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Hello and welcome to Issue #28 of Transcending the Mundane. I am proud to introduce some new blood to our family. In addition to myself (Brett Van Put), and familiar names like John V. Love, Ladd Everitt, and Dave Smith, we welcome recent additions Karl Haikara, Karl Turner, Jake Rosenberg, and Michael Knight. These additions will greatly ease the burden and allow me to have free time to persue other interests. Thanks to Scott Mosher for the logo and Mike Hrubovcak for the artwork. I would like to thank my financial supporters who have taken out ads in this issue; among them are Century Media, Nuclear Blast, Olympic, Marshall/ Korg, Moribund, Napalm, Inside Out, Leviathan, Nightmare, Metal Blade, The End, Sensory, and Victory. Without them, there would be no printed zine. Check out all our interviews and reviews at [www.tmetal.com](http://www.tmetal.com). Correspondence can be sent to Transcending the Mundane, 5 Hudson Ave, Bohemia, NY 11716 or [tmetal@verizon.net](mailto:tmetal@verizon.net).

## Table of Contents:

Russell Allen... 4	Disbelief... 21	Manntis... 45
Anti-Depressive Delivery... 5	Draconian... 22	Midnattsol... 46
Artillery Hell... 6	Ektomorf... 23	Mnemic... 47
Belphegor... 9	Elis... 24	Nightrage... 48
Brainstorm... 11	Enthroned... 25	Novembers Doom... 50
Brand New Sin... 12	Frantic Bleep... 26	Primordial... 51
Candlemass... 13	Reviews... 27-37	Red Death... 52
Circus Maximus... 14	Green Carnation... 39	Sandalinas... 53
Communic... 15	Impaled... 40	Soilwork... 54
Darkest Hour... 17	Infernal Legion... 41	Summon... 58
Dark Tranquillity... 18	Kinrick... 42	Thine Eyes Bleed... 59
Darkwell... 19	James LaBrie... 43	Thunderstone... 60
Despised Icon... 20	Lanfear... 44	Visions Of Atlantis... 62

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Interview with vocalist

Russell Allen

Vocalist Russell Allen is best known for his work with progressive metal giants **Symphony X**. He first gained attention when he joined the band prior to the recording of their second album. With a big assist from his **Symphony X** guitarist Michael Romeo, Russell has now decided to venture on a solo career on the side. Don't expect music like his day job, as **Russell Allen's Atomic Soul** is all about old school, high energy rock 'n roll. On a spring day shortly after the Northeast flooding, we spoke over the phone with Russell to find out more about his solo career. A few days after the interview, it was confirmed that **Symphony X** would be taking part in the Gigantour this summer with **Megadeth**, **Dillinger Escape Plan**, **Nevermore**, and **Dream Theater**, among others.

#### Have you been able to avoid being flooded?

It's been bad. You see this happen in the middle of the country but I never thought I'd see it here. I go camping with a buddy of mine every summer on the Delaware. We've got a trailer up there, a permanent camping spot. It's an r.v. with a driver in the front. On the property he uses a tractor to pull them up to higher ground if there's flooding but he couldn't get to them in time so thirty five trailers got wiped out. They all went down the river. The Delaware raged and tore it all apart. He had insurance, but now they won't cover these trailers anymore because they've lost so many. The river rose about twenty five feet in certain parts. Luckily it wasn't bad where I live in Jersey. Do you play any sports, like golf?

#### I used to work at a golf course, I took two swings at a ball once; the first I missed, the second went two feet.

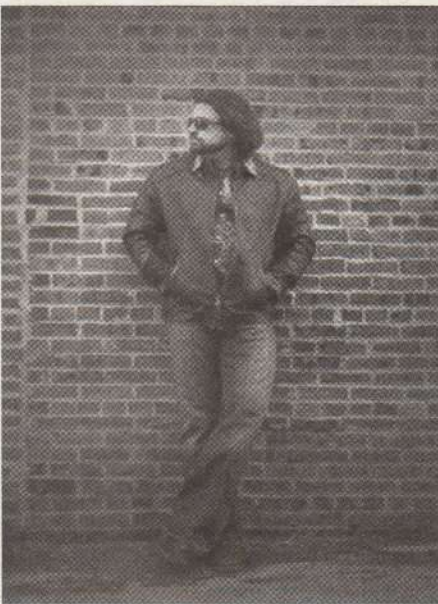
I love getting out and walking around. It's a good excuse to drink beer and walk around all day.

#### Why did you want to go and make a kick ass rock record?

Exactly what you just said, because I wanted to make a kick ass rock record. I wanted to go out and rock. It's so organic and it's all about a good time and capturing emotion and feeling. It doesn't matter if it's not perfect. It's a different way of making music and it's more spiritual for me. It's good therapy for me. I had no idea how it was going to come out. It could've come out sounding like a crappy demo. I got lucky with the production aspect because I've never produced anything before. I'm older and I've done six studio records with the band, and a live c.d. I've been around and I know what I'm doing. I had my ups and downs with the project, but the ups were way better than the downs. I wanted to rock out like the old school style. I'm proud of it and it's a style of music that needs to be done.

#### If this came out thirty years ago it would've been huge.

There is a resurgence in the old seventies stuff. Definitely the fashion and some of the bands. You have bands like the **Jet** and the **Strokes** coming out. If you want to look at how history repeats itself and how we recycle everything, I'm actually ahead of the curve. Now would come the seventies rock bands like **Led Zeppelin** and **Deep Purple**. Look at **Mars Volta**. They're hitting now and they've got a **Zappa**, **Zeppelin** thing going on. They're progressive in the way I like, the old style. I have energy in my stuff, but it's rock.



How have **Symphony X** fans responded?

# RUSSELL ALLEN'S ATOMIC SOUL

I haven't gotten too many responses, as it's not even out yet. You will get the fans who want to hear a clone of **Symphony X**, then you will get the other guy who wants something different. I did something that I

wanted to do. Maybe I will attract a lot of new people to it. I don't care, I just want to rock out and have a good time.

#### Will you continue to record solo albums in the future?

Yeah, I signed up for three of them. I will definitely do more. Whether it will be as Russell Allen, playing piano, or **Russell Allen's Atomic Soul**, kicking ass rock, I don't know yet.

#### Will you play this stuff live?

We did an acoustic set. I'd like to do the live thing. I'm interested in seeing the response for the record. It would be sad seeing singer based music die and everything gets turned into screaming.

#### What's going on with the new **Symphony X** record?

The new album is definitely very riff driven, more so than anything we have ever done. It's like *The Odyssey* on steroids and with a darker vibe. Mike Romeo's riffs are just blowing me away. I'd say the c.d. is going to be out sometime in the late fall.

#### Discography:

2005... **Atomic Soul** (Inside Out)

#### Current line-up:

Russell Allen... vocals, guitars, bass, and keyboards

Michael Romeo... guitars

Robery Nelson... drums

Michael Pinella... keyboards

#### Website:

[www.symphonyx.com](http://www.symphonyx.com)



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# ANTI-DEPRESSIVE DELIVERY

Interview with bassist Tom Wahl

Norwegian progressive metallers **Anti Depressive Delivery** are one of the most creative and open minded bands around. Inspired by bands like **Anekdoten** and **Ved Buens Ende**, **Anti Depressive Delivery** will appeal to metal and avantgarde fans as easily as those who worship prog metal. I was able to interview pleasant bassist Tom Wahl, a veteran of the southern Norwegian metal scene, and a one time members of bands like **Atrox** and **Bethzaida**. *Feel Melt Release Escape* is the debut full length from **Anti Depressive Delivery** and classy label Sensory brings us their masterpiece.

## What was the purpose for putting together Anti-Depressive Delivery?

We were just three friends joining together just to play music. A second guitarist joined shortly after, and then we entered a studio to record a demo with the intent to get hold of a singer. We asked Pete Beck to do session vocals, but then it turned out so good that he decided to stay. The same with Haakon on keyboards. We recorded the first four songs we made, and sent out a copy to three to four labels. After a few days we got in touch with Ken Golden/ Laser's Edge, and voila; *Feel Melt Release Escape* was released last autumn.

## Are seventies prog rock bands the biggest influence on your songwriting?

It's difficult to describe why 70's progressive rock is so appealing to us. Maybe it is because there are less limits to what you can do. There is a huge difference between **Camel** and **Gentle Giant**, you know, so you can mix a lot of different impulses and make something unique. When we formed the band, no one said the words "progressive rock", we just wanted to play technical thrash, or something like that. But Pete and Haakon made our music a lot more progressive, and we just went with it. I think that's why we sound a little different, because three of us have a background in extreme metal, and we tend to do things in a different way.

## Why is the bass your weapon of choice?

I bought my first bass ten years ago. I've always considered myself a guitar player, but the reason I started to play bass is because I formed a band with two other guys back in 1995, and suddenly we were three guitarists. Since they were better than me at the axe, I bought a bass. I then realized that it was easier to join bands, cause they were always looking for a bass player. Actually, a lot of bands started to use me as session bass player, so these days I play mostly bass.

## What is it about the musical scene in Norway which seems to promote creativity?

Difficult question, maybe it is because for fifteen years Norway has been mostly known to play black metal, and this is a kind of response to that. Everyone is getting older and better performers on their instruments, and therefore wants to be challenged in a different way. But, to be honest, I seriously don't know. I've never felt a part of the progressive (or any other) scene in Norway.

## What was the concept behind the artwork?

Travis Smith was my only choice to do the artwork, I've been a fan of his work for a long time. I was very pleased when the label boss said okay. He was very easy to work with, the design is based upon the title of the album *Feel Melt Release Escape*, and suited the album perfectly. We don't know what to do with the next album, though. We are always trying to evolve and try new stuff, so we'll see. Travis Smith is a safe designer, though, you always get something amazing from him, but we're also in touch with a Norwegian designer who makes some very cool designs, time will show.

## How does your band go about writing your music?

Well, a lot of the diversity is a result of the fact that the band takes a lot of chances since we formed the band until we recorded the album. Getting a deal after existing five months, put a lot of pressure on us. And with changes in line-up, a guitarist out and a singer and a keyboard player in, made the music change a bit. Maybe it was a little bit too diverse, but at the same time, there are no limits to what we can do next. We're also lucky to have such diversity, cause we can change our setlist be both "metallish" and "rockish".

## What was your time with the Embraced and Bethzaida like?

I played on the second **Bethzaida** album together with our drummer, and it

was cool. We rehearsed rarely, and since most of the band members were students, the band just faded away when people moved to get a job. Not my project anyway, so I didn't care, really. Fun to do an album, though. Regarding the **Embraced**, I just played two shows as a session bass player. Not my cup of tea, but always fun to play with different people, actually Christian, our guitarist, also played in the **Embraced** at that time.

## Also, you were in Atrox for some time; bands like Atrox and Ved Buens Ende have an interesting avantgarde attitude toward writing music- is this a similar approach you've taken with Anti-Depressive Delivery?

You mentioning **Ved Buens Ende** is quite funny, cause when we formed I think they were one of our main sources of inspiration. Also these days you can find things in our music that can be traced back to their style of playing. Brilliant band. When it comes to my time in **Atrox**, that was filled with a lot of drinking and crazy humour. The music was crazy too, and at one point I started to find it a little bit too weird for my taste, and I quit. The strange thing is that Pete Beck played bass on their last album, seems like everyone played in every band in town, doesn't it? Actually, Monica, who sang with **Atrox**, is together with Pete, and **Atrox's** new singer, Rune, did our last gig with **Anti Depressive Delivery** when Pete was out of the band. One happy family.

## What makes Anekdoten a favorite of yours?

First, they are the best band in the world right now. Their mellotron-stenched progressive rock gives me goosebumps everytime I hear them. No other band can make haunting,



depressive and melancholic songs like them. I've seen them twice live, and their performance is up there with the best live shows I've ever seen. Hopefully we'll play a show with them this autumn. If you haven't heard them, check out their album, maybe start with *From Within* and *Gravity* (one of my favorite albums ever) and then *Nucleus* and *Vemod*. And don't tell anyone, but I'm in love with their mellotron player Anna Sofi Dahlberg.

## What does the future hold for Anti-Depressive Delivery?

The next album is finished written these days, seven songs of progressive rock. Maybe a little bit more focused this time, but hopefully a step forward for us. We hope to enter studio in October, but we haven't talked to the label about it yet. Actually we don't know if they still wants us, but we'll see. In September we're also playing three festivals, so we're quite busy these days.

## What direction would you like to see the band head?

As I mentioned above, we've written seven songs for the next album. A little bit more focused this time, but everyone is enthusiastic about the material. We have fought a lot to get to the point where everyone is pleased with every song. Maybe a bit less complicated, more focused on songwriting this time. Still complex, but the songs are floating much better, and we have cut away a lot of dead meat. Anyway, I don't think people will mistake us for someone else, though.

## Discography:

2005... *Feel Melt Release Escape* (Sensory)

## Current line-up:

Pete Beck... vocals  
Christian Broholt... guitars  
Tom Wahl... bass  
Terje Krabol... drums  
Haakon Marius Pettersen... keyboards

## Website:

[www.snotpope.com/anti\\_depressive\\_reality](http://www.snotpope.com/anti_depressive_reality)

Interview by Christina Grimaldi

**Artillery Hell** wants you! These boys bring us in your face-intense, aggressive, fast, melodic, death metal music the way it was meant to be. The experience of the musicians is demonstrated in their five-song demo and the result is an explosion of relentless riffs and impeccable guitar soloing. The rhythm section brings the troops to their feet and moves to create chaos. The intricate dynamic range of the vocals make this a must listen c.d. This is certainly the first chapter of a great musical saga that will leave us with death metal in our veins!

**Can you tell us a bit of history about your band?**

**Robert:** Mike and I started the band sometime in the year 2000 with a couple of other guys, but we really weren't a band back then. We were just a bunch of friends getting together to make noise and play cover songs to learn how to play our instruments. Over the next three years we went through about two rhythm guitarists, three drummers, and three name changes, and at some point we started writing our own material. The band was really just Mike and I for about three years. The **Artillery Hell** you see today didn't begin until August of 2003, when Andrew joined us on the drums. That was when we truly began to develop as a solid unit and started to get some recognition. Then, in October of 2004, we added Jake to the lineup after his former band broke up, which was a perfect fit because Mike and I had known him since high school.

**How has Artillery Hell's music progressed from it's beginnings till now?**

**Mike:** Our music had more of a **Pantera** or **Metallica** like sound to it in the beginning. But as I started getting into bands like **Slayer**, the music just started getting faster and way more brutal and heavy. The music always has to progress, like the songs we're writing right now are way more intricate and complex than the ones we've written in the past.

**Robert:** The vocals too progressed immensely over the years. For the longest time I was trying to emulate Phil Anselmo from **Pantera** without much success, but that all changed after I heard **Cradle of Filth** for the first time. After that I knew that I wanted to perform my vocals in that style, but I stopped trying to sound just like another person and went after my own voice, which I think I've finally found. Our songs at one time actually had clean vocals in some areas, but that also changed along with the music to better suit the brutality of it, and while they may return in some aspect one day, right now I don't feel like they represent what **Artillery Hell** is all about.

**What does each individual bring into the band?**

**Mike:** I come up with the riffs, the song structure, and the solos.

**Robert:** I bring in the vocals, the vocal arrangements, the bass lines, the lyrics, the names of the songs, the band's name, some song structure, and the band's identity and theme.

**Andrew:** I bring in the drums, the heaviness of the band, the crushing feeling in your chest when I beat the hell out of my kit. I complete the song structure, and provide the energy that the songs need to be brought to life. I also spread the humor throughout the band

**Jake:** I bulk up the sound by adding a second guitar.

**How do you go about the writing process? Is it based around music first or lyrics?**

**Robert:** Now we always write the music first because that seems to be the most comfortable and successful process for us. We've written songs in the past that had the vocals first, two of which we dropped and one being **Anti**, but writing the music first just comes so much more naturally to us. Mike will write the song, record it, then give it to me so that I can take it home, become familiar with the parts, and then write the words. I don't do any serious thinking about the vocal arrangements, they just seem to come to

# Artillery Hell

me. I hear in my head right off the bat how a vocal line should be sung, and then I write the words from there. Then when we practice it I'll just play the

bass for the first couple of runs to teach my hands what they need to do so I don't have to think about them when I start practicing the vocals.

**Mike:** I'll come up with a couple of riffs that sound really heavy. And I'll try to find ways to connect them together so every part seems to flow into one another smoothly. Then when the basic song structure is done, I'll present it to the guys for some input. Sometimes we'll change it up a little bit, but for the most part it's usually pretty set from the get go. Then when it's recorded and after Robert's done working his lyrical genius we'll start practicing the hell out of the song.

**You recently just finished your five song demo and managed to keep that fat, death metal sound, was it important who you worked with?**

**Robert:** It was extremely important who we worked with! We were very fortunate to be hooked up with Dino Alden by our great friend and the coproducer of our demo, Jason Tipton. Dino is by far, the greatest and most amazing producer in the music business. He can take any band, and any style of music, and bring out its full potential, which many people can't do because they only work or understand one musical style. But with Dino, who's worked with Marty Friedman, Zero Hour, Mordred, and countless others, he can record any band or any style, and bring out every aspect of them with extreme clarity. You can hear everything on our demo perfectly! And not only is Dino a great producer, but he's also become a great friend of ours as well, and we can't imagine ever working with anyone else.

**Mike:** Dino was the only one who could get that huge, bone-crushing metal sound out of us on a recording. He is just an amazingly gifted producer who brought out the best in us and our music. It was an incredible experience to be able to work with him. He kept us all very relaxed and comfortable the entire time we were there and he just made it

a lot of fun to record the cd.

**Andrew:** For me, the entire process was amazing, and it was one of the greatest experiences of my life. It was also a lot of hard work and super tiring. At the end of the day we may have been exhausted, but the fun that we had with Dino and Jason creating such an intense sound in the studio made the experience more fun than it was work.

**Have you been shopping around the demo much?**

**Robert:** By the time this interview is out we will have just begun to shop the demo around. It's taken us awhile to get going on it because we've been waiting to get our promo pictures back and to find a good place to burn us copies of the original, mastered disc. As soon as we get those back though it'll be off to every metal label we can think of. Our main goals are Century Media and Nuclear Blast, but as long as the contract is solid getting signed to almost any label will make us happy.

**How do you stay on top of the game?**

**Robert:** By treating the band like a family and having as much fun as possible. These guys are my brothers, and they're helping me make some of my greatest memories. When bands start looking at what they do as a job or an obligation, they generally tend to fall apart. The same can also be said for those who take it too seriously and don't have fun with the experience. We goof around as much as possible and I think we've become a better band because of that.

**Current line-up:**

- Robert Anderson... vocals and bass
- Mike Knittel... guitars
- Jake Burmann... guitars
- Andrew Bailey... drums



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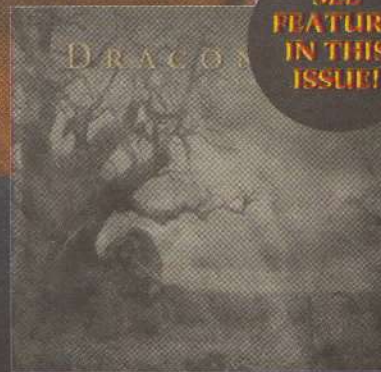


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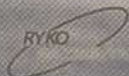
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The Herd!!



Interview with

vocalist and guitarist Helmuth  
Austrian black metallers

**Belphegor** are one of those rare bands which get better with each release. Their early albums; 1994's *The Last Supper* and 1997's *Blutsabbath*, only hinted at the greatness to come on 2000's *Necrodaemon Terrorsathan*. They're now signed with Napalm Records and their latest; 2003's *Lucifer Incestus* and 2005's *Goatreich Fleshcult*, see Belphegor combining death metal and black metal for a crushing combination. Here are some questions which frontman and guitarist Helmuth gladly answered.

#### How is the tour going?

Hey maniacs, well, it was great journey through Europe. We had a good time and lots of good shows. It was amazing for us to finally present the new songs from *Goatreich Fleshcult* album live. I think that the maniacs are as content as we are. All tracks we have played from the new album are really mighty live.

#### What type of accommodations do the bands get for a tour like this?

You can't tell it that way, it's all very different. It was a cool nightliner tour with three bands, crew, soundman and some support acts and let me tell you it was a total success for **Belphegor**.

#### What do you like the most about being on the road?

A good PA that guarantees a transparent sound of course is a hammer and also different from hall to hall. By now its more important for us to guarantee the people that come to our show and support us a good show with fat light (if possible) and a good sophisticated sound. Of course it's always difficult to make the speed perfectly soundable, cause our songs are very fast. **Belphegor** is a live band, we love to play live and we're on the road a lot too. There is nothing better than to shoot the songs in highspeed blasts into the crowd and when the people begin to bang, to flip out, yeah that's it, it's a good feeling, a real pleasure if you have played a concert and if the people like it, hard metal is for the fucking stage.

#### What do you do to keep busy while doing the travelling?

To drink a lot. **Belphegor** is a live band, sometimes it can be a real pain in the ass of course; the steady waiting and seventeen people in the bus, but a good concert compensates all the efforts. Of course we always meet faces we already know and there are always new ones too. Let me say that 80% of a tour are simply interesting, you experience a lot, travel around, meet metal communities and have a good time in the sign of the blastbeat.

#### Does censorship cause any significant problems?

Yes we had a lot of problems that for. Still we've never done this for any shock value, we fucking dig that obscure stuff, but if any moralizers out there feel provoked or disgusted by this art, fine with me. The vocals on *Goatreich Fleshcult* again tell you about the church as an institution, that dig their own graves. And let me tell you- no, it's not about a bad boy image or bullshit like that. We are not worse as a gardener, we are simple metalheads, who glorify hard metal for more than a decade. It's more about resistance, denial, rebellion against these superficial- conservative old-established structures/ religions - fanatics. Look what for example money-greed can do with the species human, we destroy our environment, nature, to got even more out of mother earth. But nature hits back more and more often, and the next generations will pay the bills for the decades of daylight robbery.

#### I'm always amazed at how Belphegor albums just get better and better- what do you attribute for this success?

Thanks for your appreciation, yes we work hard on our instruments, to get better and increase on each album. No matter if leads/ vocals/ drums, we try to set in the instruments more effective in each album, to arrange it better and to develop in every aspect. It's always a big challenge when we start with the songwriting, it's like a labyrinth into the abyss, and yes, we try everything to do everything better in the musical area, we are addicted to this hellride. It was our goal to ban our hardest and tightest album on c.d. and I think we made that. Hell yeah, we tried a few new things, trying to take our typical sound a bit further each time, musicwise we gave our best, like always. The whole album got very brutal and fleshy, the variety is for sure one of our strengths on the new album, let me tell you that we are very proud of this album. *Goatreich Fleshcult* became a total death-monster.

[www.tmetal.com](http://www.tmetal.com)



How does everything differ today compared to when you

#### were preparing *The Last Supper*?

Let me tell you I enjoy listening to the old albums and I am very proud of them. I combine every album with a certain period of life, it's like a diary, or a tattoo, if you know what I mean.

#### When you look back to the band's origins what thoughts come to mind?

Our goals simply were to make brutal music and to have a good time. It's indescribable what I was allowed to experience. We are now there for so much time, and it still is a fun, the feeling to produce hard music is still in us. I'd say we are even more ambitious than ever before.

#### Other than music, what are some other important aspects of your life?

The most important of course is my instrument, hard guitar music in general, then there is the band, management, rehearsals and then the usual things like travelling, food, and sport.

#### Do you have free time to do what you want and if so, what consumes this time?

We are just metal fans who play/ hail this music for years now, hard guitar. You know, it's all about music, say music has absolute priority, I couldn't imagine a life without music or guitar.

#### Final comments?

Well Brett, thanks for the space and support. We are already in contact with some bookers from Canada/ U.S.A., and I wish 2005 we'll have the opportunity to tour here at your place, would be an absolute dream for us and it's a big wish to present our new opus *Goatreich Fleshcult* live. All metal demons should go out and check *Goatreich Fleshcult*, so see you on the road to hell, death cheers.

#### Discography:

2005... *Goatreich Fleshcult* (Napalm)  
2003... *Lucifer Incestus* (Napalm)  
2000... *Necrodaemon Terrorsathan* (Last Episode)  
1997... *Blutsabbath* (Last Episode)  
1994... *The Last Supper* (Lethal)

#### Current line-up:

Helmuth... vocals and guitars  
Sigurd... guitars  
Barth... bass  
Nefastus... drums

#### Website:

[www.belphegor.at](http://www.belphegor.at)



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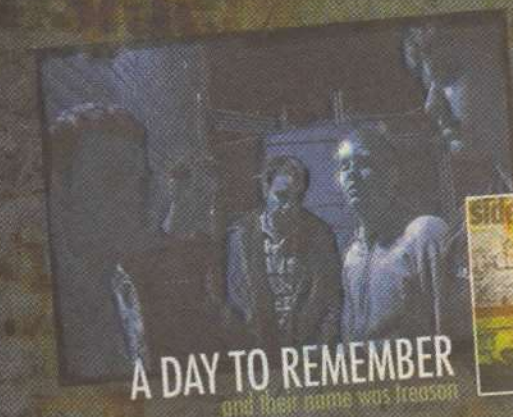
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Interview with guitarist

Torsten Ihlenfeld

Germany's **Brainstorm** are one of the best power metal/ thrash bands you will ever encounter. They released a pair of albums (1997's *Hungry* and 1998's *Unholy*) on German label B.O. Records. After some singer shuffling, they recruited frontman Andy Franck (**Symphorce**, ex-**Ivanhoe**) and have gone on to record four studio full lengths together for Metal Blade. **Brainstorm**'s sound is catchy but always heavy. Guitarists Torsten Ihlenfeld and Milan Loncaric keep the riffs heavy and memorable, ranging from traditional heavy metal to thrash. Here is Torsten for an interview as **Brainstorm** support their latest, *Liquid Monster*.

**Tell me your thoughts on *Liquid Monster*.**

I really think that *Liquid Monster* is the best **Brainstorm** album to date. It is traditional based metal how it should sound like in 2005. Combining traditional roots and includes new elements; great melodies, heavy guitar riffs and pounding drums.

**Did you try any new ideas in the studio?**

We always write and record songs very open minded. If there's anything good new ideas or technology/ equipment, then why not use them? This time we did the whole pre-production in our own Stormyourbrain Studios while the recordings took place in the House Of Music Studios near Stuttgart, Germany. We love to work with digital recording technology, especially pro tools. This gives you a lot of amazing opportunities.

**Do you ever struggle for new song ideas or riffs?**

We never ever had problems in creating enough new riffs and songs for a new album. We love what we are doing, we love making music, so the ideas just flow in naturally and constantly. Especially when you have a good time in writing new songs and meeting the other guys in the rehearsing room. About how much time usually is spent, this totally differs and is depending on the touring schedule and some more factors. This time we wrote most of the album on our tours and during the summer festivals. Means we started writing new songs beginning of April and ended end of October.

**How's your tour with Mercenary and At Vance?**

The tour is going great. We have amazing venues, amazing fans and amazing reactions so far. We recorded the Budapest show in front of more than 1,000 people and also the show in Vienna, Hamburg to see if we maybe will use the material for a possible DVD release.

**Does your setlist include songs from all your albums?**

We play around ninety minutes so there's enough time for many songs. We alter the setlist a bit every evening, so that even those fans that visit more shows get some new options for their viewing pleasure. Of course, the standards and classics stay in every night.



# BRAINSTORM

**What new pressures do you face as a headlining act?**

It is kind of getting a grown up as a band. You are responsible for yourself, for the fans that show up and of course for giving us and every single fan an amazing evening with **Brainstorm**. But we love that and the fans seem to love it, too as you can see in the guestbook of our homepage [www.brainstormweb.com](http://www.brainstormweb.com).

**What is it like writing songs with a vocalist of Andy's talent?**

We have a great chemistry in the band which reflects in the songs and the songwriting process. It is not only five musicians writing songs, it is five friends that are having a good time. Usually it is me or Milan that come up with a basic song idea or some riffs which we arrange basically with the whole band before Andy gets the basic songs to do the vocal lines and lyrics for. Then starts the real idea exchange and arranging process between Andy, me and Milan before we slowly but surely come to a final arrangement and an almost final version of the song.

**Andy has been criticized for having some lyrics close to songs by some bands; do you agree with what some people have said regarding this? Do you think it is unfair that Andy is considered to be borrowing from these bands?**

Totally, this was and is never something that is close to being the truth and has nothing to do with **Brainstorm** by the way. Everybody really involved (even the bands) shares this opinion. And to be honest, it is by far enough said about that. There are more interesting things to talk about.

**Do you think thrash and traditional metal can be combined for your sound or do you disagree?**

We all love thrash metal, heavy metal, so many different styles of metal music. We do not care that much of what names are given therefore. But I do not agree totally because it is more that thrash and traditional metal that **Brainstorm** music is all about. There are symphonic elements included as well, some exotic tunings and scales and even more. For me **Brainstorm** is a band based on traditional metal roots but also including new elements in the band sound.

**Why did you choose "All Those Words" as your first single and video?**

Because this song was something very special for us from the first note that was written for this song. It has an outstanding melody, great guitar harmonies and great rhythm tracks. Everything a real single and videoclip should have. The concept for the video was to include and show the special atmosphere this song has for us and the video shooting in that old mine simply had the same amazing atmosphere that the song itself. The mine has for sure so much tales to tell it was amazing to at least get to know a little of the history herefore.

**In America we only have Headbangers Ball for two hours a week (and even that's trendy), do you have stations or places which play metal videos in Germany or is metal underground at this time?**

Yes we have, although times had been better two years ago where we had some major music channels playing metal formats. But it could be worse and there are quite some channels that play metal music.

**Discography:**

- 2005... *Liquid Monster* (Metal Blade)
- 2003... *Soul Temptation* (Metal Blade)
- 2001... *Metus Mortis* (Metal Blade)
- 2000... *Ambiguity* (Metal Blade)
- 1998... *Unholy* (B.O. Records)
- 1997... *Hungry* (B.O. Records)

**Current line-up:**

- Andy B. Franck... vocals
- Torsten Ihlenfeld... guitars
- Milan Loncaric... guitars
- Andreas Mailander... bass
- Dieter Bernert... drums

**Website:**

[www.brainstormweb.com](http://www.brainstormweb.com)

Interview with vocalist Joe Altier

Upstate New York rockers **Brand New Sin** burst upon the scene with their self titled debut back in 2002. They secured some great tours and thrived in the live environment. After the decline of Now Or Never Records, they found themselves on America's leading metal label, Century Media, for their sophomore disc, *Recipe for Disaster*. Here are some questions we sent over for Brand New Sin frontman Joe Altier and his humorous responses.

**How do you capture the live spirit of rock 'n roll when recording in the studio?**

Funny that you ask that because the heart of our two c.d.'s were recorded live. We track all the drums, bass and rhythm guitars at once. The only things that are overdubbed are vocals and solos.

**If someone unfamiliar with Brand New Sin buys A Recipe for Disaster, what would they be getting themselves into?**

A bar room brawl. It's a record that covers all aspects of good old fashion rock and metal. There are times we are smashing your face in and then the next song we will change your mood completely. We have many mood changes and that's something that is not as prevalent anymore in metal.

**What's it like touring with Motorhead?**

This is the second time we have toured with them and its still like a dream come true. To be backstage everyday and have Lemmy say "Hi" to you is definitely surreal. It's also inspiration to stick with it. They have been at it for thirty fucking years! 30! That's determination.

**Do you get to spend any time with Lemmy?**

Like I said it is surreal. He has such a presence. When he walks into a room he commands the attention of the whole damn room. It's amazing that he is even alive, he is a god.

**You did about a week with Faster Pussycat- how did you hook up with them and what was it like sharing time and a stage with them?**

Our manager hooked us up with them. We wanted to stay busy in April and it was offered to us. At first we wondering how we would go over with the older 80's crowd, but after the first night we knew it was gonna be a fun tour. The crowds and especially **Faster Pussycat** were awesome. Great guys and a lot of fun. We would do it again in a heartbeat.

**How did you show on Long Island at the Crazy Donkey go?**

Actually that was the best show of the tour in terms of crowd size and response. We had a blast, from what I can remember.

**How important are videos for getting a band exposure these days?**

We know that at least Headbangers Ball and Uranium will be playing the video. We would love to see M.T.V. pick it up, but I'm not holding my breath. Videos are very important. I think nowadays that videos aren't as huge for our genre of music as they once were. Rap and hip hop rule that department at the moment. I would love a return of rock. I think videos on the internet and cable access shows sometimes garner more exposure than on M.T.V.

**Why do you think Now Or Never failed as a label?**

Easy, lack of money.

**What is your biggest sin?**

Oh that's also easy...pre marital sex.



**What is your philosophy regarding alcohol?**

My philosophy regarding alcohol? Drink as often as possible. We are responsible. We are not raging alcoholics (not all the time). If it ever became a problem with our band it would be

# BRAND NEW SIN

dealt with. I think regardless I would definitely be drinking if I wasn't on the road, but I would agree that the road is conducive to drinking. I mean they give you free alcohol every night.

**You've spent much time around people like Motorhead, Zakk Wylde, Life Of Agony, etc., what do you learn from veterans like these?**

Listen to them. These are bands that have been there and done that a million times over and are still here to talk about it. They have achieved success and most importantly made a living doing it. I hope to someday do the same.

**What are your goals for Recipe for Disaster?**

To never have to work a day job again.

**What is your favorite aspect of touring?**

Playing every night, meeting new people, seeing new places. I could go on and on. Bottom line is I love touring.

**Final comments?**

Enjoy life. Buy our c.d. Come see us live and buy me a beer.

**Discography:**

2005... *Recipe For Disaster* (Century Media)  
2002... *Brand New Sin* (Now Or Never)

**Current line-up:**

Joe Altier... vocals  
Kris Wiechmann... guitars  
Kenny Dunham... guitars  
Chuck Kahl... bass  
Kevin Dean... drums

**Website:**

[www.brandnewsin.com](http://www.brandnewsin.com)

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Interview with vocalist

Messiah Marcolin

When I was a teenager and just getting into some real metal bands, Sweden's **Candlemass** were one of my favorites. 1988's *Ancient Dreams* and 1989's *Tales of Creation*, were two of my favorite albums and **Candlemass** helped introduce me to other killer doom bands like **Trouble** and **Solitude Aeternus**. During the nineties, most of **Candlemass** went their separate ways, but bassist Leif Edling kept the band going. *Chapter VI* would come out in 1992 and features a new vocalist, Tomjas Vikstrom. Leif busied himself with projects like **Abstrakt Algebra** and **Krux** but then returned with two new **Candlemass** albums in the late nineties, 1998's *Dactylis Glomerata* and 1999's *From the 13th Sun*. The classic lineup of **Candlemass** would reform for some shows and a full scale reunion, including a new studio album did not seem out of reach. Sure enough, it has actually happened, and **Candlemass** are back with a killer self titled album. Here is frontman Messiah.

#### What can you tell me about the new record?

We're pleased with it. There's not one bad song on there. We recorded it in ten days. We had a really good engineer. I think it sounds really good. Everybody stood in the same room for the first time, recording this. We didn't have any click tracks, it's live like in the rehearsal room. You can hear the chemistry. We kept the drums and the bass and redid the guitars and the vocals. You get a first take kind of a feeling. That's the reason albums from the seventies sound better than modern stuff.

#### Do you have touring plans?

We have some festivals in Europe; like Sweden Rock. We play our first gig in Italy and Russia. They're talking about a European tour in the autumn. We will have to start looking at coming to the U.S. The last time we were there was in 2002 in Cleveland with **Trouble**, which is my favorite band. That was the first time I saw them live and they blew my mind. *The Skull* and *Psalm 9* are my favorite albums. The last U.S. tour was in 1990 or 1991. We were with Metal Blade then and the tour was really rushed and wasn't promoted. Nobody knew we were there. We have to come back with a vengeance.

#### Where did the idea to reform the classic line-up come about?

During the years when Leif didn't want to do a reunion, but our deal ended with Metal Blade and Music For Nations so we got the rights back for the old albums. We wanted to remaster them and re-release them with bonus stuff. Music For Nations didn't want to do it. We signed with a Swedish label, a woman who used to run our fanclub in the old days, so they released our remasters. We wanted to promote those, so we talked about doing some festivals. We did the Sweden Rock Festival in 2002. We contacted the manager for **King Diamond** because we knew they had a good manager. He started booking festivals and gigs.

#### What type of album did you want to create for your comeback?

Leif writes all the songs and lyrics. He changes his songwriting all the time. He progresses as a songwriter. When the original line-up started playing his songs it's going to sound like old **Candlemass**. The albums he did with different singers and guitarists don't really sound like **Candlemass** albums. Of course, he writes great songs, they just don't sound the same. You have great chemistry between the five of us on this album.

#### What ever happened to Memento Mori?

We talked about a new record. When **Candlemass** split up, I was talking to Mike and he said maybe we should do another **Memento Mori** album, but I was also busy with lots of side projects. I decided to concentrate on my own songs to do a solo album. Now we're concentrating completely with **Candlemass**. Even Leif, who has **Krux**, he was thinking of doing another album with them, but now we have such a great response with this new **Candlemass** album.

#### What's different in Candlemass these days?

We've sorted our problems and I've changed my attitude. Before I wanted

# Candlemass

everything my way but that doesn't work in a band. We started compromising. As long as we can have the basic rules. If I can have my monk robe, there's no problems.

#### How did you create your vocal style?

Not even thinking about it. I want to a vocal teacher for about three weeks in 1987 before I joined **Candlemass**. I don't know how to read music, I just went with my feeling. You try to imitate your idols, like Ian Gillan is my ultimate singer. I sing with my feeling and my vocals progress by myself. When I was twenty on the early record, I could only sing in one style. It was a fast vibrato on the vocals, but now I'm thirty seven and I can vary my pace on the vibrato and I can sing louder and softer. I have more control over my voice. The one thing that you do lose is the high pitch. I'm hoping that we can tune down even more now. It's really hard to sing in a high pitch. We're only half a note tuned down compared to the old days. Lars is pulling his hair. He goes crazy when I mention tuning down.

#### How have things changed from the eighties?

Everyone is older and hopefully wiser. I had to change my attitude to be in this band or any band. It feels good. We made a big mistake when we did the reunion in 2002. We started emailing each other and that broke up the band. When you have different opinions you can't really communicate when you do email. We sat down and started talking about doing a new album and we started compromising.

#### How do you feel about metal these days?

I'm disappointed in this commercial crap. If you see a band like Korn, the verse is really heavy and then the chorus is like a fucking pop song. All these bands are just trying to get on the radio. It was cooler in the seventies when people didn't think about writing a hit song. That's how we feel with the new songs. There's no singles, just really good songs. There's still some great metal bands like **Nevermore**, **Slayer**, and **Trouble**, but what I see and hear are all these wimpy pop choruses. There are good screamers and bad screamers. Tom Araya from **Slayer** rules, but some bands now have screaming vocals that really ruin good music. On this album I tried to sing like I do live, without thinking. In the old days I wanted it to be perfect, with no mistakes.

#### What would your solo stuff be like?

I studied sound engineering for two years. I've got mixing tables, computer, and microphones at home, but I need a studio of my own. My music is doom metal but more riff oriented and slower than **Candlemass**. That's my writing style. It would be like visiting your dead friend in the graveyard.

#### Discography:

2005... **Candlemass** (Nuclear Blast)  
1999... *From The 13th Sun* (Music For Nations)  
1998... *Dactylis Glomerata* (Music For Nations)  
1992... *Chapter VI* (Music For Nations)  
1989... *Tales Of Creation* (Music For Nations)  
1988... *Ancient Dreams* (Active)  
1987... *Nightfall* (Active)  
1986... *Epicus Doomicus Metallicus* (Black Dragon)

#### Current line-up:

Messiah Marcolin... vocals  
Lars Johansson... guitars  
Mappe Bjorkman... guitars  
Leif Edling... bass  
Jan Lindh... drums

#### Website:

[www.candlemass.net](http://www.candlemass.net)



Interview with vocalist

Michael Erikser

Norwegian progressive metallers

**Circus Maximus** has been one of the most talked about new bands in many years. Their aptly titled debut, *The 1st Chapter*, combines progression, aggression, and melody in a way which has called to mind **T.N.T.**, **Dream Theater**, and **Queensrÿche**. We secured an interview with **Circus Maximus** frontman Michael Erikser just a few months before the band is scheduled to make their U.S. debut at this year's Prog Power Festival.

#### How do you feel about *The 1st Chapter*?

From all the feedback and reviews we've had so far, we can say mission accomplished. We had a "goal" to make a debut album which would appeal to all kinds of music lovers- either you are a metalhead, progman or a.o.r. dude; you would find something interesting and tasteful in the music. The album is a huge melting pot so to speak. We are very proud of this album.

#### What was the recording experience like?

The recording sessions were hectic I can tell you. Long days and long nights, but that is what this album needed. We needed to put in all the time we had (and didn't have) and really make an effort. We did not want to release an album where we would look back and say "hmm... that part sucks, that part doesn't do it for me, etc." Take for instance the song "Alive." 01:53 minutes into the song there is now an instrumental part. I believe we changed this part three times. First it had a real cool guitar riff with distortion to it and some real cool guitar solo melody. Then we dropped the solo and added a vocal arrangement (oh yes we have it recorded on video tape- sounds pretty cool actually). We weren't happy with it, it was a cool idea but it needed something else. We then ended up with what you now can hear on the c.d.- finally.

#### Did you enjoy working in Denmark with Tommy Hansen?

Oh yes, Tommy Hansen is a hell of a guy. We sure wouldn't mind mixing our next album there. When it comes to sound, yes you can hear the Tommy touch to it, specially the vocals. Listen to TNT's *My Religion* and you can hear the similarities.

#### How does it feel to be part of the Prog Power Festival this year?

Feels great. This is a dream come true, actually me and the guys in the band talked about how cool it would be to play at Prog Power Festival, and that it happened so soon is just amazing. Thanks to our management and Glenn Harvester at Prog Power, they made this dream come true. Can't wait to meet up with the American crowd, rumors say they are real metal heads, and finally we will get to meet Ken Golden, who will be there on behalf of Sensory/Lasers Edge.

#### Will this be your first time in America? What type of opinion do Norwegians generally have of the U.S.?

As a band yes, but this will be my second visit to your beautiful country. My mom was an American so that makes me half American. My grandfather lives in Forth Worth Texas, so I'm actually going to visit him after the Prog Power festival. Well yes, your President has definitely burned some bridges, and yes I've seen the "movie" 9/11 Fahrenheit. In general I think most Norwegians have an opinion about Bush, but the U.S. can not be judged by one man and his apprentice's actions. Luckily he's only got four years left, but seriously I think most Norwegians love America.

#### How would you describe the music you create?

It's hard to describe our music, it's all just a big melting pot. If we like something, we put it in there. That is of course if the part fits the song. But if someone would describe our music I hope they will say: hard hitting, great melodies, crunchy riffs and they've got their own sound and style. At least that's what we've tried to accomplish. The most important ingredient is a good melody.

"Sin" is one of my favorite songs ever- it's crushingly heavy, but melodic and has amazing vocals- I feel this song is as close to perfect as possible-

# CIRCUS MAXIMUS

what was it like writing this song and what is your opinion of it?

Thanks Brett, it really warms my heart. It's my favourite song as well.

As soon as the song was recorded (guitars, drums and keys) I sat down at home trying to work up some good melodies. Mats and myself had an idea on how the chorus should be, so I had to take it from there. I remember recording the second verse when Mats and I were in the studio, and it was so cool to see his face after I had laid down the melodies. It was in the same street that he had imagined it would be. It has this **Queensrÿche** touch to it, love it man.

#### What goals do you have for your band and the future?

We have all been working and practising our instruments for as long as I can remember, and to now see that it has been worth the long hours and dedication feels overwhelming. I don't know if you can call it a goal but if we could quit our day jobs and just concentrate and live by our music, that would be paradise. A future goal would be to play as many concerts as possible, see the world and fans from different nations, and release a huge amount of records. The **Circus Maximus** show has just started.

#### Do you have any viewpoints regarding religion?

It's the root to all evil, or at least some of it is. I am not religious myself, neither is anyone in the band. Although I think Mats is in some kind of religion called "trade-porn-movies-ism."

#### What do you like to do in your free time?

I like to hang out with friends, workout, go to the movies and play PC games. If you have ever played *Battlefield 1942* you have probably been sniped by me once or twice. Mike The Snipe is the name. Can't wait until *Battlefield 2* comes out any day now. Actually just ordered movie tickets to see *War of the Worlds*. I think that will be movie of the year for me.

#### Do you travel to other countries often? Do you like to travel?

Europe isn't that big of a continent, so yes once and awhile I'll take a trip to Italy, Greece or Spain. Usually in the summer time. Now and then I'll take a trip to our neighbor country Sweden to buy food. Seriously, Norway is one of the world's most expensive country to live in. You save a lot of money by going to Sweden. A funny thing is that Norwegians go to Sweden to buy food, cigarettes and alcohol while Swedes goes to Denmark, Danish people go to Germany, it's all true.

#### Is Norway as beautiful as it looks in photos? What is it like living there?

Yes, it is. Beautiful mountains, amazing nature, great summers but cold winters. I am really happy to live in Norway. The only bad thing is the polar bears which often just pops up in your living room. They are crazy, eat anything, even a poor metal head's c.d. collection.

#### Do you have a direction you would like to go on the next record?

The writing has already started, actually the day after we came home from mixing the album in Denmark. We rehearsed yesterday for a gig tomorrow and made some new stuff, let's just say it's fucking amazing. Can't wait to start recording. It is going to be harder and maybe a little more melancholy, but the melodies will still have the biggest focus.

#### Discography:

2005... *The 1st Chapter* (Sensory)

#### Current line-up:

Michael Erikser... vocals  
Mats Haugen... guitars  
Glen Cato Mollen... bass  
Truls Haugen... drums  
Espen Storo... keyboards

#### Website:

[www.circusmaximussite.com](http://www.circusmaximussite.com)



Interview with vocalist and guitarist  
Oddleif Stensland

Norwegian metallers **Communic** were formed when vocalist/ guitarist Oddleif Stensland and drummer Tor Atle Andersen split from the great band **Scariot**. **Scariot** is still going with new members but Stensland feels **Communic** is the best opportunity for him. **Communic** released a three song demo and Nuclear Blast quickly snapped them up for their debut. Here is the talented musician and singer to tell us about his new band.

#### How do you feel about *Conspiracy in Mind*?

You know, the album has been out for a few months in Europe already and I still think it sounds fresh, after getting it at a distance for a while. I am quite happy with the end result, productions and songs. There are some small parts that I would have changed a bit in the mix, or liked to have a bit more time working with the mix, but that is probably only me, way too picky—but it's really exciting to have the debut out and available, and now it has been released in USA as well, so it feels good at the moment.

#### How would you describe what you're trying to create on a musical level?

It's quite hard to describe what specific style we are playing, because I don't see any boundaries in our music. We are three people with different influences and style from the metal scene that we grew up with, from the day we were doomed listening to metal and we just blend together and try to make interesting music together, that also challenges us as musicians. To narrow it down to style, I guess it's a bit of everything; thrash, progressive, doom, power groovy, with an emotional touch- and no rules.

#### Why do you write songs that are so long?

That's just how they turned out. I never sit down to write long songs. I never check the time on a song before it is complete, and it always amazes us, because the songs doesn't feel that long when we play and rehearse them, but we don't care. As long as it's still interesting to us and not repeating an endless note, keeping the interest and focus during the whole tune. If a song would have ended in four minutes and felt complete, we would have kept it that way. If not, we continue until it feels complete. Usually I write the songs at home, with my guitar, but only in bits and pieces and I arrange it in the rehearsal room while presenting it to the other guys, then they have to get into the stuff and put their own influences into it.

#### Why was it the right time to branch out and create **Communic**?

I was only in **Scariot** for their last album; *Strange to Numbers*. I was the vocalist there, and it was in **Scariot** that I first met up with Tor Atle that is the drummer in **Communic**. **Scariot** didn't felt like a complete band to me, and there was also no room for participating in the songwriting, other than writing lyrics and melody lines, and I consider myself as a creative person so when we started to work on a new album, the music was changing into a more brutal, straight-forward style that didn't leave much room for my kind of singing and melodies, so I started **Communic** as a side project while I was still in **Scariot**. Tor Atle joined me and quite soon after we made a demo that got us signed on Nuclear Blast, so I decided to focus 100% on **Communic**, and leave **Scariot** behind, as I would probably give more to **Communic** then to **Scariot** and that wouldn't have been fair towards the other guys in **Scariot**.

#### What approaches are you doing differently with **Communic** compared to how you did things with **Scariot**?

To me **Scariot** felt like a one man show, that usually never rehearsed until some new songs was created or a concert coming up. That is the biggest

# COMMUNIC

difference. I like to see the time in the rehearsal room as the best, quality socializing time to just hang out, get the band feeling going, and

rehearse two or three times a week steadily, and try to use the influences that the other members bring into the band.

#### Do you think the rest of **Scariot** will be motivated and keep the band going?

After I told them that I had to quit, they decided to dissolve the band. The band had changed members for every album and they didn't wanted to continue. Tor Atle and me headed out with **Communic**. The bass player now has his own band called **Harm**, and the other guitar player has a new band as well. I think the main man has a new lineup for **Scariot** that he is trying to get going these days.

#### I was unfamiliar with another previous band, **Ingermanland**, what exactly was this band about and did you have any releases?

**Ingermanland** was a project that I had going for some years. No one really understood what it was really about, experimental progressive metal or something. We released a demo in 1999 and another one in 2001, but it was too experimental and weird, I guess, and it didn't get us anywhere. I see **Communic** as more mature, a continuation of **Ingermanland**, with a new drummer since Erik, who plays bass in **Communic**, was also playing on **Ingermanland**. The name **Ingermanland** was the name of a great liner-ship, and is bound to our local history as one of the most tragic shipwrecks that has ever taken place along the Norwegian coast. The ship went aground outside the town we live in called Mandal, on the 11th of September in 1842. It's a long story and way too deep to go in details here.

#### What's it like living on the Southern tip of Norway?

I love the sea. Right now in the ocean is around 18-20°C and okay for swimming if the weather is good. Take the boat, go fishing and/or scuba diving- perfect, but I'm still waiting for the really good summer weather to arrive, hopefully for my vacation.

#### How important is touring and playing live?

It's important to play live. We were lucky and had our first European tour right after the album was released. **Communic** played some killer festivals this summer, and hopefully another tour this fall to support

our album, but we have to see if we can get something going.

#### Final comments?

Thanks for the interview and support. After the summer we will start to write new material for our follow-up. We hope to get ready to record again sometime during 2006. Stay tuned, and check out *Conspiracy in Mind* in the meantime.

#### Discography:

2005... *Conspiracy In Mind* (Nuclear Blast)

#### Current line-up:

Oddleif Stensland... vocals and guitars  
Erik Mortensen... bass  
Tor Atle Andersen... drums

#### Website:

[www.communic.org](http://www.communic.org)





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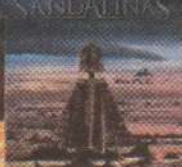
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Interview with guitarist  
Mike Schleibaum  
Washington D.C.'s thrashcore

# DARKEST HOUR

Do you ever have time to reflect upon your musical career?

veterans **Darkest Hour** continue to rise. Their latest release is *Undoing Ruin*. For the recording of *Undoing Ruin*, **Darkest Hour** travelled to Canada to record with mastermind Devin Townsend, a stark contrast to the recording of the previous disc, *Hidden Hands of a Sadist Nation*, when **Darkest Hour** travelled to Gothenburg and jammed with thrash icons from **Soilwork**, the **Crown**, and the **Haunted**. Their cycle of recording and touring has taken them around the world and back again. On the eve of the release of their fourth album and just following the release of their debut d.v.d., *Party Scars and Prison Bars*, we corresponded with guitarist Mike Schleibaum for another typically non-indepth look at **Darkest Hour**.

## Why should Darkest Hour fans be pleased with *Undoing Ruin*?

We think it is a definite progression from the other records. We feel we put our heart in the record and that provides a lot of old **Darkest Hour** along with some new twists to keep everyone stoked!

## What was it like working with Devin Townsend?

Devin is a super cool dude. He acted like the glue for the whole process. I mean really he just worked as a big funnel for all our ideas. Saying either that idea is cool go with it or that idea sucks don't do that. We were stoked because being around a dude who is so passionate about music makes you feel that way.



After all the guest appearances on the previous album, I was surprised to see none on *Undoing Ruin*- but then I remembered you recorded in

Sweden, was this decision a geographical one or did you not want guest appearance to be a distraction?

We felt the last record was more about the **Darkest Hour** influences and our past melding with our future. This record wasn't about all that, it was just about **Darkest Hour**. This is **Darkest Hour** with our own identity.

## What is it like in Vancouver? Are there a lot of activities to be done?

It's cool, it was a lot warmer than we thought. We spent some time outdoors and in the city but for real we spent most the time on the record so we got to see as much of the city as we wanted to but really spent most of our time recording.

## *Undoing Ruin* has a positive lyrical stance, I also read it's about "healing and moving forward," is this true and can you elaborate?

Yeah, I mean really we want the music and lyrics to speak for themselves. Also we want them to speak to people individually so we ask that people read into it and find how they feel.

## Does it ever get competitive with bands you tour with?

I mean one reason I loved music was that I wasn't supposed to be competitive. There can be fans there and they can love all the bands. It's not a competition and shouldn't be seen as that. It's art and expression and that is a hard thing to quantify.

## Care to tell us about almost being arrested during your video shoot?

Well, basically we were almost arrested because we were taking pictures and they claimed we looked like terrorists. It's really sad how sick and twisted the U.S. and really the world is right now. It's a mind fuck of fear, hate, and paranoia. It's a really sad thing.

## How do you feel about our great Patriot Act?

All I can say is that it is a fucked up trick to steal the few remaining qualities that make the U.S. a free country. Sooner or later we will be living in the old Soviet block and not even know it. All we can do is work our best to lift our voices and try to stop the Patriot Act from continuing.

Not really, everything always seems so important and time sensitive. I hope that one day I can have a healthy perspective on it, but right now I am to caught up in it. It's too hard to see out of. It's like a wave you just have to ride until it's over and then look back as it fades away.

## Do you think it's just a matter of time before you break into the mainstream?

Who knows? We are just stoked to have the opportunity to play for people and continue to do this rock thing. I think metal is getting bigger and that has a lot to do with it but it could also be because with every record we have been able to define or hone our sound a little better each time.

## Discography:

- 2005... *Undoing Ruin* (Victory)
- 2003... *Hidden Hands Of The Sadist Nation* (Victory)
- 2001... *So Sedated So Secure* (Victory)
- 2000... *The Mark Of Judas* (M.I.A.)

## Current line-up:

- John Henry... vocals
- Mike Schleibaum... guitars
- Kris Norris... guitars
- Paul Burnette... bass
- Ryan Parrish... drums

## Website:

[www.darkesthour.cc](http://www.darkesthour.cc)



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# dark tranquillity

Interview with guitarist

Niklas Sundin

Sweden has become a mecca for the best metal bands around today; **Arch Enemy**, the **Haunted**, **In Flames**, **Soilwork**- the list goes on and on. One band who has been around longer than them all is **Dark Tranquillity**. They are the originators of the famous Gothenburg sound. Originally known as **Septic Broiler**, the band eventually became **Dark Tranquillity** and they released their debut full length, **Skydancer**, in 1993. They signed with Osmose Productions for their next two albums; 1995's **The Gallery** and 1997's **The Minds I**, which really established **Dark Tranquillity** on the metal scene. Since signing with Century Media, they've released four more studio albums, each selling better than the previous. While on tour with **Soilwork** and **Hypocrisy**, I caught up with an ill Niklas Sundin to talk about their new album, **Character**.

## How are you doing?

I've been sick with the flu for a few days now. I take aspirin and a bit of alcohol. When you get sick on tour it's difficult to get rid of it, because it isn't a healthy lifestyle. The show must go on. The tour's been excellent. Almost every show has been sold out. The crowd reaction has been much better than last time. **Character** is getting a massive push and people are picking up on it.

## Are you happy with how **Character** came out?

Absolutely, I'm happy with the production, the songs, and the response from old fans, new fans, and the media. The time was right for this type of album. If you put out the same album time after time you get bored. We haven't done anything too radically, just slightly different each time.

## What were some new ideas or experiments you did this time?

We write our riffs and then bring everything to the rehearsal room and work on them. We figure which parts go together. It's more spontaneous. We spent a lot of time making everything as perfect as possible. We never have a specific sound in mind for each album, we just see what happens.

## Have things been going well with Century Media?

Osmose and Spinefarm were good labels, they were honest and professional and respected the bands. They were limited in possibilities. Osmose didn't even have a U.S. office. To a lot of people in the States we're a new band and we've been playing for fifteen years and we've had albums since 1993. We've reissued the old albums; **The Gallery** and **The Minds I** should have a proper release in the States. If you have to place a special order, people usually won't do it.

## Do you have many metal stores in Sweden?

Some of the bigger record stores in Gothenburg have closed down and just continue with the mailorder. It's sad for us, if we're used to going and buying albums. Times are changing. We have a couple of small, specialty metal stores. People know if they want their metal store to stay alive, they have to buy some albums.

## How many U.S. tours have you been on?

This is our third. I think America is one of the best places to tour. Eventually we want to work toward a headlining tour. We don't have the moshpits in Europe, it was really surprising seeing them here. You see universal reactions.

## What plans do you have in the summer?

We're doing about eight or ten European festivals. Every second weekend we have some festival. After this tour, we'll do two weeks in South America; Brazil, Columbia, Mexico. We were to Mexico once three years ago. People are so passionate and dedicated down there. The major misconception people

have about touring is that bands get to see the world, but most of your time is spent in a bus and you don't

get to do any sightseeing. We have soundcheck and interviews so we can't really stray too far.

## What's your daily life back home?

I work as a graphic designer. It helps not having specific hours that I have to work and lets us be more available for tours when they pop up. I've been drawing and painting most of my life. I did a lot of illustrations for demos in the nineties. Then I went to art school and became a web designer. I began receiving offers from labels for cover artwork. The interest has always been there. I have a graphic tablet so I actually am painting right on the computer. I was always a computer geek so it was natural to get into it. I have a laptop with me when I'm on the road.

Most of the band has been together a long time.

We've known each other since the age of three or four. It started out as something to do when we got together. We're in a good position now. We're one of the few bands who sell more and more with each record. The label is very satisfied with how the album sounds and how it's selling. If you look at a lot of the bands around as long as we have, they've had their peak years



ago. I like being the underdog.

## Discography:

2005... **Character** (Century Media)  
2002... **Damage Done** (Century Media)  
2000... **Haven** (Century Media)  
1999... **Projector** (Century Media)  
1997... **The Minds I** (Osmose)  
1995... **The Gallery** (Osmose)  
1993... **Skydancer** (Spinefarm)

## Current line-up:

Mikael Stanne... vocals  
Niklas Sundin... guitars  
Martin Henriksson... guitars  
Michael Nicklasson... bass  
Anders Jivarp... drums  
Martin Brandstrom... keyboards

## Website:

[www.darktranquillity.com](http://www.darktranquillity.com)

Interview with bassist Roland Wurtzer

From the land of California governor Arnold Schwarzenegger comes gothic doom rock metallers **Darkwell**.

The band released their debut, *Suspiria*, in 2000. Two years later they released an e.p. called *Conflict of Interest*. Front woman Alexandra Pittracher split with the band and they found the energetic Stephanie Luzi. The first collaboration with Stephanie is their latest album *Metatron*. We sent some questions over and bassist Roland Wurzer graciously answered them.

**I've read that the songwriting for *Metatron* was more of a band effort compared to *Suspiria*; how did this change the sound of Darkwell?**

This happened not on purpose at all, as we are in a new line up, we simply worked in the rehearsing room, and hadn't any limitations by concept. *Suspiria* I wrote completely on myself, because at that time I hadn't anyone who was behind me. This all changed and this time we simply let the music flow. Below the line, perhaps a couple of songs are not that easy accessible as they were on *Suspiria*. But if you give the record the time, I think the **Darkwell** spirit is more than obvious.

**How did you know that Stephanie was the right female to replace Alexandra?**

We had a lot of girls at auditions and tried to find the best fitting person for **Darkwell**. The main focus was that the person grabs the spirit of the old songs, and Stephanie fitted best. She has an enormous range of vocal abilities, that we really discovered as we composed the new album. We were so positively surprised that we tried everything possible.

**What is the lyrical concept of *Metatron*?**

The *Metatron* is the scribe of god, one of the three mightiest archangels. When you focus on the myth of the angels (you find them in the book of Enoch which was erased out of the bible in the first centuries after Christ) you see all affinities to the egyptian god of knowledge Thoth. For me this is a classical symbol of human double morale, give the mob a new religion, to make them comfortable with, include the old shit. Real changes in morale and beliefs are seldom. People wanted a god for every crap, the new religion just had one so you have to create a couple of angels and saints. That sounds harsh and is not the real core of the idea, on the surface I criticize the way the leaders preach the beautiful with the ugly in mind. But please don't see us as a very political band moreover its just real life what confronts me with problems I'd like to talkover in my lyrics. The are in brackets is somehow a little hint to the substitute drug Methadone but it is the same problem again, heroine addicted people should be healed by the legal substitute which is even worse.

**How was your Austrian and German tour?**

Yeah we did a small headliner tour through Austria and Germany last year in April, and a full Europe tour in November. I think the band feels very comfortable to present the new stuff live, and it seems also the fans appreciate the new material.

**How big of a country is Austria? Are most of the cities into metal bands?**

Austria has about eight million inhabitants, if you cross it from west to east it's about 800 km wide and at the broadest part 500 km broad. There are about six major cities where you can do metal concerts, the scene is small but everywhere present.

**What is the prevalent opinion in Austria about America and our politics these days?**

What should I say? You have the Austrian Terminator as governor in California and there is a old saying that every world war was started by an Austrian, what should I say. Let's stop the stupid talking, naturally nearly nobody can understand what Mr. Bush is doing right now. First everyone thought that he is led by energy lobbies and all the stuff is going on because of economical interests, but as that all is going on I'm afraid he really is believing what he's doing, and he is an religious extremist spreading violent righteousness through the world. I hope you have a liberal candidate soon again.

**Do you feel your government gives you the freedom and support Austria needs to excel as a country?**

Austria is a bit difficult example as our government is different to the states. We have four parties, simply said two liberals and two conservatives. For

# darkwell

twenty years there was a coalition of the larger liberal and the larger conservative party, what meant a time period of security but political

stagnation, now since six years the two conservative parties are ruling and there is a lot of political (in my opinion negative) progress. It is difficult to say but it still seems quite ok for Austria, social systems still work and unemployment is below 3%. So there are very few really poor people and it is still a good place to live, but gonna see.

**Napalm Records helped break Sins Of Thy Beloved and Tristania into the mainstream, do you think this can happen to bands like Darkwell and Elis?**

I think *Tristania* and the *Sins Of Thy Beloved* just made good music people liked and Napalm delivered the base they needed. If our music would have been that mainstream, the breakthrough should have been in 1999 and 2000 as we released our debut. I'm afraid, we didn't make music for the masses. Concerning *Elis* or *Visions Of Atlantis* I can't say that much because I'm not familiar with the music the Napalm newcomers are making.

**The music on *Metatron* seems more upbeat and rocks harder than the previous two albums- is this the result of having a new singer and more band collaboration?**

Partially, but still *Metatron* simply happened, there was no plan, but let's blame it on the collaboration.

**You've played some of the European festivals in the past, what type of environment do you experience there and what has been your highlight? Best festivals were Skeleton Bash (with Testament), Summer Breeze and Wave Gotik Treffen. Sharing the stage with a legend like Testament was really great and it was a highlight for me to meet these guys.**

**Discography:**

2004... *Metatron* (Napalm)  
2000... *Suspiria* (Napalm)

**Current line-up:**

Stephanie Luzi... vocals  
Mathias Nussbaum... guitars  
Roland Wurtzer... bass  
Moritz Neuner... drums  
Raphael Leposchitz... keyboards

**Website:**

[www.darkwell.org](http://www.darkwell.org)



Interview with vocalist Alex Erian

Canadian grinders **Despised Icon** first gained national attention when they released their debut full length,

**Consumed by Your Poison**, on local label Galy Records. Like their neighbors in Cryptopsy and Kataklysm, **Despised Icon** combine grind, death metal, and intelligence into one extreme package. They signed with Century Media and now are poised to unleash **The Healing Process**. Here is vocalist Alexandre Erian.

**Tell me about Despised Icon, what makes *The Healing Process* special?**

We're a death metalcore six-piece from Montreal that likes to spit out rapid fire blast beats, tough breakdowns and just about everything in between. Picture a mix of **Into The Moat**, **Cryptopsy**, **Hatebreed** and **Decapitated** but not really- I'd say that our ability to shift naturally from metal to hardcore parts without sounding too forced makes **The Healing Process** stand out a little.

**How was your tour with Ion Dissonance?**

The tour was cool. Some good shows and some that were a little sketchy but it was all in good fun. We basically started out around the same time and have been hanging out and helping each other for a while. Gab from **Ion Dissonance** did our album cover and shirt designs while Yannick from **Ion Dissonance** recorded their first album. Our drummer Alex and Antoine from **Ion Dissonance** are cousins and learned how to play together in high school. Just about everyone in both bands has shared other bands in the past. Anyway, you see the point.

**What are your expectations for the U.S. tour?**

I'm mostly looking forward to chilling with **Skinless** and **With Passion** and seeing them live over and over again. Great bands. This tour means a lot for us. I mean, we had nothing a year ago and now all of these awesome opportunities are coming our way. I'm living the stuff I used to dream about. We have worked so hard during the past year so it's rewarding to be offered a chance to be on such a great tour. Hopefully, it will be the first of many. Lots of kids from the U.S. have been writing us so it'll be cool to finally meet them on the road and yeah, I'm sure lots of people who haven't heard our shit and **With Passion** yet will get to check it because of this tour.

**I guess the move of your old drummer to vocalist and having Alex join on drums was brilliant.**

Yeah, I knew Alex Pelletier for a while and was confident that he was the man for the job. I contacted him as soon as I decided to switch to vocals when Marie left the band. Alex is a lot faster and technical than I was behind the drum kit. He practices all the time and I'm sure he's one of the best metal/hardcore drummers in Canada. He was the only one we tried out. We didn't feel the need to look elsewhere.

**Why do you feel a need to have two different styles for your music?**

We basically wanted to cover a wide range of vocals to fit with our metal and hardcore influences. I think we were able to pull it off way better than on our previous album. Having two singers live definitely adds some intensity to our show.

**Are people in Quebec receptive towards metal?**

The scene here is amazing. Lots of touring bands love to play around here. So many people in our province are into this type of music and come out to shows. We have solid bookers, venues, medias, fans, etc. here that make it all happen, stick together and grow stronger every year. Lots of local bands are emerging as well. I mean there are some well established acts like **Kataklysm**, **Cryptopsy** and newer bands like **Ion Dissonance**, **A Perfect Murder**, etc. Keep an eye out for **Beneath The Massacre** as well.

**Were you surprised at all the attention you received for your e.p.?**

We released our first album in late 2002 and didn't do much after that because of line-up problems. We released our e.p. about a year and a half after that when we got our new line-up just to let people know we were still alive. We

# DESPISED ICON

didn't expect much anymore and suddenly, all of these labels and kids started writing us after hearing those new songs. At first we were going

to sign on Goodfellow, then Willowtip, then Listenable and so on until we started talking to people in Earache, Relapse and Century Media. It's not like I think we suck but damn, I still can't believe that we got picked like that out of so many amazing unsigned bands.

**Why did you feel Century Media was the right home for Despised Icon?**

I'm surprised that we ended up being signed to Century Media. You usually see bands like us getting signed to Black Market Activities, Willowtip, Relapse, Tribunal, etc. All amazing labels. I think we stand out from the rest of the bands on our label and that's a good thing because we have our own identity within the roster I guess. The staff has been treating, helping and promoting us really well. Our A&R has been so supportive and understanding. He went out of his way to show me some of the essentials of how to manage our band. He even tries to hook us up on tours. I couldn't ask for more. Thumbs up.

**What would you try to avoid happening to Despised Icon which have negatively affected other bands?**

Mistakes we wouldn't want to make: Adding clean emo singing parts to sell more records, releasing an album every five years, releasing the same album over and over again without ever evolving, wearing make up and matching wardrobes, losing track of what's important and turning money into your one and only incentive to be part of a band, living by the slogan "sex, drugs and rock and roll", etc. Compare our first album to our second one and you'll see a world of difference. We kept that **Despised Icon** sound and added lots of new elements to it. We plan on doing the same on our next album but the changes will not be as significant though because I think we finally came up with a more personal sound on **The Healing Process**. Expect a few surprises on our third album and even faster blast beasts as well.

**How do you go about preparing for a long tour?**

We just bought a van and trailer and also got ourselves a mattress, television, and play station which turned out to be much appreciated on the road. Basically, we are investing a lot of time, money and effort into this band right now and are trying to cope with the fact that

we got ourselves highly in debt to be able to keep on going. My drummer just moved into my apartment so he and I can afford to tour, eat on the road and pay the bills when we get back. We both lost our jobs because of our touring schedule and I think Seb and Steve will go through the same pretty soon hahah I honestly don't care about that for now because all I want to do is play live anyway. We are slowly getting organized and are learning about all of that legal bullshit we need to go through just to be able to play in the U.S.

**Discography:**

2005... **The Healing Process** (Century Media)

2002... **Consumed By Your Poison** (Galy)

**Current line-up:**

Alexandre Erian... vocals

Steve Marois... vocals

Eric Jarrin... guitars

Yannick St. Amand... guitars

Sebastien Piche... bass

Alex Pelletier... drums

**Website:**

[www.despisedicon.com](http://www.despisedicon.com)



Interview with bassist Joe Trunk

Germany's **Disbelief** are one of the most exciting metal bands around these days. They may seem like a new band to the U.S. because only two of their records; last year's *Spreading the Rage* and this year's *66Sick*, have been released domestically, but they've been developing a crushing sound that is unique, but combines bands like **Godflesh**, **Neurosis**, and **Slayer**; along with an intense and emphatic vocalist (Karsten Jager) for a sound that has to be heard. Here is bassist Joe Trunk for an informative interview.

**What type of goals did you have while writing and recording 66Sick?**  
One of our goals was to do the next step in developing our own style and sound. Each of our releases has its own character and we do not want to copy ourselves. We wanted to put all the energy of our live-performance in the songs and the sound as well. I think this is the reason why *66Sick* has a kind of live character, raw and directly in your face.

**Why did you want to work with Tue Madsen?**  
First of all we wanted to work with a new producer, because we did four recordings with Andy Classen and it was time for a change. We were convinced of the fact, that this is an additional inspiration for our music. Tue Madsen was first choice. We liked the diversity of his productions and so we quickly decided in agreement with Nuclear Blast to go to Denmark and start the recordings. We expected a more modern element in our sound and a totally different kind of working process; and everything came true. We are still very happy and the time in Scandinavia was awesome.

**Why is it important to have melody and not crush listeners with only aggression?**  
The melodies stress the heart-felt emotions and make our songs so desperate. Music is speech and this is the way we try to express our feelings. We are not an easy-listening band, **Disbelief** is the reflection of our lives. Aggression or anger is just one source of inspiration and we add an element that goes much deeper and causes this special, pain-like feeling in your stomach.

**What were things like for the band when Disbelief and Infected were released?**  
At this time no record label was interested in **Disbelief** and so our manager Andy Siry, nowadays A&R manager of Nuclear Blast, decided to found his own label and to release the first record *Disbelief*. So from the beginning we had problems with the acceptance of our style. This changed within the following years by touring with bands like **Bolt Thrower**, **Six Feet Under**, **Death Angel**, **Pro Pain**, and **Hypocrisy**. The amount of fans grew and of course the interest of labels. It is a natural development of a band, that tries to make its own way and sound. The acceptance increased, this is what has changed, and this makes us optimistic for our future.

**The next two albums seemed to really establish your sound.**  
*Worst Enemy* was the first album after one year of heavy problems within the band. Misunderstandings, frustration because of the difficult situation - a lot of shit that we got rid of in the songs of this album. It was the most successful so far and I think the reason for this was its enormous energy comparable to an exploding volcano. Then we had the chance to do the German shows for the **Bolt Thrower** tour in 2002 and so our new label Massacre told us that they want a new release, because the release of *Worst Enemy* was too long ago. So *Shine* was quickly composed and recorded, an important experience for the band, because we proved our ability to work under pressure. The c.d. had a great acceptance and was established for six months in the Reader's Charts of Germany's Rock Hard magazine.

**Have you been doing any touring this year?**  
Yes, we did the No Mercy Festival tour in March with bands like Six Feet Under and Nile, in countries like Czech Republic, France, Italy, Belgium, Switzerland, Austria, Netherlands and of course Germany. After that we played some weekend shows in Germany. The next events are summer festivals in Slovenia, Austria and Germany. In Austria we are proud to support **Slayer** and **Anthrax** with their original line-up. It is planned to do two shows in Russia in September and another European tour with **Ektomorf** starting in October.

**Have the changes always been for the better and were they necessary for Disbelief to get where you are today?**

# disbelief

Fortunately we had only a change of one guitarist. Jan-Dirk Löffler replaced Tommy Fritsch in 2000, and then, in

2005, Tommy came back because Jan-Dirk decided to go back in his profession as a teacher. The four guys- Karsten Jäger, Olly Lenz, Kai Bergerin and me, Jochen Trunk, are together for more than ten years now. This is a long distance and means that we are content in the way **Disbelief** is growing. The changes were necessary at that time, you have to identify more than a 100% with **Disbelief** and Tommy at that time was not able to compete. The reason why he came back and replaced Jan-Dirk again was a change of his mind. The contact with him never broke and when he heard the news that Jan-Dirk will leave, he asked if we want to try it again. Of course these changes are part of our history and influenced our songwriting as well, because this always causes frustration, but they were necessary and helpful for our development and the situation we are in nowadays.

**Are you a fan of the old industrial metal scene and do you think these bands have an influence on your sound?**

Not obviously, of course we are fans of **Ministry**, **Die Krupps**, and I also listened to some **Godflesh** records. Every extreme sounding band has an influence on our music, because we like to describe our sound as extreme rock music- just as simple as that. What I like in industrial metal is the monotone repeating of a riff that creates a hypnotic and scaring atmosphere and sometimes we use this tool as well.

**What are some of your favorite bands?**

I love bands like **Neurosis**, **Meshuggah**, **Tool**, **Deftones**, and of course **Slayer**, but I also listen to popular bands like **Placebo**, **Radiohead** or **Foo Fighters**. I grew up with bands like **Iron Maiden**, **Helloween** or **Running Wild**. They made me start playing in a band and Steve Harris was my big idol and I learned to play every song since the *Seventh Son* record.

**Final comments?**

At first I want to thank you, Brett, for your support and interest in **Disbelief** and I want to invite every fan of extreme music to listen to our new record *66Sick*. Join the intensity of our sound and perhaps - with your help, we can manage to come to the U.S. for a tour. So watch out for **Disbelief** and see you soon.

**Discography:**

2005... *66Sick* (Nuclear Blast)  
2003... *Spreading The Rage* (Nuclear Blast)  
2002... *Shine* (Massacre)  
2001... *Worst Enemy* (Massacre)  
1998... *Infected* (Grind Syndicate)  
1997... *Disbelief* (Grind Syndicate)

**Current line-up:**

Karsten Jager... vocals  
Oliver Lenz... guitars  
Jochen Trunk... bass  
Kai Bergerin... drums

**Website:**

www.disbelief.de



Interview with vocalist

Anders Jacobsson

Sweden's **Draconian** started their career in the nineties and released several demos before gaining the attention of Napalm Records. The label signed the doom/ gothic metal act and now they have released two solid albums; 2005's *Arcane Rain Fell* and 2003's *Where Lovers Mourn*. Anders Jacobsson is their lead male singer and he also spends time studying filmmaking in college. It was a great pleasure to send over some questions and find out more about this interesting guy.

#### How do you feel about the production of *Arcane Rain Fell*?

Compared to *Where Lovers Mourn* this new album has a great production. It's more suitable for heavy and dark songs, such as the tracks on *Arcane Rain Fell*. My only regret is that we didn't know about Studio Underground until now, because I'm sure we could have produced a better debut album there. The sound of the new album was mainly brought up by the producer Pelle Saether, and I remember he used a **Novembers Doom** (*To Welcome the Fade*) album to get an idea of the sound, since he felt there was some similarities between us and them. The only thing I would have liked different was more effects and depth- also a grander and bigger comprising sound of the keyboards and programming of Andreas. That would have brought the atmosphere to a higher level.

#### How often do you write poetry?

Not so very often nowadays, sad to say. I think I have lost track of it a bit. I am sure I still have it but sometimes it's hard to find words for everything I feel, and many ideas gets lost along the way. I believe I was a better lyricist and poet in the earlier days of **Draconian**. I have a lot of older material I want to use, so as long I am not happy with my new attempts, I can always use something from the past. That's good. Some of the poems I have written end up as lyric, but with some modifications to make it fit.

#### What led you to create the lyrical concept of *Arcane Rain Fell*?

It is more or less a concept album about Lucifer and the fallen angels... their emotional and philosophical views on spirituality, retribution and independence. It's a documentation of both the fallen angels and God really. I decided to go with this concept because it really moves me... and the name of Lucifer needs to be cleared from misunderstandings and religious prejudice. The message of the album is that God is a tyrant and his holy light is deceiving. Lucifer realized this and revolted against him- but he lost the battle and fell from heaven. The greatest story of all, to me anyway. There is a great sorrow over the songs of this album and also over the story.

Therefore I think it fits very well.

#### I see that you have studied film- what has made you so interested in this subject?

I have always been interested in the medium of movies, and since I began studying The Science of Film at the university, the interest have grown larger. To write scripts and direct film is what I want to do. I hope the future allows me to be a part of it. My ambition is great.

#### Why would you want to live during the Romantic Age?

The poetry from that era was filled with the essence of pure beauty and passion. It revolted against the bleak age of reason, so therefore I must believe people had a different view on most things back in those days. Today everything is so shallow and soulless; everywhere you turn you see corruption and signs of depravity. I don't say everything then, but I think it would be easier for a guy like me to fit in. Most people like I meet today I detest. When I read some of the poetry I just adore these minds and somehow I want to be a part of it. I see myself in the ideas of that time. The ethics and ideals of the world today is everything but "romantic". Romanticism honours the essence of the soul above the essence of reason and materialism. Things as fantasies, dreams, myths, nature and beauty were dramatically



romanticised. The creative spirit was more important than strict adherence to formal rules and traditional procedures.

#### Why do you like Prague?

Mostly because of the architecture of the buildings and how the town is built. Prague is quite big city but easy to get to know. It's a gothic over Prague and it's a town of great history. I felt at home there at once. I can imagine going there to find some sort of haven and write. My inner self would bloom like a flower there.

#### You have quite an eclectic taste in movies; what types of movies are usually popular in Sweden?

Sweden is the Americanized country in the world, so everything you do over there will get popular over here. We have lost a lot of our culture because of this. I like American movies as well, but I think a good movie is a good movie, wherever it comes from.

#### Why are there not more people making films in Sweden?

But there are a lot of filmmakers in Sweden, old and new. Sweden is known for personalities such as Ingmar Bergman, a man who have had a great influence on filmmakers all over the world. We also have two great geniuses from the silent film era, Victor Sjöström and Mauritz Stiller; also known all over the world for their great work. Swedish director Lasse Hallström is famous in Hollywood and has made films such as "The Cider House Rules" and "Chocolat". Every now and then a Swedish picture gets nominated for an Oscar, like "As it is in Heaven" by Kay Pollak. Great film. There are a lot of famous Swedish directors and I like our films a lot. The Swedes are not afraid to put some depth in their films. I guess we are used to "heavy" directors like Ingmar Bergman, but that's a good thing. I find Swedish movies more attractive than Swedish music, actually.

#### How are you able to relate to the poetry of Goethe and Blake?

Well, by their works, of course. If I read a poem and I love the emotion and character it brings, I know enough. Poetry comes from within and every poem is a peeping hole to the author's inner world. Sometimes it can be damaging to know too much about the author and his/her life. I know very little about most poets I like; everything I need to know reflects in their work.

#### Many bands playing a similar style to **Draconian** change and evolve into other styles (just look at **Elend**), do you feel content with the style of music you are playing or do you wish to stretch into other genres or styles?

**Elend** has changed, yes, and they were better on their three first albums. Nowadays they have lost some of their former glory. And yes, we are content and will not change into something completely different (like too many bands do, look at **Theatre of Tragedy**). We will face development and evolvement though, to take **Draconian** to a higher level. That is a must. We just love what we play and we are stubborn about it. Why change into something else? We are happy where we are.

#### Final comments?

I think you have done a great job with this interview, so I'll leave it as it is. Remember always: "Long better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven."

#### Discography:

2005... *Arcane Rain Fell* (Napalm)

2003... *Where Lovers Mourn* (Napalm)

#### Current line-up:

Anders Jacobsson... vocals

Lisa Johansson... vocals

Magnus Bergstrom... guitars

Johan Ericson... guitars

Jesper Stolpe... bass

Jerry Torstensson... drums

Andreas Karlsson... keyboards

#### Website:

www.draconian.se



Interview with vocalist and guitarist  
Farkas Zoltan

# EKTOMORF

Hungary is a country not well know to U.S. metal fans, but with bands like **Arakain**, **Nevergreen**, **Replika**, and **Moby Dick**; they have a healthy thrash scene. The best known is **Ektomorf**, this is due to their signing with leading metal label Nuclear Blast for the release of their fifth full length, 2004's *Destroy*. This year, **Ektomorf** return with the diverse *Instinct*. Frontman Farkas Zoltan was eager to let people know about his new album.

## What is the metal scene like in Hungary?

In Hungary the metal scene is not that big, also the population is not that big. Anyway the metal bands over there play every kind of metal style that you can think of. There are many small clubs, two big ones and they have the summer festivals. They have some very cool bands. Like **Replika**, the singer is a good friend of mine and **Cadaveres De Tortugas** and **Tankcsapda**, they all doing very well in Hungary.

## Where does the folk influence come from?

The folk influence in my music originates from very old gypsy folk music. I'm gypsy and this music is part of me.

## Do you think it's necessary to sing in English to expand your fanbase?

First of all we wanted to expand our possibilities as a band. In a way it was necessary to sing in English in order to make people really understand what my lyrics are about. To give them a message with my music. It also made it possible for us to sign with Nuclear Blast in Germany.

## How did you hook up with Nuclear Blast?

We played on the Summerbreeze Festival (Germany) in 2004. Nuclear Blast came to us and said that they were interested in **Ektomorf**. Few months later we signed the contract with them. Since then we are known better all over Europe, we get a good promotion and possibilities to grow.

## Why do you feel *Instinct* is a more original sounding album?

I am a big fan from these bands and grow up with this music. We play the same kind of style but we have our very own **Ektomorf** sound. We just had to come out with more albums first so that people recognize that. If you compare the albums of them and mine you will find a big difference in sound, even style now and vocals. The *Instinct* album is too original now to compare it any longer with the old **Sepultura** and the new **Soulfly**. It's very different.

## Tell me about your touring situation.

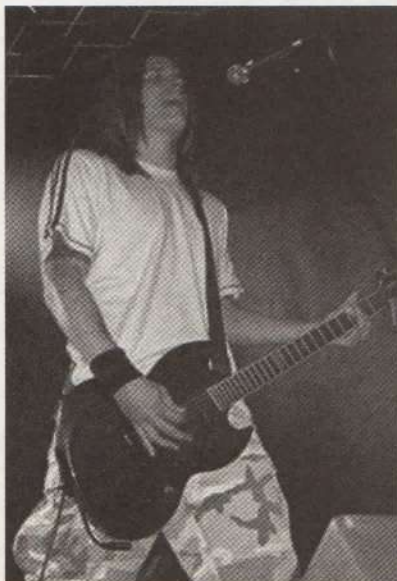
We have done our first big tour with **Pro Pain** in 2004, a tour with **Fear Factory** in the beginning of 2005 and with **Kreator**. There are plans to make our own headliner tour in Russia in September and maybe next year we go to Japan. But I would really like to tour through the States that would be awesome.

## What are the metal shows like in Hungary?

I saw **Soulfly** there a few times in Hungary. Now I live in Amsterdam, Holland with my girlfriend and we saw some great concerts there with **Machine Head**, **Slayer**, **Soulfly**, and **Mötörhead**.

## What are some places you would recommend for a visitor of Hungary to see?

Hungary is a beautiful country. From north to south the landscapes are very different. The north and west is more touristic because the cities are old, you will find castles and a nice nature.



## What have been your biggest obstacles?

In the beginning the reviews from the magazines were very negative, the critics talked a lot of shit, like if they didn't want us to get a chance. They compared us all the time with the bands **Sepultura** and **Soulfly** but did not look further to see how hard we worked the last ten years to get this far. You need to be much more than a 'copy' in order to get where we are now and that's a fact. Since the last album it seems they start to recognize that.

## What does the future hold for Ektomorf?

I hope a lot of touring.

## Final comments?

I think that people must relay more on their own intuition and not deny their instincts. And that's not easy anymore in this world where we live in because everyone tell you what to do, what is the best for you etc. It makes people insecure and they not think anymore for themselves. Just follow what feels good and is good for you but with respect.

## Discography:

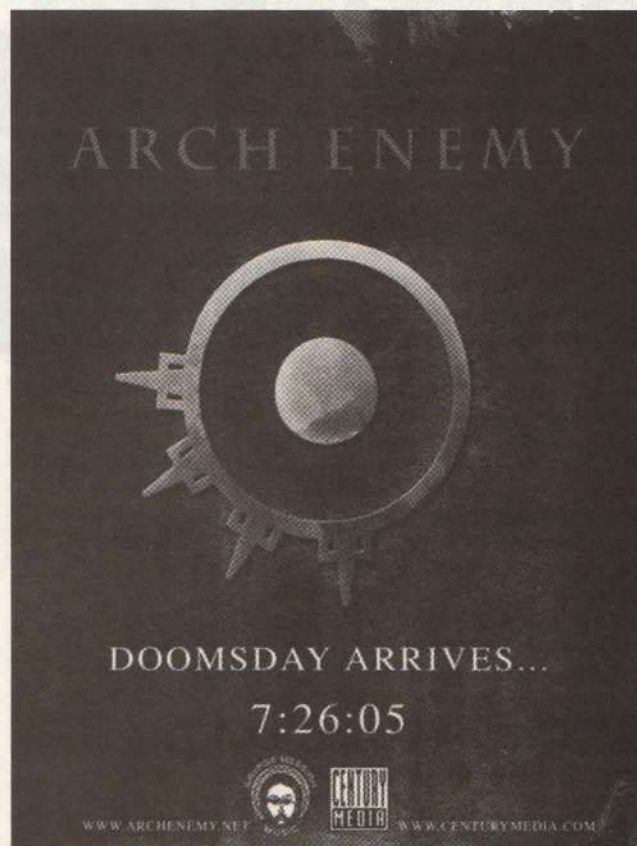
2005... *Instinct* (Nuclear Blast)  
2004... *Destroy* (Nuclear Blast)  
2002... *I Scream Up To The Sky* (Silverdust)  
2000... *Kalyi Jag*  
1998... *Ektomorf*  
1996... *Hangok*

## Current line-up:

Farkas Zoltan... vocals and guitars  
Schrottner Tamas... guitars  
Farkas Csaba... bass  
Szakacs Jozsef... drums

## Website:

[www.ektomorf.com](http://www.ektomorf.com)



Interview with vocalist

Sabine Dunser

Elis began as *Erben Der Schöpfung* and they released their

debut *Twilight* in 2001. Vocalist Sabine Dunser and guitarist Pete Streit continued working together and *Erben Der Schöpfung* morphed into *Elis*. *Elis* released their debut *Gods Silence Devils Temptation* and now quickly follow with *Dark Clouds in a Perfect Sky*. Their style of music is most often considered goth metal, but *Elis* incorporate electronics, doom, and rock into their music for a rather eclectic sound. Here is an interview with frontwoman Sabine.

#### Describe the recording process for *Dark Clouds in a Perfect Sky*.

We started to write the songs for the new album just when we finished our previous one. So we were finished with the song writing in autumn 2003 only two months after *God's Silence Devil's Temptation* was released. In November 2003 we started with the recordings of the drums, bass guitar and some parts of the vocals. After a headlining tour in February the guitars were recorded in March. In the last studio session in April the missing vocals parts were recorded. This was followed by the mixing and some weeks later we listened to the finished album for the first time.

#### Did you want to try or achieve anything different compared to the recording of *Gods Silence Devils Temptation*?

We had two main goals when we started to write the songs for our new album. Of course we wanted to lift the level of the compositions and we wanted to continue our way in the metal direction. The decision to go in this direction was taken when we changed our name into *Elis*. But the change had to be moderate because we didn't want to make a total cut between our debut *Twilight* and the following *God's Silence Devil's Temptation*. If you now listen to all the three albums you will see that *Dark Clouds in a Perfect Sky* is a logical development to the style of music we want to do. I think that we achieved both goals with our new release and that makes us real proud and happy.

#### What does recording with Alex Krull add to your sound?

All our albums so far were produced by Alex and he is also the manager of *Elis*. In this time our relationship changed from a rather professional to a friendly and personal relationship. He always gives his best to make our songs sound as good as they can and I think he does that very well. It's really great to work with him because he is a perfectionist and he always has an inspiring effect on us. We sometimes add new things to the songs in the studio, but mainly they remain as they were on the pre-production. The most important thing about our sound is that is really transparent and still powerful.

#### Why did Georg Trakl's poem "Elis" have an effect upon you?

I didn't have any experiences in writing when I started with *Erben Der Schöpfung*.

So when I started to write the lyrics I first searched for poems and lyrics which were already written. I remembered the Austrian poet Georg Trakl because we read his poems in school and because I liked the atmosphere he created with his writing. So I read most of his poems in order to find one I could use for a song. I liked the words of the poem *Elis* and it's dark and melancholic atmosphere very much so I decided to use it for one of the songs. The songs turned out to be a very good song so we chose him for our first single and later as the new band name.

#### Was the name change from *Erben Der Schöpfung* to *Elis* more because of the member changes or was it because of the sound change?

It was both. We never liked the name *Erben Der Schöpfung* too much, because it was very long and complicated to spell for people who can't speak German. So when the keyboard player left the band, we decided to change both name and style and to move in a more metal like direction. When we decided to make this change, we searched for a name which had a connection to our former work. So we chose the title of the opener of the album *Twilight* "Elis" as our new band name.

# Elis

#### Tell us about your artwork concepts?

I think that a good cover artwork is very important. I personally like to

look at nice artworks and sometimes a good artwork is the reason I buy an album for. The picture with the butterfly is a symbol for the album title and so it is also a symbol for the message we want to give to the listener. There's this perfect butterfly, which is a picture of a real but dead butterfly- which is brutally speared on the sky. On the first look the picture just seems nice but when you have a closer look at it you see that it is not as nice as it seemed. The title *Dark Clouds in a Perfect Sky* stands for the fact that in this world there exists nothing which is perfect. Everything, even when it seems to be perfect, has also a dark and ugly side. People only can be rich, because many people are poor. We like it when the sun shines but it has the power to burn everything. The nature can be very nice but on the other hand it can destroy lives with its power. So the title is a metaphor of our music, which also combines these dark and soft elements, and the lyrics which are about this contrast between good and bad. Also in a perfect sky there can appear dark clouds.

#### What do you think *Elis* adds to the genre that is different or unique?

I think that our music combines two opposite elements. There are dark and heavy element supported by the guitars, bass and drums as well as Tom's singing and there are melodic and soft parts which are represented by the keyboard sounds such as natural instruments and electronical sounds and my voice. Although this doesn't seem to be that new or unique and fits in the image you talked about in our questions, I think we could create our own style. A reason for this may be that we always and since the beginning of *Elis* not only listened to music of the gothic metal scene but also various other styles of music. We all are open-minded to involve other styles in our music.

#### Describe your approach to singing? What artists made you want to become a singer?

There were no special singers which made thinking about becoming a singer. I simply always liked to sing since I was a child. With twelve years I started singing in a choir. Fortunately the conductor was very aware of teaching us a good singing technique so I could learn a lot about using my voice. Later I also took some singing lessons to improve my knowledge. At the moment

I haven't any time to sing in a choir, although I would like it a lot. It's great fun a good exercise for the hearing, but I take some lessons in jazz rock pop singing to have something else besides *Elis*.

#### Why are there so many female vocalists in gothic metal music?

I think the gothic music metal is very melodic and has a very soft side with its keyboard parts, so that even very soft female voices can fit in. In all the other metal styles it is much

harder to sing as a woman just because most of the women can't growl or shout as men can. Not that I wanted to do that, because it isn't very good for the voice as well. So if you don't want to sing in pop band and want to have a band which is a bit harder it's the easiest way to join a gothic metal band.

#### Discography:

2004... *Dark Clouds In A Perfect Sky* (Napalm)  
2003... *Gods Silence Devils Temptation* (Napalm)

#### Current line-up:

Sabine Dunser... vocals  
Pete Streit... guitars  
Jurgen Broger... guitars  
Tom Saxer... bass  
Franco Koller... drums

#### Website:

[www.elis.li](http://www.elis.li)





Interview with guitarist Nornagest

Belgium black metallers **Enthroned** have been a fixture in the extreme black metal scene since its early nineties origins. They released their debut, *Prophecies of Pagan*

*Fire*, on Osmose back in 1995. They signed with British label Blackend Records for their next three full lengths; and eventually found a solid home with Napalm Records for 2002's *Carnage in Worlds Beyond* and their latest, *Xes Haereticum*. All their albums are consistent and professional, their trademark being able to combine the brutal sound of death metal with black metal's rawness. Here is an interview with **Enthroned** mainman Nornagest.

**What keeps you driven to keep Enthroned going?**

Our honesty towards what we are doing, preaching and ourselves.

**Was it difficult to continue after Cernunnos suicide?**

No, we just had to find another drummer, the loss of our war-brother was sad but well, shit happens.

**You spent several years with Blackend, now you're with Napalm with bands like Belphegor- does getting better distribution and promotion help?**

Yeah. It helps to get better tours and conditions for the album recordings and so on, it helps to create the products you really wanna achieve, that's a good point.

**Many bands of your genre have changed and there are others interested in being trendy; do you feel it is necessary for your band to keep the true essence of black metal alive in your recordings?**

It's not a necessity, it's just how we are. We are not stuck to this genre because we are fans of this style or whatsoever, the music we create is just a reflex ion of our inner beings and that's how we sound.

**Enthroned's live show has been considered one of the best, what makes your live performances special and do you think that audiences get a better understanding of Enthroned in this environment?**

I guess the answer will be more or less like the first question you asked me; we never cared about anyone especially concerning our music and about the way we want to develop or create things, may it be original or completely average. We don't give a god damned shit, it's all about our feelings and what we feel. Same for lyrics, we are talking about some views and parts of our belief and that's it, it's cliché well a pity for the listener, it's our thing



www.tmetal.com

ENTHRONED

ot his, same goes for a live show and o on. I guess all those things are just lue to the fact that we are what we claim o be, we practice what we preach and are completely honest towards ourselves. I don't care if the audience

like it or not well, if they like it; fine if not fuck it, I do this shit for me and Satanas end of it.

**My grandparents came from Belgium to America in the early 1900's but I've never been to your country, what is it like living there and what do you like about your country?**

It's not a bad country to live in, but there's a lot of dicks around, many back stabbers and the government is pretty lame. The good thing is that we got a lot of good shows, for that we are pretty lucky.

**Many people view our asshole president as being evil- do you have any thoughts on the subject?**

I just think he is really dumb. Just another money obsessed dick, destroying nature and his own necessity just to gain a few more bucks. Well anyway, the world is just full of dick heads and Bush is one more the problem is that he's "the most powerful man in the world."

**What is your definition of evil?**

What is in opposition to the Christian or religious values, in contradiction of some moral doctrines and so on, just a word to describe what is disturbing.

**Enthroned's lineup has changed often, how are you able to keep the band together and have you ever considered breaking up? Do you have goals yet to accomplish?**

We never really though about a complete split, but sometimes we were really fed up of people turning their backs and so on, the motivation and dedication are the two factors that kept this band together, and yes we still have a couple of goals to accomplish.

**I see you will be releasing a live album (Black Goat Ritual), tell me some more about this. Was this a recording of one show and if so, which one?**

*Black Goat Ritual* was recorded in Brazil on one show. We didn't want to record several shows and choose the best spots, best songs, better sound... no. Just one show like that, **Enthroned** live in it's purest and rawest form. There are a few mistakes and so on, but at least it's pure live and how it sounds like when we play with a good sound. We didn't re-work the album in any studio, pure live. For the rest of the details you'll have to wait the release of this one.

**What are some bands you feel have a similar style and message? Do you prefer that Enthroned stay an underground band or do you welcome more success?**

I don't care really as long as I can spread my hatred and messages. I sing for Satanas and that's already a lot to me, that's already an honour, the rest is just dust or extra's in the better cases. Bands that I think have the same message and style are **Gorgoroth**, **Nachtmystium**, **Hell- Militia**- just a few that I know.

**Discography:**

2004... *Xes Haereticum* (Napalm)  
2002... *Carnage In Worlds Beyond* (Napalm)  
2001... *Armoured Bestial Hell* (Blackend)  
1999... *The Apocalypse Manifesto* (Blackend)  
1997... *Towards The Skullthrone Of Satan* (Blackend)  
1995... *Prophecies Of Pagan Fire* (Osmose)

**Current line-up:**

Lord Sabathan... vocals and bass  
Nornagest... guitars and keyboards  
Nguaroth... guitars  
Glaurung... drums

**Website:**

www.enthroned-horde.com

Interview with guitarist  
Eywin Sundstrom

# FRANTIC BLEEP

the concept a hundred percent, but there's a lot of philosophy and psychology in there that does

Norwegian band **Frantic Bleep**

is one of the most unusual and unorthodox bands you will encounter. Their debut full length, *The Sense Apparatus*, has now been released by The End Records and it's one of the most original sounding metal discs with a sound that is progressive but heavy. Unlike other recent Norwegian progressive metal bands (i.e. **Winds**, **Age Of Silence**), the members of **Frantic Bleep** are fairly new to the scene. Here is guitarist Eywin Sundstrom to introduce his band.

## How does it feel to get *The Sense Apparatus* out in the stores finally?

It feels great, it was a lot of hard work but we finally finished the album and we're very pleased with the result as well, which makes it all worth it. The feedback and reviews has been very good too, so it seems that a lot of people are enjoying what we're doing. We've pretty much put the album behind us now and we're aiming for the next one, but we're very happy with the album and what the record is doing for us.

## What was the most difficult task you encountered while recording?

It wasn't really a difficult album to make or record, but it was hell to organize everything. We went back and forth with different ideas and that took forever. We maybe spent three months recording the album altogether during the whole year we worked on it. We were dependent on other people to be able to finish the album and that was very difficult at times. We would make plans and we would later find out that it didn't work out and so on. At least we know how to not record an album now, and we'll never try to record another record the same way ever again.

## Did you set out to create something new when you formed Frantic Bleep?

We always want to create something original and that has always been very important to us, not only in this band. There's a certain amount of freedom and honesty that's always been very essential to us, and I think we have taken that to the extremes with this band. There's no gimmick behind this band and it's all about the music. We do whatever we feel like musically and I guess some people might consider our attitude and some of the choices we've made to get people's attention a kind of gimmick, but as soon as you leave that behind, we're all about creating high quality metal music. So, yes we always want to create something new and we always want to surprise people as well to a certain degree.

## Do you think people are more interested in being more creative these days? Are there any local bands you are a fan of?

The Norwegian scene has become a lot more experimental as you're saying. I think bands are starting to mature more since this black metal thing is pretty old by now. The cool thing is that many of the musicians in the more experimental metal bands have a black metal background. It's a natural thing that people are getting other influences than they used to. There'll always be a bunch of fourteen year olds who wants to be **Darkthrone** or whatever, but the good bands are evolving beyond the copycats. That's a healthy sign I think. Not that many Norwegian bands I'm a fan of, but **Madder Mortem** and **Peccatum** are great.

## Is there any particular way which you prefer to write new music?

We're currently rehearsing three times a week. The way we wrote *The Sense Apparatus* was a bit different than the way we're writing the next album. With *The Sense Apparatus* we would arrange the basics at rehearsals and later work with the songs on the computer, adding more elements and rearranging them. We don't really use the computer to arrange anymore since it makes the music a bit stiff. Now it's a bit more spontaneous and it's more of a team effort than before. Patrick or someone will have an idea or some riffs, and we'll work on the material at rehearsals. We'll record rehearsal-tapes since it's easier to hear what the songs need when you're listening to them. So it's a pretty standard procedure I think. We use the same method that most other rock bands use.

## What is the connection, as you see it, between the body and the mind?

The album is not a traditional concept album, so the whole theme of the album is pretty much overall. Sure, some of the lyrics don't really represent

represent the concept in my opinion, since the sense machinery is a very crucial part of how we perceive the world around us. I think the connection between mind and body is very big and it's a very fascinating issue. How would your perception of the world change if you lost one of your senses? If there were no senses we wouldn't be able to sense anything around us, so your whole existence would change if you lost an important sense, like sight or hearing. The mind is the centre for everything that we experience, so senses are all about the mind. You can also throw in some philosophy in there as well. Like, are things around us created by our senses? Is the sense apparatus giving us false impressions? We perceive things through human eyes which might not be the correct way all the time. The lyrics mix these kinds of theories with storytelling, philosophy etc, and the sense machinery is everything for us humans, so there's a lot of freedom when you're writing lyrics around these kinds of issues.

## Do you believe in the supernatural and the afterlife? How strong do you think the mind can be?

I haven't really experienced anything supernatural so I don't really believe in it. But it's very fascinating and I don't want to exclude the possibility that it does exist. I hope there's an afterlife, but I would rather be positively surprised when I find out the answer to that question, rather than disappointed, so I live my life as it's the only life I'll ever have. The mind can be very strong, much stronger than any humans will ever understand. There's a lot of brain potential that we humans aren't using at all, and the human brain can be very strong in its current state as well. Right now we can only speculate what kind of tool we're equipped with.

## When you think about what you've accomplished with *The Sense Apparatus*- what are you most proud and satisfied with?

We all think the album's great and we're very satisfied with it. It doesn't really sound like a debut album at all, which is very cool I think. I still find the songs interesting after all this time. We really pushed ourselves not only when it comes to song writing, but also in the recording-technique department. What I'm the most proud of must be the fact that the record became even better than we had hoped for, and we worked very hard to make it as good as possible. It's an album that will live for a long time I think.

## What improvements can be made in future recordings?

I think the sound on the next album will be a bit different than *The Sense Apparatus* sound. It's a very well produced album and we do want to keep it that way, but it's important to go for a sound that will go well with the material. I think the sound on the next album will be massive, but a bit rawer and stripped down.

## Do you think the new songs will be in a similar style as *The Sense Apparatus* or do you want to branch out even further?

The biggest mistake a Frantic Bleep fan can make is to expect that the next album will sound like the first one. We will never make *The Sense Apparatus* part 2. We will always try to develop the band's music and sound. I don't want to say too much about the new songs, but it's a bit more aggressive and intense with a rawer "in your face" attitude.

## Discography:

2005... *The Sense Apparatus* (The End)

## Current line-up:

Paul Mozart Bjorke... vocals and bass  
Patrick Scantlebury... guitars and keyboards  
Eywin Sandstrom... guitars  
Sten Svendheim... drums

## Website:

[www.franticbleep.com](http://www.franticbleep.com)



**ABHORRED... *Wallowing In Utter Chaos...* BVP...** Massachusetts psychos **Abhorred** formed about two years ago and with this debut full length they are making local bands like **Watchmaker** and **Disengaged** look mellow. It makes me smile seeing **Abhorred** photos with members wearing **Acid Bath** and **Dark Throne** t-shirts. This is apropos because their music is raw, filthy, and no for the weak. They played local shows and recorded a demo last year and it wasn't long before artistically minded Not Common Records signed the band. *Wallowing in Utter Chaos* is an apt title because that's what it feels like when listening to this disc. First off, vocalist John Farley has the most emphatic, vocal screams I've heard in some time. Songs like "Forever War" and "Collective Strangulation" leave a huge impact especially due to his intensity/ insanity. The **Acid Bath** influence can be heard during "Bearer of Guilt," this is classic **Black Sabbath** meets extreme metal. "Submit and Surrender" is stoner rock based, but again mixed with extreme metal. There's even a slight doom influence to "Sweet Narcosis." Sure, the Louisiana scene may be an influence; especially **Soilent Green** and **Acid Bath**, but **Abhorred** have themselves a sick vocalist and an extreme sound which allows them to stand on their own. **NOT COMMON.**

**ABORTED... *The Archaic Abattoir...* BVP...** Ever since Belgium's **Aborted** started releasing albums (1999's *Purity of Perversion*) they've returned two years later with an even better record; *Engineering the Dead, Goremageddon*, and now *The Archaic Abattoir*, respectively. What makes an **Aborted** album impressive? It's how they play tight, technical, and memorably. Very few extreme metal bands can do so with this high level of skill. In particular, *Goremageddon* was a near masterpiece. **Aborted** added groove and technical precision to their death metal sound. *The Archaic Abattoir*, like its predecessor, is being licensed to Olympic Recordings from French label Listenable Records. The drumming of Gilles Dellecroix has always been impressive and he stands out with hyperblasts on the tight but very creative "Blood Fixing the Bled." **Aborted** shift gears with the slower paced "The Gangrenous Epitaph" which adds a new dimension to their grinding sound. Another surprising change occurs with "The Inertia." It's certainly death metal in style but it actually is more like a rock song in structure. The two definite highlights occur on "Gestated Rebidity" and "Threading on Vermillion Deception." The former has an awesome groove punctuated by guitar squeals, the latter has an absolutely brilliant brutal groove. It's hard to believe that **Aborted** could make an album better than this but they just keep getting more impressive. **OLYMPIC.**

**AMON AMARTH... *Fate Of Norns...* Dave Smith...** **Amon Amarth** have been consistently lurking on the fringes of greatness for the last ten years. Their melodic death style and Viking imagery are nothing new to metal, but they have made this style their own. They have subtly changed their sound over the course of the years, becoming generally slower and groovier with more structured songs, but have remained true to their original vision of crunching metal. They now occupy a pretty strong position – still aggressive enough to keep their underground credibility but melodic and song-focused enough to appeal to a wide metal audience. Same color scheme, but the cover of *Fate of Norns* is a more somber image than the cartoonish Viking warrior on the cover of their previous album, *Versus the World*. *Fate of Norns* seems to be sort of a continuation of *Versus the World*. The basic style is the same, but *Fate of Norns* seems to have a more melancholy spirit to it. *Fate of Norns* is the death and defeat that inevitably follows the war and conquest of *Versus the World*. The band are repeating themselves a bit, but it doesn't matter when they're repeating a sound that is so successful. Every song on this album is at least good, and at least half the songs are great. **Amon Amarth** are underrated masters of metal riffs. Since their first EP, *Sorrow Throughout the Nine Worlds*, they have consistently churned out some of the best true metal riffs out there. They're not coming at such a frantic pace as they were back then, but they now are accompanied by catchy, pounding grooves and the under-rated double-bass rumbling of drummer Fredrik Andersson, who has a great knack for playing what is exactly right for every song, never beating you to death with too much of one thing. Vocalist Johan Hegg continues to be a strong, emotional screamer, really getting into the character of his vengeful and doomed Viking ancestors. "An Ancient Sign of Coming Storm" is a typical rousing opener with a constant melody throughout and a big metal closing. The second track, "Where Death Seems to Dwell", is where the darker, almost doomy feeling sets in. The song starts off with a gloomy dirge that gradually builds tension until it finally breaks out into the usual chugging groove. The lyrics describe a journey to the Norse version of Hell. The title track, probably the overall best song on the album, laments a child's death to the gods and reflects on that fate which awaits us all. "The Pursuit of Vikings" returns to more Viking plunder with more great riffs. The final two songs are linked and form another great epic. No surprises here, but that's a good thing. This band wasn't meant to surprise you, they're just

meant to bang you upside the head with their flagon of ale, then throw you in the longship and row you out to blood, fire and death. Victory achieved. **METAL BLADE.**

**ANOREXIA NERVOSA... *Redemption Process...* BVP...** **Anorexia Nervosa** was formed by members of **Necromancia** in 1995. A short time later they signed with Season Of Mist and released their debut, *Exile*, in 1997. They recruited new members; RMS Hreidmarr (vocals) and Mr. Xort (keyboards), signed with Osmose, and explored new ideas with their melodic black metal sound. *Drudenhaus* was released in 2000, but it was 2001's *New Obscurantis Order* which really expanded the band's sound and saw their futuristic black metal reach new heights of creativity. Prior to recording *Redemption Process*, **Anorexia Nervosa** found another new home, Listenable Records, for their new album. It appears Listenable is a worthy home for **Anorexia Nervosa**'s creativity. "The Shining" opens the disc as a fast paced, straight ahead black metal anthem. "Antiferno" is next and the exploration begins. The vocals during the middle of "Antiferno" are clear and the singer reminds me of Atilla Csihar's performance on **Mayhem**'s controversial *Grand Declaration of War* album. Next is the epic "Sister September" as **Anorexia Nervosa** slow the pace down and go for an atmospheric vibe. The best song is "Worship Manifesto." The vocals are dynamic and it's the band at their most creative. Keyboards play their biggest role on "Codex Veritas," giving *Redemption Process* a healthy injection of melody. Another epic, "The Sacrament," takes *Redemption Process* to a dramatic conclusion. Seth and **Anorexia Nervosa**, along with **S.U.P.**, **Scarve**, and **Misanthrope** are giving French avantgarde metal a good name. **LISTENABLE.**

**ARTILLERY HELL... *Artillery Hell...* BVP...** California's **Artillery Hell** is a new band spawned from **Dreadnaught**, which was formed by vocalist/ bassist Robert Anderson and guitar shredder Mike Knittel. With influences ranging from **Pantera**, **Metallica**, **Slayer**, **Morbid Angel**, and **Cradle Of Filth** - **Artillery Hell** developed their own death thrash sound. The three songs on their latest demo are very impressive. **Artillery Hell** are tight, catchy, and brutal. Knittel's leads are one of the definite highlights as this kid can shred. This band is certainly one to watch as they balance showmanship with quality riffs and songwriting.

**BELPHEGOR... *Goatrich Fleshcult...* BVP...** Austria black metallers **Belphegor** have established themselves as one of the genre's most consistent and well developed artists. Their first two discs; 1995's *The Last Supper* and 1997's *Blutsabbath*, were raw and extreme, but when they released *Necrodaemon Terrorsathan* in 2000 **Belphegor** became tighter and heavier than before. They landed a deal with local label Napalm Records. In 2003 they issued *Lucifer Incestus*, but this year's *Goatrich Fleshcult* proves to be their defining moment thus far. Ever since *Necrodaemon Terrorsathan*, **Belphegor** has been crossing over into a more brutal death metal sound. Old **Morbid Angel** appears to be an influence on tracks like "Bleeding Salvation" and "Goatrich Fleshcult." Meanwhile, "Sepulture of Hypocrisy" is nearly as creepy as "Where the Slime Live." What I like most about *Goatrich Fleshcult* is **Belphegor**'s command of their craft. "Fornicationium et Immundus Diabolus" is solid extreme black metal, "Goatrich Fleshcult" is blasting but then you have the slower creepy songs like "Sepulture of Hypocrisy" and "Kings Shall Be Kings." Do I dare comment on the melodic beginning of closer "Festum Asinorum" or the alternating screaming high pitched and death metal growling of "Swarm of Rats?" **Belphegor** have been praised for years but this album is by far their best work to date. **NAPALM.**

**BEYOND TWILIGHT... *Section X...* BVP...** The origins of **Beyond Twilight** lie in the underrated nineties band **Twilight**. **Twilight** is known in progressive metal circles due to their 1994 release, *Eye for an Eye*. Led by talented frontman Anders Engberg (**Section A**, ex-**Lions Share**, ex-**Sorcerer**) **Twilight** was seemingly over with shortly after *Eye for an Eye*'s release. The rhythm section of Tomas Freden (bass) and Finn Zierler (drums) kept **Twilight** alive and they became **Beyond Twilight** when guitarists Anders Ericson and Jacob Hansen (Invoker) joined. They recorded 2001's *The Devils Hall of Fame* with vocal extraordinaire Jorn Lande. Despite the talents of Lande, *The Devils Hall of Fame* was not very impressive. I give credit to **Beyond Twilight** for creating a bizarre album (Jorn is bizarre after all), but only a song or two were really accessible and that **Savatage** based power metal sound of *Eye for an Eye* was completely absent. Due to Jorn's busy schedule, he does not return for **Beyond Twilight**'s sophomore disc, but they recruit a relatively new talent in **Outworld** vocalist Kelly Carpenter. I'm a big fan of **Outworld** and I can't wait to hear their debut full length, but I had no idea that Carpenter was this good. **Beyond Twilight** still remain bizarre and mid paced on *Section X*, but the songwriting is much better and Carpenter's vocals are very impressive. His singing on

"Shadow Self" is emphatic and outstanding. Like "Shadow Self," "The Path of Darkness" is very heavy but the fourth track, "Sleeping Beauty" returns to the sound found on *The Devils Hall of Fame*, as I could picture Jorn singing this and it's also progressive in instrumentation. Beyond Twilight's theatrical side comes through on the King Diamond-esque "The Dark Side" and the heavy but quirky "Section X." Perhaps it's the influence of Hansen's guitar playing, but songs like "Ecstasy Arise" and "The Path of Darkness" are very heavy and intense. *Beyond Twilight* are always an interesting band. *Section X* is their third record and each one stands alone as its own entity. There is a theatrical quality to their albums since the name change but Carpenter and Hansen help give some power and aggression and that was sorely lacking on *The Devils Hall of Fame*. NIGHTMARE.

**BIOMECHANICAL... The Empires Of The Worlds... BVP...** British metallers **Biomechanical** made an impact upon the minute I heard their 2001 demo, *Distorted*. Led by ex-**Deceptor** vocalist Yiannis Koutselinis (a.k.a. John K.), a musical assault equal to that of bands like **October Thorns** and **Nevermore**, and instantly ear grabbing songs like "Do You Know Me;" I knew **Biomechanical** were destined for greatness. John K. spent some time with **Balance Of Power** and the full length *Eight Moons* was released. *Eight Moons* was essentially the four killer demo songs with five added rather forgettable songs. They signed with British label Earache Records and their subsidiary Elitist and now comes their sophomore release. *The Empires of the Worlds* has already divided listeners. Some think it's a work of brilliance, others can't grasp what these madmen of created. No longer another power metal band, **Biomechanical** have become shockingly more extreme, faster, and technically outrageous- no wonder John K. left **Balance Of Power** to concentrate on this. Many have called this album a combination of **Judas Priest**, **Nevermore**, and **Pantera**- that's an apt description for sure, but it's also so crazy you need several listens to grasp. The music is over the top and mostly in the thrash metal vein. People who've been complaining of the lack of technical riffs from recent **Megadeth** albums will love this. Those leads on "Relinquished Destiny" are pure Mustaine/Friedman. Want some crunchy **Pantera** like riffs? Check out "D.N.A. Metastasis." Want some brutal thrash metal? Check out the ending of the same song. Want some groove to nod your head to? Check out "Existenz." If you want to hear a riff so creepy it will make your skin crawl? Than listen to the opening of "Relinquished Destiny." If you want something so over the top and extreme it makes grind and death metal sound weak? There's "Truth Denied." On that latter track drummer Matt C. is a man possessed and there are so many guitar solos your head will spin. Sure, **Pantera**, **Judas Priest**, **Nevermore**, **Megadeth**, and **Queensryche** can all be heard here, but **Biomechanical** have created an album that is meant to make people love it or hate it. Metal needs an album that goes for the throat and holds nothing back. All hail **Biomechanical**. EARACHE.

**BORGO PASS... Nervosa... BVP...** New York sludge rockers **Borgo Pass** formed about ten years ago and have proven to have dedication and perseverance to last longer than any of their contemporaries. They released a self titled debut and *Power by Sludge*, which established them on the local scene. Their 2002 e.p., *Slightly Damaged* was their best effort yet and drew **Borgo Pass** attention from more than just the stoner rock scene. Their timeless style of music sees influences from 70's bands like **Black Sabbath** but also modern bands like **Clutch**. I was pleasantly surprised when *Nervosa* arrived in the mail. *Nervosa* picks up where *Slightly Damaged* left off and it's the best work of **Borgo Pass**' career. The appropriate anthem "Working Man" opens the disc with great energy and memorable hooks. "Nervosa" keeps the album moving forward in the same vibe before shifting gears with "Dead Summer." "Dead Summer" is a semi-ballad with powerful emotion and a great performance from frontman James Tamarazzo, and don't worry by the songs end **Borgo Pass** have some crushing riffs. The middle of the album explores the dirty rock vibe of their previous work. Later, they offer the short, peppy acoustic rock of "Bad Mother Ocean" and the "Black Sabbath" influenced "American Horror Story" ends *Nervosa* with an atmospherically disturbing note. **Borgo Pass** take sludge rock and make it energetic, catchy, and always a pleasurable.

**BRAINSTORM... Liquid Monster... BVP...** One of my all time favorite bands is back with their sixth full length. I love Andy B. Franck's vocals and admire his ability to create incomparably catch vocal hooks, and he made **Ivanhoe** and **Symphorce** great just by his presence, but I prefer the first two albums (1997's *Hungry* and 1998's *Unholy*) with Marcus Jurgens

singing. These two albums were among the best power metal/ thrash discs released in the nineties. **Brainstorm** didn't start to get recognized worldwide until they signed with Metal Blade and acquired Franck as their vocalist. Since then, they've been prolific with *Ambiguity*, *Metus Mortis*, *Soul Temptation*, and now *Liquid Monster* coming out right after each other. The album kicks off with "Worlds Are Coming Through" and "Inside the Monster" and there are your typical **Brainstorm** anthems. If you're familiar with **Brainstorm**, you know that's a good thing. From there, *Liquid Monster* lacks consistency. For every awesome song (the catchy and thrashy "Lifeline" and "Invisible Enemy" or the fast paced thrash of "Despair to Drown") there are subdued, forgettable songs ("All Those Words" and "Burns My Soul") or simply lame (the ballad "Heavenly"). *Liquid Monster* on its own is a very solid power metal meets thrash album, however when stacked up against great albums like *Hungry* or *Metus Mortis*, it's comes across as not being one of **Brainstorm**'s finer moments. METAL BLADE.

**CANDLEMASS... Candlemass... Dave Smith... Black Sabbath** invented doom metal in 1970. While **Judas Priest** and many NWOBHM bands had some doomy elements, it wasn't until the mid-80's that any bands truly followed in **Sabbath**'s big fat footprints. **Trouble** was probably the first one. Then in 1986 came **Candlemass**, the band that is probably the most well-known for continuing to carry the weight of classic doom metal on its back. Bassist/founder/main songwriter Leif Edling has broken up and reformed the band a few times since their late 80's glory days but this is the first studio album in 15 years to feature the "classic" **Candlemass** line-up of Edling, guitarists Mats Bjorkman and Lars Johansson, drummer Jan Lindh, and vocalist Messiah Marcolin. Marcolin, in particular, is considered by fans to be the true voice of **Candlemass**. He also provided a pretty unique look, being a rather large guy with big frizzy hair who dressed in monk's robes and did a goofy "doom dance" around the stage. The album, *Candlemass*, has the band looking pretty serious in suits and ties on the promo photo. The music is serious as well. I was actually blown away on first listen by how aggressive and up-to-date this band sounds. The production is crisp - guitars nasty and heavy, drums pounding, vocals clear and commanding. It also sounds very organic, no digital sheen is evident. The album was recorded at Sweden's Polar Studios, a place not known for recent metal output, but a place where **Led Zeppelin**, **The Rolling Stones** and **Alice Cooper** recorded in their primes. And this album sounds as much like classic rock as those bands do. It sounds like **Candlemass**, half the album is filled with doomy dirges. But there are also quite a few songs that pick up the tempo to a headbanging groove. The past is acknowledged but not just retreat. Edling gets a pretty remarkable amount of energy and urgency out of unadulterated **Sabbath** worship and what is often standard, meat-and-potatoes metal. Marcolin sounds in fine voice, a little rougher than in the late 80's - which helps in some cases, adding an angry bite to his voice that suits the lyrics well (and makes him sound uncannily like **Deep Purple**'s Ian Gillan). Probably no other vocalist in the genre except **Solitude Aeternus**' Robert Lowe does the dramatic doom vocal better than Marcolin. Edling's lyrics are angry, sarcastic, sometimes humorous and pretty creative in their language and imagery, using a lot of space-related and sci-fi type scenarios to paint both apocalyptic tales like "Black Dwarf" and social criticism like "Copernicus" and "Spellbreaker". The underrated guitars have a lot of chemistry and there are a lot of good traditional metal guitar solos, another thing **Candlemass** do better than most doom bands. "Black Dwarf", "Born in a Tank", and "Mars and Volcanoes" are all (relatively) fast and intense songs with riffs that sound fresh even though they're composed of well-used metal parts. "Seven Silver Keys", "Copernicus", "Witches", and "The Day and the Night" are more typical **Candlemass** doom anthems with slower tempos, operatic vocals and stately, wandering guitar harmonies along with stomping riffs. "Spellbreaker" is the "progressive" song here, with a more complex arrangement and an alternation of tempos and riffs that is expertly crafted. If a complaint is to be made, it's that there are some too-obvious "tributes" to **Black Sabbath**. The slow, creepy verse of "Copernicus" mirrors the verse of "Black Sabbath". "Black Dwarf" has a groove similar to "Symptom of the Universe". "Born in a Tank" copies both the groove and the main riff from "Children of the Grave". "The Day and the Night" cops a little bit of riffing from "Sabbath Bloody Sabbath". Still, these songs sound good even with the obvious inspiration and Edling has never made a secret of his **Black Sabbath** adoration. People would be bowing if **Sabbath** made a reunion album this good. This is a classy and powerful "reunion" album. Whether this line-up will stay together I have no idea, although Edling will always continue working, regardless of who else is in the band. But

the chemistry of this particular group is undeniable and everyone sounds hungry to recapture metal glory. **NUCLEAR BLAST.**

**CORROSION OF CONFORMITY... In The Arms Of God... BVP...** It's been a long break but **Corrosion Of Conformity** are finally back with a new kick ass disc. They started out in the early eighties as a punk/hardcore crossover and like their contemporaries **D.R.I.** and the **Cro Mags**, **Corrosion Of Conformity** went from hardcore (1983's *Eye for an Eye* and 1985's *Animosity*) to thrash (1987's *Technocracy*). The band split up until 1991 when guitarist Woody Weatherman and drummer Reed Mullin recruited new members; Karl Agell (vocals), Pepper Keenan (guitars), and Phil Swisher (bass) for the heavy metal triumph *Blind*. Agell and Swisher formed **Leadfoot** while Keenan took over as vocalist and original bassist/ singer Mike Dean returned. **Corrosion Of Conformity** took a heavy rock meets **Black Sabbath** vibe on their next three releases; 1994's *Deliverance*, 1996's *Wiseblood*, and 2000's *America's Volume Dealer*. Due to a back injury, Mullin is no longer a member and these days the drummer is Stanton Moore. I was a huge fan of *Blind*, especially "Voting with a Bullet" and each of the last three albums have some strong songs, but *In the Arms of God* is **Corrosion Of Conformity's** most consistent album since *Blind*. With twelve songs clocking in at over an hour, the music has to be excellent to keep listeners intrigued. Opening single "Stone Breaker" sets the pace but it's the next song, "Paranoid Opioid" which supplies the great riff and energy. "It Is That Way" has the **Sabbath** doom thing happening. Even the acoustic "Rise River Rise" is energetic, especially with Keenan's enthusiastic performance. He particularly shines on "So Much Left Behind." *In the Arms of God* should've been under an hour but "Dirty Hands Empty Pockets," "Never Turns to More," and the trippy "Backslider" outstay their welcome and drag too long. The Ozzy like vocals and mellow music of "Crown of Thorns" introduces the closing track which is heavier than anything **Corrosion Of Conformity** has done since *Blind*. I just wish it didn't take four years for a new album to surface. **SANCTUARY.**

**CROWBAR... Lifesblood For The Downtrodden... Dave Smith...** This is **Crowbar's** first album in four years. Vocalist/guitarist Kirk Windstein is now the sole remaining original member and proves that **Crowbar** has always been his baby. Apparently, Windstein wrote absolutely everything on this album except the music for the closing title track (written by producer/bassist Rex Brown). **Crowbar** have always been known for fatness – fat riffs, fat tempos, and fat members. Unfortunately, longtime bassist Todd Strange has departed, leaving the band many pounds lighter. Luckily, the music has lost none of its heaviness. Windstein has been churning out sludgy, pounding doomcore for around fifteen years now, taking the slow sludge of **The Melvins** and welding it to the aggression of the bands that were mixing hardcore and metal at that time. Early **Crowbar** was a big sledgehammer to the head, pounding and plodding, with a dry riff-heavy ethic and extreme vocals barked in an anti-melodic hardcore style. Perhaps learning from Windstein and Strange's experience in **Down**, playing with **Pantera's** Phil Anselmo (who also produced their second album) and **COC's** Pepper Keenan, **Crowbar** diversified beginning with 1998's *Odd Fellows Rest* album, and started to groove as well as pound, and added **Sabbath** riffs as well as some Louisiana swamp gas from their native New Orleans to make the whole thing even thicker. All of this resulted in a band with its own identity that has held up a pretty strong standard of quality. Once you get past the debut, it's hard to pin down one **Crowbar** album as being way better than any other. Despite the long break, line-up changes, and record company hassles which have finally landed **Crowbar** on Candlelight Records (an odd choice, I usually associate this label with European death/black metal), *Lifesblood for the Downtrodden* is as solid as any previous **Crowbar** album, and offers more diversity than most. Of course, slow heaviness still dominates, but the songs have plenty of dynamics, and there's a naturally, bluesy flow to the grooves and arrangements, perhaps more of that New Orleans swamp influence. "New Dawn" is an immediate opener, crashing down like Chris Farley landing on a coffee table, with Windstein singing "I'm at the point that I can do what I want!" which he does. The whole album has that sort of world-weary but still determined lyrical view, living up to its title by providing inspiration – lifesblood – to the downtrodden. "Angel's Wings" and "Underworld" actually have some jarring fast paces that nearly thrash before collapsing back into sludge. "Fall Back to Zero" unfolds with soft-to-loud dynamics and the title track is a genuine ballad, although an extremely dark, moody one, with acoustics and piano providing a genuine atmosphere (which isn't entirely new to this band, after all, they did once cover "Dream Weaver"). Windstein

has diversified from his early days of growling and now has a variety of yells, groans, and gritty singing that is obviously limited in range but heavy on emotion and very well-suited to the music. This is a great return for **Crowbar**. If you've been a fan of this band before, you still will be when you hear this album. It's not perfect, the sludge does drag occasionally, but **Crowbar** have established their own heavy presence and identity as masters in the world of sludge/doom rock, where there are many bands who do little but imitate others and screw around meaninglessly. **CANDLELIGHT.**

**DARK MOOR... Beyond The Sea... BVP...** Guitarists Henrik Garcia and Javier Rubio formed **Dark Moor** back in 1993. Bassist Anan Kaddouri and drummer Jorge Saez joined and eventually Alberto Maroto replaced Rubio, while new female vocalist Elisa C. Martin took over on vocals. They signed with Arise Records and released several progressive metal albums; 1999's *Shadowland*, 2000's *The Hall of the Olden Dreams*, and 2002's *The Gates of Oblivion*. Due to differences in musical direction; Martin, Saez, and Maroto split from the band and Martin and Saez formed **Dreamaker**. **Dark Moor** was left with guitarist Garcia and he recruited new members; vocalist Alfred Romero, guitarist Jose Garrido (ex-**Arwen**), and drummer Andy C. Their first album together was 2003's self titled effort, **Dark Moor's** heaviest disc yet. The **Dark Moor** split seemed beneficial for both parties. The first release with **Dark Moor's** new line up was a focused, aggressive metal album and new singer Garcia made an immediate impression. Elisa's new band **Dreamaker** also made a positive statement with their debut and a shockingly different follow up. Having acknowledged the excellent self titled album, I find its follow up, *Beyond the Sea*, a little less impressive. It's still a good, solid album, but the new ideas explored on *The Dark Moor* are absent here and it's a predictable album. The modern elements have been replaced by traditional ones. Songs like the galloping "The Silver Key" and "Going On" have an **Iron Maiden** feel to them- although the former is heavy and catchy, **Dark Moor** are also employing a hard rock sound on a few songs- "Miracles" and "Beyond the Sea." Three of the ten tracks are filler; the ballad "Green Eyes" and the interludes "Through the Gates of the Silver Key" and "Julius Caesar." The best songs are "Houdini's The Great Escapade," "The Silver Key," and "Beyond the Sea," although closing epic "Alea Jacta" explores an array of styles. **ARISE.**

**DARK TRANQUILLITY... Character... Karl Haikara... Character** is the newest CD by the famed Gothenburg band **Dark Tranquillity**. To me, recently famed, as I had previously never even heard of the band. After researching them, I found out they were one of the first melodic death metal bands, having been around since the early 90's. In a realm of music which is known for it's overly similar bands, **Dark Tranquillity** have carved out their distinct niche. They have yet to sell themselves out or to seriously change their basic sound, yet they have matured their sound and outlook a great deal. They have not mellowed out a single bit either in the past ten years. Every song on the CD burns with intensity and fast technical playing. The songs are also very good, with good progressions and a tight (though not mechanical) sound. The CD starts off strong with opener "The New Build," which features black metal-type guitar picking, a melodic sound and integrated use of keyboards. **Dark Tranquillity** make good use of keyboards and electronic elements, they are a nice part of the music and sound, yet the basic song is very strong as well. The vocalist uses a combination of a primarily black metal sound and a deep growl. Most often it comes out as a combination of the two, which reminds me of the mid-range sound of **Dissection**. Every song is driven by the guitar riffs and the drums. The bass is a kind of distant sound, but to be honest, if the bass plays an essential part it's impossible to tell. Every song is played very very fast, not a second is wasted for the most part, as they blaze through their songs. They put a lot of great riffs and twists and turns into very small amounts of time. To be quite honest, I didn't like the CD at first. It wasn't until the fourth song, "The Endless Feed," that I started to warm up to it. This is mainly because it's the first time on the CD where it lays back and is a little more atmospheric and melodic, with moments I would even call beautiful and very emotional. The band shows that they don't have to blaze by with a million riffs every song (which starts to give me a headache) and instead can give a good groove. "Lost to Apathy" is another one I liked a lot, though it reminds me a bit of **Children Of Bodom**. It's beautiful and melodic (with really nice riffs) and also fast. It shows off the best elements of the band, their melodic parts and their heavy thrashy parts. Each song on *Character* creates a different mood, yet sometimes it's very hard to tell where one song ends and another begins except for the quiet between tracks. If

anything, that would be my complaint, that they don't change up enough, though others may find this to be a strength rather than a weakness. At least all the songs are pretty strong. There are many uses of electronic elements, and many attempts to fit electronic bleeps and burbles into the melodic death metal sound. Overall, I think they would have been better served by making these elements even more a part of the songs. As it is, the electronic parts sound a bit tacked on, though when they are used they are pretty effective. I am unhappy that when they do use these elements they always sound like the same electronic samples we had heard on other songs. On all songs, however, the keyboards do improve the sound of the songs. Without the keyboards, the songs would sound even more similar than they would otherwise. Ultimately, do I like *Character*? Yes, to a certain extent, but it doesn't really excite me except for a few songs (about 4 or 5 of the 11). It's a good, very well played album, though just a bit too similar sounding. Sometimes it works very well and is quite good, other times it just feels like more of the same. So can I recommend it? Yes, to fans of melodic death metal and/or *Dark Tranquillity*. If you don't like either, this won't prove anything to you. It mainly succeeded in giving me a headache every time I listened to it. **CENTURY MEDIA.**

**BRUCE DICKINSON... *Tyranny of Souls*... BVP...** Forty seven year old vocal legend Bruce Dickinson (*Iron Maiden*) returns for his sixth studio full length during some down time from *Iron Maiden*. Bruce originally embarked on his solo career in 1990 with the successful, but unfocused *Tattooed Millionaire*. He followed that with the more liked *Balls to Picasso* in 1994. Bruce left *Maiden* for several years and his solo career was prolific during this time as he released the controversial *Skunkworks*, followed by *Accident of Birth* and the album widely considered his best; *Chemical Wedding*. Bruce rejoined *Iron Maiden* after they had two disappointing albums with Blaze Bayley and his solo career took a back seat until now. Bruce has employed *Iron Maiden* guitarists Adrian Smith and Jannick Gers at various times but he's found a formidable writing partner in guitarist Roy Z. Roy is best known for his work with Halford, but Roy was also a member of underrated rockers *Tribe Of Gypsies* and his former bandmates Eddie Casillas (bass) and Dave Ingraham (drums) consitute Bruce Dickinson's solo band. When this trio joined Bruce for *Skunkworks* many felt it was this *Tribe Of Gypsies* influence which made the album sound like an alternative rock disc, but they've adapted well to Bruce's style and *Maiden* fans will probably enjoy *Tyranny of Souls* as much as *Accident of Birth* and *Balls to Picasso*, though it fails to come close to the brilliance of *Chemical Wedding*. "Abduction" and "Believiel" are good songs and Bruce's metal roots shine through. "Soul Intruders" is a also an enjoyable song, and "River of No Return" and closer "A Tyranny of Souls" both show contrasts between aggression and mellowness, a contrast which has always suited Bruce's dynamic vocal style. It's unfortunate that the rest of the album is filler. "Mars Within" is a pointless intro. "Kill Devil Hill" is melancholic but ultimately dull, which is more than can be said about "Devil on a Hog." The acoustic ballad "Navigate the Seas of the Sun" shows a new side to Bruce's vocal range and that's nice, but the music is extremely mundane. I'm a bit disappointed in *Tyranny of Souls*. It is Bruce singing after all, so it's essentially listening for metal heads and especially *Maiden* fans, but it's really a huge letdown after *Chemical Wedding*. **SANCTUARY.**

**DOMAIN... *Last Days of Utopia*... BVP...** German melodic metallers *Domain* started out in the mid eighties and released a trio of albums (1988's *Our Kingdom*, 1989's *Before the Storm*, and 1991's *Crack in the Wall*) which established them on the scene. The band went their separate ways until guitarist Axel Ritt decided to reform *Domain* near ten years later. Armed with the vocal talents of Evidence One frontman Carsten Schulz, *Domain* returned with three more solid albums (2001's *One Million Lightyears from Home*, 2002's *The Artefact*, and 2003's *The Sixth Dimension*). Their last album was distributed via Nightmare Records in the States, but now *Domain* have signed with Limb for the release of their seventh album, *Last Days of Utopia*. I have enjoyed several *Domain* albums, but I find *Last Days of Utopia* to not be among their best work. The songs are catchy and professional but there are very few which stick out as being among their best. Of the eleven tracks, three are one minute instrumentals. Of the remaining eight tracks, two ("A New Beginning" and "Ocean Paradise") sound like Magnum covers. Of the remaining six songs, one ("The Beauty of Love") is a boring ballad. Of the remaining five songs, two ("Last Days of Utopia" and "On Stormy Seas") drag on well past their welcome. That leaves three songs that are worthy of attention. "The Great Rebellion" is a

surprisingly heavy song with double bass drumming and lots of guitar solos. "Endless Rain" has a neoclassical metal sound, again with Stefan Kollner impressing with double bass drumming, but it's Ritt's guitar solo that is truly amazing. Closing song "Left Alone" is a very good hard rocker, but again, very reminiscent of *Bob Catley* and *Magnum*. If you're a fan of melodic metal/ hard rock, you must know of *Domain*. This would be essential to your collection, but if you aren't a fan yet, you'd do better checking out *The Sixth Dimension* or *The Artefact* first. **LIMB.**

**ENTHRONED... *Xes Haereticum*... BVP... *Enthroned*** was formed over a decade ago by the trio of Sabathan (vocals and bass), Tseboath (guitars), and Cernunnos (drums). They signed with Osmose for their 1995 debut, *Prophecies of Pagan Fire*. Tseboath left and new guitarists Nornagest and Nebiros joined for 1997's *Toward the Skullthroned of Satan*. Cernunnos committed suicide before its completion and the e.p. *Regie Sathanas* was released as a tribute the following year. In 1999, they released their most vicious and accomplished disc to date, *The Apocalypse Manifesto*. Their third and final full length (*Armoured Bestial Hell*) for Blackend Records came in 2001. *Enthroned* found another new drummer (Seth's Alsviid) and home (Napalm Records) while releasing their fifth full length, *Carnage in Worlds Beyond*. *Enthroned* were pleased with the result so they again used producer Harris Johns (*Kreator*, *Sodom*) for the recording of *Xes Haereticum*. They may never have matched the intensity of *The Apocalypse Manifesto* but *Enthroned* have developed a consistent blends of speed (black metal) and brutality (death metal). Most of *Xes Haereticum* proceeds in this manner but *Enthroned* actually explore new ground here too. "Blacker Than Black" starts out slower paced before blasting into oblivion. "Vortex of Confusion" swallows the listener into a repetitive, hypnotic headbanging end. Melody creeps into the percussive instrumental "A.M.S.G" and "Seven Plagues Seven Wrath" actually has clean vocals doubling the black metal screams at the end. Although *Abigor* is no more, Napalm have two of the best extreme black metal bands around in *Belphegor* and *Enthroned*. **NAPALM.**

**ENUFF ZNUFF... ?... BVP...** I believe this is the first time I've reviewed the underrated *Enuff Znuiff* and it's a shame because ? is the worst album of their long career. When they released their self titled debut with the hit single "New Thing" in 1989, the pop metal genre (*Warrant*, *Poison*, etc.) had just hit its peak. *Enuff Znuiff* were often dismissed as a trend, but by the time *Strength* came out in 1991, it was clear that the songwriting team of Donnie Vie (vocals and guitars) and Chip Znuiff (bass and vocals) were extremely talented songwriters and fans of bands from the *Beatles* to *Cheap Trick* to *Kings X* would enjoy what *Enuff Znuiff* had to offer. They ended up releasing seven albums through out the nineties to varying degrees of success. While the record buying public has decreased dramatically, *Enuff Znuiff* have kept busy in recent years; 2000's *10* and 2003's *Welcome to Blue Island*, join ? as their most recent endeavors. While recording ? Donnie and Chip were rejoined by original member Vikki Foxx (drums) and Derek Frigo (guitars). Frigo passed away last year but the band has carried on. Much like *Welcome to Blue Island*, ? is loaded with ballads and mellow songs, thus not much energy or groove is present and that's where *Enuff Znuiff* thrives. "Gorgeous" opens ? and it's overwhelmingly poppy as is the acoustic "Home Tonight." Ballads like "Harleya," "How Are You," and the new acoustic version of "Fly High Michelle" and the simplistic "No Place Like Home" are draining and uninspired. Only three songs stand out; the heavy rockers "Hang on for Life" and "Joni Woni" and the vintage "Help." "Help" provides the depth and catchiness which embody the true spirit of *Enuff Znuiff*. I recently saw them live as a three piece and although Donnie looked worn, the band was awesome. **FRONTIERS.**

**FALCONER... *Grime Vs. Grandeur*... BVP...** When Swedish viking black metallers *Mithotyn* split up in 1999, guitarist Stefan Weinerhall and drummer Karsten Larsson decided to form a band with a similar musical philosophy, but with a clean singing vocalist. They found Mathias Blad and recorded two new albums (2001's *Falconer* and 2002's *Chapters from a Vale Forlorn*) which were timeless metal records with their folk metal elements still intact. Weinerhall and Larsson went through some line-up problems before settling with a new guitarist (Jimmy Hedlund), a new bassist (Magnus Linhardt), and a new singer (Kristoffer Gobel)- who is now also singing in *Destiny*. 2003's *The Sceptre of Deception* was a solid album, but I was still unprepared for the great *Grime vs. Grandeur*. *Falconer* have updated their sound but not lost the good qualities of their previous sound. "Emotional Skies" sets the tone- it's surprisingly heavy and has some precision guitar

riffing. "Purgatory Time" is more in the typical **Falconer** melodies, especially with Gobel's vocals. "I Refuse" is another shocker. Gobel uses some vocal effects in the beginning and the guitar playing is very crunchy and modern sounding. **Falconer** continue this weird trend by going old school on the next track ("Humanity Overdose"), a song which comes right out of the N.W.O.B.H.M. movement, complete with a sing along chorus. What's next? You guessed it- a crushing modern groove on "The Assailant." Most of the rest of **Grime vs. Grandeur** sticks to the modern sound- "Power" has groove, "No Tears for Strangers" alternates between melody and thrash. Gobel's vocals on "The Return" go retro-Ozzy Osbourne style, but **Falconer** keep the music in a heavy modern vein. I'm not sure how long time **Falconer** fans will react. Most elements of previous albums are still there, but the band has updated their sound and made a surprisingly heavy record. **METAL BLADE.**

**FRANTIC BLEEP... The Sense Apparatus... BVP...** Patrick Seantlebury (guitars, keyboards), Eywin Sundstrom (guitars), and Karl Arthur Renstrom (drums) formed **Frantic Bleep** in late 2001. Their 2002 demo, **Fluctadmission**, gained much acclaim. Vocalist/ bassist Paul Mozart Bjorke joined and **Frantic Bleep** signed with The End Records in 2003. Sten Erik Svendheim replaced Renstrom and the Norwegian band began recording **The Sense Apparatus** in late 2003. It took about a year to complete but listening to the complexity and originality of this disc, you can hear it was time well spent. The End Records have developed a reputation for releasing the avantgarde; **Arcturus**, **Ulver**, **Winds**, **Age Of Silence**- to name but a few, and **Frantic Bleep** are another indescribable entity. If there was one band which most often comes to mind when listening to **The Sense Apparatus**, it's S.U.P. "The Expulsion" is an excellent example of this band's creativity. The emotions range from the quiet ("Mausolos"), to the esoteric ("Mandaughter"), to the hypnotic ("Curtainraiser"). Doom plays a prominent role during "Cone" and the haunting "Mandaughter." **Madder Mortem** frontwoman Agnete Kirkevaag guests, as do vocalists Kjetil Fosseid and Daniel Sotheim. I preferred **Age Of Silence** but the more diverse **Frantic Bleep** is also very impressive. **Frantic Bleep** have a more mature sound here compared to **Fluctadmission** but fans of the demo should not be disappointed as **The Sense Apparatus** is no less avantgarde. **THE END.**

**GOD DETHRONED... The Lair Of The White Worm... BVP...** After four albums with virtually no variation, **God Dethroned** return with an altered sound- albeit still firmly planted in the death thrash genre. Perhaps the primary reason for the change is the departure of guitarist Jens and bassist Beef who were replaced by shredder Isaac Delahaye and Henk Zinger, respectively. Henri Sattler (vocals and guitars) formed **God Dethroned** in 1990 and two years later debuted with **The Christhunt**. The band split while Henri formed **Ministry Of Terror** but after one release (**Fall of Life**) he reformed **God Dethroned**, eventually signing a long term deal with Metal Blade in 1997. Every two years, **God Dethroned** returned with another album; **The Grand Grimoire**, **Bloody Blasphemy**, **Ravenous**, and **Into the Lungs of Hell**. **God Dethroned** have always been a model of consistency and **The Lair of the White Worm** is no different. They lock into a mid paced death metal sound through out the album as the detailed instrumental "Nihilism" sets the pace. They find some groove with the title track and flirt with doom on "Rusty Nails," the pair perhaps the album's best. "Sigma Enigma" may be very dull but **God Dethroned** prove a simple riff can be most effective on "Last Zip of Spit" or the **Unleashed** sounding "The Grey Race." Their classic death thrash sound is most apparent on the aptly titled "Loyal to the Crown of God Dethroned." I would never consider **God Dethroned** the best death metal band around, but they are one of the most consistent. **METAL BLADE.**

**GRAVE DIGGER... The Last Supper... Karl Haikara...** German thrash metal legends **Grave Digger** return with their 12th album since 1984's **Heavy Metal Breakdown**. Having never heard them before, though I have heard the name around, I wasn't too sure what to expect, except maybe traditional German thrash. And that is exactly what this is. **The Last Supper** is designed to be about Christ or religious subjects, though I don't think it's a "holy" take on it, I don't know how much **Grave Digger** believe in these things, or if they're just using it as lyrical subject. No matter what they themselves you believe in, what you will find is pretty catchy, mid-pace thrash metal with some progressive elements. The songwriting is pretty strong, there aren't any off the wall changes in the song, the band know how to use their riffs. The bass is pretty good, filling up the low end, and being audible. The

drums are excellent as well, not technical, but very tasteful and on time. I like the faster and heavier tracks like "Hell to Pay" most. The singer has that gruff thrash metal voice, still melodic, but growling, anyone who's listened to stuff like this knows what I mean. The guitarists are very good at their instruments, as you would expect from a band that's been around for something like 20 years now. So what can I say, if you like tight aggressive and heavy traditional metal or thrash metal you should pick this up as soon as you can. It may not be my style, but I can't say anything bad about this band, they are excellent at what they do, there's nothing else to say. **NUCLEAR BLAST**

**GREEN CARNATION... The Quiet Offspring... BVP...** When Tchort (**Emperor**, **Satyricon**, **Carpathian Forest**, **Blood Red Throne**) put together **Green Carnation** in 1990, this largely solo project (although several members of **In The Woods** helped out) took a backseat to other activities. Only one 1991 demo (**Hallucinations of Despair**) would appear until he solidified the lineup and signed with Prophecy Records for 2000's **Journey to the End of the Night**. The next year **Green Carnation** went the route of **Fates Warning** and **Edge Of Sanity**, releasing an album consisting of one epic song; **Light of Day Day of Darkness**. They recruited new vocalist Kjetil Nordhus and went for a more song oriented approach for their third album, 2003's **A Blessing in Disguise**. **A Blessing in Disguise** was album of the month in many publications and the band received endless critical acclaim. Thus, expectations for **The Quiet Offspring** were high and **Green Carnation** deliver another winner. There are a handful of bands which have taken years to develop and now bands like **Anathema**, **Katatonia**, and **Opeth** combine depth, intelligence, and raw emotion into one awe inspiring package. You can now add **Green Carnation** to that list, in part thanks to songs like "The Quiet Offspring" and "Dead But Dreaming." The melancholic aspects of "A Place for Me" and the Euro-rock of "Just When You Think It's Safe" are timeless features of **Green Carnation's** music. Even the quirky "The Everlasting Moment" and the dramatic "When I Was You" are familiar to fans of their early work, but nothing can prepare for the brilliance of "The Quiet Offspring" and "Dead But Dreaming." The former opens the album and it's heavy, powerful, and emotional. The vocals of Nordhus are stunning and the riffs simply awesome. The vocal lines are instantly catchy and unforgettable. I would even venture to say "The Quiet Offspring" is one of the best songs I've ever heard. "Dead But Dreaming" is also catchy as hell and emotionally complex. I must admit, without those two songs, **The Quiet Offspring** isn't a better album than **A Blessing in Disguise**, but these two songs are so good that they elevate the album to one of the best of the year. Let's see if **Green Carnation** can somehow top that. **THE END.**

**HAREM SCAREM... Overload... BVP...** Canadian heavy rockers **Harem Scarem** started out well over a decade ago and established a solid reputation based on early albums like 1993's **Mood Swings** and 1995's **Voice of Reason**. They changed their name to **Rubber** and released one modern sounding album (**Ultra Feel**) before decided to go back to the **Harem Scarem** monicker. They signed with Frontiers Records and the label released **Weight of the World** in 2002 and **Higher** in 2003. Led by the songwriting talents of vocalist Harry Hess and guitarist Pete Lesperance, **Harem Scarem's** ninth studio album is a mixed bag. The first four songs on **Overload** are among the best this respected band has ever written. Lesperance's guitar riffing is simply astounding on songs like "Dagger" and "Don't Come Easy." The riffs on these songs are not only the best of his career, they're some of the best I've ever heard. Like progressive metallers **Enchant**, **Harem Scarem** actually have a strong alternative rock influence and this appears on the other two of the four killer opening tracks; "Rise and Fall" and "Afterglow." Later on, "Leading Me On" sees Lesperance create some Tom Morello (**Rage Against The Machine**, **Audioslave**) like riffing. So, five amazing songs- that leaves six songs of filler. Ballads like "Wishing," "Understand You," "Can't Live With You," and the Enuff Znuuff like "All You're Getting" are not up to par with the heavier material and "Some Mistakes" sounds like their crappy neighbors **Nickelback**. I have a lot of respect for **Harem Scarem** and they've never delivered a bad album, but **Overload** is so frustrating. How can they have such great songs alongside such duds? Get rid of those A.O.R. ballads and let Lesperance be free to write these riffs. At least Hess makes any song listenable. **FRONTIERS.**

**HAVOCHATE... Cycle Of Pain... BVP...** East Coast thrashers **Havochate** was formed by guitarists Freddy Ordine and Mario Rodriguez in 1998. Along

vocalist Jon Mallek, they recorded their impressive 2003 release, *This Violent Earth*, and had it released through Root Of All Evil. They had popular drummer John Dette (ex-Slayer, ex-Testament) in their ranks for a short period of time and developed a strong reputation on a few tours. Soon, Ordine and Rodriguez had a new line up with bassist Greg Christian (Testament), drummer Ron Lipnicki (Hades), and vocalist Tim Bouchee joining for the recording of their sophomore release, *Cycle of Pain*. *Cycle of Pain* is even more impressive than *This Violent Earth*. *Havochate* stray past their thrash roots and delve into some modern metal and power metal as well. New vocalist Bouchee has more range than Mallek and this allows *Havochate* to go into a *Vicious Rumors* like power metal direction on "Fiction" or go for a modern groove (ala Pantera's *Cowboys from Hell* era) on "Wicked." Original Testament bassist Christian seems to have an influence on the Testament like thrash of closing track "Rotting Hour," and Lipnicki shines with some awesome drumming on *Cycle of Pain* and during "Still Alive" in particular. Line up changes continue to plague *Havochate* as Ovie Rodriguez replaces Lipnicki, who moves on to replace Tim Mallare in *Overkill*. Meanwhile, with Testament's reformation who knows how long Christian will be around. Regardless, *Cycle of Pain* is an awesome album of metal for fans of Bay Area bands like *Vicious Rumors*, *Testament*, and *Death Angel*. **INDECENT MEDIA.**

**GLENN HUGHES... Soul Mover... BVP...** The fifty two year old Glenn Hughes is a vocal God. He sounds better on *Soul Mover* than he did thirty some years ago with *Trapeze* or *Deep Purple*. He issued his first solo album (*Play Me Out*) in 1977. In the eighties he worked with people like Pat Thrall (*Pat Travers*) and Tony Iommi (*Black Sabbath*) before his solo career took flight in the nineties. Starting with 1994's *From Now On*, Glenn released *Feel* in 1995, *Addiction* in 1996, *The Way It Is* in 1999, *Return of Crystal Karma* in 2000, *Building the Machine* in 2001, and *Songs in the Key of Rock* in 2003. He also contributed to countless other bands and artists, never damaging his reputation. The story of Glenn Hughes is one of triumph as once his addictions were taken care of, his career has flourished. It only seems natural that he would hook up with some *Red Hot Chili Peppers* for his latest, *Soul Mover*. I was happy to see Ladd acknowledge my passion for Glenn Hughes' music in a review of his because I feel this veteran is the most underrated talent ever. His latest, *Soul Mover*, is as great as my personal Hughes favorite, *Return of Crystal Karma*. The title track kicks off *Soul Mover* and it's simply stunning to hear the energy and charisma Hughes, Dave Navarro (*Janes Addiction*, ex-*Red Hot Chili Peppers*), and Chad Smith (*Red Hot Chili Peppers*) have on this track which was recorded live in the studio. Navarro comes up with an infectious riff very reminiscent of the lauded Tom Morello (*Rage Against The Machine*, *Audioslave*). Next up is the haunting "She Moves Ghostly." "High Road" is typical Glenn Hughes- filled with soul, energy, and quality. Tracks five through eight are among his most emphatic songs ever as Glenn injects pure emotion into his songwriting and performance. The last four tracks are good, but forgettable. There is no singer that is more talented and his songwriting is memorable and enthusiastic. I am glad to see his prolific nature taking over because I can't get enough Glenn Hughes. **FRONTIERS.**

**IMMOLATION... Harnessing Ruin... BVP...** *Immolation* have been around since guitarists Robert Vigna and Tim Wilkinson split from *Rigor Mortis* to form the band with Ross Dolan (vocals and bass) and Neal Boback (drums) in 1988. They sign with Roadrunner for 1991's *Dawn of Possession* but remained quiet until signing with Metal Blade for several impressive albums; 1996's *Here in After*, 1999's *Failure for Gods*, 2000's *Close to a World Below*, and 2002's *Unholy Cult*. Bill Taylor (*Angel Corpse*) replaced Wilkinson in 2000 and several drummers (Boback, Craig Smiloski, and Fallen Christ's Alex Hernandez) have come and gone but *Immolation* continued to thrive with their deceptively intricate and atmospheric death metal sound. *Immolation* are now part of Olympic Recordings' roster and the label has secured just about every quality American bands in the death metal genre. *Harnessing Ruin* is another solid release, although it takes awhile to really impress. Early on, songs like "Challenge the Storm" and "Harnessing Ruin" sound quite average for such a respected band. By anyone else's standards these would be standout tracks, but *Immolation* reside in a league all their own. As the album continues, the songs get longer and more intricate- with the final two tracks ("Crown the Liar" and "A Mournings Twilight") leaving the biggest impact. *Harnessing Ruin* is not *Immolation's* best record but by no means will fans of the band be disappointed by it. **OLYMPIC.**

**IMPELLITERI... Pedal To The Metal... BVP...** Guitar shredder Chris Impelliteri put together his band in the mid eighties with ex-M.S.G./ ex-Rainbow singer Graham Bonnet, ex-*Quiet Riot* bassist Chuck Wright, and ex-Ted Nugent drummer Pat Torpey. They released *Stand in Line* in 1988 and the band went their separate ways as Wright joined *House Of Lords* and Torpey joined *Mr. Big*. Impelliteri hooked up with fellow Christian and new vocalist Rob Rock (*Angelica*, *Joshua*) for some nineties albums; *Grin and Bear It*, *Answer to the Master*, *Screaming Symphony*, and *Eye of the Hurricane*. Fans became upset when Impelliteri went for a more modern sound on 2000's *Crunch* and frontman Rock went on to become a solo artist himself. It appeared that Impelliteri was placating old fans when Bonnet returned for the lackluster *System X* (2002). These days Impelliteri employs a modern vocalist named Curtis Skelton. If you thought *Crunch* was modern sounding, wait until you hear *Pedal to the Metal*. Adorned with some of the most awful artwork ever, *Pedal to the Metal* will draw fans of bands like *Fear Factory* and *Strapping Young Lad*. Skelton is not opposed to using distortion on his vocals and even resorts to rapping on "Punk." Impelliteri always shreds no matter what style of music he's playing and fans will not be disappointed by his solos on songs like "The Kingdom of Titus" and "Dance With the Devil." The best song on the album has to be "Crushing Daze" which sounds like *Fear Factory* with the tight drumming, modern groove, and the clear vocals on the chorus will evoke Devin Townsend's influence. Two songs which hold the spirit of old Impelliteri alive are "Hurricane" and "Destruction." I know people who have followed Impelliteri's career will hate this. Clearly Impelliteri has been listening to bands like *Pantera*, *Fear Factory*, *Meshuggah*, and *Strapping Young Lad*. Personally I welcome this sound and even though "Punk" is downright embarrassing, songs like "Dance With the Devil" and "Crushing Daze" are among his most exciting yet. **SPV.**

**KAMELOT... The Black Halo... BVP...** *Kamelot* was formed in the early nineties by vocalist Mark Vanderbilt, guitarist Thomas Youngblood, bassist Glenn Barry, and drummer Richard Warner. Their first two albums (1995's *Eternity* and 1997's *Dominion*) established themselves as a progressive metal band to watch and even with the talented Vanderbilt singing, *Kamelot* were usually considered another *Queensryche* clone. New members Casey Grillo (drums) and ex-*Conception* singer Roy Khan joined for the more mature sounding *Siege Perilous*. With each record (*The Fourth Legacy*, *Karma*, *Epica*), *Kamelot's* stature grew, culminating with a headlining performance at the Prog Power Festival. *Kamelot's* contract with Noise ended following *Epica* and they take a step up with S.P.V. on *The Black Halo*. The record label isn't the only change as *Kamelot* deliver the heaviest and darkest album of their career as well. Like some others, I had become bored with *Kamelot* as the four albums with Khan didn't have enough variety to stimulate my interest. "March of Mephisto" opens *The Black Halo* and it's shockingly heavy, dark, and atmospheric; also featuring a brief appearance by Dimmu Borgir vocalist Shagrath. Next is the equally killer "When the Lights Are Down," a fast and heavy track and these two songs will surprise *Kamelot* fans. There's a couple other standouts, including "The Haunting," the dynamic epic "Memento Mori," and the heavy title track. Traditional *Kamelot* fans will be pleased with the catchy "Soul Society," the *Queensryche*-like "Moonlight," and the ballads; "Abandoned" and "Un Assassinio Molto Silenzioso." These songs prove *Kamelot* hasn't entirely embraced their new style but I applaud their desire to grow and branch out. **SPV.**

**KRYOBURN... Enigmatic Existence... BVP...** New Mexican metallers *Kryoburn* have been around since 1997 but it appears that their career hasn't taken a turn for the consistent until now. Word has it that while the bands was touring relentlessly, *Pissing Razors* drummer Eddy Garcia caught a local El Paso show and decided to take *Kryoburn* under his wing. We've heard his production work with *Pissing Razors* and *Single Bullet Theory*, so having Garcia work with *Kryoburn* on their debut full length can only be a good thing. Unsurprisingly, *Kryoburn's* sound has been compared to modern metal bands like *Pantera*, *Fear Factory*, *Strapping Young Lad*, and yes- *Pissing Razors*. Some bands do this style and you can hear they are weak and not talented, that's not the case with *Kryoburn*. The sound is crisp and modern, I'm not blown away entirely like I was when I heard *Sybreed*, but it's still damn good. Opener "Transcience" has an enticing groove and some surprisingly clear vocals while mixing *Pantera* and *Fear Factory* influences. The precision and keyboard work of "Singularity" is also reminiscent of *Fear Factory*, as is "De Animation" for that matter. You can argue that there are plenty of more original bands on the planet



and I admit that I'm usually not that enamored by bands who show their influences this clearly, but I applaud their enthusiasm and enjoy listening to this record. **CANDLELIGHT.**

**JAMES LABRIE... Elements Of Persuasion... BVP... Dream Theater** vocalist James LaBrie has been developing a solo career since forming **Mullmuzzler** in the late nineties. 1999's *Keep it to Yourself* and 2001's *Mullmuzzler 2* were essentially solo discs and LaBrie revealed a variety of influences on both. Last year he hooked up with the artistic minded Tim Donahue on his *Madmen and Sinners* album and with Henning Pauly (**Frameshift**) for *Unweaving the Rainbow*. For *Elements of Persuasion*, LaBrie seemingly merges the heaviness of *Madmen and Sinners* with the electronic/ keyboard bent of **Frameshift** with the progressive rock of **Mullmuzzler**- and the result sounds pretty damn good. As with **Mullmuzzler**, LaBrie is joined by keyboardist Matt Guillory (**Dali's Dilemma**), drummer Mike Mangini (ex-**Annihilator**), and bassist Bryan Beller. When Andy Timmons' schedule did not work out LaBrie turned to new guitarist Marco Sfogli. Sfogli's presence makes *Elements of Persuasion* LaBrie's heaviest and most focused solo albums yet. He particularly shreds on heavy opener "Crucify" and the similar sounding "Freak." *Elements of Persuasion* has a modern sound on songs like "Alone," "In Too Deep," and "Drained." The latter two could even be considered nu metal sounding and has a strong electronic presence. LaBrie lets loose with some high pitched vocals on "Crucify" but shows restraint on songs like "Lost" and "Smashed."  
**INSIDE OUT.**

**LABYRINTH... Freeman... BVP... Italian prog metallers** formed in 1994 and led by the vocals of Fabio Lione (**Rhapsody, Vision Domine, ex-Athena**), **Labyrinth** released *No Limits* in 1996. New vocalist Rob Tiranti and drummer Frank Andiver joined and **Labyrinth** released the excellent follow up and what many consider their peak, 1998's *Return to Heaven Denied*. The forgettable *Sons of Thunder* followed in 2000 and **Labyrinth** seemed to disappear for some time. When they resurfaced, **Labyrinth** signed with Century Media for their self titled 2003 release. This union was short lived and **Labyrinth** landed on Arise Records for their latest, the experimental *Freeman*. **Labyrinth** have been journeymen lately. From Underground Symphony to Metal Blade to Century Media, and now joining Arise Records esteemed roster. *Freeman* has moments of the greatness found on *Return to Heaven Denied*, and much of the album is in a similar vein as the self titled album, and at times **Labyrinth** experiment more than ever before. The first four songs on *Freeman* are excellent. "L.Y.A.F.H." is a perfect album opener. It's memorable, heavy at times, and Rob Tiranti gives an emotional performance. "Deserter" has more of the same, including a brutally heavy riff during the middle of the song. Next is the very bizarre "Dive in Open Waters"- which unfortunately suffers due to the poor production. Songs like this and the electronic tinged "Freeman" remind me of the criminally underrated **Dangerous Toys'** album *The Rtist 4merly Known As*, during which they thrived on originality. The rest of *Freeman* fails to impress, although the theatrical "Nothing New" has moments, and "Infidels" and "Meanings" close *Freeman* effectively. **ARISE.**

**LANALANE... Lady Macbeth... BVP... California born vocalist** Lana Lane has become known as the queen of symphonic rock. She released her debut, *Love is an Illusion*, in 1995 and followed that a year later with *Curious Goods. Garden of the Moon* (1998) and *Queen of the Ocean* (1999) followed. In between full lengths, Lana Lane released several singles, e.p.'s, and ballad collections. Her recent releases have been collaborations with her husband, keyboardist Erik Norlander. In 2000 she released *Secrets of Astrology* and then *Project Shangri La* two years later. On these albums her sound has been a combination of ballads and heavy symphonic rock. Vocally, Lana has a clear and powerful voice, but usually lacks the memorable vocal hooks to make her music memorable. In 2003, she released her seventh studio full length, *Winter Sessions*, which was a collection of ballads. Lana Lane fans should be happy to hear that *Lady Macbeth* is back to her usual type of albums. Sure, there are plenty of ballads ("Our Time Now," "Dunsinane Walls," and "We Had the World" are straight ballads; while "No Tomorrow" and the haunting instrumental "The Vision" are semi-ballads), but Lana rocks out more here. The mid paced "Someone to Believe" is heavy, while "Summon the Devil" is anthemic. Her best song yet has to be "Shine on Golden Sun." Once again, Lana Lane works best with a mid paced musical background which gives the song its heaviness while her vocals add expression. I'm usually not a fan of ballads but I'm very impressed

with "We Had the World," which is perhaps her most enthusiastic and captivated performance yet. **FRONTIERS.**

**MARDUK... Plague Angel... Karl Haikara....** **Marduk** have been around for so long, and have been producing quality releases for so long, that I think there is little reason for any introduction. But for those of you who don't know who **Marduk** are, they are a Swedish black metal band, who has been around since something like 1993 or 1994. Along with **Dissection** they created what I call the Swedish black metal sound, which is basically black metal based on a kind of death metal, thrash basis, and played at a incredibly high BPM. This sound is very different from the Norwegian sound, which for the most part focused on a more "atmospheric" approach. There is little that I would call atmospheric on here, except for the mood that the music sets. Everything on here is played fast, hard and with a ton of aggression and intensity. The chordal bases and progressions on here are traditional black metal, **Marduk** don't break the mold they set back in 1996 when their first full length came out. All they have done over the years is refine their sound, and perhaps focus in on a particular element of their base sound for each album. Many call **Darkthrone** the **AC/DC** of the black metal scene, but since their records actually *change*, I think that's not a good thing to call them. Instead we can look at **Marduk** and go, there's the **AC/DC** or **Slayer** of black metal, for **Marduk** can always be counted on to release a class act record, and each one sounds pretty much the same as the last one. Not that that is a bad thing at all though, for **Marduk** do what they do so well, that they stay interesting. This particular release is as always excellent. It features some great song writing, and they even slow down a bit on a few songs, like song 6 "Holy Blood, Holy Grail" (the name comes from a book by the same name, which is about the search for the Holy Grail and the templars, which has had it's most recent explosion since the release of the "DaVinci Codes" which is partially based on that subject). Personally, I think the songwriting on here is much better than their last three records, all of which seemed a little too slicked down. This record sees the band really expanding into a more interesting vein, mainly meaning they are more interesting subject-wise, and also the sound is somehow much more evocative and cold, it has less of a war metal feeling, that their last few had, and reminds me more of early **Mayhem**. The production is not as professional sounding as the last few albums, and to me that's a good thing. With this rougher production the sound fits the music better than before, adding some atmosphere to the music, which I think helps to make their music just *that* much more interesting. You could say they're going more back to the sounds of their first few albums, while increasing their skill as musicians and song writers. There's even a keyboard song right before "Everything Bleeds," (which is not in the track listing included with the promo) which I think is one of the more interesting songs I have ever heard from a black metal band. This is yet another excellent release from **Marduk**, and should be picked up immediately by any fan of **Marduk**, and should be checked into if you like black metal. I think it is well recorded and played, and I liked it alot.  
**CANDLELIGHT.**

**MESHUGGAH... Catch 33... Karl Haikara... Meshuggah** return with their newest album *Catch Thirty-Three*. The band recieved a lot of praise for their first few albums, but I believe there was confusion as well as they morphed their sound into something more mechanical and groove-oriented. On *Catch Thirty-Three* I think their ultimate purpose has become laid bare - to create hypnotic and robotic music that doesn't attempt to "mind-fuck" the listener, but to instead create a dark, moody trance by using repetitive, machine-like drum beats and intricate but often repetitive guitar lines. The vocals are laid on stone dry with a hollow kind of scream, and the ultimate sound is eerie, aggressive and surprisingly mid-tempo. The concept of the album is that it is actually one song, just laid out over 13 tracks. Groove patterns and guitar patterns are spread out over several tracks before changing to a different sound, but on each different track of the "movement," the rhythm and guitar lines will change slightly to bring out another aspect of the base groove. There are strange breakdowns into weird sounds or moody atmospherics from time to time to break things up even more. The idea might sound convoluted to some, but when you listen to it it really makes sense. **Meshuggah** create a full piece of art over the whole album, and if it had been presented as one very long track it would have worked just as well. **Meshuggah** are becoming more and more progressive, but haven't lost any of their aggression yet. A song like "In Death - Is Death" (which happens to be one of the longest tracks) begins with aggression, and ends with eerie, clean guitar lines and electronics, which creates a progressive feel, and also

a moodiness. And as the electronics build and the bass and guitars fade out, you are left with baited breath, waiting for the pain. And sure enough, with the screams and evil sound of "Shed," you are hit. I actually like the mechanical feel of the rhythms on here. They work well to create an evil trance throughout your whole body. Rarely have I heard an album where I am left listening and unable to think of anything else at all. There is no melody, only the trance-like grooves, and the intricate, but mainly technical guitar riffs. You will not hum a catchy tune listening to this, but you will come from it with a resounding dark mood. **Meshuggah** also doesn't use any traditional song structures. You will not find anything recognizable from thrash metal, death metal, regular metal, or anything except maybe post-rock. Indeed, the band has come to a point where they could be included in the same breath as bands like **Isis** or **Mogwai**, if it wasn't for the fact that they are so much more aggressive and corrosive than either of those acts. This is an album that will eat out your soul with its bile. I think the progressive track listing is extremely well done, for you will find there will be little song trilogies like 10, 11 and 12, all three of which feed into the next with subtle variations of rhythm, but grow more and more aggressive and corrosive. Track 10 is soft, brooding, waiting for a release after its first screams. 11 becomes more aggressive, more dark and evil, and then with 12 we are left breathless in the trance attack of brutal guitars, drums which never cease and all the strange electronic touches which make you feel incredibly uneasy. The only other band with drums and an attack like this is **Sepultura**. I wasn't actually expecting to like this, but as I let the grooves in and became so entranced with the music, I came to the conclusion that this is an amazing piece of artwork, and I suggest that when it comes out on April 23, 2005, that you buy it as soon as possible. You will not be sorry, for this is true metal art, and does not let up for one second. **NUCLEAR BLAST**.

**MOLLY HATCHET... Warriors Of The Rainbow Bridge... BVP...** Southern rockers **Molly Hatchet** have been leaders of their scene since their self titled debut appeared in 1978. They scored their biggest hit the following year with the title track from *Flirting With Disaster*. The early eighties turned out to be their most prolific and the peak of their popularity; *Beating the Odds* (1981), *Take No Prisoners* (1982), *No Guts No Glory* (1983), and *The Deed Is Done* (1984). A live album in 1985 (*Double Trouble*) signified an end of an era. They finally reappeared with their new studio album in 1989, but *Lightning Strikes* was an album which did not go over as well as their previous albums. A greatest hits album appeared in 1991 and **Molly Hatchet** returned for a string of three albums; 1996's *Devils Canyon*, 1998's *Silent Reign of Heroes*, and 2000's *Kingdom of XXII*. Since 1996 the band has been fronted by Phil McCormack and he keeps to the spirit of original singer Dandy Joe Brown and his replacement Jimmy Farrar. Only guitarist Jimmy Hlubek remains as the lone original member, but when you've been around as long as **Molly Hatchet** and been through all they have, that's not an issue. They are joined now by former **Lynyrd Skynyrd** bassist Tim Lindsey. *Warriors of the Rainbow Bridge* opens with "Point of No Return" which has the classic **Molly Hatchet** sound. "New York City" has loud drums courtesy of Shawn Beamer and classic riffage. The second half of the album gets bogged down with some ballads ("Get in the Game" and "Rainbow Bridge") but also contains one of their heaviest songs ever in "Gone in Sixty Seconds." **Molly Hatchet** has never had a phenomenal vocalist and though McCormack fits in with what Brown and Farrar created before him, he's not very good either. If you're a fan or you live in the south, you'll be into this. I can't see **Molly Hatchet** gaining many new fans with this album and I don't hear any potential hits like "Flirting With Disaster" either. **SPV**.

**MORGUL... All Dead Here... BVP...** The duo of Jack (vocals, guitars, and bass) and Hex (drums) formed the band **Jack And Hex** in 1990 before changing their name to **Morgul**. A pair of demos were released in 1995 and they signed with Napalm Records for the 1997 e.p. *Lost in Shadows Grey* and their debut full length; 1998's *Parody of the Mass*. Hex left the band and Jack operated **Morgul** as a solo project as he signed with Century Media in Europe for a pair of impressive releases; 2000's *The Horror Grandeur* and 2001's *Sketch of a Supposed Murderer*. **Morgul** started to explore some cold, industrial ideas with their classic raw black metal sound. Jack is now joined by drummer Tom Cuper and violinist Peter Johansen and the new album, *All Dead Here*, is one of the darkest, creepiest metal records I've ever encountered. I was enamored by bands like **Malignant Eternal**, **Dodheimsgard**, and **Thorns** a few years ago but no Norwegian black metal band dared to experiment like these bands (exception being perhaps **Red**

**Harvest**) until *All Dead Here* came out. The opening track "The Mask of Sanity" has a futuristic **Voivod** vibe to it. "The Need to Kill" is avantgarde black metal in sound and **Morgul** go the gothic/ industrial route on "All Dead Here," with complementing violin from Johansen. *All Dead Here* is a brutal album. Jack's riffs have a modern stop and go sound on "Hategrinder" but it's so brutal you don't even notice. The combination of acoustic guitars and violins amidst the black metal madness of "Shackled" gives a creepy aura and closing track, "Empty," offers a dichotomy of melancholic and aggressive contrasts. Hopefully **Morgul** doesn't go unnoticed. This album is as good as **Mayhem** and if given the right promotion, **Morgul** could develop a career worthy of their greatness. **SEASON OF MIST**.

**NAPALM DEATH... The Code Is Red Long Live The Code... BVP...** Anyone with a clue about extreme metal knows how important **Napalm Death** has been for the genre. Their grinding punk metal debut, 1987's *Scum*, is considered legendary and a landmark for the grindcore genre. With a new vocalist (Barney Greenway) on board, **Napalm Death** were part of the initial death metal movement with 1988's *From Enslavement to Obliteration*, 1990's *Harmony Corruption*, and 1992's *Utopia Banished*. With 1994's *Fear Emptiness Despair* and especially 1996's *Diatribes*, **Napalm Death** hit a creative streak which saw them adding texture and a sense of exploration to their death metal sound. When they returned in 1999 with *Words from the Exit Wound*, they also returned to their more straight forward, early nineties sound. Their next two releases; (also their first not on Earache) 2001's *Enemy of the Music Business* and 2002's *Order of the Leech*, were their fastest and most extreme yet. For their tenth studio full length album, **Napalm Death** signed with Century Media. *The Code Is Red Long Live the Code* is a combination of the short blasting *Scum*, the death metal *Harmony Corruption*, and the experimental *Diatribes*. "Silence is Deafening" opens the album grindcore until a mid paced riffage takes over at the end. Even without long time second guitarist Jesse Pintado, songs like the brutal "Diplomatic Immunity" or the bouncy "Climate Controllers" sound crushing. The last three tracks feature the experimental side found during the mid nineties era of **Napalm Death**. If you're a fan of the band, this album has a little of everything **Napalm Death** has become known for. **CENTURY MEDIA**.

**NOVEMBERS DOOM...The Pale Haunt Departure... Dave Smith...** This is the fifth full-length album from Chicago's **Novembers Doom**. It's a step up to The End Records, where they fit in quite well with that label's roster of eclectic and artful bands. This could be the band's landmark release, if it gets the attention it deserves. **Novembers Doom** started in the early 90's as one of the first American bands to play a doom/death style of metal. That early raw doom transformed into a much more varied and atmospheric style of dark metal with a lot of light/heavy contrast and varied vocal approach. They still tend to get lumped into the doom/death school, but with their past two albums, 2000's *The Knowing* and 2002's *To Welcome the Fade*, really entered into the zone of bands like **Opeth**, combining death, doom, progressive, and traditional metal with some non-metal influences to create their own sound. These guys probably cringe at every **Opeth** comparison, but it's a favorable one. **Novembers Doom** have been at this game just as long, and though sharing similar musical motives and influences, have their own identity, one which is strengthened by this excellent album, which honestly does not feature a dull moment. This band has had a million lineup changes, with only vocalist Paul Kuhr remaining constant. Fortunately for them, the band seems to get better with each change. The band seems to have some stability now, with guitarist Larry Roberts and drummer Joe Nunez both returning for the third time. Roberts and new guitarist Vito Marchese lock in excellently as a guitar team, as if they've been playing together for years. The guitar work is excellent, from chugging heavy riffs to atonal walls of sound to rainy acoustic strumming to even a few well-placed tasteful guitar solos (one of which is performed by Dan Swano). Drummer Nunez plays like a machine, with some distinctive tribal-style tom beats, for the first time (to my non-drummer ears, anyways) really standing out with his performance. And vocalist Paul Kuhr also steps up his game. Similar to prior albums, his death growl is remarkably understandable. He may very well be the most comprehensible death vocalist in the business. Being clearly understood doesn't detract at all from the power of his growls, which sound like they're coming from even deeper inside than before. He also wields a sharper high scream and uses a clean singing voice to a greater extent than before. There are several melodic choruses and two songs entirely sung.

Helped by the excellent vocal production, they sound great, staying comfortably within his mid-range but sounding sonorous and epic. His lyrics are also impressive, sounding very personal and genuinely moving, with several tales of fear, despair, longing and regret set in various contexts of life (and death). Love and hope are touched upon briefly, and he's probably continuing to get inspiration from some sort of chronic back pain (which was the primary inspiration behind *To Welcome the Fade* and something I can relate to recently). The production is excellent. Produced by the band and Chris Djuricic, they also managed to get big names (in the metal underground, at least) Dan Swano to mix it and James Murphy to master it. The result is about as good a sound as an underground metal band from Chicago is going to get. A massive wall of sound, with the guitars, drums and vocals loud and clear, is achieved. The artwork is also stunning, with its depictions of desolate fields of scarecrows, each page of the booklet fitting to the concept of each song's lyrics. I don't recognize the artist, Attila Kis, but assume I'll see more of his work. "The Pale Haunt Departure" has a killer intro with pounding, tribal tom rolls and chugging guitar riffs that lead into an intense, epically heavy progressive death metal monolith of a song that brings the album cover's desolate field of scarecrows to life. I expected the intensity to dwindle after that, but "Swallowed by the Moon" is another heavy monster, though it adds subtle keyboards and a clean vocal chorus to bring more melody into the mix. The lyrics are a dying father's plea for forgiveness to his child for leaving them behind, and they come off as very real and nearly frightening, with Kuhr's vocals sounding truly pained when he screams "my pain finally dies." "Autumn Reflection" is the album's first mood piece: a light verse/heavy chorus song with powerful melodies, both guitar and vocal. The lyrics are dedicated to Kuhr's infant daughter, and normally lyrics like these would make me puke, but somehow he gets away with it without sounding too sappy or forced. "Dark World Burden" has a faster pace than you would expect, and another really good clean chorus. "In the Absence of Grace" is the album's most **Opeth**-like moment. The chord progressions sound like they could have come straight off *Blackwater Park*. That being said, it's a great song that would be entirely deserving of a place on that landmark album. "The Dead Leaf Echo" is the album's most dismal lyrical moment, with lyrics of regret and failure that would even bum out the Finnish. "Through a Child's Eyes" is another mellow song, with more ornate, near-classical melody and clean vocals throughout. "Collapse of the Fallen Throe" is the album's all-out trudging doom metal song, harkening back to the band's original *My Dying Bride* school of doom/death, and further back to the original Chicago doom guitars of **Trouble**. So after four long paragraphs of hype, it should be obvious that I really liked this album. It has a sweeping, cinematic quality and a haunting feel that (again) is similar to what **Opeth** achieves. There are no wasted songs, all eight tracks are strong both individually and as they fit into the album as a whole. It's early in the year still, but I expect this to be one of my favorites of 2005. Hard to believe an album this good, in this style, was produced by a band that lives only one state over from me. **THE END.**

**OPEN HAND... You And Me... BVP... Open Hand** first made a name for themselves when they released their debut full length, *The Dream*, which was actually a collection of demos. These demos were so impressive, they warranted this proper release. They went on tour with **Poison The Well**, but soon after half the band split, with only vocalist and guitarist Justin Isham and drummer Alex Rodriguez remaining. Rodriguez kept busy with Saosin and Isham soldiered on with **Open Hand**, writing new material and eventually finding new members. *You and Me* is one of the most impressive rock albums of the year. **Velvet Revolver** and **Audioslave** are overrated and **Queens Of The Stone Age** are losing perspective so it is a perfect time for an album like this to kick people's asses. "Pure Concentrated Evil" opens the album in a stoner rock vein before they hypnotize listeners with "Her Song." "Tough Girl" is in league with vintage **Queens Of The Stone Age** and I'm very impressed by Justin Isham's soothing vocals on "Jaded," a song sure to please fans of the soulful **Satchel**. **Open Hand** remain equally restrained on the cool sounding "Newspeak." Diversity is one of **Open Hand**'s strong points, and **Open Hand** close *You and Me* in style. Isham teams with a female vocalist who uses some distortion on "Waiting for Katy." **Open Hand** slow down for the ballad "Trench Warfare" but turn in their best work on closing track "Hard Night." Isham's smooth vocals perfectly complement the very heavy guitar for an exhilarating combination. **Open Hand** deliver a phenomenal record and if there's any justice they will be the next big thing. **TRUSTKILL.**

**OVER KILL... RelixIV... Michael Knight... Over Kill** continues to deliver solid albums, not verging from the thrash and burn roots they started with some twenty years ago. They have been igniting mosh-pits for 14 albums. *Relix* is no different, a hard charging, metal/thrash bludgeoning. It will get you head-banging with break-neck riffs and thunderous grooves. The story on vocalist, Bobby "Blitz" is - you either like the way he sounds or you don't. He doesn't change to meld with passing music fads and he doesn't soften his demeanor. The CD kicks off with, "Within Your Eyes", a ten to twelve part mosh-mayhem tune that offers blocks of stitched together rhythm slabs like a thrash version of the Frankenstein monster. "Love" has some cool breakdowns in the verse where there are just vocals and a lone icy guitar playing. "A Pound of Flesh" is an absolutely awesome, straight-out, speed-demon of a song, reminding me of the early days of thrash. Speaking of early days, "Old School" is an anthem to the band's early years and playing the legendary Brooklyn club, L'Amour's. Throughout the years, **Over Kill** have perfected their attack. The blast beats are just the right length of time to keep them fresh sounding and the band changes tempos at the perfect times to keep the songs interesting all the way through. Reason to get this CD? You know what you're going to get, and the gettin' is good! **SPITFIRE.**

**OUTWORLD... Outworld... BVP... I** was aware of guitar shredder Rusty Cooley from his solo disc on Lion Music but was basically unaware of his band **Outworld** until Christina interviewed them. This four song demo was recorded in 2003 and seems to be responsible for their current record deal. Despite a weak production this disc is very impressive. This is what power metal should be all about. Opening track "Raise Hell" has sharp, heavy riffing, killer guitar and keyboard solos, and excellent vocals. Speaking of vocals, Kelly Carpenter gives a great Dio-esque performance on "Concentration Camp." This is a great teaser for their full length debut due this spring.

**PRIMORDIAL... The Gathering Wilderness... BVP... Still** one of the very few Irish metal bands in existence, **Primordial** got their start when guitarist Ciaran MacUiliam and bassist Paul MacAmlaigh formed the band in 1987. Things didn't get serious until the addition of vocalist A.A. Nemtheanga in 1991. Their popular demo, *Dark Romanticism* led to a deal with British label Cacophonous Records for their 1995 debut, *Imrama*. The label went out of business and **Primordial** signed with another doomed British label, Misanthropy Records, for 1998's *Journey's End*. For a few years, **Primordial** was part of Hammerheart's roster and their best albums came out at this time; 1999's e.p. *The Burning Season*, 2000's *Spirit the Earth Aflame*, and 2002's *Storm Before Calm*. Once again, **Primordial**'s label collapsed but now things are finally looking up as they joined Metal Blade's roster. **Primordial**'s fifth full length album (*The Gathering Wilderness*) sees them continuing to evolve. They've never experienced commercial success despite endless critical acclaim, but **Primordial** have always delivered first class albums. Their style ranges from aggressive black metal to gothic tinged folk metal and a touch of doom. *The Gathering Wilderness* turns out to be their most accomplished work yet. Nemtheanga's developed into an expressive vocalist and unlike recent **Katatonia**, **Paradise Lost**, or **Green Carnation**; **Primordial** still have that raw edge to their sound. Listening to **Primordial**'s latest I am often reminded of **Anathema**'s awesome *The Silent Enigma*. Elements we've come to appreciate; the melancholic title track, the folk metal of "The Song of the Tomb," and the doomy "Cities Carved in Stone," are present throughout *The Gathering Wilderness*. Great album, someday hopefully other people will catch on. **METAL BLADE.**

**REQUIEM AETERNAM... Philosopher... BVP... In 1995** vocalist/guitarist Jose Romero (**Inner Sanctum**), guitarist Pablo Magallanes, bassist Martin Mendez (**Opeth**), and drummer Martin Lopez (**Amon Amarth**, **Opeth**) formed **Requiem Aeternam**. Member changes soon unfolded and Romero made **Requiem Aeternam** a trio with new members Fabian Redondo (drums) and Marcelo Aquilar (bass). The e.p. *Eternally Dying* was released in 1997. In the interim Romero kept busy by writing a book titled *Forbidden Writings* which dealt with philosophy, politics, and economy. In keeping with his literary mind, Jose's new album would be a conceptual piece with each song delving into the philosophies of legends like Gautama, Heraclitus, Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Rousseau, Seneca, and Tzu. Romero moved from Uruguay to New York City and reformed **Requiem Aeternam** with new bassist Maciej Kupiszewski and drummer Alex Hernandez (**Immolation**). The result is the eight song *Philosopher*. This is perhaps the best metal album I've heard in years. **Requiem Aeternam** are highly creative and *Philosopher* sounds

awesome. You could simply call **Requiem Aeternam** progressive death metal; "Rectitude" has precision death groove, "Liberty" is melodic, and "Philosopher" is progressive, but there is so much more to this band. If you crossed **Immolation** with **Voivod** and **Arcturus** you would begin to understand **Requiem Aeternam**. The guitar playing is spectacular. Romero can get it tight and precise (i.e. **Meshuggah**), highlighted with some guitar squeals (i.e. **Morbid Angel**, **Immolation**), or come at you sideways with off kilter riffing (i.e. **Voivod**), and don't be surprised to hear some **Cynic** and **Atheist** progressiveness. Kupiszewski and Hernandez provide a solid foundation. Even as a vocalist, Romero is expansive and impressive whether growling or singing. I can't say enough about this band which should be huge. **Philosopher** is one of the most rewarding listening experiences I've encountered.

**SAMAEL... Reign Of Light... BVP...** It's hard to imagine the same **Samael** which released black metal classics like **Worship Him** (1991) and **Blood Ritual** (1992) is writing industrial metal like **Reign of Light**. The evolution occurred when they signed with Century Media for their third album; **Ceremony of Opposites**. Along with **Emperor's In the Nightside Eclipse**, **Ceremony of Opposites** would play an important role in the future of black metal. Over the next four years two e.p.'s (**Rebellion** and **Exodus**) and two full lengths (**Passage** and **Eternal**) revealed an entirely new sound for **Samael** as electronics and industrial metal took over replacing the previously harsh sound. **Samael** received much acclaim for their forward thinking approach but also drew the ire of fans of their black metal roots. A label dispute with Century Media seemed to delay the band for five years as **Samael** eventually reached a new agreement with Regain Records in Europe and Nuclear Blast in North America. Expectations for **Reign of Light** are high and **Samael** don't disappoint. The album opens with "Moongate" and "Inch Allah," two very good songs with great rhythms. Songs like the anthemic "Reign of Light" and the energetic "On Earth" keep the middle of the album moving-almost making the slow "Telepath" bearable. **Samael** find their groove during the middle of "Oriently Dawn" and the catchy and energized "As the Sun." People who like their industrial metal will be pleased by closer "Telepathic." **Reign of Light** may not be as heavy as people would like (i.e. **Ceremony of Opposites**) but it's more focused and a little heavier than **Eternal** and **Passage**. **NUCLEAR BLAST.**

**SARISSA... Masters Of Sins... BVP...** Greek metallers **Sarissa** don't have many recorded products to offer (one full length from 1994) but they've been in existence since 1985. Soon after their formation, **Sarissa** drew the attention of Noise Records but various problems led the label to Russian band **Kruiz** instead. The band struggled to keep their line-up intact, so they eventually split in 1995. Four years later, **Sarissa's** original line-up chose to give it another try and hooked up with vocalist Dimitris Liapakis (**Valleys Eve**, **Mystic Prophecy**) for some shows. Musicians Bill Kanakis (drums) and Jim Selalmazidis (guitars, bass, and keyboards) found new singer Nick Iglezos and recorded **Masters of Sins**. The biography brags about **Sarissa's** great modern production from their own studio and that they spent twelve months recording **Masters of Sins** but the result is raw with an underproduced, demo-like quality of sound. Believe it or not, this is one primary reason why this album is so appealing. It lacks the gloss and processed sound of today's power metal acts and harkens back to the eighties when power metal was dirty and even unpredictable. At every turn **Sarissa** add something unorthodox and quirky. I can hear where their time was spent as each song has intricacies and ideas which makes it unique and different. "Bleed" opens the disc and there's so much to absorb that I don't know where to start. Iglezos vocals get truly bizarre when he goes for those high pitched screeches. The bass is loud, the drums are heavy, and **Sarissa** reveal a mid section instrumental that is downright weird. They can go into thrash mode ("To These Powers") with a quirky groove or become very catchy (the mdi paced "Starvation") with interesting keyboards. I was pleasantly surprised by this unheard of Greek band. **Sarissa** show a desire to make power metal interesting and creative without forgetting their roots. **BLACK LOTUS.**

**SEEMLESS... Seemless... BVP...** New Englanders **Seemless** are an impressive new heavy rock band getting compared to everyone from **Led Zepppelin** to **Soundgarden** to **Clutch**. **Seemless** was formed by the duo of Pete Cortese (guitars) and Derek Kerswill (drums). The pair were the force behind the band **Medium** and after their singer left they recruited ex-**Killswitch Engage** vocalist Jesse David for **Seemless**. Along with bassist

Jeff Fultz, they recorded this kick ass, self titled debut. A brief "Intro" starts the album but the mind blowing heavy rock of "Something's Got to Give" sets the tone. A rock song hasn't been this catchy, heavy, and energetic in a long time. I am reminded of some of heavy music's greatest bands; **Life Of Agony** ("The Wanderer") and **Soundgarden** (the energetic "The Crisis" and the second half of "Lay My Burden Down"). When **Seemless** play straight out stoner rock on "War/Peace" they sound bored. They only mellow on "Endless", and although they never match the greatness of "Something's Got to Give," **Seemless** deliver an impressive debut. After hearing Jesse on the first two **Killswitch Engage** albums, I had no idea he was this talented as a singer. **EQUAL VISION.**

**SENTENCED... The Funeral Album... Dave Smith...** Over their fifteen year career, Finland's **Sentenced** have probably set the record for number of songs about suicide. Over that time, they also went from an early death metal style to one of the first bands to play "melodic" death metal (doing the Gothenburg sound before many of the Gothenburg bands were doing it) and with 1996's **Down** album and new vocalist Ville Laihiala settled into the style they've been playing ever since, a slightly gothic metal/hard rock style with conventional song structures and uniformly depressing lyrics. I've seen the style called "depression rock" or sometimes "death rock" and the style has influenced a number of bands, especially in Finland, where **Sentenced** have become very popular, their songs and albums hitting number one (which I think is the equivalent of hitting #867 in the U.S.). With a band so fixated on death, suicide, failure, and unhappy endings in general, it's only fitting that they explicitly kill off the band. Even before release, **The Funeral Album** has been announced as the last **Sentenced** album. It seems that it was consciously written as a farewell, hitting all the familiar **Sentenced** bases and carrying a theme of a sad but strong ending throughout the songs. There's some variation, but it's no departure. If you've heard the last three **Sentenced** albums, you know what to expect here and whether or not you'll like it. "May Today Become the Day" and "Ever-Frost" are catchy uptempo rockers with "Ever-Frost" featuring a nice chorus lyric about pissing on graves. "We are But Falling Leaves" and "Her Last 5 Minutes" are sad almost-ballads with typical **Sentenced** lyrics reflecting on our frail mortality, and despite their more mellow sound, are two of the best songs on the album. "Where Waters Fall Frozen" is less than a minute long, and is a nod to their death/thrash past, with a few blazing riffs that could have made up the intro to one of their 1993/94 era songs. Serious or not, it proves they could still play that style if they wanted to. After some novel harmonica opening up "Despair-Ridden Hearts", they launch into another bunch of rockers with revenge-fantasy and death-wishing lyrics that are over-the-top enough to be humorous, showing more blatantly the sense of humor that has always lurked behind the band's misery. "End of the Road" is a very appropriate closer, starting off slow and ballad-like, then rocking out in the middle and ending with an emotional instrumental finale with some nice guitar solos. Throughout, Laihiala sings alternately tenderly and forcefully in his rough, Hetfield-style, nearly off-key singing that isn't pretty but fits the music. Fans of **Sentenced** will definitely like this. It's a good album with a strong, consistent set of songs. I would say it's not quite as good as 2000's **Crimson** or 1996's **Down**, but it's at least as good as 2002's **The Cold White Light**. There is a sense that the band is treading water creatively, and they probably realized this themselves, hence the break-up. Unless they entirely changed direction again, there probably were not any more songs left in this band. Still, they manage to go out with a bang rather than a whimper. **CENTURY MEDIA.**

**SHADE EMPIRE... Synthetic... BVP...** **Shade Empire** are a Finnish black metal band with a penchant for playing a melodic and modern brand of the style. The band formed in 1999 and have only had one change as guitarist Tero Liimatainen departed from the band. **Synthetic** is **Shade Empire's** debut full length and it was originally released in 2004 via Avantgarde Music. Apparently the sub division of Cleopatra Records, Magick, has a licensing agreement with Avantgarde Music, which has led to bands like **Shade Empire**, **Astarte**, and **Opera IX** getting proper releases here in America. True to form, Avantgarde find creative extreme metal bands. **Shade Empire** thrives on melodic black metal. Keyboardist Olli Savolainen plays a large role in the proceedings. I can't help but think **Shade Empire** sound like what **Covenant** would've sounded like had they not changed their name to the **Kovenant** and went industrial. "Pain and Pleasure" shows that **Shade Empire** are willing to add electronic beats and some weird keyboards for a modern sound. Savolainen's keyboard playing even has me thinking of

**Dark Tranquillity** while listening to "Human Sculpture." Finland has their share of underground melodic black metal bands and **Bloodrose** made an impact last year, but **Shade Empire** is the best I've heard so far. **MAGICK**.

**SOILWORK... *Stabbing The Drama...* BVP...** It's hard to believe how busy **Soilwork** have been since their inception just eight years ago- an e.p., six full lengths, and several tours. There will always be people wishing they would return to the raw energy of their debut (*Steelbath Suicide*) or the aggressive, yet sophisticated follow ups (*The Chainheart Machine* and *A Predators Portrait*) but **Soilwork** seem to have found a comfort zone these days. Like recent **In Flames**, **Soilwork** have modernized and matured their sound, especially on 2002's *Natural Born Chaos* and 2003's *Figure Number Five*. Vocalist Bjorn Strid uses more of a clean singing style and **Soilwork** often take a melodic approach musically. Many people who've been let down by *Figure Number Five* will surely feel the same about *Stabbing the Drama*. Clearly, **Soilwork** have no intentions of returning to their roots- if you want that style you're better off sticking with **Arch Enemy**, if you can accept **Soilwork** for what they are now, you will find some good songs here. The title track opens *Stabbing the Drama* and it could be **Soilwork**'s best song ever. They coast through "One With the Flies" and "Weapon of Vanity," but Strid delivers a great performance on "The Crest Fallen." "Nerve" is another good song and **Soilwork** show some speed on the heavy "Stalemate" and too short "Blind Eye Halo." For my tastes I enjoy "Stabbing the Drama" and can tolerate "The Crest Fallen"- I don't mind the melody and Strid has developed into a good vocalist, but I can't stand the emo-like vocals on "Distance" (why can't they keep the song entirely aggressive?) and "Wherever Thorns May Grow" is way too melodic. As long as **Soilwork** can keep delivering a couple very good songs, I'll stick around but many have been turned off by their current sound. **NUCLEAR BLAST**.

**SPIDERS AND SNAKES... *Hollywood Ghosts...* BVP...** Los Angeles rockers **Spiders And Snakes** was formed in 1990 by vocalist and guitarist Lizzie Grey (ex-**London**), guitarist Cup Cake, bassist Vinny Votel, and drummer Timothy Jay (ex-**London**). They released a debut e.p. of some cover songs called *Araknomania* and then their debut full length *2000 Retro* came out in 1994. *The Glitter Years* and *Astro Pop* came out shortly after *2000 Retro*. **Spiders And Snakes** always came across like a merging of pop metal, glam, and punk. 2000's *London Daze* harkened back to Lizzie and Jay's roots and things have been quiet until this big release. *Hollywood Ghosts* is a two disc set. The first disc consists of a dozen new studio tracks. This was recorded over a two year period and guests like **Fishbone**'s Angelo Moore (saxophone), Matt Cross (bass), and **Survivor**'s Stephen Ellis (harmonica) add some flavor to Lizzie and Jay's creation. The second disc is a bonus d.v.d. featuring music videos and fifteen tracks in all. There's also live concert footage, interviews, and photos. Lizzie has always been associated with Nikki Sixx as both were involved with **London** during the early eighties, but Lizzie's career never really took off as **Spiders And Snakes** comes across as more novelty than anything. Perhaps if they originated in 1985 things would've been different. **SANSEI**.

**STARBREAKER... *Starbreaker...* BVP...** The nineties were relatively quiet for vocalist Tony Harnell. There was a solo album (1994's *Morning Wood*), three controversial T.N.T. albums (1992's *Realized Fantasies*, 1997's *Firefly*, and 1999's *Transistor*), and his **Westworld** self titled debut (1998). So far we're not even half way through the next decade and Tony has practically equalled that output; two **Westworld** albums (2001's *Skin* and 2002's *Cyberdreams*), a T.N.T. comeback album (2004's *My Religion*), a collaboration with **Brazen Abbot** and this album with **Starbreaker**. Joining Tony in **Starbreaker** are drumming legend John Macaluso (**Ark**, ex-T.N.T.), guitarist and keyboardist Magnus Karlsson (**Last Tribe**), and bassist Fabrizio Grossi (**Steve Vai**). Those in the know are already aware of Karlsson's talent as a songwriter and musician, Harnell and Macaluso need no introduction, while Grossi's become one of the highest in demand producers and session players. The amazing "Die for You" sets the tone, it's very heavy and John's drumming is busy as hell. Next is "Lies." Now, Tony has delivered some of the catchiest choruses ever with T.N.T. (i.e. "10,000 Lovers", "Seven Seas," etc.) but "Lies" is his most infectious yet. Next is another heavy cruncher- "Break

My Bones." I can't think of an album with three opening tracks that are this good. **Starbreaker** pull out another winner with the dark "Light at the End of the World" and Macaluso shines again on "Transparent." People who enjoy Harnell's ballads will be pleased with the dramatic "Days of Confusion" while the heavy rock "Turn it Off" will appeal to T.N.T. fans. **Starbreaker** has been compared to **Judas Priest** but fans of T.N.T., **Last Tribe**, and **Ark** should expect greatness and **Starbreaker** delivers. Harnell has never sounded better or more intense. **FRONTIERS**.

**THUNDER... *The Magnificent Seventh...* BVP...** British rockers **Thunder** formed in the late eighties and had an immediate hit with their 1990 release *Backstreet Symphony*. 1992's *Laughing on Judgement Day* kept the momentum going but of course, grunge came around and classic rock was an after thought. They continued with some solid releases in the mind nineties; 1995's *Behind Closed Doors* and 1996's *The Thrill of it All*, but went quiet for several years. The primary songwriters; vocalist Danny Bowes and guitarist Luke Morley formed the aptly titled combination, **Bowes And Morley** for two albums, and **Thunder** returned with 2003's *Shooting at the Sun*. *The Magnificent Seventh* is their second release since the reformation. I'm unsure where the seventh comes in, by my count **Thunder** had only five previous albums. I'm torn apart with this review. **Thunder** deserves respect and they continue to capture their own sound and write memorable and distinct songs, but there isn't much on *The Magnificent Seventh* to warrant repeated listens. The album opens with "I Love You More Than Rock 'n Roll" and it's a good, but typical **Thunder**-esque anthem. I am reminded of classic rock artists the **Black Crowes** ("Monkey See Monkey Do") and **AC/DC** ("Fade Into the Sun") and the usual ballads also appear; "Together or Apart" and the bluesy "I'm Dreaming Again." All these songs are decent but unremarkable. The two standouts are closer "One Fatal Kiss" and "The Pride" which is probably **Thunder**'s best song ever. I give vocalist Danny Bowes and guitarist Luke Morley credit for sounding unique, I just wish they would stretch out those talents a bit more. **FRONTIERS**.

**THURISAZ... *Scent Of A Dream...* BVP...** Belgium black metallers **Thurisaz** started out in 1997 as **Modilium**. Their debut demo, *Never to Return*, combined doom and death metal. They added keyboardist Kobe Canniere in time for the recording of their second demo, *The Last Embrace*. A third demo, *Anno Viroviacum*, established their diverse and aggressive sound today. They found themselves distributed in Europe by Two Fat Men, but I have a feeling once more people get to hear this impressive debut they should find a home pretty easily. *Scent of a Dream* only consists of six songs, but they're lengthy and intricate. "A Timeless Flame" opens the album with a keyboard dominated sound. There are some clear vocals and a progressive section, but also some heavy groove and folk elements as well. The next track, "Scent of a Dream" is also atmospheric but at times they will remind many of **Cradle Of Filth**, especially with the aggressive vocals and melodic keyboards. **Thurisaz** change gears on "Years of Silence" with gothic and folk elements. "When Images Are Fading" can be considered progressive black metal. In case listeners forgot, "Anno Viroviacum" sees Canniere's keyboards taking over in a lead role. Closer "Endless" ends *Scent of a Dream* in grand fashion. The piano and clear vocals set the atmosphere, leading to the dramatic conclusion and **Thurisaz** relies on instrumentation more than vocals on this track. **Thurisaz** are a welcome surprise on the extreme metal scene and very few can effortlessly incorporate styles as easily as they do; everything from black metal to progressive metal and folk metal is present here and it all sounds killer.

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Interview with vocalist Kjetil Nordhus

Bands like **Katatonia**, **Anathema**, and **Opeth** have become legends of emotionally charged metal. In the last few years **Green Carnation** have developed into one of the most emotionally complex and intense bands around. Dealing with personal tragedy has helped mainman Tchort use **Green Carnation** as his emotional outlet. We were very pleased to interview the band's vocalist Kjetil Nordhus, who also has impressed with recent releases by **Trail Of Tears** and **Chain Collector**.

**The response to *The Quiet Offspring* has been amazing, did you realize you were creating something special with this album?**

Hi, Brett. Those things are always hard to say in advance. But already when hearing the pre-produced songs from the guys, I thought we would be dealing with some very strong songs. But that early in the process it's impossible to guess what the end result will sound like; we do rarely rehearse together on the songs before entering the studio, and the songs can change a lot after the different persons in the band has coloured it with their individual ideas. But I was always confident we were going to release a very strong album. I knew all the members would be influential with their songwriting and their skills, and we are all delighted with the outcome.

**How did the songwriting and recording of *The Quiet Offspring* differ from previous albums?**

First of all we were six different songwriters on this album, more than ever. That is a big change even before we started to work on the song individually. I think the biggest difference between *The Quiet Offspring* and our other albums is that there are even more musical influences evident. The musical backgrounds of the different bandmembers are very diverse, and the two new members after *A Blessing in Disguise*, certainly had an impact on the end-result. The actual recording process was also a new experience for us. We travelled down to the south of France, and stayed together there for the entire process, we used all our time on working on the album. When recording the previous albums, we have had more our individual sessions in the studio, rarely seeing each other before the party when having finished the albums.

**You will be turning thirty years old in about a month and a half, will this milestone have any effect or change in your life?**

Time will show. I very much doubt that. Except for my girlfriend mentioning it time and again, I think I will be the same person after turning thirty. Luckily I am not the oldest person in **Green Carnation** either, so I don't have any problems there. Tchort was very happy when Tommy Jackson joined the band, not having to be the grandfather in the band anymore. And on the other side, Tommy is eager to include Bjorn Harstad as the third guitarist on as many shows as possible. Then Bjorn is the oldest, by far.

**Other than the vocals, how much input did you have on the new record?**

Normally the songwriter has the sole responsibility for his own songs. With that I mean that he has the control over the preproduction, the discussion with the other members what he is looking for in his songs, and having the last word when recording the songs in the studio. This time around there were more input from all the others, since we worked on the songs 24 hours a day down in France, for example trying out vocal arrangements by the pool, after a bottle of wine, helped by an acoustic guitar. That way we all had input on many aspects of the songs on the album, myself included. You know, discussing choice of sounds on the keyboard, guitar solos and so on. I also did write one of the songs on the album, "When I Was You", and I am delighted by the result. I learned a lot after recording my song on *A Blessing in Disguise*, which didn't turn out as I wanted, and I used a lot of time discussing this song with the other guys, and they added a lot to the song when recording it.

**Is there any chance of American gigs this year?**

Yes, or at least quite close. We are doing a headliner show on The Day of the Equinox-festival in Toronto, Canada in mid-October, and we looking very much forward to that. Reactions from the U.S. and Canada has generally

# green carnation

been extremely good, so we are also working on a full U.S. tour some time after the gig in Toronto. We are confirmed being co-headliners at ProgPower Europe in early October, and we are waiting for some more confirmations during the next week or so. The interest in the band is very

good right now. We haven't been the most active touring band previously, but we're trying to do something with that now.

**I know death has had a major impact on Tchort and it shows up in *Green Carnation's* recordings; what do you find is the best way to deal with tragedy?**

Yes, I have also lost people close to me, and I think all people have their own way of dealing with tragedy. It's not easy at all, but for me, the right thing has been to allow the sorrow, and use time to get over it, trying to focus on the positive memories, and accept the mortality.

**What is your priority for the band at this point?**

I think we have worked extremely hard in the underground up until now, and I feel we deserve a bigger audience now. But things don't develop by themselves, and we will be trying to do more touring now than ever before. At least in Europe, the only way to grow is to play live a lot, and I guess that's the case in the U.S. also. So our biggest priority the rest of this year will definitely be the live part. Also, we are out of record contract now, and have already received some offers. We will also use some time on finding the right deal for us, and have no hurry, as the offers keep coming in.



**Do you think *Green Carnation* will always be a band full of surprises and always evolving?**

I think **Green Carnation** will always be evolving as a band in constant search for something new. That way we will keep the music interesting for ourselves, always having new challenges within the band. The reason for changing is not that we haven't been happy with our previous work, and not for the sake of changing, but it's a natural thing for us to do. I have no idea at all how our next album is going to sound, and that keeps it all fresh for me, and the other guys.

#### Discography:

2005... *The Quiet Offspring* (The End)  
2003... *A Blessing In Disguise* (Season Of Mist)  
2001... *Light Of Day Day Of Darkness* (The End)  
2000... *Journey To The End Of The Night* (Prophecy)

#### Current line-up:

Kjetil Nordhus... vocals  
Tchort... guitars  
Bjorn H.... guitars  
Stein R.... bass  
Tommy Jackson... drums

#### Website:

[www.greencarnation.no](http://www.greencarnation.no)

Interview with guitarist Sean McGrath and bassist Ross Sewage

California death metallers **Impaled** are perhaps the most

enjoyable interview. Since they started talking to the press, this has been a band which has an hysterical sense of humor and a professional, killer sound which is often underestimated due to their demeanor. They signed to Necropolis Records and released their debut full length, *The Dead Shall Dead Remain*, in 2000. Two years later they returned with *Mondo Medicale*. Several e.p.'s (including *Medical Waste* and *Choice Cuts*) were released and **Impaled** were eventually left without a home due to Necropolis Records' collapse. Century Media wisely stepped in and added **Impaled** to their storied roster and now comes the new album, *Death After Life*. Here are Ross Sewage and Sean McGrath to entertain us.

**Do you really believe that there is death after life?**

**Ross:** No, I don't believe that people die. I don't go in for that religious, dogmatic claptrap. I know that really, when people get old, the U.S. government just sends them to Guantanamo Bay to be tortured and have panties put on their head in perpetuity. The torture is going to be a bummer, but I bet the panties make a lovely cap.

**Sean:** I've always suspected that funeral homes and cemeteries were just con jobs designed for suckers.

**Why did you choose to have Trey Spruance produce the new record?**

**Ross:** We chose to work with Trey Spruance because Phil Spector was all booked up. Or was he just booked? It was something like that. The sound differs in that we wanted to steer away from overproduced, triggered and compressed-to-all-hell recording. It's innovative in this day and age of by the numbers death metal, so if you don't like it, it means you ride the short bus to school.

**Sean:** Ross is right. There are rebels, and there are innovators. **Impaled** is a band in rebellion against the status quo; we're in rebellion against generic production; we're in rebellion against the establishment; and if that's not innovative, I don't know what is. Plus all Trey wanted out of it was a copy of my recording of a Balinese all-kazoo orchestra.

**What type of mayhem can we expect during your tour with Aborted?**

**Ross:** Yeah, man, it should be wicked awesome. You can expect the most violent version of the game "Out of State Plates" ever will be played. Instead of punching each other in the arms, we throw knives in the car.

**Sean:** Are they twisted? In my experience most death metal guys are about as twisted as a roomful of accountants. I'm sure it'll be fun pranking them onstage though. I hope to glue Sven's hand to his mic stand one night.

**You spent a lot of time and effort with Necropolis Records - why did things end so badly?**

**Ross:** I've never once seen a royalty record from Necropolis. The only time we saw any sales records was when we demanded our contract shortened. We also had at least one employee there actively trying to defame us, not forward show and tour offers, and talk about how bad our recordings were to other bands and magazines. What a good press agent, eh? Necropolis did do one good thing for us though- I have a huge supply of **Destroyer** and **Cranium** c.d.'s that I use for discus shooting. Thanks, Paul.

**Sean:** The free c.d.'s were a perk, that's for sure. They were free right? It was an easy decision to leave the label after we went down there and saw Paul and Matt ripping the copper wiring out of the walls to sell at a junkyard. Around that time is when we started to suspect that they might be having some money problems. And then there were the times we would run into people in the scene telling us that the press guy at Necropolis was telling everyone he hated our album, on company time. Now, I'm the first person to say we suck, but when a person is being paid to lie and say how rad we are and instead he tells everyone how much he hates us, well, that's crossing some sort of line.

**What expectations do you have for Century Media and the label have for Impaled?**

**Ross:** The label expects us to make them money. We hope they won't notice when we don't.

**Sean:** Heather and Jan, the US and Euro press people at CM, have been really cool to work with, and they hardly ever tell people we suck, at least



not on company time. I expect that sometime in the near future they'll get sick of our whining and puking and finally just give us the axe. We'll drift around for a while and

then find a home on the newly resurrected Red Light Records, with **Malicious Onslaught** and **Mortuary**.

**Another label you've worked with who has earned much respect is Razorback Records - what can you say about Billy and Jill and their hordes of sickness?**

**Ross:** I can't say anything nice about Billy, so I'll say nothing at all. Jill, however, runs a great label with great bands and you can feel the love, the gay, gay love that all these bands have for what they do.

**Sean:** I don't know about respect, but Billy has definitely earned himself a



swift kick in the nuts. Jill on the other hand is a very nice person and I'm happy to call her my friend, and a friend to all living creatures.

**You obviously have fun and enjoy what you're doing, does being in Impaled and all it entails ever get too demanding or serious for you or do you feel content with how your career has gone thus far?**

**Ross:** What made you think we're having fun? Was it the constant moaning and bitching about how the world has screwed us? Or was it the moment when I broke down in tears, wailing about how I'd wasted my entire life? I know, I know. It was the time I was bashing my head into a wall trying to kill myself the same way Ray Combs, the second host of Family Feud, did.

**Sean:** No way, it's nothing but a non stop party. Oh who am I kidding? The only thing that keeps me from throwing myself out a window is the knowledge that **Impaled** may be the best band in the history of the universe.

**Final comments?**

**Ross:** You forgot to ask us how we feel about being compared to **Carcass** constantly. You also forgot to ask if we're real doctors. Finally, you forgot to ask what is the new "brutal stuffs" **Impaled** is listening to.

**Sean:** Could I please, please, please give you a short history of the band for the readers who aren't familiar with us?

**Discography:**

2005... *Death After Life* (Century Media)

2002... *Mondo Medicale* (Necropolis)

2000... *The Dead Shall Dead Remain* (Necropolis)

**Current line-up:**

Sean McGrath... vocals and guitars

Ross Sewage... vocals and bass

Jason Kocol... guitars

Raul Varela... drums

**Website:**

[www.impaled.info](http://www.impaled.info)



Interview with vocalist Josh Smith

**Infernal Legion** began their career as **Eviscerate** before changing their name to **Infernal Legion** prior to releasing their debut, 2002's **Angelicide**. **Angelicide** was released independently but the band caught the attention of Moribund Records which in turn helped promote **Infernal Legion** while signing the death metal band to a multi-album contract. The first proper release under this agreement is **Your Prayers Mean Nothing**. Playing death metal in a similar style and level of professionalism as bands like **Immolation** and **Incantation**, **Infernal Legion** deserve your attention and respect. We emailed some questions and vocalist Josh Smith kindly responded.

**You're in the midst of a West Coast tour right now- how is this going?**  
We just got home, it went pretty well. We had a good time, I thought that



some of the shows were underpromoted, but all in all it was good.

**How do you prepare for doing a tour on your own like this?**

Save money for two months, request time off of work, and just hit it hard. Just try to promote it as well as we can. Fortunately, we have myspace as a good resource, we were able to promote in places we had never been before.

**How were you able to gain the attention of Moribund?**

We caught the attention from Tom

Racine. We happened to live two blocks away from him at the time. We became friends, and he was impressed with the album, took it up to Odin who wound up giving us independent promotion, which worked out really well. They took us to Metalfest and sent it out to magazines to be reviewed.

**How do you go about composing music for Infernal Legion?**

I don't write any of the music, Doug and Eric write all of the guitar riffs. I'm basically in charge of writing the lyrics and I draw inspiration from my hatred of christians and organized religions as a whole.

**What do you think will be the key to keeping Infernal Legion's longevity?**

I see music in the mainstream getting more aggressive and not softer over time, and I think that death metal hasn't reached a peak, just plateaued, and hopefully we can lead to the peak of death metal.

**What is it like living in Washington?**

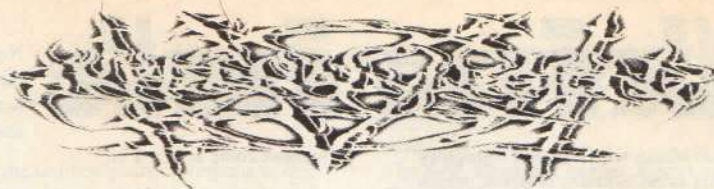
I lived here for 28 years, and the weather doesn't bother me, I actually prefer it. But people who move up here from out of state seem to have problems, especially through the winter months.

**How far are you from California? Do you visit there often?**

We're about nine hours from the California border. We just went to California on our tour. I haven't done a lot of traveling, but I like Oregon a lot, Milwaukee was cool, and I can't wait to see the rest of the country.

**What has led you to be anti-Christian/ religion?**

Religion being forced down my throat my whole life and I wouldn't try to make anybody believe in what I believe in, that's their decision to make on their own.



**If you could make someone who is religious change their mind- what would be the best evidence you could supply?**

If I did that, I would be just as bad as the christian scum who is trying to convert everyone around them.

**How do you feel about having a religious zealot leading this country?**

I think people in this country are so used to the idea of a "god" the majority can't imagine life with out it. People are so afraid of what happens after they die there willing to give up things (like premarital sex) in hopes that they will go to some promised land. It's all just a bunch of shit.as far as politics go, I vote but only for candidates I feel are worthy of my vote. I didn't vote for either of our so called presidential candidates because on one had you got a liberal who is all for gun control (which I'm completely aginst) and raising taxes for shit like welfare, and on the other hand you have a conservative religious freak who keeps fucking with freedom of speech, says "god told him" to do things, and sends our troops over to get wiped out for his agenda, so I reserve the right to hold my vote for someone who I feel deserves it, but I really hate politics.

**When will you begin writing for the new album?**

We've already started writing new shit and we're shooting for a June 6 2006 realease date (666) and as in a lot of our songs we'll mix in some black metal riffs in with the rest that seems to be working well for us.

**Discography:**

2005... **Your Prayers Mean Nothing** (Moribund)

2002... **Angelicide**

**Current line-up:**

Josh Smith... vocals

Doug Stern... guitars

Eric Armstrong... guitars

Rick Powell... bass

Justin Thomas... drums

**Website:**

[www.infernallegion.com](http://www.infernallegion.com)

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Interview with guitarist

Corbin King

Southern guitar shredder Corbin King is one of the most underrated

metal musicians around. He recorded an album with his band **Vainglory** and a solo instrumental disc, but it's his latest venture, **Kinrick**, which will turn heads. Teaming up with vocalist Stephen Fredrick (ex-**Firewind**, ex-**Kenziner**), bassist James Martin (**Zanister**), and drummer Stian Kristoffersen (**Firewind**, **Pagans Mind**), **Kinrick** recorded their debut album, **Sense Your Darkness**. **Sense Your Darkness** is a solid heavy metal disc, with exceptional vocals and guitar playing. We hooked up with Corbin King for an interview.

#### Why was it the right time for you and Stephen to get together?

I guess mainly because the material clicked between us the best. I had actually auditioned Stephen in the past for the Vainglory material and he wasn't interested because it seemed a bit too heavy for his liking. We live close to each other and it has always been in the back of Chastain's mind to try and get us hooked up on something and it has turned out that these Kinrick tunes we're the ones that let it happen. They are still heavy but I think a bit more straight ahead lending them more to Stephen's ear.

#### Will you continue to record albums as Kinrick in the future?

We will have to see what happens. I would like to do a few more, I think there are a lot of great things that could come out of it, I feel we can further in the direction created on this c.d. by staying really heavy yet straight ahead and melodic. I'd say keep your fingers crossed and see what we can do in the near future.

#### What will be your next recording venture?

Right now I'm working on a couple new things. I've got my solo band, **Southern Pride**, in the works. It's a super super heavy outfit with a lot of great songs and I'm on vocals as well. This in reality may surface sometime this fall, I'm not sure yet. I am also helping record/engineer a solo effort by Kate French. She has got some really cool songs and I'm really excited about being involved with it. She's a very talented person and musician, and she can sing anything. It's gonna transcend a lot of barriers between musical styles. Kate's writing everything and I'll be producing. For the most part though, through working with her on the **Vainglory** c.d. I have gotten really good at producing and engineering her vocals, which is where I'll be doing most of the work. I really want to see her shine through on her c.d. and want to make sure her vocal production is the best it can be. There will be more news on both of these bands in the near future.

#### Why do you play Strats?

The great thing about a Strat is its versatility. You can get pretty much any sound you want out of them with the right pickup and amp combination. The main thing I like about them is the comfort, they just fit nice. The necks are smooth and the bodies are comfortable. I like them because they are more rounded and less dainty than the soloist style body shape and they can take some abuse and not break. I really want to find a cool guitar company to do some work with because I think I've got some really good ideas on making a killer guitar. I've figured out what works and what feels good while getting the job done, now only if someone would make them for me.

#### What bands made you interested in metal?

After the early phase I spoke of earlier, it naturally progressed into heavier and heavier things. **Zeppelin** became **Guns 'n Roses**, **GnR** became **Metallica**, so on and so on. Then I branched off into the virtuoso side with Jason Becker, Marty Friedman, Yngwie, and such. I am influenced by lots of things and many bands. They all cross paths at some point.

# Kinrick

Now I'm into my own thing and letting the music in me come out, but from time to time just like anyone else, you can hear some of those early

influences come at you a bit.

#### What advice would you give beginners? What kept you motivated?

Practice like there's no tomorrow. You'll be ahead of your game in the end. Nobody practices anymore or cares and you can hear it in the music, most of it sucks in my opinion. I kept motivated by staying submerged in music and really focusing on a vision of becoming those people that I admired. If you're young, don't let your friends bully you into screwing off, running around town doing nothing of any worth. You can hang out with your friends anytime, and your true friends would want you to do what you love, so anyone that ever gives you shit about wanting to practice is not a friend and you don't need them anyway. There will be plenty of time in your life where you can goof off. Get some damn work done while you can, cause next thing you know, you're dead. Mainly, stay focused. Bury yourself in music and the guitar and always look for something new you can hear or do. There are so many great things out there to draw from, and also study music theory.

#### How do you like living down in the south?

I love it. I've never known any different. There are a lot of great places in this country and I hope to live in them all before I'm gone, but I am proud of my heritage and where I'm from. Metal shows come through all the time. I've seen just about every band I've ever wanted to see. I like it when they come through here sometimes better because they play at smaller places and you can get up close and personal where as at huge arenas it's kind of removed from reality a bit.



#### How did you hook up with David and Leviathan Records?

I met David at a club here in Atlanta called The Masquerade. We were at a **Savatage/ Exhibit A** show. I remember because Alex Skolnick

was playing with them and that's why I went. I saw David hanging out there and I just walked up to him and introduced myself, told him it was an honor and told him a little about my band at the time. He gave me his card and we stayed in touch after that. I was young, around nineteen or twenty. He gave me some constructive criticism on my stuff and I busted my ass to get better. We maintained contact and I continued to submit him material and finally we were able to put something together. It was a cool thing, I remember having his instructional video and a couple c.d.'s and when I saw him standing there it was really cool to meet him. He's an extremely down to earth guy and has helped me tremendously and really believed in what I was doing. My gratitude goes out to him. Thanks David.

#### What keeps you busy during your spare time?

Spare time? What's that? I have very little spare time. Between the recording projects and also engineering my studio. Any free time I have is taken. I don't get enough time with my family and I wish I could have more time with them. I do teach guitar lessons locally. Right now it's the mainstay of income. I have a full load Monday through Friday teaching 40+ lessons per week.

#### Discography:

2005... **Sense Your Darkness** (Leviathan)

#### Current line-up:

Stephen Fredrick... vocals

Corbin King... guitars

James Martin... bass

Stian Kristoffersen... drums

#### Website:

[www.kinrick.com](http://www.kinrick.com)

Interview with

# JAMES

vocalist James LaBrie

James LaBrie has been a busy man the last few years. Everyone is well aware of his work with **Dream Theater**, starting with the revered 1992 release, *Images and Words*. James put together a solo band called **Mullmuzzler** and they released two albums; 1999's *Keep It to Yourself* and 2001's *Mullmuzzler 2*. He performed vocals on **Frameshift's** debut, *Unweaving the Rainbow*, and then hooked up with Tim Donahue for his album *Madmen and Sinners*. His most recent work comes via the solo album, *Elements of Persuasion*. As **Dream Theater** gets ready to release their eighth album, *Octavarium*, James performed some shows along the east coast in support of *Elements of Persuasion*. As he prepared to play Long Island, Samantha Mabli and myself hooked up with James for an interview.

## How are the shows going?

So far, so good. We've had some problems with sound and monitors so we're trying to work that out. We leave for Europe tomorrow. We're there until May 3rd. It's only a couple of weeks, twelve shows. We start in Italy, go through Switzerland, Germany, Holland, London, and then France.

## Do you like travelling?

I like being on stage and being in the studio. I don't know how fond I am of travelling. That gets old real quick. It's part of the gig, you've got to do it. It's like anything else, there's going to be something you don't like.

## How do you keep your voice in shape?

My voice has died before. It's had its moments when it's had enough. There's several things I try to do. I try to get a lot of sleep. I take vitamins, jug every day. I eat smart and keep my energy level up. When you're singing in the stratosphere all the time, it takes a lot of energy. It takes a lot of conditioning. I went back to studying a few years ago. About nine years ago I ruptured my vocal chords, with food poisoning down in Cuba. I saw three throat specialists and they said it would take awhile for it to come back. About two years ago it finally felt like it was coming back. I worked with a vocal coach named Victoria Thompson and she showed me a lot. I'm at my strongest right now. These gigs are different. With **Dream Theater** I'm out there doing my thing, but I have these breaks. That helps a bit. With this I'm on stage non stop.

## How did you find a vocal teacher?

My daughter wanted to take some lessons. I was looking through the paper and reading about these people giving lessons. I came across one who had all these accolades, she was an opera singer in Europe for thirteen years, she studied in St. Louis and New York, and she had just retired. I called her and I could tell right away she knew exactly what she was talking about. My daughter was only seven at the time, and she wanted to wait to teach her until she was nine or ten. Mentally, she needs her students to be more focused. So I decided then I would take lessons. I felt there was room for me to improve.

## Do you have a different audience for your solo stuff or are they generally Dream Theater fans?

It's a bit of both. Obviously, the **Dream Theater** fans are going to be aware of it. You do see a lot of **Dream Theater** and there are other ones.

## How do you like working with different people?

It's a learning experience. You're figuring people out, it's cool to get the chemistry building. You're trying to create something unique and original. Everybody thinks differently. I usually know in the first sitting if I'm going to click with someone. You feel a person out and throw ideas back and forth. From there, with more time you can get into the deeper perspectives musically. Usually I've heard the music of the people I'm working with through various sources and incarnations, I'm able to know if I want to work with them.

# LABRIE

What do you have planned for this

year?

The new **Dream Theater** album comes out June 7th and it's called *Octavarium*. It's our eighth studio album, eight songs are on the album. We're doing festivals in Europe during June and July. We come home for a couple of weeks and then we headline the tour with **Megadeth**, **Dillinger Escape Plan**, **Fear Factory**, and **Nevermore**. Then we're going back to Europe to headline our own tour and then Asia. In January or February we're going to South America for sixteen shows. Then we'll do the States.

## Your wife must be wonderful.

Yeah, she is. She's very understanding.

## How do you keep focused while touring?

Reading and going for walks, working out. Right now I'm reading *The Pagan Christ* by Tom Harpur. It's all about the origins of the pagan. Pagan is always looked at as being negative. It's not. This gets into the Egyptian mythology. This book challenges religion as we've come to know it, especially Christianity. They weren't the first one to have character such as they have. I watch movies, stay quiet, go for coffee, get lots of rest and keep myself in a positive area as much as I can- even though I can feel very disconnected.

## Why did it take so long for the Fates Warning and Queensryche tour to happen?

It has a lot to do with everyone's schedule. You either coordinate each band's schedule or you don't. We've been trying to tour with **Megadeth** since 1998, but finally they were out touring the same time we are out touring. It's that simple. It was a fun tour. It was a good experience and each band had a terrific time.

## Discography:

2005... *Elements Of Persuasion* (Inside Out)

2001... *Mullmuzzler 2* (Magna Carta)

1999... *Keep It To Yourself* (Magna Carta)

## Current line-up:

James LaBrie... vocals

Marco Sfogli... guitars

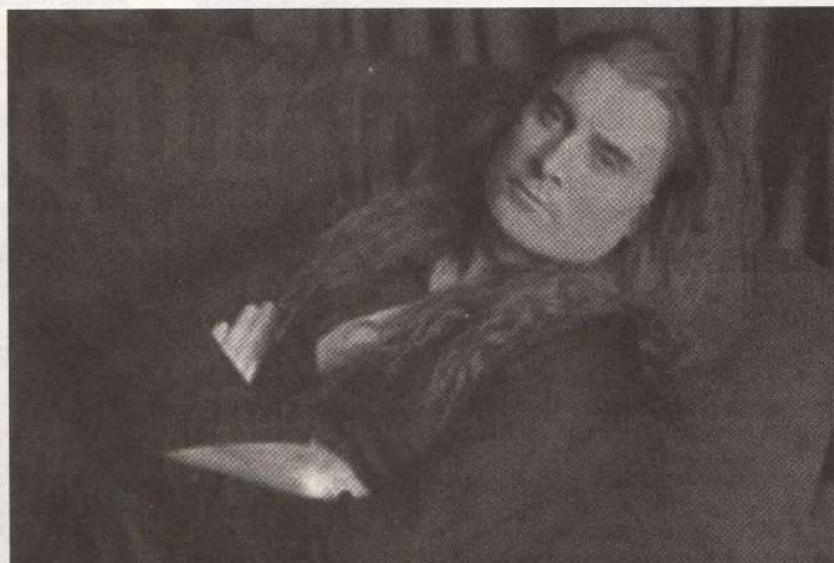
Bryan Beller... bass

John Macaluso... drums

Matt Guillory... keyboards

## Website:

[www.jameslabrie.com](http://www.jameslabrie.com)



Interview with guitarist

Markus Ullrich

# LANFEAR

Ever since Lanfear released their independent debut in 1996, *Towers of February*, the German progressive metallers have been developing a dedicated fanbase. Their early career took some time to get going, as their sophomore release, the revered *Zero Poems*, was not released until 1999. A change in vocalists saw Tobias Althammer join the band, which in turn went for a heavier more straight forward sound on 2003's *The Art Effect*. For this album, Lanfear signed with Massacre Records in Germany and Nightmare Records in the U.S. They quickly return with their latest, *Another Golden Rage*. Here is guitarist Markus Ullrich.

## What type of reactions have you been getting from America?

Until now we don't have any reactions, since the c.d. was officially released in the states only a few weeks ago. Of course there were some die-hard fans who ordered the album when it was released in Europe and most of them seem to like it. We're very happy about that.

## The album artwork for *The Art Effect* and *Another Golden Rage* are very similar, was this done on purpose and is this the type of theme/imagery which fans can relate to Lanfear?

Both covers were done by the same artist. There was no intention to create a similar effect but I think it's not completely wrong to achieve a kind of "corporate identity." The new cover refers to the story, the cover of *The Art Effect* was more or less a coincidence. I think we'll try something different with the next album, we'll see.

## The first two albums were more in the progressive metal vein, while the last two are heavier and more direct- has line-up change been the primary reason for the musical growth?

I don't think that the line-up changes were responsible for this. Of course there're always new influences when there're new members, but it was our intention to sound heavier on the third album. Our second album to me sounded a bit too "plastic" and soft, if you know what I mean.

## If someone was unfamiliar with Lanfear but interested in checking out the new album; what would you tell them which would influence them to spend their money to buy *Another Golden Rage*?

Always difficult to describe your own music. I would say that we're attractive to those fans who like their metal without the usual clichés. We try to write catchy and powerful songs that are easy to listen to but don't get boring after you listen to them ten times. We try to build in some surprises and I hope we've managed that with the new album. Of course it's not ours to decide that.

## Speaking of buying albums, in America album sales have declined rapidly, presumably due to illegal downloading; do you have similar problems with the music industry in Germany?

Yes, it's the same here in Germany and I think there's no European country without downloading problems. It's the music industries fault. If c.d.'s would be cheaper, the downloading problem would be smaller, I think.

## How does this effect a band like Lanfear? Do you find that you have a loyal fanbase that will always support you and buy your albums?

I think in the meantime we've a loyal fanbase that buys all our albums. There could be much more fans, though. Still our motto is "step by step."

## I see you recently completed a tour with Mindcrime and Morgana Lefay - how did the tour go and did you get a positive response?

It was great to be on that tour and it was amazing to tour together with those great guys. We had the time of our lives and met lots of great people. There weren't that much fans on most of the gigs but I'm sure the ones who were there enjoyed the shows. Some bands told me that it's always a bit difficult to be one of the support bands- some headliners behave like assholes, but there were absolutely no problems on that tour. A great experience I don't want to miss.

## Do you ever attend the Wacken Open Air Festival? People who go to this festival from America are always amazed at how many true metal fans there are in Germany- why has your country been able to keep metal alive and thriving while the genre has been up and down in popularity elsewhere?

To be honest, the last time I attended was in 1999. In the meantime it's just a bit too big for my tastes, I just love the underground scene a bit more. Another thing is that it's in the north of Germany and I live in the south. I love the Bang Your Head which is a bit more familiar and I also like smaller festivals as for example the "Keep It True" with all those cult bands.

## Is Germany less interested in trends than other countries? What type of bands/ music are usually the best sellers?

I don't think so. Maybe in Germany there are more metal fans than in other countries, but we also have the same trends over here. There's absolutely no "bigger" radio station which plays metal and most of the people listen to the same shit that the people in other countries. I know that there're many fans in the U.S. who think we live in a kind of metal paradise here, but believe me, that's simply not the truth. Maybe the metal scene is bigger, but it's still not big. There's a nice little byword in Germany which says: "Not everything that glitters is gold", I think this describes it in a way.

## Lanfear has been around a long time and you've earned the respect of many people; but what are you most proud of when it comes to your accomplishments with Lanfear?

That we're very good friends and not just musicians who play together in a band. That we're still fans of this music. That there's no band in the world who own as many c.d.'s as we do.

## What are your plans for this summer? Will you be playing any European festivals?

At the moment there are no plans simply because no bigger festival asked us if we'd like to play.

## Final comments?

Thank you so much for your interest in Lanfear. We hope that some of your readers had fun reading the interview and maybe some of them give us a chance and listen to our music. Just visit us at [www.theLanfear.com](http://www.theLanfear.com). Thanks a lot, take care of you and be true to yourself.

## Discography:

- 2005... *Another Golden Rage* (Nightmare)
- 2003... *The Art Effect* (Nightmare)
- 1999... *Zero Poems* (Famous Kitchen)
- 1996... *Towers Of February* (Lanfear)

## Current line-up:

- Tobias Althammer... vocals
- Markus Ullrich... guitars
- Kai Schindelar... bass
- Jurgen Schrank... drums
- Richard Seibel... keyboards

## Website:

[www.thelanfear.com](http://www.thelanfear.com)



Interview with vocalist Jake Daniels

California metallers **Manntis** gained national exposure due to their participation in a Battle for Ozzfest show in which they came in second place. They quickly received a contract with Century Media and have their debut, *Sleep in Your Grave*, officially released. **Manntis** is a modern metal band with elements of thrash, hardcore, death metal, and traditional metal for a familiar sound. Here is vocalist Jake Daniels for a brief interview.

**What inspired you to form a metal band?**

I had actually just graduated from high school. I was always into the harder shit, when we started **Manntis** we weren't really going for a certain sound or genre it just came down to that.



**Are there a lot of people in your area who are into aggressive music?**

Yes, there is a huge variety of people in the Riverside County area, we accept pretty much

all types of music out here. Metal is starting to expand a little more these days though.

**What were the most difficult obstacles you've faced?**

I would have to say the car accident I was in two years ago. It put me out from screaming for about four months, due to a broken neck. We didn't know if I was coming back or not.

**I see you're in the midst of a tour with Otep and Devilinside- how is this going? What's it like traveling with these bands?**

We just finished up the tour last Friday and I would have to say it was different but fun. **Otep's** crowd is a bit out of our league but we still pulled it off and had a great time. **Devil Inside** are great guys, we would play with them any day.

**For those unfamiliar with Manntis, how would you describe your sound?**

Hard, heavy and a new breed of metal.

**How was the studio experience for Sleep in Your Grave?**

It was recorded November 2004. Very cool experience, Cameron Webb did an outstanding job and we worked very well with him.

**Why do you think Century Media was the best choice for your band?**

I'm not one to talk about that shit, but we went with Century Media for the fact that they are a metal label. Unlike a lot of the label's out there today Century Media only sign metal bands and I like that. Over the years they've had a kick ass roster and I'm stoked to be part of it.

**You have received tons of press for the Ozzfest competition, one question I didn't see asked was; why did you feel Adair was the best choice as your representative?**

We actually did not get to choose, but if we did he would still be the one. Adair is one of the most talented individuals I have ever met and his knowledge for music is incredible. It was the right choice and he did the band good on that show.

**How do you like living in Southern California? What makes it special?**

Southern California is home. The weather is great and we have so much shit right next to us. We've got the beach, the river and the snow right around the corner. What more do you need? Except the fucking smog and traffic.

**What type of metal scene do you have there? Are clubs supportive of bands?**

# MANNTIS

What clubs? We don't have a scene out here, everybody is an individual. No stupid ass trends or overpriced jeans. We do our thing and we party

our asses off here. But, yes the bars and clubs are all supportive of the bands in the area.

**You must take great pride in your live shows; how do you keep motivated and so energetic?**

I grew up watching many bands, I am still a fan of music. I know what I want to see when I go to a show and that is 100% from a band. Just because we are in a different city each night doesn't mean there should be a better or worse show always give it your all.

**Final comments?**

Hope you all pick up the new album *Sleep in Your Grave* and we will see you on the road. Hammer Smash Face.

**Discography:**

2005... *Sleep In Your Grave* (Century Media)

**Current line-up:**

Jake Daniels... vocals  
Jeremy Manimal... guitars  
Adair Cobley... guitars  
Clint Gregory... bass  
Jimmie Sanders... drums

**Website:**

[www.manntis.com](http://www.manntis.com)

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Interview with vocalist

Carmen Elise Espanaes

Norway's **Midnattsol** is a new folk metal bands with a talented frontwoman by the name of Carmen Elise Espanaes. Her sister Liv Kristine is married to **Atrocity's** Alex Krull and the two have a band called **Leaves Eyes** which are now labelmates of **Midnattsol**. Their debut is *Where Twilight Dwells* and the album has strong ties to Norwegian folk tales and nature. Here is the pleasant and informative Carmen for more information.

#### How do you feel about your debut album?

Personally, I'm very satisfied with it, when I hear it, I can escape from this modern world for a moment. I like the fact that the music is real, it comes out of our souls, we all identify with the music of **Midnattsol** and everybody was part of the writing process. And for me, that's what counts, if you feel the real emotions through the music.

#### Is there anything you would've changed or done differently?

There are always things I want to change, it would never be perfect for me. If I could change something, it would be the time we had. I would have more time, so that we could have more time to play every song and make them more intensive and also invite guest musicians. Perhaps on the next record.

#### Do you prefer recording and writing or playing live?

I think that both belongs to the musical process, I need both, and each one of them have different positive aspects. Making music is just a great part of my life, I wouldn't be the same without it. I cope with the things I go through through making music and of course, recording just belongs to the process, which makes one develop musically and as a band in whole. But when you play live, you can get a special connection with the listeners, and that's important to me too. Although I don't like to be the one in the spotlight, I like to be on stage, I just flow away with the music and express my feelings in the songs. When it's quite annoying not hearing yourself and these normal troubles, I have to say that it gives you a lot. So I wouldn't be without any of them. But if I had to choose, I would say writing music, I've done that since I was a child.

#### What do you think makes your band special?

It's hard to say, I don't want to say that we're total different from or better than other bands. But I think we have a special real, nordic atmosphere in the music, there are special feelings in the music connected with the nature. So the melodic folkic melodies give such a characteristic.

#### What is it like growing up in Norway and feeling an affinity for your culture?

It just felt natural, how can I describe naturality? But I think that if you grow up with traditions, tales and a special history that interest you, you feel your roots very strongly, and you can identify with your country in a good way. I've always been interested in traditional tales from Norway, tales about troll, elves and other creatures of nature. I believe that there's so much what we don't know about our planet, we should stop thinking that we're the owners of the earth. The tales have a special mystic feeling, I like that.

#### What are some of your favorite folktales?

I love the mystical and beautiful side of nature, you can always find this part of nature indirect or direct in my lyrics, but still one can't say that I'm writing about exactly these Norwegian tales. Much more, they inspire me and then I write my one stories and fantasies. Except the trolls and other creatures of nature, especially Huldra inspires me, and I sing about her in my music, and the tale about her is my favorite. A tale said that this beautiful

# Midnattsol

mystic woman lured men into the woods where she lives, and then she raped them and perhaps even killed them. The Norwegian people said that

was the reason why many men didn't come home after their trip into the woods. So to all the men out there: watch out if you go alone into the woods and you see a flash of a beautiful woman.

#### What made you want to become a vocalist?

To sing and make music always was a great part of my life, actually, it is my life. I started making music with six or seven years. I just have to make music to feel happy, I cope with the things I go through through music. I can't say why I started, it just interested me and gave me much. So I'd made music if Liv sang or not. I can't say that Liv didn't have any kind of influence, it's natural that your surroundings influence you, but it was my interest for music that made me start singing. Liv moved to Germany when I was twelve, and from that time we both had our individual lives and made

different experiences. She and I were always the best friends, like soulmates. We always helped each other, and she has given me so many advice, they have all been very helpful. But actually, we don't talk so much about music. We are both very busy, so when I see her, we mostly talk about other things and important experiences. Mostly it was natural development and training of my voice. I had a couple of singing lessons as a teenager, because I wanted to learn more about breathing and the different type of voices. But I think that one shouldn't let the technique take over forget about the person in you and what you really want to express. For me the emotions are the most important thing. The bands that I really like to listen to has a singer that can express something special, so that I have a feeling that the music is real.



#### Does your society have problems with construction or businesses moving into country land or corporations wanting to remove forests for industrialization?

Yes, I think we have a society that values the nature and animals more than other countries, the moral is different. Still, there are many Norwegian people that don't have this

meaning either, there are always different people in a country. There a special rules in connection with nature protection, so you can't just remove forests and so on. But still, I don't think it's enough, I wish there would be even more stricter rules, because like other countries, there are also in Norway a lot of contamination, and destruction of the nature going on.

#### What elements are important as a songwriter to always incorporate into your band?

I can understand that, each one of us six bring different influences into the music, so we have power music, acoustic parts and different elements. I already told you what I personally think it's important: real emotions, identity with the songs from all bandmembers, a nordic and folk atmosphere, but still I don't think about these things when I make music, it just comes.

#### Discography:

2005... *Where Twilight Dwells* (Napalm)

#### Current line-up:

Carmen Elise Espanaes... vocals  
Daniel Droste... guitars  
Christian Hector... guitars  
Birgit Ollbrunner... bass  
Chris Merzinsky... drums  
Daniel Fischer... keyboards

#### Website:

[www.midnattsol.com](http://www.midnattsol.com)

Interview with vocalist Michael Denmark's **Mnemic** are one of the most impressive new bands in

# M N E M I C

metal. When they released their debut album, 2003's *Mechanical Spin Phenomena*, I considered it one of the best albums of the year. They reminded of all that is right with modern metal and took influences from bands like **Fear Factory**, **Machine Head**, **Meshuggah**, and **Strapping Young Lad** and made it into their own sound. Their sophomore release, *The Audio Injected Soul*, is a more song oriented album. After hooking up with **Soilwork** and **Dark Tranquillity** (and unable to find Peter from **Hypocrisy**, who was carousing around New York City), I sat down with vocalist Michael from **Mnemic** for an interview.

## How's the tour going?

Very well. The shows have been amazing, no complaints. The first time to the States for us, which is very exciting. I'm having so much fun that I'm in pain today. Yesterday was crazy, we are enjoying ourselves. Everybody gets along very well.

## How long is your set?

Thirty minutes, it's short. We're a small band and it's our first time here. Our biggest concern was that we hoped people would be there. In Europe people show up to shows pretty late and they usually miss the first few bands. That hasn't been the case here. People kept showing up, even before the doors opened. People have come up to me afterwards saying they haven't heard of us but loved the show.

## When was the band formed?

We started out five years ago. It was just the two guitar players and the drummer. They played hardcore stuff and it evolved into what it is today. I joined the band about three years ago. We did a demo and signed a deal shortly after that. Things are going very fast. We've had a chance to do stuff and we've taken advantage of it.

## What did you want to achieve with the second record?

We were looking for more simplicity in the music. We wanted to focus more on the melodic parts and do nice choruses. We don't want to go mainstream, the music is still hard. We wanted to see if we could take it to another record. The first album was complex and there were long songs. For the third record, we will continue down that path. We're so lucky that there's been no pressure from the label at all. It's important that the band is happy.

## Do you have a good scene in your country?

We do now. The past two or three have been really good. The past ten years Danish bands have been trying to sound like Swedish bands. There are some very good musicians but they are trying to follow trends. There's us, **Hatesphere**, and a few other bands which started to do what we like and not sound like everyone else. There's a lot of good underground bands doing demos and getting signed to labels.

## What's Tue Madsen like?

He's a good guy, amazing. His studio is really small. It used to be on a farm. He and his wife have bought a house so now his studio is in a rebuilt garage. He really knows what he's doing and he's a cool guy as well and he's not afraid to tell you if you suck. I would recommend him to anybody.

## Is Grope done now?

I don't know if they're officially done, but he hasn't played with them.

## What are your summer plans?

Four or five festivals and then we're going to start writing a new record. We won't release it in the fall, but we want to have songs prepared before we go into the studio. The label gives us advice. We decided to come out with a second album fast. We won't rush things on the third album. We will spend a lot of time seeing how we can promote the new album.

## What's the difference touring here compared to Europe?

It varies place to place. The crowds have been amazing here. The clubs

shows are great, even people who don't know us, they get into it. The main difference with the venues, the

facilities are a bit better in Europe and there's showers available. Now I get a shower every three or four days.

## Did you spend any time walking around New York?

Yeah, I woke up early and sat on the bus and watched as we drove in. I went to Ground Zero, checked out the Statue of Liberty. Somebody told me I could walk there, so now my feet are killing me. The weather was nice by the Hudson River. We have a late bus call tonight so we can spend some time out in New York at night. People tell me this is the city that never sleeps.

## What's it like in your country?

I love it. There's less people in Denmark than there is in New York. It's small and quiet. There's good things and bad things. Our system is a lot different than yours. We pay taxes which are about sixty nine percent of your income, but we get free healthcare and we get paid to go to school. There's no competition there. We don't have a university like Yale, they're equally good. The good thing about Denmark is that no one is really poor.



We don't have any homeless people there. On the flip side, no one is really rich either. Our social security system is great, but then there are people who are lazy as well.

## What are the clubs like in Denmark?

Denmark is one of the places where we can actually make pretty good money playing. Most venues are supported by the government. The government gives the clubs a certain amount of money to keep them going. If we play a club with five hundred people, it's large.

## Discography:

2004... *The Audio Injected Soul* (Nuclear Blast)  
2003... *Mechanical Spin Phenomena* (Nuclear Blast)

## Current line-up:

Michael... vocals  
Mircea... guitars and keyboards  
Rune... guitars  
Obeast... bass  
Brylle... drums

## Website:

[www.mnemic.com](http://www.mnemic.com)

Interview with guitarist

Marios Iliopoulos

Guitarist Marios Iliopoulos made a name for himself with Greek death

metal band **Exhumation**. In the late nineties they released three albums before splitting. Marios hooked up with vocalist Tomas Lindberg (ex-**At The Gates**), guitarist Gus G. (**Firewind**), bassist Brice Leclercq (**Dissection**), drummer Per Jensen (the **Haunted**), and guest vocalist Tom Englund (**Evergrey**) for **Nightrage**'s 2003 debut, *Sweet Vengeance*. Line up changes led Marios to import bassist Henric Karlsson and drummer Fotis Benardo (ex-**Septic Flesh**) to join he, Tomas, and Gus for their latest, *Descent into Chaos*. We sent some questions to Marios and he responded with this thorough interview.

**What goals did you set out for *Descent into Chaos*?**

We wanted to have less complex arrangements on the new songs and focused more in writing better songs. I think that also the fact that we have a stable line-up now helped us to feel more relaxed in the recordings. This time we worked with Patrik J. Sten, co-producer at Studio Fredman, as our producer. He mixed the album and his approach, since he is a drummer and he is more into modern metal, made the album sound more in your face and without so many effects in the mix. Actually you can feel the energy that's coming out of the speakers, it's heavy, uncompromising and straight from the heart, I feel very satisfied with our new album and the songs we have composed this time. I think that we succeeded to keep the level of quality we had on the first album *Sweet Vengeance* and we kept all the heaviness and melodic sides of **Nightrage**, spice it up with mature song writing and a better sound.

**Tomas and Gus G. are also busy with a couple of other bands of their own, does this cause any problems?**

Gus and Tomas they really love the band and they have respect of the sound and the vision that I choose to follow with **Nightrage**. It's all about good scheduling and they consider **Nightrage** as a priority as well, they helped me a lot with the new album and they are permanent members in the band.

**Did some previous problems with Tom Englund lead you to use only one vocal style on the new album or did it seem appropriate for only aggressive vocals?**

Tom just did a session thing on the first album and that was it. I wanted to concentrate this time more on Tomas' vocals because I think that they really represent the sound of the band. Also the fact that we have heavier songs and more intense riffing, Tomas' vocals fit really well and we didn't have any space for clean singing. This time around we have Mikael as a guest on the clean vocals in a part of the chorus in the song "Frozen." I think that we not going to have any guests on the next album, with Mikael it was like inviting your friend to do a guest appearance in your album, I know Mikael so we both found the idea really good and we go for it.

**Why did *Exhumation* come to an end?**

I played before my time in **Nightrage** only in a Greek melodic death metal band called **Exhumation** and we released three albums. The first on Diehard Records and the last two at Holy Records, all of them recorded/produced in Sweden. I'm proud of the music that we did with my old band **Exhumation**, it happened that I was the main songwriter in both bands, so the similarities some times with **Nightrage** are really obvious. We had a lot of dreams and we were working hard enough to realize them, but at some point I felt betrayed and left alone on a personal level, because some of the guys in the band were backstabbers and totally unprofessional on their responsibilities at the band needs. Then at some point I understood that it would not last as long as I had hoped. It was for sure a learning experience for me and my first steps in the music business, I learned a lot from our mistakes and our weaknesses, that helped me after to realize the **Nightrage** vision without any recurrence of the same miserable attitude.

# Nightrage

**Did you want to try something different with *Nightrage*?**

In **Nightrage** I have all the time and artistic expression I want, I feel very

free to realize all the ideas that I have in mind without any pressure from other guys. This time I can tell you that I manage to have the sound of my dreams realized and with **Nightrage** I'm always writing my best music. I knew that Gus and Tomas they are the right guys for the band since their styles fits really cool on my songs and also now with the addition of Fotis Benardo and Henric Karlsson the **Nightrage** puzzle came together and I feel like that these guys are helping me to bring the **Nightrage** sound in life.

**Tomas is a legend in the metal scene, however there are rumours that he may have substance abuse problems.**

Tomas he is one of the nicest persons I ever met in my life and I can tell you that he doesn't do any drugs or similar substances. That's not true at all Tomas he's really professional and he always doing his job right.

**What are some major cultural differences between Greece and Sweden?**

There are very big differences between my country Greece and Sweden, first of all the people here are really different and they are cold compare to the people in Greece. It was pretty much a cultural shock for me experience this situation from the inside but I knew that it would be very difficult, things some times in Greece could be really chaotic as far how we organise ourselves which in Sweden this is out of the question here things are extremely well organized in every level of the society, but that can be boring some times because you need a little of spontaneity in your life. Bottom line I think that if you manage to combine both cultures you could have the perfect environment but nothing it's perfect.

**How would you describe your style of playing?**

I think that with **Nightrage** we have our own style and we are trying to combine different influences from metal music I grew up listening to the great metal bands of the 80's like **Iron Maiden** and **Testament**, and after I got to the bay area thrash metal and the Florida death metal scene, all those influences are filtered in the **Nightrage** sound, and I think that we are trying to be as much as original we can. Moreover my past collaboration with the Greek scene playing there with my old band **Exhumation** gives a sort of a different and eerie influence on our sound, we are keeping the heaviness of death metal blended with melody and intensity at the same time.

**Do you discover most of your riffs from jamming or do they come out of your head?**

Both ways, sometimes I just grab my guitar and I start to play and all of a sudden I have some really cool riffs the problem is that I have to write them down so I can remember them for the next time, music is all about inspiration and feeling good with the stuff you are composing. I like also to jam riffs with Gus and Fotis since they are killer musicians and they always add something cool to the picture, if you asked me I would like to jam more with the other guys and have this cool jam feeling on the new songs I'm sure that this would add more rock n roll feeling to our new stuff.

**What made you want to be a metal guitarist?**

I think that it was when I hear for the first time *Number of the Beast* from **Iron Maiden** the impact that they had on me was really huge and I understood at that time that this is what I want to do starting playing guitar like them and be in a band. After I got into **Testament** and they really influence my guitar playing I wanted to be Eric Peterson and Alex Skolnick in one I really love the old **Testament** and I think that they were leaders in a such cool melodic thrash metal style they had.

**Discography:**

2005... *Descent Into Chaos* (Century Media)  
2003... *Sweet Vengeance* (Century Media)

**Current line-up:**

Tomas Lindberg... vocals  
Marios Iliopoulos... guitars  
Gus G.... guitars  
Henric Karlsson... bass  
Fotis Benardo.... drums





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# NOVEMBERS DOOM

Interview by Karl Haikara

Chicago based **Novembers Doom** have been one of my favorites for awhile. Combining many different sounds and emotions into their songs, they have consistently impressed me. They very kindly replied to my interview request. This is a split interview, featuring vocalist Paul Kuhr, and guitarists Larry Roberts and Vito Marchese.

## What inspires your lyrics?

**Paul:** My lyrics on the first three c.d.'s were a whole lot of bullshit. I wrote a lot of poetry type stuff because that's what I felt the music style needed. As I started to grow with the band, I decided to let my guard down and approach the lyrics with a very personal outlook. *To Welcome the Fade* was a very difficult time in my life and my life was going through many physical changes due to the diseases found in my spine; causing daily pain. This has effected me in ways, not just physically, but mentally too. I'm inspired by life, love, pain, strength, anger, emotion, the struggle between faith and hope, moments of clarity- it all depends on the moment I'm writing. Life inspires me and I love writing from the heart and putting that personal touch on the lyrics.

## How did you pattern your vocals?

**Paul:** Sometimes when I hear the song being played I start to feel a vocal pattern in my head, and then by the mood of the song I'll see if I have something written to fit that pattern. If not, I will write something specifically to fit it. Each piece is handled differently. Sometimes I have lyrics written first and a pattern in my head, and I need to find the right song from them to place it in and sometimes the song is first, and it inspires me to write to it. It's nice this way for me, where nothing falls into a pattern. Each song we do is structured differently and it helps to keep us fresh.

## What kind of gear do you use?

**Larry:** Lately I've been experimenting with different amps. This past year I've used everything from Mesa Boogie to Marshall to Carvin, to Line 6, which I've been using lately and I like it so far. Guitar wise I mainly play six string baritone guitars. I have a couple of them, an ESP Viper and a Fender Squire Subsonic. Both are awesome. I have some really nice digitech and boss effect pedals that I use sometimes too. In the studio I use acoustic guitars and sometimes mandolins and keyboards as well.

## How do you write your riffs and songs?

**Larry:** I have no real formula for coming up with riffs or songs. Sometimes I piece together a song from a bunch of riffs I've accumulated, or sometimes an entire song kind of comes together all at once, "Autumn Reflection" for example. But usually our songs are created by Vito and I coming together and playing riffs and ideas for each other and from there we decide what's good and what's not, and try to build songs from the good parts. As for inspiration, I get inspired by anything from pain and stress of my life, or from things I see going on in the world, or with people I care about. Or sometimes something even as simple as putting on a great Pink Floyd album can inspire me to go sit down and write.

## How do you decide what is a good riff, and what isn't?

**Larry:** We are extremely picky, especially Paul and I, when choosing riffs and song ideas. After five albums now, we try not to repeat ourselves too much, but at the same time, we don't want to change too much either, so it gets tougher and tougher to write songs that we are satisfied with. Of course there are times when someone isn't as fond of a song or a part as everyone else is, but generally we all have to agree on what sounds good to us and what constitutes being a "Novembers Doom" riff or song. If we feel like it fits in with our style and sound, we'll work on it.

## Who would you say are your big influences/inspirations in music?

**Paul:** The bands **Trouble**, **Sindrome** and **Chicago Devastation**. They made me want to do this. Also **The Doors**, and **Peter Gabriel**, **Celtic Frost**, and early 90's death metal.

## What do you think of Satanism or anti-Christian thought in metal?

**Paul:** I think it's 90% shock value, and it's silly. It's different if the band believes in what they say, but to exploit it as an image for your band, is not only silly, but is treading on dangerous ground. These people who do take it seriously, take it very seriously, and I'm sure they do not appreciate people using it for shock value only.

## How do you interplay between each other, and decide who plays what?

**Vito:** I think Larry and I are a pretty good writing team, things seem to flow quite nicely between us. Larry knows how to make things flow together and knows how to make ideas fit really really well. We definitely worked together in writing it wasn't like "Here's my song now play it" we worked together to make sure the song had what needed to be in it to make it a great song. The



other guys had a huge hand in this as well. When it comes to deciding who plays what, Larry plays pretty much all the little lead and harmony lines in the songs. Larry is much better at writing those than I am, so he does his thing with that and it turns out great so there's not much to think about in that end.

## Do you think a player has to be technical to qualify as a good player?

**Larry:** No, because people have different opinions of what is considered "technically good" anyhow. To some people, if you can't play blisteringly fast or read sheet music, then you're not technically good. I think guitar players like Billy Gibbons or Steve Cropper or George Harrison would probably not be considered technically good by a lot of people, but I think they wrote and played some of the best guitar work ever, so they're damn good in my book. People like to argue and debate over this stuff I know, but my bottom line is this... if what a guitarist is playing actually moves and inspires the listener, then they're doing just fine. You might not move the whole world, but that's just how it goes, not everyone likes or is moved by the same things.

**Final comments? Paul:** Thanks to those who have supported us in the past, and I hope you will continue to do so. The new c.d., *The Pale Haunt Departure* is the best c.d. we've released yet, full with darkness, power, and controlled anger, blended with beauty and sadness. Check this out, you won't be disappointed.

## Discography:

2005... *The Pale Haunt Departure (The End)*  
2002... *To Welcome The Fade (Dark Symphonies)*  
2001... *The Knowing (Dark Symphonies)*  
2000... *Of Sculptured Ivy And Stone Flowers (Martyr)*  
1995... *Amid Its Hallowed Mirth (Avantgarde)*

## Current line-up:

Paul Kuhr... vocals  
Larry Roberts... guitars  
Vito Marchese... guitars  
Michael LeGros... bass  
Joe Nunez... drums

## Website:

[www.novembersdoom.com](http://www.novembersdoom.com)

Interview with vocalist

A.A. Nemtheanga

Irish metallers **Primordial** have been around a long time and have garnered much respect due to their

persistence, attitude, and intelligence. Through the years they've signed with labels (Cacophonous, Misanthropy, Hammerheart) that were on the verge of going out of business and never reaped the rewards they rightly deserved. They finally signed with Metal Blade Records, the longest running metal label for their fifth full length, *The Gathering Wilderness*. It appears that **Primordial** is finally in a stable situation and hopefully more people will become aware of this wonderful band. Here is frontman Nemtheanga.

#### Why haven't all the metal fans caught onto your band yet?

You know we do okay, sure not as much as some other bands and I would agree we never quite got the attention the band deserves but then again when I look back on fanzines we were in from 1993 more than 90% of the bands are gone and departed. Now, five albums later we are at the strongest we have ever been so perhaps what goes around comes around. Other reasons may be; we are not Norwegian, Swedish or lately Finnish. We don't have solos or choruses or any feel good pop music sensibilities. **Primordial** is most probably too dark and challenging for most people who just want a quick metal fix.

#### Have you been frustrated with the lack of promotion and support through the years?

Most labels are complete cunts who are parasites and live off artists and their talent. Plain and simple. We've worked with some good and honest people and some not so and other times our contracts have been up and we have wanted to move on. For example in Misanthropy's case they folded. I haven't been more satisfied with anything however than I am now with Metal Blade. At least now I don't have to worry that people are doing their jobs properly. I also realized after all these years that all the legal papers in the world don't matter a fuck compared to the threat of all the computers in the office and a baseball bat.

#### Did Billy Anderson have an understanding of Primordial?

He had an understanding. Of course nothing is perfect and we didn't even want that. I'm sick of albums sounding like they are played by a fucking computer so we wanted it to sound like it does in our rehearsal room. Plain and simple, rough and raw. Billy got us that. Sure, as I said, nothing's perfect but flaws give things character. If you want the new **Arch Enemy** then you are looking in the wrong place. If we could get a sound like *Mob Rules* or *Killers* then I'd quit.

#### What is your life like in Ireland these days?

If you have money than Ireland can be a great place to live. Like anywhere else we have our problems and more than most if you scratch the surface. When we were poorer actually I think the sense of community between people was better. Now there is a new breed of capitalist, greedy and soulless Irish people ready to fuck everyone over in their search for more and more materialism. Personally, I opt out of it all as much as I can.

#### What is your opinion of the American government and the historical disregard for other cultures?

What can I say? The world boils and seethes in frustration and anger at the newest version of big brother... America. Anti-American feeling throughout the world and even in Ireland where Americans were always welcome is at an all time high. The blatant disregard America has for any other nation, its peoples, its traditions, language, natural resources is incredible- or rather not so incredible really when we look at the history of American military interventions around this world. I could give a thousand examples... but Iraq? This is a war for oil, nothing more. Saddam was an aid and confident of America and the west throughout the 70's and 80's, gassed hundreds of thousands of Kurds with American biological weapons in the late 80's with America's blessing. His invasion into Kuwait put American interest in the

# PRIMORDIAL

oil fields into jeopardy so they got rid of him but are now in another Vietnam situation after splicing up the countries resources and economic potential between the

multinationals just like they have done every other country. The un-embargo on Iraq has killed over 500,000 children, perhaps more than 1,000,000 because they have no access to medicine. Is that liberation? Indonesia is a prime example. There was no link between Saddam and Bin Laden- whose family have very close links to America. Fuck I could go on and on and fucking on. I know half of your country did not vote for Bush and I feel sorry for them. I feel sorry for the whole fucking world. And these poor kids from poor areas sent over to fight somewhere they probably could never even pin point on the map to fight for the multinationals. This world is fucked and America may have picked a war with an enemy who has nothing to lose- nothing. I could ramble on forever and not even know what the point is. There is so much anger and frustration in every country in the world right now. Truly the gathering wilderness.

#### Do you think religion is the center of many of the world's problems?

I think we are the center of most of the world's problems. Yes and no, most of the world's problems now are more to do with greed and the relentless pursuit of profit over people. Multinationalism and global marketing. Any religion other than grinding capitalism is a smoke screen.

#### Why do you think so many people of lost sight of their culture and heritage?

Of course, there is a despair to the new album that perhaps was not as prevalent as before. I don't quite despair but these days are indeed dark. People are owned since the day they are born by corporations, fed a diet of fast food popular culture. What chance have the old gods and ways got? I don't think we are at our lowest ebb, that is surely coming. However as one ship is surely sinking another is trying to hold fast in the storm. One where people are rejecting and resisting and trying to find their place in this world.

#### Are you able to release the emotions and feelings you have inside via the music or do you use other ways which you use as forms of expression?

We are all artistic people and we all come together to express what we have to with **Primordial**. We will all continue to express ourselves some way or another after **Primordial** is gone. Our music exists hand in hand with our culture and history and could not exist any other way. This band is not about gore, or unicorns, or zombies, or dragons, or smoking weed, or drinking beer; we stand for something, we mean something. I'm glad you can

see yourself within what we do.

#### Final comments?

Art is rebellion, culture is resistance.

#### Discography:

2005... *The Gathering Wilderness* (Metal Blade)  
2002... *Storm Before Calm* (Hammerheart)  
2000... *Spirit The Earth Aflame* (Hammerheart)  
1998... *A Journeys End* (Misanthropy)  
1995... *Imrama* (Cacophonous)

#### Current line-up:

A.A. Nemtheanga... vocals  
Ciaran MacUiliam... guitars  
Michael O'Floinn... guitars  
Pol MacAmlaigh... bass  
Simon O'Laoghaire... drums

#### Website:

www.primordial.tk



Interview with drummer

Graham Mitchell

The Red Death are a new band on the scene but the upstate metallers have

a familiar sound. Combining Scandinavian death metal with modern hardcore is their style and they are touring around America right now in support of their Metal Blade debut, *External Frames of Reference*. The band has endured countless line-up changes but they've made some great friends and signed a deal in a short period of time and seem destined to capitalize on the success of their now labelmates *Unearth*, *As I Lay Dying*, and the *Black Dahlia Murder*. Here is drummer Graham Mitchell.

**What is it like living in Bath?**

Bath is a small town with not a whole lot to do. Living there can be hard at times with the lack of things to do, but since we have been out on the road for the better part of two months straight we now appreciate that small close knit community that is Bath. Not to mention we get to see our family and girlfriends. Some of us are content with the small town life, others get bored very easily, but we all have friends here. There's places to go hang out/ eat and stuff like that so we have everything we need, but some of us would love to just get on a bike and ride around a big city to see all the things that you can't get in a small town.

**The Red Death had to go through many lineup changes, what were the main cause of these changes?**

All our lineup changes have been for the better, and have given us a new breath of light each time. Our original guitarist Brian had to leave the band due to conflict with touring and high school, so our friend Nate filled in and became a permanent member. At the same time this happened the original bass player Karl moved away for college and the random fill in for bass players began. Several friends filled in on bass until long time friend Dominic moved back from Virginia to play bass. Then right after we signed with Metal Blade Nate quit due to wanting to go back to school and not wanting to tour. We were left in a tight spot but luckily our good friends in *If Hope Dies* pointed us in the direction of their old guitar player Aaron. We invited Aaron up for a try out in which he did amazing, and we asked him to join. That leads us to the current lineup today. All the changes were made for the best, and under the best circumstances. There are no hard feelings with any of the old members.

**How are things going for tours so far?**

The *From A Second Story Window/ The Acacia Strain / Into The Moat* tour in February was our first major tour. It went amazing and those dudes are some of the coolest guys we have ever met, we lucked out with that tour. We then embarked on a tour with *Arsis* and our good friends *Accursed Dawn*. *Arsis* played one show then went home so ourselves and *Accursed Dawn* finished the tour, and even though there was no real headliner the shows went amazing. We are out now with our label mates *Vehemence* and *Crematorium*. The shows recently haven't been amazing, but we are having a great time none the less.

**What pressures have you faced being a new band on a large scene with lots of bands?**

Making sure that we don't get lost in the sea of mediocre bands out there. You have to stay atop by touring and getting magazine spots or you will be



lost. It's a pressure that sometimes gets to you, because music is not meant to be a competition, but this is our job and it's what we love to do. We want

[www.tmetal.com](http://www.tmetal.com)

# The red death

to take this band as far as we can go.

**What bands or styles would you cite as influences on the Red Death?**

If you listen to our record you will see the obvious *At the Gates/ Unearth* influence. We also take influence from *Dimension Zero*, old *In Flames* and various other hardcore bands. We all grew up listening to hardcore so there is the definitely influence in our music today.

**You released a couple of e.p.'s prior to the full length, do you feel it was necessary to release these demos on a small scale and take the time find your identity and sound, while also feeling comfortable in the studio?**

We started this band to make music that we loved and to just have fun. Anything that has happened since the beginning is embraced and welcomed, but we still haven't lost sight of the reason we started the band. The e.p.'s and demos we released definitely helped us find who we are today, and was a very important step for the band. We love going into the studio, it's great to push yourself and hear something you created blaring out of the speakers at you.

**Final comments?**

Thanks for the interview, keep it grim, and check out the new record *External Frames of Reference* out now on Metal Blade Records.

**Discography:**

2005... *External Frames Of Reference* (Metal Blade)

**Current line-up:**

- Paul Hamblin... vocals
- Joshua Williammee... guitars
- Aaron Conti... guitars
- Dominic Mastronunzio... bass
- Graham Mitchell... drums

**Website:**

[www.thereddeath.org](http://www.thereddeath.org)



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Interview with guitarist  
Jordi Sandalinas

# SANDALINAS

How would you describe the time you spent in America? Do you

Guitarist Jordi Sandalinas is a songwriter, guitar star in the making. The Barcelona based musician has studied guitar and developed his own style of playing and writing. While most guitarists love shredders like Yngwie Malmsteen and Steve Vai, Jordi's idol was **Iron Maiden's** Adrian Smith. Jordi put together his band Sandalinas with talented vocalist Apollo Papatthasasio and these days he has **Spiritual Beggars'** drummer Ludwig Witt as well. Here is Jordi to introduce us to his music.

## What are your plans for this summer?

Hi first of all, thanks for your kindness and interest in **Sandalinas**. We're touring Spain supporting **Yngwie Malmsteen** in Madrid, **Y&T** in Vitoria, Palma de Mallorca and Barcelona and we're playing in a big festival called Quijote Rock. We're the only band supporting **Scorpions** doing the whole gig. **Deep Purple**, **Saxon**, **Alice Cooper** are playing there, too

## Fran and Xavier recently split from the band; tell me about their replacements? Is it difficult keeping a band together?

There were some differences within the band and it was very difficult to go on going with that situation, so we decided to leave it before going bad. Actually the band is much tighter and really, really good. Ludwig Witt is our drummer. He's a great drummer and he has a lot of experience onstage. He's also playing with **Spiritual Beggars** and he toured Japan supporting **Dio**. As far as the bass is concerned, Pär Wallmark is the new bass player. He's great and the great thing of it all is that except of Victor and me, everybody is located in Sweden so it's much better to rehearse over there and then move on to the venue or to the studio.

## I've read that Adrian Smith was your biggest influence, what was it about his playing which influenced you so much? Did you like his post-Iron Maiden bands?

Yes, he's awesome. He's the best player I've seen in my entire life. You know, I used to play some of Yngwie, Satch and Vai here and there but Adrian is by far the best to me. It's not about playing faster, I think it's about delivering a message to the audience and he's unique in that. That's why there are a lot of shredders around who do not fit in the market. They are great musicians, of course but Adrian is the perfect icon any band wanted to have in. About the post **Maiden** albums, they're great but, above all, I love **A.S.A.P.'s** *Silver and Gold*. It's so powerful and it has great melodies and guitar licks. It's really great and it's worth listening to.

## Many Spanish metal bands appear to have Iron Maiden as their strongest influence- why has this band been so influential in your country?

I don't know man, but hey, who has not ever listened to **Iron Maiden** and been caught by any track of them? In Spain, metal is up to the top and Spain loves every good metal band like **Iron Maiden**, **Megadeth**, **Metallica**.

## What is it like living in Barcelona? What do you like the most?

Barcelona is a great city and is where I'm working hard to feed the music. Actually it is very hard to live from music unless you have recorded few albums. In my case I'm sharing my music with my profession. I'm working as an IP adviser. About my likes here in BCM, I like the weather and the food. I love Mediterranean food, it's great.

## I read that you spent time learning music from Terry Syrek - can you tell me more about him?

Yes, he was my teacher at the NGSW in New Milford, CN. He's a great guitarist and he imparted classes of rock and metal and advanced theory. He's one of the best shredders in U.S. and I learned a lot from him. He also graduated in a Major Music School in the U.S.A. I talked with him recently and I know he will release a solo album pretty soon, so stay tuned you all.

## come often to visit?

It was absolutely great. I love the U.S.A. and I have a lot of friends spread everywhere. All U.S. people are really welcoming and nice. I try to come to the U.S. as often as I can but actually it's been a while since I last went. I'm too busy with Sandalinas, but I swear we'll do some shows in the States pretty soon.

## One thing I like about Sandalinas is that you write good music and memorable songs without worrying what genre the music fits into- as the primary song writing, what is the key to making a song catchy and memorable?

Thanks so much my friend. Well, I try to write everything that comes out of my heart and here it is man, pure music with attitude and message. It's easy to listen and it's a good melody, everybody loves good melodies and this music will never die.

## What are the new songs sounding like? Do the other members contribute to the song writing?

I mostly write the whole stuff and it sounds pretty good, but we still have to finish the whole arrangements and do the rehearsals before entering the studio next February 2006. We'll record again with Andy LaRocque our new album, to be called, *As the Rain Falls*.

## How would you describe the studio experience you had with

## Andy LaRocque? Are you a big King Diamond fan?

Well, I had listen some **King Diamond** stuff but, mostly I was a huge fan of Anders. He's like Adrian Smith, he's a clever player, he plays smarter not faster and he's also a great producer and a great luthier.

## I read that you are a legal advisor for the Intellectual Property Rights- what exactly do that entail and do you enjoy your work?

Yes, you're right. It's a great job and I advise companies and artists about their rights in the music industry, either national or international. I help them out by writing contracts, negotiating and protecting their author rights before signing a deal with a label or I protect labels before signing deals with distributing companies. You know, everybody needs their help, but the most important thing is to help music and metal go on and survive, because if we fight each other, metal will die- and metal must live forever.

## Final comments?

Well, I hope you guys buy the album and don't download from the internet. Downloading from the internet makes us musicians poorer and if you want **Sandalinas** to survive please help us out and give us a hand, we know it's difficult but we should find a good solution suitable for everyone. Love and peace metal brothers.

## Discography:

2005... *Living On The Edge* (Nightmare)

## Current line-up:

Apollo Papatthasasio... vocals  
Jordi Sandalinas... guitars  
Victor Casado... guitars  
Fran Duarte Caparrocce... bass  
Ludwig Witt... drums  
Marcus Palsoon... keyboards

## Website:

[www.sandalinas.com](http://www.sandalinas.com)



Interview with guitarist

Peter Wichers



# SOILWORK

whatever now, they stopped playing music when they were younger because they didn't

believe in themselves. That's why I feel really good about what I do.

While the **Soilwork/ Dark**

**Tranquillity/ Hypocrisy/ Mnemic** tour hit the States we got to spend some time prior to their New York City show. **Soilwork** is on the verge of making a huge break through in the States, after this headlining tour they will be joining **Ozzfest** for the summer. Over the course of six albums in about eight years, they have developed into one of the catchiest, yet heaviest bands in metal. Their latest album, **Stabbing the Drama**, is heavier than their previous two, which should make old fans happy. We spoke to guitarist Peter Wichers, one of the nicest guys I've encountered in metal for an interview backstage at B.B. King's.

**How's the tour going?**

It's going much better than we expected. We were very nervous about going out headlining for the first time.

**Where was your best show?**

Probably Philadelphia. There's been so many good shows. They were singing so loud that the soundman couldn't hear us. We've got another week.

**Summer shows?**

We've got **Ozzfest**. It's going to be a Swedish invasion with all the bands. We have a rotating spot on **Ozzfest**. We have a break now for three weeks and then we'll fly over to Europe to do festivals. We come back for pre-production for **Ozzfest**. We plan to go back to Europe in October to do a headlining tour, then over to Japan and Australia.

**How did you meet your wife?**

I just moved to the States in December. I got married and moved over here. Other than that, I've lived in Sweden my whole life. When I was a kid, I never wanted to speak with a Swedish accent. Get me drunk and that accent will come out though. I met my wife in Spain. She's from North Carolina. We were touring in Spain, she likes metal and came out to the show. She was taking classes over there. We met and spoke briefly, exchanged emails. She was living in Atlanta and she said she was going to come out to our Atlanta show. We hit it off and when I went back to Sweden I broke up with my girlfriend of six years. She was going to move to Sweden, but she has a really good paying job and I'm on the road anyway, so we decided that I should move over here. Now that I've moved over here, I find that America is the music mecca of the world. All the industry is over here.

**If a major label came around, could you negotiate with them?**

We have three more optional records with Nuclear Blast. It's an option for them. If someone overbids them for a record, they can take the band. We're doing so well, Nuclear Blast is doing very well.

**How is living in America different from Sweden?**

For me it's the weather. We live right outside of Charlotte. It's been the best winter of my life. The sun comes up around noon in Sweden and goes down about 5 o'clock. I love the Swedish summers, but I've lived in a lot of darkness for twenty five years. We have a health care system which takes care of everyone in Sweden, but I worried about that over here. Luckily my wife works as an insurance agent with All State so it works out well. In Sweden everyone has things equal. If you're a career person you can never move up. In this country you have more ability to move up. Everyone needs a role model, someone they can look up to.

**Who was your role model?**

When I was growing up, my uncle, who plays guitar in the band. He got me started playing guitar. I knew that I wanted to do music. I know music isn't the best for me financially, but I'm doing this because I love it. People doubted me in the past. One year ago we started getting salaries. No offense to people who are lawyers or

**Do like to travel?**

I love to travel. Even when I'm back home in Sweden. Before we got married I travelled over here often. I loved Japan and Australia. We had three or four days off in Sydney last time. We always try to go to the local zoos. People are really friendly there and it's really nice.

**How long is your set tonight?**

It's an hour and twenty minutes. We play eighteen songs. It's going to be sold out tonight. The pre-sales were 888, that leaves 112 tickets. It's on a Sunday, so it's even better. Just playing in the States was a dream of mine when I was a kid, never mind selling out a show in Manhattan. I will never become a rock star, I'm so grateful for everything I have.

**You deserve it, you put out an album practically every year.**

We're going to slow down now. We need to tour more in the States. Most bands tour three or four times for each album. The European way of thinking is you do one tour and then it's back in the studio. We'll take our time for the next one and see how it works out. It all depends on how the album does.

**Final comments?**

For those who haven't checked out the album, check it out, we're very proud of it.

**Discography:**

2005... **Stabbing The Drama** (Nuclear Blast)  
2003... **Figure Number Five** (Nuclear Blast)  
2002... **Natural Born Chaos** (Nuclear Blast)  
2001... **A Predators Portrait** (Nuclear Blast)  
2000... **The Chainheart Machine** (Century Media)  
1998... **Steelbath Suicide** (Listenable)

**Current line-up:**

Bjorn Strid... vocals  
Peter Wichers... guitars  
Ola Frenning... guitars  
Ola Flink... bass  
Dirk Verbeuren... drums  
Sven Karlsson... keyboards

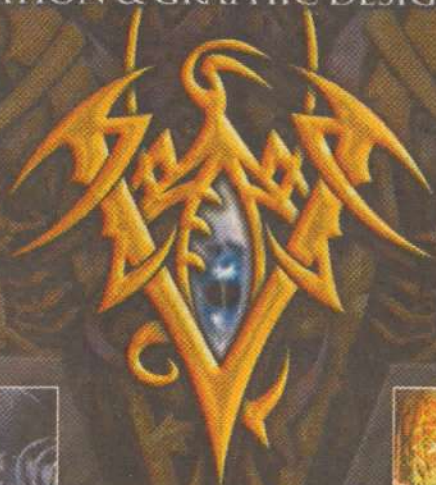
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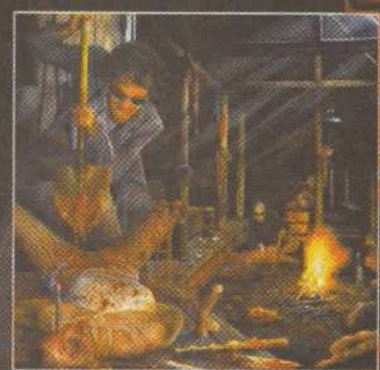
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# Thine Eyes Bleed

In The Wake of Separation

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- planetloud.com



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[www.submasq.com](http://www.submasq.com)

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# ULVER

## BLOOD INSIDE



### Ulver - Blood Inside

The strange, stray birds of the black metal branch fly off into another metamorphosis. **Blood Inside** sees **Ulver's** evolution moving on a grand scale. Gaining much experience throughout the five years between their last proper studio album, "Perdition City", and this emergency-room excursion, **Blood Inside** offers more vocals, more variety and infinite interpretations. 9 surgically precise shapeshifts, performed with a wide array of instruments and unorthodox operational techniques.

Black sheep? Never. Wolves prey upon sheep.

Written, performed and produced by Ulver, with a little help from legendary producer/mixer/artist Ronan Chris Murphy (King Crimson's preferred audio pilot). Includes a video clip. All hail the new pope!

If you're new, come see why this band has been nominated for a Grammy in Norway twice. If you're a follower, expect a brand new **Ulver** again.

### ANTIMATTER

### Antimatter - Planetary Confinement

The saddest album of 2005. **Antimatter** moves toward richer, more organic textures with **Planetary Confinement**. Forsaking the electronic elements found on *Saviour* and *Lights Out*, natural string, piano and drum sounds form the foundation, with beautiful melancholy vocalizations provided by male and female vocalists. Recorded in two sessions, one in Ireland directed by Duncan Patterson (ex-Anathema), the other in England by Mick Moss. Features a contemplative, morose and quite liberal interpretation of Trouble's Mr. White. For fans of Portishead, Massive Attack, Pink Floyd and anyone that feels the weight on the world on their shoulders.

### Peccatum - The Moribund People (EP)

**Peccatum's** second EP and fifth overall release offers three new recordings: **The Moribund People**, "A Penny's Worth Of Heart", and a unique cover of Bathory's "For All Those Who Died". Showcasing the eerie and bizarre elements that populated previous full-length *Lost In Reverie*, **Peccatum** bravely continues to tread fresh ground with every new song a treasure for those demanding high-end symphonic avantgarde darkrock. The *Moribund People* also offers a video clip of the title track, a first for this special duo (which includes Ihsahn, formerly of the legendary Emperor).

Thine Eyes Bleed -  
In The Wake Of Separation  
(Raw Aggressive Thrash)

Subterranean Masquerade  
- Suspended Animation  
Dreams  
(Art Prog Metal)

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Interview with bassist Necromodeus

Long time Michigan death metallers **Summon** have developed a reputation for being one of extreme metal's most dedicated bands. They released three albums (1997's *Dark Descent of Fallen Souls*, 2000's *Baptized by Fire*, and 2001's *No Thoughts from the Sky*) before signing with Moribund for their latest two; 2003's *And the Blood Runs Black* and their stunning new album, *Fallen*. Bassist Necromodeus is a dedicated metalhead. His label, Blackened Moon and his band, **Summon**, are here to stay and *Fallen* is the work of a mature band. The production is one of the best ever for an extreme metal band. Here is Necromodeus for more.

**What exactly is 5.1 surround sound and was it difficult making this disc?**

Thanks a lot, 5.1 surround sound is like what is in the movies. I am not really sure about it, I don't have it. I know it sounds totally different than the regular disc- ten times better. It is real crazy shit, voices come from all over and crazy sounds, sometimes it's a little spooky. It wasn't difficult for me, I just sat back and watched Dave (Flatline Studios) do it. He is a madman.

**Which song are you doing a video for? Do you have a particular concept?**

The video is done. We used "Sacred Nothing." We thought it would be most appropriate since we shot it in a church. It turned out great, but there was not much time to edit so it is pretty straight forward. The guys who shot it are working on a new mix. Like an uncut thing not intended for t.v. It is shot like the old Evil Dead movies cameras always moving, it turned out pretty good.

**How did the tour go?**

**Anorexia Nervosa** did not do the tour. We did it with just **God Dethroned** and it was so killer. I am glad those guys did not come, we would not have had enough room for the make up and Zuit suits. The shows every night had a lot of people and the great thing almost every night we played half the people did not have a clue what they were about to see. So people got their moneys worth. We had a great time the guys from **God Dethroned** are so fucking cool. We got along great and they almost drank as much beer as us.

**How do the European crowds differ from those in America?**

The crowds are bigger, but for the most part they are the same a little more crazy though. Except Portugal, those people are fucking nuts. They live for metal. We play in front of about 700 people that went so crazy I have never seen a crowd like that. I can't wait to go play there again.

**Tell me about the Minneapolis Mayhem festival.**

I think it should be a great show. There are some really killer bands playing. It is a two day festival and I think it is rather cheap for both shows. Great line-up though. **Sadus**, **Sauron**, **Sodom**, **Throccult**, the **Chasm** and a shit ton more, should be a great show.

**What is new on the Blackened Moon front?**

The new **Empty** is about to come out. They have a couple more songs to mix, and then it will be completed. It is the most depressing black metal I have ever heard. Suicide rate is going up. I met the guys from Empty in Portugal, and we got wasted they are cool as shit. **Dark Psychosis** is also very soon waiting on artwork, this is Xaphan from **Summon**'s side project. It is a one man band, he does everything on it is old school black metal, like old **Dark Throne**. The drummer from **Sauron** did a couple of tracks on it, a must have for diehard black metal freaks. I also have **Sheep Grinder** from Louisiana. It is old school death metal, like old **Samael**, **Slayer**, but it is all about the devil. I could not pass it up.

**I see you have great respect for the Spanish metal scene, why do you think some of these bands are going unnoticed? Will you be bringing their music for the American audience to hear?**

I love the Spanish scene. I think the bands over there are killer. I want to sign them all. Just before I left on tour I got a couple more bands from Spain; **Ered** and **Grimuack**. Great black metal. The money situation with Blackened Moon is kind of tight right now, you know it is only me. I have so much shit to sell, but I don't sell much unless we are out on tour or going to festivals.

**How does being a father change your outlook on life?**

[www.tmetal.com](http://www.tmetal.com)



I look out a little more, not so crazy to just jump up and do something. I care about life a little more, before I was on a train ride straight to hell with no brakes. I got the brakes fixed

but I know I am still going to hell. Anyhow they are great, I would do anything for them, and they think it's pretty cool their dad's in a metal band. It gives me something to wake up to every day, before I didn't care if this was my last day on earth. So in all they are my world and they keep me going everyday.

**What advice would you give them as they grow older?**

I never wanted to have kids, because this world is so fucked up. But they will be fine. My son is nine now and my daughter is the anti-Christ so my advice is for the



world to look out for her. But I am glad I had the little ones. I think all will work out for them. Their smart as hell and shit they look like me.

**Why do you devote so much time, money, and effort in Summon?**

**Summon** has been life for sixteen years now, before I had kids and anything else to worry about. **Summon** has been my main priority forever. I will not stop busting my ass for this band. I think it is a great band and the world needs to hear it, and I will kill myself trying to make it happen. You know, it has its ups and downs like anything in life. It is like a relationship with a girl, well four girls. You know how four cunts get without food and showers and no sleep. But most of all it has been a great experience. I have learned a lot and have had some really good experiences. I think it is time for **Summon** to explode now though, before we were not really ready for it. Now I think it is the time, everybody for the most part is all grown up and they know how the road is. It's time.

**Do you feel *Fallen* is your most accomplished and diverse disc yet?**

I think *Fallen* is a bit different from the other discs. There is a little more thrash on this one. There are a few more riffs for people to break their necks banging to which in the past there weren't too many riffs like this, well there were riffs like that but they weren't played very long. The speed has not gone away at all, if anything it has gotten faster, but way better. I think the songs are composed better, and it just feels better to play these songs. They feel very comfortable, I can't wait until you hear the new stuff after *Fallen*. I think it will be much better, not that I am not pleased, I think it's a great album.

**Discography:**

2005... *Fallen* (Moribund)  
2003... *And The Blood Runs Black* (Moribund)  
2001... *No Thoughts From The Sky* (Blackened Moon)  
2000... *Baptized By Fire* (Necropolis)  
1997... *Dark Descent Of Fallen Souls* (Grinding Peace)

**Current line-up:**

Xaphan... vocals and guitars  
Matt McClelland... guitars  
Necromodeus... bass  
Asteroth... drums

**Website:**

[www.summon666.com](http://www.summon666.com)

[www.moribundcult.com](http://www.moribundcult.com)

# Thine Eyes Bleed

Interview with vocalist Justin Wolfe

Canadian death thrashers **Thine Eyes Bleed** made a name for themselves immediately due to the inclusion of bassist Johnny Araya and ex-Kittie guitarist Jeff Phillips. They recorded their debut full length, *In the Wake of Separation*, and toured before getting an offer from The End Records. Their sound has elements of different eras but fans of thrash and death metal will find them appealing. Prior to hitting the road for a U.S. tour, we passed along some questions and vocalist Justin Wolfe obliged us with the answers.

## How did your trip to Japan go?

It was absolutely amazing. It was a real honor for us to be there. We were treated with great respect and the fans were unbelievable. The whole trip was obviously very exciting for all of us. What surprised me the most was how grateful everyone was to have us there. We were taken care of so well, and to top it off the fans were insane. The festival was huge and the crowd was just so happy to be there.



## What is life like in Canada?

Life in Canada is really laid back to tell you the truth. We come from a small town outside of Toronto where we don't do much other than practice and work. It's nice to be home and relax every once in awhile.

## Do you have confidence in your government?

I hate to dive into government and politics too often, but yeah I really am a proud Canadian and do feel at peace when I'm at home. The Canadian government has its ups and downs, I can't say that I agree with everything they stand for, but I do have enough confidence in them looking for our best interests in remaining a free country.

## Your debut reminds me of eighties thrash bands, especially Kreator, was this era and influence on Thine Eyes Bleed?

Nice- **Kreator**. Actually we all come from different eras of metal I guess. We are spread out in age so we all have different influences, but I would have to say this was a very influential era of metal for most of us. We definitely have a bit of old school thrash in our songs and in our blood.

## Is touring a priority now?

Yes, we will be travelling for a few weeks through the U.S. with **Vehemence** and **Clifton**. Touring is definitely our number one priority. It's really the only way to be heard. We plan to be on the road thirty plus weeks this year and we are ready to go. We have a lot of fun on the road so try to tour as much as possible.

## How was the studio experience?

It was really a great experience for all of us. We did this record on our own with a friend, Morgan (Mo) Russell from Seattle- he engineered, produced, and mixed the album with us. We are totally happy with the sound. We did it in a little over a week on a tight budget and Mo still made it kick some ass. We give him a lot of credit. The recording was done in a little over a week. We had the record done and were touring and shopping it a little while, then The End came to us.

## Discography:

2005... In The Wake Of Separation (The End)

## Current line-up:

Justin Wolfe... vocals  
Jeff Phillips... guitars  
Derek Ward... guitars  
Johnny Araya... bass  
Darryl Stephens... drums

[www.thineeyesbleed.com](http://www.thineeyesbleed.com)

# HACKSAW TO THE THROAT



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# THUNDERSTONE

Interview with bassist Titus Hjelm

Guitarist Nino Laurenne (ex-Antidote) started Thunderstone in

2000 and they signed with Nuclear Blast for their 2002 self titled debut. A derivative metal album, things changed when vocalist Pasi Rantanen developed a vocal style more familiar to bands like Deep Purple and Dio and Thunderstone returned with the impressive 2004 release *The Burning*. Their latest, *Tools of Destruction*, takes things a step further and Thunderstone have developed into a fine band. We emailed some questions for bassist Titus Hjelm to answer.

## How do you feel about *Tools of Destruction*?

I feels great. I think that with this album we have found the sound and vibe that best represents where we all come from.

## Did you want to make *Tools of Destruction* any differently than *The Burning* or would you prefer to not look at the past, only to the future?

As you can see, the production time between the two albums was very short, so we basically put together songs that we felt sounded good. Everything came more or less naturally. The crunchiness was already evident in *The Burning* and Pasi's voice just has evolved in the more Dioesque direction

without any conscious thought to make it sound rougher.

## How do you feel about the debut?

It is a good album, but of course you can hear that we didn't really know what we wanted to do at the time. It was Nino's project alone and we really became a band after the first tour and *The Burning*.

## Do you think it was necessary to make changes in your sound and in the singing style on the second album in order to improve Thunderstone?

Like I said earlier, there was little conscious effort to change the sound. We have always thought that if a song is good, it should be on the album, whether it sounds like something different that we have done in the past



or not.

## What is it like living in Helsinki?

I would not live anywhere else in Finland. It's hard to explain to somebody who's not a native, but there is a wide gap between the capital and the rest of the country. Not that I don't like playing shows in the rest of the country, I just wouldn't live anywhere else.

## How did you come to get involved with metal?

I heard Kiss' "God of Thunder" when I was nine years old. That's how I became involved. And sure I have the dedication, but as long as we're not making millions out of this, it has to be for the fun of it. I don't mind a couple of setbacks, but when the fun is gone, that's when you should evaluate things again.

## What is your touring situation?

We are currently negotiating a European tour, but nothing's been confirmed yet. Without touring the promotion for this kind of music is not very good, they don't really play us on M.T.V., you know. Besides, touring is fun and we always find the time to go drinking around the world for a couple of weeks.

## You've worked with Timo Tolkki in the past, how was that experience? He was saying some crazy things about a year ago- what was your take on the bizarre happenings of Stratovarius in the past year or so?

Timo is a great and a really sweet guy and we've always restrained from commenting his or Stratovarius' situation. I'm happy that they're back on their feet.

I feel it's been unfair to read Thunderstone compared to Sonata Arctica

and Stratovarius, considering you have your own sound, especially with the vocals- I would more

likely see comparisons with Deep Purple or Dio, but with a modern touch to the music- what's your take on the music you create?

You pretty much summed it up there. Old school metal and melodic 80's stuff is where we come from. It is natural for newcomers to be compared to other bands but I'm happy that with the new album we've shaken off most of that crap.

## Final comments?

A big thank you to all of the people that have supported us. We hope to see you live as soon as possible (keep harassing those record label people for an opportunity to see us play). And the usual Thunderstone proverb: Drink beer and get naked.

## Discography:

- 2005... Tools Of Destruction (Nuclear Blast)
- 2004... The Burning (Nuclear Blast)
- 2002... Thunderstone (Nuclear Blast)

## Current line-up:

- Pasi Rantanen... vocals
- Nino Laurenne... guitars
- Titus Hjelm... bass
- Mikka Rantanen... drums
- Kari Tornak... keyboards

## Website:

[www.thunderstone.org](http://www.thunderstone.org)

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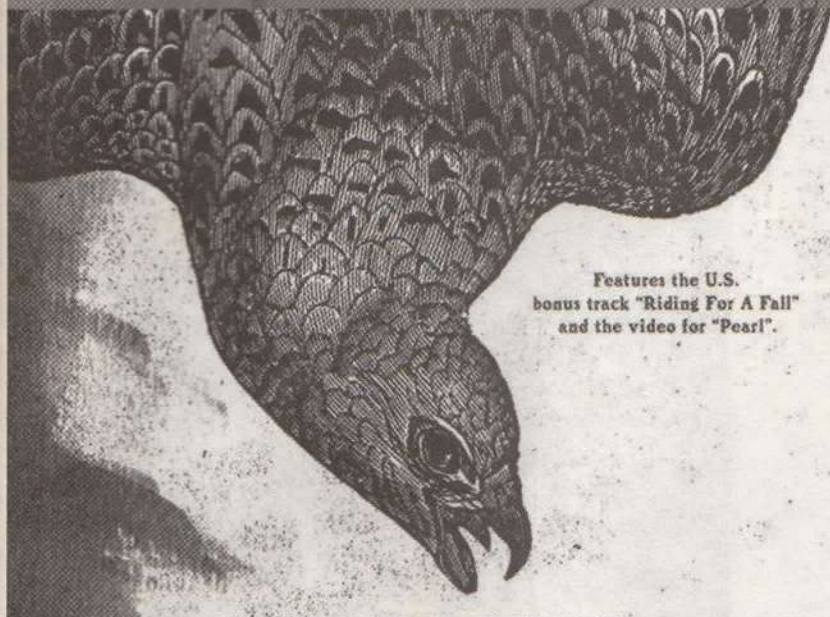
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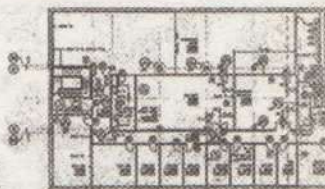


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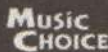


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# Visions of Atlantis

Interview with vocalist Nicole Bogner

Austrian band **Visions Of Atlantis** have quickly made an impact as their two albums (2002's *Eternal Endless Infinity* and 2004's *Cast Away*) have been making an impact on American audiences. Due to the presence of frontwoman Nicole Bogner and her enchanting vocals, Visions Of Atlantis have been getting comparisons to popular bands like **Nightwish** and **Lacuna Coil**. However, their progressive metal sound puts them in a class by themselves. Here is vocalist Nicole.

**How does it feel getting so much attention with two albums now in the stores?**

A very strange feeling, because we are all more than normal people but we enjoy every compliment very much. We work very hard on points and the fans have to criticize us.

**Why did you have the debut remastered and reissued?**

Our first label did not do very much for us so we had to promote our first album by ourselves. Also the production was very bad. We had a lot of time pressure and it was mastered and mixed not very well. But the deal ran out after one year and the c.d. was sold out so Napalm Records re-released our first album remastered.

**What changes have occurred with the new record?**

First of all, we have two new members; keyboardist Miro Holly and vocalist Mario Plank. On the new album one recognizes more clearly the characteristic style we developed and that we are clearly no clone of existing similar bands. Moreover, we and our music are more grown up. We had this time also a more than outstanding producer, who had very good ideas to make the songs really great. On *Cast Away*, we bring our wild and our soft or melancholic sides more to validity. It is very emotional and we worked out of our border. Not that we think our last album, *Eternal Endless Infinity*, was so bad, it was even good for the time pressure in composing and recording- I just want to show you our development.

**Why did you choose to name the band after Atlantis?**

The myths of Atlantis are surrounded by a lot of different emotions like love, hate, anger, hope, etc. These emotions are in connection with Atlantis very secretly and because of that it's very interesting. We select a theme everyone knows and everyone is fascinated about it, so our name is a powerful basis for our texts and songs. We are very interested in the story about it and we read a lot about it.

**Do you think Visions Of Atlantis have something different to offer?**

We have a more positive kind of sound than **Nightwish** and not very much together with **Edenbridge**. We also use a lot of synths and Mario and I share the main singing parts equally.

**How do you complete your songwriting?**

Our keyboardist and guitar player sit together and compose songs. Then we all let influence our ideas. The lyrics are written by Miro Holly and Mario Plank. It is very important for us, while our interpretation remains intact, the listener can connect his personal feelings and emotions with the songs, so that we also tell, metaphorically, a piece of his life. Therefore, we selected for ourselves a mythic band name, because fantasy and myth unite with our music at best. When you write and hear a song you have already a certain picture before eyes and the part of the band who identify himself with this song at most, writes the lyrics.

**How is it determined which vocalist sings?**

It depends, which meaning the lyrics have. We and our producer, Peter O. Moritz, think about the choir voices.

**Do you have any tour plans?**

Our main work this year is the promotion of our new c.d., *Cast Away*. So we have a lot of live gigs. In April we go on a European tour with **Elis**. In May we play at one of the biggest gothic festivals in Europe, called Wave Gotik Treffen. In June we go on tour with **Epica** and **Edenbridge** in South America for two weeks. We also have a Mexican tour but no dates are fixed yet and in the summer we play with **In Extremo** at Open Air in Germany.

**Final comments?**

I don't try to copy Taria, we just have both a singing in Music School, long before I knew **Nightwish**. I also didn't know **Nightwish** when we started with the band. Now we are close friends with them, and I hope we see us all in the near future at a live gig.



**Discography:**

2004... *Cast Away* (Napalm)  
2002... *Eternal Endless Infinity* (Napalm)

**Current line-up:**

Nicole Bogner... vocals  
Mario Plank... vocals  
Wolfgang Koch... guitars  
Michael Koren... bass  
Thomas Caser... drums  
Mario Holly... keyboards

**Website:**

[www.visionsofatlantis.com](http://www.visionsofatlantis.com)

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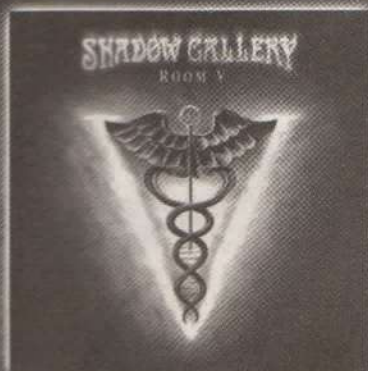


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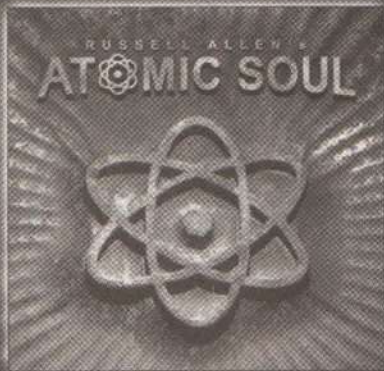
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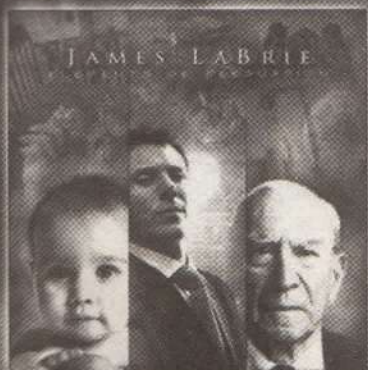
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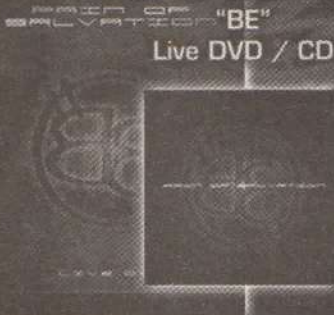
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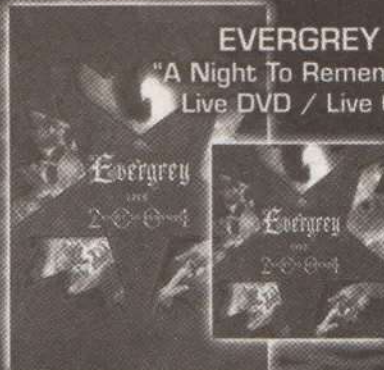


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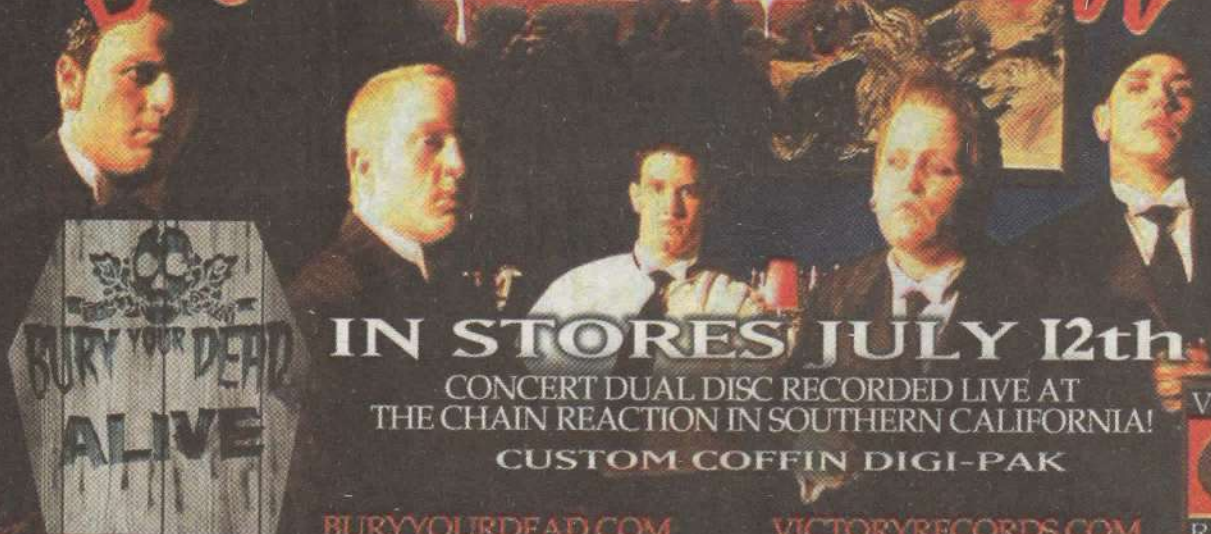
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