** need to vary their delivery a bit. (Rating: 7½ pumpkins)

ICED EARTH-Hellspawn/The Dark Saga
(Century Media)

Opening song "The Dark Saga" sounds like a sampling from the last **METALLICA** disc. **ICED EARTH** have stripped down their sound and boosted the thickness levels on their guitars. "I Died For You" is track two and **ICED EARTH**'s most accessible song to date. If Century Media passes this one up as a single, it would be a shame. "I Died For You" should be able to break Florida's finest in Europe and Japan big-time and give them an opening for the States. Like "The Dark Saga", this second song is a simple one, with Matt's vocals giving it that memorability. "Violate" is the first fast song and is nearly a blur--not because of the speed, but because it's very short (there's an outro tacked on, but that's filler) and, once again, super-simplistic. Simplicity. The **METALLICA**-like pacing. **PARADISE LOST** made it huge with **Icon**, and so will **ICED EARTH** with **The Dark Saga** (which may be titled **Hellspawn** at the final stage; the disc isn't set to be released for another few months). It's not until track five ("The Last Laugh") that **ICED EARTH** return to their old form. As Jon stated in his interview, the drumming on this album is the best yet for **ICED EARTH**, and never is that more evident than on "The Last Laugh", where the 'groove' Jon speaks of is audible. The past discs do not have this powerful, natural drumming. But the past does have better songs. And Matt is not John Greely.

Matt, without his backing vocalists, comes across as a more melodic brother to James Hetfield. Jon speaks of Matt being a great vocalist; Matt is a fine singer, but he is not a great one. The Hetfield-isms should work well for **ICED EARTH**, though; it did wonders for **PARADISE LOST**. I'm not sure fans of the last two **ICED EARTH** discs will make the transition, as **The Dark Saga** lacks the details of **Burnt Offerings** and the galloping optimism of the masterpiece **Night of the Stormrider**. Half of **The Dark Saga** can be considered average: "The Dark Saga", "Violate", "Depths of Hell", "Scarred", and Jon's favorite, "A Question of Heaven". The rest is conventional **ICED EARTH** fare, which leaves me at a loss for words. I wish Jon and **ICED EARTH** much success with this disc, but as a longtime fan, it hurts me to say that **The Dark Saga** could have been better. Sigh.

(Rating: 8½ pumpkins)

IMAGIKA-Imagika
(Headless Corpse Records)

Super production by well-known engineer Dino Alden. The infectious "Crush Your World" (**FORBIDDEN** meets **MORDRED's Fool's Game**) gets this seven-song, 38-minute CD rolling in a hurry, but track two ("Murder 1") is kind of generic. "Realize" returns to the energy of the first cut, with an old **ANTHRAX** riffing style and a mountain of double bass showering the great chorus. Convincing anti-drug lyrics. "Chance To Survive" slows the tempo down and lets singer David Michael show off his pipes. "Caged and Shackled" follows a similar pace of medium step melodic thrash that gets tiring after a while; "Vengeance Is Mine" brings back the quickened delivery, but is let down by an average chorus. And "Endings", a surprisingly effective ballad, closes out this CD. Actually, there are unlisted bonus tracks: "If a Thought Could Kill", and a title I could not make out; both are good songs, especially the latter. (Rating: 7 pumpkins)

Buy this from Dream Disc, or write to: **DEVIL'S CRIB** / P.O. Box 1164 / San Carlos, CA 94070-1164

INFERNO-Psychic Distance
(Massacre)

This Florida band have some new products out, I believe. They've barely made a ripple in the US

scene. The band may not make themselves accessible on the promotion front, and musically, INFERNO may not be an easy band to hear once and accept. Vocally the group have some limits, but I'd like to see INFERNO invest in a fifth member with a high-pitched voice. He would work well with the speedy HELSTAR-ish opener "Psychic Distance Part One". The song keeps the time changes to a minimum and is quick with its intent. Singer Jay Reele, who doubles on guitar and keys, clearly shows his vocal weakness on track three, "Sacrosanct Delusions". He is the weak link throughout the disc.

Moving on, there is abundant double bass work, as the band is a technical progressive outfit, but with the power intact. They have professed a love for RUSH in other mags, but don't take that literally, as the group are decidedly metal on this disc. Vocals aside, the choruses could be stronger, and this is a common complaint I have about progressive/technical groups. INFERNO may have been signed too quickly, and should have put out a couple more demos. The CD does have its moments, but strong parts do not make a whole, and *Psychic Distance* should be sign of better things from INFERNO. I'd like to hear their new stuff.

(Rating: 7 hopeful pumpkins)



IN FLAMES-Subterranean EP
(Wrong Again Records)

In a word: **HELLOWEEN**. The power and the glory, the majesty and the beauty. How any power metal devotee would not instantly fall madly in love with this recording upon first riff is simply unfathomable.

The first note of "Stand Ablaze" is a magnet from which one cannot detach himself for the duration of the EP. *Subterranean* was created with complete passion and sincerity; you can feel the beauty coursing through your veins in orgasmic streams of power (metal). It does not stop. It leaves you limp after the listening experience is over and the reflection begins. During and after listening, you float in a pool of happiness, drained, satisfied, and with a ridiculously huge smile on your face.

It is the perfect EP for those who seek something heavier than **HELLOWEEN**, yet just as melodic. The vocals are subdued death metallish growls that counterbalance the music perfectly, and the swirling, tight guitar riffs are so melodic that high-pitched vocals seem completely unnecessary. This is the sound that melodic death metal fans *crave* and dream about...this is the sound *SENTENCED wish* they could capture. This is a progressive metal fan's ultimate joy. Someone did it...a perfect EP that could have been created by a deity. IN

FLAMES are gods. Simple as that. One complaint: it's too short.

(9½ ecstatic pumpkins flying free)

-Natalie Vlahovic



INSANIA-One More, One Less
(Battery/Da Music)

Two issues ago I gave high praise to INSANIA's debut *Set Them Free*. INSANIA play melodic power metal, German style, full of great choruses, catchy melody lines, and everything else you'd want. As with the first disc, *One More, One Less* features a cheap crayon drawing for a CD cover; too bad it doesn't reflect the contents! INSANIA are not exclusively a speed metal group all the way through anymore; they've even become a little 'progressive' since their last disc, adding keyboards where they feel it's appropriate. Gone from the band is bassist Simon Grziwotz; guitarist Gary Nagy plays bass on this new CD. More importantly, singer F.R. Shorty has been replaced by Cheesy (!). Well, it's not that important, I suppose, as Cheesy is not all that different from 'Flash Rockin' Shorty. As said, *One More, One Less* has keyboards, allowing Gary Nagy and Co. to produce more riff changes and melodies, adding longevity to this recording. The engineering work of producer Ekkehard Strauß has made dramatic gains also. Overall INSANIA have progressed successfully; I do miss the straightforward speed of *Set Them Free*, but who would want the same album twice? *One More, One Less* is a solid sophomore release.

(Rating: 8½ pumpkins)

Write to: Gary Nagy / Robertstraße 82 / 44809 Bochum / GERMANY

INTROSPECTRE-Buried Inside
(Independent CD)

This full length CD (over 60 minutes) has been followed up by a three-song demo; please see the demo section for the review. INTROSPECTRE are a four piece semi-thrash band from Milwaukee. Ten songs are on this CD; opener "Chromosome (X0Y1)" instantly reminded me of **DEAD ON**, with a very VOIVOD-ish (*Killing Technology*) and **DBC** (second effort, the ambitious *Universe*) sounding chorus. "Night of the Hunter" is definitely more 'power metal' in its intent, with a strong double bass driven rhythm and upbeat solo section. Like **DEAD ON** and **MEGADETH**, the vocals are sometimes monotone and talkative; I prefer the lower pitched thrash style that the singer (and second guitarist) Rod Wadzinski occasionally uses, as he has a pleasing aggressive quality. However, on this CD Rod rarely roughens his voice (and he

doesn't have the high range available), so the vocal performance is poor throughout and is my main criticism. The guitar riffs are generic for the most part too. Besides "Night of the Hunter", I liked both instrumentals "Inferno" and the conceptual "Defcon" (hints of **DEATH ANGEL**'s "Ultra-Violence" in there), plus the speedy "I Malign". Other than those, **INTROSPECTRE**'s *Buried Inside* is an average power/thrash release.

\$10.00 to: Resurrection Ltd. / 10201 W. Appleton Ave. / Milwaukee, WI 53225

IRON MAIDEN
The X Factor
Lord of the Flies single
(CMC International)

It's ironic that Eddie appears to be getting a lobotomy on *The X Factor*'s cover; he is in a bind (to put it mildly) and so are the deteriorating **IRON MAIDEN**. Contrary to what Steve Harris says in the interview, this is without a doubt, **IRON MAIDEN**'s worst moment in their long recording history. The production is incredibly flat, with little guitarwork coming through—a trait with the new **RIOT**, **BLIND GUARDIAN**, **Bauerfeind** releases, etc. Actually, that may be unfair to the other bands, as **MAIDEN**'s job is probably a touch more annoying. As is the songwriting, which completely lacks any **MAIDEN** magic, (which cannot be said about *Fear of the Dark*, which had a couple of goodies), instead trading in the melodies for slow riffs and ridiculously overbearing intros to each song. The lone fast song, "Man On the Edge" is nothing more than a "Be Quick or Be Dead" rip-off, and a miserable one at that. Check this out—"Man on the Edge" is the best song on *The X Factor*. And what of the new singer? Blaze Bayley was decent live, but his performance on this disc lacks everything: range, enthusiasm, and memorable vocal lines. It doesn't help that *The X Factor* is the worst collection of **MAIDEN** tunes ever penned. Bayley was never given a fair chance. By bottoming out in this manner, I hope **MAIDEN** can come back with something better next time.

(Rating: 5 sad little pumpkins)

The *Lord of the Flies* CD single is not a recommended purchase. Besides the song "Lord of the Flies" itself, where Blaze sounds very amateurish, there are two covers: "My Generation", a very embarrassing rendition, and "Doctor Doctor", where **MAIDEN** are caught with their pants down. Distinctly **UN-MAIDEN**, which I find troubling, as **MAIDEN** were always assured of putting their stamp on what covers they do.

(Rating: 3 sad...very sad little pumpkins)

IRON MAIDEN-The X Factor
(CMC International)

To place you in my mind, I love every album that **IRON MAIDEN**'s ever done, though most fans seem to find some weak link in their chain of releases, especially in Bruce's later material. But to me, despite some difference, they've always had well written and imaginative lyrics and such powerful and unique instrumental melodies that crafted their songs into such intricate art. And, at least in the band's post '83 incarnations, they've always had stunning vocals. My favorite disc was *Seventh Son*, because although it was not their heaviest or fastest disc, I thought it was the most cohesive and

grandest of their work.

MAIDEN's eagerly awaited new release is an interesting mixture of old and new. It continues Steve Harris' unique songwriting, his wonderful, intricate basslines and guitar riffs in epic song structures, and overall, to me, still conveys the feeling of MAIDEN's work. And yet the music feels at times a bit more restrained than in the past. Blaze Bayley's vocals often times convey a reminder of Bruce Dickinson, but fail to match his piercing histrionics. The vocals also sound a bit out of control on some of his lower notes, notes almost losing their grip on the melody like tires on slick road. But none of the changes on this album are colored by the current market trends, as they easily could have, and in the end, this still feels like IRON MAIDEN at heart, standing true to everything they ever played, and merely exploring a slightly different musical feeling, as they had already done on *Seventh Son* and *Fear of the Dark*.

The lyrics maintain the band's intellectual edge, although the usual profusion of objective fact has been tempered with a more subtle emotion. The band translates William Golding's novel *Lord of the Flies* into a song of the same name, exploring the way the violent beast arises from man when society recedes. The identical theme is introduced in a different way in "Edge of Darkness", based on *Apocalypse Now*, which, like Golding's novel, was heavily influenced by Joseph Conrad's work. By contrast, "Man on the Edge" (based on the movie *Falling Down*), shows human aggression evoked by the very encroachment of society.

I know that a lot of people will be very disappointed with this album, just for the way it differs from previous MAIDEN, and with the relative limitation of Bayley's vocals. But, on the other hand, there is probably nothing the band could have put out that wouldn't have disappointed a lot of people. In the end, all I can say is I thoroughly enjoy this album, despite the redundancy of the last two tracks, which become a bit tiresome in their repetitious arrangements.

-Craig Wisnom

IVANHOE-Visions of Reality -Symbols of Time (WMMS)

Another band in the wave of momentarily successful prog-metal bands. Only IVANHOE are very good and deserve to be on the top, along-side DREAM THEATER and SHADOW GALLERY. What makes IVANHOE so different from all the metal bands that think they are progressive just because they have a keyboard player? Most of the songs have middle parts that employ melodies and structured solos reminiscent of classical influences as well as from old and better prog rock bands. It helps that IVANHOE's production, as with so many German acts, is totally over-the-top and that their playing is extremely precise. Their first effort, *Visions*, set a very high standard which made me eagerly await their second release. However, *Symbols* didn't quite fill the expectations. This is not because it was a bad album, but because I missed the natural progress that makes progressive bands more progressive than others. In other words, *Symbols* sounds like *Visions* without the fire of their debut. All of IVANHOE's trademarks are there. Andy Franck's high-pitched vocals are in the tradition of the Kiske/Tate school, and there is Chuck Schuler's sawing staccato guitar, Markus Britsche's colorful arpeggios, as well as the thundering rhythm section courtesy of Giovanni Soulas and Lars Boering. If you want to purchase



an IVANHOE CD, you should probably get *Visions* first. If you like it, you will definitely like *Symbols* as well.

(Rating: *Visions*: 9 pumpkins, *Symbols*: 8 pumpkins)

-David Boller

JEZEBEL'S TOWER Like Every Mother's Son (Independent CD)

The cover has a classic painting of Mary holding up a baby, and while I don't believe they are a Christian band, they do provide thoughtful lyrics. The group is a fine five-piece from Germany playing a pleasant sound that recalls groups like early AXXIS, DOMAIN, and LETTER X on occasion, and recent RICOCHET. The guitar work is up front, with a commercial keyboard presence filling up the front-line. The vocalist is in the Klaus Meine mold, nicely melodic with that German shade to his voice. JEZEBEL'S TOWER do have a very accessible, even commercial element to their music, making it easy listening for everyone. However, the guitar-work is heavy and up front, with some serious solos for cutting through any radio aspirations. The songs are all very catchy, with a sense of being well-crafted, as if the listener's getting his/her money's worth—a nice feeling! Sometimes, the group veer into some progressive heavy rock moments, as the keyboards break up the tight structuring, but for the most part, *Like Every Mother's Son* is pleasant heavy rock/metal.

Write to: Jolly Joker Promotion / Uwe Reuters / Hasselholzer Weg 2 / 52074 Aachen / GERMANY

JOE STUMP-Supersonic Shred Machine (Leviathan)

Oh no! Not another STUMP CD (that's three or four to date, isn't it?). Well, opener "Demon's Eye" is Joe's favorite track, and it is an impressive one. If it had some high-range vocals on it, "Demon's Eye" would devastate for sure. STUMP has finally added some keys to his sound, and coupled with the neo-classical burning that he does, this first cut is superb. Malmsteen eat your heart out! Then again, Malmsteen should feel safe if STUMP is going to do 90's power riff stuff like "Wrecking Machine", which sounds like an outtake from CHASTAIN's *Sick Society*. No good! But the seven-minute epic "R.B.N.C.S.F. No. II" (stands for "Ritchie Blackmore's Neo-Classical Shred



Fest #2") is back to the good stuff—like "Demon's Eye", this is a song missing those great vocals!! The Japanese would love this; Joe, get Kiske on there! Excellent instrumental "Lost Soul" is a slow ode to classical composers—dreary. "Tornado Watch" is a short solo spot—yawn. Besides the ten-second spot of 90's groove, "Where No Men Dare Shred" is another excellent neo-classical composition, a fierce balance of crunchy riffs and dazzling melodies. "Backstabber" is a HENDRIX tribute—echh. "The Need For Speed" is very Malmsteen-ish, a fast number that also stands out on the disc. According to Joe's notes, it will make "wanna-be shredders... cry". I don't know about that, but the piece is impressive. "Fall From Grace" is a short filler number, making way for the "plodding gothic metal" of "The Dark Gift". It's okay, but I'm not keen on slower numbers with the incessant soloing. To conclude, this is probably Stump's best work, yet it's just 50% fulfilling. Joe's band project(s) may have fallen through, but I hope he doesn't give up, as the man *should* be in a band and not doing these quick-buck instrumental discs. If he does continue with these instrumental discs, I hope he gives his drummer and bassist a bit of freedom, because there were many moments on **Supersonic Shred Machine** that deserved a drum roll or bass fill, just to break up the monotony of the rhythm section. Once again, everyone should look to the masterpiece of all instrumental albums, that being Joe Tafolla's **Out of the Sun**, for inspiration and listening pleasure. Stump is getting there. (Rating: 7 pretentious pumpkins)



JOURNEY INTO DARKNESS—Near Death Experience
(None of the Above)

Damn, this is one of the lamest ambient projects ever to be released. Actually, it wouldn't be as cheesy if these former SORROW members didn't portray themselves as such dark n' scary androids of the abyss. There are excellent ambient projects by members of equally good death/black metal bands, like MORTIIS of EMPEROR and EQUITANT of ABSU. And then there are ambient projects that sound like DREAM THEATER having a bad hair day, like JOURNEY INTO DARKNESS.

Every song sounds like the previous one, complete with those relentless DREAM THEATER-esque keyboards, similar to the ones found on the song "Only a Matter of Time" (off ...Dream and Day...); DREAM THEATER are wonderful, but ambient bands who sound like them are not. J.I.D. try to achieve that ominous effect, but only end up sounding rather laughable.

Perhaps if they had more variety in their

music, this would have been a much better album. But until then, stick with better ambient weirdness like early LAIBACH or CURRENT 93. (Rating: 1 disgusted pumpkin)

—Natalie Vlahovic

KAMELOT—Eternity (Noise)

Upon Eternity's release in Europe, the media proclaimed KAMELOT's singer, Mark Vanderbilt, to be none other than Midnight of CRIMSON GLORY. It's not true, of course, but I do admit that a startling resemblance exists. Musically, both groups are very similar also, but KAMELOT lack the dual guitar harmonies that Ben Jackson and Jon Drenning were so skilled at. KAMELOT also have a full-time keyboardist, which CRIMSON GLORY did not have. Other than those differences, KAMELOT's sound falls somewhere in between the optimism of CRIMSON GLORY's debut and the darker Transcendence. KAMELOT pull off uptempo songs with finesse ("Eternity", "Red Sands", etc), but it's the slower tracks that really gain points for KAMELOT. "Black Tower" and "Call of the Sea" are epic metal at its best. KAMELOT's songwriting is very carefully arranged, perhaps lacking spontaneity, but how many times can one listen to an album where all the songs are good? Yes, KAMELOT hail from the Tampa area, which coincidentally was the home of CRIMSON GLORY. KAMELOT does sound like CRIMSON GLORY, which may put off a few hard-core CRIMSON GLORY fans. But there's no denying that KAMELOT's debut is excellent and you may consider it the third album CRIMSON GLORY *should* have made (if ya know what I mean!) But, instead of looking at the past, I look to the future, and I see Eternity as the start of even greater things to come. (Rating: 8½ pumpkins)

KEEGAN—Mind No Mind (Aprobo)

Mind No Mind is guitarist/vocalist Jeff Keegan's second offering on CD (his first was **Agony and Despair**). This Danish talent plays alongside other "name" musicians like the Johansen Brothers, Magnus Rosen, etc. on this CD. Musically, **Mind No Mind** was something of a letdown when compared to the first KEEGAN disc. **Agony and Despair** had a quicker tempo, with more of that nice guitar work from Jeff. **Mind No Mind** is mellower, like a rough melodic metal album, mixed with a little ballady METALLICA sections. KEEGAN's voice is a weird one, able to dip to Hetfield and TYPE O NEGATIVE lows, but can also reach a Peavy-like high-pitched snarl with a bluesier delivery. KEEGAN are not a typical European power metal band; they have SKID ROW's toughness mixed with the above mentioned influences. One sore point with me is the song "In the Name of God", which opens up with an Islamic prayer. KEEGAN's lyrics state how Moslems are ordered to kill by their holy book. What a load of crap! Why doesn't KEEGAN tell about the situation in Ireland, the Crusades, the Inquisition, etc? Religious fanatics kill no matter who their god is, and to say that all Moslems are fanatics is absurd. (Rating: 6½ pumpkins)



KING DIAMOND—The Spider's Lullabye (Metal Blade)

With the last two MERCYFUL FATE releases sounding like King Diamond's solo material, I questioned, "What would KD's new disc sound like?" Would King Diamond try to separate the two bands musically now that MERCYFUL FATE and KING DIAMOND are virtually interchangeable in their songwriting? Nope, as **The Spiders Lullabye** follows **Time** as another very song-oriented disc, as pensmith KD is achieving something of a legendary status with his songs. Purists complain that recent MERCYFUL FATE material is not as good as the old stuff, which is ridiculous. Half the songs off of **Melissa** and **Don't Break the Oath** were floundering, searching for the hook. Admittedly, KD (and MF) are not as adventurous as they could be, and recent albums are a bit thin on the production side, but the songs are so catchy. It's a thrill to hear melodic, well-played material these days. Except for "Dreams" and "Moonlight", which may be a touch repetitive, **The Spider's Lullabye** is another great work from KING DIAMOND, gaining the class of **Abigail**. Highlights include the 1-2-3 knockout of "From the Other Side", "Killer", and "The Poltergeist" right from the start, the crushing "Six Feet Under" (one of King's best ever!), the eerie "Spider's Lullabye" (King out of ideas? No way!), and the melodic speed metal of "Eastman's Cure". Once again, King Diamond sticks to his guns, defying all trends, and not stagnating in the process. (Rating: 8½ pumpkins)



KING'S HEAD-Nice To Beat You
(Independent CD)

This German group should not be confused with a German female-fronted band of the same name. With workman-like production by S.L. Coe, there are five songs of Euro power metal and light, mostly slow melodic thrash with clean yet gravelly vocals; imagine a more accessible GRAVE DIGGER with better players. Kind of average stuff.

Write to: Jan Gabriel / Jagerhaus Str. 20 / D-35745 Herborn / GERMANY

MICHAEL KNIGHT-Dreamscapes
(KMP)

I do not like instrumental albums. I only have one in my collection and that is Joey Tafolla's **Out of the Sun** disc, which is MAIDEN-meets-MALMSTEEN. No one has ever matched its brilliance, including sadly enough, New York's MICHAEL KNIGHT. Much like what Chris Poland did on **Metalopolis**, KNIGHT uses too much string stretching, tremola, and pedal work in his material, which gets tiring after a while. The rhythm section gets monotonous also, with its typical backing support. Much of **Dreamscapes** fits the soundtrack/elevator music attitude of being a background pleaser and nothing more. MICHAEL KNIGHT appears to be a very fine guitarist, but he needs to be in a band. Since he does not constantly "shred" but instead writes instrumentals with structure, (but not songs as Joey Tafolla did for **Out of the Sun**), KNIGHT seems ready to take it to the next level, and that is to write songs. With such influences as Edgar Allan Poe and H P Lovecraft, it might be interesting.

Send \$12 for CD or \$8 for cassette, payable to "Knight Music Productions" / P.O. Box 651 / Floral Park, NY 11002

LABYRINTH-Piece of Time
(Underground Symphony)

This four-song disc is just a taster for the forthcoming album-length effort **No Limits**. LABYRINTH are Italians (though they give themselves names like "Anders Rain" and "Ken Taylor" under their photo; the songwriting credits offer the truth with "Magnani", "Contini", etc.), and are the best band on Underground Symphony. The six-piece offers progressive metal with powerful double bass work, much like MERCURY RISING's sound on their debut CD. LABYRINTH's singer Joe Terry reminds me of Ralf Scheepers with a touch of Andre Matos' accent. Terry is one of the best Italian singers I've heard in a great while, especially effective in the faster passages. Yeah, LABYRINTH do some GAMMA RAY-like parts in their songs ("Call Me"), having a torrent of double bass behind the chorus. In contrast, "Miles Away", a ballad, has the high quality of a mellow ANGRA composition, with Matos' hand seemingly in the mix. Plus there is the usual smattering of DREAM THEATER, FATES WARNING, and groups of that ilk. Unlike many other Italian bands, LABYRINTH are a band set to receive world recognition, because they have the groundwork laid out superbly. Let's see how their full-length debut **No Limits** sounds, as that will be the true test. Meanwhile, remember the name LABYRINTH, because they are very good.

(Rating: 8½ pumpkins)

LANFEAR-Towers
(Independent CD)

Last seen on the **Metal Gear** compilation, LANFEAR have surfaced with a nicely packaged CD entitled **Towers**. This young German group combine power metal with progressive and folk influences. Vocals are mid range-ish, in typical progressive style; a high range vocalist would be more suitable. Singer's keyboard work is plentiful; a fifth member (part-time) is the violinist. Clean yet synthetic production. This features the 15- minute epic "The Towers of February". Overall, **Towers** is a very ambitious piece of work, but possibly too much too soon.

30 DM or \$20.00 postpaid from: Markus Ullrich / Heilbronner Str. 123 / D-74831 Gundelsheim / GERMANY

LANZER-Under a Different Sun
(Point Music)

Here's an interesting piece; Dirk Schlater of GAMMA RAY produced, engineered, and mixed this disc and Kai Hansen took the time to play a couple of guitar parts. Well, Schlater's work is okay; he is a bit thin in parts, and the mix isn't consistent throughout. Anyway, LANZER are your typical German heavy metal group. Some tunes are decidedly hard rock, such as "One Night In Heaven", while others veer towards light power metal, a la HEAVENS GATE. Songs like "Strike Back" and the LA-style "Twist the Knife" emphasize my point; they are so bad that I'm left scratching my head. Why would two guys from GAMMA RAY and LMP (ANGRA, ATTACK, etc) want anything to do with this band? I have no idea!!! How could LMP give this band a chance to record, while allowing their greats like RHAPSODY and ABRAXAS do nothing? LMP, get off your arse, ditch LANZER, and put RHAPSODY on CD now!!!

(Rating: 4 annoyed pumpkins)

LAST BREATH-Ashes To Ashes
(Independent CD)

French Canadian dark progressive thrash. Somewhere in between SLAYER and ANNIHILATOR, with a riffing style similar in places to DESPAIR. Nine songs total; the last three make up a trilogy adapting Guy De Maupassant's *La Chevelure* (1884). As with DAMIEN's **Angel Juice**, the first song on **Ashes To Ashes** ("My Rebellion") is the weakest.

Available from Dream Disc, or write to: LAST BREATH / Succ. Outremont C.P. 212 / Montreal, Quebec / H2V 4M8 / CANADA

LAST WARNING-From the Floor of the Well
(WMMS)

An Italian six-piece who say they carry on "the way opened by bands like CRIMSON GLORY, QUEENSRYCHE, and DREAM THEATER". With songs averaging seven minutes in length, the group is more progressive than the first two aforementioned bands, while possessing a vocalist with a more piercing style, akin to the first two groups, with a slight accent evident. Like ATHENA, LAST WARNING are promising; let's see if they can improve their songs and rein in the vocalist on their next outing.

(Rating: 6½ pumpkins)

LETHAL-Your Favorite God EP

Are just five songs enough? LETHAL's debut **Programmed** on Metal Blade has achieved something of a great cult status, even with its lack of support in the US. The Europeans knew what **Programmed** was all about, and so it was no surprise to see them call for new material, and hence, **Your Favorite God** was pressed from the one (or more) of LETHAL's post-**Programmed** demos. For those of you who don't know LETHAL, they combine Geoff Tate-style vocals with beautiful power metal melodies and crunchy power-infused guitar riffs, a killer combination that should have gained LETHAL much more attention in the States back in 1990. Oh well.

Your Favorite God has five songs, "Swim or Drown" is in the classic LETHAL mode, with Tom's voice showing some originality. A great song. "Waiting on the Kill" does use a PANTERAish main riff, but with Tom's melodic vocals, and another awesome inspired chorus, the song works for me. It did some friends of mine, and I'm no fan of PANTERA either, but it's still a great song. I find it easy to look past the PANTERAism, and maybe you will, too. "The Page Before" reverts to the LETHAL of old, and like "Swim or Drown", sounds like a leftover track from the **Programmed** sessions. Very good! PANTERA creeps up on "Hard to Breathe" yet again, with the main verse's stiff, cold riff. But the bridge and the chorus are once again in the renowned LETHAL style, and as a song, it works for me. Tom Mallicoat even toughens his voice for this number, to match the verse, which contrasts nicely with the classy bridge and chorus. "The Real" is a superb ballad, half-acoustic, half-electric, as only LETHAL can write, with a beautiful chorus and brilliant layers of harmony and backing vocals. LETHAL's at one of their mellowest moments, and most successful. At 23 minutes, **Your Favorite God** works as an appetizer. How I want the main course!
(Rating: 8 pumpkins)

LETHAL-Your Favorite God EP

Programmed was a consummate piece of elegance and class, composed like no other and loved by the few who knew of it. I shant write a redundant mini-review of **Programmed**, adulating the virtues of it, but I must say this... There are albums that I treasure, and there are albums for which I would sell my soul; **Programmed** happens to belong to the latter category. It is a CD that will surely be saved in a house fire, along with my collection of LAIBACH CD's and HELSTAR'S **Nosferatu**. Classical beauty with a slightly modern twist is **Programmed**, with its cerebral lyrics and orgasmic music. Ever since the tenth grade, I have been impatiently awaiting the next monumental LETHAL record, which was supposed to have been more ardently beautiful than its predecessor. When I finally received a dub of **Your Favorite God** in the mail from a wonderful pen-pal years later, my trembling hands nervously placed it in the cassette deck... Alas, I took a deep breath and listened at the "music" emanating from my forlorn speakers. What I heard almost made me dissolve into a pool of tears; it was *that* horrible! Let me continue typing with great sadness, for I must now bemoan the recording of this pathetic slice of processed American cheese called **Your**

Favorite God.

The demise of an unbelievable band is a hard thing to swallow. I still maintain my high respect for LETHAL, but to praise this EP I cannot. LETHAL have resorted to sick PANTERA-worship on this wretched piece of shite EP of theirs. "Hard to Breathe" has practically the same beginning riff as "Psycho Holiday" by PANTERA, and poor Tom seems to have lodged his...you know...in a car door or something, for his voice has an eerie semblance to a high-pitched Phil Anselmo.

"The Real" is one of those sugary sweet ballads, normally vomited by pointless LA glam bands of yore, so why the fuck have LETHAL stooped to such an all-time low?! What happened to the sorrow and power of "Pray For Me" on Programmed? Why? WHY?! AAARRRGH! This ballad even contains a disgusting harmonious chorus drenched with enough syrup to induce diabetes in a person. The EP is also all riffs with happy major chords, mind you; there are no classical stylings to be found.

The lyrics are terrible as well, thriving on clichés and completely lacking in the innovation department. They contrive every possible sappy idea and milk it for the entire span of the EP. I wish not to speak of the remaining three tracks, for I am afraid that I will either become violently ill. Yes, I think we have hitherto established that this is the most uninspired, trend-infested shite EP of not-quite-power-metal power metal. Yes, any and all classical influences have completely vanished.

God, even the album cover is atrocious; the inner sleeve photos are scattered in a way that reminds me of my high school yearbook...even the logo has changed to this drab chrome-looking font that seems to fit the band's new musical direction anyway-- copiously cheesy, boring, happy-crappy-sappy PANTERAism with a bit of WINGER thrown in for bad measure.

As Tom Mallicoat croons, "swim or drown my friend, swim or drown...", I definitely think he should take his own advice. It is pathetic enough

that Programmed was so underrated and under-promoted, yet LETHAL just had to take this a step further by carving themselves a nice little niche in the crevice of utter lameness, didn't they? Christ, I hope Dream Disc weren't toying with all of our emotions when referring to LETHAL's new full-length in that catalogue as a 'return to their prog metal style'. How I wish for nothing more. LETHAL definitely do have the potential to recapture their former brilliance.

Well, the production is good, if that means anything at all.

I understand that a band cannot maintain the same sound for the rest of its duration, but there is a fine line between progression and PANTERA-ism. It seems that every band these days is attempting to 'update' its sound with a '90's feel' (i.e. NEVERMORE--Get a life! You suck!) We see a major problematic occurrence when bands stop listening to AGENT STEEL and start worshipping BIOHAZARD. LETHAL have unfortunately dived head-first into this abyss of patheticness, and the result was the terrible Your Favorite God. If you have not heard this yet, trust me, you do not want to. If you are contemplating shelling out \$25 for this shite-all EP, do yourself a favor and save that money for your next root canal; at least that's less painful than listening to Your Favorite God.

(Thank you all for reading my horribly angry, albeit loquacious review.)

(Rating: 1 extremely disturbed, distraught, and befuddled little Programmed-loving pumpkin)

-Natalie Vlahovic

LETHAL-Poison Seed (DCA/ZOZA)

Wow, and I thought Your Favorite God was bad! Announcement to all people in True Metal Land out there: Tom Mallicoat has left LETHAL to join the proud ranks of ALICE IN CHAINS. He apparently has been taking voice lessons from Layne Staley for a while, for he now snarls and whines in the same blues-tinged timbre. I kid you not.

OK, let's analyze the situation: LETHAL used to be an incredible, honest, and talented power metal band with integrity, and as we all know, Your Favorite God, the disappointment of the decade, was a sick regression to PANTERAism and falsity. But, no one can argue that an ALICE IN CHAINS direction is much worse. Poison Seed further embellishes LETHAL's newfound grunge direction with songs like "Down", "Bitter Taste", and "Walking Wounded". Hey, the song-titles alone induce in me a desire to retch. There are no other adjectives for this album, besides "Seattle music" (and I am not referring to QUEENSRYCHE here, mind you).

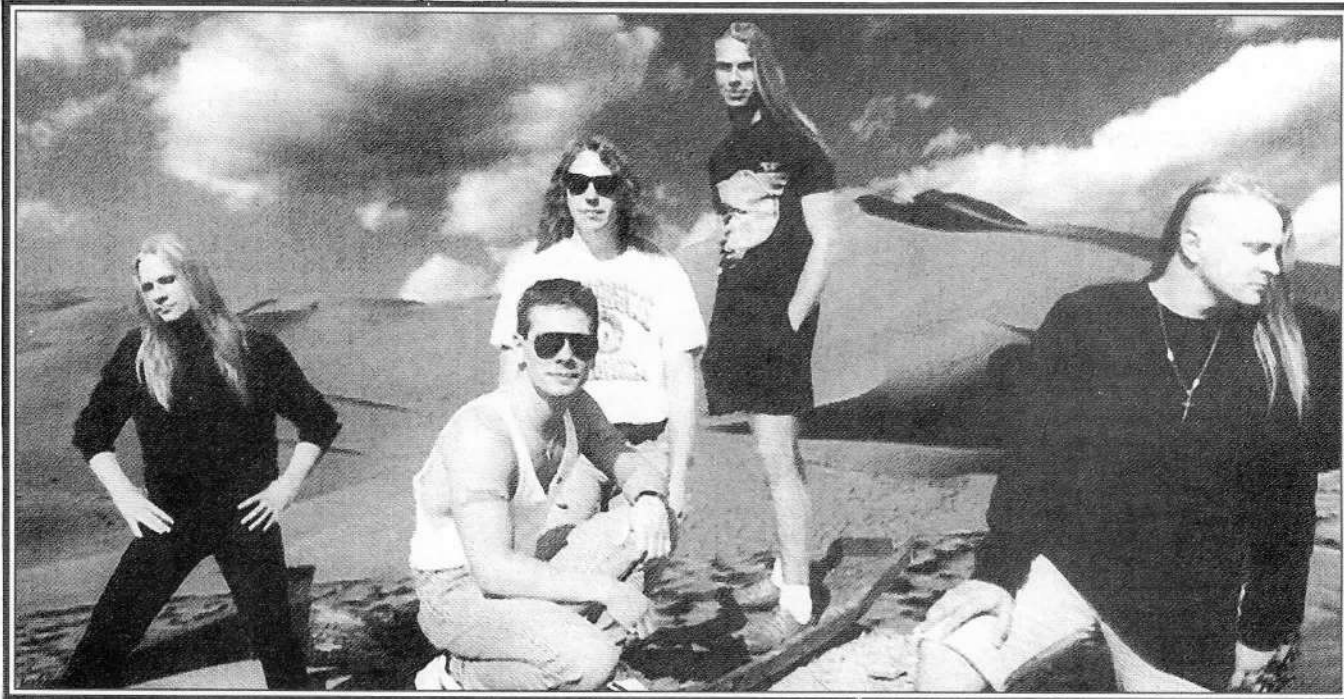
Clue for LETHAL: Kurt Cobain is dead! (finally and thankfully) Grunge is over! If you really want to make any money, don't copy ALICE IN CHAINS; copy SILVERCHAIR! Alternative poseur rock is now where the money is! Besides, with a stupid name like "LETHAL", people are going to assume you're a cheesy melodic power metal band anyway! Duh! Now all you need to do is pull a METALLICA and cut your hair, wear eyeliner, and baggy pants, and you're set!

Those poor disillusioned people at Dream Disc stated in their catalogue: "may return to prog metal style!" Dream on, for all those hopeful people who backordered Poison Seed (not I) will demand their money back and then some. I am in tears as I type this review, and once you people hear this album, you shall surely weep oceans.

The moral of the story is, The X Factor is a damn fine album, and Blaze Bayley is a damn godly vocalist. (ahem!) IRON MAIDEN, even though they are shite now, still play metal. I have absolutely had it with the US metal scene.

(Rating: 0 pumpkins; they all went out to buy the new EVERCLEAR album.)

-Natalie Vlahovic



LIGHTMARE-Vampires
(Independent CD)

The "Bachtro" should have my buddy John from the GOTHIC KNIGHTS perked with great interest. This short yet quick instrumental opens **Vampires**, a 20 minute, three-song (plus intro) CD EP. LIGHTMARE are German, and are a Christian band. "Darkness" is a dark, heavy NWOBHM-style number, with the mid-range vocal delivery that characterized that era of heavy metal. There is light gothic keyboard work backing the heavy crunch of the guitar. I prefer the more optimistic power/melodic speed metal of "Crusader", in which the band recall the Christian Crusades and Holy Wars of the Middle Ages and condemn the violent actions of their religion, instead turning "back to teach mercy and grace". Very refreshing, as LIGHTMARE enlighten with substance and Christian logic, not the syrup that American Christian bands thrust in people's faces. "Vampires" is about corrupt businessmen, knowing only one god: money. A classy song firmly in the ANGEL WITCH tradition of true metal. Overall a positive EP, but I prefer vocals with a larger range. "Crusaders" and "Vampires" are above average tunes to construct a full-length CD from.

For band info: Timon Schreiber / Grafendeichstr. 58 / 60599 Frankfurt / GERMANY. To buy this CD: Tisch & Christo / Grafendeichstr. 60 / 60599 Frankfurt / GERMANY

LIONS SHARE-Lions Share
(Long Island)

Long Island Records is a hard rock and melodic metal label which is based out of Germany. LIONS SHARE are not German but Swedish and don't play the usual cliché metal that Long Island releases. But LIONS SHARE should have no trouble crossing over to Long Island fans, as the Swedes combine TWILIGHT and TAD MOROSE with the accessible ideas that EUROPE, etc., would convey. It's basically classy melodic Euro metal with bluesy vocals. I get turned off by this type of a singing style, but knowing my readership, this should appeal to a number of you. Me, I'd rather listen to classically-inspired bands like RHAPSODY and NOCTURNAL RITES.

(Rating: 6 pumpkins)

LIONS SHARE / P.O. Box 5044 / S-123 05 Farsta / SWEDEN

LORD BANE-Age of Elegance
(Nordic Metal)

LORD BANE are a band that never happened. This **Age of Elegance** CD was released post-humously, as the band split after building a fervent cult following. Why?! I ask that question, too. At one time, LORD BANE were to sign to LMP and be on their way, but they opted for a short term deal, and that's it. Here is their CD, which I believe is made of material strictly from their demos. The recording is of a demo quality, with an up-front bass drum and snare, and electric guitars further back in the mix. LORD BANE are largely influenced by CRIMSON GLORY and SANCTUARY, but the Bostonians use more keyboards and don't have a vocalist as talented as Warrel Dane or Midnight. The keyboards are used in a Gothic timbre, utilizing Oriental/Middle Eastern melodies. It's very interesting for the first few songs, but when you hear the same melody for the whole album, it gets wearisome. Lyrical themes are darkly poetic, from the disturbing picture of "Nariah", to the historical "Queen Anne", to questioning the reasons for war and the meaning of existence in "Promise of Prophecy". Songs are long and full of the epicness that the Greeks love. A very interesting disc, let down by its clunky production and repetitive parts.

(Rating: 7½ pumpkins)

LORDIAN GUARD-Lordian Guard
(Hellion Records)

First, let me state that there are two versions of this disc available; the first pressing had a thin, trebly sound, while the second, remastered version is considerably better (but could still be heavier).

For those of you who don't know, LORDIAN GUARD is the lead project of one Bill Tsamis, the guitarist of WARLORD (one of the greatest metal bands of all time!) Bill is in Florida now, happily married to an actress wife, who is none other than the LORDIAN GUARD vocalist. She has a Gothic British sonority (sort of like Siouxsie and the Banshees -Nat), and I think it works perfectly. While the two purportedly have a regular drummer in the band, if my ears do not deceive me, a drum machine is used on this disc. And it is used well. I mean, the songs are so good, it kind of overpowers the shortcomings of LORDIAN GUARD. Besides the production and the drums, there is also the question of the decidedly Christian lyrics on the second half of this disc (six songs, 40 minutes). Once again, the

songwriting captures the WARLORD sound confidently, as Tsamis wrote all the WARLORD material. Not as heavy as the past, but Tsamis promises a beefed up sound on the next offering. Aahh, these Tsamis melodies! No one else writes like him. "War In Heaven" and "Wings of Thor" are instant classics.

(Rating: 8½ pumpkins)

LOST CENTURY
Poetic Atmosphere of Seasons
(T&T)

LOST CENTURY have been doing the German metal circuit for a number of years, putting out their own products and making a name for themselves. It paid off, as the group were able to secure a deal with T&T (STRATOVIARIUS, ELEGY, etc), and issue **PAoS** to the world. But it comes as no surprise that T&T (a.k.a. Noise) made very little hoopla over this disc, as it is strictly average. LOST CENTURY play a dark mix of recent METALLICA and PARADISE LOST, with a dash of MEKONG DELTA in spots. The pacing is very sluggish, and it's a chore to get through. Tracks five and eleven (with some death vocals), get noticed for showing some energy, but the generic riffing and mundane vocals just don't cut it. LOST CENTURY recently dissolved and/or changed their name. Read *Sentinel Steel* for details.

(Rating: 6 pumpkins)

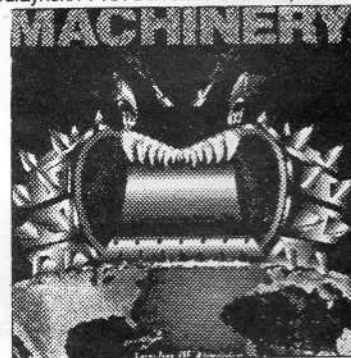
MACHINERY-Impulses of Aggression
(Independent CD)

I prefer MACHINERY's earlier Euro-metal phase, as evidenced by their song "Bite the Hand" which appeared on the *Molten Metal Monsters* compilation Vol. 1. MACHINERY circa 1996 lean toward a powerful yet bluesier riff-metal approach; this is especially evident in the song "Blame It On Society". Shawn Norris' vocals give MACHINERY that Midwest metal appeal, as does the heavy and somewhat generic riffing of Scott's guitar playing. MACHINERY fall in with the ARMORED SAINT/early SAVATAGE mold, but are a bit more powerful. "Bite the Hand", with its more 'classical' approach, reminds me of bands like OBSESSION, which is the kind of stuff I listen to on a regular basis.

Though I'm not too keen on the cover art, **Impulses of Aggression** is a thoroughly professional CD release, and I commend the band for going the independent route and being successful at it, too! They have pretty much got the local scene conquered, so it's time to move on.

To sum it up, **Impulses of Aggression** came as a slight disappointment after the great promise of **Bite the Hand**. But, MACHINERY's professionalism is faultless, and this band will be going places...

Get this CD from Dream Disc or write to: Dan Burzynski / P.O. Box 826 / Stratford, CT 06497



YNGWIE MALMSTEEN-Magnum Opus
(Viceroy)

I commend MALMSTEEN for sticking to his roots, and keeping the banner of true metal flying high, but the Swedish maestro peaked early in his solo career, and excepting *Odyssey*, all of his work since *Marching Out* has been clichéd and ultimately mediocre. MALMSTEEN's fan base, split into two groups, would surely disagree. On one side, you have guitarists who buy every disc for the Swede's fretwork, and on the other side you have an audience (especially the Japanese) who like the token commercial/heavy rock that MALMSTEEN spits out. I see YNGWIE as a super talent who is slowly deteriorating, playing pretentious instrumentals and cheesy radio rock songs. I wish dearly for the day MALMSTEEN could cleanse himself and give ANGRA or RHAPSODY (two bands who take the MALMSTEEN idea to dizzying new heights) a run for their money.

On *Magnum Opus*, we have the predictable package of songs: fast ones like "Vengeance" and "Fire In the Sky"; commercial simplicity in "No Love Lost", "The Only One", and "Cross The Line"; a ballad, "I'd Die Without You"; an instrumental "Overture 1622" and minor epics like "Tomorrow's Gone," "Voodoo", and "Time Will Tell". Sure, the songwriting is a might catchier than on the last few albums ("Time Will Tell", "Fire In the Sky", even radio friendly "No Love Lost" and "The Only One" are pleasantly memorable), but *Magnum Opus* is far from the complete package. Even with Chris Tsangarides co-producing, the sound is hollow, the rhythm guitar is mixed low, and the drums flat. And does anyone feel that Mike Vescera's vocal performance was its best on the two OBSESSION full-lengths? Nearly 10 years ago?! I wish MALMSTEEN and Co. would get it together. (Rating: 7 worn-out, corpulent pumpkins yelling moo)

YNGWIE MALMSTEEN-Magnum Opus
(Viceroy)

Absolutely nothing different than we'd expect from the mellifluous one on this disc, especially when accompanied with certified scorcher Mike Vescera, but nonetheless extremely pleasing in its predictability. I've always enjoyed YNGWIE's talent, especially on *Marching Out*, the most somber and solid album he released. This new opus walks between MALMSTEEN's aggressive, classical, fantasy anthems in songs like "Vengeance", "Tomorrow's Gone", and "Voodoo", and the romantic, beautiful hard rock ballads such as "I'd Die Without You" and "The Only One." Both types of songs are so hopelessly far from what's hip today, in the oppressive trends where if it's not ugly, anguished, and it actually takes talent to play (that is, it's not "creative"), it's not worthwhile, that it makes this album that much more fun to listen to for being so rebellious. YNGWIE flies in the face of such trends, and staunchly plays the same kind of music he always has, and apparently always will. This album could be more intellectual and more inspirational, and I don't think it lives up to its unassuming title, but it's tremendously satisfying, and as always, talented and uplifting.

-Craig Wisnom

MASQUERADE-Surface of Pain
(Metal Blade)

Well, Metal Blade is trying, I suppose, but MASQUERADE will probably fail. Metal Blade will likely throw up its hands, proclaiming it tried "real metal" in the 90's, only to have it fade again. The problem with MASQUERADE is this; their self-titled debut was pure sugar melodic metal, eaten up by the Japanese in a big way. With *Surface of Pain*, their second release, MASQUERADE have tried to get serious and incorporate 90's alternative influences with a heavier approach. As I mentioned in *Sentinel Steel #1 1/2*, there were some good moments on the band's single EP CD, which preceded the *Surface of Pain* disc. The EP songs "Say Your Prayer", "Suffering", and "America" are on here, unchanged. Of the three, I like "Suffering" the best, and "America" isn't bad either. From the rest of SOP, I'd listen to "State of Grace" (rhythmic progressive metal), and...that's about it. I can't say the songs are very bad, but they are very average, trying to fit into the American market. Now, I think *Surface of Pain* is better than their sappy debut, but that's not saying much. (Rating: 5 jaded pumpkins)

MAYFAIR-Escape
(WMMS)

This has got to be some of the strangest and best power metal-related music I have ever heard. At first, one is instantly reminded of Warrel Dane's ethereal, whiny Gothic tendencies taken to a higher level of extremism. Mario's vocals complement the bizarrely folkish and minimalistic music, giving it that welcome power metal flavor. This is by no means typical instrumentation either; it is almost trance-like repetition, but it is very pleasing to the ears. It is extremely atmospheric, possessing a slightly acoustic quality without crossing pointless folk territory.

Some songs are weaker than others, like "Atomic Prayer" and "Hotel Hunger", which have a few too many happy chords that I do not particularly care for. The better songs include the somber "Die Flucht", "Adam", and "Dear Julia". This is quite sensual music that can be quite therapeutic, actually. If you are searching for that perfect combination of Gothic rock, power metal, and minimalism, MAYFAIR shall answer your prayers. *Escape* is just as trance-like and "trippy" (for lack of a better word) as the first disc, *Behind* (which actually made me fall to my knees to rejoice the virtues of this ethereal SANCTUARY).

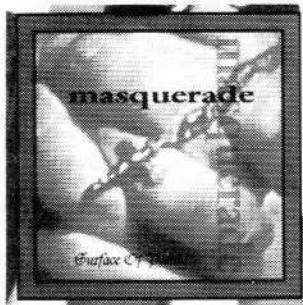
By the way, for convenience's sake, this disc can be purchased at any Tower Records. Also note that this album's name has been changed to *Escape* (from the German version called *Die Flucht*) for the American market. (Rating: 8 contemplative pumpkins)

-Natalie Vlahovic

MEDALYON-Visions
(Independent CD)

The Ohio-based MEDALYON have a nice independent CD out with top-notch packaging, something that many European indies lack. The production is very good, too. Musically, the band reminds me of a classy outfit like QUEENSRYCHE or HEIR APPARENT, but without any keyboards. However, MEDALYON singer Rick A. Shay is better compared to singers like (early) Jon Oliva, who have a rough layer to their voices, singing more in their mids with some lows, and an occasional high. Take the song "All Your Days", where Rick reaches the necessary highs in the chorus and switches gears vocally in the rest of the song. He may not be the most "on the dot" vocalist around, but he makes the most of his voice, pushing the feeling over range, helped by his personal lyrics. They're quietly good, careful in their pointed anger at the world's problems. The mid-tempo format is used throughout the disc's nine songs, which creates a semi-stale atmosphere halfway through the disc. The eighth track, "Trouble" has a hypnotic drum beat, which changes the mood, but I'd like to see MEDALYON vary the pacing in their next release. I like *Visions*, as it has the comfortable QUEENSRYCHE / FATES WARNING feel to the music. Rick's voice, at times uneven, will put off some listeners. The first four to six songs on the disc are the best, and they clearly show that the group will have something to offer on their second album.

Try Dream Disc, or write to: Fortunate Records / 1519 Harrison Ave. SW / Canton, OH 44076





MEMENTO MORI-La Danse Macabre
(Black Mark)

AAAAARRRRGGGHHH!!!! What sort of drums does that poor skinsman use to create such tinny cacophony? This album is well above average, but this sorry excuse for production renders this album unlistenable. I am almost *positive* that those are tin cans on which the drummer is drumming with his two pencils. To synopsise my negative opinions, the production is horrible, empty, hollow, and cheap. A band of this caliber should not sound as if they are playing in their parents' garages.

Anyway, the rest of the instrumentation is lovely however, and definitely deserves a listen. The music itself is excellent, and would be a great instrumental progressive rock release, if it had the right FULL production. (Can I shut up about this now?) The musicians are all competent people, but MEMENTO MORI are no longer what they used to be, (and call me a poseur, but I never really liked them much to begin with. With me, it was more of a CANDLEMASS thing). Conversely, the new vocalist, Kristian Andr n is nothing like the Messiah, for Kristian resembles an *extremely angelic* Ronnie James Dio (if you can picture that) and lacks power and conviction. His poor voice is buried beneath the overpowering sounds, as well, which further dampens the sorry situation. Upon first listen, I was impressed by the first track, "Endlessly", but then I heard the song "Crown of Thorns" and "The Beggar's Waltz"...um...let me pose a simple question; *why does every goddamn potentially good band try to sound like PANTERA?!!* Poor Kristian seems to have sifted his voice through one of those shite-all industrial/ MINISTRY/distortion thingies. I hate that. Eek. The chorus is also rather BIOHAZARDish. (You know, one of these days, I'm going to make a huge pile of all the master tapes of all PANTERA progeny and have myself a majestically burning bonfire. Aaahh.) Moving on, the songs mostly drag on in a doomy

fashion, albeit more mechanically than preceding MEMENTO MORI albums did. The songs mostly sound alike, and that coupled with the pathetic production does the band no favors. If thou must buy a MEMENTO MORI album, at least purchase one of the Messiah ones, but if thou must have Messiah, buy *Tales of Creation* by CANDLEMASS. MEMENTO MORI just aren't anything to brag about. (Rating: 6½ frustrated pumpkins)

MERCURY RISING-Upon Deaf Ears
(Dominion)

Finally, it's in my hands. Actually, I've had a cassette advance for ages (this album was recorded in 1994, only recently getting picked up by a label), but there's something about having the *real* thing, fully packaged and on CD. When I received the cassette advance of *Upon Deaf Ears*, I instantly declared MERCURY RISING to be the *best* unsigned progressive power metal band in the U.S. I sent a copy of the album to Karl Walterbach of Noise Records (with a cover letter), who immediately called me up, stating that the tape was excellent and the most interesting piece of work that he had heard since



moving to the States! Unfortunately, negotiations to bring MERCURY RISING to Noise fell through when Karl got cold feet. Dominion Records quickly snatched up the dejected group, instantly putting the small New Jersey label on the map, as MERCURY RISING are miles ahead of Dominion's other interests.

As said, MERCURY RISING are (at least on this 1994 CD) a powerful progressive metal band, utilizing thick riffs, great vocals, and intelligent lyrics. While "Where Fear Ends" is a nod to the group's current work (more progressive in execution), this CD also includes "Halfway to Forever", a power/speed song with torrents of double bass work. Part of the turnoff of progressive metal bands is the same tempos; *Upon Deaf Ears* achieves perfect balance with their songwriting. Songs may average six minutes in length, but the Baltimore-based group are so skilled at their craft that each song is structured brilliantly, with builds and crescendos keeping the listener mesmerized.

QUEENSRYCHE, LETHAL, DREAM THEATER...they're all in there...virtually no keyboards. Highly recommended. Available from Sentinel Steel Music, DREAM DISC, and other outlets. (Rating: 9 pumpkins)

METROPOLIS-Behind Mysterious Walls
(Independent CD)

Well-executed German keyboard progressive power metal. The trebly sound is countered by catchy, memorable songwriting. A German group with a seven-song CD that should be heard, though the abundant keys may put off a few. Recommended as far as indie CD's go.

Write to: KCM / Christian Bauske / Bentecknapp 5 / 58454 Witten / GERMANY

MIDNIGHT COME-The Secret Out
(R+A Records)

MIDNIGHT COME are a power trio reliving RUNNING WILD's *Gates To Purgatory* and *Branded and Exiled*. Erik Krappmann is the group leader, sharing the vocal and guitar duties. "The Midnight Come" starts off this five-song plus intro CD, and the title-track has a hefty gallop that I enjoy immensely. Production is right out of 1984 and is very warm compared to Rock 'n' Roll's stiff, cold albums of late. "Lightning Strikes Again", "All We Live", "Death Valley", and the galloping "The Road" all have that pre-*Gates To Purgatory* sound to them (check out the RUNNING WILD tracks on the *Death Metal* compilation and the *Rock From Hell* compilation for a more accurate comparison). Nothing else to say here... MIDNIGHT COME are a must for fans of the early German metal sound; I'm sure the German media gagged when they heard *The Secret Out* CD, as it's probably typical of their cheesy metal scene.

(Rating: 7½ pumpkins)

Contact: Erik Krappmann / Eberthofstr. 16 / 97769 Bad Brückenau / GERMANY

MIND ODYSSEY-Schizophrenia
(Rising Sun)

Echh, MIND ODYSSEY have discovered blues in between albums, and former ACCEPT member Herman Frank, acting as producer, probably encouraged this new sound. The title-track, cut number one, is a speed metal masterpiece, reaching SCANNER brilliance with its tightly woven hooks. And "Evolution" does not indicate any problems either, but songs three through 12 are mid-tempo heavy blues metal numbers, and I dislike them. For those who don't know, MIND ODYSSEY's debut *Keep It All Turning* was a mix of QUEENSRYCHE- and LETHAL-style cuts with all-out speed metal assaults and major Germanic overtones. *Keep It All Turning* is an excellent CD (see *Sentinel Steel #1½*), but *Schizophrenia*, a conceptual album, is a major disappointment. It's hard to believe that this band wrote songs like "Fire In the Sky" and is now coming up with drivel like "Robotman".

(Rating: 6 pumpkins)

MORBID JESTER-Until the Battle Is Won
(IMF)

SL Coe, as a singer, did some great things with ANGEL DUST and SCANNER, but since then

his fortunes have been poor as a producer/record label president for IMF. MORBID JESTER sport an expensive cover by Frazetta protégé Ken Kelly, promising epic, battle-ready music. Well, MORBID JESTER aren't bad, but if anyone finds them above average, I'd be surprised. Much of their music reminds one of NWOBHM acts, like on the song "Revenge", etc. While there's the odd number of songs that are distinctly power metal such as "Go Away", it's an even mix of NWOBHM with touches of mid-eighties German power thrown in. Like I said, not bad, but if MJ were to be rated on the basis of creativity and imagination, they'd score mediocrity. I'd like to see them with more interesting riffs and much stronger choruses. SL Coe should be signing better bands, considering his experience with two greats ANGEL DUST and SCANNER. It's perplexing to see the guy sign MORBID JESTER, REACTOR, SACROSANCT, BLOOD, TORCHURE, etc. to his label. Coe's last few years in the music business have generated no material of great quality.
(Rating: 7 pumpkins)

MORGANA LEFAY-Past Present Future
(Black Mark)

Never a fan of their past work, this mid-priced collection does nothing to change my opinion of these Swedes. MORGANA LEFAY, as mentioned before, are in the SAVATAGE style; heavy, overly dramatic metal with a blues touch to the vocals. The production is excellent, and the playing is more than adequate, but nothing really grabs me in the songwriting. It says a lot when the two standout cuts are cover songs; "Lost Reflections" by CRIMSON GLORY and "Voulez Vous" by ABBA (!). The ABBA number is particularly good, combining ML's heavy riffage with ABBA's catchy melodies and faultless songwriting. MORGANA LEFAY could learn a lot from ABBA.

(Rating: 7 pumpkins)

MYRMIDION CREED-Through Painful Eyes
(Inline/Gorgon/Da Music)

Unlike the happy QUEENSRYCHE cloning of SIAM, MYRMIDION CREED deliver a darker version of the QUEENSRYCHE/LETHAL hybrid. Volker Riedel does a good Geoff Tate with a touch of Warrel Dane as well, along with his own originality. Their label, Gorgon, is known for its fine production and this *Through Painful Eyes* continues the proud tradition of high quality Gorgon music like INSANIA, HEAVENWARD, etc. Personally, I prefer the high-powered workouts like "Floating" rather than the FATES WARNING/QUEENSRYCHE style of "Suffer In Silence". Most of this CD is in a mid-paced to slow QUEENSRYCHE style. There is the odd occasion where a verse may slip into boredom, but the choruses always grasp the listener's attention. Besides the need for more diverse pacing, this is a strong disc to be purchased by SIAM fans.

(Rating: 8 pumpkins)

**MYSTIC FORCE-Take Command/
Shipwrecked With the Wicked (2 on 1)**

**-Eternal Quest
-Another Day CD EP
-A Step Beyond
-V/A Molten Metal Monsters**

MYSTIC FORCE have recently acquired a new singer, who will undoubtedly add a new element to the group's sound. This Baltimore, MD based band is saluting their first era with a 'best of' compilation, due out any day now (the spring/summer of '96). I thought it fitting to review MYSTIC FORCE's output up to the 'best of'.

We start with their 2 on 1 CD, which compiles the *Take Command* and *Shipwrecked With the Wicked* EP's, plus a joke bonus track. Seven songs total. "Take Command" is a speedy number (by MYSTIC FORCE standards), while both "Awakened By the Dawn" and "Immortal Souls" are classy melodic/fantasy metal cuts, making for a second rate (but still enjoyable) mix of CRIMSON GLORY and possibly early QUEENSRYCHE. The production is okay, but it could be much better; guitarist Rich Davis' rhythms are behind in the mix, while drummer Rich Davis' snare is too thin for my liking. And Bobby Hicks' voice floats above the mix, not meshing. I know it's unfair to comment on low budget releases such as these, but for some reason this thin sound is a trend to be found on all MYSTIC FORCE releases! "Silent But Deadly" is a cool instrumental that is more exciting than the usual MYSTIC FORCE fare. "Shipwrecked With the Wicked", (which also appeared on *Metal Massacre 11*), is a good song, with its main attraction being the catchy sing-along chorus. The song "Eternal Quest" can also be found on the full length CD of the same name. The nifty drumming and catchy chorus once again do it for me, but even better is the sudden burst of speed in the middle, where guitarist Rich really lets loose, and much energy (not a MYSTIC FORCE trademark) is expended. MYSTIC FORCE is not known as a spontaneous band...

MYSTIC FORCE, signed to the German label Rising Sun, made their worldwide LP debut with *The Eternal Quest*. Bookending the album are "Shipwrecked With the Wicked" and "Eternal Quest", two familiar titles from their previous work. There are ten cuts in between, all in the three to four minute range, satisfyingly to-the-point and carefully hook laden. In the typical MYSTIC FORCE fashion, nearly all the songs are mid-paced, with a few slower parts to add atmosphere ("Answers of the Mystery"). While there is a lack of speed, the power factor is in sight with riffs like "Divinity Within" (a pummeling anthem) and the excellent "Vicious Obsessions" (which borrows a riff from METALLICA). Singer Bobby Hicks has a nice stage set with the ballad "Reach For Tomorrow". Overall, however, I find that his voice lacks a depth of personality. Hicks does have a nice range, but its appeal is limited over the course of two studio CD's. It gets old quickly. I don't know if it is Hicks' lack of melody variety or the fact that his range sounds compressed, as if he has a lot of room to work with, but a low ceiling. Same goes with guitarist Rich Davis, who does come up with the right riffs, but his style and sound don't seem full, especially during the solos, where the rhythm guitar just disappears! With my little studio knowledge, it sounds like Davis records one rhythm track, splitting it for

the right and left channels. This is probably not the case, but that is what it sounds like. Nonetheless, **The Eternal Quest** is a fine sample of classy American metal at its best, with tight songwriting that is rarely unfulfilling.

An edited version of "Another World" puts in an appearance on a three song CD of the same name; track two is the crunching "Divinity Within", and track three is one of my favorite MYSTIC FORCE songs, an unreleased number called "Blind Visions". Because of the gallop, it reminds me of what OBSESSION and LIZZY BORDEN used to do. Great song.

I don't like **A Step Beyond** too much; while the lyrical aspect may have matured, the songs are a little more progressive, and the pacing a bit duller. A lot was spent on the recording; it doesn't come through on the disc, which doesn't have the necessary power for success. This is not entirely the band's fault, as some things occurred which may have interfered with the recording. **A Step Beyond** is a respectable piece of work, but in the end is flat and unexciting.

(Ratings: 7, 8½, 7½, 7½ pumpkins, respectively)

Siegen Records (Keith Menser's label) put out the **Molten Metal Monsters** compilation a couple of years back, but it's still available (along with other stuff) from Keith. There are 16 songs on this collection, and all are true metal. There are quite a few 'name' bands too: MYSTIC FORCE, COLD STEEL, FORTE, VIGILANTE/HELSTAR, BLESSED DEATH, and INNER STRENGTH. Here's a rundown: MYSTIC FORCE do their "Eternal Quest", a good start; I've always found COLD STEEL a little boring, but this "Truth or Dare" is a decent representation of their melodic/progressive thrash style found on their one CD. Off of the FORTE demo (I think) is the superb "Digitator", power/speed at its best. Too bad the band became trendy on their second CD! GHOST STORY are an Atlanta band that had some sort of tie to HALLOW'S EVE--not sure. "Enemy Within" is okay, but kind of average power/melodic thrash. MACHINERY's "Bite the Hand" is, on the other hand, a great song, with a talented vocalist and a catchy chorus. Too bad the band moved into an ARMORED SAINT/SAVATAGE direction; I prefer the European style of "Bite the Hand" (see MACHINERY review elsewhere). California's DISSENTER had one of the standout tracks on **Metal Massacre 9**; their "On the Wings of a Demon" on M.M.M. is a mid-tempo power cut that sounds like HERETIC from their first EP ("Whitechapel", etc.). Fair, but nothing exciting. Check out **Metal Massacre 9** for a better sample. FINAL STRIKE's "Destructive Habitat" has gritty vocals with MAIDEN-esque parts--a decent song, though I don't hear a chorus. Oh well. West Virginia's Jim Dofka makes an appearance with his former band BRICK MISTRESS and the song "Nine Lives". This is fine melodic/power metal with a guitar hero playing for the song. Sometimes it is too safe, but look to PSYCHO SCREAM for Jim's recent work. HELSTAR, when they were known as VIGILANTE, contribute "Changeless Season", which is dull in comparison to HELSTAR's previous work. I know James Rivera said that everything Dave Ellefson did not produce was good, but "Changeless Season" is a major step down from **Nosferatu**. But this was recorded three or four years ago, so we'll see what

happens with their new material. KRONIN's "Peace Bomb" is annoying power/thrash. Very average. But ENFORCE produce a masterpiece with "I'll Walk Alone", which is a mix of QUEENSRYCHE, HEIR APPARENT, and LETHAL. What happened to these guys? BLESSED DEATH follow up with their generic thrash in "Black Snow Sky". Blah. INNER STRENGTH have "Genetic Excellence" to offer, which is progressive technical power metal that needs stronger songwriting. Great playing and production is there though. SILENCE create more generic thrash with "Echoes of Damnation"; Alabama's OBLIVION KNIGHT, while thin sounding, have a solid song in shape of "Millenium". It is a bit overworked, similar to early WATCHTOWER, but the vocals are better. Interesting--TREASON have MYSTIC FORCE bassist Keith Menser in it, plus his brother (?) Scott on vocals. "Reflections of Insanity" is a well-crafted progressive metal song, and I find myself preferring Scott over former MYSTIC FORCE singer Bobby Hicks. What's Scott up to now?

This is a needed compilation in the traditional metal scene, though I doubt most of the bands on M.M.M. will really go anywhere. There are better groups out there!! A second volume was promised, but Keith Menser is concentrating on his other promotional compilation series, GLOBAL CONNECTIONS, which appears to be open to all types of metal.

(Rating: 7 pumpkins)

To receive information on Keith Menser's many projects, like MYSTIC FORCE, TREASON, SIEGEN RECORDS, GLOBAL CONNECTIONS, etc., then please write to: Keith Menser / P.O. Box 28452 / Baltimore, MD 21234

NEOCORI-Purgatory Dreams (Independent CD)

CANDLEMASS are no more, but can fellow Swedes NEOCORI take their place? NEOCORI are a little different...the vocals are powerful, with the feel of the first CANDLEMASS singer (see **Epicus...**) complemented by a dose of Dickinson. While NEOCORI say they are influenced by MAIDEN, very little of that influence shows through. The third cut, "Feet of the Liar", has a remote MAIDEN-ish tinge to it, but the guitars are SABBATH crunchy. A Dickinson touch may show on the main verse, but once again, vocalist Stefan is much heavier in his singing style. Like CANDLEMASS' later work, NEOCORI are not an ultra-slow doom band, but have mid-tempo-to-fast sections interspersed. Sometimes they can also sound like TAD MOROSE and MORGANA LEFAY too. Just heavy, powerful true metal.

Write to: Mikael Höglund / Nackstavägen
20 D / S-853 52 Sundsvall / SWEDEN

NEVERMORE-In Memory (Century Media)

I cannot believe this is the same Warrel Dane who sang the dark, Gothic masterpieces "The Mirror Black" and "Epitaph". I realize that in 1996 I should not be comparing SANCTUARY to the wretched NEVERMORE, but I can't help it! To know that a once-great vocalist for the

younger power metal generation now aspires to be the next Phil Anselmo (on certain songs) is disheartening. Nonetheless, I expected this EP to be much worse than it really is. It is actually surprisingly *average* instead of bad.

The first mediocre composition, "Optimist or Pessimist", is a rehashed tale of woe shouted in the style of WHITE ZOMBIE or some such stupidity. Very boring, very typical cheesy 90's lameness. "Matricide", a slower song, is actually rather catchy, and Warrel seems to have sharpened his now tuneless vocals a bit. "In Memory" hasn't a single memorable riff. "Silent Hedges/Double Dare" is a pathetic BAUHAUS cover medley. Warrel should not even attempt to emulate the great Peter Murphy; if he really felt the need to cover a Goth song, a SISTERS OF MERCY song would have sufficed, for Andrew Eldritch cannot sing to save his *life*. The BAUHAUS cover could have worked in SANCTUARY but not now. "The Sorrowed Man" is an acoustic track thankfully devoid of those ridiculous macho too-many-cigarettes vocals.

Why have I neglected to talk about the *music* on this EP, you ask? What would be the point; the riffs are frighteningly devoid of melody and will bore the listener to tears. Warrel's voice has definitely diminished over the years, for he now struggles even to faintly utter a note. What's even more interesting is that the only listenable songs on this EP are pre-**Nevermore** demo tracks. Conversely, the most horrible material on the EP is the two new slices of noise, the first track and the cover. Ah, what's the point of continuing this review? NEVERMORE will continue to be the over-hyped pile of shite they've always been, and everyone will continue to love them for it. However, not all of us are sheep with deaf ears.

(Rating: 5½ dismal pumpkins with laryngitis)

NOCTURNAL RITES In A Time of Blood and Fire (Megarock Records)

I'd been sitting on a three-track advance of this CD since early 95--a long time! Believe me, I could not wait to get the full length disc. The three tracker had "Sword of Steel", "Skyline Aflame", and the amazing, breathtaking title-track, "In a Time of Blood and Fire". The CD was ready to be released in early 95, but the Japanese labels could not decide whether to license the disc or not. You see, the CD had to have a simultaneous release in Japan and Europe, so the young Swedish group had to wait it out while Megarock cut through the Japanese red tape. Well, the Japanese *turned down* the offer to license the NOCTURNAL RITES CD, purely based on the fact that NOCTURNAL RITES are not "pretty boys". Well then, what are RAGE and BLIND GUARDIAN? Just ordinary guys playing music that's not half as good as what NOCTURNAL RITES is doing. The Japanese really screwed up, as **In a Time of Blood and Fire** got a whopping score in *Burn!*, better than 90% of the bands reviewed in that issue.

What is it that NOCTURNAL RITES play? A near-perfect blend of classic MAIDEN (**Piece of Mind**, **Powerslave**) with HELLOWEEN / Kai Hansen guitarwork, MANOWAR/Dark Ages imagery, and a uniquely great European vocalist



in the shape of 30-something (the rest of the band with an average age of 18!!!) Anders Zackrisson, formerly lead vocalist of Swedish 80's metal band GOTHAM CITY. GOTHAM CITY were kind of typical for their day. NOCTURNAL RITES are definitely special for their time. The strength of the youthful Swedes is their tight, no-frills songwriting, which is superbly supported by the catchy melody lines, be it well-thought out vocal melodies ("Lay of Ennu"), or the immensely melodic guitar riffs ("Black Death"). Unlike other power metal bands (RAGE, STRATOVARIUS, etc.), NOCTURNAL RITES use melody throughout their riffs, much in the way MAIDEN of old used to, as do GAMMA RAY and IN FLAMES today. Speaking of IN FLAMES, NOCTURNAL RITES were, as one can guess, a death metal band originally, but with a few member changes, and a newfound love for true metal, plus improved playing abilities, put the group onto the right path.

Clad in their spiked armbands and zebra skin T-shirts, NOCTURNAL RITES are the epitome of true metal; powerful, melodic, and with great songs. In a Time of Blood and Fire is one of the greatest debuts in metal history, and with one quick sword stroke fall the lethargic giants known as RAGE, RUNNING WILD, MANOWAR, BLIND GUARDIAN, HELLOWEEN, GRAVE DIGGER, etc. My highest recommendation comes with NOCTURNAL RITES In a Time of Blood and Fire. Epic power metal lives on through the Swedes!

(Rating: 9½ zebra-striped pumpkins)

Write to: NOCTURNAL RITES c/o Fredrik Mannberg / Stavgrand 14 / 906 27 Umea / SWEDEN

NO INNER LIMITS-Balance (Independent CD)

This independent CD release got some very positive reviews in the German press, no doubt because the Germans must support their own (like any country would). But there are many problems with N.I.L.'s debut CD. There are three songs and an intro on this EP; two of the songs are over ten minutes in length, and the other is 6½ minutes. That's nearly 30 minutes for just three songs, which is ridiculous. Musically this is progressive power metal, and with long songs the writing must be impeccable, which it isn't. The group prefers time changes over good structuring, and I'm not the type of guy with the patience to sit down and listen to Balance 100 times to figure out what riff is coming next. The playing, while occasionally interesting, misses its mark on occasion, especially the drumming. A progressive band must have certain qualifications, one of which is being tight as hell on one's instrument. Singer Daniel Fischer tries to sing in a Warrel Dane / Midnight / Tate style, but has neither the range nor the catchy vocal lines and choruses to stand out. Catchy this album is not. The CD cover is extremely amateurish too (a plague rampant amongst German indie CD's).

Write to: Tommy Hartung / Frankenstraße 82 / D-46 446 Emmerich / GERMANY

NOT FRAGILE-The Return (Hellion Records)

I was taught not to judge a book by its cover, but NOT FRAGILE's CD booklet left a few doubts in my mind, I must admit. Perhaps all the cute

teddy bear cartoons are for all the Japanese girls? Sliding the CD into the deck, I make a disappointed note that the CD is just under 33 minutes long. After a brief intro, I hold my breath, waiting for the emergence of NOT FRAGILE's patented melodic/speed metal sound. "Flight of the Intruder" bursts through, but the production is noticeably thin, and the drums are suspiciously synthetic. "Who Dares Wins" is another strong number in the NOT FRAGILE tradition, combining melody and speed with raw yet catchy vocal lines, but the low-budget production is not something NOT FRAGILE should get at this time in their careers. I thought some of their older material, as heard on their compilation CD's, *Hard to Be Alive* and *Lost In a Dream*, had better sound. "Undertaker" is a galloping mid-speed song, followed by the really out-of-character cringe fest of "Hungry for Love". Imagine BLIND GUARDIAN doing a love song, and you get the idea. Have our obscure speed metal heroes gone...soft? "King of Fire" is a return to the fast pace, only to be let down by the slow filler instrumental "Homeless." "Don't Give Up" raises the spirits, with neck-breaking passion, but the lyrics are pretty pedestrian. The weak production/drum machine are never more obvious. The finale, "W.I.R" (Written In Rock) unplugged is an acoustic ballad of mumbo jumbo, and closes out *The Return*.
(Rating: 7 pumpkins)

OVERKILL-The Killing Kind (CMC)

Even with new members Sebastian Marino (ex-ANVIL, RAMROD) and Joe Comeau (ex-LIEGE LORD/RAMROD) vocalist playing guitar) OVERKILL still sound like OVERKILL. The chance of OVERKILL disappointing old-time fans is nil, as for new fans, they'll be gained on the strength of OVERKILL's live performance. And that is all one can say. The production is excellent, and the energy is there, the songs hold up (for the most part). Of the modern OVERKILL albums, I'd still take *Horroscope* over *The Killing Kind*, just because the new OVERKILL has that 90's touch to it, i.e. groovier riffs and the odd sample or two, which may make OVERKILL feel relevant these days, but that stuff just leaves a bad taste in my mouth. "Battle" and "Godlike" are the first-rate OVERKILL crushers, and so is the oh-so-thrash instrumental, "Feeding Frenzy". The biggest surprise here is the rock-opera-ish "The Morning After/Private Bleeding", which is not typical OVERKILL, but a successful experiment.
(Rating: 6½ pumpkins)

PARADISE LOST-Draconian Times (Relativity)

The name 'PARADISE LOST' does not seem to fit this band's new perky musical direction. This album has more in common with Goth-pop wankers SISTERS OF MERCY than it does with a sorrowful band like ANATHEMA. This is even more peppy than Icon, for Chrissake. Yes, now we are all thoroughly convinced that vocalist Nick Holmes is the illegitimate child of James Hetfield and Chuck Billy. Shudder.

Draconian Times begins with a superbly orchestrated piano introduction, which sadly dissolves into a slow alternative-tinged slab of mediocrity. "Hallowed Land" actually has a pleasantly surprising power metallish chorus filled with harmonies, which seem a tad out of place on a **PARADISE LOST** album. On "Shadowking", Nick Holmes utilizes the dreaded "industrial" vocal style by sifting his voice through one of those cheesy filter-things present on shite **KMFDM** records. Otherwise, he stays true to his newfound James Hetfield-esque singing/screaming style, as on **Icon**.

The song, "Once Solemn" is a bit faster than the others, but contains derivative guitar hooks that must have seeped out of **METALLICA**'s self-titled piece of musical misery. Even the lyrics are a bit silly... "your powers electrify me" (Huh?) The solo guitar melodies on "Yearn For a Change" recall **THE SISTERS'** "No Time To Cry", but coupled with Holmes's ever-annoying vocals, the melodies are barely noticeable.

The songs are an extremely tiresome listen, which go in one ear and out the other. **PARADISE LOST** are unfortunately now a pop group ready for stardom on MTV's **Alternative Nation**. Real doom is **MY DYING BRIDE**, and real Gothic rock is **CHRISTIAN DEATH**; it is not watered down candy-coated tedium like **PARADISE LOST**'s **Draconian Times**. (Rating: 5 cheesy Gothic pumpkins)

-Natalie Vlahovic

accessible frontman, I'd wager. To conclude, nothing brilliant or remotely original on this five-song 20-minute CD, but the package is utterly professional. The production is magnificent also and really makes this CD more than just an average release.

Contact: Jens Frerichs / P.O. Box 2137 / 21217 Seevetal / GERMANY

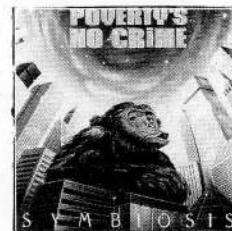
**PARALYSIS-Visions
-Wonderland
(Independent CD)**

I was turned on to these guys by a track on a **Peace Eater** compilation. The name of the song escapes me, but it was faster than any of the material on **Visions and Wonderland**, that's for sure. **PARALYSIS**, a Dutch group, have been compared to **SANCTUARY**, and I guess that is what the band wants to do. But it's one thing to want something, and another to accomplish it. Maybe it's the production's fault, but the sound is, too sterile, too cold, reminding me of **TAD MOROSE**'s current work. The **PARALYSIS** vocalist does not approach **Warrel Dane**, nor do the guitarists match the brilliance of the **Seattle** band. The riffs on **Visions and Wonderland** are lifeless -- crunchy, yes, but more **PANTERA**-ish than power metal. Really boring stuff, and all mid-tempo! Maybe a **NEVERMORE** fan would like **PARALYSIS**.

Write to: **PARALYSIS** / Janseniuslaan 34 / 4561 NM Hulst / HOLLAND

feel for this disc, i.e. understand the songs, but it's nothing for my collection. I'm very tempted to send this disc over to Sue Nolz of **MANIC REACTION** and see what she thinks, as **POVERTY'S NO CRIME** many times falls into the **GYPSY KYSS** camp, with a heavy dose of metal circa 1978-1982. Take "The A and the O", which, to my ears, is a perfect blend of **GYPSY KYSS** and **MSG**. I'm not an expert on either band; I've owned the first two **G.K.** CD's briefly, and an **MSG** collection made a quick encounter with the CD player, but neither group is my 'thing'. My favorite songs on **Symbiosis** are "Meet Me At the Sky" (the best chorus on the disc, an exact mix of galloping modern **NWOBHM** with a dose of **LOVERBOY** enthusiasm (!)), and the very memorable "State of Greed" (another superb chorus and smart lyrics). With a unique combination of apparent influences like (old) **MSG**, **GYPSY KYSS**, and modern progressive metal, **POVERTY'S NO CRIME** probably won't gain a large audience, but those who love the band will probably treasure them dearly. They're that kind of a band.

(Rating: 7½ pumpkins)



**PARAGON-Into the Black
(Independent CD)**

Classic European traditional metal with a modern-day production. "Into the Black", "Bring the Hammer Down", "Sinister Rising", "Crossed Out", and "Torn and Frayed" are the songs—all are weighty, fist-in-the-air type numbers, never speed metal, but nothing slower than the anthemic pace either. The vocalist **Kay Carstens** brings **Gary Goldwitzer (WRATH)** to mind, in that both have a quirky style of delivering their talents. **Carstens** is a more



**POVERTY'S NO CRIME-Symbiosis
(Noise)**

Noise Records still takes chances, which I commend, but **POVERTY'S NO CRIME** is a tough review. The music is pleasant, combining **NWOBHM**-like vocals and guitar playing with progressive structuring, but the songwriting is not that catchy until the last few songs on this disc. After ten or so listens, I'm starting to get a

POWER-Justice of Fire (RTN)

Alan Tecchio gets the name recognition when it comes to **POWER**, but guitarist **Daniel Dalley** is the brains behind the outfit. A few years back, **Dalley** released his own independent LP/cassette release called **Daniel Dalley's Power**, which was a classical electric guitarist's delight. I remember commending **Dalley**, but saying that he should get a proper band

together. Here he is with Alan Tecchio (HADES, WATCHTOWER, NON-FICTION) and local musicians, Mike Watt (drums) and Bill Krohn (bass). Watt has a Scott Travis (PRIEST, FIGHT, RACER X) quality to his drumming. Opener "Hands Over Time" is rhythmically enticing from the get-go; there is a constant Gothic organ 'moan' in the background, which makes a mysterious accompaniment to Tecchio's high-pitched voice and Dalley's crunchy power metal riffs and neo-classical solos. This is a pretty short CD, so these songs are tight and compact with immediate accessibility. The whole project was recorded in New Jersey, and it's great to hear something of this quality (and SYMPHONY X) to come from the home of *Sentinel Steel*. My one qualm is Dalley's rhythm guitar writing, which is cool, but tends to repeat itself over the course of the CD; when you hear this disc, you'll know what I mean. Thankfully Tecchio, who used to be terribly annoying, has improved by leaps and bounds, and does a commendable job on this disc. I'm not sure whether POWER still exist, but Dalley and Co. would make Jersey proud if they were still around.

(Rating: 8 pumpkins)

POWERS COURT-Powers Court
(Independent CD)
EQUINOX (pre-POWERS COURT)-3-song
demo

There is a review of a POWERS COURT four song cassette sampler in the tape/demo section. Since that was reviewed, the full length, eight-song disc has come in, as well as a 1992 three-song demo done when POWERS COURT were known as EQUINOX. Let's begin with the EQUINOX tape, which was recorded on four tracks. All three songs on here are still part of POWERS COURT's live set and will be rerecorded for the second POWERS COURT CD. Good idea, as "Echoes of Silence" and particularly "Devil's Triangle" and "Tragedy of Faust" are, in my opinion, the best compositions POWERS COURT have penned to date. The music is noticeably less busier in the vocal and drum departments, when compared to the new material. While there are hints of MANILLA ROAD in the new POWERS COURT CD, EQUINOX will remind one of the great MANILLA ROAD (circa 85-87). As said, these three EQUINOX songs are my favorites by band leader Danie Powers and company, mostly due to the straightforward power metal drumming and vocal performance that is not detractive.

Onto the POWERS COURT CD, which features the four songs on the POWERS COURT tape review. A strange choice for song number one in "Lord of the Winds and Breezes", with Danie Powers creating a monstrous vocal effect that can be compared to what SAVAGE GRACE did in 1986 with "Trial By Fire". An odd choice because none of the other songs have a similar vocal "style"; I hope this first song does not intimidate the listener upon first try! It is one of the best songs on this CD. Equally as good are "Dying Embers", "Master Plan", and "Deceiver", all of which were on the four song POWERS COURT promo cassette. Did POWERS COURT put their best onto this advance tape? Other CD tracks like "Spellbinder", "Suffer In Silence" and "High Priestess" have moments of interest, but do nothing to add to the POWERS COURT mythos. And the last song, with its SKYCLAD /

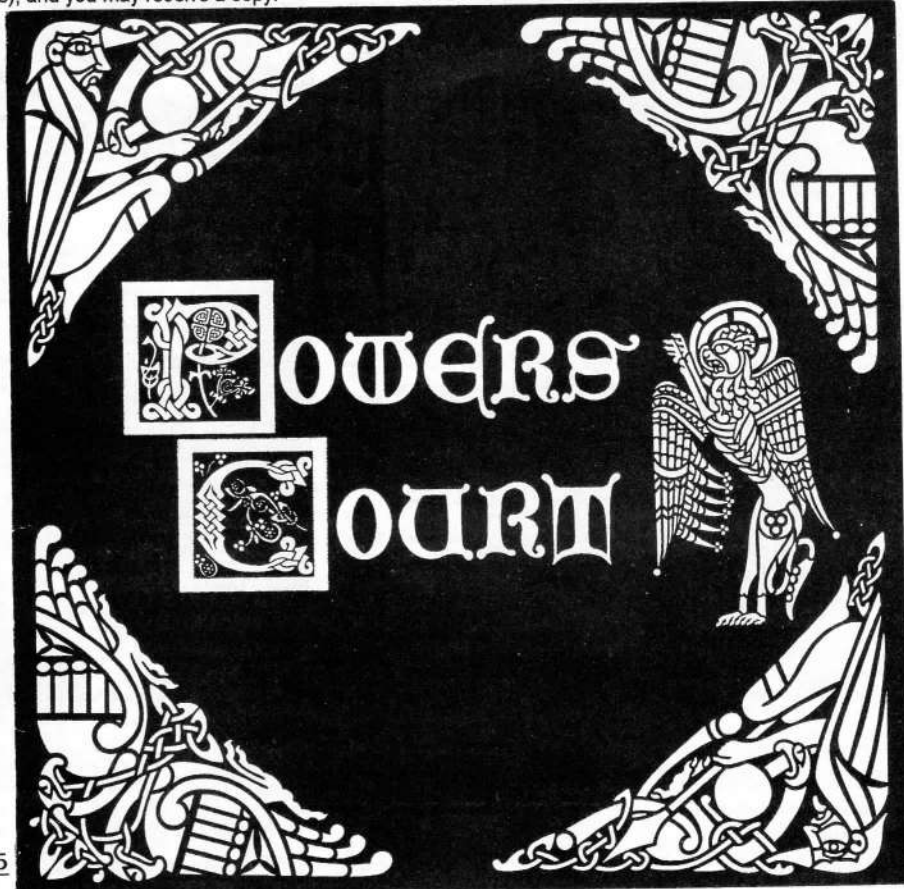
TYTONish overtones, ("Season of the Witch" is a jig put to metal), is brilliant except for the hokey chorus, which has singer/guitarist Danie Powers playing around with the vocal recording again, and the effect is humorous--not the reaction Powers would want, I'm sure. Powers has a colorful heritage and hopefully more songs like "Season of the Witch" will appear on the next POWERS COURT offering.

I commented on Danie Powers' voice being "busier" in the POWERS COURT material, and that is very true, as Powers takes on the varying pitches and tones of singers like King Diamond, Jon Oliva, Mark Shelton (note that Powers knows nothing about MANILLA ROAD at the present time), and covers all of their styles. Powers also tackles the deeper registers with POWERS COURT, whereas I wish she would take on the more high-pitched end, as showcased on the intro/outro for "Dying Embers" and in the beginning of "Season of the Witch". Beauty suits Danie over aggression, in my opinion. Then again, the minimal trade-offs she did in EQUINOX are near perfect.

In the end, POWERS COURT are an intriguing and very original outfit that should achieve a cult status given time. With a singer/guitarist that possesses multiple vocal personalities, an excellent bass player, and a lyrical vision (I'll leave that to Wisnom to cover in his newsletter) that more bands should have, I recommend POWERS COURT to fans of original heavy metal. However, this CD could be better, but I'm sure Powers will work out the knots in time for the next CD. As for the EQUINOX tape, I highly recommend that, though the recording was done on just four tracks, so don't expect a polished production. EQUINOX is Powers at her best, I feel, and I hope POWERS COURT can return to that type of a sound. I am not sure if the tape is available, but bug Danie for it (and maybe send her a few dollars), and you may receive a copy.



The POWERS COURT CD is \$10 (add \$1 for foreign orders), and a two-song POWERS COURT promo cassette is just \$2 (featuring "Lord of Winds and Breezes" and "Dying Embers"). Make Checks or M.O.'s payable to: "Danie Powers" and send to: POWERS COURT / P.O. Box 2441 / St. Louis, MD 63114





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NEW RELEASES

Table of new releases including Arcara-Live P, Angra-Hollyland, Anvil-Plugged In Permanent, Bad Moon Rising-Opium For The Masses, Bone Machine-Untitled (New), Bon Jovi-Amplified Box-Call For Details, Cephalopod-Death Tribute, Chic-Bonnie, W/ 2 Extra Tracks, Coney Hatch-S/T (Remastered W/ Extra Track), Crown Of Thorns-Breakthrough, Defiance-Amaranthine (Melotic), Desperate-The Last CD From The Snider-Clive Burr-Berne, Doken-Acoustic CD, Dobson-W/ Rhett Forrester And Bryan Jay (Keel), Elegg-Primitive Instinct

Table of new releases including Gotthard-Live E.P., Gamma Ray-Alive 95, Honeycrack-Prozack-Ex-Wildhearts, November, Glenn Diction, Human Clay-S/T W/ Jeff S. Soto And Yngwie Malmsteen + Johansson, Impellitteri-Screaming Symphony, S/T - Japan Re-Issue, Jaded Heart-Human Clay W/ Jeff Scott Soto And Y. Malmsteen, Judas Priest-Tribute-2 CD's (Each), KingDome-Come-Live-Acoustic (2-CD), Kiske, Michael-Untitled Solo CD, Labyrinth-No Limits-Like Hell/Down In Anger, Laine-Paul-Cant Get Enough, Life After Death-Ex-Armored Saint Member, Jake E Lee-A Fine Pink Mist

Table of new releases including Johansson-Sonic Winter With Yngwie Malmsteen, Malmsteen-Yngwie-Inspiration-Cover Songs, Machine Wheel-New 2nd Release, Metallica-Death Tribute Volumes 1 And 2 (Each), Mind Odyssey-Keep It All Turning, A Cross Of Gamma Ray/Judas Priest, Very Very Cool!!!, Molley Hatchet-Devils Canyon, MSL-Untitled W/ 2 Extra Tracks, Niacin-Sit Billy Sheehan's New Band, Only Child-1, Overkill-Fuck You + 3 Bonus Trks, Feel The Fire, Live At The Ritz-Similar To TNT, Pavlogs Dog-Like Queensryche, Perry, Mitch-Wire To Wire Ex-Guitarist

Table of new releases including Of Heaven Talas + MSG, Poison-Untitled (New Release), Quiet Room-Promo 95 (Dream Theater Style) Excellent Production, Rated X Words-Meloticooper Metal, Russell, Jack-Shelter Me +1, Saigon Kick-Devil In The Details W/ 2 Bonus Tracks, Sally, Steve-Alter Native (2-CD), Spooky-Live Bites, Shy-Brave The Storm +5 Extra Trks, Excess All Areas +3 Extra Trks, Skin-Lucky W/ 3 Extra Tracks, Spike-TLA Of Dogs D Amour And Quireboys, Starr, Jack-Out Of The Darkness W/ Rhett Forrester, Stratovarius-Episode, And Excess All Areas, Takasaki, Akira-Untitled, Talisman-Bestierous

Table of new releases including Thin Lizzy-Kings Call (Live), Timmons, Andy-Pond Kings And Ear X Tacy (Each), T.M. Stevens-Sticky Wicked, TT Quick-Metal Of Honor, Tribe After Tribe-W Members Of Kings X And Pearl Jam, Trilogy-Soul Provider-Ex-Europe, Suff-Decade Of Disrespect 85-95, TTKet To Take Out + Serve Up Live, Val, Steve-Ultra Zone 1, Vaughn-Steve Ray-Tribute W/ John Sykes, Mark-Kendall Of Great White, And Steve Stevens + Trevor Rabin, Vicious Rumours-Something Burning, White Wolf-Standing Alone (J), Winger-Kip This Conversation Seems Like A Dream, Zoltan-Book Of Kings - Power Metal 22.99



Table of new releases including Accept-Predator, Accuser-Taken By The Throat, Alcatraz-Live Sentence, No Parole, Angel Witch-Self Titled, Screaming Assault, Live, Annihilator-Refresh The Demon, Bag Of Tricks-Demos/Unreleased, King Of The Kill, Carmine Appice-Guitar Zeus/Wilmalsteen P Gilbert - D Aldrich - Slash - B May, J Sattian - M Mars - S Morse + More, Asia-Archiva 1-2 (Unreleased) Each, Bengal Tiger-Pain Clinic-Cool, Bewar-In Your Face, Bogus Toms-S/T (Excellent Faster Pussycat Style!), Bonfire-Fireworks, Knockout, Point Blank, Dont Touch The Light, Hot Wire-W/ Members Of Bonfire, Andy Susemihl-Solo Release, Bon Jovi-These Days +2, Slipping When Wet (Banned Cover), David Bryan-On A Moon, Badlands-Self Titled, Voodoo Highway, Bad Moon Rising-Self Titled, Opium For The Masses, Blood, Blood On The Streets, Full Moon Fever, Bang Tamo-Love After Death, Warren Cross-State Of Control, Atomic Arena, Hotter Than Hell (Live), Big Apple-S/T-Progressive Rock, Big Mouth-S/T (W/ S/Rile - T Harnell), Blackeyed Susan-Elc Rattlebone, Black Sabbath-Remastered CD's, Seventh Star + Paranoid (Each), Born Again + Tech, Ecstacy (Each), S/T + Sabotage + Mob Rules (Each), Heaven/Hell + Master/Reality-Each, Sabbath Sabbath, Blind Guardian-Imagination From The Other Side, Somewhere Far Beyond, Tales From The Twilight, Blue Murder-Nothin' But Trouble +1, Screaming Blue Murder Live, Sykes-Out Of My Mind, My Life EP (W/Unl'd Trks), Bone Machine-Search And Destroy, Dogs, Search And Destroy (Live Video), Sect-88 CM Kanone, Britton-Until The Day We Die (Similar To Bonfire), Bullet Boys-Acid Monkey, Candlemass-As It Is (Best Of), Casanova-S/T (Very Rude-Like), Christian James-Rude Awakening-Finally Back In Stock!, Chroming Rose-New World, Coldie-Singer Of Heavy Metal, Cinderella-Night Songs +1 (Japan), Live Train To Heartbreak Station, Conception-In Your Multitude, Parallel Minds, The Last Sunset, Coney Hatch-Friction, Best Of Three, Count Raven-Messiah Of Confusion, Destruction Of The Void, High On Infinity, Storm Warning, Crismon Glory-Self Titled, Criston - Harvey-Natural Progression (W X Kick Axe Members), Crown Of Thorns-21 Thorns (2-CD), Def Leppard-Vault (2-CD) Out Of Print, Slang W/ Extra Track, Warren De Martinis-Sure Upi, Demon Drive-Burn Rubber-Ex Bonfire + Casanova, Diamond In The Rough-(Canadian Hard Rock), Bruce Dickinson-Skunkworks +2 (J), Dio-Best Of, Elf-Albums (2 On 1), Dirty Looks-Rip It Out (New), Doken-Best Of, One Live Night (Acoustic), Back In The Streets, Dysfunctional (Japan Pic Disc W/Extra

Table of new releases including Trk "If The Good Die Young", Beast From The East (2-CD Set) (J), One L E Night Video (Japan), Doro-Machine II Machine, A Wither Shred Tale, D D A-Help Yourself, Call Of The Wild, Edwin Dare-Cant Break Me, Elegg-Labyrinth Of Dreams, Each, Supremacy, Electric Boys-Free Wheelin' +3, Rick Emmett-Spiral Notebook, Empyria-Behind Closed Doors, Enuff Z Nuff-Peachfuzz + 2, Peachfuzz (U.S. Version), Waked, Heavy Mothers Nightmare-S/T Wake Up Screaming, Extreme-Running Gag EP (W/Unl'd), Eyes-Windows Of The Soul, Ray What You Will Live, Eyewitness-Dessert Rain, E Z O-Self Titled, Fire Fire, Fair Warning-Rainmaker, FM-Only The Strong (Best Of), Burning Heart, Live In Japan, Live At Home, Fastway-All Fired Up, Marc Ferrari-Guest List, Firehouse-New EP (W/Unreleased), First-Best Of (W/ 1 Xtra Trk), FN-Only The Strong (Best Of), Fakin It To The Streets, Aphrodisiac, Dead Mans Shoes (New Release), Twisted Into Shape, Forrester, Rhett-Hell Or High Water, Greatest Tracks From Solo/Riot, Freak Of Nature-Gathering/Reaks, G. V. Usher-W/ 2 Extra Tracks, Free, Mark/Marcie-Tormented, Free, Mickie-Gypsy Cowboy, Frehley, Ace-Frehley's Comet, Five +1, 2nd Sightings, And Trough Walking, Spacewalk-Tribute To Ace Frehley/Skid Row, Pantera, Megadeth, Anthrax, Europe-Guns + Roses, L.A. Guns, G. V. Usher-W/ 2 Extra Tracks, Freight Train-June-Hallucination (W/ J. St. James X Black N Blue), Gamma Ray-Land Of The Free, Hard On Me-Extra Trk, Insanity And Genius, Sigh No More, Heaven Can Wait, Silent Miracles, Rebellion In Dreamland, Girlschool-Play Dirty/Screaming Blue Murder (2 On 1), Nightmare/Take A Bite (2 On 1), Gotthard-G. (New) Live Whitsnake, G. V. Usher-W/ 2 Extra Tracks, Dial Hard W/ 2 Extra Tracks, S/T W/ Extra Track, Great White-Stage (2-CD Set) Live, Lemmy-Black Album, Hanoi Rocks-Million Miles Away, Michael Monroe-Nights So Long, 21, Andy McCoy-Building Tradition, Hard On Me-Extra Trk (Rise +1 (Japan)), Harem Scarem-Self Titled, Mood Swings, Life In Japan, Helix-It's A Business Doing Pleasure, Over 60 Minutes With (Best Of), Helloween-Power E.P. W/ 2 Unreleased Tracks (Differs Than Japan's), The Time Of The Oath +2 (J), Keeper Of The Seven Keys +2-Each, 11.99, The Best, The Rest, The Rare, Walls Of Jerico, House Of Lords-Sahara (Demos Down), Glen Hughes-Burn Japan Live, From Now On W/ 2 Extra Tracks, From Now On (German), Feel, Lay Me Out, H S A S-Through The Fire, Icon-S/T - Night Of The Crime (Each), Impellitteri-Grin And Bear It

Table of new releases including Stand In Line, Answer To The Master, Victim Of The System, Inside Out Seasons (Hard Rock), Iron Maiden-The X-Factor (2-CD) CD-2, Contains 3 Unreleased Tracks, Lord Of The Flies PRT. 1, Live At Donington (2-CD) (J), Ironmen-Pi Dianno - D. Stratten, Into The Fire-Sonic Youth, KameLOT-Terinity-Very Similar To Crismon Glory, Killing Machine-S/T W/ Traci Guns, KingDome-Come-Live-Acoustic, King Cobra-Ready To Strike, Kings Machine-A State Of Mind, Kiss-Killers (W/ 2 Xtra Trks), Acoustic Open Fire (Got To Choose) (J), Tribute Of Members Of Cinderella, Britny Fox-T.T. Quick, Prophet, Krokus-Dirty Dozen (Best Of), Acoustic Open Fire (Orig Group), Live Screaming, Change Of Address, Metal Rondevous, Hardware, La Brea-Live In The City, Self Titled +2, Cocked And Loaded +1, Live Vampires, Best Of (Japan), Pantera-Strike It In Your Ear +3, Leatherwolf-Street Ready, Lillian Axe-Self Titled, No Matter What W/ Acoustic (S), Lionsheart-Pride In Fact, Lizzy Borden-Visuals, Lost Century-Complex Microcosm, Poetic Atmosphere, Love Child-Self Titled, Loudness-Live (2 CD), Live N-Raw (Newest Release), Heavy Metal Hippies, 818 Live, One Step For All, Thunder In The East, Live Hate-I'm Not Happy (New), Yngwie Malmsteen-Magnum Opus +1, Manowar-Battle Hymn-Hail To England, Metallica-Death Tribute Volumes, Medicine Wheel-First Things First, W/Marc Ferrari, Metallica-Self Titled +1, Monster-Through The Eyes Of The World (W/ Members Of Black N Blue And Also), Malice-Like Early Black N Blue, Montrose-Open Fire, W.G. Present, Moondoc-S/T E/ Herman Frank (Accapavictory), Morbid Angel-Domination +2, Mortification-Break The Curse 1990, 22.99, Mother Army, Motley-Crue-Raw Tracks III, Self Titled +1, Decade Of Decadence +2, Metallica-S/T W/ 2 Extra Tracks, Mr Big-Hey Man W/ Xtra Trk, Mr Perfect-Fasten Your Seat Belts (W/ Krokus - Sinner Members), Murderers Row-W/ Ex-Members Of Skid Row, Thorn And New England, M S G-Assault Attack, Both S/T Releases On 1 CD (2 On 1), Nectar-Released By Time-Very Similar To Malmsteen, Without Remourse (Newest), Nazareth-Angel-Domination +2, Naylor-Carved In Stone +2 (J), Exposed W/ 2 Extra Tracks, Nelson-Because They Can +2, After The Rain +2, Live And Acoustic, New England-S/T, Nocturnal Rites-In The Time Of Blood, Nostalgia To Blind Guardian, Noisy Mamma-Everybody Has One, Ozzy-Ozmosis (W/ 1 Xtra Trk), Hired Gun-Over The Edge, I Just Want You PRT 1 And 2 (Each), Best Of (Japan), No More Tears (W/ 2 Xtra Trks), Parovoz-Released Ex-Crismon Glory Members, Axel Ruddy Pell-Nasty Reputation-Made In Germany - Wild Obsession... Each 24.99

Table of new releases including Black Moon Pyramid, Phantom-Cyberchrist, Pink Cream 69-Changed (W/ Xtra Trk), Games People Play (W/ Xtra Trk), 36 Degrees 140 Degrees EP, Self Titled (W/ Xtra Trk), Pretty Maids-The Scream, Future World - Jump The Gun, Ref Let And Tie And Each, Off Side - In Santas Claws... Each 31.99, Stripped, Screamin Live (New), Psych Motel W/ Adrian Smith Ex Maiden, And Excess All Areas, Japan Issue W/ 2 Extra Tracks, Radakka-Malice Tranquility, RumbleDogg-The Drowning Pool, Rage-Black In Mind +1 (New), 10 Years In Rage (Best Of), Beyond The Wall, Execution Guaranteed, Extended Power, Perfect Man, Right On (Live), Reflections Of A Shadow, The Missing Link, Rainbow-Best Of 2CD Set, Stranger In US All (UK), Stranger In US All +1 (J), Raven-Glow (New), Live At The Inferno, Battle - Live In Japan, Rock N Roll You Drop, Architects Of Fear, Heads Up, Red Dawn-Never Say Surrender, Red Fun-S/T, Red River-Ex Holy Soldier Vocalist, Riverdogs-Absolutely Live + Bone, Kane Roberts-Self Titled, Saints And Sinners, Rough Cut-Self Titled, Ace Hood, Roky Gang-The Voodoo You Love, Riot-Fire Down Under, Resless Breed (1st Time On CD), Resless Breed (2nd Time On CD), Born In America, Night Breaker, Greatest Hits, Running Of The Horse (New), Running Wild-Masquerade (New), Black Hand Inn, Blazon Stone, Branded And Exiled, Death Or Glory, First Years Of Piracy, Gates To Purgatory, Pile Of Skulls, Port Royal, Rich Roger, Saints & Sinners-S/T, Savatage-Final Bell - Tribute To Chris Oliva (From Gutter Ballet Tour), Dead Winter Dead +1 (Japan), Live At The Inferno, Edge Of Thorns +2, Saxon-Eagle Has Landed Pt 2, Scanner-Mental Reservation (New), Scorpius-Pure Instinct +1, Lovedriver (Original Cover), Sea Hags-S/T, Sepultura-Roots W/ 1 Extra Track, Roots (Single) W/ Unreleased, Paul Shortino-Back On The Street, Shy Tiger-Feed The Kitty-Similar To Motley Crue + Poison + Firehouse, Sam Praver-Ex Shy Vocalist, Circle Of Influence-Sunshine Candyman, S/T W/ David Reice + Jay Schellen, Skid Row-Subhuman Beings (Live), Skitzzik-S/T (Like Skid Row), Skyklad-Prince Of The Poverty Line, Silent Whispers From The Lunar Sea, Irrational Anthems (New Release), Slayer-Tribute To Slayer, Slayer-Fear No Evil +1 (Japan), Hard Times +3 (W/Unl'd - Cover), Sledgehammer-Exhumed +1, Slatic Slaughter - Death Metal, Sledge Beez-Battle - Live In Japan, Sledgehammer-Exhumed +1, Sly-S/T-Dreams Of Dust (Each), Stone Fury-Burns Like A Star, Let Them Talk

Table of new releases including Storm Eye Of The Storm, S/T-S/T Release (Out Of Print), Stratovarius-4th Dimension, Episode, Twilight Time, Dreamscape, Steeler-S/T (W/ Axel Rudy Pell), Strike Back, Stonehenge-Untitl. (Chicago Band), Sven Gali-Self Titled (Live Skid Row), John Sykes-Please Dont Leave Me - Sykes Out Of My Tree (New), Dont Wanna Live My Life Like You, Tankard-The Tankard (New), The Morning After, Zombie Attack, Stone Cold Sober, The Meaning Of Life, Hand Of The Dog (Best Of), Chemical Invasion + S/T (Each), Takara-Taste Of Heaven (W/ Jeff Scott Soto), Tribal Faith, Joey Tempest-Place To Call Home, Place To Call Home +1 (Japan), Tesla-Bust A Nut +1, Psychotic Supremacy +3, Thunder-Behind Closed Door, Acoustic Live, Their Finest Hour (Best Of), Tigertailz-Waboznes W/ 5 Extra Trks, 22.99, Berzerk - Young And Crazy (Each), 18.99, Noice Live - Critical (S), Livin' Without You (S), Love Bomb Baby (S), Heaven (S) Cover, TBT-Best Of W/ Unreleased Track, Knights Of New Thunder, Trapez-Best Of, Triumph-In The Beginning, Rock N Roll Machine (Remastered), Trust-Repression, Mins Trap, S/T (1983), Marche Ou Creve, Tuff-Religious Fix + First Three Each, What Comes Around Goes Around, Joe Lynn Turner-Nothing Changes, Twisted Sister-You Cant Stop N R N, Stay Hungry, Night Breaker, Come Out And Play, Tyketto-Dont Come Easy, Strength In Numbers +1, Rock N Roll Machine (New Singer), The End Of The Summer Days (S), Vagabond-S/T (Le Truck / Int), Vanize-Twins (W/ Udo's Brother), Wain-Fade (Newest Release), Move On It, Vicious Rumours-Word Of Mouth, Soldiers Of The Night, Digital Dictators, Voice E.P. W/ Unreleased (J), Tribute To Carl Albert (Live) With 3 Unreleased Studio Tracks, Victory-Voiceprint, Wildfire-Sacrifice Very Cool Melotic Rock-Includes A Track From The Out-Break Soundtrack, U F O-Walk On Water (Original Band), Wasp-Still Not Black Enough +1, Electric Circus, Live In The Raw, Wildhearts-P H U O, P H U O-W/ Extra Track (J), Shock Of The Moment, Wild Ride-Tension And Desire-Hard Rock From The Netherlands, X Y Z-Live And Unreleased, Xenon-Americas New Design, X-W/ D-Savage, Y & T-Earthshaker, Mean Streak, Black Tiger, Down On The Count, In Rock We Trust, Open Fire, Best Of 81-85, M.S.G. - Uncorrect (New), Yesterday Today Live, Zebra-No Tellin' Lies, 18.99

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PSYCODRAMA-The Illusion
(Massacre)

Here's another case of Massacre taking a band's demo and trying to make an album out of it. Those of you who have *Sentinel Steel* 1½ may recall my enthusiastic review of PSYCODRAMA's *The Illusion* demo tape. Well, that whole tape is on this CD, along with three new songs: "Jigowatt", "From Here", and "Shadow of Silence". As I mentioned in my demo review, PSYCODRAMA base their music on the QUEENSRYPHE / LETHAL style, a perfect combo of thick riffs and melody. While the demo *The Illusion* sounded great on tape, it loses something in the transition to CD. Still, songs like "Dream to Sorrow", "Eyes of a Child", "Longtime Forgotten", and "Flames" are brilliant songs, and it's good to have them on a durable format.

As for the three new ones, they're a bit average. I think the band were pressured into making the songs hastily to get the CD out, or perhaps the band's tastes have changed. The new songs are heavier, and have less of the hooks that made the original *The Illusion* demo so great. I'm hoping that the three new songs are not a sign of things to come. "Jigowatt", with its modern, jagged main guitar riff, has a bland and repetitive chorus, seemingly repeated in order to cover up the lack of song! Oh, I'm being a bit too critical. It's not that bad, I suppose, but it really doesn't stand up to the previous tracks. "From Here" is better, but could've used some more melody lines, as the main skeleton is good. The overall purpose of the tune is a bit of a downer, competing with the optimism of "Flames", etc. "Shadow of Silence" is not an upper either, dealing with the possibility of Armageddon. This is the best of the new songs, but still relies way too much on rhythm/riffs and not enough on melody. The rhythmic changes are unpredictable, which I like.

(Rating: 8 pumpkins)

THE QUIET ROOM-promo '95
(Independent CD)

DREAM THEATER meets RUSH? That should give you the idea. The guitars and keyboards are a touch behind in the mix, otherwise the recording quality is fine. There are five cuts, all slow- to mid-tempo, and, to my regret, very typical of what young prog metal bands are doing here on the Northeastern side of the U.S. THE QUIET ROOM are from Denver, Colorado, and besides the technical prog element of DREAM THEATER and RUSH, there is also a dose of FATES WARNING, especially in the Ray Alder-like vocals of Chadd Castor (listen to "Altered Past"). After a good number of listens I find little hooks or memorable choruses to latch on to on this disc. My favorite song would have to be "Altered Past", as the vocalist is passionate, and the 'metallic' edge to the music is pleasing. Otherwise...the group are talented musicians, but too lightweight for my tastes, concentrating on slow jazzy mood sections that grow wearisome (the main verse of "Drowning"). This CD is \$7.00 (postpaid) payable to: Jason Boudreau / P.O. Box 100742 / Denver, CO 80250

THE QUIET ROOM-promo '95
(Independent CD)

This 5-song CD is excellent, surmising what is right with American music, even if bands like these never seem to see the light of a domestic record deal these days. These mile high gents deal out elegant, thoughtful progressive metal, with powerful riffs, complex drumming, intricate melodies, and vocals in the RYPHE/CRIMSON GLORY/LETHAL mold, which I can never get enough of. The production is quite good for a demo, though I think the vocals have been unfairly buried in the mix. Music that sounds wonderful, rife with talent, intelligence, emotion, and beauty. If FATES WARNING, SAVATAGE, and DREAM THEATER warm your heart, and the current MTV crop make you cry, I urge you to drop TQR a line.

-Craig Wisnom

RADAKKA-Malice and Tranquillity
(Century Media)

One can never underestimate Century Media, as now this well-known death metal/hardcore label has entered the melodic metal field. RADAKKA play a classy sort of melodic heavy rock, at times borrowing from QUEENSRYPHE on "I'll Walk Alone" and occasionally coming up with some original ideas, as with the best song on this album, "Masquerade". RADAKKA can also be boring, with the MTVish "Saint's Addiction" and "Rainy Daze", but the tracks like "Solitude" and

"End of the Line" (again in that classy style of LEATHERWOLF and bands of that ilk) keep things interesting. Strong riffs, deep production and a stand-out vocalist are to be noticed. **Malice and Tranquillity** should be satisfying to fans of melodic hard rock/heavy metal US style. (Rating: 7 pumpkins)

RAGE-Black In Mind/Avenger
(GUN)

Up until *Missing Link*, RAGE have made each of their successive albums differ greatly from their previous releases. While *Reign of Fear* was a straight ahead power/speed release, *Execution Guaranteed* was an album in transition, with many non-convincing parts. Thankfully, Peavy and Co. created a masterpiece with their third effort, *Perfect Man*, garnering them 5 K's in *Kerrang!* *Perfect Man* was an album of sweet melodies, short songs, and incredible vocal lines. Good album!!! *Secrets In A Weird World* followed, with longer, more serious songs and earned them another round of good points with the press. *Reflections of a Shadow* was their last to gain a US outlet, and was a letdown for many. It sported heavy production, but many songs were mellow and unconvincing. RAGE made up for this with *Trapped*, which captured the aggression of their first disc, the melodies of *Perfect Man*, and the memorable lyrics of *Reflections* and *Secrets*. *Trapped* is definitely the last good disc RAGE have done. Instead of striving for new territory as prior discs have done, *The Missing Link* tried to continue the success of *Trapped* with no luck. A couple of songs are good, such as "Firestorm" and "Refuge," but the rest is a mishmash of immensely boring, plodding numbers; "Nevermore", "The Pit and the Pendulum", and "Certain Days", and generic speed ditties like "From the Underworld". Peavy's voice, always having been an acquired taste, lost the melody that raised *Perfect Man*. Manni Schmidt is left cranking out ultra generic riffs he has played dozens of times before. "Lost In The Ice" is a particularly gruesome epic to sit through at the 9+ minute mark.

Manni and RAGE split after *The Missing Link*, and RAGE, with their limited audience, went to GUN Records. On board jumped the drummer's brother and another guy on guitar. With a dual guitar team, my hopes of a more musical RAGE were dashed by their new album, *Black In Mind*, which continues where *The Missing Link* left off. If anything, *Black In Mind* is RAGE's weakest disc, with too many songs, the total coming to just under 70 minutes. "Black In Mind" is a typical RAGE fast opener, and nowhere nearly as catchy as "Firestorm" on the previous album. The usual spate of average tunes continues, and the guitar work is as remarkably generic as Manni's previous mediocre output. Peavy's vocals are doing a Joe Cocker throaty groan. Out of the 14 songs, only "Forever" stands out, being nothing original, but having that melody line that made the RAGE discs of the past what they were. Otherwise, *Black In Mind* is a massive failure. If *The Missing Link* was a second rate *Trapped*, then *Black In Mind* is third rate. RAGE used to be a band known for never doing the same album twice, much less creating two bad versions of





the same disc, but they have done just that. I hope RAGE realize that they have two guitarists at their disposal, but you wouldn't know it from **Black In Mind**...a criminally monotonous album. (Rating: 6 pumpkins yawning in unison)



RAISING CAIN-Crusade
(Celestial Records)

Crusade incorporates the band's previous demo **Hell On Earth** with a bunch of new songs, producing a ten-song CD. **RAISING CAIN**, a California outfit, play melodic thrash bordering on power metal, maybe like **VICIOUS RUMORS** crossed with **FORBIDDEN**, staying with the medium pace. The best songs are the ones from **Hell On Earth**, as they are better in the vocal department, with the choruses standing out.

(Rating: 7 pumpkins)

Write to: **RAISING CAIN** / Celestial Records / 7451 Warner Ave., Ste. E-199 / Huntington Beach, CA 92647

REACTOR-Farewell to the Past
(1 More Flop Records)

The word that **SL Coe** (ex **SCANNER/ANGEL DUST** vocalist) was back with a microphone in his hand was great news to my ears! While **SCANNER's Terminal Earth** disc is a very fine piece of German metal, it's **Coe's** first appearance, **ANGEL DUST's** second disc, **To Dust You Will Decay**, that stands as not only **Coe's** best work, but one of the masterpieces of the German power metal scene—an incredible album!

And regretfully, this **Farewell to Reality** (**REACTOR's** third LP, their first with **SL Coe**) doesn't really achieve the heights that **Coe's** previous works ascended to. Surely it's **REACTOR's** best work, but when compared to the latest/best releases from Germany (**GAMMA RAY / SCANNER / HELLOWEEN**), **Farewell to Reality** is distinctly average. The disc's opener, "Farewell to the Past" is very promising, with all the trademarks of **SCANNER** (circa **Terminal Earth**), but the next two tracks are bland in a big way. "When Bosnia Falls" has a nice chorus, recalling the slow build of "From the Dust of Ages", but overall the song falls flat, too. **SL Coe**, not having sung for quite a few years now, is simply at the lowest point of his vocal talents. The production of this disc, along with the other **1MF** projects he produces, is also flat and unexciting. "In the Line of Fire", "Conquer the Past", and "Into Blood and Fire" are all **SCANNER Terminal Earth** outtakes, and round out the rest of the good tracks on **Farewell to Reality**. The worst of the lot have got to be the bonus tracks (shades of **RUNNING WILD!**), with an abysmal cover of "Road Racin'", and an extended rap version of "Living In A Trance", (a bad song in its original form, sounding horrific as a rap cut). At nearly 70 minutes, **Farewell To Reality** should have been chopped down to 40. What was **Coe** thinking?

(Rating: 7 pumpkins)

RECON-Behind Enemy Lines
(Intense)

It's too bad that Christian metal doesn't get as much recognition in the secular market. Sure, I admit much of it is cheesy, but there is the odd band or two that make one stand up and listen. Readers of *Sentinel Steel* know of my admiration of SACRED WARRIOR; well, add RECON to my short list of recommended Christian groups. RECON aren't too far from what SACRED WARRIOR do, both possessing a Geoff Tate-type vocalist falling in line with LETHAL's Tom Mallicoat, delivering crunchy, thick riffs and powerful ideas. *Behind Enemy Lines* is near brilliant throughout, with only the sappy "Holy Is the Lord" disrupting this, uh, congregation. "Lost Soldier" and the absolutely mind-blowing "Take Us Away" are power metal compositions of the highest order (pun intended?!) convincing any non-believers in seconds. Two bonus tracks fill out the Japanese version of this disc, the two tracks are from RECON's appearance on the **California Metal** compilation years ago. I believe, with sadness, that RECON are no more, but what a legacy they have left.

(Rating: 9 bible-thumpin' pumpkins)



RICOCHET-Among the Elements
(TT Records)

What a pleasant surprise RICOCHET are. A friend noted that RICOCHET are a like a cross between YES' pleasantness and DREAM THEATER's heaviness. I agree! What we have here is a German band playing heavy progressive pomp rock (obviously!), with superb vocal melodies and fine guitar hooks. At times, RICOCHET remind me of more accessible groups like DOMAIN, LETTER X, and AXXIS (circa *Kingdom of the Night*), but then again, the epic "Among the Elements" standing at 14:22 minutes is something of a grand exercise for this type of music.

Production is very fine, (though the disc volume is very low), and the playing very confident. *Among the Elements* is perfect for a late-night listen--a soothing, quietly pleasing, prog/pomp CD. And for those with patience, one may find something special about RICOCHET; while not exactly similar, there is an endearing quality that bands like VAUXDVIHL and RICOCHET have--meaningful lyrics, exceptional emotional songs and fine performances.

(Rating: 8 pumpkins)



RIOT-The Brethren of the Long House (Sony)

RIOT are back with a concept album, which is a first for Mark Reale and Co. The story line deals with the arrival of the white man onto the shores of America. The lyrics showcase in the first person what both sides were feeling. I will say no more, as the lyrics should be read along with the music. The music, because of the unified theme, seems to have better flow, but broken down, *Brethren* is musically in the same style as *Nightbreaker*. *Thundersteel*, a melodic speed metal fest, is my favorite RIOT, so I find this new disc as sometimes above average, but also too by-the-numbers for yours truly. Like *Nightbreaker*, *Brethren* mixes the traditional heavy rock of RIOT's early days with the old updated melodic power metal here and there. Songs like "Glory Calling", "Rollin' Thunder", the bouncy title-track, and the GARY MOORE cover, "Out in the Fields", work really well, but the rest of the material falls short of being anything special. The production does not help propel the songs, as the sound is very muddy. It's always alarming to see a veteran like Mark Reale chance burn out by using the same studio all his life. I'd recommend a change. He's got a good lineup now, who deserve a better engineer and mix.

(Rating: 7 pumpkins)

RITUAL MISERY-World of Hate
(Independent CD)

RITUAL MISERY look like a bunch of old school thrashers circa 1986. Sure enough, they even sound old school. Like many bands from those days, the singer has a Hetfield twang to his twisted voice, singing about the ills of the world and how miserable everything is in general. An upper the CD isn't. RITUAL MISERY kind of remind me of New Renaissance thrash bands, especially ANVIL BITCH. RM are definitely better in the playing/production department, but they've got that ANVIL BITCH sound of speedy riffs and gnarly spiteful vocals. On occasion, RM do come into the 90's with a song or two like "Damaged," which borrows some PANTERA riffing. Otherwise, this Texan band, RITUAL MISERY, is kind of average.

Dream Disc should carry this CD.

RUNNING WILD-Masquerade
(Noise)

Masquerade is easily Rolf's worst output to date. At least *Under Jolly Roger* (my previous "weakest") had the title-track and "Beggars Night" as the two excellent numbers. *Masquerade* has zero, zip, nada...not one single good song. This production is a mess also, with only the slightly realistic sounding drums being an improvement over those in the mechanical *Black Hand Inn*. Rolf's voice, so great on *Death or Glory*, is just a joke here, as he goes through the motions, not having changed over the last few albums. His voice is buried in the mix, barely audible in parts--a huge disappointment. Again, let me say that *Death or Glory* is one of my favorite albums, and the sound Rolf achieved on there is wonderful, but as it stands now, Rolf has lost his singing ability and is content to do the same old thing over and over, not nearly as well as he used to do in the past! ...and make a quick buck. By taking this approach, RUNNING WILD, once a proud name, are now a shell of themselves, being run into the ground by Rolf's seemingly diminishing imagination. As Al Spremo said, Rolf should take a breather--a double-live CD set would be nice, to give Rolf a vacation. Recharged, he shall stir our hearts again.

(Rating: 6½ leather-clad, studded pumpkins)



(l. to r) Jorg Michael (ds), Thiro Herman (g), Rocker Rolf (vb, g), Bodo Smuszinsky (b)

RUNNING WILD-Masquerade
(Noise)

I've always enjoyed this band as metal purists, a staunch combination of JUDAS PRIEST and early METALLICA, especially on *Death and Glory*, and their most recent outing, *Black Hand Inn*. These stalwart German lads return with their ninth original studio album, defending the heavy metal faith with aggressive tenacity. Like every album they've ever done, this album is aggressive yet melodic, raging and triumphant. It's especially refreshing how they work such violent drumming, almost a blast beat on some songs, into tunes that never lose track of undeniably structured metal. However, this outing is definitely not their most inspired work, and not up to the originality and wonder of *Black Hand Inn*. I've always felt this band has been at their best when their choruses have been more intricate, and their lyrics have focused either on history or their unique piracy imagery. On the other hand, the band's been at their weakest when their choruses seem to repeat simple titles ad infinitum, with subtler melodies, and the lyrics tread the tiresome metal clichés of how bad politicians, religious leaders, and warmongers are. While this album, as always, features some of the former, in "Lions of the Sea" and "Soleil Royale", the rest of it is rather bogged down in the less interesting style of songs. I.e. "Masquerade, da da da da dah, Masquerade, da da da dah..." etc. But overall, if you're a fan who still loves a band that will play unmitigated heavy metal with pride and leather garb, and you don't mind wading through a great band's more mediocre moments, this is a worthy purchase, especially at Noise's domestic price. Just don't expect one of the better albums of the year from a band capable of such a feat.

-Craig Wisnom

SANVOISEN-Exotic Ways (Noise '94)

Very few German vocalists are free of the accent, an element that adds to the character of their voices, even though some people may not agree. However, SANVOISEN's vocalist, Vagelis Maramis (of Greek origin) is near flawless, shining with a voice of much appeal. The band's foundation is in the QUEENSRYCHE / early CRIMSON GLORY / HEIR APPARENT timbre, so SANVOISEN are a very convincing outfit, sounding very American. The songwriting is very fine, with nice hooks, and sweet melodies with commercial flavor. One would think that with the right promotion, a band like SANVOISEN should do some excellent numbers. Really, it's baffling that labels are willing to spend ludicrous amounts of money on PANTERA / PEARL JAM clones, and not capitalize on the QUEENSRYCHE/DREAM THEATER sound. I can't call SANVOISEN a clone, as their percussion and melodies separate them from their influences.

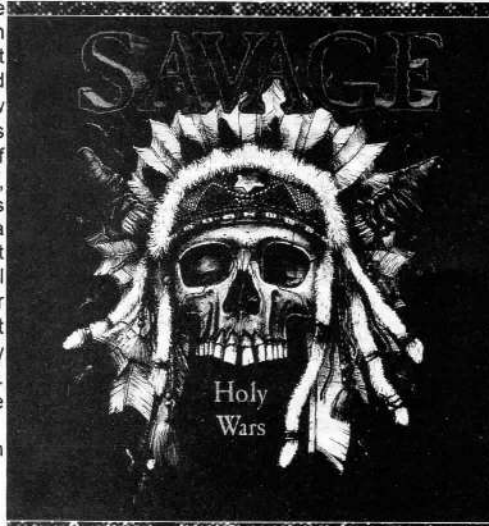
(Rating: 8½ happy pumpkins)



SAVAGE-Holy Wars (NM)

As with BLITZKREIG, the much lauded SAVAGE are attempting a comeback, but I'm not sure if we need this group's brand of blues-tinged basic metal. "Headstrong (Cult of One)" is a good enough opener, with a nice riff in the classic NWOBHM fashion. However, "Anthem" is comparable to the WARRANTs and WINGERS of the world, and I don't like it. There are ten more songs, most of which do not sound like WARRANT, but are still bluesy nonetheless, and are not my cup of tea. The twelfth number is a 90's remake of "Let It Loose", the song SAVAGE are most known for. I suppose it was something back in the early 80's, but based on this new rendition, the tune's reputation is lost on me. What's the big deal about SAVAGE?

(Rating: 5 fatigued pumpkins)



SAVAGE GRACE
Master of Disguise/The Dominatress
(Black Dragon)

Here it is, the classic *Master of Disguise* LP reissued with SAVAGE GRACE's first release, *The Dominatress* EP. SAVAGE GRACE sound similar to a sped up IRON MAIDEN, with blazing guitars dishing out high speed melodies and with punchy drums keeping the backbeat, along with high-powered vocals entertaining the front-line. I would have liked Christian Logue to have taken the time to get *Master of Disguise* properly mixed and mastered, but apparently Black Dragon didn't want it that way. So, the cumbersome drum sound is still intact, but it somehow adds to the nostalgic appeal of this 1985 classic speed metal masterwork. *Rock Hard* gave this CD re-issue a perfect '10'. As for *The Dominatress* EP, it doesn't sound too hot on this disc, as there are a few drops in the sound. I heard that either the master couldn't be found, or the masters were in such bad shape that they were unusable. So, either a tape or an LP was used, which is too bad. I'm not the biggest fan of *The Dominatress* material, but it deserved a better quality representation than it got. Oh well. Hopefully Black Dragon will follow this disc up with the *After the Fall From Grace/Ride Into the Night* split CD. If you've never heard SAVAGE GRACE, I'd recommend going with the second reissue. And buyers beware, a bootleg exists, combining *Master of Disguise* and *After the Fall From Grace*—the sound quality is not as good as the legit reissues, so don't pick it up.

(Rating: 8½ pumpkins)



SAVATAGE-Dead Winter Dead (Atlantic)

As much as I like SAVATAGE's more traditional metal material, especially *Hall of the Mountain King*, I consider their later and more experimental work to be some of their very best creations. In my opinion, this band has excelled with more innovative album styles and emotional lyrical tapestries. SAVATAGE remains one of the few bands that has taken a progression of upward steps since their inception, and my high expectations for their new disc were not disappointed. It would be hard to say that this album challenges the penultimate brilliance and emotion of *Streets*, or the masterful glory and remembrance of "Chance" and "Alone You Breathe" off their last album. But it certainly succeeds on its own merits, with former WIDOWMAKER guitarist Al Pitrelli replacing Alex Skolnick, and Chris Caffrey returning. This, like *Streets*, is another rock opera, and the lyrics trace the civil war in Sarajevo from numerous different perspectives. The choruses are grand, memorable, and victorious, and Zachary Stevens' voice is rich and exuberant. Jon Oliva does vocals on two tracks, where he dons the black hat of the story's evil doers. The band melds MOZART, BEETHOVEN, and Christmas carols into the album's instrumental tracks in magnificent fashion, creating a memorable soundscape. The closing track brought tears to my eyes the first time I heard it, as it winds up the tragic tale of the album with an inspirational message of hope, that brings to mind the other emotion the band has cloaked their music with, and thus becomes all the more poignant.

This album has a style all its own, more orchestral, symphonic, and operatic than any other album I've ever heard, replete with the sweetest melodies and elegant tales, told by the music as well as the lyrics. The songs copiously and thoroughly integrate piano into the songs, which have a more accessible structure than ever before, like a cross between *Operation: Mindcrime*, QUEEN at their most somber, and a symphony. The guitar work, though powerful, isn't of the lightning fast and flighty variety. I know this will disappoint some listeners as it recedes from a more conventional metal approach, but I feel it nonetheless is a complete triumph. It represents what I love most about this band, an original approach that thoroughly portrays ardent portraits of the human experience.

-Craig Wisnom



SCANNER-Mental Reservation
(Massacre)

With the German metal scene in a state of flux at the moment (see reviews on HELLOWEEN, BLIND GUARDIAN, RAGE, RUNNING WILD...), it is with sheer pleasure that I give a rare thumbs up to SCANNER's comeback disc, their third overall—**Mental Reservation**. There are nearly 65 minutes of melodic power/speed metal heaven on this disc. Axel AJ Julius is the only original member left, and with him are two unknowns on bass and drums. On vocals is "Haridon Lee", a.k.a. Leszek Szpigiel, whom I believe made his singing debut with the band CROWS (releasing a very good power metal disc called **The Dying Race** on Century Media in 1991. Fans of **Mental Reservation** and German metal in general should pick it up!). **Mental Reservation** is SCANNER at their most mature, with a variety of song lengths and tempo fluctuations to make the proceedings all the more memorable. Speed is abundant in "Break the Spell", "Upright Liar", "Conception of a Cure", and "20th Century Crusade". "Out of Nowhere" and "Nightmare" are comparable to up-tempo double bass enhanced GAMMA RAY songs. "After the Storm" is where SCANNER enter uncharted territory in a confident fashion, with a hook-laden verse and a pompous Wagnerian chorus. I wish "Wrong Lane Society" could have been left off, but otherwise, this **Mental Reservation** is one of the greatest comebacks in metal history. A little more complex than **Hypertrace** and **Terminal Earth**, I think **Mental Reservation** may be my favorite disc of the three. Highly recommended.

(Rating: 9 pumpkins)



SEELLENWINTER-Seelenwinter
(Massacre Records)

This is a strange record from this unique German band that play something wavering on the fine line between mellow power metal a la **Parallels** by FATES WARNING and horribly headache-inducing alternative a la ALICE IN CHAINS. Strange, but true. The vocalist has that Layne Staley quality of whiny low-pitched annoyance that would drive any power metal fan mad, running to his CRIMSON GLORY CD's for comfort.

The musical aspect of this album is fine; it is simple and soft melodies woven atmospherically together with swirling dreamlike guitar sounds and subdued percussion. Again, as with most iffy power metal (?) albums, the vocalist is the determining factor that ruined what could have been a perfectly decent piece of work. I know not how to classify this album, because it is certainly not death, power, thrash, doom, or anything identifiable. Nevertheless, alternative music this ain't, and should accordingly not have a lame alterna-poseur vocalist. It just doesn't fit. The world is already saturated with "alternative" idiots; we need no more!

Hooks and catchiness are a vital element to good power metal, but what good is the music if you remember not a note?! This is not a horrible album; it is just frighteningly average and forgettable. Sigh. No song is worth mentioning.



because they all sound the same anyway. (Now, if you are seeking *true*, passionate and emotional ethereal power metal, VAUXDVIHL's **To Dimension Logic** album is an essential listening experience that will take you to Elysium like no other!)

(Rating: 3 poseur-hating pumpkins)

-Natalie Vlahovic

SELF INFLICTED-Excuse Me
(Independent CD)

At times I could swear this three piece from Maryland were influenced by MANILLA ROAD, but for the most part SELF INFLICTED would fit into the Hellhound Records stable of bands nicely. Guitarist/vocalist John Demas has a very rugged playing style—not a precise axeman for sure, but he's got his own style. Vocally, Demas puts on this pseudo gothic/British accent which doesn't ring true most of the time. SELF INFLICTED are not a doom metal band, nor a gothic band; there is no sign of PRIEST or MAIDEN in the music either. What are SELF INFLICTED? I don't know. Maybe this power trio would have fit into the 70's and been called a prog band with heavy guitar distortion. It is heavy metal, not terribly brilliant, but original. My song picks would be "The Atmosphere", "Close My Eyes", "Cast In Stone", "Determination", and the title-track "Excuse Me".

Write to: SELF INFLICTED / 15005 Joshua Tree Dr. / Gaithersburg, MD 20878. P.S. SELF INFLICTED note in their bio that John Demas vocals are "operatic"—they are not. Off-key baritone, perhaps, but not operatic, sorry.

SENTENCED-Love and Death EP
(Century Media)

SENTENCED had spun a 180° with their impressive IRON MAIDEN-tinged **Amok**, leaving some fans stoked, and others disappointed. In the spirit of non-conformist "death" metal (?), SENTENCED continue even further down the path of rock-dom, creating an even more unique, unprecedented sound, adding cheesy 1980's rock sounds (a cover of BILLY IDOL's "White Wedding" among other things!), and more variety to their already MAIDEN-inspired sound, using rehashed riffs from the world of glam rock. "Obsession" is one of those happy crappy songs that make one wince with annoyance. "Dreamlands" has a plenitude of happy, catchy, and melodic old-school riffs as well...too bad it's so sugary sweet that one shall get an earache after a number of listens.

Anyone missing the bubble-gum era will adore this EP. Gone is the musically technical quirkiness and those fantastical lyrics of the cold northern abyss; now present are frighteningly accessible lyrics and riffs more akin to DOKKEN than older DARK THRONE. While **Amok** was a masterpiece, it seems that SENTENCED have taken their newfound love for all things old school a tad bit far. This EP is just *too* happy (and hence rather sickening). If you are one of those **North From Here** devotees, you may not care for this, but if **Amok** had you panting for something a little more "rockin'" (ick), drop this review and buy this immediately. Jeez, at first I actually *liked* this release, but I did not give it a fair listen; all of you are better off with your dusty copy of ROUGH CUTT's self-titled LP (yeah!), for SENTENCED's **Love and Death** ain't any better.

(Rating: 6 pumpkins)

-Natalie Vlahovic

SEVENTH OMEN-Majestic
(Independent CD)

Well, if John Cyriis were still around, I'm sure he'd be mightily impressed by SEVENTH OMEN's lyrics. Illinois' SEVENTH OMEN confidently incorporate UFO's, religion, and other such topics into their music. Musically, SEVENTH OMEN are a melodic power metal band with one hitch; guitarist Clay Yoksas also sings, and he sounds like Brian Troch, formerly of CYCLONE TEMPLE. There's nothing wrong with sounding like Troch, but Yoksas' earthy, textured voice just doesn't seem to mesh with the melodic and fluid guitar work. I suppose if SEVENTH OMEN had more of a thick riffing style, Yoksas' lungs might fit in, but as it stands right now, SEVENTH OMEN should find themselves a fifth member with a high-pitched voice, or at least someone with more range. As said, the guitar work is fluid and melodic, really reminding me of a band like DESPAIR, where the guitar is not blatant, but instead playing along with the other instruments, creating little swirls and wisps of melody. To break it up, a few more power moments would have been welcome. Having said that, the songwriting is mostly top-notch; at times I imagine what a set of high vocals could have done for the material on **Majestic**, to make the songs sound even better. SEVENTH OMEN's **Majestic** is easily one of the better independent releases out there today, though the vocals may put some people off. The title-track is excellent, capturing an IRON MAIDEN epic feel that the other tracks approach but do not achieve. The worst track is "Scraping Ground", where the group makes an unnecessary plunge into industrial. At 60+ minutes, twelve songs and a fully-packaged booklet.

Available from Dream Disc, *Sentinel Steel*, or Septagram Records / P.O. Box 8062 / Woodridge, IL 60517

SEVENTHSIGN-Perpetual Destiny
(Independent CD)

Much hype surrounds SEVENTHSIGN, much of it unfounded. I didn't like their first CD EP that much, mainly because it had commercial/bluesy touches. Nicely packaged and well produced, this 11-song effort lacks good guitarwork to make it 'progressive'. Nope, SEVENTHSIGN are a melodic metal band, occasionally hitting MYSTIC FORCE territory, but that's rare.

Write to: SEVENTHSIGN / 1709 Kirby NE / Albuquerque, NM 87112

SHADOW GALLERY-Shadow Gallery
-Carved In Stone
(Magna Carta)

When the first SHADOW GALLERY hit the market, the band did not have any domestic distribution. The first time I had heard of SHADOW GALLERY was when a European friend bought the album and told me about it. He described it as "a soft and cute version of MAGELLAN yet still cool". When I finally got a hold of the CD, I discovered what my friend had really wanted to say; SHADOW GALLERY are romantic prog metal. It is metal but draws heavily from the Romantic era, intermingled with various influences from folk music. Even the lyrics remind you of a time when the sword was your best friend and royal maids were rescued

by gallant knights. Back to the music though. Except for a few passages where Carl Cadden-James uses his flute to create a medieval atmosphere, SHADOW GALLERY stay well within the borders of traditional prog metal instrumentation, with haunting guitar solos and racing double bass drums. The multi-layered vocal choruses could become their trademark, since few other prog metal bands have interest or capacity to evoke an almost choir-like effect. The difference in terms of the song material seems minor to me, though. **Carved** is definitely more straightforward and conventional...and better produced. If their self-titled debut has one handicap, it is the production. The overall sound is weak, and when everyone is jamming, it is a holy mess. However, we metal fans have learned to live with inferior production (remember SAVAGE GRACE's *Master of Disguise*?) and value creativity over anything else. If you are looking for an alternative to your already pompous collection of intelligent 80's metal, SHADOW GALLERY is the way to go.
(Rating: **Shadow Gallery**: 7½ pumpkins,
Carved In Stone: 8 pumpkins)

-David Boller

SHADOWS OF IGA...The Darkside
(Independent CD)

Like NO INNER LIMITS, SHADOWS OF IGA's debut CD (seven songs) pleased German critics. And like N.I.L., and most new German bands, S.O.I. sound nothing like the popular German acts (RUNNING WILD, HELLOWEEN, GAMMA RAY, BLIND GUARDIAN, etc.). This young band (named after a HELSTAR tune, incidentally) are power metal, but the vocals are kind of dull, and the songwriting is pretty ordinary. What holds S.O.I. back is their lack of melody; unbelievable as it may seem, this German fivesome rely on American style power metal/light thrash riffs to get them by. Only "Fight For Honour", with its brief keyboard usage during the main verses can be praised. "False Pride" is no different than what a countless number of U.S. thrash/power bands are up to. Most songs on **...The Darkside** resemble "False Pride". S.O.I. do know how to set up a familiar verse/chorus structure, but in the end the overall picture is so generic that it's not attractive.

Write to: Oliver Weinsheimer / Unterer Liebenberg 3 / 97780 Gossenheim / GERMANY

SIAM-The Language of Menace
(Now and Then Records) 1994

Years ago, SHY vocalist Tony Mills was quoted as saying he'd like to pursue a progressive/QUEENSRYPHE direction. In 1994, he finally realized his dream by putting together SIAM. The sound is an exact copy of QUEENSRYPHE with perhaps a little bit more bite to the guitar section. Mills is in fine form here, extinguishing the tired blues format he fronted for so many years, and he is now walking alongside the Tates and such. The songwriting is downright catchy with well thought-out vocal harmonies and hooks galore. The production occasionally shows its budgetary limits, especially with the lead guitar overdub, but that's me nit-picking. A new disc is out, but pick this one up, too. It may shock some QUEENSRYPHE fans, but good music is good music, and SIAM led by Tony Mills is worthwhile.
(Rating: 8 satisfied pumpkins)



SIAM-Prayer
(A2Z/Milestone)

Well, here it is, the new SIAM, and Prayer should catapult these Brits to better shores. The QUEENSRYPHE aspect is still intact, but I prefer SIAM's sound, as they're crunchier, and with songs like "Sacrifice Divine", noticeably more zealous in their work. And in Prayer, Tony Mills does try to make his band sound a wee bit different than QUEENSRYPHE, but purists for the Seattle group will probably dislike the similarity of the Brits' product. As with **Language of Menace**, the first half of Prayer is the best, but overall there are no average moments. The production blows away the first album, making this new disc even more convincing. As said, towards the end of Prayer, the writing slips, and I leave the disc unsatisfied, for which I deduct a few points.

(Rating: 8½ pumpkins)

SKYCLAD-Silent Whales of Lunar Sea
(Noise)

Martin Walkyier has lost his passion and is now content to dish out quick songs without his patented careful aggression. His vocals, just as gritty as ever, are a mismatch to the somewhat typical songwriting ideas. Still, a few songs do stand out. "Just What Nobody Wanted" is musically similar to "Puttin' On The Ritz", a Broadway musical...interesting but sadly funny, too. "Art Nazi" is as close as SKYCLAD can get to punk without losing their audience (the work of fiddler Biddle is nicely engaging in this piece). "Jeopardy" is a very catchy tune, boasting a techno dance beat (NO JOKE!) and tries to be a crossover dance hit bonanza the world over. I'm not sure Noise felt the same way though... SKYCLAD are no longer on Noise, so this disc reeks of "contract fulfillment". Not much else on the CD is outstanding. Album opener "Still

Spinning Shrapnel" meets all requirements for the bonafide SKYCLAD, but haven't we all heard it before? The same guitar riffs (which now threaten to annoy severely with their sheer genericism), the little fiddle flairs, the same tempo, and Martin's grating one-dimensional voice. "Brimstone Bullet", the half-step ballad "A Stranger In the Garden", "Another Fine Mess", the very short "Turncoat Rebellion", the despondent "Halo of Flies", and another atmospheric doom ballad in the "Present Imperfect" are all the really worn compositions. Preceding the "Present Imperfect" is the furious three-and-a-half minute speed metal jingle "Desperanto (A song for Europe)", which is an excellent number that Walkyier and Ramsey used to do in their old bands (SABBAT and SATAN / PARIASH respectively). Ahh, how I'd like more of the "Desperanto" stuff! And lastly, an unlisted jingle makes for a track 12 ...a nice hee haw-style instrumental medley. By the time you read this, SKYCLAD's newer work will be out.

(Rating: 7 pumpkins)

SKYLARK-The Horizon & the Storm
(EA1)
(review #1)

Italy hasn't had a burst of metal creativity since the mid 80's, but ten years later with RHAPSODY and ELDRITCH leading the way, Italy's scene is brimming with excitement. SKYLARK are definitely one of the better bands sporting a sound blending a little progressive pomp rock with a core of RHAPSODY/ANGRA symphony frolicking. The production is a touch thin, reducing the "wall of sound" to a more sparse concept, but that's OK, as the songwriting tells the promise of this band.

While there are seven tracks total (34+ minutes), only four of the songs are "full length" (5:49, 10:07, 7:05, 6:01 respectively) making **The Horizon** like a CD appetizer. This should land group leader Eddy Antonini (piano, keys, harpsichord) some proper attention. Much like RHAPSODY's Luca, Eddy is a man devoted to creating a legacy fueled by his influences, according to the CD booklet ("thanks for the inspiration to MOZART, BACH, HAYDEN, BEETHOVEN, KAI HANSEN, MICHAEL KISKE, and JON BON JOVI). Just what metal needs!

With luck, SKYLARK will sign to LMP and record at ELDRITCH's studio. My only advice is to tighten the songwriting. But, then again, the whole opera concept presented on this disc is very appealing, too. The singer Fabio may want to improve his (out of tune) vocal delivery, but otherwise, I'm thrilled at the potential of SKYLARK. Sure the production is not the best, but treated as a demo CD, **The Horizon & The Storm** is hugely inspired.

(Rating: 8 pumpkins)

SKYLARK-The Horizon and the Storm
(Independent CD)
(review #2)

Without any great new bands coming out of Germany, Italy (and Greece) are picking up the slack. RHAPSODY are set to conquer the world, and SKYLARK are not that far behind 'em. **The Horizon and the Storm** is somewhere between RHAPSODY and ANGRA (!!!), and SKYLARK too has a single visionary-pianist/keyboardist Eddy Antonini ("Thanks for

inspiration to: Mozart, Bach, Haydn, Beethoven, Kai Hansen, Michael Kiske, Jon Bon Jovi"). Eddy's SKYLARK is not as honed as ANGRA and RHAPSODY--yet. However, the songwriting is excellent, and the playing is near full maturity. The production on this CD isn't as 'big' as it should be, due to obvious budgetary limits, but that shouldn't hold the band back; I dislike speculation, but if SKYLARK don't get signed in 1996 (L.M.P. or Underground Symphony would be ideal), I'll sign 'em! For the moment, SKYLARK do have this 35 minute independent CD available; the production is thin, I'll admit, but if **The Horizon and the Storm** isn't brilliant symphonic power/progressive/euphoric conceptual speed metal at its best, then I don't know what is. Disregard the sound quality and listen to the *magic*.

Write to: Eddy Antonini / Via Dei Mocenigo No. 4 / 20137 Milano / ITALY
UPDATE: SKYLARK has signed to Underground Symphony. New CD will be out soon! Yes!!!

SNAILBOOSTER-Why
(Independent CD)

'SNAILBOOSTER' is one of the stupidest names in heavy metal history, and I told the band this, but these four Frenchmen think 'SNAILBOOSTER' is comparable to 'ANGEL WITCH', 'VIRGIN STEELE', etc. Oh guys, please take my advice! You'll go nowhere with a name like that!! On to the music...the opening instrumental "Sixty Nine" is very funny, with a girl's moans harmonizing with an electric guitar--use your imagination! "Help Me To Die" is a solid opening song, showing this band to be fully entrenched in the NWOBHM sound circa 1982. Very simplistic, no-frills metal, from the lyrics to the production and playing. I'm not a well of knowledge when it comes to the NWOBHM, but SNAILBOOSTER are not in the same league as, say, WITCHFINDER GENERAL or SATAN; no, SNAILBOOSTER are more of a BLITZKRIEG type of a band. There are 11 selections on this disc, the first six being the more recent work, while the last five are from the group's 1992 demo, but remixed. From the newer stuff, "Shameful Poverty" really stands out with its early MAIDEN overtones, and lyrically the group aren't doing anything groundbreaking, but "Why" and "Trade of Tears" are hugely memorable.

The older songs are just as good as the cuts preceding them; lyrically they may not be as mature ("On the Way" and "To Touch Her"), but musically they make the grade. These short haired French fellows play unsophisticated heavy metal, so it has the appeal that BLITZKRIEG's recent **Unholy Trinity** has--a humble, sincere sound, unmarred by 90's technology. Refreshing and recommended.

Write to: Booster Productions / 33 Rue d Haubourdin / 59000 Lille / FRANCE. P.S. Play SNAILBOOSTER very loud; it sounds much better at a higher volume!

SORCERER-Sorcerer
(Brain Ticket Music)

From the very first note of the very first song, "Premonition", CANDLEMASS instantly spring to mind. It is complete with that church choir chanting, which then melts into the heavy, doomy, and melodic SOLITUDE AETURNUS-

inspired song, "The Sorcerer". This Swedish outfit plays typical doom metal, but not doom in the ST. VITUS sense of the word; it is classically inspired slowness with a few faster power metallish parts strewn around for equilibrium's sake.

And then there's the vocalist. Hmmm. He is not tuneless by any means, but his slightly harsh vocal delivery (ala Dio or Eric Adams) detracts from the power of the classical instrumentation. He needs not be a Messiah Marcolin clone, but it would greatly enhance the beauty of the music if he were a bit more polished. This CD contains five tracks from SORCERER's first demo, which are actually *better* in the vocal arena than the other eight newer tracks; it puzzles me why he did not improve upon that vocal style which had potential for greatness.

All vocal qualms aside, there are a few bright spots on this album, such as the demo track "Born With Fear"; it is slow and spiteful, like MANOWAR's "Hatred", but not nearly as cogent. The third non-demo track, "Northern Seas" contains a brilliant "galloping" sort of power metal bit towards the end that is much needed after such dreadful slooooooooooooooooooooooowness. One thing that may also impede the band from fully demonstrating their true musical capacity is the production. It is the same overused tighter-than-TITAN-FORCE's-spandex Tomas Skogsberg/Sunlight Studios production (a.k.a. the "Swedish" sound) more commonly associated with ENTOMBED and DISMEMBER, than with any sort of doom metal.

Another non-demo track, "Inquisition" contains melodies that echo guitar harmonies and melodies found in works by MEMENTO MORI. Also, there is an interesting cover of Rainbow's "Stargazer", which partially confirms that SORCERER's vocalist is influenced by Dio just a tad bit.

This self-titled SORCERER work of doom attempted to capture the majesty of music like CANDLEMASS and SOLITUDE AETURNUS, but only resulted in succeeding halfway. SORCERER are not at all a bad band; they just aren't very catchy, and thus take a bit of time getting used to.

(Rating: 8 pumpkins)

-Natalie Vlahovic

STEEL PROPHET-The Goddess Principle
(Brainstorm/Art of Music)

I reviewed this album in the last issue using my cassette advance, which was recorded directly from Steve Kachinsky Blackmoor's (SP band leader and guitarist) DAT master. In the review I mentioned some heavy bands (HEATHEN, LETHAL, HELSTAR) in relation to STEEL PROPHET's sound. Well, imagine my surprise when I got the actual CD; the sound was very different! I found the dB levels to be very low, as if the CD pressing plant "turned down" the volume of this CD. Basically, **The Goddess Principle** CD sounds downright weak compared to the 'original' recording. (Another disc on the label, NOT FRAGILE's **The Return**, suffers from the same problem). The group are widely compared to early FATES WARNING, and I'd have to agree, now that the disc is in my hand.

Out now is also STEEL PROPHET's 5-song EP called **Continuum**. Check out the review.

(Rating: CD-7½ pumpkins)



STRATOVARIUS-Fourth Dimension
(T&T)

For information on STRATOVARIUS' three previous releases, please read *Sentinel Steel 2*. A fifth disc, *Episode*, is due out very soon, but here's a review on *Fourth Dimension* to keep my collection of STRATOVARIUS reviews complete. This ten-song (and outro), 60 minute piece of work features Timo Kotipelto, the band's new singer, filling Timo Tolkki's shoes admirably. In fact, Kotipelto sounds very much like Tolkki, which should come as no surprise. The vocal excellence continues unchanged, as does the Tolkki production, which is definitely his best yet. The bass level is slightly higher than in *Dreamspace*, rounding out the sound very nicely. As for the songs themselves, we have once again a QUEENSRYPHE lawsuit pending with "030366" (I'll leave it up to you to find out what song it actually is, ha ha.) and a possibly pissed off KING DIAMOND for the adaptation of his "Twilight Symphony" (from *Them*) in STRATOVARIUS' version titled...."Twilight Symphony" (!). "Galaxies" is a nod to EUROPE, but I could keep going (as this is fun), but Tolkki truly does better the original versions of these songs. I wish he would come up with his own ideas, since he is a talented fellow, and hopefully he will on his fifth outing. In any case, besides the ponderous steps of "Winter", "Nightfall", and "We Hold the Key", the rest of this recommended CD is the classic STRATOVARIUS mix of HELLOWEEN, QUEENSRYPHE, MALMSTEEN, etc. A worthy follow-up to *Dreamspace*, definitely.
(Rating: 8½ little cloned pumpkins)

STRATOVARIUS-Fourth Dimension
(T&T)

Wow. As soon as I heard this QUEENSRYPHE/EUROPE-ish clone music, I had to usurp this treasure of a CD from the halls of Dream Disc. Just like CONCEPTION, STRATOVARIUS play a very classy sort of modern power metal. Kotipelto's vocals are excellent, clean, and passionate in delivery. STRATOVARIUS are all obviously more than competent musicians, who strive to perfect that *Rage For Order* sound with a tad bit of EUROPE thrown in for poppiness' sake.

Speaking of *Rage For Order*, STRATOVARIUS pull that typical clone thing by rewriting a song *almost* exactly the same way as the band they are attempting to emulate. "030366" is so blatant that it's unlistenable, but it still amusing nonetheless, for at least they honestly pay homage to their true heroes. Now that I got that off my chest, the rest of the album is amazing and deserving of all the praise in the world. "Lord of the Wasteland" is an incredible track, sung and played with fury and grace; it is an excellent follow up to the instrumental "Stratovarius". The rest of the CD is extremely pleasing ear candy. The only gripe I have is that there is no bass in this production. Tin can production of astounding music is so *annoying!* They should have had full production to fully present their sound more convincingly. Ah, shite. Oh well...perhaps next time. Nonetheless, buy this album, or you will miss out on one of the best 60-minute modern power metal epics of the 90's.
(Rating: 8¾ pumpkins)

-Natalie Vlahovic

SURGEON-The Sign of Ending Grace
(SKO Musik)

While not all of Dream Disc's recommendations have ended happily for me, Brian and Brent have my eternal gratitude for urging me to get this gem from a heretofore unknown German melodic power band SURGEON. This CD is an impressive meld of power and melody, a glorious mix of mid-80's classic metal and 90's progressiveness. How do you describe this CD? There are influences of *Keepers*-era HELLOWEEN, as well as *Branded and Exiled*-era RUNNING WILD, with vocals of a BRAINFEVER/NOT FRAGILE/ATLAIN-style. But SURGEON very much have their own identity; they really sound nothing like any of the above bands. This is just metal that is heavy, talented, played with conviction, and with passionate high-quality vocals that come together with wonderful song-writing to create a magical ten songs. In tempo, it ranges from the fast and aggressive HELLOWEEN-ish "Try Again" to the beautiful semi-ballad title-track.

This is one of those few bands whose mid-tempo songs I like as much as the high-tempo ones, and who writes stirring (instead of sappy) power ballads. If you like superbly done German power metal, this CD is for you.
(Rating: 9 happy wabbits)

-Tony Zangara

SYMPHONY X-The Damnation Game
(Inside Out)

The new MALMSTEEN? No! It's New Jersey's own SYMPHONY X, and what a surprise, as I never knew New Jersey could give birth to such talent. SYMPHONY X are what MALMSTEEN should sound like--passionate guitars, intelligent lyrics, snappy drumming, and unbridled energy. All of which MALMSTEEN currently lacks, but SYMPHONY X have an abundance of. Some of the keyboard parts remind me of DREAM THEATER, too, but otherwise, *The Damnation Game* is a straight-ahead neoclassical metal album, in the tradition of MALMSTEEN and IMPELLITTERI. The songs are very tight, much like ELDRITCH, and it makes sense that both groups share the same label. Rhythmically, both SYMPHONY X and ELDRITCH have the PRIEST *Painkiller* sharp drumming (similarly found on the *POWER Justice of Fire* disc as well) that leaves MALMSTEEN in the dust. I haven't heard the first SYMPHONY X disc, which has been out in Japan for a while, but *The Damnation Game* disc makes the first disc a tempting acquisition.

(Rating: 8½ pumpkins)



SYRIS-Syris
(Shark Records)

And yet another melodic US power metal band signed to a German label...what's new? From what I hear, SYRIS have been around for a while, playing their brand of old QUEENSRYPHE/ old HEIR APPARENT style music. SYRIS's vocalist sounds like he's right out of the mid-80's! Anyone looking for a polished 90's power metal approach won't find that with SYRIS. But those of you (like me) who enjoy the sounds of bands like HEIR APPARENT (*Graceful Inheritance*), EXPLORER, etc. then SYRIS are definitely worth checking out.
(Rating: 8½ pumpkins)





TAD MOROSE
Sender of Thoughts
Paradigma EP
 (BM)

Leaving the Past Behind gained this Swedish group some great press in the European mags. As their very good first album was rushed, everyone awaited anxiously to see what TAD MOROSE could come up with in two years. Well, **Sender of Thoughts** is the full length follow-up, and begins well with "Fading Pictures", a song that mixes typical TAD MOROSE sound with speed a la STRATOVARIUS or CONCEPTION. If this was what the whole album was going to be like, I was ready to be impressed! Somehow, it didn't end up being that way. Sure, the production is all one could ask for, and the playing is near flawless, but the songs don't leave me a happy camper. Bits and pieces seem to have been recycled from **Leaving the Past Behind**, and the writing is a bit more complex now, with more parts. Krille's vocals, with a Tony Martin-like style, are very soulful and tend to be more bluesy than I prefer. I'm not a fan of blues, so... I enjoyed the first disc, so Krille's vocals shouldn't have been a problem. It's the songwriting; it's missing from the finished element on **Sender of Thoughts**, and from the following EP, **Paradigma**. There is also the element of monotony, as Christer's stiff, chunky riffs get old really quickly, and keyboardist Frippe plays his keys like a church organ in the background. There is this constant synthesizer wind behind the bass, drums and guitars. I can't help but tell you how great their cover of "Gates of Babylon" is, but the best song on the album is a cover... (Rating: 7 pumpkins)

TARAMIS-Stretch of the Imagination
 (Rising Sun)

The name should ring a bell...Australia's TARAMIS, under heavy IRON MAIDEN influence, put out their **Queen of Thieves** epic in the mid/late 80's through our own Metal Blade. It was a good piece of work, but hampered by a reedy production and singer Shane's untamed voice. On **Stretch of the Imagination**, the years have made Shane learn restraint, yet stretch his voice to a more professional height. The production is good, successfully capturing the group's neo-progressive technical sound.

There's a smattering of DREAM THEATER's **When Dream and Day Unite**, with high-powered riffs inspired by SIEGES EVEN's **Life Cycle**. (S.E.'s only metal album!) While not as self-absorbed as...say...WATCHTOWER, fans of technical metal will enjoy this TARAMIS release. Supporters of good songs will find **Stretch of the Imagination** fulfilling, too. I have no word on what has happened to the band; it's a shame that they're out of the metal picture, as this disc is easily the finest production of Australian metal. (Rating: 8 pleased pumpkins)

THERION-Lepaca Kliffoth
 (NBA)

Whilst atypical atmosphere and unusual melody is a much-needed smack in the face to the stale Swedish meatball death metal genre, some bands seem to hop on this melody-driven bandwagon unnecessarily. THERION are a vivid example of a band who used to create godly technical death that made fans drool (Of Darkness rules!), but are now using the obligatory wannabe operatic female vocalist and excessive keyboards. Ugh.

Nevertheless, this is a good album; it just has a plethora of ideas with which THERION are not yet familiar, and thus have not fully realized. They randomly employ a female squawker where she does not belong, which can be very hard on the ears, as on the song "Black". Other songs like "The Wings of the Hydra" and "Melez" show unmistakably strong melody, but what is up with those LAME BIOHAZARD-esque vocals?! Aspects like this ruin a perfectly good album! Also, the songs "Riders of the Theli" and the title-track appear a tad too radio-friendly.

Once THERION's new approach to songwriting is fulfilled, they shall positively produce a gem. Until then, we all will have to settle for the slightly above average **Lepaca Kliffoth**. (Rating: 7 confused pumpkins)

-Natalie Vlahovic



THIRD DEGREE-It's a Crime
 (Independent CD)

Clad in their black leather jackets, THIRD DEGREE are from the New England area, dishing out straight ahead US heavy metal. The material treads well-worn territory lyrically and musically, but this full-length CD is a commendable effort. The production and playing is on a professional level, which makes up for the cheaply done computer cartoons that adorn the booklet. But, it's the music that counts, and THIRD DEGREE are in that niche filled by bands like ARMORED SAINT and DAMIEN, i.e. not wimpy metal by any means, but also lacking power to give that extra "oomph".

And sadly, the second half of the disc is average heavy metal, with several ballads and an instrumental closing the CD. Hopefully THIRD DEGREE can do more songs like "Cruel World", "It's A Crime", and "What's Wrong With Me".

Write: Dave's Music Mania / 234 Main St. / Berlin, NH 03570

DAMIEN LEE THORR-Sonic Brutality
 (Independent CD)

Damien Lee Thorr, neo-classical guitarist supreme, is working on the follow-up to **Sonic Brutality**. However, his new work will be professionally recorded in a proper studio, which wasn't the case with **Sonic Brutality**. That first effort, as eight-song (plus instrumental) disc, was done at Thorr's home, using a drum machine and a four-track recorder. Not the best recording circumstances, and **Sonic Brutality** suffers from it. Thorr also did the vocals with a vicious Udo-like snarl, contrasting greatly with the hyper, melodious fret work that he does. His sound? SAVAGE GRACE meets IRON MAIDEN meets Malmsteen. The songwriting is excellent; my favorites are "Icon", "Hear the Angels Call", "To the Four Winds", and "Break Down the Walls", which are all melodic speed metal classics slated to be recorded for his second CD. "Metal Assault" and "Nightmare" are intense anthems, rhythmically simple, but catchy nonetheless. "Exploding From Within" is a moody slow piece. "Fugue-tive" is a tribute to BACH, and the disc's lone weak cut is "I Don't Wanna Vomit Today", not a typical foray into the world of bulimia. The production is terrible, the

vocals are harsh,, and the drumming done by machine--the stuff of cult bands! Watch for the second disc, under the name of DRAGON LORD, Thorr's new band. It's the same style, pro sound, and a monster drummer and vocalist.

Sonic Brutality is still available from *Sentinel Steel*--check out the catalog. Write to Damien Lee Thorr at: P.O. Box 23216 / Fort Lauderdale, FL 33307

TIME MACHINE-Act II: Galileo
(Dig It/Spell/Lucretia Records)

When I last checked with these guys, I had reviewed their less-than-impressive debut independent release in *Sentinel Steel* #1½. At the time, LMP/Empire Entertainment (ANGRA, etc) was working on the band, but since then, both parties have severed ties. Galileo, the group's first full length album, is a nine-part/nineteen-track conceptual opus. The story is of Galileo, and the struggles of science and individuals against the chains of religion. For Galileo, the Inquisition imprisoned him at age 70. The booklet's presentation of the lyrics and illustrations is very nice. Musically, these Italian progressive rock/metallers are in the explorative DREAM THEATER style, with more symphonic/soundtrack keyboards and 70's progressive heavy rock guitar. Vocally, TIME MACHINE's new singer is better than the previous frontman, sounding confident in parts. The occasional 'honesty' in his voice is a treat, keeping him from being similar to other monotonous prog rock singers. For comparison's sake, TIME MACHINE should appeal to fans of various bands like BLACK JESTER, LAST WARNING, etc. My own feelings, however, are not that positive. There are lots of filler tracks on this disc, which act as unsightly buffers between the "legit" songs. There may be nineteen tracks, but only eight of them are songs! As for the songs, their previous work was average, and their songwriting here isn't all that inspiring, achieving a sort of monotonous quality. Soundtrack-style progressive rock/metal is what this is.
(Rating: 6½ pumpkins)

TWILIGHT-Eye For an Eye (Olafsongs)

Fans of SAVATAGE, TAD MOROSE, NARITA, and CONCEPTION might want to check this one out. The big production is by Tommy Hansen, really doing a nice job with the sound. I have never heard this group's music before, so I am wondering if they went directly from an industry demo to a CD. In any case, this Danish five-piece are definitely capable musicians with a classy vocalist, emulating TAD MOROSE, but because of the prominent blues-heavy rock/power style a la early SAVATAGE meets TAD MOROSE, I cannot drum up much enthusiasm for TWILIGHT. It's the EUROPE/CONCEPTION-charged march of "Trial By Fire" that I find appealing, but that song only out of ten tracks. As SAVATAGE is pretty popular among *Sentinel Steel* readers, this utterly professional *Eye For An Eye* album (with songs like "Imperfection", Criss Oliva's ghost has been resurrected!) should go amazingly well. A must for SAVATAGE/TAD MOROSE fans.

(Rating: 7½ subjective pumpkins)

TWILIGHT: M. Gregersen / Allegade ID, 3. / DK-8700 Horsens / DENMARK

VARIOUS ARTISTS:

Metal Gear
(Soundphase International Records)

Everyone knows that compilation albums can be hit-or-miss affairs, but the few great ones that there are (**Heavy Artillery** comes to mind) are absolute masterpieces. **Metal Gear** may not be perfect, but it is surely above average, better than most comps I've heard of as of late...especially **Metal Massacre XII**--yuck! There are thirteen songs on this disc, with DIVORCE doing two songs. All of the groups are either German or Greek, and this comp features only traditional heavy metal with no other styles presented. Production is consistently good, and a few of the groups have independent CD's out.

Grecians DIVORCE get the disc rolling with a live song, and I wasn't taken by their choice brand of melodic metal/rock. Power trio RONIN's "Silent Violation" is a decent, straight-ahead, rolling power number, with gruff vocals...not the best representation of the band, I'm sure.

APPOMATTOX are next, picking things up and showing off their "Door to December" song, culled from the band's CD/EP called **No Doubt?**. For more info on their CENTAUR-meets-DREAM THEATER sound, see their review elsewhere.

Germans CASTLE WELL do "At Dawn", one of the best songs on this comp. There are good high vocals with good melodic power metal songwriting; I'm keeping my eyes on this bunch.

VELVET GANG, along with DIVORCE, are the weakest point on this, playing bluesy LA-style metal. Thankfully, from track six on it's smooth sailing.

Greeks SARISSA promote their full-length CD release with the song "Survival", a nice example of this Euro/prog metal band--great bass work and fine hooks.

In the fine German melodic speed/power metal tradition is LAN FEAR's "Withering Beauty", which has the snappy double bass and catchy choruses that remind me of NOT FRAGILE with more grace.

Track eight is by the deceptively-named CUSTARD, who play a cool style of RUNNING WILD power metal. Their song is called "God of Storm". The vocalist reminds me of the DEATHROW singer circa **Raging Steel**.

SKELETOR may look like PARADOX circa **Product of Imagination**, but their "Last Word Is Lost" is right off of a TANK album--simplistic foot-tapping TANK metal. Like RONIN's tune, it's easy music to get into, but not challenging enough.

Even with a thin production and suspicious mix, I really like Greece's DARK NOVA, whose CD **Dark Symphonies** is available now. Their music, as heard on "Back Again", is excellent melodic speed/power metal, with a high-pitched singer. Oddly enough, the song lyrics don't match the ones printed in the **Metal Gear** booklet.

POSITIVITY OF MIND are a progressive thrash group with aggressive vocals and unpredictable time changes--kind of average.

The absolutely incredible VANILLA REX (please ignore the ridiculous name!) combine a blend of US prog/power metal like LETHAL,

RECON, QUEENSRYCHE, and SACRED WARRIOR. The vocalist is stunning, with English diction bordering on perfect. In fact, he must be American! "Save Your Prayers" is a must-listen! I may have compared them to some Christian bands, but from what I can make out, VANILLA REX are strongly opposed to religion, with lyrics like, "let people live their lives, as religion is a switchblade knife". I cannot believe VANILLA REX haven't been picked up by the German press and proclaimed to be next great band to arise. I'll change that!

Metal Gear finishes with the second DIVORCE song, with the bluesy ABBA-like "Fly Away". (I swear I hear ABBA!)

To sum it all up, seven great songs, three average ones, and three songs by two bands I don't care for, DIVORCE and VELVET GANG.

This CD is available from *Sentinel Steel* Mailorder.

VARIOUS ARTISTS:
Metal Massacre XII
(Metal Blade Records)

PAINGOD--mid-paced thrashcore with groove CRISIS--down-tuned female-fronted hardcore PIST ON--whispered vocals, down-tuned doom AVERNUS--Gothic doom/folk death metal ANCIENT--melodic, Gothic black metal with no production

LEVEL--Hellhound-style bluesy doom TIPPER GOR--bad Pantera with cleaner vocals

GUNGA DIN--annoying funk/jazz a la Primus/ Mind Over Four

DIVINE REGALE--Alder era Fates/Ryche/ Dream Theater

PERVIS--alternative jazzy speed metal with dual female lead

AND CHRIST WEPT--industrial Gothic death AMBOOG-A-LARD--industrial groove thrash EULOGY--death metal

OVERCAST--hardcore thrash

BIG TWIN DIN--Stacy Anderson, ex Hallows Eve, groove thrashcore

To keep up with the times, it's no surprise that MM XII offers everything but real metal. The only band of note on here is DIVINE REGALE, whose self-financed debut CD was reviewed in *Sentinel Steel* #1½. Their new song, "Cry to Heaven" continues to place the group in the Alder-era FATES WARNING category. This is great stuff, but I'd like to hear the guitars more, along with stronger choruses, as on their song "Horizons". That's it.

PERVIS caught my ears, but is this metal? There is a bit of a crunch in the guitars, but I'd put them in an alternative jazzy genre. It is a catchy tune, though. ANCIENT, the only black metal sacrifice here, are good as well. There are melodies and keyboards, as well as an easy-to-follow pace. It made me think that if they could rid themselves of the stupid facepaint and lame Satanic messages, they might actually go places. And, unless you like groove-laden thrashcore (PAINGOD), to other forms of hardcore/industrial, then keep away from MM XII. It's the worst yet, replacing X.

The best? VII, with JUGGERNAUT, DÉTENTE, HERETIC, FLOTSAM & JETSAM COMMANDER, etc.); IV, with SACRED BLADE, DEAF DEALER, TROUBLE, SCEPTRE, LIZZY BORDEN, etc. IX is good, too.

(Rating: 1½ alterna-poser pumpkins)

VANDEN PLAS-Color Temple
(CNR Music)



VARIOUS ARTISTS:
The Power of Metal
(Noise '94)

This is a 2 CD set, featuring a full-length live set, from both GAMMA RAY and RAGE, along with a few samplings each from Noise rookies CONCEPTION and HELICON. The GAMMA RAY disc is easily the better of the two, as much of the material surpasses their studio counterparts. Speed metal cuts like "Tribute to the Past", "Last Before the Storm", and others are elevated to great levels, sounding very much like Walls of Jericho outtakes! "Last Before the Storm" even features additional guitar parts, making its studio version seem incomplete. A minus are the live examples of GAMMA RAY's average material like "Space Eater", "Changes", and "Heal Me", but who cares, when an amazing medley consisting of "I Want Out", "Future World", and "Ride The Sky" blazes the senses? This HELLOWEEN package is a must-hear and is easily the highlight of this disc. After the ten GAMMA RAY tracks, come two HELICON tracks; "Black and White" and "Woman" are from the group's weak first LP...not a good showing at all.

Onto the next disc. With the last few RAGE outings having left me cold, and the group's patented yet popular two-dimensional sound--not a major player on the CD deck, I surprisingly wanted to be convinced by this thirteen-song live offering. Sadly, even with a perfect "song" line-up, RAGE would disappoint. They play the whole gig by the numbers, with very little heart. The best cuts are "Suicide", "Firestorm", and "Enough Is Enough", but they offer very little difference from the studio versions. Tunes like "Certain Days", "Nevermore", and "Refuge" are extremely average, supporting my opinion that **The Missing Link** and **Black In Mind** are RAGE's worst offerings to date.

In contrast, the five songs from CONCEPTION are superb. Four are from their excellent second release, **Parallel Minds**. The song "Black on Black" is, I believe, a bonus track from the Japanese pressing of the other CD's--a nice addition to the **Parallel Minds** legacy--something that CONCEPTION's third release, **In Your Multitude**, did not achieve. (Ratings: GAMMA RAY- 8½ pumpkins riding the sky, HELICON-7 pumpkins, RAGE-7½ pumpkins, CONCEPTION-8½ pumpkins)

My first sample of VANDEN PLAS left me quite unimpressed. I think the demo's name was **Days of Thunder**, and it was a hilarious attempt at an American sound. The whole hackneyed piece of work was so generically American sounding that it was laughable. Believe my surprise when I heard that LMP (ANGRA, RHAPSODY, ATTACK, LANZER, etc) decided to take on the group.

Well, **The Color Temple** is a step in the right direction with its super-heavy production and better songs, yet it's still an annoyingly predicable piece of work. Singer Andy Kuntz sounds like a sweet-voiced UDO, with highs reaching Robert Plant-like levels. His voice fits the heavy but disgustingly sappy music this band plays. The music is rarely fast, but similarly paced to a TAD MOROSE or CONCEPTION, while delving much deeper into the pit of commercialism. When they do come up with good songs, like the nine-minute "Soul Survives", it is tainted by the fact that it's a DREAM THEATER **Images and Words** rip-off. And, the bad stuff is *really* bad...who wants to sit through the seven-minute ballad "Anytime" and the eight-minute near-ballad "How Many Tears"? There is a distinct flatness or even odd remoteness to their sound, which makes it very unappealing. The songwriting is not that great, either.

(Rating: 6 pumpkins)

VIPER-Coma Rage
(RR-Brazil)

Fourteen songs and 44 minutes...they are short songs, short enough to be punk songs. Well, anyone looking for **Theatre of Fate** or **Evolution** won't find it here. **What Coma Rage** is, is a crossover disc, sort of like a metal/punk hybrid. VIPER have simplified their overall approach to everything. The drums are punk, the guitars are usually fast and bluesy, and there are a lot of shout-it-out choruses. Pit's still on the vocals and sounds very unconvincing. Thankfully **Coma Rage** is VIPER's best sounding disc to date, courtesy of Bill Metoyer. The bulk of this, songwriting-wise however, is pretty sad. It is a very predictable "influence"-heavy album, and Pit's vocals attempt to sound "Californian". A cover of "I Fought the Law" is also included.

(Rating: 5 sad little pumpkins without mohawks)

WAR DOG-War Dog
(Independent CD)

TENSION/DEUCE vocalist/guitarist Tommy Gattis is back after ten or so years! He is now in Arizona, leading a power trio, who have just signed to Metal Blade and should have a completely new CD out in the latter part of 1996. WAR DOG's debut self-titled independent release can't be dismissed however, and is bound to be a rare underground classic, since the print run of about 1000 has been exhausted. There are nine cuts, of which seven are "legit" songs. Gattis' clean power metal vocals, reminding me of FORBIDDEN or HEATHEN, are on half of the tracks, while bassist Catero sings in a clean/gruff thrash style on the rest of the songs. Personally, I much prefer Gattis'

classical delivery; unfortunately, it appears that the vocal duties will be shared in the future, too. The songwriting is also a split duty, as each songwriter sings his own material. Once again, it's Gattis' TENSION/power/melodic speed metal songs that are a cut above Catero's. I suppose Catero gives WAR DOG a more modern "90's" edge, but in my book, melody is always more important than aggression. My favorite tunes on here would be the moody "Beyond the Soul", the melodic speed of "Oblivion", and the switching tempos of the superb "Blasphemy". To say that these tunes have a TENSION feel about them would be an understatement. Gattis makes his presence known.

This CD will probably be unavailable by the time you read this, but try checking with Dream Disc.

WAR DOG-Scorched Earth
(Metal Blade)

Like their independent release, **Scorched Earth** is a mixed bag of great songs and a few average ones. The average ones come courtesy of bassist Chris Catero, whose attempt at 90's trendy "aggressive" vocals are a pain to the ears. Why WAR DOG guitarist Tommy Gattis allows him to go near a microphone is anyone's guess. No, Tommy has *the* voice and should be fronting WAR DOG full time. **Scorched Earth** starts out in high gear, with the title-track and the TENSION-like "Sounds of War" pulverizing from the start. "Broken But Not Dead" is an anthemic song that would not be so bad if Catero did not sing most of it while putting his lame voice through a filter. You can't hide, Chris. "Seeing Is Believing" is a speedy TENSION/HEATHEN-type song with Catero's voice actually passable on this one. But what if Tommy sang on it...? Two Cateros in a row are not fun. "Nothing Left" is a slowpoke doom song that is just plain bad, no matter who sings on it. "Killing Speed" is back to the speedy stuff, and again very HEATHENish at times. "Bucket O' Beer" is a piece of crap, a joke song, and I ask Gattis, WHY?! "Tomb of the Slain" and "Beast of Damnation" all also sound like updated TENSION outtakes, and this is what I want to hear from WAR DOG--serious songwriting! And that Gattis voice is just classic! "Beast of Damnation" is not the last song, as Catero felt the need to squeeze in the god-awful "Damned", which is perhaps an ode to his hero Waylon Jennings? Catero is a great bassist, but come on. The brilliance of WAR DOG's true metal is evident in "Beast of Damnation", and that is the direction the band *must* take. Gattis, show us the light!

(Rating: 7½ pumpkins)

WHIPLASH-Cult of One
(Massacre)

If this CD were graded on Tony Portaro's solos alone, the score I'd give would be much higher. See, Tony is a fantastic guitarist, and his three previous records (**Power and Pain**, **Ticket To Mayhem**, and particularly **Insult To Injury**) are all thrash metal classics. But on this WHIPLASH comeback, titled **Cult of One**, the majority of the music is a BIOHAZARD/Seattle mix, with Phil Anselmo's brother doing the vocals. Portaro, once the riff meister, is playing well below his usual standard. Only the last song, "Apostle of Truth", and the out-of-place

instrumental "Lost World" truly stand out, with the patented Portaro melody-meets-thrash writing. A first for Tony is the use of keyboards, especially on the title-track and the instrumental "Lost World". There may have been some on **Ticket To Mayhem**, but I can't remember. In any case, the keys don't help much, as vocalist Gonzo ruins most of this disc with his PANTERA-like screeching (though he does have a voice; just listen to his hidden talents on "Apostle of Truth"), and Portaro succumbs to the down-tuned, lazy pace of 90's U.S. "metal". In the end, what **Cult of One** is is another Massacre failure in the 'comeback attempts' category (next to **HELSTAR**, **CHASTAIN**, etc.). (Rating: 4 wearied pumpkins)

WINTERS BANE-Heart of a Killer
(Massacre '93)

This band broke up immediately after I interviewed them for *Sentinel Steel #1*, which was a huge disappointment, as **WINTERS BANE** put out two incredible demos in the early 90's before being quickly snapped up by the German upstarts **Massacre**. The band's sound, a mix of **SANCTUARY** and traditional **PRIEST/KING DIAMOND**, was hurriedly embraced by the German media, and everyone waited for the CD release. By the time the CD came out, the Ohio-based group were splitting up, and **Massacre** put very little behind **Heart of a Killer**, which was easily **Massacre's** best US release up to that date. So, **WINTERS BANE's** short-lived glory died.

This CD features all four songs from their second demo, one song from their first outing, "Haunted House", and five new songs. Both "Haunted House" and CD title-track "Heart of a Killer" are absolute classics, with the fine-tuned melodic work of guitarist Lou Paul, and the major talent of singer Tim Owen, whose range moves from Warrel Dane operatics to Rob Halfordism with great style and confidence. Sadly, bassist Dennis Hayes is inaudible on this disc. The production is the way I like it; sharp and punchy with a great guitar tone. But, the bass guitar is missing. The demo tapes, while perhaps not as polished, make for a more enjoyable listen.

What's the band up to now? Last I heard, drummer Salem was doing Seattle covers, pocketing cash from the suckers, and guitarist Lou Paul continues with the power metal.

(Rating: 8 pumpkins)



WITCHHUNTERS...And It's Storming Outside
(Underground Symphony)

Adorned with a cheesy **HEAVY LOAD**-style airbrushed 'Nordic-warriors-battling-in-the-snow'

CD cover, **WITCHHUNTERS** are the 'black sheep' of Italian progressive metal label **Underground Symphony**. See, **WITCHHUNTERS** are not the typical U.S. band; they are not progressive. This Milano four-piece are a pedestrian heavy metal band, offering nothing exciting in their cliched metal approach. For **DEEP PURPLE** completists there is a cover of "Strange Kind of Woman". Very average release from this new record label. (Rating: 6 pumpkins)

To contact the band, write to: Cesare Vaccari / Via Modenese 44 / 41057 Spilamberto (MO) / ITALY

X-WILD-Monster Effect
(Blue Merle + Eden)

I've grown disgruntled over the years regarding **RUNNING WILD** with their now stagnant sound. **X-WILD** does no better, still imitating Rolf and Co. Yes, **Monster Effect's** production beats **Masquerade** hands-down, and in the general scheme of things, **X-WILD** do come up with the better handful of songs. **RUNNING WILD** have not one single good song on **Masquerade**. What **X-WILD** does lack is a good singer, but with the current less-than-average performance of Rolf (with a very poor performance on **Masquerade**), **X-WILD's** vocalist Frank Knight's **UDO**-like enthusiasm is preferred.

Monster Effect is **X-WILD's** second disc, and as mentioned, contains the vocals of British **UDO** impersonator Frank Knight over the **RUNNING WILD**-esque music. As is typical with both groups, **X-WILD** sports the regular anthems buffered with the neat picking style that Rolf pioneered many years ago in **RUNNING WILD's** best opus, **Death or Glory**.

I love that nifty melodic rhythm feeling, so **Monster Effect** does have a few winners in "Wild Knight", the catchy "Theater of Blood", and "Sinners Are Winners", and there is the epic, **MANOWARish** "Sons of Darkness". However, the rest of the songs are **SPINAL TAP**-style parodies, from the music to the lyrics. The cheesy "Hands Held High", "Serpent's Kiss", etc. is unconvincing stuff, I'm afraid, from a talented band that should strive to be more than just **RUNNING WILD** clones.

(Rating: 7 leather-clad pumpkins)



X-WILD-Savageland
(Blue Merle)

Now that you finished reading the review on **Monster Effect**, don't expect the same sentiments for their new one, **Savageland**. This is a good disc! Once again, the sound is in that **Death Or Glory/Blazon Stone**-era **RUNNING WILD** (with a touch of **ACCEPT**) style, but

instead of the stupid lyrics, **X-WILD** have gone and adapted the movie **Braveheart**. My cassette advance didn't come with a lyric sheet, but the fact that throatman Frank Knight is actually singing something of *meaning* seems to have put a fire under the German foursome. As with all the **X-WILD** discs, **Savageland** is a mixed offering of high speed melodic numbers and anthemic, epic metal singalongs. The songwriting has improved, but the songs do need more time changes (achtung Axel Morgan!), which is something recent **RUNNING WILD** begs for too. 90's true metalheads will not be content with just one riff per song either. And Frank Knight...well, his voice has such a limited range, but that hasn't stopped Peavey and Hansi, I guess; Udo lives on through Frank. **Savageland** is nothing more than clichéd, brainless, predictable heavy metal fun, but they've moved forward, and **Savageland** is entertaining. Skip the new **ACCEPT** and **RUNNING WILD**--this **X-WILD** disc is better.

(Rating: 8 pumpkins)

ZANDELLE-Zandelle
(Independent CD)

ZANDELLE are a three-piece (soon to be four) from Brooklyn, NY and feature George Tsalikis, the original vocalist for the **GOTHIC KNIGHTS**. Like the great **GOTHIC KNIGHTS**, **ZANDELLE** play 80's style metal, but George's band is much simpler, relying on straight riffs and mostly typical song structures. This, their debut CD, is just over 32 minutes in length, with six songs. Both "Ecstasy" and "Medieval Ways" are mid-tempo metal cuts, pretty basic, a la very early **DAMIEN** or **ARMORED SAINT**, and may go over well with a small segment of the German metal scene. "Nightmare" is **ZANDELLE's** epic power ballad song, which closes out at a faster clip than expected. Skipping over tracks four and five (the best for last!), track six is a regular ballad, titled "Angel", and like "Ecstasy", "Medieval Ways", and "Nightmare", is even (gasp!) too dated for me, and also too basic for my tastes. Nothing special to my ears, but those Germans should be into this. The fourth track, "The Underdark", is immediately the best composition by **ZANDELLE**, with the kind of chorus that **SANCTUARY** were once known for. "The Underdark" has that classic feel about it, similar to what makes the **GOTHIC KNIGHTS** what they are. "Evil Entity" follows up "The Underdark" and is the fastest song on this CD, as well as the longest. Again, the main riff is super-simple, but it's all catchy as hell, with another memorable chorus that boasts overlapping harmony vocals. George is at his best when he stays in the higher range, as both "The Underdark" and "Evil Entity" would not have succeeded if George had sung in his mid-range (which reminds me of early Vince Neil, i.e. when he was cool! Whoops, hope I didn't lose some readers...!). In the end, this disc is a fine start for **ZANDELLE** (er, I'm not too keen on that name, sorry), but the fact that they recorded it so soon after they formed (Dec. of 1995) may have been a mistake. Then again, I may lose a few German readers with a remark like that, as **ZANDELLE** have that 'sound'.... The CD can be purchased from George Tsalikis (\$10.00 check/M.O. payable to him) at: 1266 72nd St. / Brooklyn, NY 11228. Or check with **Sentinel Steel**, who will probably have the disc in stock, too.

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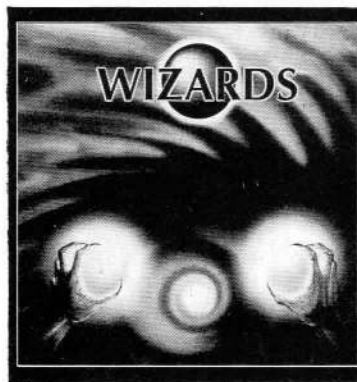
*** NOTHING VENTURED, NOTHING GAINED ***

GOTHIC KNIGHTS - Gothic Knights
(Sentinel Steel)

"Majestic metal inside" you say to yourself upon beholding this CD. For on the cover a wizard is either zapping or summoning forth some hellspawn while a terrified little pointy-eared dude covers, and the song titles are stuff like "Bridgekeeper" and "The Magi". See what I mean? The music surely doesn't disappoint. The first song "Creature Of The Dark" introduces you to the utterly fantastic vocals of Rick Sanchez, who at times reminds me of a better, more metallic James LaBrie of DREAM THEATER. He sings in the pure high-pitched style, but not in the ultra-high range like Andre Matos of ANGRA. The music is precise and powerful - you feel as if every note is flawlessly in place. The second song is "Bridgekeeper" and it reminds me of FORBIDDEN's faster stuff done with a high-pitched singer. Fantastic stuff here! Perhaps my favorite songs are "The Magi" - which features a Bach classical opening piece followed by razor-sharp riffing punctuated by crystal-clear staccato notes - brilliant and dazzling to behold. The chorus is an awesome blend of metal and classical music that won't fail to enchant you! An amazing song! Another brilliant offering is "War In The Sky" - this is like a heavier and more interesting WARLORD. The harmony vocals in the chorus are just enchanting. The guitar solos at times remind me of the stuff Glen Tipton and KK Downing used to play at the height of PRIEST's power. Overall, the music isn't complex like ANGRA's for example, but it is pure majestic traditional power metal that is a delight to hear. Rating = 9
Tony Zangara

CAREWORNE - Traveler Through The Time
(German indie recorded in late 1995)

CAREWORNE's music is straightforward crunchy riff based metal for the most part - with occasional burst of welcome melody. The band consists of Uwe Wustenhagen - vocals, Marko Hammer - lead guitar, Daniel Sylvester - rhythm guitar, Oliver Brautschek - bass, and Rene Scipio - drums. The vocalist I don't care for - he is more of a shouter than a singer unfortunately. The first song "Land Of Fantasy" displays the style you'll hear on every song. Really, all the songs seem to have the same riffs - sometime slowed down or sped up - but there is little distinction between them. Perhaps the one that will stick in your head the most is "I Sold Oneseif" which has a German chorus "Ich totete nur fur Dich - Bezahl mich", which means "I kill only for you - pay me!" This is perhaps the best (except for the cool bonus track) track on the album, although the lyrics are silly "The ghost's of the dead - are pursuing me - there souls cry after revenge - but I don't have anxiety - I don't love complexion - who life". The grammar is entertaining "And now you don't want pay - you don't want give your money!" or perplexing "I do peoples happy - I do people unhappy". Also decent is "Bleak Prospect's" (their apostrophe!) - it's more heavy pounding and bursts of good crunchy guitarwork, but again the vocalist kinda spoils it for me. About this time the CD gets kind of tireWORNE, if you know what I mean. The CD-bonus last track is called "Dark Ages" and is the best on the CD - an eight minute instrumental with heavy guitarwork. Before I buy another CD from this band, I'd want to hear about a new singer and more originality and variation in the songwriting! If you can't find the disc at Molten Metal, Dream Disc, etc, you can write to:
Rene Scipio/Thalmanplatz 9/06369/Wulfen-Anh/Germany
Tony Zangara



GAMMA RAY - Silent Miracles (Noise)

Nothing new with the line-up - it's still Kai, Dirk, Jan, and Thomas. This EP has four tracks: "Miracle" (7:16), "Farewell" (5:10), "The Silence"-95 version (6:28), and "A While In Dreamland" (4:15). "Farewell" is to my ears the same as on the full-length, so you know (I hope) what that's like. "Miracle" is a slow affair, with piano in the background. The chorus and much of the song are taken from the awesome "Man On A Mission" - but "balladized" and slowed to a crawl. Needless to say, this is not good! When you hear the "M.O.A.M." lyrics - your ears crave the fast riffing, but get only what "Miracle" delivers. Unsatisfying. This song is big on atmosphere - with backing vocals and the QUEENish part in the middle of "M.O.A.M." is here as well, but instead of breaking into speed at the end, we break into slowness. This song for me is a waste of time. On the other hand, "The Silence" is magnificent. I always liked the version on **Heading For Tomorrow** - musically it was wonderful and Ralf Scheepers gave a fabulous performance. Here Kai of course handles the vocals, and he gives one of his most impressive deliveries ever. This is a great majestic song - the Mother Of All Ballads! Worth getting this EP for by itself. The last track "A While In Dreamland" I really love also. It is mainly piano based with strings strumming faintly in the background. It has that great European classical sound with the charming Ger-english lyrics, like the chorus' first line: "I don't mind to stay a while in dreamland". So take away the pointless and frustrating first track, and you have a wondrous EP. Rating = 8.
Tony Zangara

WIZARDS - Wizards (Victor)

Here's an exciting group - hailing from ANGRA's Brazil, and indeed this band has numerous parallels with that wonderful band. WIZARDS play classically influenced melodic metal, just as ANGRA do, and in addition the vocalist Passos is a dead ringer for Andre Matos. I mean, he sounds almost exactly like him - it's hard to believe it's not Andre. Which is great for me, as I am a huge Matos fan. However the music is just not as exciting. For one reason, the band is simply not as heavy as ANGRA - for WIZARDS have more of a keyboardy sound - sort of a cross between ANGRA and STYX at times. There are two excellent fast-paced heavy songs, "Arabian Fantasy" and "Rock-n-Roll Forever", and both are amazing blends of classical music and power metal. However, there are also far too many slow drawn out affairs that are rather boring (like some of the stuff in the middle of STRATOVARIUS' **Fourth Dimension**, such as "Winter"). These slow tunes, while interesting and pretty as background music, are not all that "rockin'". There are some decent mid-paced tunes, such as the title track - but each time after listening to this CD I'm left with wishing there were more songs like "Arabian Fantasy". As I said, the vocalist is outstanding - and I hope that with future albums the band will get heavier and faster - if so, WIZARDS will be a powerful force to be reckoned with. Rating = 7.5
Tony Zangara

HELLOWEEN - Power EP

This EP has four tracks - the first two tracks are from the full-length: "Power" and "We Burn". As of this writing, I still have not heard the full-length, but I think I'll like it based on these two tracks. Andi's voice, my main complaint with HELLOWEEN these days, sounds good on these two tracks - very smooth. Also the music is much better than much of **Master Of the Rings**. "Rain" is the third track - and it is a bouncy kind of mid-paced tune with a bluesy riff - not bad, but not all that great either. After the first two excellent tracks, I forgive them. The last song is "Walk Your Way", written by Markus, and this is a faster, more interesting song. It jogs along pleasantly, and would have been one of the best songs on M.O.T.R. The fact that it didn't "make the grade" for **Time Of The Oath** makes me look very much forward to the full-length. Rating = 7.5.
Tony Zangara



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ANACONDA-Moritat

Except for "Will-O-the-Wisps" (a simplish BLIND GUARDIAN wannabe), ANACONDA are a generic German thrash band. Six song tape, trebly production.

12 DM/\$8 to: Olaf Becher / Birkenweg 10 / 95239 Zell-Ofr. / GERMANY

ANGELS IN EXILE-demo

The group is releasing a full length CD in 1996, so I thought it appropriate to get caught up and review their last tape. New Mexico's A.I.E. play 80's thrash metal with some traditional structuring. The sound is good for a demo, but the songs are kind of generic, using well-worn riffs with one-dimensional thrash vocals. Four songs.

\$5 payable to: Zoltan Nagyvary / P.O. Box 3712 / Albuquerque, NM 87190-3712



APPOMATTOX
 -Obscurity of Tomorrow
 -Seal Your Fate

For a review of APPOMATTOX's third available release, see the regular review section. **Obscurity of Tomorrow** was released in 1991 and is surprisingly uptempo compared to this German band's latest release (the CD EP **No Doubt?**). The four songs on this demo are definitely power metal songs; I'm not a fan of the mid-range vocals that also characterized many NWOBHM bands, however. Otherwise **O.O.T.** is a nice exercise in youthful German power metal. Good production, \$7.00.

On **Seal Your Fate**, the group have a new vocalist and guitarist. The production is a step down from the last one. The songwriting has tightened up, as APPOMATTOX eye the progressive metal genre; still, the songs are not as catchy as the ones found on the **No Doubt?** CD. \$8.

You can get as a package deal the above two demo tapes plus the **No Doubt?** CD for \$20.00 postpaid from: APPOMATTOX / Ralf Haberle / Postfach 1230 / 73302 Geislingen / GERMANY. Remember that **SENTINEL STEEL MUSIC** has a quantity of **No Doubt?** for just \$5 each.

ARKAINA-Symposium of a Troubled Mind

ARKAINA is a part of a new wave of 'alternative'-influenced progressive metal bands coming out of the U.S. "Reflective Soul" is the first mark of ARKAINA, with a boring pace and no song in sight. "The Pit" is speedier, but the idea is very stupid, as the chorus states, "Welcome! To the Pit. Mosh!" Not convincing at all. "Facade of Panes" is another dirge-like prog metal number with no song, and "I of Mind Aggression" tries to be aggressive with a mid-tempo stance but fails miserably due to an annoyingly cynical attitude. Once again, nothing catchy about this music. Nothing.

Write to: Sean Michael Duffen / 50 South Riverview St. / Bedford, MA 01835



BARRIADA-A.S.D.F.

Self-confessed fanatics of the S.F. Bay Area thrash movement, Japanese group BARRIADA continue the legacy started by METALLICA, HEATHEN, and TESTAMENT circa 1986-88. The playing is impeccable, the production brilliant. I don't like the filtered vocal effect on the first song, "Road of Crucifixion". In fact, at a closer listen, throughout the tape the singer's vocal delivery suffers a little from the accent problem, as words are mispronounced. Hey, this is thrash, so I shouldn't get too down on the vocals. I would like prominent choruses in the future, though.

\$7.00, tape from DAT master (Denon tape), lyrics, J-card, etc. included. Write to: BARRIADA / Hideki Fujimoto / 1-40-16 #205 Takada / Toshima-ku, Tokyo / 171 JAPAN

BEYOND REALITY-Balance of Contrast

Like ARKAINA, this is another young band from the East Coast of the U.S. playing progressive metal. There are five songs housed in a beautifully packaged demo. "Over the Edge" has a crunchy rhythm to it with a vocalist more in the mid-range, but it all works well. While much better than ARKAINA, something is still missing from B.R.'s first song, and that is melody. "Shadows in the Night" is probably the standout song on the tape, with a chorus reminiscent of bigger acts. Too bad the guitar is a touch smothered in the mix. BEYOND REALITY has a new recording out which the band neglected to send my way, but that shouldn't stop you from writing. While mostly average metal, **Balance of Contrast** has enough promise in tracks one, three, and five for a second look.

Write to: BEYOND REALITY / 1601 Shepard Ave. / Hamden, CT 06518

CHAPEL OF THE EYE-self titled

From Wichita, Kansas are CHAPEL OF THE EYE, an eclectic four-piece playing avant-garde music remotely related to death metal. From a spiritual standpoint, their ideals are rooted (albeit pompously) in such all-encompassing thought as Hinduism, Buddhism, and general Earth-consciousness. Although I question their grasp of such topics, they have a similar lyrical approach as ATHEIST's **Elements** album, along with a bit of CYNIC's **Focus**.

The music is a bizarre combination of folk and metal, aided on by an even stranger vocalist named Ricky Van Natta. His "clean" vocals are not really my "thing", as they remind me of that wretched Dave Matthews (of that self-titled pseudo-deadhead band of his). He has that vocal essence of accenting his words in a peculiar way, sort of the way folk artist LUKA BLOOM does. His growling vocal style, though a good counterbalancing element, is not as powerful as his clean vocals.

The instrumentation is extremely simplistic, attempting dynamics, but falling a bit short. The melodic and folkish parts are memorable, but the rest of it is average beyond belief. The last two songs, "Web of Energy" and "The Dance" are especially insipid musically; even Van Natta's vocals are a bit tuneless and forgettable.

Production on this demo is horrible, with the drums too high and hollow, while the guitars are too muddy. Nevertheless, this is a demo, so it obviously cannot be perfect.

The only thing that truly bothers the yin-yang out of me is their holier-than-thou pedantic approach to songwriting. Now, if you are Robert Fripp of KING CRIMSON, that's fine, because it is already known that you are a deity. If you are an unknown band out of Kansas with a bio containing a bad drawing of one meditating and a band history (or a politically correct anti-greed "philosophy") teeming with grammatical deficiency, I do not think you deserve to place yourselves on a pedestal to "enlighten people". First, learn to spell the word "consciousness" (see back page of bio), and then perhaps you can tell

me, a marketing/entrepreneurship major, that materialism is the root of all evil. (By the way, by selling your tape for \$2 and sending your demo and bio to *Sentinel Steel*, you are being salespeople, no offense.)

Write to: CHAPEL OF THE EYE at: PO Box 16743, Wichita, KS 67216

-Natalie Vlahovic

COLD MOURNING-Looking Forward to Reason

What? SAINT VITUS are back together and have a new album out? Aaaahh...wrong band. Whoops. COLD MOURNING are a doom band from California, who rightfully admit the HUGE BLACK SABBATH/SAINT VITUS influence found in their typical brand of doom.

Vocalist Matt Bilac (if that's spelled incorrectly, I apologize--the calligraphy was a tad hard to read) possesses a tone-deaf version of both Ozzy's and Wino's vocal tendencies. He definitely is more emotive than tuneful, but still does not do justice to the music. Lead guitarist Angelo Tringali has that hollow SAINT VITUS quality of playing, which would be fine if he weren't blatantly cloning the band.

The second song, "The Coming of Winter" literally echoes BLACK SABBATH's "Supernaut", which would actually be pleasant to the ears if only Bilac were tuneful. "Old Man Storm" contains a pleasing faster part that recalls the OBSESSED during their Lunar Womb period of greatness. A title which confused me was "Doom of the Rising Son"; is it supposed to be 'son' or 'sun'? I am definitely not an English grammarian, but something strikes me as a bit odd in that title. Oh well.

Yes, WITCHFINDER GENERAL are amazing, as are SABBATH and VITUS, but COLD MOURNING are trying to achieve a musical status that is far from their reach. Perhaps they should be attempting uniqueness instead of duplicating the music of their favorite bands. This is definitely honest music, but it is completely lacking in the innovation department. Maybe a new vocalist and better production will help the band achieve what they are fully capable of.

Write to: Blackened Earth Music; PO Box 3321; Monterey, CA 93942. Or call: (408) 655 1331.

-Natalie Vlahovic

CROSSFIRE-Salvation Is Just Another Vision

I caught half of this band's set at a disappointing prog metal show in CT; CROSSFIRE, the opening band, were never equaled that night.

Out of place at the show, these New Yorkers play power metal with finesse. "Murderous Education" is the best of the three songs on this tape, sporting a clean sound and punchy drumming, like PRIEST's *Painkiller* meets precision thrash. The only thing holding this band back is that the drummer does lead vocals; the group knows this and may have found a singer by now.

Pro tape is just \$2.00 to: Tony Castronova / P.O. Box 1724 / West Babylon, NY 11704

DARK AVENGER-Choose Your Side... Heaven or Hell

Alas, this is not the mysterious German band of the same name, but a current Brazilian group. Thin production aside, this six-piece are a traditional metal group through and through, listing

MANOWAR, HELLOWEEN, MAIDEN, METAL CHURCH, etc. as influences. "Die Mermaid" isn't too far from what ANGRA are up to, though DARK AVENGER have a vocalist with more power (something Matos lacks). Once again, the utter lack of rhythm guitar in the mix is disappointing. The MAIDEN-ish "Madelayne" has no guitar either (well, the lead comes through nicely), sounding like a sub-Martin Birch production; but what a great song! Very much in the VIPER *Soldiers of Sunrise* tradition. Musically, I should emphasize; the lyrics (included with the J-card) are very funny -- get the tape and check it out. "Half Dead Eyes" is the ballad, which is followed by "Ghost Divinity", a strong half-step anthem with fluid leads filling in the spaces between the gallops. Lots of potential with this group, but improved lyrics and sound are a must on their next demo (yeah, a follow-up would be a good idea).

No price, so write to: DARK AVENGER / A-C Sidnei Roldan / P.O. Box 7935 / Zip Code 70649-970 / Brasilia-DF-BRAZIL

DECEASED-preproduction demo for Fearless Undead Machines

DECEASED's 'old school' death metal has finally come into maturity with this tape. "The Silent Creature" is like a cross of DEATH circa *Leprosy* and *CARCASS' Heartwork*. I love the RUNNING WILD intro riff ("Tortuga Bay"), the huge galloping main riff, and somewhere in the middle, the DEATH style speed up part. King Fowley's voice goes back and forth, sounding like Chuck Schuldiner one moment and other times like a ticked-off Cronos. Getting past the last few minutes of "The Silent Creature" (the end drags a bit), this may be DECEASED's best song to date. "Beyond Science" recalls VOIVOD's *Killing Technology*, as does "Mysterious Research" (I like the RUNNING WILD-ish lead break sections, but that's only a part of the song). Too many parts! The two songs are an improvement over the previous DECEASED stuff though. "Night of the Deceased" is back to the vintage DEATH sound, with some RAZOR thrown in, too; but like "The Silent Creature", DECEASED just don't know when to end a great song, and so once again, I give a thumbs up to the first half-to-two-thirds of "Night of the Deceased", but a thumbs down to the kinda pointless thrash exercise at the end.

To write to King Fowley, see his address at the OCTOBER 31 review in the demo section.

DEMENTIA-No World Order maxi demo

This is the same band that did the Molten Metal favorite *Recuperate From Reality* CD. What we have here is a three-song exercise in ultra-generic, lifeless modern-day thrash. Avoid.

Skylar Kennedy / P.O. Box 557531 / Chicago, IL 60655

DEPRESSION-Second Birth

Unless my memory betrays me, DEPRESSION are the best Greek band right now. "Where No Beacons Send Their Light" should please RHAPSODY and ANGRA/VIPER fans with its bouncy symphonic gait; this song is an absolute gem. L.M.P. watch out! The singer is great, as is the guitarist. This demo is dubbed onto a normal bias tape, so some stuff gets lost in the translation, but the booklet is full-color and comes with a lengthy lyric sheet. "The Ship of Demigods" is a slow- to mid-tempo epic track,

divided into three parts; imagine MAIDEN with keyboards, and that's what you can expect to hear. "The Critical Mass" is an average song, and the demo closes with a bass guitar instrumental. The whole package is about 25 minutes long. The sound quality, like most of the Greek output, is not that hot. But with "Where No Beacons Send Their Light", DEPRESSION (not a name that fits the music) prove that they are a band worthy of the world's attention.

Tape is \$5. Alex Efentakis / 17 Dionysioy Aiginoty Str. / 11528 Athens / GREECE

DIPHTHERIA-promo four-song demo

DIPHTHERIA are from the Greek part of Cyprus (the other half is Turkish) and play straight heavy/power metal with topical lyrics. The vocals of Nicholas Leptos are very confident, with clear diction compared to other Greek bands. Overall the sound is muted (like DEPRESSION, this demo is on a normal bias tape), but all instruments can be made out with ease. "Living To Die" and "Sleeping With the Worms" are the preferred tracks; "God Wanted Here" has a hard rock edge to it, along with depressing lyrics. "As Darkness Casts Its Veil" is a slow, moodier piece dealing with drug addiction. The four songs are a good start, but a second demo would be welcome.

Write to: Phivos Papadopoulos / 11 Costa Loizou St. / Acropolis 2006 / Nicosia, CYPRUS (No booklet, etc.)

DISARM GOLIATH-Masters of the World

Yikes, I cringe at the sound quality of this three-song tape, but yes, the JUDAS PRIEST/MANOWAR is there (somewhere), and considering this band is British, THAT'S AMAZING. I like any band that proclaims grunge to be dead, but I'm not sure DISARM GOLIATH would be the right band to answer to Seattle. But I may be unfair in saying that, because the production does not do this band justice at all; with a proper budget, these blokes may be contenders. Simple songs as they may be, there are moments in "Masters of the World" and "Arm the Gods" that are downright catchy. I like the band's songwriting, so these guys are on the right track.

Write to: ADE the Blade / Disarm Goliath / 8 Healey / Lakeside, Tamworth, Staffs / B77 2RF ENGLAND



DREAMSTATE-Beyond the Mirrors

This is a full-length (ten songs) album on cassette, being promoted by AZRA/IRONWORKS. "When I Fall" is a crushingly powerful cut, complemented by the fine high-pitched vocals of Genaro Martinez. Somewhat like LETHAL! Unlike LETHAL, this group does delve into the occasional 'groove' riff ("Lifestreet"), but always keeping within the progressive/power metal boundaries. Very heavy, DREAMSTATE's songs are traditionally structured, but more melody overall (and more memorable choruses) would have been a boost to this band's material. "Mr. Secret" (a possible HITTMAN-style song) stands out, but the rest of this tape, while successfully produced and played, is missing a key ingredient to be above average.

For info, write to: AZRA / Box 459 / Maywood, CA 90270

DREAM WEAVER-Dream Within a Dream

Here's another Greek band with a full-color, pro-printed J-card and normal bias cassette tape. The guitars are barely audible in the mix, which kind of ruins it for me. The vocals are nasally too and lack excitement. DREAM WEAVER are a power metal band, with the epic touches that the Greek fans love. I think there are some RUNNING WILD-like guitar parts in the music, but... well, the bass and drums were engineered with skill, ha ha, but that's all I can say.

George Zacharoglou / Mich. Kalatzakou 3 / GR 185 46 Piraeus / GREECE

FAUSTUS

FAUSTUS are a five-piece from Washington State, and they are not from the city of Seattle. "Metal Is Not Dead!!" they proclaim, and I tend to agree. The group plays 'progressive thrash metal', somewhat in the FORBIDDEN style. "Nothing Stands" and "Godhead" are throwaway thrash cuts, but both "The Hell We Make" and "Oblivion" are well-executed crunch forays that are hopefully the band's favorites too! Vocalist Dane Bergman has mostly a clean-to-gruff thrash delivery, occasionally coming up with a growl or two; even better yet, he has an excellent high range, but uses it very rarely ("The Hell We Make"). This is a shame, as IRON MAIDEN and JUDAS PRIEST are listed as influences for this band; an even more melodic approach in all areas would benefit their sound. They're almost there; "Oblivion" has a chorus that's uncannily similar to something SANCTUARY did on *Refuge Denied* -- but a lot thrasher, of course. And the main riff to "The Hell We Make" has a subtle Oriental quality to it. Plus the chorus has those great high vocals -- Dane, use that voice!! The production is pro quality, as is the cassette packaging.

No price, but \$5 should do it. Dane Bergman / FAUSTUS / P.O. Box 3323 / Kent, WA 98032



HELLDIVER-Against the Curse

More Greek metal, this time from HELLDIVER. Once again, full-color fold-out J-card, but dubbed normal bias cassette. This demo was recorded at the same studio used by DREAMWEAVER, so the quality is comparable -- loud vocals, low guitars in the mix. The HELLDIVER singer is near monotone and also pretty boring, as is the guitar playing, which is too 70's for my tastes. "Better Leave" attempts the "Princess of the Dawn" riff (ACCEPT), but the drab vocals and weak production kill the song. Very average tape.

\$3.00 gets it. The band's guitarist is a nice guy, so write to him at: Kostas Kafantaris / Iroon Politechniou 14B / 185 32 Piraeus, Greece



IMAGE BEYOND-three song sampler

Former FATES WARNING drummer Steve Zimmerman, unsatisfied with one or two of his post-F.W. projects, has apparently found his place with IMAGE BEYOND. The vocalist (who is no longer in the band) has a nice voice, hitting upon Warrel Dane and Arch in a few sweet spots, but the songs don't excel with the frontman. As with other East Coast prog metal bands, the pace can be laborious, and IMAGE BEYOND are also hindered by a low budget 8-track recording. "Missing Time" is typical of what is coming out of the States right now; "Intruding Silence" is very much like FATES WARNING, and "New Expressions" is a mellow piece of prog metal. Better than ARKAINA, VISIONARY, etc., IMAGE BEYOND can be grouped with DIVINE REGALE and bands of that ilk who are on to something, but time is needed to achieve.

Metro Management / 334 Derby Ave., #2 South / Derby, CT 06418



INNER SANCTUM (U.K.)-Knowledge At Hand

I reviewed this British group's two previous demos in *Sentinel Steel* #1½. INNER SANCTUM are in the East Coast style of prog rock/metal, somewhat like recent AUDITORY IMAGERY and Colorado's THE QUIET ROOM. The vocals are definitely prog rock-ish, lacking the highs of a Ray Alder or James LaBrie. On-the-dime time changes are noticeable, but so are the flat sound and lack of melodies. "Of Profit To the Wise" is the most metallic piece here, with more of a traditional metal flavor in the riffing. Nice interplay between soft passages and the uptempo moments. I'm not a fan of the vocals, though, as they are too monotone for my tastes.

\$5.00 to: INNER SANCTUM / Karen Gooch / 120 Somerton Ave. / Lowestoft, Suffolk / ENGLAND NR32 4E2

INNER SANCTUM (Ger.)
-Hearken Now!
-Not For Trendy Ears!

Not to be confused with England's band of the same name, INNER SANCTUM have been around since late 1990 and have released two tapes. 1991's *Hearken Now!* is a decent German power metal tape, but is let down by the weak vocals of Michael Achenbach. Of the five songs, opener "Bridge of Sigh" is probably my fave, though parts of other songs are enjoyable too, like the steamrolling solo section of "Paralysing Intensity". 1994's *Not For Trendy Ears!* has improved playing all around, with singer Achenbach bettering himself by a few points. This recording shows a band encompassing the power and progressive metal styles, trying to find out their own sound. Recorded live in the studio, it sometimes misses its intentions; Achenbach still manages to hit many low points, sounding like he's got a foreign object caught in his throat. I can get past the thin snare sound, as songs like "The Bourne Identity" have good melodies and time changes. But the bottom line is that there are good ideas, but these guys are far from a record deal (if they are still around). Both demos are on one cassette, with the original J-cards, for \$10.00 airmail.

Write to: Marcus Uelhoff / An Der Allee 11 / 57072 Siegen / GERMANY, or my contact with the band, Martin Redieske / Bogenstr. 25 / 57223 Kreuztal / GERMANY

With a new bass player, Wisconsin's INTROSPECTRE have a third release with their three-song demo (see the CD section for their full-length disc). First song "Misplaced" is a ploddy, boring number with singer Rod trying to cover up his vocals through a light filter. "Golden Idol" is a mishmash of tempos and ideas that just do not come together. "Dream of Dead" is one of the best INTROSPECTRE songs, no question, with a galloping riff that crosses from the MAIDEN's "Killers" gait to a more powerful MELIAH RAGE "Deadly Existence". Rod's vocals are still annoying throughout this cassette (guys, please get a fifth member!), but it makes me happy to see the group incorporate their traditional metal influences with "Dream of Dead". Speaking about influences, Rod's favorite album of all time is SANCTUARY's *Refuge Denied* (!), so INTROSPECTRE are on the same wavelength as *Sentinel Steel*; hopefully time will put these gentlemen on the right path.

This should be \$4.00, to: Resurrection Ltd. / 10201 W. Appleton Ave. / Milwaukee, WI 53225

JERYD SYN

"Chem Factor" should have the Europeans scrambling, as this is U.S. power/melodic speed metal at its best. JERYD SYN are from St. Petersburg, FL, right near Tampa and... Morrisound. The group did not use that famous studio, instead opting for a sound that is adequate, but not spectacular. There are a whopping 12 songs on this tape, not all sounding like "Chem Factor". The group has a variety of material to offer, so this tape has a couple of ballads and many basic metal numbers, none of which equal the awesome "Chem Factor", which appears to be an older song. Half the material has a different production, leading me to that conclusion. Singer Buck Trick uses a more screaming style in these older tracks, which I prefer, as it reminds me of classic power metal bands like HEXX, etc.

For merchandise, write to: JERYD SYN / P.O. Box 28222 / St. Petersburg, FL 33709-8222 (cass. \$8.95, CD \$11.95; new recording available too)



This is death metal, yes, but when a band like this has large amounts of DREAM THEATER and even some Euro power metal in the mix, then it's a must listen. I'm not a part of the death metal underground, obviously, but this *Skies* tape (32+ minutes, beautiful 24-track sound recording) is a masterpiece, with tons of melody, time changes, and great hooks. There are three songs and an instrumental (10:00, 9:20, 7:03, and 5:40, respectively), and the maturity of the band's creativity is simply amazing, considering that all are French students, of which four are just 20 years old!! If CREMATORY (...*Just Dreaming!*), IN FLAMES, old DREAM THEATER, etc., are your taste, then KALISA are highly recommended. Now if they could just get rid of those growly vocals, sigh.

\$7.00 Europe, \$8.00 U.S./foreign, cash only (hidden) to: Brett Caldas-Lima / 781 Av. M. Teste / Terrasses du Peyrou B3 / 34070 Montpellier / FRANCE

KAMIKAZE BUTTERFLY-All Too Human

"Memory Burn" is a heavy mid-tempo stomper, sounding uncannily like old LAAZ ROCKIT, and something I'd recommend J.B. at MOLTEN METAL to check out. "No Man's Land" is just a hair faster, but just as good aggressive U.S. 'real' metal. "My Vicious Minutes' Hour" has a few more time changes, with an equal amount of speedier moments with 90's style mid-tempo parts. A good tape -- the group say they play rock and alternative too, but none of that was obvious from this tape! Decent production, no-frills J-card; comes with an 8x10 glossy photo and bio.

\$5.00 check or M.O. to: Gary Polley / 2036 W. Shakespeare / Chicago, IL 60647. P.S. Dear band, wipe out the 'BUTTERFLY' part of your name, and you'll be all set.

KNIGHT ERRANT-Open To the Public

This is a laughable attempt at progressive metal. A German group, KNIGHT ERRANT have a poor control of the English language; even worse yet, their vocalist couldn't tune a radio, much less his own voice! Stuck in the medium-to-slow pace, this band has little to offer beyond their interesting packaging skills.

13 DM/\$8.00 from: Stefan Markert / Raiffeisenring 125 / 48249 Dülmen / GERMANY

MERCENARY

No background info on this PA band, as I got this demo in trade. There are six songs of intense thrash/doom, with Hetfield-like vocals at times. The group are proud to call themselves 'metal', which is very cool. I'm not overwhelmed by their songcraft, but the foundation is definitely on this tape. Imagine SOLITUDE AETURNUS' third disc crossed with the last METALLICA, but with a more aggressive vocal delivery. "To the North" has a great speedy opening sequence, before launching into a mid-tempo doom riff of epic proportions. Huge riffs, thundering tribal-like drumming, and dark, gnarly vocals.

Write to: Mercenary / 515 Anderson St. / Coraopolis, PA 15108

I was offered this eight-song tape for a release through Sentinel Steel Music, but turned it down. MILITANTS are led by guitarist Bernie Versailles, who is a former AGENT STEEL member. The production, by Bill Metoyer, is superb, as is the playing (as it should be). However, the vocalist is hugely annoying, in that REALM/CONFESSOR/HADES style. Musically, MILITANTS write short songs that have a ton of technical parts and time changes; traditional hooks are nonexistent, so I don't like this stuff. Melody is scarce, and the vocals are horrible. This is the type of band that Massacre would pick up due to the AGENT STEEL connection; unfortunately, MILITANTS sound nothing like AGENT STEEL (who were one of the greatest power/speed bands of all time) and more like WATCHTOWER.

Write to: MILITANTS / 1720 N. Fuller #549 / Los Angeles, CA 90046

MIRAGE-Time To Win

More Greek metal, but MIRAGE play melodic speed metal like ANGRA and RHAPSODY, and not the slow epic stuff. MIRAGE singer Mary Zempou may be--gasp!--a female, but she's on par with the Andre Matoses of the world, with an entrancing high-pitched voice. She's young, and it will be very interesting to hear her with an even firmer grasp of English diction, plus the wider throat range that experience brings. Her partner is Bob Katsionis, who played all the guitars, keyboards, and drums, plus wrote all the music for this two-song-plus-intro demo. Like the leaders of RHAPSODY, ANGRA, etc., Bob is a major talent waiting to happen, as both "Poison Blood" and "Minds Imprisoned" are just about perfect speed metal tunes, with that invigorating combination of ultra-memorable vocal melodies, colorful keyboard hooks, furious drums, and Germanic guitar riffs. What more could one ask for? A full album, that's what!

Color booklet with lyrics, 4-track (?) recording (well, it's low budget), \$3.00 should do it, from: Mary Zempou / Dod Nisu 12 / Korbi-Vari / 16672-Attiki / GREECE

NEW EDEN-five-track rough mix advance promo

I can't help but review this five-song promo tape; a full-length NEW EDEN disc should be out in late 1996 -- and I can't wait! NEW EDEN are without a doubt the best unsigned power/melodic speed metal band in the U.S.A. The easiest comparison to this CA band would be HELSTAR's *Nosferatu*. This five-piece is the brainchild of one Horacio Colmenares, who also plays for STEEL PROPHET. But NEW EDEN, as said in *Sentinel Steel* #2, are better, as Horacio writes tight songs, with euphoric choruses and unbelievable neo-classical speed metal riffs. "Nightmare", "Captive Soul", "Sepa-ku", "Bullet Head", and "Unlock the Door" are all speed metal classics, and finally, FINALLY America can counter the GAMMA RAYS and SCANNERS of the world. All NEW EDEN need to do is get their songs properly mixed by Bill Metoyer, and they'll be set. Now please realize, I'm not supposed to review this tape (it's not for sale), but it's my duty to bring you,

the reader, the best of what's available, and in America, when it comes to melodic/neo-classical speed-power metal, NEW EDEN, are it.

Disarray Publishing / 17402 Salais St. / La Puente, CA 91744

OCTOBER 31-Voyage To Infinity

This is King Fowley's (DECEASED drummer/singer) true metal side project, where he, surprise, pounds the skins plus sings in a clean 80's style and does a few keyboard embellishments. King's 'true' voice is above monotone, but not high-pitched—similar to what NWOBHM came up with (WITCHFINDER GENERAL, etc.) in the early 80's. The overall sound is a mix of NWOBHM with some early TROUBLE, CIRITH UNGOL, etc. Of the four songs on this demo, one is a cover: WARLORD's "Child of the Damned". Overall a good tape, with solid production, but I'd like to hear some more material; a full-length album planned for late '96 should be pushed forward, with a second demo taking its place instead. I think King Fowley and his bandmates can come up with better songs personally—see my review of the DECEASED demo to understand.

As for OCTOBER 31, a fully-packaged demo should be available (write first) for \$6.00 postpaid from: King Fowley / 5953 N. 10th St. / Arlington, VA 22205



OVERTURE
-World Beyond
-Painted Pictures
-Beyond Pictures

OVERTURE had sent me a ten-song tape of the forthcoming CD, but it's 1996 now, and no CD in sight. Apparently a deal with Keltik Records fell through, so the band must have started from scratch. Well, with no CD to review, a review of all their demos since their first (seen in *Sentinel Steel* #1½) is in order. **World Beyond** is a three song affair, with the title track plus "Your Mind" and "Denial". OVERTURE's sound can be likened to a cross between QUEENSRYCHE, and, say, DEEP PURPLE or RAINBOW. Anyway, "World Beyond" lacks the hooks of the first demo (1994); "Your Mind" is a reworking of "Open Your Eyes" (from the previous tape), and the 1994 version is better. Sure, maybe the band has improved technically, but there's something about the first version that I prefer. Same with "Denial", which is a redone rendition of "Power Structure". Could it be the thin production of the newer tracks, or the new vocalist (I believe they have a new frontman)? I don't know, I just prefer the more powerful sound of the 1994 four-song demo.

Painted Pictures is a six-song tape done in preparation for the forthcoming CD. Bassist Geoff Malcolm is no longer in the band, so guitarist Chris Young probably handled the bass chores. This recording was done live in the studio, and I like it better than their shrill sound on the **World Beyond** tape. Singer Michael Goldsmith sounds much better in the musician's natural element (live). "No Friend" is very good, as is the DEEP PURPLE-meets-DREAM THEATER inspired "Painted Pictures". "Last Time" is kinda dull; over on side two, "Failed" is not much better. Disregarding the meandering verses, "Life" is solid, as is "Criminal", which is a remake of "Denial" from the last tape (and "Denial" is, of course, a secondary version of "Power Structure" from OVERTURE's first tape). I still prefer "Power Structure" itself, but "Criminal" is a cut above "Denial", that's for sure.

Beyond Pictures is a special tape for the music industry, but is also being sold to OVERTURE fans. It has six songs: "Painted Pictures" (CD version), "No Friend" (also a 'final' CD version), plus "World Beyond", "Painted Pictures", "Out of Time", and "Denial", all taken from the second and third OVERTURE demos (**World Beyond** and **Painted Pictures**, but where's "Out of Time" from? My question is answered when I listen to it: "Out of Time" is another rendition of "Open Your Eyes", a.k.a. "Your Mind" from the **World Beyond** demo). The new versions of "No Friend" and "Painted Pictures" improve on the previous versions, but let's hear the whole CD, eh guys?

Fans of 70's progressive heavy rock with an 80's and 90's influence (QUEENSRYCHE, DREAM THEATER), check out these tapes: **World Beyond** \$3.00, **Painted Pictures** \$5.00, and **Beyond Pictures** \$5.00. Write to: OVERTURE / P.O. Box 148 / Burbank, CA 91503



POWERS COURT

A CD is forthcoming, with eight songs; in the meantime, I was given a four song sampler, comprised of "Master Plan", "Dying Embers", "Deceiver", and "Lord of Winds and Breezes". POWERS COURT are a power trio, with Danie Powers handling both the vocal and guitar chores (shades of Shelton!). Steve Murray is the bassist, and some may feel his dominating bass lines are too high in the mix, but that's a characteristic of MANILLA ROAD I've always loved. I've referred to the great MANILLA ROAD twice already, and that's whom POWERS COURT remind me of, plus MOTHER EARTH. POWERS COURT may not have the lyrical depth of Shelton and Co., but that epic heaviness is there, as well as Danie's deep-to-angelic voice (a Shelton trademark). As mentioned, the lyrics are not as intricate as MANILLA ROAD's, but Danie Powers has a love of dark fantasy/classy horror, so one should not expect less from songs like "Spellbinder", "High Priestess", "Season of the Witch", and others from the CD. If this four-song advance is a good indication of what's to come, then I can't wait for the CD!

Promo cassette single (two song) \$2.00; CD is \$10.00 to: Danie Powers (payable to) / P.O. Box 2441 / St. Louis, MO 63114

PROTOTYPE-Seed

PROTOTYPE is made up of ex-PSYCHOSIS (CA) and FATHOM members; both of these bands were on the BANNED IN L.A. - Mosh On Fire compilations. PSYCHOSIS also had an EP on CD, titled **Lifeforce**. PROTOTYPE is a cleaner, more pointed entity when compared to PSYCHOSIS and FATHOM. Call it finesse/progressive light metal/thrash, if you will. The vocals are in the mid range, as are the song tempos. The drumming is occasionally too busy (the beginning of "Dead of Jericho"), and the riffs are of the typical variety. Everything is expertly played, but a flatness, a distance between the listener and the musicians, pervades this tape. I'd like to see PROTOTYPE put more passion into their music and seriously consider varying the tempos a bit. I know they are trying to create a mood, but the so-called U.S. metal scene is overflowing with mood bands, and PROTOTYPE are capable of much more than this.

The three-song **Seed** is \$6.00 postpaid; **Lifeforce** may still be available for \$8.00; both CD and tape for \$12.00 postpaid (write first to confirm!). Checks/M.O. payable to: Kragen Lum / P.O. Box 993 / Pacific Palisades, CA 90272



RHAPSODY-Eternal Glory

I took these demo reviews in alphabetical order—how I longed to get to RHAPSODY! But when it comes time to describe Italians RHAPSODY...I am speechless! What a miraculous recording **Eternal Glory** is!! This music is masterpiece defined! Glorious symphonic speed metal that transcends nearly every form of music in existence!! ANGRA, with songs like "Carry On" and "Evil Warning", have reached similar altitudes before, as have HELLOWEEN with "Ride the Sky" and GAMMA RAY with "Man On a Mission"; but never have keyboards been used to such a passionate degree, and never have a guitarist's solos been so fiery, both unifying and feeding off each other, assailing the listener in a sweet storm of enthralling melodies and spellbinding classical harmonies. RHAPSODY are absolute GENIUS.

RHAPSODY are the creation of prodigious guitar talent Luca Turilli, whose vision is shared by keyboardist extraordinaire Alessandro Staropoli. Together, these two men write all of RHAPSODY's symphonies and have been doing so since 1993. Formed as THUNDERCROSS three years ago, the band have had drummer Daniele Carbonera and bassist Andrea Furlan since the beginning. Singer Cristiano Adacher completed the lineup recently, as guitarist Luca Turilli, once doubling on guitars and vocals, decided to concentrate on his stringed instrument. The band cites influences such as Vivaldi, Paganini, Bach, HELLOWEEN, BLIND GUARDIAN, ELEGY, CRIMSON GLORY, etc. The easiest summation of the RHAPSODY (rhap'so-dy n. exciting feeling, musical composition) is a mysterious blend of ANGRA ("Carry On", "Evil Warning"), Kai Hansen, Malmsteen, etc.

A full-length CD, including most of the songs from this **Eternal Glory** tape ("Invernal Fury", "Warrior of Ice", "Tears of Nightfall" instr., "Alive and Proud", "Land of Immortals", "Holy Wind", and the nine minute epic "Eternal Glory"), is being recorded with Sascha Paeth and is scheduled for a late '96 release. This RHAPSODY CD is the most anticipated recording of 1996 — forget everything else!! And watch for this 35-minute **Eternal Glory** 'demo' to be pressed onto CD one day; if it doesn't get the CD treatment, then deluge L.M.P./Empire Entertainment with mail — criminal acts do not go unpunished!

As said, 35 minutes, fantastic full-color, multi-fold-out J-card (with lyrics), and great production. Exclusively from Empire Entertainment for \$5.95 plus \$1.00 postage.

SANCTIFY-Song of the Saved

SANCTIFY are a Christian thrash band from Finland. Five songs are on this professionally-done demo, very much in the BELIEVER/DESTRUCTION style, but with happier guitar melodies. "Words of Wisdom" even has a groove thing going for it. The vocals of guitarist Jarno Saren can be comical at times, but that never stopped DESTRUCTION from going somewhere. Still, Jarno may want to get a proper singer, because I think his vocal delivery is an acquired taste. A decent tape, but "Million Sighs" is something the band can build around, unlike "Words of Wisdom".

This tape is available from U.S. distributor Richard Pizzo / P.O. Box 596 / Lansdale, PA 19446-0596, or you can write to: Jarno Saren / Kuntalantie 9A 13 / 45700 Kuusankoski / FINLAND



SCEPTER-Up Thy Ass

What does CELTIC FROST's **Morbid Tales** plus MANOWAR's **Hail To England** equal? SCEPTER, of course! This trio from Chicago are so true metal, they could be the very sons of King Fowley! When ordering this tape, be sure to ask for the band's bio; better yet, ask for a personal letter from the band describing what heavy metal is. There are four songs on here: "Up Thy Ass" (brilliant lyrics!! You gotta read this!), "Feel the Steel", "She Rides Majestically", (a doomish, epic track, with MANOWAR-themed lyrics), and the foot-tapping beat of "Let Earth Receive Her King". The FROST influence is the dominating sound here, but SCEPTER have a more traditional metal edge than the Swiss; now if only the Chicagoans can add more melody to the vocals. This **Up Thy Ass** is a totally pro demo—I love the production. A new recording is supposed to be out—haven't heard anything about it.

Write to: Scepter / P.O. Box 388068 / Chicago, IL 60638-8068

SECRET WISDOM-What Never Was...

This was a two-man project; half the team was none other than Dan DeLucie, now with speed metal gods NEW EDEN (and he does the *Netherwords* newsletter too). Without a drummer, Dan and partner Paolo (bass, vocals, keys) set up the drum machine and recorded this four-song tape. Besides the synthetic drums, Paolo's vocals are put through a stupid filter, which hurt the recording. But getting past that, Dan is a very fine guitarist, and these guys did write a bunch of good songs. Call it space-age melodic power metal. This tape is about 30 minutes long, with a multi-fold-out J-card (lyrics) for \$4.00 from: Dan DeLucie / 615 S. Marguerita Ave. / Alhambra, CA 91801

SEDUCER-Shock Value

SEDUCER, NC's finest thrashers, are back with a four-song demo. "Sour Blackened Tooth" is in the expected SEDUCER style of no-frills, riff-based U.S. thrash, reminding me of the last LAAZ ROCKIT studio album. Vocally, SEDUCER have that NUCLEAR ASSAULT style, but the music is better than N.A.'s boring approach. "Black Sheep" is another good one, as is "Narrow Minded" (which does sound like *Survive*-era N.A.). And "Disrespectful" closes out this tape. SEDUCER will never be big, as they're stuck in a limited form of music. Like TV, it's mindless fun, and not something I'd recommend to someone. At least it's well-done for what it is—simplistic, heavy thrash.

\$5.00 should take it from: Tripp McNeill / 4625 Murray Hill Rd. / Charlotte, NC 28209. Watch for the new CD in late '96.



SERVENT FEAR

SERVENT FEAR say they are death metal, but they're better than that. This Georgian power trio have a great tune with "Full Moon", and if they could come up with songs like this one, they'd go places. The vocals are firmly in the mids, bordering on the high range. I'd call this stuff light thrash. Anyway, "Full Moon" is a standout, but the three other songs are lacking, especially the band's own song "Servent Fear", which is a ploddy, boring track. \$4.00 from: Ray Helton / 956 Holbrook Rd. / Newnan, GA 30263



SPELLBOUND-Longing For the Origin

SPELLBOUND is a Lithuanian band influenced by PSYCHOTIC WALTZ, with a little LAST CRACK and DREAM THEATER here and there. Not my thing, but I know many SENTINEL STEEL readers are fans of PSYCHOTIC WALTZ. **Longing For the Origin** is a seven-song affair, nicely produced and packaged. Well done for this style of music.

\$5.00 from: Rokas Velyvis / Peteliskiu 12-59 / 2007 Vilnius / LITHUANIA



STEEL PROPHET-Continuum EP (Hellion)

Once again I'm working off of an advance cassette of this five-song CD, and like **The Goddess Principle's** advance tape, it sounds great. I've heard the **Continuum** CD is an improvement over the predecessor--but without the **Continuum** CD, no seal of approval from me!! **Continuum** contains a few old songs and a few new songs. "Death" is from the famed **Inner Ascendance** demo, as is "Life"; both are very good, but, in the typical **STEEL PROPHET** style, lack proper endings. "Unconsciousness Man" must be a new song, and it's a total bore. "Environmental Revolt" I did not recognize either; this is one of the fastest **STEEL PROPHET** tunes to date and actually has a memorable structure(!), as band leader Steve Kachinsky remembered to put the chorus at the end of the song. Cool!! From the early days (if I remember correctly!) is "Sungazer", with a beautiful melody for its main riff (a la **HELSTAR's** "Aieliarla and Everonn"). "Sungazer" is a nice showcase of what I feel is one of **STEEL PROPHET's** better pieces of work. Overall, **Continuum** is good, but not essential; but fans of early **FATES WARNING** and **HELSTAR** should hear this band, 'cause one of these days Kachinsky and Co. will create a masterpiece. With one of the greatest U.S. vocalists ever in Rick Mythiasin, and a superb dual guitar attack (Steve plus **NEW EDEN's** Horacio Colmenares), **STEEL PROPHET** is destined for greatness.

Write to: Steve Kachinsky / 7525 Haskell, Apt. 109 / Van Nuys, CA 91406

TALISPHERE

This is an excellent three-song demo, displaying Texans **TALISPHERE's** brand of melodic power metal. The group is fronted by Chris Cronk, who was a one-time member of **FATES WARNING** (post-Arch, pre-Alder) and **JAG PANZER** (right after Harry's departure). Cronk is a great vocalist--check him out on this tape--but 95% of the time he ends every phrase and/or sentence on the high note. Cronk needs to use moderation with his range and maybe incorporate mid-to-low level vocalization for added interest. Not much, but enough to offset the near-constant highs. "Search For the Horizon" is my favorite song; "Prevention" and "Bitter Cold" are also excellent, with some amazing guitar harmonies too. The band has other songs prepared also, but a rehearsal tape of the new stuff didn't amaze me as this three-songer does. The tape is pro-packaged, lyrics, etc. Recommended.

\$4.00 payable to: Chris Cronk; Talisphere / P.O. Box 692021 / San Antonio, TX 78269

TRAGEDY DIVINE-Apostles of Deceit

TRAGEDY DIVINE have a full-length CD out, and this German group is under the umbrella of Empire Entertainment/L.M.P. **Apostles of Deceit**, for a demo recorded in 12 hours, sounds fantastic. The five-piece play progressive power metal, but super heavy, as the guitars and double bass drumming just crush. Unlike their countrymen, **TRAGEDY DIVINE** rely on the riff and not the melody, so T.D. sound American. I want to link **TRAGEDY DIVINE** with bands like **SANCTUARY**, but the former does not have the similar vocals, nor the usage of melody as the latter does. Maybe some of that **DEPRESSIVE AGE** uniqueness creeps in, but saying

TRAGEDY DIVINE sound like **DEPRESSIVE AGE** would be inaccurate. But there are similarities.

No contact address, so write to Empire for info. The full-length CD is out.

ULTIMATUM-Symphonic Extremities

Another band by the name **ULTIMATUM** exists, with a release called **Iron Age**; two different bands. The **ULTIMATUM** we're discussing are from New Mexico, and they are a Christian thrash band. This tape has ten tracks; five are taken from the band's 1994 recording, and the rest are new. "Symphonic Extremities" is from 1994 and shows this group to be fans of the **EXODUS/ATROPHY/DEFIANCE** sound. The production on this earlier recording leans toward the treble end, with the guitar back in the mix. The third track in is "E.N.D.", a newbie, and sports an excellent recording. Unfortunately, this song, as well as all the others, has very little new to say for the ploddy thrash genre. It's another case of a Christian band influenced by the secular market putting forth their ideas a little too late. **ULTIMATUM** are the nicest guys in the world, and I could never doubt their honesty, as they love what they play--but nearly all thrash groups these days are generic, and so are **ULTIMATUM**. Maybe the Christian market will find 'em fresh...

Send \$8.00 to: **ULTIMATUM** / P.O. Box 12299 / Albuquerque, NM 87105

VALRAVEN

Produced by Bill Metoyer, **VALRAVEN's** debut recording is very 80's-ish, reminding one of early **LEATHERWOLF**, **ALIAS** (FL), **SHOK PARIS**, etc. 80's-style melodic power metal. Too bad no address came with the tape. I received it from one 'Rob Garza' of 'Unreleased Metal Report'(?). If anyone knows anything about **VALRAVEN** or Garza, write or call. The band is from Houston, TX and used to be known as **JULIAN SPITE**. Eight songs are featured on the tape, which I believe to be a (bad) dub from a master. There are a couple of weak tunes, like "Sweet Christine" and the commercial "Lookin' Good", but the rest are solid true metal compositions, like "Damn the World", "Killer Quake", "Valraven", and more. **VALRAVEN** are totally oblivious to 90's metal and MTV--that's good!

Now if I could just get a contact address, sigh....

VISIONARY-Strategy

I saw this band at the CT prog metal show about a year ago; they were terribly bland, in that new East Coast prog metal sound (**ARKAINA**, **THE QUIET ROOM**, etc.). Even worse for **VISIONARY**, they had bassist Chris Roy sing the vocals; he may be a talented bass player, but his **PRIMUS**-like singing was abysmal. Roy has given up on finding vocalists, as he's sick of the headache. God help him. This **Strategy** demo includes the last **VISIONARY** singer, C.J. Dooley, who has more power in his lungs than the average prog vocalist. Musically, **Strategy** is, as stated, in that slightly jazzy U.S. prog metal style. Imagine recent **FATES WARNING**, but without the lushness, the sweet melodies, and a heavier guitar tone. When you take out the vocals from **Strategy**, the boring music will put one to sleep (see **LEVIATHAN**). A great sound for an 8-track production though.

No price, so write to: Chris Roy / 29 Thornton Way / Keene, NH 03431

WARCHILD

WARCHILD was Chris Cronk's band prior to TALISPHERE (see review). A simpler delivery than Cronk's current outfit, WARCHILD concentrated on easy arrangements, with graceful MAIDEN-esque harmony leads to add interest. "Death Penalty" is the best song, which is followed by the rather sluggish "Chains of Fire"; "Time Will Slip By" is a dramatic cut, with a very MAIDEN-ish ending right out of *Seventh Son*. "Take It On a Dare" begins as an anthem, and ends as an anthem, with a speedy section in the middle. A good traditional metal song. Good production, lyrics with J-card. This tape should still be available from Chris Cronk, so write to the TALISPHERE address.

WARRIOR

Yes, this is the same WARRIOR that did *Fighting For the Earth*; apparently the same lineup too. I have no song listing, nor any info on why this band decided to make a comeback. I thought their album way back in 1983 (I think it was '83) was okay, but a bit too safe for my tastes. Well, this new demo is, thankfully, totally 'pure' metal; but it's also boring, by-the-numbers metal. Covering territory explored by PRIEST, MALICE, and ANVIL, I know the new WARRIOR material will appeal to many *Sentinel Steel* readers. The playing is flawless, the production huge. This tape is rumored to have caught the attention of Brian Slagel, but the last word I heard is that no deal was made for the States. Something will happen for WARRIOR in 1996, but at this time, I know not what.

WICKED WAYS-Life Eternal

Here's an interesting demo! First off, the band's singer is B.C. Richards, who sang on the first WINTERS BANE demo. WICKED WAYS formed in Ohio back in 1991, but moved to Orlando, FL in 1993. There they hooked up with Chuck Schuldiner (DEATH/CONTROL DENIED), who recorded *Life Eternal* (four songs) on eight tracks. WICKED WAYS are a dark metal band, recalling some of what SANCTUARY did with their second disc. Both "Night Reigns" and "Life Eternal" are moody, medium-paced songs, creating atmosphere with straightforward structuring. "Who Cares" is the weakest song, with its blues edge and lethargic steps. For a band that has classical influences, "Who Cares" doesn't work. The fourth song on this demo is none other than "Haunted House" (see the first demo and WINTERS BANE's debut CD), albeit a reworked version, as WICKED WAYS' Rick Renstrom has a unique guitar style. The production holds this song back a bit, as does the adjusted tempo (a tad slower than the original version), but it's still a classic, definitely B.C.'s showcase during his tenure in WINTERS BANE. Speaking about B.C., he was slated to work with Chuck, but things did not work out.

For WICKED WAYS info: P.O. Box 162492 / Altamonte Springs, FL 32716-2492

CIRITH UNGOL-live (Old Metal Records)

Pressed by King Fowley, this 7" is actually pretty good; both "I'm Alive" and "Atom Smasher" were two of the standout cuts in the early days, and live they sound even better. The recording quality is surprisingly solid (soundboard methinks), as is the playing. Of course I feel CIRITH UNGOL's *Paradise Lost* disc was their finest moment, but fans of their old stuff should pick this one up.

Write to: Old Metal Records c/o King Fowley / 5953 N. 10th St. / Arlington, VA 22205

IRONRAINBOW/ SOLITUDE AETURNUS-split

Sporting a cover by painter Michael Whelan, this 7" has a S.A. demo version of "Falling" and a new IRON RAINBOW song "Magic Lord of Darkness". Not a fan of the latest S.A. effort *Through the Darkest Hour*, "Falling" is lost on me, as I don't appreciate their new dirge-like riffs and blues touches. The fourth S.A. disc should be out in late '96. As for IRON RAINBOW, I applaud their stand for real heavy metal ("If Metal is Dead, then the Dead Walk the Earth") and commend them for achieving great production on their recordings. "Magic Lord of Darkness" is their best song to date too, but it's still pretty average stuff with a ploddy SABBATH undertone and near-monotone vocals. Combining SABBATH with NWOBHM, I know I.R. will have an audience (like the guys at *Crom*), but I find 'em too boring at this stage of their young career.

Write to: SOLITUDE AETURNUS or IRON RAINBOW / P.O. Box 932 / Middle Island, NY 11953

LONEWOLF-Holy Evil

The guitars are behind in the mix, but that doesn't stop this French four-piece from stomping all over the last few RUNNING WILD records. This beautifully-packaged single (lyrics and illustrations enclosed with a fold-out insert) contains "The Dark Ages" (intro), "Holy Evil" (a speed metal number with Rock'n'Roll-style picking and great melodies), and "Buried Alive" (at first an anthem in the old style RUNNING WILD tradition, before speeding up and rivaling "Holy Evil"). The sound is a little cluttered, but I still find this 7" enjoyable. Hopefully LONEWOLF will get the chance to do a full-length CD soon.

Contact the band's leader Jens Borner at: 15 Chemin du Billery / 38360 Sassenage / FRANCE

POWERDROPS-Proud of Our Shit

"Just Before Death" is like a moody METALLICA piece, but not as heavy; "Fear" is easily the better track, yet the simple shout-it-out vocals hold this Greek band back. Not your ordinary power metal band, nor a thrash outfit, POWERDROPS fall in with bands like HEXENHAUS and DESPAIR. POWERDROPS will hopefully get a full-time vocalist and keep those guitar melodies up front (as in "Fear"). Pro 7" package with lyrics.

REFLECTION-Sire of the Storm

REFLECTION are affectinately known as the 'Greek WARLORD', which is appropriate—if one can get past the Bela Lugosi-like vocals of Chris Kappas. He's the weak link in this otherwise promising Greek epic metal band—surely one of the best I've heard. But things get weird when Chris opens his mouth; I always expect him to say, "I vant to dreenk your blood." He'd make a great goth singer, that's for sure.

Write to: Nick Spetzos / P.O. Box 80738 / 18510 Piraeus / GREECE

BOOK REVIEWS

Heavy Metal: The Vinyl Years by John Allinson

I'm sure books like this exist, but John Allinson's, to me, is the first I've seen of its kind. The premise is simple; *Heavy Metal: The Vinyl Years* is an A-to-Z listing of (nearly) all the metal releases put out up until 1990. There are 196 pages, in a 5½ x 8½ size format. There is one page before most letter headings of six album covers. The layout is as simple as it gets, just bare-bones dry. Each album title is given a country of origin, a musical style, year of issue, and a few other details. Straight and to the point, this book is priceless to collectors, giving a no-frills rundown of even the most obscure metal releases. Unfortunately, there are a lot of listings missing; an example would be the ATTACK entry, which has only two records for the German band. But that's where people like myself—and you—come in, as compiler Allinson knows there's information missing from his book and asks for your contributions. We need a book like this. While I recommend everyone to check this book out, the price is steep (\$19.95 + postage), and I'm concerned that this may affect sales. Hopefully John Allinson (who runs a metal vinyl mailorder service) can find a way to make the price a bit more attractive.

Write to: John Allinson / P.O. Box 228 / Cedar Bluff, VA 24609

Riff Kills Man! by Martin Popoff

Martin Popoff is a great writer; unfortunately, his main influence is *Kerrang!*, so this book reads hollow most of the time. Hundreds of bands are written about in this thick 430-page review directory to heavy metal. As said, Popoff has a confident handle on the English language, and I find myself enjoying his use of adjectives and wordplay. When it comes to actually reviewing the 1,942 albums in this book, Popoff lets his egotistical, overly pompous (see *Kerrang!*) writing style get in the way, causing a severe lack of information. Even worse, Popoff reviews albums which he does not even have, recalling their sound from memory! The man's view on thrash and death metal is skewed too, as he is clearly dealing with music that is beyond his realm of knowledge. Popoff has little to no love for European-sounding metal, so bands like SABBATH to today's grunge get the high points (there is a points system, grading each album). Having said that, there is a huge amount of obscure albums listed, and it's great to see bands like OVERDRIVE, JUGGERNAUT, TYTAN, PICTURE, etc., listed side-by-side with the likes of ZEPPELIN, NUGENT, PRIEST, AEROSMITH, etc. But it is easily apparent that Popoff is not as concerned with the independent releases, usually giving them a scant few sentences that say too little about the music. Popoff's reviews on, for example, AGENT STEEL, JUGGERNAUT, and WRATH are absolutely ridiculous. I really enjoy flipping through this book at times, because of Popoff's skill in our language; but other times *Riff Kills Man!* is an annoyingly overwritten/underdone piece of work. One thing's for sure, *Riff Kills Man!* was (and still is) the topic for many great conversations amongst my friends. A book worth having, but not something one would use as a reference tool.

Send \$20.95 to: Power Chord Press / P.O. Box 65208 / 358 Danforth Ave. / Toronto, Ontario M4K 3Z2 / CANADA, or try Molten Metal.

Zine Reviews

Ascendant Strains #3

This is *Sentinel Steel* contributor Craig Wisnom's personal outlet for delivering his views on the latest and not-so-new metal releases. Always well-written, sometimes overly positive, but never uninformative are four pages of detailed reviews laid out on the computer in a classy fashion. This issue has lengthy missives on: DREAM THEATER, ELEGY, DAMIEN LEE THORR, CONCEPTION, SHADOW GALLERY, SAXON, FORBIDDEN, plus a host of other current stuff like: MOONSPELL, THE GATHERING, etc. Page four has guest contributor Michael Francisco, who reviews a bunch of death/black metal releases; of great interest are Craig's interjections disputing Michael's descriptions, or I should say *clarifying* Michael's material. A fun page to read.

Send \$1 (or \$5 for a year's subscription) for the newsletter, payable to "Craig Wisnom" / 10651 E. Timeless Dr./Tucson AZ 85748. Or, e-mail him at: wisnom@gas.uug.arizona.edu.

A Visionary's Dream #2

This issue has 88 pages, a big increase since the previous issue. It has the current crop of bands found everywhere else, but the zine's intelligent delivery makes up for that. To *AVD's* credit, there is a fine interview with DARK TRANQUILLITY and a much appreciated MANILLA ROAD article. Other groups include MERCYFUL FATE, JOEY VERA, OBITUARY, PENANCE, SKYCLAD, MACHINE HEAD, etc. There are a nice number of reviews, but too many easy 9's and 10's. Very clean, simple computer layout.

\$4 in USA or Canada, \$5 overseas, in cash or M.O. payable to: "Hayley Grief". Write to: *A Visionary's Dream* / P.O. Box 215 / Hightstown, NJ 08520

Ballbuster #1

At a glance, *Ballbuster* looks like a great magazine, stuffed with reviews, interviews, and articles in its newsprinted 48 pages. However, at a closer look, this is one terribly annoying publication mostly written in a clichéd, stereotypical heavy metal fashion. Even intelligent contributors like Chris Forbes (*Metal Core*) and Andrew Veneris, along with one or two others, can't save *Ballbuster* from being the "SPINAL TAP" of all metal mags. I love the way the mag is pleasingly laid out with small type and good editing, but the writing itself can be so bad that it loses its humor after a while. Starting from the top, Editor-In-Chief David LaDuke kisses too much butt in his interviews, especially in the irritating GRIP INC. piece. Contributor Sheena Metal is the worst with her brainless Wayne's World speech and misinformed descriptions. Proud of the fact that she looks like Dee Snyder, I think Sheena should reassess her whole vision of what metal is really all about, because she's giving the scene a bad name. Writers Miki Griesbauer and Paul Autry are nearly as bad, bloating their reviews with needless fat. It's obvious that they have no clue as to what they're writing about. Check out Autry's ridiculous reviews of the second FIGHT disc and DARK TRUTH's self-

titled debut; I'm not going to waste time picking apart the contents, since it has to be read to be believed! On the plus side, there are the interviews/articles that one would find nowhere else: JADE HEART, STRANA OFFICIANA, TT QUICK, and a few others. *Ballbuster* is made up of traditional rock (YARDBIRDS, THE TROGGS), glam (ROXX GANG), current metal (BROKEN HOPE, GRIP INC.), and many other features. Basically, *Ballbuster* tries to be the voice of all bands that have no way of getting on MTV, such as music like classic white rock, hard rock, and metal in general. To be successful, LaDuke will have to kick out a certain number of his staff and redo his own writing, because as it stands right now, *Ballbuster* is the voice of the redneck hillbilly rocker, which I am sure was not LaDuke's intention. A lot of hard work was obviously put into *Ballbuster*, and it deserves a wide audience, but with the writers it has, it'll be a difficult road.

Send \$3.25 US, \$4.25 Canada/Mexico, or \$5.25 elsewhere in US funds, check or M.O. payable to: David LaDuke / P.O. Box 58368 / Louisville KY 40268-0368.

Brave Words & Bloody Knuckles #10

I'd hate to call this Canadian thing a zine; while it lacks a glossy front cover, it is very professionally done in all other aspects. The mag sports some name writers too, like Ula Gehret (*Metal Maniacs*), Martin Popoff (*Riff Kills Man book*), Mark Gromen (*Ill Literature*), and a few others. *BW & BK* is published, I believe, in part by the HMV record store chain, Canadian division. So, it is logical that *BW & BK* covers the current metal scene thoroughly from: AMORPHIS, PYOGENESIS, SEPULTURA, and SLAYER, to SAVATAGE, OZZY, SABBATH, and IRON MAIDEN. Content-wise, it's similar to *Metal Maniacs* or any other "in" zine, but *Brave Words* has the occasional old school blurb, like news bits about BLIND GUARDIAN and hard rock bands like TWISTED SISTER and DANGER DANGER, etc. There is one page hard rock round-up. It is fun to read because of the quality writing, but this 10th issue is not something I'd go back to often.

\$3 US (in Canada) or \$4 US anywhere else. Payable to: *Brave Words & Bloody Knuckles* / Tim Henderson / 354-1/2 Yonge St. Suite #38 / Toronto, Ontario / CANADA M5B 1S5.

Chaos #32

This may not be Ray Dorsey's latest issue, but it makes for an honest sample of Ray's fine work. Based in Baltimore, MD, Ray has been part of the metal scene for a great while and *Chaos* is his highly personalized outlet. Anyone looking for the same old coverage will be disappointed, as *Chaos* is strictly original in its intent. #32 has a DEAD END retrospective, MONSTER MAGNET, GLOPE DE ESTADO (obscure Brazilian metal), a TRUST history, plus a slew of obscure and not-so-obscure reviews of LP's CD's, and live shows like: STEEL PROPHET, MASTERMIND, UFO, JORDAC, LOUDNESS, SIX TON BUDGIE, PROGSCAPE, and lots of other interesting stuff. It is a mix of progressive metal/rock, classic doom metal, and whatever else Ray feels like writing about. There are 18 pages, Xeroxed, stapled at the corner, with small but readable type giving the reader the value for his or her buck.

I'm not sure what Ray does in terms of pricing and publishing frequency, but drop the guy

a line at: Ray Dorsey / 403 Walcott Rd. / Baltimore, MD 21206. P.S. Anyone into obscure prog metal and doom from the 60's to 90's, please write to Ray.

CROM #5

I gave much constructive criticism to *CROM #3*, angering a few of the zine's scribes. Well, I'm glad I made them mad, as issue #4 bettered #3. And now #5 has just been released, professionally printed, with massive improvements in all areas. *CROM #5* is, like SINGING SWORDS, now one of the best zines when it comes to power metal publishing in the English language. This issue has interviews with RUNNING WILD, SOLITUDE AETURNUS, RAVEN, John Arch (FATES WARNING; this is an excellent interview, very lengthy, and covering everything that I wanted to know about Arch), plus unsigned bands LONEWOLF and BEYOND REALITY; a thin, one-page retrospective on metal in 1984 and a one-page VENOM tribute/discography (missing a few titles like *The Wastelands*, *Temples of Ice*, *Leave Me in Hell*, etc.) make up the articles. There are the usual album ("Hail and Kill"), demo ("Young Knights"), live gigs ("Into the Arena"), and classic LP's ("Lost in the Ice") reviews, each section fattened up since the last issue. Well done! Of course I disagree with most of their opinions, ha ha; a reader of both *CROM* and *Sentinel Steel* will have a ball comparing our respective review sections (though *Sentinel Steel's* reviews greatly outnumber *CROM's*).

My only criticisms this time out are the muddy scanned-in photos; ganging the photo material on a single sheet and having them properly statted would do wonders for *CROM*. Go for it next issue, guys! Also, it's a bit annoying to see *CROM* claiming to be "Your Only Source For True Metal On The Planet"—that's pretentious; *CROM* must be aware of other publications, like *Power & Might*, *Ascendant Strains*, *Singing Swords*, *Sentinel Steel*, and many others. By distancing themselves from everyone else, *CROM* will not be helping the true metal scene in the States. It needs all the help it can get, and by working together, we can bring back true metal to the U.S. Anyways, *CROM #5* has 60 pages (with the compact type I've been clamoring for), with clear computer layouts. Again, I disagree with many of their opinions (RUNNING WILD's *Masquerade* a perfect '10'? C'mon...), and I find *CROM's* MANOWAR-ish phrasing to be embarrassing, but I recommend *CROM #5* highly. If you were disappointed with the last issues, please give #5 a chance.

Send \$4 to: Carl Frederick / 8 Harmac Dr. / East Haven, CT 06513. Watch for *CROM's* CD debut, in the shape of a compilation! Write to *CROM* for details....

Damage Jackal Vol. 2 Issue #1

Shawn did the right thing in renumbering his zine, because it is suddenly really well done in the layout and design department. Once again, the zine is split between the METALLICA stuff and death/black metal. It is 22 pages, full size, computer layout. Bands included are: METALMORPHOSIS, NAPALM DEATH, CRADLE OF FILTH, BETHLEHEM, and more.

\$3 should do it, payable to: 'Shawn Drumm'. Write to: Shawn Drumm / 620

Stonechurch Rd. W #10 / Hamilton, Ontario /
L9B 1V3 CANADA

Edge of Time #9

The latest issue of Lithuania's *Edge of Time*, by editor Giedrius Slivinskas. This issue has DESULTORY, FATES WARNING, GALACTIC COWBOYS, INFERNO, IN THE WOODS, SIEGES EVEN, and more. It is only 28 pages, but it's jam-packed with information and has excellent computer layouts. There are many reviews well-written in English.

\$3 cash well-hidden to: Giedrius Slivinskas / PO Box 982 / 2300 Vilnius / LITHUANIA or e-mail at: fates@pub.osf.it

Experience the Power #1 and #2

#'s 3 and 4 are out, but editor Steve Totomis has lost touch with me. I hope we can resume our correspondence, because this Greek zine is hugely informative and strictly power/progressive metal. *ETP* may be only 20 pages, but it's all laid out on the computer in a very detailed compact format; it is an excellent use of space. My only concern is the interviews which are done through the mail, and are sometimes stiff to read. Otherwise, this is one of the best reads for true metal out there. The reviews are extremely informative, covering signed and unsigned bands generously. I always thumb through my copies of *ETP* #1 and #2, just because I always find something new in each one. #1 has: ATTACK, SYRIS, TAD MOROSE, KREYSON, ANVIL, DIVINE REGALE, ELDRITCH, and more. #2 has: DEPRESSIVE AGE, JACKAL, ENOLA GAY, STRATOVARIUS, MERCURY RISING, and a few more. Written in English. Recommended.

\$3 each issue (\$2 for Europeans) hidden cash to: Steve Totomis / 3 Mougion St. / Nikea, Gr-184 50 / GREECE.

Geoff Wilbur's Renegade Newsletter

This is a professional newsletter covering only unsigned bands of any musical style. MYSTIC FORCE makes a couple of appearances. There were 600 copies printed and sent out to industry types. There are interviews, reviews, and news bits with a back page that seems to specialize in metal. 4 pages total.

\$1 in US, \$1.50 Canada/Mexico and \$2 elsewhere. Checks/M.O. payable to: Geoff Wilbur / 2843 East Grand River Ave. / Suite 200 / East Lansing, MI 48823

Ill Literature #10

IL covers all current heavy/extreme music, from death metal to punk to industrial, etc. Bands in this issue are: BAD BRAINS, BROKEN HOPE, FEAR FACTORY, NEVERMORE, SKYCLAD, plus dozens more. There are hundreds of reviews, and it is more informative than *Metal Maniacs*. Recommended. Back issues are available.

Send \$4, Checks or M.O.'s payable to: 'Marco Barbieri' Send to: Ill Literature / P.O. Box 480275 / Los Angeles, CA 90048. Fax: 213-939-5818

Infernal Archives #1

Don may have done a few more issues, but here's a sample review of his first. I liked the cover right away--nice logo design, and the large DREAM THEATER picture captures the eye quickly. Other bands include: ENTHRONED, DISMEMBER, INTERNAL BLEEDING, BENEDECTION, and more. The death metal coverage gets old with me pretty quickly, but publisher Don keeps the interviews moving at a good pace, not to make them short, but...er...you know! There is an indie label report, the usual amount of common reviews: UNLEASHED, KING DIAMOND, FEAR FACTORY, etc. and two zine profile interviews, one of which is with yours truly. (Some of my comments weren't transcribed properly; SHOK PARIS ended up being spelled "shock poweress", and there are a few other funny spots), but it was all in good fun, anyway. 40 pages, done on the computer.

\$3 payable to: 'Don Anderson' should do it. *Infernal Archives* / 817 N. W. 20th / Camas, WA 98607

Kollnot Music Newsletter

KMN is a nice newsletter promoting true metal via some review coverage. Editor Kollnot does have a tendency to be easily bowled over by average material...how IRON MAIDEN's *The X Factor* received 4 out of 5 stars (said to be a triumph and up there with *Seventh Son!*), and BLIND GUARDIAN's new one got 4½ out of 5 stars, which is beyond me. Other reviews include: SAVATAGE, DEPRESSIVE AGE, ANGRA, KING DIAMOND, DECORYAH, **Metal Massacre XII**, THE GATHERING, MASQUERADE, DREAM THEATER, SAIGON KICK, ENCHANT, SAXON, SPRINGSTEEN (!), and a few others. There are nine pages total, but the type is really big, so this newsletter should be compressed to approximately two pages double-sided at most. Two stamps gets you a copy. Hopefully Jon Kollnot can play around with the layout and make it more interesting. Good writing.

No address with the newsletter, but write to: Jon Kollnot / 1268 W. 133rd Circle / Westminster, CO 80234.

Manic Reaction #10

Manic Reaction #10 will probably have a successor by the time you read this, so watch for #11. Issue #10 has DEATH (Gene Hoglan), MISERY LOVES CO., GRIP INC. PYOGENESIS, ICED EARTH, THE ORGANIZATION, and NEVERMORE. Plus, there is a "Best of Manic Reaction" section and the usual high quality reviews of albums, demos, and live gigs. Those of you who know Sue Nolz's *Manic Reaction* know what to expect--extremely well-written coverage of the current US metal releases, and it should come as no surprise that *Metal Maniacs* has snatched up Sue to bolster their roster. *Manic Reaction* #10 also comes with a free compilation tape (**Psychotic Frustrations**), which should appeal to the regular reader of *Manic Reaction*. (Sorry Sue, couldn't think of a way to state that your tape has no melodic power metal. You know me! -Denis) 42 pages, super computer layouts, clean Xerox pages.

\$3 takes it all. No foreign orders. M.O. payable to: Sue Nolz / P.O. Box 3154 / Wayne, NJ 07474-3154

The Metal Crusade Report #1

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TMCR is a four-page newsletter dedicated to Christian heavy metal. There is a short news section and a good number of reviews, with bands like: DIVINE REGALE, VENI DOMINE, ZAXAS, MORTIFICATION, BARREN CROSS, and many more. Descriptive critiques make this a good read. Computer layout with no polish.

Send one stamp for a copy to: Rick Pizzo / P.O. Box 596 / Landsdale, PA 19446-0596

Metal Headquarters #3

Here's a Japanese zine with EROTIC SUICIDE, PSYCODRAMA, BONE MACHINE, and many more. It's a mix of glam, hard rock, metal and progressive, all written in Japanese. There are also many ads for other zines. 18 pages.

No price, but \$2 should be OK. Write to: M.H. c/o Akiko White / psc 473 Box 955 / FPO AP 96349 5555 / 〒238 Yokosuka / Japan

Nether Words:

Netherwords is a four-page (and growing) computer typeset newsletter dedicated to progressive speed and thrash metal. Producer Dan Delucie is none other than the second half of the NEW EDEN guitar team, and NEW EDEN, upon the release of their debut CD, will become the kings of America's lackluster melodic speed metal scene. We're talking HELSTAR's *Nosferatu* meets SAVAGE GRACE-style music here, folks! Dan's got a good hand at writing too, with a consistent no-frills style. Bands reviewed in this issue include: AFTERMATH, STEEL PROPHET, REACTOR, INFERNO, FORBIDDEN, (which gets torn apart by Dan expertly) and many others well-done.

It's free, so write to: Dan Delucie / 615 S. Marguerita Ave. / Alhambra, CA 91801. Or e-mail Dan at: netherwords@aol.com

Power & Might #1

Absolutely essential newsletter from Ruan Rossi and Max Michiels, former publishers of *Faith Magazine*. This *P&M* is strictly power/progressive metal, just packed with info in its fulfilling four pages. There is even a smart interview with VAUXDVIHL in there! There are a good number of in-depth reviews, an article on power metal zines, a trivia section, and much more. It's very well-written with Max and Ruan's patented French humor. There are loads of addresses and information. Highly recommended! I can't wait for a second issue. It should be out by the time you read this review.

Send one IRC (Europe) or 2 IRC's (or \$1 rest of the world) for a copy of *Power & Might* / Max Michiels and Ruan Rossi / 44 Av. Du 18 Juin 1940 / 93360 Neuilly Plaisance / FRANCE

Prophecy #4

Prophecy is a German zine specializing in US true metal bands. This issue has VICIOUS RUMORS, DIO, OVERKILL, WARGASM, MORDRED, plus PARIAS (UK), SKYCLAD, etc. Clean, simple computer layouts, in the German language. 34 pages.

Marcus Spahn / Postfach 1014 / 97731 Gemünden / GERMANY

Rare Records #4

This is a half-sized German record collectors' publication; there are 28 pages, with clean, no-frills layouts. This issue's special is on Shrapnel Records, with a detailed overview of releases one through 18. Each review consists of a music description, plus code numbers, dates, and market value. In addition, there are reviews on AMERICADE, BREAKER, EMPYRE, IRON CROSS, LA STEEL, WITCHHAMMER, and many others. The print is in German, but it's easy to dissect what publisher Jens Hafner is talking about. Jens also does a mini-catalog filled with hundreds of metal items on LP, CD, etc. Very nice guy--

Contact him at: Jens Hafner / Brummerforth 11A / D-26160 / Bad Zwischenahn / GERMANY

Singing Swords #2 (in English!)

As everyone knows, the Greek metal scene is very active, with many native bands, zines, radio shows, and fans getting involved. I haven't seen all the Greek zines, but this, the second issue of *Singing Swords*, is pretty amazing, and it's in English(!). At 96 pages, with great paper and good layouts, *Singing Swords* is my favorite power metal/true metal zine to read. It's something I know I'll be going back to all the time, just to reference bands; there is a ton of info. Bands interviewed include: LORDIAN GUARD (WARLORD), BLIND GUARDIAN, MALMSTEEN, SAVAGE GRACE (excellent addition to the interview I did--no rehash!), STEEL PROPHET, the soon-to-be-big CAULDRON BORN, and lots of Greek bands, like REFLECTION, DEPRESSION, DIPHTHERIA, and tons more. Over 100 reviews inclusive, plus articles (Heavy Load, etc.). Done by four hardcore fans of real metal, *Singing Swords #2* is a major triumph in the realm of metal publishing. If you love *Sentinel Steel*, then *Singing Swords* is highly recommended. I feel so strongly about this mag, I arranged to have it distributed in the States.

Contact me regarding availability and pricing. You can write to two of the *Singing Swords* men: Gregory Varsamis / Agiou Pefrou 60 / 13671 Aharnai / Athens, GREECE, and Costas Pentidis / D. Pouraimi 25 / 13671 Aharni / Athens, GREECE. But to buy the mag, contact *Sentinel Steel*.

Spectrum #4

Spectrum is a thirty-page pro-printed zine on newsprint. Good articles and interviews featuring: FORBIDDEN, Foundations '95, Jeff Wagner of Relapse, along with the usual stuff like: AT THE GATES, 454 BIG BLOCK, MOURN, and album, demo, and live reviews, too.

No price, but \$2 us and \$3 everywhere else should cover it. Write: *Spectrum* / P.O. Box 589 / Hudson, MA 01749 / USA.

Stay True, Stay Heavy, and Stay Underground #4

This is King Fowley's (DECEASED) personal foray into the world of zines. Actually, it may be considered a newsletter, just being 14 pages and stapled at the corner. There is clean Xerox layout. I like the writing, as King's personality comes through. There are interviews with THE GATHERING, ICED EARTH, and "WARLORD" (actually, it's FATES WARNING's Mark Zonder

recalling his old band). The reviews are in alphabetical order. I have no idea how King could give **Multiples of Black** (HELSTAR) and **The X Factor** (IRON MAIDEN) nearly perfect scores, but DECEASED'S screaming skinsman is right on with those reviews of that bad SENTENCED EP and FORBIDDEN'S *Distortion*.

I have no price, but \$1-\$2 should cover it. Send to: King Fowley / ST, SU, SU / 5953 N. 10th St. / Arlington, VA 22205

Strike #1

The full color cover is none other than X WILD'S **Monster Effect** illustration. I wonder what this Brazilian's mag is all about..power metal, of course! There are interviews with BLIND GUARDIAN, HELLOWEEN, and PARAGON, along with live reviews of GRAVE DIGGER/X WILD, NEVERMORE, and record and demo reviews, as well. There are 16 pages (black and white interiors), and it is not in English. Editor Eduardo promises a beefed-up second issue, which I'm looking forward to. Too bad I won't be able to read it! Oh well. The contents will be: RAGE, A.R. PELL, RUNNING WILD, ENOLA GAY, etc...looks very promising. *Strike* is always looking for more music to write about.

Contact: *Strike Magazine* / attn. Eduardo de Sousa Bonadia / Cx. Postal 4293 Sao Paulo / SP / Cep 01061-970 / BRASIL or fax: +5511 914-6052

Temples of Eternity #1

Ahh, how I wish I could read Greek! My friend Dimitris Starakis has done a great first issue and hopefully will follow it up with a second. There are 68 pages, mostly cleanly Xeroxed, and the whole mag is stapled at the sides. I think Dimitris could've tightened up on his layouts and reduced the type size making for a more compact zine, but that's all I can say. The first issue has interviews with: LEVIATHAN, ATTACK, MERCURY RISING, Limb Schnoor (ANGRA, ATTACK management), plus lots of great Greek bands like: GUARDIAN ANGEL, REFLECTION, SARISSA, CRUSH, etc...plentiful reviews, too. It's all well-written in Greek. Maybe Dimitris can make an issue in English?!

I'm not sure if *Temples of Eternity #1* is still available, so write to: Dimitris Starakis / Epimenidoy Maroyli 36 / 74100 Rethymno Crete / GREECE

That's It! #8

Well, here it is, Germany's answer to *Sentinel Steel*: *That's It!* magazine, published by Jochen Heinlein. I've been raving about how good the German mags are, and in terms of content featured and publishing regularity, *That's It!* is the best. Now, David Boller, my resident translator, tells me that the quality of writing in *That's It!* does not equal *Rock Hard* or even the excellent *Heavy, Oder Was!?*; but I'm blind to that, as I see the bands in this magazine: WARRIOR, PILEDRIVER, HEAVY LOAD, NASTY SAVAGE, SWEET SAVAGE, LORDIAN GUARD, DORO, SAVATAGE, CHASTAIN, VIRGIN STEELE, SEVENTH OMEN, and tons more, all in the 80's/power/progressive metal vein. Full-color cover, glossy pages throughout, with above-average graphics. 64 packed pages, written in German (aaargh...). *That's It! #8* is where I'd like to be, quality-wise, with the next issue of *Sentinel*

Steel. We'll see. *That's It!* makes U.S. mags look like buffoons. Anyway, bands should definitely send their material to Jochen.

People with \$5 to spare (that should get you a copy via surface, in four weeks) are recommended to pick up a copy of *That's It!*; entirely done by two people, Jochen Heinlein / Finkenstr. 4 / 75443 Otisheim / GERMANY

Underground Zine Scene #4

UZS is a great way to find out about other zines. Editor John Ridge does demo tape reviews and also hundreds of zine reviews, spanning the globe. There are short, concise reviews and good critical write-ups.

Just \$2 postage paid. Write to: John Ridge / 6611 Milligan Rd. / Cass City, MI 48726



POWER & MIGHT NEWSLETTER

POWER & MIGHT NEWSLETTER #1 OUT NOW! FOUR A4 PAGES CRAMMED WITH MANY CD / DEMO REVIEWS OF POWER, SPEED, PROGRESSIVE HEAVY-METAL BANDS, A SURVEY OF TODAY'S BEST UNDERGROUND FANZINES AND AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH AUSTRALIAN PROG-METAL SENSATION VAUXDVIHL (EX-VAUDEVILLE). NO DEATH/BLACK CRAP, NO BIOHAZARD-TYPE MOSHCORE. DEATH TO FALSE METAL! #1 COMES NEATLY PRINTED WITH LEGIBLE REDUCED CHARACTERS. 1 IRC (EUROPE) / 2 IRC's (WORLD) TO THOSE AT FAULT.

#2 SHOULD FOLLOW IN 2 MONTHS SO BANDS/LABELS: SEND IN YOUR STUFF FOR A GUARANTEED REVIEW! CD/TAPE/VIDEO TRADERS INTO QUALITY METAL ALSO WANTED.

POWER & MIGHT
(Attn: MAX or RUAN),
44 AV. DU 18 JUIN 1940,
93360 NEUILLY-PLAISANCE, FRANCE.

LABYRINTH-No Limits (Underground Symphony) What a great follow up to the EP 'Piece Of Time'! Two tracks from the EP are also on this fulllength 'No Limits'. 'No Limits' is a tasty concoction of progressive power metal with really memorable songs. LABYRINTH's talents cover Germanic sympho speed metal in "Mortal Sin" while admirably taking on QUEENSRYPHE/DREAM THEATER qualities with "Dreamland". Very original keyboard flourishes abound, and set LABYRINTH apart from others. Surely one of the top bands in Italy (and Europe!) now, LABYRINTH are recommended. The only request I have is that I hope they can get a heavier guitar sound on their next CD outing (maybe with the MADSWORD or ELDRITCH production team?). SENTINEL STEEL Mailorder proudly carries NO LIMITS in the US.

CHAMBER SEVEN (demo) A California 4 piece, CHAMBER SEVEN are a melodic thrash band, somewhere in the OVERKILL ('Taking Over'), TOXIK ('World Circus'), and FORBIDDEN realm of things. Though not as competent, as the overall delivery could be tightened up for sure. Best song on this demo is "Hunted", which also appears on a crappy compilation called SOUNDS FROM THE UNDERGROUND. This demo is free, so start scribbling to: Dismemberment Productions/1055 W. Washington Ave #4/Sunnyvale, CA 94086

LETHAL-Poison Seed (Massacre) Let me second Natalie's assessment of this disc, and state that 'Poison Seed' is a miserable album. LETHAL, the spineless band that they are, have sold out (to nothing), and gone 'Seattle'. Which is the stupidest thing they could have done, now that grunge/alternative/depressing music is on its way out (I hope!). Nearly as perplexing are the motives of the European metal media, who have been celebrating the release of this CD. Like Massacre's other 'true metal' comebacks (HELSTAR, CHASTAIN, VICIOUS RUMOURS, WARGASM, EXPLORER, FATAL OPERA, etc), LETHAL's 'Poison Seed' is destined for bargain bins all across Germany. At least LETHAL's US label DCA may be able to capitalize on the trendies here in the US, but elsewhere....

NEW RELIGION (indie CD '96) Oh my...like LETHAL, NEW RELIGION's CD debut was a marvelous tribute to the QUEENSRYPHE style of classy metal--but now look at NEW RELIGION! They've been 'Lethalized'! Another band that will lose the entire audience they gained from their first CD. I don't have the stomach for this. Read my LETHAL review again.

MADSWORD-Evolution (Underground Symphony) 5 songs, lasting 40 minutes...yes, this is progressive metal. The DREAM THEATER influence is obvious, especially with the cover version of "The Ytse Jam"--well done too. Super production, decent Italian vocalist, and a big crunch to the guitar riffage. Highly skilled musicians. After a few listens, I'm just starting to catch on to the songs. Complex.

TRAGEDY DIVINE-Visions Of Power (T&T) The demo (see review section) did its job, as the band hooked up with L.M.P. and signed to Noise's T&T division. TRAGEDY DIVINE have bettered their demo, coming up with a monstrously heavy and dark power metal album that is definitely not the typical German metal fare. Huge riffs are plentiful, the type found on Terry Date productions (METAL CHURCH, LIEGE LORD) and albums by (recent) RAGE, ENOLA GAY, etc. The TRAGEDY DIVINE vocalist reminds me of Buddy Lackey (PSYCHOTIC WALTZ) with a Warrel Dane tinge, but without the siren-like capabilities. The singer's voice plays nicely against the ominous guitar chunks. Very original sound, good songs, and a nice variety in the pacing throughout the album. I would have liked more accessible melodies, but otherwise, this is a above average release. L.M.P., why work with Charlie when you can use the TRAGEDY DIVINE producer and/or engineer?

CHROMING ROSE-New World (Miez) Germany's CHROMING ROSE, the veterans of two neat HELLOWEENish discs, a good melodic metal 3rd album, and a very average live/unreleased CD, have hit rock bottom with their 4th studio CD, 'New World'. Saying they'll never compromise themselves, CHROMING ROSE have done just that, offering average American melodic metal peppered with a little PANTERA and alternative influences. Maybe fans of MASQUERADE will like this stuff. Kinda depressing, mid-paced metal that is utterly boring. Their label urges everyone to write in: MIEZ Records/Asternweg 11/89264 Weissenhorn/Germany

MEATWAGON-Left With Nothing (indie CD) Made up of 3 current members of ANNIHILATOR (nope, no Jeff Waters), British Columbia's MEATWAGON deliver a sound naturally reminiscent of ANNIHILATOR, with a dose of recent OVERKILL and a smidgen of PANTERA. The production is dry, precise, and very clean--overall a sound that should get J.B. at MOLTEN METAL USA interested for distribution purposes. Try him, or write: MEATWAGON/Dave Machander/P.O. Box 5024/Station B/Victoria, B.C. Canada V8R 6N3 (the CD is \$10 US, \$12 Can, \$11 to Europe; Check, MO, IMO payable to: 'Dave Machander')

MAJESTY-Open Your Eyes (indie CD) Very good BREAKER/LEATHERWOLF style classy melodic US metal. 10 songs, good writing skills. I expect this to be popular with indie CD enthusiasts and melodic metal fans in general. Check the usual outlets, or write: Coast To Coast Music/106 Ramapo Plaza/Suite 215/Pomona, NY 10970

RED JURY-Perceptive Aggression (demo) RED JURY have been described as IRON MAIDEN meets RUSH by the local press, which is utter baloney. RED JURY plays regular metal, maybe a little more aggressive than others, with a blues feel to the guitar parts. The vocals are weak, and the songwriting shows off the bands inexperience in this area. The group say they have tightened up their sound--I'll be looking forward to RED JURY's more 'controlled' approach. \$4.00 for the tape. RED JURY/3 Wickham Lane/E.Windsor, NJ 08520-1209

VIRGIN STEELE-The Marriage Of Heaven & Hell Part II (T&T) The finest VIRGIN STEELE to date. A grand epic of 'romantic/fantasy' metal, the disc is finely balanced by the powerful songs ("A Symphony Of Steel"), and the more dramatic songs ("Unholy Water"). Excellent lyrics. I would have liked a better production, but that angle is easy to forget because of the music. A fine mix of RAINBOW, SAVATAGE, MANOWAR, and DEEP PURPLE.

PILLOWKILLZ (indie CD) This is a collection of the 2 PILLOWKILLZ (now FERNGULLY) demos, the first of which was produced and 'supported' by BLIND GUARDIAN. Good German power/speed with some unique ideas and an 'earthy' singer (not the typical Teutonic shouter). See FERNGULLY review. Contact: Oliver Hohendorff/Ludwig-Jahn-Str. 39/47918 Tonisvorst 1/Germany. Good stuff.

WITCH MEADOW-When Midnight Calls (demo) WITCH MEADOW are a regular metal band from Rhode Island. Their tape has 6 songs, the best of which is the speedy "Wings Of Steel". Singer Paul Wyrostek is the strong point of the band; the rhythm section is okay, but I'd like to see Bryan Martin use more melodies in his riffs. A few more riff changes might be in order too, as a song like "Hell's Hollow" may have a likeable chorus, but the monotonous main riff loses the listener fast. The music overall is plain, no frills US metal. I like the song "Room Without A View", which gives a different perspective on the situation in Bosnia. \$5.00 payable to: Bryan Martin/P.O. Box 1398/Coventry, RI 02816-0025

NEVERMORE-In Memory (CM) Much better than their debut, this 5 song EP's standouts include the crushing "Optimist or Pessimist" (a new song), "Matricide", and "In Memory" (both pre-debut CD demo tracks rerecorded). "Matricide" achieves its excellence with its anthemic, pro environment stance; "In Memory" has the typically generic NEVERMORE riff, but the latecomer chorus is worth waiting for. The BAUHAUS cover and CD closer "The Sorrowed Man" are pretty useless--bring on 'Politics Of Ecstasy'!

MERCYFUL FATE-Into the unknown (MB) Several listens later, this new disc remains as flat as it sounded the first time. The songwriting is threadbare, the riffing lame, the melodies rare, and the sudden use of 70's metal ideas inexcusable. I've heard a little of Sherman and Denner's ZOSER MEZ project, and that is what 'Into The Unknown' leans toward. A 70's vibe. A second part to "The Mad Arab" is lackluster.

STEEL PROPHECT-Continuum (Brainstorm) To add to my advance tape review, this CD sounds okay, but still weak. A better mix could have improved the sound greatly. I wish STEEL PROPHECT could hook up with Bill Metoyer....

REGIME-U.G.L.Y. and Knucklesandwich+Dead Serious (Molten Metal USA) REGIME's products will be receiving a lot of promotion in the coming months, but I caution the buyer, as THE REGIME have something of a cliched sound, with more than half of their material coming across as very average. The group combine the cooler sounds of 80's metal stalwarts HEXX and IAAZ ROCKIT with a bluesy toughness that characterizes SKID ROW and other such bands. THE REGIME vocalist is terribly limited with his 'range' (10 packs of cigs a day, no doubt), recalling John Bush, Kermit (from Germany's TYRANT, and not the Muppets), the original LIVING DEATH vocalist, etc. It gets on my nerves after a while. From the CD 'U.G.L.Y.', I thought the speedier tracks like "Relentless", "Dance Of Death", and "Fear Itself" were okay, but I dislike the bluesy redneck anthems "Bitch Is Cruel" and "Ain't So Fuckin' Bad" with a passion. The album 'Knucklesandwich' (soon to be on CD with the EP 'Dead Serious' tacked on) has even less to offer, with only "Stand & Die" and "Kill Or Be Killed" (a la ANVIL's "Winged Assassins"), plus maybe the sinister anthem "Shark Attack" making the grade. The rest is aggressive but generic blues metal like SKID ROW. 1987's 'Dead Serious' has a thinner sound when compared to the beefy, pro productions of the other THE REGIME products. But great guitar playing and good songs on "Dead Serious", "Into A Trance", and the RAINBOW rip "The End" make up for it. I can't knock the playing abilities of the band, and the production values are consistently excellent for an independent release. But THE REGIME must upgrade their songwriting, because metal listeners these days are looking for more challenging themes in their music. For info on this band, contact Molten Metal USA.

RIPCORD-Speed Of Sound (Metro Records) Somewhat better than THE REGIME, Minnesota's RIPCORD offer a similar brand of no-holds-barred aggressive US metal. The vocals are rough, the production is good, and like THE REGIME, RIPCORD have a lyrical penchant for bad girls, riots, strippers, bars, drinking, mental illness, war, and other such topics. "Riot" is the best song, with "Frontline" following; "Dead Broke" and the rest are very average metal. Molten Metal has this, or write: RIPCORD/P.O. Box 290062/Minneapolis, MN 55429

IN THE NAME-In The Name (Victor) Canadian modern progressive metal, with exKINGSBANE member(s), I believe. Mostly ponderous, boring plod prog metal, with occasional references to Seattle/alternative/blues. Like ALICE IN CHAINS meets FATES WARNING/QUEENSRYCHE, I suppose.

CATHARSIS-Pathways To Wholeness (Nordic Metal) California 3 piece mixing FATES WARNING with WATCHTOWER, plus some metallic RUSH ideas. Like INNER STRENGTH, CATHARSIS lack the songwriting skills to be above average.

EMPYRIA-Behind Closed Doors (T&T) Riffy Canadian progressive metal in the prog rock context. Too heavy for YES fans, and not sweet enough for the average prog metal listener, EMPYRIA are a tough sell. Flawless playing, roomy production, and tight songs--EMPYRIA are a good band, but I don't like the monotone vocal style and the somewhat hookless (in a traditional sense) songwriting.

GAMMA RAY-Alive '95 (Noise) I'm a bit angry, as I picked up this disc (12 songs strong), only to hear that Noise U.S.A. released a double CD version, with 6 or 7 extra tracks. Without any prior notice! Anyways, this is an acceptable GAMMA RAY live CD, let down by a sub par sound in a few spots ("Fairytale", "Tribute To The Past"), and a less-than-heavy guitar appearance throughout. The song selection is excellent, excepting "Space Eater", which I've never cared for. The biggest highlight is the complete rendition of "Ride The Sky", with Kai's vocals bringing back great memories. About Kai's voice--I really like it under controlled conditions--but in the live situation, it's not on solid ground. There were too many occasions where Kai was off pace, especially in the more complex material. **Just in:** the US pressing with two CDs just arrived. Disc one features the 12 songs that I talked about above, plus an awesome bonus track in "Lust For Life". Disc #2 is about 30 minutes long, and has **previously released material**. The 6 bonus songs on disc #2 are all taken off of the POWER OF METAL double live CD collection. For those who bought POWER OF METAL and now just paid \$20+ for the double GAMMA RAY disc...well, I'm sorry you did. If Noise was going to put out a bonus CD with the GAMMA RAY Alive '95, why couldn't they put out the entire GAMMA RAY gig from POWER OF METAL (which was from the 'Insanity & Genius' tour; 'Alive '95' is from the 'Land Of The Free' tour). By packaging 'Alive '95' as they did, Noise is forcing the metal fan to also buy the POWER OF METAL 2CD set. Who wants an incomplete concert? On a side note, Ralf Scheepers vocal performance on the POWER OF METAL CD (and the 'Alive '95' bonus CD) is excellent, and one cannot help but compare the renditions of certain songs sung by Ralf and Kai.

JAG PANZER (demo '96) YES! JAG PANZER is truly back. The original line-up is back together, with Joey Tafolla set to rejoin the group also. 3 songs are on this tape, two of which are new. Both "Future Shock" and "Ready To Strike" are top-notch PANZER tunes, though they both could be fleshed out a bit more. Tafolla's input should be the icing on the cake. The production is stellar, as Mark Briody and Co. have changed studio's for the better. The 3rd song is the old chestnut "Shadow Thief", which finally sees a legit release. And what a classic melodic power metal tune! Beautiful guitar melodies, inspired vocals...this is JAG PANZER! I can't wait for the full length release. This demo should get PANZER a quick deal....I think this tape is for sale, so write to: Mark Briody/P.O.Box 17236/Colorado Springs, CO 80935

US METAL Vol. 1 (IRON PAGES book) How I wish I could speak German! This is an amazing book, just over 200 pages in length, covering nearly as many bands. And there are more volumes to come! Each group listed is given a complete description, with quotes from other magazines and books supplying the necessary background for each band. A complete discography is also included with each entry. Basically, this book fills the gap between Popoff's Riff Kills Man and Allinson's Heavy Metal: the Vinyl Years, being much more descriptive when it comes to band backgrounds than the former, while offering more to chew on than basic discographies, like the latter. Also, one will find no alternative/Seattle/industrial/death metal in US METAL Vol.1; just true metal bands like MEDIEVAL STEEL, HELLION, METALLICA, WHIPLASH, MANILLA ROAD, etc. Like Allinson's book (but to a lesser degree), there are a few omissions and/or inaccuracies (like in the PILEDRIIVER article: the Cobra pressing of 'Metal Inquisition' was in fact the 1st pressing, while the HME (US) pressing was the 2nd, and had two tracks taken off (replaced by 2 CONVICT songs) because of their controversial nature). In any case, this is a major triumph in metal publishing, and deserves to be translated into English. Congrats to Matthias Mader, Otger Jeske, Arno Hofmann, and all who contributed to this fine book. For info: Otger Jeske/Alt-lankwitz 72/12247 Berlin/Germany

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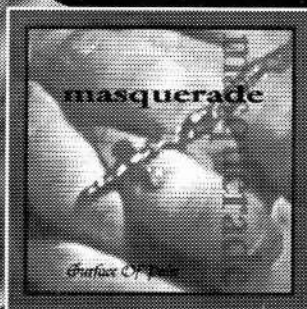
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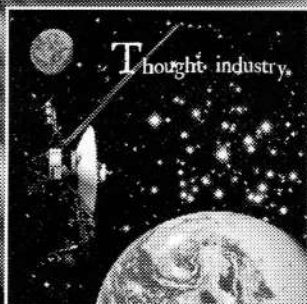
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Don't You Know It's The Night Of The

DEMON

by Tony Zangara

I'm not really a huge NWOBHM fan, beyond the obvious giants like PRIEST and MAIDEN, as well as a bunch of cool acts like WITCHFYNDE, ANGELWITCH, GRIM REAPER - and the mighty DEMON!!! - third in my mind to only MAIDEN and PRIEST in the Hall of British Steel. I bought the **Night of the Demon** LP over ten years ago, yet I can remember to this day the enchantment I felt upon putting the needle down. Here was pure MUSIC! The heavy guitars and vocals of Dave Hill were accompanied by thoughtful and highly talented solos and the songs were heavy on melody and originality. But it was **The Unexpected Guest** that really blew me away. Sheer magic - "Don't Break the Circle" was covered by BLIND GUARDIAN as a bonus track on their **Follow The Blind** CD - but as mighty as BG are - you must listen to the DEMON original to fully see how wondrous this song is. The whole album is one brilliant song after another - 10 tracks chocked full of impassioned vocals, brilliant songwriting and incredible soloing. "Total Possession", "Beyond the Gates", "The Spell" - all wondrous classics. Dave Hill has been making such incredible music for so long and has gotten hardly any fame - one of the great injustices in music!! He has proved himself one of metal's most creative songwriters. A word on the name - many have thought DEMON much have been a Satan band, but they were not at all. The only album that dealt with the occult at all was **The Unexpected Guest**, and it was a "beware of forces you don't understand" thing - no demons were ever in any way glorified. But the moniker hurt the band - people tended to dismiss them merely because of their name, which Dave Hill refused ever to change. After the great **The Plague** album, DEMON were signed to Atlantic Records but Atlantic also wanted the name changed. Hill refused and the band broke up shortly thereafter. However, Hill subsequently put DEMON back together with keyboardist Steve Watts. The first three DEMON albums had featured the great guitarwork of brilliant soloist Les Hunt and the riffs and songwriting of Mal Spooner, Hill's closest friend. The third **The Plague** strayed from the first two in that it was a concept album about a post-apocalyptic society in which "Big Brother" is out to crush individuality. In it were keyboards and the entire album was rather hard to get into at first. But it was brilliant - the title track is one of my favorite songs of all time. After the death of Spooner, the Hill/Watts tandem carried on, and released the unspeakably boring **British Standard Approved** album. Avoid this at all costs is my recommendation - it was a prog rock experiment that was monotonous beyond belief! Afterwards, Hill and Watts released **Heart of Our Time**, which was much more gratifying - but still more progressive rock than guitar-based metal. However, the genius of Hill's songwriting ability is there, and every DEMONiac should get this CD. DEMON (still in the form of Hill, Watts and a supporting cast that often changed) continued to exponentially improve with their next album, **Breakout**. Heavier than anything seen from them since the awesome **The Unexpected Guest**, **Breakout** was a forceful combination of strong and thoughtful metal anthems and has many classic songs. Yet DEMON were to get even better. Hill recruited riffmeisters Johnny Waterhouse and Steve Brooks in on guitars, and **Taking The World By Storm** followed shortly thereafter. Steve Watts continued on keys and in the songwriting - but DEMON had become truly heavy once again - and **TTWBS** is an essential DEMON CD. A while later, the band released a double live CD **One Helluva Night** that combined the classics from the early albums with the heavy new material (the keyboard stuff in the middle period was thankfully absent). Subsequently, DEMON released my second favorite DEMON CD (after **The Unexpected Guest**), **Hold On To the Dream**. The band was now Dave Hill - vocals, John Waterhouse - lead guitar, Steven Brookes - guitar, Scot Crawford - drums, and Steve Watts - keys. Keith Mulholland was the session bassist. The music is aggressive and heavy, but at the same time melodic and thoughtful. The songwriting is marvelous and songs like "New Frontiers", "Eastern Sunset", "Shoot For The City", "No More Hell on Earth" and the majestic ballad "Hold On To The Dream" make this a outstanding album. The next album (1992) saw the departure of Watts. Hill, Waterhouse, and Brookes were joined by Mike Thomas on bass and Paul Rossow on drums. It was entitled **Blow-Out** and is an excellent heavy, riff-based CD (as to be expected, since Brookes took over as Dave Hill's songwriting partner from the departed Watts) that still retains the DEMON sound established over a decade ago. In general, **Blow-Out** was the heaviest (and fastest) DEMON release to date, and "Still Worth Fighting For", "Everything Has Changed", "Victim Of His Time" (an excellent tribute to Freddie Mercury) and "Visions Of the Future" are all highly memorable songs. The following year saw Hill and Waterhouse team up on **Welcome To the Real World** - a CD under the name of DAVE HILL, as Hill finally grew exasperated by the lack of exposure given to DEMON's releases over the years. **WTRW** to my mind is an masterful album - full of highly catchy and commanding songs like "Hyperactive", "Dance Of Life" and "21st Century". The music is of the highest quality, although to be honest most die-hard metal fans would probably find some of the music too mellow - in fact, I would have preferred it a bit heavier myself, for the guitars are more subdued than on recent DEMON's. The CD ends with a ballad, a tribute to Fred Charles Hill, who worked in the mines for 45 years to raise his family (including his son Dave), but had to suffer the closure of the mines due to a depression. Not a cheerful ending, but hopefully there will be more to come from Hill and DEMON. Last year Dave Hill gave an interview to a small California radio station connected with Freddie Vinson, the President of the Demon Fan Club's USA branch, in which Hill said there would be another DEMON album in the future. Currently Hill owns a record shop in England - hopefully he has more music in him! In the meantime, go put on **The Unexpected Guest** and CRANK IT UP!

Discography (full-lengths only, not including **British Standard Approved**)

Night Of The Demon - 1981

The Unexpected Guest - 1982

The Plague - 1983

Heart Of Our Time - 1986

Breakout - 1987

Taking The World By Storm - 1988

One Helluva Night - 1989

Hold On To The Dream - 1991

Blow-Out - 1992

Welcome To The Real World (DAVE HILL) - 1993

All are available on CD - the first two as a two-on-one CD.

One Helluva Night is a double CD.



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**PART ONE: THE
HELSTAR
STORY**

Singer JAMES RIVERA discusses the 'Multiples Of Black' bomb. We begin with the man who produced the CD...

Tell me how did it go with Dave Ellefson, in terms of personality and experience in the studio, what he brought to the band, what he took away, etc.

As far as working with him, he's a great guy to work with, because, on those songs in particular, he did a lot of rearranging. Besides just producing and going, "Oh you're flat, you're sharp," he actually went in and rearranged all the songs. And as far as working with him as a person, he's the greatest guy in the world, he's Mr. Business man, everything by the book, he's like a lawyer you know. When he says we're going to have lunch at 12:03, he means we're going to have it at 12:03, and that's weird. And I noticed he always picked weird times to do things. Like, "Okay, James come in tomorrow and do your vocal tracks, we'll get you going about 11:45". Why not 11:30, or why not just 12:00, but that's just the way he was.

So he came on, and you were impressed by him? He started to make some changes about the arrangements, and you just went along with it.

Yeah, well, he actually put some effort into it, he put some work into it. He just didn't go, "I'm gonna make 30 grand off these guys. And I'm just gonna go back to sleep behind the board and let them do what the fuck they want". And in the beginning, at the time, I would say that what we called our quote-unquote progressive heavy metal, technical metal, was on the down slide already anyway. And producing a band like HELSTAR, and coming from a band like MEGADETH, and at one point they were almost kind of technical, in their earlier days, they were more technical. And at that point they had just finished doing, what album was it, the one that really gave them the big push. You know, when they had "Sweating Bullets"...

"Symphony of Destruction." (From Countdown to Extinction).

Yeah, there you go, that album. You can tell that album had a lot of AC/DC riffs. So his whole master plan was with the project was really to initially make us as straight forward as possible to land the major all U.S. American record deal. Like, *Nosferatu* wasn't going to cut it, and raise an eyebrow from anyone at Capitol or Mercury's eyes,

because at that point that's what they were least looking for, and the Seattle grunge scene had already made its way in, so that's really what he was trying to do. So, in that sense, he took away from us in the long run, because we never landed the big all around American deal and become a major success, so we ended up going to a German label, and over there they want the songs longer, the way they were written to begin with, so all of them were cut short. Basically in all those songs, there was at least a verse and chorus cut out.

So that was Dave's doing?

Yeah, right.

Yeah, cause all the songs, they're all three minutes long.

Yeah, exactly! What he was trying do with all of those songs was to make each one of those songs be a hit. If another words if we got a major record deal, those four songs definitely would be the hit singles. You see what I'm seeing, basically that's radio air time, those three minute songs.

So is that the way he thinks for MEGADETH, him and Dave Mustaine? Is that the way they write their songs?

I imagine, I would think that's how they think now.

Oh boy.

Yeah, cause if you listen to their newer stuff you can tell.

Absolutely, they're short and to the point.

They're short and to the point. Exactly, that's the way he used to say it, "Let's get it short and to the point." But only if he had got us signed to Mercury like he thought he was going to. And he didn't.

You were confident that you would get a major label deal, and thousands of other metal bands weren't able to— but you actually thought that HELSTAR would?

Yeah, exactly, we were under the impression that the chances were much greater, that he would be

able to do something to get us signed. Even if it meant going back to Metal Blade for more money. This is just off the record, really, this is probably something I don't want people to read, but this is why this guy in Austin is very upset with Dave, he feels that this whole deal was negotiated between me, Dave, and of course the guy in Austin who backed us with money, and stuff. And of course since he was responsible for paying for all this stuff, it led to conversations between him and Dave. And of course he would be sending the money while we were out in California, a little at a time, he would send so much a week, to keep us out there, and keep Dave going in the studio. So according to him, and the way he feels, he feels that Dave has misled everything. And there's another factor that we want to consider, is that Dave also jumped on the project, and wanted to do the project, but just didn't know when it would happen, because of the AEROSMITH tour. Let's back up and go back to some points of fact. When we jumped in to this and did this thing with them, that's when they got thrown off the tour.

Now why did that happen?

Uh, because, what happened, Dave Mustaine fell off his wagon again, and got all screwed up and fucked up or something and said some rude things to AEROSMITH or something; and as a matter of fact Houston was the show they got thrown off the tour from.

Ahhhhh.

So okay, basically, negotiating with Dave (Ellefson) on the telephone, "Hey yeah, dude, I want to produce it. Just we've got all this stuff coming up, and the tour, and whenever this is over, maybe we're looking at October or November, sometime of that year in particular." And this tour started in August. I can't give exact dates but let's just off the top of my head say August 1 was Dallas with AEROSMITH, August 2 was Houston. August 2 they were thrown off the tour. But see this was done after the show. Apparently, what happened was what really pissed off MEGADETH was AEROSMITH cancelled, they had two dates in Houston, they had one on a Saturday, and one on like a Monday, yeah that's right. And Friday was their first show in Dallas. Saturday was their first in

Houston, and they would have had another one on Monday. **AEROSMITH** cancelled the Saturday show, according to **AEROSMITH's** reason was **Steven Tyler** was sick, and it really pissed the guys off, because they gave money back, and a lot of people rather than selling out the Monday show, because it was on Monday, didn't go, and then the people that were there, the people down in front, we call these amphitheaters down here, and all the seat area was bought by the forty year olds still wearing their **Toys in the Attic** T-shirts from way back. So when **MEGADETH** came on, they had their kids already that were in junior high school with them, and you know. Some forty year old biker dudes up there, "Well, fuck you!" So that pissed Dave off, he said a lot of rude things like, "Yeah, I know you old fat mother fuckers out there are sweating mud puddles, but you know you can get up and mosh a little bit. Your little fucking social security band will be out her in a minute to give you the songs you want to hear, but we're **MEGADETH** anyways. Kidney transplants, they're back there getting their kidney transplants." So you know, right after that show, we hung out with Dave (Ellelson), and of course he always had backstage passes set up for us because it was a business meeting anyway. "Well man, check it out man, this tour is going to last until October like, but we're going to get it rolling, tell Ray (Austin financier) we're going to get it rolling, you know." Anyways, he leaves that night, and two days later, my phone rings, and it's like, "Hey James, it's Dave." "Hey Dave, what's up?" I thought well, shit, where is he now, he's in El Paso, right. So I said, "Hey, how's El Paso," and he's just calling me to tell me how's the tour going. And he's like, "Well, I'm not exactly, I'm home." "You're home?" "Well, man, after that night, we cancelled the tour." So to speak. He didn't want to get into it, but basically that's what it came down to. So you can see it in the way Ray sees it in, in fact he's very highly pissed off. He's like yeah, you should think about it yeah, they lost a lot of money in that shit and they had to make it up somehow. Well, he covered his ass: "Well fuck it, I'll just produce that **HELSTAR** project, they're giving me so much anyway." So you see, that's the way he sees it. Which now, I'll leave that up to you to see the way you want to see it. I don't want to comment on it. But I'll tell you right now that's kind of the way I see it myself too.

So Dave Ellefson used **HELSTAR**?

Sort of, in a sense, well, "Like hey, that'll make up for some of the money I lost on that tour".

The four or five songs he did for you, was that supposed to be a demo you were supposed to shop around?

No, we, see the whole thing, our first thing to do was to make an EP, and release a four song EP produced by Dave Ellefson, released.

Through who?

Well, we were trying through Metal Blade. And at first it looked really good with Mike Faley and everyone there. See, I even went to California, dude, on the bus. To talk to Dave in person, believe it or not, I went to California on a bus, with a bag, and I ended up being stuck there three weeks only because it took that long to get the money up, money from everyone at home, to get me home. Fortunately I had sisters and that kind of thing but anyways, I went out there, and out of that

whole three weeks that I'm sitting there, thinking "How am I even going to get home? I'll worry about that later, for one day of just meeting with this guy." That's how desperate and dedicated I was then, I would do anything. While I was there I took care of meeting with Metal Blade, you know we go back ways, me and Mike Faley especially. And you know "Hey yeah, I think we can work out a license deal with this." Well, once it started turning into Dave running into too much "With what my schedule is, and I haven't really had a chance to get to so and so, and you know I was going to get to this guy over here on this label but I haven't done that yet. But at least look at it this way, you guys have a really good demo." But see, it was supposed to be a finished project, boom, "I'll get you a little deal license deal, and we'll get it out." So I don't know, that's basically what happened with that. So then, there was no more Dave Ellefson involved in the picture whatsoever.

So all that he was brought on to do was just four or five songs.

Right, if we had got the bigger deal, what he was gonna do, supposedly, "Oh yeah, definitely we're gonna go back in and produce a whole album together."

The songs don't sound like they have a big budget behind them in terms of money spent. Dave got how much money for the whole thing?

For himself, he got 10 grand, and we spent another 15 on the studio, and then another 5 having the band out there in LA for a month. We had to go over there and do it.

About how many hours do you think total was spent on the recording?

I had that on a piece of paper, it was quite a bit, because we were there for three weeks exactly in the studio. We were working pretty much Monday through Friday, and we were pretty much working full hours, full eight hour days, ten hour days.

That's a long time for just four songs. I mean you probably...

See then he hired like all these, see this is like the other part, see this should be off the record too, but we didn't snap to this either, but he said "I'm going to get my guitar tech to come in, and he's going to tune everything up", and then those guys started to have to get a little bit of money to do all these things. And then the **MEGADETH** drum tech guy came in to do Russell's drums, and you know tune his drums and get all that, and you know, "You guys just need some real crew around, because you never know when stuff's gonna fuck up." So here we are also paying some of his crew guys to be hanging out. That's why the budget was so...

I listen to **Nosferatu**, I listen to **Remnants of War**, they're a hundred times better than any of **MEGADETH's** output, and production wise, I think it's much more interesting than anything they've done, and it kills me to hear this happening to you.

So you see then, now, here we are, with a very unlikely album period, by everyone, the major labels never even bothered, probably, to hear it, now the European fans are like, "the songs are short, you don't sing it like you used to sing." (In German accent) So here we are with an album that just got

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fucked all the way around. Now, you people have heard the demo of those exact four songs, on a separate demo, of the stuff that we had already recorded on our own under the **VIGILANTE** tape again, without the production cuts and everything, and they're like, "Man these sound fucking great." We did the first **VIGILANTE** demo, the 6 song demo, we did another **VIGILANTE** with those four songs, with the cover and everything.

*Now, these two **VIGILANTE** tapes came out before Dave entered the picture?*

Exactly.

*When Dave entered the picture, were you back to "**HELSTAR**", or did you decide to change after he entered.*

After he entered. Actually, when he entered it was still kind of under the **VIGILANTE** thing, I should put it this way. The very first time I saw him and we started to talk about this, it was going under the **VIGILANTE** thing. As time went on, just discussions between what he thought, and Jerry (**Abarca**) also coming back to the band, and what I was thinking. Believe it or not, **Aaron Garza** is the main writer for **VIGILANTE**, and for some reason we all started thinking, "Man, I don't know why we did that." You guys were the one that felt that you had no part of **HELSTAR**, and you felt left out. And that had a lot to do with it, really, was at the time I was doing the **VIGILANTE** thing I was already just so lonesome and so heartbroken from everyone leaving, because a band is like a marriage, and a band is a commitment, and especially when you had people like **Larry (Barragan)** that been with me since the beginning, and through all the drunk nights and all the touring, and all the..."Yeah, together forever brother," you know what I'm saying. Then one day, "Hey man, I'm leaving, I'm cutting my hair and going to school." You know, you just don't look at life the same any more, it's like who can I trust, if I can't even trust my own guy that was supposed to die with me. See, that's how I felt with **Larry**, when he left.

*So when **Larry** left, you changed names.*

Right, I changed names when **Larry** left, once he was gone that was it.

So who was in the band at that point?

Aaron and **Russell (DeLeon)** were already in the band, and we did another **HELSTAR** demo after **Nosferatu**. It got a lot of reviews in Europe, it was a four song demo that came out, we did four new songs after **Nosferatu**, with **Larry**. There was one called "Social Circles," "Scalpel in the Skin", "Sirens of the Sun", and another version of "Change With Seasons", which was a ballad, like, it was complete acoustical, like what they call Unplugged now. It was one of them type of songs. So anyways, when he left, I just felt like I couldn't go anywhere else, so I had to continue. So I was kind of like, when the new guys felt like when **Larry** left, they stepped up a little bit more, as to where their position was on the ship. So I started listening a little bit more to their ideas, and their wishes. And they're like, "We're going to be in the outfit, so can't we have a little say so." And that's when they would make me feel, "The name's still cool and all, but it just glorifies you. We weren't there at the time, and we feel always bad because it's always **HELSTAR**-**James**, **HELSTAR**-**James**, we go to a club, and we

be walking right behind you, and it's like 'Hey **James**, what's up, come on in.' We get there, and it's like, 'Five dollars!' They don't even know who the hell we are." So I started, what they told me was they were starting to feel left out, and they wanted to feel equal. So that was part of the name change reason too, "Well, maybe if it will make you feel better, maybe we'll just have a whole different name, a whole different band. And everybody will be an equal, then nobody will be a mere person in this band." But it didn't matter, because the **VIGILANTE** thing was always promoted as featuring "formerly as **HELSTAR**", otherwise we wouldn't have had no crowd! So you see it still had to go hand in hand. So it was like, "Guys, what you're doing is getting the wrong picture, you know, you have to earn your stripes." And of course, I'm gonna be the general in this outfit forever, no matter if you're in the band for ten years, because I'm going to have been in it for 25. And of course, we're just going to jump out there, "There's a new band called **VIGILANTE** in Houston, new metal band." "Who are they? Big fucking deal?" No, but if we go, "**VIGILANTE**", featuring the former members of **HELSTAR**"...well we never lost any of our following.

*What happened to **Andre Corbin** (Guitarist on **A Distant Thunder** and **Nosferatu**)?*

He left, actually, **Andre** was fired, of course his story was he quit, and he was going to quit anyway, but he didn't quit soon enough. Because I actually went to his apartment, and woke his ass up, and told him to get the fuck out.

Why?

Well, basically, what **Andre's** whole purpose was in the band was he wanted to do was his own thing all along. What he wanted to do was use us to get to where he wanted to get. He hated everyone of us as individuals, but he played it off, to belong to the band. But this all came out from his saying too much to the wrong people, and it coming back to people like me. I always sensed that about him, because he was a very coldhearted person, and he used to use a lot of people in front of us, other people. He was proud of it, the way he would do it. Like use certain girls to live with them so he didn't have to work, and certain friends for this, and he would talk about it real openly. "Yeah, stupid ass, she thinks I love her, dumb bitch. Fucking, man I can't wait to get the fucking pizza money and get the fuck out of here." You know, we were in the same band, so we thought nothing of it until we started hearing all this about, "Hey you know **Andre** said this about you!" You go "Like, wait a minute, I have seen how he is, that wouldn't surprise me, but nawh, nawh, I don't think so." Well anyways, what he was doing, after the **Nosferatu** album, he was already trying to manipulate **Frank** into starting a different band, which he had already started, he's already rehearsing with this band on the side, and what his whole thing was, "We don't let go **HELSTAR** just yet, till our dough and we get the real major deal." See, he wanted to go the **WARRANT** way, cause he wanted to make money, so that was his whole thing. So he was going to try to put together a real heavier **JOURNEY** type band and when I found out that was what...He screwed up and told one of the guys on the road crew. "Well, you know, when we get the deal, fuck them guys, you can come with us." And this guy had been working with me and **Larry** for ten years. And I guess he just thought maybe, I'm gonna go where

the money is. This dude just said, "Really, wow, shit, I can't wait. Man great. Well listen guys, it's getting late, I've got to go." This guy ends up coming to my apartment at 2 in the morning, all drunk. "Hey man, I need to talk with you."

This is the roadie?

Yeah, the roadie. "Hey man, sit down, and don't hit me. But this is what's going on." "Oh really?" And I had already been doing some drinking myself. So I called **Larry**, I told **Larry**, "Hey all that shit we heard, you know, him saying this, and saying that, well it's true man. **Rick DeBello's** (the roadie) sitting right here and he's telling me everything that's going on." **Larry** was so hurt, because he lent **Andre** all kind of guitars, he even gave him a Marshall stack, and all kinds of shit, I said "What do I do man?" He said, "Fuçk it! I want him out." So I said, "Alright, I'm going right now. So I went over there at fucking 2:30 in the morning and woke his worthless ass up, and said "Dude, you're fucking out of the band. **Frank**, (because him and **Frank** lived together), I love you, you're my brother man, you know where your home's at. But if you're gonna follow this piece of shit, you've got my blessings dude." That's really what happened.

*And then the **HELSTAR** demo comes out... You did the demo because **Metal Blade** didn't want to work with you anymore?*

Yeah, we were going to shop it and see what we could get out of it.

*Was the **Metal Blade** door still open, just in case?*

Yeah, I think it was as a matter of fact. But then even they started changing their mind about certain bands too, you know.

Yeah, they started getting trendy and stuff.

Right, exactly.

*Yeah, they started phasing out the true metal. So you did the **HELSTAR** demo, and nothing really caught on, and then **Larry** left? And **Larry** now plays?*

In a Tex-Mex, chicano..a **Selena** band.

*A **Selena** band! So he's got the belly going and the hat...*

Yeah, he's growing a belly...Yeah, remember, he's so fine, look at his belly..

*You're really interested in getting something going again. Would you ever consider using the **HELSTAR** demo material, or the **VIGILANTE** leftover demo material...I mean, those are songs you haven't used.*

Yeah, definitely. There's so much material that's there that is still up to standards with us. What you can expect on the new **HELSTAR** is probably "Rage in the Wind", "Sinister Deed", probably even "Nightmare Extraordinaire", maybe "Scalpel in the Skin", "Sirens of the Sun" for sure which is **Jerry's** song, so for some people that have heard all of that anyway somehow through the underground, you know basically more than half the album will be songs that were already done 4 years ago.

If I were a label looking at you, I would know that

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HELSTAR right now has enough material, more than enough, for a new CD right away.

Good! Yeah, we would definitely be able to use all that material. We've even got some other stuff that we wrote that nobody heard, like our version of "The Sound of Silence." So we have a cover song that no one's even heard us do yet.

You know what would be cool, would be to actually rerecord the **Multiples of Black** songs.

The way we originally had written them on the demo? Right, that would be interesting. If someone came knocking at my door right now, and said, "I'm with so and so, and you're **HELSTAR**, right, dudes I want to do an album, I want you to be my first band on this label, I've got this much money to go in the studio, I got time booked two weeks for now, what do you say." Now, at that point right there, and if it was all solely up to me, I would say, "Oh sure I'm ready, let's take 'Save Time', let's take 'When We Only Bleed', 'No Second Chance in the Angry City', and let's take 'Black Silhouette Skies', let's take the whole **VIGILANTE** demo, let's take 'Sound of Silence', let's take two or three of that other **HELSTAR** demo, and let's go in there and do them our way." And that could be another album.

Now, when you say "our way", I think of Bill Metoyer as getting the definitive **HELSTAR** sound. Would you agree?

Oh yeah, definitely, I would definitely want to work with him again, that's for sure. If he was willing to, and if the money was right, I'm sure he would. I'd say, hey Bill, I've got this label that wants to give me

30 grand for an album, give me a price for producing, so we can record. He actually works for 15,000 on our whole album...Dave worked with 15,000 on four songs.

Yeah, I've heard Bill Metoyer's prices are very fair.

I think he's still producing, but very little right now.

HELSTAR and Bill Metoyer, it's magic to me.

I'd like to see if we could work something out with him again, because he did do the last **FATES WARNING**. Something about that album must have been a little unusual for him. Maybe it's just because he was so used to working with **FATES** with **John Arch**. The production on that album, I don't want to use the word weak, but it did have a weird sound to it as well. **Inside Out**. Do you have that?

Yeah, I do, I didn't like it that much.

Maybe that's it, it's just the songs.

Yeah, **Parallels** had better songs, but it was a similar style. But **FATES WARNING** hasn't sounded good since **Awaken The Guardian** in my opinion, song writing wise.

Don't tell Jim that, he'll get mad.

Jim Matheos. I think he's doing a one song conceptual album, it's supposed to be much heavier. **Frank Aresti's** left, and you know all about it, you're the one who told me, they've got...

Andre..

We'll see how long.

Well, see, the full all deal is, remember I told you Frank got married Saturday.

Aresti?

No Ferrera, from our band, the **Nosferatu/A Distant Thunder** drummer, he got married Saturday, we went to his wedding. Now it turns that Frank and him (Andre Corbin) left on bad terms. So in other words, no matter where Andre goes, he uses people to the point where sooner or later they either open their eyes, some quicker than others, but now Frank hates him. Frank knows the whole scoop on that story, he says that story is turning out dimmer and dimmer for Andre with each passing day now, because it turns out he was going to join the band, but then all of a sudden **Jim Matheos** called him back and said, well he decided to do all the rhythms and all guitars. So Andre's not going to do anything on that album, basically, all they want him to do is to tour on the album. And then now, the tour is even postponed, so that's even turning a little dimmer for him too. So I mean, you know, other than that, that's who they were going to, he was supposed to get the job a long time ago. He had the opportunity, he was more interested in making another **WARRANT** or **SLAUGHTER**...He said, "Why would I want to join a band that's on an independent label, when I can go ahead and stay with **HELSTAR**?"

He never got anywhere with that **WARRANT**...

No, he did make a few demos, tried to go somewhere.

That takes care of all the band members and stuff...You always went to California to record, right?

Well, actually, no. What's strange is **Burning Star** was recorded here in Houston with Carl Canedy and that was the first, first album, and then **Remnants** was produced by Randy Burns, that was done out in LA. So was **A Distant Thunder**, we went out to LA, and Bill Metoyer worked with us on **A Distant Thunder**. Okay, then, **Nosferatu**, we came back home, and Bill Metoyer came here.

Were there any other bands prior to **HELSTAR** that you were in that led to **HELSTAR**?

Well, let's see. No one was ever in any outfit that was great. **HELSTAR** was kind of like always there. My very first band was called **DEATHWISH**, that's where I got my start with some guys that played in a garage, and they needed a singer, and one of the guys said, "Well, let's listen to this guy sing" because he used to hear me sing around the house, shit like that. I did, and I joined the band.

What year was this?

This was 1980. We were called like, the band had a slogan, under our logo, it was "Cries of Sabbath", because basically 9 out of our 10 songs were **BLACK SABBATH** songs...It was also during the era when **Ronnie (James Dio)** had just joined and they did **Heaven and Hell**. So we played parties, and whatever else we did that whole album, and we did some **SCORPIONS** and **PRIEST**, some stuff like that. And then I went from there to another band called **SCORCHER**, and from there to **HELSTAR**.

SACRED STEEL!

The Best in American Metal

Many people believe that I have an incredible collection of CDs, being the nature of business that I am in. Well, my collection of CDs does not exceed 150 items. I'm not joking. Of course I have listened to hundreds, maybe thousands of recordings over the years; but I've lost the collector mentality, because why should I hold onto something that I don't listen to? So there you have it—I have less than 150 CDs in my cabinet. And that leads to another oft asked question: "What may those CD titles be?"

Instead of listing what CDs I have, I've come up with a "Top 5" list for U.S. releases. This list is in alphabetical order; I'm not about to split hairs and try to put them in order of "greatness". They are all (including the honorable mentions) highly recommended; become a true Sentinel of Steel and collect 'em all!

AGENT STEEL- *Unstoppable Force* (Combat 1987)

Apparently despised by his bandmates, AGENT STEEL's John Cyriis has a cult following that most bands would dream of having. Possessing one of the greatest voices in heavy metal, Cyriis initially plied his talents with ABBATOIR—check out his performance on the demo version of "Screams from the Grave", as featured on *METAL MASSACRE IV*; also of interest on that same compilation is the band SCEPTRE, who's song "Taken by Force" was the second track on AGENT STEEL's debut *Skeptics Apocalypse* in 1985. This is an excellent LP, now tough to find on the Combat label in the States (its only CD appearance was on Roadrunner's Price Killers series, which are long out-of-print). An EP followed in 1986, called *Mad Locust Rising*. In 1987, after a move to Florida (to be closer to the Bermuda Triangle), Cyriis and the ever changing AGENT STEEL line-up put out the magnificent *Unstoppable Force*. Produced by Dan Johnson (SAVATAGE-Sirens) and engineered by both of the Morris brothers at Morrissound Studios, *Unstoppable Force* delivers 7 speed/power metal masterpieces (one of which, "The Day at Guyana", is a conceptual instrumental) and 2 epic songs ("Still Searchin'" and "Traveler"). Cyriis' distinct high pitched vocals were comparable to Warrel Dane's tonal quality (as heard on the first SANCTUARY), but Cyriis also had a Halford-like enthusiasm to his voice, keeping in step with AGENT STEEL's explosively melodic sound. The guitar work of Juan Garcia and Bernie "Versye" (sic—see MILITANTS review in the demo section) is magical, possessing crunchy riffage of the highest order ("Chosen to Stay" and "Rager" are just two samples) and just stunning leadwork, beautiful harmony interplay matching their European heroes. Of course, *Unstoppable Force* was missed by most in the U.S., but firmly embraced by the Europeans. Unfortunately, AGENT STEEL did not stay together after *Unstoppable Force*; Cyriis went to front other bands like PONTIUS PROPHET and BLACK REIGN, who never got beyond the demo stage. John Cyriis, where are you now? *Unstoppable Force*, while readily available on cassette and LP (See the SENTINEL STEEL MAILORDER Catalog), is a tough one to find on CD. But it must be listened to at all costs.

ICED EARTH- *Night of the Stormrider* (Century Media 1992)

Blown away by ICED EARTH 's demo *Enter the Realm*, I was disappointed by their self-titled debut CD. But the follow up, *Night of the Stormrider*, fulfilled all my hopes, and became the statement for U.S. power metal in the 1990's. Comprised of razor sharp riffs and sweet melodies, structured unpredictably to warrant repeat listens, and the (one album wonder) vocals of John Greely, ICED EARTH made a musical masterpiece in 1992 that has yet to be equaled by a fellow U.S. power metal band. Produced at Morrissound, *Night of the Stormrider* is filled with galloping riffs and the aggressive-to smooth-to high vocals of Greely. (I liken him to MANOWAR's Eric Adams, but more interesting; on "Travel in Stygian", Greely sounds very much like Halford, another influence.) I reviewed this disc in MANIC REACTION; that review has been reprinted in SENTINEL STEEL #2, so check it out. And then buy this disc! It's still available for a nominal sum from Century Media.

RIOT- *Thundersteel* (CBS 1988)

RIOT is a band with several different eras, all defined by their vocalists: the early years had Guy Speranza, then came the Rhett Forrester period, ending with 1983's *Born in America* LP. 5 years elapsed, finally producing the *Thundersteel* disc, introducing Tony Moore; after *Privilege of Power* and a live disc, Mike Dimeo joined up and is the current RIOT singer. I have documented Dimeo's latest output, *Brethren of the Long House* in this issue; RIOT's *Nightbreaker*, Mike's initial appearance, was reviewed last issue. For information on Rhett Forrester, check out the first part of the Jack Starr interview in this issue. But what of Tony Moore, and the tremendous disc known as *Thundersteel*? Like many, I never thought that Mark Reale and RIOT were capable of such a masterpiece. Upon its release, people thought the group was a "hair" band; I always assumed the New Yorkers played hokey 70's hard rock, always seeing their records in .99 bins with the likes of AXE, MOLLY HATCHET, etc. But an Epic/CBS compilation (*Megahurtz*) changed all that. On the compilation was RIOT, showcasing their songs "Thundersteel" and "Flight of the Warrior." Absolutely amazing stuff, melodic speed metal at its finest. RIOT's leader, guitarist Mark Reale, hired Texan's Bobby Jarzombek (ex JUGGERNAUT; Bobby is one of the greatest metal drummers ever, influencing bands like GAMMA RAY) and Don Van Stavern (ex S.A. SLAYER; the fact that his bass work never fell behind Jarzombek's skin pounding is a testament to the man's talents), with Tony Moore filling the vocalist slot. On *Thundersteel*, drummer Mark Edwards (LION) guested on 4 of the drum tracks. *Thundersteel* is a comeback and Reale's attempt to bring his vision up to date; unfortunately for RIOT, *Thundersteel* was not thrash, and quickly got lost in 1988 (poor promotion did not help either!). No, *Thundersteel* is a super mix of high speed riffs, glorious high pitched vocal melodies, and feverish drumming. Songs such as "Thundersteel", "Fight or Fall", and "Flight of the Warrior" are comparable to mini roller coasters—fans of German metal, don't miss out! Lyrically, RIOT tackles the tale of the returning Vietnam veteran in "Johnny's Back", and Poe with their epic "Buried Alive (Tell Tale Heart)". Brilliant stuff. RIOT's follow up, *The Privilege of Power*, is another strong true metal disc, but marred by some filler in "Killers", etc. Encompassing power, speed, melodic metal and hard rock, *Privilege* was too uneven for my taste, though still popular among many RIOT *Thundersteel* fans.

SANCTUARY- *Refuge Denied* (Epic 1988)

Upon hearing "White Rabbit" on the radio back in 1988, I caught a bus into downtown Boston and then took the subway to Kenmore Square. I knew I'd find a promo LP of *Refuge Denied* at Nuggets Records (In the shadow of Fenway Park). Soon, after picking up SANCTUARY's record, I caught them live at the Orpheum Theater, opening up for WARLOCK and MEGADETH. But I digress...it's just that the live show topped off a period of several months that I lived and breathed *Refuge Denied*. Now, many consider SANCTUARY's sophomore release *Into the Mirror Black* to be the best, but that's utter nonsense—and to even consider anything by NEVERMORE would be...well, you know my feelings on Warrel Dane's current band. *Into the Mirror Black* is a good album, but occasionally mired by Dane's ad libbed vocal lines (an element that overwhelms and destroys NEVERMORE) and an overall feeling of despair ("One More Murder", etc.), plus the production, while "bigger" than its predecessor, was also unexciting, dulling the overall picture. On *Refuge Denied*, there are no dull moments. "Battle Angels" opens the disc, Warrel Dane's piercing, expansive voice following a script of immense memorability. This is epic power metal at its best. continued next page...

Hidden contest! What is your top mini LP/EP(s) of all time? Send your review/article in ASAP! Win ANGRA, MERCYFUL FATE, NEVERMORE, ICED EARTH, etc. promo CDs, or MERCURY RISING, MIND ODYSSEY, X-WILD, etc. promo tapes! Winner will also see print! Make your review/article detailed and subjective.

WARLORD-all (Metal Blade 1983-1986)

Why "all"? While having several albums to their credit, **WARLORD** had only a single disc's worth of material. **WARLORD**, like many great US metal bands, got their start in the **METAL MASSACRE** series of compilations. Being a clear standout, Brian Slagel quickly added the band (which revolved around guitarist **Bill Tsamis** and drummer **Mark Zonder**) to his growing Metal Blade roster. As mentioned in **SENTINEL STEEL #2**, **WARLORD** essentially recorded the same bunch of songs several times over, with different singers for each album. Guitarist Bill Tsamis was the chief songwriter—and here lies **WARLORD**'s greatest contribution to metal: irresistible melodies, caught in the context of songs structured so perfectly that each **WARLORD** composition is a gem, an absolute masterpiece. The **WARLORD** discography is: *Deliver Us* EP, "Lost and Lonely Days/Aliens" 12", *The Cannons of Destruction Have Begun* (video soundtrack), and *Thy Kingdom Come*; a "best of" CD is the **WARLORD** offering on that format. 10 years after the last **WARLORD** record, Bill Tsamis continues what he started, in the shape of **LORDIAN GUARD**.

HONORABLE MENTIONS:

AGENT STEEL-*Skeptics Apocalypse* (Combat 1985)
DREAM THEATER-*When Dream and Day Unite* (MCA 1989)
FATES WARNING-*Awaken the Guardian* (Metal Blade 1986)
GARGOYLE-*Gargoyle* (New Renaissance 1988)
HELSTAR-*Remnants of War* (Combat 1986)
HELSTAR-*Nosferatu* (Metal Blade 1989)
LETHAL-*Programmed* (Metal Blade 1990)
MANILLA ROAD-*Open the Gates* (Black Dragon 1985)
MANILLA ROAD-*Out of the Abyss* (Leviathan 1989)
SAVAGE GRACE-*After the Fall from Grace* (Metal Blade 1986)
WILD DOGS-*Reign of Terror* (Enigma 1987)
WRATH-*Nothing to Fear* (Medusa 1988)

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FAVORITE NON-AMERICAN RELEASES:

ANGEL DUST-*To Dust You Will Decay* (Disaster 1988)
ANGRA-*Angels Cry* (Dream Circle 1993)
GAMMA RAY-*Land of the Free* (Noise 1995)
HELLOWEEN-*Keeper of the Seven Keys Part 1* (RCA 1987)
IRON MAIDEN-*Powerslave* (Capitol 1985)
IRON MAIDEN-*Seventh Son of a Seventh Son* (Capitol 1988)
JUDAS PRIEST-*Painkiller* (CBS 1990)
NOCTURNAL RITES-*In a Time of Blood and Fire* (MegaRock 1996)
UDO-*Time Bomb* (RCA 1991)
VIPER-*Theatre of Fate* (Empire 1989)



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ICED EARTH

America's **ICED EARTH** has released their 4th disc, *The Dark Saga*, to much critical acclaim in the press. Their sound has evolved into a (old) **METALLICA**-meets-power metal blend, losing the epic quality of the early days for a more straightforward, accessible sound. *The Dark Saga* should be the album to break **ICED EARTH** in the States, while gaining the group even more popularity in Europe and Japan. We start with the concept of the CD, which is based on Todd McFarlane's comic book *SPAWN*. *SPAWN* has regularly been the highest selling title in comics since the early 1990's.

ICED EARTH GUITARIST JOHN SCHAFFER SPEAKS!

I'm a professional, low key comic book artist, so I find it interesting that you're doing something with Todd McFarlane.

Yeah, we're working on it. It looks like it's going to go down this week, we'll probably use the artwork from Issue #50, which will be out at about the same time the album comes out. But it's been really hard dealing with him, because Todd's—I have all the respect in the world for the guy—he does things his way, that's how come he's so successful, but it's really taken a while to get him to commit. One minute it's one thing, the next day it's another thing. It looks like it's going down, he's got the contract ready for us, so it looks like we're going to get it.

That contract is just for the artwork, the right to use the artwork...but for the lyrics, don't you adapt...

There is a Spawn story line through the lyrics.

And that's all set and that's okay?

Well, yeah, we're not using the characters' names or anything, so there's no—he doesn't want us to say, "Angela" or "Overkill" or whatever, he doesn't want us to fucking go off about his actual characters and use their names in this, so what we did, basically we just wrote a very dark love story, which is what the comic book is. It starts out, with kind of an overview with the song called "Hellspawn", and that kind of tells the basic story, the next song is a ballad, "I Died for You", from there it goes into...The Violator song is called "Violate." You know it just kind of goes through the story line, but it does it in a way that if you read the comic you would know it's about Spawn, if you

didn't you wouldn't.

So it's not an outright adaption of the actual comic, but it's your own interpretation.

It could be, it could be that way. If you didn't know any better, you wouldn't know. But if you know Spawn and you checked out the record you would say, "Wow, this is cool!" Very much like the story.

Basically the only thing you have to do a contract on is the use of any artwork?

Wait a second, someone's beeping me. That was Jim Morris (Morrisound), he's on his way over here, we have to go through some shit. Yeah, right now that's what we're going for, the right to use the artwork.

*Musically, how different, how similar would this be to **Burnt Offerings**, **Night of the Stormrider**? What kind of a sound does it have?*

It's a lot different from *Burnt Offerings*, that's for sure, *Burnt Offerings* was really dark. This definitely has got some heavy shit on it, and some pretty dark stuff too, but this to me is the best record, because number one, it's had the best players on it, that's for sure. The groove is there through the whole thing. I finally had the right talent, we hired a professional drummer to play the parts.

He's a session drummer?

Yeah, he might actually do some shows with us, might do Japan, maybe in these festivals coming up in Europe, I don't know yet.

What band is he from?

He's not from a band, he's an engineer at Morrisound.

What's his name?

Mark Prator. He's just fucking incredible, he's a natural drummer, he grooves, he digs a ditch when he plays, it's just not something we've ever had in the band. What comes out on tape, and what comes out to the public is not a true representation of the band, because sometimes you have to make things better.

*So Rodney (**Burnt Offerings'** drummer) didn't cut it?*

No he didn't.

*And I love the drums on **Night of the Stormrider**, but what was his name...he's long gone..*

Richie.

Yeah, he's long gone, but he wasn't up to par either?

No, he wasn't. These guys did a good job for what they know, but it's hard...I've just never played with a drummer like Mark before, it's fucking totally natural to him. The dude gets locked into a tempo and he doesn't move until he's supposed to, and he keeps the groove going, and it's a natural thing, and not many drummers have it man. There's a lot of good drummers that can play technical stuff, but to have a groove and stay there and make it feel totally natural is a special talent, and that's one of the

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things that really made this record great. Plus, Matt's voice has improved about a hundred times since *Burnt Offerings*, I mean, he's getting up there with the big dogs now as far as a good voice. He's taken lessons over the last year and a half, religiously, and he's worked hard at it, and I'm really proud of him

Yeah, I was really sorry to see John Greeley leave, after Night of the Stormrider, I thought that was an incredible album...

Yeah, me too, it's still one of my favorites, that's what I was going to say about this new one, is that it has the elements of the first and second records, just done ten times better, and there's a lot of melody.

Excellent, so it's a lot more up tempo...I mean you even had some doomy parts on Burnt Offerings?

Yeah, it was dark, very dark album. Now, it's not like there's just a lot of speed metal on here, *Stormrider* was pretty fast the whole way through, but what I mean when I'm comparing it is there's a lot more guitar harmony, a lot of melodies. On *Burnt Offerings* there was so much anger from me and the band, with the shit that we went through with our label and everything, and just bad times dealing with band members and stuff. I was pretty bitter and it came out in the music, it's a dark record. That's how I write, it's whatever my feelings are, I throw them down, so that album was...a tough one. It was not a good time before that. Now things are, with Matt...that's the thing with Greeley, he had a great voice, I dug it big time, when he first got in the band after Gene and stuff, it was like a breath of fresh air to have someone who could sing

what you wanted him to sing, and harmonize and stuff. But then you have to deal with the person, that's a problem when you have people in bands who have these grand delusions of like being rock stars, not knowing how tough this business is, and thinking they deserve the world and shit, it's just not that way, man, I mean I wish it was, but it's not reality. So then you get guys who think they should be making fucking fifteen hundred thousand dollars a year or something and we're not near that, we don't sell enough records, we're playing a kind of music that's just not popular right now. We're playing what we believe in, but that's the price you've gotta pay for that, so Greeley's driving a truck right now. He's not doing anything right now, and he's got one of the best voices that I think is out there. Matt's right there now, he's just really improved a lot. I'm working on my vocals, and starting to take vocal lessons and stuff, so we're going to be doing more harmonizing and shit in the future.

Yeah, I wanted to ask you—on Burnt Offerings—especially on the first couple of songs, or the first song, didn't you do the rough parts, and then Matt do the higher parts?

Yeah, Matt and some chick we know, they did the higher parts.

Okay, because a lot of people who bought the disc were saying, "Oh, Matt can do the growly thing, and he can do the high pitched thing," and I was saying, "No, that's Jon, trading off with Matt." That's the way it was, right?

Yeah, it was.

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Yeah, because on Night of the Stormrider you did...

I did "Stormrider".

Yeah, very well in fact, and I wanted to hear you sing on more songs..

The song "Burnt Offerings" just didn't come out like I wanted it too, man. The whole album, it was a bad time. It's a good record, there's some cool shit on it, I think, but it didn't have the playability for me personally that *Stormrider* did. I listened to that album—I didn't have a problem listening to that for a couple of years after it was done. A couple of months after *Burnt Offerings* was done I just didn't want any more.

Same here, it was a great album, but it doesn't have that repetitious feel to it where you can play it over and over again, I still play Night of the Stormrider, I've had that since it came out. I bought Enter the Realm when it came out too, and that still sounds fresh when I play it. I got that demo from Ace's Records.

From Ace's? Are you in Tampa?

I used to live in Tampa, actually not Tampa, Dunedin, so I used to go and shop over at Ace's, and hang out there.

Out at the Flea market, eh? Are you in Florida still?

No, I'm in New Jersey, right now. I'm glad to be out of Florida, I didn't like it there.

Florida sucks. (Laughs.) We're trying to get out of

here, get the cash and we're gone.

Good, come up to Jersey.

I think we're going to be going out to Phoenix.

Ah, okay.

We're going to be heading out west, that's where McFarlane lives and all those guys, and we're pretty good buddies with Al Simmons, I think he can help us.

Who?

Al Simmons, you read Spawn?

Not really no, I read some other books, not Spawn; I never got into any of the Image titles.

Yeah, well most Image stuff sucks, I think. But Spawn is killer, nice and dark and twisted and shit. Al Simmons is the name of the character Spawn in the comic book, but he's also a black guy, one of Todd's best friends. And that's how we met Todd, through Al. He's a great guy, so that's probably why we're going to be moving out to that area, cause I think if we get this deal worked out and they see how sincere we are we've got a shot at getting some stuff in the movie, HBO, whatever. I want to do music for them, in one form or another for any of their projects coming up. Plus just being out closer to LA and the industry will be better for us.

I agree, the project with the movie would be a good break through, and I lay my cards on ICED EARTH and also Chuck (Schuldiner) from, what was formerly known as DEATH, to bring back the true metal in the States.

I hope you're right, dude, cause that would be killer. I read that Chuck was going to do that, and I respect the shit out of that, because he's got a lot of balls to change what he's done. He's started a whole fucking trend, and to go back to the roots to what he really enjoys playing, at a time when it's totally dead, is just fucking great.

Yeah, he left on his highest note possible with Symbolic, that was the pinnacle of DEATH right there, so he's taking a new avenue now. I wanted to ask you again about Burnt Offerings, I have the actual CD, I also got the promo copy in the little cardboard envelope. I prefer the rough mix over the final mix.

Do you really?

Yeah, what do you think?

I don't, that's why I changed it. Everything else I could have lived with, but it was "Dante's Inferno", that bothers me on the cardboard mix. I don't remember exactly which points, I think it was the drum mix in the middle, the whole middle section..What's the middle, it's sixteen minutes long!..the one part, Tribal or whatever the fuck it is. I haven't listened to that song in a long time, I don't think we played it since we toured last summer. I know that it didn't feel right, Century Media was in a hurry to get it out, so they took the rough mixes. But that's cool, maybe cause you heard it first, that happens a lot.

I don't like the way (in the mastering process) you squeezed it a bit more and you cut off the edge of

the guitar sound. It was crunchier on the rough mix, while on the final version it was more of a streamlined sound. Morrisound likes to use compression and that adds a bit to it too.

Sometimes that bothers me too, that's why Jim (Morris)'s on his way over here. I think in the fast parts from the new album, we have masters already, but I think we're going to remaster the faster songs. In the tight picking, it feels like there's too much "eshhhhhhh!" in top, when you crank it up real loud, it's not...I don't know how to explain it. He's going to be here in fifteen minutes, and we're going to go over it, we'll probably remaster it tomorrow or the next day, those songs anyway.

So it's finished?

It's all done, yeah.

Name the song titles.

First song is "Hellspawn", then "I Died For You"..

Also, do a little describing too, like one or two words, fast, slow, like whatever, epic, long song...as you go.

Uhm, "Hellspawn"...none of 'em are epic, except "Question Heaven" which is the last thing. I'll get to that, it's a trilogy deal at the very end of the album. "Hellspawn" is just a driving metal tune, straightforward, got a good vibe to it, good drums and stuff. The second song, "I Died For You" is a ballad, "Violate" is very, very thrashy, speed metal big time. We just wanted to throw that in after the ballad so people didn't think we were going wimpy or something. "The Hunter" is PRIESTY/MAIDENish, it feels like to me, but heavier than anything they've ever done, it's just got those harmonies and melodies in the guitars, kind of reminds me of that. Fifth is "The Last Laugh", that's getting heavier once again, more of a, little thrashy, a little on the SLAYER edge...not really, I don't know. It's hard to explain.

Yeah, well you guys don't sound like SLAYER, I better explain that for people before they think you do.

No, if anything it's just the vibe...

It's intense?

Matt wrote the lyrics for that one, it's called "The Last Laugh", it's the guy that Spawn sold his soul to, it's Satan basically. Then "Depths of Hell" is just, it's hard to describe, short, cool little tune, Al Simmons wrote the lyrics for it, who is Spawn. It's just a driving, heavy song, I can't really describe. Then "Vengeance is Mine" is another heavy one, kind of thrashy, it's about Spawn basically murdering his child molester. It's pretty twisted, Matt wrote the lyrics for that one. Then we go into the trilogy, the first part of that one is "Scarred", and that kind of sums up the whole story, and it's called...the trilogy I'm going to call it "The Suffering", but they are all individual songs, just tied together. The first one "Scarred" is I guess a little bit long, not like normal ICED EARTH songs, it's probably like 6 1/2 minutes or something, it starts off slow, and intensifies, but it's not a thrash song. It's kind of SABBATHish. The second song is "Slave to the Dark", another PRIESTY/MAIDENish song, and it's about Spawn realizing he fucked up and sold his soul and whatever. There's a lot of little

inner meanings here, it's not just about Spawn, you can read into it. And then the best song on the album, I think, is "Question Heaven", which is a confrontation between Spawn and God, it's about him fighting his inner personal demons. It's pretty epic, it's about 7 1/2 minutes long, it's got female voices, angel versus...it's really cool, a lot of acoustic stuff. FLOYD meets MAIDEN meets METALLICA...it's kind of weird. I'm really into it, it's one of the best songs I've ever written, I think, and it seems to be everyone's favorite. It's really heavy and it's really sad at the same time. There's a lot of anger and a lot of pain in the whole thing. It's pretty cool, man.

We talked about the new album, the new songs, we talked about the drummers. What if the Todd McFarlane cover falls through, do you have anything else lined up?

Not really, I really don't think that's gonna happen, but we'll probably go with some kind of tripped out photo or there's a German artist, actually the guy who did the American Stormrider cover, who'd be available if we needed something. I don't know what direction we're gonna go in with that, I've had so much to think about, getting this record out. I wrote this fucking album in six weeks. Besides the lyrics to two songs that Matt wrote, Al Simmons wrote the lyrics to one other song, and Randy wrote a couple riffs in three tunes, other than that I wrote the whole record. It was a lot of work, you know, on short notice. We started writing a while back, but it wasn't for this. So we used some of the riffs out of the shit that we were writing, and added the Spawn vibe to it, the lyrics and stuff.

So you've got different material, at first you started writing for something totally different?

Basically, yeah. Only like, parts of the trilogy were going to be for other things, it was only like a few parts of a couple of songs. I was really inspired by this thing. To me it felt like we were on our way to having some success, and I was really happy about that obviously. The first time I met with Todd was about doing music for an HBO animation thing they were doing, it was going to be a Spawn cartoon, like six episodes. And also the movie, the full live action motion picture is coming. The first time Matt and I just went out to check out the area, because that's where we wanted to move, and also meet with them. We discussed a lot of things about music with those guys or whatever, and I told them I wanted to write a song for them. And we came back, and I did, that was "Hellspawn", recorded it, and I flew back out by myself, and did a presentation to Todd. And at that point he was talking about putting one of our CD's in with one of the action figures, in one of his upcoming lines, and that would have been like a really big deal, because it would have been like half a million ICED EARTH CD's. So when I walked out of Todd's house that time, I was on cloud nine, I could hardly think straight. Because I've been busting my ass for a long fucking time, and now our ship's come in, we're on our way. Well it turns out that fell through because of cost, he would have had to jack up the cost of his figure quite a bit to pay for the disc. It's still a possibility, but it may be a different thing later. Anything is possible with Todd. Anyway, I was at his house on that trip, and I asked him if he'd do our next album cover. He looked at me like, "Are you crazy? I don't have time to wipe my ass hardly, let alone draw something." He doesn't even draw the comic any more, he has other artists do it. So, I

read that expression on his face, and said, "Well, what about existing artwork?" And at first we talked about the cover of Spawn #2 or #3, they had cool colors and stuff. And he came up with the idea of us using #50. That's where it's at... Todd's not a flaky guy, he's just very, very protective of this shit that he created, because he has to be. He doesn't want to go too big, too fast, he wants to build it himself, without anybody's help. He's got people from Wall Street trying to buy into his business and make it grow really quick, toy company and all that kind of shit. He just doesn't want anything to with that, he wants to be able to say he did, and he's doing it his way, he's very rebellious, he fucked with the biggest comic industry, Marvel Comics, he totally just said "fuck you!" and went and did things his own way. And that's exactly how Todd is, he's got an attitude. But I respect the shit out of that, and then he takes on the biggest toy manufacturers in the world, and makes his own toys. And now he's changing the way they make toys. I think that's very respectful for an artist, and first and foremost, Todd is an artist. It gives me inspiration, and makes me think it would be wonderful if I could do something like that in the music business someday, change the way things are done. People say you can't, and that's the kind of attitude where Todd says, "Fuck you, I can." He treats artists the right way in his own publishing company. Image, you know, it's a lot of good artwork and a lot of really shitty writing. Still the fact is he treats the artists right, they own their characters, and when they leave him they own their characters. A lot of artists have been ripped off for years and years, from Marvel Comics, and they made billions of dollars off those fucking guys, and that's where Todd's head's at. He's really rebellious. I'm really sure he's going to come through with the art, he's just really protective, that's the bottom line, he watches his ass. He watches what he gets into, he thinks about things long and thoroughly.

I mean, for the CD to appear with the toys, for kids who buy the toys, would there be any attempt on your end to...I don't want to say accessible, but, here's this six year old kid listening to ICED EARTH.

That's the thing, most of the Spawn's audience is teenage to adult, I mean, it's pretty graphic. I buy the figures, I collect them, so does Matt, we have in the rehearsal room Todd toys everywhere. We're collectors of sports, the Starting Lineup action figures, and all that kind of stuff, and actually Matt and I are going to probably start a business, a mail order business too where we sell some of this stuff in the mail, because they go up in value real quick, especially the hard to find ones.

Well that's more of speculation and inflated prices...

But it works.

Yeah, it works, I mean, there is money to be made off of it. It's more of quick buck then long term. I mean, Spawn #1 is worth, how much do you think, \$20? \$30?

No, only like \$15 or \$16.

And there's like how many of those out there? 6 million?

No, 1.8.

As long as there's a demand, you can always sell.

That version of "Hellspawn" that you took over to Todd, that was rerecorded for the album?

No, we just remixed it. That's when I got the idea to go ahead. I talked to Al Simmons about it, I asked him, "Man it would be cool, we could write a whole fucking story about Spawn." So I started writing a story, and then I just changed it, instead of doing that, because he didn't want us to use character names or whatever. And I wouldn't want to use character names in songs anyway, it's just not corny at all. This takes the element of the horror that's involved in Spawn, and the heaviness of it. It's pretty heavy and depressing, there are obviously some issues that are corny if Todd's on a deadline or whatever, he doesn't spend much time writing. But the ones where there is a good quality story, which is most of them, it's dark as fuck. It's about a guy who sold his soul to Satan, he's fucked. That's the way I looked at it. I made it a serious story, it's not a comic book, the ICED EARTH version is definitely not. There's no corn or cheese in it. But I just decided to make it along those lines. If you know the book, you know the story, anybody who does can read right into it.

So here you were writing music for a totally different album, what was it that made you think about going for the Spawn deal? What was the point where you had other material written for a totally different project, and then all of a sudden you went in this Spawn direction. What was it that did that?

Like I said, meeting with Todd.

How did you arrange for that?

To meet Todd? That was through Al Simmons, I met him at a comic book convention in Atlanta. He sets up the Spawn mobile, he goes around and dresses up in a costume. He's the head of promotions for the company. And that's how I got hooked up with him, I said to him, "Hey man, Todd fucking rules, and I want to write music for you guys, someday or another, I would love to do a soundtrack or whatever." We stayed in touch, we went out to Arizona a few weeks later.

That was it right there, that's what changed it.

Well, the change came after my second trip, after I was really psyched. Todd said we could use his art, and I started thinking about this, "Man this is great marketing, if I can pull this off, this is going to make the band known in the states a lot more than it is." It's not that we're, they'll definitely help us here, if it all goes as planned, the way Al wants it to go, cause we've gotten to be pretty tight. People will know who we are. We're not going to be a household name by any means, there's no reason to say we can't sell like 40 or 50 thousand units here. And overseas we can help them. Some hardcore collectors in Germany and shit know who Spawn is, but those kids are fans over there, they like to follow what we're into, they pay attention to that kind of shit, they will check it out, if you go out and promote it. Japan also, so we can help each other. But I think obviously they can help us a lot more than we can help them, because they do like 300,000 issues every time it comes out, or whatever. That's a good average, that's right up there with number one all the time. Most people that collect Spawn, the comic books and the figures and stuff, they want to have everything that has to do with it. I think we can move some serious shit

through Diamond and comic shops.

I really hope it works out, just for the sake of our kind of music and broadening its audience.

Well, see that's what I saw happening, man especially if he had done the toy thing, or if he decides to still do that, we're talking about, most collectors don't open their packages. Some do. Some buy two so they open one and leave one in the package. But a lot of people would hear us who would never have before. That's what metal needs is some exposure, it doesn't fucking have any. There's no radio support. Obviously MTV and radio, that's what runs the fucking country, that's what runs the trends, what decides the trends, and people are totally fucking brainwashed and mindless. It's typical, America is the trendiest country in the world, it's fucking all hype and it's all bullshit. That's what it all amounts to, just tons of fucking bullshit. People get sucked into it, the high dollar business guys make trends, make money, they make teenagers feel like this is what's cool, and if you like this it sucks. That's kind of the vibe, metal's got a really bad name now. It's like taboo or something, and I'm like "Fuck you man, you know, I don't give a fuck, it's a way of life. If you're just a poseur fuck or whatever than I'm sorry to hear that." I have no use for people like that. That's why we can concentrate, you know, this thing would be great if it happens, and we can sell some music finally through the states, we'll be really happy. Maybe we can change things down the road. I don't see that happening anytime soon, because Century Media is a very small record company and they don't have what it takes. It takes a lot of money, money makes trends happen....But we can start something if we get support from McFarlane. If Chuck (Schuldiner) does well with his next project, that will help too. Anybody that's got what it takes, and I know Chuck does, to make killer metal music, will make people start liking it again. Another problem too, is a lot of bands were really weak for a long time, like it just didn't seem that the new upcoming metal bands were really putting out stuff that...There were a few, killer bands out there, it's just not like there was in the 80's. It seemed to me that there were a lot more bands that were...

Name some names from back then and now...

Well, for me, I'm like a MAIDEN/PRIEST/SABBATH...SABBATH goes all the way back to my childhood when I was like four years old. I grew up listening to that kind of shit. Old MEGADETH, and SLAYER, and EXODUS, and late 80's bay area stuff was really cool...some of it was crap. It was obvious that it was getting popular and everyone was jumping on the bandwagon. I just enjoyed those kind of bands a lot more, I'm not into fucking PANTERA, I'm not into those kind of bands that try to go over the edge...Everything sounds really synthetic, and not natural, and I really am not into that kind of shit, I'm not into death metal, I never have been, I never was into that trend.

How do you like the new IRON MAIDEN?

I think some of the music is cool, I think the new singer is absolutely terrible, he has no business being...I don't know what they're thinking. I lost a lot of respect for them when I heard that record because I don't how you can sit back and high five each other, "Wow that's great!" because the fucking guy is flat the whole god damn time. And

it's just terrible man, maybe he's a good front man, maybe they're buddies, but what are those guys doing. I mean they had some decent material on that record....some.. They should fucking wrap it up, or fucking go out with a bang like **PRIEST** did with **Painkiller**, because that was classic. But what the fuck was that, I don't know, I was really disappointed, because I bought it like the day it hit the shelves because I've been...you know, I got really bummed out on Welcome to...no, **No Prayer for the Dying**, I thought that was terrible. **Fear of the Dark** was pretty cool, that grew on me, I liked some of that, but dude, this new one is just crap. I

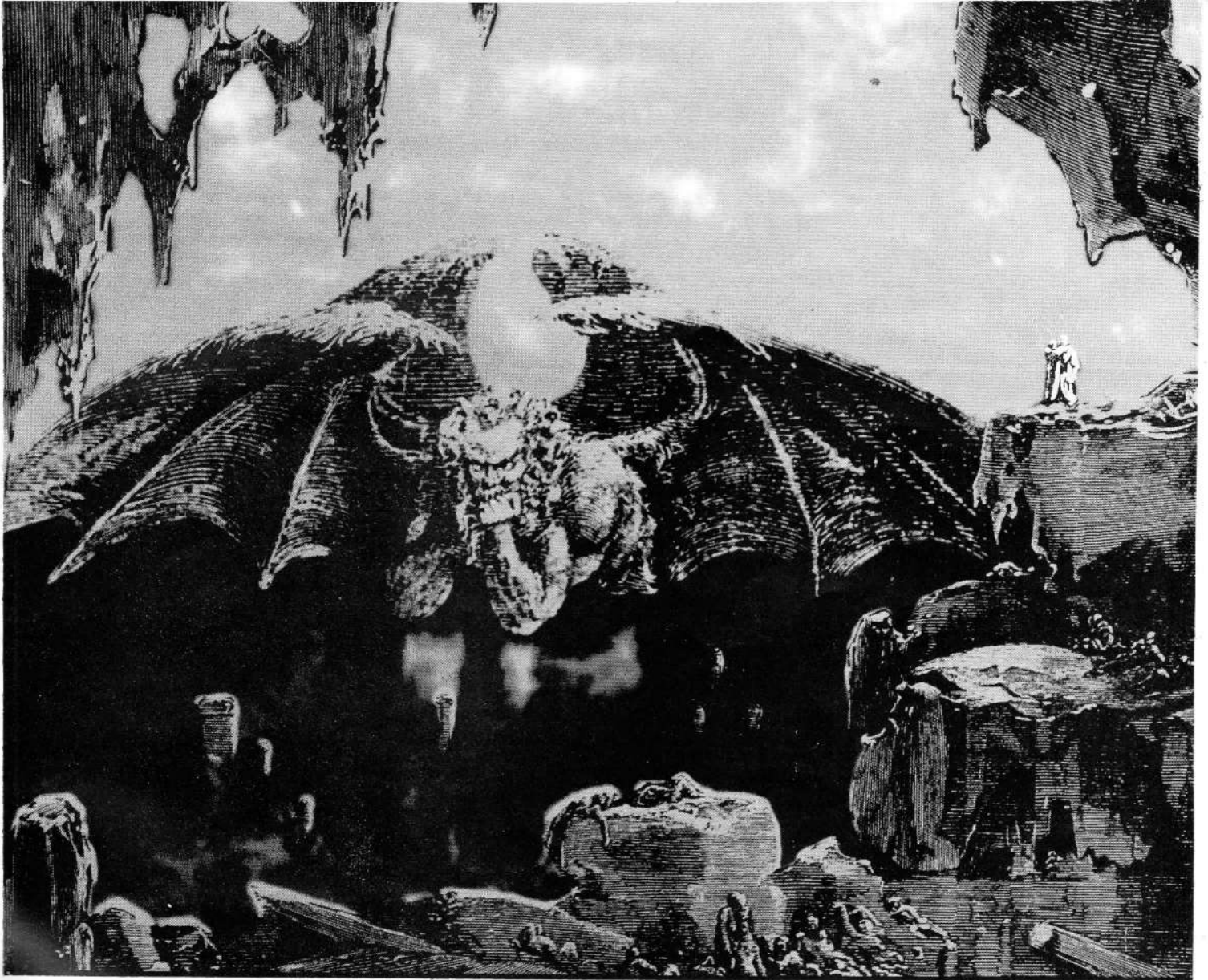
*"We made the right choices." I think they should have gotten someone like **Michael Kiske**, ex-**HELLOWEEN**, somebody with a great range. It would have opened them up a lot.*

I don't know, that guy, I mean he's a great vocalist, the thing about that **HELLOWEEN** singer is that there are so many singers out there like that. I know because I've looked for singers, and I get fucking tapes from guys who are all in that **HELLOWEEN/Geoff Tate** operatic style, high kind of shit all the time, and there's tons of vocalists out there like that man. So in that respect I don't know

since I was thirteen years old, but what the fuck, are your ears shot or what?"

Yeah there's a lot of things wrong with that album, I thought the production had too much bass, hardly any guitar.

I like the music though in that first tune ["The Sign of the Cross"]...Kind of epic for an opener. I liked some parts of it though, some really interesting changes musically. I would have recorded them a lot differently, but as far as writing, I thought it was pretty cool.



don't know.

*I've got **IRON MAIDEN** in this same issue that you're going to be in, in fact, they should be on the cover. I talked with **Steve Harris** and **Blaze Bayley**, and I asked him, well...*

Did you talk to Steve Harris? Ah, man you're a lucky dog, man that dude is my idol.

Yeah, he's good, but he made the wrong choice with the singing slot. But he stands by it, he's like,

if I would have wanted to see that, because it would have been like he's trying to get someone like **Bruce [Dickinson]** a little bit, but I would just like to have seen them really do some digging for an unknown, with something to offer, because there are guys out there who can do it, I mean we found them. I just can't...whatever, they fucked up, because that dude can't fucking sing, he's flat the whole time, and he just totally ruins the music. Maybe he is a great guy, I don't know. I don't wanna be too boge on him. If I was there I'd say, "Steve Harris, you're a god, you've been my idol

*How about **SABBATH**, do you like **Tony Martin's** work with **SABBATH**, or are you more of an **Ozzy** or a **Dio** fan?*

Ozzy man, my sister man, when I was a little kid, I grew up listening to fucking **Paranoid** and **Master of Reality**, **ALICE COOPER Killer**, **Love You to Death**, really old **DEEP PURPLE**. My first exposure to music was that and **KISS**. That was the first album I ever bought, I bought **Alive** right when it came out, I was only like 7 or 8 years old, something like that. That's the kind of stuff I grew



up on in the early days. But like in the 80's when I first started playing guitar myself I really got into **MAIDEN**, and **PRIEST**, probably the two main bands I was really getting off on, and **METALLICA**, obviously, when they came out a little later.

So now you grew up in Indiana.

Yeah.

*And the band you were in before you came to Florida was **PURGATORY**?*

Yeah, **PURGATORY**, I brought it down from Indiana.

*But that **PURGATORY** is different from the one from Ohio?*

Yes, totally. That's why we changed our name.

*Did you ever release anything under **PURGATORY**?*

Yeah, we released a couple demos. It wasn't any big release. No we didn't release anything, we locally sold some shit.

So this was about what year?

'86-'87.

Okay, did you do anything before then?

No, that was it, the first deal, the first band.

Who did you bring down with you? Were there any band members left?

No, they're all gone. We were teenagers, I split from home, I just turned 17 years old, rebellious teenager in trouble all the time and shit, me and this other guy, our old drummer (**Greg Seymour**), we split. He's the guy who played on *Enter the Realm*, that was the last thing he did.

He was a good drummer...

Eh, yeah...

*Well, as far as demos go, *Enter the Realm* is one of the greatest ever done, I think.*

I think so too, cause I get a lot of demos from people and stuff. I think we spent the right amount of time, and the right amount of cash, and we waited until we were ready to really do something right. We did a lot of demos before that nobody ever heard, but that's how you learn. If you wait until the point where you're writing some decent songs, you can make them come across right, I think that's the way to do it. I think bands should do that, instead of putting out something half-assed and flooding the market, and then people thinking you suck because your tape isn't very good. Better to learn.

And you picked the right studio, that's for sure.

Well, it was right down the street man. I live like 8 minutes from Morrisound, right now, and I always have. I've been all over this area of town.

So why come to Florida from Indiana?

Greg's sister lived here. That didn't work out too

well after being here for a week or so, so we ended up sleeping in abandoned houses and shit, kicking in the doors of these houses. I still live in really bad part of Tampa, but it's cheap. We would sleep on the floors of these abandoned houses and shit, get up in the morning and go to the daily rent a bum place, just for \$25 a day or whatever. We'd eat like one meal a day, we'd each get like a big submarine sandwich or something, big fucker from 7-11 or something, and eat that, and save all our money until we had enough money for a deposit on a shitty little apartment, which took about three weeks, to have a roof over our head that wasn't full of bugs and rats and shit..

Now this is you and Greg. Damn.

It was fucked up man. But we choose the path. I couldn't live at home anymore, I was totally self destructing, and I had to get on with my life. I was just...I could have graduated. I was a smart student, but not into conforming. I could have graduated early, the whole deal, but I just said, "Fuck this shit, I gotta get out of here." We each had like \$100, and my guitar, he didn't even have the drum set then, he just had the attitude. We just jumped in the car and came. And I totaled my car after being here for a couple days, so that was one thing we could have slept in that was fucking wrapped around a telephone pole. We're lucky we were alive.

*You put out a demo before *Enter the Realm*.*

Horror Show. See, **PURGATORY** we released whatever, we sold at shows and local record stores. We released a tape called **Psychotic Dreams**, and it had one song called "Jack", and one called "In Jason's Mind", both when I listen to now I just laugh because they're really bad, that's the way you learn. We did that thing and sold it around. When we changed the name to **ICED EARTH**, we went back in and did the song called "Dracula" and added it on to those two songs, all of it recorded at Morrisound. Back when Morrisound was a very small studio.

*Now this was back when **NASTY SAVAGE** did their first or after that I suppose?*

It was a little bit after.

Those were the days.

Yeah, those guys were killer. We played a show with them not too long ago, about a year ago, right up the street here from my house, we played a gig. There were a lot of people there and shit, and it reminded us of the old days, or me actually, nobody else who's in the band was in **PURGATORY**...**PURGATORY** used to play with **NASTY SAVAGE** quite a bit. It's dead now, which totally sucks. Everything now is just in the alternative, industrial crap, mode. So whatever, fuck it, we don't care. I don't want people to think I'm totally close minded and I only like metal, because I barely listen to metal on my own. I do sometimes if I'm in the mood, I listen to a lot of shit. I get frustrated with the scene...

Like what?

I don't know, I listen to **JETHRO TULL**, especially the new shit, I've got tickets to see them, my wife bought'em for my birthday, to see em on March 31. It's gonna be kick ass. I'm into that, I'm into Celtic guitar, mood music, weird shit, some classical, I like



some folk music, guitar like **JAMES TAYLOR**, **SIMON AND GARFUNKEL** I'm into. I like anything that feels good or that sounds good. When it comes to the business I'm in, my attitude gets a little bit different about the trends...I'm really not into that, not into trends. I'm not into people following because some corporate empire shoves it down your fucking throat. Pisses me off.

You did Horror Show, which had "Dracula", "Jack"...and...

"In Jason's Mind" which were about Jack the Ripper and Friday the Thirteenth, cause we had the horror thing going on stage back then. That was when we became **ICED EARTH**, we just changed the cover of the demo tape, just one of those go to Kinko's, do it yourself deals. After that we went into the studio several times just to learn about recording, not to release stuff. And at that point I realized, "Hey we suck, we need to learn, start writing better, blah blah blah." And for a few years we didn't do anything. I mean, we did stuff, but nothing that anybody heard. Then when I felt like it was right, and when we had saved enough money, that's when we went in and did the four or five songs, how many songs are on **Enter the Realm**, 4,5?

"Enter the Realm," "Colors", "Nightmares", "To Curse the Sky", "Solitude", "Iced Earth". Where does the Metal Mercenaries compilation tape fit in, before or after?

That was pretty quick after we did the "Dracula" recording. I think we did that song within 6 months or a year.

How do you like Keith Collins (First SAVATAGE bassist, producer of Metal Mercenaries tape)?

I don't, really. Ever since then, he's one of these guys that's around town, acts like he's hot shit and gets all these new bands sucked into his bullshit. He's just a scam artist as far as I'm concerned. That's what I think about him, and I'd tell it to his fucking face, too. He used to book gigs at the Volley Club and he scammed us out of money. I don't think a whole lot of Keith at all. And he's always been really jealous of the band, I don't know why, but he did a radio show here called The Pit with Brian Medlin, and they would never play us. They had fucking...always something against us, and I don't know why, because he's the one who fucked me, not me fucking him. I don't give two shits about Keith Collins. He's washed up. The rest of the guys I know in **SAVATAGE** are cool as shit. None of them are very fond of Keith, he's just that kind of personality where he tries to manipulate people.

Probably bitter he never got any musical success...Keith Collins, what was it called, CRUNCH or whatever...? Amplified Homicide, wasn't that the name of it?

Yeah, he's been trying to sell that song for fucking ten years man, like dude, try to write something else, nobody likes this shit. We ragged on him all the time... just funny.

How about a band that I used to love back then, in fact I even worked with them for a while, which was Richard Elliott's BLACKKOUT?

Yeah, they were cool. That was a good local band. We jammed quite a few shows with those guys.

Richard was fucking all right man, he was a really talented musician, and good writer too.

Excellent writer, but then after this last show, it was in 90, 91, it was a gig called Out of School Mosh, he ran off with some 16 year old girl leaving his wife and baby behind.

Yeah, I remember that, Richard called up at one point, when we were looking for a singer, I think it was either after Greeley or after Gene I forget, interested in the singing position. I don't know, I just didn't think it was the right thing for us, but I wished him well. I was hoping he was...and he did, he did get another project together.

Yeah, THE LAST THINGS, called Circles and Butterflies. It had that BLACKKOUT sound mixed with a bit more of a experimental, maybe a psychedelic bent to it. Cause he was really into smoking the pot. I don't know where you stand on that?

No, nobody in the band now smokes reefer...**Dave Abell's** (bassist) not in the band anymore. We just parted ways a couple weeks ago. It's just Dave wants to get married and get on with his life and I guess he just doesn't believe in this shit enough any more. And that's fine because it's been showing in his attitude and stuff. We're not bitter at all towards him, it's just he's been here a long time, he's been in the band now for 8 or 9 years.

Yeah, he's been with you pretty much since the beginning of ICED EARTH.

Well, you know who was the first bass player I had in Florida? After we moved down here from Indiana we got a place to live, three other guys came down, and they couldn't handle it. And they ended up splitting one day when Greg and I were at work, and we came home, and there's no more band, so we started look for other guys. So that's when we found Gene and **Richard Bateman**, who ended up being in **NASTY SAVAGE**, and **AGENT STEEL** too, he used to be in **PURGATORY**. And **John Cyriis** from **AGENT STEEL** saw us play, and wanted me and Richard to join his band, and I said, "No, I've got my own thing going," because you could tell John was pretty fucked up in the head anyway, and had the dictator thing going. Plus I wasn't into what they were doing that much, and it wasn't...I'm my own leader. I've got my own things to do in life. But Richard said, he'd be interested, so he went and did that, and that's when we found **Dave Abell**. So **Dave's** been in the band like 8 or 9 years, the first thing he ever did with us was "Dracula".

I love AGENT STEEL.

Yeah, they have some pretty cool riffs and stuff, for the time especially.

Did you ever play with them, live just two bands?

No, because when Cyriis was living here in Florida, he was reforming the band, that's why he came here, he was looking for a guitarist and a bassist.

This was before Unstoppable Force?

It was right after, I think.

Unstoppable Force was recorded at the end of '86 and put out in early '87.

Alright, then that would have been it then. Is that the one with like the lights on the front?

Yeah, the laser beams, terrible album cover. Can't tell what it is. Do you know what happened to them? I heard that...James Murphy said that Cyriis got jailed for some sort of satanic stuff or something.

I heard that they had one of their roadies tied down on a bed and they were throwing firecrackers at him and shit. Just being total dickheads, and they got busted in the hotel room somewhere out West. I don't how true it is. I know Cyriis made all those fucking guys in the band get **AGENT STEEL** tattoos on their arms, Dave has still got one, I said "You're a fucking idiot, how could you listen to that dick?" But whatever man, that's the way it goes, show biz thing or whatever.

You put out Enter the Realm, which created a nice size following underground and led to the deal with Century Media. I was talking with Century Media, and they were thinking about releasing that demo, and maybe "Dracula", and maybe some other unreleased material on a CD.

We had talked about that before. It's a possibility, but I'm not sure it's the right thing to do now.

Well, considering that Enter the Realm, the production is great...I prefer Enter the Realm over the first ICED EARTH CD, it would be nice to have it, pressed onto disc.

Yeah, I think the production on **Enter the Realm** is better than the debut album too. The production just kind of blows.

Well, it was the drumming, just kind of that 1-2 drumming. Just very basic drumming on ICED EARTH-Iced Earth. You had the nice double bass fills and stuff on Enter the Realm.

I don't know man, he never had a double bass or a pedal, so it's pretty basic, just listen to the drums closely, they're really...it's a better sound.

Well, that must be it then, because on Enter the Realm, the drumming was a lot more interesting than what you had on the first ICED EARTH CD.

Yeah, that was kind of a fucked up situation again, like musicians, like Greg Seymour. He was...we've had drummers with drinking problems forever, and I'm so tired of it. It seems to be like a common thing in the industry, the more I talk with other bands and shit. Drummers most of em have screws loose or something. That's why I'm just tired of fooling around with it, and I'm just going to try to get pros to work with us from now on. Who know their place and their job and why they're getting paid, nothing else. Greg was drinking a lot, and he got hooked up with this chick, and he quit the band. And it was right like two weeks later we got a record deal, we were having enough trouble with him, and it was hard because we were best friends since we were like 14 years old. That's what made it really hard. That position that we had when we had to go in and record really quickly, our light man ended up joining the band, he was **Mike McGill**, who is still a very good friend of mine. He went into the studio, he was a drummer, he knew our tunes because he'd been listening to them forever, instead of searching for a drummer like we should have, we were in a pinch, and we had to get

someone who could come in and do it quickly. So McGill did it. And went on tour with us and stuff, and we got back from Europe, and he never came down off the cloud, and he started drinking a lot too. It was like the rock star thing went to his head and Gene Adam's (Vocalist #1) both. At that point, I had...Gene was gone right after the tour, what he did on the road...

What did he do on tour?

Just not doing the right thing, not being kind to the fans, smoking hash and trashing his voice, stupid shit that was just really unprofessional. Plus the fact that Gene really can't sing, he can't sing in pitch, he's not a real vocalist. I was starting to write songs that needed that, so Tom Morris and I talked about it, he's the one that helped me find Greeley, that's later. Mike, about five weeks before we were going in to record **Stormrider** just was not cutting it, and he was fucking up at rehearsal cause he would be hungover, and have DT's and shit, I told him, "Look man, you've got to get your shit together. We've got to find someone else who can play this shit on the album, get your shit together and you are welcome back, anytime. As soon as you're ready we're going to take you back." Because we're friends, you know? I wanted him to take some lessons and expand his horizon. Apparently he kind of flipped out and he pawned his drum set, and went on a drum binge and hauled ass to Ohio, and I didn't see him for like three years. Now he's back down here, he's jamming with some guys that used to jam with **Randy Sawyer** and stuff, and they're just having fun, and he's got a great job now, and he's making money and he's married, so I'm happy for him, we're real tight. He'll probably go back out on the road with us at some point, when we can afford to take him, to do drum roady work or whatever. That's how we ended up finding **Richie Secchiari** (drummer) through John Greeley, who we got really quickly after we got rid of Gene, because Tom Morris had just finished recording his band, we talked to John, and the only thing that John cared about was money, he didn't really have his heart into it or anything, and it was sad because he could harmonize to anything. So much talent, and such an asshole. It's like how can you find the right combination. I guess that's why only one band in a million really makes it, is everything just has to fall into place. It's hard to get that to happen in this business, because you're dealing with all these different personalities, and everybody's got to pull their own weight, and if they don't, then it's fucking up the deal. And we've had that happen a lot, that's why there's been so many member changes, musicians are pretty much flaky people. A lot of them are, not all of them, but, I don't think I am, and I don't think Matt and Randy are. See, that's why Matt's great, because he's got the killer personality, and now his voice is getting there. And I think the next record he's going to be up there with the big dogs, I'm talking like Tate, Halford, really made a big difference, coming into his own for sure. That's where we're up to now.

*So there's a possible CD release of **Enter the Realm** sometime in the future?*

Well, I'd be a little wary, I would do that for sure, but as far as adding "Dracula" and some of that shit...I don't know man.

I'd like to see it.

Have you ever heard "Dracula"?

*Yeah, I've got my **Metal Mercenaries** tape still here with **KAMELOT** and **BLACKKOUT** on there, and lots of cool bands. That was a great compilation, I liked that. So you're really good friends with **BLIND GUARDIAN**, that's pretty much been done to death in interviews. Who else have you toured with over in Europe?*

RUNNING WILD..

*How did you get along with **Rolf..Rock'n'Rolf** [Kasperek]?*

We didn't talk to Rolf. We didn't even see him, he flew in almost every gig, and got off the plane at the nearest airport, came to the stage in a limo, got off the stage and left. Some of the other guys in the band were cool, some were rock stars and shit. We toured with **GRAVE DIGGER**, **RAGE**, **GAMMA RAY**.

*How did you get along with **GAMMA RAY**...*

Killer...great fucking guys.

*Yeah, **Kai Hansen** is in the same issue as this **ICED EARTH** interview. Very nice guy.*

Yeah, they're awesome. They're also really good friends with **BLIND GUARDIAN**, so all three of us bands have been together several times in Germany and gotten just fucking ripped, party all night, had a great time. The **GUARDIANS**, I guess everyone knows we're really tight...Especially me and **Hansi [Kürsch]** are. I've got some shit up my sleeve, I think he does too, we're going to try to do some stuff together.

Excellent.

I don't know what yet, we've talked about a few things. I've got a little project I wanna put together, but I don't think Century Media is going to be able to handle it so it might be a few years from now. It will be like an all-star cast type thing.

What kind of music, similar music?

No, it would be...no this thing I would want to do would be like a rock anthem...have you ever heard of **Jesus Christ Superstar**? I'm thinking about redoing the whole thing, producing it in a heavy kind of way, but not too far out of the range from the original. But with today's tones, and the guitar sounds of the day, and today's drum sounds. And with the vocalists that are out there today, I've got some in mind, like the dude from **TYPE O NEGATIVE**, **Pete Steele**...There are guys out there, I can just hear them singing these fucking parts. It would just rule. It was something that I wanted to do, and Hansi is very much into that, and he would love to play the part of Judas...it just depends, Andrew Lloyd Weber is a tough nut to crack, that's why I don't know if Century Media has got the clout to pull something like that. It's something I do want to do someday. And even if not that, Hansi and I have talked about getting together and writing some tunes together. We were joking about writing an album called, **ICED GUARDIAN -Stormtroopers of the Blind Earth**, and just like combining all our shit together and making a record. Send the masters over here, and we'll do overdubs...It would be cool. I think it would sell pretty good, at least overseas I'm sure. That's something we talked about for a while. I'm actually going to go see Hansi in April, going back

over there for a small promotional tour on the 19th. They're playing a show for a magazine called **Heavy, Oder Was!** They're having some kind of party or something over there, and the **GUARDIANS** are going to play it. And there's supposed to be a lot of press there, so I'm going over to hang for that, and do some phone interviews in the office, and then for the Dynamo festival I'm flying back to do more interviews. And then the band's touring June 5, with **SAVATAGE**, **THE GATHERING**, and **NEVERMORE**, **CREMATORY**...

*How do you like **NEVERMORE**?*

I think they're cool, I like **SANCTUARY** better, I like the writing better. I think **NEVERMORE** is cool though. I'm definitely not slagging it, it's just there's something about that first **SANCTUARY** album that makes my skin crawl and that's why I love it so much.

*Yeah, isn't it great...**Refuge Denied**. I love that album.*

And everyone I've ever talked to that's only heard **Into the Mirror Black** thinks that that's their best record, but I think they're fucking crazy. I think it's a cool album too, but man, the writing there's just so much shrieking fucking, just, **Warrel [Dane]** he just rules, man. I've been trying to get that guy to sing with me for like four years now. But I don't need him now, I've got Matt, Matt's the man, he's handling the job just fine.

*How did you like the last **BLIND GUARDIAN** album, **Imaginations from the Other Side**.*

I like a couple of tunes on it a lot, I haven't listened to it enough for it to grow on me, I mean the production is awesome...

You like the production???

Compared to the old stuff, it's definitely a lot clearer.

*I definitely think that too many overdubs may have ruined the sound, cause it sounded flat. I think they could do themselves a big favor and use **Morrisound** or something.*

Well, I don't know, they've been always into that dramatic kind of thing, especially Hansi with his vocals, he goes off on that stuff, so I think maybe there is too many overdubs, I haven't listened to the album that many times, because when you're touring together, like the other two records, **Twilight Hall**, or **Twilight World**, and **Somewhere Far Beyond**, we heard the songs every night, so they grow on you. This one, they were touring with **NEVERMORE** in Europe, and so I didn't hear it as much. I think the clarity on the album and the production is really good personally, compared to the old stuff. It's much more open, much more dynamic, but the writing, I don't know, I still like **Tales from the Twilight World** the best..

*Me too, that's my favorite **BLIND GUARDIAN** also.*

My favorite writing for sure. Production wise it's not, but that doesn't matter when there's good songs. That's why a lot of people still think **Stormrider** is the best record we ever did, before this one, they may have been right. Because the production on **Burnt Offerings** is ten times better than **Stormrider**, but the writing...I don't know, if I

can say that or not. My mind was not in the right frame, after all the shit that went down.

But you're a lot better off right now, as Century Media is treating you right. That's good to hear.

Yeah, I'm happy with what's going on now. Well, as happy as I can be. No, I'm not happy, because they don't have what it takes to make this band work. They don't have this money, maybe if they've got this thing with Spawn, and they push a little more. They do an okay job over there in Europe. They don't do a GREAT job, they do an okay job. But here, nothing's really happening.

You look at all other power metal bands in the States, and nothing's really happening for anybody right now. Well, MERCYFUL FATE just because of their name, KING DIAMOND maybe..

Well I think a lot of it is based on past fuck ups that they've made that's caused a lot of returns. You know ICED EARTH has never had a poster made in the United States, not one promotional poster, we never had a poster made in Europe anywhere. Now that tells me they're not doing what they need to do, there's a whole lot of marketing going on, they're used to signing fucking death metal bands and giving them a three thousand dollar budget, you throw it out on the fucking shelf, you maybe make 20 or 30 grand, and if you do that with 15 bands a year, then you've got a decent business going. They've got some decent employees there now that see a different vision than that, and some of the people in charge need to start seeing that, spend some fucking money and make the thing happen. That's what it takes, you've got to see the wide vision and the long term thing. Anyone can start up a cheesy little record company and rip off bands, that's the easy fucking thing to do. To be successful and have respect in the industry that's the tough thing so...but they are definitely headed in the right direction, Robert Kampf is cool, his heart's in the right place. It's tough man, it's hard to explain everything, I'm definitely happier than I was a few years ago, that's for sure. And I just got one more record to do with them, then I'm done. Or at least being able to renegotiate, either with them or another record company, hopefully that's interested in the band in the States, if not, I know we're going to have major label deals over in Europe and Japan, and that's very important to me.

How is Japan doing for you? Have you been over there tour wise?

No man, but we're going this year, this album is probably going to be out on JVC, all that pans out, and I'm pretty sure it's going to, we're going to be fucking set, we're going to be really set. Because Teichiku really did a fucking lousy job on the last record, they promised me they were going to do a promotional tour, they didn't do that...They promised it was going to be the top priority of the year. Well we've got a killer score in **Burn!** We got like a 90. We got a 92 on **Stormrider**, but dude I did fucking two phone interviews and that's it, and they ignored us completely. Century Media too, so we're like, "Fuck you, man, we're out of this fucking deal." And JVC has wanted the band ever since **Stormrider**, and I think that's finally going to go down I'll know for sure in the next couple of weeks, when they finally get to hear the new material. We're looking forward to that, I don't know what's going to happen. I know we're going to fulfill our commitment, if this album does well, and we can

ride the wave for a year and a half and do a lot of touring or longer, I don't know. Anything goes at this point. If not, if it's just mediocre, same shit as last time, we'll be in the studio and we'll have an album out same time next year. Cause we want to get the deal over as soon as we can, at least look at our options, without sacrificing the quality of the music. We're not going to fuck ourselves to get out of the deal, we're not going to put out a piece of crap.

So this Hellspawn is your last with Century Media, or the next one will be the last.

The next one.

Also, you did "The Ripper", cover version on the PRIEST tribute, how did that come about, what do you think of that?

It came about two weeks before we were going in to record the new album. Borivoj calls me up and says, "Hey we need you guys to record a PRIEST song, we're doing a PRIEST tribute." Number one, I was pissed because we'd already worked out our budget, for the ten songs on the record, but I thought it would be fun to do, so we threw down "The Ripper" real quick, and it was killer. It came out great, I'm really happy with it. We played it pretty traditional, maybe 4 or 6 beats per minute faster than the original, but it's our tones, it's ICED EARTH doing "The Ripper"...It's really heavy, but it's still got that classic feel to it.

Were there any other possibilities, other PRIEST songs?

Yeah, I wanted to do "The Sentinel", but we were late comers so there was already a lot of stuff that was already chosen, but I would have loved to have done that, but it's a matter of rehearsal time and budgeting. "The Ripper" is like 2 1/2 minutes long or whatever, we could fit that into our budget okay. It's a classic tune, I was hearing that when I was ten years old or something.

Well, either MERCYFUL FATE or KING DIAMOND did the same song.

Yeah, they did, which was kind of bogus...You know how shit goes, you get told one thing, and then there's what's really true, but, we were told that they told KING DIAMOND not to do it because we were already in the studio recording, and he went ahead and did it anyway. But it doesn't really matter because they're going to be on two separate volumes. And I know ours is going to smoke his anyway! I just feel totally confident that our band's going to sound so huge, because their guitar tones are usually kind of thin, and the King's voice...I don't know, I'm just not into it, never have been. We'll see who wins, I'm not afraid of the challenge at all.

So on this PRIEST thing you've got a guaranteed US release on that? I mean, for sure, right, Century Media's going to definitely have that on the U.S. version?

Yeah.

Because, some of the European bands aren't going to make it on.

Yeah, that's what Robert told me, I don't know who it is, but they're definitely going to put us on, I don't know, the whole world or whatever...

What's your favorite IRON MAIDEN album?

Number of the Beast.

Second?

Probably going to be a toss up between **Piece of Mind** and **Seventh Son**.

Steve Harris, and Blaze Bayley, and my [and Craig Wisnom's] favorite album is Seventh Son.

Steve Harris' is **Seventh Son**?

To him and Blaze, everything sounded perfect to them on that album. It was like a perfect album from beginning to end. It didn't have the passion maybe, that Number of the Beast or Piece of Mind did, but they like it because of the consistency, and same here. I like every song on there, while like Number of the Beast has a couple of average moments I thought.

Well, that was the first MAIDEN I really got off on...The production's lame compared to **Seventh Son**, but it's a fucking really dark heavy album. At that time period, it was the shit then, there wasn't anything heavier...It just blew me away.

1982, right? Amazing for 1982.

It was, yeah, I was a kid, I wish I could fucking talk to Steve Harris. I hope some day I can get to meet him, because he really had a major influence on my life. I almost fucking started playing bass guitar because of him. And I thought if I do that I'm going to end up sounding just like him, so I do the triples and stuff with the pick on the guitar instead. He definitely had a big...he was up there with **SABBATH** and all of them if not more than anybody else, it's hard to say. They were my band for many years, and still are, I'll still say that I'm not ashamed to say they fucked up on the last record.

Well another insult to injury is to have a band like FEAR FACTORY open up for them. Why not ICED EARTH?

That's what I'd say too, I'd love to play with those guys, that would be a dream come true and I think it would be a kick ass package...It's like they've got the biggest dicks in the world for management, so I've been told. These guys have been around a long time. Our day's coming, I just don't know when it is.

Everything goes in cycles, and music with melody and heart will be back. Like I said, Chuck and ICED EARTH will lead the way, at least in the United States, with music that's powerful, that's got guts, but also has melody.

I hope so, I hope you're right.

It should be that way. Anything else you'd like to say, just anything, because I've been meaning to do a major, in depth ICED EARTH interview for a while...

I don't know man. Just to the fans out there, thanks for hanging, we'll see if our way of life comes back around to us. We'll reign as champions again some day, we'll see, I don't know. You know what I think one of the most fucked up things is about this whole deal, is that all of a sudden it was not cool to be larger than life

anyone... They want to see the garage band next door up on stage, instead of seeing a show. When you're a kid, I don't know if you ever saw KISS, with their makeup, it was incredible, I saw them when I was like 9 years old, and it changed my life completely. Or even seeing MAIDEN back in those days, the big lights, the big show... what's wrong with that, it's killer entertainment. Well, all of a sudden that's not cool... Well fuck that!

It's like the sudden trend to be under achievers, to be lazy, to like plain stuff.

Let's go to the Salvation Army and buy our clothes and not wash our hair and we'll sell a million records. Ok, whatever..

Did you guys ever play in those robes that you had on in the Enter the Realm cassette photo?

Yeah, we did. That was a picture when we will still holding onto the horror thing as ICED EARTH, we did for a while, then we dropped it. But we did, we used to act out Friday the 13th up on stage, Gene would a tape of bag cooked pasta and liver and fake blood and shit, and this dude would come out in a jumpsuit, with a hockey mask slashing, throw the shit in the audience. We had the same guy who'd dress up as Leatherface, we had a song about the Texas Chainsaw Massacre. We just did the Horror Show, we did all this goofy shit on stage, people dug the fuck out of it, people used to pack the houses in Tampa when we were PURGATORY,

then we started to change after we changed the name, that was when this whole scene started to change. Slowly went downhill. Yeah, we did wear those robes, believe it or not.

So are you into horror movies, the more obscure stuff, or just the more mainstream horror movies...

I used to be really into all that shit, like all the gore stuff. I think now, more than anything I like for a movie to scare me, and that's hard to find. I like movies that can be realistic... Blood and guts and shit just seems corny these days. That's kind of where I put most death metal bands in the B rated horror metal category. There are a few good ones, the ones who started it are the good ones. The guys who try to follow, listening to their music and they're puking into the microphone and shit just makes me think of a really cheesy B rated horror flick. That's why I could never get into that stuff, I could never get it out of my mind, wow, these guys are trying to be scary but, really they sound dumb! I'm into shit like the Omen Trilogy, and I saw that movie The Prophecy and thought that was cool. I'm into heaven and hell stuff, more than slasher flicks.

Heaven and hell... which is a major topic, well it was on Burnt Offerings, that classic good versus evil theme is also on this new album.

Kind of been in every bit of our shit, running through. I think it has to do with being forced to go

to a religious grade school, Lutheran, when I was a kid, for like five years I went, and it was really not a good time in my life. The place was full of fucking hypocrites and I had a hard time with it, and it kind of changed my view on life a lot, and that's probably where all that stuff comes from.

Still, good always wins over evil...

We'll see...

Oh, you're not giving away the ending for Hellspawn...

It doesn't end happily, so that's why I was saying, "Question Heaven" is really sad, it's really heavy, lyrically and attitude and the whole vibe of it... There's a lot of anger towards God in it... you'll have to hear it...

I can't wait, from what you describe, it'll be up there with Night of the Stormrider

I think so... I had some guys over today who were real fans, who've been following the band for a long time... You know Century Media hasn't even heard this shit, they're going to get their tapes tomorrow, but it's like these guys are flipping on it, that's a good sign, cause they're real fans, they've been following us since *Enter the Realm*. Actually, the guy's wife is the one who took the goofy picture of us in the robes. They've been following us for a long time.



PROGRAMMAUSZUG

- CD After Dark - Masked by midnight 30, DM
- CD Allegiance - Time to react/Destiny 35, DM
- CD Amen Corner - Fall ascension 35, LP 30, DM
- CD Ancient - Trottaar 20, LP 20, DM
- CD Ancient - Svastahvorn 25, DM
- CD Antagonist - Freak of daze 30, DM
- CD Apocalypse - [US progressive] 35, DM
- CD Auditory Imagery - So alive 35, DM
- CD Belmez - Sischurt 33, DM
- CD Bestial Warlust - Blood & valour 35, DM
- CD Blind Fury - Out of reach (Jap.) 45, DM
- CD Blind Fury - Bright eyes 30, DM
- LP Breaker - Get tough 25, DM
- LP Candlemass - Slanger sigge furst 35, DM
- CD Chastain - Hider/Mystery (Japan) 35, DM
- CD Cirith Ungol - Paradise lost 35, DM
- CD Conquest - The killing time (power) 30, DM
- CD Cygnus - Sarily management 35, DM
- CD DAD - Draws a cross/Call of 35, DM
- CD Damien - Angel Juice (US) 35, DM
- CD Dark Funeral - The secrets of black arts 35, DM
- CD Dark Star - (Lady of mars) 30, DM
- CD Divine Regale - Horizons 50, DM
- CD Dreamlore - Confined to destiny 35, DM
- CD Entropy - Transcendence 35, DM
- CD Fates Warning - Pale fire 20, DM
- CD Gehenna - The second spell 33, DM
- CD Hades - ... again shall be 35, DM
- CD Hades - Exist to resist (US different cover, bonus tracks) 35, DM
- LP Hades - If at first you don't succeed 25, DM
- CD Halloween - No one gets out 50, DM
- CD Hallowe Eve - Death & insanity/Tales of terror/Monument 35, DM
- CD Hunker - In our world 35, DM
- EP Have Mercy - Armogoddon descendants 25, DM
- LP Impaled Nazarene / Berheit - A day of darkness 30, DM
- CD Impellitteri - Answer to the master/Grin and bear it (Japan) 35, DM
- CD Impellitteri - Victim of the (Japan) 40, DM
- CD Impeligo - Horror of zombies 35, DM
- CD In The Name (Kingsober, Japan) 50, DM
- CD Intrinic - Distortion of perspective 40, DM
- DLP Iron Maiden - The x-factor (clear vinyl) 35, DM
- LP Katatonia - Dance of ice 25, CD 35, DM
- CD Lankmar - First (powermetal) 35, DM
- CD Last Breath - Ashes to ashes 35, DM
- CD Levithan - Deepast secrets beneath 30, DM
- CD Levithan - First EP 20, DM
- CD Lordian Guard (ex-Variation) 25, DM
- LP Lordian Guard (red vinyl) 30, DM
- CD Memory Garden - Forever 24, DM
- DLP Metallica - Justice for all (Klipppover) 50, DM
- CD Metal Wolf - Out for the kill 35, DM
- CD Metropolis - Behind mysterious walls 24, DM
- CD Mirk Gyrning - Tusen (black) 35, DM
- CD Mystic Forces - Showwicked 30, LP 12, DM
- CD Nocturnal Rites - In a time of blood 35, DM
- CD Not Fragile - The return 30, DM
- LP Numskull - Ritually abused 30, DM

- DLP Overkill - 10 years of (col. vinyl) 33, DM
- CD Praying Mantis - To the power of ten 50, DM
- CD Prophet - I/Cycle (Japan) 35, DM
- CD Rotting Christ - Non serviam 30, LP 25, DM
- CD Rotting Christ - Satharas tedeum 30, DM
- CD Royal Hunt - Moving target (Japan) 50, DM
- CD Satyrium/Enslaved - The forest is my throne 35, DM
- CD Savage Grace - The dominatress 24, DM
- LP Sepultura - Refuse resist (7 tracks) 25, DM
- CD Seventh Omens - Majestic 35, DM
- CD Solitude Aeternum - Into the depths 24, DM
- CD Sorrow - First (powerdoom) 35, DM
- CD Steel Prophet - Continuum 24, DM
- CD Sun Red Sun (Ray Gilen) 35, DM
- CD Sykes - Out of my tree 50, DM
- CD The Art Land - Escapes 30, LP 25, DM
- CD Time Machine - Dungeons of the vertical 15, DM
- CD Time Machine - Act II: Galileo 30, DM
- CD Torment Max - Just takin' care 35, DM
- CD Triarchy - Before your ears 33, DM
- LP Trouble - In the beginning 22, DM
- LP Tyrant - Legions of the dead / Too late to regret 30, DM
- CD Vader - An act of darkness 15, DM
- CD Vader - Profundis 30, DM
- CD Vardor - Walpurgisnacht 33, DM
- CD Vauxville - To dimension logic 35, DM
- CD Venom - Sleetains in the closet (Demo/EP) 35, DM
- CD Venom - Kissin' the beast (new/Welcome Back Metal/Posessed/At war with satan) 22, DM
- CD Villain - Chiquered past 50, DM
- CD Villain - Time will tell 45, DM
- CD Vision - Vision 35, DM
- CD Visitor (great powermetal) 35, DM
- CD Wardog (ex-Tension) 35, DM
- CD Warlord - Let battle commence 33, DM
- CD Without Warning - Believe/Making time 35, DM
- CD Wizards (Japan) 50, DM
- CD Zoid - Do you believe 35, DM
- CD Zizzer-Mez - Victor of westaland 33, DM

PIC. DISCS & SHAPES

- AC/DC - Highway to hell 12
- Amorphis - Kaniellan LP 20, DM
- Amorphis - Tales from the LP 20, DM
- Anthrax - Black ledge 12
- Blind Fury - Imaginations from LP 40, DM
- Body Count - Born dead 12
- Bon Jovi - Someday I'll be Saturday night 7
- Boston - Walk on LP 20, DM
- Cremonary - Illusions LP 25, DM
- Death SS - King of evil LP 30, DM
- Faith No More - Epic Shape 30, DM
- Faith No More - Midlife crisis LP 20, DM
- Graven Image - Warn the children EP 30, DM
- Green Day - When a demon comes around 7
- Hades - Exist to resist LP 25, DM
- Havehe! - The black mist 7
- Iron Maiden - Be quick or be dead 12

- Iron Maiden - From here to Shape 15, DM
- Iron Maiden - Man on the edge 12
- Iron Maiden - Running free 12
- Iron Maiden - Stranger 12
- Iron Maiden - Aces high 12
- Iron Maiden - Run to the hills 12
- Iron Maiden - Trooper Shape 95, DM
- Iron Maiden - Wasted years Shape 70, DM
- Iron Maiden - No prayer for the dying LP 20, DM
- Katania - For funerals to come EP 20, DM
- Kiss - Creatures of the night LP 40, DM
- Kiss - Peter Cross/Ace Frehley/Gene Simmons/Paul Stanley solo LP 50, DM
- Iron Maiden - No prayer for the dying LP 20, DM
- Katania - For funerals to come EP 20, DM
- Kiss - Creatures of the night LP 40, DM
- Kiss - Peter Cross/Ace Frehley/Gene Simmons/Paul Stanley solo LP 50, DM
- Manowar - Defender 12
- Metallica - Enter sandman 7
- Metallica - One 12
- Metallica - Sad but true 12
- Metallica - Master/Slave/kill an LP 50, DM
- Monstrosity - Return of the fly 20, DM
- Monster Magnet - Dopes to infinity Shape 20, DM
- Monster Magnet - Megasonic teenage Shape 20, DM
- Motörhead - Born to lose hell 12
- Napalm Death - Nazi punks fuck off 7
- Napalm Death - One and the same 7
- Skinhead - Blood ritual LP 25, DM
- Savage Grace - Master of disguise LP 70, DM
- Saxon - Power & the glory 7
- Sentenced - Amok LP 25, DM
- Skydred - Irrational antrax LP 25, DM
- Tankard - Chemical invasion LP 25, DM
- Tankard - Stone cold sober EP 20, DM
- Therapy? - Femex 7
- Tiamat - Whichony LP 25, DM
- Time Machine - Project time scanning (bonus track) LP 25, CD 20, DM
- Unleashed - Victory LP 25, DM
- Venom - Mantou 7
- Wasp - Chainsaw Charlie 7

RARITIES

- Anthrax - Black ledge 12
- Blue Bird - Lazarus (new/Trisepal) EP 50, DM
- Death SS - The cursed sigles 4x7 Box 50, DM
- Iron Maiden - No prayer (red vinyl) LP 40, DM
- Iron Maiden - N.W.O.H.M. - the glory days 30, DM
- Jaguar - This time LP 40, DM
- Kiss - Alive II (red, blue or white v.) LP 40, DM
- Kiss - Creatures (glow in the dark) LP 33, DM
- Kiss - Revenge (blue vinyl) LP 40, DM
- Kiss - Lintonly (white vinyl) LP 40, DM
- Manowar - Sign of the hammer (green v.) LP 25, DM
- Megadeth - Rust in peace (col. vin.) LP 20, DM
- Megadeth - Sweating bullets (blue v.) LP 20, DM
- Megadeth - Youth of (etched vinyl) LP 30, DM
- Megadeth - Trandans (blue v.) LP 30, DM
- Metallica - Sad but true (promo) CD 50, DM
- Queensryche - I am I (gold vinyl) 12
- Razor - Malicious intent LP 40, DM
- Slayer - Divine intervention (red vinyl) LP 25, DM
- Slayer - Ditchhead (promo) LP 15, DM
- Slayer - Serenity I CD 18, // CD 15, DM

- Type 0 Negative - Playgit issue 8/95 50, DM
- CD Forté - Division 80, DM
- CD Abau - And shnath units 10, DM
- AC/DC - Hard as a rock (col. vinyl) 7
- Hades - Deliver us from evil 7
- Hades - The cross 7
- Iron Maiden - Clavvyant (clear v. post.) 7
- Megadeth - Train of (clear vinyl) 7
- Metallica - Sac but true 8, DM
- Napalm Death - Hung 7
- Napalm Death - Nazi punks f. of 7
- Napalm Death - The kill 7
- Napalm Death - One and the same 7
- Profanatica - As tears of blood 7
- Rotting Christ - new 7 (Cosmo)
- Sepultura - Rectors (col. vinyl) 7
- Sepultura - Torment (yellow vinyl) 7
- Stayer - Serenity (new) 7
- Solitude Aeternum/Iron Rainbow - split 7
- Tesspa - One of these days 7
- Venom - In league with satan 7

SONDERANGEBOTE

- CD AC/DC - Hard as a rock 12, DM
- LP Atlas - Alap 12, DM
- CD Anarcusis - Screams and whispers 20, DM
- CD Angelwitch - I / Live 10, DM
- CD Anvil - Worth the weight 15, DM
- LP Arcane - Destination unknown 3, DM
- CD Armored Saint - Sianis will conquer 20, DM
- LP Atheist - Elements 12, DM
- CD Attika - When heres fall 10, DM
- CD Autopsy - Acts of the unspeakable/Severed survival/Mental funeral 10, DM
- CD Behelit - The oath of black blood 20, DM
- CD Black Sabbath - Mob rules/Technical ecstasy/Heaven and hell/Never say die 20, DM
- LP Bloodfeast - Chopping block blues 5, DM
- CD Broken Hope - Swamped in gore 15, DM
- CD Buddy Lacey - Strange mind of 10, DM
- LP Bulldozer - Alive in Poland 12, DM
- LP Cannon - Death shall rise 5, DM
- DDC Dancemasters - As it is... 20, DM
- VI Celtic Frost - Hammerstein 10, DM
- CD Chastain - Next planet please 15, DM
- LP Coroner - Mental vortex 12, DM
- CD Cryptic Slaughter - Speak your peace 12, DM
- CD Cyndie - A descent into hell 15, DM
- CD Cyclone Temple - My friend lonely 15, DM
- LP Dick Millennium - Ashore 5, DM
- LP Death - Human 10, DM
- LP Demon - Taking the world/Blowout 10, DM
- LP Dissolution - First genocide 12, DM
- LP D.R.I. - Four of a kind 15, DM
- LP Elkir - Lethal poison 5, DM
- CD Exciter - Ott 5, DM
- LP Exciter - Violence/Unveiling/Long live 10, DM
- LP Exodus - Bonded by blood 12, DM
- CD Fotsam & Jetsam - When the storm 15, DM

Versandbedingungen etc.:
 Porto bei Vorauskasse 7 DM (ab 250 DM Bestellwert frei bei Vorauskasse), bei Nachnahme 15 DM (Deutschland). Versand ins Ausland nur per Vorauskasse, Porto hierbei 12 DM. (Luftpost-Kunden bitte anfragen).
 Diese Anzeige zeigt nur einen kleinen Teil unseres Angebotes, wir haben hunderte weiterer Raritäten wie z. B. Demo Tapes, Promos usw. auf Lager - fordert unsere Megalisten an (gibt es nur gegen 5 DM Rückporto; bei gleichzeitiger Bestellung natürlich gratis)! Ebenso könnt ihr laufende Neuerscheinungen bei uns zu günstigen Preisen gleich mitbestellen.
 Händler: Händlerpreise erfragen!

- CD Forbidden - Twisted into form 20, DM
- CD Forté - Division 80, DM
- LP Running Wild - Port royal 12, DM
- CD Freak of Nature - Gathering of f. 20, LP 12, DM
- CD Furbuol - Those shredded dreams 15, DM
- LP Grave Digger - The reaper 12, DM
- CD Hades - Live 15, DM
- CD Hades - Live (US, 2 extratracks) 20, DM
- CD Hades - Hissing success 24, DM
- CD Hades - Hissing success 19, DM
- LP Heathen - Breaking the silence 12, DM
- CD Helix - It's a pleasure doing business 15, DM
- CD Helloween - Master of the rings 20, DM
- LP Helstar - Multiples of black 5, DM
- EP Hexx - Watery graves 10, DM
- LP Horde of Torment - Product 12, DM
- CD Inferno - Psychic distance 10, DM
- CD Inner Strength - Shallow reflections 20, DM
- CD Internal Void - Standing on the sun 15, DM
- CD Icon - / / Night of the orme 15, DM
- CD Jag Panzer - Ampie destruction 20, DM
- CD Jag Panzer - Tyrants 10, DM
- CD Jim Mathies - First impression 10, DM
- CD Judas Priest - Hell bent for leather 15, DM
- CD King Cobra - Ready to strike 15, DM
- CD Krotator - Coma of souls 20, DM
- CD Leatherwolf - Leatherwolf (I) 10, DM
- CD Leatherwolf - Street ready 20, DM
- EP Leprosy - Brutal occupation 5, DM
- CD Lizzy Borden - Terror rising 20, DM
- CD Manilla Road - Out of the abyss 20, DM
- CD Marcho - Destiny (Jap.) 15, DM
- LP Megadeth - Killing is my business 12, DM
- CD Mekong Delta - Vision fugitives 15, DM
- CD Mentors - Sea, drugs 15, DM
- LP Merciful Fate - The beginning 12, DM
- CD Merciful Fate - Time 20, DM
- CD Merciless - Treasures within 15, DM
- 12" Metallica - Wherever I may 8, DM
- LP Metal Massacre VIII/VII/VIII 12, DM
- CD Millions - Raquel 5, DM
- CD Mindfunk - Drugged 15, DM
- CD Mindfunk - First 15, DM
- LP M.O.D. - Gross misc. 12, DM
- CD Moon of Steel - Same 15, DM
- LP Motorhead - Dirty love 12, DM
- VI Mystic - The pilot sigles 5, DM
- VI Nuclear assault - Handle with care 10, DM
- CD Oracle - As darkness reigns 15, DM
- CD Panic - Fact 15, DM
- CD Pentagram - Day of reckoning 10, DM
- LP Pentagram - Releentless 10, DM
- CD Phantom - Cyberchast 15, DM
- LP Pitch Shifter - Industrial 10, CD 24, DM
- CD Post Mortem - Destined for failure 15, DM
- CD Post Mortem - Festival of fun 12, DM
- LP Praying Mantis - Live at last 20, DM
- LP Prong - Prove you wrong 12, DM
- CD Psychotic Waltz - Mosquito 15, DM
- CD Reverend - World won't miss you 15, DM
- LP Riot - Born in America 12, DM

T-Shirts

- Ancient - Logo 30, DM
- Bestial Warlust - Logo 50, DM
- Celtic Frost - To moga therion 30, DM
- Cremonary - Illusions 30, LP/Longsleeve 50, DM
- Cradle of Filth - Black goddess 30, DM
- Hades - Again shall be 30, DM
- Impaled Nazarene - Band Longsleeve 45, DM
- Impaled Nazarene - KFS/Suomi shirt 30, DM
- Infemal Majesty - New 30, LP/Longsleeve 50, DM
- Katania - For funerals to come 30, DM
- Rotting Christ 30, DM
- Solitude Aeternum - Darkness falls in Europe 30, DM
- Trouble - Bardigo 30, DM
- Trouble - Logo Longsleeve 50, DM
- Besucht unseren Laden (Adresse; Sandberg 13, in Itzehoe - über 120 cm Verkaufsfäche), den einzigen reinen Metalshop dieser Art in Europa. Wir haben ca. 250 verschiedene T-Shirt Motive und einige tausend Platten, CDs, Magazine, Aufhänger, Demos etc. auf Lager.



NO MORE! CONTROL DENIED IS HERE!!

Are the rumors true? Has **Chuck Schuldiner** gone...power metal? **YES!** Chuck, as many of you know, was the leader of **DEATH**, who jump started the metal form known as "death metal" back in the early 80's. Creating the original "true growl" that most death bands use today, Chuck and his ever shifting band line-up inspired legions of musicians to play brutal metal. Chuck, however, has a wide range of tastes; after years of writing ground breaking material within the constraints of what is known as "death metal", he has decided to end **DEATH** and start anew, with a proper vocalist. Unfortunately, while the music is all written (and a preproduction album recorded), there is still no singer. The original **WINTERS BANE** vocalist was with **CONTROL DENIED** for a spell, but his commitments to his own band (**WICKED WAYS**--see demo review) pulled him away. Nonetheless, Chuck **will** come through, it's just a matter of time. Catching Chuck in mid-sentence, we begin with--what else?--heavy metal. Due to the length of this interview, esteemed typesetter Natalie Vlahovic deleted nearly every mention of the word "definitely"--sorry Chuck!

...Like I said, Ace Frehley, Yngwie, and the players from **MERCYFUL FATE** as well, they're a great guitar team. I always loved that double axe attack. **IRON MAIDEN** as well, major influence on the leads. As a lead player, I just thought **MAIDEN** were like butter. Their leads were flowing, just smooth. That really blew my mind. They did a lot for me.

What did you think of their new album?

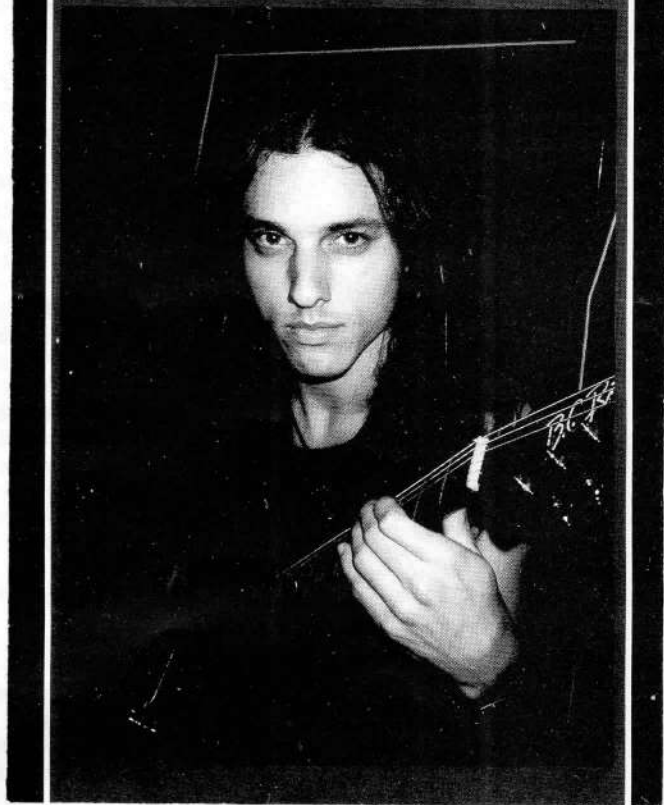
I am crushed and angered, I must say. It's **MAIDEN**'s end. I am just so angry. When I heard that, we were in Europe. It was the *Symbolic* tour. I ran out to the store; I got the double-vinyl release of it. I bought the CD of it. I am just thinking, man it's going to crush, and I'm sorry, I just expected so much more from that band.

What was the last MAIDEN you liked?

The last **MAIDEN** I liked...gosh...there were a couple of decent things on *Fear of the Dark*, but I lost hope at that point. For me, as a fan of that band, I felt like they lost their hunger. I think that no matter what type of music you're involved in, if you lose the hunger for it, you're going to lag. I think it's like that with anything in life that you do. If you lose the desire, and that thing inside of you that keeps you pissed off or whatever, as a musician, I think, man. I'll hang it up when I lose that. I'll know when I lose it. I won't put it out for other people to hear it. For me this new **MAIDEN**, the singer's just nowhere near where I thought they were gonna go. I'm a big fan of Bruce Dickinson as well as Paul Di'anno, who was also a killer singer. I just waited so long for that record, and now I'm disappointed. Everyone I know...when we listened to it, we were all crushed. I'm sad; I really am. Maybe in the future they'll get Bruce back. I just don't hear any range whatsoever with the new guy, and

AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

CHUCK SCHULDINER



that's what Bruce is about.

I just did an interview with Steve Harris and I told him that, but Steve is happy with the album...

Is he?

But Steve Harris' and Blaze Bayley's favorite IRON MAIDEN album is the same one, it's Seventh Son of a Seventh Son. That's my favorite too.

Yeah, that's a great record. Blaze for me just isn't what I expected.

A lot of people have said that.

But maybe live he will surprise me, who knows?

I thought he did pretty well live. I saw him up here in New York, except sound-wise,

DISCOGRAPHY

SCREAM BLOODY GORE

'87年



Combat [CD] 88561-8146-2
 ①Infernal Death②Zombie Ritual③Denial Of Life④Sacrificial⑤Mutilation⑥Regurgitated Guts⑦Baptized In Blood⑧Torn To Pieces⑨Evil Dead⑩Scream Bloody Gore Produced By Randy Burns

LEPROSY

'88年



Combat [CD] 88561-8248-2
 ①Leprosy②Born Dead③Forgotten Past④Left To Die⑤Pull The Plug⑥Open Gasket⑦Primitive Ways⑧Choke On It Produced By Dan Johnson

SPIRITUAL HEALING

'90年



ソニー [CD] CSCS 5256
 ①Living Monstrosity②Altering The Future③Defensive Personalities④Within The Mind⑤Spiritual Healing⑥Low Life⑦Genetic Reconstruction⑧Killing Spree Produced By Scott Burns & DEATH

HUMAN

'91年



ソニー [CD] CRCS 7462
 ①Flattening Of Emotions②Suicide Machine③Together As One④Secret Face⑤Lack Of Comprehension⑥See Through Dreams⑦Cosmic Sea⑧Vacant Planets⑨God Of Thunder Produced By Scott Burns & Chuck Schuldiner

INDIVIDUAL THOUGHT PATTERNS

'93年



ソニー [CD] SRCS 7481
 ①Overactive Imagination②In Human Form③Jealousy④Trapped In A Corner⑤Nothing Is Everything⑥Mentally Blind⑦Individual Thought Patterns⑧Destiny⑨Out Of Touch⑩The Philosopher Produced By Chuck Schuldiner & Scott Burns

Harris' bass was overpowering. You could not hear the guitars.

It's kind of like that in the record. The guitars are very subtle. That's another thing about the record. It didn't jump out. You throw on *Number of the Beast*, man...look out. Crushing stuff.

1980's--you did Scream Bloody Gore...you did Leprosy, which I liked. I thought it was Dan Johnson's influence that made the album great...he worked on it...

Yeah, he did.

I don't know what he did and how he worked with you, but some of the songs on there are so catchy. It's almost like a power metal album with growly vocals.

Yeah. Back then, I was trying to get that out, definitely. Dan was a great person to work with. That's what appealed to me about Dan; he worked with really cool bands, really great productions back them. I wanted that for our music. I wanted him to bring out all the stuff that was going on in our music. It was great. He was a great guy to work with...actually made people really look twice, because it was a very produced album for back then, but raw...at the same time, we triggered the drums, so that was like high-tech step for us. I think it showed. Dan definitely lent a big hand in that, bringing out the clarity of it.

Why didn't you use him again?

Actually, we were going to, but unfortunately, Dan got out of producing a short while after that and went into other sorts of stuff. I think he went into doing something in the electronics field. So, unfortunately, we weren't able to work with him again. We had hooked up with Scott Burns who had worked with us on *Leprosy*. That was one of Scott's first records. It was cool how we hooked up..

I'm not a big fan of Scott's work. Why go with Scott instead of Jim or Tom?

Back then, we had built a relationship after knowing Scott through *Leprosy*. Scott's a very cool person to work with, and we just immediately got on well with him. We were like, 'how would you like to do the next record with us', and we told him what we were looking for and that we wanted to get an even cleaner production. I wanted to clean it up, but keep it really heavy. Scott definitely has the same goal in mind, so we decided to work together and *Spiritual Healing*, I thought, was a risky record causing a lot of people to go, 'whoa, this is a pretty tidy sounding record,' but that's what I wanted to go for, to get more in your face. I feel like there were a lot of productions out

there getting lost, and working with Scott enabled us to achieve what *Spiritual Healing* was. I was very happy with that at the time, so we just built a relationship on *Spiritual Healing*. That album did really well for us. A lot of people started taking us more seriously, which made me really happy. I was always really serious about the music. And it's the name 'DEATH', people were kind of like, 'oh, they're just another death metal band.'

Did you ever feel that in some point in your career, the name 'DEATH' held you back, or were you annoyed with the name 'DEATH'? Take the band SATAN...it's like, you know...SATAN!

Yeah, that's even worse than DEATH! Yeah, sure I am. When the name came about, I was 16, and naturally when the music started evolving and the name kind of was the chain and ball, and the weight attached to the end of the whole thing. With the vocal style, that went along with DEATH in the beginning. I couldn't change it very much. I definitely tried to evolve and have the words come out better because the lyrics are very important to me. I want people to know what I'm saying, but with conviction. Towards the end, I felt like I wanted the music to take off, but I've got to do something a little different here, which I've planned to do for the past few years, and I've tried to make it public. I've talked about it three years back in *Guitar World*...kind of picture of a highway, and I'm kind of veering off to the left with the main road in sight. That's the way I like to look at it, so people couldn't freak out and go, 'uh oh.' With the whole thing, I felt a little trapped towards the end. I feel like the fans have grown with the band and have accepted the evolving of the music, and everyone that's been with me this far is going to really enjoy the new record as well. No disappointment here.

You have no labels lined up?

Right now, there's actually already been some interest. I'd like to give names, but once again, I'm not supposed to. We will definitely put out press releases as soon as something is solidified.

Are these European, Japanese, American...

There's some Japanese, there's some American, and Europe is going to be another story. This is so early in the game that it amazes me how there's already been inquiries coming into our office via fax from labels saying, 'hey, we heard this is going on. We want to hear it,' so that psyches me out even more.

Believe me, I've been talking it up a bit with friends of mine and in phone calls

SYMBOLIC



アポロン [CD] APCY-8239
 ①Symbolic②Zero Tolerance③Empty Words④Sacred Serenity⑤1,000 Eyes⑥Without Judgement⑦Crystal Mountain⑧Misanthrope⑨Perennial Quest Produced by Jim Morris

from readers, and they're all excited about it. First of all, you've got a great sound, and you can all play your instruments, and great production on Symbolic. Symbolic is like the perfect jump off point, and Symbolic really crossed over with all the power metal fans I've talked with. It's like SENTENCED-North From Here, and CARCASS-Heartwork; these are all big crossover albums.

CARCASS really expanded. I thought they were really going for what they wanted to. I was like, 'right on.' I supported them all the way on that one. They were big-time traditional metallists, and people will be shocked how many people are. What's great is that I think it's going to come back full circle very soon. I'm going to be there, man. I haven't given up on metal at all, going on 12 years in the band situation, as a fan...and I'm not about to right now. Some bands do not have to turn grunge in order to get noticed. We're one of them. I'm one of those people that will not turn grunge to satisfy the ...whatever.

So back in the early eighties, you were a pioneering this special form of music, and you see yourself again just, in America anyway, leading the way.

I would like to hopefully think of myself as pioneering something that's going to be fresh and that's going to, hopefully, make a difference. This is very serious to me. I spend a lot of time...I live sleep, eat, and breathe music and do think it's going to show, just like the other members of CONTROL DENIED. I'm being very careful with putting the band together as far as finding the right people so far. It's gone really smooth. Everything is falling into place. I think with all these same things in mind that we all have, it's just all ready from the stuff we've demoed off. It's quite explosive. It's something I want people to hear as soon as possible. I've got that antsy feeling, that I want to get this out and get playing out there to Japan, which was one of the greatest experiences of my life. Japan was incredible. That's another place I want to go to real soon.

You've been there...

... just once recently for Symbolic.

...and you were blown away...

It is the heavy metal capital of the world. There is no competition. It's like when you go to Japan, you're in a time warp. Metal is massive. It's so hard to comprehend. You walk into record shops in a department store...very commercialized, and you see this insane heavy metal that's available, like SILVER MOUNTAIN. In a department store! I felt like I was in a dream!

Ha Ha...

I tried to control myself, but I ended up bringing back some valuable things back with me, some really rare SILVER MOUNTAIN stuff. So that, for me, was a dream come true. I've wanted go there since I saw this picture of KISS in Japan, and I always thought, 'wow, that looks like an incredible place to play.' So being there was just mind-blowing. The shows were just incredible.

How many shows?

We played four shows, and two of them were in the same venue in Tokyo, and they were just phenomenal.

How many people do you think?

One night, there was close to 2000 people for the shows in Tokyo, and the last night we played there it was sold out. I'll tell you what...you'll talk about natural high, just that feeling...I was living it. I appreciated every moment I was there, looking out, being on stage, knowing where I was. The vibe, the expression on people's faces out there...they're so die hard. The vibe is nothing but friendliness. This warm, good vibe out there, which I miss in music, in heavy metal. Just that positive thing.

It kind of gets tiring in the States to go to a show, and all the people want to do is a rough each other up.

Yeah.

And you as a musician have to deal with people getting on stage and knocking you down. I'm sure that's happened to you a few times. You go to Japan, and the people just concentrate on the music. Like you said, sounds great! I can't wait to go myself.

You will not return! You will not want to! It's great. It was a life-changing experience.

Did that possibly make you say, "I've got to do power metal!" Once you go into something with more melodic vocals, the venues start getting bigger.

That would be great, definitely. That's funny, because when we were there, I was already working on material that we are using now. Riffs and stuff we have on tape. A couple of times, people have said that they could hear Symbolic with proper vocals. I thought the same thing. I've been thinking the same thing for a while. It was always in the back of my mind with Symbolic. There were several guitar harmonies that I put down that I wasn't able, being my type of vocal style, to put the melodic stuff in there, so actually some of the melodies guitar-wise

are vocal melodies I would have had, if there was a melodic singer in the band. Actually, that's where a lot of melodies started coming out. My frustrations of not being able to put that through the vocals, and also my love for melodic things as well. My guitars definitely helped me along the way to get that melody out, and in return, that's definitely what separated DEATH from a lot of other stuff. I got brought down eventually by not expanding, and the melodic part of DEATH is what has helped keep our heads above the water, so to speak.

So what's your favorite DEATH album?

I would say Symbolic, hands down.. I think it's just got a lot of ingredients from day one, heavy double-picking approach that is a key ingredient of DEATH, as well as the melodic stuff, and I just feel that the album is more rounded. I had a lot more time to work on the songs. Actually, all of that record was written revolving around an 8-track recorder that I had purchased and that really helped me expand as a guitar player. Symbolic really took off after I got that 8-track and was able to start demoing stuff at home.

So the CONTROL DENIED material that you are preparing right now, is that done in a studio, or is that using your own 8-track?

It's up to a 24-track now, so it's full on demoing stuff at home.

This demo that you're making right now is being done at home. When do you think it's going to be finished and ready to be shopped around?

Well, actually, the only thing that's holding us back from shopping it around is the lead vocals. Everything's done. All the leads are arranged, all the leads, all the rhythms, bass, master, final drum tracks for the demo tape. I've got it mixed, and it's just sitting here waiting for that final element to occur. It's exciting not knowing who's going to be on there. It's so close, yet it's so far away. So, it's just going to be a waiting game right now. As soon as we have the vocalist in mind, we'll put the vocals down here at home. There's people waiting to hear it. I am definitely getting antsy.

So when you do find the vocalist and you do get the deal, will you use Morrisound.

Yes, definitely I will use Morrisound, and Jim Morris as well.

With that combination, you can do some magic.

I feel that way too, and honestly, I feel like some really good things can happen. They did with Symbolic, and with CONTROL DENIED, it's like some barriers are being

broken down, and they will continue to do so, especially with Jim behind the project. He opened up a whole new sound on *Symbolic*. The material was alive, and that's the way I want this to be as well. Real in your face, and in *Symbolic*, I just wanted to plug in my guitar and play. I didn't want to fool around with the squishing and squashing it with technology. That's basically the attitude we went in with, and Jim really likes things to remain natural. So together, I think it did stay natural, and the same thing with CONTROL DENIED. Same aspect, same concept. I want people to know it's people playing instruments, and not technology, or that we've been sitting in the studio for two years doing guitar tracks. I definitely consider myself the perfectionist as far as wanting to take time on things, but it can get quite ridiculous if you sit in there for two years or a year. You get an artificial-sounding album. I want to get back to the roots of the essence of just getting in there and recording. At home, I have free reign to do that with the stuff I'm recording now, and I'm trying to expand my studio at home, and eventually I'd like to open up a small studio in my home town down here in Orlando, and work with bands locally, which I've already started doing since I've got the 24-track board.

You're starting up this little studio. Do you make a living off of DEATH?

Barely. It's getting really crazy, I would love to be able to expand and do stuff on the side, because you can't always rely on the industry to support you. It's a very just demented business to be in. You don't see money all the time. I get really scared sometimes of how things are going to work. We're self-managed. We do everything ourselves in that respect, it's a big responsibility. It's very expensive, as well, because being self-managed, you incur expenses first-hand. For *Symbolic*, we got no tour support, literally, and we had to finance it ourselves. Same thing with *Individual Thought Patterns*.

That was on Combat...

Yeah, *Relativity/Combat*. It was totally self-financed. It's amazing how barely things get by. They always end up working out some way.

Did you license *Symbolic* to Roadrunner, or was it just a one-off deal?

That was actually done through *Relativity* handing over the option. Actually, *Symbolic* was an option through *Relativity*, and they made a deal with *Roadrunner* to release it, and *Roadrunner* in return hardly did anything for it in America at all. It suffered immensely because of people not knowing how to promote it here. That really pissed me off, and I took that very personally.

That's a shame that they promoted the hell out of TYPE O NEGATIVE and MACHINE HEAD, and DEATH just kind of sat there.

We got stepped on. It was sick. It was the most important record in my life at the time. I put a lot of personal stuff in that record.

Would you ever work with Roadrunner...well, Relativity is now a rap label, but will you ever work with those two companies again?

Never ever ever ever...

So, are you looking towards Metal Blade or Century Media?

Yeah, I'm looking at certain labels on that level as well as major.

If MORBID ANGEL are on a major...

Well, actually they just got dropped....

Oh, ha ha...

But they were on a major, and that is pretty damn extreme stuff. It's going to come down to whatever label can treat us right. And I just want people to know about this music. I don't want this to get thrown under the mat. If people don't like it, cool, but if they like it, great, but they have to hear it in order to have that choice. That is something I've never had. I've never been given that actual full-scale push. I just want it one time in my life, so I can say the chance, and I either succeeded with it or it didn't work. Until then, I'll never know, and that kind of bothers me deep inside, definitely. Hopefully with CONTROL DENIED, someone's going to look at this and go, 'wow, something's happening here. Let's push this. Let's give this a chance.' Try to give this a chance, and try to make a difference in metal. If the label would see that, it would be a really cool thing. I'm not giving up. I believe in this 100%, and someone's going to see it.

Oh absolutely. I have total confidence in the whole project, and I can't wait until the day when I'm holding the disc in my hand.

I appreciate it.

How did you come up with CONTROL DENIED? What's the meaning behind that?

Absolute control being denied, just the way the industry thinks, the control it puts on you, control meaning controlling the direction your music may go in, or the direction your career's going to go in. This is a scratch type of thing. I'm not on a label right now.

Things are going to be done differently this time around. I'm not that 18 year old kid who signed a contract without knowing anything. I'm going to make sure my arse is covered, and the music and the fans don't suffer from it as well. People wonder sometimes why bands all of a sudden are just gone. As a fan, I often wonder that...you know, 'what happened to that band?' A lot of bands end up breaking up because they're crushed by what the industry does to them. This is a band that's not going to get crushed. I'm not going to get crushed again. I'm going to have the chance, because things are being done right. Things are a million miles opposite of what they were when I was 18. This is a full on force, with the legal backing that it needs, and protection I didn't have back then, and the music suffered because it was never pushed properly. People had that control, and like I said *Symbolic*, in my opinion, was shit on, and that hurt me. That definitely is a hard feeling to describe other than hurt, that, 'wow, someone just gave me the run-around, because I was told that the record was going to get pushed and get the full treatment that they knew I wanted.'

I read some interviews, and you were saying that, too.

They had me going big-time. It's sickening, and it's just not right. There are so many aspects of the industry that treat people like dirt. If I can make a difference in some way to tell people look be careful, lend some advice, I will do so. That's another reason I would just like to expand, get a studio eventually, go into something where I can work and make a difference, treat people good and also feel good about what I'm doing. There's a lot of studios around here locally that are...I'm hearing a lot of horror stories about bands spending a lot of money and getting ripped off in the studio, and I'd like to open up a studio for bands on small levels, and eventually big [levels].

That's great. That sounds like how Morrisound started.

That's why Morrisound is so great, because they have got that outlook that immediately drew me to that whole vibe. They treat people with respect. They do their utmost to try to give the band the best they can. And that comes back, because you always hear nice things about them. You leave feeling good, and that's important. Especially in such a negative form of business that we're in, as a band. When you're treated good, you really appreciate it. You leave going, 'cool, that's a great memory, I'll leave holding on to that one.' You've just gotta stay positive, and I'm definitely going to keep going forward full force.

So what are some song titles?

The tentative title for the record is *The Moment of Clarity*. That's, I think, going to end up being the title. Also, a song called "What If", another song, "Cut Down to Size". I always write the music first and apply the titles. I usually have a master list of titles and then I listen to the music and apply the titles to the music that it seems like it goes along with.

So you've got song #1, song #2...

Yeah, now we're starting to label them. The songs essentially have names now. It's the process I've always used. Music's always been the first thing.

Lyricaly have you thought about delving into historical themes, fantasy, science fiction, or mythological fiction, or anything like that?

Well, I think that stuff's definitely cool. I'm a big fan of a lot of that stuff lyricaly. For me, I've got so much stuff going on inside that I feel like it's a great source to get out stuff that I'm thinking about that I can tie in with the music on that first-hand personal basis. The basis of it was lived. I'll tell you what, it's been really exciting, because I was always kind of taking a chance when I started doing that, because there were some people that said, 'uh oh, what's up, he's not writing scary lyrics, anymore', but for me it felt great. All of a sudden I started seeing mail come into the fan club, and people were like, 'man, that one song I can really relate to. I really felt that way too', and as soon as I saw that, there was a connection going on here. I've talked to people who have contemplated suicide, and they've read the lyrics, and they related to it...I can get deep about some stories about people who have read the lyrics and have been inspired by it, and that's mind-blowing for me. I never intended to do that. I was just expressing my honest emotions. I'm pretty damn honest within the lyrics. People can read a lot into Chuck's life in a very big way. I think a lot of people do realize that, and they write in, or I'll see people on tour and they'll tell me, 'hey man, those lyrics are pretty deep, they seem like they're painful. I've felt that pain', because life's not perfect. When you're in a band, I feel like everyone else does. I have my moments when I feel like I'm on top of the world, and other moments when the world's on top of me. Depression, happiness. We're all in that whole same fishbowl, so to speak. So, music had always been a great release for stuff that's inside of me, and the music and lyrics, when they intertwine, it's a good feeling. *Symbolic* was just, I guess, symbolic of what was going on at the time.

It sounds like everything's going to remain the same except for the vocals.

Yeah pretty much. Like I said, people are going to hear a lot more stuff going on with the guitars, it's a very active record. I'd like to say it that way.

I can't wait to hear it.

Hopefully as soon as possible I promise, definitely.

Band members:

Chris Williams-drums
Shannon...[last name unknown]
Brian Benson-bass
Vocalist-big question mark

Your video is on MTV, and some cartoon characters are surrounding it. How do you feel about that?

I thought it was pretty...I don't know...At first, I had mixed reactions...it was like, what the hell...but then, I'll tell you what, a lot of people saw that, and whether it's good or bad publicity, a shitload of people saw that, and it's crazy. I ran into people recently from high school, and they were like, 'man, I saw you on Beavis and Buttthead!' It was funny, people from all over were seeing DEATH when they normally really would not have known about the band by choice. They had no choice. I definitely don't regret it being on there.

What song was it?

"The Philosopher" off of *Individual Thought Patterns*.

Did you do anything for Symbolic?

No videos. We couldn't get the video support.

What other videos have you done?

A video for "Lack of Comprehension" which is off of *Human*. That was on MTV a big old two times. That's it was far as official video.

And you are on that Ultimate Revenge?

Unfortunately. *Unfortunate Revenge*. It's just hideous, not a good representation...none of the bands were happy with the performances.

I know. None of them were.

If you talk to any bands, they will say, 'burn your copy.' I encourage people to hold a big bonfire of *Ultimate Revenge* videos and go sick.

What went wrong with the whole thing?

The schedule, you had no time for anything. It was very unorganized as far as that goes. All of this elaborate equipment, but the





Pic: George Chin

camera angles were stupid. They could've been better. The mix was really bad, and they had all this equipment. They should have hired someone who knew how to mix. It was really not good. The vibe was just not here. I think the members had more fun just partying after, honestly. It was great, a lot of people in the audience seemed to have fun, and that's what ultimately counts.

How did you like the first Ultimate Revenge?

It was OK. I could tell that one was cheesed out too. There was an unprofessional vibe going on there. If a label is going to release something, make it pro. I've heard a lot of complaints even from those bands back then about that whole fiasco. They're both done through the same label. I don't think that's a coincidence.

Ha ha...So what are you listening to now?

A lot of older stuff still. Actually, some stuff from Japan I got, SABER TIGER, a band from Japan who are just phenomenal.

What kind of music?

They're progressive melodic metal. Definitely progressive with one of the greatest female metal vocalists of all time. Just incredible, and I'm pretty picky about that. I'm not into the LITA FORD mode. This chick...LITA FORD should hide. This chick has such a voice; it is insane. She is belting it out, man. There's no bubblegum rock. It's just unfortunate that a lot of people will not hear this band. It's available in Japan only. I was fortunate to have the connections and someone sent it to me. Definitely incredible. They are like a less progressive DREAM THEATER. They concentrate a little more on repeating, a formula...DREAM THEATER's a great band, don't get me wrong, but this band is not as complex as that, which is good in some cases, because people get thrown off from that at times. I totally dig that stuff. They have two records out, and their guitar player has a solo record out in Japan. Another band, actually ULI ROTH, who has a record out in Japan exclusively. His record is just phenomenal. I think ULI is one of those guitar players who gets really ripped off and never really gets the recognition he deserves. The only recognition I think he ever got was when he was with SCORPIONS back in the 70's. His new record is insane. He's actually conducting a lot of orchestra stuff on his record and intertwining that with his guitar work. If anyone gets a chance to hear him, they'll know where Yngwie got all his licks from. Absolutely, that is the reality of that one. ULI is just incredible. Actually, the cover painting of the first ULI ROTH album was called *Rising Force*. YNGWIE's first band was called YNGWIE's *Rising Force*

and so it's *really* coincidental there! Definitely, YNGWIE is a great guitar player and took his inspirations well.

In the beginning he took it well. I don't know about his last few.

Yeah exactly, but those were two new things that I've been checking out on a constant basis, as well as *Number of the Beast*. I was cranking that yesterday. WATCHTOWER, their first album, *Energetic Disassembly*, *Piece of Mind*, I was kind of having a MAIDEN festival for a couple days here.

What would be your Top 5 of all time?

Definitely I would have to say *Destroyer* by KISS...let's say KISS-*Alive 1* actually; let's change that, *Number of the Beast*-great record, there are so many great early MAIDEN albums, but that's definitely a special record, definitely memories, MERCYFUL FATE-*Melissa*, what a masterpiece...

What did you think of the last two MERCYFUL FATES?

I enjoyed the second one better than the first one. It's kind of like they're more settled into their style that they used to have. The second one was good, the first one didn't sound like it had the energy going. It was a little held back I think. Probably, they haven't played in a long time together as a band, so I think it probably took a record to get that part going, but I definitely enjoyed them.

How about Spider's Lullabye?

I enjoyed that as well. I thought that was a really good record. Andy's awesome, another guitar player that has not been given the recognition he deserves.

Now that would be something if you could get him to play along with in CONTROL DENIED.

Yeah, now I was actually considering getting Andy, because that's the type of style I want to get into the band as far as the lead player, with that conviction, speed, and melody all mixed. What I really dug about Shannon, was that he really had similar approach in the respect of the progressive but traditional approach, the up-to-date, but yet you know where the roots are coming from. So Andy was a little...things were preventing that, actually. For one, finances, like I said. Right now I'm not on a label, so I don't have support from the label to get Andy down, but definitely he was one of the people I considered contacting, and started thinking, 'man, I needed a guitar player who's going to be able to be here on a full time basis.' Luckily, I had a feeling, that if I let people

know I'm looking around, word will get out soon enough through Chris. Ironically that's where I met Shannon. It went great, and hopefully this weekend we're going to hook up and jam again and the rest can be history.

Hopefully big history

I hope so.

Top fives of all time.

I never finished that...it's so hard to say, there are so many essential records out there, especially from the early 80s. Probably *Kill Em All*-METALLICA, magic. That was magic. That's another one that inspired the whole double-picking thrash, aggressive metal thing. I was just eating that up. METALLICA had that killer rhythm going back them. That's what really appealed to me as well. Definitely blew my mind. *Show No Mercy*-SLAYER, another record all around the same era all within the same year of each other.

How do you like Show No Mercy in comparison to their later work?

One of their peaks for me was *Hell Awaits*. They were in their prime. That's when they were listening to a lot of MERCYFUL FATE as well. I remember reading interviews before they recorded *Hell Awaits*, and they were like, we are listening to a lot of MERCYFUL FATE and stuff like that, and you can tell that record man, with some of those riffs, they got that demented MERCYFUL FATE style going on...a lot of *Melissa*, which inspired me as well. Naturally *Reign in Blood* is killer, but *Hell Awaits* was when they were really really hungry, when they were on top of it. That was a pretty complex album. There were some trippy things going on for back then rhythm-wise definitely. *Show No Mercy* was naturally the first official thing I heard by them when it came out, so that's really what blew my mind. *Haunting the Chapel* was incredible as well. It's another life-changing record at the time. That was some of the early stuff that gave me that push. ANVIL

was another big band. *Metal on Metal* was just phenomenal. *Forged In Fire* another great record.

Yeah, that's a good one.

See, all that stuff...I was just blown away. Everyone had their own style. That was what was so intriguing. *EXCITER-Heavy Metal Maniac*, another crucial record that inspired me. That album was so raw. It just...there was no stopping it. It was so heavy. Definitely.

I wonder what happened to them.

It's sad they screwed up. They put out a wimpy record and pissed me off.

OK Chuck, well thank you very much.

No problem, it was good talking to a fellow metallor of the past, especially a fellow HELSTAR fan.



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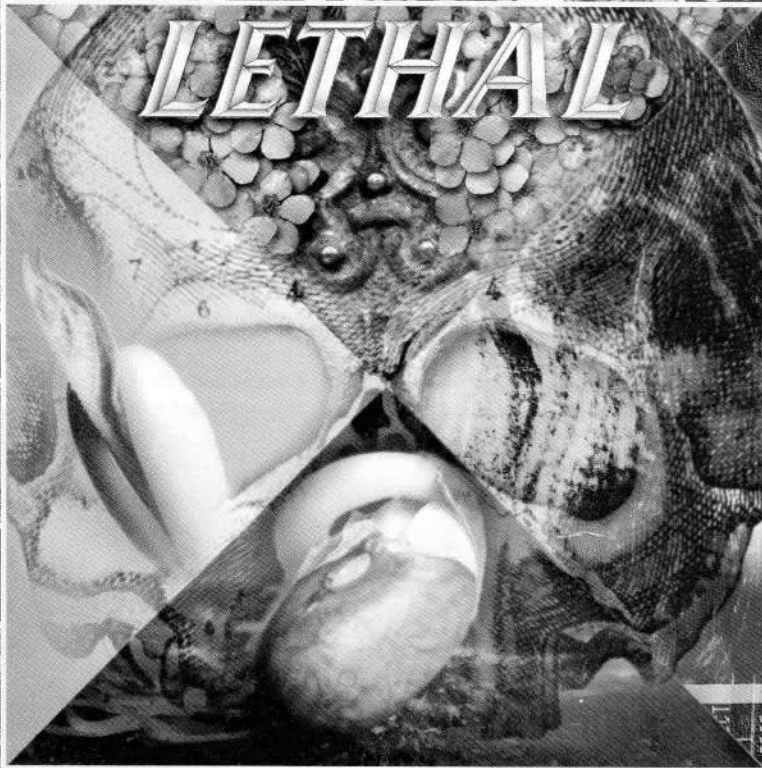
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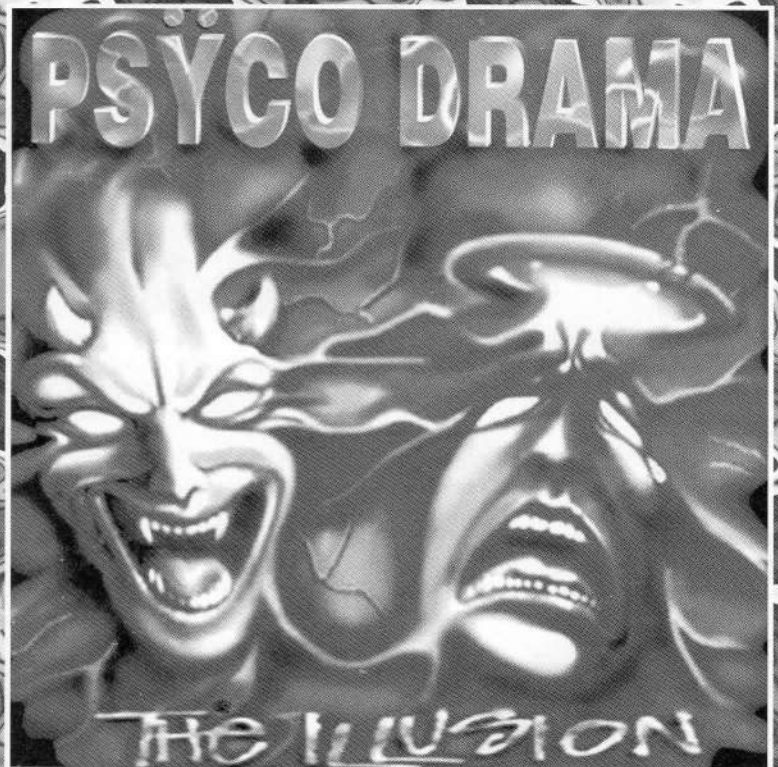


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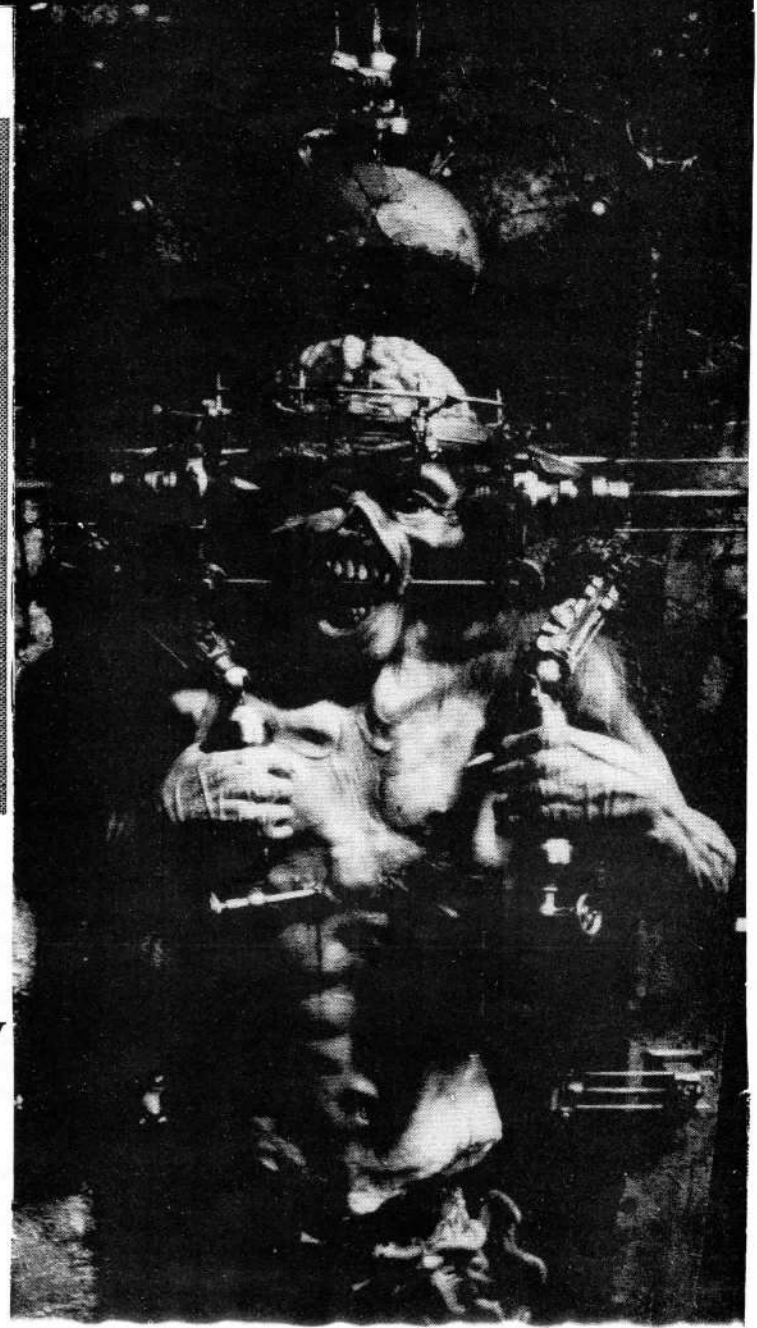
IRON MAIDEN

Let's face it, *The X-Factor* is the absolute worst thing MAIDEN has taken credit for. But the band still does amazingly well, propelled by the strength of their early classics. Just go to one of their live shows--heavy metal is **not** dead! Led by the core of **Dave Murray**, **Steve Harris**, and **Nicko McBrain**, MAIDEN soldiers on, and on the concert stage, soldiers on admirably (though their set list is hurt by too many lackluster songs from the new album). I had no interest in interviewing the band, as *The X Factor* was a big turn-off; but live, the band has so much enthusiasm that one cannot dismiss the Brits as being "over". What follows is an interview with MAIDEN leader Steve Harris, an excellent lyrical overview of the MAIDEN discography by Craig Wisnom, and an interview with the jovial **Blaze Bayley**.

Part 1: Steve Harris

Part 2: Lyrical Overview

Part 3: Blaze Bayley



STEVE HARRIS



Suicide fears in former war zone

Beirut bans noisy Maiden

Alex Spillius
and Mike Theodorou

THE British heavy metal band Iron Maiden has been denied entry to the Lebanese capital Beirut to play a concert next month for which 5,000 advance tickets have been sold.

No official explanation has been given, but sources in Beirut suggest the band is seen as a security risk after a spate of teenage suicides. In July, police seized records by Iron Maiden and other rock bands from shops and, a record company agent said, the interior ministry decided that heavy metal groups would be barred.

He said that police, perhaps with the suicide of Nirvana's Kurt Cobain 18 months ago in mind, had perceived a link between the suicides and heavy metal rock after parents of about 10 teenagers who had taken their own lives said they had listened to it incessantly.

The band's manager, Rod Smallwood, said: "The suicide sounds like a bit of a random excuse. People there have told us the government feels rock in general is a bad influence. The gig would be a lot less drastic than events of the last 10 years in Beirut. The youth deserve some entertainment."

the second major international act, after Chris de Burgh, to perform in Beirut since the civil war ended three years ago. The city has several nightclubs which feature heavy metal and a sub-culture of middle-class headbangers. Western popular culture is spreading across mainstream Muslim and Christian youth, and fashionable restaurants such as Henry's Beams have opened, with the Hard Rock Cafe to follow.

Iron Maiden intend to reapply for entry visas. They are backed by the Tory MP for Harlow, Jerry Hayes. "The Lebanese authorities are perfectly within their rights but all I would say is Iron Maiden are more likely to be a force for peace than disorder," he said.



The new album--gloomy dark and even oppressive. Is that what you set out to do?

Is that what you think? Eh, I don't really see it as gloomy and oppressive, to be honest. I suppose there is a bit of that, but uh, ha ha...It's funny how different people see different things in different ways, you know what I mean?

What have people been telling you?

It's the first time. I've done loads and loads of interviews; it's the first time actually that anyone said it's a doomy, gloomy album. Heh heh. It's interesting the way people see things.

I thought perhaps IRON MAIDEN went into the studio with the idea of fitting in with the pessimistic attitudes people have these days.

No, I don't know. I've just come out of the other end of a divorce; maybe that's it! No, a lot of it's because [there has] been a lot of bullshit going on in the last few years, especially in Europe, with the Bosnian war. I mean, back home in Europe, it's on the news every day, and there's all these things going on. It's obviously going to affect the way you think.

As we're nearing the year 2000, do you think the world is getting more chaotic?

Yeah, I certainly don't think things are getting any better, y'know. The general attitudes of people seem to be kind of depressive, really, and also, it kind of does reflect in music. I don't think it reflected that much in our album, but people see things many different ways. ...Lots of bands right now, writing how they're down on this down on that. To me, it really... people don't want to be reminded of their problems back home. They just want to go out and have a good time.

IRON MAIDEN used to sing about "Two Minutes To Midnight" and "The Trooper"; music-wise, there were always melodies and harmonies contrasting the serious lyrics. But now in The X Factor, the music is equally as downtrodden.

I wouldn't say that, really. I still think...some of the subject matter we're dealing with...some stuff that is just reality that is going on at the moment, which is a bit depressing, really. But I still think there are guitar melodies all over the album, and it's not depressing, not the music anyway.

I liked everything up to Seventh Son (minus Somewhere In Time), but the last few albums, it seems like you're branching out.

Yeah, we're exploring different things, but I think we explored different things on *Seventh Son*, which was very different from

Somewhere In Time. You can't analyze it, really.

You just go into the studio and do what you feel. Tell me, what happened to Derek Riggs? And also, explain the recent evolution of your album covers.

When we did the *Fear of the Dark* album cover, a guy named Mel Grant did a painting, and we used his for the [cover] instead of Derek's, because Derek didn't fit what we wanted, y'know? And, it wasn't edgy enough, really. And on this new album, we got somebody to build a model of Eddie, and photograph it, which we've been thinking of doing for some time now anyway. I think Derek's been doing it for so long, he's just kind of...I don't know, lost the plot a bit somewhere. But having said that, he did the covers for...after *Fear of the Dark*, we released a couple of live albums, and he did the artwork for those, and they were really good. But some of the stuff he put in between, kinda like, wasn't inspiring.

What else does Riggs do outside of MAIDEN's covers?

He doesn't do a lot really, art-wise. He's been getting himself, into music you know... Maybe that's why. If he comes up with good stuff, we'll use it. Derek's strange. He's what you'd expect an artist to be...he's a bit out there, really.

OK, recently there was an incident involving MAIDEN and Kerrang!...something about Blaze on the cover smoking? What was that about?

Yeah, it's just the way they twist things around. What happened was, I arrived at the photo session about 10 minutes after *Blaze* got there, and he was already doing a shoot with a cigar in his mouth and a bottle of champagne, which is OK. But by the end of the day, he didn't want to come across as having made the big time, kind of thing. He doesn't smoke anyway, but it's nothing to do with the actual smoking thing of it. It was just that we didn't want him coming across as some big-headed guy, y'know? And that's what we especially said to him, and of course, *Kerrang!* twisted it all around like they always do.

That's Kerrang! for you.

Well, *Kerrang!* have been a bit down on us for some time now anyway. They've been sort of trying to dig a knife in a bit here and there. They've been trendy and it hasn't been cool to be into MAIDEN. It hasn't been for some time. It hasn't affected anything over there. I know we're not playing as big places in the States, but everywhere else in the world, we're still selling out big places. We've been playing places up to 10-11,000 sold out. So, it's not like [*Kerrang!*] has had any effect on us.

Your view of IRON MAIDEN and the current US metal scene.

In the States it's really changed, y'know? We didn't even know what to expect coming over this time. We're playing clubs and stuff; we didn't know if we'd sell 'em out, if we have been. We didn't know what to expect. We haven't been here for four years. We don't know...people gotta take us as we are, we're not going to change or do anything special. That's always been our attitude. We stand or fall by it. At the end of the day, we want to do well in America, because we want to be big in America, and big in America on our own terms. And if we can't be on our terms, we won't be.

That's a attitude a lot of bands should have, but they'd rather jump on the bandwagon. It's terrible. How do you feel about Blaze's vocals...I don't want to say 'limitations', but he does not have the range that Dickinson had in his prime. Is that something--

I'm glad you said "in his prime", because Bruce didn't have his vocal range towards the end anyway. Having said that, Blaze is a different kind of singer. We didn't and he didn't want to come into the band and try to be another Bruce Dickinson. That's not what we wanted. We had two or three people send in tapes who sounded just like Bruce, and we didn't even bother to audition them purely because of that. Blaze is a different kind of singer, and he has a different kind of range. But he still learns the old stuff really really well. But he sings it in his way, and that's the way we want it. It's the same thing when Bruce came into the band after Paul. Bruce had a different range to Paul. And it was no good for him to sing the same way Paul did. Sometimes it takes a little while for people to get used to someone new in the band. I mean, the reaction to Blaze has been incredible all over. So far.

At the New York show at one point, when Blaze told the audience "we're going to be playing a lot of old songs", everyone cheered. Then Blaze said that MAIDEN would also be playing new songs off of The X Factor album and the reaction wasn't that enthusiastic.

That would happen, even if we were playing 20,000 seats in America if Bruce, Paul, or Blaze was in the band. A comment like that is going to get that reaction, because the album is new and people don't know it as well. The one thing I've noticed more in the States than anywhere else is that the fact that the new stuff [*The X Factor*]...they don't know it. Whether they haven't bought the album yet or whatever, they haven't gotten into it yet or whatever...they don't like it, at the end of the day. They don't know the stuff. The rest of Europe, the reaction to the new stuff has been amazing. They've been singing the words and everything. One thing that really pissed me off in *Kerrang!* recently in the latest

issue, the guy [writer] obviously didn't like the new album, so when he reviewed it, he said, 'oh all the old stuff is great,' and he reckons that the reaction would be what you just said. Now in the States, I notice that that is the case, when you talk about new stuff and old stuff. There is a big difference in the way people react. But, you expect that to a certain degree anyway, but the gig we did in Nottingham (the album had been out a while UK, it was a top 10 album, blah blah blah), and there was great cheers for the old stuff, which there always is. When you say you're going to do old stuff, they're always going to cheer, and then the [*Kerrang!* writer] mentioned there were boos when Blaze mentioned the new stuff. That's absolute bullshit. It was a small club, one off club, which we did as a 'thank you' to the club for standing by the metal scene. Because they're the only club in the UK, The Nottingham Roxy, that stuck by that kind of music. And if anybody was booing, [as the *Kerrang!* writer said], then we didn't see it. If he had said that about a gig over here [in the States], then I could understand it to a certain degree. Although we haven't had people booing back when we did the *Number of the Beast* tour, and when we were doing new material, we went out [in the UK for example]. We had a single out, but the album hadn't come out yet, and [the fans] didn't know the stuff, and the same thing happened, y'know, 'cause Bruce is new in the band. I'll tell you, I stand by our new material. I can get the vibe that you're not keen on it. At the end of the day, we're the ones that have to be happy first. I think this [*The X Factor*] is a great album, and that's the way I look at it. It's not like the album is hot off the press. We've been doing the tour since September with these new songs, and the reaction to the songs has been great, so if you don't like it...BOLLOCKS! Ha ha ha!

Ha ha, well, it's tough for us old fans to appreciate it.

Let me ask you, how many times have you heard it?

Not more than five times.

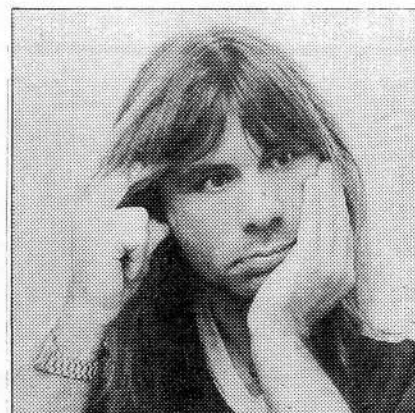
If you don't like it after three or four times, then that's fair comment. It's an album that does need a bit of listening.

It has longer songs.

There's more going on...

Longer intros for each song, I agree. I'll listen to it more, but it doesn't strike me. The last IRON MAIDEN album I loved deeply was Seventh Son of a Seventh Son, so it's been a while. But that's just one person's viewpoint. Is there any chance of getting Bruce back, or is the door closed forever?

Yeah, [it's closed]. There's no point in having him in the band if he doesn't want to be there.



Why would he come back? He's short on money, y'know what I mean; that's the only reason why he'd come back. At the end of the day, I'm not interested in working with someone who just wants to be in the band for whatever reasons other than the music.

And that's what Bruce was doing towards the end, just tagging along?

I think at the last couple of tours to be honest, I think he lost his passion. I think he was struggling and it showed on the last couple of albums before this.

Have you listened to his solo material?

To be honest, the last album he put out, I only heard the singles. I didn't hear the whole album. I've heard his latest album, *Skunkworks*, which I'd rather not comment on. I don't think my opinion really matters anyway.

You're on EMI overseas, and in the States on a new label, CMC.

That's another thing that annoys me. I read somewhere in some American magazine, I forget which one, that said we got dumped by



IRON MAIDEN '80 (l. to r.) Clive Burr<d>, Dave Murray<g>, Dennis Stratton<g>, Eddie, Paul Di'anno<vo>, Steve Harris

our label, which is absolute bullshit. We bought ourselves out, out of the deal, and bought all the back catalog out as well, [for the States], and then we went and got a deal with Castle [Communications] for the back catalog and CMC [an independent] for the new album. And the reason we went with them, is because they're more into traditional rock. We thought we had more of a chance of doing something with them than with a major label only caring about where the next alternative band is coming from. We couldn't take a risk. Some people get these ideas that we've been dumped by a label, and that's bullshit.

Are you happy so far with CMC?

Yes, I've found they do a really good job. The album is up to about 220,000, which I think for this point in time, the way things are, is really good. We're up to getting it up to 350,000, and any more would be a big bonus.

What's your favorite MAIDEN album?

Seventh Son.

I agree.

I think this album, *The X Factor* is the next step from *Seventh Son*. And also songs like "Fear of the Dark" and "Afraid To Shoot Strangers" are also a next step on from *Seventh Son*. I find it odd [that you feel the way you do about *The X Factor*].

Let me keep listening to the disc. It's not a very accessible disc.

No, it isn't, but we feel it is a high quality album. You can't do any more than that. It's a different kind of album. You can't argue that what we've done is honest, because it is what we feel at the time. We've got conviction of what we're doing at the moment. We haven't tried to follow any trend or whatever. We haven't tried to live in our past either. We've just done what we feel is the best album at this point in time.

And that's all an IRON MAIDEN fan can ask for. Will you be using Nigel Greene again to produce?

Again, I'm not 100% sure, but I should think so, yes.

Were you happy with the production?

Yeah, I was very happy with it.

The bass guitar dominated the mix.

You think so? HA!

Yeah.

I think on the last album, *Fear of the Dark*, I tried for that not to happen. I think it probably didn't do a lot of good. So, this time I tried to be natural about it. And well, whatever!



IRON MAIDEN '80~'81 (l. to r.) Adrian Smith<g>, C. Burr, P. Di'anno, D. Murray, S. Harris, EddieX2



IRON MAIDEN '81~'82 (l. to r.) S. Harris, C. Burr, Bruce Dickinson<vo>, D. Murray, A. Smith

"But I might see young Cupid's fiery shaft
Quench'd in the chaste beams of the wat'ry moon
And the imperial votaress passed on,
In Maiden meditation, fancy free..."

-William Shakespeare,
A Midsummer Night's Dream

Iron Maiden Lyrics

I was first captivated with **IRON MAIDEN** in 1983, when I purchased the tape of *Piece of Mind*. (Sigh! Yes, forgive me for coming late to them, during the birth of my metallic life). Perchance it was symbolic that this cassette surprised me by having the complete lyrics printed on the folded J-card...something I'd never seen before in my then meager collection of cassettes. And when reading the libretto, it was inspiring to find so many songs worth reading, tales of literature and keenly honed stories, with an aspiring breadth of subject. My mind held high any lyrics that transcended the rote mundanity of love songs so ubiquitous and trite in the realms of most rock, pop, and traditional music. What a dazzling find! An unbelievable 13 years, and 6 studio albums later, this brash British band remains a treasured icon of heavy metal, influential with epic song structures, middle eastern melodies and ambitious lyrics, and yet never duplicated.

For this article, I will focus on the lyrical contributions of these prowlers of the metal scene, who lived another life beyond the former limitations of the genre. They had relative success world wide, and they came as invaders to the shores of all the lands beyond their native Albion, even to our colonies. The revelations they showed us lyrically were immense, and chief songwriter Steve Harris never seemed to be at a loss for words. Rather there was a strange sense of *deja vu* that their lyrics inspired within those who listened to them, tales of warriors and heroes from far beyond, in the realms of history and legend, of the infinite dreams in mankind's subconscious past. They inspired bands like **FATES WARNING** and many others, who took their own paths from the influence of **MAIDEN**, with songs like "The Apparition", which appeared in the aftermath of **MAIDEN**'s own brilliant ascent. Simply put, **IRON MAIDEN** furthered, popularized, and elevated the art of writing lyrics, in which they dared to aspire to loftier goals in what stories, lessons, and emotions such words could portray.

Until **IRON MAIDEN**, lyrics had seldom had their power, vision, or influence...While **BLACK SABBATH** began writing revolutionary lyrics, with dark visions of life and the occult, and **JUDAS PRIEST** continued such serious and dramatic songwriting, most early metal lyrics did not very often deal with literature or history for their topics, rather they were lyrics written from the mind and heart of the songsmith. There are obviously exceptions to this, including with the aforementioned bands, but few included the depth of information and vividness of lyric crafting that **MAIDEN** eventually achieved, and in fact, it still remains so. Only **RUSH** had really begun to take truly ambitious strides with their lyrics, making references, allusions, and songs based on work by Cervantes, Coleridge, and Ayn Rand. But even by **MAIDEN**'s initial full release, **RUSH** had mellowed their metal approach and the depth of their songwriting was soon to be expressed in subtler and simpler lyrics.

IRON MAIDEN's first full length release appeared in 1980, after they had released some of their work as the Soundhouse Tapes. While a strong album still, it was closer to the bulk of NWOBHM bands than their later incarnations, both in sound, and songwriting. The lyrics were



IRON MAIDEN '82--'90 (l. to r.) A. Smith, B. Dickinson, Nicko McBrain<ds>, S. Harris, D. Murray



IRON MAIDEN '90--'93 (l. to r.) N. McBrain, Janick Gers<g>, B. Dickinson, S. Harris, D. Murray



IRON MAIDEN



'80年 東芝EMI
[CD] TOCP-3002
①Prowler ②Remember Tomorrow ③Running Free ④Phantom Of The Opera ⑤Transylvania ⑥Strange World ⑦Charlotte The Harlot ⑧Iron Maiden produced by Will Malone

KILLERS



'81年 東芝EMI
[CD] TOCP-7601
①The Ides Of March ②Wrathchild ③Murders In The Rue Morgue ④Another Life ⑤Genghis Khan ⑥Innocent Exile ⑦Killers ⑧Prodigal Son ⑨Purgatory ⑩Drifter produced by Martin Birch

THE NUMBER OF THE BEAST



'82年 東芝EMI
[CD] TOCP-7602
①Invaders ②Children Of The Damned ③The Prisoner ④22, Acacia Avenue ⑤The Number Of The Beast ⑥Run To The Hills ⑦Gangland ⑧Hallowed Be Thy Name produced by Martin Birch



PIECE OF MIND



'83年 東芝EMI
[CD] TOCP-3062
①Where Eagles Dare ②Revelations ③Flight Of Icarus ④Die With Your Boots On ⑤The Trooper ⑥Still Life ⑦Quest For Fire ⑧Sun And Steel ⑨To Tame A Land produced by Martin Birch

POWERSLAVE



'84年 東芝EMI
[CD] TOCP-3063
①Aces High ②2 Minutes To Midnight ③Losfer Words (Big 'Orra) ④Flash Of The Blade ⑤The Duellists ⑥Back In The Village ⑦Powerslave ⑧Rime Of The Ancient Mariner produced by Martin Birch

adequate, reaching highest with songs like "Phantom of the Opera", based upon the old silent horror movie. (In my opinion, one of their best musical songs as well for a long time, and Harris thought it was his best song ever until they recorded *Piece of Mind*). Unfortunately, one of their most intriguing titles, "Transylvania", turned out to be instrumental. Although it was originally written with lyrics, the band decided to record it *sans vocce*. It also contained a lot more songs, such as "Prowler", "Sanctuary", "Running Free", and their title track, which lyrically were both very simple and quite typical for a burgeoning heavy metal band.

Killers followed in 1981, working in ways to elevate their songwriting. It still contained the rather straightforward and ordinary lyrics to songs like "Another Life", "Innocent Exile", and "Drifter" which were raised above average by their haunting strains. But here a few nods to history appeared, with the again frustrating (to me!) instrumental titles of "Genghis Khan" and "Ides of March". Literature too made its first mark for them on this album, with the classic "Murders in the Rue Morgue." The title was based on the short story by Edgar Allan Poe, and the song was rather loosely based on that story, missing the basic viewpoint and twist of the original story. But still, it was an important step forward. "Prodigal Son" was a nod to Christian folklore with its title, and to the occult with its reference to Lamia.... (Also, Lamia was incidentally a town that was the source of a revolt against Macedonian rule that began after Alexander the Great's death, whose life was immortalized in the later Maiden song...oh yeah, and some other things he did probably had something to do with his fame!) "Killers" itself was an incisively potent song, and its violent yet poetic lyrics ("Death call arises, a scream breaks the still of the night/Another tomorrow, remember to walk in the light") no doubt inspired more of the aggressive bands that followed MAIDEN, like SLAYER. *Killers* was a great second album, and remains a tremendous piece of work.

But it was with *The Number of the Beast* that IRON MAIDEN ultimately defined their character...The new vocals, the music, and the lyrics all came of age with sharper focus, stronger execution, and brilliant vision. It also raised the notoriety of IRON MAIDEN with the controversial title track, which was about a dream of devil worship inspired by the movie *The Omen*, as well as a passage from the Book of Revelations. (Always struck me powerfully, since my social security number ends in 0666, and the relevant passage says, "Here is *wisdom*, let him who hath..." as well as other strange twists to my life. But I digress!) Powerful and emotional in its nightmare imagery, the song (and album cover) also unfortunately branded IRON MAIDEN as satanists by ignorant parents and religious leaders, who paid no attention to the utter diversity of their lyrical subject matter, even to that point. "Run to the Hills" was also a hit off this album, taking on the historic topic of the abuse of the Native Americans with a gritty tone much more acerbic than JUDAS PRIEST's predecessor in "Savage." "Gangland" told a tale of organized crime, while the indomitable "Hallowed Be Thy Name" wrought a poignant tale of hope evolving from a man's view of life as he awaits execution. "Invaders", a reworking of an older song "Invasion", again stridently evoked dark and bloody moments of history with its portrayal of Viking raids on ancient England that spared no mention of atrocity. "The Prisoner", loosely based upon the television series, was a glowing testament of freedom wrapped in a catchy chorus, and "Children

of the Damned" retold yet another horror movie of the same name in its words, with strikingly passionate anguish.

It's hard to separate the incredible musical glory that blessed this album, but it was also clear that their lyrics had ascended to another level along with the music. Gone were the throwaway lyrics that melded from one song to the next, and each track told its own emotional story to the listener, whether it was a finely crafted original tale, or one wrought upon the movies or history that inspired the band. The words, conveyed by the magnificent strength of Bruce Dickinson's voice, ushered in a new era of metal songwriting, which would bring much to those who listened with an open mind.

Number's follower, *Piece of Mind*, continued this tradition with a vengeance. "Where Eagles Dare" melded the general history of World War II with the fictional adventure from Allistair McLean's novel of the same name. "To Tame A Land" was an epic adaptation of Frank Herbert's science fiction classic *Dune*, and Harris' powerful music worked beautifully with the evocation of the story. "Revelations" was the band's predecessor to "Powerslave", based upon Egyptian mythology, although beginning with an English hymn, and aching with poetic emotion: "She came to me with a serpent's kiss/As the Eye of the Sun Rose on her lips/Moonlight catches silver tears I cry." This was a far, far cry from the band's beginning with "Walking through the city/feeling oh so pretty..." The glorious "Sun and Steel" likewise brought a glimpse of Eastern culture, with its tale about a young samurai warrior and the Japanese culture's visions of life and death. The song "Die With Your Boots On" was a powerful tale about prophecy and rejecting such control by resolutely choosing your own fate.

Incidentally, the title of "Die With Your Boots On" matched (almost) that from a movie about the Custer incident, in which Errol Flynn starred. Flynn also starred in a film about the charge of the light brigade during the Crimean war, which was the topic of IRON MAIDEN's "The Trooper." (Yes, I know, it was rather a desperate segue.) Not only did this omnipotent musical favorite thus conjure up yet another historical incident, but the video for this song showed excerpts from Alfred Lord Tennyson's poem on the subject: "Half a league, half a league/Half a league onward/All in the valley of Death/Rode the six hundred." I think more than anything, on *Piece of Mind*, MAIDEN was offering the flashes of their inspiration to their listeners to show them the potent art out there that appealed to the same emotional hungers as metal. "Flight of Icarus", a breath-taking song on its own right, brought alive the ancient mythology of the engineer Daedalus and his son, who escaped their Cretan prison on wings held together by wax. When Icarus, as so many damned by hubris, ignored the warning of his father and flew too close to the sun, his wings were burned to ashes, "to ashes his grave." The song was not only a stirring fantasy tale, but easily adapted to become a metaphor for the dangers of technology, arrogance, weakness, and other self-destructive forces. As my eyes wandered the folds on this J-card, I truly knew, here were lyrics worth writing, reading, knowing, and singing! Emotion, intellect, precision, and breadth were its lyrical hallmarks.

Powerslave followed ardently, and is in some ways Maiden's finest hour. The opening track, "Aces High", was another historical track, which brought alive in sharp detail and feeling the aerial fighting of World War II, with its detailed descriptions of Messerschmitts and British fighters:

"Bandits at 8 o'clock move in behind us/Ten ME 109's out of the sun/Ascending and turning our spiffires to face them/Heading straight for them I press down my guns." Dickinson brought alive the tale of a avenging warrior in "Flash of the Blade", while Harris masterfully described the moments of impending death for a man challenged to fight to the death in "The Duelists." "Powerslave" was an absolutely fascinating portrait of a dying pharaoh...On one level, the song was a vision of Egyptian history, mythology, and culture, that was informative and fascinating with its glimpse into ancient practices. And yet the lyrics had even more intellectual meat than that, as they told the feelings of a man who had always thought himself divine, facing death bitterly. "When I was living this lie-fear was my game/People would worship and fall-drop to their knees/So bring me the blood and red wine for the one to succeed me/For he is a man and a god-and he will die too." This feeling reminded me tremendously of similar passages in Shakespeare's *King Lear*, the tragedy about an English king forced to face his own mortality and weakness when he gives up his crown. "When the rain came to wet me once and the wind to make me chatter, when the thunder would not peace at my bidding, there I found 'em, there I smelt'em out. Go to! they are not men o' their words. They told me I was everything. 'Tis a lie: I am not ague proof." As much as "Powerslave" told a tale of the gods and kings of ancient Egypt, it was also a powerful parallel to the life of a human being, who must always, no matter what wealth or power he accumulates, face the final failure in his own death.

Powerslave also featured what may be **IRON MAIDEN's** greatest lyrical accomplishment. Steve Harris brought to life the epic poem from his youth, "Rime of the Ancient Mariner" by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, with a 13 minute epic masterpiece. Although the poem was much longer than the lyrics, Harris did a tremendous job writing a much shorter work reprising the mesmerizing odyssey of the poem. Musically, it is just amazing to me how this song never drags, never gets tiresome, and starts off at its very beginning with brisk riffs and immediate vocals, and is the shortest 13 minute song you'll likely ever hear. The tale of the seaman who shoots the holy albatross, his subsequent trials and hallucinations, and his ultimate penance and forgiveness, like a damned Odysseus, is a brilliant work with so much to offer the listeners. More than any other song, "Rime" was the ultimate denial of the lies that metal was an intellectually bankrupt medium, and instead was a shining example that metal lyrics had more to offer the mind than any other genre of music.

Somewhere in Time continued all these noble sentiments. "The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner", was based on the short story by Alan Sillitoe. "Stranger in a Strange Land" appears based on the classic Robert Heinlein science fiction work, though much more loosely than most of the band's other adaptations. This album's lyrical tour de force was the glorious "Alexander the Great." What stunning victory the band showed bringing the conqueror's life alive, with such vibrant music and immediacy of emotion. And the band was not content to tell a simplified abstract tale, but stuffed it with more dates, names, and places than could appear in a whole Jeopardy! category. "By the Tigris river, he met King Darius again/And crushed him again in the battle of Arbela/Entering Babylon and Susa, treasures he found/Took Persepolis, the capital of Persia." And yet with their devastating music, these esoteric lyrics quickly became second nature. It might actually be scary how much people

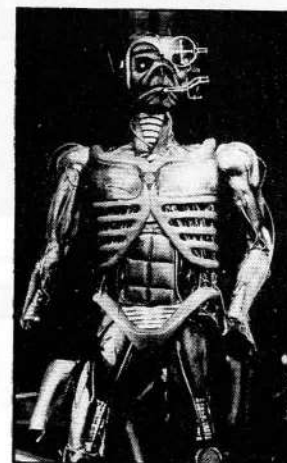
could learn from such music if they really listened to it, as work like this is not only a powerful history lesson in terms of the facts themselves, but in the constancy and relation of human emotions and failures far in the past, and the impact they can still have on our hearts today.

Seventh Son of a Seventh Son is personally my favorite **IRON MAIDEN** album, even though it eschews most outside influences, except for the mythological basis of its title, for a craftily written concept album. I think it's my favorite since I find it their most cohesive album, with songs that trace their way from vengeful rage to thoughtful contemplation, subtle melancholy, and solitary despair. The album traces the tale of the seventh son of a seventh son, a mythical portent which bestows upon the man clairvoyance and second sight. Evil as represented by the devil, and good as represented by the angels, battle for his soul before and after his birth, like those that tried to persuade Dr. Faustus. His unique power costs this son pain, love, and ultimately his own life, as he is consigned to bear the responsibility of the tragedies he foresees. While not having the historical or literary basis of some of Maiden's other best work, I find this to be the band's most complete lyrical portrait, and thus conveys their most powerful emotion in this elegant fantasy story.

No Prayer for the Dying was a disappointment to many, though I don't agree totally at all, even if it wasn't up to the level of **Powerslave** or **Piece of Mind**. While the disc had light-hearted songs like "Holy Smoke", "Bring Your Daughter to the Slaughter", and "Hooks in You", that did fall far short of the band's more ambitious offerings, such playfulness had frequently been with the band, dating back to "Charlotte the Harlot" and "22 Acacia Avenue". More importantly, such shortcomings were overcome by the strength of the album's better lyrics. "Tailgunner" again demonstrated the band's talent for not only telling tales from history, but by bringing them alive with vital emotion and wit. "Nail that Fokker, kill that Son...", with its play on the word sun, symbol of the Japanese planes. "Running Silent, Running Deep" continued this World War II theme with great rix on submarine warfare: "The lethal silver fish will fly/The hull will shudder, men will die." "Mother Russia" was an eloquent requiem for the lost years suffered by the Soviet peoples, the rich culture of their heritage, and echoes of hope in the future. Most interesting to me was the song title for "Fates Warning", a song about the random and abrupt acts of doom that shatter lives and countries. But the title didn't seem to have any specific connection with the lyrics, and I always harbored in my heart the suspicion that the reason the title, down to its illogical punctuation, matched the band's name was that **Steve Harris** was having a bit of fun with the fact that **John Arch** sounded quite similar to **Bruce Dickinson** on his early recordings.

Fear of the Dark was the band's next album, quite a long album, that a lot of people also found dissatisfaction with. In my opinion, I thought it was another thoroughly enjoyable album, even if again not quite up to the level of some of the all time great albums the band had previously produced. Lyrically, the band dealt with the Gulf War in "Afraid to Shoot Strangers", steadfastly refusing to change the lyrics so that the song was about golf, which their manager insisted was a much more timeless theme than a war that had come and gone. They also refrained from titling it "I'm Not Afraid to Shoot Managers." The band started to explore more social issues, such as AIDS in "Fear is the Key", and the rather related emptiness of frivolous

SOMEWHERE IN TIME
 '86年 東芝EMI
 CD CP-5158
 ①Caught Somewhere In Time②Wasted Years③Sea Of Madness④Heaven Can Wait⑤The Loneliness Of The Long Distance Runner⑥Stranger In A Strange Land⑦Deja-vu⑧Alexander The Great produced by Martin Birch



SEVENTH SON OF A SEVENTH SON
 IRON MAIDEN
 '87年 東芝EMI
 CD CP32-5610
 ①Moonchild②Infinite Dreams③Can I Play With Madness④The Evil That Men Do⑤Seventh Son Of A Seventh Son⑥The Prophecy⑦The Clairvoyant⑧Only The Good Die Young produced by Martin Birch

NO PRAYER FOR THE DYING
 IRON MAIDEN
 '89年 東芝EMI
 CD TOCP-6450
 ①Tailgunner②Holy Smoke③No Prayer For The Dying④Public Enemy Number One⑤Fates Warning⑥The Assassin⑦Run Silent Run Deep⑧Hooks In You⑨Bring Your Daughter...To The Slaughter⑩Mother Russia produced by Martin Birch

FEAR OF THE DARK
 IRON MAIDEN
 '92年 東芝EMI
 CD TOCP-7155
 ①Be Quick Or Be Dead②From Here To Eternity③Afraid To Shoot Strangers④Fear Is The Key⑤Childhood's End⑥Wasting Love⑦The Fugitive⑧Chains Of Misery⑨The Apparition⑩Judas Be My Guide⑪Weekend Warrior⑫Fear Of The Dark produced by Martin Birch and Steve Harris





sexuality in "Wasting Love." The band had moved away from the bases of literature and history that had made their previous works so interesting. The words were still quite captivating, interesting, and emotional, and were far from thoughtless...as I say, I enjoy the disc thoroughly. They had, it seemed though, rather tempered their intellectual edge somewhat, and while almost any one of the songs could have made their way proudly onto another MAIDEN album, it didn't have any of those more distinguished examples of what you could learn from metal.

Thus, I find the new album, *The X Factor*, to be somewhat an improvement in this way, even if it has its shortcomings in other areas. Harris' songwriting has again focused more on literary, cinematic, and historical sources with oft-times devastating, poetic aplomb: "Now bodies arms and legs are strewn/Where mustard gas and barbwire bloom." And the band offers these images up with a good cohesion of thoughtful theme. On one side, the band deals with a theme found in classic literature, the innate, hidden evil in the heart of every human, hidden and contained by society and civilization. One of the tracks based on this is "Lord of the Flies", based on the novel by William Golding about a group of boys stranded on an island who revert to uncontrolled violence and aggression, and have to face the fact the beast they fear most is inside them all.

Similarly, "Edge of Darkness", based on the movie *Apocalypse Now*, (which, like Golding's novel, was heavily influenced by Joseph Conrad's work) traces the evil and barbarity committed by those away from civilization, in the jungle, and in the midst of war. On the other side, "Man on the Edge", based on the movie *Falling Down*, shows a man snapping under the pressures of an unbearable society of traffic, injustice, and chaos, and how human aggression is evoked by the very encroachment of society. Both the subjects and the band's treatments again offer the listener a chance to involve themselves with deep thoughts of their contents, and inspire them to seek out the sources of inspiration.

Lyrics are in so many ways a vital part of the heavy metal I love so much. They portray its spirit. They show metal to be intellectual, despite the lack of respect for the medium. The lyrics are a noble rebellion away from the empty and mindless cliches of so much other music, into aspirations of thought that touch on all that human experience has to ignite emotion: history, art, literature, and stories. And IRON MAIDEN has been an innovator in raising those lyrics and what they have to offer to a new level, encouraging reading and learning, and all the background that can bring all of human experience alive to more poignant and robust emotion. This article doesn't address the musical side of the band, which is horribly unjust, considering their achievements and innovation in that realm have been as great or more so than their words, but Maiden certainly stands as a band whose contributions to the lyrics of the art I love will be matched by few others.

"I rather like the restless nights
They make me wonder, make me think
There's more to this..."

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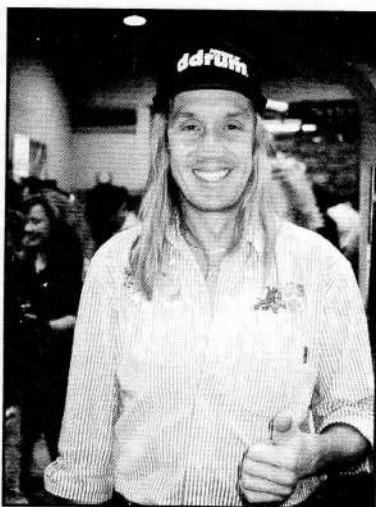
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▲ Nicko McBrain (IRON MAIDEN)

How does this tour compare to the one you did with OVERKILL and DARK ANGEL? Hopefully better?

Ha ha ha. Well, people actually *know* we're on the bill this time! (laughter)

I saw you, when you were in WOLFSBANE, open up for them in Florida.

Where? Not the open air gig?

Yeah, St. Petersburg at the Jannus Landing. It was a little open air club.

The police came around and turned the sound down after us. Poor old OVERKILL ended up being the quietest band of the night.

Yes, and WOLFSBANE was the loudest band...

Yes, poor guys...

Well, I felt bad for you guys, because WOLFSBANE didn't quite fit the bill...yeah, so it's much better this time in IRON MAIDEN, eh?

Oh yeah, I'm putting a lot of ghosts to rest, a lot from uncomfortable situations, in cities I did not have a good time in. On this tour we are having a good time. We have a good time just about everywhere we go.

Well, the one thing I wanted to ask you, was that I saw you at the Academy in New York City, and it was a very enthusiastic audience. It was a great show; heavy metal is back, etc etc. There was one part of the set, where you said, "we're going to be playing a lot of old songs," and everybody cheers, and then you said, "we're going to be playing a lot of new songs from the new album," and there weren't those cheers. It was kind of like, oh OK. Steve Harris loves The X Factor. How do you feel about the new album and its response?

It's been great so far. What's happened, you've got to put into perspective, really, that we started the tour a long time ago [this is the fourth leg of the world tour]. We started in Israel and South Africa; the album wasn't released at all. People were just listening to the new stuff [live]. They don't have the record, and they haven't gotten the chance to get it. Obviously the old stuff, the more familiar stuff, went down a bit better, people just listened to the new songs, which was a similar reaction to what we've had here. We didn't get a chance to do promotion here, because we haven't tied up with a record company at that time. So what's happening is, people are finding out that we've got a new record as we go, and more people are buying it as we get deeper into the tour. People are more familiar with it, and so that's the difference, really. In Canada, it was a lot different, because everybody knew all the new stuff really really well.

Oh, because The X Factor had come out earlier.

Yeah, it had come out a bit earlier there. So, that's the reason for that reaction. But it's gone really, really well. Everywhere we've been, we've had a great response.

I was satisfied with how you did the older songs. How do you feel about fitting the shoes of certain other singers?

Well, I think I'm just going to do things my own way, really, I can't do an impression of anybody else. And I don't think it would be of any artistic value whatsoever if I did try. I've just got to find myself and feel comfortable and do the songs the best I can in my own way. There's a bit of room for interpretation, and I use that. The most important thing to me is that I really love the music. Everybody in the band is there because of the music. That's the identity of the band as well. I really love that. I really enjoy singing those old songs, so that's really a big help that I haven't been singing those songs for eleven years. It still feels like I'm on the first week of the tour, even though we're four months in. Because I enjoy singing them, I try to sing them well. I suppose that makes a bit of a difference.

When you were in WOLFSBANE in the early years, did you play covers? Did IRON MAIDEN songs pop up?

No, we wouldn't have to play covers when we did the first professional gigs that we did. We had to play covers to raise enough money to do demos, set ourselves up with a van, and everything. We could kind of try and start making it in the UK and around Europe, but that was about the only time, really.

What songs would you play back then?

We did a few old VAN HALEN songs and BRYAN ADAMS stuff, you know...standard rockers, really.

Well, that's what WOLFSBANE struck me as, was a heavy rock band, like a heavy metal rock and roll band.

Yeah, we were more of a rock and roll band.

Is that your preferred influence? Is that your roots pretty much?

I really like metal. I really like SABBATH. I like FREE and BAD COMPANY and bands like that, but the stuff I enjoy the most is the heavy stuff, so that's what I enjoy doing. On the first WOLFSBANE album, we had a few more metal tracks, with some rock and roll on there as well. There's a few more outright heavy metal, root/classic heavy rock kind of tracks. We kind of moved away from that as we went along.

What was the last...was it Massive...





Massive Noise Injection was a live album, but there was a studio album after that.

What was it called?

It was called Wolfsbane.

So there were three releases together?

No, five.

Five? Name them all.

Live Fast Die Fast, All Hell Is Breaking Loose at Little Cathy Wilson's Place, and then we had Down Fall the Good Guys, which turned out to be quite a prophetic title. Then we had Massive Noise Injection, which was released through Bronze on Castle Communications. And then the studio album Wolfsbane, which was released on Bronze and Castle Communications. I'm sure those two albums will come back out and resurface at some point after this lot of IRON MAIDEN releases. I'm sure they're going to dig those up, and tag them with a little sticker: "featuring IRON MAIDEN vocalist".

Just like they did for SAMSON, the SAMSON records for Bruce.

As long as it's the last two, that's OK, because they didn't cost too much to make, and so we might recoup; any of the ones on Def American we don't stand a cat in hell's chance of getting any money off—they can stay in the vaults for all I'm concerned, ha ha.

Did you leave on good terms? What happened with Def American?

The contract ran out, and that was it. They didn't pick up the option, and we decided to leave. They're not the kind of label that keeps the band working, really. They're more into...I don't know...I don't understand it, to be honest. I thought that they were about a kind of rock/metal attitude, but they're not really. I think they were hoping to hitch us on the shirtils of WARRANT and WINGER, and get some interest off of MTV or something like that and save a packet of money on touring. That's just not the way this kind of music works. I just don't know what they were like, but it seemed like there were less things we could do and more things we couldn't do.

So Rick Rubin was a bit tight-fisted.

I just don't think he understood us really. It was an ugly, ugly sign for everyone in the band at the time. For everybody in the band, not just me. It was a really frustrating time. We were forced into a lot of ugly compromises that we didn't want to make.

When you got signed to Def American, had WOLFSBANE been around for a while?

Yeah, we had, but Def American was the only label that was interested. We couldn't

get any interest from any UK labels at all, so that was it.

Well, getting back to IRON MAIDEN, songwriting-wise, you contributed quite a lot. Was that something you were natural at or were pushed into it a little bit?

Well, it's just because I wrote all the lyrics and melodies for WOLFSBANE. If we're going to make an album, we felt the natural thing to do was, of course, I'm going to write some songs for it. It wasn't the pressure that I've got to come up with ideas for everything. It was like, OK, I've got some ideas, and so it was great, really...a really nice experience singing different stuff and a lot of the stuff that Steve writes works on my voice in a different way. It was very satisfying, because I normally wouldn't get there myself.

I felt your vocal performance on the CD was a bit tentative. It wasn't as...

I think that's just from being new, really. I've certainly noticed an improvement and a lot more confidence in my voice over the tour. I think if we go and record those songs again, then that would be even more fired up now, because I'm that much more confident and used to it, but you'll never release the record, if you're always waiting to get the best out of it, you know. We just did the best in the time that we had and we thought, we've got to get it out now, so that was it.

Was there a conscious effort on your part or on the band's part to make a darker album, a moodier album with more intros in each song?

I think it was just coincidence really of what everyone had been through around the time. Obviously the rest of the guys in MAIDEN had been through a lot. I've been through a lot with splitting up with WOLFSBANE and all that. I think just what was floating around at the time focused us in on the darker side of human nature and a bit more introspective in places. When we came through and started writing the songs, it was more for a vibe than anything else. We weren't worried about things being too long. It was like, does that create the mood? Should it be a bit longer to kind of give you more of a sense of what's going to happen, and get you into the vibe of the song? ...treating things more in the way of music. The vocals are a part of it rather than, this is just about the vocals, or just about the whole song is the melody, which it isn't. So, that felt really, really good.

Did you like the production where the bass guitar and the drums were a bit up front, the guitars were held back, and your vocals were there. How do you feel about the mix?

I think it's pretty good, really. I quite enjoy it. It's quite good on headphones as well. I think that's just Nigel and Steve's first production

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job together, and I think they've done really, really good.

Getting back to a Kerrang! cover shot you did, where you were supposed to be smoking a cigar and drinking a bottle of champagne, whose idea was that?

Kerrang!'s. Yeah, of course. I wish I hadn't done it, though. It blew up in my face. I thought it would be a bit of fun, but they just took it all out of context. Everything said was taken out of context. The editorial comments made me look really...If you read the text, it was nothing to do with what the editorial comment said. For anybody who didn't really understand or had a misconception of what I was about, it kind of reinforced that. So I felt it was pointless, really.

Yeah, because you don't smoke and you don't feel like you just won a lottery.

Not at all, no, I mean, if you've won the lottery, you've got a lot of money because you've spent a couple of bucks. I've been singing for ten years and I was broke when I joined MAIDEN with all the debts of my old band. I can afford to buy records again now. The whole thing about it is that I've never had any money, so if I did get any, it's pretty irrelevant. When I first started talking to Steve, "what's your plans for the future?" He said, "I'm gong to make an album and do a world tour." I thought, 'right, well that's good for me.' That was the whole reason, really. I love the music, the touring and carrying on making music that I like.

Do you foresee yourself being with MAIDEN on a long term?

I think so, yes, if I can get through this tour. If I can get this far along, then it's going to be difficult for them to get rid of me. I'm just not going. That's it...I've done this much. That's it. They're not getting me out.

You don't feel paranoid at all, do you, that they're looking over at you when you're singing thinking, 'is he the right guy?' Do you feel that at all?

Not at all. I've had a lot of support and encouragement from the guys. The tour has just been absolutely fantastic, with the fans as well.

Good. You love the music. What's your favorite IRON MAIDEN album?

I don't know really. I mean, there's a few that I really like, but there's some that I don't like all the tracks on, so I'll say the one that I like most of the songs of is *Seventh Son*.

Same here; from beginning to end, Seventh Son is perfect.

Yeah, that's it. Even on *Number of the Beast* and *Piece of Mind*, there's a couple of tracks where you think, 'I'll sit through this one,

because there's another one I like coming up,' but on *Seventh Son*, I think, oh, this one is really good, and it's like that all the way through.

Exactly. And it's too bad, because a lot of American fans somehow missed that album, because thrash metal was really big.

Yeah, it's weird isn't it? Because it's got some great songs on it.

Well, people have forgotten about Somewhere In Time, which is kind of understandable, because that was iffy, but Seventh Son was truly a great piece of work. Do you have a hand in choosing the live set list?

There was a couple that I didn't want to do. "Run to the Hills."

Why not?

Well, because it was Bruce's big number when he joined the band, and it really showcased his voice. He's an incredible singer, and his range is so much different than mine. I would just feel very uncomfortable doing it. Everybody in the band said, "yeah of course, that's understandable."

What other songs?

"Here to Eternity" off *Fear of the Dark*, which was OK. I could do it and everything, but it was just a bit of a struggle. It wasn't one of my favorite songs. There's so many other ones that I really liked.

So, when you say a 'struggle'...Bruce did have a higher range, and you are working with what you have, which is a fine voice in your own style, but does that kind of hurt you in the long run?

No, it's just constant focusing on your technique, really. I really enjoy singing all of the older songs, everything that's not from *The X Factor*, everything that's not specifically written with me in mind. I really enjoy singing, and obviously all of the stuff from *The X Factor* I enjoy, as well.

What other old IRON MAIDEN songs would you like to incorporate into the set?

I'd like to get another Di'anno song in there, that era, the first couple of albums, like "Phantom of the Opera" or something like that. I'd really enjoy that.

Yes! Personally, as a fan, I would like to see IRON MAIDEN bring out the older nuggets from the older albums, because the live set has become rather predictable. There's a certain amount of songs from the new album, and then "The Trooper", which I always love and "Hallowed Be Thy Name" and "Iron Maiden", which has

gotten really old now. I think it's gotten kind of cliché almost. I'd like to see you pull out some older songs, but I don't get to pick the set, so...

Nor do I, but there's so many things. We think, 'we've gotta play that, we've gotta play that'...there's not much room there after that. You're coming out to promote a new album, and you're thinking, 'we really want to get stuff from that album over.' It's difficult, really

Well, have you been changing songs around, or do you pretty much have...

We did at the start of the tour, we changed it a few times.

In September...

Now we're just sticking to the same songs. It's difficult to get that right every night. We're in different stages and different halls, so to get those in your brain and get them to a standard way without messing up no matter where you are. That's difficult enough.

Have there been any goof ups on the tour? Any funny stories?

There were hundreds.

HUNDREDS?!

Yeah, it's been mad from the start. It's just been absolutely crazy, from the start to the finish.

Like what?!

Well, for instance, so you think four weeks is enough rehearsal for the tour? Bearing in mind, we'd rehearse what I thought would be the older songs...I thought, 'yeah, four weeks should be enough, I can get up to it.' Then it was like, 'you got a promotion tour, and you and Dave, you're going to do six weeks around the world.' These promotion tours, it's not like you go and do a few interviews...you get to the city, at 7 PM, 8 PM, meet up with the record company, then go talk over the schedule for the next day get up at 10-11 AM, do a load of interviews, have lunch, maybe with some record companies or retail people, then another load of interviews, then off to the airport, fly to the next city, meet the record company, go and do a live radio interview perhaps, it's the same thing over and over...yadda yadda ya. (laughter) Loads of people wanted to talk to us. That was getting extended, so my four weeks' rehearsal cuts down to two weeks, and I was just completely worn out, so it was a real struggle rehearsing four or five hours a day for two weeks. All the start of the tour was pretty hairy. Dave Murray, after [this] promotional tour, said, "it's the toughest one I've ever done, don't worry, when we start the concert tour, it will be a doddle." And it was worse! About five weeks in, Dave said, "I'm sorry Blaze, this is the toughest tour I've ever been on!" (laughter). I thought, 'GOD! And he did Powerslave!' So,

it's been mad. I go to the airport on the first day to fly to Israel, thinking, 'it's going to be cool,' and photographers are there, and the press, it's like, not a moment to relax, and for the first six weeks it was like being in a goldfish bowl. It was just madness everywhere we went.

That's good madness!

Well, you bet I'm not complaining; it sounds like I'm moaning, but I'm just telling you what happened to me! I think it's quite funny. They'll come up to you and say, "can you fit this phoner in," and you've just gotta laugh. You say, "in between what? In between "Wrathchild" and "Heaven Can Wait!" While we're on stage, you know? Where? Do you want to rig up a mobile? While I'm just going down to take a drink...it's like "Blaze, how's it going now on stage?" "Oh yeah! It's going great right now! The fans really seem to be into it! See you after the next couple of numbers!" It's like, that was the running joke, when was that going to happen on the tour. Because there's loads of places on the first part when we got there, we'd get somewhere at about 6 PM and press conference and it could be anything...12-25 or 30 journalists, not all of which were vibed or knew quite as much about us as you do. Asking fucking stupid questions like, "do you believe in God?" (laughter) We're musicians from England..."are you Satanists?" Trotting out the classic Satanists question. "Are you Satanists?" (laughter) So we get all that and stuff. It's just been mad out here. It calmed down towards the end of the European tour as we got into Germany, we've done just about every interview there was to do coming out in the press then towards Christmas, so there wasn't much to do. There was a couple

of American and Canadian phoners we tried to fit in, but it got quite quiet. It was quite relaxing, now it's all started up again. Now we're here in the States telling people that *The X Factor* is out and MAIDEN is still happening. Come and see us and everything.

I heard that an in-store appearance, Compact Disc World, up here in New Jersey...

Oh yeah, it was mad.

Good show, eh?

So many fans out there.

That's good to hear. Where are you right now?

Harrisburg, Pennsylvania...what's left of it!

Why, what do you mean?

They had all the flooding, didn't they? And all that horrible weather, disasters and everything. Luckily, the hotel would still be there. Whatever's happening over here, imagine what it looks like on TV in England; you look on the TV, and comes Harrisburg, and you look at your itinerary, you're playing there and you think, 'oh shit, I've got flooding and all sorts there! What if the ticket office has been washed away. Nobody's going to be there!'

How about that night in New York?

Oh, that was incredible. I met some people from Compact Disc World in New Jersey that got snowed in and couldn't get to the show that had tickets. We signed the tickets for

them. It was a real shame.

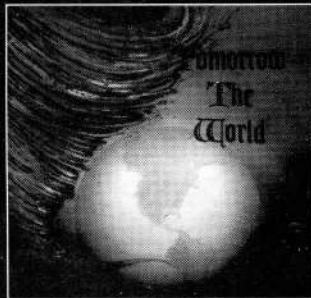
I was there, and it was a good show. Now, what's this about FEAR FACTORY? Why FEAR FACTORY? They're kind of a mismatch!

Who is a match, really?

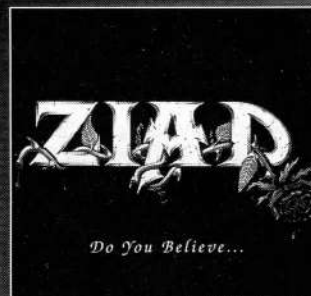
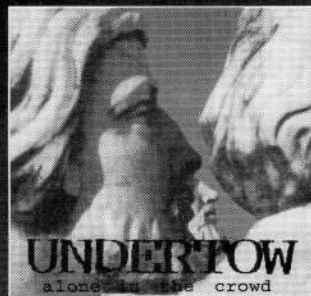
But IRON MAIDEN is a true traditional metal band, and FEAR FACTORY is a bit noisy and monotonous in my book. And I notice that after FEAR FACTORY completed their set, nobody left, as if they came for FEAR FACTORY.

Probably the two bands complement each other quite well. From my perspective, I think it shows that MAIDEN have just as much energy as the top new bands. From that point of view, it shows the difference in attitude, and probably that's quite complementary in a way. FEAR FACTORY have had a lot of good reviews and have done quite well and are getting picked up on and different independent radio stations. Maybe some places MAIDEN normally get picked up on. But still, you come back to the shows and it's like, 'well, no one can beat MAIDEN on just energy and intensity and some of the great songs we've got, some of the classic tunes.' If you were seeing this for the first time, I wonder how it would come over, because we've had so many new fans on the tour. It's been great. There's a lot of people who've been into MAIDEN for years and stood by the band and have been very loyal. It looks like a whole load of people who don't care if NIRVANA lived or died. It looks like, 'well, we like heavy rock and we've just been waiting for heavy rock bands to come around.'

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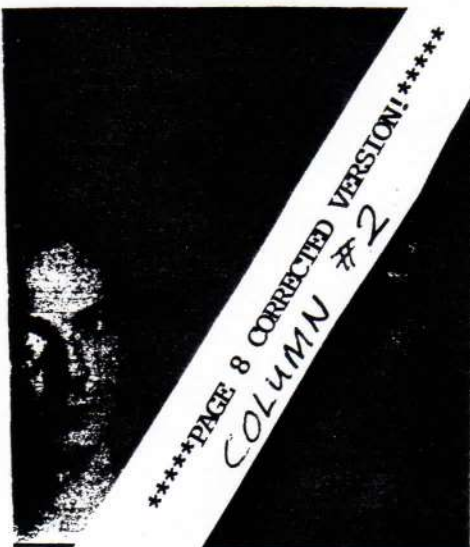
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So I hope, sometimes you never know what happens, sometimes it could be suddenly German heavy metal, or power metal, or epic metal whatever you want to call it is suddenly very trendy or popular, sometimes it can come strange ways. I'm only waiting for that day, and that's the point where I don't agree with Karl and everybody else anyways, if there's a trend, only run after it, and follow it, with...Especially America is a very tricky thing, every band that ever came from Germany and tried to sound American never had a chance there.

Exactly...

Or it was the point when they started to sound, to try before they had maybe their own German sound, and then they tried to go for the American market, they lost, if it was ACCEPT or the SCORPIONS, everybody failed, but there's a reason for that.

But the SCORPIONS still sell a good number in the States, and at their height the SCORPIONS did very well, ACCEPT did very well, Keeper Part I and Part II sold, I don't know the sales figures, how many did you sell?

I thought it was 170,000, I think.

In America? 170. That's great, I mean that's really good. But that's because HELLOWEEN, nobody sounded like HELLOWEEN, when HELLOWEEN was popular in America.

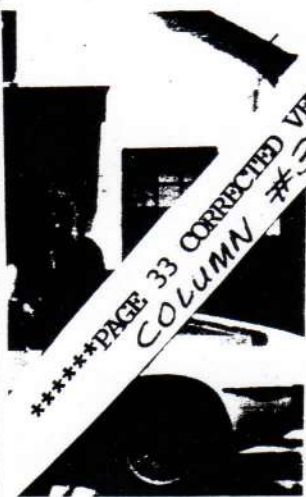
And it was a time when heavy metal in general was very popular. You don't have to, you can't forget that.

Yeah, and you had your videos played, 'Halloween', and 'I Want Out', those were on MTV, and that helps a lot. MTV.

MTV now is, merely considering heavy metal, is dead.

Oh, absolutely. Do you still do videos in Germany, and have MTV or Viva play them?

Yeah, we have Viva playing them, we have MTV, last time, I don't why it didn't happen, it didn't happen, it was in the rotation already, the preview for the rotation, without any extra payment by the



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that was a pretty interesting show. We got along with them OK. There was no problem. You know what it was? We weren't really doing the same kind of music. They were doing the forerunner of what would be thrash. They were doing it, METALLICA was doing it. We had a couple of songs that fit into it on our first album, but our first album also had other bits...something that wouldn't totally appeal to that style.

So, who else did you play with back in those days...

Names you might have heard of?

Mm hm.

Well later on, now we're going a few years into the future, around the No Turning Back time, I've got the bass player Keith Collins, SAVATAGE...

Yeah!

...the original bass player. He's on the German release of No Turning Back. Now this gets confusing, because when I say 'the German release', there's been a lot of different releases on every one of these albums: a French release, a German release, an English release, American, Japanese. He was on the French and German releases.

Those were later releases or earlier releases?

It was the same record, but it had different artwork, different covers.

..So did he play on No Turning Back's German and English versions?

That's right.

He only played on those two versions.

Exactly.

And of course his picture was on those...

And it was kind of interesting because, it

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was like he was kind of still in SAVATAGE, or had just left whatever before. On the album, we put his picture, but under bass we put 'Thumper'.

Oh, OK.

So if you see that you'll...it's very very clear that it's Keith. If you have any SAVATAGE albums, and if you have No Turning Back—any of the European releases, you'll see that it's Keith. For about a year, he was living in Long Island, and he's just an incredible bass player. It was really good having him in the band, and at the same time, if you want me to give you some more that you might have heard of, I had a guy at the time who...he is the drummer for RAVEN now...

Oh, Joe Hasselvander!

Hasselvander, that's it! Joe was playing with me at the time for about a year. What we did when Joe was with me is, you know, some of those albums you spoke about...

PHANTOM LORD!

That's Joe playing drums and actually singing on some of it, so it kind of gets complicated.

All right so, No Turning Back, I mean, Out of the Darkness did well, and No Turning Back came out, and PHANTOM LORD



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JIM HARRIS BAS

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COMPACT DISC REVIEWS CLARIFICATION: All 'pumpkin' comments by NATALIE VLAHOVIC

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