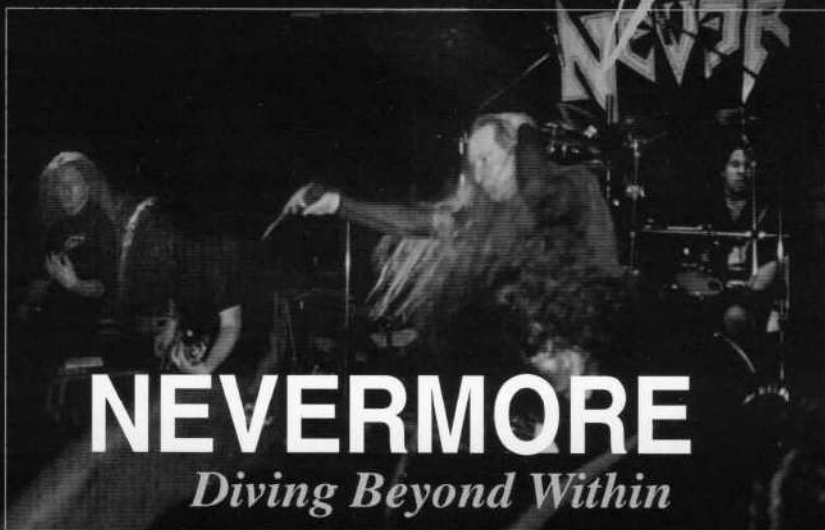


EDGE OF TIME

ISSUE #14



NEVERMORE

Diving Beyond Within

ANGRA

On Evolution of Gentle Metal

NIGHTWISH

Metal, Opera, and Wilderness

LEMUR VOICE

New album "Divided"



SWARM

DEATH ANGEL hive stirs again

- All Too Human
- Archetype
- Death & Taxes
- Destiny's End
- Dreams of Sanity
- Elegy
- Freewill
- Intromental Management
- Iron Monkey
- Little Green Men
- Lunar Crush
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SKW - "Techno-Logical" (ADR 9901)

Track Index: 1. The Mirror House 2. Double 3. Techno-Logical
4. Black Woman 5. Enigma 6. For Whom The Bell Tolls

Playing the Metal scene for more than 8 years with the monicker SKYWALKER, SKW finally releases the debut-CD. More powerful than PANTERA, more tribal than SEPULTURA, more technological than FEAR FACTORY, SKW deserves the definitive international consecration. The CD includes a storming version of the METALLICA classic "For Whom The Bell Tolls".

EVIL WINGS - "Colors Of The New World" (ADR 9902)

Track Index: 1. Colors of the New World 2. Flowers 3. Away 4. Searchin' 5. Starship
6. Big Old Roundabout 7. The Secret 8. The Stageline
9. Sell My Soul 10. 20th of May 11. Colors of the New World (Revisited)

After two albums and positive reviews everywhere, EVIL WINGS releases the "real thing": "Colors Of The New World" is their most melodic sounding album to date, but still strongly placed into the Progressive Hard Rock, up to bands such as RUSH, DREAM THEATER or KING'S X. It contains the amazing 18 minutes Prog-Metal suite titled "The Secret".



MOON OF STEEL - "Beyond The Edges" (ADR 9907) Mini CD

Track Index: 1. Did You Hear That Voice? 2. We're Nothing
3. You Not Me 4. Tonight (Acoustic Version)

Prime movers of the italian Metal scene with the internationally highly acclaimed album "Passions" back in 1989, MOON OF STEEL finally decided it's time for the comeback. And it's a BANG! Original members Marco Vaccaro and Gianluca Oliveri (brain and heart of the first line-up) joined forces with Sarah, Oscar and Andrea and moved their sound to a very "classy" Prog-Metal. This brilliant 4 Tracks CD includes also a breath-taking version of DREAM THEATER "You Not Me".

"Children Of The Damned - A Tribute to IRON MAIDEN" (ADR 9903/4) 2 CD - Digipack Set

CD 1 Track Index: 1. 22, Acacia Avenue (DELUSION) 2. Flight Of Icarus (ASKA)
3. The Prisoner (MESMERIZE) 4. Flash Of The Blade (SEASONS OF THE WOLF) 5. Killers (GOOSEFLESH)
6. The Trooper (DIPHThERIA) 7. Wrathchild (CESSATION OF LIFE) 8. Can I Play With Madness ? (MOKSHA) 9. Bring Your Daughter To The Slaughter (REALM) 10. Where Eagles Dare (NIGHT CONQUERS DAY) 11. Phantom Of The Opera (LAST DISCIPLE) 12. Futureal (INNOCENT EXILE)

CD 1: 12 international bands cover a song of the best Heavy-Metal band;
CD 2: the same 12 bands play one of their original compositions.



"Voices - A Tribute to DREAM THEATER" (ADR 9905/6) 2CD - Digipack Set

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CD 1: 9 great bands cover a song of the Prog-Metal band #1;
CD 2: the same 9 bands play one of their original compositions.



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4. Monster Magnet "Powertrip"
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6. Dark Tranquillity "Projector"
7. Nightwish "Oceanborn"
8. Sentenced "Frozen"
9. Stripsnow "Late Nite Cult Show"
10. Borknagar "The Archaic Course"

Audrius Ozalas (AO)

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2. Current 93 "Of Ruine and Some Blazing Starres"
3. Spiritual Beggars "Mantra III"
4. Legendary Pink Dots "Any Day Now"
5. Mayfair "Fastest Trip to Cybertown/" "Die Flucht"
6. Babylon Whores "Deggae!" "Cold Heaven"
7. Monster Magnet "Dopes to Infinity"
8. The Doors "Waiting for the Sun"
9. Tindersticks "Tindersticks"
10. Ataraxia "Historiae"

Christian Rademaker (CR)

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2. Lemur Voice "Divided"
3. Fleurety "Min Tid skal Komme"
4. Ancient "The Cainian Chronicles"
5. Nevermore "Dreaming Neon Black"
6. Lordian Guard "Sinners in the Hand of an Angry Guard"
7. Keep of Kalessin "Through Times of War"
8. Dan Swano "Moontower"
9. Arabesque "Naked"
10. Solefald "The Linear Scaffold"

Gregorio Martin (GM)

1. Toto "Mindfields"/"Twenty Years (1977-1997)"
2. Chinchilla "Horrorscope"
3. Patrick Rondat "On the Edge"
4. Royal Hunt "Paradox"/"Closing the Chapter"
5. Nevermore "Dreaming Neon Black"
6. Amorphis "Tuonela"
7. Turtles, Sharks, and Beavers "Version 1.0"
8. Tom Jobim "O Melhor de Tom Jobim"
9. Kyuss "Blues for the Red Sun"
10. Jill Sobule "Things Here are Different"

Sigitas Velyvis (SV)

1. Cain&Abel "Cain&Abel"
2. Radiohead "OK Computer"
3. Spock's Beard "Day For Night"
4. Masters Of Reality all
5. Pentagram "Anatolia"
6. Atomic Opera "Alpha&Oranges"
7. Orange Goblin "Time Travelling Blues"
8. Rotors To Rust all
9. Death&Taxes "Paradigms For a New Quarter"
10. James Murphy "Feeding the Machine"

edge of time #14



Hello again,

One year is probably the longest period that we can spend without publishing a new issue. Considering the current one, the amount of reviews increased compared to the last time (I hoped that it would never happen). However, we don't have enough resources to publish this fanzine on a more frequent basis. I know that we started to put out monstrous "reference guides" instead of regular issues, but that's what we can do at the moment. During the last four weeks before a deadline, I always promise to myself that the next issue will not be that big. But, after awhile, I realize that it's easier to go through one deadline per year than through two or more. Anyway, the good point is that the fanzine keeps coming out at least once a year since 1994.

You will most likely find unknown names among the interviewed bands in this issue. If not, send us a message explaining how you know them all, and we will send you a free CD or something! It's getting so damn easy to fill a fanzine with known bands (record companies literally bombard with phone-interview proposals), that it is not fun anymore. Therefore, with this issue, we tried to remember the ultimate goal of a fanzine, which is to help good obscure bands to get more exposure. And that's why the interview line-up probably isn't your dream team. We try to be selective with less-known bands though.

The editorials of several previous issues were always addressing some flaws in metal scene, so I thought that it would be good to avoid that this time. All considerations about the scene can be found in and between the lines, starting from the next page. The main thing is that metal is getting stronger, and we have many great bands (I am positive that everyone of you has at least one CD in your wish list).

Hopefully you'll enjoy our digesting of modern (in a good sense) metal. Send your comments and opinions to any of the listed e-mail or regular-mail addresses. Thank you for reading.

Giedrius

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Reviews do not give web site and e-mail addresses, but you can find them on the Edge of Time web site. In addition, the website contains new reviews and interviews, as well as an extensive links section.

The main address where to send promotional material is: **Edge of Time, c/o Sigitas Velyvis, PO Box 471, 2007 Vilnius, Lithuania**. However, you can send promotional material directly to the editor or to any of the other writers instead.

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Layout by Giedrius Slivinskas (sorry for the not-too-spectacular result, but time resources were extremely limited)

Computer was borrowed from Craig Wanom.

Front cover background picture by Travis Smith. Picture in this page by Elonas Kvietkus.

With only three full-length albums under their belt, Brazilian metallers are now tough competitors to well-established melodic metal bands. Already their debut album, "Angels Cry," was a gust of fresh wind, presenting power/speed metal with nicely arranged classical interludes, later explored at bigger scale by bands like Rhapsody. The band managed to get a relatively big success even if back then (1993) melodic metal was out of fashion. The second album, "Holy Land," was different and featured only two straight speed metal songs, while the rest was more diverse gently heavy music with classical and Brazilian ethnic music influences. The latest effort, "Fireworks," is the most direct sounding power metal album, which still maintains the gentle and warm feeling specific to Angra, yet perhaps is a bit inferior to "Holy Land," because "good and innovative" is usually better than just "good."

This interview was conducted by e-mail with the help of Century Media US. Answers of singer Andre Matos (A) dwell with the down-to-earth and humble approach.

At the final moment, we decided to complete this article with some excerpts of interest taken from an improvised and relaxed press conference which took place some time earlier in Madrid. Bassist Luis Mariutti (L) and guitarist Rafael Bittencourt (R) acted as band's spokesmen at that time, always keeping the same gentle tone.

What, in your opinion, can a band like Angra still achieve in general terms? What kind of objectives you might not have reached yet as musicians and composers?

A: We consider ourselves as just beginners if compared to the more experienced bands. There are lots of things within the show business that could be learned only along the years and sometimes they might be pretty different from what we could expect when all was just a dream.

How would you define Angra musically, at the moment?

R: Progressive melodic metal with classical influences and Brazilian influences, and a little bit of... salsa! [laughs]. Well, I prefer to say it's Angra. That's the simplest way to define our music.

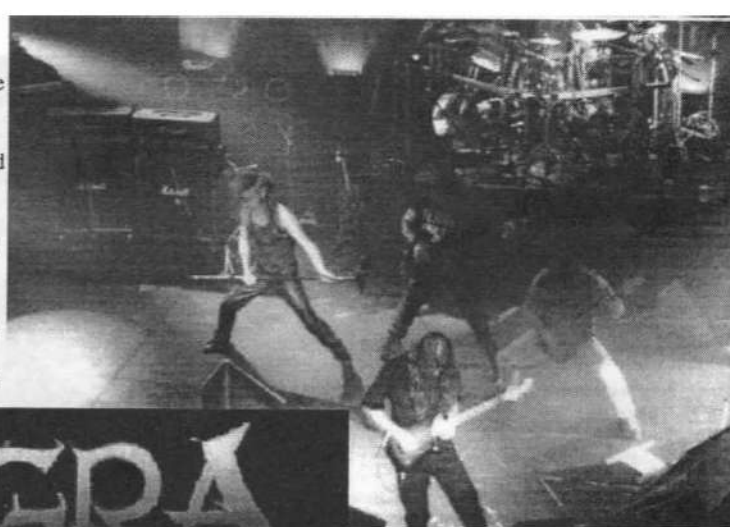
Could you tell us a bit about your new material, if any? Where do you think your next album may go? Should we take "Fireworks" as reference?^PA: You definitely may take it for reference but not as a model. Surely our next album will be somehow different, as we've been always doing since the beginning. But the band's style will remain quite the same, I assure.

Are all the tracks in "Fireworks" newly written material, or you rescued something from past recordings?

R: Well, being honest not every single track is new.

Was it your idea to release "Freedom Call" and "Holy Live" EPs, or did it come from your record company?

R: It was a proposal we got. I like the



ANGRA

Angra: On Evolution of Gentle Metal

[by Giedrius Slivinskas and Gregorio Martin]

songs "Freedom Call" and "Queen of the Night," but let's say that there was some pressure involved, in order to finish that record, so it ended up being not too good for us. "Holy Live" was okay, but it includes too few songs.

Who takes this kind of decisions?

Does it have more to do with your manager Mr. Antonio Pirani or with your record label in Europe?

R: Pirani is our manager and helps us in more personal decisions. We take decisions together with him, and he's the responsible person of later contacting the other people involved.

At the Reaching Horizons web page, I saw that he wrote an official statement denying some informa-

ago, you had a chance to jam together with Bruce Dickinson at one of your French gigs, right? Tell us about the result of that experience.

A: In fact, I did not make any audition personally. As far as I know they've listened to my stuff, and I was placed 4th on the ranking of those possible substitutes... As for Bruce's jam, I'd just say it was one of the biggest emotions for me, a moment that one could say I was expecting since my childhood and suddenly came true.

Now that it has turned into reality, do you remember if Bruce mentioned you then something about his coming back to Iron Maiden?

that was all so far... Maybe one day we can make it come true: Andre Matos for Orchestra and Choir. Just one thing: I wouldn't sing anything at all!!!

From my point of view, in "Fireworks," orchestral arrangements got simplified a bit compared to "Holy Land." What could you tell about this?

A: You got it perfectly!! In "Holy Land," as we had much less real acoustic instruments, we could develop the arrangements step by step, adding and removing lines, doing overdubs... As for "Fireworks," the orchestra was a real one, 40 musicians, live-recorded. That's why we had to write all arrangements in advance and in a little simpler way.

L: "Holy Land" was a special album. We placed there everything which came to our minds, adagios, Brazilian influences... We added lots of things, really. On this album, the scale of priorities was different when recording it. Maybe we've valorized the band aspect, through the production.

Concerning the recording of this album, which differences of its recording process and its production you would like to highlight in relation to the previous albums?

L: The producer, first of all. Then, I have to say that we started recording the bass and drums basis at a very big studio, adapted to both instruments. On the previous albums, we didn't have this possibility.

R: Yes, the big difference is that the drums and the bass were recorded inside big halls. On our first albums, they were recorded in small rooms. And what regards the guitars, they were recorded at those times in big halls, and nowadays, at more reduced ones. It happened the same with the vocals. And another difference comes from the fact that the string sections are real: no samplers nor synthesizers were used. There's a difference in the mentality of the product.

Could you explain a bit how does Chris Tsangarides operate as



tion notes that were spreading around in some circles, reporting some changes in your band's lineup (Kiko Loureiro joining Helloween, even Ronnie James Dio coming in...). Would you personally like to add something to that, or it'd be just not worth to spend any more time discussing those rumors?

A: That's exactly what I've told our manager: Let's not care about rumors of any type; and if they happen, I think that must be only a good sign that the band is becoming more and more famous.

Andre, looking back, how do you see the time when you planned that audition for Iron Maiden? Not long

A: Yes, something indeed. Of course he didn't tell all, but we've been talking about the possibilities of him joining Maiden again.

Reviewing some of your musical backgrounds, it's visible that you have a deep and good knowledge about erudite music and classical sources. Can you tell us a bit about some of the projects in that field that you might be contributing to? How would you like to expand that musical facet of yourselves if you were given a chance and enough resources?

A: I would love to write and conduct some orchestral/choir stuff. In fact, I did some during my study years but

producer? What does the "Vortex" recording system consist of?

R: Chris is a very pleasant person, and it was very easy for us to work with him. He puts lots of love in everything he does, in all his work.

L: He works as if he is a craftsman, an artisan. He does everything by hand. Everything.

R: Without computers, without much aid of technology. Everything's recorded live. Concerning the "Vortex," the big difference is the microphonation. Charlie [Bauerfiend], our former producer, was not too fond of capturing the sound right from the studio room. He didn't like that effect particularly on the guitar sound. He was fond of a very low guitar sound, he used to mix it, etc. No sound from the hall at all. The process here with Chris consisted in placing different "clusters" of microphones at both sides of the room, forming different stages, and lots of mics in the hall, to capture the resonance of the guitar inside it. That's the key point of "Vortex." You place the microphones in the direction of the speaker, the source of sound.

L: Yes, it has lots to do with the placing of the microphones.

How did "Fireworks" come up as the name for the new album?

L: The title comes from a poem that Andre was writing. He already got those lyrics, and that's where the idea comes from. We got to the point when we had to decide what would be the title for this album, and we had no idea. "Fireworks" seemed to us to be a word that expresses power, force.

In some of your interviews during the "Angel Cry" period, I got an impression that you were tending to go in a more orchestrated/classical-influenced/ethnic metal. "Fireworks" doesn't fit into this picture as good as "Holy Land"...

A: No, not really. After finishing "Holy Land," we recognized it would be very difficult to beat such an album. So the idea when composing "Fireworks" was to give it more power and freshness, something very related to the sound of it. We also would like to experience the path of old bands, so we decided to go for an old-styled album. But the possibilities are still open, and we have a whole career ahead to experience new things.

Could it be connected with the fact that Angra have already gained a solid name internationally and now you can adopt a more comfortable position, simplifying those orchestral aspects and mainly thinking of transporting songs onto stage, without being forced to use too much technical support (samples, etc.)?

A: That's also a good point. We had many troubles in the past always trying to play with samples and sequencers, to do the most perfect as possible, etc. We just found out that it could kill more and more the whole atmosphere. So for the old songs, we decided to simplify the keyboard

arrangements thinking in our live show, and for the new songs we don't have that much of a problem, once the songs were composed and recorded already meant to be performed live.

On your last European tour, you opened for Stratovarius. The only exception was France, where Angra's status is really high, and promoters decided that you'd be the headliners. Maybe this comment is too personal or might sound a bit controversial, but, in my humble opinion, some people outside Angra were not able to assimilate that fact...

A: I don't get exactly what you mean... You suggest that some people would like us to open for Stratovarius? Or that Stratovarius themselves would like to be the headliners in France? Anyway Stratovarius is a great band, and I think they should have been headliners in France, with or without Angra. If you're just mentioning the fans, I think they've got plenty of rights to request so; and if it happens in the future I just can say I'll be more than proud to share the bill again with Stratovarius!

Didn't you get an impression, when playing that somehow restricted 40-50 minutes set list, that the main attraction and incentive for a big part of the audience was primarily Angra?

A: Not quite in the places where we opened for them. In Spain, for instance, they're really big, while Angra is just starting up. And if someone got really interested about us, great! That was the ultimate reason why we both have established this tour together!

R: There's no problem. On a next occasion, we'll probably close the show. We're friends. We're bands of not the same size. They've been playing in Spain several times earlier. This is our second time. But we're on the same level.

L: The truth is our normal set lasts for 2 hours and fifteen minutes more or less.

How did you come up with the idea of paying tribute to the city of Lisbon through a song?

R: That was something that Andre experienced. He was there, and he's been in touch with people from Lisbon. It deals about his experience with street beggars. That's what inspired him to compose this theme.

On this recent tour, we've heard of Hansi K. (Blind Guardian) sadly going deaf, causing to cancel their live appearances. As members of some of those festivals, have you been told any direct news right from the band's environment concerning this, or did you have a chance of meeting any of the band members?

A: Unfortunately, I haven't heard anything and, of course, that makes me worry a lot about him... I met Hansi in Germany, and I'm a big admirer of

their work; apart of it I was very excited to play with Blind Guardian for the first time in a festival... I hope those news are not 100% real, and if so, I cross my fingers that he recovers fast and they can perform in the festivals.

"Angels Cry" and "Holy Land" were released in the US by Century Media. How did this deal happen?

A: After many years of wait, we finally got signed in the US.

R: Yes, now we have a good record company supporting us there.

A: That's a very good sign, especially now that the whole market is rising over there. We knew Century Media through the Judas Priest tribute, in which we took part. So far, we're very happy with this partnership, and there are good chances that we'll take part in some rock festivals in the US yet this year.

R: Anyway, we're more interested in the European market, since it tends to be more solid and more faithful. There's a huge market in the US, but still very influenced by the media.

I heard some rumors about a major-label interest in your band, were those rumors true?

A: Yes, but I cannot mention which label. We were approached by them something like two years ago.

Seeing your albums in perspective, what evolution do you glimpse in Angra, musically?

A: Always try to conquer new horizons, whatever they'll be. Musicalwise, I think the evolution of the band itself will be the major responsible for any changes that may occur in the future.

What's the first thought that comes to your mind thinking of "Reaching Horizons"?

A: Dreamful times, composing on the beach, discoveries in the studio and pride for the very first tape.

"Angels Cry"?

A: New experiences in a strange land, the power of a young animal running free.

"Holy Land"?

A: Never ending researches, living in a farm and getting filled up with a very spiritual feeling.

"Fireworks"?

A: Relaxed and fun, the parks of London at noon, World Cup '98, Abbey Road Studios.

Have you had time to take part in any friendly football matches in between the last tour dates? Tell us a bit about the relaxed atmosphere of those events, if you wish...

A: We always carry a ball along, as good Brazilians... But I can't recall whether last time we've played anything with the Stratovarius guys. The only thing I do remember was a bloody snowball-war on the last day we spent together in Salzburg.

You probably spend a lot of time in tours in Brazil, South America in general, USA, and Europe?

A: You forgot to name Japan!!! That's actually one of the hard parts, but we've gotta learn how to deal with it. I think the secret is to feel at home wherever you are.

R: The feeling we get is the same at every single country. Well, we might sense the difference maybe in the US, because there we're nobody.

Do you have enough time for the songwriting? Would you like to reduce some of the time you spend playing live or taking care of business and publicity?

A: No, that's OK. The only thing I regret is the pressure for new releases every one or two years. Creativity is something that needs time and sometimes we cannot just "manufacture" songs as the record labels would like us to!

On the "Holy Land" tour, you gave more than one hundred gigs. Do you think you'll surpass that figure with the "Fireworks" album?

L: Well, that's true, but it happened that the organization of several of those shows was defective, and therefore, the quality of those live performances resulted a bit low. Now we'd prefer to play less frequently.

R: Actually, it was our fault: we changed our record company in Europe too many times. The current record company is working really well and hard with us, taking not big, but consistent steps, as it happened in France. It's like a new beginning. Every time we start with a new record company, it means to begin from zero. So that was the biggest problem for us: to start over in each country and reconquering the audience.

Which recent albums or novel bands have drawn your attention because of their quality?

A: Rhapsody, Time Machine, Rammstein, Blind Guardian, Stratovarius... Also Deep Purple, Black Sabbath, and Dream Theater.

Talking about the Brazilian scene, Angra can be a good example for some bands to follow. Can you name or describe the music of some metal/rock bands from your country that you think might be successfully marketed outside Brazil?

A: Dr. Sin is one of the best bands out here. They play a kind of more mainstream oriented hard rock, and they are definitely the best musicians around. Also Sagrado, a progressive band from Belo Horizonte deserves to figure in the highest international rankings.

L: Things are also going very well for Hecateforth.

R: I'd like to have more time and help them with the production, but I do not have much. They're one of the best bands in Brazil. The new singer is excellent. He sings in a very similar way to Ronnie James Dio.



market, while we live in Brazil, and maintain stronger links with the European scene.

What is the status of Angra in Brazil, do you get features in the press, radio, TV? How does the amount of the albums sold compare to other countries?

A: It is definitely one of our strong markets, and the

country where we've played the most. Still there's a lot to do in Brazil, but, in the recent years, we got pretty good exposure in the media, and a very good concept for a metal band in general. L: There's quite a lack of structure. There're not many possibilities, not many good places to play at, I mean. R: Yes, we all come from South America, and the situation there is really different from the professionalism that we find in Europe.

Wouldn't it be better for you to establish your permanent residence in Europe then, for working and promotional reasons?

L: Yes, for working reasons that'd be probably convenient, I guess. R: I've thought a lot about that possibility already. It'd be okay for working, but the inspiration... It's better to stay in Brazil, in touch with our people. That's very important for us.

In a more or less expressive way, we can find allusions to your Brazilian roots inside all Angra's albums. Considering "Fireworks," the

harmonies behind tracks like "Gentle Change" truly resemble that...

A: Yes, alike "Holy Land." Actually, "Gentle Change" is a song that could belong there. I think that's our little contribution for what we could call international culture interchange.

L: "Gentle Change" is a song that owns a true Brazilian influence, in the harmonies, in the melody. It's not only "batuqui" (typical sound of Brazilian percussion).

Could you give a brief list of some classic Brazilian popular music works that might have influenced you as artists in the deepest way?

A: Tom Jobim, Djavan, Milton Nascimento, Caetano Veloso, Egberto Gismonti, Hermeto Paschoal, Heitor Villa-Lobos.

There's, for instance, a piano interlude towards the middle of that "Gentle Change" track, which reminded me a lot of some melodies from the classic "Aguas do Marçô" by Tom Jobim.

R: I like this kind of compositions very much. I particularly think that we can bring in pop influences and influences from other styles, and that's what eventually would make heavy metal to turn into something huge. Because if we stay still, restricted to use only pure heavy metal, then... ohhh!!! We think that, as a band, and I particularly support this idea, the more we mix, and the more we change, the bigger we could be for a global audience. Because we want heavy metal to be understood by all kind of people, you know. We don't want to be kind of a fixed band. We do not pretend that anyone would have to be in possession of a special club membership card to enjoy our music. We pursue something directed to everyone, that everyone can understand. Because the biggest weight in the heavy metal genre is love, all that passion... And I think that everyone should understand this point. And not to see it like a "devil thing." It's passion... fury!

Isn't there today a trend of excessively labeling styles?

R: Yes, that's it. Years ago, everything was heavy metal. From Kiss to Motorhead. Later, it started to divide. Nowadays, everything's split in different categories. I think that in the future, all those styles will be recycled, and heavy metal will probably grow as a strong core. In my opinion, heavy metal is a global entity.

I wonder if movies are among your hobbies? Recently, we had an opportunity to see a very interesting and visually beautiful Brazilian film called "Brazil Central Station," which was nominated in the last Oscars edition. Has had any of you a chance to see this film? If so, what do you think about it?

A: Yes, I do love cinema. "Central do Brasil" is one of the best movies ever done in our country. My opinion about it is that it is a very deep and atmospheric movie; although its approach is sometimes way too extreme

in what refers to poverty, crime, etc. But it has a pretty lyrical message from behind and, differently from the American movie standard, there's no real "happy end," what scores lots of points in my concept.

In my opinion, that hyperrealistic portrait of Brazil and of huge cities like Rio do Janeiro manages to impact a person that contemplates it, independently of the origin.

A: That's what I meant with "extreme." But I think they really succeed by creating an impressive environment.

Could you interpret, at least partially, the lyrics of songs like "Angels Cry" or, more recently, "Paradise," as a reference to that reality?

A: "Angels Cry" was more or less a kind of presight of the same theme from "Central do Brasil." The "Angels" would be the little abandoned ones... As for "Paradise," the theme has its relation with blood, specially on what concerns sports like soccer, hockey, and football... There's, in fact, no huge differences between that and the ancient roman gladiator games.

Since the beginning, Angra's music has tried to deliver a positive message, in the same way as the aforementioned film seems to leave a half-opened door of hope for the characters as outcome. Would you agree on that "optimism" being a constant and something inherent to your musical career?

A: Yes and that might be a predominant trace of our Brazilian background. We learn to go through all difficulties with some kind of joy.

If you would have to quantify in percentages (50/50, etc.) the amount of artistic freedom and commercial pressure that a band of your status has to deal with, where would you set both parameters?

A: Maybe 50/50!!!

Retaking the movie thread, some people from that field who've proven to be compromised with it as a form of art, such as Clint Eastwood directing movies, seem to have chosen a formula through which they can alternate a more commercial/mainstream oriented work with a more author/personal oriented film. This way, we could elementally say that all parties, i.e., studios, the artist, and that portion of a more demanding audience, keep satisfied.

A: I think there's a limit for such compromises. And the ones who manage to get to the very extreme of all those limits, without trespassing that delicate border... are simply genius!! (That makes me think of Mozart...!)

Tracing a parallel with record companies and your case, do you think we will be able to find a similar balance in future works of Angra?

A: I really don't know. The future only belongs to the future. Or better: the future is the present of the past...!

Do you know what happened to projects like Dark Avenger?

A: Not really... But next weekend we'll be playing in Brasilia (their home town), and I'll try to get informed about it.

What's your opinion about such acts of the musical freshness as Turtles, Sharks & Beavers?

A: I heard very good things about those guys; unfortunately, I've never listened to the music... But people say they're very creative and musical.

L: Sure, they're certainly a talented young band.

Sepultura and Soulfly are probably the most known Brazilian metal bands, but they play more extreme metal. Do you personally know any of their members?

A: Yes, basically all of them, but we never got really close due to the fact that they were rarely in Brazil.

R: We have always been big fans of Sepultura. What happens is that Soulfly members live in the US. So they spend more time there, and stay closer to that

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The Magna Carta Conflict

When we last spoke, we talked about the expiration of the deal with Magna Carta. What exactly happened?

NvdW: The deal with Magna Carta died a quiet death. The deal with Magna Carta was such that we would do one CD for them, and they had had an option for three more. That meant that if they wanted us to record three more CDs after "Insights," then we would have to comply. The deal had a certain expiration date. We contacted them when this date was nearly reached to ask them what they wanted to do with the deal. They were extremely unclear about the subject at that time, until we reached the point that we needed to move on. We then started looking for a new record company. Furthermore, we thought that the effort that Magna Carta put in promotion and getting us updated with sales figures was such that we wanted to leave anyway. That is the reason why we took the initiative ourselves.

Do you have any exact sales figures of how many CDs you've sold then?

NvdW: We don't know that exactly and that's a pity.

GL: The only thing we know is that we sold 7000 CDs after three months.

Did you actually get any financial benefits from these sales?

NvdW: I don't want to get into a big discussion concerning Magna Carta because it never leaves a good impression when you discuss the problems with your old employer. In principal, they are committed to send us a letter each half year with the sales figures, what the expenses are and what the artist eventually receives. They have never sent us such a letter in the three years since we signed the contract. The only thing you can do is to send someone to check the books or a lawyer. To find someone in the Netherlands who has knowledge of the New York law with regards to this subject and send them over there is incredibly expensive. They know that we cannot take the financial risk, and we do not know exactly of the sum involved. What we are doing is to find out from the CD manufacturers how many CDs were pressed. Each CD has a code on the pressed side. Each factory that presses a CD is obliged to report this information to a federation.

I assume that CDs for the European market have been pressed in Europe, do you have that kind of information?

NvdW: The CDs for the European market have been pressed as ordered by Roadrunner. We do not have any figures from them either because they are referring us to the contract that we signed with Magna Carta. We have now made a new start and we are looking ahead. If you want to start such a procedure you need at least five thousand dollars and we are not that



LEMUR VOICE

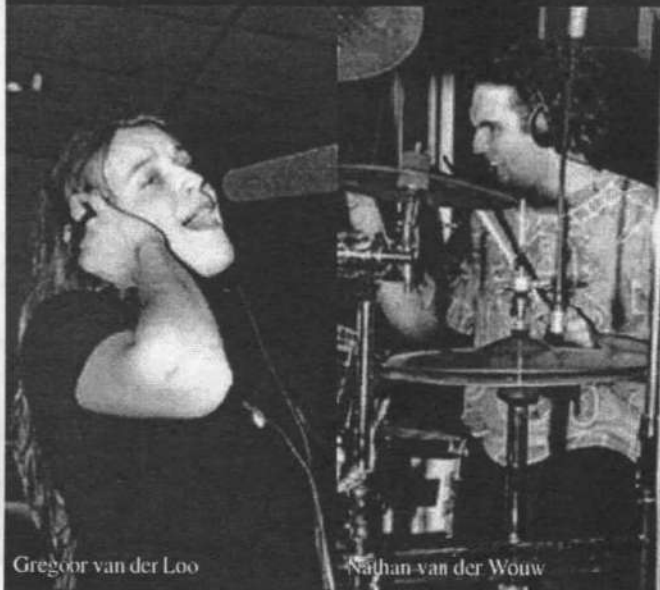
Re-emerging from [by Christian Rademaker] the Nether-worlds

After a lengthy break, the Dutch ensemble Lemur Voice return to grace the progressive metal stage. The more innovative progressive metal releases have come from European mainland as of late, and Lemur Voice have become one of the frontrunners.

After a demo was released under the name of Aura, the debut album "Insights" came out in 1996 by Magna Carta and featured eight songs of extremely well-played and original progressive metal, combined with thoughtful and intelligent lyrics. However, they could not shake off the Dream Theater comparisons that were made in the press, and, as a result, the album did not get the recognition it deserved.

Three years have passed. Lemur Voice have switched to a Dutch major label and have made a new start with their sophomore album "Divided." Combining the musical creativity displayed on "Insights" with new influences, "Divided" comes across as an album with much more range and maturity. The range is shown from the symphonic metal with an edge ("Solilocide", "All of Me"), to progressive epics such as "Childhood Facade" and "Lethe's Bowl", to the spacier "New Yamini", and the tongue-in-cheek cover of Michael Jackson's "Beat it." The signs of musical maturity are especially shown by vocalist Gregoor van der Loo and by the seemingly effortless transition between technical parts. Lemur Voice last graced the pages of "Edge of Time" in issue 11.

Giedrius did that interview with Marcel Coenen (guitars). This time around I met up with drummer and main lyricist Nathan van der Wouw (NvdW) and vocalist Gregoor van der Loo (GL) at Nathan's home in Weert. Several topics were discussed, such as the conflict with Magna Carta, the concept behind the "Insights" album cover, the comparisons with Dream Theater, the contribution of Gregoor to the Rush tribute "Working Man," their collaboration with a symphony, other musical side projects, and, of course, the new album "Divided."



Gregoor van der Loo

Nathan van der Wouw

financially powerful nor can we take the risk.

GL: We should be glad that they prepaid the whole recording of "Insights." The fact that a lot of bands have similar problems is because each band is dependent on their record company. The band makes the music but the record company needs to promote the CD and earn the money.

Five Moody Musicians in an Old Building

Whose idea was the unappealing album cover to "Insights"?

NvdW: Magna Carta.

Don't they usually have these colorful covers, while yours shows a band photo?

GL: The first few Magna Carta CDs are quite limited though with only a front cover and back cover. At that time, we had an artist in the Netherlands designing something for us, which turned out not to be our specific taste. We then had an artist in the USA, who couldn't make something from our ideas. Then Magna Carta came with the luminous idea that we needed to make 800 (!) photos, and from those 800 photos they chose that photo as the front cover.

NvdW: Meanwhile, we didn't know that would be the front cover. We thought that they would use the band photo for the booklet, because we didn't want our photo on the front.

Did you really send them negatives of 800 photos?

GL: Maybe at home they made some posters of us. Perhaps they're just two guys who really like us. We were never happy with the front cover of "Insights." We got a lot of criticism from people. The only positive aspect that I saw was that there were foreigners who looked at the cover and thought: "Why are they doing that." They were trying to figure this out and came up with the wildest ideas.

NvdW: Magna Carta didn't want us to have the typical sympho image with a Tolkienish picture. They wanted something more direct and we agreed with that. This was, of course, the total opposite.

Dream Theater Comparisons

And then, of course, there were the Dream Theater comparisons.

GL: Dream Theater who? Never heard of them.

NvdW: We got those comparisons mainly in the Netherlands. At that time, we were the only band which played this type of music who got international attention. If there is one band in the genre of music that is the most well known, it is inevitable that you get compared to them when you're the only type of band like that here.

GL: I can imagine that, on the first CD, there are several parts which



sound like Dream Theater. It has the same kind of feel but, when you compare the individual musicians, then it sounds nothing like Dream Theater. First of all, they are not an influence of ours, but we started out playing songs of Dream Theater to be able to play live because we didn't have enough originals. It is inevitable to get comparisons when you play a cover and then an original in that order. There is also a part with high vocals and a technical piece of guitar. Sometimes people are a bit close minded as well.

NvdW: Such a comparison has positive and negative sides. If I recommend a band to someone, the logical step is to compare it to some popular band. We are, of course, in the same musical genre as Dream Theater, but the second CD has almost no double harmony keyboard and guitar licks so the comparisons are no longer there.

Rush and the "Working Man" Tribute

Moving on to another topic. How did your contribution to the Rush tribute CD "Working Man" come about?

GL: That was great. We were in the studio for "Insights," and Nathan was talking to Pete Morticelli and Mike Varney of Magna Carta over the phone a lot. They wanted to hear the recorded material with vocals, so that they could make comments, and each time Nathan had to take a bowl of coins to make a call to New York. I was lying on my bed in my hotel room after a heavy night, and then Nathan came in and told me that I had to sing on the tribute CD. I thought that he was playing a joke on me, because I didn't know anything about this tribute CD. Rush is one of my favorite bands, so I thought this was great.

Wasn't it a bit strange that only you and Marcel Coenen performed on the song "Freewill"?

GL: Originally, I was the only one that was asked and Marcel joined later on. The story is as follows: The drummer of Cairo does a lot of work for Magna Carta in the area of videoclips.

NvdW: He lives a couple of streets

from Mike Varney, and he knew that there was going to be a Rush tribute CD. Mike Varney told me that he came to his door every day to tell him that he wanted to lay down the drum tracks for that song. Finally, Mike told him that he could go ahead and do it. GL: And if you lay down the drum tracks, then we'll let Lemur Voice participate as well. NvdW: Not exactly because there were already plans to ask Lemur Voice to join in. So then they had a drummer and a bass player, and they only needed a vocalist and guitar player.

Weren't you in the position as a whole band to say that you wanted to be part of the project with a song of your choice?

GL: I was so honored that I wasn't even thinking of that. I was just glad to be part of it. It would have been more fun with Lemur Voice though.

Did you want to sing the song "Freewill" specifically, or did you have any other preferences?

GL: I didn't really have a choice, but I knew the song by heart anyway so that wasn't a problem. I personally don't think that song is the best song Rush ever made but, then again, I don't think that that song is the worst song on the tribute CD. The cover of "The Trees" is in my opinion the worst song on the CD. Shadow Gallery does that song, and I don't like the way the vocalist sings it. It's a matter of taste, but I personally think that he does not have a good voice. If I had had a choice, I would have loved to do the song "Xanadu" (off "A Farewell to Kings") or perhaps "Jacob's Ladder" (off "Permanent Waves").

Are you one of those that think the albums between the "All the World's a Stage" and "Exit Stage Left" are their best?

GL: I love all of Rush's albums except for the last five

albums: "Test for Echo" and "Roll the Bones" do nothing for me. I like two songs on "Presto" and two songs on "Counterparts" before it starts to bore me. I personally like everything up to "Hold your Fire."

I personally think that's their weakest album.

GL: I think the album before that "Power Windows" is excellent [Nathan seconds that]. It reminds me of when I was a teenager at twelve years old, and I lived in my dream world.

When I was twelve back in 1981, I was an Iron Maiden fan [Nathan seconds that as well].

GL: I was a Duran Duran fan back then. I love everything they've ever done. The teen idols nowadays aren't what they used to be. Now they go to a modelling agency and pick five beautiful boys and ask them to sing one word per week. They then get \$5000 to playback at a concert and they're called Take That.

The Symphonic Lemur Voice Experience

Earlier this year, you did some shows with a symphony orchestra. How did that come about?

NvdW: Well, an organization just approached us and two other bands to do these shows. They sat around the table with Stichting Popmuziek Limburg (foundation for pop music in Limburg, the south-eastern part of the Netherlands) and an arranger, and looked at several bands in the Limburg region. They thought they could do something with our music. We discussed the concept thoroughly with these people, and last year two dates were planned but they got cancelled because, I think, the organizers didn't have enough sponsoring. They then had a whole year to get

their act together although, in fact, they had to organize everything within two months. The arranger had come to use with the new arrangements with a few modifications to our songs, and then the whole symphony orchestra had to learn the arrangements of the songs by all three bands within a short space of time. They then organized only two rehearsals of 1.5 hours each in an old school. During those rehearsals, the symphony orchestra did not use any amplifiers so we could barely hear them. The final result was great though.

What was the stage setting like?

NvdW: The first time there was a stage with the band on it, and, in front of that, a step higher, was the symphony orchestra. The second time was in an old theater in which the right side of the stage was for the orchestra and the left side was for the bands.

Which songs did you play?

NvdW: We played "Alone" off "Insights," "When the Cradle Cries," and the title track from our second CD "Divided" with the symphony orchestra, and we played "Solilicide" individually.

The symphony orchestra had not heard the new songs though.

NvdW: We had made a rehearsal recording a while back which sounded good because we recorded the music and vocals separately. We gave that to the arranger who transcribed everything to paper for the symphony orchestra. So the song "Alone," which is about 12-13 minutes, resulted in a huge stack of paper. Not all of this stack was for every musician because, for example, the violinist would only see his or her specific part.

Was the whole event inspired by the television show "With a



little help from my friends" in which members of rock bands are accompanied by a symphony orchestra in the rock temple **Paradiso in Amsterdam?**

NvdW: It could be. Most people think it was like a "Night of the Proms" in which a symphony orchestra plays slick versions of pop songs. The way you describe it sounds more similar because here the emphasis was on the contrast between heavy music and classical music. One of the bands was, for example, Son of the Rain, and they're very heavy as well.

Other Musical Mistresses

On to another topic. In between the two Lemur Voice CDs, most of you found time to release music with other bands: Nathan with Elysiion ("The Wonderyears") and Marcel Coenen with Time Machine.

NvdW: When we started Aura/Lemur Voice, we all played in other bands as well although we've stopped playing in those bands. Maybe because there was a waiting period between the two albums that we picked up on those projects again, but essentially everyone of us has done things next to Lemur Voice.

Aren't there any priority problems then?

GL: Lemur Voice will be my priority, but I am open for other options if that can be arranged, for example, if a band comes along that offers me a lot of live shows. Lemur Voice was the first, but my other bands matter to me as well. NvdW: The bass player of Elysiion left, and the remaining trio wanted to continue but play a different type of music. Together with a new bass player, Gregoor and another male singer we are now playing rock/pop music.

GL: We started with covers of Sting and Jamiroquai, no real chart music. We now have five new original songs ready.

NvdW: We hadn't played this kind of music for a while, but we still like it. After playing covers and getting a certain feel for the band, we started writing right away and if it's up to me, then there'll be a demo before the end of the year.

What's the name of the band?

NvdW: Fussili Jerry. Fussili like the Italian pasta.

GL: The name actually came from an episode of Jerry Seinfeld [American comedy show]. The other singer came up with this name and, of course, we are very good at thinking up names.

What else went wrong with your band names then?

GL: Back when we were negotiating our deal with Magna Carta, we were called Aura, and we released a demo under that name. After a while, they told us that we had to think of a new name because there were several international things with that

monicker.

NvdW: Even a band in Eindhoven [a place about 25 kilometers from the place the interview took place] was called Aura.

GL: Yes, but they hadn't registered the name, and we were there before them so they had no chance. However, there was, for example, a theater registered under the name Aura, so we could have come across other problems.

NvdW: We had to find a good new name quite soon to replace Aura, but we sent Magna Carta 500 names as options for screening. You can imagine that if we sent them 50 names that means that we had already evaluated 250 others.

What options did you consider?

GL: "Dawn" we liked a lot, but the same day we saw the name in a music magazine. Our keyboard player had a nice gimmick in which he made large computer lists in which he put words behind and after Aura.

How did you come upon Lemur Voice?

GL: Finally, we had two names left, and I don't know what the other was.

Of course you know, but you don't want to tell me.

NvdW: I think you can better not tell them. I can't remember it either.

GL: Tell me, because I can't honestly remember it.

NvdW: It was "Duncan Lizzard."

GL: Now I remember. I thought that the first name was vague, but everybody expected a type of blues band with this name. [some discussion about the origins of this name] NvdW's girlfriend: Duncan island and Lizzard island are two islands near Australia.

GL: The name reminded me too much of other names like Green Lizard and Jesus Lizard.

NvdW: We eventually chose the name "Lemur Voice," but it took us a while to get used to it.

The New Album "Divided"

Well, we've finally reached the hot topic: the new album "Divided." It was released on Telstar which is not a well known name in the metal world.

NvdW: It's a large Dutch record label famous for traditional Dutch pop music for the common people, for young and old. We are on a sublabel, of which we are the first band that is in the progressive rock/metal vein. We were signed through word of mouth. A member of one of the bands that was on their roster knew us and talked to several important people about us. They loved our music and said that they were willing to give it a try.

Do they have any expectations from you?

GL: They have hopes for the German market.

NvdW: It's now been released in the

Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxemburg. Germany, Switzerland, and Austria are up next. Separate deals need to be made for the rest of Europe, Japan, and the USA. There are several interested parties but it needs to be substantiated. The audience that will like us, knows us. They are loyal, and it might be good to try a new way of promoting a record. We tried it with the label that releases most of the progressive music around.

GL: And that didn't work for us. [laughter]

NvdW: We signed the contract and entered the studio a couple of weeks later. We are very proud of the end result.

How can you compare it to "Insights"?

GL: It's absolutely not comparable. NvdW: We haven't turned into a drum 'n' bass band. It's still Lemur Voice, but it's a lot heavier and spacier. We have more effects, analog keyboards.

GL: We did a lot more with the production. There are a lot more effects on the drums, things have been reversed, and were recorded analog instead of digital. Analog gives it a rawer and warmer edge. The production is so much different from "Insights." That one sounds more flat. We have gained more experience as a band, and the studio was very good.

Why did you choose to put the Michael Jackson cover "Beat It" on the CD?

NvdW: We decided that it would be a good idea to incorporate a cover into our live set. We used "Beat it," and the audience reacted with enthusiasm. The manager thought that it might be a good idea to put the song on a single, not with the intention to sell many copies, but as a publicity gimmick.

Lyrics and Vocal Lines

What are the lyrics on the new album about?

NvdW: It, of course, varies per song, but the common theme is that there are always two things that are battling each other or are opposite to each other. It doesn't matter if it's two persons against each other or an individual against a group. That's why the CD is called "Divided." It wasn't a conscious move before we started writing the new CD, but it's not a concept album. In hindsight it occurred to me that this theme was common to a lot of songs, although the lyrics are very different to each other in character.

Are you trying to be abstract in your lyrics?

NvdW: "Insights" is more abstract than this.

GL: That's true, people have been telling that they now understand the song and the lyrics. We now have a couple of songs that are easier to grasp.



I can't really see the audience singing them along though.

GL: I do although I have to instigate it a bit. Sometimes on stage, I am jumping around like I'm at a house party. I would like to see people doing that even more. After a show, I have a lot of pain because I've been moving and jumping around so much on the stage. I'm very lively when I'm into the music. Not like Fates Warning, for example, who stand there and don't move five centimeters, and Ray Alder doesn't even deliver the vocal lines optimally either. That doesn't mean that I have the perfect stage presentation, but I don't want to stand there and worry about how perfect the vocal lines should be. I want to play and it should be a party.

The lyrics on the album are very thoughtful and intelligent. Do you find it easy to sing lyrics and interpreting the emotions that you haven't written yourself?

GL: It's easy because then I don't have to write them myself. I do have ideas about lyrics. There's one song on the CD to which I thought of the concept. I told Nathan in Dutch what I wanted, and he translated it and turned into a nice story. I have ideas but I am not that productive, once in a while I get an outburst. For example, in the other band, in fifteen minutes time, I had all the lyrics and melody lines ready. Especially for "Insights," Nathan had more inspiration than I, and he's better at writing. Furthermore, most of the lyrics that he writes could have gone on in my head. We talk about the lyrics a lot as well, and we share a way of thinking.

NvdW: In terms of lyrics and vocal melodies, for this CD almost all the lyrics were written after the melody lines.

GL: I started doing this at the request of the other members of Lemur Voice. Now I am busy with a lot of melodies, for example, at home I am composing a lot of melody lines with my synthesizer. For example, in "All of me," there's a small melody line which I made in a typical Ozric Tentacles style space song with guitars, and now it's a vocal melody.

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NEVERMORE

It seems that Nevermore finally have established themselves. If in the early 90s, after the break-up of Sanctuary, the interest in melodic power metal faded away due to the prevail of death-metal mania, "alien ages" are over and melodic metal is big again. And, surprisingly, you meet many fans of the old Sanctuary these days. Maybe it's just that they are louder today?

Nevermore's self-titled debut, the subsequent EP, and especially the "Politics of Ecstasy", a monument of extremely well-produced technical intense power/thrash metal, set an atmosphere of big expectations for the forthcoming next album. Three years were certainly enough for the buzz about the "Politics" to circulate. This album was an indication of extremely big potential of the band as well as a well-thought finished piece of work on its own, just this was truly recognized a couple of years later after its release. Add a half a year delay, which killed even more nerve cells of some fans, and "Dreaming Neon Black" just hit at the very right time.

And a great album it is. Built on a dark concept, the album has its biggest impact when listened as a whole. The intricacy of "Politics" is not in the front plan anymore, and, due to this, the band lost a little bit of sharpness, but gained, what many would call, more of an emotional impact. At least the band and many fans think so. And many reviewers give the album great-to-perfect scores. A few technical-metal die-hards still bang their heads to the self-titled track of the "Politics" album, but they have to agree with the majority's wish to hear "actual Nevermore songs." As guitarist Jeff Loomis says.

Making it more structured

Let's start talking about the new album. Can you compare "Politics of Ecstasy" and "Dreaming Neon Black"?

JL: Well, this is the question that is asked many times. To make a long story short, "Politics" had go over people's heads, because there was so much going on... So what we were trying to do with "Dreaming Neon Black" was basically to have much more structured songs, we tried to come across more as a song-oriented band, to come across more mental-wise, you know. "Dreaming Neon Black" is a much more structured album, much more song oriented, for a metal listener. We tried to simplify a little bit, make everything a little bit more chopped now...

The album was recorded in Texas, at the same studio that was used for the "Politics" and with the same producer Neil Kernon. How was the recording, did it work well with Neil?

JL: It does, because... You know, we had a choice for this album for the producer. The reason that we kept Neil Kernon is that he has been working with us for the past six - seven years... We are grateful to him, he has been working with us for such a long time. Why not to use a person that knows us, that knows how we work, and also is our friend.

What did you tell him this time? Maybe you wanted something different than in the previous times?

JL: This basically goes back to the first question. He knew the things that were going on with Nevermore. First, we were in Germany, we were doing okay, we had such a good album out, but it just needed to be simplified more. Everybody wants to hear actual Nevermore songs. He was with us through the whole part of the production of the album. We sent him our demo tape, he came to the rehearsal studio with us, he said "oh, this part needs to be shorter, this

longer," you know what I mean? It's like a whole dramatic art kind of thing going on... He is a big part of Nevermore, he is like a sixth member, very very cool. And he is genius, man, he really is.

Why was there such a big delay? The album was supposed to be released in the summer of 1998, wasn't it?

JL: There were a number of reasons why the album was released so late. Number one reason is Century Media themselves. It's a growing record company, and basically what they are trying to do is to not release too many albums at the same time. It's like... The Gathering, you know The Gathering?

Sure...

JL: I think they are strategically doing it in a sense, they don't want The Gathering or whatever, to come out at the same time. So they hold Nevermore release until January or whatever...

Another reason why it took for us so long to have an album to come out was the line-up changes. We have had many different guitarists in the past. It takes a long time for me to show new players different things, stuff like that. Now we finally have Tim Calvert, ex-Forbidden, and Pat O'Brien, our old guitar player, is now in Cannibal Corpse. It's little things like that that take up a lot of time and make things a lot longer. It's not that we are laying around doing... well, what I do not know, you know what I'm saying...

Yeah, so Pat O'Brien likes more extreme music...?

JL: Yeah. The only reason he is not in the band anymore is musical differences. He had a death-metal background, it kind of showed over the whole "Politics" era. It was okay, we're still friends with him, he is very happy with what he's doing right now.

[The band knew Tim Calvert for 6 years, asked him to join a couple of times before, but Tim was loyal to



Quitting the Politics, Diving Beyond Within

[by Giedrius Slivinskas]



Forbidden. When they split-up, he gave a call. - GS]

Things are working fine with Tim Calvert...?

JL: Oh yeah, I think his input is great. His style is very similar to the way I play. Another beautiful thing is the way we work to play together, it's a very great hook, you are not able to find it in a lot of bands when people really fuckin' hook up together and play the same way. We are very very happy.

Do you know the reasons why did Forbidden break-up?

JL: Well... I'll tell you what, hold on one second... [pause] Why don't you go ahead and ask that question Tim himself?

Okay... Hi Tim. The question is, why actually did Forbidden break up?

TC: Oh, it's a long story... But I can tell you that it wasn't my fault. [pause] Any more details than that?

Hm, I don't know... You can elaborate if you want...

[Here, Tim said a quite silent sentence, which I couldn't figure out from the damn tape, but the message was that he wanted to leave it at that, and didn't elaborate. He added that he is happy with Nevermore, and he and Jeff are like brothers now. Well, I guess I won't be able to add a sub-title to this interview saying "And the reasons of the Forbidden break-up," what a shame... - GS]

When were the songs of "Dreaming Neon Black" written? Maybe you wrote some even before the "Politics"?

JL: No, all the stuff for the new album was written after the "Politics." And it was kind of a different way of writing, where, part of the times, I would have actually sit down and looked at some of the things Tim had, I did drum parts for a drum machine, while he was playing a lot of the guitar riffs. We did little demos like that, showed to the rest of the band. For the most part, it's actually 110% by the all of us. We all had a lot of input.

TC: 100% proof.

JL: 100% proof, yeah. It's really crazy, actually. I think that a lot of ways the album was written was by a sheer feel. We weren't actually trying to sit down and write a song or a composition, it was kind of a thing which flowed out of us. And I think that's why this album sounds so good, we were all sitting down without trying to do anything, it was kind of a feeling that was coming out from all of us at the same time. It was great.

And it's very different from the way the "Politics" was written, where we all be at the rehearsal room at the same time, sit down, you know, banging heads together, trying to figure what we're gonna do. Now it was a much more comfortable atmosphere as far as the writing goes. The songwriting process kind of went more instantly... It's really great, it's really cool.

Vocals

[Making a detour first] **Some people noticed Type O Negative style vocals in the title track... Have you heard that?**

JL: Not really. I don't think that we are trying to

sound like anybody else, the number one thing is that Nevermore is actually trying to be ourselves. It's kind of hard to categorize what we are doing, we are not thinking of other bands.

I totally agree that you are making quite a unique music, just in the title track one can notice those similarities...

TC: Yeah, with the low vocals thing going...

[In the title track of "Dreaming Neon Black," there is a female-vocals part. The girl's name is Christine Rhodes and she has been a friend of the band for 9 years now. Let's ask about that. - GS]

Why have you used female vocals in that song?

TC: The main reason is Warrel's ideas for the album, about a girl he was in love with, she's dead now, whatever... In that song, he would sing, and she would sing back to him, to make a duo.

JL: Another thing about that is that we've always tried to add a lot of colors, different shades and stuff. She definitely just sounded great from her part. This adds so many elements to that song. It's like if she wasn't there, the song wouldn't have been half of what it was. She's a bonus to the whole song.

Another thing is that you don't overuse female vocals...

TC: So you are not having a problem differentiating a girl from Warrel, are you?

? [confused]

TC: Just kidding.

JL: It's kind of a long story, it's hard... how it happened and how we got a deal to do it... We didn't even have the girl in the studio... [pause] I'm kind of glad the way things turned out.

[Addressing Tim's remark] **About Warrel, he doesn't do those high shrieks as in the Sanctuary times...**

JL: He did a couple of those on the new album, too. I was a huge Sanctuary fan. I think that all actually comes down to him finding his true head voice. He was pretty young back then, pretty much my age, like 27. And, I think, he did things in a spontaneous way, it really worked well with Sanctuary, and, after all these years, he found his actual true voice in his head. A lot of the stuff he sings nowadays is actually mid-range in a way. There's a little bit of high stuff in there, if you'd actually listen closely, but it's mixed in with a lot of his really cool lower things. Implicitly, I really think that his voice developed killer.... More killer with the way he sings nowadays. Maybe in a different way. Now he's really got his more true voice.



demos, then moves into the structured songs. Usually, it's all by Warrel, very last minute in a sense. Good question, man. It's like... Tim, help me out here, it's really weird. We had a lot of things that were already written...

TC: Probably the way it started was something along these lines. When we started writing, there was no story at all. Actually, whenever anyone would come up with a riff, it's a big help. Sometimes it's just shit, sometimes one of us would get a riff, we're like "oh, cool," and we go from there.

It wasn't until quite away with the album, until we heard that Warrel even had a story. Maybe the last couple of months we all got together over it. One of the roadies (he was on tour with Metallica) has a place on the lake, we got together over there. Van [Williams, the drummer] had an electronic drum kit, we would have a barbecue every day, a couple of beers, dinner, little wine, sit down, and goof around. We had a 4-track there. A lot of ideas came in the last couple of months. Warrel's got an 8-track, he would be up late at night, when we were gone working on stuff.

JL: Most of the album was actually written on. It's kind of funny, it's a condominium that they live in. It's built over water, and the whole album seems to be like a loose concept over the whole water vibe. I know, it's really difficult for you to understand, but in a sense, it's very last minute to us. We all had this music, and Warrel, at the last minute, comes up with a lot of lyrics. I think that the whole album isn't necessarily a concept album, there's a lot of loose concept feel, but I don't want necessarily to say that it is a concept album. I think that there is a lot of songs that burn into each other, but that's about it. TC: You may or may not say that it's a concept album, but you can say that it's an album... [laughs] JL: That's for sure! [laughs]

What are your favorite songs off the album, as of now?

JL: Everyone that Tim wrote.

TC: I like all the Madonna covers we did... [laughs]

JL: My favorite songs right now, the ones that I'd like to hear are... definitely the first one, "Beyond Within," definitely a very good first song.

"Deconstruction," it's very much into the Warrel Dane vibe, there's a lot of Sanctuary stuff that was written long time ago, with his vocal things that are

going on. And, I think, there is a lot of new kind of style, kind of things that we have never done before, like

"Death of Passion." There's a lot of weirdness going on, a lot of different off-time things... And "The Lotus Eaters" is very killer, very

Nevermoresque, you know. Stuff we've done in the past.

TC: I would say, "Death of Passion," "Deconstruction," "Lotus Eaters," "Cenotaph," and even the last one, "Forever."

JL: Yeah, we don't really try to play in one style at all, if you'd really listen to the

album thoroughly, there's so many different styles going on.

I like "Faults of the Flesh" at the moment.

JL: Oh, yeah, in-your-face song, very vocally based...

I read on your web site that the album is #80 in German pop charts... This is the achievement that the "Politics" hasn't accomplished, has it?



TC: I heard that "Politics" was number one, is that true? [laughs] Just kidding.

JL: Yeah, this is definitely a very big stepping stone for Nevermore. Very much! I don't know what the reasons for that are, I think that one of the bigger reasons for that is that we haven't had an album out for two and a half years... And this album definitely blows away "Politics," musically and structurally, as far as songs go. It's the best thing we have ever done. People that want to see Nevermore in their prime, on stage, the performance level, have to come see us live. Before the headlining tour, Nevermore has always been known for being an opening act. Most of the opening acts that go on stage nowadays are thrown on stage without a soundcheck, you know, they play for thirty minutes... Everybody that wants to come out, that are Nevermore fans, and wanna see us in our prime, hopefully they'll be blown away by us. We're playing songs for one hour and a half of music, off every single Nevermore album, and, actually, we're playing a couple of Sanctuary songs...

Which ones?

JL: "Battle Angels" and "Future Tense."

"Battle Angels" is really a killer song...

JL: Oh yeah, it is. I was a Sanctuary fan as well as Tim was, before we even got in the band. It's like a privilege to us to be playing those tunes. And also that makes our fans happy, because they always wanted to hear them. Nevermore was Sanctuary before, so we are very happy to play those tunes.

I have some questions about Sanctuary...

JL: Tim can answer all these because he has been on tour with those bastards, I've never had.

TC: Before we get there, let me answer your last question, too. The thing about this band that I think is true for all kind of things we are doing, we're not trying to follow the trends that circle around us. And we know that for a lot of people, we are not part of a trend. We are just kind of keeping our fingers crossed, maybe the trend will come back around and catch up with us. You know, you sit at the beach, and here comes a wave after another wave, if you just try to follow every wave directly... Just do what you do, maybe your wave will struggle through... Maybe that's part of the reason why we sit on off-track. There has been a lot of things going the last couple of months, metal is coming back in...

JL: I gotta think that, too, I think the biggest thing with us is that we've never been trend followers. We've actually lived through the whole grunge scene in Seattle here, this thing has been going on from 1991 to basically 1997, man! And it's still going on, kind of, today... But we've never followed anybody's else path, we've always been true to ourselves. Honestly, it's the best policy when it comes to music that you believe in, and Nevermore has always been true to that, has always followed the metal way that we believe in.

TC: In the states, if you put it as a hard point of view, everyone around is pretty much, really super trendy.

You don't even find any metal bands. For awhile, it was embarrassing to play metal in the States because it was like disco of the 70s... Suddenly they realized that disco is down, but metal is over here still... It took a certain amount of belief in our possibilities I think. I know a lot of people that are with this metal age, all they really need is to get metal bands to bring things back. I think that Bruce Dickinson is doing great... We're very happy if someone else does it. We try to please ourselves as fans also, we grew up as metal fans. Except for Van, who listens to rap. [Jeff laughs] Well, I mean a little bit of Puerto Rican music, which is pretty good... [thunderous laughs of Jeff] But you know, he likes Rush, too... Even if he has never heard Metallica or Slayer, so... Kidding!

Is it true that the old Sanctuary guitarist wanted to do grunge?

JL: I wouldn't say that he necessarily... I was actually in Sanctuary, it goes back to... I am from Milwaukee myself. I had a definite privilege of coming to Seattle to be with Sanctuary. I was, out 150 guitarists, picked for this band. And when I did get into the band, I played one my show with them which was great...

[One side of tape ended here. Jeff explained that they started to write new material, and Lenny's (the other guitarist's) stuff was really different. It didn't fit with what Jeff, Warrel, and Jim [Sheppard, the bass player] envisioned for the band. Jeff wouldn't call it grunge though, but musical differences were obvious... - GS]

JL: (...) And basically this instigated a huge fight within the band, and everybody just went their own separate ways. We didn't know what was gonna happen, I said to myself "Shit, I have to get back to my hometown, not to be in the band anymore..." What did happen was that me, Warrel, and Jim decided to stay together and do what our hearts said was right, stayed with this metal thing, even through the whole grunge era of Seattle. And, you know, we did our first album, self-titled "Nevermore" album, and another one, and another one... And we did tours in Europe and we just... this goes back to the previous question with the structure of our hearts, we did what we wanted to, and we're really happy with what we're doing right now... Lenny? I don't know where the fuck he is right now, I know he's at home doing a day job, that's where his heart is at, he just didn't really stick to what he really truly believed in, I don't think so. You gotta have your heart man...

Sanctuary: "'Refuge Denied' is a more killer album"

You've just answered my next question about what Lenny's doing now. Do you like both "Refuge Denied" and "Into the Mirror Black"? Are they different in your opinion, which one do you like more?

JL: I think that from two albums that they had, their freshman effort, "Refuge Denied" is killer, in a sense, because it's like a very first album that was out, and still fresh, there was nothing like it, with the vocals and all... It seems that the second album was much more song oriented in a way, and... I don't know, man, what do you think about that, Tim?

TC: I like the production and the songs a lot better on "Refuge Denied."

JL: Yeah, I agree. It's like the first album that has much feeling. It's a true metal album.

TC: The production is a little thin on "Into the Mirror Black." There's a couple of really good songs on the second one, but actually the songs on the first are better... I think the production just kind of dropped out par a little bit on the second one.

Dave Mustaine did the production of the first...

TC: I heard that we has drunk the whole time. Not from Warrel and Jim.

JL: He used the whole production advance for drugs and liquor. And look at him now, he's great! [laughs]

TC: He's got 15 children or something, from what I heard...

JL: The first album, "Refuge Denied," is a great one, because it was right when metal was wholly killer at a

time, 1987-1988, great years for kick-ass metal. "Refuge Denied" is definitely more of a polished album, they wanted to be like perfect, in a sense... Definitely, I think Tim also agrees that "Refuge Denied" is a bit more killer album.

Were there any songs of Nevermore that originated back in the Sanctuary times?

JL: Yeah, there was one, and it was "The Sorrowed Man," which ended up on "In Memory" album. That was gonna be a Sanctuary song, it was much different song actually. It was a stripped down version that was on the "In Memory" album. Me and Warrel wrote it together for Sanctuary, and Lenny had written a bunch of drums and other guitar stuff that was supposed to be for that song, but then me and Warrel, recording "In Memory," stripped it down, "Hey, let's do how we originally recorded it," it was guitar and vocals. That's how it ended up on "In Memory." [Phone problems and distortion started, it got more difficult to proceed with the interview. - GS]

Miscellaneous

Jeff, I have heard you were thinking of doing a solo album?

JL: I've always wanted to do one, but I really don't know if that's ever gonna happen right now. It's like my heart is into this band right now. Maybe in a future. I've always been into guitar guru shit and stuff like that. I don't know, maybe some day I'll do something like that. What I'd really like to do is to play completely improvising. Stuff going on in their own way, to get together with a bunch of really killer musicians, go off in a sense, play what my heart feels. Maybe in a future, but not now.

"Precognition" track from the "Politics" album was written solely by you, wasn't it?

JL: Yes, it was. I don't know how in the hell it ever made it on the album. It was something that I've written as far as the demo goes. And because of a really big Eastern feel to it... Everybody seems to make fun of me for doing that kind of thing. To me, it's like stuff that I love. Neil Kernon would say, "Man, it doesn't even fit the album," but to me that kind of shit is really killer. I love stuff like that. It added a really cool different color to the album. [More phone problems and distortion.]

What do you know about Warrel and Control Denied, Chuck asked Warrel to sing on his project...

TC: There was a talk about that quite a while ago... JL: That was basically when we got done doing the Death tour. And basically Chuck wanted Warrel to sing on the demo tapes that he had. That's all I can really say, it never panned out. Warrel really wanted to sing on that stuff, but he was too busy doing Nevermore stuff at that time.

TC: He was also a backup singer for Janet Jackson...

JL: The other thing I can really say that Chuck was interested in having a real vocalist in his music, in a real stylistic kind of voice. It never panned out. It would have been cool, man. Fuck, man, to hear Warrel sing with Chuck would be killer. Did you hear the new Death?

Yes, yes...

JL: The Judas Priest cover at the end is pretty cool. The distortion became too big to handle, and we were chatting for more than 40 minutes, which gave a good reason to finish. Telling about my move to Tucson, Arizona, I asked about possible US dates, and didn't get anything concrete back. Anyway, the band really wants to do a US tour, just they are waiting for a good support slot. I didn't ask anything about their relationship with Century Media Records. But can't you see, it's obvious that it's working damn fine at the moment... Let the Nevermore unite melodic metal and extreme metal fans! The same way like Sanctuary did back in the late 80s, getting into a crossfire between heavy metal and thrash metal, and helping the power metal genre to take its shape.

Since several years, the nowadays extinct German outfit Ivanhoe became one of the prevalent and most exciting acts in the flourishing European progressive metal scene. Instrumentation and originality behind the arrangements were some of the best points which contributed to enthroning their name among the top selections of technical melodic music fans.

Despite of what their medieval-reminiscent name could initially suggest to a neophyte listener, tracing the evolution of the last two albums, Ivanhoe were, in my opinion, one of the few progressive bands that were really striving to find new sounds, modernizing their proposal, and succeeding in the efforts. The musical development of the band culminated with the completion of "Polarized" album (1997), where they globally achieved a truly modern and refreshing approach in relation to what was being offered at that time, as average, from bands of their orientation.

SYMPHORCE

Promises Becoming Truth

[by Gregorio Martin]

Hi Andy. Where are you at the moment?

Me? I'm just living near Stuttgart. Next to the airport. All the planes up and down. That is my highway to the world. [laughs]

Would you be so kind of telling me how much time we'll have for this interview? Thirty minutes maybe? So I've been told, yes.

Okay then. First of all, congratulations for your new album, which I really like, very much.

Thank you very much, thank you very much.

Especially considering that there have been some turbulent chapters going on since you left Ivanhoe, I honestly would like to congratulate you with your work.

Thank you very much.

So, talking about the album itself, I think it sounds modern, it sounds progressive at parts, the melodies are haunting in general. Talking a bit about some songs, maybe you would like to tell us about...

Yes. If we have space enough no problem! [laughs]

Yes. [laughs]

Yeah, well, definitely, thank you very much for your congratulations. I think we worked really really hard. As you said before, we had lots of problems after the split of Ivanhoe. So, it was not very easy for me to form a new band. I was sure that after that I had split with the rest of the guys, musically, I wanted to go in a more straight direction. Just no more this kind of progressive stuff, just more straight, melodic power metal. Or whatever you want to call that. [laughs] I don't care, I think... to my ears it sounds good. I don't care what kind of metal it is.

I don't want to establish any comparisons either. I think the

album speaks for itself. It has its own personality, really.

That's exactly what I think. Definitely. Hey, great!

So, Andy, could you tell us then, in a grade from 0 to 10, how would you rate "Truth to Promises"?

Hm, right now it's... [pause]. I think I should say 9. Number 9. It's number 9! [laughs]

You're modest. [laughs]

10 is very good, so that's correct. 10 is the best, so 9 is gotta be "okay." You know, I think, as you said before, there were such a lot of trouble with lawyers and all this stuff, you know. I think guys are saying that [pauses]. Okay, out of it, we learned a lot about that.

I feel for you if you had to learn a lot from lawyers and all that. Too boring, right?

[laughs] Oh, yeah. I think we did a really good job for that, and everyone gave more than 100% for the album, for the band, and for the future, of course. This is the most important thing. And I think, personally the reason why I give it number 9, is because "Truth to Promises" is in my eyes and in my ears a really good basis for the future. It shows to the fans the new direction. It shows the fans that we're not kind of trendy or whatever. We got our own kind of music, and we just want our own thing. I think that's the more important thing. This is not a typical style we just write, it's our kind music. It's just Symphorce, right now. If somebody likes it, okay. If somebody doesn't, I can't do anything. But that's my kind of style, and that's what I always wanted. For me, the most important thing is being able to express this, as you listen to songs like "Drifted" or "Wounded." These are my highlights in this album. I love this kind of songs.

I see. Tracks number two and number three, yes. For instance, I've been told by the magazine

The way I see it, since the very first moment one got immersed in that ocean of music notes and rhythmic changes, it was easy to notice as well how one of the driving forces and basic signs of identity of Ivanhoe's style was represented by the powerful vocals delivered by their frontman. His wide ranged voice possessed an undeniable own hermetic personality, which endowed a good number of Ivanhoe songs with a special character. The name of the singer is Andy B. Franck, and he's probably one of those few vocalists in the metal field that one could easily recognize when playing an unlabeled tape, or an unknown song.

Well, in year 1999, this artist surprises us by forming a new band called Symphorce and releasing a really brilliant debut album. "A new beginning," as he would asset later.

After a delay of nearly 30 minutes, of which we took a bit advantage at the end in order to prolong the interview, we had a quite pleasant conversation on the phone with Andy, right from the offices of Noise Records' Spanish distributors. Some more or less important topics might have been not been discussed in depth, sorry about that, but I think that overall we can get a good global view of the personality that is behind this interesting artist, and what kind of reasons pushed him to find this new path in his career. I hope you can enjoy reading the contents of what constituted this chat, as I did along its course.

editor that, in his opinion, the refrain of "Across the Plains" sounds a bit like glam rock, what do you think about that?

[laughs] It's definitely the most commercial song.

I think so, too.

I won't say it's good or bad, or it's glam rock or poser metal or whatever, you know. But it's definitely the most commercial song, with the most commercial chorus. So, you're right. I can say that there are ten songs on the album, and I can say that I got nine highlights, and "Across the Plains" is a good song, but definitely I think it is one of these songs we are not so satisfied with. That's why I don't give myself the 10! [laughs]

I see. [laughs]

You asked me before about the numbers, you know. About the points. [laughs] That's one of the reasons, okay. But I think it's a really good basis for the future. "Truth to Promises" is a really good basis. And I think we can really work on with this basis on the future. And that's what is important for me.

Focusing a bit on your performance. My performance?

Yeah, more in detail, I think you have shown a really wide register on this album...

Yes, definitely! Hm... Do you know the first Ivanhoe albums?

Yes, I do. Well, I personally own two out of the three Ivanhoe albums. The only one I didn't have the chance to listen to is the first, the debut album.

The first one, okay. When we meet, I have a few of them here. Okay, be sure to remind me, if I don't remind myself, that I got to bring you a copy of the first album.

Okay, thank you very much for saying that. We can talk later if you want about your touring plans. It would be great to meet you, of course. But, as we were speaking... Yes, you were saying about my performance on this album.

There is one track called "Stronghold," which drew my attention. You use a really deep tone there, a different modulation sometimes. Have you tried to experiment with new textures of your voice, as well as developed new facets as songwriter? Because you're in command of almost all the

compositions of this album.

Yeah, I think that's why I asked you about Ivanhoe's albums.

I liked very much those Ivanhoe albums.

On the first Ivanhoe album, I had only this "very high" voice. It had very high notes. Right now, I just don't like to sing everytime these high notes, and everytime a typical style. I think, I've got my own typical style.

Yes, you have.

But I think it's not necessary to do it everytime the same way, you know. If a sound gets another character, I think, the voice should have another character too, why not?

Yes, I understand what you mean.

The character is really deep, really doomy or really whatever... it makes you depressive or what [laughs], like "Stronghold" at the beginning, so why not singing it deep? With deep voice, and that type of mood, like Type O' Negative, you know.

I liked that part.

So, why not to use that? It's as if I sit in the studio and I said to myself: "Hey, I can do it, why not showing it?" [laughs]

Yes, it's a new facet, as I told you. A

way to add something new to the album. Also, that "Forevermore" midtempo song is a really good composition in my opinion. How does the songwriting process go when composing an album like this? Could you tell us how it went?

Ah, about the composition, as you can see, as anyone can see, what's important for me, is that this is not a project of "Andy B. Frank" or whatever. This is really a band. So, everyone of this band got really their songs on this album. I think the mixture in between shows that we all got the same style. And this is really important for me. Since the first day when we met, we never talked about covering old Ivanhoe songs, or covering old whatever songs, Judas Priest or Megadeth... or whatever. We said since the first day "Come on, let's do our own thing." So we started, everyone had his own ideas, and it was fantastic. As you can see on, for example, "Circles are Broken," it's number nine track of the album, is a mixture of everybody in the band. Everybody in the band wrote a part of this song.

And that was when we thought "okay, it's the mixture that makes the sound of Symphorce." That was a point; when we broke through this point, it was really easy for us to write the rest of the stuff. It really came out of our hearts. And this is the most important thing for me, after the split of Ivanhoe: that in Ivanhoe we always were talking about "Hey, what can we do without that? What kind of rhythm could fit with this rhythm?" and whatever. That was kind of music that

came from our heads, from our minds.

Aha.

And this time, we wrote the songs right out of the body. I think we can feel it on this album, you know. It's music right out of the blood. On the guitars, on the bass, that's what you can see and what you definitely can feel like.

I think Symphorce sounds cohesive

indeed. Those members you recruited don't sound as a set of musicians that would just jam, I can definitely asset that. Related to this point, I also enjoyed that last part of this album, which is a bit hidden. It made me laugh when you and your bassist Mike, I think, were saying that you were going to introduce us to your fake track. That guitar riffing vocal imitation was based on Beavis and Butthead cartoons maybe?

[laughs] No it was just... Okay, can I tell you a short story?

Sure.

Okay, that was a really funny thing. That was in the evening, when Angie from Modern Music came in our studio and she said: "Okay, let's have some dinner." We went out, and we were, you know, eating something. Then she said to us "Now you guys got to tell me what's this album gonna be. What it sounds like? What you guys have in heads with this album: will it be heavy, will it be melodic? What's Symphorce?" And then I said: "Pheew.. [breathes]. Can you tell what music is about, in words?" And so I said to Angie: "I can't tell you what's Symphorce... But I can show you what kind of songs we have!" And then I said: "We got: [imitates guitar sounds a la Beavis and Butthead]" [laughs] And she started laughing so much, you know. Then Mike looked at me and said: "Andy, have you thought about recording something like that?" And I said, "No man, sure not... everybody out there in the world would kill us for that!" We had that Beavis and Butthead, we had whatever kind of comic stories.!! And he said "No, if you have a favorite on this album, just tell it out the people," you know. So we got in the studio, and the funny thing is that we never knew this was a real recording!

Really?

And the producer, Joerg, he sat in the studio and said "I have to check out the microphones, all this stuff, and you guys have to do really seriously. But the first cut you can do whatever you know." And we sat there, went in, that's what you can hear, you know, when we came in, we flew over a lot of things. That was the funny thing. "And you recorded the whole shit?" [laughs].

It got pressed, yeah.

We said: "Okay, the microphones are ready." And he said "No, no. Microphones are not ready anymore."

And we said "Why?" "Because we have to record that seriously, really seriously: this is my favorite song la-la-la-la!" And we said "No, we don't have to record it anymore, it's done!" "No it's not done! You haven't done it seriously." He said then "Come here, it's recorded." He called it "Shit happens with two idiots" or whatever. [laughs]

I see. [laughs]

That was too much funny. And that was really a surprise. He really realized that on the album, at the end of the three minutes. I was so fucking surprised that I said "I never wanted to release one of my jokes." [laughs] And he said "No, this was recorded, and this is going to be released, wherever it's gonna be released." He was the one who showed us "Okay, why not?", and he was really surprised, too. He was so amazed about the whole thing. It was great, it was "chill" feeling. And I think it's "Okay why not?", you know, we chose, as I said before with the music, that's the same thing with our life style, you know. We don't feel this so kind of seriously. Everything right now, when the band is practising or we are starting to write new songs, or when we'll go on stage in a few weeks...

I was going to tell you that: it's just a good example of the type of vibrations that were going within the band, so why not ultimately press it indeed? That you're getting along that way, naturally.

Yes, it shows that this is not a project. In the beginning, after the split of Ivanhoe, there were a lot of people out there that said: "This is going to do another project." And no, this is not another project. This is definitely a new band: Symphorce. A new band. And I want to be with this kind of people. That excerpt shows the chemistry within the band.

Anyway, we can't avoid mentioning the Ivanhoe chapter, because as you can imagine, many fans would like to know about how it ended. Putting that aside for a second, how would you describe in a few words your new work, the Symphorce album, to a person who hasn't been in touch with your previous career or with this music and contemplates accessing to it for the first time, or unaware of its existence?

To a person who doesn't know the story and doesn't know what Symphorce is about... [long pause] Symphorce is, definitely, a really honest thing. Symphorce is a mixture of power and melodic metal. And Symphorce is, definitely, your kind of music, if you're not satisfied with everything coming out of the market. If you don't want to be trendy all the time, you know.

Now, back to the Ivanhoe period. Can you tell us your opinion about all three Ivanhoe albums in

sequence? Are you satisfied with them? Could you tell a bit why or why not for each of them?

Okay. First, I got to say that I don't say: "Ivanhoe is over, and I don't want to have anything to do with my past anymore." This is definitely not right. Okay, I've done these three albums, and I'm still really satisfied with them. Definitely. There's no point about not talking about it. I think that, on the first album, my voice is a bit too high, as I stated before. There are too many high notes. It doesn't matter if you don't know it, but I can give you one! [laughs] If you don't know it, it maybe sounds good for your ears. [laughs] "Visions of Reality," with my age, I was 23 years when we recorded this album, I think it was definitely a good work. That's it. The most of the music was written before I came into the band. I have to say that also.

What about "Symbols of Time"?

With my second album, I started my first steps in writing own songs.

I see. Do you usually sit in front of a piano when composing?

No, with the guitar. Just with the guitar. Piano is just too... sometimes with the keyboards, you know: it gives you the drums, it gives you the bass, it gives you everything! [laughs] This way, it's much much easier to show the people what you want to hear, what do you mean.

Sorry to interrupt you, you were talking about the second album.

In the second album, I was just making my first steps as I said. I think the highlight, and I'm very proud of that, is the ballad "By a Feeling." This is a point which, until now, I'm really really proud of it.

Yeah, that beautiful vocal duet with Britta. That was a really good song.

Yes, still a very good song. I think not everything was perfect on this album, but it sounded really good. But... [long pause] Okay, today I'm sure I'd want to sing a few things different.

Interesting.

But, at that time, that was just when I was just about 24, or just about a lot of years ago, so there's no problem. I still like that album. "Polarized" was the highlight for me. I was really surprised, not with the production, I don't like the production so much, but I like a lot of songs of it. "Polarized" is definitely the kind of album where I like the most of the songs on.

"Polarized" seems to be the most catchy album as far as vocal melodies are concerned. What do you think?

Yes, definitely. And I think, from "Symbols of Time" to "Polarized," it was for me, the biggest step. You know, I learned a lot about singing, I learned a lot when we were on tour with the guys of Iced Earth and Nevermore. So, I learned a lot about

singing and using my voice in a different way.

Did you say Nevermore? I didn't know you went on tour with them. How was it?

It was cool [laughs]. Those were funny times. One year after the release of "Symbols of Time" album.

I think the Nevermore singer is really good. Yeah, he's very good. Definitely fantastic.

We've been told about some musical differences as the reasons why Ivanhoe have split up. Would you like to tell us about this? Could you elaborate a bit on that? What kind of music did you want to pursue, and what did the other members want?

Yes. Most of the problem was I said "Okay, 'Polarized' was for me a good step, and I want to go further. I want to go on this straight direction." And the rest of the guys just said: "No, we want just more back into this kind of the progressive style." And after that, we had some personal problems, of course, too. When I say that, it's true. So, we had those personal problems, and after that we split up and it was... [swallows saliva] Okay, but I'm really satisfied with the situation we have right now, it is fantastic to work with these guys I've got now in Symphorce. It feels good, and I've never felt like this before. For me, "Truth to Promises" is definitely my total highlight, and I'm really satisfied with everything on the album, with the sound, with everything around you know. This was really the first time that I got my ideas on CD. And most of my ideas are right now on CD, and that's what really makes me feel good.

I see. I wanted to comment you something related to the music scene. We can say that the melodic scene is now getting very competitive. Do you follow it? And do you specifically aim to come up with original ideas in your songs? I'd like to ask you this because, in our opinion, the debut album of Symphorce goes away from traditional progressive metal, and is a rather original melodic metal album. How do you get your ideas? Hm, I'm just influenced by old metal bands. Really old metal bands. I grew up with Kiss, Iron Maiden, and Judas Priest and all the stuff, and everytime these bands had these melodies in the music. But, okay I was truly into this thrash metal thing, in the late 80s, just like Forbidden, Testament, Vio-lence, and all this kind of stuff, but I just look at the scene a bit differently right now. In Germany, we got this total true metal hype, you know. Just all the bands love true metal, true metal is at the top. But metal is for me more than having a leather jacket or whatever you know. It's got something to do with your heart. When you can feel

that, that's what metal's all about. That's the lifestyle, that's it. It's not the way you use your clothes or whatever: it's the lifestyle, it's in your blood. If you feel that, and if you try a leather jacket, that's okay. But trying a leather jacket or heavy long hair and being a metalhead just right now is trendy. And that's what I definitely don't like. And I think, right now in the scene there are a few bands that are not really heavy in their hearts, but they sell it really good right now. This is a problem. I think, we had the poser scene in the 80s, 1990, 1991, I think we had this problem with a lot of poser bands from the States, you know. They had long hair, they played hard rock, and I'm sure they never wanted to play hard rock. This is not the kind of music they'd listen to at home. Because it's selling really good, you know. The industry is at the background: "Come one guys, what's up? Come on, let your hair grow. Just hang on the guitar man, and be the tough guy," or whatever. So, I think, definitely, music's got something to do with your heart, with your soul, with your mind. And if that fits, it's perfect. If your clothes show that, it's okay, but definitely the most important thing is what's in your heart. And you can't turn off your mind or whatever. You can turn off your shoes, your jacket and whatever. You can turn it off.

Yes, that's totally secondary in my opinion, too. But when you're really feeling that in your heart, that's when you're living it. And I still love all the albums of Judas Priest, as well as Megadeth or whatever. I still love these albums. And this is really important for me. So I think right now that Symphorce is not a kind of music that you just can listen to today. I hope that there are a lot of people out there that say: "Wow, maybe I can listen to Symphorce in about 10 or 20 years," why not? I've been listening to all the Iron Maiden stuff, and all Judas Priest stuff and this is stuff is about 20 years old, you know.

Hey Andy, one question: do you have a parallel occupation apart of being a musician? I ask you this because, for instance, I saw the logo design of Symphorce, which was made by you, as well as the cover concept, so I was wondering if you had something to do with graphic design, or art in general. Nope, nope [laughs]. I think it's all made by real experts, I just give the ideas or sketch the things on paper, by hand. I'm not really into the technical side of graphics. I'm certainly not. At the moment, I'm in touch with the guy who's building the Internet site for us. He's doing that very very well. And I'm saying to him: "Come on, look at that! I drew that! What do you think about that?" and he says: "Woo man, that's killer man, cool logo design!" And I said: "Come on, let's scan that in and let's do that on the computer

again." Then it looks a little bit better! [laughs] So we do that everytime, you know, because I'm painting all the covers, and all the stuff, and I give it all to the graphic designers. And then I just have to say "Come on, look at this, look at that. What do you think you can do with that? Can you do something on the computer with that or not?" Well, I'm just not the kind of guy who is working with the computer. It's all hand made. [laughs]

Well, that has its merit I think. I also have drawn and designed things for some years too, by hand, so I give you a credit for that. Thank you very much. [laughs] I hope we can meet next time.

That would be nice, of course. When I come to Spain, just give me a short phone call, and it's not going to be a problem.

So you have touring plans? Plans about coming here. Of course. Yes, definitely. We're talking to a lot of the bigger bands, just as a supporting act. It hopefully will bring us to Spain this fall.

What's the weather like there right now in Stuttgart? The weather? It's cloudy.

Because we have 30C here already, can you believe it? 30 degrees! Hey, make room! I'm coming through!

Whenever you want. Well, as I asked before, could you tell us if you have another occupation? I think it could be interesting to know that. Apart from music, what do you do for living? Right now? I'm working for the telephone industry in Germany. But I think, I have... [pause] okay, it's the kind of job that keeps me alive. It's the kind of job that makes me feel better, for the music is just more important for me. So, I don't have to look for the money with the kind of music I'm writing. It makes me free, more free. It makes my life easier.

Yes, family influences, too. And definitely, it's for me a kind of better life. I don't have to care about everything around, what's going on with the music and what's not. So I can concentrate myself only on the music.

I see. That's very important. I liked, when reading the CD booklet, a part to your wife, where you dedicated this to your "little pirate." I liked that description. Did you dedicate to your son that song from "Polarized" called "When I am Old"? Yes, that was totally dedicated to him.

On that album, there's also an emotional element that touched me the time I first listened to it. You wanted to dedicate your perfor-

mance on it to the memory of your father, who sadly passed away then. Yes, thank you very much. My father died when we were in the studio recording "Polarized," and so I dedicated the whole album to him. But for my son, I just only wrote that. You know, he's really a pirate. Everytime when he wakes up, he comes into the living room and says "Come on, let's go!", and if I say "No, no, I just can't, I'm so tired," he says: "Hey come on, come on, let's go, let's play and do this and that." [imitates children voice] [laughs] He then asks: "Do you have any gigs today?" And I say: "No, no, no: no gigs, no music." "So let's play!" he says. [laughs] He's got energy, man.

How old is he, Andy? Five and a half years.

Oh, then I think I know what you mean about energy. Do you have kids yourself?

No, but my girlfriend has so many nephews and nieces of that age, that I've been able to see them running up and down. No band has that energy. Full energy man, it's full energy, definitely. I'm really proud of that because you can learn so much from children.

Yes, I agree on that too. They don't think about everything so badly, you know.

Yes, and the purity behind their minds and thoughts. They're not spoiled or affected by world events. Well, you know what I mean. This Europe that we have now... Yes, we know too much. We just are not satisfied anymore with everything around in the world, everybody wants money from us and whatever, but these children, they see the world through different eyes.

Indeed. That's really really important.

Back to the music, we talked a bit earlier about Symphorce's touring plans. Let us know what's the situation there in Germany for your band. Many metal fans live in Germany and there are many bands over there. Is it difficult to get shows for a band? Well, what are your experiences about this? Right now, we're planning a lot of shows, used as warm-up gigs. And as I said before, we're right now in contact with a lot of bigger bands. But it's for sure not easy. It's for sure definitely not easy. But I think, okay in maybe two or three weeks, I hopefully can check something out with a really good band. I hope that, for sure, we can go on tour.

I wanted to ask you how did you get the deal with Noise Records. Well, they were interested after our



"Polarized" album. They were interested in my kind of voice. And they asked me what kind of music I wanted to do in the future. And I said: "Hey! Future? Doing in the music? No problem!" [laughs] So, I said: "I want to go in a more direct and more straight direction." And they were really satisfied with that. They said: "Okay, if you have the same opinion as us, so why not work together?" And that was the deal, you know. Noise is definitely one of the most influential indie metal labels with a good distribution. I really hope this works for Symphorce, too. Yeah, thank you very much, I hope so, too.

Also, I'd like to talk about your old Ivanhoe label. It was WMMS/Music is Intelligence, a small prog metal label. What were your experiences with it? I'm not in contact with WMMS anymore.

What were the experience from working with them in the past? Hm... [pauses] It was okay! [laughs] And it wasn't so good, because [Andy's voice gets much more serious] definitely it was... how can I say? You know, they never had enough money to spend on the band.

Was that the kind of problem? They didn't promote your music properly? Yes, they never promoted the albums. Definitely, did nothing for a band. So, I was not happy with the situation after the second album. We always had problems with them. No distribution, nothing. Fans went to the concerts and asked "Where can I find your albums?", you know. This was the situation, definitely not good. Not good for the future.

Other Ivanhoe members formed Charisma. Are you still in touch with them or do you...? No! Not after they fired me with the lawyers. [laughs]

So let's talk a bit about that for instance, if you want. Okay, we met each other just a few weeks ago, and we talked to each other. So I got no problems with these guys. I've been told that they got problems with me! I never said: "Hey guys, what's up?" I said: "I got my opinion, I want to go on a straighter direction." And these guys had these

problems with me, as if I had said "No, I don't sing that kind of progressive stuff anymore." And that was their problem. But when we meet, we're having a beer together, and it's okay, it's not a big deal, you know. I think the press was more crazy about that thing in Germany than the band itself. Definitely. I got no problems with them. I know that they formed Charisma, and I know that it sounds progressive, but I've never heard the album.

To be honest, I haven't heard it either yet. Yeah, me too. I can't tell something about an album I have never heard before, and I won't tell something about that. It's unfair. It's definitely...

Not too elegant, yes. And why neither they nor you use the old Ivanhoe name? Me? Just after all this trouble, you know, I said "Okay, I want to have a cut." Just using a new name. Okay, I know I'm starting from the beginning again. I'm starting again, but I'm sure with that kind of musicians and the background, with that kind of record company in the background, I'm sure that we can reach a lot of things, you know. It's definitely going to be okay, it's definitely going to work.

Are you into soccer, Andy? Do you play soccer? Who? Me? Every German has to play soccer man? No! [laughs]

[laughs] I just wanted to congratulate you in case you were a Bayern Munich supporter, because I think they just won the league there, right? Then, no sports? Well, I'm jogging, I'm just jogging sometimes. That's all the training I do to keep me fit for the stage. And that's all. Running around. When we're on tour, or when we're playing gigs, and we don't know what to do, after soundcheck we play some soccer, yes.

Well Andy, I'm being told here our time has expired... [long time ago] Hey, I hope that we can meet. And I got to bring you the first Ivanhoe, okay? And this is the truth to promises, okay?

That's very kind of you, just meeting you would be enough. Thanks for everything and good luck. Thank you very much, have a nice day. Bye!

[Symphorce supported Merciful Fate for some of their shows in Europe during June and July]

[Symphorce Wounded Crew, Fanforce c/o Andras Kaufmann, Ulrich-von-Jutten-Str. 37, 70825 Korntal, Germany. Website: <http://www.symphorce.com/>]

Death & Taxes

The Only Things We Can Be Certain of...

[by Sigitas Velyvis]

The band that plays progressive jazz fusion metal is a rare phenomenon today. I think, this music will never get rid of the underground status, because of its specific feature that doesn't allow the attention of the wider audience. Death&Taxes aren't an exception, their intricate and professional songwriting will be appreciated by circles of complex prog metal fans, and since I also love their album "Paradigms For a New Quarter," I decided to interview the bassist/vocalist Tom Shannon for this "Edge of Time" issue. Death&Taxes really deserve it!

How old were you as you began to play? What kind of music did you play at that time?

I started by learning guitar at 13, then bass about 6 months later. The first band I was in played mostly cover tunes of Beatles, Stones, and New Wave - this was in the early eighties.

In your band-info, you've mentioned such influences like Rush, King Crimson, Beatles, Miles Davis, etc. What about WatchTower, Sieges Even, or Cynic?

Of those three, I've only heard a little bit of Cynic. I liked the jazzy sections but didn't care much for the rest.

Tell me about the name "Death&Taxes." Why did you choose this combination of words?

It comes from an old quote by Benjamin Franklin who wrote to a friend that sometimes it seems as though "...the only things we can be certain of are death and taxes." I like the combination because it's thought provoking and a little humorous and, at the same time, a little evil. At the time that I started the band, it was a bit of a reaction to all the band names that try to sound evil, like Death, Megadeth, etc. I thought what could be more evil than death and taxes? Not that I consider the band to be evil, I just found myself drawn to the humor of it and just thought it sounded like a cool band name.

What does the cover and the title of the album mean to you?

It's funny because there really isn't much connection between the two. They were developed separately and chosen for different reasons. First of all, the cover was designed by a friend of ours named Dale Raines, who, we think, is a great young artist. We wanted a real piece of art for our cover, not something done on a computer or a photograph - real hand done artwork. Dale presented us with some ideas and, as we were looking through his sketchbook, we came across a little rough sketch of what you now see on our cover. We all loved the composition of the sketch - the lone figure in the center of the room working diligently at something, light streaming in from a single window, the door ajar leading somewhere - we loved the imagery. It seemed very symbolic, and we felt it kind of represented our own feelings about the band - individualism, hard work, mystery and light. We asked him to develop it, and he painted with oil a 16 inch by 16 inch piece that became our cover.

The title we came up with separately. We came up with a list of about twenty potential titles and decided that was our favorite. As in the name of the band, there is a subtle humor to it - it sounds like "pair o' dimes for a new quarter." But deeper than that, it's like each song is a paradigm (an example serving as a pattern) for a new time. Perhaps this is why the man on the cover is rebuilding his cuckoo clock - to prepare for the "new time."

It seems that some of the lyrics were written by your friends...

This band's history goes back as far as 1985, when I was in a band called New World. The line-up for that band was Jon Atkinson on guitar, Gina Lumbruno on vocals, Don Medina on drums, and me on bass. The song "Acid Bath" was written by that band in 1986 and is a good representation of what that band sounded like. "Invisible Man" is a reworking of a New World song; we rearranged it and Tony wrote new lyrics for it. In 1987, Don Medina and I left New World and started D&T with Harrison Pearl on guitar and Dave McIntire on vocals. Dave left the band in 1988, and we had another singer for about 6 months and then Harrison and I took over the vocal duties. We replaced Harrison with Tony Martinez in 1990 and then parted ways with Don Medina in 1991. The band almost broke up at the point, but we regrouped with Mark Hanson on drums and kept the line-up steady until 1997 when we exchanged Tony for his younger brother Vince.

Who is Dino Maddalone & Jeff Mayo? In my opinion, the production could be better. The sound quality of the songs differ from each other... Dino and Jeff engineered the album. The band produced the album, so any complaints about production, we have to take full responsibility for. I'm still not quite sure what is wrong with the sound; I've asked a few engineers about it, and they say it sounds too compressed, so I don't know, maybe it's something we can

fix if we remaster it. We're getting close to needing more CDs, so I'm thinking about remastering it, or, if necessary, I may have to remix some tracks, too. And, by the way, anything you can tell me about what you feel is wrong with it, please tell me. Keep in mind this was our first CD, and it was totally self-funded. We couldn't afford to spend a lot of money on it. We tried to put out the best quality representation of the band that we could afford and, on that level, I think we succeeded.

You took part in the festival dedicated to the Beatles. Which songs did you cover for this festival? Why haven't you put any Beatles cover-version on the CD?

Every year, here in Los Angeles, there is an event known as Beatlefest. It takes place over one weekend and there are Beatles merchandise on sale, guests who have worked with the Beatles, like Billy Preston and Denny Laine perform there, they show Beatle movies and video clips, etc. On the last day, there is a battle of the bands. Each band gets to play two Beatle songs, and the audience judges who is the best band. You don't have to sound like the Beatles, and we don't, you just have to get the loudest audience response. Well, we played it for fun the first year and won. So we went back the next year and won again. Same thing the third year. The last couple of years we haven't done so well, but we keep going back because it is so fun. Songs we have covered include: "I Am The Walrus," "Don't Let Me Down," "Dig A Pony," "She Said, She Said," "Hey Bulldog," "Drive My Car," "Savoy Truffle," "A Day In The Life," and "You Never Give Me Your Money." The main reason we didn't put any cover songs on our CD, is because we have so many originals and we wanted to put as many of those on as we could.

Which songs are very difficult to play live and why?

A lot of them are difficult to play, especially when we are out of practice! Songs like "Fighting The Bromides," "Genuflecting Derelict," and "The Woodpecker Song" are very difficult, technically, to pull off and "Acid Bath" and "Invisible Man" we almost never open with because they are so fast we need to work up to them!

Why did you change your guitarist?

Tony had some personal problems that he needed to deal with. Initially, he quit, then changed his mind, but I realized that I didn't want to work with him anymore. I'm being intentionally vague here because there were a lot of issues, and, since I really have no animosity towards Tony, I think it would be better if some things were just left unsaid. I think he's an incredibly talented writer, guitar player, and arranger, and I wish him the best of luck in the future.

As I heard, you are on the third part of the "Powermad" compilation. Have you played at this festival? If yes, what were the reactions of people there?

We played at Powermad '98. Unfortunately, we went on towards the end of the last day of the festival, and there weren't very many people left in the audience. John Collinge and James Bickers from "Progression Magazine" did stay for our whole set and said some very nice things and even printed some of them in the last issue. We always seem to get a very good reaction from people hearing and seeing us for the first time, unfortunately they never seem to be record execs...

What about labels? Are they interested in your music?

So far, we haven't seen much interest from labels. I think most of the labels out here in L.A. don't care how talented you are, they care if you can move product and sell out shows. While we have a strong local following and get great reviews, the kind of music we play just doesn't seem to generate a whole lot of money. The fan base for progressive metal is spread out all over the world and is growing in many places, but in L.A. it's practically unheard of. So, I understand that the big labels don't want to take a chance on us, and we're content with that. The drawback to not being on a big label is lack of financial backing, but the plus side is that we have full creative control of our music and are not pressured with having to make a hit record. It would be great to have both, but that is a very difficult thing to achieve these days.

What were the reactions from the press and fans in Europe and USA?

We've had great reactions from just about everybody that cared to tell us or write about us. I know it sounds like I'm bragging, but we really haven't had any bad reviews. We've had a few knocks on the production quality, and our vocals, but we've never been slammed in a review as far as I know. A few years ago, we made a demo tape and sent it out to a bunch of places. I remember it got reviewed by this one A&R big wig who slammed us for being all over the place

stylistically. I think that's probably another reason why labels shy away from us, because we're not easy to pigeonhole into one genre of music. Look, my favorite album of all time is The Beatles "White Album" - that was all over the place stylistically. I wouldn't want to be in a band that just plays one style of music, it'd bore me to tears!

It seems that today there are very few bands that play this kind of music. Some years ago the situation was better, remember Cynic, Atheist, or Pestilence ("Spheres"). Nowadays many progressive bands try to play more sentimental stuff in veins of Fates Warning, Queensryche, or Dream Theater. Progressive jazz/fusion metal is pure underground now. What do you think about it?

I don't know. I think the progressive genre has continued to grow and you see a lot of sub-genres growing too, like progressive metal, canterbury, symphonic, etc. And with the internet, you've got a lot more communication between fans and there have been a lot of these festivals like Powermad, Progfest, Prog Day, and Prog Scape, so I think, worldwide at least, the progressive music scene is very vibrant. But, on the other hand, bands like us, well, I honestly don't think there are any other bands quite like us, so it's hard for me to say. I came up with the term "Progressive Jazz Metal Fusion" in the late eighties in an effort to give

the press some kind of label, since they seem to need some way to describe your music, and if you don't fall easily into one genre they get highly confused. So I thought I'd help them out a little bit! I guess we're similar to Dream Theater and King Crimson, but we're only a three piece, and Dream Theater have keyboards and metal vocals, and Crimson have two of everything! I think we're closer to Rush like right before Geddy started playing keyboards, but without the wailing vocals and if Alex sang lead too!

Do you like Death? I think, this band is a phenomenon, their music is complex but, at the same time, quite popular among metal fans. How could you explain that?

I can't really say because I'm not sure I've even heard them. I think I may have, a few years ago, when I heard Cynic, or I may be mixing the two up. They are related aren't they? The band that I remember hearing alternated between this dark, growling, death metal and bright, soaring, complex, jazz fusion. I remember liking the jazz stuff but not the metal, and I wondered, why don't they blend the two instead of delineating them, creating this harsh contrast, or doing all of the above? It seemed strange to me that they would keep them separate and only switch between the two styles. Why not add more elements? They obviously had the talent. As for mixing the complex with metal, I grew up listening to quite a bit of Iron Maiden and the Japanese band Loudness. I think Loudness is one of the most overlooked and underrated metal bands of the eighties. All of the albums they made with their original singer were great, particularly the live album, "Live Loud Alive." I lost interest in them when they got an American singer and tried to sound like all the other mid-eighties metal bands.

There was an instrument called chapman stick mentioned in your info-sheet? Tell me more about it. Have you used it during the recordings?

The Chapman Stick is a 10- or 12-stringed instrument that has the range of both bass and guitar. It's got a stereo output so you can run the high end, or melody side, through a guitar amp and the low end, or bass side, through a bass amp. It looks like a big guitar neck with no body. You play it by tapping on the strings (like Eddie Van Halen or Stanley Jordan) and you can play simultaneous bass and melody lines or complex two-handed tapping basslines, chords or standard bass and guitar lines. It was invented in the late sixties by Emmett Chapman who lives in Los Angeles. Prominent players include Tony Levin from King Crimson, John Myung from Dream Theater, and Sean Malone who, I believe, used to be with Cynic or Death or both. I didn't own one at the time that we recorded "Paradigms..." but it will be on the new CD.

The CD came out in 1996. What is the band doing now? Have you written some new songs for the next CD?

We are currently in the process of recording a new CD. We hope to have that finished in a few months, but it's still a little too early to tell. At this point, we don't have a name for it yet, but some of the songs that will appear are: "Bottomless Hippopotamus," "Diet of Worms," "Human Fly," and "Instrumental With Words." I think people will find it less metal and more jazzy and progressive than the last one, but still heavy and powerful.



Nightwish

Metal, Opera, and Wilderness

[by Audrius Ozalas]

Already the debut album ["Angels Fall First," 1997] of this young Finnish band was a promise that one day we would be able to hear another powerful melodic metal group. Nightwish's new album "Oceanborn" surprised even the most enthusiastic optimists, marking a clear progress compared to its predecessor. Nightwish are already a cult band in Finland, and it's only a question of time when the world scene will be opened for them. Actually, it is already happening now, and Nightwish are one of the hottest bands in the scene. Tuomas Holopainen answered my questions.



The first songs of Nightwish were recorded in 1996, these were three acoustic tracks. Have you re-recorded some of them later, and what they sounded like?

The idea behind Nightwish was to make acoustic mood music, in the beginning. The first demo we made sounded just like that, very calm, moody, and atmospheric. We were pretty satisfied with them, and the making of those songs was a great experience, but we'll never re-record or publish them, that's for sure.

How have you come along with Tarja? Listening to her voice, it seems like she has a professional background, is it truth? By the way, I've heard that she sung at opera festival, can you tell something more about this event? And maybe Tarja had offers from other famous groups during these years? Tarja is studying her third year in

Sibelius Academy, which is a university-level music academy in Finland. At the moment, she studies classical singing and church music but her real passion is opera, and she will specialize in it from the beginning of next semester. The opera festival she sang in is an annual event which is well-known all over the world. Tarja has also been asked to join the Norwegian band Covenant, but she didn't think it's the kind of music she would like to do, even though she was taken by the offer.

Your first album "Angels Fall First" had two editions. As I understood, one of them was self-released, another was released by Spinefarm. Do both these editions differ a lot, were the songs re-mastered for your label-debut? And is the first edition still available for collectors? The first edition is sold out (500

copies). It contains two songs that are not on the official AFF-album and lacks four songs. The cover is a little different, too.

Was the offer from Spinefarm the only one? For how many albums you've got this deal? Does the label makes any pressure on you, asking to play in any way or another, or do they leave 100% artistic freedom? Most labels do have certain wishes when investing big amounts of their money.

We received a couple of offers but Spinefarm's one was definitely the best one. We have a three-record deal with them, and so far we've been satisfied with their work. They have a very nice habit of letting us do our music without any pressure. They never tell us how and what to do. Spinefarm has licensed us to some bigger companies, for example, Drakkar in Germany and Toy's Factory in Japan.

Already now it is clear that your new album "Oceanborn" is going to be one of the best albums released by Finnish band this year. Your success in Finland is stunning also, "Sacrament of Wilderness" entered #1 on the official Finnish Top 40 single charts, "Oceanborn" was #5 on Finnish Album Charts. Is it natural thing in Finland for metal groups to reach such high positions, is metal music considered as essential part of national musical show business?

During the past couple of years, there has been a huge revival of metal music here in Finland. It must have something to do with the success of Stratovarius, Amorphis, and Sentenced abroad. It's not very common to reach the charts with this kind of music, but it seems to happen every now and then.

In our country, the group which enters #1 in charts is considered as "stars." Could you say that you managed to get this status in your country? For example, you played live in a Finnish-charts show this year, which means something. And what does it mean to you? Are you able to live only from your music now?

No. It still is relatively rare that somebody identifies us on the streets (it happens sometimes). None of us considers himself or herself as a "star." And NO, we are not rich and cannot live with only music now. Maybe sometime in the far future but not yet.

Your music on "Oceanborn" is more catchy, melodic, and can reach a really wide audience. Have you been thinking about that when creating music, is a possible reaction of audience one of the main factors in which direction the music must develop?

No and never! We never had any expectations about the response to the album, and we definitely didn't think if it was the kind of music that would

sell, etc. I don't think it ever works that way, at least, it shouldn't. All the development in our music has been and will be natural and honest.



Some groups like The Gathering changed their direction a lot after the coming of their singer. Now it seems that The Gathering, for example, orientate their music only to express all the possibilities of their talented singer. The music seems to stand in the second place. You also have a perfect singer; don't you think that all the musicians must create right possibilities for her or you think about it differently? By the way, what do you think about The Gathering?

Of course, Tarja is the key element in our music, and we must think during the songwriting and arrangement process if the melodies and the riffs fit her voice. Still, there's much more to Nightwish than just that. Our songs are a musical journey that requires a full effort from each instrument and so everything must be in balance. I think The Gathering is a good band, even though I don't really enjoy their latest release. Still, I think every band has a right to develop their music into any direction they want and there is nothing wrong with that! (Metallica, Paradise Lost, Ulver...)

The last track on "Oceanborn" was your cover of a soundtrack. Why namely this film, were there other candidates?

The Snowman is a 30-minute cartoon which is shown every Christmas eve here in Finland for the last 15 years. It's a beautiful tale about a little boy and a snowman, who comes alive after midnight. This cartoon has always been the highlight of Christmas eve for me, so it is full of childhood memories. And the theme song ("Walking in the Air") is probably the most beautiful song I've ever heard. H. Blake is an English composer who wrote the music just for that cartoon.

It seems like you are getting major success now. Maybe you could tell where is the biggest following of Nightwish? Maybe you know some sales figures of your first and second album? I think that many people heard about you after the release of your second disc, but was the first disc also commercially successful for you?

Our first album had a surprisingly fine success in Finland (it entered the charts at #31 at its best and sold 8000 copies in Finland). "Oceanborn" has now sold 18000 in Finland but we don't know the sales from abroad yet.

You all are quite young as professional musicians, so sometimes it is strange how you

manage to create this music. Is Nightwish the first band for all of you, have you learned to play by yourselves or you have had lessons? To me, it always seemed like you must have had classical music background, as your music has a strong classical influence. We have played in many smaller bands before, all of us. Me and Sami played in Nattvindens Gråt, I played in Darkwoods My Betrothed, and all the rest have had their own bands, too. My main instrument is the clarinet, but I also studied the piano in a music school. Besides me and Tarja, we are mostly self-educated musicians.

It also seems that you have many different influences. Could you name the biggest of them? I know, it's always difficult, but maybe you could also find the nearest companion to your band? I like to listen to film music (Vangelis, Kitaro, J. Horner, Mike Oldfield, etc.) and metal (bands like My Dying Bride, In The Woods, Amorphis, Arcturus, Rhapsody, The 3rd And The

Mortal...). Other members are more into traditional heavy metal like Stratovarius, Yngwie Malmsteen, Dio, Rainbow, Helloween... So as a songwriter, I could name film music as my biggest influence! The nearest companion... I could live with comparisons to Therion, Rhapsody, and Stratovarius.

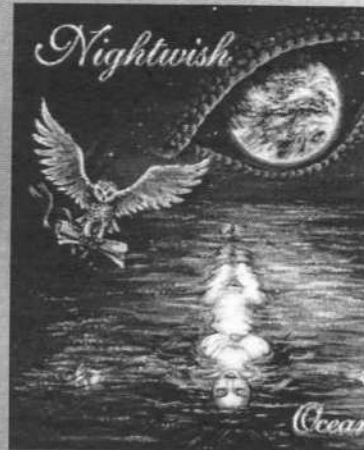
I know, it is only my personal opinion, but the places where male and female vocals are combined on "Oceanborn" are a bit disturbing to me. Don't you think that sometimes this can destroy the harmony, and do you plan to explore both vocals in the future also? The male vocals on the album are merely an effect due to the plot and dialog on the two songs.

All your lyrics are in English. Don't you have plans to record something in your native language? Amorphis did it quite successfully. That's an idea that has been spinning in our heads for quite some time, and I'm pretty sure we will use Finnish

sometimes in the future.

Finnish metal scene seems to be rich enough these days. Do you agree with that? Do you take an active role in metal-scene's life? And a related question is, have you been involved in underground movement and found it necessary to become known, e.g., spreading the flyers, contacting with zines, etc. Most groups do it at their beginning but later forget about underground when success comes to them. Are you still interested in underground nowadays? I think the Finnish metal scene is one of the best in the world. (Great bands like Stratovarius, Amorphis, Decoryah, Embraze, Sentenced...) Naturally, we started on an underground basis, but we are a little out of that nowadays. I hope people will understand this because our time is limited due to our success. The underground is interesting, however, and I'm glad to follow it the best I can.

Could you tell something about



your future activities, when do you plan to begin recordings of your next album?

At the moment, we are concentrating on doing concerts in Finland and abroad, as well. The third album won't take place until the spring/summer of 2000. Hoping to see you on our European tour!

Nightwish website:
www.nightwish.com



The term "Little Green Men" is often associated with aliens from outer space. In the early days of science fiction, the preconception of the general public was that aliens did in fact have the appearance of some green-colored and big-eyed human shaped extra terrestrials. However, in the music scene, the term "Little Green Men" is also used by a trio from Texas. Little Green Men consist of Andrew Williams (guitar), Steele Lane (bass, lead vocals, keyboards), and Crit Fowler (drums and electronic percussion). I first stumbled upon Little Green Men (LGM) last year by wading through the link section of the All Too Human homepage. Metal music from Texas has always fascinated me (especially, the late 80s Texas progressive power metal scene), and I was thus tempted to visit their homepage. This did not give much info apart from some nice pictures of aliens playing instruments during a live show and ordering info

for their album. The step to ordering the CD was made without hesitation and within a few weeks a nice package arrived with a miniature frisbee and sweater as well. The debut CD "Encounters" was released back in 1996. After frequent listens, the music keeps swirling in my head due to the catchy melodies. Here is an excerpt from my review: "Although it's a few years old the music certainly warrants a mention. Little Green Men come across musically as an amalgam of early Rush, Van Halen and Metallica-style heavy riffing. The first noticeable aspect is the incredibly raw and energetic live sound of the CD. The combination of the extremely distorted guitar sound and the pleasant mid-range voice Steele give a unique dimension to the music. At first glance, the songs create a deceivingly regular atmosphere aura which could hardly be categorized as progressive. However, closer analysis of the songs

shows a hidden complexity in terms of build-up with multiple solo parts within the space of under five minutes. The delivery of the songs is solid and the songs have memorable melodies and passages. Highlights of the CD are the heavy and mid-tempo 'The Unnamed,' 'Witch's Brew,' and the brilliant 'Starstruck.' The latter song features the best guitar work that Van Halen never wrote. Although the monicker 'Little Green Men' and the album title would imply a tongue-in-cheek fascination with extra-terrestrials, the lyrical concepts revolve around space exploration, fantasy and Greek mythology written in a serious manner."

To shed some light on their music and background, I did a short interview with Little Green Men. The interview was done by e-mail and some topics that were covered were their history, playing at jazz festivals in Europe, baseball, and Texas music. The following abbreviations were used: LGM = Little Green Men, A = Andrew Williams (guitar/vocals), C = Crit Fowler (drums/vocals), S = Steele Lane, (lead vocals/bass/keyboards).

Little Green Men seem to be virtually unknown in Europe, although its members have a long standing musical history. Could you tell us everything about the origin of Little Green Men and the previous bands each of you have been in.

A: I think you could probably do an entire interview about all the bands we've all been in...

C: True, that's a whole other story. S: As for LGM, Andrew and I met in college. We were both playing in the Jazz Ensemble at Texas Christian University (in Ft Worth, Texas). He was already in a band called Ground Zero, and they were in need of a

bassist. I went for an audition and was in that same day. We played together with various personnel changes for about two years.

C: I met Steele thru a guy I knew at a local music store. My band was looking for a bassist, and the guy told me about this bass player that was in the store the other day that I needed to take a listen to. He had gotten Steele's number, so I called him. He came out to jam, and we hit it off very well.

S: Yes, I felt very comfortable playing with Crit from day one. He has a great sense of time, and he grooves very well. We even brought Andrew in to that band for a while, but the guitarist and his ego ruined that group. After the demise of that band, I hooked up with Andrew again. We were going to play an "open mic night" at a club near TCU.

A: Yeah, Crit was supposed to play with us that night, but he couldn't make it for some reason, so we played with a different drummer. After we played our few songs, the club owner called us into his office and wanted to book us as soon as possible. We ended up keeping the drummer we played with that night for a time, since he was with us when we got the gig. He ended up taking off to Mexico without telling anyone. Luckily, Crit was available. We've been LGM ever since.

What musical recordings has Little Green Men done thus far?

A: At present, we have our first "released" CD "Encounters." We are currently shopping what may end up being our second CD, as yet untitled. We are also working on a rock version of the Charlie Danial's Band tune "The Devil went Down to Georgia." We changed some of the lyrics, made the devil a guitarist, and added a twist at the end. We are probably going to release that as a single.

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Steele, you mentioned that you played on the North Sea Jazz festival in Holland several years ago. Could you tell us how that came about and what your impressions of Europe were?

S: Well, in 1986 I had the privilege of playing at the North Sea Jazz festival and the Montreux Jazz festival with my High School Jazz Band. We were one of maybe 3 high school groups invited to perform. I was lucky enough to get to return to both festivals in 1991 with the TCU Jazz Ensemble.

Europe was incredible... the people were incredibly friendly and receptive, the food was great, and the scenery was incredible. It is something I will never forget. I look forward to returning to Europe someday.

The moniker Little Green Men conjures up images of the typical science fiction B movies of the 50s and 60s. In what way, is the band name meant to be taken seriously or taken tongue in cheek?

A: Well, it's kind of a strange story. The only reason we picked that name was because the first "gig" we played was an open mic night, which was kind of a misnomer, because not just anyone could get up and play: you had to call and "sign up." When we called to get on the list, they asked us what the name of our band was... we really hadn't even thought about a name at the time. We were listening to Steve Vai's "Flex:Able" CD. There is a song on it called "Little Green Men," so that's what we told them our name was. Steele and I were like "Yeah, we can always change it later..." But 6 and a half years later, we haven't changed it yet.

Trios have always had a particular place in rock history. Some of the most famous ones are, of course, Rush and Triumph. In comparison to the regular lineups of bands, a trio appears to be more tight in terms of maintaining a stable lineup. What are your viewpoints on trios versus quartets? What are the advantages and disadvantages?

C: Well, the obvious advantage is having lots of room to play, you know, one drummer, one bassist, and one guitarist. Three part harmony, if you will. It's easy to play tight and really lay into a groove. Of course, some might say that's also a disadvantage... when there's a guitar solo, there's no rhythm guitar or keys underneath to "fill in the space." It really forces you to stretch as a player, to fill up those "holes."

A: I agree. Being a three-piece is challenging. You want to have a big, full sound, and you have to be creative with voicing and note choices to achieve that.

All of the songs on the "Encounters" album have extensive soloing and instrumental parts. Do you intentionally put a large emphasis on building in virtuous parts into the songs?

S: I don't think we intentionally set out to write lots of instrumental parts in our songs, I think it just felt right. I think some of that is my fault, since I really don't consider myself a lead singer. I'm definitely a bassist, first and foremost, but I do enjoy singing.

A: Some of that may come from our Band background. Both Steele and I are brass players from way back... starting in Junior High School through College, so we have a lot of experience with instrumental music.

The sound of the "Encounters" is very raw and has a definite live atmosphere to it. Was it difficult to get this feeling across on CD.

C: Actually, no. We intentionally went into a smaller studio to do the recording, and we tried whenever possible to use the first take.

S: I also think that's just "our sound." When you see us live, the sound you'll hear is pretty much what you hear on the CD.

In my review, I mentioned that, at first glance, the songs create a deceivingly regular atmosphere aura which could hardly be categorized as progressive. However, closer analysis of the songs shows a hidden complexity in terms of build-up. How difficult is it to combine memorable melodies with complexity.

A: A lot of our songs sort of "just happened." We do some of our best writing when we just start playing. Sometimes I'll come in with an idea and just say "I have this in my head, see what you can do with it..." and we'll just jam on it for a while.

S: That's one of my favorite things, just playing around with ideas, seeing where they go.

What is more important to you, the challenge of playing complex music or conveying certain emotions through your music?

C: I think for me it has to be both. Although, I have to say that we don't sit down and say "We need to write a really difficult song." I consider myself a feel player: if it doesn't feel good, I don't want to play it!

S: That's true for me, too. I don't think I would

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enjoy playing our music if it was just hard to play. It has to have something to say.

A: For me, it's definitely the emotional aspect. Although I can't say that I don't enjoy pulling off a tough riff or an intricate passage, but I certainly wouldn't just write something difficult if there was no purpose behind it.

It has been a while since "Encounters" was released, what is the status of the new album?

A: Good question. We have not really decided what to do about the new material. We have roughed out about 10 new songs, and have polished about three of those. We are hoping to shop these songs to record labels, and maybe get them to pay for our next CD.

Little Green Men seem to have a large fascination for baseball with the field positions of the members mentioned in the CD inlay card. How is playing a baseball match comparable to putting on a live show?

S: I think putting on a live show is very similar to a baseball game. It has to be a team effort. If we have a good show, it's because we all gave 110%. If the show is not good, it's on all of our shoulders, not just one person. Crit is great about getting us pumped up before every show.

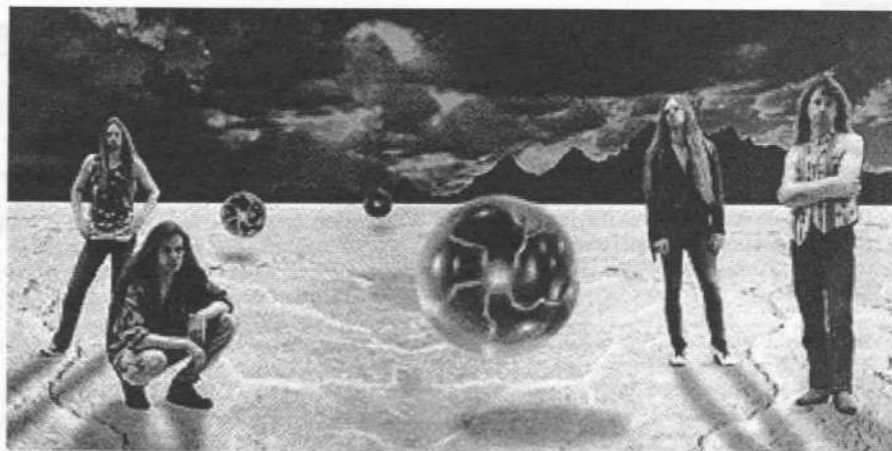
Texas is best known for its country & western scene. Back in the late 80s though, Texas used to have a prolific progressive and power metal scene. There were numerous promising bands in San Antonio, Austin, Dallas/Fort Worth that never made it to vinyl/CD though. It now seems that there is a revival with several promising groups getting exposure such as Little Green Men, All Too Human, and Power of Omens to name a few. What is the current musical scene like in your area?

A: I wish I could say it was good, but many of the larger rock clubs have closed in the last few years. It's getting more and more difficult to find places receptive to all original music.

C: I think it's getting better though. Lately, I've been hearing a lot of the 80s rock/metal on the radio. Maybe everyone has gotten tired of this grunge thing, and we can get back to rock and roll.

S: I believe that rock is coming back around again. It may fade out a bit, but it always comes back better every time.

Little Green Men website: <http://www.lgm.net/>



ELEGY's *Metamorphosis*

[by Terhi Keskitalo]

"Manifestation of Fear" is the new concept album of Dutch metal band ELEGY, and it tells you a story about one kind of life. Ian Parry wrote the concept; he had ideas from his own life, from people he had met. This story is told by music of ELEGY. The album differs from the previous ELEGY albums not only because of the idea of concept, but also musically. You can recognize similar themes that you've heard earlier, but this is a heavier album. Heavy story, heavy music. Different kind of state of mind in the lyrics, in music. Still, ELEGY don't forget the idea of melody. The music is built in the way that it keeps the interest. It's not too progressive, the musicians aren't playing only for themselves. The music is not too straight either. In the following interview, the singer Ian Parry tells about this new album.

Hi Ian, how are you doing?

I'm doing fine, since we played in Finland last year, I moved house, and we didn't see much of each other with the band over the Xmas period. We got together at the end of January, and we started working on the concept album. When I told them the story I had, they were really impressed. I'm not sure if you read the story yet...

...Of course, of course. I have been listening to it following the story.

Originally we were going to produce the album ourselves because we couldn't afford to pay Tommy Newton as a producer, because obviously producing costs lots of money... because I can make a difference between the good album and the great album. We said to Tommy that we would have loved him to produce us, yet... But when he listened to all songs we put down on tape, he said: "If you guys still want me, I'm willing to produce it for free." And we were shocked! So we went in the Tommy Newton studio. And that was a great move for the band going to Germany to record and work with the producer who's the ex-Victory guitar player. We recorded the album at the studios in Celle, it's got the new complex system built there, the new studio complex... We were amazed because if you listen to Dirk's drums, the drum sound on this record is phenomenal, Tommy had a great way of recording toms by detuning the toms so low that Dirk really had to work hard. If you don't get like the reflex back of the drums anymore. And the snare drum, where the back beat comes from, that's the Whitesnake snare drum from the 1987 album. You know the song "Still of the Night"? Tommy found this technician friend. And he asked: "Can I borrow this snare drum?" And they said, yeah, OK. So, that gave the magic on this album. And all the guitars, all the rhythm guitars. Henk were using Tommy Newtons own personal equipment. All this is customized, Gibson, Les Paul, Jackson, and we used these amplifiers, Marshall amplifiers. And Henk did all the solos with ESP. And the voice is heavy, you know, it's a lot more aggressive than earlier, because of the story. Because of its atmosphere, each substory has got a lot of tension and angst, and aggression, you know, frustration. When I was doing this album, singing it in,

I had Graham Bonnett... do you remember him, he used to sing in the band called Rainbow.

Of course!

[laughs] Great. Well, I had Graham Bonnet in my mind because people keep saying to me that the moments were really sounding like Ronnie James Dio, but it's Graham Bonnet actually I had in my mind. So, these are all new elements, and it's a lot different from the previous album. "State of Mind" had more keyboards and more drums. And with this album, all the guitars are in front of the keyboards.

Yes, I have been thinking of that.

But you like this album, compared to the last one?

I like both of them.

You like both? Me too.

This is different, but I don't complain.

This is heavier. What we have noticed now is that I have been doing interviews in France for the first time. Like last year we didn't get one interview in France. And we're album of the month in the biggest heavy metal magazine, and I realized that by doing a concept album with believable story and by combining the power of guitars but still having melody on the vocals and putting keyboards a bit more on the background, but it's still there, you know. By using that combination, I think we opened a lot more doors which were closed in the past. At the moment I'm busy writing songs for the solo album. I wanna release the album in Europe next year. Anyways, did you have some questions about the new album? [laughs]

Oh yes yes. At first: why a concept album?

It's something ELEGY hasn't done in the past. At first, I was a little bit unsure about doing it, you know, it's not easy to do a concept. Like I said, it was like piecing together a jigsaw puzzle. When I first told the band... when we played on tour with Stratovarius after the shows we used to go to talk to audience, fans. We realized one thing: the amount of unemployed kids, fans. And a lot of them had saved money to get to shows. This had a big influence on me. I've been

unemployed for many years in the past, and I know what it's like. And like you were, exactly the same.

I was unemployed, with too much to do... and too little money.

That's how it is with Elegy. Even though we sell records, we still have to pay all the recording costs and tour costs out of it. So that's why the guys in Elegy have the day jobs. I do all the projects outside of Elegy, because with the music otherwise we could never do it. It costs phenomenally. What you see in return is nothing.

You have this story behind this music...

It starts with the title "Manifestation of Fear." Because the comments of fans, they were telling us they were unemployed, they were trying to get work.

And I was really surprised because we're almost going to change the century, the year 2000. When I was a kid like back in the late 60s, the image was that in the year 2000 there would be flying saucers, unemployment wouldn't exist. It still exists with all technology. So this was kind of in the back of my thoughts. I started writing down the subtitles like "Savage Grace," "Master of Deception." Then I started to think about doing a story and to get the atmosphere in the beginning of the story. I used the circumstances of my parents in Liverpool. Before I was born in the late 50s when my mom and dad got married, they got married against the wishes of my mom's mother at the time. So they didn't get support from my grandparents who don't live anymore. So, my mom and dad had to go on all alone. My dad was knocking from door to door trying to get work. They used to live like in a very rough area in Liverpool with a lot of criminals, and when my brother and sister were born it was so rough the area where they lived in, my mom couldn't let the kids play outside on the streets, my brother and sister, because they were afraid that something would happen to them because it was rough and violent. I was kinda growing up in the kind of working class, industrial background. That's why on the sleeves you see this kind of industrial city. It could have been anywhere, it could have been any industrial city, kind of working class area for example in Helsinki. That's the kind of atmosphere. It could have been Liverpool, it could have been Rotterdam. But anyway, that's the background of the atmosphere, and I did the bases to build the story. To piece it together. I have been thinking about it from while we were... In fact, when I came to Finland, because I wrote the "Angel Without Wings," let the guys listen to it in October, 1997. When we went to Japan on the plane, they were listening to the song, and I told them: "I've got this kind of concept, story." They said they would do it as long as I make it believable. If you compare the concept with, for example, "Operation Mindcrime" from Queensryche, it isn't easy to compete against that kind of high standing. That's why I wanted to do the social concept. Something that people could relate with the 90s. That was the result, that's how it came about. It started with the title "Manifestation of Fear," attending to a number of song titles which developed into short stories which then I compiled into one complete story.

Was it easy for Henk and Dirk to compose?

Well, the first song Henk worked on was "Solitary Day." That's the first song I did lyrically.

Let me tell you one thing about this song... You can count one-two-three-one-two three in it... So, if I ever get married and I need the wedding waltz...

Oh, wedding waltz... [laughs] yeah! Exactly, that's funny. That's the clever thing about it. Not many

people realize it. But you've been involved to music, with doing music lessons with people. Then you'll be conscious of this kind of thing. You're absolutely right.

[laughs] Greetings to Henk.

I will tell him. But that's funny, that's the great thing about this record. You've got that waltz type theme in a three count and the other song which we do in a 6/8 count. We change rhythms which do its progressive side. I'm very proud how we did this, 'cause first of all went like this, when I told about this, Henk said: "Right, give me the story on paper." So, what I did was... I wrote the bio, and I wrote the concept. And I did it in such a way that it was almost like plan if we're gonna do a movie. Then I faxed it to Henk; he read the stories, he got ideas from the small substories,



from each title. If I painted a picture of frustration and aggression, he had a riff like in "Frenzy" as an example, he got that 'dakatakadaaang.' That's how it went. The last thing I did was put the lyrics to all the songs. I've written all the stories and the lyrics were the fastest thing I did on the whole album. I had all the background information, subtitles... Doing the lyrics was just the question of waiting for the music to come. And some of the songs I wrote myself. And then Henk and Dirk worked on ideas together, and Henk also wrote some stuff alone. We basically worked the three of us on this album.

You always make your vocal melodies...

I find it easier... especially when I'm writing the lyrics, and being concept, being a story, it made sense that I did it myself. I'm not saying it's always gonna be this way. I had the idea and to make it believable, I had to do it myself. The lyrics just came like the piece of cake at the end. In the vocal melodies, I'm trying to make my voice sound like instrument. And I'm trying to do melodies which are different to what Henk's doing on the guitar. And, like I said, I'm glad that we went to Germany and recorded and worked with Tommy Newton, because it was like putting the icing on the cake. We actually had a cake but without icing, which is sometimes a little bit boring... [laughs]

How are you going to play those songs live?

Well, we're not going to do this like concept. We even went this far as we specifically recorded this album in such a way that no matter what songs you put on the album, you put each song on it. We wanted it to be a concept record. Just put any song of this album, just listen to it, like the album track and still enjoy. So, that's exactly we're going to do live. We're gonna play nine songs from the new album, for example: "Metamorphosis," "Frenzy," "Unorthodox Methods," "Master of Deception," "Savage Grace"... then we're going to do a combination of "State of Mind," the best like "The Losers Game," "Visual Vortex"... We're also taking some from the "Labyrinth of Dreams." We'll do like sixteen songs on tour and that's the fact we're going on tour with Kamelot.

So, Chris (Allister) is playing with you like the real member of the band.

Well, obviously the band is four of us, officially and legally. We have the contract, Dirk (Bruinenberg), Martin (Helmantel), Henk (Van Den Laars), and me. But Chris is basically permanently in the line-up, and we have a great agreement with him. That's the great basis to work. And we're going on tour together, we did the photo session with him, we're giving him the feeling he's part of the team. He even wrote songs on this album. We give him a lot of freedom, we try to make him feel welcome because he works as hard as anybody. And he's a nice guy.

And who would play keyboards?

If he wasn't there? Henk. He can play keyboards, he played a few songs on the album...

I mean live.

Oh, live?? We obviously need a keyboard player. I think Chris fits in the image of the band. And he's the youngest guy, he's only 27 years. He's 10 years younger than me, the same age than you. I like that, because he's doing things now when he's 27 that I wish I did 10 years ago, but I never had a chance. He got to Japan on tour for the first time at the age of 27. I didn't get to Japan until I was 34. So I'm really happy for him. He's full of energy and enthusiasm. We're all happy now, we didn't dream it would go this well. I see new doors open with this record, and I just hope that the style has changed a little bit. I feel on the creative side, musically, I think we've achieved a lot with this record. We didn't do the album just trying to get money. We did

the album first of all most musically, that we could stand behind, be proud, all the days. Then secondly, if it sells great, then... great. As long as we can make music. That's how the band functions.

If I'm talking about this new album, I have to say that the same happened to me with the "State of Mind." Do you remember when I told you about one year ago it wasn't very easy to get into its music in the beginning. But when you listen to it, there's something that makes you listen to it more and more... until it opens.

At that time you said you liked "Shadow Dancer." The thing I find in "Shadow Dancer" is that it's melodic, but it's also technically very good. If you listen to what Henk creates on his guitar... and also the drum work of Dirk. That's quite clever what they do musically. Once you get used to that kind of time changes and stuff then you get vocal melody on the top which is its softer side. I like melody, I'm very melodic-orientated person. So, if you like melody, then you'll definitely get into band like Elegy. That's the thing we have noticed in Germany at the moment. They have these thing called Soundchecks, all the journalists make a vote at the end of month. They have Top-20 list. For the first time in Germany, we made the Top-20 list! I hope that while we're still playing as alive band that we can gain a lot more new fans in the future. That's my dream. But you, please carry on... [laughs]

Ok [smile]. When I think one song from "Manifestation of Fear" it makes me... I mean the second song... "Frenzy"!

Yes, I feel like urinating.
[laughs] You mean it's bombastic?

Yes and it's not the first song on the album, but the second song...

It had to be the second song because of the story, substories. It's like the "Angel Without Wings" lows the whole thing down a little bit. It's more kind of old

Whitesnake-ish style. I would have liked to put the "Angel Without Wings" rather at the end of the album but I couldn't because of the story. Is that a problem for you that there are two bombastic, heavy songs, numbers one 1 and 2?

No, I definitely like the way it is! And the last song... "Metamorphosis" at the end...

You know, we start the set, the live set, we open it with "Metamorphosis."

I think the verse is very intensive, and it grows and grows. Something I've noticed in your music is that there's 'bridge' in every song, and it gives the feeling of growth. Elegy is a band that uses them.

I hope more people start to realize it and like it. The sad thing is there are a lot of bands going around in metal scene that tend to sound like Helloween and kind of following the shadow of Helloween. But we're trying to create something different. You could say that Elegy started off a little bit in the direction of Dream Theater as an influence. But I feel now that it was creating the own sound and we found our own direction.

I remember when we're driving back from Tampere to Helsinki, Henk said to me: "Terhi, you've been studying heavy metal. Would you say some comments about our music." Well, I said that there's no band to which I could compare your music straight. Now when I got this new album, I tried to think about it again. But I have to say, your style is there, but you have developed your sound and style further.

That's what I think as well. It took us a couple of years to develop that, but I think we're on the right track with this new direction now. And we'll keep the energy and the power in the sound, because I think that's what is great in Elegy, it keeps excitement. There's clever drum work that Dirk does, using double bass drum technique, but in such way that is not used just straight forward.

I like the part of "Metamorphosis" when the drums start suddenly when getting into chorus... it's like... what's happening there?

Exactly. It's like exploding. Yeah, I'm very proud of this record. It was a big achievement to do it and I think we did a great job together with Tommy Newton. It's the best thing we could have done.

Do you want to know to which album I was listening today?

Tell me.

"Symphony of Dreams."

Oh, my first first solo album...

Yes.

I did that on no budget. I borrowed the money to try to press CDs, can you believe it? I sold 3500 copies myself.

This album is not very heavy... it's very melodic.

At the time I came out of Vengeance, it had failed, and I was so depressed. I didn't want to do any heavy metal. I just wanted to do more melodic music, a little softer, a bit of blues.

I have been thinking of that album and this new one.

There's a huge difference. "Symphony of Dreams" is a poppy album.

Yes it is, but there is something from your present style... catchy melodies...

Oh yes, there's something...

It's funny, because I have learnt to make a difference between you and Henk, in your composings...

Oh, you already have. Funny... If you think, for example, the song "Master of Deception," that's the kind of song I'm writing now for my solo album. Dirk is going to play drums for me, Tomas is going to play five songs on guitar for me. Maybe I can try getting a

few German artists, for example from Vanden Plas. So maybe that comes out next year. I hope to get European deal; if not, then maybe Modern Music would like to do it, because Henk is going to play a couple of songs on that as well. My second and third album didn't come out in Finland.

Actually, I didn't get this in Finland either...

Oh, you didn't? Where did you buy it? In Sweden?

No. My boyfriend sent it from Spain.

Spain? Incredible [laughs]... small world. With that first solo album I played live on MTV Headbangers Ball. I sold many records because of that. My third album sounded like an Elegy style, like 'Beyond' style, but I couldn't get distribution. I managed to do some stuff in Sweden, but didn't get distribution. That's basically why I stopped my solo project. That was complete waste of time. But now, because of the success of Elegy, there's a lot of interest around me as a singer, so who knows...

I've been manipulating people here...

Yeah, and we really appreciate your support and your interest in our music. You've been promoting Elegy, I know you. So you're kind of people we need. Anyways, I wish you good luck with all you're doing. I hope to see you on tour... somewhere.

Greetings to guys and Ian, take care!

The whole Elegy sends the big Hello! See you!

Elegy discography:

"Labyrinth of Dreams" CD (1993)

"Supremacy" CD (1994)

"Lost" CD (1995)

"Primal Instinct" EP (1996)

"State of Mind" CD (1997)

"Manifestation of Fear" CD (1998)

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26/6/1989 Venray, the Netherlands. I travelled to this little town in the south-east of the Netherlands together with two Germans in a Volkswagen Beetle. We were going to see a live show of the American band Hades. Hades had made a name in the underground with their combination of semi-technical speed/thrash metal, high-pitched vocals, and intelligent lyrics. Although their two albums "Resisting Success" and "If at First You Don't Succeed" weren't that successful, they did have a lot of fans in Europe. Enough to warrant a European tour, so a tour was organized by a small Belgian promoter Metallssee (without any financial support from their European record label Roadrunner). Although the attendances at the shows were average, credit must be given to Hades for making the journey across the ocean which a lot of bands wouldn't have done. The objective of our visit to Venray was also to do an interview for the fourth issue of the German magazine *Epicus Doom* (now defunct). We hadn't made any arrangements with the record company so it was up to the courtesy and interest of the band to sacrifice some of their precious time. A couple of hours before the show, I had a chance to interview Dan Lorenzo (guitars), Allan Tecchio (vocals), and Jimmy Schulman (bass) in a crowded Volkswagen. It turned out to be a relaxed conversation about a range of subjects, live shows, lack of record company support, democracy in the USA, and Edgar Allan Poe. The show later that evening sparked with enthusiasm and commitment. Two weeks later, after the European tour had lasted 17 shows in four countries, Hades had decided to split up....

18/1/1999 Eindhoven, The Netherlands. The telephone rang and Dan Lorenzo spoke with an excited voice to announce that the scheduled interview concerning the revived Hades was about to start...

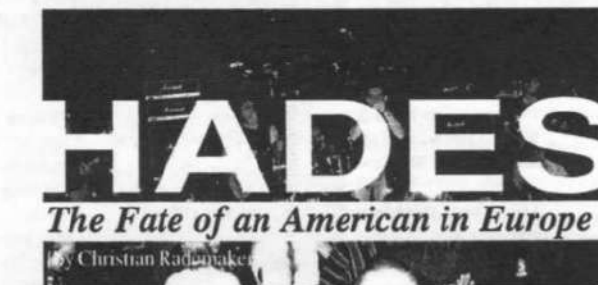
A lot has happened in the history of the Hades and its initiator Dan Lorenzo. It would be out of the context of this article to focus on every detail. But a short glance back is relevant to put the current release of Hades' new album "Savior \$elf" into perspective. In order to give some insight into the history of Hades, I've used some excerpts from the interview that Eddy Vermeiren of the Belgian magazine *Metaline* did with Dan Lorenzo and Allan Tecchio on the night of the last Hades show back in June 1989.

ML: You've released quite some demos and even some independent singles; how did those things go down?
DL: The first thing we did was the "Girls Will Be Girls" single, we sold a 1000 copies, and quite a lot in Belgium too. Then we were on both "Born To Metalize," on Megaforce, and "Metal

Massacre 6," on Metal Blade. And when Alan joined the band, we put out a 45-single called "The Cross," with "Widow's Mite" on the flipside. As for demos, there was the "Live At Fox" demo and tons and tons of our live tapes.

ML: I understand that the "The Cross/Widow's Mite" single got you some interest from record companies.

AT: Primarily from Torrid Records, with whom we ended up signing. They really liked it a lot, and they felt that, on the evidence



of our earlier material as well, they would've signed us anyhow. Therefore, it wasn't really too hard to negotiate a deal with them. Other than that, there weren't really that many labels knocking at our door.

Hades were a very popular band in the underground from the mid-to the late 80s. Their singles and debut albums were met with critical acclaim from the fanzine press but they never really transcended their insider-status. Alan Tecchio had a few possible explanations:

AT: I think we had a lot of problems with that, keeping the 'buzz' alive and things, because the delays to do with the albums. It took a very long time for us to get



the first record out, as well as the second. And I feel time is crucial, very crucial. We were very efficient in the studio but unfortunately the record company didn't have the same efficiency as ourselves, in releasing the product, in marketing it properly, and in giving it a proper distribution. I'm not to put the blame on them for us failing, but it didn't help either.

ML: Are you satisfied with the albums that you've released?

DL: We did have production problems, we had some

typical bullshit that goes on when you're in the studio, that held us back. Maybe we would have liked have seen the production on some of the tracks on both albums be improved in our eyes, but I don't think anyone has regrets about what we've released. I'm very happy with both albums!

ML: Have there been any other offers since Torrid Records?

AT: Yeah there have been a few, do you want to elaborate on them, Dan?

DL: I guess the biggest

offer we had was from Mechanic Records, who did the *Vio-Lence* album. They offered Torrid, supposedly, 60000 \$ before our second album came out, but Torrid wanted to hold on to us.

ML: What will you guys be doing after this tour? Alan, I understand you had an offer from WatchTower?

AT: I'm going to audition for them but I don't know if I will get the job or not. That's my plan for now, yeah.

ML: What's the new direction you want to head for in the future Dan?

DL: The same as I've always been doing, diverse within whatever band I'll be in.

Just exploring every facet of music that I'm into, except for commercial heavy metal, which I don't really like.

As it turned out, Allan Tecchio did do the audition and ended up recording Watch Tower's second and final album "Control and Resistance" in Berlin. Shortly after the European tour, Alan Tecchio left Watch Tower and joined Dan Lorenzo's new band Non-Fiction. Bass-player Jimmy Schulman was also part of Non-Fiction for a while but has since left the music recording business. At the time of the Hades split-up there was quite a bit of tension.

ML: What about you Dan? You sort of grounded Hades, doesn't it feel sad that the band will be no longer?

DL: A little bit. I'm really happy now, I always wanted to be a songwriter and I don't think I will ever be in a touring-band again. I wanna put out records, but I certainly don't want to tour anymore, not because I don't like it but just because when you got to deal with so many personalities, it's not easy for me. I'm really happy though, and writing songs and put them out on records. It is basically what I want to do right now. I don't need to be in a touring band. I don't need to be on MTV or in magazines, or signing autographs.

ML: What will eventually happen to the new songs that you've been writing lately?

AT: It's uncertain yet, a lot of them will probably not get any kind of release, but some of it might. I'm sure Jimmy will formulate his own band and use some of the material that he's written, some of the brand-new stuff. Like I said, musical differences, it's one of the directions that Hades were heading for as far as Jimmy wanted it, and his new band, whoever he winds up playing with, will continue in that direction, I'm sure. Perhaps, I'll use some of topics I've written about lyrically, maybe not. I really don't know yet. Dan just said he still wants to record and release music, so that will probably light in different forms of what they are right now.

As it turned most of the songs that Hades played on the European tour and which had not been part of the first two albums, found their way onto re-releases on Hades CDs.

The full Hades discography is:
 "Deliver Us From Evil" 7" (1982)
 "The Cross/Widow's Mite" 7" (1985)
 "Resisting Success" LP, Torrid Records (1987)
 "If at First You Don't Succeed" CD, Torrid Records (1988)
 "Live on Location" CD, Grand Slam (1992)
 "Resisting Success" CD, re-release with 7 bonus tracks, L.T.D. (1995)
 "Exist To Resist" CD, Black Pumpkin (1996)
 "If at First You Don't Succeed" CD, re-release with 8 bonus tracks, Exist To Resist (1998)
 "The Lost Fox Studio Sessions" CD, Exist to Resist (1998)

As mentioned earlier, after the Hades split-up, main songwriter Dan Lorenzo continued his musical endeavors with the band Non-Fiction. Non-Fiction released an EP with Dan Nastasi on vocals (who later left for Mucky Pup). Allan Tecchio, after a short stint as vocalist for Watch Tower, rejoined forces with Dan Lorenzo by becoming

the vocalist for Non-Fiction. Although the creative force behind Hades and Non-Fiction is the same, the music bears no real resemblance to Hades and is more doom/grunge oriented.

The full Non-Fiction discography is as follows:

"Non-Fiction" EP, Plastic Head (1989)
"Preface" CD, Grand Slam (1991)
"In the Know" CD, Grand Slam (1992)
"It's a Wonderful Lie" CD, Steamhammer (1996)

In the period 1996-1998, it was quiet around the song-writing team of Dan Lorenzo and Allan Tecchio until rumors resurfaced of a Hades reunion. These rumors became facts and this resulted in an interview with Dan Lorenzo on 18/1/99.

Actually we met about ten years ago when I interviewed you, Allan Tecchio and Jimmy Schulman in an old Volkswagen Beetle at the show in Venray. That was a couple of dates before you split up. But you probably don't remember that.

DL: I remember almost every night of that tour. I remember there was a band called Spit. I met one of the guys' sister in Switzerland, and when I came back a few years later with the Non-Fiction tour they were all surprised that I remembered them. I don't drink, smoke, or do drugs so I've got a pretty good memory.

I was actually quite surprised that I read in magazines a while ago that Hades were reformed and that you were going to release a new album. How did that come about?

DL: I was also very surprised. I hadn't been playing guitar for two years and Allan and I hadn't really talked to each other for two years. I went to my buddy's house once and he went onto Yahoo (internet search engine). We punched in my name and we saw all these beautiful Hades websites. This gave me the passion to release all of our back catalogue again. Allan and I got together, and we released "If at First You Don't Succeed" and added some bonus tracks. It was remastered and everybody says it sounds a lot better. We sold a lot of copies and we were like: "Wow a lot of people still like this band." So my buddy loaned me his guitar, and although I hadn't played for two years, I wrote the opening riff for "Savior Self." Once I write a great riff, I want to record it and release a record.

How difficult was it to get everybody back together again?

DL: It was very easy to get Ed Fuhrman and Scott Lepage back. The only guy that gave us any resistance was Tommy Coombs. He played in the band Trixter for a while and several cover bands and likes pop metal now. When I said to him that we wanted to do another Hades record, he said: "How much money are you going to pay me?" I told him that I was going to pay for the whole recording myself,

if we weren't able to get a deal, so I couldn't tell him how much he would earn. He thought he was in a band that was going to get a record deal and then ended up not getting a record deal. Now he wishes he joined up with us I think. We're happy to have Dave Lescinsky in the band, because he's able to play very fast double-bass drums like Tommy used to play. Dave is young and he brings a new audience to Hades. He was familiar with the old songs because he's been a big Hades fan since he was about fifteen years old.

How did this deal with Metal Blade come about?

DL: We recorded the record, and before we finished mixing it, we wanted to shop the tapes around to get an idea if I should be putting this album out myself or if we could actually get a deal. A friend of mine at Concrete Marketing in New York city suggested that I send a tape to Brian Slagel of Metal Blade. I told him that I didn't think he would ever sign us. I mailed him a tape and three days later he called us and said that if Michael Trengert likes the tape they would do a deal. We were all amazed. We still are all surprised because we've now done our first ever video, and I'm doing my first ever press tour. They are making this beautiful posters. There's so many things going on and I wish they were going on back in 1988. We would not have broken up if we had had a push from our record label like this. We would have been much happier, and we would have had better attendances at our shows back in 1989.

Let's trace back to the feelings and emotions to that fateful period in 1989....

ML: How has this European Tour been for you guys?

DL: I had a lot of fun but I think I'm a bit different person; from the first day of the tour to the last, I'm very tired, I can't wait to go home but it was a totally great experience seeing another part of the world and living a different life-style. I really had a great time, if nothing else!

ML: Is Europe what you expected it would be or is it different?

DL: It's pretty much what I thought it would be. I mean, every time you take someone out of their roots, it's going to be a bit shocking or whatever, but we were pretty much prepared for it and I'm surprised that we did as well as we did as far as I didn't think everyone would hold up physically as well as we did. I don't think we sounded any worse from one show to the next. Alan's voice kept up better than I thought it would, and all of us in general dealt with the whole situation a lot better than I thought we

might have.

ML: Are there certain aspects that struck you, while being over here in Europe?

AT: The enthusiasm of some of the crowds, compared to America, is really surprising, although we had been warned about it and we expected it to be some sort of very good welcome here. Especially some shows in Germany and Holland were



very good, response-wise.

ML: This is the final gig of Hades ever; how comes?

AT: Where can I begin? There are countless reasons for the break-up, as far as musical differences within the band, attitude differences, personal problems that we've always had before and that were highlighted because we've been on the road together and been with each other every single day, and it's obviously been amplified through that. It really sucks, but I think the outcome will be for the better for each individual person, obviously not for the group as a whole!

Let's talk about your new album

"Savior Self." I found it to be very short (approximately 36 minutes). DL: We didn't want to record a record with twelve or thirteen songs that's an hour long of which half is great and half is horrible. To me, Pantera should just release five-song records because each of their albums has just five great songs. I don't want to be one of those type of bands. With the re-releases, Allan and I have been putting out such long CDs (68 minutes, for example). We wanted to put out quality versus quantity. There are examples of bands that write thirty songs and then put ten songs on the record of which three are great. These numbers don't impress me. To me our new record goes by really fast because it's an awesome record, the more you'll listen to it, the more you'll like it.

If you look at the album, it consists of a kind of mix of real songs as well

as some intros. It gives me the impression that you didn't have enough time to write a number of songs?

DL: Ed Fuhrman really wanted to get some of his stuff on the album and this is like him getting his solo album material out there. The two songs "The Agnostic" and "The Atheist," that's really all Ed. I just wanted to make sure that he had some material on the record so he could be happy with it. He's been with the band a long time and I love both of those pieces. I think they work really well within the album itself.

What is the general theme of the "Savior Self"?

DL: The general theme is that we've become America's human blameless society. Nobody wants to take responsibility for where they're at in their life. People say that they have bad luck, and I don't believe that. I think that if you would take away my job right now, I would be really upset for a couple of weeks and then I would go out and get another good job. If you would take away my record deal, I would be really upset for a couple of weeks and then I would go out and get another record deal. There are no excuses in life. If you want something bad enough you can make it happen. Obviously there are people that are born as part of minorities and they might not have enough money. For them it's a lot harder to get out of that then it would be for me. You can look at all the guys that were in Hades ten years ago. Which guys are still living with their mothers, which guys have no money in the bank, and which guys are doing well?

So the general theme is that when you want to succeed in life, you'll probably not get there the first time around but when you keep on trying you'll reach your goals?

DL: You need to try really hard. You can have a lack of basic effort. Too many people walk around saying that they gave 100% effort. That's bullshit, it's impossible to give a 100% effort because you sleep eight hours a day. People make up too many excuses whether it's for collecting welfare like some girls are doing by accidentally getting pregnant. Why doesn't this happen to me. I don't want my taxes to pay for their accidents.

Allan wrote all the lyrics but did the rest of the band give recommendations for topics?

DL: It's mainly me and Allan that come up with the ideas. I came up with the title "Savior Self." There's a line in the song "Active Contrition" that says: "Ten percent of my check got to get my head checked." This is related to my mother. My mother does not have much money left because my father died a long time ago. My mom was complaining that the church keeps telling her to give them ten percent of her salary while she has no income! There's also a video for this song.



Hades

What should fundamentally change in America, the education in schools for example?

DL: The welfare system without a doubt, the judicial system and the way lawyers work. There are so many frivolous lawsuits in America. We need it like the way it is in the UK where when you lose a court case, you have to pay for the other person's lawyer bills. There are just too many lawyers in America of which 99% are scumbags.

Have you ever considered making a type of home video, there should be a lot of bootleg video footage available?

DL: As I mentioned, we have a video for the song "Active Contrition." It will be on a Metal Blade video compilation called "Metal Meisters Volume 2." It comes out in April. We have so much great footage for a full length video. We have this show in Boston that was the best show we've ever done and it has an excellent sound quality. You should fax Metal Blade and ask them to put out a Hades home video because we have tons of great stuff. They said we could talk about this concept when the record sells.

Coming back to the new album, actually one of my favorite songs is "Decline and Fall of the American Empire." In the lyrics, it also reflects back on the Roman and Egyptian Empire...

DL: That's funny because my wife and I got married in Rome, Italy. After the wedding we went all over Italy and Egypt for our honeymoon. So I think that's where Allan got that line! Allan and I are very conservative, we think America has become far too liberal and far too lenient on criminals. We think lawyers have ruined the country like for example in the OJ Simpson trial. We've had enough of it and we think major changes should be made.

When did the decline really start then?

DL: To me it started with the OJ Simpson trial. The outcome of the verdict was really embarrassing for America. It made me furious, and the Clinton thing really just about pushed me over the edge. My wife wants to retire to Italy, while I like to retire to the UK. Maybe America will get their shit together, and we can retire there, and that's where we should be.

What will the position of the USA be like in about 20 years?

DL: Well, economically we're doing amazing. People in America are doing really well, even a dumb guy like me can afford a cleaning lady. Ten years ago I couldn't afford to eat a sandwich, and now I live in an expensive apartment. The economy is awesome but I think the morality has declined so much. But you don't want to have the best economy in the world with a joke for a president.

Being a lawyer is a popular profession though.

DL: Yes it is, because they make a lot of money, but I don't know how the hell they sleep at night.

Is it a kind of release for you to transform this anger into words and then onto the album?

DL: Definitely, it's fun to piss people off and to give them your viewpoint and it's fun to play heavy-metal guitar. It's a great feeling. There's more to my life now than just music because I have a job and a wife, I play basketball, and I have the band. It's an awesome time in my life in the way Metal Blade is treating us: I have the best of everything.

Is the deal with Metal Blade for a single CD or multiple CDs?

DL: It's a two record deal but I've been in the business long enough to know that you can sign a seven-record deal and you can put out one record and that's that. The label always has the option. We're of course hoping that enough people will buy the record so Metal Blade will do another record with us. We're not doing it for the money. We all have jobs, this is fun for us, and it's really coming from the love of music.

When you started out all those years ago, did you, at that point, have the dream that your music would be your work, or were you realistic enough to know that this only happens to one in ten thousand bands?

DL: We were realistic but you're always hopeful with each record. You always think that your newest record is your best record. Non-Fiction was actually less popular than Hades, but when I was in Non-Fiction, I didn't need to have a job because we made some money. We were better organized. When I was in Hades, I always needed a job.

How difficult was it to determine the musical direction for Hades. I have the feeling that the new CD is a kind of combination of the work you've done with Non-Fiction and the older Hades.

DL: I don't think the new CD has that much to do with Non-Fiction. It's easy for me to write songs in the Non-Fiction style. If I write two fast songs and two slow songs, for the Hades

record I'll pick the fast songs. I want this to sound like a Hades record and not a Hades and Non-Fiction record. I guess the video song "Active Contrition" has a little bit of a Non-Fiction feel, but overall I think this is absolutely a Hades album.

Why did you go back to the name Hades once again after all these years?

DL: Well to me, the two bands Hades and Non-Fiction are like night and day. For example, there are no double bass drums on a Non-Fiction record. It's not like I can't write in all different styles, we picked the songs that sounded like Hades songs but we could've made a record that sounded like Non-Fiction. It's not like we're changing names by going back to Hades. The common part between the two bands is me and Allan Tecchio, when you add three different people to the mix then to me it's a totally different band. They have very little to do with one and another except for Allan is writing the lyrics and I'm writing the music. I don't think they sound similar too often.

Are Non-Fiction still alive then?

DL: No, the last record we did was "It's a Wonderful Lie," and we haven't done any Non-Fiction for a couple of years. I don't think we'll be back together because me and the bass player don't get along too well.

What about a European tour? You'd probably love to do that but are then any realistic possibilities?

DL: Well, we all have really good paying day jobs now so it would be tough to come out for a month. We all have two weeks off in the summer so we're going to do a two week tour either in the USA or Europe. We'll see where the record sells better, and that's where we're going to go. We'd love to do some summer festivals in Europe.

What type of work do you do then?

DL: I sell advertising for a magazine called Steppin Out Magazine. So does Allan in fact. If you go to www.steppinoutmagazine.com, you'll see the magazine I work for. I also have a column called 24 7, Allan has a column called the Barfly. I write a bit for the magazine. I've interviewed Joe Perry from Aerosmith, Pete Steele (Type o Negative), KK Downing (Judas Priest). There's a couple of interviews but primarily we sell advertising. It gives me an opportunity to talk to some of my early idols. Life has turned out very well for me and I'm a much happier person than I was ten years ago.

How old are you?

DL: I just turned 36 last week.

Congratulations! You've been active musically with Hades and Non-Fiction for almost two decades. How do you see your life in ten years, can you see yourself playing another ten years?

DL: Probably another five years, I can't see why not. But then again I started Hades twenty years ago: the second I picked up my guitar I called myself Dan from Hades. Who would have thought I'd be talking to you in 1999 in Germany about my tenth record (including the Non-Fiction albums). You can't predict life. My wife and I say that we don't want to have kids but that might change some day. But, as of right now, we don't want to retire young. We want to travel the world just like we're doing now. We go to Europe twice a year and visit other exotic places like Egypt. We love Europe.

Is that a kind of way of escaping the USA?

DL: I think, and my wife in particular thinks that Americans are so low-class in comparison to Europeans. I didn't go to college and this is the way for me learning. I found out a couple of years ago that I have very high cholesterol, and I had to lose some weight or change my diet. I started jogging, and I hated it. Then I started playing basketball and now I love it. I now play basketball all the time. To me, travelling is a way of learning. I don't want to sit in a classroom.

If you visit a country do you do research into the history of the particular country, the way of life or do you just visit the tourist places?

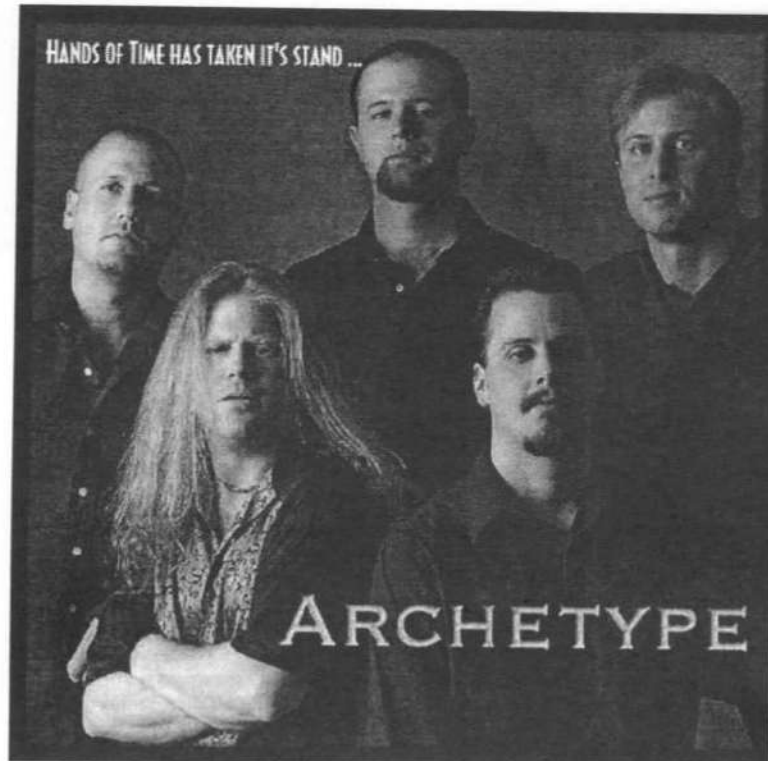
DL: No we don't do that. If we go to Edinburgh, Scotland and London or both and Stonehenge just this summer, then we buy books on each of the places we go to. At the end of the vacation I need another vacation because my wife won't let me sleep. We go to museums, to every inch of the city, and we experience as much as we can. We've been to Europe five times with each other these last few years.

So now it's totally different than the tour you did back in 1989. Now you have a chance to look around and see the sights.

DL: Right, when you go on tour you can't see shit. I've been to London on tour, and I didn't see anything. For example, when the band plays in Paris, you can't hang around in the Louvre for four hours and go to the top of L'Arc de Triomphe. You just don't have time for those things. It's a lot nicer travelling with my wife. Any place new to us is exciting. My wife doesn't like going to anywhere in America, while I haven't been to nine or ten states which I would like to try out. My wife, however, has no interest in that.



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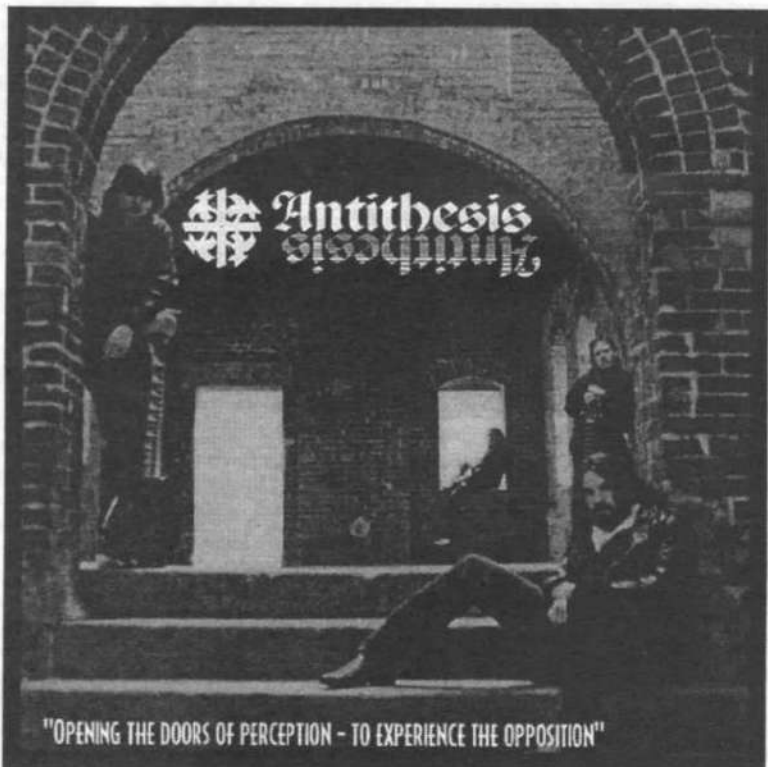
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"OPENING THE DOORS OF PERCEPTION - TO EXPERIENCE THE OPPOSITION"

Destiny's End

Breathe Deep METAL

[by Giedrius Slivinskas]

Destiny's End, Nevermore, and Iced Earth show at The Mason Jar (Phoenix, AZ) was the first show around Tucson (during my 6-month stay there) that I couldn't miss. It was a good chance to see Phoenix, too, but it remained nothing more than a chance, because I arrived to the city way too late. In the middle of a traffic jam (on a highway!), I realized that Superstition Mountains were still 20 miles to the east, and that it was probably better to forget the sightseeing and get to the Mason Jar. The Park of Lost Dutchman (luckily Christian Rademaker hasn't been there, so we still receive his write-ups) remained unvisited. Instead, I did an interview with Dan DeLucie (guitar), Perry Grayson (guitar), and Brian Craig (drums) from Destiny's End outside of the club. It was devastatingly hot, but our minds were still functioning, as you will hopefully realize from the interview.

The doors were opened at 8pm, and the most loyal fans who wanted to see "everything," including two local openers, rushed in. Two opener bands represented the extreme side of metal but were quite good, actually. No names, sorry.

Destiny's End came on stage at 9pm and blasted intense power/speed metal with an energetic performance of singer James Rivera, who, as everybody knows, has been with cult 80s band Helstar for ten years. Destiny's End's live performance impresses more than the debut album, "Breathe Deep the Dark," maybe due to the short, but very concise and to-the-point set. The band kicked off with "Unsolved World," which transformed into "Breathe Deep the Dark" and "Under Destruction's Thumb." "Transition" was a new song, in an even more uncompromising speed metal style, and didn't bring any surprises. "The Fortress Unvanquishable," one of the fans' favorites according to James, was next. Finally, they closed with the medley of Judas Priest "Beyond the Realms of Death" and "Living After Midnight." When James announced that, I got an accidental elbow kick to my chest from an enthusiastic Judas Priest fan, but still that didn't prevent me from enjoying the rock n' rolling face of Destiny's End, even if I often dislike AC/DC kind of riff rock. James was clearly glad with the audience response, and shook hands with every fan who came up to him. Since the interview would have been somewhat incomplete without James, I approached him, too, and he agreed to answer questions regarding Helstar after the Nevermore set. Nevermore were heavy and intense, but not overly melodic. Many were happy to hear old Sanctuary song "Battle Angels" as well as well-going hits "Next in Line" and "Seven [Fuckin'] Tongues of God." "Poison Godmachine" is probably going to be the fans' and bands' favorite song from their latest album "Dreaming Neon Black."

The set: Beyond Within, Death of Passion, This Sacrament, Next in Line, Dreaming Neon Black, Deconstruction, Poison Godmachine, Battle Angels, Seven Tongues of God.

Iced Earth finished with their professional performance of modern power metal. They probably were the most popular band, judging from the amount of "Something Wicked Tour" T-Shirts. Sing-a-long refrains of "The Hunter" and "Birth of the Wicked" went very well, and the full set was almost 90 minutes long. They played songs from each of their five studio albums.

The set: Intro, My Own Savior, Burning Times, Vengeance is Mine, Last December, Pure Evil, The Hunter, Melancholy (Holy Martyr), The Dark Saga, The Last Laugh, When the Night Falls, Prophecy, Birth of the Wicked, The Coming Curse, Iced Earth, Electric Funeral (Black Sabbath cover).

The show finished at 1am, and I had a heavy ride back to Tucson. Luckily, Amorphis "Tuonela" and Symphorce "True to Promises" helped me to pull off those 100 miles.

The interview with Dan, Perry, and Brian follows. James Rivera and the Helstar's final days story is after that.

THE TOUR AND "COMEBACK OF METAL"

This touring slot with Nevermore and Iced Earth is a good chance for you to introduce the band to US fans. Is it your first tour, have you tried to get on some other tours before?

BC: We did a few shows in Texas, which is our singer James's main space, he is from there, and he's got a pretty good crowd base. We did some shows with Mercyful Fate, local shows in LA with Fates Warning, Flotsam And Jetsam. This is the first major [tour] we've truly been on. We talked about getting on other stuff, but this is really the first thing that came. And it's actually the one we wanted, it's two great bands that we're playing with, and of similar style of music, so it really worked out well for us.

How did you get this opportunity to go with them?

BC: Marco Barbieri works for Century Media, he used

to work for Metal Blade. He really pushed for us, and that worked out. They [Iced Earth, Jag Panzer, Anvil] did two weeks on the East Coast, we tried to get on that, but the timing wasn't so good.

DD: Marco really liked our CD. He pushed to the booking agent and the bands.

Many talk about metal's comeback in the States, do you notice that during this tour? For example, do more people come to the shows?

BC: Quite honestly, no. We played to crowds of three hundred, to crowds of about a hundred.

PG: People are saying that...

DD: Everybody is saying that!

PG: In some cities, it has been good.

BC: The draw doesn't seem any bigger than in any shows in the past.

DD: But the people are into it, which makes us happy. As long as people are interested, they are into it, that's all what counts.

PG: We are hopeful that it's coming back.

BC: It doesn't change what we're gonna do. We are heavy metal, and that's what it's about. Whether metal is back or not, we're playing it, no matter what.

I read on the Internet impressions about yesterday's show in Albuquerque, New Mexico. The person said that there were not many people...

BC: It was probably the worst show that's been on so far. It was an early show, very inactive crowd. I think it started at 7 or 8.

DD: I think Nevermore and Iced Earth had a lot better crowd response than we did.

BC: Yeah, we just went out early.

DD: It was a little kind of a fiasco, there was supposed to be some band playing afterwards. They were like closing the club down, opening it back up again for another bands. That had an effect on timing of our show. We went out a lot earlier.

How long is your set, do you play songs only from the "Breathe Deep The Dark" album?

BC: We are playing two new songs that we've done throughout... well, not really throughout, but... Pretty much like at least one of the two new ones each night. They fit in with the material that we have on "Breathe Deep the Dark," it's a nice continuation. It's kind of funny because they got quite a good reception, and it's the music people haven't heard.

DD: It's an half-hour set that we get. When the Nevermore will go to Europe, we'll probably get 45 minutes or 50 minutes. It's short, but it's a powerizing set...

PG: Everything is heavy.

How is the metal movement in Los Angeles?

PG: Non-existing.

There is a new club called "Black Lodge"...

PG: Black Lodge, yeah. I've been down there...

BC: We were talking to Bob, maybe he'll book something for us when we get back, to do a show there. [As appeared later, the show together with Steel Prophet was booked.]

DD: I think it's getting a little bit better for power metal in LA. Or the metal thing. Just judging from the reception that Hammerfall got opening up for Death, they got a really positive response.

PG: Things are changing for the better.

BC: Coz they're on their way out. [laughs]

PG: Like he said about Death and Hammerfall, back in 1995 when Death toured with Nevermore, a lot of people at that show in Hollywood were just flipping Nevermore off. They were just not open to it, clear vocalist and stuff like that. And the Death/Hammerfall tour, everyone was up there in front like "Sing a

long with Hammerfall!". That was really cool.

BC: I think it's gonna be a real test with the show coming up at the Whiskey, because I think it might not be as big of a turnout as everybody is expecting. Everybody is saying that's gonna be one of the best shows, but...

BC: A lot of people in LA don't know who Iced Earth is. Everybody knows Nevermore, but...

PG: We could have got a lot of people to come out, a lot of our fans out there in LA, but unfortunately there is some kind of thing going on with the promoter who bought the show out there, he just didn't want to let us on the bill. So we can't play the show... But we're just rolling with it. We are going to play in Anaheim, and we'll hopefully see a lot of our fans.

Hammerfall brings up another question. Some people name Destiny's End a true metal band, but some bands are "very true" metal, like Hammerfall and Manowar. What do you think about them?

DD: It's all metal, it's all good.

BC: I think all three, us and those two bands, they're all metal, I don't see a drastic difference. Maybe we are a little darker, but not really that different.

They focus on the image more, spikes and leathers...

DD: Yeah, we're not really not it.

BC: Judas Priest already did it, we don't need to do that.

PG: It's not right for everyone.

BC: It works for Hammerfall, because that is their image, and that's what their songs are about.

DD: I think it's cool. I mean, I love Manowar, and I like that they are so upfront about their metalness, and they don't give a shit about what everybody thinks. And I really like their music. We're doing our own thing, and they're doing their thing.

BC: That's cool either way, it doesn't really matter.

You are also going to this year's Wacken festival in Germany. This will be your first visit in Europe...?

DD: Yeah, it will be our first.

BC: We're all virgins... [laughs]

How about James?

BC: James did a little publicity tour over there for a week or so, already for this album.

DD: He played over there with Helstar.

PG: None of us played over there.

BC: Who is this James guy? [laughs]

About the Metal Blade deal, one thing about this label is that their main office is in USA, and they have a division in Europe. Meanwhile Century Media and Nuclear Blast are the other way around. Do you think it's an advantage to have that, how are the sales comparing Europe and USA?

PG: There is no doubt about the fact that it's selling better in Europe than it is here. That's for sure.

BC: I think we have a big advantage having an American office, when other bands don't, because we have a little bit more distribution and more promotion than smaller bands on the other labels. I mean, you can't compare Nevermore and Iced Earth being on Century Media, because they are big bands. The other bands on Century Media that are at the level we are right now don't get the exposure that we've actually got. It is a big advantage, but they [Metal Blade] do a great job over there in Europe also. We kind of do have the best of both worlds in that respect.

Century Media have some bands like Radakka, for example, that are starving without publicity...

BC: Century Media is kind of different in how they do things. They promote their really big bands, but I don't think they do a lot for their smaller bands. Nuclear Blast seems to do a little bit more for their smaller bands, but they have a lot of death metal bands, too.

Do you hear any response from Japan?

BC: No. Basically the story we have right now is... We figured that would be a big market, but what we were told is that their economy is so bad right now, that they are trying to keep the imported music out, they keep their money in their economy.

PG: JVC had an option to pick it up, they just haven't even thought about it yet. At the same time, I've seen "Breathe Deep the Dark" on the import metal charts in "Burn!" magazine.

BC: I think there is a small limit of distribution over there, maybe 500 or 1,000 copies...

But if it was on the chart, it means people buy it...

BC: Yeah... Actually, I think that chart was a playlist of magazine editors.

PG: No, there was a playlist, but there was also a chart. They have charts for every issue, and we were on it.

BC: That would indicate sales...

"BREATHE DEEP THE DARK" ALBUM and NEW MATERIAL

Does it bother you that many people compare your debut album "Breathe Deep the Dark" to Helstar and name you an 80s metal band?

BC: Baptize in blood! [laughs] It doesn't bother me.

DD: We expected that, I mean we got James from Helstar, they're always gonna compare us to Helstar. They even compared our other band [New Eden], without James, to Helstar.

PG: The thing is that everyone has been really positive about us, as far as comparisons. A lot of people have been saying to me that we're better than Helstar, I don't know, I can't say that. Those guys were great musicians...

DD: Most of people say that we have an original sound, which we really like.

PG: A lot of people say there's a flavor of the 80s, Helstar thing. Most people have been really positive, say it's something fresh.

BC: From another point of view, I think it actually would be great. I'd like to see that used more, because they [label] haven't really pushed that "this is Helstar singer's new band." One thing we talked about is putting on the CDs a sticker stating that, but that never happened. It took a lot longer for people [to realize]... Even last night at the show, one fan was thinking "wait... so...", and then he got it: Helstar, James Rivera, Destiny's End. He'd put it together. Not that they pushing it as much as they should be. We always get asked about it from fans and stuff. We're all Helstar fans, too, so it's not a big deal. But, at the same time, you wanna be standing on your own.

PG: We are more song-oriented, when you compare us to...

BC: Depends on what era.

PG: Yeah, if you compare us to "Distant Thunder" and "Nosferatu," we're a little bit more song oriented, and less all about shredding. Gotta have a song that can really stand on its own.

BC: What you should have said is they can't shred. Just kidding. [laughs]

Do you have any new material, you said you played new songs on the tour?

BC: Yeah, we've got a couple of songs. One is actually an autobiography that James wrote, it's called "A Legend," and it's about how he's really been trying to bring back metal, and how he's all along been doing metal, and he's never given away. In a way, he is legendary, you know. Then, we've got another one, it's actually one we pretty much play every night, it's called "Transition" that Dan wrote. When I hear it (when we play it), it does remind me of Hammerfall, it's kind of got that feel. It's a pretty fast song and fits in the material that we've already written.

Do you think the new album will be different from "Breathe Deep the Dark"?

PG: I think the production will be better. The songs will be similar, but we've grown a little bit as a band already.

DD: The response we got from these two songs is that they're heavier than the old shit. I don't know if I agree with that, but... [laughs]

PG: It's still very much Destiny's End.

DD: It's not gonna be a lot different.

PG: It's gonna be a little bit different than "Breathe Deep the Dark," but it's still gonna be us.

DD: I think lyrically it will be more different than musically. Musically, it will still be speed, power, melodic...

PG: This is not gonna be a Reload album! [laughs]

What do you think about those bands that release similar albums all the time, like Running Wild, Manowar, as opposed to some bands that really change, like Sentenced?

BC: I don't think Manowar really sounds all the same all the time. They have small progressions, I think, so as other bands that sound the same do get repetitive. You gotta change, at least a little bit with each album, grow with it. Not necessarily change what you're writing about, just you have to be able to sample and grow each time.

Has "Breathe Deep the Dark" received any criticism that you would try to address in your next album?

BC: One thing that I've seen is that our lyrics were almost too much the same. We all went and wrote different lyrics, but we all, in a weird sort of way, wrote about the same kind of thing. We didn't write a concept album, but there is a loose concept to it. Another thing is, in every damn song, it says something about "destiny"...

DD: Yeah, we repeated the same warnings too much, which I kind of agree with. We kept that at the back of our minds, when we were writing our lyrics, that's why I say the new one is gonna be different lyrically.

What do you think about direct albums that last 40-45 minutes?

BC: Oh, it's kind of a good length.

DD: We don't like when it gets too long

BC: If it's too long, some of it just... Sometimes you fly through it, one hour, you don't notice it, but somehow when it is that long, it drags. I think our album is



45 minutes, and that's perfect for us.

I heard that Denis Gulbey from Sentinel Steel specifically asked you to make a 45 minute album...

DD: Yeah, that was New Eden. And we agreed with him, we didn't have a problem with that. Although we wanted some other songs on that. [laughs]

About metal in general, lately you do not find any new styles emerging. Just maybe we have some subgenres, but not exactly new styles... Do you think we can expect anything groundbreaking in future, or do you think it will be more or less between heavy metal and death metal?

BC: If I could think of something groundbreaking, we would have been doing it already. [laughs]

PG: It's so hard to actually go out there and do something different.

BC: Right now, there is a big movement that is being called metal, you know, like Rammstein or something. To me, that's not traditional metal, but it's kind of different than anything anybody's done.

PG: I don't know if I would call it metal.

BC: I don't call it metal, but it seems to be the movement right now.

DD: We're not really trying to create a new style, we like to play with our own feeling and create songs with original melodies and original riffs.

BC: I think it's not, like you said subgenre, gonna be a disco-metal or country-metal.

DD: When you are getting to that original style, it kind of sounds like a gimmick, like all these goths doing metal, this is really gimmick if you ask me. Usually it doesn't work, you listen to it and it's like [sound of dissatisfaction] enough already, it's stupid. You don't need choirs or orchestra.

BC: Sometimes you do. Depends on what you try to portray.

DD: Beat the shit out of real metal. [laughs]

BC: That's where we differ, 'coz I like those more operatic bands like Angra...

DD: I like Angra, but Angra has got a good mix of that shit. Like some like Therion, it's like...

PG: This is metal we're talking about, some guitars got to be real heavy and crunchy, you have to have lots of double bass, and all that. You want the aggression to still be there, but still some melody, 'coz otherwise you loose people.

The lyrics of "Breathe Deep the Dark" prefer dreams and fantasies to real world. What do you think, to which degree is it good for a man to have those dreams?

BC: Look at the real world around us... [laughs]

DD: I don't think that's the case that we wrote. It's got a real-world element into it, but it's delivered in a way that is kind of underworldly. But it is by no means that kind of fantasy type.

PG: Swords, armor, dragons...

BC: I think the things that we wrote are more about what is the life about and what is after life. Those are the things I thought about, I know that James thought about...

DD: All of us.

BC: What do we personally feel, what are we doing here. There is a song "Where do we go?" That must represent what the album is about.

I heard that Denis Gulbey played an important role in getting James to the band and in getting those record deals, or am I wrong?

BC: Well, he did have a very very big hand in getting James in the band, but, after that, he didn't have much to do with the record deals. We made a tape to give to Metal Blade, Dan sent it over to Germany, they liked it, and that was pretty much it. It's actually real simple.

The first New Eden album was the second release on his label, so he was probably trying to push it hard...

BC: Yeah, he did a very good job with that, I think we sold two or three thousand copies through independent labels. Playing that kind of music, it's very good. We owe a lot to what Denis has done for us, great guy.

Are you still in touch with him?

BC: We order stuff from him, so he's making money of us. [laughs] I'd like to see his magazine to come out more often though... [laughs, somebody says "I don't think so"] He's got a lot more bands with his record label, and it's probably a good money maker. And that actually helps bands better than a magazine anyway, so... More power to him.

And Horacio kept the New Eden name...

BC: Who?

Horacio, or how do you spell it?

BC: I don't know that name. [All laugh] Actually, just to keep this interview nice, I would rather not talk about it.

He kept the New Eden name, he's doing that. We're not part of it.

That's cool. Then onto something different... Perry, I got an impression that you were involved a lot in the writing of the album. Did you have any ideas prior joining Destiny's End that the band used?

PG: Yeah, a lot of the stuff came from even years ago. But when I brought it to the band, we all worked on it, just stripped it down, put it back together. And they became Destiny's End songs. We write together, all five of us, no one person stands on his own. I had a hand in writing the album, but so did Dan, James, Brian, and Nardo.

DD: Everybody writes and everybody is involved with every single song.

PG: The lyrics, you get the credit for the lyrics you wrote, but we all said, when we first formed the band, it's a team, five people, and we are going to split everything five ways.

"NETHER WORDS" AND HORROR ART

Dan, you were doing "Netherwords" newsletter, why did you stop?

DD: I just couldn't find time to do it.

PG: When you are in a signed band, touring, recording all the time, and you're working a nine-to-five job, I don't see how you can possibly do it.

DD: It was a lot of fun, I liked promoting the music I thought was really cool, but I haven't got the time to do it.

PG: Yeah, it was fun for me too, when we had a lot of time on our hands.

DD: Perry did reviews on it, too.

PG: It was the last issue though. [laughs]

Since you did some reviewing and now you're musicians, do you think that reviews should be different in some ways, perhaps more detailed

DD: I can only say, with the way I wrote, I tried to really describe what the music is like, good points and bad points. Not just tell "suck."

PG: You can't pick it apart to be actual musical contents like "OK, this guy is playing too many panatonic solos" or something like that. When you review something, you don't take it from a musician's angle unless you're reviewing for a guitar magazine...

DD: I tried to both describe the style what it was like and give my opinion on it. So, at least somebody who doesn't agree with me can still know what it's like.

Perry, I read that you are into horror books and movies?

PG: Correct.

Maybe you can recommend some good stuff? I can tell about myself, I was into horror stuff, but lately all movies I see are quite cliché...

PG: Yeah, kind of "Scream."

What is more original out there?

PG: In the past few years, I've seen quite a few movies that really surprised me. I was really surprised they were even made, I couldn't see how they could get any backing in Hollywood or anything like that. "Dark City" was amazing, it was probably my favorite movie that I've seen in definitely more than a decade. It was just all along great. "Dark Horizons" is pretty damn good, "Gattaca," Dan and I both like all of those...

BC: I kind of like "Star Wars." Did he tell that he is a joker in the band? [laughs]

PG: As far as movies, that's the way it goes. Books. Hard to say how many science-fiction, fantasy, horror books I've read. I haven't really seen anything [good] to come out lately... Lately, it's really done it for me. Except... let's say, Thomas Ligotti is amazing. He's been writing for a couple of decades now. He is in the vein like H.P. Lovecraft and Clark Ashton Smith.

BC: I'd like to see Warrel from Nevermore to write a book.

PG: [Enthusiastically] Yeah, he is an incredible lyricist.

BC: He thinks of really cool stuff, and his lyrics really portray that. I think he would do pretty good, if he would do some writing like that. Don't tell him I said that. [laughs]

PG: Same thing goes for John Arch from Fates Warning. He's not in music right now, but he wrote some incredible lyrics. And Thomas Ligotti, Nancy Campbell...

FAVORITES, RE-UNIONS, TRIBUTES

Okay. The final part, favorite new albums?

PG: Nevermore "Dreaming Neon Black" definitely...

BC: Anything by Flotsam, not because he is standing there. [The Flotsam guy was actually standing there.]

PG: Solstice...

BC: So far from the new Flotsam, I've heard only one song that was on a compilation, 'coz I haven't got my copy yet.

The Flotsam guy: It's the worst song.

[Many started to talk at the same time; the conversation between Brian and The Flotsam Guy went way to the background on my tape, Brian was saying that he liked that song, and that was all I could possibly hear.]

PG: Solitude Aeternus, the new one, "Adagio." Jag Panzer, Sentenced.

DD: I like "Dreaming Neon Black" and Labyrinth.

BC: Labyrinth? Oh yeah, it's really good.

PG: Of course, Death.

BC: And Hammerfall. It's kind of funny because everybody tells me they like their first album better, and I like the second one better.

I like the first one more, too.

BC: You're all messed up, you've got it all backwards... [laughs]

I like only one song from the second one, I think it's track number three or four...

BC: "Dreamland"?

Yeah.

BC: It's a killer song.

What are your exact expectations from the Iron Maiden re-union?

PG: Hopefully they are not just doing it for money... [laughs] I mean, come on, there's gotta be some money element involved. At the same time, I am really happy to see the guys back together. Three guitars, I don't know about that, but I'm still gonna be there, and I'm glad they are back together. I hope the new album is good, I hope it goes back to "Seventh Son," "Somewhere in Time," "Powerslave."

Are there any other re-unions that you are happy with, like Metal Church, for example?

PG: I'd like to hear the reunited Metal Church, I haven't heard that stuff yet.

DD: It depends on what they write.

PG: I haven't heard any of Agent Steel reunion. I don't really know what it's gonna sound like. Liege Lord is back together, I haven't heard any of their new stuff either. Crimson Glory... I don't know what to think about that. Kiss, I wish I could have gone, but unfortunately I wasn't in LA at that time, when they were playing there. I know it was pretty cool. If you're a big fan of a band, and you went to see them back then, oh yeah, go see them.

How about tribute albums, you did some covers of Dio and King Diamond?

PG: I'm not so jazzed about there being so many tribute albums, it's like a big trend to do it right now, but it's cool, too.

DD: I think the Dio one is gonna be really good on Century Media, because of bands they got to do it.

PG: I like the Judas Priest tribute [released on Century Media in 1996].

You did "Dressed in White" for the King Diamond tribute, why namely this song?

BC: We did "Dressed in White" 'coz it gave James room to do it. He did it in his own voice, instead of three, the middle, the low, and the high that King does. It actually came out really well.

DD: Some of the highs he did were even higher than King Diamond's.

BC: Actually, a couple of people said they liked it better than King's version. But it is, I think, more listenable from a song's standpoint.

Necropolis Records is releasing the King Diamond tribute, so you will probably be in a company of black metal bands. Perhaps you will be the only band to have a high vocals...

BC: Nah, Chuck's voice in Death is pretty high.

PG: Is he on in Necropolis?

BC: No, Dark Funeral is on it... I don't know who else is gonna be on it. They will probably hate our version because it sounds like power metal instead of death metal, but whatever... We had a lot of fun doing it.

HELSTAR: THE METAL STORY

James Rivera speaks

I talked to the other guys, and we basically covered Destiny's End. Now I've got a couple of questions about Helstar...

JR: Okay, yeah.

There was a four-song demo released after "Nosferatu" album, I have it on tape. The title of one song was "Social Circle" as I recall...

JR: Oh, yeah yeah, you are talking about Helstar 91. "Change of Seasons," "Scalpel and The Skin"...

Exactly. What happened to those songs?

JR: They're... still there, somewhere, I don't know. Nothing has got ever done with them. Actually, I take that back, some of those songs were revamped. "Social Circle" became a song called "Safe Time" on the "Multiples of Black" album. And "Changeless Seasons" became a song for the Vigilante demo that I did after Helstar. And it was a little bit more uptempo, it wasn't a ballad anymore. But the other two songs are just there, I guess, nothing have ever happened to those songs... [laughs]

Can you go a little bit through what was happening with the band after that demo...?

JR: See, that demo you're talking about was the last thing that Helstar created, because Larry Barragan left.

Why did he leave?

JR: Well, because he didn't believe in... You know, it's time to get a job and fuck all this. And that was in 1991, 1992, when metal was taking that big downfall, there wasn't a lot of a future. Most of the Helstar members saw it this way: you can't have both, you can't have a good job and still keep this going. He decided to get out of it before it got too late. Now, here it is, ten years later almost, now he owns a nice house, he's got a family, he's got a good job, he wears a tie everyday. But, you know, now he sees me and he's like "fuck!", you know, he sees it all and says "Dude, I've been always hearing about you this and that." He's like "You're lucky you were stuck with it, 'coz you now may finally make a living out of it and really live the dream that we all wanted. But you really were the only one to have courage to go through it."

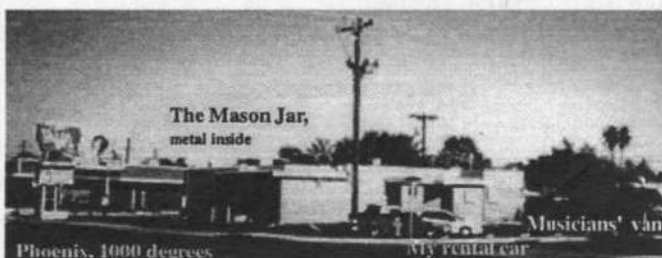
How about the other members of Helstar?

JR: Other members are doing the same thing. I'm the only one that pursued it 100% percent. It was my life, it was my career on the line. I said "Look, I've invested this many years, I'm not about to walk away from it now." I can't, because this is all I know. I was too late... Well, it wasn't too late for me to go back to school and learn to trade, but... Now, when you are thirty-three years old, you just can't change, you just can't tell yourself "No more band, no more music. I'm gonna go to school, I'm gonna study, I'm gonna become some kind of a fuckin' architect, engineer, or something." I'd be making good money, but, you know, [back then] I just couldn't see that happening. I said, no I'll stick it out. And I've always believed in a theory that what comes around goes around. And everything goes in cycles. And once I saw disco come back, believe it or not, even though that's far from what I do, disco was returning me my fuckin' strength.

BC: Hey, fuckin' Helstar! [Brian Craig shows up with his aunt, and James signs on aunt's Destiny's End T-shirt.]

A little bit about the "Multiples of Black" album. Many people didn't really like it...

JR: Neither did I. See, what really happened is that once Vigilante was moving along, Dave Ellefson got involved in the project. He was the one who recommended me going back to the name Helstar and revising that name, 'coz it was more popular. So I did. But, at that point, Helstar got so many line-up changes, and, each time the line-up changed, I was dealing with younger and younger musicians, 'coz that were the only ones that were good. And I'm aging, so the ones that are interested in my kind of music were getting younger and younger. So, now I'm dealing with a bunch of fuckin' kids. Okay, at that point, I got a five-year old son who needs me to feed him and change him and all that. But



I've got to deal with a bunch of grown twenty-something year old guys... They were dependent on me for everything. Because they didn't know anything. And if I did something without telling them, they got real mad, [offended voice] "Oh, we didn't know about that..." And I was like "You know, you wouldn't be playing, if it wasn't because of me, so shut the fuck up."

But, at that point, the fire died inside of me. For Helstar. But not for me as far as driving and keeping the drive for surviving, and still be a musician in this world. But the drive for Helstar was dead. I had no more desire for it. As a matter of fact, you know, you've got this girlfriend you have been fighting with for five years, you get back together, you break up every two months, three months go by your back, you break up again. Your friends are tired to see you crying and drunk and going like [drunk voice] "That's me again!" It's like, "Dude, how long are you going to put up with this shit?" Eventually, you finally realize it one day and you wake up and say goodbye forever, and that's how I felt with Helstar. And that point, when we did "Multiples of Black," it was the good bye forever. I didn't care anymore either. I did the record because we had a record deal on the table, big deal.

Massacre, on the other hand, didn't want to give me any money, I mean, we've already had Dave Ellefson to produce a demo for fuckin' thirty grand, they give him ten thousand, and he's like, "How're you going to expect me to finish the full record with ten thousand dollars, when I already did four songs with thirty thousand?!" The production is not gonna match!" I said, you know, I knew right from when they got us, this is it for Helstar. I knew it. At that time, I had a girlfriend. I told Ellefson, I am doing this record to get out of the fuckin deal. But after this, we'll do a couple of shows in Texas, and it's goodbye everybody. And all these [other Helstar members], all this time they were dependent on me for everything, but then they bitched about everything. And finally, after we had one last show in Houston, next day I called everybody up and said "Hey man, I've got your money." Nobody wanted to help me to pay the bills, nobody wanted to pay for those long distance calls to keep business going. They didn't believe that. They couldn't understand why, when I got paid 800 bucks for headlining show in Houston, I would come to them with my phone bills and say "Hey, here's 250 bucks for calling Germany, it's business, blah blah blah." They were like [upset kid's voice] "We didn't tell you call them all that time." Fuck, I have to. How am I supposed to contact these people, right? And after that, I said, you know what, here's all your money, don't worry about phone bills, I pay for them on my own. I called a meeting and said everybody meets at [some place]. I got there and had everybody's envelope with their money. And each envelope had a little note, why I was saying this is it. Then they were like, [poor voice] "What are we gonna do?" I was like, I don't know, go do what you always do when you don't come to practices, all these other things you wanted to do besides this band anyways. Now you can go do them all you want. You don't have to worry about this band anymore. I'm leaving to California. I've already talked to Metal Blade, they got interest in me, but I'm going to find something brand new, no more Helstar." They were like "But you can't leave us," and I: "Yes I can. For five years I've been babysitting you guys, you never wanted to put into this, all you wanted to do is write on my name." So, when it came to putting into it, it was "Oooh, who's gonna do that, who's gonna go pass out flyers? Oooh, I've got a date with my chick, I've got a babysit." Okay, so James is gonna be the one...

But, you know, the good thing about that James was the only one that went out and got all the flyers was that I was the one that everybody knew. So, when we went to shows at clubs when, say, Flotsam and Jetsam was playing at the club that we normally play at, I walk up to, you know where you pay, "James! Come on in, bro!" I get up to the bar, first beers are free. For these guys, "That will be ten dollars." "I am in Helstar!" "That'll still be ten dollars." [laughs] They never knew that, because they never went out to socialize with people. I was the name. As a matter of fact, I've got a handful of friends in Houston, where I am from, [for whom] my name is not even James, it's Helstar. "Helstar, what's up man?!" [laughs] So, I mean, that was me, Helstar was James. And that's when I realized, I don't need to fuckin' drag you guys around, I got a name already for myself. And I called Metal Blade, I told them my idea. They said, "You know what, it would be the best thing you could do. Close that book and move onto something new, dude. Because it's like a car, you've been on a race so many times, you never won that race with that car, you keep changing parts of that car, you keep doing the engine over. The time has come to get a new car, and we'll look out for you. As long as you deliver the right band, we'll sign you." And that's what I found.

After that Destiny's End happened?

JR: That's when Destiny's End happened. Here I was in Houston, packing all my stuff, going "Here I go again." Out to the west coast, no promises, no nothing. But I still had to do it.

But you still live in Texas?

JR: Yeah, it took me about a year to get the deal, to find this band, to get everything in motion. Once the deal was closed, the label was even agreed with it. "Well, we do agree, you should go to Texas, 'coz that's your monicker." My excuse was, "I think I can go home and build shit up, and I've got a son at home, I wanna be around my family." They said fine, what about flying you once a

month for rehearsals? And then one year passed, I went from "James from Helstar pulled in 500 people" to "James disappeared," to now "James goes back to Houston as Destiny's End and pulls in 600, 700 people." So, the proof was there, and I knew, it was just a hand of fate, man. And my mom died during the recording of "Multiples of Black," and I truly believe she made all this happen. And that's the way I feel. And when my mom died, those guys [other Helstar members] didn't care, they didn't go the funeral, nothing. I was in the middle of doing vocal tracks, they did give no sympathy, no nothing, I've got complaints about "So, the album is gonna be delayed now, 'coz you will have to take the time off?" I was like, you know what man, fuck you guys. I knew back then that this is it. I'm not gonna do with this anymore.

And hey, look what happened now. The hand of fate works in weird ways, dude. I had no promises, I came out there, got this band and now look where I am at again. And what are all those guys doing? Sitting home with their families and their jobs every day, eight-to-five, hating life. And, most of them, three or four, are on the verge of divorces right now. And now it's like, "Man, maybe I should have listened to you." And I'm like "It's too late, I have already found something."

Are they all in Texas?

JR: Yeah, they're all in Texas. Doin' nothing. Either got a real good job and they just got nothing to do, or they are on drugs, or they are on something that is making their life miserable. A couple of them still come to the shows that I do. I can see it in their eyes. And, you know what, I can feel for it, I really do. I have to give them a hug, and I look at them, and I want to say "Dude, I'm sorry. You should've listened to me." But you can't change it. I've got a band that I am the most happy since I'm in the world. I don't want to change a thing now. Yeah, Helstar was a big part of me, but to me, Destiny's End is beyond that. If I could change it now, if I had a choice, I wouldn't go back to Helstar at all.

I also read a rumor on the internet that Chuck from Death asked you to sing on Control Denied, is that true?

JR: That's true. That's when I had the choice to go here [Destiny's End] or that way. I could have done that, too, but he [Chuck] didn't have a record deal on the table, and I don't have a family in Florida. When I lived here [in California], I did have some family, things I could fall back on to. Could get a job and do all that job, just like you're a normal person. There, what did I have, I didn't have anybody. And he had no record deal. It would have been scarier to move all the way to Florida with nothing but his promises. Well, it turns out they never got a deal for Control Denied anyway, so what would have happened if it failed?

Well, they got a deal with Nuclear Blast later... [Chuck did Death's "Sound of Perseverance" first and only then Control Denied.]

JR: But then again, there's two opinions about that. If I would have joined Control Denied, that could make a difference. And that's true, because Metal Blade wanted it, if I was going to do it. That's true, that may have made a big difference. But I wasn't just ready to take that chance. I figured out, I'm taking the chance as it is, that means I take the chance somewhere where I can fall onto someone if things don't work. I've got my sister, I can always call my sister and like [poor voice] "I'm on the streets." If I'm going to Florida, I'm on the streets, so what a fuck? [laughs]

Yeah, okay. How did you like the audience tonight?

JR: Killer.

How was it compared to the other shows?

JR: It's hard to say, 'coz when they're good, they're good, when they're bad, they're bad. Houston is always my biggest response, 'coz that's where I am from. If you play in front of 600 people, and you get that whole audience at your hands, it's a big feeling. Everybody knew it would have been that way in Houston, we were headlining Houston not too long ago on our own. As a matter of fact, we had more people when we headlined on our own. That tells you how much power I have in Houston. A lot of people's attitude was "You're not even headlining, you're playing for 30 minutes..." I'll wait til you come back and do your whole thing." So, half of my audience that'd normally come, didn't come. [One friend] even called and apologized, said, it's Wednesday night, I can't pay twelve bucks and see those other bands I don't even like. You are playing only 30 minutes..." So, they're just waiting for me to come back.

Helstar discography:

"Burning Star," Combat (1984)
"Remnant of War," Combat (1986)
"A Distant Thunder," Metal Blade Records (1988)
"Nosferatu," Metal Blade Records (1989)
"Multiples of Black," Massacre Records (1995)

Destiny's End discography:

"Breathe Deep the Dark," Metal Blade Records (1998)

Destiny's End web site: www.destinysend.com

reviews

heavy, melodic, power, progressive, speed metal
hard rock, progressive rock, and AOR

ANDRE ANDERSEN

Changing Skin
SPV

Royal Hunt's keyboardist self-produced solo album consists of 6 symphonic rock/heavy AOR tracks, which last about 7 minutes in average, and present some not too well known facets of his, as bassist and rhythmic guitarist. The album is not fully instrumental, as one could initially presume perhaps, but has a good portion of sung parts. The musicianship and songwriting of "Changing Skin" is certainly not too impressive, from my point of view, and seems to be in need of some spark and solidness as a whole. True fans of this artist's contribution to Royal Hunt will probably dig in this album more than me. (GM)

3 1/2

ANGEL DUST

Bleed

Century Media Records

As it happened on their fine previous release, the veteran German band explores in "Bleed" an overall more melodic/modern-sounding orientation, without abandoning their in-your-face, headbanging metal roots. Brilliant and convincing songs such as "Follow Me" (parts I and II) bring in new facets of singer Dirk Thuriach and show an interesting progression concerning their songwriting abilities. Definitely, in relation to what their music currently offers, I think that bands of the perseverance and honesty of Angel Dust would deserve to get their name on par with some of those best selling power metal acts (say Helloween, Gamma Ray...) which, by the way, do not seem to evolve much. Unlike Angel Dust. (GM)

4 1/4

ANTITHESIS

Antithesis

Intramental Productions/Voices of Wonder

Antithesis go all out for an excellent power! thrash. If this record gets a good promotion, they're onto a winner with the CD. This strong mixture of early Hades, *Mercyful Fate*, and *Sanctuary* will definitely appeal to many people. Add here some complex tunes a la *Death* or *Symphony X*, and you'll get an approximate picture of Antithesis. Ty Cook's vocals are outstanding, without a doubt, as well as the guitar avalanche. It's very strange that I haven't heard of this band before. Highlights: "The Curse," "Limbo," and "Secret Fires". (SV)

[\$12, Intramental Management, PO Box 1268, 3200 Copenhagen S., Denmark]

4 1/4

ARABESQUE

Naked promo EP

self-released

Although Arabesque are new to "Edge of Time," they already have quite a history behind them. Formed back in 1989, they first made their mark with a debut instrumental CD on Shark Records called "Beyond the Veil" in 1995 (this also featured Lemur Voice bass player Barend Tromp). The style on this CD could be described as instrumental hard rock with jazz and progressive rock elements. With the addition of female vocalist Nicole de Serriere du Bizoumet in 1996, Arabesque's music has evolved into more accessible form of guitar-oriented mid tempo power metal with elements of symphonic progressive metal. "Naked" is a four-song promo demo which showcases the diversity in their music. The musicianship is excellent (which is no wonder because guitar player Joop Wolters and keyboard player Thijs Cuppen were also part of the instrumental fusion rock group Elysion with Lemur Voice drummer Nathan van der Wou); the guitar playing is versatile, effortlessly shifting from heavy Tad Morose style crunchy riffs to delicate picking and

solos, the drummer and bass player weave their complex rhythms around the keyboard melodies, and Nicole has a pleasant mid-range voice. The music is diverse: from the energetic up-tempo opener "Afraid to Fly" to the more relaxed "Heal me" to the brilliant "Naked" to the acoustic ballad "Artificial Reality." This is a name to look out for. I am not sure if this CD is for sale (Arabesque are currently searching for a new record deal), but you contact the band at the address below. (CR)

[Arabesque, Frank de Groot, Schuttebeemd 17, 8004 GN, Weert, The Netherlands]

4 1/4

ARCHETYPE

Hands of Time EP

Intramental Management Productions/Voices of Wonder

American prog metallers acquired a new singer in November '98 (Chyle Vagner, ex-Hate, Public Outcry) and soon thereafter re-recorded their four instrumental tracks with vocals. The result appeared to be a very dynamic, melodic, and versatile 22 minutes mini CD, adding some freshness to the progressive metal scene. The music is guitar-based heavy/progressive metal, quite melodic, dynamic, and technical. The vocals are quite diverse, mainly in clean mid-to-high range, and with occasional digressions to low range. With the next album, the band can establish themselves in the highest league of prog metal, because they do not seem to suffer from the lack of creativity and you cannot trace from their music back to *Fates Warning* (although Archetype are also a guitar-based prog metal band). (GS)

[\$8/DM12, Intramental Management, PO Box 1268, DK-2300 Copenhagen S., Denmark]

4

ARMISTICE

Airraid EP

self-released

Speed/heavy metal from Germany. Here you can find four original songs plus *Black Sabbath* cover "Symptom of the Universe." The music goes straight forward, the vocals are a bit hardcore-like. As for a self release, the sound is pretty good, however, the songwriting looks somewhat pale in comparison with other bands of this genre. Not bad, but no great shakes, either. (SV)

[Stefan Fischer, Bergstr. 1c, 85567 Grafing, Germany]

3 1/2

ARTENSION

Forces of Nature

Shrapnel Records

Artension's new album is very similar to the previous one "Phoenix Rising." The formula has changed slightly, but the main ingredients remain: keyboard-driven songs, outstanding vocals, background guitars. The style can be described as neo-classical metal with some blues-rock influences; the typical progressive elements are missing, there are almost no syncopated or counterpoint rhythms, odd measures, etc., i.e. "plain straight." Considered individually, the guitar player is still one of the most boring ones of the metal scene, as his riffs are totally linear and his solo mere wanking at 100 mph without melodies. The keyboards are the main force and clearly put in forefront in the production. Vitalij Kuprij is playing some great melodies and variations, and his solos are as usual (see solo albums) very impressive. The vocals are among the best ones of the current metal bands, clear, powerful, mellow, emotional. The skills of the bass player (Onder) are unfortunately underused, as this excellent musician has proven on other releases (notably with *Joey Tafolla*). Conclusion: outstanding musicianship, yet lack of originality and boldness. The introduction of much more progressive and audacious features in the composition (e.g., a la *Zero Hour*) could have propelled the album among the 3 best ones in the genre in 1999... (AS)

4

ATOMIC OPERA

Alpha & Oranges

self-released

This is not the new Atomic Opera release, it's a collection of old songs recorded before "For Madmen Only" CD. It's a great pleasure to hear this recent stuff by Frank Hart & Co., right from the start Atomic Opera strike with the beautiful "Rain Parade," probably one of



the best songs they've ever written. The next track, "For Madmen Only" comes somewhat strange over, but is cool, too. The following highlights are the last "Feverdream #1" with killer riffing and "Meaningless Word" with nice vocal harmonies. "Spinning," for example, contains a guitar part that reminds me of early King's X albums; Ty Tabor used to play such tunes 10 years ago... Listening to this record, a wave of nostalgia embraces the listener little by little. Simply incredible. I hope their new output will be as good as this one, produced by nobody else but Sam Taylor! (SV)

[\$18 (postage included), Frank Hart, PO Box 91602, Houston, TX 77291, USA]

4 1/4

AVALON

Vision Eden

Omega Records

"Mystic Places," Avalon's second album was a good example of melodic metal, but it was not that well balanced and focused as its successor, "Vision Eden." With a new singer in place (he has a more-clean/less-rough voice than the old one), Avalon sound very fresh, energetic, and concentrated. In fact, the intensity of the songs is quite surprising to feet; and it points out band's will to form their own identity in the getting-too-crowded melodic metal scene. When the music slows down, it gets similar to mid-tempo bombastic metal of *Threshold*. Once you get into the fictional conceptual theme and busy and rich flow with one leading melodic line, they hardly let you slip away. "Vision Eden" is more advanced than basic heavy metal, but very song-oriented. Not a milestone, but a solid release. The tracks worth mentioning are "They Are In Between Us," "Dancing with the Devil," "Gene Genius," and "Fate of Centuries." (GS)

[Omega Records, Soldauer Str. 8, D-81927 Muenchen, Germany]

4

AZAZELLO

Black Day

Volos Records

It's probably the first release which was sent to "Edge of Time" from Russia and which is actually related to progressive rock music. "Black Day" is a solid release of adventurous prog rock with Russian lyrics. The sound is clean yet thin, the vocals are quite soft, too. A few instrumental parts, if just heavy guitars would have been added, would sound like real prog/techno-metal, but, in general, "Black Day" is a light-weight prog rock release which should appeal to prog-rock fans. (GS)

[Azazello, A. V. Kulak, ul. Merzlotnaya 2-1, g. Tynda, Amurskaya oblast, Russia 676080]

3 1/2

BASTARD

Falling to Pieces

self-released

This band derives the ideas from hard rock groups of the 70s and early 80s. Thin Lizzy, *Rose Tattoo*, *Rory Gallagher*, *Neil Young*, to name a few, their music comprises heavy elements as well as calm tunes or rock'n'roll rhythms. Speaking openly, the first 3 tracks on the CD don't impress me at all. A usual rock music I've heard many times before. But if you will be patient with this CD, you will discover some hard rock "pearls" like "Breaking Circles" or the ballad "Too Much Trouble." Generally speaking, the album gets better and better towards the end, so it's a mystery for me, why Bastard chose this sequence of tracks. You know, sometimes an album develops only in the middle... (SV)

[Mattes Liasen, In der Schlung 66, 66763 Diefflen, Germany]

3 1/2

BEATS WORKING

Calm

Swamp Records

Beats Working is a British traditional melodic rock/AOR band whose material sometimes resembles of acts like *Dire Straits*, *Pink Floyd*, or *Genesis*. In

terms of music, this album might sound a bit too linear at times, or simplistic for listeners fond of that melodic side of music with a more powerful edge. The instrumentation along "Calm" is really sober, not too colorful or effective, and remains in that stable tendency during its 12 tracks. We find quite mellow cuts like "It Won't go Bang" or "Raise your Hands," which transmit that bluesy-soul rock feel, but not much emotion from my point of view. (GM)

3 1/2

BEYOND TWILIGHT

Lurking Fantasia promo CD

Intramental Management

This promises to be a bomb, when released officially! This Scandinavian band was formerly known as *Twilight* and has an album "An Eye for an Eye" out (three members including the singer were different then). *Beyond Twilight's* music cannot easily be pigeonholed, but it's undeniably metal, and undeniably melodic. The influences range from *Dream Theater*, *Pink Floyd*, epic/symphonic metal to groove metal and calmer *Faith No More*. In spite of its versatility, the music has a surprisingly good flow and is very dynamic (a few groovy parts are well-done and well-integrated, therefore they should not scare melodic metal fans away). Keyboards get a lot of freedom here (keyboarder Finn Zierler is the main and only songwriter), yet they do not reduce the heaviness of the music. The commercial potential is very high, because such album can appeal to all who like melodic, heavy, soundly intricate but accessible music. "Lurking Fantasia" promises to be a bomb, when released officially... blah... (GS)



ANGRA

Fireworks

SPV

It's well known how, thanks to their two brilliant studio albums and a couple of subsequent EPs, Angra have grown at exponential rate in terms of popularity among a wide range of metal listeners. Possibly the first impression which their new output left on me could be described with one word: Change. But let's talk better of a "Gentle Change," as one of the best tracks from this album proclaims. Analyzing it more thoroughly, I'd say "Fireworks" is a very wisely conceived product overall. It certainly could not be labeled as a mere repetition nor an abrupt transition in relation to any of their previous works. Musically, it brings something important, which is diversity and freshness of ideas on most parts. And another remarkable point is how, despite of what the title might suggest initially, one finds quite less pyrotechnic elements along "Fireworks," concerning the complexity of arrangements (subject whose accurate reproduction had admittedly turned into their biggest headache on stage). These facts might be caused to a great extent by two reasons, the way I see it. First, a crucial one would be the novel inclusion of *Chris Tsangarides* as producer: effects and epic coloring on the song structures were considerably reduced. The pounding flow coming from the rhythm section got also simplified, and the guitar sound has been treated accordingly, resulting in more straightforward and easy listening cuts, such as "Lisbon," "Speed," or "Extreme Dream." The second reason would be that "Fireworks" represents the first time that vocalist *André Matos* (real class, his performance) does not appear in most of the credits as main composer. Reviewing with care the band's trajectory, you'll see that "Fireworks" is probably the first album Angra have recorded as a mature and consolidated band. But now, no matter what I say, just look at the fireworks... and enjoy. (GM)

4 3/4

**AYREON**

Into the Electric Castle DoCD
Transmission Records

Musical megalomaniac Arjen Lucassen has once again surrounded himself with a broad range of talented musicians (mainly Dutch) to create a space rock opera of epic proportions. The double CD "Into the Electric Castle" combines the bombast and human nature of Ayreon's debut "The Final Experiment" and the cold metallic and robotic edge of its successor "Actual Fantasy." The combination results in a highly challenging and diverse journey through the different styles of rock, ranging from blues to symphonic rock (a bit of speed metal wouldn't have been out of place either). The possibilities that a concept album offers, such as freedom to combine long epics with short narrative interludes to direct the pace of the story, are used to its maximum. The vocal duties are impressive with special mention of Fish and the grand ladies of Dutch fairy tale metal, Anneke Giersbergen of The Gathering and Sharon den Adel of Within Temptation (even highly overrated ex-Threshold vocalist Damian Wilson doesn't sound irritating). In combination with the magnificent packaging of the CD, Ayreon's "Into the Electric Castle" offers many a pleasurable audiovisual experience. (CR) 4 3/4

MARK BOALS

Ignition

Victor

As to a vocalist, the fame came to Mark Boals after the powerful singing he showed in Malmsteen's classic "Trilogy" album. Directed to the Japanese selective market, he presents a worthy hard rock/melodic rock solo album, where he is the main songwriter and co-producer. The result is interesting at times ("Don't Dance with the Devil," "My Turn," "Broken Heart," or "Jane" are certainly good songs), but, on the rest of the album, he tends to revisit certain over-used American hard rock parameters ("(She's Not) Daddy's Little Girl," "Rip your Hair Out..."). By the way, did we ever read those words before? (GM) 3 1/2

BRAINDANCE

Redemption pre-production tape
Double Edge Productions

I am waiting for the new Braindance album for damn three years, and when I finally receive their package, it includes only various bits and pieces of the album, i.e., excerpts, but not full songs. It has just trembled my patience.

"Fear Itself," band's second album, was released in 1996 and was an intriguing mix of gothic, prog metal, and darkwave. And while the edges were a bit rough, this pre-production tape indicates that the new album, "Redemption," should be twice as much excellent and refreshing. Melodies are more upfront, and the whole flow is more continuous; stylistically, the band still fits into their own term "gothic progressive darkwave." And that's actually quite an original combination. According to the promo sheets, Braindance spend a lot of time for the production, wanting the sound to be as good "as on a Mariah Carey album." And they can jump high. They already succeeded in reaching both prog and goth communities and conquering NY Manhattan underground clubs.

The band said that due to financial constraints they might not be sending out the full album for reviews. What a loss, I will probably even buy it then. (And this indicates how much I need it: I buy about two or three regular-price CDs per year.) (GS) [Double Edge Productions, 215 Thompson Street Suite 11, New York, NY 10012, USA]

CAIN&ABEL

Cain&Abel

Sphinx Ministry

As I listened to this CD for the first time, it didn't impress me at all. After a second/third try, I was captured by 4-5 songs on it. With each rush through, it grew on me, and finally I realized that it's a fantastic album! Cain&Abel consists of only two members: the singer Jeff Richey and the multi-instrumental genius Charles Walker. Their music is hard to describe, some tracks are very progressive, some are quite radio-friendly. The opener "White Flag" goes towards Faith No More. "Looking for a Saviour" or "Welcome Home" remind me of Nazareth. The best description of their music would be probably King's X meets King Crimson. Anyway, there are lots of other influences here. The highlights of the CD are located in the middle: the lengthy "Domestaccato" with the grandiose end, the Tribe After Tribe-ish "Down," the magic instrumental "Word on a Wing," and the unforgettable ballad "Are You There." Following highlights are the above-mentioned "Welcome Home," a bit poppy "Life Rhythms," the touching "Heal," and the complex "Take Me." To crown it all, this duet writes very intelligent lyrics with a strong spiritual touch. This isn't music, this is a pure religion! (SV) 4 3/4

BOB CATLEY

The Tower

Frontiers Records

Does anybody remember Magnum? Here is the solo-CD of their singer. Produced by Ten mastermind Gary Hughes, it offers us 10 songs of great melodic hard rock. By the way, Gary himself wrote a lot of material for this album, so "The Tower" has got something from both bands: Ten and Magnum. All tracks are melodic, catchy, and radio-friendly. Though the whole album makes a solid impression, the opener "Dreams" and "Madrigal" stand out because of cool refrains. Good work. (SV) 3 3/4

CHINCHILLA

Horrorscope

Limb Music Products

This album already carries some history behind. Officially released more than two years ago for the Japanese market (where it harvested a good and positive response), "Horrorscope" finally hits the shelves in Europe via LMP. If anyone of you are looking for an album rooted in classic-styled heavy metal à la Fates/House of Spirits/Scorpions/early Queensryche, with great melodies and an interesting lyrical concept, put a mark around this name. The product does not, however, sound out of date or old fashioned at all. Sure, in this music there are elements that have been present in heavy metal since the beginning. But when it's well done, that is something which hardly becomes perishable. The musical contents of "Horrorscope" make it to stand out as an incredibly sincere and lucid heavy metal release, in my opinion; well above the flock of many recent power metal/heavy metal (re)creations. Without a doubt, it's healthy for the scene that bands of this quality come up to the surface, as one of their biggest credits takes root in the honesty of their proposal. (GM) 4 1/2

CLOCKWORK

Surface Tension

Sensory

Philadelphia's Clockwork show up again, but this time with a full-length album, which follows up their 4-song EP "Search." The band makes prog rock (Yes) and prog metal, sounding pretty much alive and not boring. What distinguishes them from others, is the high choir singing (which is totally uncommon for metal), as well as the production, having sharp guitars and drums, yet resulting into a somewhat light sound. The band, however, deserves most compliments for coherent and non-derivative songs which may sound long-winded only during the first listen. It's 100% pure progressive rock/metal (of the lighter category) and one of the albums stating that if you don't have to sound like Dream Theater if you don't want to. (GS) [Clockwork, 219 Canford Dr., Broomall, PA 19008, USA] 4

CRABTREE

Crabtree

self-released

Crabtree consist of the musicians that have been for some years in the scene, playing in the acts that opened for Cinderella, Dokken, Slaughter, or hosted TW shows together with CC De Ville of Poison. So, there is no surprise that their music attempts to bring glam flags back to their homeland, in spite of how difficult it might be. At least it may seem so at first glance. Getting more attentive, you can notice that "Crabtree" is a heavy rock album with different influences ranging from heavy rock of the early 90s, modern alternative rock, to grunge like Stone Temple Pilots, Nirvana, and Alice in Chains. Overall, the album is neither very grungy, nor very sleazy. It does not even have a clear "let's rock n'roll, baby" attitude. Which makes it sort of okay, even if we are not that keen on hard rock at Edge of Time. No real bombing tracks or exceptional material, but some moments are quite swingy. (GS) [Crabtree, PO Box 143, Lake Dallas, TX 75065, USA] 3 1/2

DAL'S DILEMMA

Manifesto for Futurism

Magna Carta Records

The first album of this newcomer band qualifies as typical progressive metal with a slightly commercial bent. Its closest counterpart is certainly Dream Theater's "Awake," whose influences pertain the whole release, yet with much more blues-rock scales. The classic elements of prog metal are featured: odd meter, time and signature changes, etc. albeit commercial themes are predominant. Hence, the typical song structure is built of a main blues-rock theme and a catchy chorus, the central part of the track allowing more space for the progressive variations and elements. The quality of the songs is very unequal, some compositions being so commercial as to sound like U2. On the other hand, the skills of the musicians are outstanding: keyboards and guitar players display extraordinary virtuosity and technique, yet remaining pleasant and groovy in their solos. The bass lines also excellent and optimally mixed at the production. The singer is the least appealing; his voice has a limited range, alternating soft and whispering tones with more raspy vocals. Overall, an excellent album; the only regret is that it is too much commercially compromising. (AS) 4

DANTE FOX

The Fire Within

Frontiers Records

The biggest merit of this album is a great female voice of Sue Willets. She's probably the only possible heir to Ann Wilson of the legendary melodic hard rock band Heart. Musically, the band is top notch AOR. The songs are catchy, radio-friendly, contain many bombastic choruses, and hooklines. A pure nostalgia for the 80s... Even if some tracks sound a bit exaggerative for my taste, "The Fire Within" is a gift for every AOR freak. (SV) 3 3/4

DARIUS

Somewhere aLive in the Crowd

Zizania Music

Darius is a German prog rock team, which here proves to display an interesting musical presence onstage. The sound quality of this album is really high, and makes it particularly recommendable for people who want to sit down and enjoy some pieces of good and, overall, calm, atmospheric progressive music. Darius' vocalist makes at times a fine use of effects and echoes, and artistically goes in a more emotional and moving direction, reminding me a bit of Peter Gabriel's personal style. "Searching," "The Last Way," or "Kayeleigh" are some of the tracks where his voice shines most. On other occasions, his voice may sound a bit more forced, especially when assaulting the lowest range of notes, but it's not a question of categorizing it because of that subtlety as any impenetrable curtain. In its entirety, Darius have completed a fine live album. (GM) 3 3/4

DARKSTAR

Heart of Darkness

Institute of Art Records

Dan Rock, the most visible member of the disbanded Psychotic Waltz, and Sigg Blasey (Crash Museum, Institute of Art Records) deliver the second Darkstar album.

The first impression is that "Heart of Darkness" is not as bombastic and monumental as its predecessor "Marching into Oblivion," but, stylistically, still offers sad and nostalgic instrumental metal with dark feel and melodies. The new album sounds somewhat like a collection of diverse tracks, maybe due to the fact that two songs have vocals: "Transitory Angel" has female vocals and "Not Today" has male vocals (far from Buddy Lackey's extravaganza, but pleasant and suiting the minor mood of the song). The eerie guitars in places remind of Psychotic Waltz's "Into the Everflow" album, and it's not a big surprise, because "Flight to Nowhere" contains a solo of Dan Rock and ex-Psychotic Waltz guitarist Brian McAlpin. "The Dream" sounds like it would have been off the debut album, but, overall, "Heart of Darkness" has some new elements (ambient) and looks more depressed, as opposed to a more constructive firm sadness of "Marching into Oblivion." Overall, it's a solid release, appealing with its diversity and truly melancholic message. (GS) 4 1/4

**DC COOPER**

DC Cooper

Bottom Row Promotion/SPV

Another solo project, but this one looks like something more than a bunch of very capable musicians jamming together and showing their abilities all the way through. A substantially high load of cohesion and sensitive musicianship comes out of this formation. Judging the musical integrity behind this attempt, hopefully this could become a stable project. But we'll see. Along it, DC Cooper (Royal Hunt's frontman) persists in showing why he can be considered one of the most charismatic, versatile, and haunting melodic vocalists in the prog scene nowadays. As escort, he chose a very competent and powerful team, which is completed by three members of well-known German hard rock act Pink Cream 69, Vanden Plas keyboardist, and Tore Østby on guitars (former focal point in Conception). If you like quality hard rock with a progressive touch, catchy hook lines in the veins of Kenziner, and wonderfully clean and well-defined harmonic melodies, all delivered by a grand-class singer (check out his performance of Uiah Heep's "Easy Living"), this could be one of the albums to take into consideration. (GM) 4 1/2

DEATH&TAXES

Paradigm for a New Quarter

Obstreperous Audio Recordings

Finally, here is another CD that will send into ecstasies everyone who is into Watchtower, Spastic Ink, Sieges Even, Cynic, or Atheist. I swear, Death&Taxes will enjoy a similar status among progressive jazz/fusion metal fans soon, 'cause the material on their debut CD is incredibly just listen to the complex tracks like "Munchkins from Hell" or "Paper Thoughts." Death&Taxes know how to create intricate and, at the same time, catchy songs with the melodic vocals. Following highlights are "Genefucking Derelict," the melodic "My Silent World" and "Circle Song," Primus-like "Man Machine," and the instrumental "Swirling Serling's Bargain Matinee" with acrobatic guitar solos. Yeah, this kind of music is still alive, and this band is the living example how to play it. Even if the sound of the CD is not so brilliant: BUY OR DIE! (SV) [Death&Taxes, PO Box 7334, Torrance, CA 90504, USA] 4 1/2

DELUSION

"Beyond The Door/Rain," from "The Tragedy of Regrets"

Siegen Records

The band is based in Baltimore, the place now famous for the annual Powemad progressive metal festival, and unsurprisingly

plays progressive metal. The similarities are not difficult to detect: merge Fates Warning of their "commercial" (just kidding) period with more romantic/elevated Queensryche and you get a picture, which is very familiar to a usual prog-metal listener. The material is written by guitarist Phil Carnes, but it is interesting to see that some other known people are or were in the band. Namely, Clarence Osborne (Mercury Rising) sang before the album but left due to obligations to his own band, meanwhile Keith Menser (Mystic Force, also the organizer of Powermad) plays bass and keyboards. You cannot judge the whole album after two songs, but if the rest is as good as these, I would recommend it to all looking for pretty melodic light-weight prog metal. (GS)

[Alchemy Management, 5509 Cedella Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21206, USA]

MARCOS DE ROS

Masterpieces

self-released

This work, simply entitled "Masterpieces," contains the classical pieces' interpretations on guitar by a Brazilian guitarist Marcos De Ros. Here you can hear excerpts from works of such composers like Bizet, J.S. Bach, Mozart, etc. I think highly of Marcos De Ros talent, but these poor arrangements of the tracks really strike the listener. Some subtle details would make these "Masterpieces" more interesting. Successful work, sometimes it reminds me of the guitar lessons CD, though. (SV)

[Marcos De Ros, Rua Granel Flores 507 apto 14, Caxias do Sul, RS Brasil 95034-060] 3/3/4

DESTINY'S END

Breathe Deep the Dark

Metal Blade Records

Ex-Helstar vocalist James Rivera returns, with several New Eden defectors, under the guise of Destiny's End. Their debut CD "Breathe Deep the Dark" combines the intensity of vintage Helstar, 80s Bay Area thrash with some European style speed metal riffing. As one might expect, no points are won for originality, for example, the main riff of a song like "The Fortress Unvanquishable" could have easily been on Helstar's "A Distant Thunder." However, the ever-trustworthy vocal delivery of Rivera, in your-face production, and strong soloing provide a pleasant and entertaining musical escapism. (CR)

4

DIGITAL RUIN

Demo sampler '98

self-released

Digital Ruin are becoming one of the better bands in progressive metal scene, and their debut album "Listen" provides high hopes for the follow-up. This promo CD contains four new songs and two radio edits; the material continues the traditions started with "Listen," delivering dark progressive metal emotionally reminiscent of Vaudvindh's "To Dimension Logic." The vocals are a bit poignant, but of specific haunting style that gives a unique edge. Compared to the songs of "Listen," the hooks are more immediate yet not-over-direct, which promises that the album is going to be good. (GS)

DIVIDED MULTITUDE

Inner Self

Sensory

The debut of this Norwegian prog metal band clocks at 73 minutes and contains ten songs. The average length of a song being 7:18, this album belongs to the kind of long-winded albums. Rhythmically, the band resembles to Swedish power/prog metal like Tad Morose, Memento Mori, or Lion's Share, but the production doesn't emphasize punch and heaviness, putting this release to the category of light prog metal. The songs usually contain almost sing-a-long choruses on top of catchy mid-tempo riffs, intermixed with crystal-light progressive style instrumental parts. In general, such a multi-part approach wouldn't contribute to a continuous flow, but, here, the really catchy refrains and solid musicianship gives some worth to the album. And the long-windedness doesn't really bother, only the last two songs are a bit directionless. (GS)

[Divided Multitude Management, Espen Larsen, CD-Baren, 7130 Brekstedt, Norway] 3/3/4

The DMZ Corea

The DMZ Corea

BMG Music

Melodic prog/heavy metal band from South Korea. They must be fans of Queensryche or Helloween, 'cause the influences of those bands are evident. The tracks are sung in Korean, so it's hard to tell what they are about. Some songs give the impression of being quite good, for example, "Children" or "Lovestory." The musicianship isn't bad at all, the singer is OK, too. I don't know many bands from South Korea, but this one is pretty good. Recommended for Psycho Drama or Crimson Glory fans. (SV)

3/3/4

DORIAN GRAY

Journey of Mind

Treasure Hunt Records

Dorian Gray's third release is an attractive combination of hard rock and melodic metal. The production and packaging are really cool, the songs are not bad at all either. Guitar and keyboards' work is OK, the rhythm section plays tight, the vocals also fit the whole concept. The opener "Revolution" is probably the best track on this CD. "Falling Star" is also great. The last song is written by Amanda McBroom (never heard about that person) and is interesting, even if it's a bit out of place here. I'm sure that "Journey of Mind" will earn great success in Japan, but I can't say whether the same will go to Europe and USA. (SV)

[Detlef Hagemester, PO Box 300948, 44561 Castrop-Rauxel, Germany] 3/1/2



BRUCE DICKINSON

The Chemical Wedding

CMC International Records

While Blaze's vocal performance on two latest Iron Maiden albums still puzzles many, ex-Maiden siren Bruce Dickinson managed to put out his fifth album, or fourth during the last 5 years. "The Chemical Wedding" looks quite contrastal to the tired metal Iron Maiden deliver on almost entire "Virtual XI". Bruce's latest sounds fresh, modern, and still falls into metal category. In my opinion, tracks like "The Chemical Wedding," and "Book of Thel" are stronger than any Iron Maiden song written after "Seventh Son of a Seventh Son" album. Yes, there are similarities with the old Maiden, even though Adrian Smith (ex-Maiden guitarist) does not contribute much to the songwriting - the work is mostly done by Bruce and other guitarist Roy Z. They came up with innovative and interesting compositions which in places come very close to what every fan would want Iron Maiden to sound like these days. (GS)

4/1/4

DREADNOX

Divine Act

Manhattan Records

Dreadnox from Brazil support the growing heavy/power metal movement and offer us their debut CD. The first half of the album flows easy, the compositions like "Time Alone Will Tell," "Treasures of Tomb," or "Hunters of a Lost Time" are really well thought-out power metal songs with good vocal lines. The second half isn't so impressive, you can find even banal songs here, like "Crying for You" or "It Never Ends." The vocals of Fabio Schneider will convince every fan of power/progressive metal, sometimes his voice looks pale, though. The instrumental side is cool, sometimes very progressive, but not particularly original. Without a doubt, Dreadnox belong to the better bands from the land that gave birth such metal monsters as Sepultura. If they would pay more attention to the originality, I suppose the outcome would be more impressive. (SV)

[Manhattan Records, Rua Eduardo Ramos, 16 - Tijuca - Cep 20530-030, Rio De Janeiro, Brazil] 3/1/2

DREAM CHILD

Reaching the Golden Gates

Metal Blade Records

A number of bands that build their music on the so-called true melodic heavy/power metal in the veins of the 80s is not very big, but several bands exist, such as Vigilante, Destiny's End, Steel Prophet, or Abraxas. The second album of Dream Child from France is of the same caliber and is a good counterweight to Helloween-inspired bands like Nocturnal Rites and Hammerfall; I would bet that Denis Gulbey of Sentinel Steel is into it. "Reaching the Golden Gates"

presents a quite interesting speed/power metal with some progressive twists. It keeps up with the today's scene, but the 80s feel is really strong. (GS)

[Dream Child Fan Club, BP 98, 74604 Seynod, France]

4

DREAMSCAPE

Very

Rising Sun Productions

Dreamscape make headway. If the debut "Trance-Like State" sounded not polished enough and lacking in expression, so the new material is more balanced and better thought-out. I can't affirm, that Dreamscape play original music, 'cause they are not able to get rid of the evident Dream Theater influences, for example, "Thorn in my Mind" (by the way, the best track on the CD) would go with the "Awake" album. That's why Dreamscape remind me of other Germans Vanden Plas, although they don't use bombastic part-singing refrains. "Very" has also got something from Threshold (just listen to keyboards), but the whole atmosphere goes towards DT's "Falling to Infinity." Although Dreamscape's CD is not a sensation among new releases, it's a solid work in the prog-metal sector. (SV)

4

DREAMSFEAR

Prelude to Destiny EP

Ill-Omen Records

Ireland is not rich in power or trad heavy metal bands. Dreamsfear should feel like the outsiders in this land. Their music is power/thrash with the unique spirit of the 80s. The

produced by Kevin Shirley, this is a fine live album that will fully satisfy most fans. (GM)

4

ELDRITCH

Ei Nino

Inside Out Music

Even if "Ei Nino," the third album of Italian progressive/power metal masters Eldritch does not carry such a factor of surprise like their debut "Seeds of Rage" did, it's better than band's second, a little bit too mechanical "Headquake." Because Eldritch are now better in integrating heavy riffs with good melody lines, and stay quite distinct in the genre. The fact is that if "Seeds of Rage" could indicate their tendencies towards more progressive sides of metal, "Ei Nino" displays not so typically sounding, but mainly power metal, with some experiments with electronic sounds ("Fall From Grace" and "Scar"), yet based on a heavy combination of guitars, keyboards, and drums with clean mid-high vocals. That's okay, the performance is tight and the playing is mature, but the freshness and emotions of such tracks as "Cage of Sins" and "Colors" (off the debut) seem never to be reached... Or the canons have changed: what was great four years ago, is only decent nowadays. (GS)

4

ELEGY

Manifestation of Fear

Noise Records

These Dutch metallers were a lot more adventurous in their early days, from "Labyrinth of Dreams" to "Lost" album. Neoclassical guitar shredding was more visible, high shrieks of the old singer Hovinga were too much to carry for many, but still unpredictable, and vocal melodies were more interesting. In "Manifestation of Fear," their sixth output, we hear more mainstream melodic metal without any digressions. Competently performed, but with just a couple of more memorable songs, like "Master of Deception." Bearing that in mind, it is an "okay" album, but many such exist out there. (GS)

3/3/4

EMERALD RAIN

Broken Saviours

Frontiers Records

Emerald Rain are often compared to Harem Scarem, and not without a reason. They use similar song structures and this part singing, typical of the above-mentioned Canadian band. Though their material is interesting and there are some really good songs on the CD, "Broken Saviours" doesn't come up to Harem Scarem's albums. There's something missing here, stirring ideas, for example. They should pay more attention to bright melodies, because, in my opinion, they are very important for bands of this style. (SV)

3/1/2



ENCHANT

Break

Inside Out Music

The same-titled opener track strikes with an intensity not that often met in progressive rock music, but, overall, the third album of San Francisco's Enchant is more for Rush/Marillion listeners than for Dream Theater/Queensryche ones. In places, Enchant's lyrical and light prog rock comes close to what Fates Warning did on "Inside Out." Some of the tracks are really beautiful ("My Enemy" and "King," among others); poetic fragility is the main emotion of "Break," allowing the listener to comfortably run through light pictures of the past and the desired future. Towards the ending, the album gets a bit passive, but, judging it all, there is much more good than average on it. (GS)

4

Judging by your biography, I get the impression that the length of the recording process is aptly described by the title of your debut album: "Forever and a Day." What was the actual story behind the time it took to record the album? How difficult was it to keep the enthusiasm with all the interruptions?

MT: The band originally started as a recording project because Chris Lucci and I always wanted to release our own album. We did not play out live so we were taking our time about recording. Everyone had a very busy schedule, then personal issues started conflicting with the recording schedule. The original singer was replaced by Paul Vander because we felt we needed a stronger voice for the music. Paul's voice was the perfect match for what we were trying to achieve. He then had to learn all of the vocal lines I had already written. I moved from Houston to Los Angeles for a while. I told everyone not to get discouraged because I would fly back and forth. I did that for 4 or 5 months basically spending 2 weeks in LA and 2 weeks in Houston. The only reason I really moved back to Texas was because my father passed away. It was a very difficult time for me although I tried not to show it to anyone that much. I needed to be alone. We finally started recording again in March of 1998 and finished up in early May. The whole process took so long because we would basically only record on the weekends and sometimes we couldn't book the studio when we needed it because there were other projects being recorded. Jason, the owner of R/R Studio (where we recorded), kept teasing me about how long the recording was taking. It sort of became a running gag between us. Once it came down to do the final mixdown and the mastering, everyone started getting more and more excited and we started rehearsing in June as a band. We didn't play our first gig until October but now we have several gigs scheduled for early 1999.

It took a while to finally record the album. You often read about the dream of musicians to finally release their own album, working on different jobs to scrape enough money together to finance the recordings in different phases. Often recording at night because those hours are cheaper. How did you finance the whole album project?

MT: The entire album project was financed by Chris Lucci and I. We split the costs for everything. As I mentioned, this started out as a recording project and went from there. When we found Chris McLuan, we were fortunate to find out he worked at the studio where we ended up recording the album. We hit it off really well with Jason Rooks (the guy who owns R/R Digital Studios in Lake Jackson, Texas). Lucci and I always wanted to make a CD and since we were in a better position financially than most musicians, we gave it a shot. Dr. Lucci is a medical doctor professionally. I was a legal assistant for a major Texas law firm. We both had money and weren't struggling to scrape up enough to record the CD. Since the entire project took two years, we had plenty of time to finance the recording.

You mentioned that you moved back and forth between Los Angeles and Houston for a few months. How would you typify the differences between those two cities in terms of the mentality of the people towards music?

ALL TOO HUMAN

Bridging the Musical Gap Between Nietzsche and James Bond

[by Christian Rademaker]

All Too Human is an unusually named four-piece from Texas. "Forever and a Day" is the title of their self-produced and self-financed debut CD. The band line-up consists of the following members: Chris Lucci (drums and percussion), Chris McLuan (guitars), Maurice Taylor (bass, acoustic guitar, keyboards), and Paul Vander (vocals). Maurice Taylor and Chris Lucci originally played in a project called Muzix. Most of the music appearing on the CD originates from this period and in April 1995 Maurice and Chris rejoined forces with the aim to record an album of original music brought. Chris McLuan began rehearsing with the band in February 1996. In June 1996, they went to R/R Digital Studios in Lake Jackson, Texas and began recording tracks for the project. The original singer was released and Paul Vander was brought in to record the vocals in August 1997. After many delays the band finalized the album in May 1998. "Forever and a Day" showcases the diversity of All Too Human but this diversity also deters the coherence. The main style balances on the border between progressive hard rock and metal with slight adventures into the area of folk and ambient electronics. The songs were written over a longer period of time and there are various credits for songwriting by non-members. This would explain that there is no particular constant style on the album. Highlights are "Life Begins Anew" which reminds of "Permanent Waves"-era Rush with Paul Vander sounding uncannily like a young Geddy Lee singing in a lower key, the brilliant spine-chillingly beautiful acoustic ballad "Souls on a Mortal High" and the Fates Warning-esque epic "Camel's Revenge." On the other hand, some of the songs such as the opener "What do you call me now?" and "An untitled Masterpiece" come across as uninspired in terms of lacking a memorable main melody and interesting song structures. The musicianship on this CD is professional but not overly extravagant to deter the impact of songs. Particularly noticeable are the exceptional vocals of Paul Vander. He has a pleasant voice with a wide range. Comparisons can be drawn to Geoff Tate and James Rivera. "Forever and a Day" is a very competent and promising release, and if All Too Human can maintain the momentum gained by finally releasing this CD then much more can be expected from a second outing. In order to find out more about All Too Human, I contacted bass-player Maurice Taylor for an interview. Although interviewing a relatively new band is always difficult in the sense that there is no previous info to build on from, I think it turned out to be very interesting. More information about All Too Human can be found by visiting their homepage at: <http://www.alltoohuman.com/frames.html>.

MT: Very, very different. Houston is almost musically apathetic. Everyone thinks small scale. In Los Angeles, it's a way of life. You have tons of musicians making a living professionally, not only with their own band but with other projects. Houston seems to have this apathetic attitude towards live music. People will go to a certain club on the strip rather than follow a band they really enjoy. I'm not saying there are no followings in Houston but it is difficult to get anything going because of people's general attitude about the whole thing. There are plenty of talented musicians that go unnoticed because they are not doing what the mainstream thinks they should be doing. Right now, the band Stride, which I believe is the most talented group in Houston, is struggling because they cannot get signed if they don't find a singer. These musicians are incredible and not enough people are paying attention to them. I try to go and see them every chance I get. The Dallas/Fort Worth scene is a lot better. Tons of bands and tons of places for them to play. There aren't very many places for an aspiring rock/metal band to play live in Houston.

In my review, I wrote that "Forever and a Day" showcases the diversity of All

Floyd and King Crimson experimental stuff. "Camel's Revenge" originally started out as an instrumental but proved too powerful to leave as such. It was a great song for us to attempt our first little mini-epic. I don't think it's a bad thing that the album does not have one particular style. To me, music is the best expression of emotion. As people, we do not walk around every day just showing one emotion to each other. In the same way, music to me should not always be aggressive, or happy, or sad. Most people don't feel the same way though. They think a band should sound one way and that usually means the more aggression the better. I don't feel that way. The newer material is different. It's a lot heavier. Even within the band, there is this thinking that we have to sound one way and it has to be heavier. I don't mind being heavy. But then again, I usually feel more than one emotion during the course of any given day. Paul (vocals) and Chris McLuan (guitar) are writing most of the newer material. I think more people will like the newer stuff just because it's heavier than most of the stuff on "Forever and a Day."

The songwriting credits list a lot of individuals who are not members of All Too Human but were part of the Muzix project. In which were they responsible for the evolution of All Too Human. What are they currently up to?

MT: All Too Human did not start out as a band per se. Oscar Mangini was the original guitar player years ago when we wrote most of the music in Muzix. I couldn't consciously release the album and not give him credit. He was the only non-member who helped with the music. David Wager and Mark Jasinski are both friends of mine who write beautiful poetry. I always have an idea of what I want the words to be like for a song but don't always necessarily know how to express myself. It was easier to collaborate with them on the lyrics for the songs. Oscar no longer plays guitar that I know of. I still collaborate with David and Mark on stuff but Paul will be writing most of the lyrics for the newer material unless there is absolutely something that I am trying to say with one of my songs. Paul is a very good lyrical writer and a very positive writer.

Without putting down the performance of the other musicians of All Too Human, I'm very impressed with your vocalist Paul Vander. He has the perfect voice bringing across the emotion of the songs and lyrics. How did you find him? How is it possible that he can sound so differently on the songs of the album: "Life Begins Anew" versus "Souls on a Mortal High"?

MT: We were extremely lucky to find Paul. Actually, Jason found him for us and hooked us up. Things were kind of shaky at first while we were trying to feel each other out. We heard Paul's demos and knew he was the one. It took a while to get him in the studio but when we did it was magical. What's great is that Paul is even more diverse and powerful than the performance on "Forever and a Day" indicates because on the album, he was singing everything I wrote note for note. I would give him the lyrics, sing the song for him, and tell him how I wanted the song to come off and he'd nail it! Even when I'd ask him to do a Geddy Lee type vocal. Paul doesn't just sing. He studies about vocals and the mechanics of singing and is able to achieve so much more than

the average singer because he keeps trying to get better by understanding what his voice can or can't do. There's not much he can't do by the way. He is an incredible vocalist and he still amazes me with the vocal parts he is writing for our new material.

The monicker "All Too Human" sounds very unusual and original. How did you come about choosing this name and what does it stand for?

MT: It was a very long process which took almost as long as it did to record the album. Originally, we just continued with the name of Muzix (a band Lucci and I used to be in). It was finally decided that we were going to proceed as a band and therefore needed a "new" name. Paul wasn't around at the time so Lucci, McLuan, and I sat around and came up with a list of about 100 names. We came up with a shorter list from that and even though we came up with a democratic choice for a new name, we did not use it. We kept thinking for a while. McLuan was coming up with these phrase names. Originally, we were thinking of calling ourselves "Among The Missing." McLuan saw a book called "All Too Human" which was about the Kennedys. I was a philosophy major and remembered a book by Nietzsche called, "Human, All Too Human." I kept seeing the phrase pop up in different magazine and newspaper articles and told him I kind of liked it. We all thought about it for one more night and decided "All Too Human" would be our name. On another note, I had been messing around with a logo for the band and one evening as I was at the movie theater watching a James Bond movie, the logo came to me. As soon as I got home, I designed it.

The inspiration of philosophy/Nietzsche for the band name and James Bond for the logo comes across as a peculiar combination. Could you elaborate a bit more on how a James Bond movie could inspire you to the design of the All Too Human logo?

MT: It wasn't so much the James Bond movie but I thought it was interesting that it happened while I was watching that movie because of the symbolism that goes with James Bond and his mythical persona. I had been working on the logo for weeks and could not get it to look convincingly artistic enough. All of a sudden, while I was in that movie, it came to me. I was nervous that I was going to forget the logo before I got home but I didn't.

Your father died during the recording phase of "Forever and a Day," what role has your father played in your life and how has his death affected your music?

MT: My father was a marine for 20 years. Everyone would think he was probably very strict and disciplined but he was actually very kind, loving, and the happiest and friendliest man I have ever met to this day. No one enjoyed life more than my father. That is the main reason it was so sad when he passed away. I know he was not ready to go yet. I had just announced to him a few months earlier that I was going to marry my current fiancée and he wanted so much to see us get married. It has been difficult at times. I will never

forget when they played "Taps" at his funeral. My mother and father were always very supportive of my music even if they didn't enjoy it at times. The two instrumentals on the album, if you want to call them that, "A Walk Through Iowa Park" and "Dismal Array," were my ways of dealing musically with my father's death. My father was from a small town in Texas called Iowa Park. I wanted "A Walk Through..." to have a soothing effect as though one was strolling through a park thinking about life and other things. "Dismal Array" encompasses the feeling of confusion I was having about my father's death. Music helped me to cope a little better with my father's death than I probably would have if I did not have a way to express myself about him passing away.

Your parents were very supportive of your music although they didn't really like the type of music. This is often the case for most parents: we may call it the



musical generation gap. Being a musician yourself, do you see yourself as a parent later trying hard to bridge this gap and appreciate the music of your children?

MT: Yes. This makes me very nervous. Especially with all of the "stuff" kids are listening to nowadays on the radio. I don't know. It just all seems different to me. There just seems to be more of a violent edge to a lot of the stuff on the radio. Everyone seems to be so angry and that's upsetting. Most kids are like tape recorders and they'll just mimic everything that's hip and cool. That's what I like about progressive music. Progressive music allows you to do whatever and the listener can go whichever way they want. I know some people that like progressive rock and some that like progressive metal. It depends on the taste. But it's all very diverse. Everything on the radio sounds the same to me. It's all either angry, anti-social junk, or all teeny bopper girls screaming for how cute the boys are. I don't know what I would do if my children were caught in the radio trap of today. I would challenge my children to be musically diverse and not to follow like a bunch of sheep.

"Forever and a Day" does not have a lyric sheet but the lyrics do seem to play an important role in the whole context of the song. Could you tell us something about the lyrical content of the songs?
MT: We wanted the lyrics to be in the CD but did not have the financial resources to include them. By the time we were ready to press, we were running out of money and wanted to get the CD out. Future

printings will most likely contain the lyrics. All of the lyrics for the songs are available through our website. "What Do You Call Me Now?" is filled with rhetorical questions which are meant to show our questioning of life. It also deals with any relationship a person may have had in the past. Relationships are always classified as friends, lovers, co-workers, names, etc... Once a relationship is over, what do you call each other? "Forever and a Day" came from the types of phrases my father used to say all the time which made sense when you thought about them but when you look at them in context they actually don't make that much sense. The title stuck and the lyrics were written after the title. The song is about hope and serenity. "Life Begins Anew" is about no matter what you do, if you regret your past, you can always start over so don't get down on yourself. "An Untitled Masterpiece" is not our vain view of our music. The song is about procrastination and how everyone's life is a potential untitled masterpiece if

you don't get around to try and do the things you want to accomplish. "Souls On A Mortal High" is the strongest lyrical song on the album for me. It started out as a "natural" view of life in the old Zeppelin acoustic time stuff and ended up being a very spiritual song for me. The last half of the song deals with the calming peacefulness of death. We are all called to a better place where there is no suffering. "The Limits of Man" is simply that there are no limitations. We are the only ones who hold each other back. And finally, "Camel's Revenge" was the most difficult song to write the lyrics for. On a small scale, it is about a CIA operative who must complete a mission on his own and he begins to question why he is doing this. On a much grander scale the man represents the United States. I'll leave it at that.

The CD cover depicts a view of the ocean at night with a clock showing 2 minutes to midnight half submerged. In which way are the title of the album cover related?

MT: These are all elements which express the concept of forever. The vastness of the ocean, the stars in the sky at night, the clock which is about to strike midnight but the face has all twelves on it. It is something which keeps going on. The clock is not half-submerged but rather on the horizon. Time looms ominously in the distance. The back of the CD shows a reverse view from behind the clock towards the logo. Sort of an attempt at saying, time is the same and always present no matter how you look at it. We were going to have more artwork

depicting elements of time and forever but ironically enough, we ran out of time and resources. Future printings will also probably include more artwork.

Texas is best known for its country & western scene. Back in the late 80s though, Texas used to have a prolific progressive and power metal scene. There were numerous promising bands in San Antonio, Austin, Dallas/Fort Worth that never made it to vinyl/CD though. It now seems that there are a revival with several promising groups getting exposure such as All Too Human, Power of Omens, Little Green Men to name a few. What is the current musical scene like in your area?

MT: Well, I basically hang out in two cities. I live in Dallas but the band rehearses in Houston. Dallas/Fort Worth has an excellent scene for heavy metal. There are a lot of bands out there that are trying to do something. Unfortunately, I haven't been able to see very many of them out live and have not met any of the members in these bands. I have seen Little Green Men and could not believe their musical prowess, especially from the lead singer who plays bass and keyboards, sometimes at the same time. He is unreal. The band as a whole sounds a lot like late 80s, early 90s Rush. I hope they can go far with their music. In Houston, there is currently an attempt to revive the heavy metal scene from the 80s. There are a lot of bands such as Stride (instrumental prog), Final Xit (prog metal), and Z Lot Z (heavy rock with some prog elements) that are very well known in this area and trying to push the scene. There are also other heavy metal bands such as Mystic Cross, Atomic Opera, and Midnight Circus. We all hope people will take notice once again. I think the most internationally known band from Texas right now is Power of Omens. They have really made a mark in the prog metal scene around the world. I hope we can follow in their footsteps and cross paths somewhere along the road.

You are also involved in other musical projects such as Ausgang Nine with Eric Kendall (formerly of Tempus). I assume that All Too Human is of course your priority. How do you divide your time between those projects. How difficult is it to determine which project has the priority in terms of musical creativity when the musical styles show a lot of overlap?

MT: All Too Human is my number one priority right now but playing on such projects like Ausgang Nine allows for more musical room. There is no conflict right now because Eric Kendall writes all of the stuff for A9. We have only had a few jam sessions and already have enough material for a very long CD. We will probably be ironing all that out within the next six months or so. I like to be able to play a lot of stuff, not just one style. If something I write does not fit All Too Human, I'll just take it to Ausgang Nine or some other project. I don't want to compromise myself musically. We are beginning to have musical differences of opinion in All Too Human because everyone is writing now whereas Lucci and I wrote all of "Forever and a Day." I'm sure there will be no problems in the long run but it just makes it difficult to write material sometimes when everyone is putting their two cents worth in. I'm trying to take more of a back seat approach on the newer stuff. We'll just have to wait and see where all of this goes.

Archetype



visionary dynamics

[by Giedrius Slivinskas]

Archetype is a new progressive metal band from Ohio, USA, which recently released "Hands of Time" EP containing four songs (see review).

Stylistically, the EP songs do not follow footsteps of any of the Big-Three bands, but do not deviate from progressive metal genre, as we understand it, and certainly indicate signs of promising future.

Just before the print time, I received a pre-production tape, containing five new songs, from guitarist and main songwriter Chris Matyus. These songs continue in the same vein of adventurous Archetype style. Some of them have a more direct metallic edge, but it only contributes to the best features of Archetype, namely, the creative songwriting and diversity. Chris answered my questions.

What was the purpose of releasing an EP on Intromental? The common opinion is that EPs cost just a little bit less to produce than full-lengths, their retail price is just a few dollars less, but the quantity of music is significantly reduced? On the other hand, saving studio costs makes sense if the main purpose of the record is promotion of the band...

When we released our first EP in October 1998, we were just a three-piece instrumental band. We had searched for a singer for over a year and decided that a CD might get us some recognition and hopefully land us a singer. Obviously, a full length was out of the question. We mostly intended for the instrumental CD to be for promotional purposes, and when it landed us a management company and a singer, it exceeded our expectations. With a new vocalist, we decided to use what we had recorded already, add vocals, a few new solos, re-mix and re-master. I wanted to get the disc out as soon as possible because I was very impatient and couldn't wait any longer. We weren't expecting much profit from "Hands Of Time," because we realized we would have to use most of the copies for promotion before selling them. Overall, the response and promotion we have gotten from the CD has been well worth the cost, effort, and the waiting. At the moment, I am working on lyrics for several more songs, and we will decide whether to wait a little longer on the response or make plans to record our first full-length CD.

I heard that you have a lot of new material, how does it compare to the four songs presented on "Hands of Time" EP?

I would say much of the material we have is not really new. I have written about three songs in the last four months and am currently taking apart a few older songs and re-writing parts here and there. I have never revealed that the songs on "Hands Of Time" are my 7th, 19th, 8th, and 15th originals until now. There is much more that no one has heard besides our management. I am always writing new material, and I feel it remains very original and consistent with each new addition. Every song will present something new for the listener yet remain within a certain structure. We have songs ranging from 4:30 to 12:00 minutes long, some are much heavier, and some more complex than others. I can't wait to see the response when our

first full-length CD is done.

You didn't have a singer until the end of 1998. Was it difficult to find a singer who would want to sing such kind of music? Were there any other candidates you tried before Chyle?

We auditioned many singers during the 14+ months without one. I was not going to settle for someone who could just sing good, it had to be the perfect fit! Most singers couldn't handle our style and never returned, some thought they could but really couldn't. It was pretty depressing at times, but we never gave up! There were only a couple singers that I might have wanted to join, but they didn't due to various reasons. Like Chyle said, it must have been fate. I reluctantly answered a classified ad (his final one) and, a week later, realized from the first word he sang to "Visionary" that he was the one.

Tell us about Ohio club scene. Which bigger metal bands play there? How many people would come to a Pantera or Rob Zombie show, and how many people showed up for Iced Earth?

The scene in Ohio is dismal! There are so many bands playing the same music that no one wants to go out and see a show anymore. It's hard to book a good club, because there are never any openings, and the clubs don't care about good bands. I honestly don't pay much attention to the local scene here anymore. Our sights are set so much higher that playing in Cleveland is not that important to us right now. We play a few gigs to keep our live show up, but are concentrating on other states and Europe. We do get most major metal acts through Cleveland and the rest of Ohio. Pantera has played very big shows here, and I know nothing of Zombie (nor do I care). I guess the Iced Earth show was all right (so I heard), but it didn't draw the amount of people it should have due to the location of the club where they played. Hopefully someday things will improve in the metal scene in Cleveland and the rest of Ohio.

How difficult is it for a band like Archetype to get opening slots, if a bigger band comes to your place? How do club owners treat you, when do you have 'pay to play' and when you don't?

We have had problems trying to book opening slots for major acts. Most clubs say there is nothing that fits our style, and others just give us the run around. It always comes down to whether the owner or the person booking likes us or not. Since we are so original, our music goes right over their head, and we are overlooked. We have a few connections in other cities right now that might turn into something good. Club owners don't seem to care that much about bands anymore here. There are so many bands in the scene, the clubs have all the power to book you or not. If you don't draw at first, they won't have you back even if you are opening. No one cares about talent or potential, it's all about making a few dollars. I understand that they need to make money, but if they actually put some time and effort into promoting good bands, things might be better. We haven't had to pay to play, and we will never do that. We have sold tickets before, but that's as far as it has gone. Most clubs don't pay much if anything when you are an original band, so maybe when we are superstars we can get a few dollars to play! (haha)

Now, when "Billboard" is featuring metal again, it seems that two opinions exist: some people think that metal needs more exposure, while others prefer it to stay underground. What do you think; probably as a musician you tend towards the first...?

It would be nice to turn on the radio and hear a much bigger variety of metal. Everytime you turn it on, it's either Metallica or Ozzy on the commercial stations or Korn on the college or underground metal stations. I gave up on radio years ago. There definitely needs to be more exposure and a wider variety of metal offered on the radio. Once or twice a week there might be a good show on college radio, but it will only be a few hours at most. I don't really read metal magazines all that much, but they seem to offer good exposure for a

variety of metal bands. I guess since metal isn't widely accepted by the masses, it is considered to be underground music. I think it's bigger than most people realize, but more exposure would do worlds of good for it.

What do you think about the fact that hundreds of bands now pursue the style still crowned by Fates Warning, Dream Theater, and Queensryche? Are there any bands, in your opinion, that would come close to the best albums of the aforementioned bands?

Archetype, of course! Ha ha, it's funny, I really don't listen to that much "progressive" metal or music outside of Dream Theater and Rush. It helps me stay focused on being original with my writing. I still think Coroner has written some incredible albums that have gone vastly overlooked by the metal scene. Although more heavy and aggressive, some of their material is quite melodic, technical, and more "progressive" at times. Besides that, I would have to listen to many different bands before deciding which ones would be able to compare to the bands you mentioned.

Do you feel a competition in the underground melodic metal scene, or do you view it in a more relaxed way?

To me, there doesn't seem to be much competition. There are no other bands in Cleveland (or Ohio for that much) doing what we do, so we never experience it. I'm sure when we get out to other cities there might be some, but I really feel that we are so different from any other bands that there won't be much competition along the way. From what I have seen locally, bands usually get along and some are willing to help others. There are always the few who think they are the best and will look down upon any form of competition.

Archetype has a website at intromental.com, but you also maintain your own web site. How much time do you spend on the internet per day and which pages do you like to visit?

I spend a good amount of time per day on the internet. Usually sending out e-mail to possible promoters/booking agents or for any kind of promotion. I talk to our managers at Intromental Management almost 3-4 times per week using ICQ. Thank god for the internet or communication costs would bankrupt almost anyone! I usually check our site at <http://www.intromental.com/archetype> to see if they have added anything new or <http://www.archetype1.com> just to laugh at our pictures. Aside from those sites, I check a lot of musicians referral sites to see what bands and players are out there.

As I understand, currently the band is waiting for record deal offers. Were there any deals that you have turned down already? Do you have in mind a vision for your debut album, e.g., will it evolve around some concept, are you going to use any songs from the EP?

Many record labels have turned us down so far. They all say that we do not fit in with their marketing direction. Really, we won't fit in with any marketing direction because we are so different! Some have expressed interest, and we are waiting on more response. It's going to take someone who realizes just how much we can accomplish before we get a good deal. Most companies just want that fast money and aren't willing to develop a talented band. I am always thinking about what songs to use for our first album, what to call it, etc. It won't be a concept album, I may think about that later. I've always liked concept albums because the songs have more meaning. We definitely will use some, if not all of the songs from our EP. There aren't that many copies out so using the songs will be all right. As of now, we are still receiving responses from the EP, and we will wait a little longer before we make any decisions on whether to continue using the EP for promotion or go to the studio and record a full-length album.

Archetype website: <http://intromental.com/archetype/>

ENIAC REQUIEM**Space Eternal Void****Shrapnel Records**

This new Shrapnel album is quite interesting, as it differentiates clearly from the so numerous "guitar virtuoso only" CDs released by this label. Stylistically, Eniac Requiem can be considered neo-classical prog metal, but the main discrepancy in comparison to the aforementioned albums stems from the sound: it has a strong emphasis on keyboards which - on the contrary of Vitalij Kuprij, for example - focus on the atmosphere building. The result is a "background layer" dominated by a "space sound." Except some fast songs, most compositions are rather played on a slow tempo, increasing the weird "ambient" sound. This landscape is completed by a dull rhythmic guitar and somewhat boring riffs. The vocals and the solos however enhance the overall effect, finalizing a globally typical neo-classical metal album. (AS)

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EVENT**Electric Skies****Rising Sun Productions**

American band Event deliver progressive rock, which is similar to Enchant in the heaviness aspect. Stylistically, "Electric Skies" is not as mellow as Enchant's "Break," and contains many intricate sections, which do not last overlong and are tastefully integrated into well-defined songs. "Electric Skies" is too lightweight for real metal fans, but is adventurous enough to be significantly superior to so-called elevator rock (whatever hell that term means). My personal favorite is "Weatherman" with a bit haunting vocal melodies. (GS)

3 3/4

EXCELSIS**Kurt of Koppigen****self-released**

Their debut "Anduin the River" got a positive review in our last issue. I must note a great improvement in Excelsis' songwriting. First of all, the refrains became better, the arrangements - more opulent. The band offers also something new lyrically. The album is based on the novel of the same name written by Swiss writer Jeremias Gotthelf. Correspondingly, the CD-booklet has a nice design with medieval type pictures. Musically, Excelsis pursue the line of their debut CD: epic power metal in veins of Blind Guardian, with a "necessary" bombast and slightly high-flown melodies. I think that's a matter of time when they get the contract with a label. Good. (SV)

[Stefan Ruel, PO Box 163, 3425 Koppigen, Switzerland]

4

FATES WARNING**Still Life DoCD****Massacre Records**

Finally, after 8 albums, Massacre honors us with the first Fates Warning live-CD, in a double format, with a clean sound and real live-atmosphere! The first part contains the whole "A Pleasant Shade of Gray" album (live-version), from the beginning to the end. The second CD is a mixture of songs from different albums. One thing, that makes not so good impression on me, is the fact that there are only 8 tracks on the CD in total. Fates Warning have such a huge number of outstanding songs, so I think, it's not so great when the whole "A Pleasant Shade of Gray" and "The Ivory Gate of Dreams" occupy more than a half of this release leaving room only for 6 tracks. I'm sure, some people will miss here tracks like "Through Different Eyes" or "Guardian." It's a pity that there was no empty space left for them. (SV)

FIARRO**Fiarro****self-released**

The 3-track demo by this band was reviewed in our last issue. In addition to the same 3 songs, you can hear 6 new tracks on this debut album. Fiarro play power/prog metal with Ray Alder-like vocals. All band members had experiences in various bands before, and you really can feel this on their CD. Great guitar work stands out as well as the clean high vocals. The only draw-back is the weak sound, but we must remember this is a low budget self-release. I believe that Fiarro will find many listeners, especially among prog/power fans, because their

material is far better than many other CDs by bands of this style. (SV)

[\$15 (incl.air-mail), John Fiarro, 6710 Greencastle, San Antonio, TX 78242, USA] 3 3/4

**FIFTH SEASON****Journey Through an Open Mind****self-released**

I wanted to lay my hands on releases of this English band for a long time. Previously known as Inner Sanctum, they kept appearing in various zines with positive reviews, but never made it big. "Journey" is their debut full-length, and it doesn't capture immediately, but challenges enough to proceed with subsequent listens. Influenced by Rush, Fifth Season deliver pure progressive metal, very dynamic and impulsive. Song patterns seem to be blurred in the beginning, and only after a number of listens they take a clearer shape, revealing all challenging hooks. The sound doesn't really remind of any specific bands. In places, you think that the material must have been composed around 1995, when there was a trend (in the prog metal world) to make the music less heavy and more accessible; in other places, you think that Psychotic Waltz fans should like it (track "Birth of Acquisition"). The band should consider lightening up the catchiness in order to get a wider appeal, but the first two tracks, "Shadows of Hope" and "A Little Rain Must Fall," just breathe with excellence. So why don't you give this album a chance, especially if you are after a little raw and non-sterile prog metal a la Psychotic Waltz, Heaven's Cry, Seer's Tear or adventurous prog rock of the a earlier Rush (Fifth Season are less heavy compared to the aforementioned three bands). (GS)

[10£, Karen Parker, 120 Somerton Avenue, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 4EZ, England]

4

FIFTH SEASON**promo EP '99****self-released**

And just when one could have expected them to add a second guitarist and do some harmony leads, they hooked up with a full-time keyboard player and softened the music compared to "Journey Through an Open Mind." I am ironizing a little bit, but it's a fact that the band noticeably turned from metal to a bit more psychedelic heavy rock (a la Tool, Opposite Earth) mixed with prog/space rock influences of the 70s. The promo CD clocks at 28 minutes and contains 4 lengthy songs which have more fluent structures than band's earlier material, but are less adventurous and even more light-weight. It's a matter of taste, of course, but I want to hope that their next full-length will still have some metal. (GS)

FINAL TRAGEDY**Trial of Tears demo-CD****self-released**

Final Tragedy, French progressive rock/metal band, evolved from technothrash quintet Etheric Soul which was founded in 1989 and put out one demo. The duo of female singer Delphine Cochand and main songwriter Jean-Luc Millot plays mid-heavy prog rock with high-pitched vocals which are a bit too much upfront and lack processing. Stylistically, Final Tragedy go after Leger de Main, but soundwise they need to improve, as well as the singing should be more diverse (now it's only in high range). All four songs themselves are quite good, with progressive structures and riffs. The most memorable one is "Cold Sun."

[Final Tragedy, c/o Delphine Cochand, 1 bis, rue du Chene, 25230 Dasle, France]

3

FINALXIT**True Nature EP****self-released**

A brand new band from Texas, delivering melodic yet quite aggressive US metal with prog-metal style clean vocals. The overall impression is if a streamlined Queensryche or The Quiet Room would meet Life of Agony's "River Runs Red," and the result doesn't really resemble to any of them. The not-so-good production with too little power on guitars doesn't do justice to the music, which is not that technically challenging and more relies on

powerful riffs and melodies. The dominating tempo is slow to mid-pace. Finaxit may be a fine band to catch live at a local club, where they would have a 20-30 minutes set and support a bigger act, but they should lighten-up the intensity in some of the heavier pieces for the full-length album, as well as improve the sound. Overall, the style is not worst, so the band is promising. (GS)

[Melodic Productions, PO Box 751835, Houston, TX 77275-1835, USA]

3 1/2

FOREVER TIMES**Forever Times****Zizania Music**

Thanks to you know who, Dutch atmospheric rock/metal band fronted by a female singer isn't difficult to describe. Yeps, they're like The Gathering, just more experimental (saxophone in two tracks) and progressive (the opener "In the Eye of Compassion" comes close to what tech-light-proggers Leger de Main are doing). Brightly-sadly thoughtful, this album is even catchier in places ("System of the Heart") than, e.g., "Nighttime Birds" of The Gathering, just less monumental. Overall, the music sounds a bit like a collection of all great ideas that musicians had, and doesn't have the impact that would make you breathless from the beginning to the end (due to some loose interludes? Or the overlong ending track?), but this flaw shouldn't prevent you from detecting this band, since it is really going on its own trail. (GS)

[Forever Times, Boksdooier 465, 5038 KC Tilburg, The Netherlands]

3 3/4

FORGOTTEN SUNS**Fiction Edge Demo EP****self-released**

Portuguese prog band. I guess, at first this material was released on the tape and later pressed on the CD. This EP contains 4 tracks-intro, and if we keep in mind, that the band comes from Portugal, we must agree, that Forgotten Suns are far better than many other prog rock/metal newcomers. Their music is melancholic, calm, enriched with many details. With respect to the atmosphere, the band is related to Everon or Spock's Beard. The production is not particularly good, but satisfactory for a self-release. My favorites on the CD are "Lost (Back Home)" and the overlong "Routine." (SV)

[Forgotten Suns, Av. Roma 24-4 esq., 1000 Lisboa, Portugal]

3 1/2

FROM THY ASHES**One With the Waves EP****self-released**

It's not easy to describe the music of this German band. Sometimes their stuff comes progressive over, sometimes it's simply trad heavy metal, and sometimes I hear elements of gothic rock here. The CD cover and the title are probably "gothic," but the music isn't, actually. OK, the vocals are not so varied as the instrumental side, I even think that the singer needs more practice, 'cause he is probably the main hindrance in the band. Apart from that, it's a quite listenable EP that could excite the curiosity of above-mentioned styles or Depressive Age fans. (SV)

[Sebastian Schult, Geissberg 13, 71334 Waiblingen, Germany]

3 1/2

GAMMA RAY**Powerplant****Noise Records**

Kai Hansen and Co. realized that it's heavy and fast metal what attracts fans and satisfies record labels, and "Powerplant" confirms that there is no time for experimentation at the end of this decade. Competing with many competent rivals, Gamma Ray blast a portion of what they do best, namely heavy/speed metal with well-flowing vocal melodies. It's good, even if it sounds safe and familiar. My personal Gamma Ray peaks were the track "Lust for Life" off their debut album; the first half of "Insanity & Genius" (1993) where the band sounded very energetic, epic, and convincing; and the whole "Land of the Free," which perfectly filled the void of nicely executed heavy/speed metal at that time. "Powerplant" offers about the same now with its upbeat material, but the past energy is scaled-down and its effect won't be as big. The album still keeps a fairly high standard for traditional German metal, and, for dedicated fans of the band, it would not be difficult to love this album (maybe with an exception of one or another song, but these things always happen with Helloween and Gamma Ray). Thus it's safe to say that, if you want safety, you can buy this album safely. (GS)

4 (or should it be 3 1/4?)

GANDILLION**Perennette Gandillion****Killerwhale Records**

It would seem that the Netherlands is turning into a breeding ground of new female-fronted prog rock/metal acts with the likes of Gandillion and Forever Times leading the way. Although "Perennette Gandillion" is the debut release of this young five-piece, their sound and songwriting approach is very mature. Elements of Fates Warning ("Perfect Symmetry"), The Gathering ("Mandylin"), and Marillion ("Misplaced Childhood") spring to my mind as influences, but they are not disturbing. Gandillion's ability to write diverse material is shown in the mid-tempo "Covent Garden" and the lament "Penetrate." However, the third song "Suddenly" is a short fragile ballad that falls a bit out of place. The final song "Perennette Suite" is an overwring 22-minute epic consisting of five separate yet musically connected parts with a highly experimental and rhythmic song "Shapeshift" with French narration thrown in for a surprising interlude. Some points of criticism would be that, in the mix, the balance between guitars and keyboards during the rhythm parts is often in favor of the keyboards. This creates a keyboard-driven sound whereas the guitars are varied enough to shine out. Vocalist Femke Feenstra has a powerful voice which is able to convey emotional and fragile moments as well but, at times, there are too many lyrics to fit into her vocal lines. Nevertheless, a highly recommendable CD from this young Dutch band for fans of the aforementioned bands looking for something slightly different and fresh. (CR)

[Gandillion, The Reprise, Zalkerbos 76, 2716 KC, Zoetermeer, The Netherlands]

4

GORDIAN KNOT**Gordian Knot****Sensory**

It's probably the first Sean Malone's real involvement that took a shape of a full-length CD since Cynic's "Focus" (1993). This purely instrumental, very well polished album is a good counterpart to usually guitar-focused instrumental albums. Sean plays chapman stick, which creates a different sound. If you wonder what the heck is a chapman stick, check out the Death & Taxes interview elsewhere in this issue. Different kinds of instrumental albums exist, including jam&experimental (Liquid Tension Experiment, Spastic Ink), guitar-hero (Joe Satriani), fragile&mellow (Jim Mattheos's solo debut), or very melodic&accessible (Marty Friedman's "Scenes"). Gordian Knot balance between the fragile&mellow and very melodic. The melodies are very subtle, used somewhat sparingly, and don't go upfront though, so please don't play this album as a background music. You can do it only if you have devoted some attentive listens before and grasped the nature-like flow of the music, which is not too heavy, but sometimes metal. (GS)

4 1/4

HADES**Savior Self****Metal Blade Records**

American cult legend Hades re-united for the third time, hopefully for a longer period than one year. At least, the music of "Savior Self" is pretty bold, combining the style of the first two Hades albums "Resisting Success" and "If at First You Don't Succeed," and owing less to their third "Exist to Resist." Hades bring catchy riffs back to metal (courtesy of Lorenzo/Fuhrman), and can be proud of tracks like "Decline & Fall of the American Empire," "Savior Self," "To Know One," and "End of the Bargain." Allan Techie's voice fits very well to technical thrash/speed/power metal of Hades, and is not forcefully high-pitched as on WatchTower's "Control and Resistance." "Savior Self" is quite short, clocking at 36 minutes, but dense and versatile. (GS)

[Exist To Resist, PO Box 224, Emerson, NJ 07830-0224, USA]

4

HAMMERFALL**Legacy of Kings****Nuclear Blast Records**

If on their successful debut album "Glory to the Brave," these Scandinavians presented a bunch of good traditional power metal compositions even without re-inventing any wheel, it seems that most of that freshness is missing along this, from my point of view, pretty weak follow up. After giving it a

few "last tries," I personally concluded that most of the songs here simply lack the richness and musical content. That fact, together with the repetitive message they parade, makes it all sound even caricaturesque in quality terms. Let's see for how long the "Stronger than All" formula will last here. (GM)

3



HOLLOW
Architect of the Mind
Nuclear Blast Records

This promising act from Germany already positively impressed us about year and a half ago with "Modern Cathedral," a solid melodic prog metal release. With "Architect of the Mind," they've modified the skeleton and structure of their compositions, sounding more heavier, rawer, and straighter. Tracks like "Walls of Confusion," "Rain," or "Transcending Sorrow" do sound more trashy/speedy than ever, mainly due to the weight of the detuned crunchier guitars. Following the wake that bands like Lethal embraced some years ago, Hollow's music shows equilibrium, and is a good example of a modern, powerful, and impacting for its sustained intensity, metal release. (GM)

4 1/4

HYPERION
Where Stone is Unscarred
Massacre Records

Italian band, clearly influenced by their countrymates Rhapsody and Labyrinth, delivers epic power metal, very melodic, orchestral, and bombastic. It is a perfect product for German and Japan markets. Hyperion have everything for becoming a cult band for melodic metal fans: their keyboards arrangements form symphonic view and M.McHartin sings in perfect traditional power metal manner. Hyperion don't go for more complex structures and frequent rhythm changes, their music is quite straight, and personally for me "Where Stone is Unscarred" is too bombastic and pathetic. But I didn't like Rhapsody so much either. So if you didn't like Rhapsody or Labyrinth, better avoid this disc, because Hyperion don't surpass any of these bands. But if you like extremely melodic metal with expressive choirs and hymn-like songs, check this band out. (AO)

3 1/2

IRON SAVIOR
Unification
Noise Records

The second album of Kai Hansen's old fellow Piet Sielck and his new born project represents traditional speed/heavy metal. Maybe the fact that Piet engineered or produced Blind Guardian albums resulted in some resemblances between his band and Blind Guardian, especially in the album's beginning, which is also the strongest part (except the inarguably catchy refrain of track #8, "Mind over Matter"). In the second part of the album, powerful and speedy riffs and vocals sometimes yield to a more laid-back traditional German heavy metal (for example, track "Eye to Eye"). Gamma Ray's Kai Hansen performed guitar on all tracks and lead vocals on the only two tracks that he

LEMUR VOICE
Divided
Telstar Records

Lemur Voice's sophomore release builds on the impressive progressive metal debut "Insights." With a new label, a new elan has been found in which conventional symphonic metal boundaries have been surpassed to incorporate new influences as well. Combining the musical creativity as displayed on "Insights" with new influences, "Divided" comes across as an album with much more range and maturity. The first three songs are regular Lemur Voice with a more metallic edge, but Lemur Voice gain a momentum later on and are at their best in the complex progressive metal epics such as "Childhood Facade" and the more mellow, spacier "New Yanini" and "When the Cradle Cries." The cover of Michael Jackson's "Beat It" is a nice twist to the original with some jazzy interludes but doesn't really fit within the whole atmosphere of the album in my opinion. "Divided" offers enough variety and quality to satisfy the listener. This, in combination with the beautiful packaging and over 74 minutes of music, makes it certainly worth picking up. (CR)

4 1/2

wrote (not counting the cover of Helloween's Gorgor off "Walls of Jericho" (1985)); these two tracks are the only place clearly reminding of Gamma Ray. Overall, "Unification" is a well-done album, ranging from really-good-traditional to good-but-derivative. The CD also includes a bonus track of Swiss band Excelsis, offering a quite challenging power metal. (GS)

IVORY TOWER
Ivory Tower
Limb Music Products

Exactly the name you would expect that a progressive metal band would have, a progressive metal style cover, and traditional progressive metal music. Luckily, the performance and songwriting are at a good level, therefore the band will surely get noticed by the core fans. Ivory Tower represent the lighter/thought-provoking side of progressive metal, which was defined by "Images and Words" (Dream Theater), and was frequently aimed to explore by newcomer bands, yet not so often successfully, and never better than the original. "Ivory Tower" belongs to those relatively successful attempts and sounds a little bit more concentrated than Zen or Empty Tremor on their debut albums, but not so distinct from these. The thing I do not understand is how the record label promotes them as "power progressive metal from another age," when it is actually power progressive metal right from the middle 90s... (GS)

3 3/4

JAG PANZER
Age of Mastery
Century Media Records

Their name is covered by a mysterious aureole to the most of younger generation. How there would be, the band is not that known as highest class acts like Iron Maiden, Judas Priest, and Megadeth, but their most famous album, "Ample Destruction" (1984), is considered a cult by those who "know." "Age of Mastery" is a swift follow-up to "Fourth Judgement," and it shows that the band is the whole head above all primitive retro metal bands, even if their new album may sound 'old-styled' to modern metal worshippers. As a popular cliché says, "good music does not get old." Anyway, Jag Panzer fully realize the time in which they live and their true powerful metal reflects that. The band deserves a credit for interestingly arranged melodies ("Twilight Years") and obscure melodic power, so their music should be loved by all metalheads to which romanticism and fairytales are not alien. (GS)

4

JESTER'S TEARS
Reflections EP
self-released

Great, unexpected material from Germany. I don't remember when I was so glad about the release by a German band. The first song "Different World" rocks in the best manner of Helloween/Gamma Ray. "No Doubt" has a very cool refrain (the merit of the singer Dimitrios Tsaktes) and reminds me of Queensryche. "Machchina dell'Oro" is "Dream Theater meets J.M.Jarre" instrumental with brilliant arrangement. "Jester's Tears" is a bombastic track with Blind Guardian/Shadow Gallery influences. The last song "Pride" (with nice female vocals) crowns this mini-CD, which, by the

way, is well produced and has a smart design. Great work. (SV)
[Jester's Music Production, Lincolnstr. 15, 81549 Muenchen, Germany]

KILLER KHAN
Kill Devil Hills
self-released

It seems, we have to do here with a serious follow-up to Ozzy Osbourne/Black Sabbath. The mastermind of the band, Killian Khan, not only sings like Ozzy, but also writes the songs that go towards early Sabbath stuff. And look, the outcome isn't bad at all. The title-track, for example, is a killer song with fantastic vocal lines and lommi/Jake E. Lee-like riffs. The rest of the material doesn't come up to this track, but, anyway, it rocks. Yeah, I must add that the lead guitarist Richard Downs is a real expert of his instrument. Plenty of nice guitar solos... I'm sure, Killer Khan live must be a cool experience. (SV)
[Killian Khan, PO Box 1466, Mooresville, NC 28115, USA]

4

KOPECKY
Kopecky
self-released

Kopecky is an instrumental music band that consists of three brothers. If you've ever listened to the Bozzio Levin Stevens CD, and if you liked it, this one is for you. OK, Kopecky sound a bit more exotic, there are lots of African and Eastern music elements here. Some parts are very Tribe After Tribe-ish, with dominating drums and shamanic rhythms. Shame, there are no vocals, otherwise this CD would be an absolute killer, in my opinion. In the meanwhile, we can speak about a very impressive instrumental record, and it will probably depend only on your mood, how often you will listen to it. (SV)
[Kopecky, 3335 Hamlin St. Racine, WI 53403, USA]

4

LANA LANE
Garden of the Moon
Angular Records

Poetic and dreamy hard rock fronted by female singer is not a very frequent combination nowadays. The singer Lana Lane can be called Maggie Reilly of hard rock; the music is quite adult-oriented I would say, because it's not extreme enough or cute for a teenager. In spite of that, the songs are quite catchy ("Destination Roswell" is a good example). The album has a stylistic concept, all songs have a calm and romantic feel, even when they are not really mellow (e.g., "Evolution Revolution" is a pretty fast, aggressive, and progressive track). "Garden of the Moon" is for those who want some good hard rock without too many clichés and with good female vocals. (GS)

3 1/2

LANA LANE
Queen of the Ocean
LMP

With this follow up to "Garden of the Moon," Lana Lane continues to reaffirm that she's one of the driving forces in the symphonic/progressive rock music scene today. Songs as "Night Falls," "Frankenstein Unbound," or the superb title track combine with brilliance the elements that are predominant in Lana Lane's music: the elegance and sensuality of the vocal melodies (sometimes in the veins of Heart's best years) intertwine with a very solid keyboards/Hammond organ backup (producer Erik Norlander's performance really outstands in this respect). The CD comes with 3 bonus tracks (two of them recorded live in Japan) and, towards the final phase, gets a bit more linear and less intense musically. (GM)

4

LEFAY
The Seventh Seal
Noise Records

Lefay from Sweden are certainly the band that cannot be accused of jumping into a bandwagon, because they were playing power metal since the early 90s. Due to legal hassles with Black Mark, the band was forced to shorten its name (from Morgana Lefay), but, musically, they continue Metal Church style power/thrash metal. The opener, "End of Living" is very good, and the rest nine tracks, while not surpassing it, are stone-solid, too. "I Am" and "So Strange" resemble Savatage, "Child of Time" comes close to Testament, but overall the album

contains distinct mid-tempo (with some exceptions) melodic metal songs with a Swedish stamp. (GS)

JOHNNY LIMA
Shine On
Frontiers Records

Johnny Lima's second album "Shine On" combines elements of the classic Bon Jovi, Def Leopard, or Winger. Mixed by Ten mastermind Gary Hughes, this CD has a very good, powerful sound. Johnny Lima is an excellent songwriter of melodic hard rock, just listen, for example, to "Star," which is the highlight of this higher-than-average CD. OK, the album becomes a little boring after a time, but all in all, it's quite an enjoyable work. (SV)

3 1/2

LITTLE GREEN MEN
Encounters
self-released

Little Green Men are a three-piece from Texas, and "Encounters" is their debut CD, released back in 1996. Although it's a few years old, the music certainly warrants a mention. Little Green Men come across musically as an amalgam of early Rush, Van Halen, and Metallica-style heavy riffing. The first noticeable aspect is the incredibly raw and energetic live sound of the CD. The combination of the extremely distorted guitar sound and the pleasant mid-range voice of Steele give a unique dimension to the music. At first glance, the songs create a deceivingly regular atmosphere aura which could hardly be categorized as progressive. However, a closer analysis of the songs shows a hidden complexity in terms of build-up with multiple solo parts within the space of under five minutes. The delivery of the songs is solid, and the songs have memorable melodies and passages. Highlights of the CD are the heavy and mid-tempo "The Unnamed," "Witch's Brew," and the brilliant "Starstruck." The latter song features the best Van Halen guitar work that he never wrote. Although the monicker "Little Green Men" and the album title would imply a tongue-in-cheek fascination with extraterrestrials, the lyrical concepts revolve around space exploration, fantasy, and Greek mythology, and the lyrics are written in a serious manner. Since this release, Little Green Men have signed with Axon Entertainment and have recorded the follow-up. (CR)
[Little Green Men, 8080 S. Hulen St., Suite 360-192, Ft. Worth, TX 76132, USA]

4 1/4

LOW DOWN
Dark & Simple EP
Intramental Management

Modern trends of the 90s seem to pass by those Aalborg metallers, who deliver pure back-to-the-roots' heavy metal. No keyboards, of course. The first song starts like Solitude Aeternus, but quickly later one can realize that early (1980-1983) Iron Maiden were one of the main inspirations. The tempo, however, is slow or mid-paced, and the songs (there are 3 of them) contain long instrumental sections. In spite of its purity and the absence of devious tricks, the music is quite good and without irritating clichés. (GS)
[57/DM12, Intramental Management, PO Box 1268, DK-2300 Copenhagen S., Denmark] [Low Down, Mikkel S. Pedersen, Enkleshovparken 178A, 9400 Norresundby, Denmark]

3 1/2

MAJESTIC
Abstract Symphony
Massacre Records

Majestic are probably the new rising star of symphonic power/speed metal. The number of the fans by this style is growing with each day, just take the popularity of bands like Stratovarius, Rhapsody, or Angra. Majestic's musicians have played in various projects before, what has given them a lot of live and studio experience. Finally, they decided to form Majestic and to record the first CD. The result is really worthy of praise, I'm astonished at the fact how easy they bear the balance between traditional heavy/speed, Classical elements, and progressive inserts. My faves are "Crimson Sun" and "Ceasefire." With such a debut, Majestic are on their way upward. (SV)

4

MASTERMIND
Excelsior
SPV/Suburban

The fifth studio album of this American instrumental band will appeal to fans of quality progressive symphonic rock,





LIQUID TENSION EXPERIMENT 2

Magna Carta Records
The exceptional instrumental project headed by Tony Levin and three Dream Theater members strikes back with a new collection of colorful and fully enjoyable weird-progressive rock cuts. In relation to their first effort, they explain how, in the recording process of this album, more guitar overdubs had to be added, due to timetable incompatibilities in the studio (John Petrucci's wife was on the last stages of pregnancy then). So, Mr. Petrucci had, at times, the chance of interpreting later the improvised material that the rest of his band mates produced during those breaks, adding his own lines on top. But, giving more importance or not to those anecdotes, molded with a sense of humor in song titles as "When the Water Breaks" (one of the best tracks of the album by the way), what finally counts is the incredible freshness, aptitude of inventiveness, and ingenuity that L.T.E. music showcases. The most jazzy and obscure fusion parts got blended here with elements of latin music ("Blooded"), heavy music ("Acid Rain"), 60s progressive rock reminiscent concepts. Everything can be fused, experimented and has room under this flag, and the final result speaks for itself. In my humble opinion, it would be nearly impossible to find in today's progressive scene more brilliance, dynamics, and a higher degree of improvisation in instrumental music, than what we glimpse here. L.T.E. 2 is, in its own right, a formidable, insanely sane, sonic avalanche of musical ideas. (GM)
4 3/4

performed in the best tradition of acts like ELP, King Crimson, or later projects like Liquid Tension Experiment. The Berends brothers (guitar and drums) deliver a work in which the furious improvisation and variety of styles covered combat effectively any possible chink left opened to musical tedium. Jans Johansson (Yngwie Malmsteen, Stratovarius, Allan Holdsworth) completes this brilliant trio with a highly imaginative contribution with the keyboards. (GM)
4

LARS ERIC MATTONSON

Obsession
Lion Music
Good melodic hard rock from Finland. Reminds me a bit of Rainbow anno 1979 or early Yngwie Malmsteen's Rising Force. The first three songs go well forward, especially "Alive" and "Just a Leo" bewitch the listener with nice guitar tunes and melodies of the rough voice by Bjorn Lodin. But then they are played out, so the rest consists of monotonous, slightly banal songs. What a shame, I believe, the guitarist Mattson & Co. could gain more out of this material. Hopefully, they will improve everything on the next album. (SV)
[Lion Music, Stromsangama, 22410 Godby, Aland, Finland]
3 1/2



MAYADOME

Near Life Experience
Siegen Records
The second longplayer by these Swedish prog metallers leaves quite a better

impression than their debut. The main improvement is the new singer Bassel Elharbiti with a good voice in veins of Geoff Tate or James La Brie. Mayadome strangely remind me a lot of other Swedish prog band Timescape. The opener "Restorepair" is a perfect blend of Queensryche and Dream Theater. The rest goes towards the same direction, speak, complex and, at the same time, catchy song structures, melodic refrains, nice guitar and keyboards moments. The only shortcoming are a bit too lengthy songs, some parts could be saved, in my opinion. Apart from that, "Near Life Experience" is a very successful piece of "traditional" progressive metal. (SV)
4

MEDALYON

In the Test of Time
Fortunate Records
After three years, Medalyon return with the new album, the follow up to their acclaimed 1998 CD "Visions." Stylistically, the band moves somewhere between Overkill, Metal Church, and early Fates Warning; mid-tempo power metal at its finest. Rick A. Shay has a very versatile voice, one minute he sings like Blitz ("In the Test of Time"), next minute like David Wayne ("I've Gone Beyond") or Ray Alder/Geoff Tate ("What's the Question"). The musicianship is excellent, too; shame, there aren't any faster songs on the CD, they would do the album good. In spite of that, "In the Test of Time" is one of the best power metal albums of 1999. Just listen to the Overkillish "Crosses to Bear" or the early Metal Church-ish "I've Gone Beyond" (SV)
[Medalyon, 641 Lincoln Way West, Massillon, OH 44647, USA]
4 1/4

METAL CHURCH

Masterpeace
Nuclear Blast Records/SPV
About one year ago, Metal Church released a live album, which denoted some activity around this legendary band. Now we can see those movements gave fruits someway, and the pleasant surprise comes with the shape of a new full-length album. Eleven tracks which without a doubt carry their personal hallmark. Long time followers of this band won't be disappointed by the load of adrenaline that titles hymns as the title track, "Fallidown," "Kies of the Dead," or "Faster than Life" produce, reminding of the finest moment of band's career coinciding with "Blessing in Disguise" album. Kurt Vanderhoof's guitars sound as confident, direct, and heavy as then, and the incessant collection of riffs he fires effectively wrap up David Wayne's well known shrieking vocals. According to what we can hear in "Masterpeace," the band shows to be in excellent shape. (GM)
4 1/4

MIND'S EYE

Into the Unknown
Sansory
You can hardly get more "progressive" in the common stylistic meaning that Mind's Eye do in "Into the Unknown." The music is built on frequent time changes, high vocals, and light-weight guitars, falling somewhere between prog rock and crystal-clear light prog metal. I already imagine all those, who are not 100% into progressive, feeling away with scared faces after hearing Mind's Eye syncoated riffs, but some die hards may actually dig this release of the Swedish band, balancing between lighter-era Sieges Even albums with slight shades of light Fates Warning/Dream Theater. The lightness is one characteristic feature of this release, the other is its deliberately mid-tempo (or slow) speed. Both together they will alienate fans of powerful metal. While the technical potential is shining here in its all glory, and while songs are intricate and versatile, it all paradoxically ends being a bit one dimensional. I have to admit that the review is written from a metal point of view, and some people at "Progressive" side may think differently, but the bottom line is that the music is too strained and hardly flowing (even while there are good melodies). "Into the Unknown" might have been a treasure in the prog-dy years (1993, for example), but now, having all the flood of the new bands, come on... (GS)
[Laser's Edge, PO Box 388, Voorhees, NJ 08043-0388, USA]
3 1/2

MOB RULES

Savage Land
Limb Music Products
Quite surely, this potent German outfit is one of the most promising debut acts that have blossomed lately from the saturated

European power metal scene. Even if often it is laborious to find something that is truly original and not petrified to some extent on what was already carved in the past by others, I see Mob Rules as good candidates in finding their own audience. Stylistically rooted halfway between Gamma Ray/Angel Dust/Scanner and progressive easy-listening acts like Sarvoisen, this futuristic conceptual work musically is close to the most straightforward side of Angra when they were giving their first professional steps. Mainly that's due to the strong (and I mean strong) similarities between vocalist Klaus Dirks and Andre Matos. Not too surprisingly, we can read on the credits that the famed team formed by Sascha Paeth (mixing & remastering tasks) and Miro (keyboards) had something to do with the completion and final quality touch given to this pretty solid release. (GM)
4 1/4

NEVERMORE

Dreaming Neon Black
Century Media Records
"Dreaming Neon Black," Nevermore's third, builds on what its predecessor "Politics of Ecstasy" already has established, that is, very intense and melodic thrash/power metal. Just with a slightly bigger focus on songs versus technically. Great vocals of Warren Dane is a treasure on its own over the well-organized crusade of energizing riffs spiraled into a continuous intensity. As Sanctuary didn't in the late 80's, Nevermore now don't rely on used formulas and develop their own strategy, which works ultimately well. The title track has a Type O Negative-style vocals in the refrain and three lines of female vocals that enter beautifully in the right place. The album includes some characteristic to Nevermore heavy pseudo-ballads like "Lotus Eaters," a close-to-Sanctuary track "No More Will," the rest songs are mainly of similar heavy/melodic style. Add a perfect sound (Neil Kemon again), a mysterious concept, and you may hardly have what else to wish for. From that, Nevermore were a unique act, intriguing both melodic and extreme metal fans. With "Dreaming Neon Black," they finally prove that they are an event in the scene, a phenomenon that sets standards and influences others. (GS)
5



NEON SUNRISE

Burning in the Focus EP
self-released
Neon Sunrise were founded in January 1998, and after only four months they recorded this 5-track EP, which, at least musically, left a pretty solid impression. Varied mid-tempo heavy metal with some progressive elements. Guitar work is OK, powerful riffs and nice solos shuttle through the whole material, the rhythm section is also not bad at all. The only disadvantage is apathetic and a bit expressionless voice of Dirk Zimmermann, he really needs more experience. In spite of that, a solid outcome of 4 months teamwork. (SV)
[Andreas Becker, Am hohen Brink 8, 44892 Boohum, Germany]
3 1/2

material is not worse than this recent flood of speed/power releases. The songs are pretty lengthy, about 7 minutes each, what is not necessarily good. Sometimes shorter songs are more effective. Fairly good, nothing new though. (SV)
[Overlife, Avda. de la Estacion #20, 1°C - 03005 Alicante, Spain]
3 1/2

NOCTURNAL RITES

Sacred Tullman
Century Media Records
These Swedes didn't wait long after their successful second album "Tales of Mystery and Imagination" and made up a follow-up, which, unfortunately, doesn't really offer any improvements, delivers very similar fast heavy metal of European style, and looks a bit dehydrated. Sure, the highlight of the band still are melodic tonal variations of their singer ("Destiny Calls" and "The Iron Force"), but when they are absent, songs look mediocre ("Free at Last" and "Eternity Holds"). The album is okay though, but doesn't come across as good and sparkling as their previous album or "Return to Heaven Denied" by Labyrinth. (GS)
3 1/2

OCTOBER 31

The Fire Awaits You
RIP Records
Yeah, it's a great piece of power/speed/thrash metal. I can't say that it's an ordinary stuff. The riffing reminds me of Slayer, early Metallica, or Merciful Fate. The vocals aren't high or squeaky, but are located in middle ranges, what is just the advantage of this record. There aren't any fillers here, only great heavy songs. "Salem's Curse," "Prelude/Lost City," or "A Million Goodbyes," to name a few. Guitar work is really incredible, fireworks of strings! The bassist Jim Hunter played in Revelation once, the vocalist King Fowley had his own band Deceased some time ago. Four well-deserved points. (SV)
4



PAIN OF SALVATION

One Hour by the Concrete Lake
Inside Out Music
Although Pain of Salvation's sophomore release is not the prog metal landmark album that it's hailed to be, it does contain enough class and variety to appeal to the majority of the universal prog metal audience. In the previous issue of "Edge of Time," I reviewed Pain of Salvation's debut "Entropia." "Entropia" showcased their ability to mix a lot of influences ranging from symphonic rock to Mr. Bungle to King's X to create complex yet unfocused songs. "One Hour by the Concrete Lake" takes the same influences but is much more focused and adds the more adventurous aspects of the Dream Theater-style of prog metal. This results in an exceptional yet natural display of virtuosity on this eleven-song, hour-long CD (the Japanese version includes two additional songs). The lyrical concept of "One Hour" is an ambitious yet incoherent (and slight naive) story of one man's destruction of the planet through pollution and war. The songs have an excellent production, which brings out the general ominous, bombastic, and depressive moods. The different songs shows that Pain of Salvation are able to carry bombast and beauty ("New Year's Eve") or speed and aggression ("Handful of Nothing"). "One Hour" is a big step forward for the band and sets high hopes for the future. (CR)
4

FREEWILL

interview

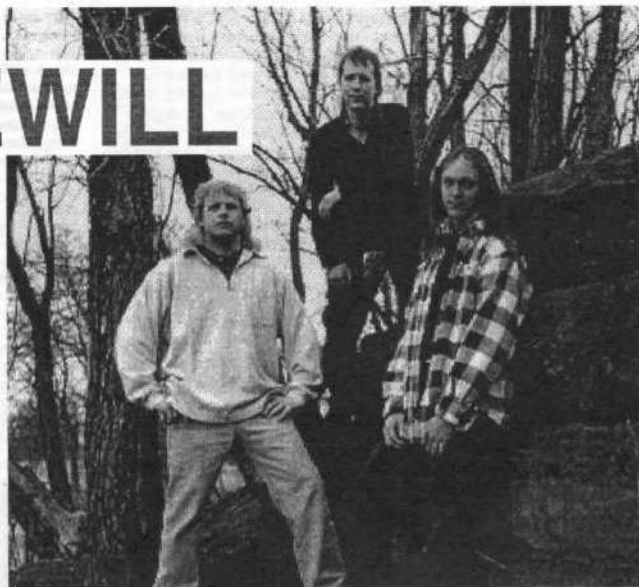
[by Christian Rademaker]

Freewill is a trio that have slowly been making a name for themselves in the progressive metal community. Hailing from Wisconsin USA, Freewill were formed in 1993 by Tom Clark (vocals), Chad Heyroth (lead and rhythm guitars), and Paul Bakalars (lead and rhythm guitars). Citing influences such as Fates Warning and Dream Theater, they had a desire to explore more complex musical ideas than the mainstream music that was created in their area. The band began writing original material right from the start, and in 1994, they released a self-titled demo tape. This tape sold out its pressing and got a very good response. During the recording of the demo, however, the drummer left the band to pursue other avenues. Since then, filling the vacancy of the drummer has been a major problem for Freewill. Therefore, the main emphasis has been on writing new material instead of playing live. After more than two years of writing and rehearsing, the band began recording in a studio they set up in their rehearsal space. Without a current bass player, their former bass player, Jason Peck, agreed to fly in and play on the recording. This put the band on a tight schedule, leaving no time to audition new drummers. So, with Tom Clark behind the drums, Freewill began recording their debut CD in March of 1997. The debut CD is entitled "Progressive Regression" and features 7 lengthy songs with a total running time of approximately 62 minutes. The material is primarily in the vein of the Fates Warning albums "Parallels" and "Inside Out" and Altura: melodic mid-tempo power metal with a clear and pleasant voice. Although the songs are long, between 6:55 and 10:45, the song structures are not overly complex. In my opinion, the dynamics of some of the songs would benefit by shortening some of the parts, by building in some bridges or adding some uptempo parts. The lyrics are well written and the lyrical content of the CD carries a common theme: how people deal with emotions such as anger, guilt, envy, rejection, and betrayal.

The following is an interview I did by e-mail with Freewill in the first months of 1999. My compliments to Freewill for their effort because it isn't often that the whole band participates in answering the questions. The following abbreviations were used: Tom Clark (TC), Chad Heyroth (CH), and Paul Bakalars (PB).

During their history, Freewill have had a hard time finding musicians to complete the line-up. This leads me to conclude that the Wisconsin is not oriented towards progressive music. What are your views on this, have you ever discussed the possibilities of relocating?

CH: Well, the Wisconsin area is not the best place for our kind of music. I wish that our area was more supportive of our kind of music. Our town has done some promotional things for local music, but it only supported variety bands, grunge, and alternative. So it is hard to find drummers and bass players with the kind of musicianship that we look for. It is discouraging at times, but we still hope for the best. As far as relocating, I don't think that we really thought about it. All our family, friends, and



work are right here in town. I myself never thought about moving, and if it ever came up, I don't think that I would want to. Our town may not support progressive metal, but that won't stop me from writing more music and having fun with it.

TC: I don't know how it is elsewhere in Wisconsin, but La Crosse, which is where we're located, is not a hot spot for bands period. Progressive music has never even been a factor in the music scene. In the late 80s and early 90s, there were a lot of metal bands around, playing the local club scene, and a few developed a local following, but they were mostly your standard metal or power metal bands. I once saw a band play a Rush song, but it was sandwiched between Firehouse and Pearl Jam songs; it just didn't work. Today, there are maybe two or three metal bands around, and they are made up of musicians from the metal bands that broke up years ago.

PB: The band has never really discussed the possibility of relocating. My general feeling is that it would never happen. We have always had the attitude that if we could not find somebody that was into our style of music we would do it ourselves. This has always worked for recording; however, there would be no possibility of us doing any live shows. Ideally, the band would like to find some additional members for practicing as well as for extra ideas in the writing process.

The current lineup does not include a separate drummer or bass-player. Doesn't this pose you with major difficulties when you want to practice or compose new songs?

TC: I've been playing drums for years, so we never have to go without drums in our music. Personally, I would like to be able to sit back during the writing process and analyze everything as it's being played, and get a feel for what works and what doesn't. When I'm playing, I can't do that. We do tape a lot, but, at the same time, something cool always happens when we're not.

PB: This does make it difficult to practice because our band likes to have very tight arrangements. I believe this is accomplished through repetition. If a new musician is added, it will take even more time to learn his style. When composing new songs, it would be nice to have the extra ideas of additional members to finish the material quicker. Otherwise, another member will have to come up with bass lines.

CH: As far as composing new songs or practicing, I don't think it's that difficult. I do think that we need a drummer and bass player because I like to hear everything all together. The only problem we have is completing a song and bringing in a new musician. That person has to learn our style and work it in with their style. Sometimes this is a big problem and can take a long time to get the song down.

Your biography states that the album recordings started in March 1997. The debut album was finally released in 1998. What was the actual story behind the time it took to record the album? How difficult was it to keep the enthusiasm with all the interruptions?

TC: The whole thing was so hectic, especially in the

beginning, that enthusiasm was never a problem for me at all. When we decided to do the CD, we had no drummer or bass player. We contacted our former bass player, Jason Peck, who had played with us on our demo in 1994, about playing on the CD. He got back to us and informed us that he would be in town in a little over a month! This caught us completely off guard. We were not prepared for things to move so quickly. We didn't really have time to think about anything at that point. The drums had to be recorded right away, which meant I had to play them, since I knew the parts, and we didn't have time to teach anyone else the songs. After rearranging our schedules, we ended up with seven nights total, spread out over a four week period, to get the drums and scratch tracks of the guitars recorded. That was the most chaotic time of the whole recording project. After we had the basic tracks finished, (drums, bass, and guitars), it hit us that people might actually be hearing the stuff. Reality set in at that point, and we began to analyze the songs very closely. These songs were written a year to two years earlier, and we had become better musicians and more creative, but that was not reflected in the songs. They had stayed exactly the same. So we took the time to rework things and add parts; at least, as much as we could with the basic song structures intact. We spent the next five or six months just playing with the songs and trying things. This really annoyed Chad I think, and it caused a lot of arguments and disagreements. To top it all off, I was working on lyrics throughout this whole period. We really approached the project backwards, by reworking the songs AFTER they were on tape, but we really wanted Jason to be a part of this recording, so we had to commit to this type of a time line to allow for that to happen.

CH: Keeping the enthusiasm at a high level was hard for me. A lot of the disagreements came from me, and always trying to make the songs better took a lot of the wind out of our sails. I think that I had a lot to do with arguing about changing things around in songs. I wasn't as open minded, as I should have been which made things more difficult. I do remember Tom and I having differences in the way a song was to be presented and arguing with Paul about how a part was to be played. In the end, it all came together and I was happy the way the songs turned out.

PB: I didn't find it hard to keep the enthusiasm at all while recording the CD. I found it to be very fun. The difficult part was that it took us so long to get it recorded. The band got together whenever we could to work on the CD, but we had never done this before and had no idea how much work it would be. We did a demo tape in 1993, and I don't remember it taking that long.

You mentioned that writing the type of songs that Freewill play, is usually accompanied by many discussions. When does this discussion process stop: is there actually a point when a song is actually finished. Do you consider yourselves as perfectionists?

TC: We all had our stubborn moments during the writing and recording process that's for sure. We usually figured a song was finished when nobody was arguing or complaining about anything any longer. We worked until we got to the point where everyone was happy. There are still things I would like to change, but that is to be expected, and probably evidence that I am a perfectionist.

PB: I consider myself as a perfectionist. This is another one of the many reasons it took so long to record our CD. I did not want to hear the attitude "it's good enough" during song writing or recording. A song should not be finished until everyone agrees it's done.

CH: As Tom said, we all had our stubborn moments. Every time the song seemed finished, someone had to say "I think we can do better." I wouldn't call myself a perfectionist, because no one can be perfect. There is a point when you have to say enough is enough or you would just keep going. Even after our CD came out we still wanted to change things. This is what I hate about recording. If it wasn't for the other guys our songs wouldn't be as good as they are.

You often read about the dream of musicians to finally release their own album, working on different jobs to scrape enough money together to finance the recordings in different phases. Often recording at night because those hours are cheaper. How did you finance the whole album project?

CH: We did everything ourselves, which saved a lot of money. We had our own studio and equipment and TC

had the knowledge we needed to make a good recording. Splitting the cost to make this CD helped a lot.

TC: Yes, that's another reason it took so long to finish it. After finishing the drums and bass, we changed some gear, in particular, the board that we had used to record the drums with. It really was inevitable that we do it, but it hurt the overall sound in some areas. Also, I got married, and so we had to move all of the equipment into my new place, which added some extra time to the project as well.

How difficult is it for a new band to get its product to potential buyers. How much has the Internet helped as a communication medium?

CH: In our hometown, it's difficult. Our town doesn't support our kind of music, but we let people know about us and know that we are out there. As for the Internet, it has helped us a lot. Being in contact with other bands and different distributors makes it a lot easier to get our product out there.

TC: I don't know how it is for other bands, but it is a never ending process trying to get our name out to the public, get people's attention, try to keep that attention, and hopefully take enough interest to maybe check out what we have to offer. The Internet has made all of that possible, or at least aided in all of those things.

PB: Although we believe it is extremely difficult to get people aware of our product, we have been fortunate to have distribution help from numerous vendors. Most of these vendors have sites on the Internet. We believe our web site has also been a success as well. People can hear and read what Freewill is about.

The moniker "Freewill" almost automatically reminds me of the Rush classic. How did you come about choosing this name and what does it mean to you individually?

TC: Jason, our former bass player, came up with the name. People almost automatically assume we're either a Rush copy band or a Christian band, but neither of the two is the case. To me, the name reflects the philosophy of the band; no rules, no restrictions, no boundaries. That's an idea that appeals to me, musically speaking, so I took to the name right away.

PB: I agreed to the name Freewill because I felt it suggested choice. Our band could do whatever style of music we wanted. Fortunately, we have always been on the same page when it comes to music. As for the Rush comparison, this does not really bother me like it does the other guys. I think Rush is a very talented group of musicians. Hopefully this is why the comparison is drawn.

CH: I really never thought about what Freewill means to me. I guess I would have to agree with TC and PB. Our music has no restrictions. Everyone in the band is open to any suggestion. I think that we strive to come up with new ideas no matter how far out they are.

The CD cover depicts an old man looking into a mirror and seeing the image of a baby. What is the relation to the album title and song "Progressive Regression"?

TC: The song deals with the idea that every forward step leads to the past in some way. We start out as babies completely dependent on others. Our brains are empty and we have very little knowledge. We can't walk or care for ourselves, and we have very little or no hair. As we grow older, we get stronger and develop knowledge and the ability to do things for ourselves. Then, one day, the process reverses and we begin to regress. If we live long enough, we end up just like we started. We lose our memory, our strength, our hair, and become dependent on others. It's a very depressing thought, but one that fascinates me. That idea is hinted at on the cover with the old man seeing the baby in the mirror, and it is also covered in the lyrics to the song. The old man is in the shadows of the attic amongst the packages of stuff packed away and forgotten about. The baby's reflection is bright. It is the focal point of the cover, emphasizing where the future lies; in the "changing of the guard," so to speak. On a deeper level, the cover art itself, reflects the old and new concept. It has a very old look to it, kind of worn and tattered, as if it had been packed away in that attic. Obviously, however, it is a new painting, painted specifically for us by Patrick Olbert. The lyrics and the painting are pretty involved, and leave a lot to interpretation. It's brain candy for those who like to think and ponder the deeper philosophical side of life. Not

many people will actually take the time to appreciate this, I'm sure, but I am very proud of the concept and the song.

Some believe that life does not end after a person's death, some religions follow the theory of reincarnation. What are your views on this subject?

PB: I believe that Jesus died for all of our sins so that we could have eternal life. One must confess with his/her mouth and believe in his/her heart and this gift shall be received.

TC: Exactly. I don't believe in reincarnation, but I do believe in eternal life.

CH: I'm not very religious, but I do believe there is life after death.

The first name that is mentioned in your thanks list is Jesus Christ. Are you religious in any way?

PB: I wouldn't consider myself religious as much as thankful for the abilities that God has given to our band.

TC: The simple answer is this: we all believe in God. Therefore, we would be hypocrites if Jesus Christ wasn't on our thanks list.

How did you meet up with the artist Patrick Olbert and what other work has he done?

PB: Pat is a friend of our former bass player Jason. Both of whom I met in college. I'm not quite sure what other art work he has done. I believe he more or less does it as a hobby. Anyway, we are very thankful for his help on our covers.

TC: Yes, we are grateful for his help. He did the artwork for our demo as well, and he did the cover for at least one other local band that I know of for sure.

In my opinion, the lyrical content of the CD carries a common theme: how people deal with emotions such as anger, guilt, envy, rejection, and betrayal. How is this related to your personal lives? Do you actually enjoy writing such lyrics?

TC: I love writing lyrics. I wrote all of the lyrics on the CD except for "Erase the Memory." I am a big fan of metaphor and ambiguity, and as a result, I tend to be very slow and deliberate in my writing. I am a bit of a perfectionist in this area. Both "Unmasked" and "Progressive Regression" took over a year to complete. As far as how the subject matter pertains to personal life, I write what I know. I prefer to write about real issues and things that get my emotions stirred up. That way, there's passion behind what I'm writing. I have a degree in psychology also, so I'm sure that has a lot to do with the topics I choose to present as well.

Next to law and economics, psychology seems to be a popular subject at universities in the USA. Whereas in Europe it does not seem to be of interest to many students. What are your views on this and how has your degree in psychology helped you thus far?

TC: It's interesting to me that psychology isn't as popular in Europe as it is in the states. It's kind of ironic in a way, because, some of the earliest psychologists were of European descent. Wilhelm Wundt, who founded the first psychology laboratory, was German. In fact, the most well known psychologists were not Americans at all. Pavlov was Russian, Freud was Austrian, Piaget's earliest work was in Paris, and so on. It was only in the last two decades really, that the USA has come to the forefront of the field. I work in a habilitation facility for the mentally and physically challenged. I work with children and young adults with all different kinds of disabilities, and having a degree helped me get that job. More importantly, though, I think having the degree helps me keep the job. A lot of what I studied in my courses is right in front of me every day, and that's the kind of education one can't get from a book or lecture. It's been a humbling learning experience thus far, and really helps keep things in perspective, in my life.

All of the songs on the Progressive Regression album are very long (ranging between 6:50 and 12:15) although I would not term the songs progressive or complex in the sense that unusual song structures are used. You describe your music as progressive metal and making comparisons to Fates Warning for example. What exactly is your definition of progressive metal?

PB: My definition of progressive metal would consist of

music that frequently moves away from the common 4/4 time signature.

CH: My definition would have to be anything far out there. If it doesn't seem to go together or sound just right then it must be progressive. If a song has a lot of different time signatures, key changes, and sounds like a song within a song, that to me would be progressive.

TC: This is a big sore spot with me, so I'll try not to go nuts here. I have a very specific definition of what progressive metal is, but about 90% of what is now considered to be progressive by the general public, is not, in my opinion. Fates Warning's "Perfect Symmetry" is a definitive prog metal release. The music is fairly technical and complex, written in odd meters, with excellent syncopation happening throughout, and the vocals are unpredictable in both the phrasing and melodies. These days it seems that any metal band that uses keyboards in their music or puts out a concept CD is considered progressive. This really bothers me. The label is being used very loosely and carelessly, in my opinion. Like Paul and Chad said, the MUSIC is the defining factor, not what instruments are played, or what the songs are about, or what a band looks like. Those things have nothing to do with whether or not a band is progressive.

What is more important to you, the challenge of playing complex music or conveying certain emotions through your music?

PB: I believe the challenge of playing complex music is what keeps me going. When I write music, it often seems that the common chord progressions always sound like someone else's song. I like to mix things up a bit by switching time signatures, using uncommon chord progressions, tempo changes, syncopation, layering parts, counter melodies, etc. These things help distinguish Freewill's style and keep us from musical boredom.

CH: I would have to say the emotions through the music. When I write music, a lot of my emotions kind of dictate what kind of mood the song will be. As I continue working on a song, it tends to change as my moods change. The challenge of playing complex music comes second. As I get involved with the song I try to think of things that would be hard to play or a change where both guitars, drums, and bass would be playing totally different parts from each other.

TC: Ideally, I would like to be able to achieve both. I don't want to have to sacrifice either one. Complex music doesn't have to be cold and dispassionate. I do realize that it's not always appropriate to be musically insane, but I don't think it's necessary to ever be reserved either. You just have to find the right balance at those critical times.

It has been a while since "Progressive Regression" was released, what is the status of a new album then?

TC: We have begun writing, but we're very slow. I can't predict when the stuff will be ready, and if I tried I'd just be wrong anyway. What I can say is that the new stuff is quite a bit heavier and more technical. I am a huge fan of the technical metal bands, as few of them as there are, and I really wanted to incorporate that into our music, and we're succeeding. There will definitely be more of an edge to our material this time around, while still remaining melodic.

Could you elaborate a bit more on incorporating technical metal into your music?

TC: As a fan of music, I love the extremely complex and intricate music of technical metal bands such as Spastic Ink, Watchtower, and Cynic. Really those are the only bands that I consider to be true technical metal bands. Like I said before, people are using terms too loosely, and "technical" is another word I hear tossed around too frequently. Most of what people consider technical metal, I call progressive metal and what they call progressive I call standard heavy metal. I've grown bored with the state of progressive metal. There is just too much simple music out there for my tastes these days, and having said that, I want to create music that is challenging, and exciting enough to hold my attention. Our new material will have more of a technical edge to it. The songs are going to be more involved and more complex. I am happy with "Progressive Regression," but it was only a starting point for us.

Do you have any other topics you would like to discuss or do you have any closing comments?

TC: Thank you for your support and the opportunity to do this interview. Thanks also to your readers and our fans (all three of them). All for now, take care and greetings.

Travis Smith

visualizing metal

[by Giedrius Slivinskas]

Many people noticed and appreciated the cover art of Psychotic Waltz's "Bleeding" album, released back in 1996. Even those who wouldn't include Psychotic Waltz among their favorite bands. The CD booklet presented a quite revolutionary (for that time) collection of computerized color images mixed in a twisted and captivative way, delivering a meaningful and consistent emotional message. The images were composed by Travis Smith, the artist from San Diego, and they have lead to subsequent requests for CD covers from other indie bands and famous record labels like Nuclear Blast and Century Media. Trav designed a whole number of other CD covers after that, and is still continuing. It was quite interesting to ask him some questions regarding his art and CD-cover specifics. From his answers, it appears that he listens exclusively to metal, and often to an extreme one...

I was actually a bit surprised that you listen to a lot of metal... Is it your favorite genre?

Yeah, definitely. I'm very into the, I guess you could say, sub-genres, with bands like Katatonia, Anathema, The Gathering, Opeth, Borknagar, Moonspell, Sadus, Death, Nevermore, Psychotic Waltz, etc. The bands that have that extra touch. I'm also a big fan of Lacuna Coil and the new Helloween. And the new Dan Swano is very cool.

Can you run through your biography, how did you get involved into the CD-cover making business? Was it after Psychotic Waltz "Bleeding" CD cover when bands and labels started to contact you for doing CD covers for them?

Well, technically, "Bleeding" is the first CD I ever started. Psychotic Waltz's original artist, Mike Clift kinda passed me the torch, and I took over the flyers and shirts. I ended up getting a Mac dropped in my lap at work and just started playing with it. By the time Psychotic Waltz was ready for pre-production on "Bleeding," I had figured out a few good techniques, and the band and I agreed that it would be a cool way to do the CD. They couldn't decide on a title for awhile, so I ended up doing a piece for every song, so whatever the title was, we'd have it covered. (I needed the practice anyway.) We ended up using them all. After I began doing the "Bleeding" art, I put it aside for a month and did the art for Dan Rock's Darkstar CD. Then got back on "Bleeding." "Bleeding" is the one that got me noticed, it got into some of the right hands, and I also did some pestering of my own. For a lot of it, I had friends with good friends.

Are you doing the cover of the new Darkstar CD? Have you heard the music, how do you like it compared to the debut?

Well, yeah, I am trying. Dan came back from recording and everything is done and he says they (the publisher) are ready for the art. The thing is they never told me anything on when to get started, and we never talked about ideas or anything. And, in the meantime, I have committed to two

very important projects that I can't turn my back on, so Dan and I are seeing what we can work out.

Yes, I have a tape of the music. I like it a lot better than the first one. Just more flowy, more focused. I just get a better experience from it. I hope I have the time to make the art just as great.

Do you know what Mike Clift is up to now?

Yes. I see Mike all the time. He works with Norm Leggio at Norm's record store and has been doing some very good paintings in addition to doing art for Norm's new band, Teabag. He also has been getting into the computer stuff as well. Mike has let me photograph him for use in several of my projects. So, I see him when I go in to buy CDs, or if I want to do a quick shoot. He is doing well.

Is it your main occupation now?

Describe your working day. How much time do you spend by your computer?

Unfortunately, no it isn't. Still gotta get up early and go to the day job for 8 hours, then go to my little studio and work on my art. I usually spend a good 8-12 hours a day on my art when the deadlines are pressing.

Aren't you afraid that when you will do hundreds of CD covers, it will start to get difficult to escape from your style, to explore something different?

Not really, because I experiment all the time with new things. Some work, others do not. But I still have a lot of fine tuning to do on my new discoveries. I have time in between projects right now to experiment, but they are not yet refined enough to start slapping on covers. The possibilities are endless, and I don't yet see being trapped. If I do end up doing a lot of covers, I would be afraid of people burning out on my stuff and not wanting to see it anymore. Keeping that in mind, I will be motivated to develop new things...

Are you piled up with work? What if some unknown band would contact you regarding a cover of their record? Can you give an





initial hint how much it can cost?
It's feast or famine with me. Some periods I have nothing to do and others I find myself squeezing 5 or 6 things through a 2-month deadline. I have a hard time turning things down, and for the most part, I am not a bloodsucker, so bands can usually afford it. I will work with any band, unknown or not. That doesn't matter to me. The indies are a little easier during the creative process so far. The price depends on the amount of art and the complexity.

Which CD cover you did was the most successful one, i.e., which one you like the most, and which one other people usually mention first? Would you agree that a number of people who buy an album partly or totally inspired by your cover is a good measurement of success?
Well, I am very happy with the Sadus "Elements of Anger" art, and the new Skinlab and Nevermore CDs, as well as the Solitude Aeternus "Adagio" and Death "The Sound of Perseverance." And I am very proud to have worked with Greg Capullo on a project which was Iced Earth's "Something Wicked This Way Comes." I've got the most compliments on "Bleeding." If someone picks up a CD wholly or partly due to my cover, then I will consider that job a success in that regard. To me, a project is a complete success if, when the CD is on the shelf, the band themselves are pleased with it and happy to have it covering their work. Although I like to be happy with it as well, if the band themselves are pleased, then nothing else matters to me.

How would you compare your early CD covers with your current stuff? In the aspect of technique, in the quality of thought?
Well, the early stuff was very experimental and busy, where the newer stuff might be a little more focused and direct. A lot of people like that better for their music I found as well. I feel I know what I'm doing now for the most part, where before I was just trying everything out. There is still so much to learn and do, so I am in no way done with experimenting. I just have a better feel for direction, which will help in future experimenting. I also have some ideas for some newer busy stuff too, I have some things up my sleeve, I'd like to try. I think the newer stuff has a more mature professional look, and some,

where the concept is simpler, is also "deeper."
In looking at all my covers, there are a handful I wish I could do over. I thought they came out nice at the time, but in retrospect, there are things that could have been done better, or, on a few, the band really liked how it was, but I always felt it to be unfinished or on a few getting much better and more ideas later on for things that had were already done... So there are a few that I am not completely satisfied with. I try to keep these thoughts in mind now when completing new ideas. Just hold on to as many thoughts and ideas as possible that will might improve the end result.

Do you have any favorite CD covers that were done by other people?
Oh, yes, a million. There are so many I love. A few quick ones right off the bat are Stabbing Westward "Darkest Days" by Dave McKean, Suffocation "Pierced from Within" by Hiro... (something, I forgot), I like the Cradle of Filth art and the Death "Symbolic" art, Testament "Low" by Dave McKean, Tiamat "Wildhoney" by Kristan Whalan, Sepultura "Chaos A.D." by Michael Whelan... I love Hugh Syme's work. I also really like the Dew-Scented "Innocent" Korn "Follow the Leader," the new Dimmu Borgir, Stephen Kasner's Rotting Christ covers. Kreator's "Outcast" has a great cover. There's really too many to name here.

What is more difficult, to develop an idea, to collect images that you need, or to compose the actual graphics?



Psychotic Waltz

The most difficult of those is actually collecting the images. Some things I think up don't even exist and are difficult if not impossible to find and photograph. In those cases, I just have to create them myself however I can. The concept development is only difficult when I have writer's (artists') block. And the composition is just time consuming, especially when I get diverted with trying new stuff I kinda get lost in it...

Do you always have an idea how the result should look like, or do you sometimes try to compose different images nearly at random?
Yeah, I have ideas on it. After the concept is established, I do sketches to get an idea of composition, and when it works, I figure out all the images I will need to make it work and after that, I go to it. Some things, like certain effects and specifics, I see as I do them, cause sometimes I get new ideas for things as I work, and I'll experiment. So, some things stay the same and some things evolve in the process.

Where do you get photos?
I take them myself wherever I can. I also have a camera with me at all times, just in case something happens, or I see something I like that might be useful someday. I've gathered hundreds of images and used countless rolls of film this way. Sometimes a photographer friend will pass me a couple of photos.

Once you make some draft of an image, you probably show it to the artist, who gives corrections, then you improve the image, etc. Which time it was the longest process?
So far, this new Skinlab CD has the longest process due to revisions. That is in no way meant to imply it as an unpleasant experience. Quite the contrary. After that, the Psychotic Waltz "Bleeding" and Sadus "Elements of Anger" CDs probably took the most time. But only a small part of those was due to revisions.

Were there any strong disagreements between you and your customer about one or another detail of some image? How easy or how difficult for you is to make a compromise?
I've only had a couple like that so far. I will change any part with no question if it's the band's request. Sometimes the label or whoever will jump in and change things for no logical reason, and that's when I'll try to talk to them about it.

Considering the CD covers you did, in how many cases you have had to think of the main visual idea for the front cover yourself as opposed to detailed wishes from the band or the label?
Whenever possible, I like to think up the idea, but sometimes the band will already have good ideas for what they want. For instance, on the Death and Nevermore CDs, the front covers were



Profile
Name Travis Smith
Birth place San Diego, CA, USA
Current location San Diego, CA, USA
Favorite band Katatonia, Anathema, Voivod, Opeth, Solitude Aeternus, Iced Earth
Favorite song Something from the above mentioned bands or The Gathering
Favorite album Currently Katatonia all, Death "Symbolic," Opeth "Morningrise," Anathema "Eternity," Nevermore "Dreaming Neon Black"
Favorite movie "The Shawshank Redemption" or "The Last Temptation of Christ"
Favorite book "The Long Walk" by Stephen King as Richard Bachman
Favorite artist (computer images) Probably Dave McKean
Favorite artist (painter) Kristan Whalan, Michael Whelan, Stephen Kasner
Favorite quote I have 3: "The idiot walks along a canvas" [Voivod], "Angel Rat" "It's not what they call you, it's what you answer to" [Skinlab] "Put something silly in the world that ain't been there before" [Shel Silverstein]

the band's ideas (specifically Chuck and Warrel's), and the rest of the art I thought up myself. In the new Skinlab, there were ideas from different sources, but most were mine. The Solitude Aeternus ideas are mine, and on the Iced Earth, cover idea was already done. Or sometimes, I'll think up the first idea, and that will give the band a few ideas, and we work together from there. A lot of times a label or band will give me free reign, and they might make small alterations when it is done. The input varies from project to project.

If you would look at yourself from aside, to which degree do you take customer's wishes, and to which degree you lead the process yourself, giving your opinion and saying "This has to be done in THIS way."
Well, I will ultimately do whatever the band themselves want. Or if they ask for it, I will give them my honest opinion. Most times, I already have an idea and the band might say "hey we love it except we got another idea for this part here..." or whatever. Those things are fine. Most times they let me run with it. There was a time before when an um, "art director" was telling me that my actual methods were incorrect, and I was actually wrong in the way I did things, and they were actually scared of what the result would be. And I was telling them, hey look I know what I'm doing, don't worry. Besides, I had printers and graphic guys from labels, comic books, and book publishers backing up my methods and these guys were still saying I was wrong. So on that kind of thing, when I know I am right,

disadvantages? What is surprisingly quick to do, what is very time consuming?

Right now, I use a PowerMac 7500/100 with Photoshop 4 being the staple software. I don't stray too far from Photoshop. By the time you

print this, I should have upgraded equipment. I think the advantages speak for themselves in the things one is able to create. I can't think of too many disadvantages except the rate in which it becomes obsolete. Working with images like 12" X 12" at 410 ppi in CMYK mode is terribly slow, and sometimes I'll get lucky with an experiment, and it will go quicker than I first thought.

What are the things that should be added to current software products for computer graphics?

I think we need something like on the movie "Strange Days," where you can attach this thing to your head and create all the art by thinking about it. But that could also be dangerous.

It is quite common that people want faster computers, then they do not try to save space and build higher-resolution images, then they want even faster computers... and the cycle never ends. Have you felt like this?

Yes and no. I've been creating larger projects which in turn slow everything down. So I'm gonna upgrade. But only so I can get the equipment that can handle what I need it to at a decent pace. I've been using the same system since 1995 now, and I don't feel the need to get the new stuff just cause it's there. I just want what will get the job done well.

Do you have any favorite web sites to which you would like to direct those who love your art?

You can look at mine <http://seempieces.the.nl>. There is my art, and, if you are interested, some links to some sites I think are worth looking at.



Skinlab

PANGEA

The First

Frontiers Records

Pangea is a melodic hard rock band from Denmark. It seems that they specialize in Japan market like many other bands of this style. The best song on this CD is the first track "Daddy's Steamgun." The rest is good, but doesn't cause euphoria in my mind. They've borrowed a lot from the 80's glam rock bands, take, for example, these happy-go-lucky riffs or lyrics about pretty girls. This is music without any great demands. It wouldn't be out of place in a pub or at any parties. (SV)
3 1/2

PARAGON

The Final Command

B.O. Records

Another speed/heavy group from Germany. The CD cover is a pure standard, looks a bit worn out. The same goes to their material: traditional, at the places boring speed metal with expressionless vocals. The cover version of Wardog "Fighting for the Earth" is not particularly impressive, either. The only advantage is a good production. The rest is average. (SV)
3 1/4

PARIAH

Unity

self-released

Yes, the old ex-Satan Pariah are back with a new album, which will probably please old Satan and Pariah fans. "Unity" is a pure metal record, but without references to Helloween or Iron Maiden. The album mixes fast songs with slower/crunchier ones, and songs have a fair amount of melody. The music won't cause any earthquakes, but will be appreciated by those who are into 'serious' and strict metal. (GS)
[Pariah, PO Box 67, Wallsend, NE28 7YW, UK]
3 1/2

PLATYPUS

Break

Inside Out Music

During the last couple of years, quite a few projects with Dream Theater members were formed. Platypus is one of them, featuring Myung and Sherinian with Ty Tabor (King's X) and Rod Morgenstein (Dixie Dregs/Winger). The music is much more bright and rock n'roll than Dream Theater, bringing similarities to King's X and The Beatles. Five of ten tracks are instrumentals, showcasing virtuoso abilities of the players and, at the same time, being quite dynamic, colorful, and enjoyable. Actually, those free-styled keyboards with the 70's feel sound great, interlined with rocky riffs and unique vocals of Ty Tabor. Nevertheless, I cannot get rid of a feeling that it's a music composed with the purpose to make 'cool music' (tracks are quite eclectic and different), but without a deeper emotional background. It's a subjective opinion, of course. (GS)
3 3/4

POINT OF ARES

The Sorrows of Young Apollo

Arula Records

An extraordinary album. I would call the music prog/pagan rock, but I think it says nothing to you. It's quite not easy to review such releases, if you aren't acquainted with some background facts. Point Of Ares leading figure Karen Michalson came to bass playing and singing out of her literary pursuits (novels, books, spoken word albums) and they are reflected on this album as well as on the predecessor "Enemy Glory" (1996). According to info, "The Sorrows of Young Apollo" is a virulent, hard-edged progressive rock odyssey through the myth cycles of Apollo and Dionysus. There is no doubt, that the lyrics play very important part for Point Of Ares. The mystical, whispering voice of Karen lends the album a mysterious touch. The only drawback is the weak, demotape-like sound that steals some dynamics. An enigmatic disc, hard to digest though. (SV)
[Arula Records, PO Box 332, Southbridge, MA 01550, USA]
3 3/4

POWERGOD

Evolution Part 1

Massacre Records

Powergod go the same path, earlier trodden by their countrymen Helloween. The band

continues all the traditions of pure German heavy metal, and I can imagine how all the worshippers of Accept, Helloween, or Running Wild now bang their heads. I think that it's one of the most traditionally played heavy metal album I've heard this year. Iron Maiden, Judas Priest, Dio are also among the influences. The best track for me is "Evolution Pt. One," because it's a bit more innovative and has an epic character (personally, I am not a real worshipper of pure "old-good heavy metal"), but for still existing heavy metaliers the entire album should be quite enjoyable. (AO)
3 3/4



POWER OF OMENS

Eyes of the Oracle

Elevate Records

The debut album from this new band from Texas makes a huge impression of maturity at the first listen. They play a very intricate and complex, but rather light-sounding prog metal which defies definitions. First, the musicianship of all the band members is outstanding. Second, the production is excellent. Third, the music is dominated by the extraordinary complex rhythms, tempo changes, and totally crazy drumming. Taken individually, I will describe each musician to try to encompass this original style of prog metal: the singer is a real Geoff Tate clone; his voice really sounds like him, it's not an imitation! The drummer has a very light "jazzy" touch, and his cymbal playing is so weird that it sometimes difficult to understand. The same complexity can be said about the bass player. The guitar player is, in my opinion, the main 'weakness,' which actually imparts the overall effect of the music. He never plays any riffs, what gives the compositions an impression of fuzziness, and lack of backbone and consistency. All tracks are built without any graspable structure to hold to. The result is indeed a brilliant album, but which fails to catch the average listener. (AS)
4

PRETTY MAIDS

The Best of...Back to Back

Massacre Records

I've never been a fan of Pretty Maids, although I liked their earlier stuff as "Future World" CD (1987). That's why I can't say whether there are (in fact) the best songs of the band on this CD. "The Best of..." contains 15 'hits' and 2 unreleased tracks that probably is an additional incentive to buy this compilation. Only for Pretty Maids fanatics. (SV)

PRETTY MAIDS

Anything Worth Doing is Worth Overdoing

Massacre Records

Right after the "Best of..." compilation, Pretty Maids return with the new studio album. The first track "Snakes in Eden" gives a hint, the band has become heavier, but the following tracks show that they remain true to their style: melodic hard rock/heavy metal. Sometimes their stuff resembles Ten or Harem Scarem, Pretty Maids are heavier, though. The most impressive track on the CD is the magnificent "When the Angels Cry" with early Def Leppard touch. This CD is definitely for people who are longing for the times when melodic hard rock gathered together thousands of people at the concerts. Not bad. (SV)
3 3/4

PRIME TIME

The Miracle

Rising Sun Productions

The band from Denmark featuring ex-Elegy singer Eduard Hovinga. Like their predecessor "The Unknown," this CD offers us a straight melodic hard rock with emotional vocals and solid guitar work. The material resembles Elegy stuff, not so

Nevermore



I don't budge. But if there's something I don't know, hey, I'll admit it and seek some education. Some things I don't know, and some I do. So the thing came out, and some versions look beautiful, and some I don't care too much for, like they were tinkered with or something.

In your opinion, how much creativity an artist should have? How much can be achieved by hard work and, subsequently, by incoming experience?

Well, I don't think creativity can be taught. You either have it or you don't. You can teach things like composition or color combinations, the technical aspect of things, but not creativity. A lot of people think that a computer will turn them into a designer, which is why there are so many sterile things out there. I think the hard work and experience along with practice will develop the skills one already has, and make their style all that much better.

Would you call yourself a perfectionist? Do you spend a lot of time on little details?

Yes and yes. As much as deadlines allow.

Are you happy with your productivity speed?

Not always, but that's mainly due to slow equipment. I am always on time, I make sure of that. But things could be faster.

You mainly compose dark and twisted images. Was it always like that and will it always be?

For the most part, yeah, but I've done a few things that are not so twisted. But they were personal things, and the market hasn't asked for them. I haven't really done many happy pieces. I don't know if it will always be like that as far as what you see, depends on what I am asked for, but I am more inspired and influenced by the dark stuff, so if it's up to me, it will be the majority, hah hah. The new Nevermore CD is a good example. The art is very dark without being too twisted. It almost has a serene quality about it.

What software and hardware do you use? Can you evaluate it pointing out advantages and

demanding though, but attractive enough to arrest the attention of many people. Melodic rock fans could also try this one. "The Miracle" is a commendable album, but it doesn't mark any improvement in comparison with "The Unknown". (SV) 3 1/2

The PROMISE

Human Fire

Frontiers Records

Melodic hard rock band from Scotland, which returns with a new album after the four-year break. The first track, "Let's Talk About Love," is a really nice piece of hard rock. Great guitar and keyboards parts. "There Goes My Heart" is a cool ballad with lovely refrain. There are also longer, almost epic compositions on the album like "Arms of a Stranger" or "Only a Woman," which get well mixed up in the whole plan. Ian Benzie has a powerful and melodic voice, which lends the CD some really pleasant moments. One of the better AOR releases this year. (SV) 3 1/2



PSYCHOTIC WALTZ

Live & Archives DoCD

Institute of Art Records

Not polished, quite rough documentary of the early days of Psychotic Waltz, and, thus, interesting solely for those who have at least one Psychotic Waltz record in their collections. "Live & Archives" marks the end of band's history, because they split up in 1997, and, even if the hope dies last, there are no many chances of a reunion anytime soon.

Disc One contains a bootleg recording of a live show at Hamburg, in 1991, when the band's performance was passionate, mysterious, and energetic indeed. Almost all "A Social Grace" (the debut album) songs are present, except "Another Prophet Song," in addition to "Out of Mind" and "Little People" that would appear in "Into the Everflow," and The Beatles' cover "I'm the Walrus." Not much can be added, except repeating that "A Social Grace" was one of the most remarkable albums in progressive metal history, delivering an unique mix of weirdness, delight, thrill, and heaviness. Disc Two is a gift to real band fans, because it contains rare materials. First of all, the Asian (pre-Psychotic Waltz) 3-song demo; from which "Spiral Tower" was used for the debut album, but "Chase to the Stars" and "No Glory" went no further. Then, heavy/speed metalish "Burn the Night," band's first song, which sounds even funnier than the commercially-oriented refrain of "Chase to the Stars." In addition, you will find early recordings of "Successor" and "Halo of Thorns" (both appeared on "A Social Grace"), very early versions of "Aahes," "Freakshow" (later appeared on "Into the Everflow") and "Mosquito," a cover of Ozzy's "Diary of a Madman," and a number of various excerpts or unreleased instrumentals. It should be noted that most of the material Psychotic Waltz ever written was included in their albums, so you won't find many unreleased and unheard complete songs. Anyway, the fans should like all those special early versions of period 1985-1991. (GS) 4

RADAKKA

Requiem for the Innocent

Century Media Records

This Chicago based band was probably one of the bands at the end of Century Media priority list, but, unlike their 'friends of fate' Leviathan and Lion's Share, they have not run away and put out their second album on this label. The debut "Malice and Tranquility" was a good example of melodic metal, the follow-up is more hard rock n'roll-styled, occasionally even marching into the territory of Guns N'Roses ("Phantom #9"). Thank goodness, the majority of tracks displays

classy darker-edged heavy rock with some signs of modern thinking. The ending trilogy "Black Rose and Red Wine" deserves a honorable mention and presents a quite innovative approach to standard heavy rock elements, in form of, e.g., periodically used female vocals. Overall, a few rock n'rolling tracks aside, an enjoyable and solid album. (GS) 3 3/4

REVIVER

Reviver

self-released

Heavy/power metal from Holland. Not particularly outstanding, but interesting. Especially the guitar work is not bad, I really like the places on the CD where the guitarists show what they can. The draw-back is the weak voice that sounds very green and obscures some cool moments of this Iron Maiden/Savatage/Judas Priest mixture. On the other hand, I think, Reviver should pay more attention to the originality of the music, 'cause, at the moment, their songs are too stereotyped. It's such a cliché... (SV) [88, Fred Mantel, Merwedestraat 174, 1442 ST Purmerend, The Netherlands] 3 1/4

PATRICK RONDAT

On the Edge

Limb Music Products

How to describe accurately this piece of music? The fourth effort of this French guitar virtuoso is not only full of feeling, but denotes how instrumental sophistication can be incredibly attractive when all the additional musical elements are wisely integrated under one conducting force (guitar lines) and treated accordingly. This musician owns the talent of creating great musical moments, but also of accompanying himself by musicians of the caliber of Tommy Aldridge behind the drum set, or a reputed jazzman as Michael Petrucci on the piano. Their playing and coordination on "Why do you do Things like that?" is the finest example of the aforementioned excellence that we find on this really complete album. (GM) 4 1/2

ROUGH SILK

Beyond the Soundown

Massacre Records

In the early 90s, I associated Rough Silk with, more or less, straight hard rock music. On their 5th studio release, I witness a fine example of power metal with some good creative ideas, rhythm changes, and interludes that place Rough Silk above the average. A really consistent guitar base and personal sound is what adds punch to the album, sometimes reminding me of bands like Threshold. Their new singer seems to be competent and though may sound a bit mechanical at times, he shows in general a good melodic sense, often making use of the low range of his voice when needed. Nostalgic listeners might find references to some renewed Pretty Maids along the way, as signs of their stylistic roots, probably. (GM) 3 3/4

SALEM HILL

The Robbery of Murder

Zizania Music

This CD is a re-recording of Salem Hill's third tape-only release back in 1995 with several additional songs. The musical content of "The Robbery of Murder" resides at the lighter side of the progressive metal/rock spectrum. Influences such as Pink Floyd, Marillion are embedded in mellow neo-prog with several escapades into heavier territory and multiple King's X-type vocal harmonies.

SEA OF DREAMS

Land of Flames

self-released

I have fond memories of this band, their first album hasn't lost some of its charm up to now. Tracks like "Pain" still ring in my ears. I think, the new album is even better, but on the other hand, not so catchy as the debut. The songs consist of different parts with many tempo changes, solo-parts and inserts from various already known musical compositions (for example, "Carmen"). Sometimes this complexity of the structures hasn't good effects, like in "Last Trooper" or "Strong Winds", but speaking about other songs, it vindicates itself. The longest track "Illusions" and the great ballad "Morning Rain" are the real achievements in questions of prog/power metal. Not the slightest bit worse are the opener "Eagle" or "Vanishing Son." "Land of Flames" unite progressive, hard rock, bombastic power metal, exotic tunes, folklore under the same roof. The production is OK, so don't think twice about it, just grab it! (SV) [Sea Of Dreams, Blaklokvev 1, 4350 Naerbo, Norway] 4 1/4



RHAPSODY

Symphony of Enchanted Lands

Limb Music Products

After their incredible first release "Legendary Tales," Rhapsody faced the difficult challenge to meet the high expectations of their fans. They took the path to stay loyal to their style, even trying to improve it. Therefore, "Symphony of Enchanted Lands" is based on the same concept as the previous album, and is clearly its sequel. It narrates the "Chronicles of Algalord," a heroic fantasy world in cosmic danger, which is saved by a providential hero struggling against the evil. Musically, Rhapsody chose to elaborate and deepen their existing unique style: baroque neo-classical metal. Hence, the emphasis in comparison to the previous release has been put on a more than ever prominent orchestration, featuring a string ensemble, several male and female choirs, etc. The resulting epic is a masterpiece of blending between baroque music and metal, at a level of achievement seldom reached yet. The concept also incorporates some unusual elements, as narrated parts and ambient noises (whinnying horses, falling water, howling wolves, etc.) which partly gives the impression of a motion picture soundtrack (for example for a movie like "Willow"). Besides, some compositions (particularly the amazing song "Beyond the Gates of Infinity") integrate progressive elements (i.e., frequent time changes and original harmonies), which broadens in an interesting manner Rhapsody's repertoire. The only disappointment: the voice of the narrator is not really suitable for that job, being too high and lacking the "tragic" tone required for such epic storytelling. (AS) 5

The musical delivery is diverse and competent, but the emphasis is oriented too much towards the piano/keyboard for my personal taste. The lyrical concept does, however, compensate for the lack of musical crescendo and extravaganza. It revolves around a boy's quest to avenge the death of his father who was killed by a drunk driver. After a life-long quest, the pitey for the culprit beats his feelings of hate, and he contemplates his new future. An interesting aspect is that the story is not only from the boy's perspectives. All in all, an appealing lyrical concept put to music that can only excite in a limited quantity to non neo-prog affiliates. (CR) 3 3/4

SCOTT MCGILL'S HAND FARM

Ripe

Laser's Edge

Brought to you by the label that gave us Gordian Knot, this is Scott McGill's second instrumental solo album, and he was joined by the rhythm section of Mistaken Identities. Previously in progressive rock band Finneas

Gauge, Scott is now concentrating solely on his solo work. This CD offers progressive fusion, showing slight tinges of Allan Holdsworth, played by extremely competent and talented musicians. However, my impression is that the songwriting focuses more on exhibiting instrumental virtuosity than conveying emotions and creating memorable hooks for a non-musician to hold onto. Extensive guitar and drum soloing in "Industrial Blowout" is a prime example. Parts of "The Ripe One," "Skwerbie," and "Ong's Hat" combine this virtuosity with some heavier parts but, overall, it's an endeavour for only the more adventurous (progressive) metal fan. (CR) 3 3/4

SEVENTH GATE

News from the Underworld EP

self-released

On their first EP, this German quintet combines power metal with progressive rock and gothic elements. Seventh Gate's trademark is a great voice by female singer Sabine Demes which sometimes reminds me of Anake from The Gathering. The opener "Still the Wind" is probably the best song on this CD. The remaining tracks are also of high quality, they are overlength though, and, in my opinion, that's the reason why they aren't so perfect like the first song. The whole material was recorded with the rehearsal equipment, thus the sound is not brilliant but satisfactory for a self-release. Seventh Gate's musical abilities are evident, so next time they should choose a better studio for the recordings. (SV) [Ralf Ossowski, Westerbleichstrasse 65, 44147 Dortmund, Germany] 3 1/2

SEVEN WITCHES

Second War in Heaven

Massacre Records

The nostalgia for Metal Church makes to play the music like this. Also, I can find clear influences of bands like Iced Earth and all melodic power metal groups of the 80s. Here, we don't have many progressive metal inputs, it's just pure old metal style, e.g., the third track "Camelot" shows it all. I can remember R.J. Dio or Iron Maiden songs that were made to sound like hymns; I think that German and Japanese markets are already waiting for this release. The album contains two covers, "Metal Daze" (not so much successful one), originally by Manowar, and "The Chain" (a really interesting one), originally by Fleetwood Mac. It's a good album for all worshippers of old melodic metal without innovations. (AO) 3 3/4

SHARON

Edge of Time

Limb Music Products

This German quintet makes their apparition with a series of catchy commercial melodic rock songs that certainly go straight to the point. Endorsed with the "Best Newcomer Rockband" title, gained at local popular music contests, Sharon have become one of LMP label promotional priorities. The playing sounds compact ("Sweet Family," "Once," "Waiting for the Rain," "Can You Remember?") and makes the product appealing mainly for followers of not complex material in the veins of White Lion, Bon Jovi, and other names from commercial rock school, "Miss the Day," for example, could have been the first single of any Poison album. But don't take these references as a critic: since the first listening, the orientation of this album and, particularly its songwriting style, are perfectly clear and do not delude one. Blindly recommended if one's into the most commercial slopes of the rock field. If you're not, listening to some of these songs and their constant "broken heart" allusions will perhaps sound much heavier than any Dimmu Borgir material. (GM) 3 1/4



SKYCLAD

Vintage Whine
Massacre Records
 The first albums by these folk-metallars offered a really interesting combination of traditional music and heavy metal. Skyclad seemed to grow and to become one of the most promising artists of this style. Sadly, later their progression stopped: many albums have followed, but everything was the same (I just remember 1996 when two albums and one "best of" were released), musical innovation went down in the sea of productivity. "Vintage Whine" shows that Skyclad decided to reform their style a bit. First of all, it is much heavier than the previous Skyclad's albums. Of course, folk parts are still here, but the sound is more guitaric and strong. The second thing is that here we don't face really mediocre songs which formed the majority of earlier albums. "Vintage Whine" consists of many different songs, from pure folk to straight rock/metal. I'm glad that we can re-discover Skyclad again, and it is maybe the best Skyclad's album in five years. By the way, it's already their 10th album in total. (AO)
 4

SKULLVIEW

Legends of Valor
RIP Records

Is the cover art of album an answer to heroic Manowar? And how can a band in our times choose such a name? The music is a mix of Helloween, Manowar, and Iron Maiden and can serve as one of the best albums for the section "the trend of heavy metal renewal." If some bands, such as Powergod or Seven Witches, play traditional heavy/power metal, and also try to show their own face, Skullview are just pure imitation. There are better things in life than this group. (AO)
 2 1/2

MICHAEL SOBYGGE

No Words Needed
MSP Music

It's a pure guitar album with 11 instrumentals. The tracks are of metal kind, but Michael is not a shredder-type guitarist and more focuses on moody heavy parts or gentle acoustic guitar/piano interludes (the best example of integrating them is "Song of Passion"). "No Words Needed" is more laid-back as opposed to tense. It's a decent mid-scale effort, though it would be good to hear more up-to-the-front melodies. (GS)
 [Michael Sobygge, Skragade 4G, DK-9400 Norresundby, Denmark]
 3 1/2

SPOCK'S BEARD

Day for Night
Suburban/SPV

Due to not having a deep knowledge of their previous works, I'm certainly not the right person to judge Spock's Beard latest output from a global perspective. But, in any case, analyzing this material just as it came makes it possible for me to categorize it as a truly compact, song-wise, and comprehensive prog-rock work. Along fourteen - often very brilliantly sequenced - tracks, "Day for Night" cozes the mature musicianship and colorful arrangements in a mastery fashion. Spock's Beard strive in displaying an ample spectrum of colorful and mellow musical hues, embellished with fluid, multipoint vocal lines, executed always in an impeccable way. After a few listens, experiencing this music, which sometimes seems to move

SHADOW GALLERY

Tyranny
Magna Carta Records
 Since the beginning, the use of majestic choruses and greatly complex colorful piano/keyboards arrangements have constituted one of the main hallmarks and proved affinities of this sextet from Pennsylvania. However, like in my case, sometimes that myriad of ornaments could affect the listener in the same way as adding too much sugar makes a cup of coffee something cloying, and, ultimately, not easy to consume. On this new effort, Shadow Gallery seem to have worked very hard in trying to showcase more efficiently the entire spectrum of their creative potential. Which is quite vast, by the way. Compared to "Carved in Stone" album (1995), the vocals go in the same emotional and moving style, with a good number of midtempo beautifully highlighted by female vocals in a couple of tracks. We also find that the structure of songs is, in general, more concise and tasteful, carrying a heavier instrumentation ("Mystery," "War For Sale," "Roads of Thunder"). Analyzing it globally, the presence of arrangements helps to add more vitality to the compositions, instead of just pursuing a mere mellowness or insipid melody lines as adornment resources. Lyrically, "Tyranny" is a quite interesting, thought provoking, conceptual work divided in two acts elapsing one year, along which the band reviews some topics of great concern in today's modern society (media power, armament industry, information networks, world balkanization...). Cuts like "Out of Nowhere," "I Believe," or "New World Order" stand out as some of the best compositions of their whole career. The selection of guest musicians (James LaBrie, DC Cooper) is wise and really contributes to make this album one of the most complete recent releases in the prog meta/technical melodic metal field. (GM)
 4 3/4



halfway between experimental and classically-rooted resitful/progressive stuff is a ELP, constituted for me quite a pleasure. In my humble opinion, talking from a wide perspective, it shouldn't matter much the point from which you access this, musically brilliant, album. If you, for instance enjoyed material like the last Platypus album, or are fond of bands like King's X and the like, with that 70s retro feel, I'd strongly recommend this release. (GM)
 4 1/2



STEEL PROPHET

Dark Hallucinations
Nuclear Blast Records

This album is a good example of how the dedication pays off. Steel Prophet were formed back in the mid 80's, but only in the 90s released two full-length albums and one EP on Art of Music label which had quite limited resources for promoting the band. Finally, Steel Prophet have an album on one of the most influential indie metal labels. Thanks to Hammerfall's success. But Steel Prophet's music is far more challenging than still good Hammerfall or Nocturnal Rites. "Dark Hallucinations" is a faster, slightly heavier, and more versatile elaboration of Iron Maiden's "Powerslave" album. The third Steel Prophet's full-length album is more complex, less one-pace than its predecessor "Into the Void," which was pretty much direct Maiden-ish album. Steel

Prophet don't use keyboards, owe very little to 'cheesier' Helloween-like metal, and, in this aspect, resemble to current US metal torch keepers Iced Earth and Destiny's End. The album starts off gracefully, the first verse of "Montag" is brilliant with guitar leads interchanged with vocal lines. The second track, "New Life," is probably the biggest 'hit' of the album, with flowing verses that burn into a very powerful melodic refrain. "A Strange Encounter," the next song, starts with a fireful Bernie Versaye's (Agent Steel) solo and develops into very fast and melodic metal. Towards the end, you will hear some in-your-face power/thrash songs with good riffing, rhythms, and vocals, giving a good diversity to the album. Singer Rick Mythiasin did a good job on this, singing in a well-controlled mid-to-high-range voice, with occasional wild highs. Five out of 9 songs form a mini-concept based on Ray Bradbury's science-fiction book "Fahrenheit 451."
 It's one of the better US metal offerings. (GS)
 4 1/2

STIGMATA IV

The Court of Eternity
Noise Records

Positively received "Solum Mente infirmis" was swiftly followed-up by the new album, hauntingly named "The Court of Eternity," and such a rush can be explained by saying that "Solum" was actually recorded way before it was released (the band signed to Noise Records only after the album was recorded). In "The Court of Eternity," these Austrians confirm once more that tracing the path of popular power/heavy is not in their thoughts. Their power metal is equally based on heaviness and melody, both dense and dark, oppressive and restlessly fighting. The pounding sound is sometimes enriched by apocalyptic keyboards; in slower places resembling to a really heavy Savatage. If I would have to pick one song from this release, I would probably name "Nature's Revenge" or "Mirror Man," due to their drifting melodies. Comparing with its predecessor,

"The Court of Eternity" may seem not that diverse at first, but it's not monotonous either. (GS)
 [Fan Club, Manfred Thanner, Bayernstrasse 3, 5020 Salzburg, Austria]
 4

STRANGLEHOLD

Elemental
Iscares Productions

Good stuff from Great Britain. This CD will appeal to all Stratovarius, Symphony X, or Riot fans. Stranglehold's classical heavy/speed metal makes a very professional impression on me. The band consists of three brilliant musicians who know how to create catchy, melodic heavy metal hymns. There is also a strong Malmsteen and Rainbow touch over the whole album. Jon Nicholas' voice reminds me a bit of Joe Lynn Turner. By the way, his guitar solos are outstanding. Highlights of the CD: "Total Eclipse," "Achilles Heel," and "Dying by Design." Four fat points. (SV)
 [Stranglehold, PO Box 768, Southampton, SO15 1WU, England]
 4

STRATOVARIUS

Destiny
Noise Records

During 1994 and 1998, the Finnish premier melodic metal band was releasing one album each year. What is more amazing is that the quality does not seem to suffer from such quantity. "Destiny," band's seventh record, does not offer any mind-converting innovations, just a classy intelligent speed metal with nice harmonies and choirs. For all who are not quick in labeling things 'cheesy' and 'whining,' Stratovarius play it safe not changing the style (as Running Wild or Manowar do, for example), but it is probably because they are just not willing to do otherwise. The music can get banal in places, but not to an irritating level, because Stratovarius manage to keep their heads high. Even in those almost-ripping-off cases, like "4000 Rainy Nights" (which reminds of Queensryche's "Another Rainy Night" not only because of its title). One thought that stirs my mind is that Helloween were more interesting in their prime than Stratovarius are on "Destiny," but it does not mean "Destiny" is not for the charts, more the other way around. And why not? It is great that Stratovarius exist, just do not encourage Strato-coopy bands, because it really gets cheap when you follow not the very real thing. (GS)
 4

SUPERIOR

Younique
Noise Records

Bands like Superior should get applauded for their bravery explore the different, especially when "the different" is not dictated by commercial reasonings, which happens more often than people admit (or would you argue that "Younique" will sell better than "Behind"?). Starting as a Dream Theater-inspired band, in their second full-length "Younique," they deliver modern melodic rock/metal with slow or mid-paced rhythms and crunching guitars and vocals; the latter transform into flowing melodic in refrains. The number of distinct songs is quite big: "God's Funeral," being quite long and epic, has a catchy main melody, "Free Minded" is their biggest outburst of freedom (and the biggest sacrifice for prog metal maniacs), with its powerful drive reminiscent to Faith No More-like sounds, "Nothing" is captivative and nice, relatively quiet song with guitars heavier and tension bigger than usually met in a 'normal' rock ballad, "Think" is electro/industrial metal track (Die Krupps). Some songs slightly repeat each other, and some songs contain too many parts which don't always positively contribute to the whole, but the main merit, in my opinion, which brings Superior a little bit superior to others, is the warmth of their music. Melodies sound natural, you can feel that listening to the last track "This Promise," a beautiful Queensryche's "Silent Lucidity" kind of ballad. (GS)
 3 3/4

SYMPHORSE

Truth to Promises
Noise Records

At one point, it looked like Ivanhoe were going to establish themselves on the progressive metal hall of fame; it was when

STRIPSHOW

Late Nite Cult Show
Spot

An album from an Icelandic band released by an Icelandic label, not interesting? Wait a second! If the success of Bjork has put any stamps on Stripshow at all, one of them is a rebellion against the norm. Stripshow may appeal to many, starting from the rock audience to hard rock, progressive metal, and even extreme metal folks. Because their music is sincere and real, and they write good songs. The front cover may suggest that the band is much more twisted than Psychedelic Waltz; partly it's true because Stripshow write lyrics about freak shows, spooks, people with no feet, people who eat razors and glass, i.e., their lyrics are for those who are addicted to visionary mysticism: happening in carnivals of freaks and beyond. The songs are quite heavy, very melodic, without usual templates and boring clichés, yet not too complex (the complexity is not a pre-requisite for a good song). Their influences are not very visible, but my guess is that they liked Black Sabbath, Led Zeppelin, Ozzy, Alice Cooper, but followed all movements in contemporary and older hard rock/heavy metal scene. Anyway, the album is quite unique and extremely interesting. Believe my words, we have to deal with some talent here, just listen to "Potholes," "Where Are We Now," or sentimental ballad "Freaks." (GS)
 [Spot, Nybylvegur 4, 202 Kópavogur, Iceland]
 4 1/4



their second album "Symbols of Time" was released. But then their third and the most catchy album "Polarized" got mixed reactions and wasn't too widely recognized by some reason. Maybe because it was not progressive enough for prog freaks and not focused enough for Halloween fans. The band split-up due to musical differences and the singer Andy Franck formed Symphorce. "Truth to Promises" contains ten direct metal songs, which don't sound hackneyed at all, mainly due to unique high and poignant vocals of Andy and his trademark melodies, which were best revealed in "Polarized." Symphorce don't hold any sentiments to progressive metal, but it's not a bad thing these days. "Truth to Promises" is one of the recent albums with catchiest sing-a-longs, that's a fact! (GS) 4 1/2

SYLVAN

Deliverance

Limb Music Products

It's well known how most avant-garde progressive music fields contain works which require a more or less conscientious effort from the listener in order to absorb the set of ideas that the artist has tried to reflect. The ambitious debut album of this talented Hamburg-based line-up may fit into this category. Sylvan's "Deliverance" outstands as a very personal prog-rock creation, which offers a rich range of different musical textures making it, in my opinion, worth of investing the aforementioned intellectual effort. Fortunately, Sylvan have not restricted or isolated their proposal to just exploiting the technical side of music. Going further than that, they have weaved eight varied, full of substance, tracks, where memorable refrains, clean guitars with a jazzistic feel, and a taste for meaningful lyrics prove to be the flag and pattern to follow. A very competent and solid singer delivers a wide range of beautiful, yet complex and haunting melodies a la Marillion/Mayfair, that may transport you to the most emotional parts of such different material as Vauxdvihi's "To Dimension Logic," Superior's "Behind," or Anathema's "Eternity." Falling the curtain, a 16 minutes long epic cut with numerous narrated parts, dialogues, and diverse sound effects transmits a unique fairytale ending, as the song title literally expresses. (GM) 4 1/2

TAL DORGAR

Zero to Nowhere

self-released

Hm, this band sounds like Budgie of the 90s. Shame, the sound is very weak, otherwise this CD would be really interesting for Rush, Yes, or Budgie influenced rock/metal fans. The songwriting is somewhat chaotic and scattered around, but, however, some places are cool. This part singing has something from Yes or even Beatles... The musicianship is a mystery for me, sometimes it convinces me, sometimes - not. Listening to "Zero to Nowhere," I come away with mixed impressions. (SV) [Tal Dorgar, 1002 Highland Road, Fredericksburg, VA 22407, USA] 3



TALAMASCA

Projection

DCA Recordings

It is exactly progressive metal, according to what the common understanding says about the term. The debut album of Talamasca sends us back to "Perfect Symmetry" (Fates Warning) times; from newer acts the band can be compared to The Quiet Room or Mercury Rising, because "Projection" is really guitar-driven, all the way heavy, of varying tempo, and with relatively high vocals, which should be accepted by those who are into good prog-metal style singers. The twist is present, big thanks to creative and catchy guitar parts: the riffs are powerful in nature (like in the old days), what sometimes current bands forget or try to

compensate by a heavy sound. Not all songs easily stick to memory, "Self Aware" and "Lost Within" are among the best ones. In conclusion, the stylistics are not very original, but the performance is more than good, which makes the album interesting, as well as leaves us waiting for more elaborate efforts from this band in the future. (GS) [\$15, DCA Recordings, 268 Bush Street, #3237, San Francisco, CA 94104, USA] [Talamasca, PO Box 441, Appleton, WI 54912-0441, USA] 4

TEN

Spellbound

Frontiers Records

Ten are probably one of the most known melodic hard rock groups, not solely in Japan. Their previous albums "The Robe" and "The Name of the Rose" were very popular in Europe, too. The new opus "Spellbound" is not the slightest bit worse. They've kept up combinations, verified a long time ago, and have refined their style with some fresh arrangements. There is no doubt, that songs like "Fear the Force" or "Spellbound" will be the next Ten hits, especially at their concerts. Ten successfully mix all trademarks of a melodic hard rock band with the influences from the 70s (Deep Purple), and it's a real joy to listen to the outcome. Modern hard rock at it's finest! (SV) 4

TEN

Never Say Goodbye DoCD

Frontiers Records

This is a long awaited double live CD by the famous English melodic rock band. It contains 22 live tracks (recorded during "The Robe" and "The Name of the Rose" tours 97/98) and 4 new studio songs. I must notice the great sound-quality which helps to create the cool atmosphere of a Ten gig. "Never Say Goodbye" contains nearly all the best songs of the band, I think, none of Ten fans will be disappointed about the selection of tracks. It's a gift for every melodic rock admirer. (SV) 4

TERRA NOVA

Eye to Eye

Frontiers Records

Terra Nova is an AOR band, which is very successful in Japan. Finally, this record is available through Frontiers Records for all European fans. For my taste, Terra Nova are too soft and commercial. Stylistically, they move somewhere between Van Halen, Europe, and so-called "radio-bands." There's no doubt that they are great musicians, but their songs are simply expressionless and empty. I'm quite sure there are enough people out there who will like this album, sorry guys, I'm not one of them. (SV) 3

THIRD VOICE

Reflections

self-released

Third Voice is a two-man project, bringing progressive metal in its traditional form, with biggest inspirations coming from Fates Warning (from "Perfect Symmetry" to "Inside Out"). "Reflections" sounds more like a demo, due to the average sound and not so tight songwriting, but the melodies are actually quite enjoyable. Songs sometimes go beyond typical prog metal, for example, "Mystery" is a light-weight rock song, and "Never Know" is American-style ballad of the late 80's. The missing link is not sufficient controlling of songs, which perhaps could be obtained with a powerful production and better explored vocal capabilities. "Reflections" is a good starting point though. (GS)

[\$12 (US) or \$13 (elsewhere) in cheque or IMO payable to Jason Pirone, Third Voice, PO Box 97841, Pittsburgh, PA 15227, USA] 3 1/4

THRESHOLD

Clone

Inside Out Music

Threshold is a phenomenon in the prog scene. They've already changed their singer for the third time, but you can't discover any changes in their music. The new frontman Andrew McDermott (ex-Sergeant Fury) sounds like a mixture of both previous vocalists. In spite of that, "Clone" is not so impressive as "Extinct Instinct" or the brilliant "Psychedelicatessen," and it's not the singer's fault. It's like this - the songs have become simpler and somewhat insipid. I missed the spontaneity that was a

characteristic feature for previous releases. Of course, "Clone" is far better than other today's prog releases, and (for example) "Freaks" or "Voyager II" are really great tracks, but I simply expected more from the band. (SV) 3 3/4

TILES

Presents of Mind

Inside Out Music

Tiles' first two records were good releases, but they lacked something. I don't know what exactly, maybe they were too much Rush-oriented, or maybe their songwriting was a bit vacuous. Finally, "Presents of Mind" remedies these little faults and offers us well thought-out, mature progressive metal with great songs like "Static," "Facing Failure," or "Safe Procedures." If the arrangement of previous works were somewhat empty, so this CD consists of effective guitar improvisations and memorable vocals melodies. I hope, "Presents of Mind" will help them on their way farther. Congratulations. (SV) 4 1/4

TIMESCAPE

Two Worlds

self-released

First of all, I must say that this band has a very good vocalist. His voice is somewhat very similar to Geoff Tate from Queensryche. However, I think, the band hasn't a way with this strong point, that's my opinion after a couple of listens. The first track "Silent Room of Time" is undoubtedly the best song on this CD: moving between Queensryche, Dream Theater, or King's X, it contains an interesting refrain and great arrangements. The rest of the album tends in a similar direction, but it's steeped in monotonous and too transparent structures, the songs appear to me interesting, but slightly uptight. It's obvious that "Two Worlds" is better than many other prog metal releases, but it looks very shy in this flood of Queensryche/Dream Theater/Fates Warning followers. (SV) [Nettle-Space Productions, Skogvaktaregatan 4, 802 08 Norrköping, Sweden] 3 1/2

TIMOTHY PURE

Island of the Misfit Toys

Isosceles Records

Timothy Pure go more and more back to the roots of psychedelic/progressive rock. If their debut album "The Fabric of Betrayal" presented more diverse and complex progressive rock, the second album "Blood of the Barry" was much more quiet and melancholic, more into Pink Floyd than into Marillion (as the debut). "Island of the Misfit Toys" is certainly the most quiet and still album Timothy Pure created to date and resembles the most melancholic, supported by dreamy keyboards songs of "Blood of the Barry."

Already the first track creates the atmosphere not dissimilar to solo albums by Rick Waters; it is the crossroad where psychedelic rock and melancholic, more traditional rock meet. "The Fly-Man and the Snake" has a more diverse sound, but later on everything is calmed down. All in all, this disc (except instrumental "Channels" and complex "Misha Superhero") is an example of quiet, romantic prog rock, and I think that it was a logical prolongation of where this group was stepping with their both previous albums. This disc is more keyboard-oriented and is created as a monolithic conceptual story both musically and lyrically. We also must notice that this disc is the most professional and finished album of this band, and it won't disappoint those who don't seek for novelties of progressive music but who better choose older forms and want the music to be personal and sincere (the qualities this group always maintained). (AO) [Isosceles Records, MPB 186, 2480-4 Briarcliff Road, Atlanta, Georgia 30329, USA] 4

TROPA DE SHOCK

The Blade of the Wind EP

self-released

This band is from Brasil and plays traditional heavy/speed/power metal in veins of Helloween/Gamma Ray, Iron Maiden, or early Fates Warning. It's a second release by Tropa De Shock, the first album came out in 1996(?) and was called "Angels of Eternity." "The Blade of the Wind" contains 4 songs

that are of a high standard, even if the material makes slightly archaic impression on the listener. The best track for me is the long "Shadow of the Lion" with good high vocals and interesting instrumental parts. There can be no doubt that Tropa De Shock is one of the better bands from Brasil. This EP will give pleasure to everybody who loves traditional HM tunes. (SV) [Katia Ferraz, Avenida 9 de Julho, 4726 Apto. 43, Sao Paulo, Brasil CEP 01406-200] 3 3/4

TURTLES, SHARKS & BEAVERS

Version 1.0

self-released

Certainly not any "beta-version." That's one of my personal conclusions after listening carefully to the debut album of this talented young trio from Brazil. Together with a really competent and diversified production, what they present us along is a rich amalgam of different music styles, ranging from progressive rock to pop-rock, funk, or jazz-fusion. Thanks to that unrestrained combination, I think "Version 1.0" stands out as an album that does not leave one indifferent. Well-constructed prog-pop-rock compositions such as "Frightful Happiness" or "Lights" leave an indelible impression, and coexist accordingly with pretty different material. Being Rush one of their (proudly admitted) biggest influences, TS&B are the type of band that successfully manage to transport the listener into pretty different moods. Globally, their music might fit better in the progressive pop field. And it's just that eclecticism and musical glibness, wisely accompanied with a healthy irony and sense of humor, is what becomes one of their main attractions. Just try to listen to it with an open mind the first time you put it in your CD player, and enjoy! (GM) [R. Gomes de Carvalho, 83-92 04547-000 Sao Paulo - SP, BRAZIL] 4 1/2

V/A

Progressive DisDURPance Vol.1

Durp

This is a compilation of new German prog metal acts. Some of them were already reviewed in "Edge of Time," for example, re-Vision, No Inner Limits, or Sunblaze (see interview in the last issue). Another great band on this compilation is Esthetic Pale that play something between gothic and prog. An interesting collection of good songs, with the exception of Spyhole that are out of place here (hardcore with a disastrous sound). Bands can send their demos/CDs to the address below, because Markus Weis plans to release Vol.2 soon, and don't forget to visit his homepage "Prog Teutonicum" where you will find tons of info on German prog metal scene. Support it. (SV) [17DM (Germany) or 22 DM (elsewhere), Markus Weis, Am Gangsteig 9, 85551 Kirchheim-Heilmstetter, Germany] 4

V/A

Progressive DisDURPance Vol.2

Durp

Markus Weis really does everything he can to support progressive rock/metal scene. The first volume of this compilation presented new acts in prog scene, and I believe that this disc helped to get recognition for some of them (like, for example, Esthetic Pale). The new compilation again offers carefully selected tracks from European prog rock/metal. We've got such prog rock bands as Flamborough Head, Dionysos, Twin Age, Esthetic Pale (once again), or WW, prog-metalists Moonzade, Moonlit, Blank, Winterland, or Third Voice, and the band that doesn't fall in any frames and is my favorite - Mayfair. Their psychedelic track "Trip" from wonderful album "Fastest Trip to Cybartown" is the absolute highlight on this CD, and maybe it will help the band to get more recognition, what they have been needing for a long time. Other highlights include Flamborough Head, Moonlit, and Esthetic Pale. But all the proggers will find their own favorites, as the compilation offers something for each taste, as well as serves as an overview of what's happening in European scene. Besides good points, we can also notice that the influence of Dream Theater is too evident, and many bands still find their inspiration in this band's music. This CD offers all the needed info about featured bands, so I can only repeat what Stiglas said above, support it. (AO)

Much more than a band with an exotic name. Chatting once about the state of the Brazilian scene with a couple of Angra members (guitarist Rafael Bittencourt and bassist Luis Mariutti, to be precise), they remarked the talent behind Turtles, Sharks & Beavers. I subsequently paid more attention to "Version 1.0" album, which I had been listening to since a few weeks ago, and indeed, after analyzing it more in depth, I could see with my own eyes what their compatriots had pointed out: I had in front of me a good proof of what bright and uninhibited music can be.

Around "Version 1.0," you can find snippets from very different orientations, e.g., vocal melodies that resemble King's X, or the funky edge of bands like Extreme, merged with the melodic accessibility of classic acts like Toto, or the instrumental and experimental approach of Rush or Frank Zappa's music.

"Version 1.0" has already harvested

playing Rush covers along Sao Paulo pubs circuit, I wanted to comment you something: around three or four months ago when I first listened to "Version 1.0," I remember I emailed the "Edge of Time" editor telling a bit about your band. Well, Rush was the band I initially traced parallels with. I suppose part of those years is still reflected in your music or simply in the way you operate as musicians.

Yes, completely! I think Geddy Lee was the person who influenced me to start learning the bass guitar. I used to enjoy Rush so much (and so did Tibira, our



Considering you started doing Rush covers being really young, I wonder in which kind of musical atmosphere you personally grew up?

My mother used to hear rock and Brazilian music all the time, when I was young. The freshest "memory picture" I have in my mind is me, three years old, sitting on a big chair, with big phones in my ears, listening to a John Fogerty's album (singer of Creedence Clearwater Revival), while watching my mother cooking. I think I've done this thing (always with John Fogerty's music - present) several times, over and over. My mother jokes about being guilty for making me become a rock musician. I've always been interested in music. So I started to learn music with 8 years and never stopped. But, as I grew up, I started to discover music by myself. The funny thing is that I think the same had occurred in homes of Tibira and Fred (except for the John Fogerty album). They started listening to music and learning music very early, too.

Could you explain a bit to "Edge of Time" readers the reasons for adopting

probably know Flavio, in the progressive/technical metal area, there's often a tendency to summarize a band's potential in terms of "instrumental virtuosity." Well, in my opinion, one of the biggest difficulties is to combine both sides, accessibility and music quality, in a well proportioned way.

Yes, I totally agree with you. But sometimes I find people are strange. Because we try to do that, and people seem to demand bands like Nirvana, Wallflowers, etc. Always the same thing! It's strange, because when something different starts to show off, it's a big hit, but when you show something different (with a hallmark), people are afraid to invest.

I can tell you that our artistic goal is always to make music that comes directly from our hearts. It doesn't matter in what music style it fits. It's obvious that we were very deep into that "progressive pop" kind of music, so this is a big influence for us. But we like to hear and read and know about everything, and this affects our creation directly, and in a very deep way. We

turtles, sharks & beavers

Musical Farm

[by Gregorio Martin]

very positive reviews in different publications from Japan, Italy, Canada, or Holland (in the latter two countries, the band has managed to get some airplay as well). Waiting to take the "big jump" and bestow more exposure to their music, at the moment, as bassist/vocalist/keyboardist Flavio Marchesin states, the band is facing different negotiations and trying to give their music a definitive push by possibly founding their own label, TSB records, and finding a good distributor.

To know a bit more about this interesting band, named after three different creatures, keep on reading.

If it's fine with you Flavio, we can start talking a bit about your musical backgrounds, and what your goals and expectations are. Talking about the formation of Turtles, Sharks & Beavers, and considering that you're a very young band, when did you start playing together?

Well, I started playing with Tibira (guitarist) about 9 years ago. We formed a trio with another drummer (called Alexandre), and we started playing around Sao Paulo, but we only played Rush music at that time! We were a "cover" band. We were called "Rush Cover Trio" actually. We used to sell out every pub we were playing. It was a nice time. So, we played for about two years, and then our drummer went out of the band (to get married). Then Frederico (TSB current drummer) came to us, and we started playing together, and tried to do some songs. The energy between us was incredible, so we were sure that we had a new band. We are playing together for about seven years as TSB!

That's quite a long time indeed. Related to those days when you were

guitarist), that I really wanted to be able to play their songs in a band with the same formation. So, spending so much time listening to them, it's impossible to get "out of them." It's like... it's in our blood! We still listen to Rush these days, but I think we are more open minded now. We listen to all kind of stuff, and now that's having some reflections on TSB. But, because of the long time recording "Version 1.0," I think this album reflects many music periods (since when we were Rush "fanatics" till these more open minded days).

As I progressively got into "Version 1.0," I noticed that a sole "Rush comparison" would be quite restrictive for explaining TSB music. Starting with that solid base (correct me if I'm wrong), maybe you've tried to make a step further and have managed to give it all a more modern approach. I think that balance constitutes one of the best points in your music: how you've endowed TSB innate musicianship with accessibility and haunting effects in the right measure.

Thank you. Yes, you got the point! What you said is perfect! Well, we tried to do that consciously: starting with a good influence as a solid base (Rush), and then going to another level, mixing more styles, becoming a different band, not just a band like Rush... But it's nice, and, at the same time, strange, that you mentioned "a more modern approach," because we heard two musical critics, one in USA and one in England, saying that we sound too much "dated." I really got very sad about that. They say that our songs are fine, but to be more modern, we have to simplify the drums, cut the keyboards, put more distortion effects in the guitar, simplify the arrangements. But I think they're crazy. I mean, what is the point in restructuring TSB to sound like Nirvana???

such a curious (and funny) name?

Sure! I think it's a funny history. Just a few weeks before we met Fred, we were trying to play with a drummer (a friend of us), which had the nickname "chicken." So, one night Tibira had a dream that the name of the band was "Turtles, Sharks & Chickens." Tibira was the "Turtle," because he is a "slow" person, he is always late (but he says that it's because he loved a turtle when he was young, and his turtle disappeared, etc. anyway, this explanation didn't convince anybody); I was the "Shark" because of the size of my nose, it's like a shark's fin (you must see me in profile); and the guy named chicken was obviously the "Chicken." So, soon "Chicken" went out, and we met Fred. At that time, he had a pony tail (his hair is brown), and, in combination with his smile, we found him very similar to a beaver (the pony tail was the beaver's tail, and his smile was similar to a beaver's "smile"). Then he became the "Beaver"!

In my modest opinion, you show a quite sharp sense of humor and freshness of ideas along "Version 1.0."

I think you are a very kind person, and we are flattered and very emotioned with your words. It's strange to explain this, but it seems that you really "got" our message! You are in the same level that we are (not higher, not lower), so you understand every message we want to tell, with words, with colors, with melodies, sound effects, etc. It's like we and you are in the same syntony.

Thanks to you for saying that. Well, I have to tell you very honestly that, at least for me, it's not common to listen to music like yours, that refreshing. Probably that's the main reason why I'm so enthusiastic about TSB and can connect to this whole project. As you

listen to all styles of music, so we want to play a little bit of all kinds of music. And I think we are very well humored guys, and we think that humor is something that is missing in the world these days. We think that, especially in the rock scene, there is too much people giving the same message: destruction, chaos, negative situations, anger, rage, etc. Nobody gives a smile, nobody makes jokes.

You're quite right on this.

It's like everybody is waiting for the end of the world. And we are exactly the opposite: we think that a new world is about to be born. We think that smile, good humor, and fun are essential to reach a higher level. We think that every living being is eternal and infinite, and we all are just passing through stages. So, let's have fun!

I get your reasoning. I agree with you on that that "funny side" is often not too cultivated in rock music. For instance, talking a bit about this, there's an album that I listened to recently, which surprised me for the "irony" it expelled: Marillion's "Radiation." It showed me how it is possible to establish a well-recognized critic through jokes or through the "language of the absurd," regarding a serious problem such as environmental protection.

Yes, Marillion, I think especially with Steve Hogart, always do this kind of things. In my opinion, they have excellent lyrics. I couldn't hear this last album with attention, but my friend Hugo Mariutti (from Henceforth) is crazy about Marillion, and so I always listen to new albums with him.

Environment is precisely the question that is always a big concern for the international community when thinking



of your country, Brazil (the Amazon forest and its conservation, etc.). Being able to live the problem from "inside" as you are Flavio, how would you describe this matter to a foreign person like me?

It's strange. Hm... how can I say that? It's strange, because even knowing that the Amazon forest is a serious matter, I think people, even in Brazil, always do a "storm in a cup of water"! It's not that this is not important, but the media always seems to "increase" the nature of problems. The environmental matter is a serious question, we have some problems, but it is not that alarming as the TV says. I know this because I studied laws, and I studied environment laws, and I learned lots of things about it. One thing I've learnt is that the media always turns problems into something bigger (to get more audience, sure), and so things are often not so alarming.

Yes, but even then, as you can well imagine, it's a bit difficult to understand events like that recent one where it was said that a huge extension of forest, equivalent to the Netherlands and Belgium together, had been acquired for a ridiculous sum of money by an individual who, this way, has become the biggest landowner in the planet. The news reach us through press notes, more distorted or not, sure, but it happens that thousands of indigenous families (putting aside the natural resources for a second) are affected by that fact, so that's pretty serious in my humble opinion. You are a very cultured person, aren't you?? I thought that nobody knew about us! Yes, this is a shame for us. Unfortunately, these things are not so uncommon in Brazil. We don't have a good educational structure in the country. Only in Rio, Sao Paulo, and in some southern cities we are more educated. But, what can we do? Just vote for the right people! I tend to think things are getting better progressively.

Talking again about your music, I almost have lost the count of how many different styles are present on your debut disc. Even Mexican "corridos" (that mariachi reference, I mean) have their room at one track. Yes, I love that part.

Can you talk a bit about this? What represents your best inspiration, and how do you get to compose together such attractive and varied material? Thank you for calling it "attractive" material! Well, as I said before, we are always listening to all styles of music. So, it's impossible for us to limit ourselves musically. We like pop music very much, but sometimes we "have to" play jazzistic things. We love progressive music and new age music, but sometimes we "have to" play some

heavy things. We love funny things, but sometimes "we have" to talk seriously! Do you know what I mean? We get bored to speak always in the same way! We could go crazy if we had to play the same style all the time. I will give you a list with some artists that really inspire (or inspired) me, particularly. I think I will forget many names, but let's go (the names are not listed by preference): Rush, Sting, Yes, Primus, U2, Marillion, David Bowie, Pat Metheny, Mr. Bungle, Red Hot Chili Peppers, Genesis, Dave Matthews Band, Frank Zappa, Alan Parsons Project, Pink Floyd, Queen, Level 42, Peter Gabriel, The Police, Gentle Giant, Metallica, Steve Morse, Dream Theater, Michael Hedges, Tears For Fears, Prodigy, Elton John, Living Colour, and Talk Talk.

Really a "jungle" of names. It somehow ratifies what I saw in TSB about the rich eclecticism and mix of styles that we talked about previously. It draws my attention to see Mr. Bungle among those references, that's interesting. I remember having listened to their first album several years ago, and I still consider it as a pretty original and, at the same time, twisted product. Not conventional music at all, right?

Yes. In fact, I didn't like their second album, but I got very influenced by their first album. I think it's fantastic! But you are right, they are nothing conventional.

Thinking about this matter, there are some tracks from "Version 1.0" like "Circus of Illusion," "The Cat's Tale," or some production details (sound effects, samples, and vocal arrangements) that remind me a bit of that old Mr. Bungle material.

Yes, these songs are part of the "old stuff" (early days songs), and reflect the time when me and Tibira were fascinated about Mr. Bungle. As always, you got the point!

Of course, your Brazilian roots are also present in your music. I personally consider Brazilian folklore or music styles like Bossa Nova as very rich sources.

Yes, this is a privilege for us: being in a country which has such a huge musical culture, it's impossible not to become involved. And it's great, because we can mix rock/pop with Brazilian music, which can be very surprising for the international market.

That's a key point, I think. Talking about Angra's case, alluding to those inner elements of Brazilian folklore music through percussion or the use of typical harmonies has proved to work really well. And it comes out of their compositions in a quite natural way. We can find that mood on your album in the song "The Long Trail," presented in a beautiful and original way with that tribal drumming and the female singing, followed by the Scottish bagpipes. I personally like that part of the album very much. Yeah, it's one of my favorite parts, too.

In TSB, we are able to see that you don't hesitate too much about including more complex instrumentation in the arrangements where you think it's convenient. Tell us a bit more about this subject.

Yes, we always loved do work on arrangements. The ideas start to come, and how can we just stop it? By the way, am I wrong, or the rock artists of today (in general) simply don't work on arrangements?

For instance, tell us how came the idea of inviting that Scottish bag-pipe section to take part in this album? About the piper, it's a nice story: Fred and I once went to a city near Sao Paulo, and found a Scottish bag-pipe group called "The Scottish Link." So, Fred started playing Scottish drums with them. Soon, they had the idea of combining rock with pipes. Then we started to invite this piper to do two songs in our shows, and soon came the idea of recording one of the songs!

As far as I know, you all come from Sao Paulo, right? Let's talk a bit about the musical status in such a big town as Sao Paulo.

Yes, we all are from SP. It's funny, because the music status in such a big place as SP is not as good as it seems to be. The television programs and some big radio stations control people's opinions. We are now starting a real independent scene in SP, because now there's a lot of bands that start playing and recording, and, I think, things will be better soon. But we don't have almost any place to play in the city! It's strange but true. And I think people are starting to comprehend Brazilian rock bands singing in English. We have to export artists!

Yes, I think I understand your reasoning Flavio. Related to this, there was also a strange case there in your country, Viper (Andre Matos' original band) started to sing in English and decided to change and sing in Portuguese, right? They oriented their career in a more mainstream direction too, as far as I know.

Yeah, but it's that thing I mentioned before: an artist cannot change his music to something that he doesn't believe in. I don't know if the Viper guys believed in singing in Portuguese, but the fact is, the band is over now. Coincidence or not, they changed their style and didn't survive.

Apart from that lack of material facilities to put up shows, what are the basic impediments that a band like TSB has to face in order to become exportable, marketable, and rightly distributed, not only abroad, but also domestically?

I don't really know! It's that international matter. I have to get a serious proposal, I have to get very good references of the other part, I have to trust in the other part, and then do business. I don't know if it is too hard, maybe not. But sometimes it seems to show lots of risks. I think maybe it's easier to start in Brazil, get some success, and then work with a Brazilian guy who has lots of contacts outside Brazil (or sign a good deal with a multinational record company).

What kind of feedback do TSB get from a standard "gravadora" when you try to present them your product there?

In Brazil, people in record companies don't seem to be very professional. They

frequently don't listen to the demo CDs, and when they do, they always give very opposite opinions (you hear your album is too different, then you hear your album is too dated, then it's too commercial, then it's not commercial!). In our case, most of the people don't show interest in bands singing in English. That's why I'm trying to do by the other way. In other countries, I just had totally opposite opinions, too, but people seem to be more professional. "We sound dated," "we are incredible," "we are new and fresh," "we don't fit in the record company artistic line," "we are commercial," "we are not commercial," "we are good but only in a few songs," "we are good in most of the songs," "we are good in all songs," etc.

Which Brazilian bands and musicians are you in contact with? Tell us a bit more about your musical tastes, concerning Brazilian music.

I'm in contact with some rock bands around here, but the most professional bands are Angra and Hencforth (Luis Mariutti's brother's band). I like Brazilian music, artists such as Djavan, Gilberto Gil, Lô Borges, etc., but it's strange: these guys are in a very high musical level, but I always prefer listening to foreign artists. I don't know why (I think it's because of that "syntony" thing...).

I see. By the way, I'm really looking forward to listening to Hencforth's first album, you know? About two years ago, I got their "Last Day" demo, and they looked like a really promising act. Luis himself told me quite good comments about them, and was the one who informed me that Andre's brother was not the vocalist anymore. I didn't know that. Yes, they don't have an album yet. I think they will start recording it this year. But I think they're very good. Especially for the European market. Yes, Andre's brother went out of the band. But the new singer is very nice. I think everybody will like him.

A final detail I wouldn't like to skip: the production of "Version 1.0" is really polished. Tell us about it. Are you fully satisfied with the result?

Yes, I am. I think there're always some things that could be different, but I think this is the best we could do. I hope we can have a better structure in the next album. The recording process started in 1996. We recorded nine songs, mixed it, etc. and got what we thought it was the "Version 1.0" final format. But after listening to it for a while, we were unhappy with the vocal parts and the mixing process. So, we decided to do these things again. But we were always recording in studios that had some kind of partnership with Tibira (he was always involved with studio things), because we spent so many hours that otherwise it would have been very expensive for us three. So, we had to wait for available hours, and the whole process took two years. But, at the end, we agreed that the wait had been for good, because we got to "Version 1.0" in a more mature format (we took out one song called "God Is All," and we added four more songs, which were "The Witch," "A Long Trail," "Steam Train To Mallaig," and "Everybody Dance With TSB").



ZERO HOUR

Zero Hour

self-released

Apparently coming out of nowhere, this newcomer band is undoubtedly the number one prog-metal revelation of 1998! Their untitled debut album is actually a self-produced 'demo-release,' though, as we'll see later, one can hardly call such an awesome CD a 'demo' (except for the duration, which is around 38 minutes). Zero Hour's first album is an amazing release, which epitomizes what progressive metal really means: frequent time changes, odd riffs, twisted melodies, and exotic scales, without however sacrificing power and harmony. It is loaded with bunches of crunch and heavy staccato riffs, alternating with complex melodies and calmer parts. The closest comparison which comes to mind would be a cross between the weirdness of Dream Theater's 'Metropolis Part I' and the crunch of Dream Theater's 'Mirror.' Taken individually, all musicians really display outstanding skills: the guitar player is a master of syncopation and intricate melodies; the bass player is also excellent (and contrary to a frequent syndrome not cast in the background), as well as the guest keyboardists. The singer has a smooth, clear, and powerful voice, indeed a typical example - yet excellent - of a prog metal vocalist. The sound and the production are equally outstanding, considered the nature of the release. Stylistically, Zero Hour remind of bands like Dream Theater and particularly The Quiet Room (notably for its use of a distorted guitar sound combined with a clear acoustic piano sound), but is distinctively heavier and crunchier. Almost unbelievably that this incredible prog-metal band haven't signed with a label yet! Their full-length album is one of the most anticipated releases. (AS) 4 3/4

VENI DOMINE

Spiritual Wasteland
Massacre Records

What a voice... Frédrik Ohlsson from Veni Domine has probably one of the greatest voices in prog/power sector. It's a pity that the instrumental side of the band looks pale compared to his singing. All songs flow at a slow pace, long compositions create slightly monotonous feeling. The material is interesting, but I miss some speed parts on this CD. I think, "Spiritual Wasteland" would appeal to Saviour Machine or Savatage fans, 'cause Veni Domine work with similar epic structures and good melodies. The best songs are "Last Letter from Earth Beyond the Doom (Chapter 2)" and "Silent Lamb." (SV) 3 3/4

VIRGIN STEELE

Invictus
Noise Records

"Invictus" sounds like a modern mix of powerful speedy Manowar's "Kings of Metal" and melodic speed metal with symphonies tendencies. I hope the band would excuse me for making comparisons, because they

have been around from as far back as 1981. Virgin Steele tend to collect a decent following, but they don't get that extra push and are forced to watch Rhapsody, Angra, and Hammerfall eating the fruits they would have liked to taste themselves. However, "Invictus" offers a not so usual melodic speed metal, sounding mighty, melodic, fast, very solid, and non-cliche. It may represent a more rough approach in the vocals than their famous "Marriage of Heaven and Hell" I and II parts though. (GS) 4

JOHN WEST

Mind Journey
Shrapnel Records

Artenson's frontman solo project is a bright compendium of heavy hard rock compositions, with a progressive touch, where, stylistically, he seems to have given free reign to some of his Purple/Rainbow influences. The music of this very melodic album is certainly not as complex as what Artenson distill, but does not navigate in dramatically opposed waters (soloistic parts have their place, as you will see). Using his

innate vocal abilities, John West tucks powerful and consistent tracks such as "Lady Eyes," "One Way," or "Veil of the Blind" with an indelible soulful sheathing. This singer is simply superb: a voice of magician who's capable of singing whatever he wants, and finds here the arena he needs. After a few listens, "Mind Journey" opens to you, while John West leads us to the musical experience of traditional but, at the same time, modern heavy rock. (GM) 4 1/4

X FACTOR X

X Factor X
Klytus Records

Bands like Skid Row got their good portion of success in the early 90s, when that style of music was a quite well implanted tendency. X Factor X debut CD will probably remind you of those years. The consistent guitar work by John Bruno is what outstands here most, in my opinion. The vocals are correct, choruses sound clean and in the right place, but usually are not too captivative. There are some moments along the album that bring in more personal strokes ("Ghosts," "The Scream") but, in general terms, the melodies swing between American hard rock and sleazy rock parameters. (GM) 3 1/2

ZONATA

Copenhagen Tapes EP
self-released

A strange CD title for the band from Sweden. Joking aside, Zonata have already signed a deal with Century Media, and their first CD will be out this year. "Copenhagen Tapes" is a self-released demo-CD with 3 "normal" songs and two Classical piano instrumentals. Their material goes towards the traditional heavy/power metal with Michael Kiske-like vocals. The sound isn't fantastic, but don't expect too much from a demo-CD. According to info, Zonata are inspired by classical music and bands like Iron Maiden or early Helloween, and I think, the fans of above-mentioned bands should definitely check out their forthcoming CD on Century Media. (SV) [Jonas Hagstrom, Varbergsvagen 14, 50430 Boras, Sweden] 3 1/2

decade. When the soundman complained of a "low, irritating buzzing noise" coming from Lilker's speaker cabinet, the tall, frizzy-haired bassist replied "yeah, that's my bass, dude." Closer examination of the equipment revealed a blown speaker in the cabinet and several loose, burnt wires. "That explains a hell of a lot," said Lilker's former bandmate and Nuclear Assault frontman John Connelly, on break from the dish tank at Sizzler in Pennsauken, NJ. "Back when we were doin' the records, we'd be in the studio and we'd hear this weird noise like somebody's stomach gurgling, and then Danny'd come in and say 'my bass tracks are all done!' No one really wanted to say anything - we figured he knew what he was doing. I mean, the guy was in Anthrax - we looked up to him." Kevin Sharp, who sang for Lilker's band Brutal Truth until its breakup last year, concurred, when reached at his home under the loading dock at Relapse Records' Millersville, PA office. "I mean, I thought it sounded fucked up," Sharp related in a high, piercing shriek. "But I figured hey, that's his chosen method of expression. Besides, fighting about how something sounds is, like, such a buzzkill. I mean, come on, we're gonna sound like ass anyway, right? We're Brutal Truth! So why argue? Free Leonard Peltier!"



S.O.D./Anthrax guitarist Scott Ian would not comment, but was heard to whine "man, I wish Paul Crook was here! I bet he could handle this!" as the sound crew attempted to locate a working amp. When one was found, Lilker plugged in, layed a few crystal-clear notes, and immediately began riffing like Stu Hamm. "Shit, dude," he said, beaming. "I shoulda fixed this shit, like, ages ago." Immediately after that night's sold-out gig, Lilker tendered his resignation from S.O.D., burned all his Japanese noisecore band t-shirts and formed an instrumental prog-fusion band with guitarist Michael Manning and Dream Theater drummer Mike Portnoy.

- Keith Bergman

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[see also page 85]

Infernal Combustion

parody webzine:

<http://www.holeinthewall.com/infernal.htm>

DAN LILKER'S BASS AMP: BROKEN SINCE '90!

During a routine soundcheck at an S.O.D. gig in Antwerp, Belgium, this week, it was revealed that bassist Danny Lilker's amplifier was broken, and has been for nearly a

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ABOMINATOR

Damnations Prophecy
Necropolis Records

It is often difficult to properly review a work of enthusiastic musicians when all you have is a simple promo sleeve and track listing on the CD itself. With a band name like Abominator, you would expect a musical style that goes back to the amalgam of thrash/death metal that was popular in the early nineties. You would be right, but this 11-song effort is, however, an average exponent of this type of music. Abominator are certainly not the forerunners of their type of music, and I personally don't find the combination of uptempo riffing, harsh vocals, and lack of interesting breaks thrilling enough to be memorable. Abominator are most probably doing their best, but I'm afraid that most of the ideas in the songs have been heard before and done better. (CR) 3

ADORIOR

Like Cutting the Sleeping
Head Not Found

And it is an answer to those who say that there are no more traditional brutal and aggressive black metal bands on Earth. Meaning that everybody uses keyboards and wants to be symphonic. Of course, such discs as the new Immortal release give everything for a fan of raw black metal, but Adorior are even more raw and have a bit "unpolished" sound, reminding of Dark Throne's "true" releases. I think that "Like Cutting the Sleeping" will also be named "true" black metal and will please the most extreme fans of pure black metal. Really, here we don't have many outside influences, all the disc has one running tempo that never stops, and its goal is to be as extreme as possible. Adorior succeeded, because it is one of the most intense and aggressive piece of black metal I've heard writing all reviews for this issue. This album is for those who think that the pure assault of hatred is better than changing melodies and atmospheres. (AO) 3 1/2

ADRAMELECH

Seven EP
Repulse Records

The previous album "Psychostasia" by Finnish Adramelech presented brutal European death metal. Sadly, it wasn't the first quality product, so I've listed them to the mediocre death clan. This new EP doesn't mark any progress, actually we've got only three new songs and two live versions of their older songs. These live versions sound even more boring than their studio work. Adramelech clearly have problems with vocals, originality, and the concept. Luckily, the cover art is bearable, but that doesn't save this EP. (AO) 2 3/4

ALISON

Symmetry
Goldtrack Records

Is it Goldtrack Records who stand behind this album? I thought that this label releases more melodic stuff, the style, which prevails on "Symmetry," is hardcore. Alison don't simply play HC/crossover metal, they try incorporate as many styles as they can, including hardcore, punk, thrash metal, industrial. The main influence is Faith No More with hardcore-ish background. If you mix this band with S.O.D., you get an idea of what Alison's music is about. It is great to hear bands that try to give fresh air to a quite boring HC-scene of today. Some songs, like "Oral Madness," have almost nothing common with hardcore. Alison build bridges between many styles, and their crossover proves that after the perfect style cocktails made by Faith No More, we will still have bands that are not afraid of experimenting. (AO) 4

AMORPHIS

Invidia

Shock Wave Records

One more technical brutal death metal band jumps to the scene, this time it comes from Slovakia. Death metal isn't any wonder these days, and you must create something real not to sink in this deep sea of mediocre bands. Amorphis don't show any exceptional passion in playing brutal sounds, they aren't very technical that we'd close our eyes to the so outplayed style of "Invidia." It's just "one more" band that tries to combine melody with brutality and provides music for fans of the style only. (AO) 3

ANASACRA

Godmachine
Repulse Records

Anasacra emerged from the ashes of the group with the most stupid name in the world: Vomiting Corpses (of course, Goat Killer sounds great, too). And I expected something terrible. Hopefully, the result is quite satisfying. German death metal in the veins of old Gorefest: technical brutal death metal, which is a paradise for all fans of really heavy and brutal metal. Of course, the theme about group's originality is, as always in current death metal scene, a hot topic, but I try to evaluate this album according to technical possibilities. And I don't have many reproaches. Enjoy brutality. (AO) 3 1/2

ANATA

The Infernal Depth of Hatred
Season of Mist

I am "lost in admiration" with those cover pictures of brutal CDs. This one is also a "masterpiece." Usually, the musical contents of such albums are bullshit. Anata are rather an exception, their mixture of Swedish and US death metal is pretty cool. Brutal and technical stuff enlightened by a huge and powerful sound. Of course, it doesn't come up, for example, to the latest Napalm Death masterpiece, but, anyway, it has lots of killer moments. For In Flames, Morbid Angel, and Napalm Death fans. (SV) 3 3/4

ANATHEMA

Judgement

Music For Nations

More melodic and restful than ever, Anathema present us their new material, which partly retakes the solemn and inherently melancholic atmosphere that "Eternity" album possessed. Compared to "Alternative 4," their previous effort, we witness how harmonies are developed in a different way and more importance is conferred to acoustic elements in the instrumentation. Equally, Vincent Cavanagh's vocals sound mellower and more accessible than ever, something that perfectly matches with the spirit of this work. As usual, it's not any contradiction to think that one of the biggest forces of Anathema's music resides in its peaceful, melodramatic, and undlined character. "Judgement" demands time to assimilate its ideas, and in, in my opinion, their most mature and complete work to date. (GM) 4 1/4

...AND OCEANS

The Symmetry of I, the Circle of O
Season of Mist

Their last output "The Dynamic Gallery of Thoughts" was an outstanding black metal album that went beyond the scope of the genre. The new CD underscores the originality of ...And Oceans: strange, bizarre titles of tracks like "Mechanic Hippie," "Baby Blue Doll - Merry Go Round," or "I Wish I Was Pregnant" and interesting arrangements separate them from the black metal flood. The production is also convincing, no wonder, the album was recorded in a

famous Finnish studio. One of the best black metal newcomers, together with Eminenz. (SV) 4

ARCH ENEMY

Burning Bridges
Century Media Records

The third album of this Swedish band gives an avalanche of memorable twin-guitar harmonies, courtesy of Amott brothers. Arch Enemy's creative arsenal only slightly reminds of Gothenburg style album and, overall, contributes to a somewhat sharp death/thrash version of Iron Maiden with harsh vocals. In a way, it can be viewed as an elaboration of Carcass' "Heartwork" album. During its 35 minutes, "Burning Bridges" doesn't have time to become boring and is a solid statement saying that Arch Enemy definitely play metal of 1999. The bluesy solo at the end of "Demonic Science" is a highlight of its own. (GS) 4

ARTROSIS

Hidden Dimension
Hall of Sermon

Hall of Sermon always have had groups with good female singers, and now we can add Artrosis from Poland to the list. Magdalena "Medeah" Dobosz has an exceptional voice, and it is the trademark of this group. The music is based on metal, ethereal, and gothic/wave. This emotional mix reminds of their label mates Lacrimosa (like on "Seventh Seal"), though Artrosis have much more metallic inputs and much less orchestration. Tracks like "Black and White Dreams" almost come to gothic metal style (think of their label mates Dreams of Sanity or The Gathering). The music is emotional, symphonic, and dramatic, but it feels like this band would lose almost 50% of its power without their singer. Even with Medeah in the front, Artrosis can't escape from some cliches of ethereal gothic style, they don't have such budget as Lacrimosa, so sometimes their songs sound a little unfinished. But such extravagant cuts as "Emerald Night" indicate the high potential of Artrosis, and I hope that the next album will be even more emotional. I wouldn't be surprised if Artrosis would decide to invite an orchestra for their recordings. By the way, five songs of the album are sung in Polish. (AO) 4

AS FRIENDS RUST/DISCOUNT
split EP
Goodlife Recordings

A short EP with two bands on it. The first one is called As Friends Rust, they play melodic punk with catchy melodies. Discount are probably more original, because of the fact that they have a female singer, and her voice somehow reminds me of Guano Apes here and there. It's a mystery for me, though, what Good Life Recordings releases such short (and moreover split) EPs for... What's the point of it all? (SV) 3 1/4

AS FRIENDS RUST

The Fists of Time EP
Goodlife Recordings

The band featuring ex Culture and Morning Again members. These 5 songs leave a far better impression than their 2 tracks on the split EP with Discount. The material is diversified with interesting vocal parts, the tracks flow easily and don't annoy the listener with unnecessary moments. According to info, they remind us a bit of Hot Water Music or Gonilla Biscuits. Hardcore/punk fans know what the talk is about. (SV) 3 1/2

ASGAROTH

Spells Beyond EP
Abstract Emotions

The best symphonic black metal band to come out from Spain, and a powerful answer to bands like Cradle of Filth or Dimmu Borgir. Comparing with their previous album "Trapped in the Depths of Eve," "Spells Beyond" marks a clear progress. The previous album presented emotional black metal, but the symphonic direction wasn't developed then. Now Asgaroth have recorded three new songs and a cover version of King Crimson's classic "Epitaph." These new tracks generalize the works of Dimmu Borgir (but Asgaroth aren't so angry and more melodic). Thenon (Asgaroth are a



AMORPHIS

Tuonela
Relapse Records

"Tuonela" is different than keyboards-filled "Elegy" and the acoustic roaming-in-space "My Kantele," because now the keyboards are way beyond guitars, and the guitars are still quite heavy and metal. The space feel is evident, and the fourth full-length album of Amorphis is something like what The Gathering did back in 1995 with "Mandylion," just Kalevala-metallers have a male singer. "Tuonela" contains ten flowing atmospheric space-metal songs with clean vocals and captive melodies, which, as in The Gathering case, don't come upfront and need to be customized to your ears. Compared to "Elegy," "Tuonela" has less bombasticism (the title track and "Rusty Moon" come closest to that), the focus on keyboards is gone, so are the growling vocals (almost). Amorphis didn't break the tradition to change with each album, and the newest Tuonela-change, do not diminishing the power of "Tales from the Thousand Lakes" and "Elegy," is a good one. Fans of Sentenced, The Gathering, Monster Magnet, and the 70s space rock, try this! (GS) 4 1/2

bit more metallic), and Lacrimosa (but Asgaroth have a more epic sound). In places, Asgaroth even remind of the best theatrical band Artrosis, but Asgaroth still must work to reach such highs (but I wouldn't dare to say that the Spanish band hasn't got a potential to compete with Artrosis). "Absence..." offers everything emotional metal fan would like to hear, it has got catchy melodies, good vocals (both male and female) and a very good songwriting. Those who will be lucky enough to catch the limited edition of this EP, will also get band's previous album as a bonus. (AO) 4 1/4

ASHES

And the Angels Wept EP
Necropolis Records

The label calls Ashes dark rock/heavy metal band with influences of Dio, Battery, Celtic Frost, or Black Sabbath. What I can detect, is an ordinary black metal without any elements from other styles. The exception is probably the last track "To the Bone" that is pure rock'n'roll with hoarse vocals moving some where between Sodom and Motorhead. This is a second release of this band featuring Pan Thy Monium guitars. Check out their debut "Death Has Made it's Call." (SV) 3

AUTUMNBLAZE

Dammer Elben Tragodie
Prophecy Productions

This is an intriguing release in all senses of the word. Autumnblaze are presumably a German group, based on the album title and the fact that the lyrics are in German and English. This concept CD offers a combination of Gothenburg-style guitars (Dark Tranquillity/In Flames), elements of gothic metal and medieval music in the shape of acoustic picking, flute, and Gregorian style choirs. The most fascinating aspect is the fact that the vocal delivery shows hints of opera in the sense that there are multiple vocal styles: a mid-range gothic style singer, a rawer screaming vocalist, and poetic female vocals. Some songs even feature all these vocal lines simultaneously. The best song is the 8-minute epic "Garden of Slumber" switching between medieval interludes with acoustic picking/flute and triple vocal lines/heavy guitars and harmony solos. This high standard is not reached in all the songs, and a minor aspect would also be that the rhythm section is adequate but not spectacular. This is nevertheless a band worth investigating. (CR) 4

BORKNAGAR**The Archaic Course***Century Media Records*

On their third album, the former all-star black metal Borknagar has evolved into a proper band with a recognizable style. In comparison to their previous album "The Olden Domain," the new songs are more melodic and the musical style is more a bridge between nordic metal and power metal with some folk elements. The more aggressive high speed parts of their older material have been replaced with pleasant melodies. Apart from the more accessible song structures and tempo of the songs, the brilliant midrange vocals of Simen (also known from his work with Arcturus and Dimmu Borgir as of late) will definitely create a mass appeal. Although some of the midtempo songs do tend to sound a bit the same after a while, standout tracks such as "The Ad Noctum" (with the 70s sounding keyboards) do add that necessary experimental touch. If a further point of criticism needs to be made, then it is the running time of the album. Nowadays with high record prices and advancing technology, seven songs and an outro, resulting in a short running time of approximately 38 minutes, is no value for money, in my opinion. Nevertheless, a highly recommendable album. (CR)

4 1/4

**AVENGER****Shadows of the Damned***Breath Of Night Records*

Yeah, this must be one of those underground cult black metal bands. Avenger come from the Czech Republic and offer us 6 tracks and intro of old-school black metal. The CD cover is a picture of Albrecht Altdorfer, the artist from the 16th century. Looks cool, what I can't say about their material. I think, such a monotonous slow black metal can be accepted only by so-called die-hard/true BM fans. The songs are simply not thought through the end as well as the statements of their label in the CD booklet: "We will not support any band, label, site or person who is not committed to destroying all-Christian morality." (SV)

(Breath Of Night Records, PO Box 54, DeHab, IL 60115-0054, USA)

3

music/leave a bit more like a "whatever..." impression. (GS)

[Dr Wayne Bolte, 4425n. 37th st., Milwaukee, WI 53218, USA]

3

BETHLEHEM**Reflektionen auf's Sterben EP***Red Stream Records*

This special EP is not recommended to you if you haven't heard previous discs by Bethlehem, because here we've got special remixes and re-recorded versions of their earlier tracks. Only two tracks (out of five) are really worthy: "Yesterday I still had a Beer Today" and "You Must Play with Yourself," which are taken from their previous album and renamed in English for this release only. They present Bethlehem at their best dark metal style. This EP reflects band's sense of humor and a wish to experiment. But if you want to hear what this group is really about, better listen to their previous album. (AO)

3 1/4

BETHZAIDA**LXXVIII***Season of Mist*

Bethzaida give the feeling of thrash metal made in the 80s or even of the early Black Sabbath transformed into our times. The biggest influence, without doubt, is Voivod (the beginning of "Black Winter" can't deceive - this is the sound we heard on "Dimension Hatross"), and Bethzaida also try to experiment with various styles. But when Voivod brought to their music everything from Pink Floyd, Van Der Graaf Generator to thrash metal, Bethzaida mainly use doom metal, death metal, and, in the heart of all this, is black metal. The group also calms down the angry music by using flute (like on "No Regrets Before Death"), and it gives diversity to the sound, even though the band would be diverse, complex, and original enough even without that. They miss something though, and I guess that they need better vocals. I think a more psychedelic timbre would improve all the view and won't make them sound like hardcore vocals mixed with dark emotional metal. But it's great that there are bands in Norway that play not straight black metal. (AO)

3 1/2

BIRTHRIGHT**Out of Darkness EP***Goodlife Recordings*

This EP is clearly an ideological piece of music. Birthright are one of the most known groups in vegan straight edge movement, so if you support these ideas, I'm sure you've already got this EP. As I always confronted the music where the ideology plays a more important role than the music, I wasn't so much excited by the album. I have nothing against their ideas, but the music is very mediocre. In fact, we've got only three studio songs. They sound as another piece of traditional hardcore, and can find many more progressive hardcore bands among other artists of the influential Good Life Recordings. Like, for example, Poison The Well or Liv. This EP also contains a live set, and here Birthright sound chaotic and a bit disturbing. I'm not sure why they needed to release these live songs on CD except maybe for presenting the Gonilla Discants cover. For vegan straight edge fans only. (AO)

2 3/4

BLACK MESSIAH**Sceptre of Black Knowledge***Last Episode*

Strange things happen in black metal scene.

The band from Germany is influenced by... Russian folklore and classical music. To tell the truth, I wouldn't say that those additional elements they use in their music are truly Russian; of course, violins and accordion are played in Russia, too, but as well as in many other countries. In spite of it, "Sceptre of Black Knowledge" brings us melodic black metal mixed with classical music; fans of this style can bravely check this disc out, because it is really professional and meets all the standards. The cover art is a bit banal (though and song titles are traditional to death like "Pagan Winter," "Queen of Darkness," etc.). By the way, Frank Godzik (who earlier collaborated with such bands as Kreator and Sodom) played the lead guitar on this disc. (AO)

3 3/4

THE BLEEDING LIGHT**The Bleeding Light***Season of Mist*

One of the few industrial/ambient artists on Season of Mist, "The Bleeding Light" gives a mosaic of different styles: metallic industrial (the first track on this album), dark ambient, neo-gothic, and various soundscapes go hand in hand here. If you want to have an idea on what this album is about, listen to "Kyrie Eleison." This track is a mixture of almost all industrial styles you may think of. The Bleeding Light use many samples which, as always, help to create dark, nervous atmosphere. The sounds of these samples sometimes makes some doubts, for example, maybe I am not right, but I think that the group uses Danzig's samples on "Halloween III." The music on this disc is more heavy and metallic than on most ambient/industrial albums. Better don't think about Cold Meat Industry sound. The Bleeding Light also own something from such groups as Godflesh; this is an album for guitaric industrial/ambient fans, not for symphonic soundscapes lovers (though some songs like "Halloween III" remind of such acts as In Slaughter Natives). It is the disc on the edge of where ambient ends and gothic/industrial starts. (AO)

3 1/2

CASKET**Faithless***Serenades Records*

Emotional rock, presented on this album, reminds of such bands as Bon Jovi, Cinderella going more to a more gothic sound. Some songs, like the ballad "Not Too Far," can bravely become radio hits - it's a simple rock music (no metal here!) beautifully sung by Karin Trapp. I think she could sing in a pop band as good as she does in Casket. The problem is that the music is too sweet, too much for easy listening, and the places where Jorg Weber sings together with Karin (why all gothic bands must have at least one song sung by male and female together? is it the tradition that was started by Theatre of Tragedy?) simply get on my nerves. But the tracks like "Let Your Hair Down" are beautifully arranged and can serve as a good background listen. I miss the elements of more metallic sounding, but Casket seem to orientate their music to major audience, not to underground circles. (AO)

3 1/4

CATAMENIA**Morning Crimson***Massacre Records*

The second album of Finnish blackers doesn't mark a big progression compared to their debut album "Halls of Frozen North." It is catchy Nordic black metal, commercial enough to reach a wide audience. But as their debut didn't make the big success, this one may pass by unnoticed also. The style has remained almost the same: melodic black metal with atmospheric keyboards. Each reviewer will notice that Catamenia sound quite traditionally and too stereotypically. Maybe "Morning Crimson" is more technical than their debut, but, stylistically, no progression will be found here. Catamenia try to make their music open for fans of other styles, so maybe this disc is suitable for the beginners of the style. But their natives Children of Bodom are more innovative and interesting. (AO)

3

CATHEDRAL**Caravan Beyond Redemption***Enrache Records*

In spite of their status, I've never been a big Cathedral fan. Spiritual Beggars ("Mantra III") or Orange Goblin ("Time Travelling Blues") have always been more "progressive" bands of this genre. "Caravan Beyond Redemption" won't change anything, though I must admit that it's the best Cathedral work so far. The opener "Voodoo Fire," for example, is a killer piece of hippie/psychadelic rock as well as the hypnotic "Captain Clegg." Towards the end, they become slower and much more doom oriented, reminding me of their older releases. The advantage of the album is Lee Dornian's voice, capable of improvement with each new record, and the subtle guitar work. Even if this CD doesn't come up to the mighty "Mantra III" of Spiritual Beggars, it's undoubtedly one of the psychedelic highlights of 1999. (SV)

4 1/4

CENTINEX**Reborn Through Flames***Repulse Records*

Swedish death metal is still alive and not necessarily sounding like all the bands from Gothenburg. Instead of the latter, Centinex base their style on brutal death metal that was played in Sweden in the beginning of the 90s. "Born Through Flames" won't blow away classical albums by Entombed or Disember, but are there many albums done in this old, "true" style nowadays? "Reborn Through Flames" is certainly one of the few. One of the most disappointing things about this album is the fact that all the drums were played by a drum machine. I'm not sure, but I think that the old-styled Swedish death metal must be live. Regardless of that, the disc is one of the best recent examples of the style. It also contains the cover of classic Kreator song "Under the Guillotine." (AO)

4

**CHILDREN OF BODOM****Hatebreeder***Nuclear Blast Records*

From all melodic death/black metal bands, Finland's Children Of Bodom are probably closest to traditional speed/power metal, as far as the music goes. In fact, "Hatebreeder" would be a speed/power metal album, if not harsh, thrashy, Kreator "Goma of Souls"-style vocals of band's lead guitarist Alexi Wildchild Laiho. However, Alexi puts his heart not only into the guitar (he doesn't avoid neoclassical leads!) but also into the vocals, which sound far more expressive than some attempts by some fellows from Gothenburg. The combination of melodic guitars and harsh vocals doesn't sound unusual at all in our days of subgenres, and this album is one of the best coherent efforts in melodic death/power metal field. The confidence, playfulness, and enthusiasm are all here! (GS)

4 1/4

CLAYMORDS**...More Sombre than Life***self-released*

I don't know why they chose such a CD title and cover. Claymords definitely aren't "more sombre than life." Their music is too aggressive to go with these words. It moves somewhere between black metal and doom/gothic. The structures of some songs are somewhat empty and insipid, so they run past the listener. The songwriting isn't bad, however, the songs miss effective moments. I hope, Claymords will improve everything till the next record. (SV)

[Claymords, Nils Ivar marita, Wiers Jessens V. 33 B. 5030 Landas, Norway]

3

BABYLON WHORES**Deggael EP***Misanthropy Records*

The debut full-length "Cold Heaven" of these Hell-sinki death rock propagators was the best disc in this style released in 1997. The new EP marks progress, containing six new songs that are better than anything the band has created in the past. As an added bonus, this CD also includes a video-clip of "In Arcadia Ego," as well as a reworked version of "Omega Thenon" from their debut album. The style on this EP remained the same, i.e., still groovy, extremely melodic death rock, but with a much darker approach and even more interesting lyrics (this band always wrote interesting, intellectual texts). "Emerald Green" is the best example of this pessimistic deep philosophy. The best tracks are "Somniferum" and "Emerald Green," but the closing track "Deggael: A Rai's God" is also very melodic, beautiful, and not typical to the band. It's a masterpiece, and if you like a cross between gothic music and metallic aggression, you simply must get it. Can't wait for their next full-length. (AO)

4 3/4

B.E.N.T.**Bury Em! EP***self-released*

A short 10-minute offering by a band from Milwaukee gives us some eerily... pedagogical "lessons" about the danger of AIDS (in "No More Sex for Johnny Holmes," the main subject, a porno actor I believe, dies). Musically, this EP is a crossover between metal and some punk. The riffs are a clean, not too heavy version of White Zombie and Helmet, and the vocals are that element reminding of punk. The dose of irony in their message words fit a metal band well (while for a punk one it might be okay), so I wonder what B.E.N.T. will do next. The first song has some decent grooves, but the length and the look of the CD in addition to a probably not too interesting

CONSOLATION

Stahlplaat

Displeased Records

Vow! This one is a very good and innovative release from Displeased Records. It's hard to describe the events that happen on this conceptual CD. Musically, I would call it brutal death metal à la Cannibal Corpse with hints to early Type O Negative/Carnivore. "Stahlplaat" is an interesting, dynamic mixture of brutal and experimental songs (for example, "Camel Song" or "Route 666"). Strangely enough I haven't heard of this band before. Four fat points for this bold album! (SV) 4



CULTURE

Born of You

Goodlife Recordings

According to the label info, Culture are an old hardcore band, and, as I understand, this is a re-release of their debut LP. It seems that it's a very old record. The spirit of hardcore is present, but the music is very boring. Only for true hardcore underground fanatics. (SV) 2 1/2

DAWN OF RELIC

One Night in Carcosa

Wicked World

Dawn of Relic join Wicked World's team of Gothenburg-inspired blackened death groups. The band tries to create its concept using the works of HP Lovecraft but this deals only with lyrics, as a more mystic character isn't reflected in the music very often (maybe only in melodic intros). Acoustic moments and lyrical digressions don't play the main role here, so we deal again with melodic fun of Gothenburg style. I don't think that it is the best example of the style, and solely the lyrical concept won't do all the work. But "One Night in Carcosa" will please those who prefer more melodic and not so fast edge of this style. (AO) 3 1/4

DEATHWITCH

The Ultimate Death

Necropolis Records

The third album of this brutal black/death band brings us back to the middle 80s and resembles to such groups as Destruction, Sodom, Celtic Frost, Venom, containing as well a bit of heavy metal influences. It's a trend nowadays to say that a group plays black metal in the way it was meant to be, meaning just raw, aggressive, and not so melodic black metal. The songs like "Necromancer's Hates" give impression like Celtic Frost decided to give away the melody and to play their music faster, faster, faster, more heavy, heavy, heavy, and more brutal, brutal, brutal. Okay, I've never been into this "just brutal" music, but I must agree that this product is worth of attention if someone wants the old-style stuff. But anyway, black metal scene has something more to offer, and it clearly didn't stay at the point it had reached in the last decade. (AO) 3 1/2

DECEMBER WOLVES

Completely Dehumanized

Wicked World

December Wolves have at least two features that mark them out in the recent blackened thrash style: they don't worship Satan as all their colleagues in Necropolis Records, and they use various fragments from soundtracks to create more "inhuman," cold character. Also, the cover art is more similar to industrial music than to black/thrash but, all in all, the album offers fast, brutal black metal with thrash elements. It doesn't mean black metal with catchy elements, it surely won't create the groovy mood and won't make you rock as, when listening to Witchory, it is much more aggressive music. I even would name them "black metal in the age of post modernity". I know that the final emotions are rage and hate, but all the elements how they reach it disappear in the mix of styles. Maybe let's just call it extreme blackened thrash for industrial people. Very aggressive. (AO) 3 3/4

DELLAMORTE

Home Sweet Hell

Carnose Productions

Yeah, Swedish death metal comes back, and Dellamorte are able to get a strong position in this renewal movement. The new album makes its predecessor to sound as an

CREST OF DARKNESS

The Ogress

Listenable Records

Some of the members of this band must be known for prog/heavy metal fans: Trigar Amliog and Arve Haimdahl earlier played in Conception, and Roy Khan who sings on some "The Ogress" songs is the current Kamelot vocalist. The music of both of these bands has nothing in common with Crest of Darkness, except maybe the fact that all these bands are innovative and are searching in unexplored musical territories. Though the band says they belong to the Norwegian black metal scene, Crest Of Darkness have very little from black metal. Except maybe some chaotic black metal riffing and sudden assaults of hate. But I do feel the influences of prog metal, symphonic metal, industrial, complex atmospheric groups (like, for example, the latest album of In The Woods...). The sound quality and professionalism are stunning. I think this is one of the most interesting mix of styles I've heard while reviewing albums for this issue. Massive keyboards sounds play an important role here, they give symphonic and schizophrenically melodic character to brutal and very aggressive music. The psychedelic mood spirals upwards in some places ("Retraunce") in such way that I do feel the mood of psychedelic genius Pink Floyd transformed to metal world. Another sweet input is the enchanted voice of Kristin Fjellsøth, her beautiful voice creates a contrast to E. Amliog's growls, shouts, and whispers. Some people may think that it is another symphonic black metal group, but you are not right, because Crest of Darkness share nothing with Cradle of Filth or Dimmu Borgir. Crest's music is more technical, complex, and many-sided. Also, it is much more demonic and terrifying. Already the concept of this album says it all: it deals with famous female murderer Belle Gunnes who lived 100 years ago and murdered nearly 50 people. Enough? In spite of the terrifying mood, I recommend this release to all fans of technical music. (AO) 4 3/4

absolutely unfinished work. "Home Sweet Hell" made a big progression and sounds like December and Entombed brought together into one piece. Dellamorte combine extremely brutal Swedish sound with catchy riffs and pure groove, it just rocks! It was recorded at the Abyss Studio, so the sound quality is perfect, as opposed to the duty sound of the previous release. (AO) 4 1/4

DESOLATE ANGEL

No Apology

Starship Records

It's a quite old release (the album was recorded in 1993), but Alchemy Management decided to promote it, probably aiming to build a basis for band's (now called Desolate) forthcoming "Millennium Theory" album. In spite of the crappy cover, musically, "No Apology" is a decent thrash metal album in the veins of the late 80s/early 90s (GS) [Starship Records, 2423 Chesterfield, Baltimore, MD 21213, USA] [Alchemy Management, 5509 Cedella Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21206, USA] 3

DIMMU BORGIR

Spiritual Black Dimensions

Nuclear Blast Records

Admirably, Dimmu Borgir have opted for an extremely heavy and evil follow-up to the highly (artistically and commercially)

successful "Enthroned Darkness Triumphant." From a commercial stand point, a bold move because "Enthroned Darkness Triumphant Part 2" would have been a safe cash in. At a superficial glance, "Spiritual Black Dimensions" shows that Dimmu Borgir have matured into a tight musically competent unit that professionally combines elements of thrash and black metal to be one of the leaders of black metal wave. However, when comparisons are made to the previous studio release (not considering "Godless Savage Garden"), then it is painfully clear that "Spiritual Black Dimensions" misses the variety and freshness that made "Enthroned" such a landmark. Sure, the artistic contributions of this new keyboard player Mustis, and the immaculate vocal performance of Simen Hatnes add a distinctive edge to their previous work, but, as a whole, a lot of the songs are too inaccessible and similar to be memorable. Even after multiple listens, only a few moments such as the chorus in "Reptile" really stand out. In my opinion, Dimmu Borgir need to put more emphasis on the impact that can be achieved by switching between the slow heaviness and a crescendo towards speedy aggressiveness to really make their songs special. Although "Spiritual Black Dimensions" outclasses the majority of the current releases, higher standards apply and they are, to my judgement, not met. (CR) 4

DOG FACED GODS

Random Chaos Theory in Action

Gothenburg Noiseworks

Oh well, I haven't faced straight hardcore for a long time, but the silence is over, and Dog Faced Gods made me to remember that Pantera/Biohazard/Fear Factory haven't died at all. This album combined elements of metal, NY-hardcore, and more recent industrial. Just strong, angry, straight-to-your-face muzak, not so bad when listening to it at the club, but quite boring when listening at home once again and again. Dog Faced Gods are one of the best newcomers in this style, they've got everything what's required, including energy, good technical possibilities, and melody. But I think that the HC scene is coming to its deadend; hey, who will discover something innovative in this sphere? (AO) 3 3/4

DRASTIC

Thieves of Kisses

Beyond Productions

Pollat/Italiam band has recorded an album that can be ascribed to the quickly growing kind of emotional/avantgarde albums. The emotional concept of this album reminds of such groups as early Misantrophe, Thenon, or a bit faster version of My Dying Bride. I think that the weakest point here is the male vocals, which don't express the poetic and melancholic vision that Drastic's music almost succeeded to transform. Wouldn't it be better to leave the female vocals only, they are much more romantic and expressive than the singing of Chris Buchman. The music of Drastic is highly influenced by electronic music, sometimes, it seems that keyboards play a more important role than traditional metal instruments. That's not bad, but songs become too synthetic and unnatural in places. It's clearly not a bad album for emotional/avantgarde metal with special poetic touch. (AO) [Beyond Productions, Viale Italia 211, 57100 Livorno, Italy] 3 1/2

DRAWN

Plan Be EP

Prophecy Productions

The degree of experimenting of these Norwegians is similar to that of their landmarks: Into The Woods. Drawn are also dark and atmospheric, yet they are more courageous in exploring different, even lightly bizarre areas. Sometimes it's not very cohesive (growling vocals in the opener doesn't smoothly connect with the rest), but, in general, the result is pretty much integrated. The band combines a wide range of influences, including doom metal, dark metal, industrial, progressive metal, and gothic music. The EP contains 4 songs (running time is about 30 minutes), and is quite a "thumbs-up" debut. (GS) 3 3/4

DR. DEATH

Somewhere in Nowhere

Rising Sun Productions

Yes, the artwork of this album is perfect, thanks to Oscar-awarded (for film "Alien") artist H. R. Giger. But the music didn't surprise at all, because it belongs to the clan of Rammstein/Umbrä Et Imago influenced groups which are filling the scene; Dr. Death took the main standards of this metallized gothic rock with Umbrä Et Imago as main idols. Yet they somehow sound too unnatural, and the vocals need to be improved (I'm not speaking about the female vocals, I don't understand why each gothic band must have a female singer, even when her voice is too mediocre?). Overall, it's too standard, typically German gothic metal for those who think that Crematory are the darkest band in the world. I think that the main promotional subject on this album will be the artwork of H. R. Giger. (AO) 3

DREAMS OF SANITY

Masquerade

Hall of Sermon

Already their debut "Komedia" marked Dreams Of Sanity as a highly prospective theatrical symphonic group with Lacrimosa as the closest comparison. Two female singers have managed to create poetic, romantic feelings and, all in all, it seemed that Dreams Of Sanity are one of the most promising acts in the Hall of Sermon camp. In the second album, only one singer of the two is left, but it doesn't change the main feel of music much. The music became more melodic, a bit more soundtrack-like, and not so heavy. As in the case of "Komedia", it is a concept album again and is based on the novel "Phantom of the Opera" by Gaston Leroux. If the first disc reminded a bit of bands like The Gathering, "Masquerade" is more dreamy, and their pianist Fredenc Heil has got much more work this time. With "Masquerade," Dreams of Sanity come closer to bands like their label mates Lacrimosa, and their singer Sandra Schlerot again feeds us with beautiful, ethereal vocals. One of the most exceptional tracks here is "The Phantom of the Opera," which is a "cover" of Hart/ Webber's musical and is surely the most breath-taking and atmospheric song on "Masquerade" it is recorded together with Tito Wolff from Lacrimosa, so you know what to expect. This disc is highly recommended to the fans of emotional metal. (AO) 4 1/4



DARK TRANQUILLITY

Projector

Century Media Records

When band's third album "The Mind's Eye" was not even an inch lighter than its predecessor "The Gallery" (both being Gothenburg metal trademark albums), it was difficult to expect any compromises on "Projector." However, they are here. Mikael Stanne often sings in a clear voice, and "Day to End" starts like none other but Depeche Mode. Don't despair much though, because heavy moments are still present, e.g., the opener "Tree/Gard" is classical Dark Tranquillity. With time, the album finds its way to listener's heart. For example, it helped me a lot during two tough weeks before the deadline of this issue. Dark Tranquillity very smoothly integrate gothic rock elements into their extreme melodic death/thrash metal, and the result is astonishing (just listen to "Therion"). If "The Mind's Eye" wasn't a big step from "The Gallery," "Projector" proves band's sharpness, e.g., the riffs in the beginning of "The Sun-Fred Blanks" is what we all want the new Iron Maiden album to sound like. "Projector" songs flow very well, the album is very harmonious and musical, and I even like the Depeche Mode part, which sounded cheesy at first. I just hope they won't repeat the path of Paradise Lost in the future, as of today, Dark Tranquillity rule! (GS) 4 3/4

INTROMENTAL MANAGEMENT

[by Giedrius Slivinskas]

Danish metal scene looked very pale compared to their Scandinavian rivals a couple of years ago, with just a few bands (Konkhra, Invocator, Royal Hunt), record labels (like Progress Diehard), "Metalized" magazine, Nordic Metal distribution, and fading memories of King Diamond's Danish descent. Things are uprising now, and big thanks go to Intromental Management, a new artist management company.

Intromental Management was started in 1997 by Claus Jensen, also known for his contribution to "Metalized" magazine. In the beginning, Intromental's roster was purely Danish, with bands like Behind The Curtain and Wuthering Heights leading the front. Yet, after a while, the managing director Claus Jensen realized that some of the Danish bands are simply not strong enough to compete in the international market and started to sign some bands from abroad. He also realized that he can do a good job only if he believes in bands 100%, and, for various reasons, Intromental separated ways with Compulsory, Lowdown, Missing Link, Shane, and Michael Sobygge. Compulsory were difficult to work with; also, they were more interesting visually (with strip dancers on stage) than musically, and propagated male shovinizism which created additional problems. Regarding the others, the bands either wanted to go on their own, or the reviews were not good enough. Claus wants that Intromental sign would represent a quality product, so he tries to be selective. At the same time, he doesn't want to have too many bands, because it would become difficult to support each well.

And the results are visible: Claus Jensen signed several bands that are certainly more original than his last name. One of the new hopes are Archetype (USA), which clearly have potential to deliver some innovative progressive/power metal and Scandinavia's Beyond Twilight (ex-Twilight), a new name to watch out if you want modern metal (in a good sense) with melody and attitude (no feel of the 80s!).

ACTIVITIES

So, what exactly can Intromental Management do for a band? First of all, to promote their material and motivate to move on. When Intromental picked up Behind The Curtain, the band had a demo and was not sure what to do next, the members were thinking whether to go on or to quit. Now, with a debut album on Sensory, they're full of energy... Intromental sends out demos to suitable labels and zines, has good contacts with many record labels, and Claus is certain that it's obviously better to work out a record deal this way. They even have got their own lawyer, who can skillfully distinguish between good and bad contract proposals. A big part of experience and insight in promotion field came from journalism years of

Claus and some other members of the Intromental team.

If a band gets signed, Intromental helps in choosing a studio depending on the amount of money in disposal. They have a good contact with producer Jacob Hansen from Serious Entertainment record label, where Ill Disposed, Invocator, Mercenary, Behind The Curtain, Wuthering Heights, and Breaking Silence recorded their material.

Intromental Productions is a record label created to release albums, "just in case." The main purpose is still to promote the bands, and Intromental doesn't plan to become a full-fledged record company. For example, Intromental Productions released Abdunor's (Danish black metal) debut EP and are thinking of putting out their full-length. Abdunor are the first band, for which all 100% of work is done by Intromental Management. From arranging the recording studio to the production of the album and promotion. The EP was quite successful and sold in 500 in Denmark only. Other releases include Manticora EP "Dead End Solution," Archetype EP "Hands of Time," Improvisation EP "Energy," and Antithesis re-recorded/mixed debut CD.

Intromental also maintain a good relationship with CD cover designer Kristian "Necrolord" Wählin, have a booking department, which takes care of



Behind The Curtain: a remedy for weeping Psychotic Waltz fans

concert arrangements, and have a promotional department which takes care of Laser's Edge/Sensory and Prophecy Productions records, and works with Danish label Serious Entertainment on getting a licensing deal for Greek progressive metal band Breaking Silence. The rest is at www.intromental.com.

Aside story: NORDIC METAL

Nordic Metal, metal distributors in Denmark, once were also a record label. It was in 1994, and they actually released three progressive (!) metal records, which was not a commercially viable step at that time. The albums were "Age of Elegance" by Lordbane, "Pathways to Wholeness" by Catharsis, and "Circles and Butterflies" by The Last Things. All the bands faded to



This is not the father of Danish Satanic Circle, but Intromental's managing director Claus Jensen

black. Claus provided some insight, and said that Lordbane's leader Shawn started to write some soundtrack music after the album, and then fell to coma after some accident. Catharsis went nobody knows where, and The Last Things had line-up difficulties. Mika from Nordic Metal was a big progressive metal fan, liked Psychotic Waltz and especially Crimson Glory. The latter certainly explains the signing of Lordbane, but Nordic had limited resources and didn't do any promotion at that time. After that, Nordic Metal was signing some aggressive metal Danish bands like Push and Cyanotic, and lately is busy with the distribution of foreign labels. It's a huge distribution they created, and they have only three people working.

INTROMENTAL PRESENT

Intromental Management started slowly, but after awhile switched to a new gear. Claus works each day full time on Intromental in their office, which occupies half of his apartment. This extra space became available when he broke up with his girlfriend last summer, and she moved out. That's truly metal behavior, if you ask me.

Lars F. Larsen, Claus' "right-hand," works at the office from 10am to 5pm four days a week. They have plans to move to a bigger office, because Claus is getting tired of living at his work place. Beyond Twilight are, as of print time, finalizing a record deal and be sure that their innovative metal will stand on its own. Behind The Curtain's debut album "Til Birth Do us Part" promises to be one of the highlights in progressive metal in 1999, with its impressive poetic and nostalgic. Psychotic Waltz inspired style with keyboards. Black metallers Blazing Eternity are releasing an album on Prophecy Productions, and Manticora signed with Black Lotus and released a debut album "Roots Of Eternity," which, according to Claus, is great power metal in the veins of Iced Earth, Gamma Ray, Nevermore, and Blind Guardian.

When asked about similarities between Intromental and Limb Music Products of Mr. Limb Schnoor, Claus admitted that Limb was his inspiration. Claus strives to get quality material on Intromental, and seems very excited about his job. Periodically raising new fruits only stimulate his enthusiasm. It looks like he will never work as agricultural consultant, even if he has a necessary education for that.

INTERVIEW

Tell me the real reason why you formed a management, not a record company?

Hm, I think it was a choice of doing three things. First, a magazine of my own, second, a record company, or third, management. Well, we already had "Metalized," so I didn't want to do that, and Nordic Metal was already sitting on most of the metal market in Denmark, so that would be stupid as well. The thing left was to do a "Management" (which probably would have been my first choice anyway...), and it was really easy for me to start such, since I, for years, have been involved in Lost Horizons and Wuthering Heights as friend and "spiritual guidance," ha ha.

Can you tell about how you deal with bands? More specifically, do you plan to get royalties?

We put a lot of work into our bands - trying to secure them record deals, helping with studio, artwork, booking, etc., so in all fairness we, of course, should get a share of their "income." We are paid out of their royalties (I don't want to mention how much), and that's it.

Prophecy Productions deal with dark metal, as well as with neofolk/gothic bands. How did you get in touch with them? Was it during the time when they were going to release the Wuthering Heights debut album and then backed off?

I have known Prophecy since the time with Wuthering Heights, which really was a bad experience. In my honest opinion, it all came down to the band trying to record something "out of this world" with a line-up that couldn't do anything. In Prophecy Productions' place, I would have dumped the band as well! Luckily, the band realized their problem, and we helped them to get their new line-up together. Concerning my work with Prophecy, well, Martin Koller contacted me sometime in beginning of 1998 and asked me if I would help them with Scandinavian Promotion, and since I really liked the bands he releases (Empyrium, Nox Mortis, and Paragon Of Beauty, for example), it was logical that we said yes.

Archetype and Antithesis look like your priority bands at the moment.

What's next, how do you plan to support new releases of Behind The Curtain and Wuthering Heights? Archetype and Antithesis were our priorities for the spring/early summer '99, while, right now, we have started on Fifth Reason as the next priority, then it'll be Improvisation and the new Manticora album, and so on... It all changes after which band has material to promote. We don't say that

because this band is signed and that band is unsigned we should concentrate more on the one than the other. All bands get the same fair treatment and promotion. Considering that we work as promotional department for Laser's Edge/Sensory in Scandinavia, we will, of course, be able to support Wuthering Heights and Behind The Curtain to the ultimate extent, which is both by advertisements as well as promotion tours.



Wuthering Heights

Do you plan to sign any new bands anytime soon?

Yeah, we are always looking for new bands. But, on the other hand, we don't want to take on every band that gets in contact with us. We get contacted by something like 3-4 different bands every week who want to work together with us. Usually it's black/death metal, and I honestly feel that we have those three extreme bands (Abdunor, Gothic Domain, Blazing Eternity) that we want. I'm not that keen on signing anymore bands in that vein. But if a good progressive band comes along, we might consider it some more. The latest addition to the Intramental family is Norwegian Progressive band Divided Multitude, who I've been talking with for a long time now. It's, of course, easy for me to work with a band already signed, and especially to Laser's Edge/Sensory with whom we work very well, but my reason for signing Divided Multitude is simply that their music is really brilliant and appeals to my taste.

Which Intramental concert was the most successful? How many people would show up for a Danish package including Behind The Curtain and Wuthering Heights?

The most successful event so far was the Stratovarius/Behind The Curtain concert in Copenhagen where 250 people showed up. Right now we have five of our bands participating in the Orestads Festival where hopefully 1500 people will show up. In Denmark, the progressive audience is very low, so having more than a couple of hundred people attending a concert with "our" bands could probably be called a success! What we want to happen booking-wise for our bands next, is to get some tours around Europe going, where the bands will play small clubs for a small dedicated audience. We have a tour lined up for Archetype, Antithesis, and Fifth Reason which will take place in November, and other tours with other bands will, of course, also be happening.

Management company is certainly not a quick cash generator. Does it mean that it is easier to exist in such environment as Danish "socialism"? Do start-up companies get some support from the state (tax deductions, loans, etc.)?

You are absolutely right - it's not a quick cash generator! So far, I haven't made enough money to pay myself, and I will probably not be making that the next year or so, since it's more important for me to have my co-workers paid first. I work 10-12 hours a day with Intramental, and I even have a cleaning-job in the morning just to pay my bills...damn!

Danish socialism, hm... ha ha. I hate that word "socialism," since it, in reality, doesn't work. Not here in Denmark at least. It would be nice though if the state would pay for starting up this company, but they don't. A couple of years ago, they did have some help to get new companies started, but they stopped doing that 4 years ago, and now you are all by yourself. It doesn't matter much though - we are all dedicated to this, and with or without the state's help we will make it! I hope, ha ha...

Intramental bands: Abdunor (Denmark, black metal), Antithesis (USA, power/semiprogressive metal), Archetype (USA, progressive metal), Behind The Curtain (Denmark, progressive metal), Beyond Twilight (Scandinavia, metal), Blazing Eternity (Denmark, dark extreme metal), Fifth Reason (Sweden, heavy/doom metal), Gothic Domain (Denmark, black metal), ImproVision (Norway, progressive rock/metal), Lost Horizons (Denmark, semiprogressive/symphonic metal), Marticoors (Denmark, heavy metal), Wuthering Heights (Denmark, epic heavy/speed metal)

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www.intramental.com

DRILLER KILLER

Really Bites

Osmose Productions

There's such a huge number of bands on the Osmose label... Driller Killer's material is a highly-charged power, thrown out by sheer force. This is one of those rare cases when I like the band that plays hardcore with speed and heavy metal elements. Just listen to "God Forgives," "Where the Sun Never Shines," or black metal influenced "Don't Point." As the bonus of this CD, there's a live-excerpt (about 30 minutes). I think, they could keep it for themselves, because it's an absolute crap. The rest is good. (SV) 3 1/2

DRIVEN

Cowardice Consumer of the West EP
Goodlife Recordings

The booklet of this CD contains a long consideration about hardcore, animals, religion etc. Seems like we have to do here with some intellectuals... Shame, but their songs aren't full of innovative or fresh ideas. Sometimes I even would call this stuff stupid. Banal riffs and expressionless vocals somewhere in the background. The only credit point is the positive message of this CD. I think, it's too little though, especially for a hardcore band. (SV) 3

DUNWICH

Eternal Eclipse of Frost
Rising Sun Productions

Here we have a strong alternative disc to the Lacrimosa material. Dunwich recorded this album with an orchestra ranging from 20 up to 40 elements between electric, acoustic instruments and background chants (monks from Vatican sung, too), so this disc will please those who think that more instruments lead to a better quality. I even don't remember all the instruments that were used on this album, but the final impression is the same as listening to the above-mentioned grands Lacrimosa. Dunwich don't have such a dramatic character though, and their music has a bit more bombastic character and much more elements from traditional heavy metal. Also, the Italian background of the band plays its role, yielding to the mood of more Southern

European character, different from the Northern mythological epics. The lyrics have strong and meaningful concept (at least it seems like that according to English explanations, but the lyrics are in Italian) and, all in all, this disc will please symphonic/orchestral gothic music fans. (AO) 4

EISREGEN

Krebskolonie

Last Episode

Violin sounds good. What else? Everything else is just boring German-sung black metal. I am just angry for the releases like that. Who needs this crappy usual black metal with such vocals? Well, maybe that's a bad day for me, but, as I don't understand German, they say nothing to me. Black metal for those who think that to sing in German is innovative enough to forget everything else. (AO) 2

The ELYSIAN FIELDS

We... the Enlightened

Wicked World

Each person in the underground business has seen at least one flyer of The Elysian Fields. I'm quite sure about that, because these Greek musicians have released several successful demos and the debut album "Adelain" on Unisound. But somehow it's my first opportunity to listen to their music. "We... The Enlightened" sounds like I always imagined The Elysian Fields would sound (by the way, strange name for a band coming from Greece), namely atmospheric and symphonic metal. It has elements of atmospheric black, doom, death, but the picture is skillfully improved with the use of violins and piano. In places, it even sounds like an extremely aggressive version of Therion. But it's still metal which dominates in the album, we have such elements as growling/screaming vocals, guitar rhythmic attacks and high tempo; emotional melodic elements only bring some senses of harmony and quiet meditation. "We... the Enlightened" is a real metal album for those who like metal's symphonic and orchestral side. (AO) 4

The EMBRACED

In My Dreams... I am Armageddon

Aftermath Music

The Embraced are an upcoming band from Norway, playing melodic death/black metal with growing vocals. Inspirations of melodic Swedish death can be detected, for example, in "Remnants of a Scorched World" which is one of the best tracks on the album with smartly tied in female vocals. A quite poor production does not do justice to the band, and because of that the material sounds quite loosely in places. If they would manage to enrich their songwriting (not all songs are equally effective on this one) and produce the songs decently, the second album should be a pretty good one. (GS)

[Aftermath Music, Box 721, N-7001 Trondheim, Norway]

3 1/4



EMINENZ

Anti-Genesis (On the 8th Day I Destroy Godcreation)

Last Episode

This is probably one of the best releases from Last Episode label. The title of the album is "full of sense," to be sure, but Eminenz aren't black metallers who write stupid songs. The first track "Nocturnal Horizon" is endowed with magic atmosphere and great keyboards parts. The keyboards also shine in "Army of Immortals," "Apocalypse," or the title track. Additional merit of the album are very varied and a bit complex structures of the songs. Shame, the production isn't top notch, but the material is very interesting. There are also lots of cool guitar solos on the CD, what, I think, is a rare case if we speak about all these young black metal bands. Good. (SV) 4



EMPEROR

IX Equilibrium

Candlelight Records/Century Media Records

Instead of solely relying on atmosphere, Emperor have tried to come up with more challenging songs. Consequently, while the predecessor "Anthems to the Welkin at Dusk" was one monolith, "IX Equilibrium" offers a wide range of distinguishable songs, what is not that common to black metal. Emperor lost one inch in atmosphere and two inches in extremity to their older material, but now the band focuses more on the technical side of the music (not in vain one of their members was hanging around in Nevermore T-shirt), as well as on melodies. If nice-done melodies are your top priority in black metal though, "IX Equilibrium" may still leave a bit rough taste ("La Masquerade infernale" by Arcturus would be a better alternative to try). Still very vulcanizing to regular ears, Emperor's new album offers a wide range of cascading riffs, speeds, and vocals (which are mostly but not entirely black metal). "Anthems" lost and won fans due to its uncompromising nature; "IX Equilibrium" is not a compromise either, but has the diversity which may appeal to more listeners. (GS) 4 1/4

ENSLAVED

Blodhemn

Osmose Productions

Hm, it's another great black metal album that, I think, will attract attention of the wider audience. "Blodhemn" is a melodic and dynamic mixture of speed and black metal. Enslaved strive for well-thought-out compositions and don't abuse these ultraspeed rhythms which often are just the signs of the musicians stupidity (sorry). Of course, the band uses speed, brutal riffs, too, but their songs always keep structures and don't turn into a monotonous chaos. Very good Viking metal. (SV) 4

EPOCH OF UNLIGHT

What Will Be Has Been

The End Records

My overall impression is that taking into account the majority, American extreme metal bands focus more on extremity, less on atmosphere, while Europeans often take it even or the other way around. Technically, Epoch of Unlight are good, but their songwriting is too much component-based. Add severe vocals (a bit Sabbat (UK) style, yet more savage), and their death/black metal is twice less listener-friendly than melodic riffs derived from Gothenburg. Not to say that the focus must be on melody; just the fact is that Epoch of Unlight is for those who do not make the melody their top priority. Overall, the potential is present (the intensity reaches the level of Death in places), it was just not fully realized. (GS) [Epoch of Unlight, 3125 South Mendehall Suite 371, Memphis, TN 38115-2808, USA] 3 1/2

EVEN SONG

Path of the Angels

Displeased Records

Gothic metal from Hungary, reminding the times when Paradise Lost and Anathema began their discoveries in mixing doom metal, death metal, and gothic rock. Just Even Song remind of those times too unnaturally: depressive doom a la Paradise Lost '91-'93, growling vocals, and trendy female vocals just sound annoying. It's only their debut, but somehow I can't see the future for the band if it stays in the same path. The title track is quite good, but all the album can be of interest only to those who feel a nostalgia for the early My Dying Bride or Paradise Lost. (AO) 2 3/4

Red Tide

when secure becomes insecure

[by Christian Rademaker]

Red Tide is the typical example of a talented musical outfit that has walked the traditional path of making a name for themselves in the underground by releasing demos. From the hardcore/thrash metal oriented demos "The Ideal Creation" and "Steps to the End" back in 1993 and 1994 to a more mature and original own style with their later demos "Expressions" (1995) and "Hybrid" (1996). During the last few years and with these demos, Red Tide have evolved to create their own style. This is showcased in more detail on Red Tide's independently released debut CD "Themes of the Cosmic Consciousness." The musical style is an unusual and original amalgam of compact songs featuring well-executed thrash metal and melodic fusion jazz parts. Imagine Allan Holdsworth (around the "Metal Fatigue" era) playing thrash metal. Although the music is original enough to defy comparisons, other musical links could be made to the likes of Death and Atheist. As often with this type of music, the slightly raw and brutal vocals are slightly out of place. However, the transition between the styles is phenomenal and makes up for this slightly negative point. The CD has 8 songs with a total running time just under 40 minutes. The stand out tracks "Numbed Emotions" and the instrumental "Let the Lotus Feet Fly" definitely leave you wanting more.

Since Red Tide have not received much exposure within the progressive metal community of which they're certainly worthy of, an interview was appropriate. The following is the result of an interview I did with drummer Justin Foley (JF) and guitarist and lead vocalist Jeff Wu (JW) in late 1998 and early 1999.



Red Tide have been around for several years. You've walked the traditional path from making demos and gaining a reputation in the underground to your debut CD. What were the reasons for releasing your debut CD independently. Were there any record companies interested in signing Red Tide?

JF: At first, the CD was actually going to be put out by a small label. We wrote the first five songs and recorded them, and we thought that they would be the only ones on the disc, making sort of a mini-CD. Unfortunately, the plans fell through with the label, and we had these songs that we really wanted to get out to people. During all this time, we were still writing new songs. Finally, we decided to record a few more songs and put out something closer to a full length. But we had no one to put it out for us, so we did it ourselves. That is why there are different recordings on the disc, and also why we were not able to do everything we wanted with the layout and other things. But the music is on there, and it is out there and that is all that really matters anyway.

In my opinion, one of the minor aspects of your music are the vocals. Does Jeff Wu feel comfortable being the vocalist and have you ever considered adding a separate vocalist to the line-up of Red Tide?

JF: Jeff should answer this, but since he is not here, I'll do my best. The vocals have been an issue for us since the beginning. We have tried a lot of things, other singers, other styles, but nothing ever worked. After all this, I think Jeff is capable of taking care of all the vocal duties. The more time we spend in the studio, the more confidence he gets. I think he has a great voice anyway, and he is getting better and better at fitting into our style. As long as he is just confident, he sounds great. When we play live, Ian sings a lot of the more singy parts with Jeff, and Blue even does some random screaming, so the process is ongoing. Part of the problem is our attitude towards the vocals. We always write the music really fast and we have this song sitting around forever before we finally write lyrics for it. We even play songs out live without words on occasion. We've even recorded a song before we had words. The music always takes priority over the words, and that may have something to do with why the vocals are not on the same level as the music.

Your music has evolved from thrash metal to amalgam of thrash and avant garde jazz. When you started out with Red Tide, was the music that you're now playing the ultimate goal or did it evolve during the years?

JF: I don't think we ever had this "ultimate goal," or this ideal that we wanted to sound like. Jeff and I have been playing together for a long time, and we are always changing. The more change we go through, the more satisfied we are with what we are playing. Who knows what we will write tomorrow? It depends on everything, the music we

hear, what people say to us, what we eat that afternoon, it all changes what we write. If we eat at the Olive Garden, we usually write some pretty good stuff.

It has been a while since "Themes of the Cosmic Consciousness" was released, and since then you've written a lot of new songs. Could you tell us more about the direction of your music.

JF: I don't know if there is a direction that describes where we are going. The new songs are weird. People say we are weird now, when some of this new stuff comes out, I don't know what they will think. Overall, the basics are similar. There are heavy parts, there are clean parts, there are solos, there are catchy choruses, there are acid parts, noise parts, technical parts, we want to include a techno part, you know, so we can get the clubbers to come to our shows and turn it into a dance party for fifteen or twenty seconds, there's a bossa nova, a Bar Mitzvah part, or so people say, disco parts, obviously metal parts, because there can never be too many of those, and all of these will hopefully result in severed body parts. The new songs are technical, followed by noise, the more variety the better. The songs are shorter, we change from part to part faster, more like changing channels on the TV. There is more aggression, but I don't know if I would say it is heavier. I think there is something wrong with us, mentally. All four of us have issues. It hasn't been the best year for us personally, especially me. When we write this new stuff, that is coming out more than ever before. It's a good thing for the band, because I really like the music, and the live shows are crazy. It ties in to the last question. I was totally happy with the music on "Themes of the Cosmic Consciousness," and now I am totally happy with the new stuff. I wouldn't change a thing. You really can't, the music just comes out, there is nothing we can do about it.

When can the unsuspecting world be confronted with the second Red Tide CD then?

JW: Well so far we have 6 brand new songs. We're still writing more tunes, but we are doing tons of shows now, so it kind of slows down the process. We still need a few more songs. The songs we do have are pretty crazy. I'd have to say it is a bit different than the first CD. We just go nuts and experiment with sounds. I would have to say we never repeat any riff more than once now. It's weird, but it's just the way things are coming out. It's heavier and more crazy. Jazz jam sections are still an integral part of our music, so that's still there. We just want to keep progressing and trying new things. The bottom line is we have no idea when a new CD will be out. We are currently trying to get our bassist's ass in gear because he has been slacking. He has missed a few shows and has not yet made it to practice in a while. We don't know what's happening yet but we may need a new bassist soon. If so, it halts everything and well then who knows.

The playing and creativity on "Themes of the Cosmic Consciousness" is outstanding. How important is it to you to incorporate a lot of technicality in your songs?

JF: Thanks for the compliment. We used to listen to a lot of death metal, especially me and Jeff. So much of that playing is technical, and it just kind of found its way into us and our playing. We don't really think about it now. Sometimes we do, if we feel a technical part is needed, and lately the technical parts are pretty ridiculous, like we need a computer to figure out what is going on. We are actually thinking more about not so technical parts. Sometimes, "sloppy" parts have more emotion, and we are listening to a lot of music like that, so we just lose it sometimes now and we don't care about beat and rhythm and time and music and notes and making sense. The contrast is what makes it work. Technical parts are even more tight sounding and effective if they follow random sporadic noise, and vice versa.

The booklet of the CD lists your musical and lyrical inspiration, why is this so important?

JF: If there was just one single band that didn't exist on that list, just one musician that never existed that we could never hear, Red Tide would not sound like Red Tide. But, at the same time, there is no way we could list everything we have ever heard in the booklet. But what we wanted to emphasize was the importance of listening to music, all kinds of music, and letting it create our own personal identities. We like to think we are open minded musicians, and there are a lot of different styles represented on that list. We wanted to show people why we sound like we are on crack or some other kind of drug or anything that would alter our minds to write this stuff and give people the impression that we have multiple personality disorders. But the main point is, if it wasn't for all this great music, I wouldn't be playing music. And it goes beyond that. A dial tone gives me inspiration. The rhythmic hemiola of my car blinker and the one in front of me at a stop light gives me inspiration. The great composer Messian was inspired by bird songs, and I think I must have been as well. Bands full of people that can't even play their instruments, or even know what their instruments are called, they inspire me. The sounds of people's voices when they talk, or especially when they laugh, that inspires me. And all of this is just musical inspiration. The things people do around me, their actions, that inspires me when I sit down behind my drums. Everything that has ever happened to me comes out. It all comes down to Renee DesCartes theory of the blank slate. Everything that has ever happened to you or around you is absorbed and analyzed by the brain, and forms your matter of being. I better shut up.

From which movie is the intro to the album and what is the relevance to the album?

JF: The intro is from "Taxi Driver." Yes, DeNiro, A+. Very good. "Heat" also good. 30 seconds flat! The first part, about loneliness, is because we are lonely and we don't get any (well, I should speak for myself. weak. F-). But also because Red Tide always get the gas face at shows, if we even get them, and we wind up by ourselves. We are too weird to be in any category, so we are just alone I guess. The next part, about the change, can deal with a few things. First of all, the songs are about relationships, and they all changed. Also, I think that there is a lot of music that is stale and we are kind of weird, so I guess we are a change of pace. I think it is a neat way to start the first CD. The cool thing is, it is open to interpretation, so take from it what you will.

The title "Themes of the Cosmic Consciousness" comes across as a very

vague and pseudo-intellectual statement without much substance. What is actually meant by it?

JF: The writings of Gurduev Paramahansa Yogananda had quite an effect on Jeff during his formative religious years. He gained an interest in the Self Realization Fellowship. Our songs are themes, feelings, trips into various states of mind, viewing our life and our soul with the surrounding universe. This is the music of our souls.

Over the years, metal music has become more complex and technical. Red Tide is one of these bands contributing to this musical growth. How do you see metal music evolving in the future?

JF: According to the metal scene in CT, metal will be played in the future by a bunch of monkeys who are all trying to be tougher than the next, where music is nothing and being cool is everything. According to the metal scene in the US, it doesn't take much



more than a shaved ape to bounce around playing an open b-chord, and that's metal. But we don't choose to sit at the cool person lunch table. We laugh at those suckers and throw food at them. Fortunately, there are some other people at this table with us, and these bands keep us going with their interest in music and not image, such as Dead Eyes Under, Die My Will, Groundzero, Blood Has Been Shed, Barrit, Cave In, Cryptopsy, Meshuggah, we feed off each other. No bananas for us, please.

Your lyrics are very personal, dealing with themes such as betrayal and commitment in relationships. It seems to me that you're using these lyrics to put several things in the right perspective, reflecting on things. Is writing these lyrics a type of therapy?

JW: Yes, in a way. More of an expression of our feelings towards certain situations that has happened to us personally in the past. It's a release.

Red Tide have recorded a new tune for a compilation CD that is about to be released on Endless Fight Records. Could you give us some more information on this CD?

JW: Well, it's a rough mix of a song we did in a studio. The guy at Endless Fight wanted us to get a song together so that he could put it on his CD Comp. We have this one song called "Deviation," which we have been playing lately at our live shows and we went into the studio and did a quick recording of it. It's very raw and rough, but it will get its message across. I really do not know what is happening with that comp because we sent the song to him 4 months ago so who knows. Hopefully I'll hear from him soon. I'm sure he's trying to put it all together now.

You mentioned that your music is

influenced by a diverse number of things. Do you see your creativity being used in other forms of art as well?

JW: Hmhmhm, I don't think so. We're all different. We have Justin Foley (drummer) who is a music major and he eats, sleeps, lives music. His creativity is being used in music 24-7. Ian (guitar) is the same. Music major and is constantly creating. Our bassist Blue, well, he's just another story. He is a new member but not really... he's been with us for a while now but has not yet recorded with us. He's played tons of shows with us but... he's very sketchy nowadays. Never really see him around. Who knows what his creativity is being used for. Myself, Wu, well... I use it as an expression. I just love to play music and it's fun. I do a lot of stuff with reading up on law enforcement and firearms.

With your uncompromising freedom in musical virtuosity, I can't imagine you'd

be for any sort censorship. Then again, some people share the opinion that you should not let small children watch violent television programs. Apart from some small cases, music has not really been prone to censorship. In which cases do you see the need for censorship?

JW: Well, I can't really say. I don't care about censorship at all. If the message of a song is about killing or hating people, I feel that should be censored. But then again, I never pay attention to it, so I don't know what to say to that question. Censorship is just something we all have to deal with. If we like it or not, it is here.

Jeff, you're also a stand-up comedian. How did this come about, and do you incorporate comedy in your live shows in which the essence of the songs is quite serious?

JW: Hahaha, well I'm not really a stand-up comedian. Well, at our shows, in between songs, I guess I'm just like "whatever." We're very loose on stage or very calm. We joke around and people think we're nuts when they see us. It's funny. We're not really that serious at all, we're just having fun playing live. I mean a lot of these bands we play with are kind of "tough guy" bands, and they act really tough, etc. That's their image. We just play, and we just go with the flow. Whatever happens, happens. Nothing is planned at our live shows. I think I just babble during the breaks of each song, and people think it's funny.

Jeff, you're currently a senior at the University of Hartford and will be receiving a BS in Business Management. One wouldn't expect people with that sort of background to be playing your type of music. How does your environment react to the type of music you're playing? Are you consciously

adopting a certain image to steer away from the accepted norm?

JW: Well, yes, I just graduated from University of Hartford and got my BS in Business Management. People in my classes and professors are shocked when they find out what kind of music I play. It's funny. They don't expect it at all. I mean, the way I look and the way I behave may confuse them because of the stereotypes of "heavy metal" people. You know, like if you are into death metal or any kind of metal, you have to have the long hair, wear the black shirts, etc. etc. I pretty much have a normal hair-do and wear whatever I want, and I guess when people find out that I play in this sort of band and play this sort of music, they don't picture me doing so. We are not consciously adopting a certain image to steer away from the accepted norm. We just do whatever feels right.

On your website, the fascination of Red Tide for the "X-Files" and the FBI is quite apparent. Could you elaborate a bit more on your fascination for the "X-Files"? Doesn't it frighten you to know that the methods they use to solve mysteries are coming close to a big brother is watching you scenario?

JW: Yes, it is frightening. I am very interested in Law Enforcement. I am a big gun enthusiast and go to the shooting range often. I read tons of books on FBI Investigations, US Marshal fugitive trackings, SWAT Tactics, criminal behavior, investigations, postal fraud, sniper tactics, VIP Security tactics, handguns/rifles, combat shooting, insurance fraud, bullet configurations, computer crimes, etc. etc. Anything that has to do with law enforcement and firearms. Let me remind people out there that I AM NOT A GUN FREAK. I am a GUN ENTHUSIAST. Guns get a bad rap. A gun freak is someone who thinks there is gonna be a damn war and stocks up on weapons and has a mindset of using them to kill people. A gun enthusiast (ME) enjoys shooting guns at paper targets only and has a passion for improving one's skill, likes to take care of their guns and has responsibility to use them safely and also understands the potential danger they possess and is cautious at all times. OK, I went off on that sorry. Just to let you interested folks know, I own a custom compact Kimber .45 (1911 style) handgun, and I also have a Bushmaster AR-15 (m-16 style) rifle.

Thanks very much for the interview. Do you have any final words you would like to share with the rest of the world using this modest platform?

JW: Thanks you all for reading this interview. We're grateful that people even give us a chance and our music. As of now, we really do not know what is happening with the band. Our bassist seems to be on his way out, so we're gonna be searching for a new bassist soon. Who knows. But for now, we're still playing shows without a bassist, and we're still writing music. Just keep an eye out for upcoming news on Red Tide. Thanks all!!!

Let us hope that Red Tide can regain their momentum so that a sophomore release is only a question of time. There have been too many musical outfits that stumbled after the first hurdle for numerous reasons. Additional information about Red Tide and how to order the CD can be found at their website: <http://users.aol.com/redtide/next.htm>. The snail mail address is Red Tide, PO Box 1434, Avon CT 06001 USA. P.S. As you may have guessed, shortly after the interview was conducted, the bass player was kicked out.



IMMORTAL

At the Heart of Winter

Osmose Productions
Who said black metal is dead? Look at the renewal of Mayhem, new albums by Enslaved or Emperor, and you'll probably say that while many groups are really copying each other, the grands release their best stuff. And Immortal belong to this category of bands that still surprise with their quality. The fifth full-length of Immortal is clearly their best album to date, containing six songs that bring us back to their first albums, but having a much more complex and stronger sound. True, heavy, aggressive, and brutal, but still very technical black metal for all black metal maniacs; one of the best black metal albums in 1999. (AO)
4 3/4

EVOKEN

Embrace the Emptiness

Elegy Records
I remember that such slow doom/death bands as Winter or the first album by Cathedral have always been boring to me. Evoken dangerously manoeuvre on the edge of this style. It isn't like torturing doom of such groups as Skepticism or Esoteric, which create a certain mood of nihilism, it's certainly more like Winter, a very very slow doom metal with deathly vocals. I think this is the slowest kind of doom metal. Sometimes Evoken fasten their music, and then it becomes similar to slower tracks of My Dying Bride. I think you must be in total despair and in a very melancholic mood to listen to this in its entirety. I prefer doom metal with more variations, this disc is too monotonous for me, but if you liked Winter and if most metal bands seem too fast to you, you can bravely try this realm of desolation. (AO)
3

FACE INVADERS

Big Bugger

self-released
A German band that successfully combines metal/hardcore with reggae and funk. Sometimes they sound like a German answer to Dub War. Especially the first two songs go into that direction. "You've Got to Do..." is probably the best track on this CD that reminds me a bit of Skunk Anansie here and there. The good point about Face Invaders is the fact that they write very varied songs, that simply rock. Take, for example, "How I Tried" or "Like a Ninja." Since the sound of the CD is really good (especially for a self release), so I think this is a very promising start for these Germans. (SV)
[30 DM, Christian Guenther, Hans-Mielich-Str. 3, 81543 Muenchen, Germany]
3 3/4

FEAR FACTORY

Obsolete

Roadrunner Records
The moral of this review is that one shouldn't make quick judgements. After three listens, I couldn't get hooked by this album from any angle. The aggression seemed primitive, the style looked the same as in the previous Fear Factory albums, the melodies looked weak, and the first place in "Ill Literature" readers' poll of best albums released in 1998 seemed unexplainable. However, the fourth listen proved me wrong, and I finally realized and began to respect mid-tempo industrial metal's punch and frequent trademark clean-style melodies. "Obsolete" may not be too different from what Fear Factory have done in the past, and it may not be the album that will be remembered after five years, but, at the moment, the band is still high in aggro-metal category. (GS)
4

FLOTSAM AND JETSAM

Unnatural Selection

Metal Blade Records
Flotsam's seventh album proves that the band is still fresh and tighter than plenty of its competitive newcomers. Yet this album will hardly bring the band back to the hall of fame, partly because now there are some "competitive newcomers" that simply do

better, and partly because "Unnatural Selection" falls somewhere to nowhere between melodic power metal and thrash/death metal: missing the depth of, e.g., Nevermore, it's virtually impossible to attract any fans that are strictly loyal to one of the two styles. The riffs are well done indeed, of a groovy nature (not in a Machine Head way, softer), but together with poignant vocals they fail to make a lasting statement. I know, "it's just fuckin' metal man," of a good class, but the album won't make any impact except an acceptance by old Flotsam fans and some thrashers who don't mind the lighter side of the style. (GS)
3 1/2

FOR THE LIVING

Worth Holding Onto

Goodlife Recordings
Old-style hardcore from Washington DC. Thirteen short songs, aggressive guitars and vocals, "inspired and inspiring" lyrics. Music for headbanging and moshing at the concerts. Enough said. (SV)
3 1/4

FURIOUS TRAUMA

Roll the Dice

Season of Mist
I've heard about this group before but never really listened to their music (actually, they exist since 1988). Already the first track "Roll the Dice" leaves a very good impression: I haven't heard such crazy rockin' metal for months, it is like mixing Entombed with, let's say, one of the straight rock'n'roll bands. It's sad that the other tracks haven't reached such highs, but the entire album must please Entombed fans (Furious Trauma are a bit more rocky, not so heavy) or those who adore groovy metal; the groove is the thing that dominates in this disc. Some thrash elements (like on "Alive") shine through, and that doesn't sound too great, but I like this album. Of course, I would like to hear more psychedelic stuff here, like, for example, Spiritual Beggars do; maybe "Roll the Dice" is the album for fans of a bit earlier times in heavy metal (by the way, Denner from Mercyful Fate, and LaRocque from King Diamond have played on this disc). Let's rock now! (AO)
4

GANDALF

Deadly Fairytails

Wicked World
Finland seems to give much to metal world these days. Gandalf are just one more good band from Helsinki, and their album "Deadly Fairytails" gives you pure, groovy, melodic death metal à la their natives Sentenced. Gandalf have everything for this style; ten songs on this album, of course, don't blow away such grands as In Flames, but are simply... okay. Better than mediocrities of the genre, worse than the big names. Such groups as Withering Surface have something more of their own, while Gandalf decided to follow pure traditions of Gothenburg style. (AO)
3 1/2

THE GATHERING

How to Measure a Planet? DoCD

Century Media Records
Back in 1995, bands like The Gathering, Tiamat, Moonspell, and Therion were one of the "most desired" in the underground metal scene. It is difficult to stay on the top all the time, and there are no rules whether you have to change in order to stay popular, or have to stick to the same. Dutch The Gathering did not have any radical style changes from "Mandylion," their third album, until now. "How to Measure a Planet?" displays a shift in a bigger angle, comparing to that between "Mandylion" and "Nighttime Birds," the fourth album. Musically, the band still plays slow-tempo moving and drifting heavy rock fronted by romantic female vocals, but this time guitars are less heavy, and the songs are more diverse. It's more fresh, perhaps even more uplifting, yet very spiritual and melodic. The highlight of the first CD is the bombastic ending track "Travel." The second CD is a bonus CD containing 5 other songs, including 28-minute long title track. (GS)
4 1/4

GEASA

Angel's Cry

Season of Mist
Not so many interesting groups come from Ireland, and Geasa are one of the more interesting ones. Their style could be described as occult-atmospheric black metal, and they sound not unlike their natives Primordial, but are more extravagant

IN THE WOODS...

Strange In Stereo

Misanthropy Records
"Omnia" was a real highlight but disappointed those who wanted something in the veins of band's debut, more pagan/black metal "Heart of the Ages." In fact, already the debut CD showed that this band was adding progressive elements to make their songs more dynamic. "Omnia" surprised as one of the best atmospheric albums of 1997, but, at the same time, all black metal elements started to vanish and In The Woods... became a progressive/atmospheric metal band. "Strange In Stereo" shows that In The Woods... finally stepped into an absolutely new dimension, and their past is left far behind. Of course, we can appreciate "Strange In Stereo" as a natural prolongation of "Omnia," but I evaluate this new album as an absolutely different way of creation. All the songs now have a highly progressive structure and they are so complex, that many prog bands only can dream about reaching such level. Black metal roots are finally eliminated, and I can't find the name for the current style of In The Woods... It is atmospheric metal where such styles as doom, progressive, gothic, symphonic, psychedelic are well combined. As a song's nature changes so often, it is hard even to catch how it began and where it transformed to. For example, "Vanish in the Absence of Virtue" begins with a typically My Dying Bride sound, but later on changes to psychedelic riffs and expressive singing of Oul Svithjod and Synne Diana. By the way, both of them, in my opinion, showed their best singing compared this album to the previous ones. Comparing this disc to "Omnia," we feel that In The Woods... became much more mature, atmospheric and technical, but, at the same time, melodies and emotions now change so often that it is really hard to get into the disc; I think that "Omnia" was more accessible. You must listen very carefully to catch the main sense of this complexity. It is the best In The Woods... album to date and is highly recommended to every "Edge of Time" reader. (AO)
5



and avantgarde. I also find similarities to the highly atmospheric French band Misanthrope, especially, the emotional singing of Draighen reminds of the French masters (a kind of "crying" voice). Geasa incorporate Irish folk melodies in their music, and the album has this strange Celtic character (the reason why I've named Primordial as Geasa's influence). "Angel's Cry" doesn't sound as one monolith; on the contrary, all the songs supplement each other, from war-like hymns to epic ballads (like wonderful "Dannu") or extravagant "Frozen Queen." The professionalism is here, so are emotions and innovations, so why can't we name this album as the biggest must in all the Season of Mist family for dark emotional metal fans? (AO)
4 1/4

GIGANDHI

Chaaval

Euphonious Records
I haven't heard the debut Gigandhi's album "Rafflesia," but already the evaluation of "Terrorizer" says it all - 5 out of 5. We at "Edge of Time" are a bit sceptical about evaluations of other mags and usually try everything ourselves :) Gigandhi's new album gives us opportunity to check out the band. Well, I wouldn't give 5 out of 5, but I share their opinion that this group from Denmark in the future can shake industrial/metal world. Gigandhi don't play groovy, almost danceable industrial à la Die Krupps or Ministry, I would better reference Godflesh or (most likely) neurotic industrial gods Neurosis. The first songs on this album offer slow and very heavy industrialized metal, but the things change with "Melting," which is an example of one of the most atmospheric and psychedelic industrial music. As far as I can remember, only Red Harvest played the music like this. One more interesting contribution to the special sound is India-inspired melodies: just listen to harmonic "Basmati" or peaceful Eastern inserts on "Worthless" or "Inside." If you want to persuade yourself that it isn't just an ordinary industrial metal band, start listening from the end of the disc: the last track is done in almost meditative, ambient style. One more interesting turn point is a cover version of Madonna's song "Justify My Love," done in typical Gigandhi style. "Chaaval" is dedicated to those industrial fans who, besides traditional, angry indus-metal, need diversity and worship the above mentioned Neurosis or Red Harvest. (AO)
4 1/2

GOLGOTHA

Elemental Changes

Repulse Records
Is it really Repulse, who release this Golgotha album? All musical ideas can serve as an absolute opposite to Repulse's deathish ideas. Instead of traditional and brutal death metal, here we have catchy, melodic, and compromising doom/gothic rock. I think, the fact that Golgotha come from Spain played an important role when getting signed to Repulse, because there are plenty of groups

playing this style and much better. "Elemental Changes" offers a quite standard Paradise Lost-oriented music, in places catchy ("Emotionless"), in places melancholic ("Save Me, Kiss Me") with keyboards forming the main emotional mood. Vocals aren't bad but too standard again - varying from gloomy gothic style to trendy shouting. And, in addition, we get a funny and interesting Kiss cover "Love Gun." Too many cliches to take this album emotionally too seriously. (AO)
3 1/4

GOOSEFLESH

Welcome to Suffer Age EP

Goldtrack Records
This record was reviewed in the last issue (as a demo). Spanish label Goldtrack, that released the material of such bands like Seer's Tear or Ruination, decided to sign this cool group from Sweden and to release their third demo as a CD. Nothing else is left, but to remind you that Gooseflesh play modern metal in veins of Crowbar or Stuck Mojo. Their material is well-produced and contains a good dose of melody, what, in my opinion, is very important for this kind of music. I think, their full-length CD will be even better, because these Swedes improve their songs from record to record. (SV)
3 1/2

GOthic SEX

Laments

Repulse Records
It's not a new album of this well-known Spanish gothic rock/metal band. "Laments" has already been released by Nightbreed Records in the UK and by Ausfahrt in Germany. The first track "The Night Scream" is a bit disappointing: traditional doom/death with only a slight touch of gothic rock. But the second track presents the style that predominates in the album, namely heavy gothic rock rhythms with doom/death elements (Paradise Lost's "Gothic" and "Shades of God" albums) and doom-metal style vocals (Paradise Lost again, and maybe Crematory). Only "Ashes to Ashes" is sung by a different, clear voice. One of the most interesting tracks is "The New Christ" whose atmosphere reminds of Moonspell and reflects everything what Gothic Sex is about: melodic, heavy gothic/doom metal, a place where Crematory meets Paradise Lost and decide to take a bit darker nature to their music. As for an album pretending to be "gothic," I miss more gloomy feelings (for example, The Sisters of Mercy also were rocky and a bit catchy, but who can blame them for not being gloomy enough?), and, after all, it is too catchy and kind of entertaining. (AO)
3 1/2

The GREAT KAT

Bloody Vivaldi EP

Thomas Public Relations
Another mini album by the extremely eccentric guitar player. I don't understand why she wouldn't release a full-length one day. Then, she could repeat her big success of "Beethoven On Speed" album. Now we've

got 4 new songs, two of them are created by the guitar-genius herself. As always, it is very technical guitar music. I agree that she is one of the best guitar players in the world. But when she adds her shouts, screams, it gets on nerves. All in all, it is best when Great Kat plays classics. Here, we have two "covers," originally created by Vivaldi and Sarasate, respectively. And again, it is very interesting, technical, we all know that Great Kat knows how to turn classical compositions her way. It is her trademark; exactly the same could be said about her bloody, sexual image. The biggest shortage is the length of this CD, which is only 8 minutes. You must be a real fan to buy a CD only for some minutes of music. (AO) 3 3/4

GRIP INC.

Solidify

Metal Blade Records

Sorychta/Lombardo give another yearly statement that their work was not a short-time get together. The fact that they kept the same singer for three albums also shows that Grip Inc. is a serious band. This time, Dave Lombardo didn't contribute to the writing at all, except for the ending instrumental, which has the Cynic vibe, just with the key focus on drums. Waldemar Sorychta (guitar) wrote almost all songs, with which he continued leading Grip Inc.'s boat to somewhere between thrash metal and power metal, like Nevermore do. Just when the latter are purely intense, Grip Inc. aren't that sharp this time and rely on varying mid-tempo rhythms and riffs. The vocals of Gus Chambers are clearer this time around, and "Solidify" melts diverse songs, the best example being "Griefless," where heavy passages are intertwined with subtle melodic ones similarly to Anacrusis' "Screams and Whispers" album. One of the better recent albums, and a live example that a metal album can be coherent containing quite diverse songs. (GS) [Grip Reality fan club, PO Box 3095, Sea Brigh, NJ 07760, USA] 4 1/4

GRYN

Progression of Aggression EP

self-released

The hardcore/metal band from Texas that somehow reminds me of the latest Kreator releases. Of course, there are places on the CD, where you can hear riffs of pure hardcore, but it seems that thrash prevails on the most part. The title speaks for the album, though I'm not sure whether this music is very "progressive." Not bad, but nothing new, either. (SV) [Gryn, PO Box 48613, FT Worth, TX 76148-0613, USA] 3

GUIDANCE OF SIN

Soul Seducer

Mighty Music

Melodic death metal from Sweden doesn't always mean Gothenburg sound; Guidance of Sin exemplify this. But, of course, they couldn't miss another typical Swedish influence - Entombed. Guidance of Sin sound like a more melodic, not so groovy version of Entombed. "Soul Seducer" was recorded at Sunlight Studio, which does give a certain specific sound. Guidance of Sin don't always go in this Entombed-like way, they add an old-school touch and a sense of Paradise Lost's "Gothic" (who will deny that "Dawn of the New Religion" is a clear echo of Paradise Lost's "Shades of God" or "Gothic"?). The singer more grows than shouts and that isn't usual in Sweden's melodic death metal scene, where it is much more popular to scream in Gothenburg manner. "Soul Seducer" isn't as catchy as most Black Sun Records groups, it is more brutal and, at the same time, melancholic. (AO) 3 1/2

HIMINBJORG

Where Ravens Fly

Red Stream Records

Viking black metal as we know it. If you heard such artists of this style as Ulver, you already know what "Where Ravens Fly" is about. Six songs on this CD present melodic, barbaric black metal based on folk melodies and is calmed by acoustic interludes, whispers, sounds of burning fire, and other attributes of remembrance about long-gone glorious times and mystic nature of the sound. This group goes in different direction than aggressive/brutal black metal bands, it has more in common with bombastic,

powerful music of Bathory. The band to which Himinbjorg could be compared best is Forlorn or any other extremely melodic and folk black metal group. It isn't any big discovery in this style, but it promises a pleasant listen; Himinbjorg can be characterized as creators of modern black-metal hymns. (AO) 3 1/2

HOUWITSER

Death...but not Buried

Displaced Records

A brutalized band from the Netherlands, playing a quite expressive death metal. The sound of Houwitsler is one steady and heavy monolith, and all death maniacs will be pleased, no doubt. Of course, Houwitsler have their reason for releasing such a strong debut album, because three band members have earlier played in cult-band Sinister, and bass-player played in Judgement Day, so the professionalism is guaranteed. The style doesn't step too much from the Sinister sound, but, here, it is probably more grinding and fast even though some more melodic parts are included, too (well, not too many anyway). But, once again, better don't touch if you are not the fan number one of this style. (AO) 3 1/2

HYPOCRISY

Destroys Wacken Live

Nuclear Blast Records

Fans and their support during live shows is what stopped Peter Tatgren and Hypocrisy from calling it quits back in 1998, and this live album is a good example of devastating death/black/doom machinery, which hypnotizes the audience at Hypocrisy shows. The atmosphere clearly is the main focus in this material; Hypocrisy do not spell with guitar riffs, but press with a ten-ton mechanism of depressive heaviness. This is especially characteristic to their later material ("The Final Chapter" album), but their early death metal tracks aren't out of place either. Four bonus tracks include heavy/punk-rocking "Time Warp" and "Fuck U," beautiful atmospheric "Til the End," and energetic bloody-riffing "Beginning of the End." (GS) 4

IMMOLATION

Failures for Gods

Metal Blade Records

The third album of this New York-based group is surely a masterpiece of brutal death metal. Nowadays it's hard to hear innovative brutal death metal album, but Immolation managed to do that. They are very brutal, very technical, have their own style, and are one of the leaders of this style. Don't expect here to hear black metal or other more recent influences - Immolation pay their tribute to Brutal Truth, Morbid Angel, Napalm Death, and other grinds of old death metal. In times when other bands opened their music for other streams of metal music, Immolation just built their music on the same background. It's brutal, it's heavy, it reminds of the times when death metal was pure underground thing. (AO) 4 1/4

IRON MONKEY

Our Problem

Earsche Records

Iron Monkey are one of the sickest stoner rock bands I've ever seen or heard. Just look at the booklet of this CD... Musically, the band carries out the reliable Sabbath-riffs. The distinctive mark of Iron Monkey are harsh and black/death metal oriented vocals. The vocals are probably the only point where the opinions of the listeners will differ. The guitars and rhythm section are quite primitive but rock well. Go and see Iron Monkey live on stage, where they probably are even better than on this pretty original CD. (SV) 4

ISEGRIM

Isegrim EP

Last! Episode

Four songs of satanic black metal, where, once again, the ideology is maybe more important than music. The music is straight and a bit boring; they say it returns to black metal at its original way, but if it means repeating the same model everywhere, then it isn't music I would like to hear too often. But as I said before, "Isegrim" is a kind of satanic manifestation, and the musical

quality probably was not one of the main goals of A. Blackwar. (AO) 2 3/4

JESUS MARTYR

Sudamerican Porno

Repulse Records

This band has played here in Lithuania some time ago. I can tell you that Jesus Martyr live are far better than on this CD, which, however, is one of the best releases on Repulse label I've ever heard. Right from the start, these guys from Argentina strike with two powerful tracks ("Next Biological Crisis" and "Ethereal New Era") in veins of Fear Factory and Sepultura. "Back to Basics" is a song that is very similar to one track from Strapping Young Lad's debut. Following highlights are the noisy "Impersonal World Order," the mighty title-track, the Marilyn Manson-ish "Nailed," and the closing "Nutritive Soul." "Sudamerican Porno" is a successful mixture of different brutal styles like thrash, hardcore, and industrial. Not so original, but very good. (SV) 4

LACRIMOSA

Alleine Zu Zweit EP

Hall of Sermon

This is the new single performed by Tilo Wolff/Anne Nurmli together with the London Symphony Orchestra at the legendary Abbey Road Studios. Here, Lacrimosa present three new tracks: two versions of "Alleine Zu Zweit" and "Meine Welt." In addition, we've got Samael re-mixing Lacrimosa's hit "Copycat" from their 1995 album "Inferno." Basically, Lacrimosa play in the same way as on the "Stille" album, i.e., deliver symphonic, classical, bombastic, and very sensitive gothic music. You can't think of another group that is alike Lacrimosa. And the new tracks just prove that Lacrimosa are still at their peak of musical abilities, so if you liked "Stille," don't miss the new single. The new album follows. (AO) 4 1/4



LACUNA COIL

In a Reverie

Century Media Records

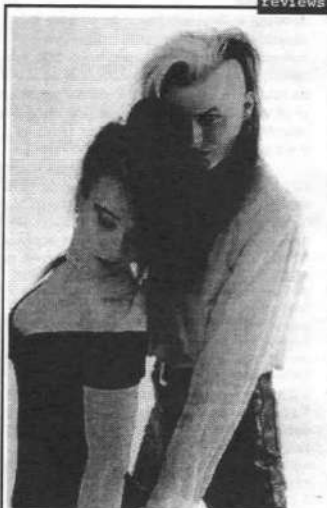
The full-length album this Italian band represents a clear growth compared to their debut EP, and boldly states that the band doesn't need to hide behind the backs of The Gathering and Theatre of Tragedy. "In a Reverie" is a gothic powerful metal record with female and male singers, uniting The Gathering's "Mandylion" and Paradise Lost's "Draconian Times." Heavier and more rocking than later Paradise Lost and The Gathering material, more playful than rather melancholic Theatre of Tragedy, Lacuna Coil strive to make clear, to the point songs, raising emotions with versatile melodies instead of long "atmospheric" instrumental passages. An important factor is that the band is full of creative enthusiasm, which mesmerizes the listener through the whole album. The highlights include "To Myself I Turned," "Reverie," and "Falling Again" (the vocal tones in the refrain sound like Alanis Morissette does metal...) (GS) 4 1/4

LAMBS

Lambs EP

self-released

This self-released mini-CD offers the listener 7 tracks of hardcore that keeps the listener happy. The songs flow easy and don't affect your ears. Though I'm not the fan of punk/hardcore scene, I must admit that tracks like "Right on Through You" or "Through my Ears" could appeal to every fan of this style. I hope they will bear this quality on their next release. (SV) [Tommy Only, Laivurinkatu 2-4 C 34, 95400 Tornio, Finland] 3 1/2



LACRIMOSA

Elodia

Hall of Sermon

My biggest doubt about this album was if "Elodia" would mark a progress comparing with Lacrimosa's perfect "Stille"? Speaking technically, the progress is evident: several choirs and London Symphony Orchestra were involved here, the work on this album lasted 14 months, 187 musicians took part on this creation, and "Elodia" was recorded in the famous Abbey Road Studios. The result really shows that many musicians worked on this release, it is maybe the most technical, best-arranged and produced album in all orchestral gothic/rock history. Musically, "Elodia" starts where "Stille" left off and is named "a rock opera in three acts." It really reminds more of opera than of a rock album. It is bombastic, dramatic musical theater where moods change each other, complex strings arrangements are hardened by metallic guitar assaults and passionate, expressive singing by Tilo Wolff and Anne Nurmli. Everything is done according to symphonic music standards, and the name "rock opera" characterizes this disc best. But if you have heard Lacrimosa's "Stille," there is no need to explain what you'll find here. It is a natural prolongation of what has been done in the previous album, just everything is done with a much bigger budget, and such songs as "Sanctus" are maybe the best tracks ever created by Lacrimosa. But then I return to my doubts, does it really marks a clear progress? Maybe I would say no. It is worse than "Stille." Technically, it is much better, but it isn't such a big step forwards as it was with "Stille" and the previous discs. It is the same brilliant music, but nothing new. Nonetheless, I recommend this disc to all symphonic music fans, you won't be disappointed. (AO) 4 3/4

LENGTH OF TIME

Approach to the New World

Shame to This Weakness Modern World EP

Goodlife Recordings

The concept of this band has nothing in common with the hardcore scene, it's enough to see the pictures in the booklet, read the lyrics and song titles of this full-length and EP. It's also very useful to check out the bands mentioned in the thanks list, because we find such names as Death In June, Changes, or Fire And Ice, all being grinds of the apocalyptic folk. And the main person to whom those discs are dedicated is none other than Charles Manson. So, when I got the package, I hurried back home hoping to hear a kind of mix of strong hardcore and neofolk or industrial/noise a la Boyd Rice. But when I put one of the CDs into my player, the naked truth came out: after all, it is extreme, heavy hardcore with no any influences that I've expected to shine through (except the calm acoustic song "To Those on Our Lives" from "Shame to This Weakness Modern World"). The albums are pieces of the hardest, most intensive hardcore with metal influences and a bit of NY hardcore. I can recommend it to all metallers, because Length Of Time are maybe the most aggressive and the closest band to metal in all the Good Life family (by the way, Length Of Time are not a new band, as you could expect, all the members are

veterans in Brussels hardcore scene). It is violent and very developed music with interesting songs structures, especially it is clear on their more recent EP. And, in particular, this album should attract attention of all worshippers of so-called Ch. Manson's "talents." (AO)
3 3/4 and 4

LET ME DREAM

Medley Rain EP

Succubus Records

It seems like we can't escape clichés in this case. Already the cover of this EP with roses shows us what to expect. Namely, gothic metal at its most standard, pure way. Let Me Dream obviously have problems with vocals, which just crash everything what is good in these four songs. Anyway, listening to their third track "Julia," I almost began thinking that Let Me Dream are quite OK with their simple, keyboard-controlled, rich gothic metal. But the last song "From Passion to Void" proved once again that more work is needed. It's just a rip-off of bands like Paradise Lost. I understand that we can't wait for "really something" from a self-financed EP, but I expected more quality. (AO)
2 3/4

LIAR

Deathrow Earth

Godlife Recordings

The only thing that really ascribes this band to hardcore scene is their lyrics giving traditional sXe messages about animal rights, ecological problems, etc. The music is hardcore, but heavily influenced by metal; I don't even know which description is better: metal with hardcore influences or hardcore with metal influences. Anyway, it is very aggressive, technical, and complex metal/hardcore (but don't take this music for typical NYHC. Liar have nothing in common with Biohazard). It really isn't trendy crossover metal, but, in fact, this style can become a new trend - some prospects for this are already seen. But now it is the third album of Liar and shows them forming their own style and sound. (AO)
4

LUNATIC GODS

Sitting by Fire

Metal Age Productions

It's hard to describe the music of this band from Slovakia. One minute they move in melodic doom/folk territories, the next find their pleasure in thrashy and deathly eruptions. The same goes to the vocals. Lunar Gods use melodic voice as well as the growling one. The outcome is really not bad. Although the material is a bit chaotic, the structures of the songs remain more or less clear. The only comparison would probably be Amorphis with some weird moments, but I think that says nothing though. Better listen to it yourself and form your own opinion. (SV)
3 3/4

MADDER MORTEM

Mercury

Misanthropy Records

Before the sad closing down of one of the best metal labels ever, Misanthropy Records released two stunning doom metal albums: one of them is Sciltice's "New Dark Age" and another is this one. Earlier Madder Mortem released only one EP "Misty Sleep," so the professionalism and perfect coordination of musicians is surprising. The only band I can compare "Mercury" music to is more metallic tracks of The 3rd And The Mortal. Madder Mortem display the same melancholic and emotional gothic/doom metal, and the beautiful voice of Agnete M.Kirkevaag can even be compared with Anneke van Gierbergen from The Gathering. But, while The Gathering more and more adopt all their music to Anneke's voice, Madder Mortem sometimes burst with uncontrolled aggression like on "These Mortal Sins." But after this short fury, "Mercury" again settles down and "The Grinding Silence" even can remind of Dead Can Dance. But the tracks like "Loss" again prove that, after all, it is deep and tragic emotions what makes the music more metallic than, for example, Theatre Of Tragedy's "Aegis" album. (AO)
4 1/4

MARDUK

Panzer Division Marduk

Osmose Productions

Marduk's last release "Nightwing" tended towards more varied and interesting side of black metal. Shame, this new output

ruins all and joins the ranks of ordinary black metal releases. This 33 minute length album starts and ends with the same note. I think, variations on the traditional black metal are already exhausted, it's cool that bands like Emperor or Cradle Of Filth have got that in their heads. Marduk simply mark time with such releases... (SV)
3

MENTAL HOME

Black Art

The End Records

"Black Art" continues the path explored by Mental Home's debut album "Vale," and one can still notice similarities to Tiamat's "Clouds," occasionally in vocals stylistics, and, especially, in the sound which is so mild and so heavy. It can be noticed though that the music became faster, with strong emphasis on keyboards, and, in places even reaching the intensity of black metal. The general spirit is very melancholic, just as it is often in atmospheric dark metal. (GS)
3 3/4

MERCYFUL FATE

9

Metal Blade Records

We can blame maestro King Diamond for not progressing, repeating himself or for other sins, but we surely can't blame him for bad productivity. The new album proves that once again. It's good that King Diamond has stopped releasing mediocre, banal discs. His album with band "Voodoo" showed progression compared to the previous boring releases, and "9" marks also new quality for Merciful Fate. Compared to King Diamond, Merciful Fate are more raw, straight, brutal, and not so melodic. It's clear that the mastering of both groups has finally divided his work into two different ways. "9" sounds like early albums of Merciful Fate, with the same streamlined heavy metal sound, brutal riffing, and, of course, typical singing of King Diamond. Here, he sings more brutal also, and this disc brings us back to "Don't Break the Oath" times. "9" is even more brutal than this legendary disc, but the musical schemes are quite the same. I dare to say that "9" is the best Merciful Fate's album after "Don't Break the Oath" and maybe the most straightforward in their career. But, in general, King Diamond didn't make any radical changes, everything what you liked in his music remains here, and his voice is still the same. (AO)
4

MESHUGGAH

Chaosphere

Nuclear Blast Records

Although I am a big fan of the Meshuggah guitarist's experimental solo album "Fredrik Thordendahl's Special Defects," I find Meshuggah's type of brutal thrash very hard to digest. Songs built-up around non-melodic staccato riffing in the Machine Head/Pantera style and the constant conveyance of rage do not appeal to my musical taste. Rage is an easily used emotion which is, in my opinion, only impressive or frightening when it is subliminal or controlled. The constant conveyance of rage is not a method of getting across an emotional message. Meshuggah do not get their musical message across either. Although the playing on this CD is virtuous (especially the Allan Holdsworth-type leads), the eight songs do not contain any hooks or breaks that could make them memorable. The fact that most of the songs are in the same tempo and the brutal vocals do not help either. An irritating point that needs to be mentioned is that the last fifteen minute song "Elastic" contains a five minute monotonous buzz before exploding into a frenzy. What's the use? This is recommended to fans of extreme metal in search for a more complex version of Machine Head; I would recommend "Fredrik Thordendahl's Special Defects" to others.



Meshuggah

Actually, I don't find it that strange that Americans tend to go for this type of music more than Europeans. (CR)
3 1/2

MORBID DEATH

Echoes of Solitude

Independent Records

Hm, a very "original" name of the band... After the success of Moonspell, there are probably plenty of new young bands from Portugal trying to reach similar status. It seems that Morbid Death are still far enough from this desired aim. They aren't bad at all, the music, for example, goes smoothly, merely the vocals ruin all, so the songs pass the listener without any positive results. Anyway, doom/gothic fans could try this one. (SV)
[Independent records, Rua da bandeira, 311 1T, 4400 Gaia, Portugal]
3 1/4

JAMES MURPHY

Feeding the Machine

Diehard Music Worldwide

James Murphy has one the most busy curriculum vitae's when compared to other metal guitarists. The lengthy list of bands and projects in which he played from 1987 includes Agent Steel, Death, Obituary, Discarnate, Testament, Explorer's Club, and Konkra. "Feeding the Machine" is his second solo album containing 5 instrumental and 5 vocal tracks. Stylistically, it's modern metal of the 90s, heavily grooving and pounding, with clean yet aggressive vocals (Testament, Geezer, Under, Magellan, and Artisan singers performed on different tracks). There are no hyper-technical tricks, "Odyssey" (Dixie Dregs cover) and "Race with the Devil on Spanish Highway" (Al di Meola cover) are probably the most technically challenging tracks on the album. However, the music is emotional and well-done, therefore a solid four. (GS)
[James Murphy, c/o Sound Temple Studio, 1234 47th Ave. c9, Oakland, CA 94601, USA]
4

NAPALM DEATH

Words from the Exit Wound

Ravage Records

There is no doubt that Napalm Death belong to one of the best death metal bands nowadays. The last two albums were brilliant pieces of modern death/grind, but this work, in my opinion, is much better. The band continues the line of their previous CD: well-produced, professional groovy death metal with some grind passages. You can also discover some parts with clean vocals what is very surprising to hear (especially if you remember the first albums of Napalm Death). I can't name you some outstanding tracks because the whole album is great and there aren't any weak songs on the CD. "Words from the Exit Wound" doesn't offer anything new but it sounds very fresh and solid! (SV)
4 1/2

NEBULAR MOON

Mourning

Last Episode

I think that it is one of the best acts in Last Episode's black metal groups list, many of which don't shine with originality. Nebular Moon aren't a big exception either, but they do classical things classically; I mean, everything is familiar, but if you wanna hear another example of traditional symphonic black metal, listen to Nebular Moon. Of course, it's worthless to compare it to Arcturus, but it is good for a debut album. I think you don't need explanations how the things look like here: symphonic arrangements, melodic black metal, a bit of gothic rock, and all quite well packaged. (AO)
3 3/4

NEMBRIONIC

Incomplete

Displeased Records

One of the most brutal and aggressive bands to come out from the Netherlands. Nembrionic play powerful, grinding death metal without getting into any compromises and, to tell the truth, the whole album gives an impression as if the group knows only one scheme of playing: after all, it's only grinding death metal, and if you like this style, check it out, if you are looking for something more meaningful, you'll find something more interesting in the scene. (AO)
3

NIGHTFALL

Diva Futura

Holy Records

Nightfall now are miles away from their previous albums such as, e.g., "Macabre Sunsets." "Diva Futura" shows this Greek band to base their sound on dark gothic rock. The nearest comparisons could be the two latest albums by Paradise Lost: same catchy melodic heavy rock. Some more comparisons come to my mind, too, for example, the first track reminds of Metallica's "Master of Puppets," also we can remember Tiamat's more gothic songs (like "Cold Skin") or Moonspell. But Nightfall have one really big problem - the vocals. I can't understand how these terrible vocals were added to such powerful and catchy music. Sometimes I even think that it would be better to listen to these 11 songs played without vocals. It is clear that they tried to make singer's voice to sound modern and remind of industrially re-worked Marilyn Manson, but the result doesn't satisfy at all. Vocals aside, here we have one of the best albums of dark gothic/metal style. With a better singing, they could stand next to Type O Negative (and Nightfall's concept reminds of Type O Negative: dark love, lesbians...). Maybe it is really the best Nightfall's album so far, but this group really must do something with their vocal lines if they want to become a gothic band of the first class. Comparing with colleagues of the style Diabolique, Nightfall created a much more professional and technical music, but they didn't succeed with the singing. (AO)
3 3/4



NIGHTWISH

Oceanborn

Spinefarm Records

It's a mystery how this Finnish band conquered the metal underground by storm in the first half of 1999, and it's equally or more surprising that their songs reside in Finnish pop charts. And Nightwish deserve it all, if not more, because their second album "Oceanborn" is an ear super candy, uniting the best of Therion's "Theil" (mainly), Rhapsody, and Amorphis' "Elegy." The music is very romantic, bombastic, symphonic, and purely metal at the core; and their female singer is a real opera vocalist. Her voice adds the originality to Nightwish, but even judging the music itself... damn, every fan of "Theil" or Rhapsody's "Legendary Tales" would be happy to hear this. The only thing that holds me from giving the top score to this album is the occasionally repetitive musical fundament. It's a minor flaw though, and those Finns are so fascinated by their own created epic symbolic imagery that they will easily transfer a listener to their nostalgic nights of dreams about oceans, stargazers, and wilderness. (GS)
4 1/2

NOX MORTIS

7 Lies

Prophecy Productions

Melodic dark metal isn't a big rarity these days, and Nox Mortis are a good reflection of what is going on in this style. Less metal elements and more gothic rock. If some groups like Nightfall still play solos and generally remind us that they came from metal scene, Nox Mortis dive deep into emotional dark gothic. Remember My Dying Bride's "Turn Loose the Swans"? Nox Mortis have something from that sound, if we leave death elements aside. "7 Lies" shows aggression in places (like deathly doom "3:31 PM"), but it is also melancholic, sentimental, and, after all, again turns everything into dreamy emotions. The vocals here are mostly clean and melodic, and I can recommend "7 Lies" to those who like more emotional, sad dark metal, not the catchy and groovy one. If comparing Nox Mortis to gothic scene, Nox Mortis are clearly Swans, not The Sisters Of Mercy of this style. (AO)
3 3/4

OCCULT

Of Flesh and Blood

Massacre Records

Occult are new hopefuls of Dutch old-school death metal. In fact, Occult aren't newcomers in the scene, it's already their third album, and they also played in Dynamo



Open Air '97. But this album seems to be the most solid, and they're getting massive promotion from their label, so expect Occult to become one of the new heroes of old death metal. First of all, this album is for the fans of old, brutal death metal in the veins of Bolt Thrower or their natives Gorefest. It also has this nostalgic feeling of transitional period from thrash to death: double guitar solos, melodies reminding of Kreator or other thrash giants, but double-bass and vocals reminding of old-school death metal. Well, Occult haven't escaped modern influences, in places, their music reminds a bit of Six Feet Under, and some tracks like "Stolen" have a very slight touch of Atheist. Occult also have one special thing: a female singer besides male growls and shouts. To tell the truth, the female singing here doesn't remind of the female beauty we are used to hear, Rachel sings maybe most aggressively in all the metal empire. Solid work for fans of old death metal. (AO)
3 3/4

ODES OF ECSTASY
Embossed Dream in Four Acts
The End Records

This band comes from Greece but has nothing in common with their natives Septic Flesh, Necromantia, or Rotting Christ. Instead of these inspirations, we get a more death version of Therion. Odes of Ecstasy also deliver symphonic, classical metal but they don't forget to show that they are a death metal band. And that usually disturbs, for example, "Faithless" could be a great melodic symphonic metal song not much worse than some songs of Therion, but the growling male vocals destroy all harmony. The only song where everything is in place is "The Total Absence of Light," which is one of the best examples of symphonic death metal. But Theatre of Tragedy also had the same problems with death metal elements and successfully solved them. Odes of Ecstasy have the potential for this, and the group could explore more the beautiful voice of their female singer. It seems that we'll hear from them one day. (AO)
3 1/2

ODIUM
The Sad Realm of the Stars
Eclipse

Yeah, it's another ordinary black metal band that uses the same riffs and melodies through the whole album. The CD cover & booklet & title are nothing but a bunch of stupid stereotypes. Moreover, it looks very childish. I just hope that this flood of average black metal releases will shallow one day. That doesn't make sense anymore... (SV)
2 1/2

PAGAN WINTER
Inferos
Last Episode

Vow, what a CD-cover! Seeing this tortured guy in blood, I have a suspicion that this band consist of mentally diseased people, he he. OK, the music is more or less traditional black metal with bursting and cracking inserts between the songs. The vocals are also 100% black metal, not especially expressive though, the guitars play usual melodies, the drums & bass keep abreast of life, too. It's a pity that their songs are not as sick as their image, otherwise I would give them more than three points. (SV)
3

PAINFLOW
Audio-Visual-Aids
Massacre Records

The new generation of industrial metal comes, and some of new artists find their place even on Massacre Records, which don't seem to be very keen on industrial music. "Audio-Visual-Aids" is the debut album of these Finnish musicians and offers straight industrialized metal. Fans will notice a big list of their influences, beginning with Ministry and ending with Strapping Young Lad. It's driving, groovy, and in places very danceable industrial metal. The album is dedicated to fans of a bit more diverse industrial, e.g., the first single from this album "Frontline" has clear influences of hardcore, yet contains driving melodies as well. Together with "Ganglas" and "I Fuckin Kill," "Frontline" is one of the highlights on this album. Already now it's clear that Painflow shouldn't disappear unnoticed. (AO)
3 3/4

PENETRALIA
Carpe Noctem (Legends of Fullmoon Empires)
Last Episode

The debut album of blackers from Germany. They try to combine black metal with gothic music, dark wave feelings, and operatic elements, in other words - traditional black metal plus melodic keyboards sound and female vocals. The sound isn't very powerful and needs improvements in order to achieve real quality, but the mystical atmosphere of this album marks it out from all the black metal clan. Penetratia seem to look for their own path in the current black-metal misery, and it's only for good. (AO)
3 3/4

PIK
The Heritage of Past Gods
Mighty Music

PIK finally released their debut album. It is already the right time for this, because PIK have been in underground for years and developed their style. PIK play emotional doom metal with strong vocals, which remind of Peter Steele from Type O Negative. However, singer H.D.Beck doesn't purely imitate Peter's style, it is obvious that his influences also come from traditional heavy metal and such groups as Iron Maiden. The music is very slow, that is what we could bravely call real doom metal. Combined with expressive singing, it must appeal to fans of slow, melancholic, and depressive doom metal. (AO)
3 1/2

PISSING RAZORS
Cast Down the Plague
Noise Records

This band from El Paso, Texas are one of the most touring metal bands in USA, and their music is directed to the fans of "modern" aggressive metal like Machine Head and Pantera. Not very creative comparisons, but they are true. While the level of convincing energy is a bit inferior to the best bands of the subgenre, the clean and powerful production of Andy Sneap (ex-Sabbat) adds value to this release. Angry mid-tempo grooves do their job as well. All Pissing Razors tracks reside somewhere in the middle between catchy drive-oriented Pro Pain material and heavy riffs of the best Machine Head and Pantera moments; and the band seems to be comfortable with that. (GS)
3 3/4

POISON THE WELL
Distance only Makes the Heart Grow
Fonder EP

Goodlife Recordings
Finally, Florida's hardcore band that I like quite a lot. Maybe that's because it's not pure hardcore and contains melodic metal influences. The tracks like "Tom" or "Material Christ" are real discoveries in this style; I haven't thought that punk/HC could be so greatly combined with Gothenburg style. It is said that Poison The Well play similarly to Morning Again, but to me Poison The Well are much better. I even think that this is one of the bands that can force real metalheads to pay more attention to hardcore. Unfortunately, it's only a 5-song EP. (AO)
4

PRO-PAIN
Act of God
Nuclear Blast Records

While the riffs are not as strict as of modern Pantera, one of USA's most known hardcore metal band focuses on the drive and catchiness. The songs sound energetic, but the outburst is not big enough to qualify the band for the race of the most angry (with Slayer, Strapping Young Lad, and the aforementioned Pantera). Pro-Pain have got metal's "seriousness" as well as the easiness of rock n'roll, and I feel that this album is for a fan of milder aggressive metal. (GS)
3 3/4

RESURRECTURIS
Nocturnal
Diamond Rds International

After several good tapes Resurrecturis from Italy present us their first CD. Musically, "Nocturnal" is another step forward in the career of the band. If the song-quality of their demos was swaying, so the new material is far better settled dynamically. It's fresh and melodic death metal with nice guitar riffs and

solo parts, attractive rhythms. "Nocturnal" lies the brutality of Morbid Angel and the energy of Testament. The use of female voice in "Dark Moods" or "Midnight Letter" and some grindcore parts give the album the desired variety. I hope that their label will find professional working distributors to promote this above-average product. (SV)
[Diamond Rds International, Postbus 2166, 1620 ED Horn, The Netherlands]
3 3/4

REVEAL
Through the Eye of Perfection Evolution Dies Slowly
Goodlife Recordings

Finally, some bizarre stuff from hardcore label Good Life Recordings. Gloomy, depressive, but varied material with a bit hysterical vocals. Has also hints to Neurosis at places. For hardcore conditions, the music is quite colorful, with some acoustic parts and nice guitar solo inserts. Smart design of the booklet and profound lyrics make this album one of the best underground hardcore releases this year. Aggressive music with an artistic edge. (SV)
4

ROTTING CHRIST
Sleep of the Angels
Century Media Records

A famous Greek band, which once was pushing the envelope with black metal cult "Thy Mighty Contract" (1993), has noticeably calmed down. Their fifth album is a mild-gothic/atmospheric metal offer, similar band's fourth album as well as to what Cemetery did once and disbanded. Some of the Cemetery melodies still play in my mind; to a certain degree, Rotting Christ achieved the same memorability ("After Dark I Feel" and "Sleep the Sleep of the Angels"), but some of the other tracks sound a bit shallow, maybe due to quite modest, non-screaming and softly-growling vocals. Century Media are helping out the band to remain visible, but to regain their authority in now a more competitive scene, the band needs to come up with more innovations than some German-sung lines. One positive aspect though is that the album's sombre and mildly powerful atmosphere is concise and captivative. (GS)
3 3/4

SACRAMENTUM
Thy Black Destiny
Century Media Records

The third album of these Swedes sounds surprisingly ferocious and wild. The main focus here is on in-your-face savage songs with strong technical side and soloing. Sacramentum apply the extremity of death/grind to black metal, making a double-double. Produced by Andy LaRocque, the album makes its sharp statement. The music isn't very melodic or diversified, but it's a well-done mix of ferocity, technicality, and darkness, which could win them some fans. (GS)
4

SALEM
A Moment of Silence
B.N.E.

Already five years have passed since the release of previous Salem's disc "Kaddish," so I've already forgotten about their existence. The silence is over, and the new album shows again that Salem are the best band from Israel (well, maybe not counting Orphaned Land). The style has changed comparing to their previous two albums, now it is much more melodic, rocky; we can compare it to blackened death metal with a touch of more recent Paradise Lost. The producer of this disc is Colin Richardson who produced such acts as Fear Factory or Machine Head. He didn't add the modern industrial metal touch but made this album to sound clear. I don't know whose influence is that "A Moment of Silence" has got this catchy, melodic character, but that's only for good, because now Salem can be bravely be added to dark metal's hall of fame. This disc also has two special tracks, a cover version of Pink Floyd's "Set the Controls for the Heart of the Sun" which marks that Salem can get psychedelic, and a catchy gothic remake of "Eyes to Match a Soul" which

OPETH
My Arms, your Hearse
Candlelight Records/Century Media Records

The musically and lyrically proficient giant that is Opeth is slowly awakening from its dormant state. Opeth's trilogy of thinking man's prog metal has been completed with "My Arms, your Hearse." Upon frequent listens, it is clear that Opeth's initial style of mixing death metal with elements of 70s prog rock has fulfilled it's potential. The third installment has lost the naiveté of youth and has resulted in a mature and compact blend of progressive metal with challenging and complex song build-ups (and without cheesy keyboards). Up tempo heavy parts with death growls, melodic acoustic parts with clear mid-range vocal styles are highly effective in transferring the different moods. The epic songs of the previous releases have been replaced with shorter songs (some still lasting just under 9 minutes) which are interwoven to create one whole novel instead of different chapters. This is shown aptly by the effortless transition from the ballad "Madrigal" to "The Amen Corner" which itself shifts from utopempro thrash to a doom-metal lament. For readers that have not been subjected to the genius that is Opeth: believe me, all the (positive) criticisms are true. Let's just hope that a future release under the banner of Peaceville can even transcend this masterpiece. (CR)
4 3/4

together with such tracks as "Winter's Tear" shows a new direction in group's creation. Though atmospheric doom (like on "In Another Dimension") is still present in Salem's world, it is interesting where this group will go in future. (AO)
[Salem, PO Box 566, Givataim 53000, Israel]
4

SAMAEI
Eternal
Century Media Records

Far from the current dark metal standards, Samael go on exploring other spacier and more atmospheric variants that have to do more with the integration of technology, electronic elements, and programming in their music. Even if it's difficult to place such an album stylistically, try to think of an hybrid between Moonspell's "Sin" and perhaps Rob Zombie's industrial project, keeping in mind the line Samael started tracing on the "Passages" album. I would personally suggest to include some of this, perturbing at times, music on "The Matrix" movie soundtrack, just to go on par with the gloomy decadent futuristic look both expel at their correspondent artistic levels. (GM)
4

SCATTERED REMNANTS
Destined to Fail
Repulse Records

Only the intelligent and non-traditional artwork of this album was interesting for me. "Destined to Fail" is one of the most boring Repulse's releases, even comparing with traditionally boring-enough brutalists incantation, Scattered Remnants are nothing but a mix of double-bass, super-brutal growls, and heaviness. Be it professional or not, it is boring and traditional brutal US death metal. (AO)
2 3/4

SCEPTER OF HADES
Eth Ned demo EP
self-released

Black metal from Germany. The sound-quality isn't brilliant, I suppose these 4 songs were recorded in a rehearsal room. The best track is "Scepter of Hades" with great vocal lines and nice guitar parts. The rest isn't so impressive. Traditional black metal, more or less. (SV)
[10DM, M.Schaefer, Florianstr. 8, 56753 Trimb, Germany]
3

IRON MONKEY

mushrooms in the air

[by Audrius Ozalas and Sigita Velyvis]



One thing that makes me really nervous after returning from Western Europe to Lithuania is the total lack of concerts of more or less known metal bands from abroad. Since the last winter when I returned back from the Netherlands, I was able to see Apocalyptica. What else? I can't remember, maybe Jesus Martyr. And that's all.

So you can understand the joy of an ordinary Lithuanian citizen when he sees the posters announcing the gig of such acts as Pro-Pain, Pissing Razors, and Iron Monkey. I haven't heard Pissing Razors, but their stage performance later proved that I had not missed anything essential. To tell the truth, even Pro-Pain weren't the main band for me on this gig either. Of course, their latest CD is pretty good, but Iron Monkey is the band which interests "Edge of Time" correspondents most. Their album "Our Problem" on Earache Records presented interesting stoner-doom, clearly inspired by Black Sabbath, with strange vocals and provocative art-work (giant gorilla with over-sized genitalia, replet with syringes attached, surrounded by crucifixions and disembowelments). They aren't as good as Spiritual Beggars or Monster Magnet, but to see Iron Monkey live seems to be real excitement.

The day of the concert comes, and I take a walk to "Kablys," an old truly underground-like building, where most underground gigs take place. And there I face the first disappointment: the concert begins three hours later than it was announced (the groups had some problems at the border). But you know how it goes, first you take one bottle of beer, then another, then the third, and life isn't so boring any longer. It's like that until the second bad news: Iron Monkey won't play tonight because of problems with their singer's voice. But we together with my colleague at "Edge of Time," Sigita decide to talk to this band anyway and to figure out the real story behind their album sleeve, inspirations, magic mushrooms, and other important things in this life. While Pissing Razors are playing quite boring hardcore, which pleases mostly punk-heads, we go straight to the bus where Iron Monkey seem to enjoy their time. Marijuana, some bottles of wine, and the night isn't so dark any longer (I suppose, it was already midnight).

It seems strange to do this interview. Imagine a bus driver, who walks around all the time and keeps talking about problems with the bus; Iron Monkey musicians smoking dope and drinking wine; two "Edge of Time" correspondents with beer in their hands; six or more people who appeared from

nowhere and often speak louder than we or the musicians (for this reason, I couldn't understand everything that was recorded on the tape). Everybody is quite drunk and lively.

Anyway, here we go, and that's what we have talked about. As it was extremely hard to distinguish who asked or answered the questions, all the questions are assigned to Edge of Time and all the answers are assigned to Iron Monkey. [Another individuality insult, as if we don't have enough of those in our society... -GS]

OK, we are ready to listen to the story of your group.

We formed our band four years ago, in 1995. We've recorded our first record and put it out on a small record label. Then people from Earache picked us up and said that they want to release our album on their label. We toured in England, and our new album "Our Problem" was released last year in August. We went touring with Extreme Noise Terror, and it was the first time when we toured to promote our album! [But that was enough for "Terrorizer" to name this band the best newcomer from England. -AO]

And how did Earache pick you up; have you sent them a demo, CD, or it was another story?

No, we just live in the same city where this label is based, Nottingham. So we were playing some live shows, and they just came to see us. They thought that we were good enough and offered us a deal for four albums.

What about the style, have you been playing it since the beginning?

Yeah, pretty much the same, it changed slightly...

[Here, the interview was interrupted, because the bus driver finally decided that he needed help, and all the musicians had to leave everything and go to help the driver to push the bus. Of course, without any positive results.]

Well, let's continue the interview. As far as I can remember, we've stopped talking about the style...

[Again, the screams of people who desperately try to push the bus. The musicians from Iron Monkey try to explain that their style is "just to rock, smoke dope, drink wine, all that's music." As a confirmation of this, the new bottle of wine is brought, and Minda from "Wounded" zine prepares another big joint. The talk grows more and more jolly.]

And what about drugs? As I understand, you smoke dope, but what about other drugs, cocaine, for example?

Have you got some?

No, but what do you think about it?

[As expected, the answer is extremely incoherent. Topics like which drugs are "light" and which drugs are "hard" are discussed. Like, for example, "is heroine

'light' drugs or not?" Mushrooms? "No, not mushrooms. Better acid, LSD.]" Let's change the topic and talk about this tour. Which countries were the best for you?

Greece was excellent. There was great advertising, everybody knew that we were playing, everybody knew about Iron Monkey. Gigs were very good. We were all sick after the show, but the crowd still wanted more.

And what about England? What are the reactions from your home country? People hate us in England.

On this tour, you play with the groups of the style quite different from yours. How is it like to play with groups like Pro-Pain?

It is very good to play with different groups, because then people can hear different styles, groups, diverse stuff, you know.

But have you played with other stoner-rock groups from United Kingdom, like, for example, Orange Goblin or Cathedral?

Yeah, we played quite a lot of shows with Orange Goblin, they are very good friends of us. Our styles are quite different, but we also have much in common.

And what about inspirations? Kyuss?

No, I think, old hardcore, all these 70s bands. Also, groups like Winter, ZZ Top and other acts we grew up with. Of course, groups like Kyuss are also excellent, very very professional.

[Sudden change of the topic] Have you been to the Netherlands? Dynamo Open Air festival?

Yeah, we've been here, very cool.

But there are too many German people (who prefer old styled heavy metal)...

[Dear reader, take a wild guess who asked this question. If your guess is correct, you'll get a free CD. If not, you send us a free CD. No rip offs, okay? -GS]

Yeah, too many of them, but they are everywhere.

[For some moments, everybody is silent. Obviously, everybody thinks about the Netherlands, and only the smoke of dope is heard.]

What is it like being on Earache? Is it like your dream label; which label would you change it for?

They are OK, we wouldn't like to change them for another label. Of course, they've got much of crap albums, but that's the problem with all labels. Anyway, we like their older stuff. There are not so many groups which we like on this label now, but Cathedral is still OK, as well as Morbid Angel.

Who painted this picture for your album? [Sigita points at Iron Monkey long-sleeve he recently bought from the group.]

This is a work by US artist Mike Diana. He is the only person who is jailed for his own pictures. Our singer just collects some of his comixes, so we have used one of them. [Indeed, Mike Diana is the only artist in US history to be convicted of obscenity and a registered sex offender. He is currently working off a

\$3000 fine and 1300 hours of community service, and undergoing mandatory psychiatric treatment. -AO]

Your lyrics aren't printed in an easy-to-read way. Speaking more, it is quite difficult to read and understand them...

Yes, it is very difficult to read them. And to understand, of course. To tell the truth, we don't really know what these lyrics are about. Our singer writes them and doesn't tell what they mean. Each listener can read them and decide for himself.

We heard about the split-up of Acrimony and we know that their guitarist is playing with you now.

Stu [from Iron Monkey]: Yeah, I'm here now. Well, we were getting into music business with Acrimony. You know, music business is shit, all these industry people... So we were tired of it all and decided to stop. Then I came along with Iron Monkey, I liked their music, and the guys who play here are fine. Anyway, there will be one more album by Acrimony, but I'm not sure which label will release it.

By the way, you thanked various drugs on Acrimony's "Hymns to the Stone" [specifically: "herb, psychedelics, ecstasy, fermented apple brews"], is it easy to get, for example, so called "magic mushrooms" in England?

Stu: Not in England, in Wales. People keep picking 'em, growing. I can't tell you why it's in Wales, for some reasons maybe. For example, early eighties crust-core!

[The talk again becomes too difficult and complex to clearly reproduce here. Long-haired maniacs discuss about this hot topic of mushrooms, and the final solution is "there are mushrooms in the air." Understand it as you wish. The wine is poured once again, and the toast for Danzig is proposed. Iron Monkey explain how badly they don't want to go touring to Russia, and the smiles appear only when remembering about upcoming concerts in Germany. I can't remember how, but the talk about Misfits turned out ("Misfit are rubbish"). All in all, it was clear that it's time to end this interview.]

OK, so thank for this talk, we'll return here after the Pro-Pain show.

Of course, somehow we didn't return. Good intentions don't always come true. Pro-Pain ruled, and I can only imagine how Iron Monkey would have been playing their gig.

But anyway, each story has its end. And it's best to end a story with a mysterious fact. And luckily, we've got one here. Some days after the show, I met Ugnius from Dangus Productions, and he said that people from Latvia phoned him and said that all this caravan with Iron Monkey, Pro-Pain, and Pissing Razors had to come to Riga (it was the next stop in groups' tour, before Estonia and big festival in Moscow), but nobody had seen them. The caravan simply disappeared. I don't know any more details about the ending of this tour, but it would be really interesting to know what had happened and why the band hadn't travelled as it was planned. But again, everything can happen when you have mushrooms in the air...

SCHOLMANCE

A Treatise on Love

The End Records

Dark atmospheric death metal, the music on "A Treatise on Love," does not really correspond to the inspirations of Scholmance, such as Iron Maiden, Cynic, Dream Theater, Meshuggah, Volvod, Björk, and In Flames. The fact is that the band is highly willing to experiment and innovate, that is why their songs rarely follow some usual structure, they always evolve in a romantic and eclectic way. The vocals are harsh, and this is perhaps the only component which is not very diverse in the album. Apart from that, the music is quite interesting and enjoyable, if you are willing to explore something a little bit out of ordinary. It would not be surprising if such album would have been released by Holy Records back in 1994, it would fit their style (Misanthrope, Nightfall, On Thorns I Lay) rather well. But now The End Records seem to carry a similar flag... (GS)

[Scholmance, c/o Scott Crinklaw, 8118 N. State HWY AC, Willard, MO 65781, USA]

3/3/4

SEPTISM

Purulent Decomposition

Repulse Records

This band exists from 1992 but only now has released its first full-length. It's a strange thing indeed, because it looks much more professional than most of the bands in death/grind scene and is surely one of the best acts in Repulse's grinding-death legion. It reminds a bit of their labmates Deeds of Flesh, but Septism's music is more technical, and especially drummer's work is exciting. "Purulent Decomposition" should be a good listen not only for brutal death/grind fans, but also for fans of technical death metal. (AO)

3/3/4

SETH

Les Blessures de l'Ame

Season of Mist

I'm not sure how big is black metal movement in France, but logically it must be quite wide. Anyway, who can name some known black bands from this country? Seth plan to take this position and already now they are named as the hottest band from France. One really interesting feature of Seth is that they sing in French; as far as I remember, not so many groups deliver French-sung black metal. Generally, it is traditional black metal, more aggressive than melodic (except some folk/melodic songs like "Hymne aux vampires"), and Seth can't compete with their much more skilled colleagues on Nocturnal Art Productions (for example, Oidium or Limbonic Art). It is one more traditional satanic black metal band to add to your list. It is not boring but maybe a bit dull. Anyway, the new album is promised to be more interesting, at least some known figures from Norway like Fenriz (Darkthrone), Blasphemar (Mayhem), and Maniac (also Mayhem) are going to appear as guest musicians. (AO)

[Seth, 21 Rue Saint Hubert, 33000 Bordeaux, France]

3

SHOREBREAK

Path of Survival

Goodlife Recordings

Spanish hardcore. Shorebreak are really one of the better underground bands of this genre. Their music comprises both aggressiveness and melody that are expressed in such cool tracks like "E.P.S.B.", "Broken Heart," or the instrumental "Just Something...". Many people compare Shorebreak with bands like Morning Again, but, anyway, they add their own touch... As the info says: "Their whole life is dedicated to their music and playing out; spreading the message of a cruelty-free (vegetarian/vegan) and drug-free lifestyle!" (SV)

3/1/2

SILVARA

Search Within/Ignorant

self-released

A new band from California offers death/trash metal with some technical tendencies, especially in instrumental track "1 Frat, 2 Frat." Overall, the songs follow Death, Morbid Angel, or Sarpultura routes, and the emphasis on the technical side is fair but not big. The exception is a couple of songs that sound more like an effort to make a more interesting version of Pantera, but ending up being noticeably less powerful. The vocals could be more expressive because, as of now, they don't add much to the music. In general, the release (which is actually a collection of two demos) is more a documentation of band's appearance in the scene and demonstration of their potential (especially, in the first part of the CD, which

SENTENCED

Frozen

Century Media Records

It's the first time when Sentenced put out a sequel similar to an original. From the debut "Shadows of the Past" (1991) to the fourth album "Down" (1997), they transformed from an underground death metal act to a popular heavy rock band. And no albums in-between sounded similar to each other. Meanwhile, "Frozen" is a clear continuation of "Down." But once you try to open your mouth and complain about that, these Finnish nihilists quickly shut it up with their glorious melodies that shine everywhere on this album ("Grave Sweet Grave" and "Mourn" are the best examples). Musically, it's very minor-toned metal, lyrically, it's dark and suicidal. (GS)

4/1/2

contains newer material), than an actual release for metal fans. (GS)

[Silvara, 611 Isla Pl., Davis, CA 95616, USA]

3

SINS OF OMISSION

The Creation

Black Sun Records

Reviewing a Gothenburg metal release again sparked a discussion between me and my wife on why some singers sound "like mad dogs." What can I say, the vocals of Sins of Omission are very far from being the most diverse in the metal scene, and while the classical melodic riffs are very catchy in opener "Eager for the Fray," their subsequent black/death hardly goes anywhere but downhill. Dual guitars shine in some places, but neither melodies nor aggressiveness are at a good level, making this release nothing more than a mediocre derivative. So, unless you want to owe an entire Black Sun catalog (the label specializes in the Gothenburg style), better don't spend too much time on reading this review. (GS)

3

SIX FEET UNDER

Maximum Violence

Metal Blade Records

"Maximum Violence" presents a new guitarist in this group: Alien West left and former Massacre guitarist Steve Swanson entered. This clearly changed Six Feet Under's music. The new album isn't so technical as the previous one, it returns to band's more brutal, aggressive, and straight sound. If their previous disc "Warpath" showed the group to bring more experimental, different sound, "Maximum Violence" can be characterized as the return to the group's roots and can be compared to "Haunted," not "Warpath." This disappoints in the beginning, because the groovy death metal that I expected to progress after their previous album was changed to more standard, traditional death metal. It seems like the band's frontman Chris Barney tried to come back to his years in Cannibal Corpse (and his gore lyrics prove that), so the style became the most brutal in the



SATURNUS

For the Loveless Lonely Nights EP

Euphonious Records

The previous album by Saturnus "Paradise Belongs to You" was perfect doom/death played in the veins of My Dying Bride '93, and I remember how I thought that it was almost the best example of how doom/death should sound now. Also, there was one track "Fall of Nakkla" performed in a strange way of apocalyptic-folk grands Current 93. The new EP also begins with a tribute to doom/death ("Starras"), but later on Saturnus again turn to a more melancholic, dreamy, and highly emotional gothic music. Here, we can't find such clear influences of neo-folk, instead, Saturnus, little by little, form their own sound, which is a mix of the most quiet songs by My Dying Bride, folk sound, and emotional gothic background. All four new songs are very different, and, for example, "Consecration" is almost in the ambient world. And we can bravely say that these songs are the best tracks Saturnus have ever made. Presented two live-tracks aren't as good as the new songs, but it's still one of the best EPs in melancholic metal music field. (AO)

4/1/4

career of Six Feet Under. This album is for the fans of more brutal death in the veins of Napalm Death or Cannibal Corpse than for those of more groovy, modern metal. (AO)

4

SKEPTICISM

Lead and Aether

Red Stream Records

Skepticism are true to their funeral doom, it's the most torturing and depressive group in a not-so-happy doom world. Already their previous works could make you ask a question: is it the deadend of getting more monolithic and nihilistic? Now we can say no, because "Lead and Aether" is even more minimalistic than "Stormcrowfleet." It is more depressive than depression and more nihilistic than nihilism itself. This album almost lost its concept as if built up by separate songs: "Lead and Aether" offers one monument of minimal sounds and torturing sense of monotonous soundscapes. The music has got a bit more aggressive character and darker approach. Don't compare it to dark ambient, Skepticism aren't an ambient group! It is metal music, but this metal is at its edge of minimalism. The darkest turn of doom metal. (AO)

4

SKINLAB

Disembody: The New Flesh

Century Media Records

The second album of Skinlab may establish them in the aggressive metal scene and give the press some comparison alternatives for frequent use in addition to Fear Factory, Machine Head, and Pantera. Skinlab take a bit more adventurous approach than the latter two, constructing a diverse album, a good deal of which is similar to what Rage Against the Machine would have done if they were thrash/death. The main strength of "Disembody" is its pounding rhythms along with a versatile arsenal of dynamically used tools like diverse vocals or avantgarde soundscapes (like in the hidden track between the eerie "Scapegoat" and "Breathe, or in 'I Name My Pain"). Definitely an album to look for, if you don't mind first the rhythm and then the melody, yet do not want the first to completely overshadow the second. (GS)

4/1/4

SKYCAMEFALLING

...to Forever Embrace the Sun

Goodlife Recordings

New York band that is on this famous hardcore label but surprisingly plays many-sided music that very often has nothing to do with hardcore. Sometimes they remind me of At The Gates because of their aggressiveness, sometimes they swim in acoustic/atmospheric fields. There are some cool songs on this album like "Of Adornment and Disguise" or the title-track instrumental. I would call this music a mixture of different styles from death metal, hardcore, and simply metal. Especially recommended for Kreator, Meshuggah, and At The Gates fans. (SV)

4

SOIL

El Chupacabra! EP

MIA Records

"Masters of terror return... Soil...starring in El Chupacabra!", says the CD cover. I don't know what Soil are trying to say here, but their music is worth listening to, in any case. Throw Black Sabbath and latest Anthrax stuff in one pot, and you'll get an approximate picture about this band. "El Chupacabra!" comprises modern thrash elements as well as doom/psychadelic parts. Don't forget to add the singer that sings like John Bush from Anthrax. Cool. My faves are "Broken Wings" and "Crucified." Try this one. (SV)

3/3/4

SOIL

Throttle Junkies

MIA Records

Soil's EP "El Chupacabra" had one of the most stupid cover arts last year, but its music was promising. Soil managed to combine elements of such groups as Black Sabbath and Corrosion of Conformity. The full-length has a normal cover art and even better music. Soil go in the same direction that was begun on the EP, but, first of all, now they've got a famous producer, S. Albini (Page/Plant, Bush, Nirvana) by their side. The music became more groovy, and the influence of Black Sabbath is more evident than before. But the closest band to Soil is Life of Agony, especially, when we talk about the vocals. The lambs of R. McCombs also reminds of Danzig and all his followers. If we want to make a list of references more complete, we must also mention Rotors To Rust and their combination of groove and psychedelics.

All these comparisons talk for themselves, but that doesn't mean that Soil haven't got their individual sound. No, Soil definitely have something similar to Rotors To Rust or Life of Agony, but they also have the background of American hard-rock traditions, this sense of solid rock. Their music is song-oriented, "Everything" and "Road to Ruin" prove that best. They sound heavier than the groups mentioned above, and the feeling of going back to the roots of hard rock is revealed more openly. This music is perfect for playing it live, so I think that Soil will play loud'n'proud and will prove that groovy, pure heavy metal is alive. (AO)

4

SOLSTICE

New Dark Age

Misanthropy Records

The second full-length of this English doom-metal band. We had to wait four years after the release of "Lamentations" to hear bands new stuff. One EP and 10" were released during this period, but I almost buried this group. And now they return with their best music to date. "New Dark Age" is surely a new page in band's history, because it shows Solstice bringing absolutely new elements into their music. It is still mainly melodic doom, but the songs like "The Anguire Roar" are pure folk/medieval music.

These new influences have changed the atmosphere of the band, it became deeper and with a horrifying sense of Apocalypse. Musically, Solstice are one of the few still existing doom bands with clear vocals. Morris Ingram is able to express emotions without growls, screams; just clean, melodic singing (and no female vocals here!). The mood reminds a bit of more epic songs of Bathory, especially it is obvious on tracks like "The Sleeping Tyrant." Tempos don't change too much, it is slow, melancholic, and a bit sentimental doom metal - as it was meant to be. The album shows that this style doesn't necessarily mean the stagnancy. (AO)

4

SOULSEARCH

Abred Vs. Annwn

Serenades Records

The fourth album of this Austrian band combines elements of classical music, gothic, metal, and folk. We remember Haggard, which also released their long-play on Serenades Records. Think of them, but Soulsearch are much more metallic and less polished than Haggard: To tell the truth, the first tracks represent a bit boring atmospheric metal. But starting with beautiful folk "Owl Auld," the album begin to progress. Of course, everybody uses folk melodies nowadays, but Soulsearch incorporate them elegantly and powerfully. Especially, I like the tracks like "Seals of Gressa": I remember also the band called Dark Reality: maybe it's the most exact

comparison with Soulesearch. Like Dark Reality, Soulesearch sometimes include metal elements in places where it's not appropriate. Soulesearch also sing in German, and the folk background is the main part of their music. Interesting and promising album. I hope that, like in the case of Dark Reality, Soulesearch will progress really quickly. (AO)

4

SPIRIT 84

Beyond the Call of Friendship EP
Goodlife Recordings

As I understand it correctly, it's just pure hardcore. Spirit 84 come from the Netherlands and the name already indicates what this music tries to give us: the spirit of 1984's punk/hc movement. To tell the truth, this is that side of hardcore I don't like too much; I would rather listen to more experimental and emotional hardcore of their country mates Reveal. Spirit 84 still may attract your attention with their understandable, clear lyrics about lifestyle, friendship, movement, etc. Twelve songs on this EP are for the fighting urban youth. (AO)

3

SPIRIT OF YOUTH

Colors That Bleed

Goodlife Recordings

Belgium's oldest hardcore band is back with the new album. Their new material is probably not as catchy as on their split CD with One King Down, I miss some variety here. Similar guitar tunes and similar vocal lines have the upper hand on the whole album. It seems like this music could be popular only among true hardcore fans. I'm quite sure that only a few people outside this "family" will be interested in this material. (SV)

3

STRAPPING YOUNG LAD

No Sleep Till Bedtime (Live in Australia)
Century Media Records

A live effort of Townsend & Co.: nice sound of a really heavy music. The intensity, anger, brightness, and heaviness can be praised to the skies, but namely the melodic touches to the overall not-so-friendly extreme muzac makes the songs diverse, rich in thought, and complete. "No Sleep Till Bedtime" includes four tracks off SYL's second album "City", two off the debut, one brand new track "Far Beyond Metal" (this one killzizz), and two bonus tracks, "Japan" (in parts like Ocean Machine) and "Centipede." Strapping Young Lad's drilling vehicle is perhaps even more effective live than in the studio, and this release offers a fine selection of their material, so, if you have not heard the band before, why not to start with this one to explore the extreme side of Davin Townsend, once the singer of Vai's "Sex & Religion." (GS)

[Hevy Devy Records, PO Box 44116, Burnaby B.C., V5B 4Y2 Canada]

4

SUN OF THE SLEEPLESS

Poems to Wretched Hearts EP

Prophecy Productions

Sun of the Sleepless is a solo project of Ulf Theodor Schwadorf (who contributed to previous works of Empyrium). As often with these solo projects, this short (three song, 15 minutes) EP features black metal. More specifically, it's old-school Norwegian style extreme black metal with the characteristic raw/simple guitar chords, hyper-speed drumming, screaming vocals, and some peaceful interludes. The atmosphere reminds a bit of the older works of Satyricon and Ulver. The mid-tempo parts of the songs show some interesting ideas with flute and better production. However, as a whole, the song structures are too simple, often unnecessarily repetitive, and no distinct novelties can be found to be above average. (CR)

3 1/4

SWARM

Swarm EP

self-released

Three ex-Death Angel members joined their forces once again, and their new band is called Swarm. The EP contains four songs of energizing metal. We hear more aggression than we were used to in The Organization (post-Death Angel) days, the songs are created so that they would blast very well live, and funk elements are still present. Compared to Death Angel's best, "Act III" album, Swarm aren't miles away: good drives, rhythms, and grooves (in places reminding of heavier Faith No More) prevail here, but they do not leave place for the lyrical side. For an EP, it's completely fine, but for a full-length, some melodic lyrical



TESTAMENT

The Gathering

Spitfire Records

After a miserable attempt of death metal in "Demonic," Testament returned with full force. Chuck Billy and Eric Peterson recruited big names like James Murphy, Steve DiGiorgio, and Dave Lombardo, and delivered one hell of an energetic thrash metal record, not relying much on the past, but forming the resurging face of good thrash, which now would barely exist if you'd remove all the retro bands. Chuck Billy went back to his classical powerful voice technique, and deathly growls only in a couple of songs; his real voice is much more convincing than "pissed-off" death growls. The album is very focused on rhythms and riffs, does not rely too much on soloing. Andy Sneap proves his status as one of the most demanded aggressive metal producers. Welcome back, Testament, we missed you. (GS)

[Spitfire Records, 19 Hanover Pl., #240, Hickville, NY 11801, USA]

4 1/4

parts (that we know the band is capable of doing) would be beneficial in adding more diversity. What rejoices is that, even today, Swarm are hard to pigeonhole and possess a unique feel. (GS)

[2269 Chestnut St. Suite 967, San Francisco, CA 94123, USA]

4

TEMPLE OF THE ABSURD

Mother, Creator, God

High Gain Records

A second album of Temple Of The Absurd, the band featuring ex-Holy Moses singer Sabina Classen. "Mother, Creator, God" is an impressive mixture of modern metal, unique growling/whispering vocals of Sabina, and profound lyrics that deal with a human psyche. The first three tracks go well forward, good intense stuff with Sabina's expressive statements. Following highlights are "The Mate" with a cool refrain and the relaxed "Requiem for Misanthropy." The last track is a strange interpretation of Jethro Tull's song "Locomotive Breath." Good album, but I think, such lyrics simply cry out for more innovative/experimental sounds. (SV)

[Shure Shot Promotions, Sabina Classen, Oberhafenstr. 1, Fruchthof, 20097 Hamburg, Germany]

4

TENHI

Hallavet EP

Prophecy Productions

Only a brief taste of the forthcoming album: just two tracks offering a very laid-back and peaceful music along the lines of gothic, folk, and atmospheric rock. It's mainly based on acoustic guitars and melancholic vocal melodies sung in Finnish language. A quite relaxing slow music, far more mellow than, e.g., The Gathering, more reminiscent to acts like Empyrium. (GS)

[SDM, Prophecy Productions, Kurfürstenstrasse 5, 54492 Zeltlingen-Rachtig, Germany]

3 3/4

TERVEET KADET

The Ultimate Pain

Solar Disk

Legendary Finnish hardcore group Terveet Kadet have released their next album on the small label from Oulu. It's quite strange because the roots of this band lay already in the 70s, when the band was influenced by such groups as Discharge or Ramones, and, in the next decade, they made a name for themselves in the hardcore underworld. I'm not sure how many albums they have released to this date, but I guess that quite many of them and that all HC-ducks :) know about this band. The new album is still

based on their old influences (meaning melodic and rocking hardcore), but also has more recent metal influences. It is interesting that the singer on this disc is Laja who sung here 20 years ago. The times have changed, but his voice became only more aggressive. The production and sound quality of the album are perfect, and not so many new bands can play the old style hardcore as good as TK do here. So, if you are tired of the Pantera/Biohazard hardcore style, listen to "The Ultimate Pain," which may bring a remembrance of rock'n'roll and such groups as Ramones. (AO)

4 1/4

THALARION

Tales of the Woods... Thus was Written

Mighty Music

Doom/death with folk melodies. Maybe only the folk melodies (Thalarion are from Slovakia) add more liveliness to this disc; without them this release would sound like first albums of Paradise Lost or My Dying Bride. Male vocals are mainly growling very typically to traditional doom/death, and it wouldn't be a real doom/death without female vocals, right? Yes, female vocals are here, so the standard is complete. I think that I almost haven't got what else to say, it's one of the most typical doom/death albums, even though the press release says that "Thalarion definitely don't sound like any other bands." Sorry, I've been listening to these schemes for 6 years already, and the bands that made these schemes alive, like Anathema or My Dying Bride, progressed a lot. I hope that the same future awaits Thalarion. Now it is death doom with very slight elements of folk and black metal. (AO)

3

THERION

Crowning Atlantis

Nuclear Blast Records

As every time since the highly acclaimed "The1" album, Therion have big shoes to fill. They didn't really exceed expectations with "Vovin"; and "Crowning Atlantis," as "A'arab Zaraq..." (1997), is not a regular album, so the requirements are not that high.

Four new songs on "Crowning Atlantis" continue the orchestral-metal traditions of "Vovin" with high female vocals and male/female choirs, and, while are not very innovative with riffs, spellbounds the listener with mild and romantic sublime atmosphere. Isn't it weird to hear after three such songs a Loudness cover about "rock n'roll crazy nights"? Anyway, after "A'arab Zaraq..." we can expect some eclecticism from Johnsons & Co. Manowar's "Thor" is irrefragably performed, and singer's mildly powerful voice adds a unique touch. Also, on this album we have Accept's "Seawinds" and three cover versions of older Therion songs including the mighty "To Mega Therion." The four new songs sound very solid, and the fact that they are on such album means that either Therion don't have any creative crisis or that the new album will be totally different than "Vovin," so the songs wouldn't fit there. (GS)

4

TONCA

demo CD'98

self-released

Varied hardcore/thrash from Norway.

Reminds me a bit of Prong and some hardcore groups. They use a little of industrial elements here and there that give the music some attractive accents. The vocals go towards Biohazard/Prong, surprise the listener with some interesting parts in places, but are lacking in expression though. Mixed impressions... (SV)

[Yngve Jacobsen, Pionneveien 1a, 4635 Kristiansand, Norway]

3 1/4

USURPER

Usurper II: Skeletal Season

Necropolis Records

Usurper is a black/death/thrash metal group that has already toured with Dark Funeral and played some shows with Cradle Of Filth. This album is the second release, the debut "Diabolosis" came out in 1995. Although it's not a masterpiece, there are some cool dynamic moments here and there. Sometimes Usurper sound like Celtic Frost in their early days (remember Hellhammer). They write fast, angry songs as well as slower heavy pieces. Recommended for true old-school black metal fans, others should better not get involved. (SV)

3 1/4

V/A

A Collection of Darkness

Euphonious Records

Euphonious Records decided to release a compilation featuring their groups. The most known of them are Withering Surface, Exmortem, and Stiff Miners. At least two groups are more than worth of attention: Satumus and Stiff Miners; and also the new disc by Withering Surface seems to go very well. Of course, if you are interested in the Danish metal scene, buy this CD, as it contains 15 tracks, most of which are performed by Danish groups, but, all in all, there are better compilations around. (AO)

V/A

ECW Extreme Music

Earache Records

Earache Records have combined an original idea with good musicians, so the result is a real surprise for the ears of extreme music fans. ECW show is one of the most popular extreme show which can be viewed on cable TV, and the groups presented here are the masters of their work. Here we've got 12 tracks including Megadeth, Anthrax, Bruce Dickinson, White Zombie, and Morbid Angel among others. The most interesting thing is that most tracks are previously unreleased, and this CD also includes exclusive covers. Here, Motorhead made the cover of Metallica's "Enter Sandman," Monster Magnet reworked "Kick out the Jams," by MCS and Bruce Dickinson covered "The Zoo," originally written by Scorpions. These are only some of the highlights of this album, and, of course, we face Earache's own extreme children here. Cathedral with their groovy "Freedom" and Iron Monkey with "Supagorgonizer" make this album to look complete. Of course, there are many albums where dozen of famous groups are presented, but rarely we get the compilation, where almost all tracks are exclusively recorded for it. "ECW Extreme Music" is one of them. (AO)

V/A

Gateway to Hell - A Tribute to Slayer

Dwell Records

Dwell Records will become famous as a label that releases almost exclusively tribute albums. As far as I can remember, there was a tribute to Celtic Frost, then a more interesting one dedicated to Iron Maiden, and now we've got the most interesting tribute on Dwell Records, this time different bands cover thrash legends Slayer. I think that the main problem of tribute albums that are released on this label is that there aren't many known bands, and most of the featured ones are still in deep underground and don't have their own sound. So, here we again have many covers which are more than weak, e.g., Diabolic's version of "Killing Fields" or Coffin Texts with "Cryps of Eternity." There are some interesting covers, too, though: Dark Funeral "Dead Skin Mask," Monstrosity "Angel of Death," Somnus "Seasons in the Abyss," and some others (all in all, we have got 13 tracks). As in the case with the tribute to Iron Maiden, I miss many central songs in Slayer creation: it seems that most groups on this compilation (most of them are black/death metal) are influenced by earlier tracks of Slayer. But Dwell Records have already prepared the second volume of this tribute, so maybe we'll find more legendary tracks. But even this first volume should attract your attention, especially if you're interested in the more aggressive styles of today. (AO)

V/A

Identity Five

Century Media Records

What's interesting in the new instalment of a compilation of Century Media Records artists? First, the order of songs, i.e., who, in Century Media's opinion, are the most worth of promotion. The first three are Iced Earth, Skrilab, and Lacuna Coil. Then: Turmoil, Sentenced, Katatonia, Nevemore, Old Man's Child, Blind Guardian, The Gathering, Haste, Cryptopsy, Borknagar, Theatre of Tragedy, Angra, Jag Panzer, and Opeth. A quite diverse collection, and, while it's hard to imagine anyone liking all 17 tracks, it gives a nice overview of Century Media's roster (just where did they put Nocturnal Rites?) for a really low price. Find out if Lacuna Coil are catching up with The Gathering, if Skrilab are the new gods of extreme metal. Or if Borknagar are worthy black metal, if not the best Angra song from "Fireworks" was chosen, and if aggressive metal fans can find any better than listening to Turmoil. Since it's a review, my personal answer is 'yes' to all these questions, maybe with a hesitation mark for the first of them. (GS)

V/A

Presumed Guilty

Misanthropy Records

After having problems with Burzum sales due to censorship, Misanthropy Records have finally said "that's enough" and released this concept album whose idea is to stop censorship which still exists in our so-called "democratic" society and to express the idea that everyone can listen and play the music he or she likes. I think that already these ideas makes this compilation worth of attention.

Speaking about music, we have all Misanthropy/Elfenblut/Heroine bands presenting their unreleased or rare tracks (with some exceptions): I just can name Burzum, Babylon Whores, Monumentum, In The Woods... whose tracks give you a journey into a rich and colorful world of Misanthropy. My faves are Beyond Dawn, Burzum, Monumentum (their next album seems to become another highlight), Amber Asylum, and, of course, In The Woods... covering the classical "Let There Be More Light" by Pink Floyd. Get this CD if you want to say "no" to musical censorship or just wanna listen to fourteen great bands. (AO)

V/A

Psychone Sinfonies

Psychone Sinfonies

A compilation of black/thrash/death metal bands from Greece. This is the first release for Psychone Sinfonies, a new underground label in Thessaloniki. The greater part of the songs has weak demo tape sound-quality, some of the tracks are difficult to listen to because of chaotic structures and absence of ideas. According to info, one of the bands has already signed a contract with an official record company. I wonder, which one... Bands can send the stuff for the next compilation that most likely will be out then. (SV) [\$11 (Europe), \$12 (elsewhere), Psychone Sinfonies, PO Box 33014, 56610 Sykies, Thessaloniki, Greece]

V/A

Smells Like Team Spirit III

Displeased Records

"Smells Like Team Spirit" again presents only Displeased Records' bands; here we find Manegarm, Consolation, Altar, Houwiter, Even Song, Whiplash, Sadist, Pestilence, and some new bands that are going to release their music via Displeased in the nearest future (like Vesperian Sorrow or absolutely non-traditional for this label Ontario Blue). Some groups like Altar or Manegarm still leave a very good impression, but somehow the Pestilence track that they chose ("Thorn of Death") is the worst song I've ever heard from this band. If you were inspired by Avulsed making techno versions of their death metal songs, you will also be excited by Italian Sadist and their techno version of "Fools and Dolls." In total, we have 14 bands and 17 tracks. (AO)

V/A

Worldwide Metal Inquisition

SMI Records

In my opinion, really interesting underground compilations are very rare nowadays. This one is a pleasant exception, 'cause it's very varied and well-balanced with respect to all metal styles. Let's begin from the start. Aurora Borealis play death metal with some grind passages. Calamus from Germany is a bizarre mixture of metal, hippie rock, and weird parts in veins of Celtic Frost anno 1987. Click reminds me a bit of Venom, Corruption could be the second Pantera. Fig Leaf's "The Seventh Day" is the first highlight of this CD: progressive/avantgarde rock with great vocal parts and influences from the 70s. The Australian band Fury combines hardcore with metal. Gooseflesh were already reviewed twice in our issue. Good groovy stuff in veins of Stuck Mojo/Machine Head. Horizon from Holland play atmospheric gothic metal, reminds me of the first two The Gathering albums, especially the clean voice would fit the "Almost a Dance" disc. All in all, not bad. Lambs CD is reviewed in this issue. Dynamic, hardcore-influenced heavy stuff. Finland's Magic Wave seem to be Kyuss/Slo-Burn fans. Cool retro/stoner rock with a vocalist that sings like John Garcia! Meatlocker Seven from Canada play technical death metal with numerous tempo changes. Mostly Harmless come from Switzerland and offer the listener a quite interesting experimental music which is hard to describe. I would call it avantgarde/atmospheric metal. At least, this track goes into this direction. Necromanicide's "Descent into Hades" is the first brutal death metal

track on this compilation. The same goes for England's Phantasia, that are the only representatives of black metal here. I'm quite not sure what kind of music is the rest of their material, but this song could be numbered among slower black metal pieces. Polish are the Australian band, their music is alternative/punk with some Manic Street Preachers elements. The last track is "Gentle River" by Tremor from Holland. They have devoted themselves to gothic/doom metal with growling and melodic female vocals. Not bad, except that the female voice is somewhat weak. (SV) [5-25 copies: \$4 each, 25 and more copies: \$3 each, SMI Records, PL 799, 82198 Rengsjö, Sweden]

VILKATES

Angeldust and Blasphemy

Last Episode

Finally we've got it. Earlier all the bands tried to find names for themselves in the Northern mythology, and here it is: "Vilkates stands for a werewolf which in the early Middle-Ages (in the area of today's Lithuania) caused a horrible disaster." Well, this band comes from Germany but looked for its name in the history of our country. Strange, but that's what we've got. Musically, it's just rough-brutal-straight-traditional & simple black metal. Nothing really shocking. And the band says, it will go on using physical way to pay homage to the evil, maybe they'll be more successful in this field than in music, who knows. (AO) 2/3/4

VIRGIN BLACK

Trance EP

self-released

The only exact comparison is innovative French band Morthem Vlade Art. If you have heard them, you know what you can expect: theatrical horror music. Three singers sing on this album, and the atmosphere is like in a real horror theater. Influences range from atmospheric metal groups such as My Dying Bride to gothic rock and a bit of industrialized music artists such as Marilyn Manson. The aim of Virgin Black is to create specific atmosphere: it's dreadful, it's schizophrenic, it's psychedelic. The structure of music on this EP isn't familiar to rock or metal listener, as I mentioned above, it is maybe more opera or theater-like. Of course, metal elements are here, too, but they are only a part of the whole picture. The most special musical scene is revealed in trilogy "Whispers of Dead Sisters," where the vocals change from opera-singing to shouts, screams, and silent whispers. The mood changes even more drastically, but, generally, it is more terrifying than pleasure-bringing. This highly atmospheric band misses symphonic arrangements that Morthem Vlade Art explored so expressively. That would enable them to express even deeper emotions, I'm sure about that. But even now, I wonder how they are still unsigned. (AO) [\$10, Virgin Black, 21 Tracey Ave., Flinders Park, SA 5023, Australia] [European distribution: Carsten Buchhold, Am Steffen 22, 36251 Bad Hersfeld, Germany] 4/1/4

WHIPLASH

Thrashback

Massacre Records

Whiplash don't want to stay behind (compared to several metal veterans) and return with the original line-up and the brand new CD. This step turned out well 'cause the archaic spirit of speed/thrash is reconstructed 100% on "Thrashback." It's hard to believe that this album was recorded in 1998! Stylistically, it reminds me of the great "Power and Pain" and "Ticket to Mayhem" albums. Every song on "Thrashback" is a cheering of speed/thrash revival, but my favorite songs are "King with the Axe", the instrumental "Strike me Blind" (feat. two members of Symphony X) and "Nails in me Deep." (SV) 4

WHIPLASH

Messages in Blood

Displeased Records

Only for fans of old thrash metal. Two demos of Whiplash ("Thunderstruck" and "Looking Death in the Face") in addition to 10 tracks recorded live in 1985. How long ago it was, and how strange does it sound now! I really can't judge this album as of today; it sounds funny and a bit dull now, but I know that back then it was really something. If you want to

have these recordings on CD, buy this album, but I'm not sure if you'll listen to it very often. And I'm happy that metal progressed so much, and that demos like these aren't "really something cool" nowadays. (AO)

WITCHERY

Restless & Dead

Necropolis Records

This album has already got a cult status and can bravely be named as one of the best discs to summarize heavy metal evolution of the past 10 years. Witchery's line-up includes musicians that played in Satanic Slaughter, guitar master P. Jensen (ex-Seance/now in The Haunted), and bass player S.D'Angelo (Mercyful Fate). Such a company couldn't create something dull. "Restless & Dead" combines elements from heavy metal and blackened death. It sounds catchy and groovy, and it's No. 1 album for headbanging. The structure of songs seem simple, but if you listen more carefully, you'll notice how everything is played thoroughly and tentatively. The group doesn't go into groovy psychedelic fields like Cathedral or Spiritual Beggars, they do it the opposite way - play it straight, melodic, fast, and non-typical. Maybe we could name this band Accept of our times. This is the album if you want music for moving and rising up of your mood; it has nothing in common with most of Necropolis Records' black metal bands which primarily try to create atmosphere of hatred or mystic world. Witchery are more older heavy metal band in this aspect. And I can name "Restless & Dead" the best album ever released on Necropolis Records. (AO) 4/1/2

WITCHERY

Witchburner EP

Necropolis Records

After the release of already highly-acclaimed album "Restless & Dead," Witchery can play almost everything and all their albums will get a cult-status. And so did they; this new mini album offers only three new songs and four cover tracks (of Accept, W.A.S.P., Judas Priest, and Black Sabbath). And, to tell the truth, Witchery play covers as good as they create their original music, at least the cover of Accept's "Fast as a Shark" is far better than Dimmu Borgir's version. It is still hot, raw, powerful heavy metal made in the best tradition of the last decade. Three new songs are made in the same "Restless & Dead" style, so it's your opportunity to bang your head once again. I think that Witchery can become the new Iron Maiden, Accept, or Black Sabbath of our times. (AO) 4

WITHERING SURFACE

The Nude Ballet

Euphonious Records

I became acquainted with Gothenburg metal after listening to In Flames EP "Subterranean," and later on I was surprised by how many bands have jumped into this wagon and did it quite successfully. Withering Surface seem to continue this tradition, and their second album crystallizes what has been in their debut "Scarlet Silhouettes." Track "Whorebride" can become an example for those people who want to figure out what the hell does Gothenburg style really mean. Withering Surface are catchy, melodic, rocky, and a bit aggressive. The aggression is often traded off for standard guitars in the veins of such monsters as Iron Maiden. The archetypes of classical heavy metal are very important on "The Nude Ballet," just listen to "Numbie&Humble" and you'll understand what I'm talking about. But Withering Surface also have current influences, e.g., the singing on "Breathing Purple" is a bit influenced by Paradise Lost, and "Will She Defy" is influenced by My Dying Bride. I would throw out only one track, "The Last One," which was meant to be a kind of ballad, but turned out to sound too sweet and banal. But, in general, "The Nude Ballet" is a really meaningful album for worshippers of Gothenburg metal. (AO) 4/1/4

WOLFHEART

Cold Breath

Mighty Music

Like their Finnish fellows Gandalf, Wolfheart are also inspired by Sentenced and, especially, by their album "North from Here."

Wolfheart are more progressive than Gandalf, not so straight and not so aggressive at the same time. Melodic death metal has completely filled the scene, so I'm almost sure that Wolfheart (is it the only band with this name, by the way?) won't make a big break through. We could talk about freshness of such music only if this album would have been released three years ago. (AO) 3/1/2

Record labels

- Abstract Emotions, PO Box 20116, 08080 Barcelona, Spain
- Adrenaline Records/Energie, Via F. Matteucci 25/27, Arcore 20043 (MI), Italy
- Black Sun Records, PO Box 129, S-401 22 Gothenburg, Sweden
- Candlelight Records, 2 Elgin Avenue, London, W9 3P, UK
- Century Media Records USA, 1451-A 14th Street #324, Santa Monica, CA 90404, USA
- Century Media Records Germany, Schaeferstrasse 13a, 44147 Dortmund, Germany
- Cleopatra Records, 13428 Maxella Ave, PMB 251, Marina Del Rey, CA 90292, USA
- Cold Meat Industry, PO Box 1881, S-581 17, Linköping, Sweden
- Displeased Records, Ronde Tocht 74, 1507 CC IJsoord, Holland
- Dwell Records, PO Box 39439, Los Angeles, CA 90039, USA
- Karaoke Records/Wicked World, PO Box 144, Nottingham NG348E, UK
- Relapse Records, 11 Ward Avenue, Butler, NY 07405, USA
- Sleazy Records, 248 Lakeview Ave, Suite 319, Clifton NJ 07011, USA
- Sleazate Records, Via Antonio Silvani 79/85, 00139 Rome, Italy
- The End Records, 556 E. Fair Oaks #101-111, Pasadena, CA 91105, USA
- Euphonious Records, Sankt Jørgens Alle 7, o.g., 1615 Copenhagen V, Denmark
- Poulsen Management & Consulting, PO Box 31, 73062 Ultingen, Germany
- Frontiers Records Srl, Via G. Gonzaga, 4-80125, Napoli, Italy
- Goldtrack Records, PO Box 27 062, 28 080 Madrid, Spain
- Good Life Recordings, PO Box 114, 8500 Kortrijk, Belgium
- Head Hot Music, PO Box 447, 1701 Sargisbury, Norway
- Headbanger Record, Box 5964, S-700 05 Örebro, Sweden
- Holy Records, BP 56, 77 263 La Perle Sous Joux Cdx, France
- Inside Out Music, Kleiner Markt 10, 47533 Kleve, Germany
- Intromental Management, PO Box 1268, DK-2100 Copenhagen S., Denmark
- Laser's Edge/Sensory, PO Box 381, Voorhees, NJ 08043-0188, USA
- Last Episode, In der Vorstadt 114, 73529 Schwäbisch Gmünd, Germany
- Limb Music Products & Publishing, Postfach 60 25 20, 22235 Hamburg, Germany
- Listenable Records, BP 559, 621 11 Boulogne/BKD, France
- Luna Press & Publicity, Bergshöjden 42nb, 174 45 Sundbyberg, Sweden
- Massacre Records, Raubekstr. 16, 74232 Abstatt, Germany
- Metal Age Productions, PO Box 42, 038 41 Vrutky, Slovakia
- Metal Blade Records, 2828 Cochran St. Suite 302, Simi Valley, CA 93065, USA
- Metal Blade Records Europe, PO Box 1332, 73054 Ellingen, Germany
- ME Records, 315 Church Street, 2nd Floor, New York, NY 10013, USA
- Mighty Music, Vermlandsgade 74, 1 tv, 2300 Copenhagen S., Denmark
- Modern Music Records, PO Box 11 02 26, 10832 Berlin, Germany
- Necropolis Records, PO Box 14815, Fremont, CA 94539-4815, USA
- Norse Records USA, 1680 N. Vine St. Suite #1005, Hollywood, CA 90028, USA
- No Fashion Records, PO Box 2140, 103 14 Stockholm, Sweden
- Nuclear Blast Records Germany, Hauptstrasse 109, 73072 Dorndorf, Germany
- Nuclear Blast Records USA, PO Box 1074, Canal Street Station, New York, NY 10013, USA
- Omose Productions, BP 57, 62990 Beaurainville, France
- Palace of Worms, via Bronzetti 19, 23900, Lecco, Italy
- Prophecy Productions, Kurfürstenstrasse 5, 54492 Zeltingen-Rachtig, Germany
- Red Stream Records, PO Box 342, Camp Hill, PA 17001-0342, USA
- Relapse Records, PO Box 251, Millersville, PA 17551, USA
- Relapse Records, PO Box 50562, 20808 Madrid, Spain
- Resurrection Records, 228 Camden High Street, London NW 10QE, England
- RIP Records, PO Box 41182, Chicago, Illinois 60641, USA
- Rising Sun Productions, Pulser Damm 4, 25560 Oldenborstel, Germany
- Season of Mist, 24 Rue Brandis, 13005 Marseille, France
- Serenades Records, In der Vorstadt 114, 73529 Schwäbisch Gmünd, Germany
- Shock Wave Records, rue Medicis A20, 2, Impasse J.Gabin, 31700 Blagnac, France
- Sleazy Records, PO Box 28452, Baltimore, MD 21234, USA
- Solarlink, Box 50, 90251 Oulu, Finland
- World Serpent Distribution, Unit 7-1-7 Seager Buildings, Broomhill Road, London SE8 4HH, UK
- Zisania Entertainment Group, Oude Roermondsedweg 111, 6049 AD Herten, The Netherlands

With their second album "Masquerade" (following the debut "Komodia"), Dreams of Sanity have established the name for themselves as proud prolongators of musical concept similar to their labelmates Lacrimosa. Dreams of Sanity's theatrical, symphonic music with emotional female vocals resembles rather musicals, or theater or opera performances, than your traditional symphonic gothic style. Moreover, the band pays a lot of attention to the lyrics: the first album was an interpretation of "The Divine Comedy" by Dante Alighieri, and the second album takes us to the dark, shady world of the despised - "The Phantom of the Opera"... I conducted this interview with Michael Knoflach.

Let's traditionally begin with a short summary on how you've started this. What does this strange name of your band characterize for you? In 1996, you've won "Lacrimosa Prize," which landed you the deal with Hall of Sermon. What does this "Prize" mean, how this competition was organized, and maybe you could name some more bands that also won it?

We started under the name of Dreams of Sanity in 1991 as a trio. In those days, it was very trendy in the Innsbruck underground to be very satanic and evil. Most of the bands just tried to make noise and scream like hell. We wanted to make clear that we were different, so we choose the name "Dreams of a non-sick-mind."

It took us until 1994 to complete a lineup, that is similar to the one (only with 8 people) we presently have, to record a demo tape. Although it sounded a bit different from what we do now, we still stayed true to our style, and I am quite proud to say that every single Dreams of Sanity song can be recognized. "Lost Paradise '99" is actually the first song with vocals - we did a lot instrumentals in those days; we wrote it in 1991 and it still fits into the 1999 program of our band.

In 1995, we recorded "Komodia" part 1 and part 2 for a sampler CD and sent them all over Austria and Germany, but never got any response from the industry. So we literally gave up upon getting a record deal and just played for our own entertainment. In 1996, suddenly a friend of a friend called and said that he had entered us into this Lacrimosa contest (we never heard of before) and that Hall of Sermon would be interested in signing us. The competition was based on demo tapes, and it was also won by The Gallery and a third band we never met. The prize was money (and actually the contact to the industry).

Listening to both your discs, I get an impression that you aren't newcomers not only in rock/metal music, but also in classical music traditions. Does anyone of you have a classical music background?

Christian Marx and Frederic Heil have a classical education on their instruments, i.e., classical concert guitar, grand piano.

Both "Komodia" and "Masquerade" are concept albums. Why do you always choose a certain concept for an

album, is it, in your opinion, the only way to express your musical ideas? Don't you think one day to release an album with different songs? Also, this reminds a lot of Lacrimosa, do you agree that this band is the biggest influence on you both musically and conceptually?

I think a CD should be a piece of art. The cover, the lyrics, the music; everything has to fit together. We wanted to paint a single whole picture with every CD. Of course, one can still make it a piece of art without a concept by using the same metaphor; make an

the most interesting songs on your new album is "The Phantom of the Opera," which actually is a cover (if we can name it so) of Hart/Webber's musical. Your version differs a lot from the original, except maybe the melody itself. Do you agree with that, or maybe it is only my own opinion that you've tried to create the contrast mood to the famous musical? By the way, it was recorded together with Tilo Wolff from Lacrimosa; were there other candidates for this role, and how did you get in touch with him?

My all-time favorite for a concept is still

Dreams of Sanity

The Phantom and the Dark Opera

[by Audrius Ozalas]



exhibition of different pictures in the same style. I am not sure whether we will release an album without a concept once. But, by the way, even if we have a concept, I still consider our songs as "different songs." Of course, Lacrimosa was a big influence recently, but before we won the "Lacrimosa prize," we never heard of this band. One has to know that Innsbruck, Austria is quite far removed from every trend and scene.

One more question related to this topic: why do you choose not your original lyrical concepts but, for example, the divine comedy by Dante Alighieri or "Phantom of the Opera" by Gaston Leroux. Do you feel that you aren't able to create something so emotionally strong, or maybe you have other reasons for this?

Our next CD, that should be released in January 2000, is going to be a self-brewed concept. So far, it was just the inspiration that I got when I read "The Divine Comedy" or "The Phantom of the Opera."

Your most recent album is "Masquerade." Tell me more about the concept of it. How did you decide to take the work by G. Leroux, were there other possible candidates instead of his work? How did you think of the way you've transformed his work? Did you exactly follow the original or did you insert some personal things? One of

"Finnigans Wake" by James Joyce, but it still has to wait... There is a lot of personal stuff in every song, but now for the songs...

"Within (The Dragon)." The lyrics were basically by Sandra, and I gave them a bit of a twist and turn. It's a song about how this world loses its ability to dream (metaphorized by a dragon that flies away). We couldn't decide whether the song should be called "Within" or "The Dragon" so... We wrote this song right after we recorded "Komodia" (after "The Maiden and the River"). The music was starting the idea to get a tighter rhythm-section and more rhythm-guitars into our sound.

"The Maiden and the River." It's a story about an old man who sits at home and remembers when he met the women of his dreams, but didn't dare to speak to her. Musically, it was the same "phase" as "Within." The slow part was strongly inspired by Lacrimosa.

"Lost Paradise '99" is the first time when we recorded the first song we wrote under the name of Dreams of Sanity in 1991. The song has not changed for the last 5 years, and it also fits well into the concept because it is also about masking.

"Opera" is the intro which tries to pick up the flair of the cover version written and programmed by our new keyboarder Frederic Heil. We knew musical "The Phantom of the Opera" for quite a while and were always impressed by the

intense flair it had, though sometimes the commercial attitude in it was bad. Already the first singer we had back in 1992 said she could sing the whole musical part of Christine. Since then, we always had the idea of covering the title track, but, until now, we never found the right singers to do so. First was the idea of making a concept about the character of the phantom, and later we also decided to put the cover version on the CD. The only logical "phantom" was Tilo Wolff, and we were lucky that he is not only our boss, but also our friend. Still, it took us a long time to persuade him to play his part. (By the way, we would not have recorded the song without Tilo as the phantom.)

"Masquerade act 1" is the most complex song on the CD. It tries to explain how Eric (the name of the phantom) used to live, and why he decides to wear a mask (we interpret the mask not physically but rather masking the feelings and the true character in order to survive in our society). The piano solo was a first take in the studio. We were so surprised how well it sounds, when we erased all guitars from that part. The guitar solo is played by J. P. Genkel who is also a member of Lacrimosa.

"Masquerade act 2" is a rather happy song because the freedom of movement Eric has gotten by masking himself let him see new things. He is on his way and wants to find life and love.

"Masquerade-Interlude" doesn't have its own act number because it links the journey to the plot in the opera. Musically, it was a new task for us not to write a whole song but rather a bridge. This song also plays a lot with "musical"-style arrangements.

"Masquerade act 3" is the meeting between Christin and Eric, where she tells him that she fell in love with something inside him she cannot see anymore. So Eric decides to take off his mask again, but fails... Act 3 and 4 are rather slow songs because we just couldn't make a happy power-rock song with that background.

Comparing your both albums, I see many differences. First of all, the second one is a bit less metallic, more opera-like, and I also can't find such sweet songs as "Masquerade act 3" on your first recording "Komodia." What's the biggest difference between both your records, in your opinion? One big change after the release of "Komodia" was the fact that your second singer Martina has left Dreams of Sanity. Earlier, two female singers were almost a trademark of your band. Don't you think that you've lost something essential after this departure? By the way, she wasn't the only member who left your band during this year?

The biggest difference is definitely the production. For "Masquerade," we had a far better studio. The second big difference is the "new" line-up. After the recordings for "Komodia," we just didn't get along with Martina and Romed (the drummer) anymore, both musically and personally. So we had the choice to split up or to throw them out. Well... it was definitely not easy or funny, because we used to be friends for years. A few months later, Stefan also left because he was fed up by looking

for new members all the time and rehearsing the "Komodia" stuff for years. I don't think we really lost something concerning the band, because Sandra can add so much flair and emotion to her voice when singing alone.

I've heard that your ex-singer Martina sung on Therion's album "Vovin." Is this true? And what is she doing now? We didn't split peacefully, so we don't have any contact anymore. I have heard she is going to stay with Therion. She also appeared on a Korova CD and has some project with some ex-Morbid Angel guitarist. She is also pregnant.

Who creates music for the group? Is it an all-team work or maybe you have a person who does it all? How often do you rehearse?

90% of the songwriting was done by Christian Marx and Frederic Heil, 10% by the rest. We usually rehearse twice a week, but as recordings or gigs come closer, then more often.

In 1997, you've toured with such famous groups as Lacrimosa, The Gathering, and Sentenced. Isn't it hard to play your concept music on stage? Do you treat each song as separate track or do you try to play songs according to their sequence on the albums? Who is going to sing the part of T. Wolff in your concerts?

I don't think a rock stage is the right place for a theater-like production, especially when it is a rather sad and complex one. Most of people go to a concert to party or to have good time, not to get depressed. We love to play live and try to put as much energy as possible into our performance. We don't want to have every step on stage planned. We also don't play the songs according to the CD order, but rather try to make a mix from both CDs and from our early days. We won't play "The Phantom of the Opera" without Tito. That means it is going to be a very rare event.

You've already started working for the new album. Can you tell more details about it: its concept, musical direction, guest musicians - everything interests us.

As I mentioned before, the new album is going to feature an own concept, which is quite complex: it involves listeners and addresses them. The main character is no longer passive, but well aware of the audience. He has to perform live every night and live through it again and again just to entertain you. The music will, of course, sound like Dreams of Sanity, although it is going to be more guitar-oriented. So far, we don't have any guest musicians.

Listening to your albums, I hear many musical influences, can you name the most important ones? Personally, I feel a big influence of instrumental music and soundtracks.

The roots are definitely two things: first of all, the 80s Metal (like Iron Maiden, Queensryche) and then the 80s pop on the radio with which we grew up. Later, things like the early instrumental work of Mike Oldfield and, more recently, Lacrimosa influenced us. The theatrical

element of our concept can be accounted to our likes for musicals.

You've got a deal with Hall of Sermon. Have there been any other offers? Personally, I think that your music suits the style of this label very much, symphonic gothic rock with emotional singing. Are you completely satisfied with this label (what is your dream label?), and maybe you could tell your opinion about recent Hall of Sermon albums like The Gallery, Artrrosis, and Lacrimosa?

No, there were no other offers. We were

Some years ago, the mix of symphonic music and metal was a really innovative thing, and such groups as Therion or Dimmu Borgir were a pleasant surprise. Nowadays almost everybody tries to incorporate symphonic elements. Do you think that it has become a trend already, and what are the main reasons for this? Maybe it shows that metal or gothic music has come to the point where everything is already done, and it's so hard to find some novelties?

I think it was a quite logical step. First, there was only guitar, drum and bass.



"Komodia" period

quite inexperienced in matters of business when we won the "Lacrimosa prize." But Hall of Sermon is probably one of the few labels who doesn't try to rip of their bands in the first place. I don't think any other label could give us so much of personal and professional support. We don't really have a dream label, but I think a contract with Sony with special conditions concerning the artistic freedom would be nice. I have not heard the new Lacrimosa CD yet (only the single, which is very good). I used to listen to The Gallery a lot. The album is not spectacular, but very, very beautiful. Artrrosis are okay, but somehow their album doesn't "catch" me.

Is Austria a good country for the music like yours? Maybe you know which countries are the biggest markets for your group, where have you played your biggest gigs?

The best gigs and the biggest market is Germany. In Austria, the industry (and most of the consumers) is not interested in our music. But we sell the CD worldwide. It's always funny to get letters from Russia, Argentina, or Japan.

Then came the keyboards. The next logical step is to add different instruments up to a whole orchestra. It's not hard to find novelties, but it's hard to find novelties that people want to hear, which means companies are willing to invest money in. Even a cheap production costs a lot of money.

The promotional work changes a lot with the coming of the Internet. Do you do some promo work by yourselves and which means are the most effective nowadays, in your opinion?

Advertisement is very important. Now that the Internet offers so much, it has become even more difficult to advertise at the right spots. We are lucky that we don't have to waste any thought about this. The deal is: we make the music, and Hall of Sermon sell it. Quite easy.

The last question: what are your most disliked groups or artists of recent years?

Hm, On the top of my hate list is this pop song starting "I'm a big big girl in a big big world"... It always fucks up my day when I hear it. [Damn, you just fucked up my day. -GS]

reviews

gothic, industrial, neofolk, ambient

4TH SIGN OF THE APOCALYPSE

Lost Hour World

The Order of Suffering Clown

The most interesting thing about this disc is the fact that it is difficult to compare it to any other album. Its frightening and monolithic world is created with analog synths, samples, and a very very gloomy voice. It's also interesting that no sequencing was used in the creation of this CD, so, it's a way to look into ambient from a different viewpoint. Especially, I liked the second track "Miss Meh," which can be described as the darkest piece of Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds. Also, the sense of sarcasm and irony is evident here, and I think that the music on this CD can explain the name of the record label best: not-too-pleasant-sarcasm and darkness of all beauty. Call it gothic ambient, soundscapes, or somehow else, it's not an ordinary piece of music. I've heard a new track of the band on compilation "What Is Eternal," and it shows that the group continues to go in the same direction. (AO) [PO Box 2124, New York, NY 10009 USA] 4 1/2

AIN SOPH

Ain Soph

Elfenblut

And here is the joy for all ambient/neoclassical music fans - this album has been released by cult-label "Staalplaat" but was sold-out quite quickly. Sub-label of Misanthropy Records, Elfenblut re-released this legendary album by famous Italian act on limited edition digipack. For those who didn't hear about this group, I can say that it is one of the most interesting ethereal/industrial/neoclassical/ritual/folk (sorry, I couldn't find a shorter term) groups in the entire world. "Ain Soph" begins with classical, poetical "V Chiave Di Enoch" song, which suddenly transforms into extravagant experimental "Giahliya." Later on, starting with "Azazel," Ain Soph develop a strong monument of neo-classical soundscapes and dramatic singing. For some people it can become a little bit monotonous, and I agree that this CD isn't easily listenable; and it took some listens for me to get into these musical spheres. "Adieu Aux Raves" romantically prepares you for "Daterni Pace," which is the most famous song on the album. And, finally, all this bizarre carnival ends with the tragic "Prologon." A must-get for worshippers of the dark orb. (AO) 4 1/2

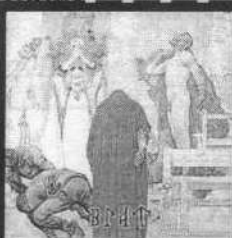


ATARAXIA

Historiae

Cruel Moon Int'l

For those who don't like middle age music, Ataraxia won't be interesting, but for people who are interested in this music, Ataraxia is already the name that characterizes the very best medieval music in the world. Two hundred concerts, 6 full-lengths in the past; and this one is going to get rave reviews in all specialized press once again. I can simply guarantee that "Historiae" contains nine tracks: six of them were recorded in studio in 1997, the second part was recorded live in a medieval court in 1998. All these middle-age ballads are performed authentically and emotionally, they are able to bring the sense of the past better than any other band I know (the groups like ...The Soil Bleeds Black seem like the beginners when you turn the CD of Ataraxia on). Twelve years of musical activity is behind this group, so these three musicians are real masters of their work. Their singer is simply another talk, if you thought that The Gathering have the best female singer in the world, better turn on "Historiae" and you'll be surprised by their extremely gifted singer. Only with the



BLOOD AXIS

Blot
Cold Meat Industry
This is one of those bands in esoteric underground that don't have to release lots of albums to get a cult status. With just one full-length "The Gospel of Inhumanity" and a couple of songs on various compilations, Blood Axis have established a name that associates with the best neo-classical industrial music in underground. Not to forget to mention that the leader of Blood Axis, M. Moynihan is quite known in esoteric circles of underground. So I think that many people know about Blood Axis more than they have heard their music.

"Blot" follows their debut album "The Gospel...", and it was recorded live on Cold Meat Industry 10th Anniversary Feast in 1997. The performance was recorded directly from the mixing board, and the resulting tapes were brought back to USA, and re-mixed there. The sound quality is perfect, and I don't wonder why Blood Axis prefer some of their songs sounding live than on their studio album. Twelve tracks presented on "Blot" clearly indicate all what Blood Axis are about: everything going from industrial/neo-classical to neo-folk and symphonic arrangements. The absolute highlights are the bombastic symphony "Reign I Forever," angry "Eternal Soul," and gloomy-sounding neo-folks "Seeker" and "The Hangman and the Papist." I agree that some won't accept the ideology of Blood Axis, but this music MUST be checked out. The best album while waiting for the Apocalypse. No more descriptions here. (AO)
5

help of music, Ataraxia transforms you to mystical past times and their cultures. I'm not sure how much you are familiar with medieval music, but that really isn't that cheap music you hear sometimes at national festivals. Just hear the stories behind these ballads. If you like folklore, authentic music with a touch of medieval culture, don't miss it! (AO)
4 3/4

BURZUM

Hildskjalf
Misanthropy Records
I'm sure there'll again be lots of talks about this work of Varg Vikernes. As the previous album "Daudi Baldrs," "Hildskjalf" (the second disc in the trilogy) is again created by keyboards and computer and doesn't go too far from its predecessor, offering quite melancholic, dreamy ambient folk. Who could earlier think about such words when describing the musical tury of Burzum? There is nothing common with the former Burzum, and so I'm longing for black-metal creation of Varg and can't accept this disc as a prolongation of first releases. It's just another musical work, that's it. Well, as for ambient, it's not bad, I even could say it's good, but there are many far better groups in ambient/folk scene. Of course, I understand that Varg hasn't got good possibilities to compose music in Trondheim prison, and who knows what he could do when being free. And now we just have a nostalgic flow of epic keyboards, based on the myths surrounding the death of the Norse God Wotan. There are no vocals, but you can find booklet enclosed which explains the concept of each song. So, if you disliked the earlier Burzum, hold on to the previous releases, but if your mind accepted "Daudi Baldrs," here we have a better sound and more interesting music. (AO)
3 3/4

CHILDREN OF STUN

Seven Year Itch
Resurrection Records
I think that all the fans of gothic/wave know about this group, so there is no need to present them. This CD contains an exceptional pleasure for the lovers of Bauhaus-style gothic or the ones who like gothic mixed with the raw energy of punk rock. In other words, the style gothic rock used to wear in 1980-1985. Here, we get mini-album "The Hollow" which shows Children of Stun playing their usual goth/punk. But the most interesting thing (at least for me) is the live set which is also included

on this CD. These songs were recorded in 1998 at famous Camden Underworld, and we find all classics of the group; some songs sound even more interesting live, they get a bit more gloomy sound and remind of The Sisters of Mercy. Everything is mixed with a good sense of humor. So, all in all, "Seven Year Itch" contains 17 songs, and I can't understand you if you like gothic rock classics and don't plan to have this album. (AO)
4



CURRENT 93

Soft Black Stars
Urbourous Music
All releases by Current 93 marked all-way changing and spiraling musical and philosophical concept. The new album, released after a long silence, was expected to bring even greater changes. How right we are. Already the name of this group slightly changed, now it's written as Current Ninety Three, also we haven't got the titles on the cover (though you can find preliminaries on the Internet). The first listen makes me wonder, what happened to D. Tibet? "Soft Black Stars" is the most minimalist album in all D. Tibet's creation, in fact, mainly we hear M. Elliott playing piano and D. Tibet singing his poetry. Even S. Stapleton, who always knows what noises to bring for the background, stays silent almost all the time. Where is the most wonderful apocalyptic-folk we've heard on albums like "All the Pretty Little Horses" or "Thunder Perfect Mind"? That is vanished.

After such first shock, comes the second, third listen and this opinion begins to change. Yes, goodbye to apocalyptic folk, but instead of this, we have highly romantic, personal, poetic, and spiritual album. I even would call it a confession of D. Tibet. I understand that maybe that's not so interesting for people not familiar with D. Tibet's earlier works, but for those who already stepped into his mystical, asking, answering, wondering, seeking for spiritual home world, this album will clear something. And even if you aren't interested in his philosophical discoveries, I recommend this disc as one of the most romantic, poetic and... sad journeys. Take a glass of wine, turn off all the lights and listen. Is it really so that this sentimental mood that D. Tibet magically creates doesn't touch you at all? Damn, I don't believe.

And I don't care that someone could say that it is like a soundtrack for a romantic love film. That's not truth. It is the best example how perfect atmospheres can take hold with the most minimalist music. Loudly greeting this wonderfully peaceful and harmonic album, I become sad only when remembering what we've lost. Really, Death In June again stepped to more electronic spheres, Current Ninety Three became minimalist, so the two greatest apocalyptic folk groups have nearly changed their direction. Once again. Will it be always so? Nobody knows. Luckily, the present is bright enough, too. (AO)
4 3/4

DESIRE

There Where Candies Fade
Noxious Records/House of Kicks
One more gothic rock group recorded their album at the Abyss studio together with Peter Tägtgren. As we can remember, Love Like Blood did the same last year, and I was really surprised by the quality of their disc. It seems like Desire on their second full-length have chosen the following scheme: the music is based on gothic-rock genres with not so many steepings outside the right way, and a good studio plus producer who gives a bit metallic sounding that can attract attention of some metalheads who are into Moonspell or Tiamat. So, after all, we have a well-produced and very standard album. I even could think that "There Where Candies Fade" is another album of The Mission. Especially the singer tries to imitate this pop-gothic group. Too many standards, too many clichés - you must create something of your own and not only repeat other artists. Love Like Blood knew that and their album was great. And Desire

released an album only for those whose favorite style is gothic rock of the 80s. (AO)
[House of Kicks, Box 2140, 10314 Stockholm, Sweden]
3 1/2

DIABOLIQUE

The Black Flower
Black Sun Records
Finally, this Swedish goth rock band improved their vocals. The previous album "Wedding the Grottesque" was dark gothic rock at its best, but the vocals didn't let the band to get a more gloomy sound (but I agree that they were quite original). Now, the sound of Diabolique has changed, the music became more straight, melodic, and, I would dare to say, typically gothic sounding. And the vocals became clean and fit the style better, creating a melancholic and sentimental character of the album (of course, in places they still sound a bit unfinished, but the progress is evident). The final result shows us a style that isn't so noticeable in nowadays scene - rocky gothic rock with psychedelica of sixties-seventies. It's catchy, melodic gothic rock, but it also has this dark nature that I usually miss in gothic circles nowadays (everybody went danceable); I think that it is a bit more fastened version of the music that Anathema played on their "Alternative 4." The highlights are "Catholic," "And Deepest Sadness," "Mortuina." (AO)
4

DREAM INTO DUST

The World We Have Lost
Effenblut
I can clearly remember when I listened to a creation of Derek Rush for the first time - it was the band December whose tape had surprised me with gloomy and original gothic music. Later the name was changed to Dream Into Dust, and the style changed, too. It was first shown on the debut EP "No Man's Land," which was even darker and more gloomy neo-classical avantgarde. After some more appearances on compilation CDs, Dream Into Dust's debut album finally summarizes the work of 1995-1999 period. Nine songs bring us to desperate, nihilistic, dark world of Derek Rush. Comparing with "No Man's Land," this album has much more singing, and songs have a more finished structure. Musically, we also find some new elements, e.g., a bit of folkish sound in some songs. The perfect "Farewell to Eden" makes us to remember the times of December, a slight touch of melodic gothic rock can be felt here. But, all in all, Dream Into Dust play dark experimental neo-classical style which attacks you with war-like rhythms and terrifying sounds. Yes, this music (and the booklet with gloomy photos as well) reminds me somehow of F. Kafka, and the mood that only Shinjuku Thief manage to create. But Dream Into Dust are much more nihilistic and has this, as I said before, war-like character. And that's nice, it's a real beauty in darkness. Do you think that today sun shines, everybody's happy, and overall everything is all right? Well, then listen to Dream Into Dust, you'll change your mind. (AO)
4 1/4

ELECTRIC HELLFIRE CLUB

Unholy Roller
Cleopatra Records
Here, we have only one new track by these extravagant Satanic-electro-metallars. It's called "Unholy Roller" and gives everything you've expected to hear from these maniacs; maybe the song is a little bit more rocky, compared to band's previous material. In addition, we have B-re-mixes of their old songs and a re-make of Motley Crue's "Shout at the Devil." But the most interesting part of this ordinary release are various versions of classical "Prince of Darkness" song. Who could expect this song to become so schizophrenically matured? Electric Hellfire Club presented rave, techno, instrumental, and even trip-hop (!) versions of their hit. I think that even dancefloors can play some of these versions as their own. Of course, the previous album "Calling Dr. Luv" was a more typical Hellfire album, but "Unholy Roller" is more interesting, diverse, and must please all industrial and dark techno explorers. (AO)
4 1/4

EMPYRIUM

Where at Night the Wood Grouse Plays
Prophecy Productions
Nowadays many groups try to perform the so called "folk" music, but creating "folk" music feelings means just to do it by synthesizers. Of course, that can't reveal real folk atmospheres. And only some groups go in a

more complicated way and perform their music on real acoustic instruments. Empyrium are one of them, and it's the third album of this group. Empyrium have already made the name for themselves as the group that performs dark folk on acoustic instruments and are one of the best acts of this style. This new album doesn't disappoint at all and can be compared to the beautiful album of Hagalaz "Runedance" "The Winds that Sang of Midgard's Fate." Empyrium explore authentic folkloric themes and are far away from modern sounding, they just try to get to the heart of these melodies and feelings as close as they can. The music is mostly romantic, deeply melancholic, and longing. As in the case of Hagalaz' "Runedance," it also can't be compared to neo-folk artists, such as Current 93 or Sol Invictus, because Empyrium try to perform their music without this added "neo" feeling. This beautiful and sad folk music is dedicated to dark melancholic music lovers and for those who like products released by such labels as Cruel Moon. (AO)
4 1/4

The GALLERY

Fateful Passion
Hail of Sermon
The producer of this disc is none other than Waldemar Sorychta who is responsible for most of Century Media's gothic-metal bands, such as Moonspell, The Gathering, Tiamat, and Samael. But the producer can't do all the work for the group, so The Gallery can't reach the horizons of Moonspell or Tiamat. "Fateful Passion" offers melodic gothic rock with leading female vocals, and I can almost name this style "Hall-of-Sermon-style," it's a kind of mix between ethereal music and melodic gothic rock. But this time the album turned out to be a little bit banal and very traditional. There is no way for them to become a new discovery as long as they pretend to sound like all other bands. The most interesting track on this CD is the cover version of A-ha's classic "The Sun Always Shines on TV." Pop-gothic? Maybe it's the right name for this album. (AO)
3 1/4

GIANTS CAUSEWAY

Destination: Insecure
Serenades Records
We don't have The Sisters Of Mercy any longer, Fields Of The Nephilim also remain to the past, and almost all gothic/wave bands nowadays play more electronic than guitar gothic rock. Giants Causeway went a different path, so "Destination: Insecure" reminds of gothic rock made in the 80s, of The Sisters, Fields, and other rocking gloomy gothic music. It's already the third album of this band, and it indicates bands move to even more heavy, metallic spheres (Influences of bands like Crematory); is it the place where The Sisters Of Mercy and Paradise Lost meet? I'm not sure how many people will adore this old-wave guitar gothic; I can almost hear accusations that their music is something of the past. And these people maybe are right, because Giants Causeway play exceptionally traditional form of the style. They do it perfectly, and if we would be able to go back to year 1987, maybe the band even could compete with A. Eldritch. But now, listening to "Destination: Insecure," I can sense the smell of naphthalene. Is it good or bad? I don't know, for me it smells great; gothic rock went in different directions, but in this case, we return to the roots, and the nostalgia takes over. In addition, Giants Causeway recorded the cover of The Sisters Of Mercy "Alicia." (AO)
4

GLAMPIRE

Pretty Scary
J-Bird Records
An interesting wish to combine glam rock, gothic rock, and industrial; reminds of something, heh? Yes, most of all it reminds of Marilyn Manson, both musically and imagerwise. The music of Glampire is much more diverse though, contains less industrial sounds and more acoustic music (songs "Trick on My Skin" or "Breakable"), and, in general, is lighter, more melodic, sensitive, and emotional. In times when goth scene is usually so one-way going, Glampire try to put here everything they can find, and, on one hand, it is a very rich, diverse, and non-traditional album, on the other hand, sometimes it sounds a bit chaotic. Glampire are surely one of the most recent hopes in goth scene, but they can pass by unnoticed because it takes time to get into "Pretty Scary." (AO)
[Medalyon, 641 Lincoln Way West, Massillon, OH 44647, USA]
4

Lunar Crush

Transcending the Progressive Musical Atmosphere without Guitars

[by Christian Rademaker]

Although I am far from a reckless person, I do take musical gambles. One of these gambles resulted in buying a copy of a CD by band Lunar Crush. This happened on a business trip to the Detroit area. Through an Internet contact, I had managed to find a rock-oriented record store in the Detroit area called Rock of Ages. Always being interested in local music, I looked eagerly at a wall with numerous CDs by local bands. Several CD covers looked tempting and one of these included a purple colored by Lunar Crush. I asked the guy behind the counter to play some of their songs (for some strange reason, often in the USA there do not seem to be facilities in CD stores to pre-listen to CDs individually). My initial thoughts were that the music was an amalgam of prog rock and 80s new wave influences. I told the guy that once the guitars would set in, I would buy it. The contradictory thing was that within the space of a couple of minutes, I had bought my first guitar-less album within the last five years. Steeping back to the artists behind this musical endeavor, Lunar Crush is a musical trio from the Detroit area featuring the line-up: Gabriel Lee Pilon (keyboards and vocals), Scott Smith (drums and percussion), and Gary Blakemore (bass and synthesizers). The musicianship is excellent, showing a diverse range of influences resulting in original and unusual songs with an emphasis on creating a definite mood and atmosphere. Although there are only three musicians, through the use of additional synthesizers and midi patches, the music is layered. Musically, Lunar Crush have been compared to a cross between progressive music (Rush/Dream Theater) and industrial music (Nine Inch Nails), although I can't really pinpoint this. The self-titled debut CD has nine songs with a running time just under forty minutes. The stand out tracks are "Secrets" and "Killing Silence."

During a visit to Detroit earlier this year, I contacted Lunar Crush with the proposal to experience one of their rehearsals and to do an interview. The proposal was accepted with enthusiasm. The next problem was getting there. First you need a rental car, then you need a proper map and a large



dose illogical house counting (although the numbering of houses is in numerical order, the ranges are often from 1001 until 35623, and worst of all: large gaps in the numbering sequence are the rule instead of the exception). After finally finding Wick Road in Detroit, I found out that it stopped at a railway line. I deduced that the road probably continued at the other side and, after some lengthy detours, found the nice, typically American house of drummer Scott Smith. The plan had been to listen to new songs during a rehearsal, but things went a bit different than planned because the evening before my visit, Gary's bass decided to leave its resting place and break into pieces. That meant that I had to be content with some samples of a live show with some new songs and a stunning Gary Numan cover. Based on the new songs that I heard, a possible second album should be more complex and feature longer songs. The following is the result of the interview that I did with the three members of Lunar Crush: Gabriel Lee Pilon (GP), Scott Smith (SS), and Gary Blakemore (GB).

Could you tell me something about how Lunar Crush got together?

SS: Gary and I have been friends since high school and we've jammed together since then. We basically grew up learning the same kind of tunes. We met Gabriel in a bar in the summer of 1994. GP: Actually, I think it was my sister that introduced us. She said that she knew someone that was looking to do some jazz fusion type of music.

GB: We didn't start off as a rock band, we were talking about doing the new age thing. That was in 1994, and it evolved into a type of rock-oriented thing. Scott and my influences were more in the progressive rock, jazz, and fusion vein.

GP: We actually listened to a lot of different music, too. They were more into progressive rock, more than I was although I've become more into it now. I always listened to pop and industrial music so that's where we get the blend of the two elements.

SS: It makes for an interesting mix.

Did you play in other bands before you formed Lunar Crush?

SS: Throughout high school, I was in rock bands and stuff.

Gary and I jammed with a few guys here and there but nothing really came of it much. We knew that we had a good relationship in terms of writing music. We just wanted to find the right and then we found Gabriel. The first day we jammed, his ideas were really cool so we decided to stick together.

GP: Before I met these guys, I was in a few rock bands as well and I had a few projects in high school in which I was a predominate writer. I never really met anyone with which I could write very well together. I just wanted to do music by myself because I was fed up with working with other people. But when I met Steve and Gary, we found out that our music blends very well together. We can start an idea and generally within the same day we would normally be done with the entire foundation of a song, and then we work out everything else after that.

SS: One thing that is unique about this band is that we literally have to fight about whose idea we have to shave back in contrast to a lot of other bands in which one guy writes all the tunes. But that's great because there are so many ideas from the three of us that turns a song into something really cool.

Is this your regular rehearsal room?

Have you had this for a long time now?
SS: I bought this house last summer. We used to play at Gary's place, but we moved everything here because there's more room.

GP: Luckily, due to all the electronics of our set-up we used to rehearse in a single room at my apartment for years. Scott didn't have his acoustic drums set-up, so he just used his electronic drums, and me and Gabriel were both playing

keyboards. We padded up the room a bit so we wouldn't disturb the neighbors. GP: The only thing people could hear were the beats on the drum pads and me belting the vocals. We used headphones and it worked out good in a lot of ways because we could really hear what we were doing and we didn't blow our eardrums out because we could easily adjust the volume to our own liking.

So who decided to start singing then?

GP: I have been singing the whole time although I didn't always want to sing. When I was younger, I used to write things but the singing of it became the eventual process. I had an idea, and I had to find a way to do it. My family had to deal with me belting and learning how to sing years, all those years ago. I have a lot of four-track stuff that sounds terrible now.

As a band you start writing songs until the point that you decide to record an album. Did you record a demo before that?

SS: We did actually make one four song demo on cassette, and it wasn't all that bad actually.

Was it commercially available?

SS: We only made a few of them.

GP: We made about ten copies. We each took one, and we sent two off for copyright purposes, and we gave a couple away to a radio station. Nothing came of it although we thought that it was really neat to make a record. We thought let's do it for real now.

GP: It kind of made sense as far as looking at the band as a business. If you want to go out and play, it's a good idea to have a product. If someone really likes and a fan base is developing, it's a lot easier to have something out there to show to people.

GP: I think in deciding to put out a CD, we wanted to put out what we were doing because we thought we were doing something good and unique. We didn't want to go out and play in a bunch of bars every weekend and just be another band on the scene that no one cares to hear necessarily, because they don't know who you are or they came to see a cover band. A CD was the logical step to put what we were doing.

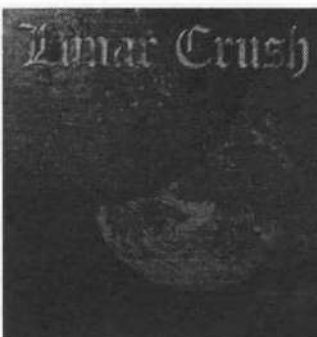
How did you come up with the money for the recording?

GP: All the tracking was done right in my apartment and then we mastered it in an outside studio.

GP: The cover artwork was done by somebody I used to work with and he had a really nice computer set-up with Adobe Photoshop. We found some images on the Internet that I thought were interesting. I had an idea in mind of the earth and the moon really close together. I told him my ideas, and he was able to take our idea and bring it to life.

How did you come up with the name Lunar Crush then? Is there a deeper meaning behind it?

GP: Not really. We were originally called East of Eden and that's how we started the band. Then after a period of time when we started to go through with it, we started to do trademarking checks. The name East of Eden was already taken by a band that had put out an album a few years earlier. We then



thought up ideas of things that sounded cool.

GP: I still have different pieces of paper with a lot of really cool names on them. A few of them have been used for other things as well. Phantom Gallery Recordings for example is the name of our record company and Dreaming in Digital Music is our publishing company.

GB: Scott came over one day and said what about Lunar Crush. We thought about it a little while and it seemed to really fit our music.

SS: We checked out the name and as far as we can tell it's safe. That's a big thing because we can now legally have a name. There are so many bands out there. We had this name East of Eden for a long time, and then we found out that we had to start again.

GP: We went downtown to check out all the copyrights and trademarks. I would just think about something from the top of my head, to see if it was taken and most likely it would be. It's like Stone Temple Pilots' first name Mighty Joe Young was taken before they came out and they had to change it. Mighty Joe Young is now a movie just like East of Eden is.

Do you guys need to have your own publishing company?

SS: Just in case things really get going for us, it's something we need to have. GB: We gave the rights to the copyrights of our songs to the publishing company that we own so that we can have that publishing company registered with ASCAP. Basically every piece of music that gets copy written gets registered either with ASCAP or BMI. They monitor college/commercial radio, television shows; just about anything that plays music. They collect royalties from anybody who uses commercial music, from a health club to a TV station. Those royalties then get split up amongst their shareholders which is anyone who has music published with them. You get money based on how much your music is played. So we set it up properly just in case something happens with it so no one can come in and take our music. We own full rights, and we know what we are doing from a business stand point. Basically, if something breaks we have our butts covered.

This means that if a song from the Lunar Crush CD gets played on the radio, you then get royalties?

GB: Yes, but it would have to get played regularly or at least more than once or twice. We have not received anything yet because our music hasn't really been played yet on big commercial stations. Some smaller stations have written us

letters saying that they've been playing our music.

SS: There is a radio station here called RIFF and it's on 101.1 FM. It's the main rock station here, and they used two of our songs for bits in a commercial. They never asked us but we just thought it was neat that they did that. That's about all the exposure we've had as far as radio goes.

How difficult is it for you guys to get your music to the potential buyers?

GB: When we were in the studio having the CD mastered, the engineer, who really liked our music, said that he had a friend that we should talk to. He brought him in while he was mastering the CD, and the guy really liked the music. He said that he had a distribution company and that he could put us in the stores in the Detroit area including the bigger stores like Harmony House. So when we had the CDs pressed, we brought him some boxes and next thing you know, we are in all the stores. That part was easy. We were in the right place at the right time, and he thought we had a product that was worthwhile.

How many CDs have been pressed?

GB: We originally pressed a 1000. We have now sold a few hundred. SS: The thing is that this guy helped us get the CDs into the store. You saw the CD and listened to it, but a lot of people won't buy a CD if they don't know what it is.

GP: Our next step has to be to create the demand. We need to come up with more marketing ideas. Without taking away the integrity of the music.

GB: We need to do this by playing more live shows, and we haven't made a good effort at this point to hit college radio, which is our best bet for good play. Good radio play can mean good sales, so if we can get into the college market, and if a couple of songs get picked up on then maybe we'll sell some CDs and maybe we'll get picked up by the commercial radio.

Is it important to sell many CDs, or do you just want a product out that people can buy?

GB: It's most important for us to create music that we like. GP: That comes first but if you put it down and you have it in your hand and it is a good product then of course you want to do something with it. GB: All of us would one day like to play music for a living and not having to go to work for a job that we don't really care about. SS: It's not realistic at this point but no less realistic than some of the bands that have made it. It does happen, and I believe enough in what we have and that we have a shot at it. GP: There's been a lot of good bands that have come Detroit these last few years such as Sponge, Nervepipe, Kid Rock, the New Radicals but these are mainstream bands though.

Are there any bands in the region that sound like Lunar Crush then?

GB: It's hard to find bands like us, because I think we've really created our own niche. There is no one like us although there are some bands that are in the progressive scene which to some people, we are part of. I don't really

consider us a progressive rock band but there are a couple of really progressive rock bands in the Detroit area.

GP: There's a band that we've done a few shows with: Discipline. I think they are very amazing.

SS: They've been around for almost 15 years, but then again stylistically though, I really can't compare us with them.

GP: It really depends on what someone's preference is, some people that are more into progressive will definitely see the progressive side of the music, while other people think of it as more industrial.

What I find very interesting is the fact that there are no guitars. The main thing is the melancholic keyboards and the driving rhythm section. Why aren't there any guitars which are quite normal in rock music?

GB: Others have also said that they miss the guitars. It's not that we made a conscious decision to not have a guitar, we just created what we created, and it just didn't involve guitars at that time.

GP: We both play guitars though.

SS: Here's one thing, when we first formed the band we tried out a few guys and with the kind of music we play they wanted to throw Van Halen riffs and leads over what we were doing and no one had an idea on how to approach this style. So we decided to just go with the three of us.

GB: We couldn't find a fourth member that we could actually create with.

GP: After auditioning a few guitarists, we did audition someone that played guitar and keyboards because we thought that maybe if they weren't so prominent they would fit in. But it still really changed the mood of what we were doing, and we didn't want this to change. We did therefore invite the concept of a guitar player into the band but, at that time, we didn't like what the results were. In fact, we have some of the auditions on tape and listening back to those I am glad we didn't go with that route. I like toying with keyboards. Most of the sounds that I use have been created by myself through editing. I like to try to be more aggressive with keyboards and doing leads and things of that nature and kind of look at it from the perspective of a guitarist. I come from a family of five and most of them play guitars so naturally I went to keyboards (laughs)

SS: The way we look at keyboards and synthesizers is that even though the sounds themselves are inherently artificial, what we do besides creating the music, is make up the sounds that make up the music. This really lends an original sound to what we do. That holds for all three of the instruments.

SS: We are now experimenting with a guitar and Gabriel is using it now, but we are going to keep the band the way it is and add the instrument to it. We don't want to suddenly change into a guitar-oriented band. We are working on it, and there will be more guitars on the next album.

GP: What is it interesting when you discuss the topic of whether there are no guitars in the band, when you listen to pop music there are numerous songs without any guitar at all.

The debut CD was released late 1997. What's been happening since then in

terms of music?

GB: It's time for another CD, but we are still at the writing stage.

SS: We have about three or four songs now. Some of the songs you heard off the live recording will be on the CD more than likely and several new songs that we haven't quite written yet.

GB: We keep a tape recorder, so when we rehearse and hit upon an idea, we'll record it and develop it later. We have dozens of tapes at home filled with songs and partial songs, ideas that we've come up with and that we like and turn into songs for the next CD.

To me that sounds like a kind of mathematical way of making songs. Composing parts and then combining them to make a whole.

GP: It works both ways. Sometimes we'll get on a groove and just create the entire thing like we know exactly what to do with it. Then again, if we don't have enough time that day because we have a show coming up and in between a song I just start playing, the others will catch on to it. But we know that we have to keep on rehearsing for a show, and then we'll just put that idea on tape and get back to it later.

GB: Sometimes it is mathematical in putting pieces together, but we put the pieces down to develop them later. It's not like we have three cool parts and let's arrange them into a song.

SS: The tape that we made before the CD that you haven't heard yet has one song that was written in two days. It was just all of a sudden, all at once it was there.

GP: "Untamed" on the CD was written to completion from beginning to end from the initial idea.

The song that I heard from the live show was longer and more progressive than the songs on the album. It had a lot of different parts, is that a conscious step or just a natural progression from the older music?

GB: I think it's just a side of what we do. If you look at the songs of the CD itself, you have songs that would lend themselves some more to the commercial ear like "The Clown," then there are songs that would themselves to the progressive ear like "Secrets" or "Killing Silence." I think that the songs that we played for you just now are towards the progressive side of things.

When can we then expect something new?

SS: You're looking at the new millennium before any new material is released.

How often do you guys practice then?

SS: Not as often as we used to because of our conflicting schedules.

GP: Usually, we try for two to three days a week. When our schedules allow us to practice in the afternoon, we practice for two to three hours.

GB: The last month it's been an hour for two to three days a week if we're lucky. We're going to step things up if we're going to work on a new CD and for longer periods. It takes a long time to put a CD together. When we recorded the debut CD we were putting in 10-12 hour days.

Are you going to record here in this

rehearsal room as well?

GB: We will do some of the tracking here. We like doing it ourselves. When we recorded the debut CD, we first recorded almost the whole CD in a big studio, and we weren't happy with it. We thrashed the tapes, went out and bought some more equipment and did it ourselves. We wasted over three thousand dollars in a studio on tracks that we didn't use.

GP: We spent an entire day mixing one of the songs down. We all got in the car, the best way to test a recording is in the car because that's where you're going to be listening to it.

SS: That's what the guys that work in nice studios say: if this tape sounds good in your car or in a regular radio then you know that you've got a good mix.

GP: Our first mix was very bass heavy, there was a lot of low end. After spending an entire day in the studio and having things outside of our own hands, we decided to take things into our own hands and be able to tweak the effects and mess with things.

SS: For the next album, I feel that since we have the experience, it'll sound better by ourselves. We have learned more through the process.

As musicians you play multiple instruments, does that mean you have a very static live act?

GB: You're right. We have to compensate that with a light show because there's no running around on stage.

GP: It is shown on the emotion on our faces though. You can tell when I am into the music, it's the same with the others. The light show helps a lot and that's one of the reasons we needed to do that. When you go to see Rush, you don't see them doing any flips or anything. [A discussion erupts about Rush with the anecdote that Rush has the most gold albums in rock next to the Rolling Stones, they're hugely commercially successful although they're not considered to commercially viable.]

Judging by the live photos on your website, you're using a large light show. Was that influenced by Ozric Tentacles?

SS: Rush, too.

GP: We knew that we needed to add a good live element. When I saw Queensryche, I was blown away by their light show.

When was that?

GB: Way back in the early nineties, probably during the "Operation Minderime" tour.

[Another discussion starts about influences which include Jeff Beck, Peter Dinklage, Jan Hammer, Nine Inch Nails, and Prince for GP, Rush, Iron Maiden, Shadowfax, and all different styles of music for SS; conflicting tastes concerning Dream Theater but how they can fill a venue without a hit single; the neo-classical shredders of the 80s; the cloning that Yngwie Malmsteen does with each album; GP seeing Tony Macalpine playing live in front of 15 people.]

You mentioned to me that you like film music. For which kind of movies would you like to make music for?

GB: I'd love to make music for a film. I would not like to do the music for a comedy nor a romance flick but something eerie, something scary, something on the dark side. I like moods, I think one or two simple notes played at the right time watching a film can make you feel scared or nervous.

Like the Halloween theme for example?

GB: Sure, that music creates that mood. Even something really simple like in "Jaws" [starts humming the theme], as simple as that piece of music is, those two notes make you scared when it comes on. That's powerful to me.

When you describe eerie, the logical step for me would be horror movies.

GP: Horror movies or drama.

SS: Some of the same things that Gary mentioned that he would like to do for films in some ways is taken into this band like the moods.

GB: For instance, if you listen to the



intro for "Killing Silence." That whole intro of just keyboards and percussion creates a dramatic mood.

Wouldn't it be an interesting concept for you to team up with an independent film maker?

SS: We've actually looked into the concept of the three of us writing music for soundtracks.

GB: It's funny because in some of our ideas tapes, we have quite a bit of music that sounds nothing like what's on the CD. We have music sounding much more jazz and new age, music that's just on a whole different level than what's on the CD. It didn't fit on the CD, so it didn't go there, but we have these ideas. It would be great for us as a band to write for a film, certainly.

Are there film makers in the vicinity that would be open for your kind of music?

GB: Possibly, but we haven't looked into it that much. We get caught up in the day to day routine, it's hard, there's a lot of different avenues that we haven't pursued yet.

We've talked about the music but we haven't discussed lyrics yet. How important are the lyrics?

GP: Very important, I write things every day.

Are the lyrics composed after the song is written?

GP: Not always. Here's three different

scenarios of how the lyrics happen for the band. One is when we wrote "Breath Again," I just sing as we were writing the song, we pretty much kept word for word what I made up as we played it. Other times, I'll use an old poem that I've written. Or Scott has written two of the songs.

GB: Another option is that we collaborate on them. "Killing Silence" started off one way, and then we reworked it. Some of the songs have been written by piecing together music and lyric content that works.

SS: The most weird is when we play a song and Gabriel makes up lyrics on the spot. How many bands do that, when you just play music and make up lyrics from the top of your head and keep them? That is unique.

Most of the lyrics have been written from the first person perspective.

GB: Gabriel wrote most of the lyrics, and he's an egomaniac.

GP: Generally, I don't write about the world. I'm not political in that sense, I guess you could say. In terms of listening to lyrics, well, I don't want to hear about the world either. I would rather hear about some one's personal experiences and that nature.

SS: There's actually one song on the album that was written about an event that happened here that I wrote: "On the Bridge." I wrote about the situation that happened whereas Gabriel will sing more about feelings.

GB: "On the Bridge"

was written about an event that happened here on the Bell Isle bridge in Detroit. It's about a lady who jumped off the bridge out of fear because several guys were beating her up.

SS: She was involved in a minor car accident in which she hit someone. Some guys in the car that got hit, got out of the car and were threatening her. They scared her, and she died because she jumped off that bridge. There were a lot of people on the bridge that saw this and did nothing; they stood and stared. That was a wild and bizarre thing. I just sat down one night and wrote those lyrics.

GP: "Secrets" is about how people will tell someone something and ask them not to tell someone else and yet they do. It's about the circle of life and that play will always tell you their secrets. "The Untamed" was about a nightmare that I had. I had a keyboard at home, and I wrote a lot of the idea of the music and words of that music that night. I brought it here, and they liked it. I had created something really abrasive, because it was a really creepy dream. As far as writing lyrics, it happens in a lot of different ways, inspiration comes from everywhere.

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INKUBUS SUKKUBUS

Away with the Faeries

Resurrection Records

I remember how much we here, at "Edge of Time," saluted the first CDs of Inkubus Sukkubus. But the years passed and the band remained the same, not progressing and just repeating what they've done in the first successful releases. I think this is one of these bands that are 100% faithful to their style. Six new songs presented on this album again offer melodic gothic rock with strong pagan attitude and wonderful voice of Candia. Well, the only new thing is the lyrics, which show that Inkubus Sukkubus use hallucinogenic drugs, as the songs are about "chariot of psilocybe," "mescaline time machine," etc. And this group is getting more modern, too, e.g., song "Lo Pan" says: "Great god of the internet, his web around the earth."

The music remains the same, sweet, romantic, melodic (extremely melodic) gothic rock. If you have heard their previous albums, you know what to expect. Is it good or not? I don't know, but I think that they must bring something new. Also, this disc offers you nine more tracks, which are recorded live in 1998, and these include such classics as "Belladonna & Aconite," so my blood begins to run faster. After all, Inkubus Sukkubus are an interesting outfit. (AO)

3/4

MANTRA

Every Defect

Resurrection Records

Not only Resurrection Records clearly improved their layout, but also Mantra progressed a lot. Their debut album "Painted Red" took my breath with very sensitive and dramatic music, but it missed a good final structure. Now we face a matured piece of music, far better than their first album in all spheres. First of all, all the songs here present different emotional fields, each track is something special and not always has a clear connection with the previous one. Of course, some main characteristics remain on all songs, and the biggest of them is Yvonne Neve and her impressive voice. Writing my review for "Painted Red," I've compared her to Bjork, but now I can add some more closer comparisons. First track "Poison" really reminds of Tori Amos and her passionate singing manner, and the second one "The Making of Me" is somehow similar to slower tracks by Skunk Anansie. These are my comparisons, but that doesn't mean that Yvonne Neve hasn't got her own style. Her voice is maybe more emotional than above mentioned singers, and Mantra's music provides all opportunities to her. I can't call "Every Defect" gothic rock (though it has many elements of this style), because then you would call PJ Harvey "gothic" also. Mantra is a combination of rock, gothic, tribal rhythms, even softer music elements, but I'm not sure if the band chooses styles. Maybe they choose atmospheres, and tracks like "Cry" remind of Nick Cave on his perfect "The Good Son" album (although you maybe won't notice outward similarities). If we could blame "Painted Red" for not creating their personal sound, this disc corrects that. "Every Defect" is dedicated to open-eared lovers of dramatic sounds. (AO)

4/14

MANUSKRIFT

Devil's Advocate

Resurrection Records

I've heard only one track by Manuskrift earlier (Manuskrift have released 2 EPs and one album), and it was their rocky melodic darkwave track "Faking Lies" on the compilation CD "New Alternatives III." This song stylistically is similar to the music of this album. The album begins with "Class of '85," which clearly characterizes the style of Manuskrift as melodic darkwave with influences of synth-pop grands. Somehow I've felt the sound of Australian band Midnight Oil, too, but maybe that was only my impression. As the album goes on, we find more influences, such as classical gothic rock, synth-pop, darkwave, dance-floor, which make a catchy cocktail. Maybe for some people it can be even too catchy (I'm speaking about those who adore the more gloomy side of gothic music). Especially, I liked the tracks "Knives" and "Tranquilliser"; the first one is a guitar-based transformation of Depeche Mode, and the second one is an attribute to the darker side of the style. Of course, some weaker tracks are here also; I can't understand the musical concept of "Snap to Zero," and "Modern Medicine" doesn't suit the atmosphere of the whole album. But, all in all, it's a surprise for all dancefloor-gothic maniacs. It's an album for those who prefer Big Electric Cat to The Sisters Of Mercy but also want them to sound more rocky. (AO)

4

Peter Andersson is definitely the person who constantly discovers new fields of ambient/industrial music and creates music which is a reflection of eternal search for the meaning of life ("raison d'être" means "reason of life"). Each time you listen to a new piece of his creation, you dive deep into your unconscious world and find another way how your inner self can be realized. The most known project of him is *raison d'être*, but he also is responsible for other projects like *Necrophorus*, *Svasti-ayanam*, *Atomine Elektrine*, or *Stratvm Terror*. This year *Cold Meat Industry* has released *raison d'être's* compilation album "Collective Archives," so now it's the best time to talk to this mastermind of dark ambient.

Let's start with a short story how you've been involved in creating music. How *raison d'être* have started and how did you get the deal with one of the famous labels of this style, *Cold Meat Industry*?

I started *raison d'être* in early 1991 as a tool for expression and introspection. I have been doing music on my own since 1988, but it wasn't until 1991 when I began composing music seriously and with my new thoughts about music and mind. I think that my music is an expression of my inner self, a reflection of my mind. When listening to the composition I can, through introspection and meditation, try to understand my self, *raison d'être* (and my other projects) is part of my self-realization and the maturation of my psyche. So, through my music, I try to understand myself in order to reach my goal, which is to feel entirety, harmony within my self and in the world. This process is designated by the striving to individuation and is part of the psychoanalyst Carl Gustav Jung's theories of our psyche. I think I was born into this type of music I'm making. I began listening to music (bought my own records) when I was very young. The first group I really enjoyed was *Kraftwerk*, and then I listened to *Tangerine Dream*, *J. M. Jarre*, and *Klaus Schulze*. I enjoyed their meditative and electronic sound, and I often painted the imaginary landscape in my mind that this music generated. After that, I discovered most of these well-known industrial bands, sure they were really amazing bands, but something essential was lacking: the special meditative state music could generate. But when *SPK* released "Zamia Lehmanni," I found that this type of music was perfect for me and led the way to other similar groups. I guess all these groups influenced me when I started *raison d'être*. I think I have to thank my oldest brother for much of this because he led me into this type of music in the first place. To get in contact with *CMI*, I simply sent a demo tape. "Après nous le Déluge" to them, they liked it very much. I remember Mr. Karmanik said "How do you manage to make this type of sound, what equipment do you use?". Later *CMI* released this demo on tape, the first official release of *raison d'être*.

I think that such your projects as *raison d'être* or *Necrophorus* are

maybe the best examples of ambient music nowadays, so if I started creating my own music, they would be a kind of inspiration to me. But what groups/projects have inspired you at the beginning, maybe you could name at least five most influential albums?

I almost only listen to industrial and ambient music and their varieties, plus a few other types of music. I prefer listen to *Alio Die*, *Robert Rich*, *Lustmord*, *Nocturnal Emissions*, *Zoviet France*, *Rapoon*, *Voice of Eye*, *Jeff Greinke*,



raison d'être ambient chants of our unconsciousness

[by Audrius Ozalas]

Vidna Obmana, *Coil*, *SPK*, *Dead Can Dance*, *Lycia*, *Download*, *Future Sound Of London*, *Tangerine Dream*, *Klaus Schulze*, *Brian Eno*, *Cranes* and *Daniel Menche* only to name a few. I do recommend all of these groups above. I don't know which albums inspires me most, but the next five is definitely among them: *Dead Can Dance* "Within the Realm of Dying Sun," *SPK* "Zamia Lehmanni," *Tangerine Dream* "Stratosphere," *Delerium* "Faces, Forms and Illusions," and *Robert Rich* "Numena."

Your first CD by *raison d'être* "Prospectus I" is very different from your second and third albums. Maybe it's more melodic and a bit more conceptual. Do you agree with that and what's your opinion: what is the main difference between your first recording under the name of *raison d'être* and later albums? Does this slight compositional transition mean that you've changed your thoughts about the aim of this project or maybe you've just found something that fits better to your understanding about music?

I do what I feel is right at the moment, perhaps *raison d'être* will be more melodic again but that I don't now yet. Anyhow I have at later time used more expressful sounds, which perhaps have replaced the melodies. Let's say, I have developed my thoughts about *raison d'être* further on, it's thoughts in progress, they are changed but not totally replaced. This progression is reflected in the albums and makes the differences.

The latest album on *raison d'être*, "In Sadness, Silence and Solitude" at least for me is the darkest piece of ambient/industrial you've created to this date. The first track even sounded not like "traditional" *raison d'être*. Does it mean that your creation in the future is gonna go to a darker approach? Can you shortly characterize each of the four your

albums with *raison d'être*?

I don't know anything about the future sound of *raison d'être*. But if we look back on the previous albums, the first "Prospectus I" was very melodic and contained bell, choirs, drums, and some ambient and industrial elements. Next, "Enthralled by the Wind..." was much more ambient and a bit darker. "Within the Depths of Silence and Phomations" was darker and more hypnotic. Drums were almost gone, ambient-industrial sections were dominating the whole CD. "In Sadness, Silence and Solitude" is the darkest so far, most industrialized as well of my recordings. All four albums sound different, but they do complement each other. It's a sound in progression, perhaps a striving for the ultimate *raison d'être* sound.

In the interview for "Spectrum May," you've said that "I try to create such sound structures that express feelings without playing melodies." Can you explain this sentence more? Do you think that more minimalistic ambient can express the feelings better? And how does all the process usually go: do you think the melody first or maybe you seek for unusual sounds or what?

A sound can be expressful without playing melodies of it, that's what I mean. It's what you can do with the sound, how you change the sound of a sound, it's the control of a sound, that is interesting and not the alteration of the pitch (that creates melodies). You can hit a string on a guitar with different velocities, using different tools to hit, blow in a pipe with different breathe pressures, and so on to create different sounds. Using electronic instruments, I'm able to do this alteration of sounds without changing pitches much more powerfully, using filter, pan, etc. How I proceed differs all the time. I usually began with finding sounds. Melodies are usually laid on the top. Too much elements in the music can destroy the feeling, so I think that minimalistic music can describe a feeling better, as long as it isn't too minimalist, but that also depends on what feeling it's trying to create.

There are many chorales in your recordings. As I understand, you use samples - is it for financial reasons only or you don't feel the need to use live recordings? Are you planning to add more live elements in your music?

It would be great to arrange live recordings, but it's not only a financial problem. It's also about planning, rearranging. Maybe I'm not satisfied, then I have to redo everything, so I think it's too much work. Anyhow, the sampled choirs has been live recorded once, even if it's not by me.

***raison d'être* is just one of your many projects. Somehow, it is the most known one and many people don't know about such side projects as *Atomine Elektrine* or *Necrophorus*. Do you consider *raison d'être* to be your main project, others being just side projects? Or maybe *raison d'être* just became most known, though you don't think it is your priority project?**

Actually, I see all my other projects just as important as *raison d'être*, but it seems to be established by people that all my other projects are side projects to the main *raison d'être* project, so I go for that. And it's the most known of my projects as well, so it's naturally somehow.

Your latest release with *raison d'être* was double CD "Collective Archives." Who decided to release this compilation, you or Roger Karmanik? How do the songs you've recorded 8 years ago sound to you now? Some people don't like to remember their old compositions because they sound too unfinished... Is this case familiar to you?

Roger and I decided together. *CMI* had plans to release the "Après nous le Déluge" tape onto CD since 1996 but was delayed all the time. In 1997, I started to collect all the tracks that have appeared on compilations, my thoughts were to make a CD of it, so I sent Roger the material. After a while, we both thought that why don't we make this a double CD set. I added some tracks to fill the time to maximum. The old songs feel a bit primitive. Perhaps not unfinished as songs but more unfinished in mix. I like most of my old tracks, but the mix can make some of them a pain in the ass to listen to.

The closest project to your music on *raison d'être* is *Necrophorus*. Do you see very a big difference between these projects? How the conceptions for these soundscapes differ? By the way, it's interesting, how do you decide that this is time for certain project? Is it a spontaneous feeling or you plan everything ahead?

Well, in the way of how it's created, it doesn't differ from *raison d'être* so much but the sound differs. *Necrophorus* got a more sensible touch over it and uses more synthetic sounds, it's much more ambient than *raison d'être*. When I do music, I usually know before what project it's aimed for. I usually don't create music for different projects at the same time, I work with one project at time, so I feel a stronger overall feeling and a relation between all the compositions involved.

Maybe one of the most unknown projects of yours is *Svasti-Ayanam*. Could you tell more about this project, do you plan to release something under this name? If yes, on which label?

This project was only a temporary project I had for five days in 1993 and two days in 1994. *Svasti-ayanam* is sanskrit and means "bliss." This project is topic once again because of a CD titled "Sanklesa," released in June 1998 by *Crowd Control Activities*, containing the material from 1993 and 1994 (re-mixed). Most of this material was released in 1994 on the split-tape "The Ring of Isvarah." But still the project will probably remain temporary.

In times when *raison d'être* is transforming a more Christian sense, *Svasti-Ayanam* is clearly influenced by Tibetan Buddhism. What is your opinion about religions? Which one of these viewpoints, Christian or Buddhist



is more intimate to you?

Buddhism is a far more sound religion, and I feel closer to buddhism than to christianity, even if I'm not religious at all. So, I do not use religious elements in my music because I might be religious. These religious elements are symbolizing something I want to express. Generally I think religion is crap. I don't believe in a God. I do believe in myself and my own "power." I think a belief should be more personal and not follow a pre-written book. There is one kind of religion I respect and that is the so called primitive ones, nature religions, Mother Earth religions. These are the only true healthy religions.

Almost in all interviews you name K. G. Jung as the man who inspires you a lot. Don't you think that believing in theories of K. G. Jung is a kind of creating a personal religion? I mean, many psychologists say that theories of K. G. Jung are just interpretations which are far from more traditional Z. Freud's ideas. It comes when talking about religions and subconsciousness, archetypes, etc. Do you believe that his theories were right, or you just take something from his books and then transfer them according to your own viewpoint?

I have a personal religion, everyone should have that, and I'm inspired by Jung, but I have not accepted all of his ideas. As I feel now, Jung is more relevant in today's psychology than Freud, at least in the new theories that include quantum physics and psychology. What is right and what is wrong, I pick, which for me are, interesting and "close to me" elements of other people's ideas and mix them together to something new, something that I feel is right for me.

Well, let's return to music. I'm not sure if our readers know about your two other projects: Atomine Elektrine (by the way, in which language is this name? It sounds really Lithuanian!) and Stratvm Terror. Could you tell more about them? Will the first CD of Atomine Elektrine be re-released in the future? I started the Atomine Elektrine project in 1992, as I wanted to make more synthetic and electronic music as well. The basis and conditions for this project was created in the earliest 80s, when I listened to Kraftwerk, Tangerine Dream, and Klaus Schulze. I wanted to make the same music, but I couldn't do it that time. The wish was re-triggered ten years later, and, this time, I had

better possibility to make my wish come true. Atomine Elektrine is the name of a nuclear power station in Lithuania.

Musically, Atomine Elektrine has perhaps not so much in common with Kraftwerk and Tangerine Dream, etc., but the inspiration comes from them. The first CD "Elemental Severance," released by CMI in early 1995, shows a wide spectrum of different electronic styles. Perhaps because it was under construction for a long time, from 1992 to 1994, Techno,

trance, space-ambient, "new age" (new-age feel, not real new age music), and fairy-tale styles were represented on this CD. The second CD "Archimetical Universe," released on Yantra Atmospheres in spring 1999, contains a more homogenous and consistent sound of electronic space-ambient trance tech chill-out music: it's like a journey through a cosmic universe. There is also a CD-R released titled "Atom Xtension" containing unreleased tracks from 1992-1993 and 1997-1998. There has been some talk about re-releasing the first CD, but I'm not sure this will happen. It all depends on CMI.

Stratvm Terror is my noise-ambient-industrial project, which I run together with a friend of mine, Tobias Larsson (drummer and singer in several unknown hard rock groups). Sometimes it's quite harsh and powered, so it's quite different from my other projects. So far, there have been released two tapes, "Germinal Chamber" on Old Europa Café and "The Only True Septic Whore" on Slaughter Productions, and two CDs, "Pariah Demise" on Old Europa Café and "Pain Implantations" on Malignant Records. The two tapes will be released on a CD on Slaughter Productions later this year, and Old Europa Café will release a CD with new material in winter.

Your own label "Yantra Atmospheres" is going to release some early project of your named Cataclyst. Never heard about it. When it was recorded, and how does it sound? Strangely, but the name for me sounds like it could be harsh industrial.

Cataclyst was a temporary project I had in 1992, together with Johanna Rosenqvist, now known as the female part of the noise-industrial band Institut. Cataclyst was a blend of atmospheric music with industrial and tribal elements, so not very harsh.

The layout of raison d'être albums is worth of a special discussion. Who does the design for your releases? On "Collective Archives," you used pictures by A. Nemkovsky. How did this plan come out? By the way, A. Nemkovsky said that he is highly influenced by Tarkovsky films. Did you see some of them, and which directors were the most influential for you?

CMI does all the design for raison d'être, under supervision by me, of course. About the paintings on "Collective Archives," Alexander himself first got in touch with me. He

sent me some of his booklets containing some of his paintings. At the same time, I was looking for pictures for the "Collective Archives," and when I looked at his paintings, I felt that this is raison d'être picturized, and I strongly wanted some of his works to be included on the CD. CMI agreed. I enjoy the films of Tarkovsky very much, especially "Stalker and The Sacrifice" (that is filmed in Sweden with Swedish people). Else, I like the works of David Lynch and Peter Greenway very much.

I've read about your live performances with raison d'être. It was very strange, because somehow I can't imagine the mood of your albums created on scene. How your live performances look like? Do you use video's or other special attributes? Could you remember performance of group or project which stunned you most?

I prefer not to play live, but it's nice to travel sometimes and to meet people. Many fans would like to see me, too, so I almost feel that it's a duty to play live. Anyhow, the live atmosphere on a raison d'être show is not what it should be. I admit I have to work something out. I usually use a background video, and when I performed, I did only play new unreleased songs to "compensate" the lack of the right atmosphere. The advantage of playing live (to the audience) is that the music is so much more loud. The music really penetrates the whole body and make one's bowels vibrate. There is not so much to see actually. I stand behind some equipment, and make some sounds on the top of the background tape. One performance of another artist I really remember is when Sleeping Dogs Wake played in Sweden in 1989, I think. It was a very hard and intense performance, and I had never heard of them before, more that there were rumors that they used to perform naked or almost naked.

Swedish industrial/ambient seems to do very well in recent years. I'm not sure, is it because of solid, productive work of Cold Meat Industry or Swedish people really have a kind of special industrial-music-oriented character. Do you think that Sweden has the leading position in power-electronics, industrial, ambient music? By the way, I've seen that you did mastering for "Esthetics of Cruelty" compilation on Cold Meat Industry. Do you work sometimes for this label, or did it happen just once?

I think CMI got a leading position in what they do, and Sweden got a leading position in industrial music, but power-electronics is better presented in UK and US, I think, even if the "Esthetics of Cruelty" compilation strengthen the Swedish position. I have started doing the mastering for CMI since this noise compilation, except for the Sephiroth CD, and I will continue doing the most of the mastering work for CMI, at least as it looks now.

Maybe this question isn't so delicate, but are you able to live only from your music? And how many CDs can the project like raison d'être to sell? Of course, you cannot answer this question, if you don't want to.

No I can't live on the income from the music, so I have a regular job as well. The CDs are selling in about 4000-5000 copies of each title of raison d'être.

Many of your projects could be a reflection of nowadays' society - in a sense, that they are all created by computers. What is your opinion about this computer-mediated society? Aren't you afraid that in future computers will change natural human relationships? And would you be able to express your inner world with other, not computerized, instruments?

There is always a need to express oneself and to meet people, after all, we are social beings and these needs can't disappear with an ease. I think it's quite good with a computer age, it gives us more freedom and more relations all over the world that we never would have, if the Internet wouldn't have existed, but this cannot replace social meeting and will not either. I don't think I make computerized music, it's more a blend of computerized and real sounds, as I sample most of my sounds. The sounds are real, acoustic before I sample them.

Your thoughts about nowadays' ambient scene and its best artists? Best artists would be Brian Eno, Robert Rich, Aljo Die, and Vidna Obmana.

Death metal?
Don't like.

Apocalyptic folk (Death In June, Current 93, Sol Invictus)?
Usually do not listen to this, but Ordo Equilibrio is good.

Gothic rock?
Don't like.

One of your most recent projects is the collaboration with Lina from Deutsch Nepal. Do you plan to release an album, and what is the main concept for this project?
The concept is to create recordings connected to our hometown Boxholm (the town where we spent our childhood). Most of the sounds are sampled from sources in this town. An album is to be expected soon, first as a vinyl LP and later on CD.

Could you name your forthcoming albums for all projects. If you can, please, tell some information about them. Maybe you could reveal something about future album of raison d'être?

Next releases for this year and early 2000 are: Necrophorus "Tundra Stillness" CD on Crowd Control Activities (autumn 1999), Bocksholm Untitled LP on Entertate Musikk and CD on Yantra Atmospheres LP planned for September, CD will be released later, Stratvm Terror "The Only True Septic Whore" CD on Slaughter Productions (contains the tape plus some of the tracks from "Germinal Chamber"), and Stratvm Terror Untitled CD on Old Europa Café with new and live material. I will begin with a new raison d'être album soon and hopefully there will be a CD release in spring next year.

NIGHTMARE LODGE

Blind Miniatures

Red Stream Records

For your darkest hours. Nightmare Lodge always has been a group that promises an uncertain, deep and, most often, quite depressive journey. Their music has this floating atmosphere of terror, and, in my opinion, only several groups in the world can reach this emotional height. The new piece of nightmares continue this trip of ambience into dark worlds. Comparing with previous releases, here we have less voices, and the music became a bit slower (at the same time, it became even darker). Also, the tribal character became clearer (like on "Locked Memories"), and band's dark ambient is more flowing and much more useful for deep diving into yourself. It seems that Red Stream don't release much stuff in this style (as far as I can remember, they have En Nihil and Wejdas), but all their signings are more than worth of attention. The motto of this album is "War is everywhere... and everyone is fighting," and it clearly characterizes the mood of "Blind Miniatures." It is ambient at its most depressive side; it's darker than Raison d'Étre or Desiderii Marginis. (AO) 4

NOXIOUS EMOTION

Symbols

ADSR Musicworks

Noxious Emotion come from Seattle and they have nothing in common with grunge, instead of this they play pure EBM (Electronic Body Music). I've lost my interest in danceable EBM sounds years ago, but sometimes it's pleasant to hear electronic rhythms mixed with the upbeat new-wave sounds. Noxious Emotion don't have industrial elements, such as hard guitars attacks, aggressive vocals, etc. They choose cold, rhythmic, standard, classical EBM with strong influence of nihilistic wave. The vocals are typical to the style, but Noxious Emotion at least escape the traditional EBM lyrics; the lyrics of "Symbols" are more personal and self-analytical. The press release says that Noxious Emotion also overlay their rhythms with medieval melodies; sorry, somehow I haven't noticed that. The music is suitable for every alternative dancefloor and is more orientated to pure electronic music fans, not to electro-gothic audience. (AO) [ADSR Musicworks, 1106 E Republican, Seattle WA 98102, USA] 3/3/4

OF UNKNOWN ORIGIN

Seven Ovens of the Soul

The Order of Suffering Clown

Bryn Dall from Loretta's Doll and Derek Rush from Dream Into Dust have recorded this alchemical album which, I think, is extremely hard to get into. I don't say that Loretta's Doll or Dream Into Dust are just easy-listening groups, but this one goes to even darker spheres of unconscious worlds. I think this is one of the darkest albums I keep at home; even Lustmord don't leave this extremely dark atmospheric impression. Musically, Of Unknown Origin create soundscapes that differ from dark ambient to tribal or trance, I just don't know. It seems like you brought something unknown into your room, does it give you a pleasure or pain? Of course, here, as in all esoteric creations, we can't get answers: it is your personal experience, and where the "personal" ends nobody knows. As I understand, the concept was influenced by such thinkers as A. O. Spare or W. Blake, so it's highly recommendable to all those who practice the magic. But I'm still not sure that I understood everything from this record; maybe that's in my future plans. (AO) [PO Box 2124, New York, NY 10009 USA] 3/1/2

PUISSANCE

Mother of Disease

Fluttering Dragon

Each album of Puisseance marks certain progress. Their debut "Let Us Lead" on Cold Meat Industry presented bombastic neo-classical apocalyptic music, but it was created in a bit amateurish way. The second full-length "Back in Control" sculptured the same mood, but the music was much more professional. "Mother of Disease" is again a big progress, but now the mood is slightly different. The music isn't so bombastic and militaristic as it was in "Back in Control." "Mother of Disease" has much more silent, peaceful places, and some tracks like "Reign of Dying Angels" are almost meditative/symphonic ambient. War rhythms, so characteristic to Puisseance earlier, now often give up their place to more thorough apocalyptic symphonies. It is the most melodic, symphonic and, in places, even ethereal music created by Puisseance. Some tracks like "In Shining Armour" even add more gothic elements which never existed in Puisseance's music earlier. This album now

RAISON D'ETRE

Collective Archives DoCD

Cold Meat Industry

The most interesting (at least for me) project in all Cold Meat Industry family has released the collection of compositions previously released on cassettes and compilations only. Earlier you could fall in despair knowing how many rare tracks you weren't able to find in stores, and finally now there's the best possibility to make your Raison collection complete. This double album presents thirty rare compositions totaling in almost 150 minutes of music recorded in the period of 1991-1995. It's interesting to find the tracks that open a new view to Peter Andersson's creation, like, for example "Ignasco Combuo" with Tibetan chants, and also you can find really interesting exclusive re-mixes from the first CD "Prospectus I" and three previously unreleased compositions. I must also add that the booklet of this CD is the most beautiful of all Raison d'Étre albums (thanks to the artwork of Russian painter Alexander Nemkovsky), and even if it isn't a regular Raison album, it isn't for the collectors only; I even would say that it could be the first step if you aren't familiar with the music of the ambient grands. So, as in the case with all Raison d'Étre albums, it's just another must. And, by the way, Peter Andersson has released his new album under the name of Atomine Elektrine which is called "Archimetrical Universe." Another piece of music for a society whose spirituality has been rendered impotent. (AO) 4 3/4



reminds more of melodic albums by In Slaughter Natives than of war-like ambient. "Mother of Disease" is also recommended to those who like ambient albums where the style differs in each song. "In Shining Armour" is melodic, "Post Ruin Symphony" delivers dark-flowing ambient, "Core of Revelation" is done in a typical Puisseance way (bombastic and triumphant industrial). Without doubt, it is the best Puisseance album to date: Puisseance have also released 4-song album "Hall the Mushroom Clouds" which presents drum'n'bass alike marchings. (AO) [Fluttering Dragon, PO Box 182, 03-700 Warszawa 4, Poland] 4/1/4

SEPHIROTH

Cathedron

Cold Meat Industry

This is the debut CD of this group which returns us to a more usual Cold Meat Industry sound. After the angry assault of power electronics, we return to dark ambient, and "Cathedron" is again more or less a typical album of this style: dark soundscapes, nihilistic moods, gloomy atmospheres. It is really nothing new in the dark ambient world, but it sounds good. Most of all, Sephiroth's music reminds of Lustmord and other ambient creators who don't insert some side atmospheres like Raison d'Étre, but concentrate on a specific sound or mood. So maybe this disc won't be easier accepted than the more cosmic music of projects like Necrophorus, it is more down to the depths of earth music (like Lustmord, Sephiroth) also use own recordings - this time from places like Iceland or Cairo, and you must concentrate only on these sounds to get a full impression. "Cathedron" is also filled with tribal drumming, thus giving us more of an ethnic character, reminding of acts like En Nihil. But the clearest influence in all ways is the above-mentioned Lustmord. Sephiroth don't surpass Lustmord, but their disc is solid nevertheless. (AO) 3/3/4

SPATIUM SAEVUS SONITUS

The Ritual of the Black Sun

CAPP

You can't blame nobody but yourself for touching this release, because the mood, transformed by these sounds, can be only depression, sadness, and discovery of your darker self. Warning: it is not an easy-listening album, on the contrary, it is one of the most depressive and bringing-the-senses-down, release of my life; the recommendation on the cover, "Find Your Way to Hell" is more than correct, speaking about this CD. The style is gloomy, dark ambient with flowing dark passages and dominating sense of horror and nightmares. I would recall the Cold Meat Industry traditional sound, but I can't remember such a gloomy project in their roster (maybe that's fortunate). It's darker than Lustmord, I even don't speak about Raison d'Étre or Deutsch Nepal. But Spatium Saevus Sonitus, in contrast to the above mentioned groups, are more one-sided, not so experimental, more monotonous; and the use of synthesizers is more evident. But maybe the aim was to create a certain atmosphere, not to seek for innovative sounds? Anyway, I rarely listen to this disc, because often you don't want to fall in a total despair. You can contact CAPP for their catalog of dark releases, they've got everything from Cold Meat Industry and Tesco. (AO) [CAPP, S.V. Koukoumatitis, Lsiou 8, GR-11146 Athens, Greece] 3/3/4

SUTCLIFFE JUGEND

When Pornography is no Longer Enough

Death Factory

Well, do you think that noise, pornography, insanity are no longer enough? Sutcliffe Jugend come here with an album that must please the fans of hardest, most brutal, and most breaking-through power-electronics. If you have heard such bands as Whitehouse, you know what to expect: this is just pure hatred, and even for me sometimes it's too much. I think that those who say that they can listen to this album any time or day simply lie. I think that Sutcliffe Jugend are one of the most interesting groups in the genre of extreme electronics (and one of the most professional; the project exists since 1981). Especially, I liked fifth and sixth tracks, which are, by the way, dedicated to M. de Sade (the album, as usual in the power-electronics field, is about murder and beauty of it all; I said that this is brutal, didn't I?). So, this record can really be "your partner in crime," but that's only for unstable brains. (AO) 4/1/4

V/A

The Black Bible 4-CD set

Cleopatra Records

A four CD set for all gothic-music maniacs, it's like a bible of what has been discovered in gothic music during 20 years. Beginning with such pioneers as Bauhaus, Fields of the Nephilim, and going to the new discoveries such as Spina or The Electric Hellfire Club, it covers all sub-genres of dark music, including industrial, ethnic, traditional gothic rock, and gothic-metal. So, if you want to have almost all your favorite groups in one place or just want an introduction to dark music, grab these four CDs. Also, here you can find many unreleased tracks, exclusive mixes and so on, as in all good-quality compilations. I won't point out my favorites, 'cause there are too many of them.

V/A

Esthetics of Cruelty

Cold Meat Industry

Well, if earlier someone asked me which band characterizes the Cold Meat stuff best, I would have said that Ordo Equilibrus or maybe Raison d'Étre. But things change, and now I would think of Sutcliffe Jugend or maybe Sogun. Industrial/noise became almost the main style in the Cold Meat camp, and their future plans show that we must prepare for another assault of power electronics. Does it mean that it is the end of dark ambient which was so much related to the record label? I hope not, but this time we have a double compilation where 22 bands/projects coming from Sweden present power electronics, noise, industrial; it's pure insane music. And this compilation also marks the growing interest for these styles which I have noticed this year: just look at the growing number of web sites dedicated to this most extreme music in the world. This compilation is the best starting place for those unfamiliar with this obscure scene. Of course, not all the bands are of the same quality, but I recommend Blod, Janitor, Proiekt Hat, and Iron Justice. But be prepared, I don't think that's really safe for your brains. And remember - that is much more extreme than your most brutal death metal. (AO)

V/A

Storm the Palace: Worms A.D. MCXVII

Palace of Worms

Personally to me, this compilation is the best one in this issue (together with "What is Eternal"). This time Palace of Worms decided to release a concept album that aims to present best artists performing in dark medieval style. Some stappings outside this concept are present, like, for example, Ontario Blue which we maybe can call ethereal or something else, but it seems that they don't have much in common with artists performing in the atmospheres of Dark Ages. Hagalaz' Runedance is also clearly folk, but after all it's very hard to find where one style ends and another begins. The main thing is that here we've got an exceptional collection of talents, and only one track isn't worth of this compilation (at least for me), which is Nothvs Filius Mortis's "Legio." Each medieval/ambient/folk fan will be glad to find such known artists as Ataraxia, Penitent, The Soil Bleed Black, Protagonist, or Hagalaz' Runedance. Seven tracks here are previously unreleased, which makes this album even more worthy. This compilation disc is exceptional also because it is divided in three parts: The Unprejudiced Plan, The Pitiless Attack, and The Palace's Deleath, each of them contains groups/projects having similar musical concept or atmosphere. For me, this compilation CD creates an impression of dynamically changing emotions, which grow and then calm down. I won't pick any favorites, because most of the bands are at the same high artistic level. Better don't miss this compilation. (AO)

V/A

What is Eternal

Middle Pillar

The best neofolk/dark/ethereal music compilation I've heard in my life. All 14 tracks presented on this super-quality digi-pack are of unique beauty and can serve as the best beginning step when wanting to get into dark music spheres. Besides such grands as two tracks by T. Wakeford (Sol Invictus) - by the way, one of them is recorded with Tor Lundvall or Jarboe (earlier on Swans) - we have new hopes Unto Ashes, The Machine In The Garden, and Mors Syphilitica. Also, once again, we can hear such stunning groups as Backworld, Dream Into Dust, and Loretta's Doll. I'm sure that all neofolk and ethereal music maniacs will try to grab a copy of this limited edition release (1000 copies only). And to those of you who have often heard something about this dark folk and ambient, but never risked to touch it, better don't miss it now. For me, the best compilation CD to enter the new year. (AO) [Middle Pillar, PO Box 555, New York, NY 10009, USA]

VEHEMENCE REALIZED

Severe

Palace of Worms

It's strange to hear that group playing such music comes from United States. The main atmosphere in "Severe" associates to me with English apocalyptic folk/industrial movement of the middle 80s, such genius discs as "Nada!" by Death In June or some tracks on Current 93's album "Swastikas for Noddy." If you remember Death In June's track "Fields of Rape," you can imagine atmosphere of this album. Vehemence Realized didn't stop at this point, of course, and their music is inspired by ethereal gothic (track "Old" reminds of Black Tape For A Blue Girl), and I even could compare this project to melancholic Beyond Dawn (stylistically, both bands don't have much in common, but the hypnotic melancholic atmospheres are quite similar, maybe that's because Vehemence Realized, as Beyond Dawn, use trumpet). This group manages to form romantic, melancholic atmosphere, I even wouldn't call it dark, maybe such words as poetic or sentimental suit more. The label characterized it as "walking under our city's night rain," and I hardly can find better comparisons. This disc will please fans of more ethereal gothic/wave/neofolk, it doesn't have this sense of nihilism that most groups of this style try to transform; Vehemence Realize offer a sense of hope in many places instead. It isn't only optimistic album, but it offers many colors of mood. Technically, this project is also worth of praise. (AO) 4/3/4



reviews

rock, alternative rock, stoner rock

CREED

My Own Prison

Wind-Up Entertainment/BMG

And who wanted to write off grunge? Creed's "My Own Prison" is a mix of grunge and modern American rock. Some of the better songs, like "Tom," "One," and the title track, are influenced by Alice in Chains, Tool, and Soundgarden, but the rest of the album is mediocre regular "modern" rock/grunge which you easily do without. Undecided lyrics "Am I right or am I wrong," "Should I Sleep or Stay Awake" get downright annoying, and if it was not the rusty melancholic feel of aforementioned tracks, the album would not be reviewed here. (GS) 3 1/2

INCUBUS

S.C.I.E.N.C.E.

Sony Music Entertainment

This album sounds like a never released Faith No More record. Not too harsh, but soundly funky, hard riffing songs have the atmospheric deep flavor that helped metalheads to appreciate Faith No More. The album probably has too many funk/rap parts if you want solely metal, but if you don't mind experiments, give it a try. Unfortunately, the CD cover is one of the most idiotic and distracting CD covers in heavy music history (look for it on the Internet, I can't spoil the page by putting it here), which initially reduced my will to get this album from 10 to 2, and I finally got the CD only because of \$3.50 price. (GS) 3 3/4

LIMITED TIME OFFER

Limited Time Offer EP

self-released

Trio from Tucson, AZ delivers American-style alternative hard rock. I had a chance to talk to one of the guys, and he said that the rhythm section is inspired by Dream Theater and Rush. However, guitar riffs are quite direct, and the vocals are in the veins of Alice in Chains and Tool, which gives an overall "alternative" touch. While none of the songs do have that magic touch to become a hit, they have catchy moments and indicate the future potential. The band sees this debut EP just as a demo to get to clubs, and currently is in pre-production stage of new material, about which they are really excited about. (GS) [Limited Time Offer, 1509 S. Frances Ave., Tucson, AZ 85711, USA] 3 1/2

MALEVOLENCE

Transcending the Godless Age of Science

self-released

The second album of Canadian undergrounders contains 10 metal/rock songs. The drive makes you recall bands like Monster Magnet and Kyuss, just Malevolence are less diverse, and, in some songs, more punk-rock oriented. Once you start the listening, "Silkwood" and "Full on Tachyon" immediately capture with good riffs and sheer drive, but the fact is that towards the middle and the end, things get a little bit the same. (GS) [\$13, Jason Walton, #9 3987 Gordon Head Rd., Victoria B.C., Canada V8N 3X5] 3 1/2

MAXIMUM INDIFFERENCE

Maximum Indifference

Botched Records

A do-it-yourself style minimalist packaging of the promo CD we got did not rise high expectations, but presented five instrumental tracks of electro-metal were actually very good. In many cases, such style-tag (electro-metal) would imply a rather monotonous high-speed aggressive material, but here the focus is clearly on the melody. In addition, the music is very energizing and varying, and the dance between guitars and synthesizers is well-coordinated. (GS) [\$15 (full-length CD), Gustaf Fjelstrom, Botched Records, 5094 Moorpark Ave., San Jose, CA 95129, USA] 4

MONSTER MAGNET

Powertrip

A&M Records

Yet another psychedelic trip from one of the better American popular acts. While their earlier "Dopes to Infinity" really smoked, you cannot say the same about "Powertrip," no matter how much you would like to. It is, of course, very adorable when Mr. Dave Wyndorf spits on popular scene and supports stoner rock movement, but the fact is that, in "Powertrip," Monster Magnet (or Wyndorf, which is the only songwriter) ride with their old luggage. The album still offers confident trippy heavy rock; Monster Magnet do not need to look around to find inspirations, they are inspirators themselves. But on "Powertrip," the songs are simpler and the huge spacy feel of their earlier material hides behind the rocking textures. A number of tracks stand out though, including "Temple of Your Dreams," "19 Witches," and "Golath and the Vampires." "Bummer," "See You in Hell," "Space Lord" are memorable, too. So, why the grumbling then? I don't know. My conclusion is that "Powertrip" is one of the best of what you can get from the current mainstream music. (GS) 4 1/4

NAIAD

In Bardo EP

self-released

Naiad are a four-piece musical outfit currently based in Sydney, Australia. "In Bardo" is their five-song debut CD. Interestingly, the word "bardo" is taken from the buddhism religion and is commonly used to denote the intermediate state between death and rebirth, but, in reality, bardos are occurring continuously throughout both life and death and are junctures when the possibility of liberation, or enlightenment, is heightened. These religious aspects cannot really be heard in Naiad's music though. What can be heard is a promising blend of Tool ("Aenima" era) and elements of stoner rock. The Tool references are especially evident in the vocal intonation of female singer Judi, who is a deadringer for the Tool vocalist. Although not entirely within the musical scope of "Edge of Time," this is an interesting release from a band that is still searching for their own identity but for now will certainly satisfy fans of Tool willing to embark on a musical journey down under. (CR) [Naiad, PO Box M45, Monash Park NSW 2111, Australia] 3 3/4

PLAN E

Songs for a Rainy Day

Solar Disk

This album has nothing in common with the first EPs I've heard from this group. Earlier it was psychedelic rock, but it didn't have a stable form; now their music progressed a lot, and it is gothic-psychedelics with strange emotional vocals. And I think this is disc number one for all experimentators with mescaline and other psychedelic drugs as all lyrics are obviously influenced by hallucinogens. The mushroom-created atmosphere is transformed into music, and I listen to this disc with pleasure when I am in a certain mood. Is it an alternative to psilocybe, or what? Musically, there are no innovations, just extremely psychedelic music. By the way, two of Plane E members are from cult band Impaled Nazarene. (AO) 3 3/4

QUEENS OF THE STONE AGE

Queens of the Stone Age

Roadrunner Records

The band features three ex-members of the legendary stoner rockers Kyuss. The main figure of Queens of the Stone Age is the guitarist Josh Homme. His magnificent and relaxed guitar tunes are simply phenomenal. Stylistically, the band has nothing to do with Kyuss, it's a catchy, easy listenable psychedelic rock with a slight indie touch. The vocals are melodic, a bit melancholic; it takes a little time to get used to them, but after a couple of listens you get them. There are lots of brilliant tracks on this CD, so I won't mention them. Listen yourself! (SV) 4 1/4

ROADSAW

Nationwide

MIA Records

As I heard, this CD was recorded and released about two years ago on a small

label. No wonder that this album is re-released now on a bigger label, RoadSaw have that certain something. The first track "Keep On Sailing" is a straight groovy piece of stoner rock in veins of Kyuss or Fu Manchu. The next song, "Not Today" is also a great composition with a slight punk touch. The slow "Black Flower" is a perfect mixture of Alice in Chains and Metallica while "Overspill" reminds me a bit of Offspring, although, generally speaking, RoadSaw have nothing common with these bands. "Motorcater" is another impressive example of psychedelic rock. All in all, "Nationwide" has become a strong stoner rock CD with heavy guitars and nice vocal lines, some versatility would do a lot of good, though. Four fat points. (SV) 4

ROTORS TO RUST

All That's Heavy

self-released

A very interesting band. The opener "Stranded" combines Danzig, Tool, and The Doors. The second track "Gameface" contains a nice guitar riff and has a slight The Tea Party touch. Nick Cave-ish atmosphere rules over the third song "Turning the Soil." Outstanding songs are also the calm "Lament," the mid-tempo track "Don't You Ever," and the last "trance"-composition "Relentless Motor." Pretty depressive stuff, I must say. Melancholic and, at the same time, aggressive. Has also something from stoner rock here and there... (SV) [Mark Curdo, 512 Bloomfield Ave., Apt 3-F, Caldwell, NJ 07006, USA] 4

ROTORS TO RUST

Bitter Fountain EP

self-released

This EP, the follow-up to their debut, is heavier and more psychedelic. I would call this stoner rock meets Danzig. The songs are no more as sad as on "All That's Heavy," they simply rock, go forward. In addition to three new studio tracks, you can find here the amazing live-version of "Relentless Motor," one of the best tracks from their debut CD. I can't await their new album which probably will be out this year. (SV) 4



STABBING WESTWARD

Darkest Days

Sony Music Entertainment

The album breathes with depression, and dark lyrics put a stamp to the music, which could become a depressed soundtrack to a movie like "The Crow." Musically, it's rock with industrial elements and distortion, coming along with such acts as VAST. The industrial flavor acts rather positively, bringing emotions and not mechanicality. Sometimes calm moments change quite drastically with heavy guitars (like Nine Inch Nails), and it can get a little disturbing, but, on the other hand, it gives diversity to the entirely dark feel of this album. Stabbing Westward pay attention to good refrains and compose good melodies, too. (GS) 4

TERRA FIRMA

Terra Firma

Steamhammer/SPV

The truth is I do not find many attractive elements in this band's first effort. There are well known teams in the metal field that have tried to take their obvious Black Sabbath influences some steps further, and sporadically, few of them created something innovative. Terra Firma sound more as a not too developed and a bit confused Sabbath-



ORANGE GOBLIN

Time Travelling Blues

Rise Above Music

After their highly acclaimed debut "Frequencies from Planet Ten," Orange Goblin return with a new great album. I think, "Time Travelling Blues" is even better than the debut. The songwriting is more mature, varied, the ideas are fresher and more attractive. The improved vocals and guitar work make this CD one of the best latest stoner rock releases. The highlight of the album is the mighty "The Man Who Invented Time." The whole material is based on powerful Sabbath-like riffing, and it has class. The title track surprisingly has cool bluesy touch. One of the strongest hippie/stoner outputs recently. (SV) 4 1/4

Kyuss-Dolly-sheep clone. Being frank, that's the poor impression I get here. (GM) 2 3/4

3RD DAY RISING

Spiral

Nepesh Records

3rd Day Rising is an alternative hard rock band from Newport, South Wales. "Spiral" is their second album, the first one came out in 1995. First of all, I must say that the production of the CD is really very professional, especially for a self-release. Regarding their material, it's hard to describe the music of the band. They mix elements of classic rock from the 70s, heavy metal tunes as well as a little of experimental sounds to an interesting outcome. I can't say I'm thrilled, but "Spiral" is a very solid release, without a doubt. Not without a reason they have played some famous festivals like Kingston. Good. (SV) [3rd Day Rising, 20 Beechwood Crescent, Newport, South Wales NP9 8AB, UK] 3 3/4

VAST

Visual Audio Sensory Theater

Elektra Records

Not all guitarists that at young age were featured in "Guitar Player" magazine end up doing virtuoso rock/metal instrumentals. Jon Crosby is a good example, because his band VAST play psychedelic industrial rock/metal, which doesn't demand outstanding guitar play, but certainly demands wise songwriting in order to be intriguing. Jon succeeds here, because VAST's album is ready to capture the listener with its multilayered spells, oriental elements, atmospheric textures, melodic, powerful, and dramatic vocals. It's not as heavy or drastic as Nine Inch Nails, rather mid-sounding and more organic with strings and orchestration, but powerful and dynamic. A sort of what Enigma made with those choirs, just we deal with lightly-industrialized rock and metal here. Or maybe The Tea Party would be a better reference? (GS) 4

THE VENGEANCE BROTHERS

The Vengeance Brothers

self-released

This CD offers us very dynamic rock in veins of the 70s bands like Black Sabbath or early Alice Cooper. The aggressive vocals and guitar of Eric Baestlein (ex-Lost Breed) rocks very well as well as the tight rhythm section. The main influence of the band is probably Black Sabbath (Ozzy era), just listen to cool tracks like "Clint" or "Rancid Dancer." I imagine, their shows are bursting with energy, such a material is an ideal case for live performance. Great. For fans of above-mentioned bands and also Danzig (vocal intonation). (SV) [The Vengeance Brothers, 12940 Burbank Blvd. #7, Van Nuys, CA 91401, USA] 3 3/4

rotors to rust

Music Has Always Been About Freedom

[by Sigitas Velyvis]

From their web-site:

ROTORS TO RUST are a hard rocking, fire breathing trio who hail from Portland, Maine. While their hometown may seem inconsequential, it is in fact not. Portland, the east coast's version of Seattle, is permeated by never-ending winters, a cold infinity in the sea, freaks and legions of people seeking to disappear. In this setting you either die, go insane or break out; ROTORS have done all three. Their music on three albums to date, is a somber, but powerful collection of bombastic rock; employing tendon tearing riffs, tribalistic drums and deep, rich vocals. But ROTORS are signified by more than just the music... their atmosphere is a hidden musician.

Ed Gaines, lead singer/guitarist is both shaman and warchief; healing and destroying simultaneously. His voice has been branded Nick Cave meets Ian Astbury. The lyrics open his own wounds that at one time were too internally deep to be expressed in any fashion. Jason Grosso, bassist, brings forth bone shuddering, knee knocking sounds that fringe on Mingus filling in with Black Sabbath. Drummer Doug Wood adds a concentrated thunder to the steady march. Although their sound is their own, most reflections of ROTORS associate them with a heavy version of The Doors and The Cult. This band can bring; Tool, Monster Magnet, Soundgarden and AC/DC fans to the same party. ROTORS is a hard rock band that rocks hard. The edge and their style is very much all natural and unformulated. ROTORS TO RUST is a florescent band without the color.

The band brings back something to hard rock that is basic and profound. Their brand of riff based, big hard rock is timeless and will always sound good to those who enjoy a little less "flash" in their bands. Everyone that sees them, is an instant fan. Something so real and genuine is hard to deny. It's Intense. Very Real. Powerful. Hypnotic. Rock. Loud. Louder. ROTORS TO RUST.



"Bitter Fountain" was released in 1996, so I wonder, when can we expect the new CD...

Doug: We're going to do a strong period of pre-production to get comfortable with what we want to present this time. I think we begin to record the middle of August.

Ed: We haven't put out an extensive collection in some time now. So we wanted to make sure that this record was expressing everything we wanted to relinquish this time around. We didn't want to put out an album just to have a release out there. "Bitter Fountain" was released in part to satisfy our fans and radio who wanted a hard and heavy record. I feel great about this album. I'm always excited about the creation process. We want the chance to be able to present a rock record that holds that magic from the first track until the last. I think bands get so caught up setting the table so much, they forget that the meal that needs to be great. I want to be able to put out a great all around rock record.

What do you think was the difference between "All That's Heavy" and "Bitter Fountain"?

Doug: I think on "All That's Heavy" we played for ourselves. It was therapy for Ed I know. "Bitter Fountain" was a record that was very much demanded by friends, fans, and radio.

Ed: I think there was a transformation from passive vibe (on "All that's Heavy") to aggressive one on "Bitter Fountain." I think those records are like bookends. Recording those albums were very therapeutic for me. We had more time to do "All That's Heavy." Also, we had the opportunity to have that record mastered by Bob Ludwig's studio Gateway Mastering. That was a great touch to the record. Those records were both very much inspired by a trying time in my life. That music was the only way for me to express anything at that time.

What direction are the new songs going?

Doug: More melodic.

Ed: Yes. More melodic absolutely. My mom was happy about that!

Doug: More melodic, but heavier. Power. Love. Hate. Laugh. Cry.

Ed: These songs continue our ideas and feelings just in a new path.

Jason: I am trying to build the bass lines to become more of a texture. I see songs as ever changing waves.

The covers of previous albums were a bit bizarre, especially the "Bitter Fountain" photograph. Why did you choose these pictures, do you think they represented your music and lyrics then?

Ed: The covers, to us, always carry on the thoughts and themes of the material inside. But, at the same time, we don't like to dictate what the album cover is supposed to mean. We want the listener to decide for themselves what it means to them. We just offer the initiative. The cover of "Bitter Fountain" was taken outside my house in the early 30s. To me, it means something very specific. To you or to anyone else it means whatever you want to derive from it. Music has always been about freedom.

"All That's Heavy" was pretty gloomy and depressive album. I can feel a strong "loneliness-outsider" feeling there...

Ed: The dedication inside the jacket says it all. (Dedicated to anyone who has ever felt alone.)

In my opinion, both CDs had a slight Danzig touch. What are your musical influences?

Ed: I never heard of Danzig until "Mother" hit big. I guess it's my voice that attracts that attention. But that's my voice. I don't alter it in any way. That's just the way my voice is.

Doug: For me? Iron Maiden, Led Zeppelin, Rush. Hard rock and metal has always been it for me.

Jason: Butthole Surfers. The Boredoms, John Coltrane. The Cows.

Ed: Neil Young, Dylan, I liked the vibe of The Doors, Monster Magnet, Soundgarden. I listen to mostly singer/songwriters. People who make honest music that inspires me the most.

You have played with some hippie/stoner rock bands recently. What do you think about this so-called stoner rock scene?

Ed: Whatever is going on is good because it's all based in rock. You can give the genres any name you want. As long as it comes back to rock n'roll. That's most important.

Doug: To me, this style is very true music that can mesmerize even the best of em'. Hard and Heavy. A bass, drum, and guitar onslaught.

Jason: It's a good idea, but the fans are far and few between.

Psychedelic music is often related with drugs, be they light or hard. What opinions do you have on it?

Doug: To each his own.

Jason: I love drugs. Acid, pot, mushrooms, mescaline, cocaine. But that's just me.

Have you had the offers from any labels or you prefer self releases?

Doug: We are pushing strong to have this album released and promoted by a label. All of our releases have been self releases thus far. We sold over 5,000 records without any label or distribution mostly sold in a small section of northern United States. All purely off of a street buzz and playing gigs. And we did alright considering we weren't dealing with any type of management representation for the first four years. We now have strong management and many avenues have opened up for us. Labels have been calling us excited asking about the new record. But no matter who puts this record out for us, they have to do one thing: love the record. We don't want someone to just put the record on the shelf. Hell, we can do that. We want someone to believe in this record and in this band as strongly as we do.

How did you get onto the name Rotors To Rust?

Ed: The night that Woody (Doug Wood) joined the band is when the name broke through as THE name. The phrase "Rotors To Rust" came from a song of ours called "Relentless Motor." I always like the way that sounded, and it meant something special to me. I was lying in bed and the same line from that song kept ringing in my head over and over and over. It just sounded right to us. I think it creates a compatible vision that pairs up with our sound.

Something to add...

Doug: Thank you for giving us a chance to reach out to your readers, and we thank you for the support you've shown the band. It means a lot to us.

Ed: We hope to see the face of your readers very soon in a club or at a concert featuring Rotors To Rust. Thanks you to everyone who has picked up our records. I hope you continue to enjoy our music. Eat, sleep, rock, repeat.

Jason: Thanks. Bye.

Releases: "All That's Heavy" '94, "Bitter Fountain" EP '96, and "Temple Of The Sun" 7" vinyl.

Rotors To Rust, c/o Mark Curdo, 512 Bloomfield Ave. Apt 3-F, Caldwell, NJ 07006, USA

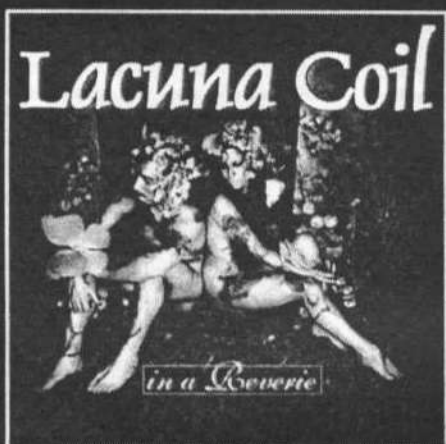
Rotors to Rust web site: <http://www.rotorstorust.com/>



ARCH ENEMY

Burning Bridges

Burning Bridges is another example of this band's unstoppable talents. A classy concoction of the best elements of traditional metal and death metal fueled by the insane guitar skills of brothers Michael and Christopher Amott.



LACUNA COIL

In A Reverie

The much-anticipated full-length from Italy's Lacuna Coil becomes a reality. Melding the power of goth, metal and rock into an infectious mix of sensuous euphoria topped off by the complementing vocals of Cristina and Andrea.



DARK TRANQUILLITY

Projector

Sweden's Dark Tranquillity have made a vast impact on the "Gothenburg Sound" and *Projector*, their first official release in the States, is the culmination of 10 years of ripened creativity, talent and unrestrained vision.

COMING THIS FALL:

SAMAEI *Eternal* • TIAMAT *Skeleton Skeleton* • MOONSPELL *The Butterfly Effect*



CENTURY MEDIA RECORDS

1453-A 14th Street, #324 • Santa Monica, CA 90404 • www.centurymedia.com

New San Francisco-based band Swarm contain three members of well-known thrash legends Death Angel. Rob Cavestany (guitar), Andy Galeon (drums), and Mark Osegueda (vocals) got together for the third time, after their joint work in Death Angel and The Organization.

Death Angel released three albums and developed a unique style of funky yet very melodic thrash metal, particularly visible in their last album "Act III." The band split-up in 1991, but soon thereafter four members formed The Organization (then Mark Osegueda didn't participate; vocal duties were handled by Rob Cavestany). Two albums on Metal Blade Records represented the transition from thrash metal to a more rocking metal music. The Organization split up after the release of their second album "Savor the Flavor" (1995).

In the year of re-unions (1998), Swarm was formed. And it's not simply "another re-union" as you may think initially. Not only because the bass player is a new guy called Michael Isaiah; the main reason is that the band does not intend to repeat what was already achieved with Death Angel and The Organization, and has a new name, even if it may cost some recognition. So, no accusations of betrayal of fans, okay?

"Come on, did they change or not," you may ask, and that was my main interest as well. After listening to Swarm's debut four-song EP, I can say that it's certainly not how we all imagined "Act IV" to sound like. Yet it's not that different from what we could have imagined the third album of The Organization would have sounded like, with some added aggression perhaps. In other words, no back-to-the-roots thing is denoted here.

The band is building the monument once again. They started by playing many shows in San Francisco and gaining local recognition. Drummer Andy Galeon answered my questions by mail, and it looks like he prefers the music do the talking.



SWARM

the hive stirs again

[by Giedrius Slivinskas]



Death Angel members were very young in 1987 (everyone is pointing out that you were 14). What helped you to get the deal with Enigma Records back then?

It is true, I was young when we first got signed. No one in the band was 21, when we recorded and released "The Ultra-Violence." We got our first deal by good luck and better timing as far as the new wave of thrash metal was concerned. We discovered Metallica upon "Kill 'Em All" release and met them at a meet and greet at a little record store called "The Record Exchange" in Walnut Creek.

How do you view your debut "The Ultra-Violence," and the follow-up, "Frolic Through the Park," today?

I think they were ground breaking for that time period only because that's what our fans tell me. Personally, I think we put all our hearts and souls into every recording to try and capture each song the best we can.

Why did you change record labels



before "Act III"?

We tried to reach more people by having our records more easily available since major labels have wider distribution.

"Act III" was a quite original album for that time, when many thrash metal bands stuck to regular standards. How was it accepted by fans, media, and other bands?

"Act III" was applauded by all our fans and friends which made us feel great. You try and make music that will move people. As far as everyone else, I think everyone has the right to their own opinion.

What happened after "Act III," why did the band stop playing? Was it solely because of that tour-bus accident, where you were injured really badly...?

We crashed, the label wanted the guys to tour with a replacement drummer, they said no, they dropped us, and then Mark moved to New York.

The band was at its peak with "Act III," even if regular thrash metal

started to fade out a couple of years later. However, at that point, you were thinking of shortening the band name to D.A., because Death Angel name was "unlucky." Can you tell more about what did lead you to such decisions? We always referred to the band as D.A., so it wasn't a name change really.

Why was the live album "Fall From Grace" released? Was it a way to get out of the record deal with Enigma? It was unauthorized and never should have come out. We never would've released that kind of recording at least without remixing it. Don't buy it.

Which Death Angel album was selling the best? Can you reveal any sales figures?

"Act III" by far, "Ultra-Violence" second, but I don't know of exact sales figures.

What did finally cause the split-up of Death Angel, and how The Organization was formed? Why the original Death Angel singer Mark wasn't a part of it?

Tension, bad management, stupid pride, and for the sake of integrity.

How did the deal with Metal Blade come up?

We shopped the O's tape around, and they came up to bat.

Do you consider The Organization material any different than the way in which Death Angel were evolving?

What were your influences at that time when The Organization debut album was released?

Everything except all the grunge stuff.

Many fans think that The Organization albums were quite different from Death Angel. Combined with the fact that both albums were released in the difficult years for metal (1993 and 1995), they didn't sell too well, did they? Was the lack of response the reason why the band split-up?

We split up because of musical differences (punk & rock).

Personally, I like both The Organization albums a lot, especially the second one,

"Savor the Flavor," which was even more rocking than the debut. Are you satisfied with both albums?

We always do our best at all our music. All you can do is try to express what's going on in your head. Hopefully, you can communicate to the listener through music.

What happened to the band after "Savor the Flavor"?

Den started a punk band called Big Shrimp, and Rob and me jammed in a couple of projects, Smokestack and Bliss, and Mark started Silver Circus.

What are the best Death Angel and The Organization songs in your opinion?

Being in the band, I think I'm biased, but I do like mostly all the songs. "Act III" in particular.

Some of Death Angel albums can be found in stores even today. Do you still get any royalties?

A little but not that much.

When you were on Enigma, Geffen, and Metal Blade, were record labels giving you any suggestions about how your music should sound like? What were those suggestions, if any?

If they did, then I didn't hear it, because I think musicians make music, and the suits should stick to just selling music.

What were you doing after The Organization split up, and how Swarm was formed? What are your expectations with this band?

When the O broke up, we still played here and there but nothing serious. Swarm is made up of four jammers that need to jam. We were brought together again, and somehow we miraculously found Michael who is totally on the same wavelength as us. My expectations are to live from music, as it always has been. If you're good to music, I believe it'll be good to you.

Do you consider Swarm metal? Is it a continuation of Death Angel and The Organization, or is it a totally different musical endeavor?

Swarm is definitely the next musical step in our collective lives. It's like jungle mixed with the street. Heavy rock and hard metal. Melodic, experimental, soul expression from the gut.

Dennis Pepa [original bass player of Death Angel and The Organization] is in Big Shrimp now? Why didn't he want to join Swarm?
They are not called Big Shrimp anymore. They have a new band with no name as of yet. We jammed once, it was fun, then we moved on.

How would you compare the music of Big Shrimp and Swarm?
Punk rock and Swarm rock.

Where is Gus Pepa [original guitarist of Death Angel]? He was a member of The Organization...

I don't know where Gus is. I think he doesn't love me anymore. I think he finds my sacred dreads offensive and stinky.

Why have you decided to call your new band Swarm, instead of keeping Death Angel or The Organization names? The latter two names are more known and perhaps would help you in getting a record deal?

To us, it's a new chapter of the same book that's yet to be written. It would have been easier, but if your heart's not in it then fuck it. By the way, we totally do D.A. songs.

Have you got any interest from record labels for Swarm, and does your past metal career help in this respect?

Yes, we are lucky our reputation is untarnished, and it's crazy so many people remember our shit, still. We just did our CD, and we will be sending promo packs to every and all A&R people who'll give it a listen.

Swarm has a demo recorded with the help of Kirk Hammett, was it the same Kirk Hammett from Metallica? How did you hook up with him and how he was involved? How many songs does the demo contain, how would you describe the music?

It was recorded at Kirk's house, a 4-song demo that was made before we even played live. Being the live band that we are, we were unable to capture the intensity needed. So 20 live shows later, we did our new one. Live is our thing. That's why we do it. Jamming live is the most gratifying thing imaginable. The energy is a rush beyond words.

What do you think about Metallica's "Load" and "Reload" albums?

I think their new stuff is great. Best thing on the radio. Although the tracks they don't play, the heavier ones, are my favorite. They played some obscure ones with the symphony, "Call of the Kthulu," "Of Wolf and Man"...

Do you keep in touch with any of thrash metal bands of the late 80s? Many of them reform with their original names and play in similar style again, what do you think of that? Do you think that too much metal these days fit into one or another frame, e.g., all bands are playing either like Dream Theater, like Slayer, like Pantera, etc.? Or do you think that there is enough innovative metal around? Or maybe you don't care?

I think trends come and go, but the ones who really mean it, get recognized and reach people. I don't mean reach platinum

status or is the heaviest or fastest. I mean quality, thought-provoking, balls out, jamming. They can go cash in now, but who's gonna be listening 10 years from now. It's gotta be the whole package, I'm sorry but I've been a fan of music too long. We are so jaded, that if it doesn't have honesty in there, then it doesn't belong.

There was one gap in your career between Death Angel and The Organization, then another one between The Organization and Swarm. Did any of the band members receive any offers to play in other bands?

Yes, but that's all heresy today. Our new musical craft is set to take us wherever it may, and we are more than ready to venture into the unknown. As long as we have fun, the sky's the limit.

How is Bay Area today, do you miss the old days when Bay Area was known worldwide for its thrash metal bands?

I think that heavy music is coming back here slowly but surely. It's up to the younger kids to get into the new music. Metallica has done a fine job at schooling the young ones with some good, heavy music. The new Bay Area scene is more diverse, and all the bands now don't dress alike. I'd like to say W'Sup to Machine Head Bay Area style, Spike 1000, The Sick, the shit in SF, Insolence, M.I.R.V., and Man Made God, south Bay and east Bay respectively, and just remember, you can't get over ground without being underground first...



Death Angel: Early days



Death Angel: ACT III period



The Organization

Death Angel discography:
"The Ultra-Violence," Enigma (1987)
"Frolic Through the Park," Enigma (1988)
"Act III," Geffen (1990)
"Fall From Grace (Live)," Enigma (1991)

The Organization discography:
"The Organization," Metal Blade Records (1993)
"Savor the Flavor," Metal Blade Records (1995)

Swarm discography:
"Swarm" EP, self-released (1999)

Swarm, 2269 Chestnut Street Suite 967, San Francisco, CA 94123

Swarm web site:
<http://www.swarminfo.com/>

temple of the absurd

go the absurd way

[by Sigitas Velyvis]

"Mother, Creator, God" is the title of the second album by the band featuring ex-Holy Moses singer Sabina Classen. In comparison to the slightly gloomy and atmospheric debut, this CD is heavier and has a more modern sound. Lyrically, there are very interesting hints to the psychology of C.G. Jung and his followers. If you are interested in heavy music with a really intellectual touch, choose this one. Don't forget to check bonus CD-ROM where you can find more thoughts and ideas to the lyrics of each song. And here is a short interview with another C.G. Jung "follower," Sabina Classen.

What happened to High-Gain Records? As far as I know, they collaborated with some known bands like Pink Cream 69 or Pro-Pain, so what was the problem?

Oh yes, that's a good question. We all only know that they are bankrupt and the label is not existing anymore. Nobody saw that coming, so we were running into the mass with full power... ha ha. We don't know the problem, 'cause all the bands were selling really good. But anyway, we will play all the big open air and the first record companies came in contact with us.

The lyrical "human psyche" concept is probably the most impressive thing on "Mother, Creator, God." In the past, Last Crack "Burning Time" or The Ten Party "The Edges of Twilight" were (in my opinion) the most successful attempts to investigate similar subjects, inspired by C.G. Jung or Nietzsche's work. What are your inspirations?

You are totally right! I'm inspired by C.G. Jung. On the other hand, I'm inspired about my own human life and, in the mix with the ideas of Jung, I am writing my lyrics. My albums are for me like a diary, and I can feel in which step of my life I am.

What is the difference between these 'seen from the psychological angle' lyrics written by a man and such lyrics written by a woman?

Oh well, I think there are normally not so many differences. I have some male friends which are thinking in the same way like me. I think it has to do with how much you think about the way of life. But sometimes I can see that a woman looks a bit deeper into herself... But it has to do with the person himself. And mostly, it has nothing to do with male or female; and I write my lyrics not only for women, this is real important to me.

Your guitarist Schroedey writes all the music. When he writes a song, is he familiar with the lyrics yet? Or you come with the lyrics when the song (music) is already written?

This is a good question. Schroedey is into my lyrics, but when we write new songs, it is a mix. I write ideas down every day. And when I listen to the riffs he is writing, I feel in my soul which kind of lyrics are fitting best to it. We can work together on the fine-tuning of the song. For us it is important that we don't make a concept about the song - the feeling for a song is coming from our soul and stomach. This is maybe the reason why our sound and songs are not all the same, and for some people we are really absurd.

This is the quote from my review to "Mother, Creator, God": "Good album, but I think that such lyrics simply cry out for more innovative/experimental sounds..."

Yeah, you are right, and the best thing is, see us live, and you will see and hear some more special things. On the next album, I think, we will go more and more absurd.

The CD-booklet is very cool. Tell me about the developments of these pictures...

We have a good friend called Mika, and this guy followed us everywhere... And I like to have a lot of pics in booklets, so you get a good impression about the people's work and doings.



What does Temple Of The Absurd mean to you?

...To be absurd, like I wanna be... Under this name, I can do all the things what I wanna do, 'cause we can be absurd like we want to be. On the other hand, the word temple means to me finding a place to relax... And this is the temple of the absurd...

Your impressions after the "Bang Your Head" festival.

I was standing on the same stage like my grandfathers Deep Purple... ha ha. Oh, it was really great, it was a good organization for the bands, I was really happy to had the chance to be on such a festival.

What can you say about German metal/rock scene?

This is a hard question, but what I can see, is that the scene is still going on, and this is the most important fact. And all the discussions if metal is dead or not are answered, 'cause the festivals are running good, and I feel that the end is not coming.

Your favorite bands and CDs.

My old style favorites are still Venom, Black Sabbath with Ozzy, Bathory (old), Possessed, Celtic Frost, old Slayer. On the other hand, Nina Hagen, Pink Floyd, Supertramp and Jethro Tull. But I can say that I listen to all new stuff, what I can get, too.

How much time have you spent creating this CD-ROM disc? Are you satisfied with it?

Oh, to get the whole material together, to cut videos and sounds and all these technical things took a lot of time. If you do things like that, you are never satisfied, 'cause there are still missing things when you are ready. But what I like is that we did our best and that we gave a good overview about the start of the band. On our homepage, I will try to make a good actual thing and I hope we will have a chance to make it better on the next release. But for now, I am really happy, 'cause not every band can do things like that.

What means LOVE to you?

The most important thing in life: without that I would be dead.

Any words in conclusion...

I hope our fans will go this absurd way with us together.

[Shure Shot Promotions, Sabina Classen, Oberhafenstr. 1, Fruchthof, 20097 Hamburg, Germany]
[Web site: <http://www.templeoftheabsurd.de/>]

demo and tape reviews

AGHORA demo '98

This Florida band has already created some buzz in the underground because of its relation to Cynic and intricate yet very listenable songs. Sean Reinert recorded drums on this demo, which was recorded at Cynic/Aghora rehearsal house. Musically, the project of Santiago Dobles (guitars/synth) is Cynic's "Focus" minus death metal, crossed with "The Gathering" element in the form of female vocals. The purring instrumentation is very soul uplifting, and the eerie vocals of Santiago's sister Danishta Rivero only help to dive into an extraterrestrial mind search. Very good, and also a bit different with its deep cosmic brightness from usually minor-tone dominated metal. Look out for their debut full-length album. (GS)
[Aghora, PO Box 165503, Miami, FL 33116-5503, USA]

BLOODWURM "Cold Dead Stare" 7" (Lifestyle Records)

The frontman of this Canadian band Vince (ex-Infernal Majesty) has described the style of Bloodwurm as "Southern-Fried Voodoo Goth-Rock." Whatever it means, this band has something, and I can't take their music unseriously. First of all, this vinyl spreads a very unique feeling of "pure underground." Secondly, the 4 songs (presented here) are very different and, at the same time, somehow attractive. Even if the sound is "pure underground," too, this White Zombie/The Stooges/Type O Negative mixture makes an impression on the listener. Just listen to the title-track. Who knows, maybe these guys will be the cult-band of the underground soon... (SV)
[Lifestyle Records Inc., 253 College St., No. 110, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5T 1R5]

CATHARSIS "Embrace"

How many Catharsis romp around in the metal scene? I think, at least 3 or 4. Quite popular name or something. This band comes from Denmark and is probably not so good as the prog metal band with the same name from USA, but worthy of great praise. The music is original death/black with melodic inserts. Dynamic stuff with several experiments. Although you can discover some weak spots on this demo, you won't deny that it's a quite listenable tape by this Danish band. (SV)
[Catharsis, Iranvej 11, DK-2300 S., Denmark]

CRYPTIC "Angel of Cancer" demo

Thrash/death from Wisconsin. The sound of this demo is very obscure, it seems that it was recorded in a rehearsal room, thus the songs can hardly win the sympathy of the listeners. The material is too chaotic and somewhat dull, the ideas are very narrow. I can't imagine who would be interested in this tape, but try to write to the address below. (SV)
[Cryptic, c/o Nate Jacobs, 3841 Gibraltar Road, Fish Creek, WI 54212, USA]

DESTROYER demo

This Romanian band already has a debut album out on Roton (the biggest Romanian recording house), and this is their subsequent demo, which contains four tracks of electrized rock/metal. It's aggressive in nature, but surprisingly lightly-sounding. Reminds of White Zombie and Ministry, but less heavy, yet with an own touch. The song "Waiting for Impact" has nothing common with metal or industrial at all. Overall, good sound and well-done music. (GS)
[Destroyer, OP1, CP 196 IASI, 6600, Romania]

ETERNAL DEFORMITY "Nothing Lasts Forever"/"In the Abyss of Dreams... Furious Moments" demos

Eternal Deformity come from our neighboring country Poland and play atmospheric gothic/doom metal. The "Nothing Lasts Forever" demo contains 10 tracks of pleasant unpretentious music with good sound quality. Although the band doesn't offer anything new here, but it's nice to listen to this stuff with some Amorphis elements. The only minus factor is a weak voice that is out of place here. The new tape "In the Abyss of Dreams..." was recorded with a different singer, is heavier and, at the same time, better than the previous demo. It's not so romantic and slow, I would even describe the music as a melodic death/doom with great melodies. I'm sure that's a right step in the band's career, 'cause Eternal Deformity sound more solid and fresher than ever and aren't worse than many of their colleagues from the West. Interesting stuff, trust me. (SV)
[S4 each, Zawilinski Wojciech, Ul. Polna 2D, 39-200 Debica, Poland]

HAE "LVT"

This is a Norwegian band with influences from death/thrash to psychedelic rock a la Kyuss/Mindfunk. The beginning of the tape (especially the first song) is OK interesting, sometimes experimental stuff with the necessary portion of heaviness. The rest tends towards the banality,

meaningless music. Not bad, but no great shakes, either. (SV)
[S6 (incl.postage), Sverre Daehlie, Ostre Vel 13, 1315 Nesoya, Norway]

HIBRIA "Metal Heart"

Such a demo could well be recorded in the late 80s, because it delivers obscure, epic-sounding speed/heavy metal with high vocals, a quite common style back then. The sound is quite undergroundish yet tolerable; the demo (4 songs, 30 minutes) provides some catchy moments, particularly in the opener track "Throne of Glory." Hibria follow the famous bands like Helloween, Iron Maiden, Manowar, but are far from blatantly ripping them off. The minor aspects are that some parts of the songs are not polished to the very end, and the music is not that mature to be in the high league. (GS)
[S6, Hibria, Jeronimo Coelho no 30/123, Porto Alegre/RS, Brazil CEP: 900 10-240]

MYTHOPOEIA "Scheps, Ankh, Aesch Mezareph, Atropalia, Michani" Metal Breath and Equinox Productions

Sometimes it is great to hear old-wave doom/death metal sometimes even now. Mythopoeia from Czech Republic don't have big ambitions to sound more modern, they choose to follow groups like Anathema, My Dying Bride, early Paradise Lost instead. Of course, they can't miss some new influences, for example, this disc presents some black metal elements (more in the singing than in the music). Ambient, esoteric, folk influences sometimes shine through in this cassette and are also familiar to the ears of modern doom listener. These slight discourses don't change the main style which is doom/death metal of 1991-1994. If you forgot what does it mean, you can remember melancholic doom metal with aggressive/growling vocals. Not so usual style nowadays, when each doom band will use more gothic elements instead of death metal. Nowadays, I prefer modern sounding, but this cassette gives a sense of nostalgia. Mythopoeia play everything technically, professionally, so if you haven't got problems with this style, write to the address below. (AC)
[Metal Breath, PO Box 5, 33011 Tremosna u Plzne, Czech Republic] [S USD, Mythopoeia, Pavel Kusniarik, Blatenska 12, 307 02 Pizen, Czech Republic]

ONE "Receive a Word" demo

One's mastermind is David Wilkinson, the ex-singer of the Australian goth band Meridian that some time before was signed by Music For Nations and dropped by the same label later. David goes solo now and continues investigating the musical fields of gothic rock. In comparison with Meridian, this project has an inclination for electronic sounds, but the voice by David himself is really very "gothic." With respect to the atmosphere, I discover the parallels to Sisters Of Mercy or Fields Of Nephilim. Although I'm not a huge gothic fan, this tape produces good impression on the listener. (SV)
[David Wilkinson, PO Box 464, Brighton-le-Sands, NSW 2216, Australia]

REIGNSTORM promo

This 3-song promo tape flashes with quite solid sound and quite original music. It is more or less progressive metal, but definitely not chasing after the well-known stylistics and playing manner. Songs contain many different musical lines, which make them sort of eclectic (and unorthodox?). Jarret's vocals on "Chapier XXX" are pretty much of the old-days style, trying to be high yet powerful; while on "Exhaustion," he does not rip that much, however, the melodies are suitable for him... humming, "Road to Insanity" is probably the most "insane" of the three, consisting of several very different parts. Though do not think that Reignstorm are a "hard-to-understand" type of band - in spite of a certain dose of eclecticism, they are not. (GS)
[Reignstorm, Jarret Lembach, 7561 Tomahawk CT APT C, Baltimore, MD 21237, USA]

RUDRA demo

In their info, Rudra from Singapore hint on original brutal music with some Indian elements. In reality they play worn out death/thrash with spoken parts in the Sanskrit language. I think, this is not enough for the description "an original release." It seems that only old-school death metal fans will be interested in this tape, which, in my opinion, is average. (SV)
[S7 (incl.postage), Rudra, Blok 24, Marsiling Drive, 08-185, Singapore 730024 Singapore]

STERILE VISION "3"

The band comes from Duesseldorf, Germany and has already 3 demos out there. I've never heard of them before but, according to info, Sterile Vision played innovative metal a la Psychotic Waltz/Anacrusis earlier. Later they moved from the progressive base to simpler groovy rock songs. This tape contains 6 mid-tempo tracks with some cool guitar lines & solos and reminds me a bit of Depressive Age or Volvod stuff. The vocalist can sing, but sometimes his voice is too apathetic for me and demands for trainings. You can purchase both first demos ("1" and "2") on one CD. (SV)

[S5, DM8, Jens Krueger, Zwickauer Str. 39, 40627 Duesseldorf, Germany; both first demos on CD are available for 18 DM or \$10]

STOCKARD JETTISON demo

If you read the interview with ex-Last Crack singer Buddo in the previous "Edge of Time" issue, you should probably know that he has started a solo career a year ago. Parallel to his acoustic songs, Buddo has joined another band called Stockard Jettison. Each member of this group had experiences in many bands before; the drummer Bryan Berry, for example, played together with Buddo in Mind Ox some years ago. What can I say about this demo? Some places remind me of the previous Buddo demo Magic 7, Stockard Jettison are more relaxed and balanced, though, I believe I've said this many times before, but Buddo's vocal lines have always been incredible. These three tracks show probably the "lightest" side of his voice. State of mental and emotional steadiness. The musical accompaniment isn't very complex (no lead guitar parts), but top notch. We can only hope that this band will not break up after one demo. The short existence of bands like White Fear Chain, Mind Ox, or Magic 7 proved the fact that Buddo didn't stay too long with the same group of musicians. (SV)
[Stockard Jettison, 6035 Cottontail Tr., Madison, WI 53718, USA]

TERRA COTTA demo

The 3-track tape by this Canadian band offers us modern gothic metal with evident Pantera influences. The songs are heavy, powerful, but alike. According to info, they have released a full-length CD in 1996. Due to line-up changes they lost some time and now are preparing the new CD. For my taste, Terra Cotta's music is too monotonous, and I'm not quite sure whether even a Pantera fan would be interested in this tape. But who knows, maybe I'm wrong... (SV)
[Terra Cotta, 250 Dundas Street South, Suite 236, Cambridge, Ontario, Canada N1R 8A8]

THEODORE MUDFOOT "The Beauty of the Swamp"

The opener track "No More" leaves an impression of a bit cacophonous punk rock; some later tracks are quite catchy and driving. Especially, "When Dawn Breaks" and "You Were in My Dreams" are cool rock songs with powerful female vocals in the front. "Warrior" is almost a speed metal track. The sound certainly could have been better, but hey, they charge one buck for 8 songs! (GS)
[S1 (yes, it's a real price), Theodore Mudfoot, 205 Bentbough Dr., Leesburg, FL 34748, USA]

THOUGHTSPHERE demo

It's a quite good demo tape of this German band lead, some ex-Lost Century members. Melodic power/prog metal with fresh melodies and

professional sound. OK, the song "Grailkeeper's Gate" stands out on this record because of the great atmosphere. "Emerald Dust" has a gentle Fates Warning touch in the refrain. Actually, the singer reminds me a bit of Warren Dane from Nevermore. Thoughtsphere are probably one of the best power/prog newcomers without a deal. Good. (SV)
[S7, DM10 (Europe), \$10, DM15 (World), Andreas Lohse, Torgauer Str. 8, 40231 Duesseldorf, Germany]

URANUS advance tape

Poland sends its regards. Whichheaven from Warsaw presents us their 5 tracks demo of experimental and dark heavy metal. The first two tracks (after intro) on A-side are more or less melodic death/doom without any great demands. The B-side shows more experimental side of the band, and "Confession" is probably the best track on this tape: interesting music with strange, relaxed vocals. The same goes to the following song, "Lords of the Realms." This demo is also available on the CD, so you can choose that format, if you can afford it. (SV)
[S4 (tape), S7 (CD), J.J. Bosakinski, Ul. Dzika 15/17, 00-172 Warsaw, Poland]

WHICHHEAVEN "Witchheaven" demo

Poland sends its regards. Whichheaven from Warsaw presents us their 5 tracks demo of experimental and dark heavy metal. The first two tracks (after intro) on A-side are more or less melodic death/doom without any great demands. The B-side shows more experimental side of the band, and "Confession" is probably the best track on this tape: interesting music with strange, relaxed vocals. The same goes to the following song, "Lords of the Realms." This demo is also available on the CD, so you can choose that format, if you can afford it. (SV)
[S4 (tape), S7 (CD), J.J. Bosakinski, Ul. Dzika 15/17, 00-172 Warsaw, Poland]

WINTERLAND "Under the Flood"

Winterland is another promising melodic hard rock band from Germany. Simple song structures, catchy refrains and melodic guitar parts are the trademarks of this album on tape, which makes very professional impression. Winterland's songs have stayed in various radio stations for weeks, does that ring any bells? Of course, the vocals are somewhat too apathetic and the music sometimes too old-fashioned for my taste, but you know tastes and opinions are always different. (SV)
[S10, DM15 (incl.postage), Markus Pfeffer, Am Wald 10, 68851 Hauptstuhl, Germany]

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where echoes end

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press

In recent years, printed metal magazines were overshadowed by the World Wide Web, because it's a lot easier and cheaper to launch a metal webzine than to struggle with a printed fanzine. The only thing that still keeps fanzines going is that, doing a printed publication, it is still easier to get promo copies from the record labels, which look suspiciously at web masters.

Webzines and printed magazines have differences, and, overwhelmed by the web sites, we loose some of the edge that printed magazines give us. If you are on the web, you want neat stuff, and you want it quickly. You want links with short annotations, thumbnail pictures that load fast, nice big pictures only at request. If you are technically equipped, you also want MP3 and video files. And you are not very excited if you get a whole page of pure text. It's not that easy to concentrate and read it.

A printed magazine is something else. Its primary purpose is an entertaining reading. Recently, I found out that it's nice to relax at home with a good metal magazine in hands instead of staring to the computer screen. Think about it for a minute, soon you will be able to buy groceries on the web. Most of people will work at home, because all that little communication needed will be enabled by advanced video conferencing technologies. I won't even talk about video phones and your Friday bridge game, which will be over the internet, with an ordered coca-cola and pizza besides your screen. Oh well... luckily "Edge of Time" needs to care only about apocalyptic music, and not about the downside of the cold future of humanity.

However, reading printed magazines may be viewed as a small step in stopping the technological madness. In this article, we decided to focus on entertaining metal magazines and fanzines that we have around. Since many tend to forget, we did some easy digging. And it turns out that we still have quality reading material. To give the article a constructive approach, we rate each publication according to the following scheme.

- | | |
|---------------|-------------------------------|
| 5 - excellent | [reader sometimes says "wow"] |
| 4 - good | [reader raises eyebrows] |
| 3 - decent | [reader reads] |
| 2 - poor | [reader unhappily frowns] |
| 1 - bad | [reader does not read] |

The given ratings will seem demanding, because they are such. But if the publication is here, it's damn worth every bit of attention.

ABLAZE

in German

"Ablaze" calls itself "the metallic voice of underground" (shouldn't that include the word "ble" somewhere though?). In a sense, it is comparable to "Defone": it's in German, it's highly informative with in-depth interviews. The major difference is that the featured artists are slightly more obscure and non-commercial (more black death and no power/progressive metal to be found). The reviews are short and concise, but there is no rating which makes it difficult to pass judgement. The layout is professional although I do find it a waste of ink to use white lettering on a black background (it probably adds to the underground feel of the magazine). There's also an added feature of black and white posters of your favorite corpse painted artists to scare your mother (who, with a serious mind and intelligence, would ever put such a poster above his or her bed?). The ratio between information and advertisements is good: only 14.5 pages from 76 pages include adverts. There are no book or video reviews. Once again each issue includes a sampler CD with songs of the artists featured in the issues. Let yourself be amazed or not by the quality of the strangest names to be used for band names.

STYLE
Elegance of writing: 5
Layout: 4

CONTENTS
Interviews->Selection: 5
Interviews->Quality: 5
Reviews->Selection: 4
Reviews->Quality: 4

Address: Ablaze Verlag, PO Box 16, 15728 Eichwalde, Germany
Web site: <http://www.schlund.de/ablaze>

E-mail: ABLAZE-Magazine@t-online.de
Subscription price: single issue (7 DM), six issues (40 DM Germany, 50 DM Europe)
Periodicity: bimonthly
Unsigned bands: contains an underground section

(CR)

DEFTONE

in German

"Defone" names themselves the ultimate dark metal magazine and for those who can read German it probably is. In this case, the word "ultimate" refers not only to the quality but also the quality: 148 pages (of which 23 pages contain adverts) on a bi-monthly basis. "Defone" focuses on a musical range from thrash and death to gothic and black metal. The focus is not only on popular acts but on underground and artists promoting debut releases as well.

The layout is professional glossy black and white with a full-color cover and the writing style is critical. This can be seen in the quality of the interviews. These are informative, in depth (multiple pages with small lettering), and cover serious and relevant issues apart from the standard questions. There are some book and video reviews as well. One of the disadvantages of such an extensive magazine is the number of contributors. There are at least 10 different writers which makes it difficult to judge the value of a review (there's always someone who supports a certain release). To top it all, each issue includes a sampler CD with songs of the artists featured in the issues. It's too bad that such a magazine will only be read by Germans.

STYLE
Elegance of writing: 5
Layout: 4

CONTENTS
Interviews->Selection: 5
Interviews->Quality: 5
Reviews->Selection: 4
Reviews->Quality: 4

Address: PCC Printmedien GmbH, Süchwort: Abonnement, Joh.-Seb.-Bach-Strasse 34,71711 Steinheim an der Murr, Germany
E-mail: deftone.666@gmx.net
Subscription price: six issues (35DM Germany, 50DM Europe)
Periodicity: recently quit
Unsigned bands: contains an underground section

(CR)

FEAST OR FAMINE

in English

One of the newer American fanzines, which surprises with informative and interesting interviews. Along with quite long and usually to-the-point reviews, "Feast or Famine" focuses on the contents as opposed to the presentation. Consequently, the layout is plain and simple. Issue #3 contains 84 pages (5 of them contain ads) and offers a good read.

STYLE
Elegance of writing: 4
Layout: 3

CONTENTS
Interviews->Selection: 4
Interviews->Quality: 4
Reviews->Selection: 3
Reviews->Quality: 4

Address: Matt Johnsen, PO Box 242, Exton, PA 19341, USA
E-mail: mjohnsen@amicosys.com
Subscription price: \$3 (USA), \$4 (elsewhere)
Periodicity: unknown
Unsigned bands: should be reviewed

(GS)

HEAVY ODER WAS!?

in German

My favorite magazine, without a doubt. "HOW!?" exists since 9 years, is published every 2 months, and comes in a glossy color paper. The mag covers the whole spectrum of heavy music including avantgarde, stoner, industrial, etc. Of course, the priority program is traditional heavy/power metal, but it doesn't exceed 50% of the whole stuff. There are lots of interesting specials/columns like "Metallic Underground" or "Tape Time" with demo bands, "Trash Attack," "Prog-

Rock Special," "Live-Action," "Secret Studioreport," etc. The writing skills of contributors are very good, their tastes - more or less different, so there is always place for interviews with unusual bands. Sense of humor is also here, what is very important, for example, for the reviews or readers section. Additional highlight of this excellent mag is the "Forgotten Suns" column, where you can find the current interviews with the members of famous metal/rock bands that have already broken up some years ago. If German language isn't an obstacle for you, grab this one. This is the best mixture of underground stuff and articles about well-known bands. 130 pages of heavy fun!

STYLE
Elegance of writing: 5
Layout: 4

CONTENTS
Interviews->Selection: 5
Interviews->Quality: 5
Reviews->Selection: 5
Reviews->Quality: 5

Address: Heavy oder was!?, Brandenburger Str.7, 72108, Rottenburg-Ergenzingen, Germany
Web-site: <http://www.heavy-oder-was.de>
E-mail: heavy-oder-was@T-Online.de
Subscription price: single issue (7 DM), 8 issues (61 DM) Europe
Periodicity: bimonthly
Unsigned bands: contains an underground section

(SV)

ILL LITERATURE

in English

One of the finest US metal publications, which you are probably going to like. Even if you know that Century Media and The End Records albums won't be smashed in the reviews, since Marco Barbieri and Andreas Katsambas are the main people behind the mag. Hell, "Ill Literature" reviews usually are positive and hardly smash anybody; and when they don't give any scores, the reader can easily empty his or her pockets trying to purchase all praised albums. The writing is competent, and each issue features many interviews and reviews. The drawbacks are the lack of additional features like fanzine reviews or some general articles, and that interviews differ in quality, due to a big number of contributors. The layout is improving, but still makes cringe in places. Usually, each issue comes with a CD.

STYLE
Elegance of writing: 4
Layout: 2

CONTENTS
Interviews->Selection: 4
Interviews->Quality: 3.5
Reviews->Selection: 3
Reviews->Quality: 3.5

Address: Ill Literature, PO Box 480275, Los Angeles, CA 90048, USA
Web site: <http://home.earthlink.net/~andreak/>
E-mail: illlit@aol.com
Price: single issue \$4 (USA), \$5 (elsewhere), three issues \$10 (USA), \$15 (elsewhere).
Periodicity: quarterly
Unsigned bands: will probably get reviewed; "Ill Literature" have many reviews of demos and self-released albums

(GS)

(GS)

LAERMBELAEESTIGUNG

in German

Great fanzine from Hamburg. Glossy b/w paper, 90 pages, bonus compilation CD. The priority program of latest two issues were trad heavy/power metal and brutal death/thrash. Of course, there are also excursions into other territories, for example, the last issue contains excellent interviews with King's X, doom/hippie rockers Naevus or Antichrist. The merit of the fanzine is a large review section with lots of demos and self-released write-ups. You can also purchase some rare CDs of underground bands directly from fanzine editor (low prices!). There are also previous issues available, check them out.

STYLE
Elegance of writing: 4
Layout: 3

CONTENTS
Interviews->Selection: 3

Interviews->Quality: 4
Reviews->Selection: 3
Reviews->Quality: 3

Address: Karim Daire, Juergenstrasse 11, 21073 Hamburg, Germany
E-mail: kosbab@erzicip.erzwiss.uni-hamburg.de
Subscription price: single issue (6,50 DM Europe, ask for overseas prices)
Periodicity: unknown
Unsigned bands: get reviewed

(SV)

METAL DREAMS

in English

First, I have a pretty good reason to be upset. The guys in "Metal Dreams" didn't want to trade their issue for "Edge of Time" #13! You have been working your ass off for five years, having a hard time putting the mag together, getting it out, and even a harder time getting paid (Hi John!) - and then your colleagues don't even want to fuckin' trade. Next day I wrote a cheque for five dollars, since it was the amount for just a good fuckin' lunch anyway. But this gave me a rare reason to use some bad language in this paragraph. The rest will be objective, don't worry.

"Metal Dreams" follows footsteps of the mighty "Sentinel Steel," which did its part of the job in resurrecting US power metal (1995-1997) and then went into a coma. Dennis Guitby, the editor, bought a house as rumors (Craig) say, so his mailorder and record label business is apparently going well.

Back to metal dreams. The fanzine is very informative and contains many interviews, mainly focusing on hard/heavy/speed/power/80s metal with some trips into progressive and black/death (extreme bands rejoice a separate review section). My feeling is though that the earlier issues (#1 and #2) were more thrilling in the interview department trying to dig every tiny detail, while #3 interviews are a little bit dry in places. Reviews are informative, but the evaluation sometimes can be different from what you can read elsewhere. A nice idea is to put band pictures spanning different periods of time, e.g., who doesn't want to see how Hades or Savage looked 10 years ago and how they look now.

"Metal Dreams" is coming to its peak with enthusiasm. Hopefully they will stay there for awhile.

STYLE
Elegance of writing: 3
Layout: 3

CONTENTS
Interviews->Selection: 4
Interviews->Quality: 3
Reviews->Selection: 4
Reviews->Quality: 3

Address: Metal Dreams, 2 J.R. Court, Cornwall, NY 12518, USA
Web site: <http://members.aol.com/mtdreams/main.html>
E-mail: MTLDREAMS@aol.com
Price: single issue \$5 (USA), \$7 (elsewhere, surface mail), \$10 (elsewhere, air mail)
Periodicity: irregular
Unsigned bands: should get reviewed

(GS)

METAL MANIACS

in English

Together with "Ill Literature," the best metal magazine in the United States. But at the contrary to their closest rivals, you can get it in your favorite grocery store. (I can't guarantee that though, Fry's in Tucson sell it, but Safeway doesn't anymore.) "Metal Maniacs" has a nice line-up of writers, including Century Media's very own Ula Gehret with his lovely Firing Squad column on unsigned bands, ex-Relapse promo guy Jeff Wagner, and Borivoj Krgin (who is so famous that I can't remember any affiliations on the fly) with his bits of news. Some may also recognize Sue Nolz from her work in "Manic Reaction" fanzine, and some of the other writers.

New issues of "Metal Maniacs" come twice during three months, containing the current actualities of metal and a fair number of wisely-written interviews. The amount of reviews is quite small and could be bigger, but then they probably



wouldn't have enough space for the energetic 'Zine and Not Head column by Marty Rytkenon about fanzines. The reader mail is fun to read, too, but sometimes has too many Korn/etc. fights. And hey, you can even meet your future gothic Cradle-Of-Filth-admiring fiancée in the Shorts section! Though "Metal Maniacs" could reduce the font of those classifieds and put two extra reviews.

While the layout is inferior to "Terrorizer," the contents don't seem to be any worse. And you don't get the sometimes too pretentious writing of their British colleagues.

STYLE

Elegance of writing: 5
Layout: 3

CONTENTS

Interviews->Selection: 3.5
Interviews->Quality: 5
Reviews->Selection: 2
Reviews->Quality: 4

Address: Metal Maniacs, 233 Park Ave. S. 5th Fl., New York, NY 10003, USA

Web site: <http://www.metalmaniacs.com/>
E-mail: unknown
Price: single issue \$4 (USA), 6 issues \$18 (USA), \$24 (world).
Periodicity: 8 issues per year
Unsigned bands: have a small chance to be reviewed in an indie-label column (usually features maybe five reviews) or Firing Squad column (about ten reviews per issue). You need to send material to Firing Squad, c/o Ula Gehret, 1453-A 14th St. #324, Santa Monica, CA 90404, USA.

(GS)

ROCK HARD
in German

Germany's leading heavy metal magazine. "Rock Hard" is published every month (glossy color paper, 150 pages, poster), every other issue has an extra compilation CD with songs from brand new releases. The main area is traditional heavy/power metal, but there are also lots of articles dedicated to other styles of heavy/extreme music. In comparison to "Heavy oder was!?", "Rock Hard" is more hardcore and black metal oriented. The strong point of this mag are the great live-review column, detailed tour-diaries, and the funny readers-section. The writing skills of the contributors are on a high level, the knowledge of heavy metal/rock scene is evident. Tons of info on music, clubs, fans, etc. "Rock Hard" is definitely the most popular and the most known magazine in Europe together with "Terrorizer." If you are more into unsigned/underground bands, better choose "Heavy oder was!?"

STYLE

Elegance of writing: 5
Layout: 5

CONTENTS

Interviews->Selection: 4
Interviews->Quality: 3
Reviews->Selection: 5
Reviews->Quality: 5

Address: Rock Hard, Postfach 11 02 12, 44058 Dortmund, Germany

Web-site: <http://www.RockHard.de>
E-mail: Mogazine@RockHard.de
Subscription price: 12 issues (85 DM Europe, 85 US dollars rest of the world)
Periodicity: monthly
Unsigned bands: there is an underground section

(SV)

PIT

in English

The journalistic content of "Pit" can be compared to a fast-food hamburger (compared to the haute cuisine of "Defone" and "Ablaze"). The formula of "Pit" is comparable to that of "Ill Literature." Both feature the same types of bands from the speed/thrash/black/death corner of the metal ring and both can be found in the larger music stores in the USA. The big difference is the quality of interviews: the questions are cliché, although there are many, they are short and extremely superficial. The reviews are to the point and concise but there is no rating which makes it difficult to pass judgement.

It is a glossy magazine but the layout is unimaginative and messy: the table of contents is

on page and more than half of the time the page numbering is missing. This is partly caused by the huge number of adverts making the ratio between information and advertisements very poor, e.g., 33 of 64 pages are adverts. The whole feel of the magazine screams out commercialism, it revolves around adverts and not journalistic creativity (then again what do you expect of a magazine that is proud to be endorsed by instrument manufacturers). There is a page of magazine reviews and a page devoted to horror movie reviews. Each issue includes a sampler CD with songs (for issue 27, a Necropolis Records sampler) of which most are very untalented. This is a magazine to be avoided by the critical reader in search of food for thought.

STYLE

Elegance of writing: 2
Layout: 2

CONTENTS

Interviews->Selection: 4
Interviews->Quality: 2
Reviews->Selection: 2
Reviews->Quality: 2

Address: Pit Magazine, PO Box 9545, Colorado Springs, CO 80932, USA

Web site: <http://www.pitmagazine.com>
E-mail: pitmag@aol.com
Subscription price: Single issue (\$4.95) Six issues (\$29.50 USA, \$39.50 World)
Periodicity: Quarterly

(CR)

SNAKEPIT

in English

The fourth issue of German metal magazine "Snakepit" is an exercise in stamina: 48 interviews each with an average of 2 pages with small print (character 6!). The magazine has outgrown the fanzine format and the step towards a magazine with a larger circulation would be financial suicide in my opinion. "Snakepit" is a glossy magazine (written in English) that resembles a book in the sense that it has a folded rectangular edge. The choice of bands is very diverse: ranging from defunct lesser-known bands from the 80s (Abattoir, Anvil Chorus, Artillery, Heathen, Nasty Savage, etc.) to the more popular prog/power bands gracing the current scene (Steel Prophet, Syris, Hammerfall, Iced Earth). This immediately leads to the big differences in quality of the interviews. The "historic" interviews with the fallen stars of the past are superficial (no critical or original questions) but extremely informative and nostalgic. On the other hand, the interviews with the current "rising stars," although lengthy, offer no information that cannot be found in other fanzines. The reviews are average; without a rating system and more than ten reviewers, they're bound to be meaningless at times. The layout is straightforward with lots of small pics which are not always as sharp as they could be. The ratio between information and advertisements is unbelievable: only 3 pages out of 122 pages are adverts. Summarizing comments: extremely informative and the interviews with gods of time past are worth the purchase.

STYLE

Elegance of writing: 3
Layout: 2

CONTENTS

Interviews->Selection: 3
Interviews->Quality: 4
Reviews->Selection: 3
Reviews->Quality: 2.5

Address: Snakepit Magazine, PO Box 210212, 28222 Bremen, Germany

Web site: <http://www.come.to/snakepit>
E-mail: heinz.konzett@EUenet
Subscription price: Single issue (\$5)
Periodicity: unknown
Unsigned bands: should be reviewed

(CR)

"SOD" (Sounds of Death)
in English

"SOD" is a glossy magazine focusing primarily on death and black metal, and it sells at a blasphemous price of \$6.66. Although the appearance is very professional, the magazine still has a fanzine feel.

The writing is superficial but honest and slightly tongue in cheek. This can be witnessed in the interviews. Although there are only a few interviews, they are often very long but not very critical and do not touch any new subjects. There are two reviews sections: "From the Vault" and "Album reviews." "From the Vault" focuses on vinyl masterworks from the golden age of metal (the 80s). The reviews are short but additional info such as recording line-up, track listing (mind you, it's vinyl so there's a side 1 and 2), and lyrics to one of the songs (although there's no relevant reference in the review) is given. The regular album reviews section has as subtitle "the best death metal CDs from around the world." Because this amount would only fill two pages at most, SOD has a broadened its scope to include thrash and black metal as well under the death metal umbrella. There are a lot of reviews but the rating system can not be taken seriously: so CD has a lower rating than 7.5 skulls (out of ten).

A highly entertaining section is the hate mail section in which even letters giving positive comments are completely thrashed. The ratio between info and advertisements is poor, e.g., 43 of 92 pages are adverts. A usual bonus is that each issue includes a sampler CD with songs (issue 12 even had two free CDs: Pulverised Records and Death of the World). All in all, an interesting read but not really a reference material or value for money.

STYLE

Elegance of writing: 3
Layout: 3

CONTENTS

Interviews->Selection: 3
Interviews->Quantity: 2
Reviews->Selection: 3
Reviews->Quality: 3

Address: Sounds of Death, 1069 Pinegate Drive, Kirkwood, MO 63122, USA

Web site: <http://www.soundsdeath.com>
E-mail: sognag2@aol.com
Subscription price: Single issue (\$6.66) Six issues (\$29.50 USA, \$39.50 World)
Periodicity: Quarterly

(CR)

TERRORIZER

in English

Undeniably, the premier world's extreme metal publication, which sets a high benchmark with excellent writing and professional coverage. They started to admire power metal lately and began to see a bit more than just Hammerfall. Still, as power/prog is concerned, they don't capture the whole spectre. It's unlikely that they ever will, because their main focus is on extreme music. You can't beat them in black, thrash, death, and gothic metal. They have a good taste in selecting rock/metal artists, e.g., Bruce Dickinson or Monster Magnet were featured on front covers. And who cares if sometimes Up-to-the-Front section's short articles and ads in the same issue contain names of the same bands; the mag is still quite objective. Of course, it's often true that the more you listen the more you like it, so albums like Paradise Lost's "One Second" get that chance and get a better score while newcomers don't, but it's a tough world we live in.

A minor remark about reviews: sometimes for the sake of writing for excellence, the concern to precisely specify the style of the album is pushed to the second plan.

Extra features include zinc reviews (sometimes), news, classifieds, and reader mail (cool).

STYLE

Elegance of writing: 5
Layout: 5

CONTENTS

Interviews->Selection: 4
Interviews->Quantity: 4
Reviews->Selection: 3.5
Reviews->Quality: 3.5

Address: Terrorizer, Suite 411, The Old Truman Brewery, 91 Brick Lane, London E1 6QN, UK

Web site: <http://www.terrorizer.co.uk/>
E-mail: n.terry-scantec@btinternet.com
Price (in pounds): Single issue 2.75 (UK), 3.25 (Europe), 3.75 (other). Twelve issues 31.20 (UK), 37.50 (Europe), 44.50 (other).

Periodicity: monthly
Unsigned bands: have some chance to be reviewed either in a demo section (about ten reviews per issue) or among other albums.

(GS)

**Infernal
Combustion**

parody webzine:

<http://www.holeinthewall.com/infernal.htm>



NEW PANTERA ALBUM

"FUCKIN' BLOWS,"

SAYS ANSELMO

singer "on autopilot" for band's sixth major-label CD

In a surprising interview given just hours before press time, Pantera vocalist Philip Anselmo has updated Infernal Combustion readers on the status of the Cowboys From Hell's album-in-progress. The news isn't good.

"Well, fuck, bro. I mean who cares, you know?" Anselmo muttered, fighting the effects of a hangover which had caused him to call five hours late for the interview. "I mean, fuck it. We been doin' this shit for a long-ass time now. Cowboys From Hell, Vulgar Display of Power, yeah, okay. Those rocked all right. But man, that last one [1997's The Great Southern Trendkill], finishin' that was like takin' a hard shit! How much more of this chugga-chugga bullshit are we supposed to fuckin' write, you know? I mean, some of the new songs are all right, but most of it's pretty fuckin' tired."

When asked if his many side projects are interfering with his enthusiasm for Pantera, Anselmo lit up. "That's the fuckin' nail on the head, right there, dude," he exclaimed. "I mean I got that black metal band, Christ Inversion, even though we ain't doin' much lately. Then there's Down, which I got about a million fuckin' lyrics to get done for the next record, and then there's Necrophagis, which I technically ain't even supposed to tell you I'm in, but fuck it, man. The older I get, the more I wanna just dig into this underground shit, maybe film some horror flicks, keep my big haunted house in N'awlins going every Halloween. I don't wanna go play fuckin' 'Walk' or 'Mouth For War' in front of a bunch of fuckin' mall rats."

"I mean, I could just quit, I suppose," he continued, cracking open a beer. "But shit, that's some good money. Major label money, ya know? Shit buys a lotta weed and tickets to boxing matches, bro." Anselmo is vague on sales figures, but admits that "sure, the last one didn't do as fuckin' good as Vulgar or Far Beyond Driven. Fuck it, though, there's still a lot of fuckin' dudes in rusty Camaros out there, believe you me. We put this next piece of shit out, they'll still come runnin'."

Anselmo, pressed for song titles from the new record, pauses. "Um, shit. Lemme think... there's one about, like, havin' cops and squares harass ya, and then there's one about how the press fuckin' sucks... I think I got one on there about stayin' true to your home boys and never sellin' out. Fuck, man, I dunno - I been on autopilot ever since those assholes [Vinnie Paul, drums; Rex, bass; Dimebag Darrell, guitar] dragged my ass into the studio. I can't even fuckin' hear myself think in there! Oops - uh-oh, gotta roll, bro, I'm fixin' to Ralph this beer everywhere."

Pantera's new CD is due out in late summer.

- Keith Bergman

Best METAL ALBUMS of XX Century

Edge of Time writers' poll



- 1. Dream Theater "Images and Words"**
The best album of crystal-clear progressive metal; influenced (way too) many, 1992
- 2. Queensryche "Operation Mindcrime"**
Great concept album of intelligent metal with progressive tendencies, 1987
- 3. Metallica "Master of Puppets"**
Classical thrash metal album, 1985
- 4. Psychotic Waltz "A Social Grace"**
Masterpiece of dark and twisted progressive metal, 1990
- 5. Death "Spiritual Healing"**
A superb amalgam of death metal with technical playing, 1990
- 6. Iron Maiden "Number of the Beast"**
Influential classical heavy metal album, 1982
- 7. Fates Warning "Awaken the Guardian"**
Legendary epic progressive metal album, 1986
- 8. Iron Maiden "Seventh Son of a Seventh Son"**
Brilliant concept heavy metal album with melodies and depth, 1988
- 9. Arcturus "La Masquerade Infernale"**
Extraordinary theatrical black metal, 1997
- 10. Watchtower "Control & Resistance"**
The best abstract techno thrash metal album out there, 1989

- 11. Slayer "Reign in Blood"**
Thrash metal milestone in 29 minutes, 1986
- 12. Fates Warning "Perfect Symmetry"**
Classical guitar-based progressive metal album, 1989
- 13. Mercyful Fate "Don't Break the Oath"**
Brilliant complex sophomore release of one of the original black metal bands, 1984
- 14. Metallica "Ride the Lightning"**
Powerful thrash metal album, 1984
- 15. Angra "Holy Land"**
Innovative heavy/speed metal with orchestral and classical tendencies, 1996
- 16. Dream Theater "When Dream and Day Unites"**
Roaring eruption of progressive metal; prelude to greater things, 1989
- 17. Faith No More "The Real Thing"**
The best mixture of funk, rap, and metal in great atmospheric style, 1989
- 18. Mekong Delta "The Music of Erich Zann"**
Technical thrash concept album from a one-time mysterious outfit, 1988
- 19. Voivod "Dimension Hatross"**
Sci-fi metallers reach their pinnacle with this concept album, 1988
- 20. Nevermore "Dreaming Neon Black"**
Intense power/thrash with melody and style, 1999

- 21. Paradise Lost "Icon"**
The definitive album of gothic metal, 1993
- 22. Vauxdvihl "To Dimension Logic"**
Generation next of transcendent dark progressive metal, 1995
- 23. Helloween "Keeper of the Seven Keys Part I"**
The best example of melodic German heavy/speed metal, 1987
- 24. Tiamat "Wildhoney"**
Exposing new values instead of the extreme; atmospheric/gothic metal, 1994
- 25. Judas Priest "Painkiller"**
Energetic and fresh comeback heavy metal album, 1990
- 26. Metal Church "Metal Church"**
Debut album of Seattle's finest power metal with an epic touch, 1985
- 27. Sieges Even "Steps"**
Rush meets Watchtower in a frenzy of brilliant songwriting and intelligent lyrics, 1990
- 28. Cynic "Focus"**
Definitive and influential hybrid between death and fusion jazz, 1993
- 29. Sepultura "Beneath the Remains"**
Pounding and full of speed trash metal; more influential than influenced, 1989
- 30. Emperor "Anthems to the Welkin at Dusk"**
Traditional yet innovative extreme black metal, 1997



Best Debut Albums

- 1. Dream Theater "When Dream and Day Unites"**
Roaring eruption of progressive metal; prelude to greater things, 1989
- 2. Psychotic Waltz "A Social Grace"**
Masterpiece of dark and twisted progressive metal, 1990
- 3. Cynic "Focus"**
Definitive and influential hybrid between death and fusion jazz, 1993
- 4. Vauxdvihl "To Dimension Logic"**
Generation next of transcendent dark progressive metal, 1995
- 5. Heaven's Cry "Food for Thought Substitute"**
One of the best novel albums of modern progressive metal, 1997
- 6. Testament "Legacy"**
Fresh debut showcasing the pinnacle of Bay Area thrash, 1987
- 7. Sieges Even "Life Cycle"**
Hailed as Germany's answer to Watchtower but more adventurous, 1988
- 8. Watchtower "Energetic Disassembly"**
Debut album of these Texan abstract techno thrashers, 1985
- 9. Candlemass "Epicus Doomicus Metallicus"**
Doom, doom and more doom: the definitive epic doom metal album, 1986
- 10. Exodus "Bonded by Blood"**
Good friendly violent Bay Area thrash, 1985
- 11. Metallica "Kill 'Em All"**
Point of reference for _____ [place your number] thrash metal bands, 1983
- 12. Iron Maiden "Iron Maiden"**
Sull one of their best albums for many fans; Paul DiAnno, 1980
- 13. Damn The Machine "Damn the Machine"**
A visionary metal album whose freshness still surprises today, 1993
- 14. Metal Church "Metal Church"**
Debut album of Seattle's finest power metal with an epic touch, 1985
- 15. Warrior Soul "Last Decade Dead Century"**
Subversive and insubordinate message as form of dynamism, 1990
- 16. Leger de Main "Concept of Our Reality"**
Progressive jazz/fusion pearl with female vocals
- 17. Sanctuary "Refuge Denied"**
One of those cult power metal albums of today; impacting vocalist, 1988
- 18. Flotsam and Jetsam "Doomsday for the Deceiver"**
Imagine a cross between Iron Maiden and Metallica; epic speed metal, 1986
- 19. Lethal "Programmed"**
Dark-laden Queensryche-style melodic heavy/progressive metal, 1990
- 20. Annihilator "Alice in Hell"**
An incredibly powerful and imperishable thrash metal release, 1989



Best Underrated Albums

- 1. Heaven's Cry "Food for Thought Substitute"**
One of the best novel albums of modern progressive metal, 1997
- 2. Solitude Aeternus "Beyond the Crimson Horizon"**
Powerful doom metal with progressive tendencies, 1992
- 3. The Tea Party "Edges of Twilight"**
Grandiose ancient heavy mixture of 70s rock and Eastern elements
- 4. Soul Cages "Moments"**
Joining emotion, beauty, and warmth with a metallic sound, 1997
- 5. Mekong Delta "Kaleidoscope"**
Kaleidoscopic technical thrash, 1992
- 6. Pestilence "Spheres"**
Thrash metal and fusion jazz collide, 1993
- 7. Coroner "No More Color"**
Technical thrash made with the Swiss quality standards, 1989
- 8. Helstar "Nosferatu"**
A vampiric endeavor of dark and intense speed/power metal, 1989
- 9. Mayfair "Fastest Trip to Cybertown"**
Psychedelic and trippy rock with some industrial tendencies, 1997
- 10. Tribe After Tribe "Love Under Will"**
Ethnic metal; bridging the continents, 1993
- 11. Threshold "Extinct Instinct"**
A fantastic interpretation of symphonic progressive metal, 1997
- 12. Atheist "Elements"**
Innovative cross between jazz and death, 1993
- 13. Damn the Machine "Damn the Machine"**
A visionary metal album whose freshness still surprises today, 1993
- 14. Waltari "Big Bang"**
Innovatory disco heavy thrash pop hurricane
- 15. Enchant "Break"**
A fine exponent of innate elegance in delivering calm melodic lines, 1998
- 16. Last Crack "Burning Time"**
Underrated musical extravaganza, 1991
- 17. Carisma "1825"**
Conceptual progressive work with a factual story line and dramatic charge, 1997
- 18. Faial Opera "Faial Opera"**
There's life after Megadeth; prog metal with a twist, 1995
- 19. Anacrusis "Screams and Whispers"**
Overlooked technical thrash with sociopolitical depth, 1993
- 20. Neurosis "Through Silver in Blood"**
Atmospheric heavy noise/hardcore trance

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