


HEAVY METAL MAGAZINE

# Snakepit

ISSUE N°9



**ANVIL  
MALICE  
PARAGON  
ANACRUSIS  
HOLY TERROR  
MANILLA ROAD  
SENTINEL BEAST**

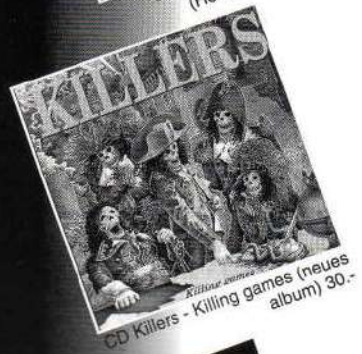
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**A Metallic welcome to another edition of our magazine...**

*With this issue we believe we feature some really strong acts like FORBIDDEN, MALICE, SENTINEL BEAST, HOLSTER or ANACRUSIS among the excellent others that released glorious Metal music but failed in the end due to a variety of reasons. As we always loved their music we tried to give these bands a historical focus. It's evident that one of our main purposes is to cover some deceased Metal outfits of the past that are still in our hearts and minds as well as to feature current bands that should get far more attention because of their great musical efforts. We also try to be honest and speak the truth as we see it. In particular our reviews are subjective and if someone does not agree with some of them, be aware that it's our personal opinion and not anything more. To make it clear - *Snakepit* is an underground magazine and we do not want to change this attitude and we will stay both critical and honest. We are not here to please everybody's opinions and at least for us that was never our intention. Heavy Metal with all its categories is a wide field but the origins of our beloved music should not be forgotten - it's the power and emotion that carries on the enthusiasm to hear this special music. If someone is missing the power in today's Metal releases, *Snakepit* is the right place to stay a bit more than a second or two and maybe you can discover some aspects of Heavy Metal music that are partly missed nowadays. There was some criticism that the price could be cheaper. We would like to do that but we can not right now because of the extremely high postage rates from Austria to the world and the printing costs. We do not make a profit in producing the magazine and we never wanted to. For us it's okay if the sales of the magazine nearly cover the costs we have to pay as Laurent, Matt and I have families and can not afford to lose too much money. So enjoy another detailed packed number with lots of peculiar bands -each of those is more than worth checking out and stands in the line of glorious real Metal outfits. I want to say a big thank you to all the faithful readers, you know who you are and you rule, to the *Snakepit* staff for the incredible and dedicated work, to my beloved wife Gaby for her endless patience and our little daughter Larissa who gives life a gas. Thank you!*

**Heinz Konzett**

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**ANACRUSIS** - this fantastic band marked huge footsteps in the Metal scene with their four albums and created a unique mix of Thrash, Power and Progressive Metal that has been inaccessible since their demise in 1994... And it's also a very sad story. They were one of the real original bands ahead of their time and didn't get the recognition they deserved so badly. In this case the involved labels fucked up the band in a bad manner and when you read the sincere words from the musical genius Ken Nardi in the first in-depth interview he has given since the band's dissolution everyone should be clear that honesty has not been an important characteristic in the Metal business. The band died in the end because of the obvious lack of business support and that's not only sad - that is a tragedy if you look at the music that ANACRUSIS could have released later after the "Screams And Whispers" masterpiece. With the first interview from Laurent, Matt and J together, we intended to cover the whole history of a favorite band of ours and Ken himself answered the many questions with passion and knowledge. There is bitterness in his words also when he speaks about his frustrations and views of the Metal scene with the same intelligence he wrote and played music. Also we managed at the last minute to have original bass player John Wenery answer some of the questions so here's two of the most impressive Metal musicians ever doing the talking and enjoy the real ANACRUSIS story!

Ken, tell us how your first band in high school HEAVEN'S FLAME sounded and how you first met Chad Smith - a future ANACRUSIS drummer, at that time?

**Ken:** "Actually, I was introduced to Chad by a mutual friend. My brother and I had been playing together for a couple of years and had heard about him and what a great drummer he was. We were starting to move away from the older JUDAS PRIEST/IRON MAIDEN type of Metal into the heavier, newer bands like METALLICA and SLAYER. Chad liked the material we were beginning to write and decided to join us."

How many demos were recorded with that band during 1985/1986 - and how would you describe the band's style, did you play some gigs at the St. Louis area?

**Ken:** "We recorded a few demos over about a year and a half. They were all four-track basement recordings and we never went into a studio together. Our style wasn't much different than the early ANACRUSIS stuff, in fact about a third of the songs on our first album were HEAVEN'S FLAME songs note for note. The major difference was that we were a three-piece band and not quite as intricate. Some people used to describe us as sounding like a "melodic" VENOM, if you can imagine that. We played a few local shows in St. Louis, but our biggest exposure came when we got to open for METAL CHURCH, which was my favorite band at the time."

ANACRUSIS was formed in 1984 by Kevin and John and it wasn't until mid 1986 that they were joined by Mike Owen first and a few months later by you Ken, how did you join 'em exactly? Were you familiar with their local band?

**Ken:** "Actually, Kevin and John had seen my band play out a few times. It was Chad who introduced me to Kevin, since they had gone to school together. When HEAVEN'S FLAME broke up, Kevin asked me to come over to one of their band practices. We all got along very well and I started coming over to practice with them."

When you joined, did they already have originals written and if so how did those first originals sound like even if they didn't have a singer before you came in?

**Ken:** "When I began to play with them they had three original songs: "Pendulum" (later "Killing My Mind"), "Frigid Bitch", and "Annihilation Complete". The songs sounded pretty similar to the recorded versions, except for the fact that they were still using standard tuning."

I know the band played lots of covers in the early days, was it mainly before you came in or was it after you joined them? Do you remember what those covers were?

**Ken:** "When I joined, the band really hadn't played out yet, so like most bands, they had been playing OZZY, METALLICA, IRON MAIDEN and other stuff along with the few originals. In fact, one of the first songs I learned with them was "Motorbreath". We must have played that and "Am I Evil" about a million times."

Even if the name of the band had been chosen before you joined the band, do you remember how and why

# ANACRUSIS

this musical term was chosen as it sounded really strange and totally unusual to say the least...

**Ken:** "Kevin saw the term in the glossary of his music theory book and liked how it sounded. It means "upbeat" or the unaccented beat at the beginning of a line of poetry or piece of music."

**John:** "Kevin came across the musical term, "anacrusis" in the glossary of his music theory text in class at High School. This was before I had actually met him through a flyer, which he had posted at a local college in mid 1985. The first incarnation of ANACRUSIS featured Kevin and I and two other players and we basically played cover tunes and did not have a singer. It wasn't until a year later when Ken Nardi's band HEAVEN'S FLAME broke up that Mike Owen and Ken joined the band to make the line up complete. We all liked the name. People were always asking us what it meant and often thought it was curiously ominous and unique sounding. It is a musical term and can be found in the dictionary. It is from the Greek."

So I guess that as soon as the line up was completed, you started to work on originals that would appear on the 1987 demo "Annihilation Complete", which received particular critical acclaim in Metal Forces. What do you remember from what I suppose was ANACRUSIS' first studio recording?

**Ken:** "After I joined we recorded a rough two song demo with the music through our mixing board and the vocals overdubbed. A few months later we recorded the original "Annihilation" demo on a four-track. We later re-recorded it and added two more songs. We didn't go into a "real" studio until we did our first album."

**John:** "By early 1987 the band was recording demo tapes on a four-track cassette recorder. The first time I remember tracking my bass lines I was astounded to learn that players could punch in during the middle of a song if they had made mistakes and that was extremely helpful for me because I was not used to playing this

type of Metal. My musical background was more grounded in classic Rock and Hard Rock styles and was introduced to a whole new style of heavy music. With the passage of time and practice and with the patience of Ken, I learned to hone my skills to be more efficient. Ken's patience was immensely helpful, because essentially I lacked it. Some of the songs on the demo tapes were ones Kevin had written and were somewhat re-worked once Ken had joined the band. Most of the other pieces were from HEAVEN'S FLAME repertoire. It was apparent to me very early on that Ken was a special, creative talent. I remember being very interested in knowing more about the songwriting process. It's not something one can learn through instruction though...people shouldn't take it for granted. When the demo came out we started to learn more about the underground and the tape traders and the importance of building a mailing list and corresponding with people. This was before the invention of the Internet and we made lots of friends especially in Europe through the mail. We were forever sending tapes to fanzines and radio stations for free. I think that more than anything got us our initial following. The sound of the music was original and people were hungry for something new at that time."

So there was three different versions of that tape released: a five track thing for the press, two tracks were added to become a seven track demo sold to the public and a new version was released six months after the first - a fully re-recorded version as the original master tape had been destroyed in between, featuring two other extra tracks making this time a nine track affair. Do you have an idea of how many copies of the public versions were sold and would you say that the last re-recorded version was way better than the original?

**Ken:** "Actually the five song and seven song versions were from the same recording. I have no idea how many of those things we ran off in the dual-cassette deck, but I'd guess a couple hundred maybe."

**John:** "In late 1987 the second version of the "A. Complete" demo was finished and was by far superior. The playing, the production, the sound quality, the time that went into it were better executed. You could hear the bass guitar on this one too (laughs)! The result won us demo of the year in Metal Forces magazine, which just totally blew us away. The band was becoming more cohesive and I actually contributed some lyrics for "Injustice" to this demo. My first attempt at writing. I look back and remember how inspired by rage I was. That the process was spontaneous and the lyrics just came out of me...I had to get them out. It was one of the purest things I ever wrote."

The extra two tracks from the last version "Imprisoned" and "Annihilation Complete" were used also on the "Scream Your Brains Out" album released by Metal Forces' Chain Reaction in the Spring of 1988 which featured also the likes of AFTERMATH, LEVIATHAN (who featured Chris Barnes, later seen in TIRANT SIN, C. CORPSE and SIX FEET UNDER) and ATROPHY. Do you think this first vinyl appearance helped the band a great deal as it was quite hard to find the record and most





# Screams From The Grave!

of the time compilations don't receive too much interest?

**Ken:** "I don't know how much it helped to promote the band, but it was very exciting and encouraging for us just to be on a record."

**John:** "I think the fact that we were named demo of the year was a very influential factor. I remember we were sending out more and more demo tapes and t-shirts after that issue (of M. Forces) came out. But the "Scream Your Brains Out" compilation wasn't near as readily available as the "Annihilation" demo for the simple fact that we were just going crazy with all the response from the underground through the mail. It was gratifying to say the least. I imagine there are many dubbed copies of that demo floating around."

Let's talk a bit of the St Louis and the whole Missouri scene back then, was it a good area for your kind of music and Metal in general? Did you have the chance to play quite often in community centers, warehouse, clubs and things like that?

**John:** "The Metal scene in the Midwest US in the late 80's was pitiful and almost non-existent. Most underground metal acts played at small venues. I remember seeing SLAYER on the "Reign In Blood" tour at a roller skating rink in the fall of '86. Amazing show...still one of the heaviest albums ever recorded. St. Louis essentially sucked for this type of music. There was little support from commercial radio aside from a weekly Metal show, which often played mainstream Hard Rock acts instead of Metal bands. A few low wattage college stations were helpful but not on a very large scale. We organized our own shows at community centers and high schools and tried as often as possible to get supporting gigs for "national" acts."

If I'm correct during the early years of the band you had the opportunity to open for some quite big bands such as KILLER DWARFS, SAXON and ARMORED SAINT, did those shows help to increase your popularity on the mainstream scene? Can you remember some funny stories that happened at that time?

**Ken:** "Not SAXON, but we did open for KILLER DWARFS (our first show ever) and ARMORED SAINT. One funny thing did happen at the ARMORED SAINT show. We had been doing this sped-up version of SABBATH's "N.I.B." for quite a while. In fact, we recorded it for the first album but didn't include it. Well during soundcheck, the crowd was already waiting outside for the doors to open, so rather than playing with a song from our short setlist, we started to play "N.I.B.". Immediately, then manager from ARMORED SAINT came running up to our manager yelling, "They can't play this song!!!". It seems they had been doing a cover of this song also as one of their encores. We had no idea, and weren't planning on playing it anyway, so we apologized and promised not to play it."

**John:** "Yes, the KILLER DWARFS was our first show. There was all of 100 people there, if that. It was an invigorating experience for me, since it was my first time playing out. But as we would often see in the future...the audience didn't know what to make of us. They were intrigued and confused at the same time. We also opened for CORROSION OF CONFORMITY and DANZIG. Neither of those shows went well illustrating our dilemma...we weren't very easily categorized. Our music did not bill well with most underground acts let alone mainstream Metal acts. We knew we were different...which isn't necessarily a good thing if you are trying to gain recognition. Or is it?"

You made clear from the early days that TROUBLE, METALLICA, PINK FLOYD, METAL CHURCH, and SLAYER were your biggest influences,

but what made the difference to others that your band sounded original?

**Ken:** "We never wanted to sound like any of the hundreds of other bands around at the time, most of which sounded like everyone else. I think our emphasis on more melodic vocals and willingness to experiment with arrangements made us stand out a bit. Also, we put a lot of time into our lyrics and I know this is something that our fans appreciated about us."

**John:** "In the very early days, yes those bands influenced us. It was music we liked. I suppose in minor ways it influenced the song writing. But most of the music on that album "Suffering Hour" was leftover stuff from previous projects. Except "Imprisoned" and "A World To Gain" I think. Kevin wrote "Annihilation Complete" and "Frigid Bitch", the rest were re-toolings of Kenn's old band's songs. By late 1988 we had already begun working on a myriad of new material that would make up "Reason". The songs were very wide reaching in influence. But considering our backgrounds we listened to all different types of music. PINK FLOYD was very influential especially for Kenn and I. I still had been a fan of BLUE OYSTER CULT, DEEP PURPLE, RUSH, BLACK SABBATH. "Reason" was as Kenn once said our "soul-searching" recording. We were finding a direction."

By the way did you consider at that period ANACRUSIS a Speed Metal band or a Thrash Metal band?

**John:** "No...well maybe at first. I think because of our different backgrounds musically that we were unable to consciously choose a musical direction. Everything progressed naturally. I believe we were from that point on, a Progressive Metal band."

Besides the interest from Metal Forces through the compilation, did you get lots of interest coming from the record labels or was it just only stuff like "We like you, but we'll get back soon" and stuff?

**Ken:** "We really didn't send out that many promo tapes. Bernard Doe (from Metal Forces) was the first one to really take notice, and almost immediately he offered us a deal on his label. At that time, nobody was getting signed out of St. Louis, so we viewed it as a great opportunity."



Before the Axis deal came up, I think you had decided to record an album by yourselves and then shopped it out, correct? What made you go for Axis at the end? Was it mainly because of their affiliation with Metal Forces and Bernard Doe?

**Ken:** "In between sending out demos and getting signed, we did decide to try and shop a finished product. We had already booked a studio and paid for a week to record, so even with Bernard's interest in us, we decided to go ahead and record the album on our own instead of taking an advance from a label. We did the whole thing for \$1,200."

"Suffering Hour" contained some new tracks that weren't on the previous demo and it was quite blatant that you were taking a somewhat different direction from before, starting to add certain flavors that made them sound somewhat different. Was it due to the fact that between the time the demo tracks used on the album were written and the time you went in the studio to record the album, you had started to find the necessity to write stuff that could not be really associated with the usual Speed/ Thrash Metal stuff played by so many at that time?

**Ken:** "Yes, like I said before, we wanted to sound a little different from everyone else. However, I think the fact that we had so little time to record and mix. "Suffering Hour" wasn't really very representative of the band at



the time, and sounded more like a live rehearsal than an album, at least to us. In fact, two of the songs from the demo that we decided not to record, "Vulture's Prey" (later used in "Brotherhood?") and "Apocalypse" were also from HEAVEN'S FLAME and probably the most melodic stuff on the demo. In some ways I think "Reason" was much closer to our sound, although many people thought it was a big creative step forward for us. Much of the music on that album was already around when we recorded "Suffering Hour".

Why did your version of "N.I.B." never appear on an ANACRUSIS record, even though it was recorded during the "Suffering Hour" sessions?

**Ken:** "Honestly, we weren't sure how to get the rights to release it and we had really only done it for fun in like one take."

How well did "Suffering Hour" sell worldwide? Don't you think it was kind of a disadvantage for you to be on a European label?

**Ken:** "I still have no idea how the album sold, in this world or any other for that matter. We did get quite a bit of press and some good reviews, which did start to build a following in Europe and elsewhere. We hoped to have it distributed in the U.S. also, but that didn't happen until the second album."

**John:** "The album was only released in Europe so it was very frustrating for us knowing we had a published released recording on the market but it was nowhere to be found. I don't know about availability, but if our following releases were any indication to sales, "Suffering Hour" was probably difficult to find. We never received any statements as to what our sales were from Active Records or from Metal Blade."

Did you get offered any touring in support of that album as I don't remember to have seen any tours lined up with you on it?

**Ken:** "We really didn't do any touring for the first record only a few opening slots here and there. We did get to open for VOI VOD in Chicago, which was pretty cool."

Why was the production quite poor on the album, I mean was it only because of the small budget?

**Ken:** "I think you answered that one yourself. I think it was mostly the budget and time restraints. I mean the music was tracked in two days. Now most bands spend more time than that getting a good kick-drum sound."

After "Suffering Hour" was released, you went to L.A. at the Concrete Foundations Forum, was it during that time that you hooked up with Bay Area based bands such as EPIDEMIC, VIOLENCE and FORBIDDEN and with Kathy Kohler who became your manager?

**Ken:** "We had been corresponding with Kathy for a while and she helped out for a couple of years. She was one of the first people to write to us for a demo and she became a fan of the band."

"Reason" was released early 1990, on Active Records (which was in fact Axis but renamed) in Europe and Metal Blade in the States, and the music featured on it as well as the sound showed a great deal of improvement as the stuff developed on it sounded way more original than before, using unexpected vocal tones and a general atmosphere not normally associated with Metal. Can you tell us how this album was elaborated and what went in your minds to try to distance yourself so much from the usual Metal style?

**Ken:** "We were all pretty disappointed with the way "Suffering Hour" turned out as a whole, since we had to rush so much, so we wanted to put a lot more effort into the "production" side of "Reason". I have always loved the recording process and would spend days on end with the demos, tweaking them and adding lots of effects and layers to the sound. Also we were listening to a lot of non-Metal bands. I was really into the CURE's "Disintegration" album at the time (still one of my personal favorites). The full, layered sound of their music was very appealing to me, especially because after METALLICA released "...And Justice For All", it seemed that nearly everyone was trying to mimic that dry, in-your-face production, practically abandoning studio effects altogether. We knew there were better singers out there and better musicians, so we figured we would try and make originality our strong point."

**John:** "Like I said before this was where we found our natural progression... we were becoming a cohesive unit, lyrically, musically, emotionally as well, as you



can tell from the very personal lyrics on this release. The songs were a part of us. The chemistry was working. To this day we often fantasize about remixing this album...the songs did not come across as we really would have liked as a result of the production problems we experienced making this recording."

**John,** would you say this album and its songwriting originality helped you to increase your fan base, which comprised mainly of Speed/ Thrash fans gained from the previous release?

**John:** "Yes, there are many different types of heavy songs on "Reason". We experimented with different songs within songs. Tempo changes often drastic and abrupt were common. One of my favorite songs was "Stop Me". It exemplified what ANACRUSIS was trying to get across musically. We were pushing the envelope of what we wanted to hear. We played music that we longed to hear. Isn't that purely what a songwriter/ musician strives for? We believed so, hence, we tried things that were new and exciting. Those were exciting times for us creatively. We toured with D.R.I. for a couple of weeks in the summer of 1990 to support this release and were given the opportunity to play for a much more diverse audience than we had previously. It was an intensely challenging experience."

**How did the license deal with Metal Blade come about, was Brian Slagel interested in your band after receiving the "Reason" album?**

**Ken:** "I think he actually became interested after "Suffering Hour" had been released. I think we had sent out some demos from "Reason" while we were still trying to secure a licensing deal for the U.S. and we decided to sign with Metal Blade directly after our two album contract with Active Records had been fulfilled."

**How come you had to remix this album? Explain to us why "Reason" had two different covers for Europe and the US? Did you believe Metal Blade's excuse that "The layout wouldn't print properly" but Active Records had no problems with this?**

**Ken:** "We did this album in a total of ten days. I think we were still pretty shy about speaking up to our engineer, who actually did most of the original mixes. When Bernard Doe heard the advanced promo copies, he thought the material was strong but that the mix didn't do the songs justice. I ended up re-mixing all twelve songs in one all-night session, so even though it brought out our sound more than the original mixes, it still suffered due to time constraints. As for the cover, we were pretty unhappy with Metal Blade's decision to use a different cover than Kevin and I had designed. I don't remember their exact reason, but it was obviously not for technical reasons, considering what they ended up using."

**Ken,** that was also your first attempt at producing ANACRUSIS, something you developed even more on future albums...

**Ken:** "Like I said, I love recording and I had always done all the arranging and mixing for the demos. I would put hundreds of hours into experimenting with effects and things. When most bands demo material before they go into the studio they tend to keep it very basic. I, on the other hand, would view our demos as a full dress rehearsal, so that by the time we entered the studio we had a very clear picture of what we wanted to accomplish. By the time we did the third album, frankly, we were sick of the demos turning out better than the albums. Even through the third album there was lots of posturing and ego stuff to deal with, so the first time I got to really see the whole process through was when we did "Screams and Whispers"."

**Why didn't you use Bill Metoyer for this album, as I think that you started to work with him to begin with?**

**John:** "Kenn was our producer from that point on. Bill Metoyer was an amazing help when we went back into the studio to mix the "Screams And Whispers" release in January 1993. That was the only time we worked with

him. He was producer on some of our favorite releases too, the early TROUBLE material was simply awesome."

**On the CD version, there's two extra tracks, "Killing My Mind" which is a reworked version of "Pendulum" from the 1987 demo and "Injustice". Can you tell us from where this song comes from? Who had the idea to add bonus tracks on the CD and do you think it was a wise idea considering the number of Metal fans who were still only buying vinyl at the time?**

**Ken:** "These were two songs from the first demos that had not been recorded for "Suffering Hour". CDs were still pretty new and many bands were including extra material as a selling point to justify the higher price. We decided to record twelve songs and figured ten songs were plenty to fill an album or cassette, and planned from the beginning to use these other two songs as bonus stuff on the CD."

**What made you go for the type of clean as well as shrieking vocals you used instead of the more traditional type of Metal singing, was this a natural development for you or did you want to give the music more emotion and deepness with your brain-storming performance?**

**Ken:** "Again, the more mellow vocal style was something that came very early on, but due to the fact that most of the faster material ended up on "Suffering Hour", many people had a mistaken impression of the band. We knew from the beginning that we wanted to be as versatile as possible within this genre of music and by the time we did "Reason" we decided not to worry about what everyone else thought a "Metal" band should sound like."

**Let's talk about the fan response to that album, was it as good as the first considering the musical change or evolution? It seems also as you always gave A LOT of attention to your fans on almost every album, it was written along with your contact address "Your letters will be answered!!", so did you see your band as a part of the Metal community with the fans in it?**

**Ken:** "Sure, we were probably buying as many albums as we were selling. We all love music and were huge fans of many of the other bands of that time. It was a very exciting time for music in that almost everyone was still playing clubs and you could go see your favourite band, stand 15 feet away from them and probably meet and hang out with them after the show. You couldn't do that at a KISS concert or a JUDAS PRIEST show. It was unique to that time. Now it's gone back to '70 style arena Rock or stadium-sized festivals, and I think we are missing out on that level of equality and "down-to-earth" attitude where the bands and the fans were on a common level. It wasn't the usual "Rockstar" worship that seems to be making a comeback. Take the whole METALLICA/

Napster controversy for example. Here is a band that most people would never have even heard of if not for underground bootlegging and tape trading of the early 80s. Of course there is the business side, but they probably should have given the cause over to someone else since I think it really hurt their credibility with their fans. I mean are we supposed to believe that these guys never "borrowed" an album or demo before they were filthy-rich? About a year before I joined ANACRUSIS, Kevin, John and a few of their friends drove three hours

to this small town in Illinois to see METALLICA play in this gymnasium. They met them before the show and even tossed a football around with Cliff in the parking lot. Now you'd probably have to get past ten levels of security just for a glimpse of a band of their popularity. I'm not knocking them personally, I'm just pointing out that it was an exciting time to be a fan of that kind of music."

**As you were on Metal Blade in the States, did they help you promoting the record and the band in general at the time as you were only licensed to them?**

**Ken:** "Actually Metal Blade did give us tour support, and a pretty good amount of promotion for "Reason". This is why we decided to sign with them for the next album. Of course as the honeymoon faded so did their enthusiasm about the band, and though they never told us what to record, and usually supported any tour we could get, we never felt that the label as a whole was all that interested in seeing us become successful."

**What about Active? Did they make the same kind of sucking job for you as they did for the other label's signatures like ATHEIST or OBLIVION for example?**

**John:** "By this point we were getting what little support was to be had from Metal Blade. I don't remember getting very much support when "Suffering Hour" came out from Active and by the time "Reason" was released we were offered a recording contract with Metal Blade."

**I know you did 16 dates supporting D.R.I. in the States late 1990 or early 1991, how did that go despite the fact that both bands sounded extremely different than each other? Did the D.R.I. crowd accept your type of Metal really well? Do you have special memories of that tour?**

**Ken:** "This was a time when the line between Metal and Hardcore/ Punk was becoming very blurry. I think we were generally accepted by most of the crowds because we were sincere in what we were doing. We managed to avoid many of the clichés of

Heavy Metal and didn't exactly look like your typical "Metal" band. As far as stories go, most of them are your typical first-tour horror stories- crappy van, no sleep, lots of driving and lots of arguing."

**When and why did you part ways with Mike Owen as he was replaced by Chad Smith? From which band did Chad come from as you knew him well from your musical beginnings?**

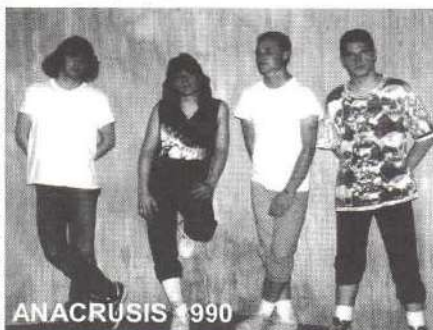
**Do you know what Mike did after that and are you still in contact with him?**

**Ken:** "We were all pretty young when we started playing together, and after awhile the band was becoming more of a full-time thing. It takes a lot of dedication and sacrifice to leave your job, home, and family to go on the road, usually playing for an empty club for no money. Mike decided that he wanted to go back to school and ended up joining the Navy for the next four years. Chad had been playing around the St. Louis area in several different bands, playing everything from Top 40 to Rock and Funk. Mike is actually still playing music. After he got out of the service, he spent a few years in San Diego and lived in Las Vegas for a while. We actually all just hung out together a couple of weeks ago when he was in St. Louis for the holidays. He is now playing in a San Diego based band called MOWER."

**You also changed managers and hooked up with Debbie Abono, known for her previous work with POSSESSED, FORBIDDEN, VIOLENCE etc... were you happy with her work overall unlike some of the bands she worked with? Would you say she did the best she could for the band?**

**Ken:** "I believe we first met Debbie at the Milwaukee Metalfest in 1990. Over the next couple of years she helped us out with some business stuff and with quite a number of contacts, but never really acted as our "manager". She is a very sweet person and we got along with her pretty well, though she and I disagreed on many things concerning the band and the music business in general. I think Kevin still speaks to her on occasion."

**So "Manic Impressions" was released in the summer of 1991, featuring more off the wall type of songwriting/ arrangements but not as memorable or catchy as the "Reason" stuff, it sounded more technical and the production supported the cold and mechanic**





character of that album, do you share this?

**Ken:** "A big reason for many of the changes on "Manic Impressions" was due to Chad joining the band. He was by far a more accomplished musician than the rest of us. He also brought the added dimension of different musical styles, which we were able to incorporate into some of the newer songs. I think the "mechanical" feel that people refer to was partly due to the fact that everything was recorded to a metronome to ensure that the tempos would be consistent. One of the problems we had on the first two albums was that they were recorded in a hurry and the songs reflected that. Also we didn't want to repeat the mistake of all the reverb which had added to the muddiness of those albums. We probably overcompensated, which led to a very dry sound."

**John:** "Manic Impressions" was released in the summer of 1991. I have very fond memories of the "Manic" sessions probably because we were videotaping a lot when we were in the studio. I have watched these tapes many times since those days with great recollections of our work then. It was during the War in the Persian Gulf and I also remember tracking bass parts and going into the kitchen for a smoke or something to eat and passing by the TV and seeing the bombing of Baghdad, it was pretty surreal I must say. This recording was done with the best drummer I have personally had the opportunity to play with Chad Smith, just an amazing talent. I think the bands musicianship, especially mine was greatly influenced and improved by Chad's discipline and precision. His playing was simply amazing and I feel some of the best drumming for this type of music I have ever heard. Which is not to say Mike Owen wasn't greatly missed. We had built a great friendship among the band members and his sense of humor and his raw aggressive playing was lacking on "Manic", not to mention his blistering speed. But the recording was a far more clinically precise work than previous efforts and Chad's style fit in well. I think with "Manic" we finally started to get a little mainstream recognition. The reviews were good and sometimes really good. We toured to support the album in the fall of 1991 supporting THE GALACTIC COWBOYS who had a very eclectic and diverse style for a Metal band and OVERKILL whom we had supported and befriended at a show out East during the summer of 1990. We again noticed the audiences during these shows were sometimes entranced by our sound, sometimes confused, and sometimes raging with enthusiasm. It all depended on where we were, I think. We became a tight performing act during this time and learned to adjust even during the most adverse conditions."

For this album, you also made a bit of change in labels, being this time directly signed to Metal Blade and licensed to Music For Nations- who ironically distributed Active products before, in Europe. Would you say it was better that way and why did you choose to not re-sign with Active?

**Ken:** "We originally were signed to Active for two albums and during that time we discovered the difficulty of dealing with a label all the way on the other side of the ocean. We had been working pretty closely with Metal Blade ever since "Reason" and they had just signed a deal with Warner Brothers for distribution in the States. We really didn't have anything to do with picking the European distributor(s)."

During the fall of 1991 soon after the "Manic Impressions" album came out you toured with OVERKILL and the GALACTIC COWBOYS, opening 38 shows over a seven week period. Why were you only allowed a 30 minute set- from what I can remember the set list included "Still Black", "Something Real", "Explained Away", "Paint A Picture", "I Love The World" and sometimes "Dream Again" - as a lot of fans came to the shows to see only ANACRUSIS? Did you like both bands as it seemed to be a good tour then?

**Ken:** "I wasn't really familiar with the GALACTIC COWBOYS before the tour, but we got along great with them. They are really nice guys and we all enjoyed their music. We of course were familiar with OVERKILL and had actually met them in about 1989 when we did our first bit of touring. The first show was opening for them in Rochester, NY and Bobby ("Blitz") came back to our dressing room before the show and introduced himself.



He is a really friendly guy and hung out and talked for quite a while. After the show Kevin kept in touch with him over the phone. We did pretty well on the tour in '91, all things considered. Of course it would have been great to be able to play a longer set, but having three bands on the bill made this impossible. We learned a lot though, and it really tightened up our musicianship. It was a little disappointing to our fans, many of whom had been following us since the first demo, and were hoping to hear some older material."

Why did you chose "I Love The World" from NEW MODEL ARMY to cover as it was quite unusual, wasn't it?

**Ken:** "I had been into NEW MODEL ARMY since about 1987 and had always wanted to cover one of their songs. Since it was very typical for Metal bands to cover someone like BLACK SABBATH or one of the other early Heavy Metal influences, I thought it would be cool to cover someone different. I figured since N.M.A. didn't have a huge following in America, it wouldn't seem like an obvious "cover" song. Plus I thought if people liked our version, they might check out N.M.A. for themselves and discover this great band."

After the OVERKILL tour you opened eight shows in the Mid-West and Mid-South, including your hometown of St. Louis, for MEGADETH. One of the largest shows was near New Orleans, where 3,000 people went to the show. Was it difficult as most of the concert goers were unaware of who ANACRUSIS was since the people thought that ALICE IN CHAINS were supposed to open these dates? What was your feeling towards Dave Mustaine and the other MEGADETH guys? Did you enjoy playing with them and were you kind of proud to play with



them in St. Louis?

**Ken:** "I think most people have heard the stories about Dave's behaviour in the past, but he had since quit using drugs and alcohol and the whole band seemed to be going out of there way to change people's perception of them. Dave was very cool and made us feel very welcome. He made sure we had time for a soundcheck every night and we always got a great monitor mix, which really can help your performance. Overall the crowds were accepting of us, though most of them had never heard of ANACRUSIS before, and we had a great time. The show here in St. Louis was especially cool because we got a chance to play for a lot of people who had only viewed us as another "local" band and never took the time to come one of our shows."

Which concert in your career would you consider your best and which do you not want to be remembered?

**Ken:** "I think we all would say our best shows were in Germany on the DEATH tour. We had a particularly great time in Essen, where lots of people knew our lyrics and just generally went nuts while we played. Many of the European shows were very memorable. As far as in the States, we did a "record release" show here at home for "Screams And Whispers" that was taped for a local cable channel. Even though it was the first time we were playing this material live, and we were a little rusty, the crowd was great and we felt like we were finally getting some recognition and support from our hometown. The bad shows are probably to numerous to mention a specific one. Often, what makes a show "good" or "bad" is not based on the size of the

crowd or whether the band played well as much as your attitude at the time and often we were caught up in personal or financial problems that really distorted our view of things."

Why did Chad Smith leave the band then, was he too frustrated about the band's situation and of the reason that he couldn't make a living with the music? Where did you find the new drummer Paul Miles?

**Ken:** "Mostly, Chad was unhappy with the business side of the band. He felt as though we weren't aggressive enough with the record company. He was supporting a wife and young daughter and we just weren't able to make any money. Chad had always been able to find decent paying work in bar bands and he just couldn't afford to commit fully to what we were doing. I think Chad really believed in our music and we were good friends, but eventually your responsibilities must be your priority and Chad's priority was to his family and I respect him for that. Paul was playing around the local scene for years and I think it may have even been Chad who suggested that we give him a call."

What I and many others consider as your most accomplished effort came out in 1993 as "Screams And Whispers", a real Metal classic. First of all why did it take so long to release that album when the predecessor had been released two and a half years before?

**Ken:** "I didn't realize it was that long in between. We pretty much recorded each of the records about a year and half apart, "Suffering Hour" in spring of '88, "Reason" in '90, "Manic Impressions" in early '91, and "Screams And Whispers" in the fall of '92. We did end up re-mixing "Screams" and this probably pushed back the release date."

**John:** "Yes I think we ended our career on a high note. "Screams And Whispers" was our most refined effort. Taking all we had striven for and tried to get across with our previous work and pushing those ideas even further and with Kenn's addition of some keyboard work it all culminated with "Screams". The lyrics were very personal and continued to emanate what we were going through in our lives and reflected our feelings about politics, psychological stress, relationships, paranoia, and lots of other introspective ideas and thoughts. The playing and musicianship was the best work we had done. But I think above all these were songs...when I say that I mean they worked better than anything we had done before...they were more cohesive. They listened well. They made more sense (laughs). At the same time there was even more diversity. The songs were so different from one another. Even more so than on previous efforts. Altogether the album was more dynamic and experimental and it felt naturally so, at least to me it did."

The emotional side of things is more present than ever on this one. Your lyrics always were somewhat depressive, do you think you could express your feelings through your music?

**Ken:** "Well, we certainly did try. I always felt that lyrics were very important. My favorite bands were PINK FLOYD and NEW MODEL ARMY and lyrics don't get any better than that in my opinion. We did try to write about things that people could relate to. I think this is why many of our fans felt very close to the band because our lyrics were honest and personal."

What about lyrics as in "Tools Of Separation"- "We turn our heads and show our backs. Burn bridges of communication, throw away and cast aside, shed these tools of separation"? What did those words mean to you personally?

**Ken:** "Well, those were John's words and they pretty much dealt with people's unwillingness to open up to each other. Many problems stem from an inability or refusal to simply communicate with each other."

There are keyboard parts used in different songs, who did them and what do you think they added to the overall ANACRUSIS sound?

**Ken:** "I did all the keyboard stuff, though I cannot really play the instrument. I either sequenced (programmed) the parts or played them one piece at a time. I thought the way CELTIC FROST had incorporated them on "Into The Pandemonium" was very inventive and added a real "Gothic" tone to the music. I wanted to take that even further and use them in a more melodic way. Besides, guitars and drums can get very boring at times and I thought this could add a little flavor to the overall sound of the record."

**John:** "I believe "Grateful" to be one of the greatest ANACRUSIS songs ever. It is so ominous and so very heavy at the same time the song is delicate and very personal. As with a lot of our songs I think we were



good at creating music that was a kind of contradiction. Displayed both ends of a musical spectrum often within one song. Lyrically I was always trying to touch on what was tearing me in two emotionally and psychologically. That contradiction...or irony if you will was indicative to what ANACRUSIS experienced in those times. There was stress and dismay amongst the members about things that occurred during our final tour, with management and the record company. I also think "Driven" is one of the defining works of ANACRUSIS... all of us contributed to that piece and we believe it was a culmination of the sound we strove for."

**Did that album do well in terms of sales compared to the previous ones and despite the lack of support of Metal Blade?**

**Ken:** "I have no idea, but if anyone else does, I'd love to know."

**John:** "Once again I really couldn't fathom a guess at what sales were because we never received a statement. We noticed a sizable following of very appreciative and enthusiastic fans when we played in Europe, but the shows stateside were more of the same. We got pretty good reviews from the press from what I remember."

**That's a shame! Can at least someone from the label contact Ken now and tell him the sales, that would be only fair. To go further without regarding this business bullshit, the cover supported the dark feeling in a good way, the red/black motif came like the music - hard, direct, emotional, cold, warm, from life to death - do you see these oppositions in your music as well?**

**Ken:** "Yes, I think extreme contrasts were what defined our sound. Even with the title we wanted to try and portray that point."

**You finally went to Europe in September/ October 1993 supporting DEATH on their "Individual Thought Patterns" tour, I remember that you put on a great show but the crowd was far from enthusiastic, at least at the two shows I saw, were you satisfied by the response and what do you think of that tour?**

**Ken:** "As I said before, we had learned not to expect much from most crowds. Most people had no idea who we were and "Metal" crowds in general are hard to win over. However, I felt as though the European audiences were generally more open-minded than in the States, and even though we knew the band was close to its end, we had many great shows on that tour."

**John:** "The shows in Germany were fantastic and so were some of the ones in Holland. I remember sounding better on stage and down front than we had ever sounded before. Truly amazing work by the sound people. There were some luke warm responses at some shows yes. Once again I remember intrigued looks from people. At least they didn't throw things at us (laughs)."

**Do you really think it was a good tour for you to be on considering the different nature of the music that both bands played? I mean the Death Metal train rolled at that time and original techno Thrash Metal music that you played had some difficulties to get accepted, was it a problem of being accepted or a problem of not playing this fast growling stuff?**

**Ken:** "This kind of music can be very limiting, and even though DEATH were very good at what they did, I think we added some variety to the tour. I think as long as a band is sincere in what they are doing, the audience will know it and show you respect. We were very intimidated when we started the D.R.I. tour. You know, would we be too "Metal" or what will the crowds think, but soon we realized we are only who we are, and we may as well try and be good at it. When you try and keep up with what's "cool", you'll never catch up and you'll only ever become a carbon copy of everything else around you. We never wanted ANACRUSIS to be another carbon copy."

**John:** "Yes I think being billed with DEATH was a good idea. They are a very technical band musically and I hope that some of their fans were introduced to our



music and some of our fans maybe listen to theirs. I hope it increased sales and awareness of our band, but it was only a couple of months before we disbanded."

**Did you get along well with the DEATH guys, Chuck Schuldiner had quite a bad reputation at that time in Europe as he had cancelled several tours before? Even if they played a style very different to yours, did you enjoy their stuff?**

**Ken:** "Chuck and the rest of the guys were really cool to us. We shared a bus for that whole month and got to know them pretty well. Chuck is really quiet and kept to himself most of the time. He was very friendly to us and I have to wonder how many of their past problems were his fault or if it may have been related to the people he was playing with at the time. There are a lot of politics that go on within a band and they can play a big part in what goes on. Since Chuck has always been considered to "be" DEATH, I'm sure he took most of the flack for the whole band. As for their music, I have never been a huge fan of strictly Thrash/Death Metal, but they certainly were good at what they were doing and had great musicianship."

**So what happened after that as I never heard anything about ANACRUSIS from that point? Were you simply dropped by Metal Blade just like many other bands on that label at the time and you just couldn't get any interest from other companies?**

**Ken:** "Actually, we were never dropped. After the tour with DEATH we were all getting to the point where it was becoming very difficult to make ends meet. We never had any delusions that we might become multi-millionaires, but it was becoming extremely difficult to pay the bills at home. We felt that we poured our hearts into our music but we couldn't seem to get Metal Blade excited about anything we did. There is only so much you can accomplish without the support of your label behind you. We also had gotten a little older and our priorities were changing. Things are much different when you're still in high-school and living with your parents than when people are married and trying to support themselves. I went through a divorce shortly after the tour and it was a very hard time for me. The last thing on my mind at that time was writing new songs or recording another album that no one would hear or trying to do a video that no one would ever see. It ended up with an argument about playing some shows in Canada which resulted in John walking out, and we pretty much felt that we didn't have any reason to continue the way things were going. We never made a "formal" announcement that we had broken up, in fact I don't know if we even knew we had. After a while things cooled down and we all remained close friends. I spent the next few months trying to get my life together and at a certain point we just knew we had lost the motivation to continue to fight a losing battle."

**Were you disappointed about the whole situation, making great music but not receiving the response that you deserved so badly?**

**Ken:** "We had let our frustration and resentment over things outside the band itself get the best of us. We started to project all those negative feelings toward one another and we just weren't getting any enjoyment out of what we were doing anymore. I'm pretty sure we could have done another record but we really didn't see any point in doing so. We received lots of mail from people all over the world who loved the music we made and who really appreciated the band, but it is a business and, unfortunately, it takes more than good reviews and great fans to keep a band going."

**If you had recorded another album, can you tell us what it would have sounded like? Would it have been really different in terms of song-writing style to "Screams And Whispers"?**

**Ken:** "I think if we had done another album it probably would have been a few steps further in the direction of "Screams and Whispers". I think our strong point was our more melodic songs. I would have incorporated more orchestration in the vein of "Grateful" or "Brotherhood?". After we broke up I spent quite some time recording a demo by myself of five or six new songs and re-arranged versions of a couple of my favorite ANACRUSIS songs, "Stop Me", "Afraid To Feel" and "Far Too Long". All the songs were arranged for bass, drums, guitar, and acoustic guitar combined with full orchestral arrangements. It could best be described as SLAYER meets the MOODY BLUES. Actually, it was very similar to what METALLICA did on their "S&M" album. It was all done on an eight-track and was never really finished. I have been into recording stuff on my computer over the last couple of years and keep intending on finishing it, but I never really get around to it. If I ever do, I'll probably post some stuff on our website."

**John:** "Kenn definitely believes we would have incorporated much more orchestration into our music with the next effort. I can't fathom a guess, however. I would like to believe it would have been memorable and further made the mark of ANACRUSIS on Metal history."

**Do any unreleased ANACRUSIS tracks exist and is there any possibility to see them released one day? What about merchandise, do you have any shirts left?**

**Ken:** "We never really recorded any extra songs that weren't used, so there really aren't any unreleased tracks around. As far as merchandise goes, I think it was probably all snatched up by the band members and is probably in a box somewhere in a closet far, far away."

**Did you make any videos during the whole ANACRUSIS story as I never saw any - besides the "Sound The Alarm" clip?**

**John:** "Yes there was about ten hours of video shot during the "Manic" sessions...mostly goofing around and acting foolish though...we can see our mistakes when we watch it and it sometimes makes me cringe. As far as live performances. The album release shows from the last two albums were both shot on video. They were multi-camera Super VHS productions the first done by Michael Henricks who had directed our video that MTV had played a couple times and the latter by a local cable access company."

**Are there any plans to see all your albums re-released with maybe bonus tracks? Do you know of the re-release of "Screams And Whispers" and "Manic Impressions" by Metal Blade recently?**

**Ken:** "We don't have any plans to release anything right now. The re-issues of "Manic Impressions" and "Screams And Whispers" were a shock to us. We didn't know anything about it until they had been released, and I only knew about it because Evan from REMNANTS OF REEZON was in contact with the label at the time. (Brian Slagel - if this statement is true and I trust Ken, is that your Metal attitude?!- Heinz)

**John:** "I don't know honestly...as I said Ken, Kevin and I would dearly love to remix "Reason" someday. Who knows what the record company will decide to do."

**What about you? What have you done individually or collectively after ANACRUSIS? Are you still interested in Metal music or playing in bands?**

**Ken:** "I played in a local band called TRIBES WITH KNIVES for about a year around '94-'95. They were friends of mine and it was fun playing second guitar and singing mostly backing-vocals. I got married again about a year and a half ago and am working as a computer programmer now. I have been a Christian for about four years, and my priorities are much different





than they were seven years ago. I still enjoy playing music occasionally and am proud of all we accomplished in ANACRUSIS, but music has become a hobby for me, at least for now."

**John:** "Individually, I am a manager of a storage facility, Kevin co-owns a bar, and Kenn is working in the computer industry. Collectively, we get together as a group to talk about old times."

**Why did you write your name with two N on the albums, as your real name is Ken?**

**Ken:** "No particular reason. I figured there were more Kens in the world than there were Kenns and I like to be different."

**Are you still in contact with John Emery or Kevin Heidebreder, what are they doing now?**

**Ken:** "I still talk to Kevin and John all the time. John and I get together every week or so just to hang out and watch a movie or laugh at some old ANACRUSIS videos."

**John, are you still a Metal fan these days or do you consider that part of your life as something passed?**

**John:** "I am still a fan of the music from our era, very much so. Not much new music really excites me. Although I do really like DISTURBED, very cool sound. Also I am a huge fan of ROB ZOMBIE...I'm looking forward to his directorial debut. The Rap influences of today's newer heavy music I guess are a sign of the times, but I am not into that sort of thing. I guess I am old fashioned. But none of the members of ANACRUSIS plays our instruments very much anymore except all



three drummers. Mike Owen is playing in a band called MOWER out of San Diego, CA- I believe you can find some of their music on Napster or search on UBL.com. Chad Smith last I heard was playing with Geezer Butler's band in the mid '90's and some local groups here in St Louis. And I am not really sure what Paul Miles has been up too lately."

**Do you consider that part of your life as something passed or is there a chance to see ANACRUSIS reunited as I am sure many people would love to see and hear more from you? Would you change anything about your careers if given the chance to do it all over again?**

**Ken:** "I don't see a reunion tour looming on the horizon any time soon. I think we all miss it from time to time and we sometimes threaten to get together to jam, but I think we've all become too lazy to carry the amps to the car. Who knows? With the way the internet has become it is much easier to get your music heard these days, so maybe we'll record something for the website in the future...maybe. I don't think we would change much if we could go back. Most of what didn't turn out was really out of our control anyway. I am glad we were able to record the four albums we did. I think stopping at any other point would have left us feeling like we never got to fully mature musically, which I think we did on "Screams and Whispers"."

**John:** "I suppose if we'd had the bare minimum of support in order to make the band economically stable thus making us viable and a potential money maker, we could have gone much farther than we did. A record

company executive once said to us in the fall of 1991 that "The world just isn't ready for ANACRUSIS yet". That I think was the seed that was planted in our heads. We needed to get used to it, to accept that we were on our own. We gave it a good go though don't you think?!" (Sure!- Heinz)

**Is the address listed on all your albums still correct and do you still hear from fans from time to time?**

**Ken:** "Actually, that was Kevin's parent's house so I'm not sure. I'm actually pleasantly surprised by the amount of stuff I see on the Internet about us. Most of it is very flattering."

**Any last words?**

**Ken:** "I just want to thank everyone who ever supported our music. We hope we were able to bring a little enjoyment to your lives, as this was our goal. For those of you who were fans I'm sorry we didn't properly say goodbye, and we kept you wondering for so long. We wish everyone well, and hope some of you will continue to enjoy listening to the albums we did have the opportunity to record. And also, thanks to Snakepit for your interest in ANACRUSIS and for allowing me to answer your questions. Take care."

**John:** "Download all our songs off Napster and share them with your friends who have open minds!"

**Thanks a lot for your eternal music, Ken and John. Your music lives on, forever.**

Heinz Konzett, Laurent Ramadier, Matt Coe

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# Unsung Speed Metal Fury

Was VIKING your first original band growing up- as I'm aware that you, James Lareau (bass) and Matt Jordan (drums) all were jamming together in high school?

"Actually they were all jamming in high school but I was out of high school. My first gigging band was called HAGS and we had some more infamous popularity in the Southern California area. I was just one of several guitar players that came through that band. Finally I quit the band because it was just plain old dangerous! (laughs). It's hard to describe- kind of a caveman/ Don Rickles death sludge sound. Basically the singer was a sociopath and a genius. He would pick the most dangerous people in the audience and tear them to pieces verbally. Then everyone would be so enraged we'd live in fear for our lives- that was a typical show. We never had roadies for more than one show. So I was a year ahead of James and Matt- after I got out of high school I started playing with them in 1985. Matt was in a band called BARRIER- just a garage band playing IRON MAIDEN covers and James was in a band called LETHAL GENE which was a Punk band. The three of us got sick of our respective bands at the time and started jamming together. This band was called TRACER because we were all into acid back then- we put out a demo tape with a singer- his stage name was Tony Spyder and he became the singer of L.S.N.. We put out a three song demo with him but he let us know up-front he wasn't into being in the band. As I was singing the songs for him he said I should really be the singer- afterwards when Brett came on the scene we jammed SLAYER tunes. After TRACER we kicked James out of the band because he put his girlfriend ahead of the band. That was a stupid mistake- then Matt advertised

ences were more JETHRO TULL and Punk bands- but Matt, Brett and I were die-hard KISS fans in the 1970's and we never got over it. We loved to hate KISS once they got into their "Unmasked"/ "Dynasty" era. We were really into early KISS and loved SLAYER- Matt had been into the larger Metal bands like IRON MAIDEN and JUDAS PRIEST and I had been into the local Metal scene with bands like RATT, MOTLEY CRUE, STEELER. When we discovered SLAYER we knew that was it."

**How soon after the four of you became VIKING did you record your three song demo? What details can you provide about the songs, the production, the sales and your overall feelings on this tape?**

"It was pretty soon after- I don't remember exact dates because I was heavily into smoking pot during those days. Concerning the demo tape- Brett's father died and left him a little bit of an inheritance, a few thousand dollars which was enough to pay for the demo. Brett set the whole thing up- he found the studio and the producer, it was done at Fiddler's in Hollywood and Chuck

lived in Long Beach we agreed that we had to make the trek up to Hollywood because Brett got really cheap studio time if it was early in the day. So I spent the night before on Brett's floor and I ended up getting sick, so I had a sinus infection. We were really happy with everything other than the vocals which I choked my way through. Looking back the demo is weak compared to the albums. The guitar sounds were weak but we were pleased that this demo got us shows. When you cut a demo you go one step above garage band and it immediately got us a show at the Waters Club in San Pedro. We started gigging nonstop after that- as a matter of fact it was our second show at the Whiskey in Hollywood that Brian Slagel of Metal Blade Records happened to be there. He liked our live show enough to ask for our demo tape and liked the demo tape enough to ask if he could throw "Hellbound" on to "Metal Massacre 8". The only thing I remember production wise was they had a new drum sampler at the studio. We tried to make the sampler work but Matt's playing was so fast it would make machine gun sounds on the sampler so we didn't use it."

**What were those early VIKING shows like in the demo days?**

"We were opening shows- the first show at the Waters Club was opening for SARDO (a band originally known as SCEPTRE!!!- Laurent). We had come up with an idea of dressing up like Vikings and doing a gothic stage show. We did the full on Viking leather, boots, belts, fur- everything you can imagine. We tried to play a 45 minute Speed Metal show with all this gear on. It was a big mistake and the crowd reaction was awful. We thought musically we performed great- but at that time in the Speed Metal scene with SLAYER they got rid



**By the late 1980's Thrash/ Speed Metal had saturated the worldwide Metal scene, especially the works from classic California bands like EXODUS, SLAYER, AGENT STEEL and DARK ANGEL to name but a few. Through the good graces of Metal Blade the world first heard another California Speed/ Thrash band called VIKING on Metal Massacre 8, winning the legions of Thrashers to gain a record deal and record two albums (the latter of which "Man Of Straw" still stands up as a killer release). Wondering why the band dissolved on such a high note I did some searching to find guitarist/ vocalist Ron Eriksen (now known as Ron Daniel) and called him up at his workplace in Wyoming to get all the relevant information...read on.**

for a second guitar player with influences of SLAYER and old KISS- Brett called Matt up and he wanted to use my garage to rehearse. From there I jammed with them on SLAYER songs and I started singing. We knew we had a magical thing."

**Did VIKING ever perform cover tunes in the early days- as I imagine SLAYER songs were your specialty along with DARK ANGEL?**

"We only did cover songs that first jam session- we started writing originals right from the get go."

**You found Brett your half brother through an ad you placed in a local magazine looking for a second guitarist- tell us about the meeting and how long had you lost touch with him?**

"Actually in all honesty that was a thing we came up with later trying to give people something to write about. He in fact is not my half brother- it was one of those things to try and set us apart from all the other Los Angeles bands. When we decided to play together and write original tunes we had to figure out how we can set ourselves apart from the 150,000 other Southern California bands. Well because we both had long red hair and had this European background- we picked up VIKING and said Eriksen is a good Viking name, let's do the brothers in a band thing. It was pretty successful to get us in magazines like Hit Parader- it gave them something else to write about other than Norsemetal kind of thing."

**Were Brett's influences similar to yours as far as the Speed/ Thrash Metal sound?**

"Very much- and the three of us brought James into the mix as soon as we realized we had something special- we knew he needed to be a part of this. James' influ-

## Ron & Brett Eriksen

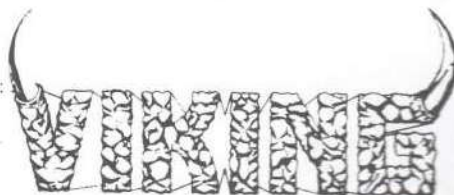


Rosa was the engineer. He got some incredible drum sounds and we were really pleased with the engineering he did. It was done in a day- I remember that as Brett

of the eyeliner and they had departed from the image Metal bands- leather had been replaced by ripped jeans. So for us to come in with outfits wasn't cool- it might have been cool two years before but not then. I remember one taunt from the crowd was "Go back to Bedrock" (laughs). The nice thing about it was we decided to get rid of the image but it created a huge buzz around Los Angeles of people talking about the band and our outfits. The attendance at the second show was better as a result- we played with PREDATOR and DARK ANGEL. When we turned up doing material in regular clothes and still slayed the crowd I knew we had a chance."

**You were featured on "Metal Massacre 8"- did this lead quickly to a deal with Metal Blade and had you been a fan of Metal Blade before appearing on the compilation?**

"Actually I was the biggest Metal Blade fan in the band and Brett loved them too. Growing up in Los Angeles with the Metal scene I had "Metal Massacre 1" right after it was released. I had as a high school kid the members of RATT sign my "Metal Massacre 1" album. I had BITCH "Live For The Whip" and lots of Metal Blade product. When we got the deal with "Metal Massacre 8" we were all just stunned because we didn't have a manager. Brett and I did all the legwork, because Brett talked to Brian and told us about appearing on the compilation. We were excited from what Brett told us Brian had a deal that from every Metal Massacre album Brian would get the fan reaction and the two best bands would get Metal Blade deals. From "Metal Massacre 8" SACRED REICH and VIKING got the best reactions. Brett called me up shortly





after the release and said Metal Blade wants to sign us to a six album deal and I was on cloud nine."

In 1988 "Do Or Die" was released on the market- an album noted for its savage Thrash energy and relentless pace. You recorded it in two months at Adamo's Recording in Huntington Beach, CA - what do you remember about the sessions and the songs- and did the critics plague you with more SLAYER comparisons (especially due to your vocal resemblance to Tom Araya)?

"Wow- that's a loaded question! #1- with youthful exuberance and stupidity, when I was in contact with Metal Blade they said they wanted to provide us with an engineer and have us record near them. All I could remember was the last time I did that I got sick. Adamo's Recording was where we did the TRACER demo a couple years before, it was a couple miles from my house and my thinking was he has a 32 track recording studio and one studio is as good as another. That after years of being a musician is totally false. So

## Ron & Brett



we went in producing ourselves because the engineer had no Metal background. He was recording everything from a Jazz quartet to voiceovers for TV commercials. I had it mapped out in my mind that we would save a lot of money and my theory was we can get in and get out in a few days. We had a \$6,000-8,000 recording budget- \$8,000 sounds right. I figured if we could record it for \$3,000 Metal Blade would give us \$5,000 to tour on. Which again was an assumption, as no one at Metal Blade ever promised me a tour. I was 18 at the time. #2- because I wanted to be tight I told Matt and everyone else but Brett because he was straight all the time with no drinking or dope, I told them no smoking dope. Apparently that was a big mistake because the speed with which we played shows and practiced was much less than shown on "Do Or Die". Between Matt and I being sober for the recordings it put us into overdrive. We cut those tracks on the first day and then went back to listen and couldn't believe it. So then we got in our minds that we would be the fastest band in the world (laughs). We adjusted to that but it was difficult to play guitar parts at a speed we've never played them at before. Unfortunately that kept us from catching those little things that were not tight- the very first chord of the album was completely not tight. I forget the song now ("Warlord"- Matt), it started out with cricket sounds and we wanted to keep it really low so that you'd wonder what's going on...then turn it up and have it blast through with this E minor chord. I know the bass and drums weren't tight so we muted those out and we sounded weak. We wanted the record to sound heavy and to the engineer he thought that meant more bass. We ended up with a mud/ mush mix which was garbage to Metal Blade so we remixed it again. We ran it through an EQ to bring up the highs and mute the lows, so "Do Or Die" is a second generation tape of that horrible muddy mix. I think looking back if we had let Metal Blade pick our engineer and studio plus if I had let Matt smoke dope I think our album would've been as good as or better than SACRED REICH's first album turned out to be. That would have launched us far earlier and we wouldn't have had to wait until the "Man Of Straw" album."

**Did the critics say that "Do Or Die" resembled SLAYER?**

"No, I don't remember any of them saying that we resembled SLAYER. I remember Kerrang! from England chewed us up and spit us out- they said it was so fast that the drummer sounded like he wasn't even playing with the band. Lyri-



cally they said everything was about death- which I didn't even catch. I think they listed the first four or five songs and they were all about death. I think we would've done much better with a producer and the critics tore it up. Some fanzines were really into us and we tried to have a good relationship with their editors."

**What hand did musicians like Gene Hoglan of DARK ANGEL and Mike Torres of ABA TTOIR have in helping VIKING in the early days?**

"I remember Gene but I'm trying to remember Mike...I think Mike was a singer in HERETIC, he also sang in one of Brett's bands called HIEROPHANT. I remember Mike being really encouraging to say we have something good here. Gene- we became friends after playing together. He didn't input musically or lyrically but he turned us on to the fanzine/ underground network. He told us who to contact and who to send it to. I showed him some poetry I had written and he encouraged me to broaden my lyrical horizon. Gene told me my lyrics were too cliché- he had me look at "Burning From Within" on the first album which was about spontaneous human combustion and how a man's body was rebelling against his own wickedness which came to the point of destroying him. Gene told me that's the stuff I was good at, and I needed to apply my strengths to it which is describing lyrically how it feels to rip a jawbone from a man."

**How important was the fanzine/ underground network for VIKING in those days?**

"Until VIKING I was unfamiliar with fanzines, and until I started reading them I thought they had their place but weren't that effective. They really benefited us though as we got requests for interviews all over the world. People would send us orders for our demo tape- then we got cover stories. They helped because the first album stunk so bad that without the fanzines Metal Blade would have dropped us after that album."

**Were you able to do much touring beyond California for that first album?**

"Not at all- just the Southern California area. We were so poor it was all we could do to buy guitar strings much less hop in a van and tour the country. It was one of those things where somebody's mom bought the microphone stands that we would practice with. We all had jobs but most of our money was going towards pot. Looking back I can see all the mistakes clearly."

**Did you ever receive any sales statements for the first album?**

"We did- what they were is either 7,000 or 17,000- but we were blown away. Especially because we didn't tour and we thought the album was horrible."

**How did you get the chance to appear on the DARK ANGEL "Leave Scars" album with the song "The Promise Of Agony"? Had you developed a good friendship with the whole band?**

"Brett was probably Gene's best friend, and I became close with Jim and Annie Durkin. Then when Ron Rinehart was brought in the band we had a good relationship although he was a fearsome type of person. He was fun to party with but he had a very violent streak. How did that come about...I remember Gene calling me up and asking if I'd like to sing this. I'd stop by his mom's nail salon and tanning place, which was really funny because Gene worked at the counter if you can imagine that. He'd show me his latest lyrics and they'd go on for pages. I remember reading the lyrics to that album and he said he wanted me to sing with Ron on "The Promise Of Agony" so I agreed."

**You worked from the end of 1988 to February 1989 on the follow up "Man Of Straw"- an album that**

shifted the tempos more often and allowed you to stretch your vocals beyond the screams you mostly employed on the debut. How did the recording go - as you used three different studios to achieve a sonically brutal album?

"That recording went great. When Metal Blade and William Howell, our A&R guy, contacted us they'd have Bill Metoyer engineer the album- I was ecstatic. I mean he had done a slew of great albums including early SLAYER, he knew what was going on. My one stipulation was when we did the vocals we go back to Adamo's Recording because I am not recording another album sick. We did all the tracking at two different studios and the vocals at Adamo's because it was right by my house. Another thing Gene Hoglan did was come into the studio and put new heads on Matt's drums, tuned them up and tweaked them, he was instrumental in the engineering of the drum sounds for that album. He helped Matt get a killer drum sound for that album."

## James & Ron



**Did you decide purposely to slow down the tempos for this record?**

"No- what we did was represent who we always were on "Man Of Straw". What we did was making sure not to make the speed mistakes of "Do Or Die" was at practice we figured out the tempos, wrote them down and brought a metronome in the studio to play at. It gave us a reference to play it the same way. The more shows we played the more we saw how the crowd like to slam to the mosh parts- the half time parts. We saw how it would go more tribal and we thought that was so cool we consciously began putting mosh parts in every song. Vocally I had begun to be trained in the Elizabeth Sabin vocal technique- which teaches Heavy Metal guys to sing opera and not thrash their voice. As a result I could sing all day long and not get a sore throat anymore. I was more conscious of vibrato and using more range instead of singing in monotone. Going back to the recording session there isn't much else I remember."

**You rewrote many lyrics on "Man Of Straw" due to your developing Christian beliefs- what was going on in your life and what did you want to get across lyrically?**

"What was going on in my life was my musical career was taking off. The buzz around Metal Blade because of the demo we had given them was huge. The demo we produced in Matt's upstairs den was better than the "Do Or Die" album so they were excited. We were talking as soon as the album came out going on tour with HELSTAR, and everything was happening. Personally I was becoming a burnout- you can only smoke pot so much before you end up on the couch all the time. I had broken up with the girl I was engaged to, we had had an abortion which devastated our relationship and I was a mess. I was on edge and irritable, and I had a friend who had just left the Metal scene and he had become a Christian. When he started coming around my house he started carrying a Bible. We'd offer him pot and he wouldn't want it- he started doing the Christian witnessing/ sharing Jesus with people at my house. My house on any given night would have 10-20 people getting stoned. His evangelism thing would get to be a pain because people would leave as he was ruining the party. Personally it came to a Sunday night where no one showed up at my house- first night in probably three or four years. He comes up and I thought I'd blast him. I asked him if he had his Bible and I thought I'd intellectually blow holes into this book. For two hours I asked him about all the Bible stories I knew and with every story he was already on the page in the Bible before I finished a sentence. I started to get weirded out. I felt it was divine intervention. I was an atheist and it was outside of my comfort zone. I figured I could get him off my back by going to church next Sunday- but he goes to a church that has studies every night of the week. He picked me up on a Monday night and I lis-



James Lareau



tened to this intelligent message of prophecy which showed the history of restoring Jerusalem. It was too clear- I got nervous that my atheism and blasphemy would come to haunt me. I ended up praying for the second night in a row. I knew I was in trouble and became a Christian that night. I realized that the lyrics I'd written I couldn't sing- but I knew I was in trouble because Metal Blade's already got the demo. I took bits and pieces of words in the songs and completely rewrote "The Trial" from a Christian perspective. I've got a video with the original lyrics of "The Trial" and they're really awful."

**Did you decide during this time to also cover "Hell Is For Children"?**

"Originally it was going to be on the album. I lived next door to a couple that also smoked pot, did drugs and had a four year old boy. It was one thing for us to smoke dope but another to act like this four year old didn't know what was going on. As we talked about parenting and watching parents scream you could imagine what was going on when we didn't see the parents and child together. Brett and I had been looking for a cover song, something that we could get college radio play that would not be mainstream but still sound like VIKING and be played on the radio. We threw around a lot of ideas and we knew this was the song to do. The statement of the song stands on its own- it stands against child abuse so other than the title I still don't have a problem with this song."

**You didn't tour behind "Man Of Straw" because of your beliefs and possible connection to "evil" people. Why didn't you show the fans that you can play Metal without succumbing to the Rock and Roll lifestyle of sex, drugs and alcohol?**

"In all honesty because I knew I would succumb to the Rock and Roll lifestyle. I was brand new to Christianity- I'd have no problem now existing around anyone. I can talk to anyone- but I knew back then that pot, drinking and women were too tempting to maintain a standard. Matt became a Christian on April 1, 1989- and he tried to convince me that we could listen to Bible-study tapes on the road. It's like if you stopped being an alcoholic 25 years ago you might be able to go in one day and have a soda or water- but if you quit a week ago going to a bar is not a place you want to be. I knew my Christianity was more important than my musical career. I tried to convince myself of going on and it wasn't reality."

**How quickly did VIKING dissolve- and did you support Brett's move into DARK ANGEL?**

"That was an interesting time because Matt and I were Christians and we were going to church together and we were spending more time away from Brett and James. There wasn't a lot of communication happening there- we weren't at odds but we had our own lives. After being cooped up in the studio we were all going our separate ways until rehearsals for the tour started. When Jim Durkin left the DARK ANGEL tour in New York Gene called up Brett to have him flown out and finish up the tour. I think we filled in the blanks- Brett's doing this incredible thing with DARK ANGEL, played America and Europe- we were pretty sure that Brett would stay with DARK ANGEL and leave VIKING. I remember when DARK ANGEL played the Country Club, which was the recording session for "Live Scars". It was a huge show- everyone was thrilled to be there, Ron Rinehart had lost 25 pounds on tour and was in the best shape of his life. The band was tight- I joined them on stage to do "The Promise Of Agony" and that was reassuring to us. Brett's playing had improved and got tighter- part of the problem in the studio was I did all the guitar tracks because Brett had not been as tight as we needed him to be. When the time came for me to leave I tried to find a replacement. I couldn't get one- so I quit and Matt told me he'd rather be in a garage band with me than in VIKING without me. When half a band quits that's pretty much it. Brett never left DARK ANGEL at that point."

**You are now a minister of a church in Wyoming- how is your life now and do you regret playing Metal music?**

"I'm married and I have two stepchildren- 14 and 16. I'm the parent of teenagers although I still feel like a teenager. I don't regret playing the Metal music- I may not be proud of some of the things I did but I'm not ashamed of my musical background. I'm not proud of being a womanizer or a drug addict but it's also helped me to identify with people. I'm not a minister that's



been socked away and can't relate to reality. I'm not judgmental in the slightest because I'm guilty of worse things than what people come into my office for. I'm not a televangelist and my approach is an intelligent explanation of the Bible. It's intelligent and I can prove this through prophecy, through archeology, through science so it's an intellectual approach to faith. It's not like Jimmy Swaggert. I'm not the same person I was- I have the same mind but a different heart. Even moving to Cheyenne to start this church I walked into Kinko's one day and someone recognized me as the guy who sang on the DARK ANGEL album.

**I introduced myself and he told me he had "Man Of Straw".**

being able to relate to him is cool. I can talk to people with no problem at all."

**Favorite memories in VIKING- changes you would make back then if you could?**

"I've covered a lot of changes- I'd rerecord "Do Or Die", I would have supported the tour for "Man Of Straw". We could have easily financed a tour by producing and selling quality t-shirts. It sounds heretical for a pastor to say this but I would have let Matt smoke pot in the studio that first day. I would have had better communication with Metal Blade- not be so opinionated and let the experts handle the business. Good memories- I still like "go back to Bed-

rock". Musically as the singer/guitar player I'm proud of our playing. The best memories were getting the records/ CD's when they were done. Seeing "Metal Massacre 8" printed up- to get letters. Tami (Matt's girlfriend at the time- now his wife) would help Matt and I with the mail as we both worked at night but we would get the mail during the day. Every day the mailbox was stuffed with mail- all over the world. People from Yugoslavia saying they wanted to sing just like me or this was the best album ever in their lives. Those were good memories."

**Do you still keep in touch with any of the former VIKING members?**

"I've only had a short conversation with Brett in the last ten years- I was in Southern California for a conference and actually saw him driving down the street. I flagged him down and we chatted for a couple of minutes. But other than that, I have no clue about his whereabouts. Matt Jordan is living in Oregon. I haven't talked to him in about a year, but I'm sure people can find out about him through his church where he is an elder. As for James, I haven't talked to him at all since I left the band."

**Final comments?**

"There's a pressure question. Encourage them to not blow off Christianity as something for your grandparents. Read the Bible for yourself and your life will change."

Matt Coe



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**DEATHSLAYER is a name that you will find back on a few Heavy Metal compilation albums of the mid eighties. They never released any full length album or anything, but their music was highly appreciated in the so called underground scene. We got in touch with Suzanne Morovic (a.k.a. Suzanne Hearts), who a few of you readers still might know from her days with this eighties Metal band. Here's an interview I did with Suzanne to get the story complete. Our sincere thanks go out to Suzanne for all her time and effort to make this interview as exclusive as possible. We wish her all the best for the future!**

**When did DEATHSLAYER get together and was this the first band you played in or did you already have other musical experience before that?**

"In 1981 Johnny Hearts and I were in a Metal band called MARAUDER - not to be confused with the modern day MERAUDER, also from Brooklyn, NY. DEATHSLAYER formed in 1982. We later got a different bass player and changed the name to HELICON. We dropped a lot of the DEATHSLAYER songs, and wrote some more melodic songs. We wanted to go for a more commercial sound at the time. After that I was in an all-girl band called TOKYO ROSE. Then Johnny and I got together again and formed BEWITCH, which was soon changed to the name MASK."

**Some magazines stated that Johnny Hearts was your brother and some say he was your husband. Was he in fact a relative or did you just have the same last name?**

"Johnny and I were boyfriend and girlfriend at the time. Johnny had been using Hearts as his stage name."

**How did you get on the "New York Metal '84" compilation with the song "Journey For Light"?**

"Through Phil DiBenidetto, who ran a local record store called Zig Zag Records in Brooklyn and wrote for a UK Metal fanzine called Metal Forces. He knew a lot of people in the local and international Metal scene. The singer in TEASER, another band on the record, put together some local Metal concerts at which we played. He later put together this compilation and wanted us to be included."

**By whom were you influenced in those days?**

"I loved QUEENSRYCHE and Geoff Tate's vocals. Also Tony Harnell from TNT. Some of my other favo-rites at the time were IRON MAIDEN, JUDAS PRIEST and early OZZY OSBOURNE. Randy Rhoads was my favorite guitarist. When I began to sing, I loved Ann Wilson (HEART) as a female vocalist."

**I've seen a lot of reviews of "Cry Of The Swords" - your full length debut album. But most of these reviews talk about an advance tape. I actually never saw this album. Does the album really exist and how many copies were printed of this very interesting release?**

"We had a financial backer who funded the recording of "Cry of the Swords" collection of songs. We spent a lot of time recording and mixing the tape, so the money ran out. We were hoping to press and release the album ourselves, but had to put it off at the time. We got a lot of interest from Europe after our review by Phil D. in Metal Forces magazine of some of those songs. We decided to send out the demo as it was, instead of wait-

ing for a full length release to be complete. A lot of the magazines reviewed the tape, and it was played on many European Metal radio stations. We still wanted to record additional songs and finish the album, but the band split up before that could happen."

**And how did you get on the "Iron Tyrants" compilation with the song "Raven's Nest"?**

"We were very popular at that time in the East Coast clubs, New York and New Jersey especially and the word spread about us. Someone contacted us about being on this compilation. I don't remember who it was or how they heard of us."

**When John Forte left DEATHSLAYER, you changed the name of the band to HELICON, why was that? DEATHSLAYER was already gaining some popularity in the underground scene here in Europe.**

"SLAYER started about the same time as us on the West Coast and were becoming increasingly popular with their Thrash/ Speed Metal sound. People were confusing us with the band SLAYER. They would think that we were also a Thrash band, but we were not. Johnny was

also starting to write in more of a melodic style, and with new songs to do we started to drop some of the older material. John Forte left the band, and we had a new bass player. We decided to change the name of the band for all those reasons."

**With whom did you play back in those days?**

"TT QUICK, OVERKILL, WHITE LION, Tony Harnell's band JACKAL. Probably a lot of other popular bands from back then that are no longer together."

**After DEATHSLAYER you for med BEWITCH in 1986, which soon became MASK. Why this sudden name change?**

"We only used the name BEWITCH for a very short



time and decided we did not like it. To run through the names again of the bands I was in with Johnny Hearts, well it was MARAUDER first, then DEATHSLAYER. When a new bassist, Hugh Essay, came in the band, we called ourselves HELICON. The line up for BEWITCH was a new bassist and drummer, Paul Ross and Michael Hamboussi. This band had all brand new material not used with DEATHSLAYER or HELICON. So then we called ourselves MASK."

**Why did you change your musical style with MASK so radically?**

"It was a new bassist and drummer so of course the sound changed. The new bassist Paul Ross contributed a lot to the writing. Johnny was becoming more and more influenced by the commercial Metal bands of that time. We were all listening to new bands then. There were so many new sounds in Metal at the time, and there were more and more bands with female vocalists."

**MASK disbanded in 1988. How did this happen? Any musical differences or what?**

"It was not musical difference. We all were happy with

music. Thrash was getting big in the East, and even L'Amour where we had done most of our shows was not having new commercial bands play anymore. I understood all of those things, but I agreed with the other members that we should wait and not rush into a big move. Johnny would not back down, and the other two members refused to go to LA at that time, so the band broke up. I still think it was a big mistake and sad that we could not stay together. I think that was my best band in New York. I think with more time we would have become an even better band and gotten more popular. We would have stood out on the East Coast. Moving to L.A. at that time we would have gotten lost among all the hundreds of bands that were trying to get noticed on the West Coast."

**How did you actually get in touch with TYPE O NEGATIVE member Josh Silver in whose home studio you recorded a solo demo tape?**

"Long before TYPE O. NEGATIVE, Josh Silver had a home studio at his house in BROOKLYN. Johnny and I wrote and recorded some songs with him to use as a demo for our move to LA. We wanted some new material other than the songs we recorded with MASK. I think we met Josh through Pete Steele, who Johnny met when he was auditioning guitarists for the initial line-up of CARNIVORE. Johnny was all set to play with CARNIVORE, but when he saw what kind of costumes he would have to wear, he turned the gig down. Later on in L.A. I recorded a solo tape for my own material with Johnny playing guitar. These were the songs "Something New" and "Simple Times". Johnny was a great guitarist but very hard to write with as a vocalist. After being in several bands with him, and attempting another project in LA with him, it was time to go our separate ways. This was when I joined WARBRIDE."

**You returned with WARBRIDE - an all female Heavy Metal band. Why get back to this heavier music style and who were your influences at this point?**

"A guitarist named Lori von Linstruth from Sweden I think had formed WARBRIDE before I joined the band. She was heavily influenced by YNGWIE J. MALMSTEEN. The music had a darker quality, but was still very melodic. They were very popular in LA at the time because she was an excellent guitar player. Power Metal with all-female musicians was something new. Eventually because of musical differences and personality clashes she went out on her own. The first year I was in L.A. a friend of mine and keyboard player from New York Cindi Varsos had also moved out to L.A. - she eventually played with an all girl band called MIS-

# The Cry Of The Swords

GUIDED. We were looking for bands on our own but came across the guitarist Lori's ad looking for a female vocalist and musicians. We liked her material and hoped to form a band with her. She decided not to start a whole new band and ended up returning to Sweden (if that's where she was from). When I joined the band WARBRIDE, the keyboardist Velia Garay did most of the writing. All the members were new except for Velia and the bass player. Velia was starting to get influenced by METALLICA, PANTERA, TESTAMENT, SEPULTURA and others so the sound started to get heavier."

**One of the band members came from Canada, two from California, you came from Brooklyn, NY and your bass player from Australia. How did this international band get in touch with each other?**

"Drummer Michelle Pickering from Canada, came to the U.S. to make it in the music business. Bass player Kim Hays and keyboard player Velia Garay were California natives. Guitarist Samantha Taylor came from Australia and was only 17 when she left to come to L.A. We all met through musicians wanted ads in the local music magazines."

the sound of the band. Johnny wanted the band to go to Los Angeles, CA where the Metal music scene was booming. The rest of us did not want to go right at that time. It would mean having to make a big move which would cost a lot of money. We would have to leave our jobs, friends, and family in New York, and have to start all over again in a new city. We wanted to continue playing in New York where we already had a growing fan base. There were plenty of clubs in the area that would let original bands play. We wanted to wait at least another year, so we would be stronger as a band, and save up some money. Johnny would get impatient if things did not happen quickly. He felt we could make it faster in Los Angeles. All the record labels were based on the West Coast at the time. Glam and commercial Metal were big over there too. He thought the East Coast was not the right place for us with our kind of





Samantha Taylor was later to be found in PHANTOM BLUE. How was it to see her name pop up again all of a sudden? And what happened to the rest of the band?

"Samantha Taylor also played bass, so when PHANTOM BLUE needed a bassist, a mutual friend recommended her. She toured with them in the U.S. and Europe, but never recorded with them. I still keep in touch with Velia Garay and Samantha Taylor, who are no longer playing music. Before I left L.A., Kim and Michelle had gotten married and had babies. We did not keep in touch."

The band breaks up and continues as HEROINE. Why this band name change when only the keyboard player changed places in fact?

"In WARBRIDE Velia and I were the main songwriters.



In HEROINE it was Michelle Pickering the drummer. It started out as her project. There were personality clashes and musical differences with the members of WARBRIDE. Michelle had songs of her own she wanted to do but her writing style was more a Power Metal sound with melodic vocals. Velia's style was becoming more heavy sounding, and she wanted me to start doing Thrash vocals. She also started to play guitar rather than keyboards in some of the songs. At this time WARBRIDE had started a new demo, but in the middle of the recording the other members did not want to continue. Velia wanted to finish the demo, and she found other musicians to play on the tape. I don't think it was ever completed. I never completed the vocals on it. Michelle, Sam, and Kim then formed HEROINE and asked me to do the vocals. I did not contribute to the writing of those songs."

At that time you worked with producer Ross Robinson (KORN, SOULFLY, LIMP BIZKIT). How was that experience and what were his strong points?

"We did not work with Ross directly. We worked with a producer Mikey Davis who shared a studio with Ross at the time. When we were recording the WARBRIDE demo, Ross was working with the then unknown KORN on their demo. Mikey Davis has worked with many bands and artists, such as Ann Boleyn, WASP & KISS among many others. I did not know Ross very well, but he was extremely dedicated and worked long hours with KORN, which seems to have paid off. I am happy for his success."

What made you decide to give up music for a couple of years and take a 9 to 5 job?

"I have always worked a 9 to 5 job whenever I was in a band, so that was not something new. There was no money to be made with your music, unless you were signed to a record label. The clubs did not pay you, and you had to sell your own tickets if you wanted to make money. All your money went into flyers and advertising to promote your shows, recording of demos, T-shirts and tapes to give to fans, rehearsal space, gas and travel money. It is all very expensive. I never gave up music. The Metal scene had died in L.A. and a lot of the popular Rock clubs had closed down. Alternative Rock had become popular, Seattle, WA and San Francisco, CA were the new music centers. Heavy Metal was not a 'cool' term anymore. At that time HEROINE broke up due to lots and lots of differences, personal and musical. Our manager had intended to shop our tape to some European labels, and told us he had a lot of interest. The recording went on way too long, and we were all in big debt from the recording. I think too much time was spent recording and not enough time getting together as a band and rehearsing so the ties started to become undone. Eventually it was decided for many reasons that Sam would no longer be in the band. Another guitarist joined, and it seemed like the bands sound was changing to a more Rock groove sound. The songs on our demo already seemed dated by that time. It was hard to capture that sound in the rehearsal studio. The drummer became pregnant so the break became longer. I decided then to do a solo demo, hopefully to sell my

songs, and not necessarily as a solo artist. The band members did not like this. I felt I was being honest by telling them my intentions, but they felt I did not believe in HEROINE anymore. We tried to keep the band together, but we all felt it was not going to work. So I went my separate ways. I auditioned for a couple of new bands, but nothing really interested me. The Metal scene was dead in L.A. For many reasons I then moved back to New York to my family and old friends. I began placing ads in music magazines right away. I went to meet with several bands and tried working with various musicians, but nothing ever materialized."

Then you met Bill, a bass player from Pennsylvania. He was into Thrash metal. Did he know you from your WARBRIDE or DEATHSLAYER period? How did you actually get in touch with him?

"No, he did not know any of those bands. He was into the heavier stuff. He had spent time in California too, but had been in the S.F. Bay Area which was known for all the heavier Thrash bands. Years later, I met him here in NYC in November '96 through an ad I placed as a female vocalist looking for a band."

After your recordings with Bill you spend some time in other bands but returned to Bill to cooperate with him again. What was so special about this first experience that you decided to work with him again?

"Well, Bill and I never did any actual studio recordings. He was set up in this big empty warehouse space in Brooklyn and we composed a few songs with just my voice and his bass. The only recordings we did were the few times we had a boombox with us and pressed the 'record' button. The material was quite moody, very much in the Darkwave/ Ambient kind of sound, very bleak and atmospheric. We may eventually re-use some of that stuff. The other projects I had worked on never progressed. I had started playing keyboards and was working with a guitar player for a few months in Queens, NY. He then decided to devote all his time to another band he was playing with at the time. Bill had begun playing in an ambient/ electronic band called NEUTRAL and was playing some of the smaller clubs



in the NYC circuit. They signed to a London based label and recorded a full-length CD themselves in their rehearsal room. The label never released the CD, so the band broke up. He contacted me about getting back together and working on some new material."

Presently, you're experimenting with Dance and Techno rhythms. Why this musical change, 'cause these styles are far away from all the other more Metal stuff that you've been doing in the past?

"I like many different styles of music, including Dance and Techno. It's great for working out and driving long distances. A lot of this music is quite generic but that is true with just about everything. I would say we use Techno-type sounds like the band GODFLESH, or even some of the more obscure project bands. It's hard to meet other like-minded musicians who really want to put the time and effort into a full band situation. The whole process of getting together a full line-up and then renting a rehearsal space isn't something we have to worry about. We don't have to pay money to go to a recording studio, nor do we have to cart around gear for a whole band to play an awful 1:30 A.M. slots at local dives for small audiences who could probably care less about us anyway! This is the perfect situation because we don't need to operate as a full band. We just do recording. The drums are always MIDI or from various lo-fi and digital sources. Bill likes to use a lot of cheap analog sources to add that rawness to it. The bass is always live. He plays a tuned-down (and often distorted) five string and since he likes a lot of Death/ Doom Metal, that sound is present. We come from a Metal background so Metal will be a part of anything we create. Likewise, we are open-minded to many different styles of music, including Gothic, Darkwave, Psychedelic, and Industrial."

You posed with a few amateur pictures for a Death Metal magazine Grimoire of Exalted Deeds. Why did you actually do that? And why did you go by the

name Vexx?

"This was a way to promote myself and get some attention in a Metal magazine, since I do not have any current Metal recordings right now. As a female in Metal, looks have always been a big part of it. While it may be frowned upon by some people to use your looks, women in the music business have always used it as a way to bring attention to their talents. I always admired artists such as Lorraine Lewis and Doro who had great vocals and stage presence, but were not afraid to be glamorous and sexy. Most of the male artists do it, so why not women. It's not very politically-correct, but who cares? Metal isn't supposed to be! Vexx is a name that sounds harsh, but is also somewhat mystical and sensual."

The new project you're working on now is called THE WORKER DRONES. Who did pick that name and why?

"Bill has a new name every week. And that was what he wanted to call it at the time. Now he wants to call it THE DRAGONFLY, which is from a song by the band CLUTCH off 'The Elephant Riders' CD that he thinks is such a great song. Until we have some completed songs recorded, who knows if this will be the final name of the project."

I read that you're also working on a website and the release of a CD and video compilation. Can you tell our readers a bit more about this all?

"Right now I am concentrating on establishing and creating a website. I have been learning HTML and web graphics, and hope to have it up by the end of the summer. My site will consist of my Metal days, as well as any new things I will be involved with. The video will be a collection of clips from live shows of my former bands. I am not sure if I will release a cd of the old material. I do have old tapes that I would need to re-master. If there is interest, I will press it to cd and put it on MP3."

I have a picture from a period after WARBRIDE. The story behind the picture is that you girls are looking for a suitable bass player. The band is then called SABRA CADABRA. Did you play long under this name? The name refers to BLACK SABBATH - did you also play SABBATH tunes in those days?

"We wanted to change the name WARBRIDE since it was a new line up, without the original founding member Lori Von Linstruth. To help us promote the new band, the magazine wanted to write about us so we needed to come up with a new name quickly. We chose SABRA CADABRA, but we decided to go back to WARBRIDE again. I am sorry that the name changes are so confusing. Whenever a new band comes together, you try to get your name in print so people will know about you. At the beginning of a band when you first start playing together, everything is still so new. You spend a lot of time on coming up with a great name and taking good photos. It seems like you need some time to write and rehearse together so you can see in what style and direction the band will go. After you spend more time together you have different ideas of your style and sound then when you first got together."

From all those bands you've been playing with,

MASK



which one did you like the most and why?

"I can't answer that. They all had songs that I loved, and good musicians. I think I took part in a good variety of musical styles. What I produce in the future will reflect all of those sounds, and I think will end up being my best. I enjoyed playing with male musicians, and being the only female. But I think it is more fun to work with other women in a band. We were like sisters and we were always struggling against the prejudice of women in Metal. We felt strong together and we could support each other. We certainly did get a lot of attention being all women in a band. We had some crazy times too."

What is the NEW JERSEY Metal scene like now a-



days? Are there any new bands we have to keep our eyes and ears open for?

"I don't get out much so I'm the wrong person to ask. Hardcore is big in New Jersey and New York. There are a lot of newer bands that are doing some interesting things within the local scene. CANDIRIA from Brooklyn and DILLINGER ESCAPE PLAN from New Jersey are two local East Coast bands that are gaining a lot of attention and creating some innovative material. Some of the old Thrash bands like WHIPLASH (Well apparently they're gone once again-Laurent) and HADES are back with new releases and are playing shows, too."

**What are your other hobbies besides music?**

"I work out and weight train. I'm concentrating on learning HTML and web design mostly. I also like to get away from the city and go to the country when I can. I like to lay out in the sun and go on hikes in the woods. I like to write in a journalistic style a lot too. Who knows, maybe one day I will write a book about my Metal days."

**How did you feel when someone from Holland got in touch with you and asked you about your DEATHSLAYER days, after so many years?**

"I used to get a lot of mail from all the fanzines and Metal fans in the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany. It was great to have someone from there interested in my music again. I was very surprised that you had remembered me and the band."

**Do you have any nice stories you like to share with our readers from all those years that you played in so many different bands.**

"I will have to take some time to go back down memory lane. I had been involved with so many different musicians, and played in so many places, sometimes it is hard to remember each small incident. All I can say is that being in bands you learn a lot about other people and about yourself. It can become one big soap opera that the music sometimes can become secondary. I think the most successful bands

are those that were able to channel their hard times and personal lives into some great material. Trent Reznor and Kurt Cobain to name a couple. You always have to believe in your music 100%. You can never doubt what you are doing. You have to believe that each member is just as important as the next, otherwise the bond is broken and you can't accomplish what you had started out to do. I sometimes feel sad that the bands I believed in so much at one time, could never make it past all the internal troubles, and never went further than recording a demo and playing the local clubs. Speaking just before about women in Metal, I remember doing a show with WHITE LION. At the time their bass player was Dave Spitz (formerly AMERICADE bassist and Dan Spitz brother also- Laurent) who had played in one of the BLACK SABBATH line ups. I remember him coming to me and saying that he thought I had a great voice. He told me that he thought I could go very far. It was great to hear this from someone who had such a history in the music business."

**What are your future plans in music?**

"Bill and I are currently working on THE DRAGONFLY. The music is in the experimental Electronic vein, but with old school Metal overtones, since both of us are old school Metal people. Bill is into alot of weird Grindcore and that offtime Metal riffing stuff so that will be a big part of it. He's gradually learning more about recording with the computer so it's been a constant process. He has studio engineering experience but is new to computers, like me...and I thought computers were supposed to make our lives easier...yeah sure!!! We both have full-time



jobs and busy lives so making music is not a big priority at the moment, unfortunately. When we get about four or five finished songs done, though, we will burn our own cd's and release it ourselves as well as on MP3. We'd consider being on any sort of underground compilation cd's, too, so please get in touch with us. Likewise, if any band would like to possibly release a split CD with us, we're interested in that also. Just contact us. we're nice people...honest!! I myself am branching out from music, too. I will mention to any interested musicians or bands reading this: I am available for session recordings and possible stage work as a lead or backing female vocalist. I

would entertain ideas of contributing to any sort of music project in some sort of context. I would have to restrict to the NYC/NJ area obviously, but am interested in hearing from perspective bands. I would also be interested in posing for advertisements in Metal magazines for underground bands, labels, and distros. Any sort of gothic, S&M, sci-fi, horror, leather and guitars, biker, fetish, fantasy, medieval type of imagery would be wonderful to do for a photo shoot. I am open to suggestion if approached. Email me with legit offers and I will contact you."

**Have you got any messages to our readers or is there something you'd like to add to this interview?**

"I hope I will see you all very soon, hopefully! Email me and say hello at [metalbabe2000@hotmail.com](mailto:metalbabe2000@hotmail.com). Thanks to Ria and Toine of Metal Maidens for their support and for being such great people! Take care, everyone!!"

This story originally appeared in Metal Maidens magazine- #21/Sept. 2000.

Toine van Poorten  
Photos/ scans by: Rita van Poorten



## POWER METAL FOR THE MASSES

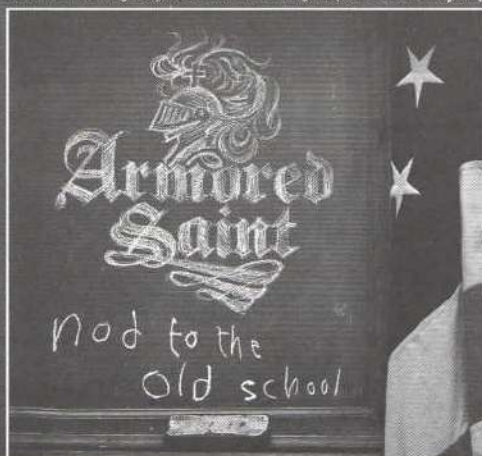
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**TRACKLIST:** 1. Real Swagger (new song), 2. Unstable (new song), 3. March of the Saint (new 2001 version), 4. Day of the Eagle (Robin Trower cover), 5. Never Satisfied (Priest cover from Spain tribute), 6. Tainted Past (acoustic version), 7. After Me the Flood (Live), 8. Creepy Feelings (Live), 9. Lesson Well Learned (original ep), 10. False Alarm (original ep), 11. On the Way (original ep), 12. Stricken by

Fate (from ep sessions),  
13. Reign of Fire (1989 Studio demo w/ Dave Prichard),  
14. Betty 79,  
15. People (1989 4 track demo),  
16. Get lost (1989 4 track demo),  
17. Nothing Between the Ears (1989 4 track demo),  
18. Pirates (1989 4 track demo),  
19. Medieval Nightmare (1989 4 track demo)

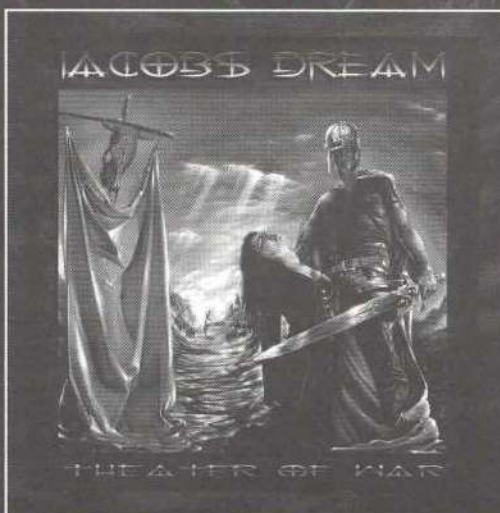


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I imagine some of you smiling when you'll see the METALLICA name on the cover and saying that Snakepit is wimping out or that we are trying to reach a bigger crowd in featuring this band. Well no luck people because we'll never prostitute ourselves with the hope to attract a wider audience!!! I'm the first one to say for a long time already that METALLICA can't be associated any longer with Metal because they have betrayed their fans no matter what they would like us to believe but at the same time I don't forget how killer the early material was. Recently I was given the chance— huge thanks goes out to Katon W. De Pena for his great help- to get in touch with METALLICA's very first bass player Ron McGovney, who told us how the whole thing started as he never really got the chance to express his views about those old days. Here's what he had to say about this magical period and enjoy the exclusive pictures and flyers!

Okay, let's go back in the early '80s before you started to play with James Hetfield, do you remember under which circumstances you discovered Metal music and when it was?

"I really wasn't into Metal music at all until I went to high school and hooked up with James and some other friends. I was into Elvis Presley, the DOOBIE BROTHERS, THE EAGLES, and CCR. I have a sister who is ten years older than me and I listened to what she listened to. In high school, I got into LED ZEPPELIN, FORTY EIGHTERS, KANSAS, and BOSTON. My favorite band turned out to be UFO."

Were you more into the bigger Metal bands like PRIEST or MAIDEN for example or were you more interested in discovering small outfits like those from the New Wave Of British Heavy Metal like DIAMOND HEAD, PRAYING MANTIS, HOLOCAUST...?

"Later towards our senior year, we got into IRON MAIDEN, JUDAS PRIEST, SCORPIONS, DEF LEPPARD, OZZY. Of course BLACK SABBATH was one of the bands that we admired the most. We didn't get into the less known N.W.O.B.H.M. bands until we were introduced to them later by a guy named Lars Ulrich..."  
Was it hard to get albums in L.A. back then? I know Brian Slagel had his magazine The New Heavy Metal Revue and also a record store at the time and he was selling those records so were you familiar with him



to become our manager. We got a guy who lived around the corner from us to play guitar and his name was Troy James. Our final lineup was James on vocals, Jim on drums, Troy on guitar, and me on bass."

Were you still playing with James and Hugh the first time they jammed with Lars Ulrich but in the end it went nowhere and it took a few months before they really teamed up together?

"Jim Mulligan decided that he wanted to play in a more Progressive type band. He was very RUSH influenced. He left, and without a drummer, Troy soon followed. James met Lars through Hugh Tanner and they came over to jam with James. I sat in on a couple of their practices and I thought Lars was terrible. So I kind of distanced myself from them at that point."

So what kind of stuff did you play with L. CHARM? If I'm correct, "Hit The Lights" and "No Remorse" were written by L. CHARM, do you remember if

I haven't heard since then."

So around May '81, James was recontacted by Lars and Lars told him he was in touch with Brian Slagel who was working on putting out his first release, "Metal Massacre vol. 1", so you all hooked up together which means Jim Mulligan was replaced by Lars, is that correct? Tell us more about that period when Lars joined the band...

"James and I didn't graduate high school until June of '81 and he didn't move in until that time. I would say that the first time that Lars jammed at my house was in September of '81. After Jim Mulligan and Troy James left LEATHER CHARM, the band ceased to exist. Lars was never in LEATHER CHARM. It was just James, Lars, and Hugh Tanner trying to get something started. This was when they started trying out guitar players and bass players to form a band."

Would you say Lars somewhat changed the musical direction of the band as it seems he was a very into underground Metal?

"Like I said, Lars was never in LEATHER CHARM, but he did like the song "Hit The Lights". That was really the only song that they worked on at that point. He was really into the N.W.O.B.H.M. and I think that it opened up James' mind about what direction that he wanted a band to go."

Is it true that the METALLICA name was taken from a list of names Ron Quintana (Metal Mania

# Back From The Past

and his store?

"We had a store in Downey called Middle Earth Records. They had most of the imports from England, Germany, and France so they were pretty easy to find locally. I personally had never heard of Brian Slagel or his store until the "Metal Massacre" record thing came up. You have to understand that the L.A. area is so huge and Brian's store was in the San Fernando Valley which is like a world away (50 miles) to us in Downey which is closer to Orange County."

Was LEATHER CHARM the very first band you played with? How was that band formed and who was in that band besides you, James Hetfield and Jim Mulligan as drummer? I know there was another guitar player also as James was only singing if I'm right....

"LEATHER CHARM was the first band that I played with but we have to back up a bit to straighten out this very confusing band formation. During high school, James was in a party band called OBSESSION. They played covers like "Highway Star", "Rock Bottom", "Paranoid", and other Metal songs. After they broke up, James was in a RUSH cover band called SYRINX. That band didn't last long, so James was without a band. At this time he was living in Brea and going to Brea Olinda High School which is about 20 miles from Downey. He asked me if I wanted to be in a band with him and I told him yes. I rented a bass and amp and he would drive over every weekend to teach me how to play. About that time, he hooked up with drummer Jim Mulligan and guitarist Hugh Tanner in Brea. This ended up to be the first LEATHER CHARM line up. James on vocals and guitar, Jim on drums, Hugh on guitar, and me on bass. Later, James decided to be the frontman only. Hugh quit playing guitar for us

there were other future METALLICA songs which had been written by L. CHARM? Were those "Hits..." and "No Remorse" versions a lot different from the later METALLICA versions?

"The riff for "Hit The Lights" was actually written by Troy James. "Hit The Lights" was the only song that became a METALLICA song but a lot of the riffs for future METALLICA songs came from L. CHARM songs. L. CHARM had a song called "Handsome Ransom" that had "No Remorse" pieces in it. A song called "Let's Go Rock 'n Roll" had "Motorbreath" parts in it. The L. CHARM version of "Hit The Lights" is pretty close to the METALLICA version."

Did you play covers with this band like DIAMOND HEAD covers and stuff? Which ones? Did you play live a lot also?

"We didn't play any DIAMOND HEAD covers with L. CHARM, because we hadn't heard of them at that point. We played "Remember Tomorrow" by IRON MAIDEN as well as "Wrathchild" and "Running Free". We played "Hollywood Tease" by GIRL and "Slick Black Cadillac" by QUIET RIOT. LEATHER CHARM never played anywhere except in my garage."

Have you recorded any demos with that band?

"We never recorded any demos, only practice tapes that

'zine) suggested for his own 'zine at the time to Lars? "METALLICA was a name that Lars and James decided on for their new project. I can't confirm the Ron Quintana connection."

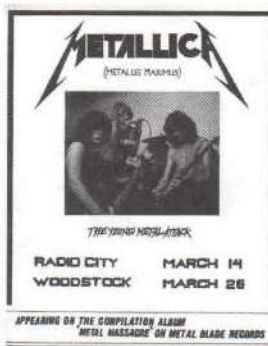
In old interviews James said that you weren't into the band as he was playing also rhythm guitar and bass at that particular period, that the band consisted mostly of him and Lars- even if James was living in your apartment, Lars said you joined them only in February '82, is that correct or what?

"I really wasn't into what James and Lars were doing. Hugh left before the METALLICA name was decided on and James was playing my bass on tapes. The actual order of the next series of events is a little fuzzy in my mind after so many years, but I'll do my best. Lars got the offer to put a track on "Metal Massacre", but they didn't have a lead guitar player. He got his friend Lloyd Grant to put the leads on the four track demo for "Hit The Lights". The four track of "Hit The Lights" was James on vocals, bass, and rhythm guitar, Lars on drums, and Lloyd on lead guitar. Just before the album went to press, Dave Mustaine was recruited as a permanent guitar player and after hearing how good they sounded at that point, I was asked to join the band and I accepted."

So when "Hit The Lights" was recorded on a four track recorder to be submitted to Brian Slagel, it seems they had asked two guitarists- an unknown one and Lloyd Grant to play a lead part so they could choose later the best one, is that correct and do you remember who was that "unknown" guitar player? Do you know why Lloyd's lead was chosen at the end?

"The unknown guitarist was Dave Mustaine. Dave played the first two lead parts, but they liked the version that Lloyd did for the last long lead and they kept it."

Talking about Lloyd, what hap-





pened to the other guitar player who played in LEATHER CHARM before?

"Troy James was leaving LEATHER CHARM just as Lars was coming in to start up the new band project with James."

When the first pressing of "Metal Massacre" came out, you were mentioned in the credits and the name of the band was not correctly spelled as it was written METTALLICA on it, how did you feel when you saw that first record appearance? Were you satisfied of it despite the poor sound?

"James played bass on the first pressing of "Metal Massacre" but my name was mentioned as the bass player because I had joined the band before press time. Not only was the band called METTALLICA, my last name was spelled McGounney. Even now when I talk to the band they call me McGouney. James had a throat infection during the taping of the song and there was no time to wait for him to get better so what you hear is James sick as a dog singing on it. It really sounds bad. Even though I lost my copy years ago I can remember the horrible sound quality."

It seems the song was re-recorded when the second pressing of that album was done- the spelling error was corrected and Dave Mustaine was mentioned in the credits this time, correct? Does that mean Lloyd Grant's lead has been erased and replaced by Dave's lead also?

"The second pressing was done in an 8 track studio and all the leads are Dave's. This is the same version that appears on the "No Life 'Til Leather" demo."

So what happened with Lloyd Grant- later seen in DEFCON, as he was replaced by Dave, do you remember how Dave joined the band? Was it his first band experience?

"I'm not sure what Lloyd did. You have to remember that he was never officially a member of METALLICA. He just put one lead on "Metal Massacre". I have seen Lloyd many times through the years and he is a friend of mine. Dave Mustaine and I joined the band at almost the same time. He had been in a band called PANIC before METALLICA."

So at which point did METALLICA start to play live exactly?

"We played our first gig on March 14, 1982 at Radio City in Anaheim, California. It was after the first pressing of "Metal Massacre", but before the second pressing."

Do you remember how the L.A. scene was in early '82 as lots of new bands had appeared like BITCH, DEMON FLIGHT, ABATTOIR, SLAYER, BLACK 'N BLUE... were you familiar with those outfits?

"I have seen all of those bands and METALLICA played on bills with most of them. MOTLEY CRUE ruled the L.A. scene at that time and most of the bands wanted to look like and sound like them. When METALLICA started playing on bills with that type of band, we were outcasts."

Do you remember which songs you played live at that time, I mean which originals and covers did you play?

"Hit The Lights", "Jump In The Fire" were the only originals. We did "Helpless", "Am I Evil?", "Sucking My Love", and "The Prince" by DIAMOND HEAD. We also did "Killing Time" by SWEET SAVAGE, "Let It Loose" by SAVAGE, "Blitzkrieg" by BLITZKRIEG."

On March 27th 1982, you opened two nights for SAXON at the Whiskey as you were still labelless, you had no demos yet available, how did you get that opening slot? What kind of reception did you get from the public as the audience wasn't familiar with Speed Metal yet?

"We played two shows that night with SAXON. We had



Ron McGouney '82



heard about a month before that SAXON was coming to town and I took a tape that we had recorded on a four track recorder down to the Whisky. The tape was "Hit The Lights", "Jump In The Fire", "Let It Loose", and "Killing Time". I talked to the girl who did the booking into letting us open up for SAXON on the 27th. On the 26th, we played at the Woodstock in Anaheim and after the gig we drove all the way to Hollywood to watch RATT open for SAXON. When we played on the 27th, nobody knew that all of the songs weren't METALLICA songs or so we thought. After we played, the crew from SAXON came over to us and congratulated us on how well we played the DIAMOND HEAD songs! The rest of the crowd was standing there with their arms folded. Ozzy Osbourne was over in the corner drowning his sorrows after losing Randy Rhoads in a plane crash a few days earlier."

The next assault was- if I'm correct, the headlining show you did in L.A. which was supposed to be at first a guest slot for KROKUS but they canceled it at the last minute and you became the L.A. Heavy Metal heroes from that point, how much new stuff did you have for that show?

"To be honest, I don't even remember when that gig was. By that time we probably had added "Seek And Destroy" and "Motorbreath". METALLICA were never Heavy Metal heroes to most L.A. club goers. We were just long haired Punk Rockers. We had a bad reputation and the only band who would consistently call us to open for them was RATT."

In April '82 you recorded your first 4 track demo featuring "Hits.", "Motorbreath", "The Mechanik" and "Jump.", what kind of memories do you have of that first effort which became one of the most traded demo of all time?

"That would be our second four track demo. All I remember is that Lars would borrow the four track from somebody and bring it to practice. It took all day to record one of them. Why? maybe it was a signal about how long it would take METALLICA to record a full album in the studio."

Do you remember what kind of response you were getting for that demo which was sold through the mail?

"The demos were never sold. The money for the tapes and postage came out of our pockets. Lars got most of the feedback about the demo tapes, but I was aware that there was a lot of response from Europe and the Bay Area around San Francisco."

Did you have a lot to say in the songwriting department? At least for the arrangements?

"James did almost all of the song writing and he and Lars did the arranging. I did add some ideas about song arrangements and we adopted them, but I got no credit for them."

Were you conscious that METALLICA was creating a brand new Metal sound with the speed injected into the song despite the fact that slot of riffs were taken from DIAMOND HEAD and the likes?

"At that time, if you took MOTORHEAD's speed and DIAMOND HEAD's song structure, you would get METALLICA. Bands like VENOM had the speed but nothing else. As I look back, I can see how the songs developed into that original METALLICA sound, but at the time I didn't think it was a sound that would make them the icons that they are now."

Then with the help of a guy called Kenny Kane, you entered the studio around July '82 to record a third demo titled "No Life 'Til Leather" featuring

Seek.", "Metal." and "Phantom." plus the 4 songs from the second demo, looking back, what do you think of that second effort which established the band even more on the international underground scene?

"The studio was called Chateau East in Tustin, California. It was only an eight track studio. Kenny Kane was a guy who worked for Rocshire records in Orange County. He was trying to get a piece of the METALLICA pie by paying for our studio time. He kept the reel to reels for the demo for a long time until METALLICA got them back from him many years later somehow. This was the demo that really launched METALLICA into the world Metal scene."

So following local shows at the Roxy, Troubadour etc... you went for the first time in San Francisco to play a bunch of shows late November/ early December '82, the first being as headliners(!!) at the Old Waldorf with EXODUS and ANVIL CHORUS as guests, then two shows at The Stone and a final one at the Old Waldorf, what memories do you have of those first S.F. shows which were your first and last ones in S.F. with METALLICA correct?

"We never played at the Roxy, we played at the Troubadour, and the Whisky in Hollywood and at a lot of Orange County clubs. Our first gig in San Francisco was at the Stone subbing for the band CIRITH UNGOL who couldn't show up on a "Metal Massacre" tribute night. I don't have a flyer from that gig so I can't give you the exact date. However, after consulting my trusty old METALLICA scrapbook, we did play a Metal Monday at The Old Waldorf on October 18, 1982. My scrapbook tells me that we headlined the Old Waldorf on November 29th with special guests VICIOUS RUMORS and EXODUS. We played November 30th at the Mabuhay Gardens across the street from the Stone and that was my last gig. I remember the cold, and the rain, and I remember Cliff Burton standing there in the rain. I remember being the only band member who was not totally drunk. Remember, I was the driver and financial backer at that point."

It seems the band received massive praise from the audience at those shows even if it was your first shows there, to the point that EXODUS or ANVIL CHORUS who were already legendary were only guests to your shows...

"I don't remember ANVIL CHORUS but I do remember EXODUS. I thought they were great. After they played, I went up to the guitar player and told them how much I liked them. He told me how much he liked METALLICA. His name was Kirk Hammett."

After that trip, you came back in L.A. and opened for Y & T in Orange County but that's also when the rest of the band decided to look for a new bass player, James said it was because you couldn't get along with Dave and because your bass playing was too limited for them, so set the record straight and tell us what really happened at that point.

"The Y&T gig was on November 11th. My last gig was in San Francisco at the Mabuhay Gardens on November 30th. James was right that I couldn't get along with Dave. I'm not going to say exactly how Dave wronged me, but it bothered me that James saw it happening right in front of him and he did nothing about it. I had known James since junior high school, and I couldn't believe that he would let this happen to his so called best friend. One day, I kicked them all out of my house and I didn't see them until the Spring of '83 on tour with RAVEN. By this time, Kirk had replaced Dave. As for the bass playing, I just played what James asked me to play. It was probably more of a personality issue about me than anything."

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Ron, James & Dave '82



METALLICA live in S.F. late '82



## James & Dave '82



Did you leave the band on friendly terms or...?

"As you can see, it was not friendly at that time. Things had cooled, so I had heard that METALLICA was going to play at the Country Club on the RAVEN tour ("Kill 'Em All For One" legendary tour-Laurent) and I called Lars. I asked if they wanted to stay at my house while they were in town and they agreed. Even Mustaine showed up. I wish I had a picture of all of the members of METALLICA together."

What was your opinion about Cliff who replaced you? Even if you were out of the band, were you impressed by his playing?

"Cliff was one of a kind. I had never seen a bass player like that before and I have not seen one since. He was also a very cool guy. I wish I could have hung out with him more. He is missed by everyone."

So what have you done from that point as I'm sure you didn't stay inactive until mid '86 when you teamed up with Katon De Pena to form PHANTASM... tell us what you did during that period.

"After I quit METALLICA, I sold all of my bass equipment and got back in to off road motorcycle riding. I tried to get James to go with me when I was in the band but he would never go. I was just working and saving money for desert bike trips."

How did you team up with Katon to form PHANTASM by the way?! From what Katon said, you

knew each other since '81 or so, correct? Were you a L. A. CHAOS/ HIRAX fan?

"I met Katon through my friend Jim Kiechle who was in KAOS with Katon. It was about 1981...yes that is correct. In 1986, Katon had left HIRAX and we were having a few beers one day and that's when we decided to form a band together. I went to both KAOS and HIRAX shows. I liked Katon's energy on stage."

PHANTASM recorded a demo in '87 and played a few shows, what kind of memories do you have of that band? Did you have big expectations with that new outfit? I mean did you expect to succeed with that band where you failed with METALLICA?

"I was never in PHANTASM to get famous or popular like METALLICA. I just liked going to practice, writing songs, and playing live gigs. It was more of a hobby to me than anything. Sadly, some of the other band members had "rock star" in their minds so that's when it hit the skids."

Did you feel more comfortable with PHANTASM than with METALLICA or...?

"PHANTASM was similar to METALLICA in one way. METALLICA is James and Lars. PHANTASM was Katon and Ron. In PHANTASM, I had a part in writing every song so that was a lot better. We had better friendships in PHANTASM than I had in METALLICA. In METALLICA I was basically the roadie who played bass."

What were your feelings when the PHANTASM adventure stopped brutally mid '87?

"The end of my relationship with METALLICA was a buildup. I saw it coming. With PHANTASM, I was blindsided. I thought we were doing great but then Katon quit. To this day, I have never got a straight answer as why he quit. Katon is still a good friend of mine, and I respect his decision no matter what."

Did you try to be involved in another Metal band after that?

"I haven't been in a band since PHANTASM. I have had offers, but I am not interested in it anymore."

So what are your views/ thoughts about those early years? Do you still have regrets nowadays to have failed with METALLICA or not so much when you see what they have become these days -something

like a money machine to me, when at first they were loyal to their fans?

"It's easy to look at METALLICA and be jealous at all of the success that they have had and all of the money that they have made; especially, when most people live paycheck to paycheck like I do. I don't think that I failed with METALLICA. I did what I thought was right at the time. Remember, I was only 19 years old when I was in METALLICA and I didn't see any other choices then. I think that they are still loyal to their fans, but it is METALLICA Inc. now. They are not four guys in a garage anymore."

Does it happen that you see Lars and James these days?

"The only time that I see Lars or James is when I see them at gigs. I usually show up without them knowing and get passes from Lars after he knows that I am there. I usually see James backstage but not always."

What's your opinion about the last studio albums they put out, namely "Load" and "ReLoad"- which can't be labeled as Metal albums as far as I'm concerned comparing to older albums?

"As for "Load" and "ReLoad", I have no opinion because I don't have those albums. I do, however, have "Garage Inc." and think it is awesome. I also have "S&M" and like it too."

Anything you want to add that wasn't covered?

"You seem to have covered it all. Thanks!"

Laurent Ramadier



Unfortunately for reasons beyond my knowledge I missed "Truth To Promises", the debut by Germany's Power Metal dudes SYMPHORCE, when it originally came out (thanks to Noise Records I own it now...). But luckily I did get to hear their follow up "Sanctuary" right away. That album was without a question one of the biggest positive surprises to me lately, it actually completely blew me away! That's why I had to contact SYMPHORCE/ BRAINSTORM vocalist Andy B. Franck to find out some more about these hopefuls... Here's the result.

The band's name SYMPHORCE pretty much sounds like a combination of the words "symphonic" and "force"... So, did you choose that intentionally so that people already have a clue what to expect musically from you guys, straight from the start?

"You know when I formed SYMPHORCE I wanted to have a band name that shows you what the music of the band is all about: power, energy and melody. So, symphonic stands for the melodic part of the music, and force for the aggressive part. So when you're hearing the name SYMPHORCE for the very first time you will know what the music is all about, especially on our new album "Sanctuary"!"

But don't you think it's misleading people a bit? For instance I personally never cared to listen to your debut album (until now!), for the simple reason that I thought you were a Prog Metal act...

"Hmm, I don't know... Okay, I know that a lot of people think when you're using a name like Symphony, you have to play Prog Rock or Prog Metal. I never cared about this. I think SYMPHORCE is Metal. Who asked Steve Harris about the name IRON MAIDEN 20 years ago, hahaha! Or Glen Tipton about JUDAS PRIEST. I think it's all up to the music! If you like the music, you'll associate the music with the name... But, "phorce" is a very important part of the band's name. So that's why we call ourselves and our fans just "phorceheads" (laughs)!"

But you really seem to be into word games anyway, aren't you? The new album is called "Sanctuary", there's a track on it called "Insight"... How come?

"Hahaha, oh yes, I love this!!! You're absolutely right! Especially the album title "Sanctuary" is very cool... in my opinion! I always wanted a one-word title for the second album. But I also wanted to have a very special word with a lot of meanings in it and something you can just make up your mind with. The sin and the sanctuary... something totally different, but I think it's something not so far away... The sin and the sanctuary are very close to each other, and this is what this album is all about! Do you think the fans are now ready for a real "sin"??? For me, these wordgames sound very interesting, and there's always a deeper meaning behind them. Check out the lyrics, and you'll know what I'm

talking about..."

Anyway, would you mind giving us the most important facts about your origin? The only thing I know is that you used to be in the band IVANHOE previously... So, did IVANHOE split-up or why did SYMPHORCE come to life?

"I was pregnant... and the baby SYMPHORCE was born (laughs)! No, you know, I've never been a big Progressive Rock fan. I grew up with bands like JUDAS PRIEST, MAIDEN, early METALLICA and MEGADETH or especially KISS. I'm a Metalhead, and I always tried to push IVANHOE into a straighter direction. But after we've recorded three albums, these guys wanted to become more progressive, and so I had to say goodbye. It's not fair, singing songs that you don't really like. I'm still proud of all three albums, and I still can say that I've done my very best, but I had so many songs and ideas in my head and I knew with IVANHOE, I could never play my kind of music. So it made no sense to go on when you're on stage, and you have to play all the songs every night... I think you can have way more fun on stage, when you really love your kind of music...and be sure, I love the SYMPHORCE (...and also the BRAINSTORM)...shit!!! Hehe!"

I personally never heard any material by IVANHOE, but read a few times that they used to be a lot more on the Progressive Metal side of things... So, was it planned straight from the start, that SYMPHORCE had to become more straight ahead?

"Yes, as I said I always wanted to make straight Power Metal. I had this idea in my head about a modern Power Metal band...and here we are!"

What about the other SYMPHORCE members then? Where do they all come from musically? Any bands they've been in previously?

"Oh, they all played in different cover bands. Especially Cede, our guitarist (who comes from Switzerland) still has his own cover band PLASTICA. Oh yes, they play a lot of old METALLICA songs, and they're really good! It's very cool, cause every member of the band's got a



Cede



totally different background. But in the end, we're all real Metal fans and we all have the same sense of humor. It feels good to be part of a band where everybody knows how to use his instrument, and everybody wants the same. So I'm happy to be a part of them! You know, SYMPHORCE is now really a band! Personally and musically, and I think that's you can hear that on "Sanctuary"..."

**How did things develop for you then? I mean, have you recorded any demos that you shopped around or did Noise Records have the option to release your new project in the first place?**

"First of all...SYMPHORCE is a band! But NOISE were always interested in my voice (not kidding!) but never in the music of IVANHOE. But they told me that, weeks after I've left the band. So I was really surprised, and they asked me about the style of my new band. After I've told them about my dreams, we started writing songs and recorded them. I know we had a few problems on "Truth To Promises", but now the situation is fantastic..."

**Some bands have complained about the label over the past couple of years... How about you? Have you been pleased with the work they're doing for SYMPHORCE?**

"It's okay. I know they've made a lot of mistakes, but until now there's no reason to say something bad about them. Sure, there will always be things that you like or dislike. But this can also happen with every other record label. So until now it's okay, but the most important thing for me really is: the fans should get the chance to hear or buy our new album and we want to go on tour! I think we've done a great job so it's up to them doing another great job too (laughs)! That's it (more laughs)!"

**Please reflect a little bit upon your debut album "Truth To Promises"... How do you judge the record nowadays? Did it live up to your expectations?**

"Hmm, as I said, there are a few songs on "Truth To Promises" I really like, and some I don't... but especially the sound is sometimes a bit strange. Hmm, it's still a good album of course, but everything happened really quick and we've done things we wouldn't do again. But it was a good debut album, we've learned a lot, and the reviews have also been really good. Some songs are really great, and I'm sure we'll play a few of them live!"

**In 1999 you got the opportunity to support MERCYFUL FATE on their tour overhere... Was that your first real tour as a band? How did things work out for you? Do you think the MERCYFUL FATE fans got into your material as well?**

"For SYMPHORCE, it was the first tour, yes. With IVANHOE I've been on tour with bands like ICED EARTH, NEVERMORE or SKYCLAD. The MERCYFUL FATE tour was okay. We played in front of maybe 200 people. That's not so much, but it was in the mid-summer, and so we also had the chance to learn a lot. The guys of MERCYFUL FATE and especially King himself were really friendly, and we always had a good sound and had the same dressing room. Not every band's doing that. So for me a dream came true, cause "Don't Break The Oath" of MERCYFUL FATE is still one of the best albums I ever heard!"

**On that particular tour you had a guy named Ralf helping you out on guitar (who replaced your original guitarist)... Why didn't he stay with you permanently?**

"Oh, haha, he's not a real good one. He helped us out but wasn't really able to play the original solos. He also had problems to hear himself on stage every night, but you wouldn't believe how loud his guitar was. He told and promised us a lot, but there was always nothing. But we never had the chance to replace him for the tour, and he knew, that it's just a job for the tour, so I still say thanks to him, cause he did his very best. But now with Cede, we've got one of the best guitarists I've ever played with. He really rocks!"

**There was also talk about a full European tour in September / October '99? Did that ever happen?**

"We had the chance to go on tour with RAGE, but had to cancel it because of our guitarist problem. So we started writing new songs and searched for the real new guitarist. Now I also think it was better to concentrate on new material, and since Cede is a part of the band, we're now really ready to play live and kick ass!"



**When did you exactly become BRAINSTORM's new singer? Have you ever seriously thought about quitting SYMPHORCE to join them full-time?**

"That was in October 1999. Torsten and myself, we've known each other for many years and always wanted to make music together. When they were looking for a new singer, they asked me to sing on the album, but I said: singing, okay - no problem, but I also want to be a part of the band. So we talked with both record companies and also with both bands. We checked out the best and the worst case, and I'm sure there will be no bad surprises in the future. Both bands like each other and we're honestly talking about every single situation. I'm proud being a part of both bands."

**SYMPHORCE is my baby and BRAINSTORM is something like a family. I never thought about quitting SYMPHORCE and I never will, cause this is the band where I'm writing my music, and this is what I always wanted. So here I am with two bands!"**

**Do you think that SYMPHORCE will benefit from the fact that you are also fronting BRAINSTORM, a band that is more popular already?**

"Well, it's two different bands, but both are playing Power Metal. I don't think that a BRAINSTORM fan also has to be a SYMPHORCE fan. I think it's good for both bands cause now, after we received so many great reviews for "Sanctuary", a lot of people realized BRAINSTORM for the very first time. Torsten had a lot of interviews with people who never heard anything about SYMPHORCE, and I also had many interviews with guys from magazines that never heard anything about



**BRAINSTORM. So, like I said...I think it's good for both bands!"**

**Well, back to SYMPHORCE... How come you ended up with a new guitar player from Switzerland? Weren't there any good ones available in Germany? How did you actually get together with Cede? Has he been in any bands previously?**

"This guy really kicks ass! We received many demos from German guitarists, but we didn't find them good enough. We were never looking for somebody who is just a Petrucci-clone! We wanted a guy with his own style. Cede is 21 years old, has a huge talent, and is one of the coolest and friendliest guys I've ever worked with. He came, saw... and played like hell!"

**Where do you see the main differences between SYMPHORCE and BRAINSTORM?**

"Hmmm, I think SYMPHORCE is a very modern kind of a Metal band. Not only the sounds we use are cool and modern. The whole arrangements are very powerful and straight, but I don't see SYMPHORCE as a limited band. We got our own style, and that's very important!!! BRAINSTORM is a much more traditional orientated band. It's really cool and heavy old-school Metal. Hey, this is great, and I love it. But that's also the reason why I'm only writing songs for SYMPHORCE, cause this is my style and I never want to change the BRAINSTORM style. Both bands rock and

both got their own style."

**You recorded 11 of your own songs (plus the POWERMAD cover) for the new album, but there was talk that you had written more than 18 already... What happened to the other tunes? Will you use them sometime in the future?**

"There were ideas for about 18 tracks, that's right! We always used the best ideas, but I'm sure that I maybe will use a few old ideas for one of the next songs. We'll see, but right now I think, we've chosen the best songs!"

**I was totally blown away by the brilliance of your new album and because of that I consider SYMPHORCE as one of the biggest German hopes for the future now... and I suppose you've already gotten a few more enthusiastic reactions like this. So, do you feel a certain kind of pressure now, while being a lot more in the spotlight of the media and fans?**

"Thank you very, very much! No, I don't feel any pressure, cause I always wrote the songs I wanted, and I'll continue to do so in the future! This is our kind of style, and this is what I like! Yes, we receive real enthusiastic reviews, but I don't care too much about this. First of all we have to be satisfied with our new stuff. This is the most important thing. If the fans like it too, that's okay. About the media... hmmm, I don't know... we're really happy about these reviews, and we're also really proud on that... but you'll never really know what will happen with the new or the next album, so in the first line, we care about ourselves. But we'll see what happens!"

**Who came up with the idea to cover a song by the highly underrated POWERMAD? Are you in touch with the guys, so that they will get to hear your fantastic version of "Nice Dreams"?**

"I was totally blown away when I heard "Absolute Power" in 1989 for the very first time. But I was a bit confused, that nobody realized this band really. I never recorded any cover songs before and I always said, that I will never record an old Pop or Disco song. For me, this makes no sense, cause the Pop guys really don't care about us Metalheads. Why should I build up my own success on an old Disco song? "Nice Dreams" is our kind of tribute to POWERMAD! And for about quite a while, we're in contact with the original singer. Maybe he will come over to sing this song on a few festivals together with me. We'll see."

**Unlike with many other bands (no names mentioned) your musical influences are not exactly easy to locate. So tell us, which albums / bands shaped the musical vision of SYMPHORCE?**

"Hmmm, that's not easy to say, cause we're influenced by a lot of Power Metal and Thrash Metal bands from the 80's. I'm really inspired by those Bay Area bands like FORBIDDEN, VIOLENCE or TESTAMENT. But as you can hear, we do not really play the same sound, so SYMPHORCE is a mixture of many Metal bands."

**Would you mind explaining the meaning of the album cover a bit more? What does this skeleton which is coming out of the cocoon represent? And why is the band almost drowned on the backcover picture?**

"We've been told by the church that when you're dying, you'll enter the paradise. Okay, but who really knows it? The cocoon is the thing between life and death, between present and paradise. The old man in the back dies and you think he'll come out of the cocoon as a butterfly, meaning the step into paradise. But he comes out as a skeleton. So what's true? The meaning behind is very simple. Live your life and believe in yourself. Don't think about tomorrow too much. It's a very evil cover, but with a very positive meaning behind. Hmmm, the backcover...??? (laughs) that was just an idea. But I love it. I think it's cool, and it's different. As I said...I love it."

**I noticed that you and your bass player Dennis were responsible for the logo and artwork / design of the new album... Are you just doing that for fun or is that something you do professionally, as a job or something?**

"Not really... I created the logo all by myself when I formed SYMPHORCE. That was one year before Dennis joined us, but Dennis did the whole booklet, cover and stuff by himself. We had many discussions about many things, but in the end I had too much to



# GERMAN POWER METAL ATTACK



do with two bands, so Dennis did it by himself - but I always had an eye on it (laughs). And me and the boys, we think he did a fantastic job. I love everything on this album: the songs, the sound and the whole artwork. Dennis fits perfect into SYMPHORCE. I'm doing something like this for fun, but he's professional. I think in his next life, he'll be a computer (laughs). No seriously, I always wanted to have something like this artwork. Now we've got it, and a member of the band did it ... awesome, huh?"

**Why is there two different versions of "Sanctuary" available (one limited edition with 12 tracks and the regular CD with only ten songs)?**

"This is just something very special, cause we've re-recorded "special European bonus tracks" I always was really pissed off, when I heard that the Japanese guys always get two or three songs more, so I said "stop this bullshit"! So this is something for the "real" fans, and as you know, the European fans are the real and true fans!"

**You placed a statement on your website which says "...the new record sounds like the first one should have..." Does that mean you're quite dissatisfied with the way your debut turned out? What went wrong there? Where do you see the main differences / improvements?**

"No, not everything went wrong. A few songs are still great but you know, SYMPHORCE was born real quick. We wrote the songs, went into the studio and recorded the whole shit. All in about two, max. three months. I think we've used some ideas that we wouldn't use again. The sound is not really heavy and the musicians haven't really been into SYMPHORCE then. I think now, you can hear a real band playing. It's a great feeling, we always have a great time when we're together, and that's what you can hear on the album. We had so much fun in writing the new songs, and we had so much fun in recording them so now the fans should have fun in listen to them. And Achim also gave us the right sound. Now... this is really SYMPHORCE, and it kicks ass!"



**Unlike the current (and rather stupid) trend, all you guys still have long hair... Do you still see that as an important part of a Metal band these days?**

"SYMPHORCE is the most long-haired band I've ever played in (laughs)! But I grew up with long haired Metal bands! That's what I like and I still think it looks a bit better to bang my head with long hair (more laughs)! I'm proud on that and as long as we have enough hair to let it grow, we'll do this! It's not the most important thing, but for me it's a kind of lifestyle, but I've got nothing against short hair maniacs!"

**What had caused the delayed release of "Sanctuary"?**

"I don't really know. Nobody of the record company knew this (...strange, huh?). We called a few record stores and those guys told us about the problems. So we called Noise again, and they were trying to solve the problems. There were a lot of fans who wanted to buy the album but couldn't buy it, so they bought another one. But anyway, now it's in stores, sells good, and the people like it. That's the most important thing, or?"

**What kind of promotional activities are planned now to push the album? Will you be on the road again for "Sanctuary"?**

"Hopefully, yes! We try to support a real big band in maybe January or February 2001. We'll see what happens. But fans out there... be sure, SYMPHORCE will soon play near your hometown, to kick ass! But let me say something different: Sorry again so much for the delay of this interview. As you maybe know, I broke my collarbone and my elbow, and have also been on tour with BRAINSTORM. So sorry again and thanks so much for your support! You guys rule, and thank so much to you, the readers, you rock! See ya soon! Cheers!"

Frank Stöver

**IMPALER, the Shock Rock band from Minneapolis has been around for ages already, but for some strange reason overhere in Europe most people are still lacking in information about them. They are probably best known because of their classic releases "Rise Of The Mutants" and "If We Had Brains... We'd Be Dangerous" that both came out on Combat Records in the 80's. But very little is known about the years and releases to follow, so we re-located original vocalist Bill Lindsey who kindly accepted to answer our questions. Here's the result.**

**The first time I heard about IMPALER was in 1984, when your "Rise Of The Mutants" EP came out... How long had the band been together at the time already?**

"IMPALER formed in the summer of 1983."

**Did you record any demos or something prior to that EP?**

"Yes, we had a demo that was circulating through the tape traders at the time called "Vicious" demo." It had four studio songs and a live show."

**I guess it would be a good idea if you could tell us exactly when and how the band got together back then... Had anyone of you any projects going before you founded IMPALER?**

"The Metal scene back in the early 80's was cover bands (bands that played other people's music) IMPALER wanted to do all original material and put on a theatrical stage show. That was the plan from the beginning. We all played in bands that we were not 100% happy with."

**Who came up with the visual side / image of IMPALER and did you use that straight from the start?**

"I was the founding member of IMPALER. I came up with the name and the concept. I got all the members together. Once we all got together everyone contributed to their own images. Everyone was excited and had input of their own."

**When it comes to the image, where did you get your main inspirations from and did you create your outfit and stagershow completely on your own?**

"Our main inspirations came from the original ALICE COOPER BAND, KISS, Horror Movies and Pro Wrestling. We created our own costumes and props to set us apart from other bands. We didn't want to wear clothes that anyone could buy at the store. We were very different from the other bands around at the time."

**And musically? Would you agree that you not necessarily have a pure Metal background, but also got influenced a lot by Punk music at the time, especially your vocals remind me a lot on old British Punk?**

"Well, some of us in the band liked Punk better than others. Meaty Bob (drums) and I listened to FEAR, BLACK FLAG, GBH and DISCHARGE. We also liked bands that mixed Punk with Metal like the STOOGES, MOTORHEAD and VENOM. I listened to THE DAMNED, THE RAMONES, THE DEAD BOYS. But my vocal influences were Alice Cooper, Steven Tyler, Bon Scott, Ozzy, David Lee Roth and Iggy. These were the guys that made me want to be a singer. They were the bands I listened to back in the 70's."

**I noticed that you originally started out as a five piece, but already with the release of "Rise Of The Mutants" your other guitar player, Mike Senn, wasn't with you anymore... What was the reason for the split-up?**

"We couldn't always get along. Mike formed a band called VILE that played a lot of shows with IMPALER back in the mid 80's. He came back for a short time and played lead on three demo tracks that appear on the reissue of the two combat albums called "The Gruesome Years" (Root Of All Evil Records)."

**Why did you never replace him and just continued on as a four piece in the years to come?**

"We felt the chemistry was perfect with just the four of us. We didn't want to get someone else in the band that

impaler

we couldn't get along with. Also we had more room on stage for mayhem!"

**Is it possible that "Rise Of The Mutants" was supposed to be a three track EP at first? When it got announced there was only talk about the songs**

"Shock Rock", "Assassin" and "Impaler"...

"That was an early press release that was inaccurate. "Rise Of The Mutants" was originally going to be a six song EP. The song "Live Hard, Die Fast" and the original recording of "Breathing Down Your Back" were omitted by Combat. So it was released as a four track plus Torok's guitar solo '0 dfs' (zero defects). He liked to spell it the weird way... But that title was left off the track list for some reason."

**So, was "Crack That Whip" the newest song on that EP at the time?**

"I can't remember...all those songs were written about the same time. We were building our song list up at that time and writing tons of material. Some songs that only appear on live bootleg tapes!"

**"Rise Of The Mutants" originally came out on Blood**



**Records, which (I suppose) was your own founded label... What made you do so? Was there no real interest in IMPALER happening at the time?**

"That is not correct. We got signed by Combat before we had to put it out ourselves."

**When I found the EP in a store overhere in Germany back then, they had censored the cover picture with a white piece of paper - did similar things already happen to you overthere in the U.S.?**

"Yes, there were actually stores that refused to carry it because of the cover! The P.M.R.C. was all over it. Church groups burnt it and protested our shows! It was exactly what we wanted!"

**How did you get together with Combat Records then? Did they like your EP or have they been seeing you live, so that they offered you to be on their label? "They had read about IMPALER in the fanzines and heard our "Vicious" demo. When they heard the tapes and saw the cover we wanted to do for the EP they said Combat will put it out."**

**What kind of contract did they offer you? For how many releases? And was the license of your EP already included?**

"I think the original contract was just for "Rise Of The Mutants". That sold so well that they wanted another one."

# Dangerous Mutants





But it seems that your co-operation didn't really work out as you only recorded one more album for them in 1985, the "If We Had Brains... We'd Be Dangerous" full length. So, what exactly went wrong?

"Combat promised a lot to us that they never delivered. We became frustrated and asked to sever ties with them. A lot of the people who believed in IMPALER had left the label and were replaced with assholes who didn't care about IMPALER and did nothing for us. There were great people there who helped us a lot. Mike Snapp and Allen Becker were a pleasure to work with. Others sucked!!"

How did you hook up with HÜSKER DÜ's Bob Mould as the producer for that album?

"They are from Minnesota too. We played a lot of Punk clubs when we started because we played our own material and were so aggressive. HÜSKER DÜ used to come see us and asked IMPALER to play with them when they released "Metal Circus". When we came to record "If We Had Brains... We'd Be Dangerous" we had to find a producer. Bob Mould had produced some other bands from Minnesota. We knew he understood what we were doing."

"If We Had Brains... We'd Be Dangerous" also featured a cover of the old STOOGES song "Search And Destroy" - who came up with that and did you have any other cover songs in your set at the time?

"We played a cover once and a while of bands that influenced us. That was one that we played a lot and was a crowd favorite so we decided to record it. I believe I was the one who wanted to do it the most! We did others sometime "Making Love" by KISS, "Poison" by VENOM and "Sin After Sin" by TWISTED SISTER are a couple that I remember."

Why did it take you three long years until you returned to the scene with "Wake Up Screaming"?

"We recorded that album in 1988 but through bad management it was held up in red tape for three years! It did not come out until 1991. We had a couple of deals that fell through so it ended up coming out on a local label here in Minnesota called Channel 83."

Have you at least been able to play out live in between the split-up with Combat and the release of your next album? Any particular shows (good or bad) that you can still recall?

"We never really stopped playing shows. Out of town shows slowed down a bit. I also got my son in a divorce and was raising him at that time too."

Your stage shows have been described as a mixture between "Night Of The Living Dead" and "The Day After" - would you like to go a little bit more into detail here?

"IMPALER has a stage show that has to be seen to be believed! Lots of blood and guts and pyro and fire. Very high energy and physical. I get carried out in a body bag, smashed with folding chairs, people get their entrails ripped out!! It is Halloween all year long."

Did you mind if people compared the blood'n'guts



thing with early W.A.S.P. shows?

"No, I think Blackie and I were influenced by a lot of the same people. We were in Minnesota and W.A.S.P. was in L.A. so who do you think would get the most press? But W.A.S.P. is more rockstar in their image. IMPALER is more horrific."

On the CD re-issue of "Rise Of The Mutants"/ "If We Had Brains..." there's also four demo tracks

from 1987 - did you shop that around to record labels?

"No, we intended to at first but we had so many management problems at the time. And Mike Senn had left again so we got our guitar tech at the time John Stradinger to play guitar. He knew all the material as well as any of us in the band."

How popular have IMPALER become throughout the years overthere in the U.S.? I guess you mainly concentrated on the American market, didn't you? Or what is the reason that there's hardly anything known about IMPALER overhere in Germany?

"IMPALER is a cult band. We have a strong following that is growing all the time. We have fans who write us that have been into the band since "Rise Of The Mutants" came out and we have fans who only heard of us recently. I think that since we have never had the chance to play in Europe we haven't been able to make as much of an impact there. IMPALER would love to come over and play. We get mail from all over the world so some do know about IMPALER. We need the right connection to bring us over there."

I'm personally totally lacking in information about all the other releases of yours, that came out in 1988 ("Wake Up Screaming"), 1995 ("Undead Things"), 1998 ("It Won't Die") and even your brand-new album "One Nation Under Ground". So, could you tell us all necessary things about each one of them?

"Wake Up Screaming" was the last album that Mike Torok and Court Hawley played on. That was the end of the original line up. At this time there was a mad doctor and an accident in a laboratory and I was frozen in a block of ice... then I was resurrected by a Punk Rock band called IRON FIST that used to play shows with IMPALER back in the 80's. I asked them to join forces with me in IMPALER. Nikki Nickols on guitar and Eric Allyn on bass and a drummer named Ron Barna became the new IMPALER line up. We began recording and playing live shows and soon put out a six song demo called "Sonic Freakshow". We soon sold out of that and knew we had to release a full length CD. We recorded "Undead Things" in 1995/96. We put it out ourselves on the Viad Productions label. It sold very well but more importantly we got a lot of national press from writers who remembered the band from the eighties. Also some big record chains here in the states refused to carry "Undead Things" because of the cover!! We came full circle from the "Rise Of The Mutants" days. All this attention caused us to sign with Root Of All Evil Records. IMPALER has known Earl Root from his radio show and record shop since the eighties. So it was a perfect move for both Earl and IMPALER. Nikki moved away in that year and has been replaced with Brad Johnson on guitar. We put out "It Won't Die" in 1998 and the "Black Leather Monster" 7". This disc has had a lot of critical praise and attention here in the states. In late 1998 Ron moved out to Seattle to be with his son. So to our good fortune Tom Croxton became our drummer and we played the "March Metal Meltdown Fest" in New Jersey and "Expo Of The Extreme" with MOTÖRHEAD in Chicago and "Milwaukee Metal Fest" all in 1999. Now for Halloween 2000 IMPALER has released our most gory, gruesome monster to date... "One Nation Under Ground!!!"

By the way, what caused the big gaps in-between all of them?

"I think the biggest gap was between "Brains" and "Wake Up Screaming" and that was the result of bad management and putting our trust in people who really didn't know what they were doing. Once we put out "Undead Things" we have put out an album every two years. That is where we want to keep it. It takes about two years for us to promote an album properly and write and record new material."

You very often had problems with the P.M.R.C. because of your offensive album covers but haven't changed a bit anyway... Would you say that this controversy resulted in better or worse album sales?

"That is what IMPALER stands for and we won't ever change. The P.M.R.C. and Tipper Gore can shove it up their asses!! We think the covers are cool and horrific and if that upsets some people they can fuck off!!"

You also had some line-up changes throughout the years and by now you are the only remaining original member left? What had mainly caused those changes and what keeps you personally still going?

"I think some musicians tastes change over the years and they don't want to play Metal any more. Or they have changes in their lives that cause them to quit playing music or at least slow down. I can't do that. I have Metal burning in my heart and I love it so much I don't want to stop. Also I've been fortunate to find great

people who want to keep IMPALER going. We are staying true to the original idea of what IMPALER is."

Would you agree that the new members pretty much changed the overall IMPALER style? I mean there's quite obviously a big difference in the rather Punkish early stuff of IMPALER and the more Rockin' new material, so... Have your personal influences



also changed over the years?

"Certainly each person brings something of themselves to IMPALER but we still mix Punk with Metal. All of our writing skills have gotten better with time. Some bands put out their first album and it is kick ass and then they go down hill. IMPALER is getting better and stronger! Music is something that is constantly influencing me. I love new Metal and Punk bands and I don't forget the old influences either."

There's two remakes on the new album. One by ALICE COOPER ("Teenage Frankenstein") and a re-recorded version of your own old classic "Heaven's Force", which originally appeared on your "Rise Of The Mutants" EP... Tell us the reasons why you exactly decided to re-record those two songs? Especially the ALICE COOPER song is rather unusual as it's from his more commercial late 80's period, so...

"Heaven's Force" is a song that has never left the live show and fans always say how much they love the new line ups version of the song so we re-recorded a couple as bonus tracks and they just got included with the rest of the disc. My first choice was to redo an older COOPER song like "Dead Babies" but the band started to fool around with "Teenage Frankenstein" and it sounded great! Plus the lyrics fit well with IMPALER's style."

Please introduce the current IMPALER members a little bit more, how long they have been in the band by now and what they have done previously?

"Eric Allyn on bass abuse... Uncle Eerie is I call him has been with IMPALER ever since the "Sonic Freakshow" demo and "Undead Things". Eric had been in the Punk band IRON FIST before IMPALER. Brad Johnson is the guitarist and he has been in the band since "It Won't Die". Brad played in the Punk band IDOL THREAT and MONDO TRASHO before IMPALER. Like Eric I've known Brad for many years. Tom Croxton is our newest member. He destroys on the drums. Tom is a Metal veteran who has played in numerous bands and recording projects. Some of the bands that he has worked with are ACHERON, THE UNHOLY and a side project called KREPITUS and a recording project called 3's EVE. Tom joined shortly after "It Won't Die" came out. We also have Dr. Corpse, the Zombie Executioner, and the Bride of IMPALER who adds chaos to the live show!"

Anything else that people should know about IMPALER?

"IMPALER will always be lurking underground with all the other corpses. When you need a monster fix IMPALER will leave your blood splattered!  
OOOWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWW!!!"





# LABEL SPECIAL:



When the famous N.W.O.B.H.M. started, not only hundred of bands started to appear but also a couple of independent labels who tried to help out these young bands (and who also tried to make money out of this movement, no doubt about that!) such as Neat, Ebony, Rondelet, Guardian or Heavy Metal Records to name the most familiar. As we all saw the resurgence of Heavy Metal Records through the re-release of the WITCHFINDER GENERAL albums, I thought it would be interesting to know a bit more about that label so I contacted Paul Birch to find out more about Heavy Metal Records, the label who brought to us in the first place amazing bands such as JAGUAR, DRAGSTER, BUFFALO etc...

So when and how did the Heavy Metal Records label exactly start? Was it started because you were a NWOBHM fan and you wanted to help the newer bands just like so many new labels did at the time in Europe and in the U.S.?

"The label came out of my search for a way of getting released the group I was managing: THE HANDSOME BEASTS. I created an indie label imprint around the group. Before long I started to get demos sent to the label. By the end of my first year Lasgo the British exporter convinced me I should attend the industry trade show held in France each year: the MIDEM. We shared a stand. That year I was offered two new signings MOTLEY CRUE and ACCEPT. I offered both deals, but it was ACCEPT we secured the rights to, and in no time we had sold 30,000 albums. The label was in business..."

What was the very first record that you put out and what kind of response did you get for that first effort?

"The HANDSOME BEASTS 'All Riot Now' was the first single. The first album was 'Heavy Metal Heroes (volume 1)'. The single sold 2000 and the albums sold 7000. Today we would be really pleased with those sales, but at the time I remember thinking 'Why have they failed?'."

Was it hard to have good distribution for your releases in U.K. and overseas?

"I fell straight into distribution. I had been a record company rep for about six years before starting the label, and so I knew all the sales managers of the competing firms. The only six months we have ever been 'independent' was the first six months. We went through Spartan an indie distributor in Wembley. I always remember a consignment of sleeves arrived late for one of our releases in those early days, and I had to drive down to Wembley where Spartan were based, and package all these sleeves with the records. It was humiliating, because it was freezing cold, and they made us do it without any help on the shop floor of warehouse, whilst other labels were turning up for meetings. Since then we moved to Polygram for two years, we then moved to EMI who represented us across much of Europe - we were there five years before we moved to BMG-Ariola Munich. BMG were our distributor for seven years, and the past 10 years we have been at SONY. Now the Entertainment Network through their joint venture with Warner Bros."

The label kind of established its name with the "Heavy Metal Heroes" compilations, why didn't you put out more volumes of that compilation?

"There were just three volumes of 'Heavy Metal Heroes', followed by one album titled 'N.W.O.B.H.M.'. We could have continued the series, but we wanted to leave people wanting more."

What kind of relations did you have with the other U.K. labels which were also specialized in the newer Metal like Ebony, Neat or Music For Nations? Did you try to help each other or...?

"Neat and ourselves have always been friendly. But Ebony ran-off with all the money owed to a former HMR group, and their bad business practice held up

our first major American deal with RCA. RCA thought all Northern English Metal labels were probably the same. Nothing could have been less true. Music for Nations was created by Steve Mason. Mason had been our biggest export customer at Windsong, he encouraged me to talk to him about groups we were signing, and MANOWAR was a case in point. When I arrived at their lawyers office in 1982 to sign the band after months of negotiating, Mason had arrived a week before and doubled my deal. A deal I had confided in him. He then took all my pre-sales and collateralised them into advance orders for his deal. So MFN and ourselves were never going to be friends after that."

I always was surprised that you never went further with some of the bands featured on the compilations which had a lot of potential like DRAGSTER, SWEET SAVAGE, NO QUARTER for example or with JAGUAR who only released a 7" with HMR and finally ended on Neat records, how do you explain that?

"I had so much else on offer, and I didn't feel strongly about those groups at the time. I regret not doing the JAGUAR album, but they signed faster than I could move and I still think we would have done a better job. I am still in touch with both DRAGSTER and JAGUAR, and I gave DRAGSTER some free studio time last year - to help them out."

Some singles didn't have a real cover, just a generic cover with "HMR-The Heaviest Label." written on it, why did that happen to some releases?

"We just did not have the money. It took a lot of waiting for money to come back from sales, before we could plough it back in. MFN by comparison had a huge amount of money for investment. I had turned down Mason as a partner, and wanted to stay independent. Later EMI were interested in buying us, and that never really got off the ground either."

Some albums like the WITCHFINDER GENERAL albums were released in different colored vinyl versions, do you remember how many versions of them were pressed? I suppose some stores refused to sell them?

"Some magazines refused to take ads, but almost all the stores gave us support. We have always had good retail support - because what we have done has always sold so well. The W. GENERAL albums were on clear vinyl, red vinyl and silver vinyl. All very limited editions, and we don't even have a copy."

Is there one release that you expected a lot from but ended up being a big flop?

"John Sloman's album 'Disappearances Can Be Deceptive' produced by Todd Rundgren was my best album, and worst seller."

Did you give a lot of support to the bands in terms of promotional work, putting advertisements and stuff because I never seen so much about H.M.R. in a leading mag like Metal Forces for example?

"We never got a lot of support from Kerrang though Metal Hammer were better. I don't feel we had a great deal of support for what we did. I don't think it helped being in the Midlands, and not being able to just drop in as the London labels could. Having said all that Ker-

rang were part of the build 'em high knock 'em flat school of journalism. Artists like Marino and Lisa Dominique always had good relationships however, and WRATHCHILD were loved by Kerrang - so perhaps I am being a bit hard on them. They were in the magazine business, we were in the record business. I was often reminded about the difference in our agendas, except when they wanted to sell me advertising. Then they explained those things were separate. Sure they were..."

So around 1985 the label disappeared suddenly, what were the reasons? Tell us what happened.

"In 1985 we lost our American market. Trade barriers meant I lost £500000 sales a year to the USA. MFN were part of Relativity and carried on. Also in the UK, Metal went through the floor. I started FM and signed MAGNUM. They went gold in 1995."

Then what happened for you between that extinction and your come back in 1996 with the re-release of W. GENERAL 1st album, the new XENTRIX album..?

"In 1996 I put Revolver together. I signed the STONE ROSES, the biggest signing of the decade in Britain. I also signed the UK SUBS, VIBRATORS, JAYNES ADDICTION, MISFITS, Jayne County and CRAZYHEAD." Do you think U.K. can regain the lost ground in true Heavy Metal and produce quality bands just like it was back then?

Do you feel a resurgence of H.M. these days?

"I really really hope so. I intend to be here, to look, listen and wait for the day."

What kind of response did you get for your re-releases on Cds? Do you plan to sign any new bands/ or re-release more stuff (maybe unreleased N.W.O. B.H.M. stuff hidden in the vaults!) in the future?

"I intend to relaunch and make the entire catalogue live again. I also intend to sign more and more Metal and general Rock bands, and any bands who are re-forming that were once signed to the label - I would love to hear from. More than anything I want to do another WITCH-FINDER GENERAL album. No one loved the band more than me, and I have lost touch with them."

Anything to add?

"I could not have built Heavy Metal Records, the FM label or Revolver without the help of the people who buy the records and support us. I know we have a close affinity with our buyers, and they feel like part of our team. I am always thinking about what they would want us to do, and I sense their frustration in getting hold of early catalogue, and news about what we are doing. Our web site is [www.Revolver-Records.com](http://www.Revolver-Records.com) or [www.HeavyMetalRecords.com](http://www.HeavyMetalRecords.com) and I encourage people to e-mail me with any request at [RevolverMusic@CompuServe.com](mailto:RevolverMusic@CompuServe.com) - I would do more if we had more money. We are still a small business, and I think people are shocked that I am not rich. But what is more important; to create 400 albums that have shaped the history of Rock, or to sell out? When I get to 1000 albums I will let you know."

Laurent Ramadier

(Huge thanks goes out to Malcolm MacMillan for compiling the following list! By the way some titles were erased on purpose as they had nothing to do with Metal)





## HEAVY METAL RECORDS RELEASES:

### ALBUMS:

HMRLP1 VARIOUS "Heavy Metal Heroes"  
HMRLP2 HANDSOME BEASTS "Bestiality"  
HMRLP3 SPLIT BEAVER "When Hell Won't Have You"  
HMRLP4 BITCHES SIN "Predator"  
HMRLP6 SHIVA "Firedance"  
HMRLP7 VARIOUS "Heavy Metal Heroes Vol.2"  
HMRLP8 WITCHFINDER GENERAL "Death Penalty"  
HMRLP9 QUARTZ "Against All Odds"  
HMILP12 ELOY "Performance"  
HMRLP13 WITCHFINDER GENERAL "Friends Of Hell"  
HMILP15 BULLET "No Mercy"  
HMRLP16 FORCE "Set Me Free"  
HMRLP17 PET HATE "The Bride Wore Red"  
HMRLP18 WRATHCHILD "Stakk Attakk"  
HMILP19 BENGAL TIGERS "Metal Fetish"  
HMILP20 CHARON "Charon"  
HMILP21 ELOY "Metromania"  
HMRLP22 THE REJECTS "Quiet Storm"  
HMRLP23 PET HATE "Bad Publicity"  
HMRLP24 VARIOUS "Heavy Metal Records"  
HMRLP25 VARIOUS "Rock Pretty"  
HMRLP26 RUNESTAFF "Runestaff"  
HMUSA30 TEAZE "One Night Stands"  
HMUSA31 GUITAR PETE'S AXE ATTACK "Dead Soldiers..."  
HMUSA33 VARIOUS "Heavy Metal America"  
HMRLP35 BABYSITTERS "Babysitters"  
HMUSA36 SABU "Heartbreak"  
HMASP37 WITCH "The Hex Is On"  
HMRLP38 MARIONETTE "Blonde Secrets And..."  
HMUSA39 LEATHERWOLF "Endangered Species"  
HMUSA40 NASH THE SLASH "American Bandages"  
HMRLP41 BRIAR "Too Young"  
HMUSA46 STARZ "Live In America"  
HMUSA48 GODZ "I'll Get You Rockin"  
HMUSA49 SMASHED GLADYS "Smashed Gladys"  
HMASP50 STARZ "Piss Party"  
HMUSA53 CHEQUERED PAST "Chequered Past"  
HMUSA55 VARIOUS "Moose Molten Metal"  
HMILP57 ZERO NINE "White Lies"  
HMUSA60 CASTLE BLAK "Babes In Toyland"  
HMUSA63 BLACK OAK ARKANSAS "The Black Attack..."  
WKFMLP64 JOSHUA "Surrender"  
HMUSA66 FOREVER "Forever And Ever"  
REVLP72 SAMMY HAGAR "Street Machine"  
WKFMLP76 WHITE SISTER "Fashion By Passion"  
WKFMLP80 HERMAN RAREBELL "Herman Ze German"  
WKFMLP83 KING KOBRA "Thrill Of A Lifetime"  
HMILP88 GEISHA "Phantasmagoria"  
WKFMLP89 AFTER HOURS "Take Off"  
WKFMLP91 STATETROOPER "Statetrooper"  
WKFMLP92 DIAMOND HEAD "Am I Evil"  
HMRLP94 TORME "Die Pretty, Die Young"  
HMUSA95 KUBLAI KHAN "Annihilation"  
WKFMLP96 VARIOUS "Cost To Coast"  
WKFMLP97 DARK STAR "Real To Reel"  
HMRLP99 AMEBIX "Monolith"  
HMUSA102 RAZOR BABY "Too Hot To Handle"  
WKFMLP104 TORINO "Customized"  
WKFMLP105 TOBRUK "Pleasure And Pain"  
WKFMLP106 MAGNUM "Mirador"

WKFMLP107 UFO "Ain't Misbehavin"  
HMILP109 VOW WOW "Vow Wow"  
WKFMLP111 MAGNUM "The Eleventh Hour"  
WKFMLP112 MAGNUM "Chase The Dragon"  
HMRLP113 CLOVEN HOOF "Dominator"  
WKFMLP114 JOHN SLOMAN "Disappearances..."  
HMRLP116 WRATHCHILD "The Bizz Suxx"  
WKFMLP117 LISA DOMINIQUE "Rock And Roll Lady"  
WKFMLP118 MAGNUM "Kingdom Of Madness"  
WKFMLP119 MAGNUM "Magnum II"  
REVLP120 ELOY "Ra"  
WKFMLP123 TORINO "Rock It"  
WKFMLP128 VARIOUS "Best Of British Steel"  
HMRLP129 CLOVEN HOOF "A Sultans Ransom"  
WKFMLP130 HEAVY PETTIN "The Big Bang"  
HMRLP131 BITCHES BRUE "We Not Be American..."  
HMRLP132 HANDSOME BEASTS "The Beast Within"  
HMRLP133 BROKEN BONES "Losing Control"  
WKFMLP136 STEVE GAINES "One In The Sun"  
WKFMLP137 WRATHCHILD "Delirium"  
HMRLP138 MARSHALL LAW "Marshall Law"  
WKFMLP139 MARINO "After Forever's Gone"  
WKFMLP140 ADAM BOMB "Pure Sex"  
HMRLP141 BROKEN BONES "Trader In Death"  
WKFMBX145 MAGNUM "Foundation" (LP box set)  
REVLP147 WARFARE "Hammer Horror"  
HMRLP148 JEZEBELLE "Bad Attitude"  
HMRLP151 DRUNKEN STATE "Kilt By Death"  
HMRLP153 VARIOUS "Heavy Metal Heroes Vol. 3"  
HMILP154 ICE AGE "Life's A Bitch"  
HMRLP157 VARIOUS "N.W.O.B.H.M."  
HMRLP163 ATOM SEED "Get In Line"  
HMRLP165 DIAMOND HEAD "Behold The..."  
WKFMLP167 MARINO "Blues For Lovers"  
HMRLP168 BERNIE TORME "Are We There Yet?"  
WKFMXD169 VARIOUS "Guitar Exploration"  
HMRLP170 SLAMMER "Nightmare Scenario"  
WKFMLP180 ASJA "Aqua"  
REVXD193 SASS JORDAN "Tell Somebody"  
HMRXD194 VAIN "Move On It"  
REVXD216 VAIN "Fade"  
WKFMLP1 DIANNO "Dianno"  
HMILP1 ELOY "Planets"  
HMILP2 SCORPIONS "Lonesome Crow"  
HMILP3 ELOY "Time To Turn"  
HMILP4 SANTERS "Racing Time"  
HMILP5 BOW WOW "Warning From Stardust"  
HMILP6 ACCEPT "Restless And Wild"  
HMUSA1 HARLEQUIN "One False Move"  
HMUSA2 MONEY "Trust Me"  
HMUSA3 SANTERS "Guitar Alley"  
HMUSA4 TEAZE "Taste Of Teaze"  
HMUSA5 JIM DANDY "Ready As Hell"  
HMUSA6 RECKLESS "Heart Of Steel"  
HMUSA7 WHITE SISTER "White Sister"  
HMUSA8 STARZ "Brightest Starz"  
HMINT1 ELOY "Fools"  
HMINT2 BOW WOW "You're Mine"  
VHF1 DIANNO "Heartuser"  
VHF3 WRATHCHILD "Alrite With The Boys"  
VHF4 MAGNUM "Just Like An Arrow"  
VHF5 RUNESTAFF "Road To Run"

VHF6 STARZ "So Young, So Bad"  
VHF7 THE REJECTS "Back To The Start"  
VHF8 PET HATE "Girls Grow Up Too Fast"  
VHF9 MULTI-STORY "Carrie"  
VHF10 MAGNUM "Storytellers Night"  
VHF11 BABYSITTERS "I Wanna Be On The TV"  
VHF13 NASH THE SLASH "We're An American..."  
VHF14 BRIAR "One More Chance"  
VHF15 JIM DANDY "Ready As Hell"  
VHF17 RUNESTAFF "Do It"  
VHF18 MULTI-STORY "Breakin' Ground"  
VHF22 SMASHED GLADYS "17 Goin On Crazy"  
VHF25 SABU "Angeline"  
VHF26 ROUGH TRADE "Crimes Of Passion" (promo only)  
VHF32 WHITE SISTER "Ticket To Ride"  
VHF42 MACC LADS "Jingle Bells"  
VHF44 MACC LADS "Pie Taster"  
REV45 THE VIBRATORS "String Him Along"  
VHF50 WRATHCHILD "Nukklear Rokket"  
VHF51 LISA DOMINIQUE "All Fall Down"

### SINGLES

HEAVY1 HANDSOME BEASTS "All right Now"  
HEAVY2 HANDSOME BEASTS "Breaker"  
HEAVY3 BUFFALO "Battle Torn Heroes"  
HEAVY4 DRAGSTER "Ambitions"  
HEAVY5 LAST FLIGHT "Dance To The Music"  
HEAVY6 WITCHFINDER GENERAL "Burning A Sinner"  
HEAVY7 SPLIT BEAVER "Savage"  
HEAVY8 SATANIC RITES "Live To Ride"  
HEAVY9 TWISTED ACE "Firebird"  
HEAVY10 JAGUAR "Back Street Woman"  
HEAVY11 HANDSOME BEASTS "Sweeties"  
HEAVY12 SOLDIER "Sheralee"  
HEAVY13 SHIVA "Rock Lives on"  
HEAVY14 TWISTED ACE "This Fire Inside" (not issued)  
HEAVY15 BUFFALO "Mean Machine"  
HEAVY16 SHIVA "Angel Of Mons"  
HEAVY17 QUARTZ "Tell me Why"  
HEAVY21 WITCHFINDER GENERAL "Music"

### EPs

I2HM17 WITCHFINDER GENERAL "Soviet Invasion"  
I2HM56 BROKEN BONES "Religion Is Responsible"  
I2HM66 SLAMMER "Bring The Hammer Down"  
I2HM72 MARSHALL LAW "Power Crazy"  
I2VHF2 PET HATE "Roll Away The Stone"  
I2HIGH3 ACCEPT "Restless And Wild"  
I2VHF4 MAGNUM "Just Like An Arrow"  
I2VHF10 MAGNUM "Storytellers Night"  
I2VHF12 MARIONETTE "On A Night Like This"  
I2VHF32 WHITE SISTER "Ticket To Ride"  
I2VHF35 KING KOBRA "Home Street Home"  
I2REV36 STONE ROSES "Sally Cinnamon"  
I2REV40 DREAM "Desires"  
I2VHF43 SHY "Just Love Me"  
I2VHF46 BITCHES BRUE "Leather Love"  
I2VHF47 LISA DOMINIQUE "Jealous Heart"  
I2REV48 DREAM "Do The Trip"  
I2VHF50 WRATHCHILD "Nukklear Rokket"  
I2VHF51 LISA DOMINIQUE "All Fall Down"  
I2VHF54 ADAM BOMB "Pure Sex"



# Sporting Metal Heroes

**I remember reading about these New York gentlemen in the pages of Powerline and Aardshock America as the next big melodic Metal sensation to hit the scene. Finally getting the Roadracer release when it came upon the market I could easily see why this band gained lots of critical praise and fan appreciation. Unfortunately label politics kept this band from gaining a larger following but I still believe their music (especially the self-titled debut) deserves more attention for its heaviness mixed with songwriting class. Thanks to my friend Jeff Brown from Bad Posture Records I located guitarist Jim Bachi and vocalist Dirk Kennedy who enlightened me on the ups and downs of HITTMAN.**

**What are your first memories of music growing up and what inspirations moved you from playing an instrument/ singing to playing Metal music?**

**Jim:** "I grew up with an older brother and sister- both whom played the piano, so there was always music in the house. It was the 60's and my older sister had all the popular 45's: THE BEATLES, MONKEES and so forth. I used to play those records all the time, especially THE MONKEES. The first two records I bought were 2 singles from THE BANANA SPLITS, which was a kids TV show with live animation (as in the guys in the suits of the characters). The first full album I ever bought was "Chicago 2" which I've recently rediscovered. It's a genius record, and the late Terry Kath was a phenomenal guitar player. So music was around me as a kid as long as I can remember. I'm convinced that that is where I got such a good ear from- I can pick up just about any song within seconds of hearing it. When I was about 13 my friend turned me on to KISS, and that was where I started getting into Hard Rock which eventually led to Metal."

**Dirk:** "I came from what I would say was a very non-musical family in that no one was singing or playing instruments but I was always interested in music at school or at home. Listening to the radio and TV my older sister was into a lot of Rock and I thought she was very cool- she bought me my first record "Elton John's Greatest Hits" and that sold me on the piano. I took lessons for a few years and wanted to be a drummer later on, but I was a really terrible drummer. In all my early outfits when I would show the singer what to do I was always told I should do it myself so I got the message. I later realized that if I was going to be a singer I better learn how to do it properly and studied with an opera coach."

**Who were some of your vocal mentors- either in the Metal/ Hard Rock field or elsewhere?**

**Dirk:** "I guess its always been evident to the listener who I'm listening to at the moment as I consider myself more of a character singer than a stylist. I have always loved different ways of interpreting a lyric so I never stuck to one sound and said that's mine. Instead I kept it changing to reflect lyrics and the color needed. With that out of the way I guess its safe to say I was a major parrot in terms of singing replication. If I really loved the way a singer sounded I would listen intensely and find a way to reproduce it note for note. I'm sure that's why we got all the QUEENSRYCHE comparisons early on. I was really into Geoff Tate at the time. But from the beginning my influences were David Cassidy, Ronnie James Dio, Sam Harris, Klaus Meine and the one who influenced me most of all was Freddie Mercury. The best singer ever in my opinion."

**What bands did you play in prior to HITTMAN's formation? What were the styles of these bands musically and were these cover acts or original bands? Did you record any demos/albums with these acts?**

**Jim:** "My first real gigging band was called LYRA. We were a three piece band and we worshipped RUSH. We played the entire first side of "2112"- it was great. I emulated Alex Lifeson, bought the same kind of guitars, effects, etc. I learned a lot from studying his style. This was around 1980-1982 when I was still in high school. We had a few originals which we demoed but I don't have any of it. We also played songs from UFO, BLACK SABBATH, LED ZEPPELIN. Our first show in an actual club was the day John Bonham died- we dedicated "The Rover" and "Rock and Roll" to him. I was also in a band called ATTLA with Mike- we had two songs on a compilation record called "Metal Over



America". TAKASHI was on that as well."

**Dirk:** "HITTMAN was my first real band period. I had a little experience in a few other bands briefly including a short stint with ANTHRAX when I did rehearse with them a few times."

**You formed HITTMAN in September 1984 with bassist Mike Buccell and drummer Chuck Kory (formerly of TAKASHI). Who was the original singer before you found Dirk Kennedy and were you familiar with Chuck and Dirk's previous outfits?**

**Jim:** "The original singer was a guy named Scott Knight. He was in a band called ARMED FORCES and they released an EP called "Let There Be Metal" that was pretty cheesy. I had seen TAKASHI- my best memory of seeing them was when METALLICA was touring for "Kill 'Em All" and TAKASHI opened up for them. James Hetfield was out in the lobby of the place making fun of them and talking all this crap about how they were posers and wore makeup and should move to Los Angeles. I think of that moment when I see that METALLICA record "Load" where they're all wearing makeup and smoking cigars in the photos. Hypocrites? You tell me..."



**How did you get the chance to join HITTMAN? Were you familiar with the band and their previous singer Scott Knight before entering the band?**

**Dirk:** "Scott Knight gave us the name HITTMAN. I knew him from his earlier band and he was a big Rob Halford man. I think he was in the band for a short spell and I have friends who are still in contact with him."

**Your first demo was recorded in June 1985 entitled "Metal Sport", a five song demo that received massive underground support. What do you remember about the studio, recording sessions and overall outcome?**

**Jim:** "Actually that demo wasn't called "Metal Sport", it was just called "Hitman". We recorded that in a little 8 track studio called White Cloud Recording somewhere in Long Island. My most vivid memory of that is Chuck renting a Tympani drum for "Hitman Theme" and having it delivered to the studio because it was too big to fit into his car. Now we would just find a tympani sound on a keyboard- but this was before sampling. It was an ok demo and it certainly got us some attention."

**Dirk:** "The demo! I was so scared I might lose my job I don't really remember much outside of Jimmy's great

guitar sound (he got that all in a vocal booth) and MOTLEY CRUE's new album "Theatre Of Pain" came out that week and we all goofed at the photos that made them look like drag queens. It was at White Cloud Studios and it was a very big moment for me."

**You added ex-ALIEN guitarist Don Fair to the lineup as a second guitarist- did you always intend on having a twin guitar lineup but couldn't find the right player until you found Don?**

**Jim:** "The intention was always to have two guitars, we just hadn't found the right player yet. So as a result I did all the guitars on the demo."

**Your first live show was opening for STRYPER on 11/11/85. How did that show go audience-wise considering their Christian lyrical slant and Bible-enhanced stage show?**

**Dirk:** "Getting that show had been a lot of work, I had been a huge fan of STRYPER and I knew we had to have that show. I believe Jimmy had some friends on the committee and they made it happen even though it was an auspicious first gig. The guys in the band were amazing and sounded terrific. We played with them on the "To Hell With The Devil" tour as well. STRYPER got the best guitar sound ever recorded in Rock. I did not notice the Christians, I was too distracted by a mirror across the room checking to see how fat I looked. I was not too svele in the early days, and the Purple Lycra costumes were less than flattering."

**The demo got re-released in 1986- was there any remixing/ repackaging done? Were you gaining any label interest as a result?**

**Jim:** "We never actually re-released the demo. We just kept making more of them."

**Your live shows attracted a lot of attention in those days, as you would combine cool promotional items (free t-shirts at certain shows) with weird stage clothing. Describe what HITTMAN were trying to do to set themselves apart?**

**Jim:** "The free promos were due to our manager at the time who owned WEB Merchandising, they did a lot of merchandising for underground Metal bands. So we always had t shirts and hats and stuff to give away. Our weird stage clothing was part of that futuristic Mad Max/ Road Warrior look that a lot of Metal bands were into at the time. ARMORED SAINT, MALICE, JUDAS PRIEST and W.A.S.P. were a few of these acts. We just did our own version of that. We were all huge KISS fans and that larger than life element was something we were going for. Looking back, it was very silly. We also had pyrotechnics in the early days- Chuck designed it all. You can now see Chuck's pyro work at shows like IRON MAIDEN and MOTLEY CRUE- he is the pyro designer."

**You lost Don Fair in 1986 and he was replaced by ex-ANTHRAX guitarist Greg Wells- but he lasted five months before being replaced by John Englema. What were the circumstances behind these lineup shifts?**

**Jim:** "I think it was a matter of personality differences- no one really clicked with us personally until John came along."

**At least six labels were lobbying for HITTMAN to sign a deal, but you went on your own in the summer of 1986 to record a debut album- which turned into an EP because you ran out of money. Explain the problems that the labels were giving you for record deals?**

**Jim:** "Six labels! That is news to me! We decided to do our own EP because we couldn't find a label that wanted to sign us. We were kind of naive and didn't really know the right way to go after a record deal, so



we did those six songs ourselves and decided to release an EP. Eventually we got the SPV deal."

**Tell me about some of your favorite HITTMAN live shows during the 80's- as I know the band played the NY/CT circuit frequently with shows at L'Amours in Brooklyn and the West Hartford Ballroom in West Hartford, CT?**

**Dirk:** "Well CT was great because it gave us the chance to play to a non jaded musical microcosm that just wanted to rock and luckily for us we were the band they really supported. We played there with FATES WARNING and LIEGE LORD, STRYPER and SAXON- all in all an amazing way to get your show together as an opener. It was the period we started rehearsing our headlining show that was going to be a visual extravaganza. We planned to be the first band with a mega show that didn't play crap. We played L'Amours East in Queens, we were not a part of the Brooklyn clique, that was reserved for WHITE LION, MANOWAR and CITI-ES. All bands that were managed by the guys who owned the club. Queens was a better gig anyway, it gave us the ability to work out our shows on a huge stage with great sound and eventually we had quite a big following there."

**Finally in March 1988 SPV/ Steamhammer signed the band- so how did HITTMAN spend the time in waiting throughout 1987? Were there many shows on the East Coast?**

**Jim:** "We played about once every four or five weeks- mostly at L'Amours in Queens and we also played in Connecticut as well. We used to play at this huge place called the West Hartford Ballroom- we opened for FATES WARNING, SAXON, KILLER DWARVES and STRYPER which was a huge show. Their audience really seemed to like us."

**Another guitar change happened before you recorded the three new songs that appear on your debut album. Where did you discover John Kristen from?**

**Jim:** "He was in a band that used to play L'Amours called WILD CHILD- I think Mike met him first."

**Tell us about the released of "Hittman" in August 1988 in Europe- were you satisfied with the recordings, the press reaction and how were the overall sales?**

**Jim:** "Well the recordings were two years old except for the three new songs so we were a bit tired of them. We never heard about sales because SPV USA shut its doors the day our record was supposed to be released. We were feeling screwed over by SPV and we never really heard anything about sales. We were so pissed off at the whole situation. The radio guy at SPV had "Will You Be There" on all the college radio/ Metal charts in the US, so it was a huge disappointment when the label just folded like that."

**Dirk:** "The biggest memory I have is that the Mets won the World Series while I was doing a vocal for "Behind The Lines". We took a break to watch it and went back in fueled to conquer. It was recorded in two studios- Sonic in 1986 for most of it and finished at Glen Cove Recorders after we signed with SPV in 1987."

**SPV licensed the album to Roadracer in June 1989- do you feel badly that the album didn't reach the consumers sooner? Are you surprised that the album sold 50,000 copies here without much promotional push?**

**Jim:** "Well that was partially our fault. We had been offered a crappy deal by Roadracer prior to signing with SPV, so we really didn't want to be with Roadracer. Unfortunately we decided not to work with them as opposed to working with them when they released the record. Someone from Polygram told us that he wanted to sign the band and buy the record from SPV, so we decided to blow off Roadracer because we thought we were getting a bigger deal with a major. That was a big mistake. I have no idea that our record sold that many copies in Europe. I am curious to find out how accurate that number is. I am discussing an investigation of SPV with Dirk regarding our sales, because we never got any royalties from SPV."

**Dirk:** "Let's go on record here. SPV signed us to a worldwide deal. They had offices in NY and we believed that they were committed to making us the biggest band in the world. In fact what happened was on the day of its release SPV fled the country without notice and we didn't hear from them until lawyers got involved. Our album would be in limbo for the better part of two years. At this point they still wanted control over the

album's distribution, but having violated the terms of our contract we were seeking to be released but it was in the hands of German courts and in the end they won. Figuring we had the rights to the record in the states we got a major deal with Polygram, and they tried to negotiate terms with SPV. I believe the amount SPV wanted was one million dollars. That dragged on for about a year, and in the meantime SPV illegally licensed our record to Roadracer, a label we had talked to and decided not to sign with because we didn't like the person who ran the operation out of New York."

**You lost drummer Chuck Kory due to his increasing problems with the music business- where did you find his replacement Mark Jenkins from?**

**Jim:** "Our new manager knew Mark Jenkins, so that's how we found him."

**Can you tell us about the times that you were offered the vocalist slot for Yngwie Malmsteen- did you turn them down because you wanted to stay with HITTMAN? Did you ever have other offers to try out for noted bands?**

**Dirk:** "During the Polygram debacle when it looked like it was not going to happen I was approached by his A+R man about singing for him. I was asked by a lot of bands to sing for them: DREAM THEATER, YNGWIE, VANDENBERG, BRITNY FOX. I never thought about joining any of these bands, not even once. I was in a band that suited me perfectly where I was able to write songs with musicians I could call my friends. John Kristen is still my best bud. I got to argue with Mike Buccell over nothing, disagree with Bachi on lyrical content, and have a late night food run with John on the way home from rehearsal. All in all it was the best. Why would I want to join anybody else's project? This one was mine and I loved it."

**Your second album was supposed to be called "Precision Killing" and you demoed seven songs for this, but the album never came out. What was going on between HITTMAN and the record companies at that time?**

**Dirk:** "Precision Killing" would have only happened if the record label didn't play games. Let's face it- we never had an American label period. Had we been given the chance we would have had a proper evolution from record to record like everybody else. Instead we demoed songs for our next record and we were so caught in red tape that we eventually got bored playing those songs and they got old before seeing the light of day. In essence "Vivas Machina" is more like a third or fourth record. It would not have seemed like such a departure had there been the rest of the puzzle in place by then."

**You did a side project called ONE GROOVY COCONUT and released two 7" EP's- what was this band like and did you still have hope for HITTMAN to continue?**

**Jim:** "That band was a Funky Pop band- like JELLYFISH and the RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS mixed together. I didn't have any clue as to if HITTMAN would continue."

**In 1991 you re-signed to SPV for another album- but scrapped all the previous demo material outside of "Answer My Prayer" for the second album. What prompted these changes?**

**Jim:** "Well- we felt the music was changing and we wanted to be more than just a Metal band."

**Dirk:** "I think I answered that question, and I believe "Answer My Prayer" was new at the time not an older song. It's all about timing and where you are as an artist. We were just moving on."

**You recorded "Vivas Machina" in the fall of 1991 and it received a release over 14 months later in January 1993. Describe the stylistic changes as some of the songs have a more Pop Metal feel and why did it take so long to hit the market?**

**Jim:** "We had decided to go in a more commercial direction in hopes of getting a deal on a major label in the states, which is why it took so long to hit the market. We asked SPV to wait because we were trying to secure

a deal in the states. In the meanwhile the Grunge movement had taken over so our timing for the commercial Hard Rock thing was not so great."

**Dirk:** "Actually that record came out one year after it was finished. So much for staying on top of your game. I said earlier that we had not intentionally moved in a more Pop direction it was just what we liked writing at

the time. "Vivas Machina" is a much more focused and personal record than the first. It shows a lot more diversity as songwriters and musicians. Jimmy Bachi came up with some really sick stuff there, I mean listen to the arrangements on that record. I don't think anyone could have been able to infuse progressive musicality with the kind of hooks we had there. I love that record. We recorded it with Bob St. John who was as fun as hell, eating Hostess snowballs all the time and full of great EXTREME gossip. I think I got to use something like ten different vocal styles on that record. I mean "Listen" sounds nothing like "Say A Prayer" which sounded nothing like "Mercy". I approached it as an acting gig- different stories with different characters."

**You finally toured Europe in May, playing live with SARGANT FURY and SKEW SISKIN. What were the shows like and did you notice major differences between American and European crowds?**

**Jim:** "Well most of the shows were not that crowded due to I guess the high ticket price. We did have a few really good shows though and the crowds were great."

**Dirk:** "Since we hardly played the US I would have to say Europe is and was one of the best memories I will ever have. The fans we met were so intelligent and thoughtful, really having an opinion of music. Every city we played was better than the last, European fans are the greatest."

**A new demo was shipped around in early 1994 with four new songs ( "DaVinci's Machine", "Prove", "Alive and Breathing" and "Flash")- yet the band never put out another album. What caused the band's breakup?**

**Jim:** "We had been together almost ten years and had lots of rough times and bad luck. It was apparent that the type of music we played was not at all what people were listening to in the US at the time. Besides, I had pretty much stopped listening to Metal altogether. This happened right after the first record, but I stayed with the band because I liked playing with them. Dirk and myself were not really into playing Metal anymore."

**Dirk:** "I don't ever remember getting the memo that HITTMAN was kaput. Yes we did a demo and it was sad really. Four different songs from four different songwriters and it showed. It was like the KISS solo albums, you could tell everyone had a different idea as to where the band should go direction wise. As for the break up it never happened. We talked and have been talking for a few years about doing this or that. I mean this is more than a band, it's family, so we never really split apart. It's just been awhile since the family got together."

**Do you keep in touch with any of the former HITTMAN members? Would you change anything in the history of the band if you could?**

**Jim:** "I speak to Dirk, John, Mike and Chuck regularly. I actually spoke to Greg Walls for a few minutes online the other day too. The core group of us are all still friends. Mike just moved out here to Southern California not too long ago, and Chuck lives in Las Vegas. The one thing I would change is that I would have worked with Road-

racar when they were working the first record. I think that refusing to work with them was a big mistake. They really wanted to put money into the band and promote us heavily- we were just too stubborn and I feel that we cut off our nose to spite our face. I think had we decided to work with them we would have done a lot of touring, and maybe we would have gotten to play overseas more at some of those big Metal festivals like Dynamo and the others. Oh well, a lesson well learned."

**Will we ever see a re-release of the debut album on CD- and are there any unreleased demo/ live songs that could see the light of day?**

**Jim:** "I doubt it but you never know. I don't think we own the rights to release the first record. But we can



Michael Buccell



Dirk Kennedy



John Englema



release "Vivas Machina" in the US if we want. We talked about it but I don't know how much of a demand there would be for us. As far as unreleased stuff, nothing that I would want people to hear. Maybe the first demo, that's about it."

**Dirk:** "We're working on *hittman.net* which should have all the rarities you could ever need and more. Also *SPV* still sells both records on CD..."

**Name your favorite Metal albums of each decade (70's/80's/90's) and 1 band that deserves more attention for its originality?**

**Jim:** "As far as the 70's- *BLACK SABBATH*: all their albums rule. I love all the *KISS* albums up to "Alive 2". *UFO* with Michael Schenker, *SCORPIONS* up until "Animal Magnetism" and *RAINBOW*- everything with Ronnie James Dio. In the 80's I was obviously a huge *QUEENSRYCHE* fan and *IRON MAIDEN* fan as well. Other albums would include *ACCEPT*'s "Restless And Wild" and "Balls To The Wall" plus *JUDAS PRIEST*. I didn't really listen to any Metal albums from the 90's."

**Dirk:** "I don't think there was really Metal before 1980, I would call it Hard Rock. In the 70's it would be *RAINBOW*'s "Rising". For the 80's I'd pick *IRON MAIDEN*'s "The Number Of The Beast" and *QUEENSRYCHE*'s "Rage For Order". In the 90's...was there ever any Metal in the 90's? If so I slept through it. As for originality I pick *JELLYFISH*."

**What are you currently up to in life and musically?**

### Dirk & Jim Bachi



**Jim:** "I am currently living in Hollywood, CA. I have a band called *FUZZBUBBLE* who was signed to Puff Daddy's Bad Boy label. We had a song on the "Godzilla" soundtrack (1998) and also we were on his "It's All About the Benjamins" rock remix which was huge and we got an MTV award from it. He stupidly never released our record and we eventually got off the label in March. We are now selling the record on our website at [www.fuzzbubble.com](http://www.fuzzbubble.com). It's a power Pop record in the vein of *CHEAP TRICK* and the *FOO FIGHTERS*. Mike Clink produced it- he did all the *GUNS* and *ROSES* records. It rocks really hard and I'm really proud of it. Unfortunately the rest of the band live in NY so we aren't doing much at the moment. I also have a band here in LA called *TEEN MACHINE*. We are a 70's Glitter Rock band with girl back up singers. One of the girls in the band is on that TV show "Felicity". The bass player used to play guitar in a band called *DIG* who were pretty popular in the mid 90's. We have a record out on Popsquad Records- check us out at [www.teenmachine.net](http://www.teenmachine.net)."

**Dirk:** "I am working in my home studio trying to get an album of solo material out there, incorporating all of the styles I love. It's a work of passion so its taking me far longer than I would like but all the same its personal and that's the kind of music I like best."

**Any final comments for the Snakepit readers?**

**Jim:** "For those of you that are into other music besides Metal check out *FUZZBUBBLE* and *TEEN MACHINE*. Also I'm really curious as to the popularity of *HITTMAN* over in Europe. I'm guessing that I'm due some royalties from *SPV*."

**Dirk:** "I just want to thank the fans who are still out there for all the wonderful emails I get and am proud of the work we've done. I also know that if there was an interest in another *HITTMAN* record and tour I personally would love to do it."

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Matt Coe

Live pics by Frank Stöver

**GILGAMESJ** is one of the most underrated bands in Holland. No, let me rephrase that. **GILGAMESJ** is one of the most underrated bands in the world. They were never chasing success or the 'big money' thing. They played just for fun. But they did this so incredibly well, that it's hard to believe that no record label ever wanted to sign them, except for Jac Hustinx at Rave On Records. He knew that there was a lot of potential in this band from Leerdam. I saw **GILGAMESJ** several times on stage at various clubs and I always had a good time. The solid rhythm section consisting of Jan Vos (bass) and Hans Laponder (drums), the killer guitar solos of Henny van Santen and the Dutch equivalent of Michael Schenker, named Gerrie den Hartog, plus the crystal clear voice of Frank van Stijn, who sounded like a cross between Klaus Meine and Ronnie James Dio. In my eyes, they meant so much for the Dutch melodic Rock scene that I'm glad that I can finally do something back for these guys. After all, they gave so much in return with their music, and they still do. I got in touch with Frank van Stijn, who's still a very fine singer. I invited him at my home, which is only a few blocks away from where he lives with his wife and little son. Together we completed the full history of **GILGAMESJ**. The latest news would be that Frank will record some new tracks soon with his new band **SIXTH SENSE**. In this band, we also find his old buddies Gerrie den Hartog on guitar and Jan Vos on bass. But let's get back to the very beginning. It's 1975 and **GILGAMESJ** began. The story of 25 years of the finest melodic Rock unfolds itself thereafter.



**When did the first line-up of GILGAMESJ get together and how did you guys meet?**

"*GILGAMESJ* was formed in 1975. We knew each other already from other bands and so that's how we met. I had played with Gerrie den Hartog before and through him I got in contact with the other guys. However, Gerrie wasn't a member of the band at that time. He joined a while later."

**Who exactly was in this first line-up of GILGAMESJ?**

"We consisted of Jaap Besterveld (guitar), Hans Laponder (drums), John Stam (bass), Anton van der Ham (guitar) and myself, Frank van Stijn (vocals)."

**Did you guys play in other bands, before GILGAMESJ was formed?**

"Yes, we did. When I speak for myself, my first band was called *SQUAW*. A cover band doing songs of *CREAM*, *WISHBONE ASH*, etc... I played in *SQUAW* together with Dick Stam (who joined *GILGAMESJ* later on), and two guys from Geldermalsen (a small town in the area of *GILGAMESJ*'s hometown Leerdam). It didn't last very long though... Then, Gerrie den Hartog asked me to sing in this band from Leerdam, called *JARGA*. Musically, they played the same style as *SQUAW* did, plus they added some of their self-written material to it. But that didn't last very long either. After that, I joined *GILGAMESJ*."

**Do you know of any other talented bands in Leerdam at that time? I can remember *SAPPHIRE*, *DIAMOND EVIL* and *VAN HEUKELOM*, although this last band can't be called a really talented band, by the way.**

"Yeah, *VAN HEUKELOM* was more or less a real party band, that only played occasionally. *DIAMOND EVIL* was a nice band. They created their own style of music, which was very innovative in those days. Although they played a different kind of music than we did. We played melodic Hard Rock, while they played a more Metal style. I was a member of *SAPPHIRE* myself, so this must have been a very talented band (laughs). The line-up for *SAPPHIRE* was Bert van der Velde, Bessel Bakker, Harold Sengers and myself, Frank van Stijn."

**What do you think of the newer bands like *GARLIC* or *NUCLEAR GARDEN* from Leerdam?**

"I think that *GARLIC* is a very good band, although I don't really like the style of music that they're playing. I can't say anything about *NUCLEAR GARDEN*, because I've never seen them play. I've heard some very positive things about them though. They play Thrash Metal, which is not exactly my cup of tea."

**Do you know any other interesting bands that play the more melodic Rock style?**

"Yes, there's this band called *SANITY*. I have seen them

play live only yesterday. Their style comes close to bands like *DREAM THEATER* and *SAVATAGE*, who are obviously one of their biggest influences."

**Who came up with the name GILGAMESJ and what does it mean?**

"Actually, Jaap Besterveld came up with this name. It means something like "King Of Oerogest", which is a Babylonian half god: half man, half horse or so and unbeatable. I didn't really think it was the best choice for a band name. Through the years there were a lot of people who even couldn't pronounce it properly. Either they couldn't pronounce it or they couldn't write it... I think that I would have chosen a name that speaks for itself. I also think that I was the only man in *GILGAMESJ* that thought in a bit more commercial way, sometimes..."

**Who designed the band logo of GILGAMESJ?**

"The first band logo (a circle with a waterfall inside) was designed by a friend of our drummer Hans Laponder. I designed the logo, that we used later on."

**Who were your biggest influences back in those days?**

"I think, we were obviously influenced by bands like *DIO* and *THE SCORPIONS*."

**Okay, but in the early days you sounded much more symphonic, like for example *RUSH* or *STYX*. Were these bands also of an influence to you or just the first step to what the band would sound like later on?**

"Before you start playing in a band, you always have some kind of direction in mind. How you want to sound and what sort of music you want to play. Bands like *RUSH* and *STYX* were those directions at that point."

**Your voice has been compared to Klaus Meine (*THE SCORPIONS*) and Ronnie James Dio. What do you think of that and do you want to add any names to it?**

"I liked them both very much, but I didn't experience it that way. This is the kind of music you want to make, so without really knowing, you're also going to sound like them in a way, I think. Maybe it was a mix of these two. Singing wise, I have one main influence and that's Robert Plant of *LED ZEPPELIN*. Sounding like the man is something different. For me, he's definitely the best vocalist of the last century. You must not focus on trying to sound like somebody else. That's one thing you really mustn't do. Then you're duplicating, and you have to keep your own input. To put it this way: you simply can't create a motorcycle from a normal bike..."

**Why did you change from a somewhat symphonic style to a more melodic style of Hard Rock?**

"I think it had something to do with how the audience reacted to our music. You want to release a lot of energy, and we could do that by



making the sound a bit heavier. We didn't really do it on purpose, but it just slowly happened that way. Although when Gerrie den Hartog joined the band as a second guitar player, this also changed our style a bit and contributed to that fact. Not on purpose because he wanted it that way, but with two quite heavy guitar players it's just a normal evolution."

**About the line up now. I read about Anton van der Ham being your guitar player. How long did he play in GILGAMESJ and why did he leave the band?**

"Anton didn't have fun playing in the band anymore, so that's why he left. He played about five years with us. Anton actually liked the more symphonic, melodic music. He liked bands like CAMEL and that kind of stuff. Gerrie den Hartog replaced him, but for a short while they were both members of the band."

**Why did you guys never get a good record deal? Especially in the early days you played everywhere on the Dutch stages. And why did the deal with Backdoor Music didn't happen?**

"We didn't get signed, because we didn't want to choose for GILGAMESJ alone. We wanted to be sure that we could do our regular jobs besides playing in a band. We had to buy food and pay the rent after all. At that time, these things were quite insecure. Besides that, we didn't really set a goal for ourselves to make a record. For us, playing on stage was the most important thing and the most fun thing to do. We also didn't like to shop around with demo tapes and things like that. These things had to happen in one single day, otherwise it didn't need to happen for us at all."

**Didn't it have something to do with the fact that Backdoor Music had to choose between GILGAMESJ and PICTURE?**

"Undoubtedly, this has something to do with it. To be honest, at that point if I had to choose between GILGAMESJ and PICTURE, I also would have chosen PICTURE. It's a pure commercial choice. There was a



much better market for them than for us."

**Dick Stam (now bass player/singer for Dutch Blues Rock band DIRTY WHITE BOYS and manager of the Dutch booking office D.D.A Agency) also had his space in GILGAMESJ over the years. When exactly was that? And did I forget someone here (besides Dick Stam and Anton van der Ham)?**

"Nope, besides Dick and Anton, you didn't forget anybody and we already mentioned Jaap Besterveld earlier. He was there at the very beginning of GILGAMESJ. To put it this way, he wasn't such a big talent... Dick and I knew each other from our days in SQUAW, where we both played together. We needed a bass player because John Stam was leaving the band. My first choice obviously was Dick Stam."

**A musical family, these Stam family members....**

"As a matter of fact, they weren't even related to one another at all. But it was easy to change their names on our promo material. We only had to put a cross through their initials and the name Stam remained the same."

**How did you get in touch with Jac Hunstinx and Rave-On Records and why did you cooperate with him for your first release, the four track EP "Take One"?**

"We got to know him through Stefan Rooyackers from Aardschok magazine. He told Jac that we were doing our thing in Holland and were doing it very well. We also owe a lot to ourselves of course, because of the many gigs we played in the South and made the people aware of us this way."

**How did you get on the "Metal Clogs" compilation in 1982 together with CROSSFIRE, IMPACT and FRANKENSTEIN and why did you choose "Heavy Duty" and "Ticket To Heaven" to be on this album?**

"Ferry Bovet (also known for his work for Aardschok) was kinda charmed of GILGAMESJ and he asked us to



contribute to this sampler. He knew that we weren't that difficult to handle and we didn't demand strange things. We were never a band that wanted to talk about big bucks first and only then wanting to play. I think we chose these two songs because they were simply our best songs at that time. They were outstanding and most representative for GILGAMESJ in 1982."

**Did you also do a tour in Holland with the other bands of "Metal Clogs" after the release?**

"No, unfortunately that never happened."

**Who is Bert de Groot - the painter of your mini LP "Take One"? Was he some kind of local artist?**

"Bert de Groot was indeed a guy, who came from our neighborhood. He could draw fantastic pictures."

**Was there someone who modelled for the cover of "Take One"?**

"Not that I know of... Otherwise, I would have loved to be there when he made this drawing (laughs all over)."

**Who choose the four songs that came on "Take One" and why did you pick these particular ones ("Oppression", "Daybreak", "Revolution" and "Headshaker")?**

"Again my answer would be these were our best songs at that moment."

**Wasn't it possible to complete this mini LP with old demo songs to make it a full length release?**

"Well, it's like this. If you make an album or EP, then you only want to record your best songs. Older songs like "Ticket To Heaven" and "Heavy Duty" weren't our strongest songs anymore. You want to move forward with your band and not backwards. This would have worked for a "Best Of..." album, but not for a new LP."

**You also had a large fan club. What kind of activities did they develop exactly?**

"The fan club sold tee shirts, buttons, LPs, ballpoints, etc.. Shortly, everything that had something to do with the band. They published a quarterly fan club magazine, which contained tour dates and a lot of inside information. In a way, the fan club was part of the band. It was our own family, who took care of the fan club. Besides that, they also organized two fan club days: one in Asperen and one in Oostervijk (two very small towns near their hometown Leerdam)."

**Is there still any merchandise left from those good old days or did you sell everything?**

"I think there's not a whole lot left. Maybe there are a few of our EPs left in boxes in the attic, but that's about it, I guess. For sure, we don't have any tee shirts left or you must fancy a tee shirt with little holes in it...."

**How did you get in touch with Stanley Sanders (ex-HAMMER)? And why did your other guitarist Henny van Santen leave the band?**

"Henny didn't enjoy playing with the band anymore and left. We knew Stan from HAMMER, when they played a couple of times with us. It's kind of funny, because Stanley was HAMMER's bass player and he became our guitarist. When he came to our rehearsal space for the first time, we were like "Should this be it or how about it?". But since we always played for fun, everything went smoothly. Before Stan joined us, we tried to work things out with Jan Palthe - known from T-BONE in the eighties and now in DIRTY WHITE BOYS - but he arrived one hour late in the first week. In the second week he came in time, but he was infected by alcohol, so to



speak! He started bragging on, that we would be playing in Rockpalast (Germany) soon and he'd arrange it for us. We decided that it would be better to sack him, because we had no future whatsoever with this man. We'd played together for so many years with GILGAMESJ already and he seemed to know exactly how to take care of our business. That's not the way it works."

**After "Take One" things became a bit more quiet for GILGAMESJ, until your return on the compilation "Metal In Rocks 1" in 1988. What did you do in the years in between?**

"As far as playing concerns, we never stopped! And that was our main goal. When "Metal In Rocks 1" came out, our gigs diminished slowly. Then, the Death Metal scene became very popular and pushed the melodic Rock aside. For GILGAMESJ it became very hard to get booked and play any live shows."

**On "Metal In Rocks 1", we hear "This World" and "Into The Fire". Striking me is that both songs were written by Stanley Sanders. Or is this just a coincidence?**

"These songs were never written by Stan. We did this to avoid trouble with the Buma/ Stemra (they provide the licenses for songwriters). This way we didn't have to register ourselves, which would have cost us a fortune. It was mainly a bureaucratic decision to do it this way."

**Who were the people behind your management Backline at that time?**

"That's me!"

**When I look back at all the answers you have given me so far, my conclusion must be that you've been a very important part of GILGAMESJ.**

"Sideways, I did a lot of different things for the band - yes. Musically, I wasn't that important, I think. I only started to sing when the guys had written some music. Of course, I also had something to say about it. At first we even had a manager. His name is Joop van Gen-



deren. He's also a good friend of ours. He owned the "Trademark" management - something I took over from him after some time."

**What did you think of the fact that GILGAMESJ (which existed for a long time then already) was standing between all these young, new bands who just started out, like GARLAND, MESSINA, GERMAINE and PANDEMONIUM?**

"We never thought of it that way. There are bands that exist only for two weeks and already show a lot of potential. I've never had any problems with that at all. However what did happen is, that we've had bands supporting us from which we couldn't tell what they were playing. Even worse, the audience seemed to go insane by liking it and when we played a good set, nobody reacted. That's really frustrating!!"

**Did you contribute to more compilation albums? I can remember that there was one called "Rave On Hits Hard", on which you played one song ("Daybreak").**

"Yeah, that's right. We did appear on that Rave On sampler. Actually, when we existed just a few months, we also contributed to the "Symposium" compilation album (GILGAMESJ, KASSA, ALPHA and CIRKEL). It only came out locally, but I don't play it for anyone else. I only play it to get rid of the bugs in my house during the summer months (laughs). (I heard these songs recently, Frank and I can only say that they sound very different. But you were a beginning band at that point, so there's nothing to be ashamed of! Toine)

**There were rumours that you would tour with the bands, that appear on "Metal In Rocks part 1". What happened to this and did you get to play at all?**

"There have been some gigs. Two or three bands played per evening in their region. We played in Tilburg, Heesch and I think somewhere in the Nothern part of Holland. I thought it was a very nice album and it contained some good bands, especially PANDEMONIUM



and MESSINA were my favorites."

Then there's another period of silence, until you suddenly appear "Harder Than A Millstone" with the songs "Victims", "Lightning Strikes", "Unknown Passenger" and "Carry On". What did you guys do in between?

"We played a few gigs, but not as much as we used to do. Before, we played three or four times a month and that was reduced to once or twice a month. But we still had a lot of fun during our rehearsals. Just having fun and being yourself was our motto. Some people go and watch soccer in the weekends, while we played music to enjoy ourselves..."

How did you get on this compilation CD?

"I really can't tell you. I think that somebody saw us play live or perhaps one of the other bands from the compilation recommended us. I think it was ETERNAL FLAME, who told the initiator about us. As a reasonably well-known live band in the scene, our reputation has always been that we wanted to take part in almost everything. That makes things easy, you see."

You dedicated "Carry On" to your deceased father. Isn't it difficult to write such a personal song and to play it live regularly?

"No, not really. At least you play it very convincingly every time. My father was always my big example, despite the fact that he never played any music. He was my biggest influence. The song that I wrote was more like 'a tribute to the man'."

Didn't you have the wish to release a full length GILGAMESJ album at that time? After all, you had enough songs to fill a triple album.

"Yes and no. We didn't feel like it. You got to have a very steady financial foundation to bring out something independently. We thought of it this way: If you want to release something, then you have to do it good. But we just didn't have that possibility."

And you never had the idea to stick your heads together and just go for it?

"As a matter of fact, I discussed it with Gerrie den Hartog the other day. It would be very nice for yourself and your family to do something like that. Make an overview of our work from 1975 until now. Put all the recordings on CD, if necessary re-record them with the old band members to get a much better sound. Gerrie liked the idea a lot, but I think that all the other members of the band must like the idea. There are really no commercial thoughts behind such a release."

Why did you call in the help of keyboard player André Booy on "Harder Than A Millstone"? How did you meet up and did he have any band experience?

"Actually, I don't know if he had played in any other bands. Stanley introduced him to us. He had heard about him and was told that besides singing, he could play some nice keyboards. I was really glad to hear that, because after all I am a singer and not a keyboard player. And I thought "Finally someone who can take over the keyboards and we can always use a good second voice". André Booy joined us accidentally in the period when we recorded these songs for the "Millstone" sampler, but he never played a single note on it. We gave him the credits, but I played all the keyboard parts and I sang everything. He didn't come as far as playing a few notes in our rehearsal room, then we simply told him to get lost. He didn't listen to a single thing we said and every time we had to explain things over and over again. That doesn't work. It's been a good lesson for us, too. I believe that he has done some things with Toine van der Linden (ex-HOT LEGS) after that. And I kept hearing, what a brilliant singer he was. It really didn't show, when he played with us."

What about the video clips you recorded in this youth club in Leerdam, The Jungle? What was the whole idea behind it?

"At first we got a phone call from someone who was starting a video company. He wanted to shoot some promotional material for it and needed the help of a band to try things out. He asked us if we were interested. We thought it was a good idea and it's always a nice memory afterwards, so we said 'yes'. We spend a whole day recording the videos. It's an odd situation when you've never done any playbacks, but there was no possibility of playing live. It would have cost too much money."

What did you think of the actual result?

"Well, I believe that everybody was a bit shocked to see and hear themselves back. But aside from that, we think it turned out just fine."

Frank, you also started playing the keyboards later on. Why this sudden interest for the instrument?

"Like I mentioned before, I like to play the keyboards, but that really isn't the issue here. A singer needs to be in front of the stage. He has to entertain the audience and those kind of things. It was like a necessary evil to me. At a certain moment I took over the keyboard parts of Anton van der Ham (at that time, they called it 'strings' instead of keyboards), because he was leaving. The strings belonged to the band, so somebody had to play them. I remember, that is very rather difficult for me to play that thing and at the same time sing my lines. We actually never really searched for a permanent keyboard player (like André Booy), because we fit so well together. And it's very difficult to find someone, who has the same 'vibes' like the rest of us."

Your live gigs in the nineties were still very professional. Mixing your own material with cover songs like "Voyager" (GAMMA), "Highway 6" (KINGDOM COME) and "Smoke On The Water" (DEEP PURPLE), it has always been a pleasure watching you. Why did you continue to play covers, while there were so many original songs to choose from?

"We always thought that "Voyager" was a worldly song! As a lot of people don't know it, we could easily add it to our set without being labelled as a cover band right away. As far as the KINGDOM COME song goes, that's the same story, with the exception that this band is a bit more well-known than GAMMA. DEEP PURPLE's "Smoke On The Water" - that's a song everybody knows. And if you want to get some response from the audience, then you definitely have to play it! Everybody sings the words to this... In the very beginning, we even played RUSH songs, like "Temple Of Syrinx" and old SCORPIONS songs."



Humour also played a big part during your live gigs. You liked to fool around with toy guitars next to the keyboards. Do we have to take that seriously or see it as some kind of gimmick?

"That guitar toy was more or less meant as parody to all the bands on MTV in the eighties. Almost every guitar player had to swing his guitar around his neck and that kind of tour de force. I thought what they can do, I can do better!"

At the end of a very long career you still hadn't released a full length LP or CD. Isn't that a little bit frustrating?

"Not at all. I would have liked to have a GILGAMESJ cd in my cd rack with everything up and on it. Then I never have to search for anything again. But I never felt badly (or physically) hurt that we didn't do it."

You never wanted to become really famous with GILGAMESJ. Despite that, did you achieve the goal you had in mind? And what was that goal?

"We had reached our goal already very easily by playing music and having fun! We enjoyed ourselves from our very first gig on and I think it showed. Of course one club isn't the other but it didn't stop us from having fun on stage."

Do you still remember any memorable gigs?

"Well, Durne was a whole lot of fun. We played there two or three times. One time was together with HELLOISE. We supported them, but when the evening moved forward, it was the other way around. Or a small town like Bergeijk, where we were number one in their popularity list, together with VANDENBERG. Things happened there, you had never witnessed before. We were pulled

off the stage on our trouserlegs. That's a very strange experience!"

Did you support any important bands from abroad?

"We supported PAT TRAVERS during our farewell tour in Holland. I can tell you a great story, when we had to play in Paradiso, Amsterdam with PAT. We finished our set and a few people came to meet us afterwards. They said "Hey, your band is so cool. Where do you guys



come from?" Obviously, they thought we were a newly discovered band - one that had already started their farewell tour (laughs)! Then PAT TRAVERS climbed the stage and during the first song, he blew up both his amplifiers. So Mr. Travers had to play on the backline of GILGAMESJ! That was really funny. I met him that evening and he was a kind and very quiet man. Altogether, we played about three or four nights with him. I only think he should check his hearing because he plays very loud. Unbelievable!"

The last GILGAMESJ gig took place in your hometown Leerdam and was also some sort of a reunion gig at the same time. What was it like being on stage as GILGAMESJ for the very last time?

"It was a rather strange feeling. I can tell you that. Especially during the last song something gets through you, because we shared so much together throughout the years. Good things and bad things too, but that's a part of it all and makes it all so pleasant. The idea to quit with GILGAMESJ was there for a much longer time already. The candle had burned out, so to speak. The gigs made us feel alive again, but these things actually showed at the rehearsals more and more. If you can only write three songs in one year, then there's really something wrong."

Don't you think it was a shame that Aardschok (the leading Hard Rock magazine in Holland) didn't send one of their reporters to witness this very last gig, after twenty years of devoted touring in the Dutch club scene? You did send an invitation, didn't you? (By the way, I was so mad, that I wrote a letter of complaint to the editor of Aardschok saying it wasn't very polite that they didn't show up that night. Of course they didn't reply to this letter or pay some attention to it in their magazine! - Toine)

"We thought it was a pity, but on the other hand didn't give it a moment's thought. It was all over for the band. We have had a wonderful evening - one that almost gets you thinking of "Okay guys, let's start again tomorrow!"

Did you share the stage with any other big names, besides PAT TRAVERS?

"HERMAN BROOD, THE BINTANGS, VANDALE, HELLOISE, etc.etc."

After GILGAMESJ, you played in 147. For how long did this exist and who else was in it?

"147 consisted of Ed Sterk, Rene Sterk, Gerrie den Hartog, Jan Willem de Haan and myself. I think we were together for three years. We even played at a biker festival in Germany. It was more like a band that occasionally got together and like GILGAMESJ, we only played for fun."

How did you come up with the name 147?

"The Sterk brothers have a studio in Oosterwijk (a small town near Leerdam), which is called Studio 147. This explains everything."

You also worked as a booking agent/programmer/disc jockey in The Jungle in Leerdam. Why did you quit this job?

"I always enjoyed working there, especially in the beginning. I made a lot of friends, also from the music scene, and we booked some really good bands. At a certain point I had to take a course 'How to deal with aggressive behavior'. I did this of course, but all the fun was gone. I've always been someone who did things for fun. It was clear to me that there's such criminal behavior in Leerdam and you're not sure about your life anymore. Not funny and I didn't want to go through with it..."

Which bands did you bring to Leerdam to play in The Jungle?

"Let me see. There was TAMAS SZEKERES, Peter Wolf and THE J GEILS BAND, Snowy White (a very kind man, I even went to Switzerland with him), RIVERDOGS, JESSE GUITAR TAYLOR, BACKBONE SLIDE and we had a very good DOORS tribute band, who got some great response."

You even auditioned for PICTURE, after GILGAMESJ. How did this work out and why did you



never really collaborate here?

"I got in touch with Jan van Bechtum, their guitar player, over the phone and that was it. The biggest bottleneck here was the long distance between us."

Are all the other band members still doing something in the music scene? I understand that most of GILGAMESJ is playing in the Blues Rock band JP BLUES GANG. Wouldn't you like to be their singer instead of their current singer Henk Smids and then play together as the JP BLUES GANG for fun?

"I think Gerrie den Hartog and Stanley play (or played) in some kind of cover band together with Toine van der Linden (ex-HOT LEGS) and Robert Soeterbroek. That's all I know. I really don't see myself as a Blues singer. I am not a blues singer. Either you have the Blues or you don't. And I don't have it in me. There's no fun in playing the Blues. And I don't like these depressive lyrics... That's not me."

Does this mean the definite end of GILGAMESJ or do you think you might do something together in the near future for like maybe a possible GILGAMESJ reunion, perhaps?

"The chance is always there, I guess. But we don't have any plans in that direction yet. Besides, I am playing with half of the GILGAMESJ line-up live again, so... We do it under different circumstances and under a different name (SIXTH SENSE). The music we're playing now is a bit easier to comprehend."

If people would ask you for a reunion gig, would you do it?

"I guess so. I think it would be great and I'm sure the other guys feel the same way. But everything should be perfectly arranged then."

Wouldn't it be nice to bring out an (independent) compilation CD with old demos, live recordings, unreleased tracks and as a bonus the three video clips as a CD Rom part. Maybe you could even add some photo material to it. The fans would go out of their mind of such thing and it would be an enrichment for the music history. And I am very serious here!

"Actually, you don't realize that you still have so many fans out there! I feel very honoured. Of course it would be a great idea to do something like that, but what should I do? It would cost a lot of money and I don't have the time for it either. Look, if there would be someone who said to me "Hey Frank, that sounds like a nice thing to do. I could make it happen for you and put everything on CD, etc..." I would probably say "OK fine, go ahead and do it! I don't need any money for it!"

How do you feel about an interview like this, that covered a very important part of your life?

"Now you get to realize what you've done over the years. You see questions that make you say "Damn, that's true, I also did this and that. It's really nice!"

Do you have any other hobbies other than music?

"Yes, since one year my little son is my biggest hobby. I've always said that I didn't want any children, but when you have one of your own, you don't want anything else. It's the best thing that ever happened to me."

What are your future plans?

"I want to play with my new band again on a regular basis. And like in the GILGAMESJ days, I want to have fun again in doing the things I like to do. We'll see what happens. The band consists of Willem Prinsen (drums),

Sylvester van Leeuwen (guitar), Rogier de Vaal (keyboards), Gerrie den Hartog (guitar, ex-GILGAMESJ), Jan Vos (bass, ex-GILGAMESJ) and Frank van Stijn (vocals, also ex-GILGAMESJ). We haven't come up with a name yet, but we've reached the point that we want to play live. (The first gig of this band took place already under the name of SIXTH SENSE- Toine). We play in the same style as GILGAMESJ did, by the way. We also play a GILGAMESJ song, called "Lost In Paradise". But the band itself doesn't have anything to do with GILGAMESJ."

Did you ever think of putting something about GILGAMESJ on the internet, like a home page?

"When GILGAMESJ existed there was no such thing as the internet and now I just don't know. Any suggestions??"

Would you like to add something here, that you think shouldn't be 'unmentioned'?

"I don't think so. We have played together for 20 years and we had a great time. We quit because the fun was over."

Any messages for the readers of Snakepit?

"Keep rockin'..."

My thanks goes out to Bert van Haarlem (for the audio stuff and merchandise material) and to Frank van Stijn for his time and his story. Good luck with SIXTH SENSE, my friend!!

Toine van Poorten

**FALCONER** - a new band out of Northern Europe and if you're looking for some interesting new traditional Metal outfits this band is a hot tip in the first place. With their debut they come up with classic Metal stuff that sounds fresh, unique and different to the standard European Metal sound these days. They have this typical European sound like forerunner bands such as old PRETTY MAIDS, ARCH or WITCH CROSS delivered some time ago. They do not play happy and sweet Metal though the music is highly melodic, but not superficial, in a more quality way. They're highly recommended and it's time to know some more news about their path so far from the band leader Stefan Weinerhall.



anything about it. I think one of the things that makes the music a bit original is my lack of engagement in the present Metal scene, I'm more into the old stuff, both in Metal, Pop, Rock or whatever so I naturally do not take any inspiration from the current bands or trends just from what my ear tell me is good."

The term True Metal is misused by bands like HAMMERFALL and all the HELLOWEEN/ GAMMA RAY clones but FALCONER can not be thrown in that dull category, where do you see FALCONER?

"I'm lost in all these categories, but the one I've heard about us the most is something like: melodic, epic, northern Heavy Metal. I think that tells it pretty well although it sounds funny with all these categories. I guess our strongest mark is the melodies mixed with the original vocals."

The cover drawing is excellent, but don't you like colors?

"No, I don't. No honestly, it was the atmosphere I tried to capture. Something that could capture the emotions of both the music and lyrics: historical and a bit depressive. I like the colors of nature and not like screaming colors. I specifically told Jan Meininghaus to keep it in the brown and greyscale and not use the typical crap like skulls, swords, temples and all that bullshit. Just a simple historical picture. I am very satisfied with the cover and it seems like many more are too. I often get told "I just love the cover of your album" so it seems like I'm not the only one that don't like colors (laughs)."

I heard that you do not want to play live. Why? Don't you think that playing live is very important for a Metal band to survive and having a future as I do not think you want to be the next BATHORY? So, is FALCONER a real band or only a studio band?

"What's wrong with BATHORY's way?"

Playing live is an essential part of Metal's attitude. BATHORY were a real cult band but without playing live Heavy Metal would not exist in the end and a band that refuses to play live is neglecting a main part of the Metal spirit.

"From the beginning it was just meant that I would write the songs and then we rehearse it and record it, that's that. Just the way it was with MITHOTYN. So we never had any thoughts of doing it live, it's come up as a matter of discussion now but I'll try to keep it at this level although we get quite many sorry faces for it. I see

Stefan, I was surprised to hear your guitar on a real traditional Metal album. How come?

"I was fed up with the old scene I was in contact with through my old band MITHOTYN. Since I didn't listen to that kind of Metal myself it just became too unfulfilling to play that music. After the third CD with MITHOTYN we said that we should move on, this was after the split-up of our label. Actually I'm glad they split up, it brought me to take a decision of my future sooner. So the choice for me was Heavy Metal since I could relate to that music much more."

Was the instant end of Invasion Records responsible to bury MITHOTYN after only three albums?

"We all felt a bit tired and un-engaged in the band at that time, so we said that we should "rest" for a while and at this time Invasion disappeared so you could say that they made the final decision for us. But we were very disappointed about the way they did it, just kept quiet and went away, that's pretty rude I'd say. Well, now I play in something better I think so I don't think about that anymore. Even if they had not disappeared we would have split up anyway I think, maybe we would have done one more half engaged album, you know the third CD wasn't that motivated from our side."

Did you record any demos with FALCONER and how did you get the deal with Metal Blade?

"I recorded one demo that I sent around to different labels. Metal Blade was interested in getting MITHOTYN when we stood without a label and even before so you could say that I had some advantage there. After they had listened to the demo they offered me the deal. It all went quite smooth I would say, if they wouldn't have offered us the contract we had other labels to choose from, but I think Metal Blade was the right choice and we have nothing to complain about so far."

How did you find singer Matthias Blad and where did he play before?

"Thanks to his father who owns a music store here in town. It was him I asked about the vocalists in our town and he mentioned his own son. Since his background was so full of promising stuff as music schools and all kind of musicals I felt like he was the right guy for my demo. Fortunately he liked my stuff and agreed to sing on it, and the result was stunning so I was mighty satisfied with it and it seems like the labels liked it too since we got offers right away. Mathias was in to joining the band more permanently now, and I can only be thankful. He has no experience from Metal since before."

Was Karsten Larsson as well enthusiastic about playing more real Metal stuff?

"He joined the band right after the demo, he played with me for six years in MITHOTYN and since the basic music is the same now although put out in a different shape he was very much into it. He didn't have any real band to play with after the split up of MITHOTYN and liked the FALCONER music very much so he offered me his services right away."

FALCONER comes as across as a mix between Viking Metal and Power Metal with clean vox, crossing the melodies of your old band and creating a blend between Metallic JETHRO TULL and somewhat nordic traditional Metal, is originality in music important for you?

"Yes, of course, but it isn't something I think of that much. I just write what I think is good and interesting and I can only be glad if people in general seem to like it too. I put everything into the songs as long as it is good, not thinking of if it's suiting or Metal or too wimpy. As long as it's good I use it. Since we don't have any special image I think we can do it without people saying



myself as a composer and not a performer and Mathias has his musicals to think of first of all. I guess we could get more members and try to fit in a tour in the future in worst case but it's nothing we bother to think of right now. My ambitions lie on the next album already. So FALCONER IS a studio band for now."

**Are the lyrics important for you, singing about high mountains and the beauty of nature?**

"The music is most important, but I don't want to release a bad lyric so I try to write lyrics that capture my second interest: history. I would say that most of the lyrics deal with this issue in some way. The forces and forms of nature is just a way to describe something. When I say "walking over high mountains" it must not mean actual mountains. Poetry my fellow, poetry."

**How many albums does the deal with Metal Blade run?**

"Five albums. It is a personal binding contract so I could decide to start something else and still have the contract- if they like it. This is no problem with me, making four more albums will be no problem, but if all will be under the FALCONER moniker I can't say now, that's too far into the future. But please DON'T think that we are dissolving or something now. I just mean that I don't think my music will be the same in about 15 years as it is now, my musical evolution doesn't stop but it takes me to new places all the time."

**The production sounds powerful, how long did the recording go and what did it cost? What was the exact part of Andy La Rocque? Did you know his works with EVERGREY or his albums with KING DIAMOND?**

"No, but we knew his work with the second MITHOTYN album and we were very satisfied with that so there

wasn't any choice. We spent three weeks in the studio and for 56 minutes of music that is a bit too short of time. The sound setting of the guitars and drums were set by Jacob Hansen so you could say that Andy's job was only as an engineer. There wasn't much to produce either since we knew pretty much how everything would be like, but still Andy was very good to have in handy, not least as a pleasant fellow."

**If you look back to your previous band, do you think it was six successful years and do you still like the more rough vocals? What would you change if you could?**

"I don't regret my time in my old bands MITHOTYN and INDUNGEON, although I wouldn't do it again, they were just a part in my musical evolution. Without them I wouldn't be where I am today. I still think that "King Of The Distant Forest" is pretty good though I think that the rough vocals put down my grade, it could have been so much better with proper vocals... No we have no plans on doing a FALCONER version of it."

**When did you begin to play music and which models did you have?**

"I slowly began to play the guitar at the age of 15. At that time I had Ace Frehley and Mick Mars (??-Heinz) as models. Nowadays I wouldn't say I have any fave guitarists really. Well, I think that Mike Oldfield does very good things with his guitar- and with music in general, someone might say that "Malmsteen can do it faster", yes he can, but he wouldn't come up with this thing himself. I mean that some can play fast but boring so I rather listen to someone that can't play that fast but can come up with very interesting music instead, not that Mike Oldfield is a bad guitarist but you know what I mean. Otherwise my musical role models were Ian

Anderson and Ronnie James Dio."

**Which was the first Metal album you bought?**

"Hmmm, let me see. I had most of the music on tape since I didn't afford LPs. I think the first Metal album I bought was "Theatre Of Pain" or "Crazy Nights". I can't remember exactly."

**Not the best choices, eh. Name your best concert you ever attended and your favorite albums you listen to?**

"When I was 11 or 12 when I came to listen to Metal my fave band was KISS and they followed me through the years and are now the "childhood heroes". I often really wished that I would have been old enough during the 70s to go and see them...and when they finally reformed and came to Sweden in November 1996 it was like a dream for me, I think it'll be hard to top that experience. First time I saw DIO was too a very strong thing but it doesn't top the KISS thing. I finally saw "the gods". My favorite albums are BLACK SABBATH's "Heaven And Hell", JETHRO TULL- all albums from the 70s. You could say everything with R.J. Dio, Mike Oldfield and JETHRO TULL."

**Where do you see Metal going in the future?**

"I have no idea, I hope that it will grow stronger since I think Heavy Metal is way better than for example Death Metal to be overrun by it once again."

**Anything more to add?**

"Thanks a lot for this interview. I hope all you Metal-fans will check us out if you like melodic Power Metal! All the best from FALCONER and cheers."

Heinz Konzett

The new album "Unholy Terror" sounds more traditional than "Hellorado" did, more like in the old days...

"Is that good or bad?"

That's good.

"Oh, I think it sounds like a mix through the first album and "Headless Children"."

Really?

"It was not an obvious step to go this direction, when I make records the only time that I ever decided what a record was going to be before I did it, was "The Crimson Idol", but normally I don't think about it before I start, I just do them and see what comes out. A lot of times people ask me and they say, what does the record sound like? And I say, I don't know. And they don't understand it, they think I do not want to tell them but many times I don't understand what a record is gonna be until 75% is finished because then it turns to reveal itself. I don't make conscious decisions to try to understand when I start. I just start playing and whatever happens happens."

So, fortunately "K.F.D." did not influence you on "Unholy Terror" as it was too Industrial sounding and not of my liking.

"K.F.D." didn't take shape until 99% finished because the songs on that album are not different than anything else than we ever fit. They are exactly the same. What people became confused in Europe about "K.F.D." was the mix, but at the same time the album did very well in America, so you have to ask yourself the question, who do you wanna make a record for? Do you want make it for America, or for Europe, for Asia, or do you want to make it for yourself? I say for myself, you can not predict the reactions in these parts of the world. That's a very dangerous game. We make records for 17 years now and you understand very quickly that the only thing you can be absolutely sure, is to try to please yourself. You never know how the world is go to react."

But if you play traditional W.A.S.P. stuff you know people like it and you can not go wrong with that sound.

"Well, that's probably true but you can not do that for other people because if you start making records for the world you are making a dishonest record. The only way I can make an honest record is to do what comes from my heart."

I agree, it was always a strong part of most of your albums that they have own characteristics and are standing for themselves, like the debut, "Headless Children" or "The Crimson Idol" or even the AC/DC-ish "Hellorado".

"Yes, that's true. Well, when I say it reminds me of "Headless Children" it's because of the political and social comments that I am making. I don't think musically it sounds like "Headless Children", only the lyrical content."

You had to change the radical cover for "Headless

# W.A.S.P.

Blackie Lawless and his band W.A.S.P. wrote some Metal history since the mid-80's- with albums like the self-titled debut, "Headless Children" or the maxi "Animal (Fuck Like A Beast)" as well as with their conflicting live shows where they mixed action with theatrical and shocking elements. We thought it was time to do the first interview in Snakepit with this guy and cover some main aspects the band is standing for since 1982, hear his opinions on the ups and downs in their career and -surprisingly - Blackie was willing to answer these kind of critical questions in an honest way. So enjoy a bit different W.A.S.P. talk as much as I did!



Children" in 1989, what do you say to this censorship afterwards?

"That's because Salman Rushdie had released a book just a few weeks before called Satanic Verses that had the Ayatollah on it and there were many retailers in the world that refused to take the album with the dictator Ayatollah among others on it. They were afraid of terrorists attack which I understand. Sometimes you have to do things like that. There's probably about 5.000 of the original album covers with the Ayatollah on it and these are collector items now. Very expensive. I would like to have one."

Music-wise, the new album is - as said - sounding traditional in a fine way, lyric-wise it's provoking again as well as your live shows with blood, bones and sex, so provocation is a trademark of yours?

"No, it's what you feel strongly about. I look at things in the world and I really believe that I have an average taste, the things that I like that's probably what a lot of other people like and the things that disturb me are probably things that disturb other people. So, as a lyricist or someone who writes lyrics that's really what I am trying to do, I am trying to write about things that move me, things that I feel very strong about."

So what's the story behind "Baby Jane"?

"Oh yeah, there are some serious songs on the album but some of it are not, and "Baby Jane" is not. I have a very dark humor and concerning "Baby Jane" - I was watching an interview in America on television with a famous American football player and this guy is a real animal. He is a very, very bad man. And he was asked, what do you think about when you are up there on the field playing, and he said to the guy, well, did you ever see the movie "Whatever happened to Baby Jane", the one with Betty Davis? And the guy said, yes. Do you remember the part in the movie where the head is rolling down the stairs and he said, yes. And the football player said, that's what I am thinking about everytime I hit somebody, haha. He was serious, he was not trying to be funny and that's what made it even more funny to me."

Isn't that a problem of your band as well? I read a review from Sylvie Simmons-Gene Simmons' wife - from your Castle Donington gig in 1987, and she said that was really an excellent gig but it were a terrible thing that you take it all so serious.

"You can not determine how everyone is going to react to W.A.S.P., The thing that makes us what we are, is the people don't know when we are serious and when we are not serious. That's always been confusing to people. I don't worry about that. Because I know what's funny and what's not funny. And if somebody doesn't understand it, I am sorry. That's nothing I can do about that. My suggestion to her is try to understand that I would say 90% of everything that we ever did on stage was not serious, we understood that the world was gonna look at it seriously but to us, we thought that was



very funny. That's where the conflict comes in sometimes. That's the reason we had all the problems in America, with the PMRC and all these groups, they did not understand the humor, we thought that it was really funny, they didn't."

The same problems happened to ALICE COOPER.

"I can not speak for him, if he takes it serious or not. I do not know. You can not satisfy everyone, the only thing to do is to satisfy yourself. That's funny that you tell me she would write something like that, she knows us for a long, long time. She knows what the truth is, that's actually pretty shocking that she wrote such things about us. She knows better than that."

It's evident that you changed the sound of your albums from time to time quite radically, if you look at your debut and "Headless Children" and K.F.D., these can hardly be compared.

"It's called growth."

So you were becoming a more serious band?

"Well, you know any band that starts is interested in having fun and that's certainly what we were and after about the first five years you looked at the world in a different way. That's certainly what happened to me, but I think that's good too because one question I hear a lot now, what is the secret to our success? How have you lasted so long? And I honestly think that the secret me revealing myself to the audience to show them what's really going on inside my head. Not something that's superficial, that is not real, I think any real artist who has lasted a long time has this in common. You let people come inside your mind and walk around. That makes people feel like they know you very well, it makes them intimate with you and if you are not willing to allow the people to be intimate they will never feel that they really know you, so that's really important. I am okay with it because most of the people that I meet now they come up to me, they act like they know me and they have the advantage but I don't know them. You must share everything with your fans."

Do you think charisma is important to gain success as you have it, I mean when you are on stage everybody looks at you and maybe Chris Holmes the whole concert.

"Puh, you better ask the public, it's not for me. I can answer that point about others but not myself."

Are you still satisfied with the one-dimensional "Hellodoro"?

"For what "Hellodoro" was it was a good record. It was not designed to be a record where you think a lot. It was designed to have fun because to understand "Hellodoro" you have to go back to "K.F.D." and you have to understand the problems Chris and I had, we were in a very dark place emotionally and looking back now, I think that's the reason Chris and I got back together again because we both needed to go back to something familiar. To find a place where we were comfortable again, both. Musically, personally, everything. When we got back together, "K.F.D." was "Wow, what an ugly record, just a nasty piece of work", it described what we were feeling at that time, but I think after the record was finished, and the tour for a year, we had a point, we opened the door and the sun was shining. I was ready to live again, ready to move on, "Hellodoro" was really a celebration of that feeling and it was not designed like anything that has to be in-depth. That record reflected exactly what the feeling was at that moment, but "K.F.D." did too. When we were doing our first album I went in the studio on a Sunday morning and the engineer was there and something was wrong, and I said, "What's the matter?" and he said, "A friend of mine got killed last night", so I stopped for a little while and I talked to him and I asked him, "Who was the person?" and he said it was Marvin Gaye and this engineer had done two albums with him and we talked half an hour about it and he said something that I never forgot, "Marvin always did records that reflected who he was at that moment in his life". He did not try to pay attention to charts, to trends. And I just wrote that down in my mind, I never forgot that. That's one of the keys to be a



true artist."

You released the excellent double live album "Double Live Assassins" in 1998, then a dull best-of in 2000 and recently the not-necessary live album "The Sting", isn't that too many compilations in the latest years?

"Well, I have to be very careful what I say to you right now because we are no longer with the company that did that and contractually if I say anything negative, if I tell you what I am really thinking, I can get sued for it. You could say that Blackie did not say this, but I get the feeling that he hates it. You could say that. But I can not say it. I think you understand what I am talking about. I had nothing to do with those records. With "Double Live Assassins" yes, but the other ones no."

You are on a new label, Metal-Is, with IRON MAIDEN, HELLOWEEN, HALFORD or MEGADETH.

"That's my management since 1993, this is something we wanted to do for a long time and we are very happy. It's just how we understand the market. All of them are music people, not business people. That's a big difference. We have BMG as distribution in America."

The "Still Not Black Enough" album in 1995 was this meant to be a solo album and not a W.A.S.P. record?

"When we were doing it we talked about, should it be me, should it be W.A.S.P.? We were still on EMI when we made the record and they asked all the retailers around the world, what did they think? The retailers answered, the world knows W.A.S.P. but the world does not know who Blackie Lawless is. That was important but that was not all of it. The other part of it, we still thought that maybe it was time to not use the name W.A.S.P., so we decided to do that but we talked to our fan base W.A.S.P. Nation and the response was overwhelming, do NOT lose the name W.A.S.P., they were very upset about it, when the fan base response comes back that told me more than anything that keeping the name was probably the right thing to do. What you are saying is correct but you have to stop and think about that when your fans are upset and do not want to lose something that's important for them."

When did Chris Holmes join the band again, after the album or after he left the band in 1990?

"It was in 1995 when we got back together. We kept it quiet for almost a year because it was going to take at least a year to do the album."

The band is quite constant now.

"For six years now."

Are you in contact with Steve Riley?

"I really don't know, he was with L.A. GUNS for a long time but I do not know anything else."

Or your old bassist Johnny Rod?

"Oh, I have no idea. I hear stories about him but they are only rumors, I don't know."

So you are satisfied that your old girl-friend Tipper Gore is not the wife of the American president now?

"(laughs) It's a no win situation, look at Bush and you see what's going on. To be honest I told people for 15

years that Al Gore and his wife never cared about censorship, the only thing they ever cared about was putting him in the White House. When you think about it on a global level, records are not that important. That's bullshit. They want to get publicity, makes them look like the heroes of the new society. The election must have been a real torture for them to sit and wonder what was really happening."

When you wrote "Animal (Fuck Like A Beast)", it was logical that such provoking lyrics caused problems at that time.

"Yes, but in politics who cares who is singing anything in Rock'n'Roll, it's not that important."

Do you think "Inside The Electric

Circus" was your worst album?

"Hmm, if you compare it to everything else we did, it's a weak record. It's a record that when it was done I felt that there was no real direction and because the first years in your career you are listening to what the record company is telling you, and that's bullshit, the fans forget about you when you make bad records but when we finished the "Circus" record I was very angry listening to what they had told me. And I thought I have to do this for myself. When I wrote "Headless Children", they said to me, that's not sounding like W.A.S.P., that will not sell enough and so on. And I thought, fuck them. "Headless Children" ended up being the biggest selling record we ever had."

But after the "Inside The Electric Circus" album you toured with IRON MAIDEN on their "Somewhere In Time" tour and that was a big success.

"I think that tour did very well and we had a lot of fun. Personally I was not satisfied because of the record. It was a good-bad feeling going on."

If you look back at your beginning in the mid-80's, the old times and at the old video "Live At The Lyceum" in London, what are your feelings at these revolution-like times?

"I think the things that made these times so special is the attitude of the people. You remember what you said to me earlier about that article of Sylvie Simmons, the reason that some people feel that way is because you don't know when we were serious and when not, but one thing you can see in that video is the look on the faces of the people doing it in the band, we were dangerous, hungry and hot. A band like us, the thing that scared people the most was the look on our faces because it was not animated, it was real. When we are actually performing live now, it does not feel that way, it just feels like I am talking to you right now, but when I look

back and see the videos, I can see the difference. And it's almost like it's somebody else. It feels good now but when I look back I go, "Wow who is that?" and that's why I think these times and that video people look at it now and they think what a dangerous, scary band."

Do you know why the first self-titled album was not released under the name "Winged Assassins" in 1982 as planned?

"The idea was to call it "Winged Assassins", looking back I wish we would have called it that. But very close to the release date, the idea was changed and it was self-titled. That's interesting you should say that because for many years I wish we would have called it "Winged Assassins", a good title."

You played with the NEW YORK DOLLS before W.A.S.P., right?

"Well, I did not join the band. I only played a couple of shows with them to fill in for one of the guitar players and I was not part of the band."

And with the band after that, SISTER?

"That happened after the NEW YORK DOLLS, when we went to California and we did that for almost a year before we founded W.A.S.P. in 1982. We played some shows. Ace Frehley was always one of my friends, I was there in the beginning when KISS started their career and I always identified more with KISS than with the NEW YORK DOLLS."

What was the best tour you ever did?

"1986 and 1987 with IRON MAIDEN. That was the best one. It wasn't MAIDEN, it wasn't W.A.S.P., it was both bands put together and the reactions that came out of the audiences, it's funny I remember telling people before that tour started, people are gonna talk about this tour for years after it's done because both bands could make really great shows with loud noise at that time. I remember that tour more than others."

You toured a lot in the States through the years, as a headliner and with some great bands as MÖTÖRHEAD, ARMORED SAINT or even METALLICA back then when they were a good band. What about the problems there was with Lemmy?

"Him and I are friends. We are still friends and I talked to him a couple of months ago, there was a disagreement on something but once again the press makes more of it than it should be. The tour with METALLICA and ARMORED SAINT was fun also, making big noise as we always did, you know."

Heinz Konzett







**POWERSURGE 1990**

So what are the ex members from POWERSURGE doing these days? Are any of you still involved in Metal? If so give us all the details about the new outfits you're in/ releases done to this point.

"Singer James Marra played for a couple Metal bands since POWERSURGE and is now playing bass for MUTILATION POINT a three piece Death Metal band and is not singing at all. He just plays bass and lets the guitarist do the growling. Guitarist Eddie Rice was in a band for a short time but recently has been busy in his home studio recording his blend of new Metal stuff. Guitarist Todd Boese pretty much retired from the biz and got married and has a little girl. Drummer one Hal Loo still plays Metal but moved to Phoenix Arizona. Drummer two Rudy Goryance still lives in Tampa we hear but no one has ever heard from him??!! Myself bassist Todd Paine Dyer played for a couple local circuit bands from Tampa including, RELENTLESS and DIAMON GRAY and recorded with them. I also did a solo project called DYER PAINE which is now nothing more than a cyber band."

Todd, you told me that you have created a POWERSURGE site on the internet, do you get lots of mail from people saying that they miss the band and they'd like to see the band back...?

"Yes I have a place for POWERSURGE in my web site (Pain's Web) at [www.onlinerock.com](http://www.onlinerock.com). Though I've had over 4000 visitors in the last two years. I've only heard from about a half a dozen POWERSURGE fans that had stumbled on to the site. The site is a portfolio of my musical history and talents including the bands I've been in. There is some rare unreleased POWERSURGE music on the site free for download. Here's the address <http://www.onlinerock.com/musicians/icedog/index.html> or you can also search engine POWERSURGE and look for the link (bassman florida). You'll find a few other sites in the search that have POWERSURGE stuff."

So POWERSURGE was started in '86, was the line up the same as the one from the album minus Rudy Goryance as there was a guy called Hal Loo who played with you at least on the demo?

"Yes Hal Loo was the original drummer for the first two years and played on the "Wall Of Power" video and the EP "Elements Of Metal". He was replaced by Rudy Goryance in 1989 who played on the 1991 album "Powersurge"."

Who formed the band back then and how was it formed? What was the purpose of getting a band together at that time?

"In 1984 I was in Houston Texas playing for a band called BRAM STOCKER when I got a call from my brother in Tampa saying he had found an awesome group of musicians that were in search of a bass

player. The group included James Marra, Rudy Goryance and later Todd Boese. We named the band ANDZ VOLT and did a southeastern circuit tour for about two years and wrote and performed some of the early POWERSURGE tunes. We decided that we'd be taken more seriously if we went all original so in 1986 we added members Eddie Rice and Hal Loo, changed the name to POWERSURGE and started doing all original concerts. From the very beginning it was our goal to become recording artists."

Did any of you play in previous Metal acts before?

"We all had previously played in Metal bands prior to ANDZ VOLT and POWERSURGE."

Despite the fact that POWERSURGE was formed way before most of the others Heavy/ Speed/ Thrash/ Death Floridian bands, the first six song demo was only released in mid '88 and your first album was issued only in '91, quite surprising to say the least...

"It was tough trying to break the music scene playing our style of Metal back then. We were heavy. We finally financed our own EP "Elements Of Metal" and did a music video that went into regular rotation on MTV's competition station V32. I also spearheaded a launch at



all the underground mags and zines to promote the band. We sold demos through the mail and got hundreds of letters from all over the world. We had gone through thousands of the EP's before we caught the eye of metal Mike from Roadrunner Records."

When the band was in its former incarnation two years earlier, what did you sound like? Did you play covers back then, if so which were some of these covers?

"We started out in ANDZ VOLT playing the heaviest stuff on the circuit, JUDAS PRIEST, IRON MAIDEN, OZZY OSBOURNE etc. but mixed in our original music that we started writing from the first week we rehearsed together."

Did you play a lot during those early years as the Tampa scene wasn't that strong yet? I guess it was mainly shows at the Sunset Club or at Crossover Club mainly...

"Ah yes the good old Sunset. We played there lots. Including shows with NASTY SAVAGE and early MORBID ANGEL. But due to our large local following we were able to rent out the Ritz Theater and have regular concerts there. We also would open for SAVATAGE."

Did you get much help from the other local Metal bands who were doing good back then and who had started the whole thing there such as SAVATAGE, CRIMSON GLORY, DEATH, IRON CROSS and NASTY SAVAGE, EXECUTIONER, R.A.V.A.G.E., HAVOC....?

"ARGUS, AVATAR (SAVATAGE) and NASTY SAVAGE were some of the bands I recall to get things rolling. Others including us came later. We had lots of help from a lot of very talented acts including SAVATAGE, DAVID CHASTAIN, NASTY SAVAGE, CRIMSON GLORY, ICED EARTH, MORBID ANGEL and others."

So let's go back to that six song demo from mid '88, which tracks were on it exactly besides "Tear Up The Pavement"? Was it recorded at Morrisound studios as they were local and not so wellknown yet

back then?

"Elements Of Metal" was a six song demo recorded at Morrisound studios in Tampa. It included the songs "Tear Up The Pavement", "Wall Of Power" recorded on 24 track. It also had "Eye Of The Storm", "Busted", "The Stalk" and "Whole Some Americans" recorded 16 track live in the studio."

From what I remember that tape got a good response with James being mentioned very often as one of the best Heavy Metal singers...

"James had a beautiful voice. He could sing a song solo that would sound great. He'd hit high notes on stage that were so piercing that he nearly made me blackout. He was often compared to Geoff Tate of QUEEENRYCHE. We had great reviews that help launch our career."

Let's talk about the "Elements Of Metal" EP, when was it issued exactly? How many copies of that vinyl were pressed?

"Sorry to have misled you but it was only released on cassette. It was transferred to CD only later in small amount. We went through 3000 "Elements.." cassette tapes. It came out in 1986 according to the box. Lots of years to reflect on. But we had been sending out demos with the material for a year or so before that."

Which songs were on it as I think they were different from the '88 demo?

"It was the same as the other demo. Before it was boxed we called it a demo. It was boxed and released in 1986."

Do you remember where you sold the most copies? Was it mainly local and did you sent out copies in Europe as I never saw any articles about that EP here at least...

"More than half went to Europe. We had articles in every zine from California to Hong Kong. Including Aardshock and Kerrang Magazines. I started sending to a couple zine addresses I had and then some I had gotten from Nasty Ronnie. The other zines would read about us and get the tape and want to do their own articles. It snow balled."

So following that strong effort did you get label offers? From which ones and why did it take so long to have an album released on Roadrunner like three years later?

"Early on we had got a couple offers from small labels. One was Par Records, CRIMSON GLORY's first label. But the deal they offered was poor at best. Then CRIMSON GLORY had problems with their release and distribution so we had to pass up the offer and look elsewhere. It was about then that Metal Mike from Roadrunner Records took an interest in the band. He tried to convince the company president into signing us but he didn't want any more operatic sounding singers on his label. They already had KING DIAMOND and just signed CRIMSON GLORY. He had even suggested if we got a new singer he would sign us...and that wasn't about to happen. With the help of Tom Morris of Morrisound recording studios we started recording our first major release in 1989. Tom had so much faith in the band that he said that he would record it in his spare time in the studio. He was sure that it would be so good that we'd have no problem getting us signed once we



## Kiss Of Steel

POWERSURGE 1986

No one can affirm that the state of Florida hasn't changed the Metal world because if you think about it a minute, just count the number of bands coming from Florida who have put their indelible mark upon the Metal scene: SAVATAGE, CRIMSON GLORY, DEATH, OBITUARY, MORBID ANGEL, ATHEIST, NASTY SAVAGE, ICED EARTH etc... And it would be unfair to forget outfits that never got as big but who contributed a lot for this state of things just like the Tampa based act POWERSURGE. These guys only released an EP/ cassette and a full length album in their career but they managed to attract a good amount of interest in their quality Power Metal material. With the precious help of Ben Meyer, I recently managed to have founding member/ bass player Todd Dyer answering my questions about this forgotten act.



had a product and he could be reimbursed then. But then the studio got very busy and more popular. We worked nights when he was burned out. Or we were rushed through stuff. We also had problems with the drum tracks which was due to rushing the project from the beginning. It was hurry up and wait. By the time we had finished the material was old to us and we had written about 25 new songs we would have rather released. When it was done we were signed to Roadrunner but it wasn't released until early 1991 which started the stress that eventually broke apart the band."

**Talking about Roadrunner, why did you choose them and what kind of deal did they offer?**

"Roadrunner was the next best thing to an American major label. It was the largest European label and had great world wide distribution. They offered us your typical seven year deal with options for more."

**Around '88, the Tampa Metal scene became one of the most talked about areas with the Death Metal boom, what were your views about all that sudden interest etc....?**

"In Tampa all of us Metal heads knew each other and hung out together. It was like a race to see who could play the hardest, heaviest and the fastest. I think we all influenced each other to take Metal to a new level. Death Metal was the finish line."

**At which point did you replace Hal with Rudy? Did he play in a Metal band before he joined POWERSURGE?**

"As mentioned before Rudy was there from the start. But we kind of split up for a couple months after coming off a grueling road tour with ANDZ VOLT. I even played shortly with ex MORBID ANGEL members Trey (Azagthoth- known also as George Emmanuel-Laurent) and Mike Browning at that time. Then we regrouped with Hal Loo and Eddie Rice as POWERSURGE."

**You said you worked with Trey Azagthoth and Mike Browning at one time, do you remember when it was exactly as I believe it could be only around 'early 1985 or something? What kind of material did you play together?**

"Yeah I think it was early 1985. It was when ANDZ VOLT split. And just before POWERSURGE. We were just pretty much jamming. Playing covers. I remember doing "Victim Of Changes" (JUDAS PRIEST). It was before Mike and Trey got possessed. Well I guess Mike had always been possessed."

**So the album was recorded in '90 with Tom Morris as producer at his studio, any memories of those sessions? Were you satisfied by the result?**

"It was a trying period. Slow slow slow. We didn't get to stay on a roll. When it was done we all had grievances with the recording. Although we all really liked Tom Morris and had lots of fun too."

**The album features mainly mid paced material with the exception of "Pulled Over" and "Burning Revenge" which have somewhat of a Thrash feel into them, was it deliberate that you chose to include two somewhat harder songs to maybe attract interest from the Thrash circle?**

"Absolutely. Metal was going in that direction in Tampa town. By the time of the record release we had written some of the best and hardest stuff ever but never got a chance to share it with the rest of the world."

**On the opposite, there's "Tear Up The Pavement" which is undeniably the most accessible song on the album with a hell of a catchy chorus, looking back do you really think this song fit with the rest of the material?**

"No it didn't. That's what happens when it takes too long to get a band on label. You want to release all your best songs from each era instead of what you're doing currently. "Tear Up..." had its following. It was written in the first months we were together. It went over great live. We'd bring out a jack hammer on stage, lay a metal plate down and put a microphone next to it and jack hammer the stage. People loved it! I'd start the bass out

banging the notes on my head. I almost knocked myself out a couple of times."

**So what kind of response did you get for the album which came out at a time when traditional Heavy Metal was more or less dead? Do you have any sales figures?**

"I don't have the figures but we did good in Europe and okay in America. Our best sales were in Japan, Germany, France, England and Australia."

**Would you say that things would have worked better for you if you would have played Death Metal instead of traditional Metal as lots of people jumped on the Death/ Thrash Metal wagon and did not give a shit anymore about what was going on in the Heavy Metal genre?**

"I'm sure we could have but that just wasn't us. Jimbo (James Marra) wasn't a Death vocalist. He hated Death then. I think it threatened his style. But hell, now he's in a Hardcore Death band playing bass. I was the most opened minded one about Death Metal back then."

**So what happened next to the album as nothing was heard again from the POWERSURGE camp? Give us all the details about the events that followed the album release.**

"James and I were the main writers and leaders of the band. There was lots of difference of opinion after the release. We were impatiently waiting for our European

**Do you have material in the vaults that was recorded after the album and which remains unreleased?**

"There were some 40 songs we had recorded live in Morrisound studios as pre-production. Pre-production are tapes you make and listen to before you record a record to see which songs sound best on tape. Morrisound told us we should leave the tapes there so they wouldn't get lost or damaged. So we left them there only to find out that someone had recorded over them later. I was sick. I am still sick about that (I can imagine! Shit-Laurent). I still have hope it was a mistake and the tapes will resurface one day. I do though have a live broadcast from the 98 rock concert series, that's good stuff. We played straight from the Rocket Club right over the airwaves and it was recorded in their studios."

**Do you still keep in touch with all the members? Have you played maybe one time together since the band broke up?**

"James and I are friends. He played with me for a short while in DYER PAINE as a co vocalist and bassist. Eddie and I are friends and got together just a couple weeks ago and played some of the POWERSURGE songs together. Todd Boese and I were always great friends but he married about five years ago and his life now pretty much rotates around his family life. Rudy was never heard from again. I hear from Hal every once in a blue moon. We never did have a reunion."

**If some label, even a small record company would contact you to re-release your album and EP, would you go for it?**

"Absolutely! We should be free and clear of any obligations to Roadrunner. The unreleased and live stuff should be heard."

**Any last comments?**

"This is for any aspiring musicians. If you are in a band with a style you all like and it works for you, stick to it. If you are good you can make it playing anything. There are two morals here. Metal is a team sport and YOU CAN'T PLEASE EVERYONE!!! I can be contacted via email: [icedog@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:icedog@tampabay.rr.com) or visit Pain's Web <http://www.onlinerock.com/musicians/icedog/index.html>."

Following this interview, new things happened in the POWERSURGE camp, so I asked Todd to give us a few details about that:

**Some new POWERSURGE records will be released on OPM records in the upcoming months, can you tell the readers how this recent deal happened? Which songs will be featured on this recording?**

"There will be two records. The first will be 1986 studio pre production stuff, side 1: "Snow God", "Pedal To The Metal", "Flying Tigers", "Free Base", "Sirens" (version #2), "Engine Rail". Side 2: "Shock Wave", "Stepping stone", "Bullet For A Bad Man", "One Nation's Revenge", "Fate", "Voltage Rider". OPM emailed me - following your interest into the material Laurent, asking what unreleased stuff we had and after lots of follow up phone calls we struck a deal and I went into Audio Lab studios to remix the 22 new songs. The second record will follow featuring the 1988 stuff that we also did at Morrisound studios. I'm not sure what will be on that one..."

**Did you get contacted by different companies to issue that previously unrealised stuff?**

"We were also approached by Iron Glory Records who we might also do a deal with as soon as we get the OPM stuff out. The two labels are working together on this project."

**Have you talked lately with the other ex members about maybe reforming for a couple of shows POWERSURGE following that new interest in the band?**

"You never know?! James and I talked some about reforming. It depends on the demand. We had a lot of new material we had never had gotten a chance to record."

Laurent Ramadier



tour. I think some of the guys thought we were going to be instant stars. James thought we should have gone more accessible and wanted to change our style and be more commercial. I wanted to stick to what we did and get heavier and more intense. Eddie wanted to do something different and didn't feel involved enough so he left the band and was replaced with Rob Koob. Todd Boese and Rudy pretty much were stuck in the middle. Finally James quit which gave Todd Boese the chance to jump off the ship to pursue other interests. Rudy had drug problems so there wasn't anything left to salvage."

**What do you think a strong talented Heavy Metal band such as POWERSURGE lacked to make a real career?**

"Personally I think the trials and tribulations of success before us caused panic. I think some were scared of success or being unsuccessful. I think the main thing that caused the break up was insecurity about our music style. We should have stuck to our guns."

**How's the Florida Metal scene in general now that the Death Metal boom is over?**

"It has weakened now. Tampa was a Metal boom town. You can still hear some pretty good up and coming Metal bands at the Brass Mug pub. But its small and is the only surviving Metal club left in Tampa. National concert acts still play the big halls."

**Are there any plans to maybe re-release the album in the upcoming future?**

"None to my knowledge."



# POWERMAD

I really hope that the following interview with POWERMAD vocalist Joel Du Bay will finally get the band back into the spotlight again and that some serious label will go ahead and re-release both their excellent releases (the mini album "The Madness Begins" and full length "Absolute Power") in the near future, as both have become highly expensive collector items by now. POWERMAD used to be one of the most promising Power Metal acts in the late 80's, but unfortunately never really got the attention they deserved and disappeared way too early again. Anyway, thanks to the nice buddies from SYMPHORCE, who perfectly covered the POWERMAD classic "Nice Dreams" on their second album "Sinctuary", we finally managed to track down Mr. Du Bay and ended up with a bunch of highly interesting information. Nice guys as we are, we decided to share this with you...

The first time I came across the name POWERMAD was in 1986, when Combat released your five song EP as a part of their "Bootcamp" series... Was that the first recording of the band and were there any demos previously released?

"I initiated a few demos prior to any of the releases on labels and sold them locally in record stores. I must say, once people started hearing them, they sold very fast. This is because there was NO Heavy Metal scene in Minneapolis prior to POWERMAD. Yes, there were a few hair bands but no substantive, original true Metal. We were the first, and maybe the last. Maybe. I am not sure."

Is it true that you already formed the band at the end of '83? What did you do until that Combat EP came out? How did they find out about you?

"Yes, the band was being formed at that time and once the original line up was complete, we started to play at local clubs. None of which was ready for our brand of Metal. Up until that point in Minneapolis, nearly every band in every genre was a cover band. POWERMAD played no covers. Well, we did play a CRO-MAGS cover at that time. The CRO-MAGS were a great band. Combat found out about POWERMAD the same way most European and US indie labels did. We sent them a copy of our first demo. They immediately offered to press the demo as an EP and market it under their "Bootcamp" series records. We agreed. I went to New York and hand delivered the master tapes to them. That was a cold venture. The eastern seaboard in the States is very fucking cold."

Has there ever been an active underground Metal scene in the Minneapolis area?

"Yes, there have been a few bands that have made splashes here and there in the local Metal market as

well as national of semi-national scene. At one point after POWERMAD became successful, there were at least 20-30 local Metal bands. Many of which were playing in clubs and receiving some attention from local press. There is still an active underground Metal scene in Minneapolis, but it is nothing like it used to be in the early 1990's. I am not sure why its popularity has decreased, but I have a feeling that many of the bands began to sound alike. One of the first questions I ask a new artist or artists seeking advice is: "What do you think is different about your sound, your songs or your music compared to any other bands in your genre?" The answers I receive much of the time are not worth printing because they are clueless. This question is particularly interesting when a prospective band wants to do more than just play a few clubs every once in a while. They quickly realize that "different" is good when marketing a band and that being able to distinctly separate your music from anyone else's is extremely self-gratifying."

Has anyone of you been in bands previously? Tell us a bit about the time until POWERMAD came to live...

"Yes, nearly every one of us had played music in some sort of setting or with some sort of band prior to POWERMAD's inception. But none of us was ready for the attention and satisfaction we got from writing and playing music as POWERMAD. We got used to it very quickly however. I played in some local bands but was writing a lot of material on the side. None of which would have ever been accepted by the guys I was playing with at the time. I was writing very Heavy, Thrash-oriented music and every one else was playing VAN HALEN. I just kept thinking, "You fucking pussies. I've gotta get outta this bullshit and do something different" Then I heard MOTÖRHEAD. It was all over after that. I quit every band I was playing in and began writing full time and putting together POWERMAD. Bill Hill and I met during that winter when I went to see a friends' new band. They sucked, but the guitar player was just

Joel Du Bay



episode in POWERMAD history started to unfold, I started talking to a producer who became very interested in POWERMAD. He advised me that there were a few major labels that he had contact with and would like the opportunity to "shop" our demo / record to them. We agreed on a deal knowing that this other company was going to release the record we had just recorded for them in several months. But I took the chance. He finally put me in touch with Kevin Laffey at Warner Bros. Kevin was an amazingly interested and interesting guy who eventually became a dear friend. Kevin and others from Warner Bros came to see us play a gig at First

## ETERNAL POWER

thrashing the hell out of these pussy fucking cover songs. So much so that he was making people sick. They hated him. I thought, "this is the guy I want in my band." He kept thrashing and whaling these awesome lead guitar riffs in the middle when the singer was singing. I just kept smiling. After the rehearsal, I talked to Bill, told him what I wanted to do and he came on board. He was and is a really good songwriter."

Did you have to face any line-up changes in POWERMAD's early days or was it Bill Hill (guitar), Jeff Litke (bass), Adrian Liberty (drums) and yourself, Joel Du Bay (guitar / vocals), straight from the start?



"That was the original line up after Bill and I selected the other two. Jeff was a struggling guitar player with a lot of energy. When I met Jeff I told him that he would be a better bass player than anyone in town someday. He switched to bass and I believe that he one of the best bassists ever to play. He is fantastic."

As far as I know Combat put out this "Bootcamp" series to test the reactions on possible future signings of the label, but for some strange reasons none of those bands ever ended up on Combat later on, so what was the problem there?

"Good question. I never really expected anything to happen with Combat. I had heard many times that Combat was not a very good label and that I should wait for

another. But I just wanted to get a demo out there so I could see peoples reactions. I didn't really care what Combat thought or wanted to do. I had a long-term plan in my head and eventually made it happen. By the way, Combat was and is a good reputable label."

But then you got an offer from some other underground label and (as far as I know) you even recorded an album for them, didn't you? Tell us more about that, like which company it was, which songs you recorded, where you recorded them and why you didn't release the album in the end?

"This is true. I was soliciting responses from other labels at the time when a France based, US record label called me. I accepted the offer to do a record for them and did so. But, as it is with many independent labels, we were asked to front up the money to record the record and then bill this record company for the studio fees. The recording fees were almost nothing. We recorded this at Gark Studios in Minneapolis and had it engineered by David Pinsky. POWERMAD produced that demo / record and that was it. But after we sent the master tapes to that company for pressing, they began avoiding the issue of payment. We did not do business like that and became very discouraged. At one point we went to New York- where they were based, looking for one of the A&R guys. I was going to kick the shit out of him to get our payment or I was going to retrieve the master tapes. I never did find him, but I will. As this

episode in POWERMAD history started to unfold, I started talking to a producer who became very interested in POWERMAD. He advised me that there were a few major labels that he had contact with and would like the opportunity to "shop" our demo / record to them. We agreed on a deal knowing that this other company was going to release the record we had just recorded for them in several months. But I took the chance. He finally put me in touch with Kevin Laffey at Warner Bros. Kevin was an amazingly interested and interesting guy who eventually became a dear friend. Kevin and others from Warner Bros came to see us play a gig at First

Avenue, a very big local venue. The club was sold out and Kevin was quite impressed (thankfully). We talked over the next week after he went back to Warner Bros. During an A&R meeting in Burbank, CA., Kevin played our demo / record for Ted Templeman, the head of A&R (if you do not know who he is, you should). Ted has produced VAN HALEN, DOOBIE BROTHERS and many other super groups. Ted loved our songs and energy. He advised Kevin to offer us a deal. He did and then offered to buy out our contract with this other indie label. There was a very nerve racking moment when I had to call the indie label and inform them that Warner Bros wanted to buy out our current contract. I assumed that once they heard WHO wanted to buy it, they would ask for a lot more money and Warner Bros would retract their offer. But they didn't and the rest is history. I never mentioned the name of the indie label because they do not deserve any press." (Oh you did mention the name of that company once, it was Mercenary Records-Laurent)

Was the track list similar to what became "Absolute Power" later on?

"Yes, similar."

At which point of time was Bill replaced by Todd Haug? Wasn't there a change in the drum department also?

"Bill was replaced prior to our recording the second demo / record, the record that was supposed to be re-released on the indie label just prior to Warner Bros picking us up. There was a change in the drum department as well. During our recording of "Absolute Power", Adrian was having a very hard time getting the complicated drum parts down that he had written for the songs, so that at one point we had to face the fact that he was not going to be able to perform them as well as we and he would like. We found a studio drummer who learned the parts and then recorded them under Adrian's supervision. That was a very difficult and uncomfortable time for him and us. After that, we went to L.A. to record vocals and guitars. I advised Adrian to go back to Minneapolis to rehearse for an eventual tour, but he refused and stayed in L.A. doing nothing. When it came time to tour, he was not ready. We told him that he



could not do the tour if he wasn't ready and would need him to rehearse for the next go around. He refused and then quit the band. I knew it would happen though because Adrian was a very stubborn guy and didn't listen well. That was a sad time for me because he and I wrote most of the material. He was part of the driving force in the original POWERMAD. But he gave up. We used the studio drummer for many of the tours while looking for a more permanent drummer. We eventually found Shirl Dodson Lowder to replace him. We originally wanted a drummer named Dave Dicenso from Boston. He was fucking amazing but he decided he wanted to play jazz full-time. Dodd, is an amazing talent. He is one of the best drummers I have ever known."

**You filmed your showcase for Reprise/ Warner and later used the song "Terminator" as a promotional video, didn't you? Tell us a bit more about that video and what you achieved with it.**

"That video was done in one day and is nothing much to speak about. Very low budget and very silly if you ask me. There is no story there. It's just a few guys running around. Big fucking deal. Yes, there is a crowd there and many people turned out for the shooting, but I like a video that illustrates something more about the song. I like the video to show me more of what the band and the director of the video imagined."

**Why did Reprise just release an EP ("The Madness Begins") at first? Was it to test the overall interest in POWERMAD? Would they have dropped you if the EP didn't sell well enough?**

"That was partly due to the fact that we planned to release the full album earlier the next year. In the mean time, we wanted a reason to take our live show to the fans that were begging us to play in their city, so we released the EP and toured on it. It was a VERY good idea."

**Why was the CD version of that EP only available in limited quantities?**

"It was at that very stage in the industry when CD's were becoming more popular. But there were still a lot of die-hard people who liked tapes and records. So we decided not to release it on CD to the masses. But, we did press a very limited amount of CD's for publicity reasons. The band also screamed down a few throats to get copies made for our personal use. In hind site, it would have been good to release it as a CD as well. Perhaps a dedicated record company will buy the rights to do so someday and re-release it. It would be a very good idea, especially if we ever decided to tour Europe."

**I remember that you did a RAMONES cover ("Shock Treatment") for that EP- which musically isn't really what POWERMAD was all about. So, why did you do that and which other tracks appeared on it?**

"Who the fuck are you to tell me that "this is not what POWERMAD was all about"? I love the RAMONES, as well as HELLHAMMER and SLAYER and Hank Williams Jr. etc. I love virtually any and every kind of music or sound imaginable. I appreciate more about music and sound than you know. We did the RAMONES cover ("Gimme Gimme Shock Treatment") along with "Terminator", "Hunter Seeker" and "Blind Leading the Blind" because we bloody well felt like it."

**Wasn't that EP recorded in Paisley Park Studios which is owned by PRINCE? What made you record there and wasn't it more expensive than using a lesser known studio?**

"Yes, we recorded the record there because it had everything we need to get the kind of sound we wanted. It is very close to home as well. As for the expense, well I don't recall telling you how much it cost to record our album there so how do you draw a comparison between studios in Minneapolis. We did what made good, efficient and economical sense to us."

**How did you hook up with your producer Tim Bomba? Has he done any productions prior to POWERMAD that impressed you?**

"Tim became involved when he approached about shopping our demo to Warner Bros. Tim helped me get in touch with some folks who were already interested in POWERMAD. We like him and his approach. He is an exceptional engineer as well as producer. Tim had done many different projects in the past and has a varied background in recording. I did not want us to get lumped into a certain sound at that time and Tim's ideas

appealed to me."

**Why didn't you record the album in Paisley Park again?**

"The studio was being used by another act at the time and Tim had worked at the Record Plant in New York before. That studio was amazing. It is a fucking shame that it is no longer there."

**"Chasing The Dragon" from the "Bootcamp" EP was the only old POWERMAD tune that you didn't re-record... Why?**

"We didn't like it that much."

**Why did you use a b/w cover design for the album and what did it represent for you?**

"Every cover on every album at the time seemed to be in some gaudy, multi colored scheme. We wanted something that would draw people to the cover and found that black and white was an ideal way to do so. As for the meaning? Well, it did not turn out exactly as planned. We had something different in mind after our meeting with Hugh Syme the artist. He had great ideas and was able to draw out of us more of what we thought the meaning should be. When our meeting was done, we

had a great plan for an album cover that would have represented a serious following of true POWERMAD freaks. The baby head is something of an enigma. Its roots are very seriously planted in the idea that symbolism can conjure devotion. But that is all I am going to say about it. Secondly, it might pain some people to know this, but every single one of the helmets on soldier's heads in that picture were SS helmets. But the record company was very fearful that this would offend POWERMAD fans in Germany. We did not see it that way at all. We were not advocating Hitler, we were trying to make a point about a core base of followers. It is my guess that the record company was offended and that may be partially due to the fact that this record company was run mostly by Jewish

Americans at the top level. We have no hostility for either of the mentioned parties, we only wanted to use a picture from a magazine because we liked the seriousness of it. In the end, Warner Bros demanded that every helmet be airbrushed to look like something different than an SS helmet." (Good decision, cause it certainly would've caused you a lot of trouble and boycott over here in Germany- Frank)

**Was John ever a full time member of POWERMAD? I noticed he played and recorded with TNT for a while later on...**

"No."

**You used to write very intelligent lyrics when "Absolute Power" came out... What inspired you to do so? By the way, was "Slaughterhouse" about some guy who got executed by the government for having killed a criminal? Unfortunately I never really found out about that...**

"I am glad you used the word "inspire" instead of "influence". It is difficult to know exactly why words and meanings come to us in different forms. But I believe that every idea is somewhere right now. Every idea is in a room right now, waiting to get picked. I am inspired by many things. Politics, sex, war, travel, suffering etc... This is a difficult question to answer, but one we are all not asked enough. I think if you can answer this question for yourself, that may be all that matters. "Slaughterhouse" is a song about a guy who kills someone else in self defense and is put to death for it." (yeah, that's what I thought... - Frank)

**What is your opinion about the death penalty? Did you have a different opinion about it when you were younger?**

"This is a question that I receive very often, and one that scares the shit out of me. It is the question I struggle with more than any other. In know that I could easily kill someone who threatened my life or another innocent person's life, I just don't know if the government should decide it. It may be something that people in communities should decide collectively or individually, but I do not know. I am getting a little spooked just talking about it though. Who knows, maybe I am a serial

killer and I just don't know it."

**Did you have a particular dictator in mind when you wrote the lyrics to "Absolute Power"?**

"I did not write those lyrics. Bill Hill did. He was a great lyricist. If you listen carefully, you will hear references to Machiavelli. It is possible that Bill had every dictator in mind when writing this. I love that song."

**What kind of negative experiences did you make with the Holiday Inn in Fort Lee and who was Baby Basheew who got extra credits in your thanks list?**

"If I tell you, I will have to kill you."

**Have you ever really been on the road with POWERMAD throughout the country, in support of the album or before? Do you still recall any cool or embarrassing shows?**

"Yes, POWERMAD toured much of the US and Mexico. We even had plans to tour Europe with OVERKILL and again with FATES WARNING. As far as I am concerned, POWERMAD played every show like it was their last. We kicked ass every night. Every night. Our live shows became popular very quickly. Embarrassing shows? No. We did get doused with food and beverage from FATES WARNING on our final show with them though. They were a lot of fun. Little did they know that we would drive 150 km out of our way the next day to surprise them with over 500 kg of food and party shit the next day in New Jersey. We just showed up with masks on and stormed the stage. All of their gear was drenched and the roadies were laughing so hard they pissed their pants!! POWERMAD will not be out done like that on the road!!!"

**Did you finish any new material after "Absolute Power"? Tell us about it and if you ever demoed any new songs...**

"Yes!! There is a bunch of POWERMAD material recorded and sitting in my house on DAT and ADAT tape. All finished and ready for mastering. It has been here for about 7 years. I just haven't been looking for any record companies yet. Your next question should be "Why not?" (laughs). If I did, it would have to be a good, independent style label with major distribution. A band like POWERMAD is a gold mine for the right label."

**When and why did POWERMAD split up?**

"I got very tired of the new personalities people were growing. I wanted POWERMAD to be pure in the beginning and pure in the end. I dissolved it for a bit because it was the right time."

**When and how did you find out about the German band SYMPHORCE (who covered POWERMAD's "Nice Dreams" on their new album)? What kind of**

feeling was that, when you found out that people still remember your music and even cover your songs? Did you like their version?

"Yes, I receive a note from someone on Napster one evening informing me that SYMPHORCE had covered one of my songs. I am flattered and I think they did a very good version of it. Other bands have attempted to cover our songs in recent years, but none have done so successfully. SYMPHORCE is the first. I receive a lot of mail from POWERMAD fans and many of them have been here from the beginning. Letters come from everywhere in the world. India, China, Germany, Australia, ... everywhere. It is a very good feeling."

**Are you aware of any other bands that play POWERMAD songs?**

"Yes, but none that have been commercially successful in doing so."

**What are you doing nowadays? It seems that you are still involved in music, aren't you? What have you done all those years?**

"I write all of the time. I have never stopped. I can't. I have been approached by a few bigger Metal bands to join, but I have not found the right one yet. POWERMAD may have more to offer in the coming years. We are asked all the time to get back together and to tour our country as well as others. There may still be a chance to do that."

**What about the other guys? Are you still in contact with them? Do they still play in bands?**

"Yes, I speak to them and they are all doing something in music. Todd is playing in a Minneapolis based Metal band, Bill is doing the same and Adrian is exploring his heritage as a Native American Indian. Jeff? Well? It's hard to say."





We've given a fair amount of coverage to the California Metal scene throughout Snakepit's lifetime- but how can you blame us for its impact upon the listeners and subsequent bands in the following decades? Hearing one side of the HOLY TERROR story from guitarist Mike Alvord in Snakepit 6, I wanted to find the leader STEEL guitarist Kurt Colfelt and hear his take on the rise and fall of one of the mightiest Speed Metal acts to ever grace us with albums. Although not as talkative about his time in AGENT STEEL as I would have liked, he opened up eagerly about his accomplishments with HOLY TERROR and I think you'll enjoy his memories of "Terror And Submission", "Mind Wars" and other enlightening tales...

What was your background like prior to AGENT STEEL? Also, what influenced you to pick up a guitar and play music?

"Well, let's see. I started playing the guitar in 1973- so I experienced all the 70's bands. I'm from Seattle originally so I played all the Hard Rock songs throughout the 70's and then got into the NWOBHM in the early 80's along with the Punk style. I was friends with Floyd Flanary in Seattle, so we both moved to California and formed a couple of bands that didn't quite take off. Actually one of these bands John Cyrilis auditioned as a vocalist. I knew him from that previous to my joining AGENT STEEL. John came up to me with the band- they were getting ready to record the album and offered me a gig to be in his band. That was at a MERCYFUL FATE show, Halloween night in Los Angeles. I lasted in the band for a year- it was a difficult band to be in because of John, but he is a great singer."

Did any of these bands record any demos- and what were your initial experiences recording like?

"Yes, I've got a couple of demos lurking around. I played in a couple of nondescript Speed Metal LA bands right when I got down there. I realized there were two kinds of music here- Punk and Metal. Within Metal there were the guys with poofy hair and lipstick or the Hardcore straight ahead Metal. Bands like SLAYER I used to see before they got really big- I still love them actually. It was evolutionary for me to get to AGENT STEEL."

How did you hook up with Floyd to start playing in bands? Were you familiar with his work in the Chicago band THRUST?

"I've known Floyd since 1980. We met through an ad in the Seattle newspaper and we played in bands off and on. The Seattle scene was pretty much cover music at that point so looking for some action I moved to Los Angeles and after a while it looked like something might happen. I called Floyd who was on the road with some bar band in Colorado. He was tired of that and willing to relocate. At some point Floyd got in a car wreck and the band we were starting was petering out so that's when I got the offer to join AGENT STEEL. Floyd actually played in THRUST while I played in AGENT STEEL. I never really checked them out because a little while later Floyd would quit THRUST to do HOLY TERROR full time."

Tell us about joining AGENT STEEL on Halloween night at a MERCYFUL FATE show in California- were you a fan of the band before joining?

"I'd never heard of them. I don't know if they'd played shows back then or not- so I joined right at the beginning. The only stuff I had heard was some demo stuff John had played me. I ended up in the band but it wasn't exactly what I wanted to do."

On "Skeptics Apocalypse" you only wrote one song- was it difficult to get more writ-



ing done with AGENT STEEL due to other guitar players like Juan and Mark doing the bulk of the work?

"Well, no- if I would've felt comfortable things may have changed. I liked the rest of the band but I couldn't relate to the drama within the band. Juan would be the first guy to tell you that it was kooky dealing with John back then. I don't tell many people I was in AGENT STEEL- if I talk about the Metal years I pretty much stick to HOLY TERROR."



Floyd Flanary Kurt Colfelt



What are your feelings on the first album- the recording, the studio used, the songs and overall impact it made on the underground?

"I learned from my first time sitting in the studio- I got good experience with AGENT STEEL. The whole thing blew up a year later in a big fight that happened at Dancing Waters in San Pedro- it wasn't between the band but it was the last straw for me- playing the show and fighting four security guys to leave."

What touring/shows did you play with AGENT STEEL?

"I only did shows in California- they went on tour pretty

quick after I left. I had some songs I had brought down with me from Seattle that ended up on HOLY TERROR records afterwards."

Can you tell me about the June 1985 show with ABBATOIR at The Waters Club in San Pedro, CA when you surprised John with your dog just as he was going to fire you from AGENT STEEL?

"He had this big friend of his that he tried to get to beat me up. That started the whole evening. All I did was tell my dog to get John, and those guys were running. The dog is completely harmless. Later on that night I got jumped which I never understood. I don't have a lot of fond memories of that band."

Following the dismissal you met up with former DARK ANGEL drummer Jack Schwartz and began HOLY TERROR- how did the other members join up and what was your game plan/ concept from the start?

"Basically I had a few songs that I had continued to be writing. I thought about forming a band where everyone gets along- so once I found Jack I called Floyd who was in California also and he joined on bass. Jack had a friend Mike Alvord who played guitar and we auditioned singers and got Keith. The game plan was the normal one- try to get some records out."

You recorded your only demo in March of 1986- can you tell us about this recording, the studio used and how long it took to gain a deal with Music For Nations?

"We did that demo in a guy's basement- a little 16 track Tascam, a nondescript little studio. Although no one was real happy with the way it came out we went ahead to make a few copies and sent them around to magazines. They'd put our picture in and give us a little time on their pages and we sent out a bunch of tapes. We got a lot of press coverage in especially European metal magazines. The guy from Music For Nations Mark Palmer sent me a letter and asked if we wanted to do an album. We got the money from the English label and recorded the album with our new drummer Joe Mitchell. We got the deal within a year of letting loose the demo."

You gained Joe as a drummer- why did Jack leave the band?

"Jack wasn't working out well- it got back to having a band without dealing with people who made life difficult. We didn't get another drummer and tell Jack goodbye, we told him goodbye and set out to find another drummer. He's a good drummer but I was looking for a little more peace of mind within the band."

Your first album "Terror and Submission" came out in 1986 and showcased a strong Speed/ Thrash sound but was hampered by a less than stellar production. Yet the re-release has a crisper production according to fellow guitarist Mike Alvord who was interviewed previously in Snakepit 6. Tell us your opinions about the debut effort of HOLY TERROR?

"It was a freshman effort for a band. We went to a studio and dealt with whoever was available as far as recording it. I was never too happy with a lot of things about the record- musically content-wise it had a lot but in the end it didn't sound quite the way we wanted it to sound. Joe had only been with the band two months before recording the album and that was probably a mistake too."

Did you re-mix the record when it was coming out in the states?

"Yes, we did. We went in and re-cut it- it was one of



those things where we did the best we could to redo it. The way it was recorded wasn't quite right for the style of music we played. I always thought it sounded like an orchestra on Thrash Metal- kind of weird. The actual sounds themselves didn't sound the way the band sounded. If you stood in the room and listened to the band play and then heard the record, the band sounded flat on record."

You toured Europe with D.R.I. in support of "Terror And Submission"- playing a savage pace of 29 shows in 32 nights. What are your memories of this tour and do you believe it tightened the focused attack of HOLY TERROR's sound?

"Yes, it definitely did. The tour brought Joe into the fold. When we were in Los Angeles we played some but you couldn't be a bar band playing Speed Metal so you had to tour. I look at that first European tour with a lot of fond memories."

The second album "Mind Wars" achieved classic status in the underground, especially for its breakneck speed and Keith Deen's one of a kind vocal performance. Describe the recording sessions, the production and your overall opinions on this effort?

"On that one we had found Casey McMacken, he recorded DARK ANGEL's "Darkness Descends" record which I always thought sounded really good. We met up with Casey and he did the re-mix of the first record, so he knew what we were looking for. When we went in to record "Mind Wars" we had achieved a mature sound. We recorded that album in 17 days- and that came off sounding much better than the first album."

You took one of the songs on "Mind Wars" called "Debt of Pain" from an earlier AGENT STEEL song "Back To Reign" and sped up the riffing. What prompted this decision- as the early song was more MAIDEN influenced but the newer version is more Speed Metal enhanced?

"Right- because that was a song that I had originally written with vocals that were different than the way John sang them. He took the song and rewrote all the melody lines. Rather than toss the song I thought there was a real way the song should go, so let's do the real version of it. We put it on there to show people how the song goes the way I envisioned it to go."

Also were you surprised by Keith's vocal performance on the record?

"No, he didn't surprise me at all because I always knew he was a really talented guy. When we first got him we knew- he was like Floyd and I and into 70's Rock. He was influenced by Roger Daltrey and some of the great Rock singers and he definitely had the pipes to do the material. I knew he was an amazing talent."

What were you trying to portray lyrically- as it seems HOLY TERROR put a lot of thought into their songs with a mixture of religion, philosophy



Mike Alvord

and politics?

"Once again that's a throwback to BLACK SABBATH- before it got fashionable to get into them. It's not devil Rock- we felt like writing about things that couldn't be pinned down to day to day life- it was more abstract thinking."

When did Roadracer sign the band for a US release? Also, were you upset about being on tour for a couple months before the album's release due to Roadracer's mistiming?

"No- Roadracer picked up the band for the second record- and we made them put out the first one. This was 1988 and it was thanks to our manager who also managed D.R.I.- that's how we got the great tours. It didn't bother me but Keith said some snide comment to Roadracer which didn't go over with them too well."

How was the touring in the US different then Europe in support of "Mind Wars"- as I heard that the four months took its toll? Who did you play shows with on this tour?



Keith Deen

"Well, by then- on the first record we were still developing as a band. On this record things like drug abuse and those various things that happen on those "Behind The Music" specials happened- we had our car wrecks and drug abuse. Back then I got screwed up on drugs- in Europe you are on your own but in America we would do crazy stuff like get packs of speed Federal Expressed to Tennessee and go pick it up. Literally took the term "Speed Metal" seriously. We toured the US with D.R.I. and KREATOR. Then the drug abuse continued and we got a second European tour with EXODUS and NUCLEAR ASSAULT. We had signed to Roadracer secretly because Music For Nations put out the second record. We got 12 days into the tour and we were in Nuremberg, Germany when our singer was drunk and told a magazine we were signed to a different label and that got around the horn and came back to Music For Nations- so they booted us off the tour in Switzerland. We stood there in Switzerland with all of our gear and no tour. It was raining and they offered to give us a ride to the airport. We argued as much as we could to get back on the tour. We got ahead of the KREATOR guys to borrow drums, rented a van and we missed one show. We drove back to Germany and that's when major issues went down. We had these big arguments with the tour manager from Music For Nations. I thought we had signed contracts and all we had to do was show up. As it turned out our manager hadn't signed the contracts. Finally RE-ANIMATOR took over our slot and I stood off the side of the stage just before they went on. Jim the

tour manager picked up this block of wood and held it up like he was going to hit me- he told me to get out. As a result I punched him in the nose right as the band started playing. The German security guard came running over and he was confused- I told him the tour manager was going to hit me with the board. He ran over to him- back to me- then the security guard walked away. I had visions of the police taking me away- Mike was appalled that I punched the tour manager so he called his mom and got a plane ticket home. We spent two weeks in a van in Munich, Germany trying to get home. We had \$5,000 in t-shirts and I still have three boxes of shirts from that ill fated tour."

What caused the breakup of HOLY TERROR- as you had hit a creative peak with the second album?

"After we got home Mike wanted back in but we said no, we played a show with CELTIC FROST and CRO-MAGS, two shows as a four piece. That was nearly impossible with all the dual guitar stuff so we tried to write a record as a four piece.



We wrote it but it never came out as it should have- we tried to go into the ultra technical weird areas a little more. Shortly after that I had a child- that changed my life dynamics. After 1 and 1/2 years my wife left me and moved back to Washington while I got off drugs. I then moved to Washington with Floyd and Joe, plus Keith was going to come but he didn't come. So we wrote another record as a three piece and played out with that band as HOLY TERROR with me singing- but that became impossible as Keith was pretty irreplaceable as a singer. Then I moved into a Punk band. We plugged away into 1991 as HOLY TERROR."

Did you ever receive any sales statements from the record companies for the two albums?

"We never got anything that amounted to recouping the advances we received. At one point we had some money- we'd get royalty statements. Roadracer let us out of our contract after two records- even though they signed up to a five record deal.

We painted ourselves in a corner and we wanted to do different things. If Keith had moved and we didn't get hooked on drugs it could have been different."

What did you do musically following HOLY TERROR?

"Well, we changed names from HOLY TERROR to SHARK CHUM- which is fish food. We recorded a 13 song demo which was more Thrash/ Punk oriented- material I felt comfortable singing. We did that for awhile and called it quits- then I joined ZEKE- they played a Thrashy Rockabilly sound- they are still going and are signed to Epitaph Records. I played bass and then I've floated around to the LOADLEVELERS. I knew I wasn't going to do Metal anymore. I've done the LOADLEVELERS for two 1/2 years- we play a mixture of Bluegrass, Punk, Industrial- a good mix of styles with plenty of guitars and vocals. What we play is conducive to bars- we still do a twinge of the Speed Metal stuff."

Are there any unreleased tracks/ live sessions from HOLY TERROR that may see the light of day?

"This guy from England has been talking to me about doing an album of outtakes- he released the new AGENT STEEL record. So there is stuff but most of it is versions of songs that have been put out, just in different forms. I know there are a bunch of HOLY TERROR live tapes floating out there, but I don't have many of them and I would be unsure about the quality."

What are your favorite memories of AGENT STEEL/ HOLY TERROR- or the California Metal scene in the 1980's?

"Fondest memories- AGENT STEEL would be Juan and Chuck. I talked to Juan about joining HOLY TERROR but they were doing well. HOLY TERROR I have a lot of good memories- we traveled a lot and toured with D.R.I. Having 400 plus people to play for per show for a beginning band is amazing. There will probably never be a HOLY TERROR reunion- I need to move forward."

Name your three favorite albums of all time and the two best shows you've witnessed?

"Oh man- three favorite albums. One of the MOTORHEAD records- "Ace Of Spades". MERCYFUL FATE- "Melissa". Other than that I've loved the REVEREND HORTON HEAT. The best shows- ZZ TOP on a Texas shaped stage in 1976 and it was the most mind blowing show I've ever seen- they had a buffalo on stage and sequin suits. Later on I saw SLAYER at the Country Club in Resada- it was sold out and nuts."

Final thoughts for the readers?

"Not really- I'm bad on final thoughts. I'm still making music in a non commercial vein. HOLY TERROR is something I am proud of."

Matt Coe

(All live pictures except Kurt London '88 and Keith live picture on the left by Frank White)



# Megadeth

Tell us the story how and when you met Dave Mustaine for the first time and how you joined MEGADETH?

"Well actually I was jamming in a room with Gar Samuelson, his brother Stu, and a bassist by the name of Doug Burlleson at this hall that used to be a beer brewing factory. Dave was playing with some guys next door and a friend of mine named Joe Spry knew Dave and introduced us. This was before the whole MEGADETH thing. Later on Gar began playing with Dave through a recommendation to Dave by a guy named Jay Jones (who did the pre-production of the first MEGADETH record amongst others - Laurent). Then Dave was looking for another guitar player to join the outfit and I was recommended by Jay and Gar. Dave had actually first heard me play when I rented out a room at the building he rehearsed at. I just went into a room and cranked up my amp and played as loud as I could. Dave Ellefson who worked at the building at the time heard me. I was soon offered a spot in the band. That's actually how it all happened."

Did you know that Kerry King played as the other guitarist in the band before your contribution and were you a part of the rising Metal scene in those days?

"Yeah, I knew that Kerry was playing with Dave at the time. As for being part of the Metal scene at that time, I definitely was not. Gar and I were in an L.A. Fusion band called THE NEW YORKERS. We used to play sold out gigs all the time at clubs out in Pasadena, CA. One night our show was sold out and they wouldn't let people in, and they totally tore the door open and threw the cigarette machine outside. It was totally wild! However, Gar and I saw the Speed/ Thrash Metal genre as a challenging form of music that we wanted to try and do. The distorted guitars mixed with complex rhythms intrigued us and we wanted to give it a whirl. We were "Jazz heads" though and that's where our hearts were musically."

Did you play some gigs in your area before recording the first album, "Killing is My Business...And Business Is Good?" and what was the feeling in the band at that time as Dave was quite frustrated that METALLICA fired him?

"We didn't play any shows out before that first record. Actually it was a pretty rushed record and I had joined the band about two weeks before we went in and recorded it. I think Dave's feelings were that he just wanted to get a record out there and MEGADETH's name out there."

The first album sounded weak concerning production, was the budget so poor and why wasn't it possible to come up with a more diverse sound?

"Well we had about a \$6,000 budget for that record. It was recorded at the Indigo Ranch, a studio associated with the band, THE MOODY BLUES. At that time the Speed/ Thrash Metal thing was new and people didn't have much experience recording that type of music. Furthermore, our engineer didn't really know what he was doing and the band was dragged-out at that time as well, which is where a lot of the money went."

Did you record any demos before the debut?

"No. It was a pretty much rush record for the band. We just went in and did it."

The running time of the album was only about 30 minutes, what was your part on that album, only playing your guitar and some leads or more?

"On that first record I just contributed leads and some rhythm guitar. It was tough because when I went in to record my tracks, the tempos of the other instruments varied and this was an issue for me to deal with on the recording of that first release."

I really like "Looking Down The Cross". Do you have a favorite on that album and what do you think of it so many years later?

"I haven't heard that record in years, but I remember liking the aggressive vibe of "Rattlehead." I also liked "These Boots," a cover tune we recorded during those sessions that appeared on the soundtrack for the movie, "Dudes"."

After the release of "Killing Is My Business..." you toured as a support act for EXCITER, how

What does old MEGADETH and DAMN THE MACHINE have in common? Chris Poland, one of the most underrated guitar players in the Metal biz! He was part of the very early and best MEGADETH days, playing guitar on their first two albums, and being part of some really good and unique music afterwards. I never intended to cover the newer MEGADETH story as I lost interest in this band some years ago because their music got too easy to foresee and quite ordinary, not to mention boring if you look at the glorious mid-80's works Mustaine and co. released. Well we all know the MEGADETH hey-days are long gone and hence it was a real pleasure to hear the other side of their beginnings from Chris Poland directly. Of course we covered his awesome DAMN THE MACHINE band as well as his intense solo works to make this in-depth feature complete, starting in California in the early 80's....

did that go?

"Actually, I didn't do that tour. Mike Albert filled my spot for that tour. I was pretty pissed at the time because the tour t-shirts they had pressed up for that tour had everyone's name on them except mine. Everyone tried to tell me it was no big deal, but I felt like I wasn't being considered a part of the band and refused to do the tour."

The status of the band at that time was rising, but was not comparable to the status three years later. Was this an advantage to write such a classic album



Chris Poland doing some nice axe work!

# damn the machine

as "Peace Sells...But Who's Buying?"

"Before "Peace Sells..." broke, the band was living in a studio and pretty much starving. I mean we were taking "birdbath showers" at that point. "Peace Sells..." then got picked up by Capitol Records and our manager at the time, Janie Hoffman, got us on the ALICE COOPER tour. That's when I think things really broke open for us and that record."

Did you have serious problems with Dave's ego and his, well, sometimes strange behaviour at that time?

"It wasn't like everyone in the band didn't know that Dave had a big ego. Let's be honest here, band front-man in general have to have an ego to some extent to do what they are doing. You can't stand out there in front of millions of people without some serious confidence and thinking that you are someone special. It is what makes those type of people who they are, you know? For those people that's what it is all about, that's what they need to satisfy themselves."

Dave Ellefson mentioned in an interview some years ago that it was the drug times around 1984 to 1986. It was obvious that Gar had some drug problems - also. Was that a dangerous thing for you, or just a youthful kind of attitude?

"The drugs were a real dangerous thing for me and I knew if I kept up the way I was going I was going to end up dead. Luckily, I worked my way away from the heroin addiction and alcohol. I have been drug and alcohol-free for 13 years. You know stuff happens and people don't grow up saying that they want to be a heroin addict-it just adds up to that. Heroin just gives you a comfortably numb feeling. You try it once and you think it is ok, so you just keep doing it, it becomes a serious addiction that you can't control."

Coming straight to the "Peace Sells..." record, let us know how the song-writing process went and what made this work so special in the end as it is labelled a Metal classic?

"Well, I think the record turned out so good because we toured playing that material in clubs for four-six months before recording it in the studio. We knew the songs well and how to pull them off live. We also worked with a very good engineer/ producer in Randy Burns. Furthermore, a lot of the arrangements on that record had to do with Gar. For instance, the title track was originally like six-seven minutes long, but Gar helped tighten it up and make it more solid with a new arrangement as he did with other tunes on the record. I also think that since the band was living together at the time we were always around to practice and work on the tunes to bring out their full-potential."

Your and Gar's Fusion influence can be heard easily on tracks like "Black Friday" and on the cover "I Ain't Superstitious." Do you agree?

"Yes, I agree. We had that Fusion background from our previous experience with THE NEW YORKERS. Fusion had that same high energy/ speed thing going for it that Thrash Metal did. I think Gar and I tried to bring that element into what MEGADETH was doing."

"Peace Sells..." was released by Capitol, a major label. What were the differences between Capitol and the indie Combat/ MFN and did you see any money from them as it got to platinum status and is still selling today?

"The big difference was that Capitol Records had millions of dollars to work with. Suddenly when we got on Capitol we had a road crew, tour buses, food. Capitol Records was a machine and if they wanted your record to take off they could make it do just that as they had the money to promote it well."

You did a video for the title track, did that help a lot and what did the band await from this album, the break-through or only some more attention?

"The videos for "Peace Sells...But Who's Buying?" and "Wake Up Dead" were great for us and MTV's Headbanger's Ball helped out a lot as well with airplay. I think that those videos also contributed to helping make that record a success."

The Thrash Metal scene exploded at the time and MEGADETH were a strong part of that, but did you really want to be a part of that?

"No I never really did. MEGADETH was all about

# Absolute Destruction Of The Senses



Dave Mustaine. If I suggested song-ideas they were rejected because it was his band and his vision."

**Then a long tour began, touring with OVERKILL in the United States. Were the larger clubs packed? Do you have some memorable stories of the time?**

"I don't remember much about the specifics of those times as I was pretty messed up on drugs, but I do remember having a lot of fun and that the tour went well."



**Coming to a special New Years Eve show in San Francisco on 31.12.85 with METAL CHURCH and METALLICA, I think Dave was quite pissed not to be accepted by the audience, is that right?**

"Well all I can remember is watching the tapes from that show and that EXODUS, who also played on that night, blew everyone else away by far. They were unreal and made all of us other bands look like old men. However, for some reason METALLICA was still worshiped, I think because it was expected. Nobody topped EXODUS that night. They were in incredible form!"

**You toured with ALICE COOPER and MOTORHEAD at that time as well if I am correct. However, there were some problems as you wanted more sound-checks and some stuff. Was Dave the man who had this arrogant behaviour?**

"I think it was a combination of things. We only played like three dates with MOTORHEAD, in the San Francisco, Los Angeles, and San Diego areas, until Dave pissed Lemmy off and egos clashed. Also, I wouldn't doubt that maybe Lemmy was a bit intimidated by us as a band. At this time MEGADETH was in top form. Lemmy couldn't touch Dave Ellefson on bass, their guitarists didn't compare to ours, and their drummer couldn't compare to Gar. MEGADETH was a well-oiled machine at this time and that combined with the egos of Dave and Lemmy clashing is probably what led Lemmy to boot us off the tour."

**MEGADETH got some bad criticism concerning the live performances at the time. Was this true and was it caused by the difficult band situation?**

"This isn't true. As far as I am concerned, I thought the band was really on during that time. I mean sure we had our bad nights as well. However, overall we were a very strong band. Don't forget the band was also on drugs at the time, but speaking for myself, I always went out there and tried my best to give a good show no matter how messed up I might have been because of the drugs."

**Why did you leave the band then? Let us know the whole story as I have not read a line about that.**

"Well Gar and I left the band after the last gig of the "Peace Sells..." tour in Hawaii. We took our stuff and took a plane back home without telling anyone. I remember writing "Welcome to Jonestown," in reference to a massacre that had happened around that time, on the hotel mirror with soap before we left. I got to the point where we had sold millions of records and when we'd ask Dave Mustaine for our share he acted all bothered that we were asking him for anything. He always avoided the subject. It is like you can't tell me we sold that many records and we don't have any money coming to us, you know? When I joined MEGADETH Dave always said things were going to be split four ways. That never happened and after awhile we just got sick and tired of the bullshit and were getting ready to take legal action."

**Do you think it would have been good not to leave the band at that time as big success was near the door, or was it a natural step for you and Gar? What do you think of the career and albums the band made years later?**

"Basically Gar and I couldn't take it anymore. When "Peace Sells..." broke that's when Dave's ego really

began to get out of control. Also we had sold all these records and done all these shows, yet never got paid. It was not an easy gig, being in that band. I left little pieces of me all over the world playing in that band. Getting up everyday, sick, I still never missed a show, even if I was fucked up on heroin. I don't want to glorify that, but I worked for the money, the very little money I got. As for MEGADETH after I left, I thought "Rust in Peace" was a pretty good record."

**In 1990 you released your first solo record, "Return To Metalopolis" on Enigma Records. Why did it take so long for this record to come out after you left MEGADETH and what were your feelings to play and record music without a kind of band dictator?**

"Well, it took a little while because I had to get sober and drug free. After I left MEGADETH I went to rehab to clean up my act before I would end up killing myself. After that I got a gig playing bass on a tour with the CIRCLE JERKS. That was a lot of fun to do. While that was happening, I was offered a deal for what became "Return To Metalopolis", but had to take some time to realize I could play guitar without being high. I wrote the tunes and Mark (Poland, brother, drums) and I went in and laid it down. I still regret not having a real bassist on that record, as I ended up doing the bass lines myself. I think if Dave Randi, who toured with me for that record and was later in DAMN THE MACHINE, was on that record it would have made it sound way better on the bottom end. Everything always looks better in hindsight I guess. But, yeah, it was great to be doing my own thing again. I didn't have to deal with people rejecting my song ideas, etc. I could do what I wanted."

**Did you play some gigs and with whom after that as the album sounded still heavy, focusing more on your soloing?**

"We started the tour in the southwest with DEATH ANGEL. We did a few dates and then the guys in DEATH ANGEL had a bus accident, where their drummer was seriously hurt. We went up to San Francisco to participate in a benefit gig for them and that's when we found out Enigma Records went bankrupt. That was it for the album tour and album support. Since the record wasn't out that long before Enigma went bankrupt, it was nice to have Len Fico and Fuel 2000 Records reissue "Return To Metalopolis" in 1998."

**Why did you end the solo thing and then started a new band with DAMN THE MACHINE with your brother Mark and Dave Clemmons on vocals?**

"Well we felt that the shows we did for "Return To Metalopolis" needed a second guitarist to fill out the sound. The crowds reacted weird to a three piece instrumental heavy act playing in front of them. Mark, Dave Randi, and I had written some tunes that we thought would be perfect for a vocalist and that led into the band thing again. We got Dave Clemmons from a band called MINISTERS OF ANGER, that also featured the drummer of MACHINE HEAD. The way Dave sang and played guitar in that mega-heavy band impressed us and so we got him for DAMN THE MACHINE."

**DAMN THE MACHINE's self-titled debut delivered complex Metal with a high dose of originality and a great cover from Hugh Syme, the maker of many RUSH album covers. Was the RUSH thing something you wanted to follow?**

"Well we wanted to follow RUSH in the sense that we wanted the same type of fan base. We also really liked Hugh Syme's artwork. However, I thought that the comparisons of our sound to RUSH's were not accurate."

**With which bands did you tour then?**

"We did an extensive tour of the US with VOIVOD and did a European tour opening for DREAM THEATER. Those shows with DREAM THEATER were awesome. When you are opening for a band like them you really have to make sure you are on every night, you know? I thought that those shows were some of DAMN THE MACHINE's finest. We were really on then. As far as the band ending, A & M Records was cleaning house on bands that hadn't sold a certain number of copies. At that time EXTREME was also dropped and one of the only bands they kept was SOUNDGARDEN. The musical scene at the time was changing and the label didn't want to get behind what we were doing anymore."

**Songs such as "The Mission" and "Lonesome God" were great examples of real Progressive Metal. Is complexity an important part of your music or do you see that emotion counts more in the end?**

"To be totally honest, I don't know I am being complex when I am being complex. I do feel that emotion is very important in music. The bottom line on emotion is, if I ain't feeling it, then you ain't gonna feel it either."

**Are there any recordings left of the band as it was a**

**real pity in my opinion that only one album was released?**

"Yeah we had six other originals and a bunch of cover tunes we did. We did our own versions of songs like HENDRIX's "I Don't Live Today" and NEIL YOUNG's "Mr. Soul." I am actually looking into the possibility of getting the six cover tracks released officially as it is material I would like to make available for people to be able to hear."

**Great news, do that Chris. After the demise of DAMN THE MACHINE you joined MUMBO'S BRAIN, a band that sounds different and has little in common with your bands before and nearly leaving the Metal train. Why? Did you discover your Jazz roots again and why did you change the sound at that time?**

"Well with MUMBO'S BRAIN that's just what came out. When I work with people in a band context I try to focus on their strengths and not try and make them what I am. You have to work with what you have and that's what came about with MUMBO'S BRAIN. Whatever happens will happen, you know?"

**The first six songs on the "Rare Trax" cd features MUMBO'S BRAIN material, which sounds Progressive, sometimes both strange and catchy, it's not Metal but it's quality music, that's for sure and it reminds me on the mid-90's RUSH material. How did you find singer John Skipp? Are there any other recordings available?**

"After DAMN THE MACHINE disbanded, Mark, Dave, and I still were playing together. Mark had some friends that knew John. One day John came over to Mark's house with Carol McArthur. We liked them and when they came down with us to play John did the lead vocals with Carol doing back-up vocals. John Skipp is actually also a horror book writer and has sold many copies of his novels. In total for the MUMBO'S BRAIN, I think we recorded around 14 songs. Some of it is pretty heavy as well; more in the DAMN THE MACHINE vein of guitar heaviness."

**Why haven't you released albums from 1993 until the year 2006? Were you frustrated by the music business?**

"I was trying to get a deal with some of the material found on "Chasing The Sun", but that didn't pan out. Also I was just really busy at the time with other things in life and focusing on making music, not shopping it. MUMBO'S BRAIN came real close to getting a deal a few times. We played a show with TODD RUNDGREN at the House of Blues once, but things always fell through on the possible record deals. I have always been playing music though because it is what I love to do. Some people will dig what you are doing and others will not. What matters is that you are happy with what you are doing. That's what counts."



**Who was responsible for your comeback as a solo artist?**

"I never have felt I wasn't a solo artist. Even with band projects like DAMN THE MACHINE and MUMBO'S BRAIN I had the final say in what happened musically, but I would be open to ideas from the other band members and their contributions."

**"Chasing The Sun" is an un-typical instrumental album in my opinion, you let the guitar do the melodies and are not flickering to death as many others did in the past. Is emotion and melody an important factor when playing music?**

"Yes emotion is very important. Whether or not a song contains vocals, it needs a storyline. You have to start the song, tell a story, and if you can make it that far to the ending section, then you have won the prize to improvise a little."

**The album was recorded from 1994-1999. What do you say about the other musicians that contributed to the recording, in particular, your brother, Mark Poland?**

"That record, which is a collection of demos spanning those mentioned years, is honest music. We just went in and recorded totally spontaneously and it was a lot of fun to do. I got a chance to pay homage to some of my influences on that record in terms of style also. Mark has always been an excellent drummer and great to



work with. It is definitely an advantage having a drummer in the family. Ha!"

Concerning the "Rare Trax" cd, is it an official release or just for the die-hard Chris Poland fans out there?

"It is a die-hard release. Only 500 copies were made and it is an opportunity for the fans to hear what I had been up to throughout the years since the demise of DAMN THE MACHINE in 1993. All the material has never before been released and the cd also includes a preview of my new band, OHM, via a live improvisational jam, we recorded at rehearsal one night."

The NOTHING IF NOT period in 1995-let us know what this band was all about, in particular the excellent female singer, Carol McArthur?

"Well, Carol had worked with us on the MUMBO'S BRAIN material as a back-up singer, so that's how I knew her. At the time I had written a bunch of songs with lyrics that I felt would sound great if sung by a female vocalist. Carol had this sexy, haunting voice with perfect pitch, so I asked her if she would be interested in contributing. She did and as a result I have some material, which is some of my personal favorite from my career thus far. I feel that my solos on that material are some of the best I have ever done."

I really like your flowing guitar, as on the title track of "Chasing The Sun". What do you prefer most of all?

"I like all that material as I feel those songs are happening, but I have a soft spot for "Song For Paul (33 Summers)". Paul was the brother of an ex-girlfriend of mine who overdosed on heroin. I remember we were in the studio recording that song the day I found out he died. He was only 32 years old."

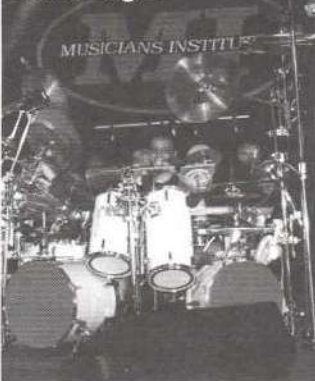
Do you still play live with your band OHM? What are your goals with this Fusion band or your solo project in the future?

"OHM is my new band and it is a separate entity from the "Chasing The Sun" material. It has a slightly diffe-

Robertino Pagliari



David Eagle



rent vibe. We have been playing The Baked Potato Jazz Club in Hollywood California regularly and did a show at Musician's Institute this past summer. However, we have been taking a break from live gigs until late spring, so I can finish up my recording studio. I am currently almost finished with the studio and am getting ready to start the recording of the OHM record for a 2001 release. OHM definitely has that heavier, aggressive Metallic vibe on certain tracks, that "Return To Metalopolis" lead tone, and a Progressive feel, while not being Progressive, if that makes any sense. With OHM I am working with the best bass player and drummer I have ever worked with in my career as well. Robertino Pagliari is a monster on six string fretless bass and David Eagle is an amazing original percussionist. Their combined credits include working and recording with artists such as Frank Gambale, Alfonso Johnson, Jan Akkerman, Steve Luthaker, and Gary Hoey."

Coming to a sad topic, Gar Samuelson died some time ago. Did you hear about this and what do you think went wrong in his life in the end?

"Gar and I always stayed in contact and I actually went

out to Florida, where he owned and operated a recording studio, to visit him about a week before he died. Gar was still playing great then even though he was sick. In fact, I think people have no idea how awesome a drummer he really was, he was very underrated. Gar's days in MEGADETH and the hard life he led during those times eventually caught up with him. I guess you can't burn the candle at both ends and not pay the price in the long run."

Going back to music- what does Metal mean to you now? Are you still interested or do you think that's gone for you?

"Well in terms of Metal and music, I still try to keep the elements of that form of music that I like with me. You know the power, aggression, and anger in that music. I try to take those things and adapt them to new forms, like what I mentioned with some of the OHM material. So I guess Metal is still part of my music in that sense."

With which other guitar player or other musicians do you like and would like to play with?

"That's a tough question. I really like a guitarist by the name of David Torn and a lot of other obscure weird-ass recordings out there, I guess pretty much anyone would be cool to play with if the vibe is happening and it comes out sounding good. That's why I will be glad to have a studio where I can just jam and record stuff."

Any last words?

"I would just like to thank the fans for their support throughout the years and of my new solo releases, "Chasing The Sun" and "Rare Trax" on Grooveyard Records. I hope to come over to Europe and play for you soon with my new band OHM. Take care!"

For more information on Chris Poland and on how to get "Chasing The Sun" and "Rare Trax":  
[www.chrispoland.com](http://www.chrispoland.com)  
[www.grooveyardrecords.com](http://www.grooveyardrecords.com)

Heinz Konzett

**Rob Rock - not just an ordinary name of an ordinary Metal singer. No- he's one of the most captivating shouters of the melodic Metal genre ever undoubtedly. After his contributions to the M.A.R.S., JOSHUA, ANGELICA, DRIVER, AXEL RUDI PELL and IMPELLITTERI albums he just released his first solo work "Rage Of Creation" which is nothing less than brilliant melodic Power Metal. One of my personal faves of the year 2000, Rob is an honest guy with a great attitude and it can easily be said that he should get the same recognition as Dio, Dickinson, Halford or Tate got through their careers. That has not been the case but in comparison with the aforementioned three men (not Ronnie!) he never lost Metal out of his sight for some time.... As Frank already did an exciting in-depth talk with him for number 3, we mainly covered his career since IMPELLITTERI's "Eye Of The Hurricane" album in 1998. Enjoy!**

I was not very surprised to hear that your first solo album is excellent, and what a great album it is.

"Oh, thank you. I am very happy with it. When you finally do your solo album, you become responsible for what the mix is going to be and such stuff. So you have the responsibility and I think I made the right decision." Your friend Roy Z produced the album expertly.

"Yes, he is a very talented producer and I must give him a lot of credit for the album. He co-wrote the songs with me plus he produced the album, recording all the instruments and stuff."

Wasn't his work very expensive as he got big budgets for the DICKINSON, HALFORD and HELLOWEEN productions?

"We are friends for a long time since 1989 in DRIVER, so I did not have to go through the typical business things because he contributed to the album as a friend and that's the difference. So it was not as expensive as it could have been (laughs). I think it was more of a love-record for Roy Z and for myself because for ten years now we wanted to record an album together. In 1989 we wrote about 30 songs together and now we finally got together and we wrote some brand new songs to make this album."

Are there any older songs of the DRIVER times on "Rage Of Creation" you can mention?



"Three or four of the songs are ideas that we had when we were together in DRIVER, so we listened to some parts and they were very strong and we re-wrote some it for the album, but no full DRIVER songs, only parts from that period."

What about the DRIVER cassette that exists, are there any plans to re-release it on cd at last?

"No unfortunately. The 24-track recordings we did with DRIVER were paid for by a management company and that management company does not want to release those recordings. They have the rights. For us we have to get back together and re-record it, so I do not think that's going to happen."

But you have the master tapes in your house.

"Yes. I have a master tape of the mix. I do not have the

24-track recording."

You know the bootleg of it?

"I heard the bootleg and it is a bootleg of a cassette we made at that time. So the quality is poor."

What happened after the "Eye Of The Hurricane" release of IMPELLITTERI in 1998?

"After we finished "Eye Of The Hurricane" we did a Japanese tour, we played the Whiskey in L.A. as well, and after that we wrote the "Crunch" album together. It was released in Japan at the beginning of 2000 and recently in Europe."

"Crunch" sounds different in comparison to the other IMPELLITTERI albums, more modern and more aggressive, not to say a bit too trendy.

"Yes, I think that album was an attempt to be more modern, the main goal of Chris (Impellitteri) was to try to get signed in America, him being the producer he was manipulating the songs through the instruments to try to make it sound more modern."

Do you like it?

"Ah, I like "Crunch", but I like it in a way that (long pause) - I think it's a very good album but it's not really one of my favorite albums right now. And we didn't tour after the album which was a pity. Personally I like "Screaming Symphony" and "Answer To The Master" better. "Crunch" is a bit too experimental and that's



why it's probably not one of my faves." Chris mentioned in an interview that you had to leave IMPELLITTERI because you released a solo album, is that true?

"It's not all true. Chris knew about my solo album for a long time now. It took me three or four years to get the album finished, to get the budget from the record company, start recording and so on. All that time he said it was okay to do a solo album. But when I finally finished the album he changed his mind, he said that it was too Heavy Metal and it would compete with IMPELLITTERI, so he said I can not release it anywhere but Japan. That was unfair because first he said I can do it and then as he heard it he said I can't do it. But I am my own boss, I am an artist for myself and if I can not do both then I am a solo artist. The original plan was to do both, solo albums and IMPELLITTERI albums but he changed his mind and that was it."

So he changed his mind when he remarked that your album is awesome and can easily compete with his writing, so he was jealous, wasn't he?

"He never told me that he heard the album but he told me that he heard from the record company that it was a very good output and a strong Metal album. That was enough for him to say, "Oh wait a minute you can not do it". I have a different philosophy than Chris, it's okay for band members to do solo albums as long as it does not disturb the work with the band. And he thinks if someone does a solo album the band breaks up. When I joined IMPELLITTERI in the first place back in 1991 it was supposed to be a band name and a whole band but the reality is, it's the name of Chris and everything is written around the guitar, he produces the album, he manages the band and it's his band. And every one else in the band does studio jobs or does touring with other bands, so it doesn't make sense to me that I can't do the same. So he fired me I guess."

Honest words. But it seems it was the right decision as you got raving reviews in the European press and you signed to Massacre, so the distribution and promotion should be okay here.

"It was very important for me to find a label that pushes the album. I had like four different labels that wanted the album but Massacre told me they would do priority promotion and they would do a good job for the record. I am really hoping to tour Europe with this album."



It was nearly impossible to see IMPELLITTERI live outside Japan.

"We never played Europe. I think Chris does not want to play live, but I love to play live, that's my favorite thing. He gets nervous or something like that. That's another part of my reason to leave him."

What about the response in Japan so far?

"I am very satisfied with the response but I am disappointed with the promotion from the record company. They told me that I was now a new artist and they will not put a big budget behind my promotion, but I made eight records for them with IMPELLITTERI and they said it doesn't matter, they only put out the album, did only one advertisement in Burn Magazine. But the record sold well, I hope they promote the next one better."

Do you have any sales numbers from Japan?

"It was over 10,000 three months ago and that is really



good if you look at the market and other sales numbers."

I was very surprised to hear Jake E. Lee playing on the album and contributing some classical solos. How come as it's a very long time since he played this kind of stuff on OZZY's "Bark At The Moon"?

"Yeah, I know. We have a friend called Chris Leibundgut, and he talked to him and played him some songs and then he was interested. So he decided to come down and play some solos which was great."

You play some gigs in the States, what is the line-up of the band?

"Yes, we have some gigs here in Florida and play the Ultrasound Metal festival. I have a band here in Florida with some great players and I also invited Roy Z, Jake and Ray Burke and the others to play with me, but their schedule is very busy and it's an open door for the guys on the album to play with me if they have time."

Do you think it's a disadvantage that Rob Rock is named on the album and not a real band name? And do you think people know your name because of your works with M.A.R.S., JOSHUA, PELL or IMPELLITTERI?

"I think so. I made like fifteen albums now but this album sounds different for me as it is something special, so my name can become my trademark as Dio did if I can continue my way."

You contributed to the Randy Rhoads tribute which was only released in Japan.

"Yes, I love his playing on the two OZZY albums, still favorites of mine and if they asked me so I did one song."

And how did your contribution on the AVANTASIA concept album of the EDGUY singer work out?

"Toby Sammet knew about my recordings with AXEL RUDI PELL on "Nasty Reputation" and the M.A.R.S. album, he contacted me and asked if I would sing on his album, he sent me a tape with the melodies and lyrics, I did the track for him and sent it back to him so he could add it to his mix. I did only a piece of a song, singing one person's part of the opera, so it's not that much."

You've always played melodic Metal through your career.

"That's my favorite type of music, I was always a big fan of the early DIO albums, I always like to have strong guitars and a melodic singer."

Tell us about your WARRIOR contribution!

"I recorded the "Rage Of Creation" album in Joe Floyd's Silvercloud studio. Roy Z did some of the HAL-FORD album there and his TRIBE OF GYPSIES albums. Joe was helping to mix the album and once the album was finished he said, "You know, I really love your album and can you help me to record the next

WARRIOR album?", I said, "Don't you have a singer?", he said, "Not anymore." so the deal was done. I always respected WARRIOR because I really loved the "Fighting For The Earth" album and it's a great band, a little heavier than what I usually do, I helped Joe with some melodies and lyrics and I sang in the vein of the M.A.R.S. "Project Driver" album. It's finished and you can await a heavy piece of Metal, I tell you."

JOSHUA's "Intense Defense" album is very rare nowadays, it costs more than 100 German Marks on Metal Markets, is there no chance of a re-release?

"I tried to get the rights to do that, but they said no. They will not do that which is a pity in my opinion. I wish they would."

AXEL RUDI PELL released a best-of recently with two songs from "Nasty Reputation".

"Yes, he sent me a copy. Every few months I talk to him and usually we send each other our albums. Great guy. His new singer has a more Bluesy feeling."

You played with so many great musicians through your career, do you have some favorites?

"I think Roy Z is my favorite because we are great friends and we have a lot of fun when we play together. When the vibe is great and you have an awesome player like Roy Z, everybody should know what a fantastic player he is, Metal is great to play. I really like Chris Impellitteri for his playing, he does one thing and one thing very well. Of course Tony MacAlpine is a great player. One of my memories of the M.A.R.S. recordings was seeing Tony play the piano in the studio and he plays it like his guitar."

Oh, that was an awesome line-up with Sarzo and Aldridge.

"I would like to do another M.A.R.S. album if that would be possible."

Which concert or tour did you like most of all?

"I think the "Screaming Symphony" Japan tour was my favorite. The Japan fans are very loud and they really get into the music, the album was very strong and I thought that the live show was very good. I wish we could tour more with IMPELLITTERI but we basically did only three Japan tours. The "Answer To The Master" tour was good but not more and of course we did one after the "Eye Of The Hurricane" album. We didn't play different venues or different clubs, so it wasn't fresh anymore."

Did you play some shows with JOSHUA in the late 80's?

"No, we played with Joshua for over two years in his studio, writing the JOSHUA album "Intense Defense". We were waiting for Dieter Dierks to produce the album. I joined the band in 1986 and for two years we did the album, for too long."

And with M.A.R.S.?

"No. Before I started recording I played all the time, six times a week in the East Coast clubs. After that I have not been able to tour that much but now with my solo album I really hope to get back out on the road. To me that's one of my favorite things to do - play live."

You play one gig now at a Christian Rock Festival in Germany and you are headlining, from what I've heard it's sold out.

"Yes, this is the first offer I have to play live in Europe, so I am doing this gig to promote my album, the first time I have ever played in Europe, I can't believe it. I really hope to come back and do a full tour then."

Choose your personal all-star Metal band.

"Hmm, a tough one. Maybe a combination of bands. I think the best band for me would be if I am the lead singer for DAMN YANKEES."

Really?

"Yeah, because I love a lot of their vocal harmonies. If you have only lead singers in the band as they have plus writing some heavier Metal songs of course, keep the melodies in the harmonies with heavier music that would be a great band for me."

Heinz Konzett

# The Power Voice Of Metal



# The Underground Path Resurrected

You must feel vindicated these days, because it seems more people know about you now than they did then. Finally!

"I think at that point (in the '80s) France was the only place that knew about us."

**Because Black Dragon was a French label?**

"Yeah, that was probably the reason we were popular in France first. Not only that but we had a French artist doing our cover artwork, Eric Larnoy. I never found out how he died. I heard it was of natural causes but I don't know exactly what. I met with him in 1986 and he had just finished the cover of "The Deluge". I was over there in Paris. It was a fantastic piece of art, I offered him beaucoup bucks for it and he just would not sell it. He said, "No, I don't think I can sell this one, because this is my best work ever!"

**That is a great piece of work. One of the best albums covers ever.**

"I think it's probably my favorite M. ROAD album cover. He was a very nice guy. As a matter of fact, he took me to the graveyard outside Paris where Jim Morrison and a whole bunch of other famous people are buried in. The graveyards are cool in France, they're big, everything's stacked together, it's real tight. They got mausoleums for everybody (laughs). Sorry I got off the subject. I have an affinity for graveyards, I guess."

**You've always sounded like an authentic '70s Metal band, and the band's origins in fact stretch back to that decade. Tell me about the beginnings of MANILLA ROAD.**

"It was when I returned from a little stint in the Marine Corps in 1977. After I got out, that just gave me a more aggressive attitude. When I came back I was all ready to rip people's heads off and shit down their throats. That was what I was trying to achieve with my music at that point. I put the band together with a lineup of unknowns. Of course, I was unknown too, but around here I was sort of known because I'd been a local musician for quite a while. At that point it was Scott Park on bass, his little brother Robert on rhythm guitar, and a guy named Ben Munkirs on drums. We existed in that lineup for about a year or so, and then the drummer left and we played with a bunch of drummers for a while and finally ended up with Rick Fisher in early '79. That was when we wrote all of the material for "Invasion".

**By that point the rhythm guitarist had gone?**

"By the time Rick joined the band, Robert was still with us, but when we started recording the album he kept showing up drunk in the studio, so we threw him out of the band because of it, because he wouldn't stop doing it. Then we recorded the album and released it on our own label, because we couldn't find anybody to sign us. We decided if we were going to put anything out we were going to have to do it ourselves. We, a bunch of young pups, figured out how to become a corporation and started our own label, Roadster Records. We put it out and gathered up all our friends and started calling everybody in record stores all over the place, trying to get 'em to stock the albums on consignment. We did that over a three-state area, Oklahoma, Nebraska and Kansas. Just continued on, not really making a lot of money but playing a lot of gigs. The gig money was how we afforded to keep ourselves going. We went in and recorded another album that we didn't like. We were going to call it "The Dreams Of Eschaton". We shelved it. Had some demos out there but that was it. Monster Records in San Antonio is going to put it out finally."

**I'm surprised you were disappointed with it, I think it's one of the best things you've ever done.**

"Well, thanks."

**You still don't like it?**

"I don't like any of my old stuff (laughs). I mean, I do

but I don't. It's hard for me to go back and listen to my musicianship back then. It seems rather shoddy to me now."

**When did this "Mark Of The Beast" thing happen, around the same time? I have a tape that was labeled as "The Dreams Of Eschaton" demo, and something called the "Mark Of The Beast" unreleased EP.**

"That was actually a song on "The Dreams Of Eschaton" album. You've got one of those weird demos where we put a few songs on a tape and it managed to get to you somehow. There's a bootleg out from Greece that's called "The Dreams Of Eschaton Demo 1981" or something like that, that Black Dragon helped facilitate coming out, which, all they ever had was a demo of that too, so it was obviously burned from a cassette tape."

**So "Mark Of The Beast" is just that long song from the unreleased album.**

"Exactly. Of course, at that time we were feeling epic but we didn't know what it meant yet (laughs)! I mean, we were trying, but we didn't have a solid direction at that point. We were sort of a cross between early DEEP PURPLE and HAWKWIND."

**I hear a lot of old RUSH in your early stuff. There's an especially big Alex Lifeson influence in your guitar work.**

"Oh yeah, definitely. I was a big RUSH fan back then. For me, albums like "Fly By Night", "Caress Of Steel", "2112", man, that's the epitome of epic Rock and Roll



## MANILLA ROAD

music. And of course most people were just trying to get used to Geddy Lee's voice back then! (laughs) But I was loving it, it was cool. The epic approach of the band, things like "The Necromancer" on "Caress Of Steel" is probably still to this day one of my favorite epic pieces. I loved his guitar sound, it was just so cool, he had chops that nobody else was playing. I gravitated towards him real quickly. Before that it was the traditionalists for my era, BLACK SABBATH, DEEP PURPLE, PINK FLYOD, that type of stuff. And I was starting to get into HAWKWIND a lot. Probably all the LSD I did back then (laughs)... If anything's screwed up in my life I can blame that (laughs). So, "Invasion" came out in January of 1980, "The Dreams Of Eschaton"/"Mark Of The Beast" stuff we recorded in 1981. We actually did a three-song stint in the studio that had "Aftershock", "Venusian Sea" and "Time Trap" on it, which also got lobbed into that "Dreams..."/"Mark..." stuff, and none of it ever really got released. Then we did "Metal". It turned a few more heads, locally, and it did well enough for us so we decided to put another one out. Of course, we're talking small numbers. We never pressed more than 4,000 of the first two albums."

**Hence the value of those albums on the collector's**

market.

"Oh yeah. Iron Glory Records is actually going to re-release those first two albums, and some of our other stuff too. They already put out "Crystal Logic" on CD and did a picture disc of that album."

**It's nice to see this happening finally. I think someone into early MERCYFUL FATE and early FATES WARNING could probably get into what you do, though you're obviously quite different than anything else out there.**

"That's what's happening over in Europe right now. So many bands grew up with us, so many musicians that are getting sort of popular now. Every time they do an interview they mention me and M. ROAD."

**There's a guy named Gerrit (Mutz) in SACRED STEEL who's mentioned you in a lot of interviews.**

"Yeah, I've met Gerrit. Before the start of the Bang Your Head Festival in Germany, we went to a club called The Womb. CANNIBAL CORPSE and some other bands were playing there that night. We walked in and someone introduced me to Gerrit and he fell to the floor on his hands and started kissing my boots."

**Literally?**

"Yeah, literally! I was like, "Man, this guy must be toast," and then I found out who he was. He's a really nice guy, he's really cool and everything, but I read the review of his band's album in the newest issue of Metal Maniacs, and hey, I hate to say it, but I agree (laughs)! He's a very nice guy, but man, he needs a little bit of vocal instruction. The Alvin And The Chipmunks thing in the review was appropriate."

**When you formed, you were immediately toying with a fantasy/epic/medieval element, but there were a few of the more straight Rock songs, like "Street Jammer" and "Feeling Free Again" on the early albums. They eventually disappeared after "Crystal Logic" and at that point your stuff was exclusively involved in the dark, mystical Metal world, whatever you want to call it.**

"Weird, bizarre stupid shit (laughs)!"

**Yeah (laughs)! But not many bands were doing that at that point. Maybe IRON MAIDEN, maybe some of the early MANOWAR stuff. But you were right on the cusp of that.**

"I was pretty heavy into MAIDEN at that point too. That was around the first album and the "Killers" era. I was getting into those. I thought Paul Di'anno was really cool. We were definitely one of the first Metal bands trying to do that. I was really into "Fly To The Rainbow"-era SCORPIONS, and of course my HAWKWIND influence was for the length of the songs, that was always stuck in there. I was reading an awful lot of Robert E. Howard, the guy that wrote the Conan stories, and I was always into Edgar Allen Poe and Lovecraft, so I always had that dark imagery floating around in me. That's pretty much what I was starting to key into, more than anything. One thing that I always strived for- at first I never thought we sounded heavy enough. Around here there were really no such things as Metal bands at that time. We were sort of the forerunners in our own local market, of bringing that type of music to the point of being listened to. In 1982, when "Metal" came out, I was working as a deejay at the University radio station here. I was going to Wichita State University at the time, studying to be an anthropology major. I was doing a gig at KMWU radio, I co-produced a show called "After Midnight." We were probably the first people in Kansas to play really hardcore stuff. I was introducing stuff like early ACCEPT and I. MAIDEN. We were trying to get the music known locally, so people could find out what they were missing. We were getting promos from every record company back then, even the

It seems like all the very best bands in Heavy Metal receive the least amount of respect and recognition. It seemed that way for the Wichita, Kansas-based MANILLA ROAD, until very recently. Though they've been around for nearly 25 years, the band is just now seeing a huge resurgence in interest. The band's excellent new album, "Atlantis Rising", is available on Iron Glory Records, and by the end of the year, all of their previous nine records will have been reissued (at the time of this writing, "Crystal Logic", "Mystification", and "The Deluge" had all resurfaced). The band's Metal is thick with mythos, mystery, and darkness, and all road-work, from 1980's "Invasion" and 1982's wonderfully-titled Metal to 2001's "Atlantis Rising", is absolutely worth your time if you're looking for timeless, original, visionary Metal. We tracked down band leader/ guitarist/ vocalist/ songwriter Mark Shelton, who is currently enjoying this renewed interest in all things Manilla...



small ones were sending out stuff, so I had a good chance to listen to everything that was on the market at the time. So I was starting to tap into strange stuff and was reading strange stuff and studying strange stuff in school, and I think that's pretty much what set me off on the idea of the direction of lyrics and style of music that we ended up in."

It really became MANILLA ROAD World, you knew when you were buying "Crystal Logic", "Open The Gates" and "The Deluge" that you were getting something unique.

"We were striving for that. Like I said, nobody was doing it around here, so we were trying to be something that was totally different, be on the cutting edge, which I think we were but we sort of got passed up in the shuffle somehow (laughs). Probably my voice, I'm..."

That's my next question, actually. Your voice is a peculiar one. And the productions were super-raw, definitely more raw than what some of the other Metal bands were doing. Do you think those are the reasons you remained a "cult" band as opposed to a more widespread success?

"Yeah, I think you're probably hitting the nail on the head there. For one thing, the budget had an important part to do with the raw productions. Plus, once again, the studio we were working in, we were all trying new stuff at the same time. There was nobody in this area of the country to befriend us and help us out. So we were taking chances. A trial-and-error thing. That's why we



shelved a lot of that material in '81, we felt like it was an error instead of a good trial (laughs)! But it turns out that a lot of people appreciated what was going on back then. At the time I wasn't happy with it because I was looking for a different sound. "Crystal Logic" actually came a lot closer to the sound I was actually hearing in my head. Unforgivably, I kept on writing one tune per album that we thought might have radio airplay possibilities. There's your "Feeling Free Again." That was the last time I ever did that, because at that point, after that album, I decided, "Screw the radio, we'll just do what we do, and if people like it that's cool, and if they don't, that's cool too." As far as the voice goes, everything I've ever read about my vocals is that either people love it or hate it. There's no in-between. There's no gray area. It's either "Yeah, he's great" or "Man, he sucks." I think that's just the individuality that we started to grab in the music. It's like any other band that has a really unusual singer. Like RUSH, Geddy had a really different voice, and it grated on some people. "Oh, he's so squeaky, I can't handle it!" And other people were like, "It's cool, it's different, it's new." I was also a big JUDAS PRIEST fan back then. I saw your interview in Metal Maniacs with Rob Halford and you mentioned one of your favorite J. PRIEST albums was "Stained Class".

Absolutely.

"Dude, I still play the sucker even now. "Sin After Sin" and "Stained Class" are probably my favorite J. PRIEST albums ever. The way I found J. PRIEST was because I was a big fan of good drummers, and I knew that Simon Phillips was a kick-ass studio drummer. I just happened to see his name on an album ("Sin After Sin"), I didn't know who the band was, and I thought, "Well, I'll give this a try." Once I heard that I was like, "I gotta find out if this band has any more stuff out, I gotta listen to this!"

They definitely pushed Heavy Metal up a notch back then. BLACK SABBATH was definitely Metal and very heavy, but PRIEST took the sound to a whole different plateau.

"Oh definitely. Back in their, what was it you called it, the "satin/ bellbottoms days"? "Rocka Rolla" was really good epic stuff. And then "Sad Wings Of Destiny" started picking up a few different things. Very good stuff. I latched onto everything they did after hearing "Sin After Sin". Like you, during "Turbo" and stuff I started losing interest. But man, I really like the new HALFORD album."

So, back to "Crystal Logic"...

"Right! (laughs) We were starting to sound more like what I was thinking we should sound like. We got lucky, we were starting to tap into Important Records distribu-

tion here in the States. This guy from Sweden that had a distribution company got in touch with me and we were starting to ship albums over here. Some of those made it to Denmark and Holland and places like that. Somehow, in Holland, we ended up receiving some award in the mail for being the best album of the year, for "Crystal Logic". And we were like, "Huh? We didn't know we had enough distribution over there to matter." We were actually in the studio recording the "Open The Gates" album at that time. Rick had already left the band, and we'd gotten Randy (Foxe) on drums. It was still that ongoing search for heavier sounds, and Rick was wanting to stay in the more mellow, spacey type stuff, and Scott and I were wanting to get fast and heavy, that's why we ended up getting rid of Rick and getting Randy instead. And that's when Black Dragon called us and offered us the deal. They were a really good label at first. They treated us well, we got our money like we were supposed to; they had good intentions. As a matter of fact, I was over there in '86 and hung out with 'em for awhile, and the owner of the label played me a tape and said, "What do you think of this? These guys sent us a demo." After I listened to it I said, "Man, you absolutely have to sign these guys. If you don't sign these guys you're a fucking idiot." It was CANDLEMASS. That's how "Epicus Doomicus Metalicus" got on their label. They weren't really going to sign them, they just wanted me to hear it because they thought it was different. Of course, everybody knows CANDLEMASS at this point. That's definitely one of the classic Metal albums of all time, as far as I'm concerned."

So now we have "Open The Gates", you probably had a larger budget, but still the sound was very raw, so I guess that was just your natural attack. You were doing this epic stuff but it wasn't overly slick or anything. You kept it dirty.

"Basically it was just bringing a bunch of Marshall stacks into the studio and cranking them up to ten. That's what we were doing. That's what it was about, just as loud and brutal as you could get it. That's why the production quality on that album is still real raw and rough."

You still kept a very epic and Progressive edge, something like "The Ninth Wave" is very atmospheric, kind of grandiose. Something Rick probably would like.

"Yeah. And Rick was getting a little touchy about my lyric content too. He was raised in the Catholic school, so after a while he started telling me I was getting a little too close to being a demonic type of guy. I was like, "Man, it's just lyrics, it's entertainment, c'mon!" It was a good thing that he left and we got Randy, because it turned us into the direction we wanted to go."

"The Deluge" is next, and that one was really a pinnacle. The production was better, the songs are all great, the best album cover. "Divine Victim," "Hammer Of The Witches," the title track, just a really classic album.

"Yeah, our production started getting better. We started figuring out that if all the instruments were semi-audible, it sounds better! (laughs) The title cut on "The Deluge" is still one of my favorite epic pieces that we wrote. That album was at the peak of our capabilities at the time. Playing that stuff live was totally brutal, but it was a lot of fun. We were really turning a lot of heads here, locally, and over in Europe we were starting to gain a lot of popularity at that time too. And we were sellin' what we thought was a lot of albums, too, somewhere in the neighborhood of 30,000. We thought we were rolling on cloud nine at that point."

And of course you come back and your next album, "Mystification" was a disaster, sound-wise. I remember hearing it for the first time and being completely disappointed. The songs are great, but the production is horrible.

"That all started with Black Dragon. They told us that we needed to get away from the little underground studio in Kansas, go someplace that was capable of doing the big production thing. We got hooked up with these guys that had supposedly worked on ZZ TOP albums and knew what they were doing. Big-time guys. They were supposed to book us time in Ardent Studios, which is one of the big studios in Memphis, Tennessee. We get there and meet the guys and we find out that they couldn't even secure us time in Ardent. They ended up getting us time in Al Green's studio. We're working with these guys, and we find out that one of the guys was second engineer on a ZZ TOP album. That was their claim to fame. They sort of misrepresented themselves to us, but at that point we'd already spent a bunch of money, we were already there, so we thought we'd give

it a try. Al Green Studio wasn't that bad of studio, but it had old equipment, their microphone rack was just terrible. I think they only had a dozen mikes, some of them were old and shoddy, and we had to secure as many decent ones as we could to put on the drums. It was a clusterfuck was what it was, man. We went ahead and did the thing. They kept pushing us out of the studio around midnight every night. We thought, "These guys are early to bed, late to rise type of guys." We came to find out that they were pushing us out of the studio and using all the time we had booked to do advertising jingles for their production company. We got upset about that, we argued with them a lot, we were pretty pissed off. When we finally got it all done and came back to Kansas, we started checking out the tapes and arranging them in final order for the mastering, and we were like, "Hey, where's 'Up From The Crypt'? I don't have 'Up From The Crypt' but I've got this advertisement song here." So we ended up traveling back to Memphis, bitched 'em out, and made sure we got "Up From The Crypt" on tape. They had to actually sit down and remix it, because they'd wiped it somehow, they put this jingle over the top of our master of the song. That's when we had the proof in our hands that they were screwing us for our time. We really went off of 'em, threatening to sue them and everything, so they remixed the song for us real quick and sent us on our way. And thank god for Denis Gulbey and Sentinel Steel, because he took the thing, went over and baked the tapes at Ampex, took it to Trax East and worked with some guys who knew how to take old fucked up shit and make it sound good, and now it sounds a lot better than it did."

Does it ever. I rediscovered the album because of it.

"Denis is a man of vision. Anybody that spends that kind of money on producing a reissue of something is remarkable. He takes a lot of risks, a lot of chances, but man, the Metal world needs people like him (Sure!-Laurent). He's a quality dude. I still talk to him on a weekly basis. He's been a real help in my direction, even now. Thanks a lot, Denis."

Now what about "Out Of The Abyss". I have to be honest, I really don't like that album much- but "Helicon" is massive! I don't think M. ROAD worked well as a Thrash band, which seemed to be what you were going for on that album.

"That's a strange album for us too. A lot of people said we were just trying to tap into the Thrash market at that point. But we had made a promise to ourselves and our fans a long time back that we were going to always make every album different, and we were going to try and always progress to heavier, faster stuff. It just happened to be another one of those stages where we were stepping up the pace and the heaviness. Everything we'd done at that point had been so serious since "Metal". The last song we did that was tongue-in-cheek was "Defender," because it was about the video game. Everything else got real serious after that. And when we put "Whitechapel" together, it was a tongue-in-cheek



look at Jack The Ripper. Randy was just remarkable on that album. He could play faster than I could, which is hard to do on the drums. It was one of those albums that just happened to be where we were at in our minds at that time. It really wasn't that we were specifically trying to tap into the Thrash market, it was just that we were trying something new and different again. But I understand what you're saying. It was almost like we stepped out of our boots on that one. We realized that. Strangely enough it was one of our better selling albums, but I think some of that was due to the fact Leviant had pretty good distribution. Plus we had a publicist at that point, we had more promotion going for us at that time. I think another thing that hit a lot of M. ROAD fans as bizarre was my Rob Halford/ King Diamond vocal thing on there."

I like that.

"Yeah, a lot of people ask me, "Did you have somebody come in and do that?" But, no, I could actually do that.



I can't do it anymore, mind you. At one point on tour I ripped one of my vocal cords. I had to have that repaired slightly, but I couldn't get all the surgery done that I was supposed to, because they were afraid it was going to change the sound of my voice completely. I developed chronic laryngitis in 1984 when we were recording "Open The Gates". I was really sick when we were recording the album. We had this little window of studio time, and I was forced to do all the vocals during those sessions, and there was only one day out of the whole week or so that we were in the studio that I had a good enough voice to record with. So I sang all the tracks on "Open The Gates" in one day. I ended up the next day with no voice whatsoever. I recovered from it, but I was real hoarse, and when we started going out and doing live shows, I'd sound great the first night, then the second night I'd have hardly any voice, and the third night we'd be playing instrumental. So I finally went to some vocal specialists, they put me on steroids, started checking it out, and they said I didn't have nodes but I definitely screwed up my vocal cords a little bit and told me I had chronic laryngitis. They put me on a weird diet, told me not to eat things like bananas, no high-potassium foods. So I went along like that. While we were touring on "Mystification", we were doing the recording for "Live Roadkill", and I had done a few too many shows too many nights in a row, really busting it out, and next thing I knew my throat was really hurting and it was very hard to sing or talk, and I went back and found out I had torn one of my vocal cords. I had to shut up and not even whisper for 14 days, stuff like that. I came back and had this super-high falsetto thing (laughs)! And then I re-took my vocal cords with "The Circus Maximus", and that was the last time I could ever do a falsetto note in my life. I have no falsetto voice now because I ripped it so bad this last time.

Luckily that's not central to your voice. It was just a small part at that point.

"Yeah, it would've killed somebody like King Diamond or Rob Halford. It would've been all over at that point. Luckily I only did that on one album (laughs)."

You then went back to a more traditional, epic scope on "The Courts Of Chaos".

"Yeah. Randy was starting to experiment with electronic triggers for the drums. That's where the weird drum sound and production came from on "The Courts...". It started sounding too mechanical for me. At the same time, we realized that "Out Of The Abyss" was really over-the-top for us, it was in a direction that most of our fans weren't used to, and a direction that we weren't really used to either, so we decided to go back to that more anthemic, majestic style that we had been doing before. Randy was a good keyboard player and guitarist also. He came up with this idea that he could play keyboards and drums at the same time. We thought, "Let's entertain this. I've never seen anybody do that. If he can do it and pull it off, sure, that's great." And sure enough, he could. He had this huge drum cage that his drums were mounted on, and he mounted some keyboards on the left, up above his hi-hat, and he'd play the keyboards with his left hand and do the drum parts just using the right hand and his feet. We weren't doing all the songs like that, but songs like "D.O.A." and "Prophecy," that's how he was doing that. And we could pull it off live too, which was totally blowing everybody away. At the same time, him and Scott were not getting along at all. Scott was turning into a vivid alcoholic, and it was starting to really show in his live performance. Randy was very upset about it, and I wasn't happy about it either, but Scott and I went so far back, we started the band together, so it was hard for me to sit him down and say, "Hey, you're fucking up, I need to slap you." It got to the point that Randy wouldn't even be in the studio for "The Courts..." if Scott was going to be there. So it got very hard for me to work with the situation and that's when I decided that it wasn't working. I didn't want to throw Scott out of the band, because that's what Randy wanted me to do, and I just couldn't bring myself to do that. And our popularity seemed to really be waning, and we knew Black Dragon was screwing us at that point. They weren't paying us royalties, they were pressing more and selling more than what they were telling us, so I decided we were going to disband. That's where CIRCUS MAXIMUS came from. I was looking for musicians to do the solo thing with, do a real guitar-oriented thing, and it ended up that those guys were extremely talented writers. After

we had written several songs, they were like, "Let me write the lyrics to this one" and "let me sing the vocals to this one," and I said, "Yeah, cool," and before you knew it we decided we were a band instead of a solo thing. So that's how that came about. It was never meant to be M. ROAD. When we did the deal with Black Dragon, they asked me, "What do you think if we call this MANILLA ROAD?," and I said, "Absolutely not, it doesn't even sound like M. ROAD, there's maybe two songs that sound a little bit like M. ROAD, the rest of it's totally different." A lot more accessible sounding. Well, they put it out as M. ROAD anyway. The band, CIRCUS MAXIMUS, stayed together longer than we intended, we did a lot of touring locally. We actually had a very large following locally. We played live for two or three years, longer than I intended.

What started M. ROAD back up again?

"After CIRCUS MAXIMUS, Randy and I started talking again, but Scott had never squared around. He'd actually gotten himself in more trouble, and was in trouble with the law and stuff. He'd already hocked all his equipment. So Randy and I decided we try to put the ROAD back together, and we ended up with a guy named Harvey Patrick playing bass for us for two years or so. We did a bunch of live gigs and we were just about to the point of recording the next M. ROAD album, and Harvey ended up leaving due to some heavy marital problems, and we were close to his family, and we kept him too close to home. Randy and I decided to start working on building our own studio and doing it ourselves. At some point Randy started losing interest. Too many years doing

it. We didn't do anything for a long time. That's when Bryan Patrick (Harvey's brother), the road manager, he also played drums, that when we decided, "Well, let's work on something different." We started recording stuff, brought in another bass player, Mark Anderson, that had been bugging me for about two years, "Please let me play with you!" Finally I gave him a chance and he sounded really good. So it was like, "Yeah, let's do some shit." In the middle of all this we picked up another drummer, Troy Olson, he played with us live in Germany at the Bang Your Head festival. Brian is pretty essential to us vocally, as far as backing me up, he can hit the high notes I can't anymore. He's not very comfortable performing in front of people. He's a really good studio musician when he's got his friends around him, but when you put him in front of a crowd his drum chops get real shaky. He's totally different when he's just singing, he's a maniac if you give him a mic, but put him behind a drum kit and he gets real stage-shy (laughs)."

So you're comfortable calling this M. ROAD?

"Absolutely. It was pretty much everything the way I would write a M. ROAD album. And everybody at the Bang Your Head festival (which took place in Germany during the summer 2000) was treating us like we weren't any different than before. Once Troy did a little drum solo in the first part of the show, everybody was cool with it. And Mark's an excellent bass player, he's actually better than Scott was. I think they accepted them really well. Everybody that did interviews with us afterwards asked them as many questions as they asked me."

How's new material coming, what can you tell me

Mark Shelton— B. Y. H. 2000



about it?

"First let me say we've got a bunch of reissues coming out. All of our old albums are being released again. "Mystification" is on Sentinel Steel. Dragonheart is putting out "Open The Gates". Underground Symphony is putting out "The Deluge". Monster Records is putting out all that "Dreams Of Eschaton"/"Mark Of The Beast" stuff. Iron Glory has "Crystal Logic" already out

there, and will be putting out "Invasion", "Metal", "Out Of The Abyss", "The Courts Of Chaos" and "The Circus Maximus". And we've signed a three-album deal with Iron Glory at this point. We've finished tracking our new stuff. We're hoping for a February or March 2001 release date. The name of the album is going to be "Atlantis Rising". All of the album, except for one song, is actually a concept. It's sort of like part two of "The Deluge". I didn't feel like I said it all. When I was doing "The Deluge", I was totally intrigued with the myths that I was working with at that point. This new album is based on mythology, but it also has a Robert E. Howard adventure/fantasy story in there. So it's a little bit of me, a little bit of mythology. It's definitely M. ROAD."

(I managed to drop the phone here) Oops, sorry, dropped the phone.

"That's alright. I've been dropped before (laughs). You should've had kicked me while I was down there!"

Well, my name's not Black Dragon (both laughing hysterically). Just kidding.

(laughs) No, that was a good one! (even more laughing)

Tell me more about this festival, I heard the fans there were treating you like the BEATLES.

"It was a total trip. We stepped off the plane in Stuttgart, Germany and there's all these people waiting for us, and they've got banners. People from Italy and Greece too. These guys were just mauling us. But it was cool. The festival was just phenomenal. We get there and the festival, along with Iron Glory, had lined up a dozen or so interviews for us. They started selling our T-shirts the morning of the first day of the festival, and they sold out in two hours. We were like, "Wow, we're not even playing today." Our shirts are red with black lettering and artwork, real atypical of Metal shirts. Usually they're black. So these shirts stuck out like a sore thumb. The joke over there was that everyone thought the fire brigade was out, because in Germany, the fire brigade guys wear red shirts. When I was backstage tuning my guitars, I looked out front and there was this sea of red M. ROAD shirts right in front of the stage, and I'm like, "My god, what's going on here?" Two bands before we were even on they were all out there chanting "Manilla Road! Manilla Road!" We were freakin' out. It was just remarkable, and they were crazy, they were fanatics. A guy had written on a big piece of cardboard "Shark Attack" and "Sweden Welcomes MANILLA ROAD!"

Was there a time when you thought everyone had just forgotten about the band, like you were lost to obscurity?

"Absolutely. For most of those interim years when I wasn't doing much of anything, I absolutely thought there was nothing left for me, that it was all a thing of the past and that I had my heyday. And that's all changed. I think what did that was, some people had gotten a hold of me for some retrospective interviews, and I mentioned that all our stuff was out of contract, and the next thing I knew I was getting emails and phone calls to do reissues. The thing that really freaks me out the most is that all the magazines that thought we were shut back in the old days think we're great now."

What songs will you always play live, things that are definitive M. ROAD songs, songs you'll never take out of the set?

"The songs we always had to play live, locally- if we did a show and didn't do "Cage Of Mirrors," we were in trouble. And we have a thing called the "Quadrilogy": "Masque Of The Red Death"/"Death By The Hammer"/"Hammer Of The Witches"/"Witches' Brew." We put them all together and called it "Masque Of The Red Death By The Hammer Of The Witches' Brew." Those are songs we always did live, and we do the "Quadrilogy" even now. It's not a medley. They're done in their entirety. We did the "Quadrilogy" at the German festival. We did "Necropolis" and "The Riddle Master" in Germany. Those were deeply appreciated, but it's hard to go back and do those real old songs. I've played them so many bloody times. When you play something too many times it becomes machine-like instead of having the passion in it. I prefer playing things that I'm really grooving on so that you get the passion and the feel."

Do you play "Divine Victim"?

"No. The only songs we have in our lineup from "The Deluge" are "Hammer Of The Witches" and "Taken By Storm." Part of our problem is we've got so much material, in order to do even a two or three hour show, you've still got to pick and choose everything. We saw in a lot of the reviews of the Bang Your Head thing that people are a little upset that we didn't play "Dreams Of Eschaton." For one thing, it's almost a ten-minute song,



and when you've got only 45 minutes to play, you gotta try and jam in as much as you can, and doing a bunch of epic tunes that are real long, what are you going to do, go out there and play three or four songs and say goodnight? That becomes a bit of a problem. Of course we've got all our new music too. We're playing everything from our new album, "Atlantis Rising", plus we've been writing another album. We're only about three songs away from having the next album completely written. We just try and pick and choose something from every album. We don't do anything from "The Circus Maximus" because it wasn't a real M. ROAD album. And we don't do anything from "Out Of The Abyss" because we know there's an awful lot of controversy about whether that's an album people like or not. We just didn't want to take a chance. We do "Up From The Crypt," we always do that one. I like doing just about anything off the "Mystification" album, the songs are killer live. Now that the cds come out remixed and remastered, I'm proud of the whole thing."

**Will Iron Glory be putting out "Live Roadkill"?**  
"Actually, no. We're piecing off a few of those songs to put as extra cuts on some of the stuff. Like when we signed to Dragonheart for "Open The Gates", they're going to have a couple of "Open The Gates" songs from "Live Roadkill" as extra cuts. And "The Deluge" is going to have "Dementia" as the extra live cut. They're not going to replace the studio cuts, they're just going to be extra cuts."

**Someone tried telling me they heard Greece has a Manilla Road national holiday. What's that about?**  
"I don't know. It's a fact that I get mail and email from Greek people all the time, and everybody I've talked to, they treat us like kings over there. They think us and CIRITH UNGOL are the stuff. I think it's probably just like saying we're a household name."

**That's really cool, because I've always seen you guys as a kind of companion band to CIRITH UNGOL in many ways: a singer not everybody can handle, always existing on a cult level with obsessed fans,**

**dealing with epic subject matter, the awesome album covers.**

"Definitely. They were into the Michael Moorcock stuff. And there's a lot of bands that people say are like us, like THE LORD WEIRD SLOUGH FEG, stuff like that. I'm not sure I see that or hear that in their music so much, but maybe that's because they're a three-piece also."

**Do you still have your metal guitar?**

"Yes I do. I played it last night at practice. I'm sitting here looking at it right now."

**Is it heavy?**

"Very heavy! (laughs) It'll bruise your shoulder if you wear it for a whole show."

**How much does it weigh?**

"Here, I'll pick it up. (picks it up, judges the weight) I'd say at least 40 pounds, probably, it's as heavy as could be."

**That's metal.**

"Yep."

**Do you keep up with Metal today, the newer bands?**

"I do quite a bit, but not as much as I used to. When I'm writing music I tend to not listen to a lot of other stuff, that way I don't accidentally transfer somebody's chops into my stuff. I'm like that sometimes, I'll find a riff that I really like and accidentally a riff I've just written ends up sounding like that. I really like Ripper Owens and



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the new J. PRIEST lineup. "Jugulator" is a great album. I love the HALFORD album "Resurrection", I think it's a good lineup for him, he's sounding good, he's still got the voice. I like the "Nemesis" album by GRIP INC., I'm not really fond of their other stuff as much, it's still good, but the "Nemesis" album I like very cut on it. And I'm still into VOIVOD. I love VOIVOD. They actually played here in Wichita on the "Negatron" tour and I went and stood right in front of Piggy all night long. They're fantastic. Even though Snake's not with 'em anymore, I think the lineup's working really well for them. "Phobos" was very good. I've got everything they ever put out. Don't really like their real early stuff that much, it's sort of grungy, but from "Killing Technology" on, I'm pretty hooked on 'em. And I still find obscure HAWKWIND releases, they still seem to be out there doing it. So I buy 'em! (laughs)"

**Most generic question for last, but in your case I think it's warranted: How did you get your name? It's very strange.**

"You mean MANILLA ROAD?"

**No, Mark Shelton. (laughs)**

"My mom (laughs). Well, it's a bunch of things. It was a name that everybody would ask us what the hell it meant, so it would give interviewers something to ask about. And it seemed to work, I've been asked about it every interview I've ever done. And back when we were first starting there was DEEP PURPLE, BLACK SABBATH, PINK FLOYD, so I think that might have had something to do with it. The color thing. Another concept is something of ours, that it's the road of light. But there's actually a highway in Colorado called Manilla Road, it's off of Highway 75, and I actually traveled it quite a bit, and that's where I first saw it. We did a lot of partying on that road. Saw a lot of visions on that road, you might say."

Jeff Wagner

Out of all the French bands that we have praised in Snakepit, HOLSTER is certainly one of the most obscure acts of the whole French Metal scene. Formed in 1979, they only did two demo tapes in 1983 and 1984 and appeared on a hard to find Belgium compilation. 15 years later we have traced and found the band leader, former member and guitar player Luc Epaulard, who agreed to talk about that extraordinary outfit.

## HOLSTER

**Can you tell us briefly what was the event that got you playing music to the point that you formed your own band when you were only 15 years old?**

"Well the tradition is that you start by saying "The story has begun...", that's a bit like that...since I was a little child, I had the opportunity to sing and to be in a musical environment because my father was involved in different choirs with my mother. Around the time when I was 13 years old- as I was quite good in doing carpentry and cabinetmaking- I started making my own guitar, a copy of the Gibson SG, Angus Young's fave guitar, "The" Angus Young. My cousin, Manu (Emmanuel Verbeke) who later became HOLSTER's drummer, was making on his side a copy of a BC Rich which was mainly used by AEROSMITH at that time. So following a series of electric and electronic tests of those instruments, we got the idea to form a band. And since we had made copies of those Gibson and BC Rich guitars, why shouldn't we imitate AC/DC and KISS who were showing the way?!"

**Can you tell us a bit more about the band's formation in 1979? Did you and Emmanuel have a precise idea of what you wanted to do in the beginning?**

## Buried But Not Forgotten!

"When we started the band, a problem happened to Manu as he had to redirect himself towards drums, which he did in a short period of time. Drumming seemed more "physical" to him and easier to play. I think he did a hella great job, he worked really hard and soon became a great drummer. But, yeah shortly we had in mind a precise idea of what we wanted to do. We started the band and step by step added members to the two piece band we were at first."

**What were your musical influences at first? Did you have in your set list covers mainly or did you already have your own material?**

"Our influences were the bands that were around at the time like AC/DC, KISS, DEEP PURPLE, AEROSMITH, SCORPIONS, and then the bands from the early '80s, JUDAS PRIEST, DEF LEPPARD, IRON MAIDEN, MOTORHEAD, SAXON, MOTLEY CRUE... Every week, a major band was releasing an album and those different waves enriched our songwriting. In the early stages, we did one or two covers but we soon started to write our own stuff. It was the logical step as everything that we tried to that point was working."

**Did you immediately come up with the name HOLSTER or did you exist as a band with some other names? Did that name have a particular meaning for you?**

"We didn't have a band name at first. It's just after a long period of rehearsing- which was six or 7 hours long every Saturday afternoon, that we started looking for a name. It had to be a band's choice, so a bunch of names were suggested and finally we decided for HOLSTER and for a logo inspired by the great Druillet. The name didn't have much meaning but it sounded like our influences and could be used by a band singing in French or in English."

**During 1982, Frederic Pierre (bass) and Franck Simonet (vocals) joined the band, how did you hook up with them and how did it work out musically speaking with those guys?**

"At that point we had already exhausted a few bassists, guitarists and singers and one day at high school I started talking with Fred. His sensibility made him choose the bass, a noble and powerful instrument. Early on Fred tried to bring original elements with his bass. I also met Franck in private high school. His first reaction was to join the band for fun and doing musical experimentation just one Saturday afternoon... he came back the next Saturday and then the next one he became

HOLSTER's singer for quite a long time."

**Until Pierrot (Pierre Audifred) (guitar) joined HOLSTER in May '83 and Sylvain Tarot replaced Fred on bass which finally brought a stable line up, a lot of line up changes happened in HOLSTER, what were the reasons behind that? Was it for motivation reasons or was it due to relationship problems and musical differences?**

"There was two types of replacements. Those following a lack of motivation and those due to obligations. Like, five or six guitarists and three bassists had to fulfil military obligations so we had to replace 'em. Also we were all extremely demanding and extremely involved, so the lack of motivation in that intellectual environment is generally fatal."

**It was extremely rare back then- and still nowadays,**



**to see a French Heavy Metal band with three guitar players. Can you tell us when Yoyo (Luc Dutter) the third guitarist joined HOLSTER and what motivated the band to add this third guitarist? Do you think it was that necessary?**

"Yoyo's arrival is the result of several factors; the envy to experiment a line up ala MOLLY HATCHET, knowing Yoyo by a common friend and the fact that Sylvain seemed less and less motivated. Musically speaking, we didn't win that much from that addition and Yoyo didn't stay long. He was an exceptional guitar player, his influences were more Bluesy with Hendrix and Clapton. His playing was really different than Pierrot's playing and mine, his musical approach was really creative but also extremely fluctuated from one practice to another. At this time, I was the band leader and required a lot of meticulousness and precision. That was maybe too



harsh for him, so he never really became integrated."

Did the fact that you open on several occasions for H-BOMB (May '82) or BLASPHEME (June and October '83) helped the band growing? Did it open some doors that remained closed until that day?

"Those experiences are still in my mind and make me think that everything is possible, you just have to do the right things to obtain what you want. In fact we got different offers which never became reality because of those line up changes. TRUST's producer had auditioned us, like BLASPHEME's one too... At the same time, we were all students, working on our studies and I have to admit that I didn't do everything I could to make HOLSTER successful. It would have been easy to go further but the time was lacking and I didn't feel that the other members were that determined either. Carrying more than a ton of material every weekend for one or a few more shows, setting the material on stage and then carrying back the stuff to the rehearsing room... all those things can break the motivation as time goes on!"

During October 1983, you recorded your first three song demo featuring "Holocauste", "Passé" and "Riders", what sort of financial and technical means did you have for that recording? What kind of response did you get for that?

"We entered a studio in Cachan (near Paris) for 3000FF a day (around 860DM). The recording material was ridiculous, a Fostex B16 with three mikes all fighting together (laughs). The studio was a cool place and so was the technician. That said, I have nowadays more material and of better quality in my own home studio than what they had back then. The response was quite good as we had received letters from the whole world asking us information and play the tape on radio stations. Radio stations from Holland, Germany, USA, UK... also people from everywhere wrote us and we sold a few copies of that tape to them."

Did you have contacts with the other bands from the Parisian scene?

"A few contacts with MACH 3, H-BOMB, THE ACTORS, BLASPHEME... As a whole, the contacts were good but yet there was a bit of jealousy from some towards others motivated by the competition. I remember a show where a musician from another band had a lot of fun as we were on stage, removing and putting back a fusible from the sound system five or six times, turning off and putting on the sound system again... a bit destabilizing at first, but we learned a lot from that."

A year later, in October 1984, you recorded a second demo, a four track affair, featuring "Le Prince Du Lac", "Artifices", "Cavalier Noir" and "Les Rois Fous", which is as far as I'm concerned the best one. Was it following this effort that you got contacted by Whiplash Records from Belgium to appear on the compilation Lp "Metal Onslaught"-featuring also European acts like EVIL PRAYER, ELIXIR, STORMBRINGER...? Do you know why we have never seen that album on the market and what were your feelings towards that album?

"Well that whole story is a part of the things where we weren't fully implicated into that, at least due to the fact that we weren't totally motivated to become successful. That looked interesting, but instead of taking our car to meet our Belgium friends, we didn't do anything. The compilation got released and...effectively I've never seen it! I'm a bit disappointed to never have received a copy of that vinyl. That said, one more time, our lack of implication is responsible for what happened for a huge part, we were too tied up to the musical side of things and not enough to the business and its implications."

Did you receive offers from French labels?

"We had bits and pieces of offers which never went further due to the line up changes. But globally nothing serious. One more time, we should have been more implicated in the business to have a chance to do a more professional career."

Did you ever think about releasing a self financed record like ATTENTAT ROCK did with their first effort?

"This is an eventuality that I considered at one time, but I was too modest to push the idea further as I thought the whole thing wouldn't go to the end. HOLSTER has disintegrated slowly and that was after HOLSTER that I

produced my first four albums with a precise idea: putting on CD the songs I was writing to keep a trace, which I couldn't have done with HOLSTER. It's a bit sad because hundred of songs have stayed in the boxes, some played one time, others played live very often."

How do you explain the fact that the French press from that period never showed any interest in HOLSTER? The only article ever written about the band to my knowledge appeared in the German fanzine, Speed Attack...

"One more time, the lack of implication in the business side of things. I was writing the majority of the music, Franck was writing the lyrics, we were looking for concert halls, we were doing the shows and we were going back practicing. As a band we didn't have the executive line apart from having fun. Personally, I regret that and I regretted it back then also. Speed Attack is one of the many mags and radio stations who contacted us and Olivier Quinet, our manager at that time- Hi Olivier! This guy is a working monster and you can count on him that whatever happens, he answered. We didn't think about exploiting the path unfortunately." Did the fact that the other French band HUSTLER had a band name relatively close sounding to yours and that they released a single and one album do some harm to the band career?

"This name doesn't sound familiar to me, so I'm not sure it had an impact. Let's talk about a career when something real has been released and in HOLSTER's case, that career start was extremely limited!"

When did you break up and for which reasons exactly?

"It was around 1989/ 1990 that the separation happened. I moved with my girlfriend in a house where there was a huge practice room where I put all types of Marshall amplifiers that they have built with a huge sound system but HOLSTER broke up. Too many de-

sounding alot like AC/DC, JUDAS PRIEST, End of the hostilities in 1993 for BLACK VELVET, Serge and Christophe leaving for a more professional musically speaking future. I also moved in '93 for a new house where I set up my recording studio and practice room as the idea was to be able to record when and what I want and having "swing wing" bands. At that point I formed two bands, SHAK' ALE, a Blues/Rock band with a singer Thierry Feillault singing in French, a second guitarist very eclectic, Pascal Millet and myself on guitars, keyboards, vocals, backing vocals and engineer. LONEWOLF CORP is the second band formed around myself and Pascal. LONEWOLF CORP recorded around 30 tracks that had no cause to be jealous of big recording studios in terms of quality. The "swing wing" side band has the advantage to have people that I know for a long time spending some time in the band... like Febrice Trovaco on drums (ex-HOLSTER, MESCALINE, STYL, CRYSTAL), Gérard (BRAS CASSES...), Manu (ex-HOLSTER...). On the other side SHAK' ALE recorded about 40 songs and three albums before Thierry gave up as he was too busy with his job. LONEWOLF CORP are still around with a second album in the making and a powerful line up featuring Pascal Millet (guitars, backing vocals production), Jérôme Fraval (keyboards), Thierry Valot (drums, bass), and myself (guitars, vocals, programming, production). We record at my place with an analog 16 track mixing desk Tascam M3700 32/32/8/2, 2 Adat with all the facilities you have in a house."

Looking back, what do you think of those times when there was a craze for that style of music?

"There's always a craze for that music! And it's all a story of ebb and flow. A few years ago Lenny Kravitz brought back Hendrix into line with current tastes, Rap and Heavy Metal are mixing nowadays with suites of chords that you can find on the early BLACK SABBATH albums. A few more years and the Eighties style is going to be back with a bit of a remix and that will be perfect! Nevertheless, I think those years were fantastic to be alive and I'm really happy to have been a part of them."

Have you think at one time to reform HOLSTER?

"I think about it but I'd like to do it like a huge party and get all the people who were involved into it. Most of 'em have children and mixing everybody would be very funny. Of course, everybody would play drums, would be in front of a Marshall or behind a mike to sing. The best would be to rent a hall like The Bataclan (in Paris) and doing a sort of show/ public and private party... I think about it and until now, all my dreams have become reality as I did everything right to reach them so who knows! Reforming the band as a real band would be impossible, everybody has evolved and the musicians would not be able to play altogether on the same wavelength, good old Hard/ Heavy Rock like at the time!"

Do you have something to add, Something that I have maybe not covered?

"Maybe one or two stories... I remember a show in a hall from Bry Sur Marne, an evening of a football final or a semifinal... Frankly it was never my thing and nobody in HOLSTER except Franck was into that but that evening we should have been a four piece, Fred, Manu, Franck and myself, but Franck never came! He was watching the match! He was right because only about ten people came to the show! Another evening, we played in a theater of Choisy, the show was supposed to be a small place...when we got there, it was in fact a superb theatre with more than a hundred spotlights and a killer sound system. The small show in a suburb turned out to be an excellent memory where the 35 degrees on stage while it was the winter! On the other hand, we were supposed to play at the Eldorado in Paris, the hall was huge. We had set up everything while we were asking ourselves where the owners of the hall could be... after two or three hours of set up, we were told that everything was cancelled!"

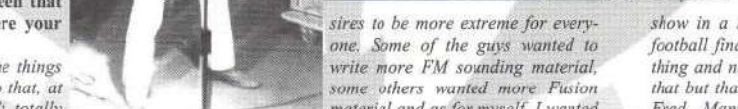
Christophe Abraham

Contact:  
Luc Epaulard  
56 rue de Gournay  
91100 Corbeil  
FRANCE

Luc & Franck



Pierrot



sires to be more extreme for everyone. Some of the guys wanted to write more FM sounding material, some others wanted more Fusion material and as for myself, I wanted to keep it hard and heavy."

What have you done following the split? Did you stay in the music business?

"The split happened slowly so everybody had the time to try different experiences. Franck was and always is a writer for other bands and singers, his lyrics being still extremely powerful and right. Manu played with different Fusion sounding bands while having a large part for improvisation. Fred has his own sound system business and he played with a more Folk sounding band at one time. Pierrot played again at one point but we have lost each other musically. I formed ALTAIR when we broke up which was heavier sounding than HOLSTER, something in between VULCAIN and ATTENTAT ROCK. Sylvain and Manu were in the line up. At around the same time, I formed BACKSTAGE, influenced by JUDAS PRIEST/I sung in that band. After Sylvain and Manu's departures, I formed BLACK VELVET with Christophe Pineiro- the best guitarist I ever heard in my life, technical wise and feelingwise, he was in the BACKSTAGE line up, Thierry Valot and Serge Herault- both ex members of THE ACTORS. The songs were



# Album Re-releases:

## ARROW The EP's 84, 85 (self-financed)

Are you aware of the German group ARROW that released two vinyl EP's in 1984 and 1985 ("The Heavy Metal Mania" and "Master Of Evil")? Now both items got re-released on a cd-r with some unreleased stuff from the last rehearsal sessions as bonus material, for what I know directly from the band. The vinyl editions are hard to get, so it's okay that a cd-r is used here with a nice package. What to await? Typical German Metal like bands such as TALON or TRANCE delivered in the past, sadly the "Heavy Metal Mania" ep has a terrible demo sound. The ep "Masters Of Evil" is far more enjoyable, the track "Heavy Metal Hero" for example conglomerates some fine elements with a great chorus line or "Built To Destroy" reminds me of "Fast As A Shark", good 80's stuff. The songs from the last rehearsal session - again with no studio sound - are nice German Metal in the NWOBHM vein ("Master Of Evil" or "Spider", on the other side "Invader" with its "Stand Up And Shout" riff) stuff as well. So, if you are an 80's collector and can not find the "Master Of Evil" ep, go for this compilation with some really obscure and rare 80's material which is enjoyed quite a lot. Order it for DM 15 from: **Andreas Burger, Metal Knight, Westring 30, 64850 Schaafheim, Germany.**

*Heinz Konzett*

## BLUE ÖYSTER CULT Tyranny And Mutation / Secret Treaties - The Back To Black Collection - (Axe Killer Records)

Ok, I gotta admit that I never really listened to any BLUE ÖYSTER CULT album EVER! All I previously knew from these Rock dinosaurs was the track "Veteran Of The Psychic Wars" which was featured on the soundtrack to the movie "Heavy Metal" many years back. And after I had listened to this re-issue of two classic BÖC albums, I decided that I would continue not to care for them in the future as well. This is simply not my taste of music. Ok, I loved "Veteran Of The Psychic Wars", but the material on these two albums is just too old fashioned for me - it dates back to 1971 and '74 respectively. So, with being completely incompetent, I better not give you any further comments on the music - just let me tell you that fans of this legendary band should go for this double CD set as it comes up with a first class deluxe packaging, lots of pictures, a band history, lyrics and even two bonus tracks.

*Frank Stöver*

## BREAKER Get Tough! (DCD) (Auburn)

If one traditional Metal band deserved to make it big back in the mid '80s, then it's without any doubt Cleveland's BREAKER! Those guys had such a huge potential that it's just beyond comprehension that they never became as big as ACCEPT, JUDAS PRIEST, TWISTED SISTER and the likes. For those who still haven't took the time to check out the original "Get Tough!" album or their recent "Accept" release, BREAKER's style is very European sounding like the guitar playing delivered by Klein and De Pew and the song structures were obviously influenced by U.F.O. in particular. Add to that a killer Metal vocalist with Jim Hamar, a solid rhythm section and first class Metallic songwriting. Disc one offers the cult "Get Tough!" album in a remastered version while disc two features mostly unreleased material taken from demos, the single-issued way before the album and a rare collector item, compilations and a live song. Opener "Standing In The Light" is a song that was originally started during the late '80s but finished last year and it's clear that they were really ready to deliver more classic Metal in years to come as this track possess everything a Metal song must have, catchiness, intensity and talent. "Still Life" is once again present on this recording and will always remain as one of the best Metal songs ever penned in the Metal genre! GODLY! Besides that it would be

nonsense to do a track by track review, I just can add that every serious Metallor on this planet must own this double CD release in his collection as its worth every second of it. Not forgetting a killer packaging with tons of never seen pictures and liner notes from different people. If every cult band could offer to their fans and to the Metal masses something as complete as that, it would be heaven everyday for us! Huge thanks goes out to Bill Peters to have reissued that record so brilliantly and to have managed to get the band back on the Metal scene. Welcome back BREAKER!

*Laurent Ramadier*

## CULPRIT Guilty As Charged (Hellion Records)

It's unbelievable that it really took more than seventeen years to get this Metal classic finally out on CD officially (there's already a bootleg version with MEDIEVAL STEEL circulating!) CULPRIT used to be one of the most promising and unique bands to emerge in the 80's, but never really got the attention they deserved. A big problem probably was Mike Varney (the head of their old label Shrapnel Records), who always refused to license this masterpiece to European labels (for reasons beyond my knowledge). So, "Guilty As Charged" only got over here as rather expensive imports. Mr. Varney even refused to give out the original master tapes for this CD re-issue, so HEIR APPARENT's Terry Gorle had to re-master the album from the vinyl version... Oh boy, the business really sucks! But anyway, CULPRIT's material definitely stood the test of time and every Metalhead into slightly technical US Metal should still worship the band's many diverse classics such as "Guilty As Charged", "Steel To Blood", "Tears Of Repentance" or "Players" nowadays in a same way as people did back in the 80's. Due to the untypical writing style and Jeff L'Heureux's clear yet charismatic vocal delivery it might take some time to get into some of the songs, but once you discovered their brilliance, you will worship CULPRIT forever!!! The only problem was/ is the poor production of the record, which doesn't really do justice to one of Seattle's first legends! The re-issue comes with all the lyrics, unreleased pictures, a re-designed cover artwork and three live bonus tracks from a reunion show in 1998, so what are you still waiting for? "Guilty As Charged" was, is and will ever be an essential Metal classic! Available directly from Hellion Records.

*Frank Stöver*

## DAMIEN THORNE The Sign Of The Jackal (self-financed)

It's about time to see that classic album finally released on cd! After all it features ultra classic powerful U.S. Heavy/ Speed Metal from the Eighties and nothing else. Tracks such as the title track, "Fear Of The Dark" - a total Speed Metal scorcher, "The Ritual" - the only average song on the original album but still way better than most of the stuff around, "Grim Reaper" - that twin axe attack between Ken Mandat and Michael Monroe (R.I.P.) still burns after all those years, "Hells Reign" - with its controversial intro but also those classic riffs and vocal melodies delivered so fuckin' brilliantly by Justin Fate, the guy had a truly original and killer Metal voice, hell yeah! "Escape The Fire" with its demonic up tempo and venomous riffs just shreds. Then comes four tracks that weren't included on the original vinyl version, "Vlad" a mid paced track which features some burning riffing at times but still doesn't really convince, "Eye Of Ra" is also a slow/ mid paced song showing that the duo Mandat/ Monroe could kick ass anytime when asked, good stuff but again somewhat different to what could be found on the original album, "Care Taker" is a similar song tempowise, heavy intense material with more mindblowing convincing vocals from Justin. "Phantoms Of Fire" being a previous demo song is another very heavy track and certainly my fave out of those four unreleased tracks. The album's last two songs being "Sirens Call" - a short outstanding Speed Metal burner, and "Damien's Procession" - a grinding mid paced track with numerous tempo changes, a nice way to end this classic album. The remastering/ remixing job gives the songs a whole new edge like giving more bottom end to the bass lines. So I just can add that every maniac has to get this re-release right away. DAMIEN THORNE still lives and are ready for a new attack! You can get it by sending 12\$ (U.S. funds or IMO) to: **Ken Mandat, 7830 S. Rutherford #1N, Burbank, IL 60459, USA** or

order it on internet at [www.damienhorne.com](http://www.damienhorne.com),  
e-mail: [kjm208@aol.com](mailto:kjm208@aol.com)

*Laurent Ramadier*

## GIUFFRIA Silk And Steel (Axe Killer Records)

Due to some legal problems the Axe Killer re-issue of GIUFFRIA's second (and last) album "Silk And Steel" took longer than originally planned. But the wait is finally over and it's out now. Musically there's no big difference to the self titled debut - GIUFFRIA continued on with their melodic, partly kinda bombastic journey on this impressing full length and delivered another bunch of first class songs. The album is basically the missing link between GIUFFRIA's early days and their evolution into HOUSE OF LORDS later on, so everyone into the first HOUSE OF LORDS album can blindly pick this up as well. The packaging is great and it even features lyrics (which the original didn't have), but I don't really get the slogan on the album's sticker of this re-issue. It says that "Silk And Steel" is out on CD for the first time, which is WRONG!! MCA already did a CD version back in 1986. Well, but as that is pretty hard to find these days and this re-issue also comes up with a bonus track (the rare "Say It Ain't True" which previously only was available on the "Gotcha" soundtrack), there's nothing wrong in this re-release. Definitely worth picking up!

*Frank Stöver*

## INSANITY Death After Death (Black Lung Productions)

I was kinda surprised when I heard a while ago from guitarist/vocalist INSANITY mainman that their debut album originally issued on M.B.R. records from Germany in 1993 (which was nothing else than a rip off deal) would be redone with new vocals parts courtesy of Mr Dave Gorsuch and would be remixed, and here's the result issued on Dave's own label. For those who're not familiar YET with what I always considered as one of the best Thrash/ Death Metal bands in the world, INSANITY comes from the Bay Area and have been in existence since 1985, providing us some of the best technical/ intense Metal ever through many cult demos/ rehearsals/ live tapes but following some dramatic events, they never managed to get signed by any labels that could have given them the real career they deserved, making INSANITY one of the most unluckiest but talented bands in this poor world. Finally they ended up on M.B.R records to do an album which was never properly distributed and promoted at all. If you like your Thrash/ Death Metal like it was in the mid Eighties, then this album is a gem! Incredible technical riffing mixed with excellent arrangements makes songs such as "Attack Of Archangels" (Sounds still unreal 15 years later!), "Death After Death", "Possession", "Morbidity Lust", "Rotting Decay" some of the best Death/ Thrash Metal ever along with the POSSESSED and MORBID ANGEL albums! It's that great!!! The new vocal parts sound alot more deathly, but still nothing to do with the Death Metal crappy doggy vocals we have to hear since the early '90s, as they're more in the old POSSESSED, MASTER vein, excellent job Dave! The only thing that I still think was superior in the early demo days were the drum parts courtesy of Mr Bud Mills which were superior to the job Prakash Sharma did on this album but this is minor criticism as the whole thing sounds GREAT!!!! I wish people would wake up and finally give some attention to that incredible pure Death/ Thrash California band who NEVER GAVE UP despite all the shit they had been confronted with during 15 years!!! Contact: [dgor@edwebprint.com](mailto:dgor@edwebprint.com)

*Laurent Ramadier*

## LAZ ROCKIT Know Your Enemy (Old Metal Records)

I gave up on L.R. after "City's..." was released years ago just because they weren't a Thrash band as I was looking for faster stuff only, but now that I discover their later albums, I know I missed something because this band continued to deliver classic Heavy/ Power Metal over the years and with "Know..." they had adopted a somewhat harder edge for the material certainly due to the fact that the Bay Area was full of Speed/ Thrash bands at that period ('88), something they developed further with their later albums. So yeah "Know." is good powerful Metal where originality is not necessar-



ily blatant, but who gives a fuck about that, all we need is effective stuff in the shape of "Last Breath", the brilliant "Euroshima" (which will remain in my opinion as their best ever penned tune!), "Means To An End" with excellent vocals from Coons etc... There's a few filler tracks here and there which is typical on a L.R. album like "Shot To Hell" or "Self Destruct" but well, it has always been hard for them to come up with a near perfect album. There's of course the brilliant axe work from Mr Jellum and Kettner, classic twin lead playing from the Bay Area. As a hidden bonus track, you can find the very first L.R. demo "Prelude To Death" from '83 (I think I know from where this tape comes from humm...). Another great re-release from Old Metal with the best packaging yet from this label.

*Laurent Ramadier*

**LIEGE LORD**  
Freedom's Rise  
(Old Metal Records)

When I talked to Paul Nelson for the LIEGE LORD feature in our 5th issue, he hoped this album would gain a re-release. King saw fit to get the disc out, and now many newcomers can see what the origins of Power Metal came from. Taking JUDAS PRIEST to a little faster and more epic level, "Freedom's Rise" batters the listener into submission from the opening intro. Quickly you'll succumb to the medieval lyrics and axe-leading chants of "Wielding Iron Fists" and proceed into the drum charging abandon of "Dark Tale" with Andy Michaud's rapid fire piercing completing the LIEGE LORD soundscape. The original Eric Larnoy drawings and cover art remain preserved- as well as adding some classic live/band shots from the 1982-1990 lineups. My favorite tracks include "Rage Of Angels" with its PRIEST meets early QUEENSRÛCHE arrangement and "Warriors Farewell". Here's hoping that I'll hear some cuts from this effort in June when the band play in Michigan- why did it take 15 years to gain a US re-release? Classic- powerful- majestic- LIEGE LORD commands the Metal brethren. **Contact: Old Metal Records- 5953 N. 10th St.- Arlington, VA 22205-USA.**

*Matt Coe*

**MANILLA ROAD**  
Open The Gates  
(Dragonheart)

It's just amazing- and quite funny at the same time, to see what kind of status M.R. are getting these days at least in Europe as I remember that this band never impressed the press that much and myself also back in the mid '80s... and as far as I'm concerned not much has changed. Now I've never been a big fan of this three piece's previous work having long viewed them as competent but purely second rate and I admit that "Open The Gates" was a much more enjoyable musical direction for my tastes as I think "Open..." was the first album that saw M.R. delivering Heavy Metal in the true sense of the term. The material was much more modern sounding than before and more aggressively orientated.

The songs are all pure Heavy Metal that's for sure but I really do think that there's not enough variety in the songwriting to make one track very distinguishable from another but maybe that's what people want after all. Good stuff delivered in a great digipack packaging with a great remastering job done here but I would not trade "Mystification" for this as the latter album really showed that M.R. could come up with some much more shredding intense riffing a.k.a. better songs but of course it's just a matter of opinion. Two live tracks are also added here, "Witches Brew" (a good Metallic number) and "Open The Gates" (an average number if you ask me). A highly recommended re-release if you love M.R. material, but if you never heard them before check out their later stuff before this.

*Laurent Ramadier*

**FRANK MARINO**  
Mahogany Rush Live  
(Axe Killer Records)

Ooh, another tough one for me. I suppose you really need to be into Blues to appreciate this re-issue of FRANK MARINO's classic '78 live album "Mahogany Rush Live". As I'm not, I am probably the wrong person to judge its qualities here, so just let me tell you that it comes in a slipcase nowadays, with a nicely designed full colored booklet, featuring a history and a bunch of live pics. A quote from the man himself could also make things easier for you: "In the early years... I did mostly cover songs by THE DOORS, HENDRIX, PINK FLOYD, CREAM, JOHNNY WINTER, THE BEATLES and even THE GRATEFUL DEAD..." So, if your musical taste goes along that line, feel free to check this out. But, dear people at Axe Killer Records (and often in France in general), Frank Marino - as well as many other Franks around the globe (including yours truly) is not spelled with a "c" (Franck), ok?!

*Fran(c)k Stöver*

**GARY MOORE**  
Corridors Of Power / Run For Cover  
- The Back To Black Collection -  
(Axe Killer Records)

I'm not sure why Axe Killer Records is going for re-issues of albums that are still pretty easy to get these days, but the packaging of this "Back To Black" series is worth a purchase, no matter what. Before he completely ended up in the Blues genre, GARY MOORE not only used to be a great guitar player (which he still is of course...), he also knew how to write excellent (Hard) Rock material. These two (solo) albums from 1983 ("Corridors Of Power") and 1985 ("Run For Cover") belong to his strongest offerings in that department and contain a whole lot of MOORE classics. The catchy uptempo opener "Don't Take Me For A Loser", the extremely heavy "End Of The World" (just listen to the opening riffing!), the extremely well done FREE cover "Wishing Well" or the melodic "Falling In Love With You" are perfect examples of the big variety of "Corridors...", while "Run For Cover" partly even managed to top that high quality with its excellent titletrack,

the Lynott/ Moore songs "Military Man" and "Out In The Fields" or the ultimate MOORE ballad "Empty Rooms". Another plus of "Run For Cover" is its production, which was done by several wellknown producers, such as Peter Collins, James Jimbo' Barton, Andy Johns, Beau Hill or Mike Stone, who all delivered first class quality on the individual tracks. This deluxe packaged double CD not only comes up with fat full colored booklet, lots of pictures, lyrics etc., it also has five bonus tracks in total! So GARY MOORE fans or collectors of limited edition stuff shouldn't hesitate to add this release to their collection.

*Frank Stöver*

**VIVA**  
What The Hell Is Going On!  
(Axe Killer)

No matter what, but I have the feeling that Eric Coubard from Axe Killer has lost some of his inspiration to find great stuff to re-release these days (and god knows that there's still a lot of awesome stuff to put out!) because VIVA sounds like third rate material nowadays. Of course it was enjoyable stuff back in the early Eighties when it first came out, just like many other German releases such as TRANCE, STEELER, FARGO or RUNNING WILD, but unlike let's say "Breaker" or "Blackout", "What The Hell..." sounds tired as it doesn't really give us the envy to headbang to the sounds of those tunes without maybe the exception of "Break Out", thanks to the vocal performance of Marc Paganini. Sorry but the fresh aspect of this album got evaporated over the years and the fact that Barara Schenker was a member of this band doesn't change anything to that fact.

*Laurent Ramadier*

**XYZ**  
Xyz  
(Axe Killer Records)

After having secured the rights to all the other XYZ releases already, it was only a matter of time until the band's best offering would see the light of day again on the Axe Killer label as well. And here it is. Completely repackaged with a way better booklet, delivered in an Axe Killer usual slipcase and even with an additional track ("On The Blue Side Of The Night", which originally backed up the band's "Inside/Out" single). Musically this album exactly goes along the lines of the best DOKKEN releases "Under Lock And Key" and "Tooth And Nail" and was even produced by mister Don Dokken himself. XYZ's 1989 debut was a great sounding, very well executed melodic Hard Rock release, with an overall quality that the band unfortunately never was able to top again in the years to come (not even later DOKKEN albums would reach this quality). Due to the fact that the original EMI/ Enigma CD release is out of print for quite some time already this is finally a good opportunity again to pick it up now.

*Frank Stöver*



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**FORBIDDEN...** Out of all the Bay Area bands from the Eighties, these guys were always some of my favorites since the day I heard their first demo/ rehearsal done as **FORBIDDEN EVIL** back in '86. These guys came up with songs that will remain untouchable in terms of talent, power and quality, some of 'em actually belong to the category of the best Metal songs I've ever heard in my whole life- those being "Egypt Has Fallen", "Through Eyes Of Glass", "Forbidden Evil" and "Disillusions". **FORBIDDEN** should have become huge because their material was just absolutely brilliant and way ahead of most of their contemporaries in terms of extremely killer songwriting. If they had received the right push and if maybe they didn't change their style that much as it was the case with their last two releases they would have achieved more but anyway with the precious help of their long time friend/ roadie and now manager Cole Gill, we managed to have them answer the questions that I had in mind for a long long time. So here's what came out from Craig Locicero's twisted and talented mind and from Steve Jacobs a.k.a. Horse- being the last member added to the band.

## Bay Area Gruncheers

Let's talk first about the period when you were a kid- how did you get into Metal exactly and what made you decide to play music? What did you find so exciting in that music?

**Craig:** "I was one of those kids who...I started to get into things like "Helter Skelter" by THE BEATLES over every other song they had, I don't know why, couldn't tell you why and my family was definitely a lot mellow than I was but there's something about guitar, drums, bass, anything I wanted to play any of those things but I believe that my parents settled on the guitar because it was the quietest at the time they thought...until I started to bring the band over rehearsing, but yeah it was certainly... that's what I gravitated towards, I needed to play music, I needed to get it out and I needed to play my own music and so I started writing really soon after stated playing, it was pretty much the first thing I did."

So you didn't get much resistance from your family when you started expressing your interest in music?

**Craig:** "A little bit because my family are very much what you would call nerds- very straight people, but they were supportive. My Mom and stepdad realized that there was nothing else I was gonna do good, and that's about it. It took a little longer than anyone expected to get the kind of result I wanted but I definitely had a lot of support."

Before being involved in your own band, I guess you were fans of what was going on in the Bay Area in the early '80s with a lot of new bands coming out with a brand new approach like EXODUS, BLIND ILLUSION, SINISTER SAVAGE (GRIFFIN), METALLICA (after they moved from L.A.), plus lots of clubs having Metal shows like The Stone, Ruthies Inn, Keystone... what can you tell us about those extraordinary early years, about the atmosphere that could be found in that area, the violence that could be found at the EXODUS shows for example etc....

**Craig:** "Yeah I was into a lot of that stuff when I was 14, 15 years old, when I started to get into it, and start playing guitar and everything- I didn't play guitar til I was even 15 years old so...But yeah I was part of it, I was like the youngest kid in the whole scene pretty much, I was sneaking in the clubs, getting drunk at a very early age, go back to school hung over-all that kind of thing...it was great, it was new back then, it was exciting, there was a lot of pretenders that came afterwards but the original Thrash Metal sound was very much a lightning rod for a lot of stuff, it was great."

**FORBIDDEN EVIL** was formed in March 1985 with you Craig, Russ Andersen (vocals), Rob Flynn (guitar), John Tegio (bass) and Jim Pittman (drums)- who came up with that name and how did you all hook up together?

**Craig:** "Well, I met Rob first through a mutual friend of ours, a Chinese guy who went to school with me, he saw me walking around with my **MERCYFUL FATE** record, he knew that there was another guy out there that was into the same stuff I was into and that was Rob Flynn... he introduced us a couple days later and then we got along really well. Rob was the guitar player that wanted to sing but he's much better playing guitar so I pretty much told him to drop the singing and play the guitar and he was in another band that didn't really have...I think it was **INQUISITOR** or something, there was Jim Pittman and a couple of other guys, it wasn't really heading anywhere, I said "Hey man, let's do this, we're gonna start our own band.", Pittman was really resisting to play with me, he thought I was evil cos I wore a

**VENOM** shirt, he was very much the Christian guy and he fought it, but Rob and I got along really well and we started **FORBIDDEN EVIL** and it was more Jim Pittman's name because he was saying it as if it was anti-evil type of thing you know which is pretty corny but it was a warwitch song and you know when you're looking for names, it was as good as any other names of that time. There wasn't much thought put into it until later when we became a real band but that was how the whole thing began."

A few months later you already had written a few originals such as "Next To Die", "Legions Of Death" and the incredible crunchers "Egypt Has Fallen" and "Forbidden Evil", those songs especially the last two mentioned already showed that you wanted to go in an original direction, that you were aware of the importance of maintaining a diversity in your sound instead of writing tons of songs which would have sounded all the same. Did you start to write the stuff as a band unit or was it mainly one guy who penned that early stuff?

**Craig:** "No, it was mostly Rob and myself that was writing all the stuff in the beginning, "Egypt Has Fallen" is in fact a song that Rob has written with very little help from me before we started the band, it was one of those things that made me like his style so much and I saw so much potential in him. "Forbidden Evil" is the first song we collaborated on together and then we collaborated

**ALLICA** had covered it or were you fans of the original **DIAMOND HEAD** stuff?

**Craig:** "Yeah I used to kind of like **DIAMOND HEAD**, I thought they were blah but yeah definitely because **METALLICA**'s version was the one that we liked."

Talking about **D. HEAD**, a lot of S.F. headbangers were big time into underground European Metal like the **EXODUS** guys, Sam Kress, Lee Altus.... what about you guys-were you aware of what was going on in Europe and were you fans of stuff like **BUFFALO**, **SATAN**, **WITCHFINDER GENERAL**, **MERCYFUL FATE**... or were you more into bigger acts such as **PRIEST**, **MAIDEN**, **SCORPIONS**...?

**Craig:** "I definitely liked both, that was the cool thing about European Metal, you just knew what was cool and you gravitated towards what was good and I used to like **W. GENERAL** with their **SABBATH** feel and **M. FATE** was a huge influence on me and Rob...and the bigger bands too, I definitely thought my standards were raised and I tried to be more like the bigger bands as far as **ACCEPT** but other than that we wanted to have our own sound and we eventually kind of got that."

Unlike most of the other Bay Area bands you weren't really from S.F. since you're from Fremont, how was the scene there? Were you familiar with **ANNIHILATION** for example?

**Craig:** "Yeah we used to practice with them, they were into it but they were older than us. I remember being in the studio with Rob and Jim one night before we started our own band and sitting in front of those guys and they played "22 Acacia Avenue" and I was totally blown away, I was like "My God! there's no one else around as cool as these guys!", they were my heroes for a long time, they really were a great great band at that point. They were **DEEP FREEZE** before they were **ANNIHILATION**, but they were a great band and they were older, they weren't kids like us, they were 19, but Fremont had definitely a scene after we started building something up and a lot of Thrash bands popped up and a lot of very influential musicians came out of Fremont after as a fact."

In early May '86, you recorded a rehearsal demo tape, "Endless Slaughter" featuring "Next To Die", "Forbidden Evil" and "Chalice Of Blood" which made its way into the underground through the tape trading network and received critical acclaim from underground fanatics despite the fact that no articles could be found on the band in fanzines- what do you remember from that demo/ rehearsal tape?

**Craig:** "I remember that was my first time recording, not really knowing how to get a tone so I used two distortion pedals and it sounded like crap! It was like "Man, more distortion, pile it on", it was fun, it seems it catch everybody even if it sounded like shit, everybody seemed to really get into it, because it was so fresh even comparing to the other stuff that was out there - people seemed to like it so it was inspiring."

After that demo was recorded, you parted ways with Jim- later seen in **SLAMBODIANS**, who was replaced by Paul Bostaph (who was Jim's cousin)- how did that happen exactly? Did you try out many drummers before you decided to go on with him?

**Craig:** "No, Paul suggested to us that he could play better than Jim and we agreed. He had never played Thrash before, he was pretty much into Rock drumming... I hate to mention those things but he didn't even like **SLAYER**, that's the funny thing...but he sure did after joining our band. He was the perfect drummer for us at the time, he had the maturity as we were a bunch

# FORBIDDEN

from that on until he left the band, it was pretty much a 50/50 deal all the way through and the other guys just had something to say about the arrangements, it was our riffs so that was the way it was."

During the first shows I know you were playing covers such as "Am I Evil", "Violence And Force" and "A Lesson In Violence"- did you play more than that during those early times?

**Craig:** "Yeah we did "Hell Bent For Leather", "Creeping Death"...we didn't do that many covers. We just took good songs and they were new to all the other people cos let me tell you, in our neighborhood we were the only kids into Thrash, nobody else even had heard "Violence And Force" and stuff like that so to them it was our songs...because they weren't our songs but to us it was covering songs by people we liked and it told us a little bit about how to put a cool song together."

Did you play "Am I Evil" as a cover because **MET-**





of Punks and it was a good combination."

Before Paul joined the band, it seems you had already got label interest from the first demo/ rehearsal, some small time offers, what can you tell us about that?

**Craig:** "Not too much, there was nothing going on and we were never serious about trying to get signed until we did our third demo tape."

At the same time you started to play shows at the legendary Ruthies Inn, how did you feel when you started to play there? I mean that club had seen earlier in its walls prestigious acts such as SLAYER, SAVAGE GRACE, TROUBLE, MEGADETH.... and while we're on that subject, why did all those mythic clubs like Ruthies, The Stone, The Mab, The Farm, Rock On Broadway, Keystone... all closed their doors a few years later?

**Craig:** "Yeah it was great to play Ruthies, it makes you feel like you were doing something significant even if there were 25 people in there because that magic place



Glen in U.K. May '89

held the birth of Thrash Metal in the Bay Area. Right there, and a couple of other places, the Mabuhay Gardens is another one that was really happening. But all those places have closed down because there was less and less of a draw for their bread and butter being Thrash Metal at the time it was keeping those clubs alive, there became more things to do and the underground became less important."

Later in '86 John Tegio was also replaced by Matt Camacho, tell us more about that.. did those different changes mean that you were progressing at a fast pace musically and the other guys couldn't keep up with that state of things?

**Craig:** "Yeah, ironically that's more of the same... Matt fit the band perfectly as far as the personality and he had a lot of charisma, energy and at the time, it was like "Yeah he looks cool" so we took him for a few reasons like that but it wasn't because of a giant musical jump or anything, as a matter of fact it caused a little bit of a problem cos I think it made Rob a little unhappy as he missed John as a friend but it was the right move for us as Matt fit our band for years to come after that."

Let's talk about your first vinyl appearance with the "Eastern Front" compilation which contained "March Into Fire" recorded live at Ruthies Inn, how did you end up on that record?

**Craig:** "Oh everybody that played at those Eastern Front gigs got put on the record. We were just one of the bands from the Bay Area that made it."

So with that brand new line up, you entered the studio for the first time to record that one song demo in early '87 "As Good As Dead" but unlike bands like HEATHEN, DEATH ANGEL, VIO-LENCE, you didn't really manage to create an underground buzz with that demo since nothing once again could be found on the band in fanzines, how do you explain that? Why didn't you try to send out that one song demo in particular to the fanzines... I heard it's because Rob left the band just after the recording, correct?

**Craig:** "Yeah that's true. That was the main reason why because we've always felt if it wasn't worth really putting your neck on the chopping block don't do it. It was in fact a four song demo, it has "Chalice Of Blood", "Forbidden Evil" on it as well and "Next To Die" too, I think it was the three songs that were on the other demo and "As Good As Dead". And we just chose not to really pursue it and yeah it was because Rob had left, it just didn't seem like it was something that we should push."

So what were the exact reasons for him leaving for VIO-LENCE? Is the fact that he wanted to play something more straight forward than following the direction FORBIDDEN EVIL was heading to with the newer material the only reason?

**Craig:** "Very interesting time because this is something that I've never actually said in an interview but it was funny because a month before Rob had left for VIO-LENCE, they asked me to join their band and I said "No, I like what we're doing" and I asked them why they

wanted me and they said "I was VIO-LENCE material.", so anyway a month later they asked Rob to do it and he decided to do it and it's just very ironic. But the reason being it's because that I think he thought that they were heading places faster, it's more of his liking, we were definitely more Metal and they had a little bit more Punk and Rob is definitely a little bit more into Punk than we were and that's the honest truth."

What were your feelings towards him when he left just after the recording of the demo, something he obviously knew he was going to do before entering the studio....

**Craig:** "Yeah he did know he was gonna do it. I think our feelings were justified...anger because he basically used us as a gauge to see if he liked what we did enough he stay around and he made us spend all our own money. I think we were a little upset at him because he's a great friend of mine, he turned out to be a real good friend of Russ, he was getting to know Paul, it was a really weird time because he had started changing a lot, he started growing in a different way, started to become more of a rebel, stuff like that so he's all a different guy than the guy we all knew at first, he started to change so dramatically, he just wasn't the same so it was all for the better but I think at the time it just chapped our ass." Now here's when Glen Alvaleis entered the picture-how did you hook with him back then?

**Craig:** "I used to watch Glen breakdance in high school, spinning on the floor man... He had this long pineapple hairdo- I almost thought he was a poser but the guy was a great guitar player, his solos...but as soon as he heard Rob had left he called me up and I said, "He's good, give a try." and then we did like the solos so much that we decided to take him up for a while and he ended up being in the band longer than we had anticipated."

What can you tell us about his musical background?

**Craig:** "VAN HALEN, DOKKEN...it's funny man, it's just like Paul, these guys never really got into the heavy stuff until they hooked up with us and then they became experts."

Then you managed to hook up with Debbie Aono who was POSSESSED's manager back then, what made you go with her exactly? Were you sure that she was the right person for the band?

**Craig:** "Maturity, she was definitely mature, 59 at the time and she was really into us, basically there was a mutual admiration, she heard about us through our third demo, we were getting played on KUSF and Davy Yain- long before people had heard him, and swears he discovered us to this day. He said we were the most original band he had heard, but she ended up wanting to take us on and nobody else at the time until the whole VIO-LENCE thing came in the picture, they talked to her about managing them as well, that was a weird time for us cos we had to go through all that stuff with them, so it was bizarre. It was all child-like stuff but it happened."

Knowing that she was going to a big music convention in New York, you went into the studio quickly in early July '87 with Doug Cadwell as producer to record that three song demo "March Into Fire" featuring "Chalice.", the title track and "Follow Me", any memories of that recording?

**Craig:** "That was a lot of fun! We did it in two days I believe, the whole thing, recording and the mix and it felt right. I think that was the one demo at that time out of all three that had that magic on it, that we started to create our individuality through it, a little bit."

"Chalice Of Blood" was an old track but on the other hand "March.." and "Follow Me" were quite new, so I wonder if those songs were written prior to Rob's departure in early '87 or if they were written with Glen?

**Craig:** "Well I wrote "March Into Fire", that's the first song I wrote by myself while Rob was still in the band... which didn't go over too well at that time and that popped up as one of our main songs. And "Follow Me" was written after Glen was in the band but pretty much my song that I wrote in high school, actually literally in high school in my guitar class."

Did you find lots of changes between Rob's songwriting and Glen's songwriting?

**Craig:** "Oh there was many differences. Well Rob is definitely more certain of what he wanted to do, he was always very decisive and Glen wasn't really sure of what he was doing within our band. We all shaped everything he wrote to fit what we thought FORBIDDEN was all about. So with Glen it was like he's a great lead guitar player, and that was his forte and Rob was a real good lead guitar player at one time too but that's when he used to concentrate on that instead of the songwriting so much."

Also for the first time, this demo started to create a

buzz for the band, but way after most of the other Bay Area bands even if you were around way before some of them, you had distribution in Europe through Alexandra Dorrie, do you remember what kind of response you got for that tape from all over the world?

**Craig:** "It was ridiculous. We didn't even know why we were getting such a good response, we thought it was cool but we also thought it wasn't that cool. Everybody seemed to really like it, I guess it had that intangible but everybody seemed to really get into it, it was a good feeling but overwhelming I remember."

Following Debbie's suggestion, you shortened the band's name to FORBIDDEN also because you thought it would limit your direction, and you didn't want to be associated with the whole satanic thing, but looking back do you think it was really necessary since the album was called "Forbidden Evil", Russ was still wearing a shirt with that name on it etc...?

**Craig:** "Russ still had lots of respect for the old name so he did that and...you think that's not a big deal when you're a kid and you can call yourself whatever you want and it doesn't matter, you know what I mean, it really doesn't matter and I think it was a good decision overall to change for FORBIDDEN cos it definitely was more appealing. People takes it alot more seriously."

When the labels started to knock on the door, you had an incredible choice since you had gained interest from Roadracer, Mechanic, WEA, Capitol and Combat, so at the end why did you choose to go with Combat?

**Craig:** "God knows (laughs)! That might have been a real big mistake, but I think they did a great job for the first album, that just blew after that. I think they and Music For Nations did a fine job with "Forbidden Evil" but after that it was just shit so you look back and whatever, I really could not answer you why... At first they (Combat) wanted to make us their priority which you hear a lot, they were giving us full page ads and there's lots of things that were pluses to what they were doing. We didn't want to be on the same label as VIO-LENCE (Mechanic) cos we were at the time so competitive and we wanted to do our own thing. WEA was different



Craig in U.K. May '89

licensing all over the world in different countries, it was very confusing. Capitol in fact chose to pass on us and sign RIGOR MORTIS which turned to be a great move for them (laughs). Roadrunner, we just thought that they would not put enough into the band, which they wouldn't of at that time- we would have been another ATROPHY or a band that nobody would really remember."

Do you think that the reason all these companies took an interest in you at that particular time meant that each company wanted its own Bay Area band on its roster since the Bay Area sound was the "in" thing at the time?

**Craig:** "Definitely, it had something to do with it, anytime."

So in '88 you finally entered three different studios to record the album and you delivered an instant classic album that can be put in the same league as albums such as "A Lesson In Violence" (before it was called "Bonded By Blood" you fuckers!), "Hell Awaits", and a few others, so what kind of memories do you have from that recording?

**Craig:** "The main reason we went to three studios is because we had to move out of there to finish vocals in another studio. They didn't book us enough time in that studio. But from what I remember there was only two studios, there was only Alpha & Omega and Prairie Sun and that was it (what about Studio 245 in S.F. Craig?)- Laurent, it got mastered somewhere else. The thing I remember about that recording how glad I was to be there and also I remember that was when we decided we couldn't play with Glen forever cause he would only want to do a Joe Satriani type album and really focus on himself. And all the band was sitting around going, "this is ridiculous" and John Cuniberti who produced Satriani was encouraging the whole thing."



Were you happy with the job Cuniberti and Cadwell did for this first album? I personally find the sound crunchy as hell and crystal clear, something very important for a band like FORBIDDEN..

**Craig:** "Well I really enjoyed working with Doug Cadwell and I think Cuniberti is an amazing engineer but I don't know...he really had an above complex, like very dominating and it wasn't all that fun working with Cuniberti to be honest, he just didn't really seem like he enjoyed it, that we're just a bunch of noise to him which he wasn't that far off (laughs)."

Were you satisfied with the final result?

**Craig:** "I was satisfied with everything but the vocals, I thought they were really sold short, the day we went to do vocals, those guys told me they were on the way to pick me up right where I was and they went and they didn't pick me up and I was never satisfied with the vocals after that, it was only a one day thing... to this day I can't listen to that album cos I know Russ could do so much better."

When that album was issued, I never understood and I still don't after all these years why the track "Egypt..." wasn't included since it features incredible riffing all the way and an Oriental feel that never leaves you...

**Craig:** "Simply because it's Rob song. We didn't want to use anyone's song that was all theirs, everything else is written between us and if you start using somebody stuff that's not yours in terms of a song for the band."

Who came up with the cover idea of good vs. evil? How did you feel when you saw later that some people made a tattoo out of the cover and stuff?

**Craig:** "You know, I had my concept in high school and I had my friend draw me up this concept for a sticker, two skeletons who are fighting on the edge of a cliff, it was like an upside down cross and a right side up cross on their heads and they were bashing. It was pretty much the same thing but a lot more primitive and when we took it to Kent (Mathieu), he understood where it came from and took it further. I think it's a classic album cover and I'm very proud it's our album cover, it optimizes Thrash Metal I think."

You also always made clear during interviews that the band wasn't influenced by Speed Metal bands such as SLAYER, EXODUS and stuff but more by bands like SABBATH, PRIEST... but would you have played Thrash/ Speed Metal the way you played it if bands like EXODUS wouldn't have been there in the first place? I remember reading an interview with Gary Holt and he was quite pissed off to hear that some Bay Area bands of the second generation like yourselves didn't want to give credit to bands like EXODUS or SLAYER for their influence....

**Craig:** "No, you're right! And you know what, now I look back at it but when you're in the middle of it you don't realize that.. I think it's foolish to say that because those bands were very important to the whole thing and I mean them no disrespect, they really were important for all of us. I think it was just being young, we just figured we invented more than we did and we're definitely influenced by all that stuff, the Thrash and the mainstream Metal."

In October 1988, you went to Philadelphia for the Ultimate Revenge 2 event, so despite the fact that you opened the show it seems it went really well for you even if some critics said that you lacked a bit of experience, what kind of memories do you still have?

**Craig:** "I was very pissed off that I broke a string on the very first song, I had to play that stupid ass VAN HALEN guitar of Glen's, I was red of anger from that point, so upset that I had to be caught on tape playing that guitar, it's not mine man, I've never played with it and that's the main thing I remember from that and we definitely had a lack of experience, it was the first show out of California ever but we definitely got the best response from all the bands in the reviews, I was really surprised considering how bad we thought we were."

What do you remember besides that from that week end?

**Craig:** "Cheesesteaks and piss bombs! I remember DARK ANGEL, meeting Gene Hoglan- he's a great friend of mine now- for the first time he said, "Hey Man- watch this!" as he threw a piss bomb out of the window. Well Combat was encouraging that kind of behavior, they thought we were...because we respected Debbie, we wouldn't do this type of stuff, they thought that was the Combat way."

Do you think the fact that the show was issued on different supports such as video, cassette, vinyl and CD gave even more exposure to the band?

**Craig:** "Well certainly it could have been better if we were better, it was decent, it was as good as it could

have been. It wasn't as good as the first Ultimate Revenge, not even close, that first one with VENOM, SLAYER and EXODUS was a classic."

Then you did five dates in late November/ early December '88 supporting VOIVOD/ VIO-LENCE on the West coast and there was always the feeling around that since your album and VIO-LENCE's album had come out at the same time plus that you were both from the Bay Area there was like a competition between both bands, was is really the case back then or...?

**Craig:** "Oh yeah it was and we were jealous and childish. They were both two good bands but we were different, we were heading in different places, we were very much kind of...eventually become some sort of a stadium band maybe it went above our heads but that's what we were trying to do and they were definitely trying, just do the underground Thrash scene. But yeah we were always opening, eternally opening."

In May '89 you did a co headlining tour with SACRED REICH in Europe, playing shows mainly in Germany and U.K. and the highlight of the tour was certainly your appearance at the Dynamo Festival where the "Raw Evil" EP was recorded. From what I remember the tour went really well for you despite the fact that Paul had broken his arm during one show in Germany but still continued to do the shows... give us your memories of that tour (remember the crowd in Paris, France was yelling FORBIDDEN, FORBIDDEN!! For your first show in Europe?!)..

**Craig:** "Yeah...You know what?! To this day, I'll never forget that...sitting backstage and thinking "Oh my god they know who we are!" that was new, the first of those feelings and the first show was just such an insane enthusiasm for the band. That was a great tour, I think the highlight would be the Dynamo but also the lowlight because I think we didn't know we're being recorded, our manager Debbie hesitated to mention to us that we're being recorded so we kind of fucked up all day, got really stone and drunk, you know the typical shit you do in Holland and I think we sucked comparing how we usually played, it was just too bad that it wasn't our representation, on that Ep we're very much embarrassed by it."

How did Paul break his arm exactly?  
**Craig:** "He punched a wall really hard that was solid cement- that wasn't too bright but hey he proved he was really good and got a good reputation cos he was the one handed drummer."

So when "Raw Evil" was issued, everybody could see that nothing had been changed from the original recording like the bum notes Glen did during one of the leads of "Forbidden...", why did you make that choice to leave everything intact?

**Craig:** "Again, we had no choice, it was a decision taken out of our hands, I think that is the beginning of some of the problems that FORBIDDEN had, we couldn't have enough control over what we were doing, we were young and immature, and we wanted control and it wasn't gonna happen so that was very much a disappointment and we never wanted to release that in the first place. Some people maybe liked it but we certainly don't."

So Combat just took over and issued it without giving you any money or...?

**Craig:** "It wasn't even in our contract, they did it because they said it would make us have more of a fan base, we didn't believe it for a second. If anything it took us a step sideways."

On almost every date you played "Victim Of Changes" live and you even went as far as to put it on the live EP, did you make that choice to prove to people that Russ wasn't just "another Thrash singer"? You also covered "Hell Bent For Leather" in the early years of the band, so why have you chosen to not do this one live?

**Craig:** "I don't know, I think we just really thought that "Victim..." was a classic and also we wanted to set up that we wanted to be a bigger band so I guess we just chose the cover that was more of a coliseum, stadium type cover."

During that tour, people could hear some of your newer tracks such as "One Foot In Hell" or "Step By Step" and there was an obvious difference in the songwriting department between those newer tracks and the older ones, the newer stuff sounded more twisted and less straight forward than the old songs

and as a fan, I have to say that it was harder to get into that material in a live situation. Do you think it was really necessary to add that stuff during that tour when at the same time a song like "As Good As Dead" wasn't being played?

**Craig:** "That's a good point...well you get selfish in the middle of a tour- you wanna do what you feel like doing and since it was new we thought sort of like everybody will get into it just because it was new. Some nights it went over great, other nights it was like, "What are you doing?" you know, but I don't regret. I mean I don't think it really hurt us."

Problems with Glen started to appear during that first touring experience since it seems he didn't want to play encores and stuff, so what exactly happened with him?

**Craig:** "I don't see Glen very often but when I do he's kinda stand off-ish. Glen is a real cool guy but he wasn't cut out for the road. He went out for TESTAMENT for awhile and they can tell you the same thing, anybody who have played with Glen for a while will tell you the same thing, he's a cool guy but it's hard to play music with him, and it's hard to be on tour with him and it's very very difficult for the band to motivate him to do alot of things, very lazy at that time and we decided on that tour that enough was enough and we called Tim (Caivert) at the end of the tour and said "Okay" because we were talking to Tim and I taught him some songs before leaving the Bay Area so we called him during the European tour and we told him "You're in!" and he did,

we played a show six days after he got back home with Tim. As for that encore thing, I think it was in Germany, I can't remember the name of the place, Rock something in Germany, that was the thing with Glen, he didn't feel like doing it you know?! On the flight back home he said, next time we go to Europe, we should get a replacement cos he doesn't like flying to Europe so we already knew we're gonna fire him so we said "Alright dude sure thing"."

How did he react when he knew he was fired?

**Craig:** "Not well, he walked all the way home from our studio, he didn't want a ride from us, that's for sure."

Matt in U.K. May '89

As you had an offer to be open for EXODUS on their "Fabulous Disaster

tour" in June '89 throughout the States just after the end of the European tour with Tim as a new member, were you certain that he would be the perfect replacement for Glen when you started the EXODUS tour since you had almost no time to rehearse with him prior to the tour?

**Craig:** "We just liked him, he was a good friend immediately and when you're on tour with people and making album you want to be friends with them. I think Tim was probably the best guitar player I've ever played with and I've only really played with three and he was definitely an amazing guitar player and had a very innovative way of doing his solos, no one else could quite do what he does as people have heard NEVERMORE and anything else he's ever done. We just really liked him, we just knew he could do it. Paul got along with him and he wanted him. That was kind of a decision we made like that."

So how was the tour with EXODUS despite the fact that Paul still had his broken arm? Was it easy to share the stage with those guys? Do you think that tour opened some doors for FORBIDDEN or was it only so and so since EXODUS were trying to regain the popularity they had lost earlier?

**Craig:** "No it was pretty cool, we all got along pretty good. They were on their bus world and we were on our van world, they were living the rock star life and we were living in a shit ass opening band life but other than that it was cool. Those guys are really cool as far as hanging out with them, I think it was a bit of an enlightening experience for them because they were definitely on the way down at that time, we didn't even know that, we thought they were on the way up until we went on tour and saw for ourselves that the "Headbanger's Ball" tour (which featured EXODUS- with Perry Strickland (VIO-LENCE) on drums replacing Tom Hunting during that tour, HELLOWEEN and ANTHRAX- Laurent) didn't help as much as everyone thought it had."

1989 was a busy year for you since you went back on the road a few weeks later after you returned from the EXODUS tour, this time again with SACRED REICH in another co headlining club tour in the States and Canada. Do you think the fact that you did all that touring was the result of having Debbie



as a manager? Do you think also that all that touring increased the sales figures of the debut album?

**Craig:** "Oh definitely! That definitely helped to have a manager that talks to people and hooks up for tours and she did that and it definitely helped our album sales, we did pretty well one point finding out that we opened up for S. REICH and we sold more albums than they did, no one wanted to believe it but there were the album sales right in front of her eyes."

Since you spent most of 1989 on the road and the album was recorded in early '90, does that mean you wrote most of the tracks from "Twisted Into Form" on the road or did you write it in a short period of time at the end of 1989?

**Craig:** "We wrote some on the road, a couple things on the road and a lot of it I started writing before we even left on tour, you know we had a couple of other songs but most of it we had jammed into that short period of time and it really got things rushed in the studio but it turned out well."

Judging by the credits on "Twisted...", this album looks totally like a band effort since every member except Matt was involved in the songwriting, did the band feel much better having Tim as a new member?

**Craig:** "Yeah, musically, writing songs was a lot of fun especially at that time. Tim was really into different things...he's really into QUEENSRÛCHE and stuff, and at that time that was a welcome influence...looking back at it, I think it made us a lot more rigid compared to "Forbidden Evil". I can see why people prefer the energy of "F. Evil", but we improved so much as a band that we didn't see it at the time, exactly why everybody would complain and say it wasn't as energetic, we didn't see it but now looking back I can look at all of the albums objectively."

Just like "One Foot..." presented on earlier tours had made us think, the rest of the material was in the same way of writing, twisted riffs all over the place mixed with unreal lead playing with brilliant singing delivery courtesy of Russ. Still that album wasn't as instant as the old stuff, just like it was the case with second albums from DEATH ANGEL, VIO-LENCE, HEATHEN or MORDRED for example, how do you explain that process? Can we really talk about a maturing process here or more of a songwriting change?

**Craig:** "I think it's just what happened and especially when the music industry changes right underneath your feet, you do what you want to do but you also keep in mind all of the other things- it's that sophomore jinx. I mean me personally I like "Twisted..." better than "F. Evil" but I can definitely understand why other people had a problem with it you know...I feel like our second album is a little bit better than some of the other ones you mentioned for their second album, I think we at least made a positive jump."

Why did you change the name of the song "The Infinite Wisdom" for "Infinite" and what happened to "Behind The Mask"? Are there any other songs that you wrote for "Twisted..." that weren't used on it?

**Craig:** "The reason why we changed the song "The Infinite Wisdom" to "Infinite" is because we didn't want to be very wordy and it was getting a little long-winded and "Behind The Mask" just didn't make it, didn't make the cut- we had some vocal problems that didn't work themselves out at the time for the record. There's no other songs that didn't make it on this album."

For this album you used Michael Rosen, a producer that lots of other Bay Area bands had used previously, why did you make that choice? Do you think his producing style fit your sound better and your new approach than Cuniberti or Cadwell? What do you think of this album now?

**Craig:** "Doug would have been really cool cos I think he would have made the album rawer and that was something that was missing on "Twisted...", but Michael Rosen hadn't really done anyone else's records before except for engineering and we were the first one and Debbie had chosen him without really even asking to us, just told us "This is the guy that can do it." but we liked Michael and he's a great guy, he got a lot of business after that but I don't think he's really producing too many albums now. And another important thing of all that nobody knows is Rick Rubin wanted to produce our second album but Debbie didn't tell us until she told him "No", she's afraid she's gonna lose control over the band which eventually happened and that might not have been bad for FORBIDDEN but in the end it's alright, but if Rick Rubin would have done it, God knows what we could have come up with."

Don't you think that you also somewhat changed

your songwriting on "Twisted..." because you didn't want to be labeled anymore as "another Bay Area thrash act" with the same galloping riffing and stunnin' leads" something people started to get bored with since there was too many releases coming out and too many average acts started to come out like (DEFIANCE, EPIDEMIC...)? What kind of reactions did you get from your true fans with that second album?

**Craig:** "I don't know what true fans are besides people who follow your music. I think that anyone who really likes a band, considers themselves a true fan anyway. There are true fans of METALLICA that hate them, but I guess their truest of fans are those who like them no matter what they do. So, in that essence, I don't think we really lost any people. We actually sold twice as much of the "Twisted..." album than of "F. Evil". But the reason why we changed was that we had Tim in the band, and we started to become more solid songwriters. We didn't make a conscious decision to change it just happened. Once you sit back and listen to "F. Evil" if you did it yourself, it was a little hard to take, cause it was so raw and so fucked up in a good way. At the time, we wanted to mature, we were rushing to mature a little too fast, but that's probably the biggest reason why they are so different. But looking back at it all, I think both albums have their cool points. And most of the fans came along with us from one record to the next. And we gained alot more."

Do you think this album would have sounded the same if Glen had still been in the band at that period? I ask that because his lead playing was closer to the Satriani stuff when Calvert's playing is just totally different with an unreal approach in playing his leads...

**Craig:** "It would have sounded much different and Tim fit the band much better, he was the perfect man at the time and I like Tim's style alot so we wouldn't have certain songs on the album. Glen didn't help writing anything on "Twisted..." so...he was there when Paul and I wrote "Step By Step" and "One Foot In Hell" but that was myself and Paul so..."



Do you know exactly how many copies of your albums (1st and 2nd) have been sold over the years? Did Combat give you sales figures on a regular basis?

**Craig:** "Well I do know that "T.I.F." sold a whole lot more albums than "F. Evil" and it sold over 100,000 worldwide over the years and...over the years, that would have been nice if that was the first month or two, but it didn't...as well as "F. Evil" was received, "T.I.F." did much better saleswise in the USA and it didn't do well in Europe because we never toured on it, we were told we were gonna tour in Europe and alot of other things by Combat but they didn't want to do it. They wanted to shove us through a meat grinder and do what TESTAMENT did, make an album in a week after... they did "Practice What You Preach", they went and did "Souls Of Black" and they thought that was the blueprint but in actuality that didn't help show TESTAMENT popularity because the album wasn't as strong and the same thing would have happened to us."

How did your first video experience for "Step By Step" go? Do you think it gave the band more exposure or was it money lost for nothing, money that you could have spent on something else and who came up with the idea to do a video with that track?

**Craig:** "I think that the video didn't turn out as good as we wanted to cos that wasn't the director that we wanted. We wanted to work with the director of NINE INCH NAILS and MINISTRY videos, we were really excited but Debbie had a girl that she wanted to do it cos she thought she was really nice and that kind of killed that video but it got played on MTV at least ten or eleven times. It did serve its purpose but it was a little embarrassing to watch- like alot of things FORBIDDEN put out, that was another thing that fell very short of what our expectations were, and it's hard to look at when it's our only representation on video."

Then following a huge show on April 20, 1990 at the Omni, Oakland with VIO-LENCE and DEATH ANGEL, you embarked for what will always re-

mains one of the best Metal bills ever- a European tour with VICIOUS RUMORS and DEATH ANGEL as headliners for three weeks of hell on earth. Don't you think that bill showed exactly what the Bay Area was all about- power, speed, melody and talent after all?

**Craig:** "Well that was an incredible tour, incredible bill and probably the funniest tour I've ever been on. I think it did kind of sum it all up alot but maybe it kind of put a period at the end of everything. There might not have been another Bay Area tour that came out there that was as solid as that at that time and I think the guys in DEATH ANGEL and V. RUMORS all agreed that that was the best tour they've ever done, it was a great time."

How did that tour go exactly for you? How was it to go to places like Spain, Finland, Italy for the first time?

**Craig:** "Oh it was fantastic! I really enjoyed it." So the day before DEATH ANGEL headlined the Dynamo festival, you had the opportunity to do a headlining show at the Karregat, Eindhoven in Holland where you delivered another extraordinary performance and the day after there were talks about having you doing a few songs just before DEATH ANGEL at the Dynamo open air festival but it didn't happen, why?

**Craig:** "This wasn't pursued hard enough. It just did not happen and if we made a bigger push and Debbie made a bigger push it would have probably happened but we didn't get to do it-oh well."

What do you remember from that festival which will remain one of the best ever (TROUBLE, MORDRED, SEPULTURA...were all there)?

**Craig:** "I think I remember VICIOUS RUMORS had their very very best night of the tour- and Carl who has passed away since then- it was an amazing performance by them and... I understood where they were coming from on that tour...the traditional Metal, it was really cool, just cool to see such traditional band go over so well in front of so many people."

Hell on earth didn't stop with Europe since you continued to tour with DEATH ANGEL all over the States for two months in the summer of 1990, but despite what was expected, it seems the tour wasn't a huge success for D. ANGEL, what about you?

**Craig:** "Oh it was a huge success for us! We gained a lot. I think that they (D. ANGEL) were just looking at being a major label band, I think their expectations were very very high and I think ours were high but not maybe as high as theirs were because we didn't have major label breathing down our necks but there was a lot gained and we were feeling we were preparing in the right direction making all the right steps at that point and after that tour we figured it could only be better but that's when all the problems with the label started and they didn't see things the way we did so that's when the whole thing started to fall apart after that tour."

Then in early '91 you were part of a benefit show to raise money for Andy Galeon's medical bills following the RV road accident that they were involved in for December '90, can you give us more details about that benefit event?

**Craig:** "Pretty much everybody was there. It was all the bands that lived in the Bay Area. We were in town at the time of the benefit. I can't quite remember if the guys from EXODUS were there... But I think pretty much everybody was there, very supportive and also a very good day for Andy, who is a great guy that I still see quite a bit."

Then you started in '91 to write new material with the hope to enter the studio later that year to record your third effort. Producers such as Dave Jerden and Max Norman were even mentioned to produce that new effort but suddenly in September '91 you were labelless just like many other acts on Combat/Relativity since they chose not to pick up the option for the third album, so what do you think happened with them? I mean it is due to the fact that they found your sales figures weren't good enough or was it due to the fact that their whole scheme of music business was changing?

**Craig:** "More the second one than the first one because it did sell. It sold lot better than any of the other stuff on the label, there wasn't that much that sold better than FORBIDDEN that was on Combat but we wanted to get out of that label because of their change of philosophy, we didn't agree with the...like I said earlier the meat grinder kind of attitude, make an album real quick and hopefully it'll be good, get out there and tour. We wanted to make great albums and we thought that we could but not be in a rush and we were heading in a direction that was probably...looking back it was probably good that we didn't put out an album right away



because it would have been even more of a...maybe stiff and rigid, I don't think it would have been as good because it was getting too much of that QUEENS-RYCHE influence, with much respect to Tim but it was becoming too prominent and it wouldn't have been what we wanted to be in the end. And Combat probably couldn't have handled it- it would've had to be a major label album and that was what we were very close to doing after that."

Does that mean that you never had any conflicting situations with them unlike many other acts (DARK ANGEL, EXODUS...) before the day that you got suddenly dropped?

Craig: "It was only similar because we were on the



same label but I think it was different, it was definitely different. Both those bands were more established and by that aspect I think they were disappointed with their sales because they were established and us, we were just building and we were heading in the right direction but we suffered just like everybody else. See, I think that the whole Thrash Metal scene started dying off once bands really started second guessing what they came from and started wanting to become different things and we were a part of that too and when you got great bands like, well I use their names now like TESTAMENT and EXODUS, they're coming out there with these albums that are really disappointing that make every band below them suffer that much more."

What was your state of mind when you heard that you were dropped- I mean were you confident enough in your music to hope that it would not take long before you'd find a new deal or were you really disillusioned?

Craig: "We begged to get off that label, they could call it dropped at the time but we were like "Great. Finally, we're free", because we thought we were gonna be a major label band but the music industry had changed within a stroke of a couple days. It seems as soon as ALICE IN CHAINS and Alternative Rock came out, everything geared in a different way, what was good about us wasn't good for new music anymore so our chances to be a major label band started fizzling right about then."

Then in October '91 you finally re entered the studio with Doug Cadwell as producer to record a brand new three song demo featuring "Trapped", "So Dark" and "My Sorrow's My Own" to shop it to independent and major labels and once again the few people who had the chance to hear the stuff could see how much talent was involved in that material, like the beautiful haunting ballad "So Dark". It was said that there was an LP worth of brand new material ready at the time, tell us more about all that material that was ready back then...

Craig: "I don't think that...as cool as that material was in it's own way, I don't think it would have really made a lot of FORBIDDEN fans that happy. I think it would have opened a lot of doors for a bigger crowd in more mainstream but it would have been probably a disappointment to FORBIDDEN fans and in a way I feel kind of lucky that things didn't happen because we eventually put out an album that better represented FORBIDDEN in "Distortion" because that would've been a little bit more...it was too Progressive and a little bit too melancholic comparing to what...you know Tim's influences were coming into play a little too strong at that point and as much as we love Tim, it just wasn't right for FORBIDDEN."

Did that mean that you wanted to expand your audience somewhat at that time?

Craig: "Yes. We definitely wanted and we had alot of major label interest off that demo but again like I said earlier, when NIRVANA, ALICE IN CHAINS and bands like SOUNDGARDEN started to take off it started to make a lot of the Metal sound very rigid and stiff. It's hard saying that when you are in the middle of it but it's true. It made music better to have those bands come out."

After the demo was recorded, Matt had to leave the band because his playing abilities weren't sufficient anymore for the stuff you were writing...

Craig: "It just happened dude! He was more concerned about the party than the playing and that was an awakening for him and he tried really really hard to get back in the band, we tried out a couple bass players, really really good, but Matt was part of our heart and soul so he did improve and really worked and we took him back."

During the period he was out of the band, you were supposed to play some gigs in your area with a sit-in bass player, did that happen?

Craig: "No."

How long did it take him to rejoin the band?

Craig: "About two or three weeks, it wasn't that long, maybe a month...it was a crazy period of time for us, we didn't want to do it but we thought like we had to and make him better."

Then in the first months of 1992 you performed some showcase gigs for a number of major labels, do you remember those shows?

Craig: "Yeah, there was some good, some bad, mostly not as good as we wanted to be on those dates but there was some good shows."

From which labels did you get interest following those shows?

Craig: "Almost every major label was at least interested in us and looked at us. We had pretty severe interest from RCA and Capitol, EMI, Chrysalis...you name it. None of that stuff really panned out, in the end they passed on us and that's the way it goes..."

But in mid '92 you were close to signing a deal with RCA, so what went wrong with 'em especially since you got ready to go into the studio in June '92 with Max Norman to record that long awaited third effort? I guess the fact that Paul was on the verge of leaving didn't interfere in those events since he would have certainly recorded the album to help you out and then leave, correct?

Craig: "No, basically it really didn't interfere because Paul at the time didn't go about it in a very professional way of thought and said some things to RCA at one of our shows which caused them to get very nervous about us. He said Steve (Jacobs) wasn't the right guy for the job, he doesn't know who would be except for him. To this day he apologizes to us for that, but yeah he ended up killing that deal pretty much singlehandedly by making them nervous. If you look at the band, if they had signed to RCA, they're not even around anymore so it might not have been such a great thing to be on a major label that didn't know how to work us."

So at the first show with Steve, Paul was there and RCA was there and you showcased for 'em and he was talking to the A&R person from RCA?

Craig: "Yes. That's exactly what happened and he said something that he shouldn't have said and then he ended up regretting it later but it was too late so here it is."

If the album had been released, it should have featured the cuts from the last demo and also "Thorns Of Truth", "Disillusions", "Crawl, Walk, Run, Fall", "Hypnotized...", "Hostility" and "Feed The Hand", some of this material found its way on later recordings but what happened to the remaining material like "Thorns...", "Hostility" or "Crawl, Walk..."?

Craig: "Well "Thorns..." turned into "Feed The Hand", "Crawl..." never came about, just didn't happen, it's a great song too, all the songs are really cool, "Disillusions" is cool but that also didn't really fit into how we were feeling, I think at that point, we started to be really fuckin' pissed and angry, really start fighting back and writing more aggressive material cos we were feeling that way and that's why those songs didn't really survive and "Hostility" turned out to be "Wake Up" and...some of that stuff survived but only the strongest material really did and some newer stuff had to get in there cos otherwise it would have been only old stuff."

What were the real reasons behind Paul's departure during '92?

Craig: "Huh...well that was pretty weird because Paul really had started finding God and he was getting very religious at the time and he felt like our band was so dark and so depressing that he needed to go do something positive so that's when SLAYER came a knocking...and he thought that was for him (laughs). He thought that was the thing to do and he decided to go in Satan's hands...cos he was really ready to do other things and then SLAYER asked him to join them and he just couldn't say no to that possibility. They had their eyes on him for a little while, we knew that they had their eyes on him before he quit and that wasn't really a shock to us."

How did his departure go from the band? How did you react when you heard that he was joining SLAYER a while later to start with and then do a couple of shows in late '92 with TESTAMENT to help them out (who had also been joined by Glen Alvales in their ranks at the time)?

Craig: "Well I think it didn't really make anyone very happy but the thing that was very funny to me was just, I just remember how much Paul didn't use to like SLAYER until he joined FORBIDDEN and you have to get turned on to these things somehow but I think he was a good fit for them...no one was really that upset about this because we got Steve who's so good, he's an amazing drummer, I think that Steve fit FORBIDDEN better than Paul did which was next to impossible. If we wouldn't have found Steve, then we would have probably taken a whole different attitude."

How long did it take you to find Steve Jacobs? What sort of drummer were you looking for to replace Paul?

Craig: "A week. He walked through my door. I got a call saying that this guy from Cincinnati who was available and interested in our band. We tried him out, he walked in the door, we liked him when he came walking through as he just fit the band immediately. We had better groove than with Paul, Paul was such a flair on the drums field, such a showman, Steve was just like... something that Paul didn't have that we liked right away. We tried to find drummers that could play what Paul played but that wouldn't have any problems playing their own style. We got lucky you know, I played with Steve to this day and we are soulmates, we will play with each other in any Hard Rock bands, we just fit and that's the standard test of time, because we've been playing together a while longer than FORBIDDEN was together."

Steve, give us some info about your musical past and how you joined FORBIDDEN exactly.

Steve: "I started playing drums at eleven years old. I went to college at the university of Cincinnati, the conservatory for music there for about two years, then I got offered to play in a band out there in the Bay Area which was in fact the band HEATHEN. Jason Viebrooks (HEATHEN's bass player)- he wasn't in GRIP INC yet, had heard about my reputation through somebody out here, got my phone number and called me up, asked if I was interested in touring Europe with the band, so I said "Sure!" so I packed up and went there, did an audition there with them, nothing really worked out, I got a job, and I got another call from Jason, he was friend with FORBIDDEN, told me that Paul had quit, they were auditioning drummers so I called Craig, got an audition. I didn't even have a drum set at the time... finally got a kit down there, auditioned and it went really well. In fact the day I had the audition the set fell through, like last minute so I could have called the guys and told 'em so rather than calling I showed up with a couple beers, just hang out with the guys, talked to 'em about the stuff to play, recording and shit that I've done earlier in bands from Cincinnati. Anyway we got along really cool, so I arranged to come back the next day,



trying to get a kit and come back the next day so I did. I borrowed a pretty trashy drum kit and played... so yeah they kept ask me to come back next day, come back every day so we kept jamming and jamming, I think it started on Monday and we jammed the whole week and then Craig, we jammed last on the Friday, he says "Well go home for the week end and we'll call you up like on Sunday to let you know. We're gonna make a decision on the week end.". So I went home and I got a call from them, Craig called me up at Friday night and said "I couldn't wait, you're in!" so that's how it started. I was really into "Forbidden Evil" and I've been into the Thrash Metal scene way earlier and at that point I came in I was a bit burnt out with the whole scene cos I've been listening to that shit for years already but when the audition thing came in, I was kind of going in a different direction, I was getting into the RED HOT



CHILI PEPPERS a lot, lots of Hardcore Punk stuff and I didn't really give much attention to it, definitely had no idea what "Twisted.." was all about, but I came down and auditioned, I listened to the second album "T.I.F.", I was pretty impressed with it. Bands I was in, in Cincinnati, mostly Thrash Metal, there's one band I was in which was more Punk."

**Did you start playing music with drums or did you try out another instrument before? What about your drumming influences?**

**Steve:** "I started on guitar! But it didn't come as natural, then I got a drum set and it was it. As for influences, John Bonham, Neil Peart... tons of 'em. As for contemporaries, Lombardo.. that was a real trip stepping in his shoes for a tour, as a kid I remember listening alot to



Russ- Europe '90

"Raining Blood" when it came out, I knew it was gonna be hard on a tour replacing this guy...even TESTAMENT, I was listening to TESTAMENT when I was a teenager... later playing with these guys, crazy... but as for drummers I love Gene Hoglan, Dennis Chambers... there's more as far as newer drummers, I forgot some..." Steve, to many people Paul Bostaph seemed completely irreplaceable in FORBIDDEN as he was considered by many as a drum god, and you seemed to have replaced him without any problem at all, you even brought brand new elements as well in the band...

**Steve:** "Yeah I got most of that type of thing, especially in Europe, in the States it wasn't so much of that all... but that was a hell of a challenge, that inspires me even more, to do more...but I loved it, I loved stepping in shoes of Bostaph, that was a real challenge. That was the same when I played in TESTAMENT after Dave Lombardo when we went to Japan, but I love that, that makes me play better and better, and that was basically the same, people came and said that no one can replace Lombardo and stuff, but I guess somebody can (laughs). So I did alright with that. Bostaph, Lombardo or Gene (Hoglan) no one was easy, definitely hard especially Bostaph cos he has...from what the guys in the band told me, he's kind of a spontaneous player, he didn't play always the same thing over and over so that kind of kept the stuff fresh and...sometimes it was hard figuring what the hell he was doing. it wasn't easy at all but it was fun."

With Steve in the band, you recorded in late '92 a new three song demo containing "Disillusions", "Hypnotized By The Rhythm" and "Minds "I"" and just like it was the case on the previous demo effort, there was more than ever a lot of room in the songs for some real catchy vocal melodies which added an even more killer aspect to the songs- especially with "Disillusions" which is gonna remain one of the best tracks ever penned by FORBIDDEN. What was your goal with that new demo- to prove to people that you were still alive and kicking even if it was impossible to get those tapes in the tape trading network for some reason, tell us more about that period?

**Craig:** "That was when we really started finding our new sound and getting a little bit more electrified, it was getting better, we thought like we were getting somewhere and that's where Steve and I were locking up more for writing songs together and that's a song like "Distortion" and "Hypnotized.." happened, that's alot of myself and Steve working, really creative rhythms, it was really experimental but alot of fun and it had more aggression, I think that's where we were heading... Steve had definitely alot of Punk Rock in him and he added that to us too."

**Steve:** "One of them at least was in the making when I joined- I think that was "Disillusions", but the state of mind was kind of the same we have now, trying to deliver something different, we're trying to break some boundaries, keep the same flavor of course. We were pretty happy for the most part, no longer anger going on and stuff so we were more into writing melodies." 1993 was like another lost year for FORBIDDEN

since nothing really new happened to the band other than playing a couple of shows in your area but at the same time the rest of the world thought the band was dead after such a long period without any material available since 1990. You ended up being the only Bay Area act still alive since that scene was dying at a fast pace- all the bands which had given notoriety to that area had all broke up like HEATHEN, DEATH ANGEL, EXODUS, POSSESSED, ULYSSES SIREN and the list is endless, how do you explain the state of things?

**Craig:** "Well, there was definitely a lot of bands falling out, I mean we thought like we were the last one surviving, TESTAMENT are still around to this day but they have changed so dramatically, they're pretty much a Black Metal, Death Metal band now...It was good to be the only one around cos we were drawing lots of people up to that point and up to our last show, we still pulled in pretty good numbers, but it was difficult from another stand point because...nothing is the same, the music industry had changed and a lot of people looked at us like we're a dying breed even if we were writing very fresh material just because there was lots of new bands coming up, that's just the way it goes... When a name sits around long enough and there is not a product all you remember is the last thing they did, we all go through these changes that no one can see them from the outside world."

**Steve:** "It was a hard time and we weren't sure what's gonna happen because the scene had been so strong before it wasn't so sure that it would go definitely under, we thought it was maybe more a transition stage and it would come back so we stuck to our guns and we kind of liked the fact that we were the last band alive. That felt good, and I think we gained some respect from people that we kept going. It eventually paid off cos we got another record deal. It was kind of a lazy time because our clubs started to close down shortly after that, there's nowhere to play, just like the scene, it was going away. It wasn't necessarily the people who didn't like the music, it's just a lot goes to other people supporting the scene like promoters... alot like it is now."

You participated to a one night event on August 8th '93 at the Ruthless Inn club in S.F. (previously called Ruthies Inn) as BONDED BY BLOOD which was supposed to be at first an EXODUS reunion with Paul Baloff on vocals but it ended to be a show with a line up composed of you on guitar along with Rob Flynn, Moose (from OTHELLO'S REVENGE) on bass, Baloff on vocals and Hunting on drums, as Hunolt, Holt and Mc Killop refused to take part in that, so tell us exactly how that event was organized and which songs were performed.

**Craig:** "Actually the guy who called me to do the gig was Tom Hunting and he is a friend of mine and I pretty much didn't want to do it because I thought they should do it with the original line-up or not do it at all, but Tom said it would be fun, and I came down to the studio and I pretty much remembered all the songs, Rob Flynn and I used to jam to those classics when we were starting FORBIDDEN, "A Lesson In Violence" and all that stuff, we pretty much figured out and it was easy to remember. It was fun. Not a technically perfect show, but it was fun! A lot of blood and guts! Yeah it was '93 and a long time ago! Pretty cool. The songs we played were pretty much everything off of "Bonded By Blood". I don't think we missed a song of that record."

That same month, you recorded your third three song demo tape in a year and a half's time containing "Distortion", "All That Is" and "Rest Assured" but your songwriting style had changed since those songs sounded somewhat more aggressive, more like the stuff that could be heard at the time. Fortunately we could still hear some of the distinctive FORBIDDEN trademarks but still it was a radical change for the band, how did that happen?

**Craig:** "I think I answered that earlier, it was feeling better for us, we were getting hooks out that we wanted to get out and we were getting aggressive cos we were pissed off and fed up so I think that's what really came through."

**Steve:** "I didn't think it was less melodic necessarily, it did become a bit more aggressive...we were becoming a little more angry because we lost our deal with RCA and different things, there was a direct reflection off that state of mind so it definitely got more aggressive. But "Rest Assured" there was a strong emotion on that one, it was definitely a reflection of how we felt."

Craig had the opportunity in September/ October '93 to play as second guitar player in DEATH during their European tour, how did you get that chance exactly? I mean did it happen because Chuck Schuldiner has always been a FORBIDDEN fan and

he needed a guitar player for that tour (Ralph Santolla being unable to do this one)?

**Craig:** "They called me up, Steve DiGiorgio called me and said Chuck wanted me to play and I asked the guys from my band if it would be okay because the time was right, we were just about ready to record that "Distortion" demo, and I said "Well I go to Europe and I'll distribute it." and that how we got the deal with GUN from me giving that demo away in '93 and eventually made a way with GUN and they picked us up, it was a break. I think that was a great one for DEATH."

What kind of memories do you have from that tour which featured the best DEATH line up ever and where DEATH finally ended up as being a great live band during that particular tour- something that never happened before and after that tour to be honest.

**Craig:** "Oh it was a great one for DEATH and we had a lot of fun. It was probably the fastest they'd ever play because between me and Gene together pushing for more speed, it was pretty cool, good line up then. Memories...just the fact that I might be the only guitar player that played with Chuck and still get along with him (laughs). I never had a problem cos he was never misunderstanding, he knew that I was in FORBIDDEN, he knew that I was just doing it for the tour, he asked me if I wanted to join DEATH and I declined because I didn't really feel like doing another person's songs and I was more melodic. He's a great songwriter, he writes very great stuff but I wanted the singing, I wanted a real voice and so did Chuck but he's trapped in DEATH."

How did you feel about the fact that Craig went on tour with DEATH at that time?

**Steve:** "We knew it's gonna help cos Craig did it mostly to promote our band, to see if something can be started out there which he did and worked but we basically used our time to tighten up other aspects of the band. Mostly Matt and I worked together alot to kind of tighten the rhythm sections as much as we could, it helped alot. We were happy that he had that opportunity."

Tell us exactly how you managed to finally get this FORBIDDEN contract with GUN, after all those years during that tour.

**Craig:** "The demo made it to the president of the label's car- he had a big pile of tapes in the front seat and he... somebody gave him and went through his tapes and when he threw on ours he couldn't believe that was FORBIDDEN and he lost it, he eventually sought after us really hard right after that from that point on. It ended up in the pile he really liked as opposed to the pile in the back seat. He really liked the tape and it was a good thing- it really helped us at the time waking us up cos it was a good record deal for Europe, it was decent."

Following that deal, the third album "Distortion" was issued mid '94 but to my surprise it didn't feature the classic tracks from the '91 and '92 demos except "Hypnotized" and "Minds "I"" but instead just like the latest '93 demo announced it, it featured more aggressive tracks such as "Rape", "Wake Up!" and even if I still rate this album higher than all the PANTERA, M. HEAD etc.. of this world I still find it very disappointing for a band like FORBIDDEN especially after having heard the demo songs such as "So Dark" etc... so why didn't you use all those godly tracks to make a new classic album?

**Craig:** "Well because what ended up happening was you



Tim- Ohio '90

end up losing enthusiasm for the old songs, they didn't have that same fire they did at first and we weren't feeling like we were back then, there's a point where we were probably more melancholic and depressed and then we came out to be lot more angry and frustrated and also relived, so all that came together to be "Distortion" and it was a different time and we definitely were feeling more aggressive like music was getting more aggressive so...to me it was kind of a, you know a little bit more of "Forbidden Evil" in it than





DEATH '93 with Craig

"Twisted..." but that still... still had a little bit of the rigidity. It didn't quite bust out yet, it was getting almost there."

**Steve:** "It was a little too light for the album. We wanted to put "Rest Assured" on it but we ran out of budget. But yeah the first demo, the songs just slowly became too different from what we were, we didn't seem to want to move into that direction anymore, that didn't fit anymore."

**What kind of response did you get for this one?**

**Craig:** "That was pretty good in fact, especially good in the States again. About Europe, I think the songs went over better live than they did on the record especially songs like "Rape", "No Reason", it was a good fun time for us, it was nice to come back and have everybody remember."

**Steve:** "I thought the fans really enjoyed it...I don't know, it seems to happen to any band, if you change a member, it's not gonna be the same, like SLAYER, Paul is an amazing player but still some people say it's not the same thing and I think we got a little bit of that within FORBIDDEN, people even if they don't say necessarily that you're a bad drummer, it's not the same."

**How did the shooting of "No Reason" go as it was your second video effort? Did you get lots of TV airplay for this one?**

**Craig:** "It was another time where...the video turned out okay, it wasn't that bad, I remember being in Europe for "Headbanger's Ball" and I remember it had the time codes on the video on "H. Ball" when somebody screwed up and sent them the time code version instead of the version that was right. Here we are watching this on MTV, it's all fucked up "Oh my god what the fuck happened", yeah that was bad. But it did good, it's got played a lot and it did help sell our record out there."

**Steve:** "The video was interesting, it wasn't a big budget thing but I don't have much to say about that, it was alright...I mean, I was happy with the energy level on this video, there was always moving so that was kind of cool, not necessarily boring to watch but you know \$3,000 budget and you get what you expect. But we did have a lot of airplay, in Europe at least."

**Before the album was issued, you did your European comeback at the Dynamo festival in May '94 on the small stage if I'm correct, any memories of your second appearance there?**

**Craig:** "Yeah that was a lot of fun, they put us on... basically nobody wanted to go on early so the other two bands that started before us didn't go on until 10 pm so we didn't go on to like probably two or three in the morning and it was raining like crazy like, a foot of mud and people had already gone back to their tents cos they didn't know we were gonna play cos they didn't make an announcement so as soon as we came up with "Chalice Of Blood", we just saw droves and droves of people, get out of their tents and come running up to the front, it was pretty good, it was lots of fun...it was crazy cos we thought that it's gonna be shitty just cos everybody's back to sleep and then everybody came running back and realized what was going on, it was cool."

**Steve:** "It was a mud of beer, shit and piss (laughs)! That was great! That was my first trip to Europe, I was really excited, it was a blast. We didn't play until two in the morning I think, it was very late, most of the people had gone back to their tents and stuff and when they heard us play, everyone came back, everybody! Really nice crowd, really good response and seems like they were really happy to see us play. First time we got to meet the guy from GUN and he's really cool. That was good, good time. I remember seeing SICK OF



FORBIDDEN '93

IT ALL the next day on the main stage."

**Then in the fall of '94 a European headlining tour with GOREFEST as support took place in support of your new album and you went in almost every European country, what kind of reactions did you get during that tour?**

**Craig:** "A real good one and we got great reactions, that was a great tour...that was lots of fun...the guys in GOREFEST were pretty interesting, it was cool, man, had a good time."

**Steve:** "That was a great tour especially in Germany, Austria, Denmark was a great response...we were a little upset that we didn't get to go to U.K.. Yeah the tour was really great response, people very happy to see us cos it's been four years I think that the band had been out there. There was places that we really didn't get that great of a response I remember was Spain, France is great, Paris was...I think we could have played a little better, we had people from MTV coming in Paris for that "Headbanger's Ball" thing and we played in a brand new venue (it was at the Café De La Danse-Laurent), just opened that day, they didn't even have a fire inspection done, they had to get everybody out during the soundcheck so they could come in and do the fire inspection before they would open it. And there was a lot of kids, that was a top show. That tour was a definite success."

**During that tour, there was only two songs from "Forbidden Evil" played which was really a bad surprise for the long time fans since that album contains classic scorchers all the way, why did you make that deliberate choice to play almost nothing from that cult album?**

**Craig:** "Just because we had so many new songs, we didn't want to be one of those bands who rehash a lot of their old stuff just because that's what people remembered us by, we wanted to set our future off instead of our past, we didn't want to be a retro band even if basically that's what we were to a lot of those people."



Matt & Tim - Dynamo '94

**Steve:** "There was the time factor cos it was a co-headlining show, and if we had been headlining we would have played pretty much as long as we wanted but we couldn't. So we had picked and chose our songs and we were out to really promote the new Cd so we wanted to do a lot of the newer songs as much as we could. I was quite sure people wanted to hear more older stuff, and we could have played a couple more in my opinion."

**In 1995, following an aborted deal with Massacre to distribute the new album in the States, you finally get a deal with Pavement and you went on a club tour throughout the States with MALEVOLENT CREATION as support, did you get a big audience at those shows? Do you have any numbers concerning the sales of "Distortion"?**

**Craig:** "Yeah I have a slight idea about sales numbers but I can tell you that...it did okay, it sold as much as they put it out there, that's the problem, they didn't put enough out there, it was getting sold out everywhere it was so that was the big problem and that's still the problem to this day, they never have enough copies of this album in the stores, they come in- they go out, they come in- they go out, never enough. But there was some good draws on that tour and mostly from what you can call a very small fucked tour but the few nights...we're blown away cos we were sold out that night or very close to be sold out, so it was decent."

**Steve:** "We toured in the U.S. twice for "Distortion", one was with M. CREATION and one with TESTAMENT, but those were pretty good tours as well. As we got back from the tour

with TESTAMENT- it was close to a year since the record had come out, Craig and I started writing "Green". But what happened at that time we did that U.S. touring, it seems like FORBIDDEN had almost become a cult act, it wasn't a huge following but these people were just total fanatic fans you know?! It was crazy for FORBIDDEN which was kind of cool, but that's what gonna happen if you're dead out of the scene for four years. FORBIDDEN had not become that strong of a power yet to go out of the scene for four years and still come back with the same following, it's just not gonna happen but we still had a decent following and it was a real strong following. Like I said a cult type of thing almost and in the big cities we had big shows, lots of people showed up, but the smaller towns were a little less but still the same type of people showed up."

**Before going further Steve, can you tell us how it was to work with the rest of the band concerning the songwriting?**

**Steve:** "Craig and I clicked immediately in writing, we worked very quickly. And Tim is a real good writer but he didn't work well with Craig...Tim seems that he wanted to go in a little bit different direction that we wanted to especially when we were writing "Green", raw and too heavy I think than what he wanted to do, the stuff he's doing now with NEVERMORE is much more what he wants to do. Craig and I wrote most of the stuff and he didn't like that as well. Tim definitely had an ego part for the writing. And then, we come up with the general direction of the songs, we had Matt to come up with his bass lines, and finally we had Russ come in. Craig and I pretty much with Russ wrote all of "Green". Me, Craig and Tim all worked with Russ on "Distortion" with the vocals and the lyrics, I didn't have a whole bunch to do with those for "Distortion" but I had a lot to do with "Green"."

**Then 1996 was spent to write a new album which was issued in early '97, "Green" and this time it was just too much for the die hard fans. I personally don't consider this album as a FORBIDDEN album since everything that made this band so amazing and killer was gone on this one, lots of people including myself just thought that it was just another record in the M. HEAD, PANTERA, SEPULTURA style and lots of people gave up on the band following that effort. Looking back don't you think that you maybe went the wrong way instead of continuing to write catchy melodic material? Don't you think the old style fitted better the band than this aggressive direction?**

**Craig:** "Huh...in retrospect...two things, "Green" is my personal favorite album because it's the one I'm the most proud of as far as the way that Steve and I felt when we were writing it and putting it together, I think that it might be some of the best songwriting we did but it wasn't really a FORBIDDEN album, not so much, so I can understand that and I think that it really caused the band to go in two different directions you know...Tim was definitely more into the writing more melodic, in QUEENSRÛCHE type of stuff at that time and Steve and I were definitely... getting more raw and aggressive things because I just was headed back in that direction. I think in fact the way FORBIDDEN...it's more like "F. Evil" as far as things raw but it's definitely had that modern, kind of really powerful groove stuff, so it probably wasn't a normal FORBIDDEN album but I know that it got great reviews here and in Europe, and there's some reviews that sort of said just what you've said which I can respect so maybe FORBIDDEN should have broken up by then, we should have never done that... Steve and I could have got started MAN MADE GOD by that point but that was basically Steve and I musical album, it was definitely ours... cos that's what we thought was the best and I'm embarrassed about. I think also Russ did his best vocal performance, maybe not a lot of high screaming but definitely very strong, hooks...it was a cool album then maybe just not a real FORBIDDEN album."

**Steve:** "It didn't really matter to us, we were not doing writing to please other people, we're writing for ourselves you know?! That's not what people want to hear out of this I guess or what the normal FORBIDDEN following wants to hear out of this, but there's a lot of other people who were not necessarily into FORBIDDEN before that became interested in us after we did that album, the people who're more into the more aggressive, heavier stuff. But it still has the flavor, we weren't losing that flavor in FORBIDDEN that much, I mean there's still a lot of melodies in "Green", it's just the reflection of how we felt at the time. We just had part ways with our manager at that time Bill Menery, as he screwed us over and we couldn't really find a deal in



the States, and there's no scene in the Bay Area at all, the scene had pretty much died completely so we're frustrated, pissed off and that's how it came out! They're wasn't so much for thinking, "Hey let's write a M. HEAD type of song" which I don't think sound like M. HEAD at all. We were happy with "Green" in fact." (Well I can understand your point but as much as I love and worship MORBID ANGEL, EXECUTIONER, POSSESSED, UNSEEN TERROR, REPULSION or even THE HAUNTED which are to my eyes aggressive and brutal to say the least, I simply can't stand the pseudo aggressive sound from PANTERA and the likes and associate that stuff with heavier/ more aggressive tones and unfortunately the same goes for "Green", that has nothing to do with liking or not aggressiveness, it's just the way it's written- Laurent)

**So what happened after that? You were supposed to come over to support EXODUS on a Metal meeting tour and then in July '97 to appear at the Milwaukee Metal Festival but suddenly the news was that you had broke up...**

**Craig:** "Yeah GUN fucked up- as well as they did on the first album, they got a lot of problems because they'd just signed a bunch of really really bad bands and...I can't tell they're bad, they just made some bad decisions about where they put their money and when it came time for us to do our album support and our tour, they didn't have the money available that they had earlier, they made a big mistake we ended up paying for it. They wanted to put us on a Metal meeting instead of the GRIP tour which was another retro tour with a lot of old bands, and we just weren't interested in being part of that cos we all had new energy so that's when Steve and I decided that we're gonna start our own band and we're gonna break up on our own, we thought that it's just gonna be us two and Matt came along too and we started MAN MADE GOD. Also why we ended up break up is partly because, not just what GUN had tried to offer us on tour but they didn't want to pay to have our soundman come out with us or they didn't want to have any crew...basically they just tried to send us out there on a limited budget because they had made such bad decisions, we were going suffer so it just didn't make any sense for the band to continue cos basically we were continuing just for ourselves at that point and it wasn't fun anymore, it had just gone too far. At that point, it was enough is enough and we needed to start new."

**Steve:** "GUN overspent their budget on a bunch of other bands that I know didn't really do anything, anyway they didn't have any money left for us. We are at the end of our thing pretty much, had no support from our label, had no support from the States, there's no scene in the Bay Area, and the Metal scene in the States is just dead so that's what happened. We had a deal going with Pavement, that was supposed to go at least, that's when it started, we were in Europe, did the tour, and we were talking with our manager while we were in Europe, he says "You guys have a deal with Pavement, it's a done deal, it's ready to go." and I think it was right before we came home, he says Pavement decided not to do it, no explanations, no reason. So we came home, we had no idea what really went wrong with Pavement but we found later when we were on tour with M. CREATION that we were playing, I think it was New York and we met the representative from Pavement Records so we said "Hey what happened?! Why did you decide to drop us all of a sudden?!" and he seemed surprised, he was like "You don't know what happened?!", we're like "No, so explain to us." Bill Menery at the last minute demanded thirty grand for a video and he never discussed that with us at all, we had no idea that he demanded that much money for a video. Basically what Bill was probably gonna do from what we can tell is that he was going to ask for that money for the video and keeping it for himself. So that's what happened with Menery. But we never toured for "Green". Well we had an opportunity to tour, GUN wanted to put us on a week or two weeks maybe for five shows on a festival kind of thing, it was basically '80s Metal bands in the whole line up and we kind of basically already decided that we were probably call it quits as a band."

**Would you say you broke up only because of the business problems or is there any personal problems, conflicts happened at the same time?**

**Steve:** "Oh there has always been problems. You put five musicians in a working environment that way, I

mean musicians are screwed up people anyway for the most part and you have to try working together, you're gonna have conflicts and just absolute illogical behavior is gonna happen so...but yeah it got worse especially between Tim and Craig, lots of conflicts between us too but I shouldn't point the finger on one of them, it's just a conflict of characters, two very different people."

**You, Steve, Matt and Craig, are involved in MAN MADE GOD, what can you tell us about that band?**

**Craig:** "MAN MADE GOD is definitely a more organic band, definitely more of a Rock band, very hard Rock band, it's something much more close to the soul, alot less thought behind it and alot more heart into it. It took a little while to get the line up the way that we wanted it and we really stuck with the singer that...we were really hoping that it was gonna through but unfortunately he fell in a bad way and is not doing too well right now, but that's him as the rest of us are doing great. Matt is now out of music completely, has a kid and a wife, totally changed. Everybody who knew Matt before, he's not the same he used to be, he's definitely more mature and grown up person which is insane if you have ever know Matt, but yeah he's doing great in fact. His life has changed for the better and so have all of ours. We all do what we wanna do and I love the M.M.G. songs, and the guys I play with are great."

**Steve:** "When I started M.M.G. with Craig and Matt, we weren't sure where it was gonna go, what direction and how it was gonna sound like and we really had no idea. And as time went on we really found our direction, it's just recently we found it in fact, it took a couple years, demos and stuff...but the general idea was to come up with something that was gonna stand out, not be a part of any type of trend or anything, we wanted to create something that was gonna be long lasting, music that can be listened to years down from now and still be enjoyed, not something that can be part of the era...like I remember the Metal days, the Pop days or whatever you know. We finally got a line up that I think is right, Matt was tired to be in a band that wasn't getting immediate acceptance because the material we work on is not popular, he left the band. I did the TESTAMENT touring at that time just because I knew that would be some dead time with the band, it was perfect timing when Matt left. We had problems with our singer... we even had a second guitar player in the band, Ahruie Luster (formerly from Las Vegas PESTILENCE who moved in the late '80s in the Bay Area, became THE HORDE OF TORMENT and released two Eps and one album-Laurent), we started out with him, we wrote some kind of cool stuff, did the first demo with him, it was fun... but it seems he went a little in a different direction as well, we wrote some decent songs with him, but yeah he just didn't fit right, he got the opportunity shortly after to join MACHINE HEAD. But it didn't hurt the band at all. M.M.G. is gonna be a rising force for the next ten years at least."

**Can we find FORBIDDEN elements in this band or is it a completely different situation?**

**Craig:** "Well there, it's gonna be the main FORBIDDEN element, that will be me. Being in there and being the songwriter you know to start most of these things but because that's just what FORBIDDEN was too but it's definitely not very complex and it's... like I said, it's more from the heart not as much from the brain so it's just a lot easier for a lot of people to get into it, it's been a lot of fun watching that whole thing grow."

**Steve:** "We want definitely to sever any ties, as much as possible with elements from FORBIDDEN in that style. When we set up that first demo, we didn't tell anybody and it worked. Most of the record companies even don't know about our roots, we do it that way because they wouldn't listen if they knew that we come from a Thrash Metal band, that's the originality of that project. But the writing, there's a song called "Drone" that we're doing now that Craig and I have written, it's like pretty much the first more we wrote after FORBIDDEN broke up and Craig and I started writing stuff for M.M.G., that one has a touch of FORBIDDEN but that's pretty much the only one."

**Can we expect a FORBIDDEN reunion, not a reformation but a reunion one day with maybe Paul on drums - just like EXODUS did three years ago.**

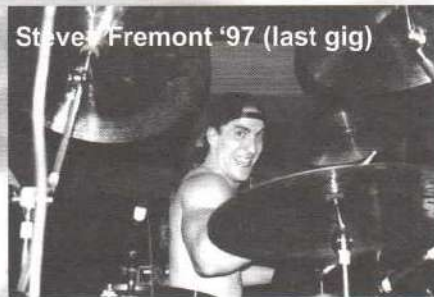
**Craig:** "Huhh...I really can't anticipate you know...if there was that big of a demand it would have come up and it's just not really that big a demand you know. It's

like DEF LEPPARD said, "it's better to burn out then fade away", I think we kind of faded away and then burnt out. It's not really...you know, the legacy is already tainted by all the years of bad business that had gone wrong and...I'm not interested in it at all, I'm very much interested in M.M.G. succeeding and becoming a worldwide band, it looks like we're heading that way so I've got to stick with it, not even think about the past."

**Steve:** "Oh, I mean there's a possibility but it's very uncertain. If there's one, I think it'll be the original FORBIDDEN, that's what people are looking to see, Paul Bostaph, maybe Glen Avelais."

**How do you explain that a scene like the Bay Area which was so powerful, so violent, so incredible, which gave to the Metal world countless killer Metal acts is just a memory now?**

**Craig:** "It just happened you know?! I think that there were some great bands and a lot of bands weren't so great, I think...even more so later unfortunately but you know when music changes, you gotta go with it, but in my case you kind of say "Fuck, what's really trendy" and you go from what you got going in your heart and hopefully that will pay off for us firstly but the music scene is definitely different, none of the old bands really have members floating around doing anything new, most of 'em gave up on music and I feel pretty lucky that we have so much going on, and so much of a positive thing comparing to alot of the guys who gave up on music so I just think that once things change you either roll with it, you fail miserably or you just give up, I mean there's only two choices."



**Besides the KING CRIMSON cover that you recorded on "Distortion", you recorded two other covers, "Rip Ride" from VENOM and "Dissident Aggressor" from PRIEST for tribute albums but both also ended up as bonus tracks on "Distortion" & "Green" respectively...**

**Craig:** "The VENOM cover I initiated when I found out that our label at the time, GUN records was putting together a VENOM compilation. I was a huge VENOM fan back in the day, none of the other guy's in the band were ever VENOM fans at all, so I had to talk them into doing a song, and that was "Rip Ride". We had a good time, it was fun. We learned it in a day. I already knew the song, but the other guy's pretty much learned it in a day. Steve was practicing it out on a cardboard box at Matt's house before they left to go to the studio to play it for real (laughs). We went and recorded it in a day, it was really fun. The PRIEST cover was pretty much the same circumstance. They wanted to know if we would be interested in doing a cover for their tribute record. It was Century Media this time, they called me up and asked if we were interested and I thought we could do a pretty cool version of "Dissident Aggressor" and it was no big deal. There were other songs we would have liked to do, but they were already taken so... we did the one that SLAYER did already, and it was a little more true to the original, but we also jacked it up some too."

**What do you think lacked for FORBIDDEN to become a huge band despite the fact that you never gave up- unlike countless others, and you had an amazing amount of talent?**

**Craig:** "Number one: bad business and number two: bad timing and I think that's pretty much it because if we would have the right business decisions done along with the right few months here or there, I think FORBIDDEN would've definitely been a force and probably would have made records well into the nineties, quite a few more would have been a different growth. But being as the way things worked out the way they worked out and what you got right there in front of you, it's just a fragment of the past, some pretty stellar moments and some pretty glaring low points (laughs). You know, I really don't have any regrets because I feel I've got a chance now, but I can't say that for everybody, I can only say that for myself and Steve...the other guys probably are full of a lot more regret than I."

**Steve:** "Playing a type of music that was not in the

**Craig- Fremont '97 (last gig)**



song that we wrote after FORBIDDEN broke up and Craig and I started writing stuff for M.M.G., that one has a touch of FORBIDDEN but that's pretty much the only one."

**Can we expect a FORBIDDEN reunion, not a reformation but a reunion one day with maybe Paul on drums - just like EXODUS did three years ago.**

**Craig:** "Huhh...I really can't anticipate you know...if there was that big of a demand it would have come up and it's just not really that big a demand you know. It's



mainstream anymore but like I said we were trying to make something that was traceable for a wider range of people, we always had problems with the other guys accepting that, we had a different idea for what's gonna make the band big and what's the band need to do. Russ was especially hard to work within that aspect and trying to get him try new things, new type of voices, whatever...something that came out on "Green".

**Do you still see some of the members who were in FORBIDDEN from '85 to '96 sometimes and do you know what they're up to now like with Tim being in NEVERMORE, Russ in PARKING LOT PROPHETS (P.L.P.)?**

**Craig:** "Tim is not in NEVERMORE, he probably quit the music business altogether. He probably plays by himself still, but that's it, he got married and lives up in the Seattle area still as far as I know. He's pretty mellow now. He is working on airplane's or jet engines something like that, that's what he always wanted to do. I see Matt Camacho all the time, he lives very close to me, he is still a very good friend of mine but his family took over priority for him which is perfectly normal and ok. I still see Russ every once in awhile. I think you have see his band on the internet, P.L.P., he is doing the type of music that is important to him now and it is what he likes. He doesn't really care if people think its not cool or whatever, he likes it and that's all that matters to him! He just wants to do it and its fun for him. I don't see any of the older members at all. I don't see Glenn, John Tegio or Jim Pittman or know what they are up to."

**Steve:** "I haven't seen in a long time Tim, since he left. I see Russ once a while, we played a couple shows with him and his new project, P.L.P.. I see Matt cos we've been in the same band together, M.M.G. and Craig of course. I see Paul, I hung out with him. In fact I did a tour with Glen in TESTAMENT, I help 'em out on the "Demonic" tour, we did some shows in South America."

**How did you feel about the cheap "best of" Relativity put out a while ago as "Point Of No Return"?** Did

they ask your opinion about that?

**Craig:** "No they did not ask for our opinions or impressions. And I think that the name "Point Of No Return" was a HUGE insult! In fact, I think the label did their very best to make sure that we never did return to that point! Which was a course or point of positive momentum. Yeah if you ask every band that puts out a best of record, how do they feel about their best of album, they will say it was a waste of good music that they did. They (the bands) are just out there to make the record labels money and very rarely do they (the bands) themselves ever really approve of a best of album or appreciate that."

**Last year Century Media re-released your first two albums, are you satisfied with the final result and did they ask your opinion about re-releasing that stuff?**

**Craig:** "Well they wanted some pictures from me and I sent 'em some pictures. They really wanted us to put the demo tracks on there but we didn't have a decent version of 'em. There was only bootleg versions and they weren't good enough, so I wasn't really into that, and no one in FORBIDDEN really was. I think Paul Bostaph is the only guy who really wanted to see that stuff released, just so people could see what he was playing, right at the end of FORBIDDEN. I could really care less you know...well I do care but as far as the details about what they did, it didn't matter to me that much, I was just glad to see our stuff was out there."

**Recently there's a bootleg FORBIDDEN album called "Trapped" that has been issued on WFW records which features the '91, '92 demos and the**

**July '87 demo, are you aware of this? How do you feel about this and do you think it'll help to continue the FORBIDDEN legacy and finally give a chance for people to hear that godly unreleased studio stuff?**

**Craig:** "Well I heard it and I think the hiss from the cassette tapes they recorded from is louder than the actual music on those things. I'm cool with it being out like that, I'm not gonna come looking for those guys, shaking a stick at them for our money. The bootlegs are gonna get out there and I've always been a great supporter of that kind of thing because that helps keep the underground alive and it's a long time ago...and that demo stuff, it might as well get out there somehow, I stand behind that and all power to them, it's the past let it be."

**Steve:** "Some people are really happy about it, die hard FORBIDDEN fans...I'm not that happy about it even if I haven't heard it but I heard it sucks, the sound is really really bad (by your standards maybe but not by mine and better get this godly stuff that way than never-Laurent) but I don't really care, I'm not shocked... I'm just a little bit angry that they did not ask us, contact us or anything, that's disrespect to us."

**Anything that you would like to add that wasn't covered maybe or something else?**

**Craig:** "It's been a very interesting decade for me. I went from being a teenager to hitting thirty in these last ten years! I think 2001 is going to be my best year so far and also for Steve. I really feel great about everything that MAN MADE GOD is doing. There are going to be a countless amount of people who are going to be very happy to hear what MAN MADE GOD are bringing to the table! Laurent I think you are going to be really happy with our latest recording and so will everyone else!"

Since this interview has been done, MAN MADE GOD have signed a record deal with American recordings and are currently in studio recording their first effort.

Laurent Ramadier

(with some transcription done by Matt Coe)



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**Please introduce SOLSTICE first...**

"At this moment in time, the line up of the band is myself Rich Walker (guitar), Morris Ingram (vocals), Lee "Chaz" Netherwood (bass), Rick Budby (drums) and our stand in guitar player number two is Rick's twin brother, Jerry Budby."

**I have part (two songs) of a demo from 1994 called "As Empires Fall". Please tell us something about this demo and the two prior to it.**

"The first demo was recorded in 1991 and it was entitled "Lamentations", the track listing is "Lachrymose (intro)", "No Mans Land", "Absolution In Extremis", "Night Falls", "Midwinter Serenade", "Doomculte (outro)". Only tracks 3-6 were ever released "officially" as we felt at the time that the intro and second track weren't up to the standards of the others... The second demo was recorded in 1992, entitled "MCMXCII" and consisted of "Your Haunted Eyes", "Midwinter Serenade", "Lachrymose", "Another Cross To Bear", "Absolution In Extremis", "Graven Deep", "No Mans Land", "Mind-Food". Once again, only tracks 1-6 were officially released, the song "Mind-Food" was a cover of the SAINT VITUS tune, and came out awful to be honest...After that came the third demo by the name of "As Empires Fall", its track list was "Neither Time Nor Tide", "Absolution In Extremis", "Nowhere Journey", "The Revenant". This demo was produced by Gene Hoglan (of DARK ANGEL fame) and track three was later retitled "These Forever Bleak Paths". After a serious line up change the band became the "Lamentations" CD line-up but prior to that we did record the "Ragnorock" demo in 1994 which had the following cuts "Winter Moon Rapture", "Last Wish", "The Man Who Lost The Sun", "Ragnorok", "Only The Strong" and the one song "Winter Moon Rapture" demo, which was as its title suggests, just that song. Looking back on the first three demos they were pretty good but very basic BLACK SABBATH/ CANDLEMASS inspired affairs. And contrary to popular belief, we were never influenced by SOLITUDE AETURNUS at all, just fans of those first three albums. Personally speaking, I can see where the comparisons come from, but it can become annoying after awhile."

"Lamentations" was released by Candlelight Records in 1994. Were you happy with their promotion at the time and how would you say this CD was received in the underground press?

"No, far from it. They were, and still are a set of money grabbing businessmen with no interest in Metal. We had NO advertising at all for the album. Not fucking one advert anywhere at all. Very few review copies were mailed out and we have NEVER received a sales statement either. The reviews we did receive were 90% excellent raving about us, the other 10% indifferent. We got one interview in a national magazine from it. That was the extent of Candlelight's incompetence. On the whole we soldiered on for nearly two years after its release before things started to fall apart once more."

**Tell us some tour stories from this era on the road with COUNT RAVEN and ANATHEMA.**

"Firstly, we got both the tours off our own backs, the COUNT RAVEN one during the summer 1994 was 14 shows in the UK, the majority of which were small attendances, averaging about 90 people a show, apart from a couple where only around four people showed!! They were great fun but were spoiled only by having the ridiculous YEAR ZERO playing on them who were just a bad pub Rock band. They totally killed any atmosphere with their 10<sup>th</sup> rate songs and poor musicianship. There was plenty of serious drinking on SOLSTICE's and COUNT RAVEN's part, and I mean serious! They were fantastic every night and a great set of men. SOLSTICE hails them. The ANATHEMA tour across Europe in November 1994 was also good fun and a great learning experience for us. Lots of great shows in countries like Belgium, Germany, Holland, Sweden, Poland, Lithuanian, Czech Republic and the exceptionally memorable Denmark. Memorable for being out worst show ever! It was dead silence after every song, utterly dreadful. Not even "polite" applause! Never again will we play Denmark after that display of sheer ignorance by a bunch of Death Metal trendy shithheads. Also, ANATHEMA towards the end were acting like arseholes toward us, so after the very last show we bought ourselves 200 bottles of beer for the journey home, knowing full well that ANATHEMA had no money left. We sat on the tour bus and drank the fucking lot in front of them, not even offering them a single drop. This all happened because the last five shows, they had decided they

**Unlike any other band in existence, cult act SOLSTICE have their own unique vision of epic Doom Metal. Copying no one, they continue to bring forth incredible visions of the ancient past into their music. Let's journey into the past and then into the future through this interview with Rich Walker.**

Rich Walker

Lee Netherwood



ered that hardly any copies of the cd made it out at all, sadly. How we never got on a plane to Italy and murdered them I'll never know. Anyway, the 10" ep came out in late 1996 as an edition of 500 with embossed sleeve, and the cd early 1997."

**To me "Halcyon" is so much more epic and bludgeoning than "Lamentations"- which has a much more somber tone & style. Do you feel that the band was finally moving into an area more to your liking musically?**

"Yes, the earlier material was composed under a great amount of personal grief which came from the death of my mother, after "Lamentations" John Piras and I wrote what was to be the template for our musical evolution "To Ride With Tyr". It was more aggressive than we'd ever been before and it also opened up whole new vistas of epic Metal for SOLSTICE. We were starting to get angry with all our bad luck, and it showed! But before we wrote anything else line-up changes occurred between 1996 and 1997..."

**SOLSTICE was basically a new band with three different members in 1995, including a new vocalist, this sounds like a pretty turbulent time reading between the lines, what happened?**

"No, it was still the same line-up as "Lamentations", but over the period of summer 1996, Simon, John, and (Lentil? Check this) all left- or in Simon's case was sacked/left. We had a drummer called Steveley Steals for awhile who sessioned on "Halcyon" and a few live shows, then we gradually assembled a new working line up in summer 1997 of myself, Lee, Morris, Rick and Hamish the Porkboy. We recorded a demo in early 1997 with three songs which were "The Sleeping Tyrant", "Protest & Survive" (DISCHARGE cover), "Only The Strong". Only the DISCHARGE cover from this session has ever been released, after that we recorded the now famous "Drunken Dungeon Sessions" demo which was "The Sleeping Tyrant", "Blackthorne", "Hammer Of Damnation", "Neither Time Nor Tide", "Only The Strong". Once again, only the first three songs were released. And after that, we recorded the "Dungeon Sessions II" tape, this was never released fully either, only the first song. It tracks: "Cimmerian Codex", "Midwinter Serenade", "Solitude" (The CANDLEMASS classic!). Finally, just before "New Dark Age", we

# NEW DOOMY AGE!

wanted all the free beer and food for themselves. Revenge was sweet! I will take the look of jealousy on their stupid faces with me to the grave (laughs)!"

**By the time the "Halcyon" mini-CD was released in 1996 on Godhead from Italy (recorded in 1995), what happened to Candlelight and SOLSTICE?**

"Nothing happened, and that's why we left. They didn't really have any interest in us, after we recorded the "Halcyon" mcd in 1995, they wanted to release it but we said no, and that we weren't interested in releasing

recorded a one song demo of "The Sleeping Tyrant" again which ended up on the "At The Mountains Of Madness" compilation cd on Miskatonic and Misanthropy's "Presumed Guilty" compilation cd. This will also be released as a split 10" picture disc with TWISTED TOWER DIRE very soon by Syren Records, originally it was due to be released by Near Dark productions but they too turned out to be a set of losers!"

**"New Dark Age" was recorded and released in 1998 on yet another label, Misanthropy, long before this Godhead had vanished, how difficult was it to find yet another label?**

"It was very difficult, we had no money at all to record a proper demo of new songs- hence the "Drunken Dungeon Sessions" demo's recorded on a four track machine in our rehearsal space, which was at that time in the cellar of the house where myself and Chaz used to live, and we were on a real moral low too even though we'd just pieced together a full line up. But as fate would have it, our good friend Russ (Smith) of Black Tears mailed a copy to Tiziana at Misanthropy and she liked it enough to offer us a deal for a new album. After Misanthropy decided to shut down, we sent 30 promo's out to various labels, and received three reply's! Once again, it is very hard to get a deal when you play real fucking trend free Metal! But, Misanthropy although they did pretty damn excellent on mailing out promo cd's, placed only two quarter page ads for "New Dark Age", one in Terrorizer, and one in a Nuclear Blast Records catalogue. Now I'm no egotist or anything, but I have to admit I was very disappointed with this, especially as other bands on the label, who went on to sell less than us received numerous full page add's in a variety of magazines. So once again, no real advertising. That's now in total two quarter page add's over six years and three cds, pretty depressing isn't it? In fact I'd say that it is totally insane..."

**On "New Dark Age", you have yet another drummer and another new vocalist. What keeps happen-**



anything else with them. "Halcyon" was originally meant to be released as a 10" ep, mcd and a limited one sided 7" single on the obscure German label Storm-strike records. However after 18 months and no release we licensed it to Godhead Records for the mcd and Black Tears for the 10" ep. Only 15 copies of the 7" single exist as test pressings- featuring a cover of MANOWAR's "Gloves Of Metal". However history repeated itself and Godhead folded a month or so after the cd release leaving us in the lurch again. We discov-





ing to your drummers, are they exploding or are you killing them?!

"As I explained before, we used a session drummer between "Lamentations" and "New Dark Age", after that we got Rick. As for vocals, Simon sang on "Lamentations" and "Halcyon" so far Morris has sung on "New Dark Age". If you are referring to Tom Phillips sessioning on vocals for five months, it really isn't worth mentioning as we never did anything except play two very bad shows due to Tom's inability to sing the songs which I'm sure he'll agree with, he was very bad!"

To me the song "Hammer Of Damnation" is the ultimate distillation of the poetry and fiction of Clark Ashton Smith, Robert E. Howard and H.P. Lovecraft. What is your take on that?

"Musically or lyrically Rob? Or both? I'd agree wholeheartedly but I wish people would bear in mind that the lyrics are not just fiction, it trivializes some of the serious topics they address. Never the less, the works of such literary masters has helped me forge forward with my own deranged ramblings and I am unashamed at how heavily inspired by such Titans they are. But unlike a certain band who I shall refrain from naming- but they are English, I don't copy word for word literally from books, my ideas are my own."

I think "New Dark Age" is masterpiece of musical art, the culmination of years of heaviness in an hour of clarity. What do you think now two years later, are you still happy with this record?

"Very much so, under the circumstances it was recorded in I believe it came out incredible. In terms of song writing I believe it is my best yet- and of course with contributions from Lee and Hamish musically it came out even better than it would have done otherwise. Lyrically, once again, I am very proud. I get a lot of comments from people on how good they think the lyrics are, which in the Metal scene is no mean achievement, I think as there are some fantastic lyricists out there!! There's also plenty, well the majority actually, of absolute balderdash."

I think "New Dark Age" derived a lot of its original vibe and perfection from your present day vocalist Morris Ingram. His crystal clear voice and wide range to me put him in a league of his own. How does he compare to vocalist you have worked with in the past?

"Morris is 100% better. Simon was to put it politely an anal probe. He was also a liar, and a thief- very much like Staveley Steels. But we are on Morris, not those two cretins. Surely the difference is there to hear. Morris sings like he is into the music- which he is, the old guy sang more like he was into making money from the music. Also Morris has a very distinct vocal style with several nuances which I haven't heard any other singer from Albion use. More power to him for developing his own style. He also has a better grasp of the dramatic and he's also a much better frontman with a presence on the stage- most important me thinks!!"

For years I was unable to locate a copy of "Lamentations" for my collection. Yet right when "New Dark Age" was released, copies of this CD are now readily available- at least in my area for awhile. How do you feel about Candlelight repressing this CD? Have you received any cash from their exploitation?

"I feel it is very typical of the label and the people behind it. For years they ignore it and yet as soon as "New Dark Age" started getting all its fantastic reviews it suddenly made a re-appearance in stores worldwide, initially also it was very hard to get hold of as well. As I said before, we never received any money or sales statements from them. They also made a bunch of longsleeves and normal shirts without our permission a couple of years ago using a design we sent, not the "Lamentations" sleeve, but a "new" design and then scrapped. Needless to say if I ever get my hands on them, I shall in no uncertain terms beat the living shit out of them."

By now "New Dark Age" should be out on double vinyl from Metal Supremacy Records. I know that personally you are into vinyl big time. Are you happy to see this finally happen? When will we get "Lamentations" vinyl?

"Of course, it is like a dream come true for me being a vinyl collector like yourself, I couldn't wish for anything better. My eternal thanks to Hermann and Andrea at



Morris Ingram

Metal Supremacy for this. The album deserves to be on vinyl, the songs, artwork, everything about it. "New Dark Age" was created for vinyl!! But it doesn't stop there, we've added two bonus songs, covers of IRON MAI-DENS "The Prophecy" and the TRESPASS anthem "Stormchild". For me, I feel that this chapter in SOLSTICE's recording output is now complete. As for "Lamentations" on vinyl, well there's talk of it but I doubt it will ever happen, to be honest although I like the album I'm not sure if its deserving of a vinyl release as much as "New Dark Age" and "Halcyon". But if someone wants to I won't say no! Anybody interested? Then get in touch...actually I'd like to see it as a double 10" set, that would be cool."

In the summer of 2000 you toured around Germany with THE LORD WEIRD SLOUGH FEG and played at Wacken. Fortunately I had the chance to catch three of these gigs and can honestly say they were some of the best I've ever had the chance to experience. Were you satisfied with how everything turned out? What is one of your best and most painful memories?

"Courtesy of our staunch friend and fellow Metal maniac Jochen Fopp of MIRROR OF DECEPTION, both SOLSTICE and T.L.W.S.FEG were able to play shows in Germany this summer. They were awesome to say the least, it felt like going home playing those shows to people who actually enjoy what we do- of course we had a few UK shows too which I organized including the "Metal Inquisition" festival. Wacken was very prestigious, but we put just as much effort into all the other shows, we don't aim to sell anybody short with our live performances. Also I was amazed at how many cd's and shirts we sold over the course of the German shows. I



SOLSTICE 2000

think the highs were constant, meeting old friends like Gerrit, Ralf, Apollo, Bolle, Jochen from the Stuttgart area, making new friends like Frank from WELL OF SOULS and all the guys of DREAMING, the huge amounts of free German beer we drank and then meeting up with more at Wacken, it's just like one big tribal gathering with great music to top it off. Also getting to play to over 1000 people was an incredible high too at Wacken. There were not really any painful moments- unless of course you count saying goodbye to SLOUGH FEG and TWISTED TOWER DIRE at the end of it all. But I suppose you could say that our traveling conditions were no too comfy. Though what doesn't destroy is, only makes us stronger."

Just recently "Halcyon" was remastered and reissued on Invictus/ Hammerheart. Were you unsatisfied with the original version? Where did the track "Only The Strong" come from? I know this was originally on "Lamentations", why did it end up here?

"We weren't so much unsatisfied with the original, but its exceptionally poor distribution, as I said before very few cd copies made it to stores due to Godhead going bankrupt. "Only The Strong" and "Winter Moon Rapture" on the new version are both rescued mixes from the original "Lamentations" master tapes. "Winter Moon Rapture" is different to the original cd version of "Halcyon" which was the one song demo I spoke of earlier. We added them to give more value for money and repackaged it all to make it look better. It came out excellent, especially the totally awesome picture disc LP version, which was limited to 300 copies. My deepest gratitude

goes out to Alan Averill of PRIMORDIAL and Darragh O' Leary for the wonderful opportunity they gave to us- Hail!!"

Up next from SOLSTICE is the "Doomcvlte" mini- lp on Necropolis Records, is this correct? Tell us about the songs on this release.

"Supposedly, next up is "Doomcvlte", but we shall see, so far after many months of waiting, Necropolis Records have yet to send us any money to record with. Upon this, we plan to record and release three SOLSTICE originals "Aequinoctium II", "Bloodfeud" and "Mighty & Superior". "Bloodfeud" is another nine minute SOLSTICE epic, the other two being instrumental pieces of around three minutes each. Also the plan is to record two to three cover versions, one being the WITCHFYNDE classic "I'd Rather Go Wild". This will also feature guest vocals from non other than Mr. Luther Beltz himself!! Killer! For the others we are currently arguing over tracks by such bands as SOLDIER, ANGEL WITCH, TWISTED SISTER, JUDAS PRIEST and CANDLEMASS. Wait and see..."

What is up next on this mini-cd? Do you plan on coming to California to record this full length release?

"The third full length is entitled "To Sol A Thane" and I have no idea where on earth it will be recorded. If our luck run's true to form then it will be recorded for the princely sum of \$10 at Mike Scalzi's house (laughs)!"

What books are you reading these days that provide you with the most inspiration?

"Ok, so last week I read Robert E. Howard exclusively, his Conan stories at that. Awesome! Now if only I could get hold of the missing books for my collection of Conan's adventures. Still, this week I shall read a rather nice volume I recently bought of Arthurian legends (How very English of me!) and probably the Icelandic saga's. I make no secret that H.P. Lovecraft, J.R.R. Tolkien, Robert E. Howard, Clark Ashton Smith have inspired me greatly, but I also read several modern authors too such as Brian Lumley, Raymond E. Feist, Robert Holdstock, etc. Without the following- and these are in no particular order I can think of, life would not be worth living for as I am concerned, my wife (Lucy), my cat (Queen Gertrude of Saxony), Metal (i.e. heavy), books (by the above authors), beer (strong and in large amounts), SOLSTICE (loud, and in large amounts)."

Tell us about the Miskatonic Foundation. How well has this done for you, are you breaking even? What are some of the projects already on the burner?

"Right now, I'm preparing to release the debut full length CD by German Doom Metal lunatics MIRROR OF DECEPTION, it's a very melancholic piece of art, exceptional production and their finest work to date. After that volume II of the "At The Mountains Of Madness" sampler featuring another ten Hardcore Doom Metal groups from the depths of the underground, confirmed so far are PENANCE (US), ICEFALL (US), SUNN (US), THE REVEREND BIZARRE (Fin), MINOTAURI (Fin), MIRROR OF DECEPTION (Ger), DAWN OF WINTER (Ger), SOLOMON KANE (UK) and also ELECTRIC WIZARD (UK) are meant to be appearing too. I think so far everything has gone pretty good, the sampler is sold out, TWISTED TOWER DIRE is close to selling out its second pressing and WARNING is half-way down its first. I wish more people would check out WARNING, but there you go. It's all down to personal taste. I'm not breaking even, I lose money but I don't care. I'll carry on regardless, I started the label to help the bands who I thought deserved a break and release music I liked as a fan, not to line my own pockets. FUCK LABELS LIKE PEACEVILLE, EARACHE, etc. They are nothing more than scum. In the future I would like to release some new stuff by WARNING and TWISTED TOWER DIRE, also I'd love to release cd's by ICEFALL and BROCAS HELM too! Two totally incredible bands."

This last space if for you to say anything you would like:

"Thanks for this interview Rob, thanks also to Mike "Stargate" Scalzi, John "Electric Bruce" Cobbett, Dan "Cletus" Cobbett, Greg "Pietaster" Haa and of course Tony, Mark Jimmy, Dave and Scott of TWISTED TOWER DIRE (alias the Tom Phillips Quintet). ALE & KILL!"

Rob Preston

SOLSTICE live 2000





# A LESSON IN HISTORY III - INTERVIEW W/ JON TORRES

**Old Bay Area Metal rules! And even if what remains from that legendary Metal scene today is just ruins, there are still some acts from those old days who never got further than recording demos or self financed singles that need your attention if you're looking for talently executed Metal. I guess most of you never heard of THUNDERHEAD, WARNING, ULYSSES SIREN or I4NI- four forgotten killer Heavy/Thrash Bay Area outfits. On the other hand everybody knows of LAAZ ROCKIT- who released six albums, one EP and a video in their eleven years career, and are aware of the fact that ANGEL WITCH was a Bay Area based band during the early nineties. So you may wonder what's the connection between all bands?! Well simply a Metal veteran named Jon Torres, a witness of those magical times. Now it's time for him to talk about all the bands he performed with during those 20 years of Metallic fury. And I warn you to keep your eyes open for the upcoming WARNING/THUNDERHEAD releases as those certainly will be some of the most devastating Heavy Metal releases of this new century... Nothing else!**

## THUNDERHEAD

**How and when did you discover/ enter the Metal world?**

"I would say pretty early in my life...I was 12 when I started getting into stuff like SABBATH, DEEP PURPLE and so on."

**When did you start playing guitar?**

"When I was 15ish I guess. 1977 or so."

**Was it the first instrument you played?**

"No oddly enough played the Coronet in Grade school along with a lot of other instruments, which I was, never all that good at."

**What were your main influences as a guitarist?**

"The biggest influence was SABBATH by far. When I first started playing I wasn't good enough to play most SABBATH tunes so I played a lot of Punk- PISTOLS, DAMNED, DEAD BOYS, and THE RAMONES. When I finally was able to figure out more complicated tunes it was like a floodgate was opened. I got into everything but was really influenced by guys like Michael Schenker, Uli Roth, Gary Moore, John Sykes, Vivian Campbell, and Scott Gorham to name a few."



**Was THUNDERHEAD your very first band?**

"No THUNDERHEAD was my first REAL gigging band. There was only one really worth mentioning before THUNDERHEAD. That was BLACK PEARL. That band was mostly a copy tune band. It was I, my brother (Mike), Brian Poole and Tany Fillari. It was a lot of fun but that was about it."

**How and when exactly did THUNDERHEAD form? I think at one time the line up consisted as far as I know of you on guitar, your brother Mike on bass, Terry Hamilton on guitar, Carl Stevens on vocals and as a late addition back then Mark Bradley on drums... did you go through a lot of line up changes during the time you existed as THUNDERHEAD?**

"THUNDERHEAD was formed in 1980. The original members were Terry Hamilton on guitar/vocals...Mike Torres on bass and vocals Lenny Albert on drums and myself on guitar. It was formed by accident



Jon Torres '83

actually. Terry lived around the corner from us and one day my brother came to me and said "This guy around the block has all these Marshall stacks in his basement, we should check him out.", so Mike and I went over and played "Rock Bottom" (U.F.O.) for him. The next day we started the band. We got Lenny through a friend of ours and the band was born."

**What was the main influences of the band? Was it mainly European bands like ACCEPT, MAIDEN... as some of your originals sounded somewhat like the early stuff of those bands?**

"The main influences were the classics to begin with (SABBATH, U.F.O., THIN LIZZY) but then the focus really changed when I started writing more of the tunes. Our songs started sounding like a lot of bands I was really listening to at the time- RIOT, ACCEPT, MAIDEN, MOTORHEAD, ANGEL WITCH, SAXON, SCORPIONS."

**How would you describe THUNDERHEAD's music to those who never heard of that band?**

"An adolescent fixation with a lot of different Metal bands. Classic and Neo all thrown together with an American twist."

**Did you immediately write your own original material or did you incorporate some covers of European Metal bands that weren't that well known yet on the West Coast such as ACCEPT, JAGUAR etc...?**

"I did a bit of both really. Started writing tunes and played copies as well- HOLOCAUST, ACCEPT, MOTORHEAD, BLIZZARD OF OZ, and so on."

THUNDERHEAD were (along with the likes of VICIOUS RUMORS, TRAUMA, BLIND ILLUSION, SINISTER SAVAGE (pre GRIFFIN), PARADOX (pre HEXX), LAAZ ROCKIT, MURDER, VIOLATION, ASSASSINS, DAMMAJ, METAL CHURCH, EXODUS and ANVIL CHORUS) a band that belonged to the famous New Wave Of San Francisco Heavy Metal scene. Do you remember how it all started EXACTLY and how it was to be a part of this impressive movement, playing shows at the Metal Mondays etc...

"The way I really remember the start of it for me was going down to the studio in North Beach and first seeing VYKING (Thaen Rassmussen's band) and METAL CHURCH and just hanging out with those bands and meeting other bands soon after that- EXODUS, VICIOUS RUMORS, BLIND ILLUSION, and more or less bonding in one form or another with all of them and starting a prelude to the "Metal Monday" era."

Besides live shows, I never saw any demo or rehearsal tapes from THUNDERHEAD floating in the underground tape trading scene. I remember that there were talks in mid '82 to record a demo tape, and even a rough tape was played at the time on KUSF radio. What exactly at that time got recorded?

"THUNDERHEAD never did anything more than rehearsal tapes and gig tapes. That was a great time but we weren't ready for studio recording at

that time."

Some of the song titles you had were "Thunderhead", "Make It Or Break It", "Sorcerers", "Road Death", what were some of the others and did they sound like the aforementioned ones?

"There were some others. "Curse Of The Pharaohs", "Tribute To Eddie" and "Aftermath" and "Nightmare". They were a mirror of the others in some ways."

**Were you close at one point to release something like maybe a single just like A. CHORUS or VIOLATION did?**

"No not really."

**What ended the band exactly? I mean it seems you had a great response coming out from the Bay Area to your material as you played quite a lot of live shows so...**

"I would say sibling rivalry...I simply couldn't take my brother any longer, besides Mark Bradley and he were the only ones who had any real talent in that band



anyway. Also I was offered a gig with another band that seemed a bit more my speed at the time."

**Next thing you were involved with was WARNING, was that band formed after THUNDERHEAD's demise or did that band already exist and you simply joined it?**

"Ok this is the story. I joined a band called HADES after THUNDERHEAD. With Brian Poole on guitar, Tany Fillari on drums and Kirk Bowman on bass and vocals. They didn't want to call themselves HADES anymore so we changed our name to WARNING."

The line up featured Robert Halverson on guitar/vocals, you on guitar, Brian Poole on guitar and keyboards, ex-THUNDERHEAD guitar player Terry Hamilton on bass this time and Tany Fillari on drums.

**Who came up with the idea to have a three guitar team in the band?**

"It wasn't really designed to be a three-guitar player band. We had gone through two bass players and a singer and were getting fed up with line-up changes so we got Terry to play the bass and Rob to replace Carl Stevens- two dependable members."

**How did that thing develop and was it hard to be tight in such a situation?**

"Funny you should say "develop". Terry really didn't want to play the bass at all...I really had to coach and coerce him into doing it but in the end it worked out pretty good. We really didn't have any problems in the "tightness" department."

A three song demo called "Not A Chance In Hell!" featuring "Fall Upon Your Knees", "Metal Maniac" and "Not A Chance In Hell" was recorded and released in August '85 featuring shredding material with lots of emphasis on the riffing- that tape came out with a very professional cover also, what kind of response did you get for that?

"It was ok I guess. The people who got it really liked

WARNING

SICK FOR LIPSON YOUR MESSAGE  
MIND YOUR BUSINESS  
SICK 2 NOT A CHANCE IN HELL



NOT A CHANCE IN HELL





it."

Was it sold mainly in the US or did you get the chance to send copies to Europe as I never saw any copy of that demo in any tape trading list?

"It was never released in Europe. Some copies ended up in South America and Japan but it was mostly an American release. It will eventually end up in Europe though. We're re-releasing that three-song demo along with some other old stuff on the new album."

Did you record any other demo with that band?

"No the 85 demo was the only one."

What were some of other songs you had written?

"Doomsdays Gate", "Castle Of Fire", "The Noose" which ended up becoming a ULYSSES SIREN tune, "Above The Ashes" (Absolute GODLY/ RAGING tune-Laurent) and "Sounds Of Armageddon".

Did you play THUNDERHEAD material during the WARNING shows also?

"Oh yeah. Quite a bit of it actually."

I remember a particular show that happened at the Mabuhay Gardens, S.F. on February 20th '83 where you played along with ANVIL CHORUS and EXODUS, a quite raging Metal bill to say the least. Any particular memories of that

show? Also what was the WARNING line up at that point?

"Yeah, Gary Holt's electric blue spandex pants...Sorry... I really remember that all the bands that played that night gave it their all because it was a very special occasion for us all. EXODUS really kicked ass! It was Brian Poole, Carl Stevens, John Quinn, Tany Fillari and myself."

By that time, the S.F. Metal scene had grown up



Jon & Brian Poole '83

"Yeah I was still in WARNING for that show. It was a raging hellhammer as I remember it."

Did you have the chance to open for bigger bands like this during that time?

"We opened for METALLICA, and MEGADETH twice and that was really it besides EXODUS."

What happened to WARNING once you left them because it seems they were still around at the end of '87? Who replaced you in WARNING and how/ when did that band last in the end?

"I ended the band really. No one ever replaced me. The band was over in mid '87 when I left to join U. SIREN." But how did WARNING break up exactly? "WARNING never really broke up. I ended it. At the end of that era there was nothing left to work with so I quit



and joined U. SIREN."

So the next step for you was with ULYSSES SIREN who were formed late '84, were you familiar with U. SIREN?

"Yeah I knew Manny Lopez pretty well."

How did you get the chance to join them?

"We were practising in the same studio and I used to hang out with those guys a lot and we got to talking one night and they told me that they were fed up with their bass player never showing up to rehearsal and were thinking of sacking him. I was not a bass player at the time but I really loved their songs and wanted to join them so I got a bass and learned their songs. I wasn't the best bass player but I guess I was good enough because I got the job."

Do you remember who was the guy you replaced in that band?

"Yes I do. They called him BooBoo...I think his real name was Joe Jimenez. Great bass player."

The line up consisted of Manuel Lopez on vocals, Steve Pickering and J.R. Clegg on guitars and Steve Heuser on drums and you on bass as far as I know, how do you explain the lack of info that surrounded that band as almost nothing could be found on that band in fanzines (not talking about magazines), and the people who were taking care of their merchandise didn't take the time to answer to the snail mail they received so...

"I can't really explain it because I really had nothing to do with the merchandising. That was Steve Pickering's job. You see ULYSSES SIREN was Steve's band and he wanted to have complete control over all of the merchandising and copyrights as well as the music and the press. If you never got a response from us, now you know where to look."

Why did you switch exactly from being a guitarist to a bassist at that point?

"There were a couple of reasons. I really wanted to be in SIREN and there were far too many blazing hot guitarists at that time. I thought it was the right thing to do. I still think it's one of the best decisions I've ever made."

Unlike THUNDERHEAD and WARNING, U. SIREN was a Speed/ Thrash band totally inspired by EXODUS and METALLICA, so was it a natural progression for you to come from a traditional Heavy Metal band and play something faster and more aggressive?

considerably with bands like EXODUS, MACHEN ASSAULT, ANVIL CHORUS, V. RUMORS, HEXX etc... who had started to make a name for themselves outside of the Bay Area through the tape trading network. With the tons of new bands that appeared, what were your views on that whole thing?

"I wish I had known about the tape-trading network. I was on the outer edges of that whole movement, a little too into writing the songs and not enough promoting of them. Glad it worked out for the rest of those bands though."

Did you get at one point the possibility to appear on a "U.S. Metal" compilation type of thing for example or do something else with WARNING?

"As a matter of fact we almost did end up on "U.S. Metal" but somehow we got pushed aside for someone else and it never materialised."

Were you still a member of WARNING when you opened along with LETHAL CREED for MEGADETH in March '86 at The Stone in S.F.? How was that show?



Both photos: Jon '83



Rob Halverson

"Yes I had no problem with it at all. It was very natural because the later WARNING material was more Speed/ Thrash so it worked out well."

Two demos were issued by U. SIREN, one in '86 which wasn't reviewed that much in fanzines and featured good promising material and the last one in '88 which featured KILLER material in the fine Bay Area tradition, material that could easily compete with EXODUS, VIO-LENCE, MORDRED etc but once again there was no reviews for this one at least in the most popular fanzines...

"I really don't know why the press wasn't contacted for interviews and so on. There were a lot of inner conflicts with the band as well as the classic "Sex, Drugs and Rock & Roll" syndrome which probably contributed to the lack of promotion of the band."

On the '88 demo it's written that you played guitar on the "Leviathan/ Above The Ashes" track and J.R. Clegg did the bass tracks on this one, what's the story behind this?

"As I said in a previous question the song "Above The Ashes" was a WARNING song called "The Noose" so J. R. and I talked about it and decided that I should play the guitar on it. Steve P. and myself wrote "Leviathan" as an intro mostly. A bit of "Leviathan" made its way into "Above The Ashes" by Steve P's insistence...I'm glad he did because it was a good change. I ended up playing a little more guitar in more songs and J.R. played more bass. Which in the end was a good thing... J.R. turned out to be an excellent bass player after SIREN."

When U. SIREN was around, the S.F. Speed/ Thrash Metal scene was at its peak and oversaturated to say the least, was there a lot of competition between the bands or did you try to help each other?

"At that time it was a bit of both depending what bands you were tight with."

Would you say that the scene would have survived when tons of new and mostly uninspired bands such as DEFIANCE, EPIDEMIC, KAOS, POTENTIAL THREAT for example came onto the market...these bands started to saturate the whole scene when at that point almost every previous S.F. band had somewhat managed to come up with their own sound (FORBIDDEN, MORDRED, L. ROCKIT, VIOLENCE, INSANITY, POSSESSED, HELLHOUND, REDRUM etc...) and until then only a few like



ULYSSES SIREN '88

DAMNAKLEEZ, DESECRATION, BLACK DE-THE were just not original at all...

"Sorry my friend but I think some of those bands were very inspired. DEFIANCE and POTENTIAL THREAT were good bands that we played with a lot and had their own twist on the SF Metal scene. Some of the other bands you've mentioned like HELLHOUND, DESECRATION, INSANITY, DAMNAKLEEZ, BLACK DE-THE, and REDRUM. I know almost nothing about those bands so I can't really comment on them or their originality."

Did you have a big hand in the songwriting department in U. SIREN just like it was the case in THUNDERHEAD?

"I tried to but it was never that well received."

Was it more a band effort?

"Sometimes but not really. Steve was large and in charge."

Did you have a bunch of other songs written with U. SIREN?

"The only other song we wrote was called "A Gluten For Punishment"."

When you left U. SIREN mid '88 to join L. ROCKIT, did they continue without you or did the band break up right away?

"Yeah, the band did break up after I told them I was going to quit to join LAZR R. but in all fairness I think it was only a matter of time til we would have killed each other so it was a good thing to depart on those terms."

What do you think U. SIREN lacked to become a

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successful recording band such as VIO-LENCE, FORBIDDEN etc... with the talent that this band had?

"I really believe that the problem stemmed from the drummer. That guy was holding everybody at bay. We would show up to rehearsal and this (dick head) would never show. EVER! There were other issues of course but he was the beginning of the end. Not to mention that we weren't "connected" like the bands you've previ-

# LAAZ ROCKIT

ously mentioned."

So like I said, you joined L. ROCKIT in '88 to replace Willy Lange who had left 'em after the recording of "Annihilation Principle", how did that happen?

"Willy had to quit so he could take over his father's trucking company so I got a call from a friend of mine who knew them real well asking if I'd like a tryout."

I guess you were familiar with those guys since you started at around the same time playing local clubs and stuff...

"To be quite honest I never really liked them at all. I told my friend no at first...Then I called their manager and got a rough mix of "Annihilation Principle" and really liked it. So I learned about 20 of their songs. Tried out and got the gig."

But did you enjoy a little bit of what L. ROCKIT had recorded until you joined 'em from their "Prelude To Death" Heavy Metal demo to the Thrashy approach of "A. P."?

"I never really listened to LAAZ ROCKIT at all until I joined the band but I thought some of their older stuff was ok. I liked "Prelude" and "Wrecking Machine" and a few others."

How would you explain that they became somewhat a Speed/ Thrash band after all those years spent playing regular traditional H.M.?

"I would guess that they were following a trend...Who knows but regardless I did like the new direction they were going towards."

Would you say that the fact that the Speed/ Thrash was the "in" thing at the time gave them ideas to go



towards a different direction?

"Probably so but I know they weren't being false about how they felt about the material they were writing."

So even if you didn't play on "A. P." you did all the promo for it, as you appeared on the promo shots and you did an U.S. tour supporting M.O.D. in the spring of '89, any memories of that tour?

"A lot of memories. In a nutshell it was a crazy drunken lust fest from hell. Every day was a new adventure in debauchery."

It was hard to be accepted by a somewhat Hardcore/ Crossover crowd?

"Sometimes it was really hard but the majority of the crowds were great."

Did you do a lot of other touring supporting that album besides that U.S. tour?

"Unfortunately no. We were supposed to go to Europe and that got postponed for the "Leatherface" recording."

What about the video of "Fire In The Hole" as I think it was with you? If so any memories of that?

"Yes it was I. Yeah we did a lot of things in a very short amount of time. We did the video at a place called "Battlezone". They did indoor war games there with paint pellets and such...We did the video with a guy from the WCW named "Sting". That was a lot of fun...

We also had to leave that night after shooting the video to fly to New York to go on tour with M.O.D. The thing I remember the most was all of our equipment was on it's way to N.Y. and I didn't have a guitar to play...I had to call Greg Christian from TESTAMENT to see if I could borrow one of his basses because we both had Ibanez endorsements at the time and I had to play an Ibanez bass in the video. He bailed me out... Cheers Greg!"

I think you did another one with 'em?

"Yeah I'm also in the "Leatherface" video."

As you never appeared on any L. ROCKIT albums, I think the only thing you were credited with was the song "Leatherface".

"Credited is a good choice of words. Yes I did appear on the album "Nothings Sacred" even though I was never credited for doing it. I not only played the bass on that record I also played guitar on it as well along with writing a great deal of material on the record. Scott Dominguez and Scott Sargent don't play one note on



that album. Ken Savitch and I play on that album."

The song which appeared on the "Leatherface" story correct?

"Yeah the song was featured in "Texas Chainsaw Massacre 3"."

How did you get contacted to do that?

"By the record company. I guess the people from the film company contacted them."

Would you say it gave a push to the band to appear on that movie soundtrack?

"Push? No they didn't have to push us at all. It came down to us and TESTAMENT and we got it. No pushing involved."

Was that song a band effort written song?

"Yes it was. Aaron (Jellum) came up with the main riff and Vic (Agnello) came up with most of the drumbeats. Sven (Soderlund) came up with some of the harmony parts, Mike (Coons) did the vocals and I did the bass riffs and some of the arrangement. A band effort."

Would you say that at this particular time, L. R. were close to hit it big or were there more chances that they would stay an underground band?

"I'd say that there were too many bands and too few opportunities at that time. Metal was really on it's way down in the States as well. If they had continued on they would have ended up being underground for sure."

At which point did guitarist Phil Kettner and drummer Victor Agnello leave the band? And what were the reasons behind that?

"We fired Phil after the M.O.D. tour.. Phil wasn't on the same page as the rest of us at the time and Aaron was really at the end of his rope with Phil as well. He wasn't the greatest live player. Vic stayed around for a while longer but eventually left the band because he really didn't believe in the band or its ability to be successful enough for his standard."

From what I know, ex- MORDRED, MERCENARY guitarist Sven Soderlund and ex- EXODUS drummer Tom Hunting were supposed to have replaced Kettner and Agnello, did it really happen?

"Sven did replace Phil and did the "Leatherface" recording and video with us. Tom turned us down."

It seems something went wrong with Soderlund as a guy named Ken Savitch (later seen in Chicago's SINDROME) replaced him around January '90 until he was also replaced by Scott Sargent around September '91, and Hunting was apparently also replaced at one point by Dave Chavarri, him and Sargent appearing on L.R. next and last studio effort "Nothing Sacred" released late '91, so tell us more about what happened at that time as it sounds and looks confusing...

"Sven quit before the "Leatherface" tour so we got Ken to do the tour. Tom was never involved in LAAZ at all. We ended up getting a drummer to do the "Leatherface" recording...Darren something or other. As you can see he didn't last long...We got another drummer for the "Face" tour...Michael Anthony was his name. What a mistake that guy was!"

What happened at that point? Did you leave them on good terms?

"I was dismissed but on even terms...I was going to quit. They beat me to it."

What do you think of the final result with "Nothing Sacred"?

"I really liked some of the stuff on it. I wasn't crazy about the final mix of it though."

Did you take an interest in what L.R. did after, namely the live album recorded during May '92 in Japan "Taste Of Rebellion" and with "Fix" from GACK who featured L.R. members?

"They played some of my material on the "T.O.R." recording. I thought that was cool. I really liked some of that GACK stuff as well. I really would have liked to have written some material with Sven S. as I've known him forever. A great songwriter."

Were you still in the band when Enigma dropped the band after "A. P."?

"Well we didn't get dropped after "A. P.". We got let go after "Leatherface"."

What happened if you know it?

"As I understand it...the record company itself went

# Angel Witch

under. That was that as we say in the business."

Then, next to L.R., you were involved with the relocated ANGELWITCH and recorded in 1990 the famous three song demo with "Twist Of The Knife", "Psychopathic 2" and "Slowly Sever" featuring you on guitar/ bass, Kevin Heybourne on guitar/ vocals and Tom Hunting on drums, how did the three of you get together? Was it following the shows ANGELWITCH did in '89 in California? Tell us exactly how it all happened... and what happened with the previous members...

"Sadly the guy that brought us all together was Jeff Weller. Jeff Weller managed LAAZ and ANGEL WITCH at the same time. That's how A.WITCH got over here in '89 and got Kevin and I together. Kev went home after that tour and returned not too long after. That's when he met up with Tom and started work on the '90 demo. I was still in LAAZ at the time...I didn't have too much time with Kev and Tom because I was about to record "Nothings Sacred" with LAAZ. Jeff really restricted my involvement with the demo. Sorry but I didn't play any guitar on that demo. The previous members were left behind in the U.K. and none of them wanted to make the trip back to the States. I don't think Kevin wanted them to make the trip either."

That demo featured material that could be almost labelled as Thrash as it was way more aggressive and faster than anything ANGEL WITCH had recorded earlier, what do you think influenced Kevin to go in that direction?

"I assume your talking about "Psychopathic"? "Psychopathic" was written long before Tom and I re-recorded it. The other two were more H.M. tunes...I think the reason you might consider them Thrash tunes might be because of Tom and I. We play things a little different than our counterparts who did the previous tracks."

Why did Kevin choose that direction? Change maybe?

"I'm not really sure."

How did you feel about playing with Kevin Heybourne as he's considered by many as a legend and I know lots of musicians in the Bay Area were huge ANGEL WITCH fans?

"I enjoyed it very much early on. There are a lot of people who consider him a legend. A great deal of those people don't know the whole story behind their "Legend". I don't and never did regard him as "legendary". He wrote some good songs. He's a good guitarist that's had a lot of help the GP doesn't even know about."

Did you manage to play shows with Kevin in the Bay Area as from what Doug Piercy from HEATHEN fame (who had joined you on second guitar at that point) told me, Kevin couldn't play the show that was planned because of passport problems and he had to return to U.K., so you had to play the show without him, is that correct?

"Kevin was deported... He stayed in the U.S. too long and was working illegally as well. He told Jeff Weller that he no longer wanted him as a manager so Weller blew the whistle to the I.N.S. They came and picked him up at the place he worked and the rest is history."

Are there any other shows which took place besides



that one?

"We only did that one show. I played two songs onstage with Kevin and two guys from the band ANNIHILATION at a benefit concert for Dave Pritchard from ARMORED SAINT. We played "Confused" and "Angel Of Death". Utterly forgettable."

Do you remember how Doug joined the band as he rehearsed and played live at least once with you?

"To be quite honest I don't really remember how Doug ended up in the band but I do remember that we had a great time rehearsing together."

So the whole ANGELWITCH thing ended up with Kevin being deported from the States, correct?

"No the whole A.W. situation was supposed to re-form again. We had raised a lot of money to hire an immigration lawyer so we could get Kevin back in the country. He was supposed to marry an American girl that he was living with while he was here but after he was deported she went over to the U.K. to see Kevin and from what he told me they ended up hating each other. So even though he had got the OK to return to the U.S. he would have had to get married and he wasn't having it. I went over there in Nov. of 1991 for about a month to write some new songs. That was fun. After I had gone back home Kevin and I kept in touch for a while but eventu-



Jon at The Omni early '91

ally he ended the band in mid '92."

What did you do after that before joining LE VEAUX or was it immediately started by Tom and yourself?

"There were two things that happened after ANGEL WITCH. I took a little time off to re-group so to speak. After my little holiday I got in touch with Tom to see what he was up to. At that time he was playing with a Rock 'n' Roll band named RUNAWAY TRAIN. He told me to come over and play with them. I did and basically told him he was wasting his time with those guys. To make a long story short he eventually got rid of those guys and started to play with Brian Poole and I- also at that time he had just finished recording an album with a band called REPULSA. I ended up getting together with the singer from the band and not too long after we (Tom, Brian, and I) started playing gigs with REPULSA as well."

So the next thing I heard is that you were involved with LE VEAUX- this time as a full time guitarist again, which featured Tom Hunting on drums/ vocals (like in the early EXODUS days!), and Brian Poole (ex-WARNING bassist/ keyboardist) on bass. This soon became PLEASURE & PAIN and a three song was recorded, what can you tell us about that first recording as I never heard it?

"The recording was a new experience for us all. It was a departure from straight up in your face Thrash and was a bit more harmonic and a bit slower in tempo. Tom did a great job on the vocals for a first time effort. I did return to playing the guitar full time and that was a challenge in the studio as well. We also got some other guitarists to do some lead guitar playing on the songs."

Did you gig a lot with that outfit?

"No not really."

I think you did a couple of shows with FORBIDDEN, EXHIBIT-A (who featured Alex Scholnick, ex- LE-GACY/ TESTAMENT) and VIO-LENCE, correct?

"Correct."

Did you get well accepted by the Metal crowds in the Bay Area?

"At that time "Metal" crowds in the Bay Area were almost non-existent but the crowds were ok I guess."

Did you shop that tape around with the hope to get a deal out of that?

"We tried to with the management we had at the time but to no avail."

Did you record more than one demo by the way under that name?

"No that was it. And for the record we were never called LE VEAUX. That was a name we talked about

# I4NI

after Bobby (Gustafson) joined the band but we never used it."

PLEASURE & PAIN didn't last long as the name was changed around August '94 to I4NI and you added Bobby Gustafson (ex- DROPOUTS, OVERKILL, THE CYCLE SLUTS FROM HELL and GRIP INC) also in the band and two demos were recorded if I'm correct, one featuring "Fatal Sleep", "Letters In Lunacy" and "M.U.D.D." or was it the PLEASURE & PAIN demo in fact?

"Yeah that was the PLEASURE & PAIN demo."

Also a four song demo featuring "Rage Within", "Vow Of Vengeance", "Worm" and "Harshness Of Reality" was recorded in August '94, so please tell us if Bobby appeared on the P & P one and how you got him to join the band which happened around the same time when the whole GRIP INC thing didn't work out with him if I'm correct...

"He was living at Debbie Abono's house and driving all the way down to L.A. to rehearse with GRIP (an 8 hour drive each way) and from what I've heard they weren't all that impressed with him but who knows. Personality conflicts? I don't really know or care. At that time we were trying to get another guitarist. Jim Martin from FAITH NO MORE was supposed to try out but that never happened. We eventually went with Bobby. No he wasn't on the first demo."

Also Brian Poole was replaced at one point by John Wayne Turguson, what happened with Brian and how did you recruit John?

"Brian got involved with his future wife at the time and he wasn't ready to make any sacrifices for the band whatsoever. So we decided to let him go. John Wayne Turguson was a joke. JWT is both Bobby and my names combined... I played most of the bass tracks and Bobby did a little on "Harshness Of Reality"."

The P & P and the I4NI demo offered a brand of Metal that combined sounds from the whole Alternative/ Grunge Seattle thing with some of that "groove" thing associated with many bands from that period. Luckily the typical Bay Area Metallic trademarks were still deeply included as well as some excellent singing courtesy of Tom and the result has nothing to do with the PANTERA, MACHINE HEAD, BIO-HAZARD bands of this world.

A great surprise to say the least plus the whole thing sounded fresh and original, what kind of views do you have on those efforts?

"I really wanted that band to succeed and really believed in the music and the band members but it just never worked out. We got a friend of Bobby's to play the bass and sing but that failed as well. Sometimes things are just not meant to be. Too bad."

How did you manage to have Thien Rasmussen (ex-VYKING, ANVIL CHORUS, HEATHEN) as a guest doing guitar work on "Fatal Sleep"?

"Thien only played in the beginning of "Fatal Sleep". I got Thien to do the "Bar Drops" in the intro part of "Fatal Sleep" because I knew he was really good at it. Greg Blotay from MONOLITH did all of the other lead guitar playing on the PLEASURE & PAIN demo."

Did you try to get him as a second guitar player in the band at one point?

"No. That was strictly a recording gig."

How did you hook up with Debbie Abono, known for her previous management work with POSSESSED, VIO-LENCE, HEATHEN, OBITUARY etc etc..?

"Tom and Bobby were good friends with her."

It seems after that second demo was recorded, Bobby left the band, what happened with him?

"He moved back to N.Y. and eventually joined a band called SKREW from Texas."

Did you record more stuff with I4NI and did more line up changes happen?

"No. After Bobby went back home that was pretty much the end of the band."

Why and when did the band break up?

"Why is due to the fact that he never returned. When was 1995."

Then all I know is that you were involved with ANGEL WITCH again around '97, so how did that happen once again?

"I had moved to Texas in '96 and one day I rang Doug Piercy to tell him that I'd moved on. He tells me that he knows a record company that wants to re-release old ANGEL WITCH material so I try to contact Kevin but his phone number had changed. I wrote him a letter and finally heard from him. He asked me if I'd be interested in re-forming the band to do some gigs in Japan. I agreed. ANGEL WITCH was back in action."

Does that mean Kevin got a U.S. work permit and decided to re-surface the band in the Bay Area again?

"No He didn't get a work permit. He applied for a visa and was turned down. He was supposed to come down to my place in Texas but that never happened. The new ANGEL WITCH was Kevin, Myk, and myself. Tom (Hunting) was never involved. When I went over there in 1997 we recorded three songs demo for a sort of pre-production thing to try to regenerate interest in the band. It didn't work out too well."

When Kevin asked you if you were interested in reforming ANGEL WITCH to do shows in Japan, did those live dates happen?

"No. As I understand it they still are working on that."

You did a new demo in '97, '98 featuring "Worm", "Scrape The Well" and "Inertia" and this time most of the stuff was written by you and Tom, something unusual in ANGEL WITCH as Heybourne has always been the main songwriter in this band. Does that mean that you used I4NI ideas in that material even if the song "Worm" from ANGEL WITCH had nothing in common music wise with the song "Worm" from I4NI?

"No. Most of the material had nothing to do with Tom. "Worm" was a bunch of different riffs that Kevin and I had written in 1991. Tom wrote the lyrics and sang on the I4NI demo version. As far as the comparison between the two versions goes, besides a few changes it is basically the same song. Of course it's going to sound different there are different people playing on both versions. As far as "Scrape The Well" is concerned Tambre (REPULSA) and I wrote that song...I play guitar on that song. All Kevin did was sing on that tune. Kevin wrote "Inertia"... Russ Tippins (SATAN/ PARIAS) was on the original four-track version playing the bass. Neither Tom nor I had anything to do with writing that song."

How do you explain that those songs sound so different from the other ANGEL WITCH stuff, more modern styled, hard to describe but for nothing I wouldn't label them ANGEL WITCH songs?

"I really wouldn't either but nevertheless they are."

Do you think it really suits ANGELWITCH history?

"Suit it? Probably not but once again it is part of the ANGEL WITCH history."

Did you play live with that reformed band?

"No we never did any shows."

Next was the "Resurrection" CD released in '98 which featured the two demos done with you and Tom in the band and an older one with the previous members from '89, also your wife is mentioned as band's manager on this CD, who came up with the idea to re-

lease this?

"I did."

How many copies of the cassette and self-financed CD were pressed?

"1000 cd's and 500 cassettes."

As a whole, did you get from the fans the response that you expected for this "resurrection"?

"The response we got was pretty much what I expected. Good."

How did you get Crook'd Records from North Carolina to re-release that CD in the States last year?

"Patrick Harman contacted me about re-releasing it."

Are you responsible for that deal or was it done with Kevin?

"It was my deal."

It seems also that they have showed interest in releasing the PLEASURE & PAIN/ I4NI stuff...

"Patrick asked me if I had any other material besides ANGEL WITCH...I sent him the I4NI/ P&P stuff and he really liked it. I just signed a deal with him last week so it should be released sometime within the next month or so...I'll keep you posted on the actual release date."

So next to that, what happened with Kevin as the next thing that could be heard is that Kevin did some shows in Europe including one at the Wacken fest last year with a brand new line up as it seems the band is now based again in U.K., so please clarify



IT'S ALL FUN & GAMES THE SOMEONE LOOKS AWAY EYE...



things about how your involvement and also Tom's, ended up with ANGELWITCH.

"Tom hasn't played with ANGEL WITCH since 1991. Those songs we recorded in 1998 were done with a computer. The band he has now he got together before I came over the last time minus the bass player. We were supposed to tour in 1999 but things went all wrong and it never happened. We practised together for about two months before I quit. Too bad Scott and Keith are really nice guys."

You said Tom Hunting wasn't involved in ANGELWITCH anymore after '91 but I wonder why he's credited for playing on the '98 demo that featured "Worm", "Scrape.." and "Inertia" ?

"Because it was "correct" to say that a "real" drummer had done it instead of a machine. It seemed the right thing to do at the time."

Did you check out the EXODUS reformation with Tom Hunting like maybe during their U.S. tour from the summer of '97?

"The EXODUS tour was ok. I was living in Austin, Texas at the time. They came through town in August... Very HOT!! They were melting... Still did a good show."

There's talks recently about recording the old THUNDERHEAD/ WARNING stuff to release it on one album, and Tom Hunting is even mentioned as possible drummer, will you make sure that those songs will sound exactly like they sounded back then with that fresh approach which made them so enjoyable at the time?

"I'll do my best. Tom has decided not to do it though." Will you use previous members such as your brother for that recording or Brian Poole- as it seems you've always been close to him?

"Yeah both of them will be on the album also Manny Lopez and Sven Soderlund are doing some tracks on the record as well."

Do you have an idea of the possible label that will issue that or will it be something done by yourself?

"Patrick Harman has showed interest in this project as



well as another label that does strictly vinyl so we shall see."

What kind of response do you expect for this project considering that not a lot of people have heard of both bands?

"I expect nothing really. I would be thrilled if these two records do well but I'm not going get a sense of false hope about the whole thing. I would just like to see that whoever does get a copy... Enjoys it."

Do you see from time to time members from different bands you've been involved with during those 20

past years?

"Not too often. I saw Steve Heuser about a month ago. He was going to do some drum tracks on the WAR-NINGSF album but flaked on us. Typical."

Can you tell us if some of them are still involved into Metallic activities?

"I think the only guys that are really doing anything are JR Clegg and Andy Galeon (DEATH ANGEL/ THE ORGANIZATION). I did a recording project with JR Clegg, Andy Galeon, Tambre and myself. It was called "ZUMBOX". So I guess you could say I did play with Andy but we never did any gigs. Andy is in a band called SWARM and JR is in a band called THROTTLEFINGER. I don't know how Metallic these bands are but I'm sure their good."

Do you still have as much interest for traditional or good old Speed/ Thrash Metal as you had in the beginning or did your interest turn towards different musical styles?

"I love good old Speed /Thrash Metal but I also have other interests as well. I write whatever moves me whether it is Metal, R&B, and Industrial... Whatever... The style matters not as long as it's done well."

Is there any hope to see the Bay Area being again an exceptional Metal area in

the upcoming years or is it totally out of question in your opinion?

"I've seen a rise in the Metal scene and the interest in it again, but unfortunately I don't ever see things returning to the way they were. There is too much that has changed. The industry, the clubs, the crowds. Sad But True."

Tell us what are your fave Metal albums and Metal events ever.

"I could go on forever but I'll give you a short list. IRON MAIDEN's 1st album, "Ace Of Spades"- MOTORHEAD, "Black Rose"- THIN LIZZY, "British Steel"- JUDAS PRIEST, "Strangers In The Night"- UFO, "Master Of Reality"- BLACK SABBATH, "Pandemonium"-ANGEL WITCH, "Ride The Lightning"- METALLICA, "Breaker"- ACCEPT, "Volumen Brutal"- BARON ROJO, "Wheels Of Steel"- SAXON, "Reign In Blood"- SLAYER, "Bonded By Blood"- EXODUS, "The Legacy"- TESTAMENT. I would say the most memorable Metal event was seeing the original BLACK SABBATH in 1978 at the Oakland Arena with VAN HALEN opening. Great show! There were so many shows I could write a book about them alone. One other that was incredible was METALLICA at the Kabuki Theatre on the "Ride The Lightning" tour. They were fucking incredible!"

Anything to add if something was forgotten?

"The only thing I can think of that may be worth mentioning is the LAAZ ROCKIT reunion we did in 1998. A close friend of ours had died and we decided to do a farewell concert in her honor. VICIOUS RUMORS headlined and LAAZ ROCKIT supported along with REPULSA, and BEHIND THE WALL OF SLEEP- a SABBATH copy band. The band members were Mike Coons vocals, Scott Sargent guitar, Sven Soderlund guitar, Jon Torres bass and Will Carroll drums. We played four songs. "Fire In The Hole", "Holiday In Cambodia", "Leatherface", and "Prelude To Death". Great fun."



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**One album wonders... they happened more often in the heyday of the 80's underground then at any other period in Metal's history. Carrying the flag for Sacramento was this band who tempered speed with finesse, never letting the energy get away from the songs and had a classy front woman who could belt out any tune with the best singers of the day. Seeking out my requests on various Metal internet message boards bassist Michael Spencer, willingly talked to me about his efforts in this band, and also put me in touch with vocalist Debbie Gunn (real name Debbie Gunderson). Get ready to add another chapter to the vivid puzzle of 80's Metal California style....**

How was life growing up for you- and name your initial inspirations that spurred you to become a musician?

**Michael:** "My parents were divorced when I was 14 years old. I ended up living with my dad who was in the Air Force, so from 14 to 19 I was in a single parent home. I started playing bass when I was 15- my brother played the guitar and I picked up the bass because it wasn't a guitar. At the same time when I think back every cool guy in a band was the bass player I thought. Whether it was Gene Simmons from KISS, Geddy Lee on to Paul McCartney. Playing the bass was like being a voice for me- I was introverted and only hung out with a small circle of friends. Playing music and being able to play on stage allowed me to express myself, especially in the old school 80's."

**Debbie:** "Let's see- I grew up as an Air Force brat. My mom listened to Classical music as well as old standards like Judy Garland and Liza Minelli. My dad listened to Country, so you can imagine that mix. I learned a lot of tribal stuff by traveling from place to place. You never have any stable friends so that made

into more Pop/ Glam Metal. Greg was in RED RUM and PANTHER- they were more KISS kind of Metal. After Jerry left Barry got done with G.I.T. and he wanted to play with us again. So this lineup recorded our second demo and next Greg wanted to do his instrumental thing- so we got Mark. Mark was from THE BOYZ- a cover band doing RAINBOW/ DEEP PURPLE tunes. That was our "Depths Of Death" album lineup." Vocalist Debbie Gunn and yourself wrote five songs together before forming the band- what were these songs like and what was the game plan for SENTINEL BEAST from the beginning?

**Michael:** "The songs were in the MAIDEN style- Deb went into that fantasy/ mythology lyrical content- because she loved Ronnie James Dio, Bruce Dickinson and Steve Harris with their lyrics. This was the beginning before METALLICA really took off- within one 1/2- two years our sound was changing and we realized when we played the Bay Area how much we fit in with EXODUS and the Thrash bands."

Where did you get your lyrical inspirations from- as you favored fantasy/ mythological topics early on?

## Guardians Of Speed

me rebellious. I indulged in pot in high school- you start hanging out with people that are into heavier music. I was in England, Philippines, France- then after high school I moved to England in 1980. Once I heard IRON MAIDEN with Paul Di'Anno, I knew I wanted to be a singer in a Heavy Metal band. Even though most people like Bruce Dickinson more I really was struck by the Punk ethic that Paul had. I got to meet Di'Anno afterwards when I was in Sacramento. I was also into the SEX PISTOLS."

Was SENTINEL BEAST your first Metal band or were there other acts before this?

**Michael:** "My first original band. I played in a band in Arizona that I couldn't tell you the name of. We did IRON MAIDEN, JUDAS PRIEST and BLACK SABBATH covers."

**Debbie:** "I started playing in bands when I was 15. SENTINEL BEAST was my first original Metal band."

SENTINEL BEAST formed in June 1984- describe how the five of you met and what previous bands each member played in?

**Michael:** "Deb and I dated each other in the start of 1983- we had lived together and moved from Sacramento to Phoenix and back to Sacramento. We started working on songs, she had lyrics and I had music- through her sister we hooked up with Barry Fischel and Scott Aves, who were the guitar player and drummer of a different band. The four of us got together for just one show- we did covers and one original "Mor Air" which became a SENTINEL BEAST song from then on out. Barry left to go to G.I.T. and we thought this band had potential so we put out an ad and got two guitar players- Greg Williams who wrote a couple of songs we ended up using on "Depths Of Death" and Jerry Frasier- Jerry was more of a Randy Rhoads type guy whereas Greg had a lot of Yngwie in him. We did our first demo with those guys and then Jerry left our band to go to Los Angeles and try to make music there- he got

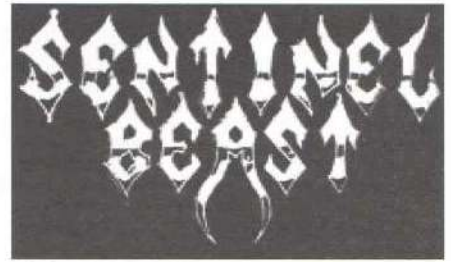
**Debbie:** "I really liked mythology- especially books like "The Odyssey". One of our songs called "Behind The Walls" was about Gilgamesh- my mom knew I was into mythology when I was growing up. I liked singers like Ronnie James Dio and Paul Di'Anno. When I started I tried to sing and all the time I would end up with a sore throat. I took vocal training for two months to learn breathing technique and never had any problems with my voice since."

For those that are unfamiliar with Greek mythology, describe what SENTINEL BEAST means and how Debbie came up with the name? Were there any other possible considerations?

**Michael:** "Debbie came up with the name just by putting two words together- we liked the word sentinel from the JUDAS PRIEST song and then came up with a list of 15 words and then said the phrase SENTINEL BEAST. We didn't put anything to it other than the sentinel being a guard and I ended up working with someone who told me that SENTINEL BEAST in mythology is Cerberus, the three headed dog. He let me know that Cerberus was the three headed dog who guarded the gates of Hades- so that helped us get our logo going. Greg Williams did the layout of the logo- Greg's dogs are on the inside sleeve and Metal Blade's version of



Barry & Debbie—party release



the dogs is the outside cover."

Your influences came from 70's and early 80's acts like IRON MAIDEN, RUSH, RAINBOW and JUDAS PRIEST when writing songs for this band. Who did you admire most songwriting wise and how did you work out songs with the other members?

**Michael:** "I was trying to have layers when I wrote parts instead of everyone doing the same thing. I would write the way Steve Harris may write- planning out little guitar harmonies and different parts. If the guitar player wrote the song it was a chance for me to go outside his area a little bit. I would come in with songs completed that we would just fine tune the structures."

Give us some details on your debut self-titled three song demo which included "Kill The Witch", "Tonight" and "Full Treatment". How long after forming did this tape get recorded, what studio was used and how was the response from fans/ press/ radio?

**Michael:** "Within six months after forming we recorded the three song demo. I've seen that demo on people's websites where they are calling it the "Kill The Witch" demo. That was received very well, especially by the

### Debbie, Michael & Scott



Bay Area bands we played with because we didn't sound like them. Everyone was trying to sound like METALLICA, and we were bouncing between MAIDEN and older RUSH. "Kill The Witch" is like a five minute song that goes places but still has the MAIDEN energy to it plus the musicianship of RUSH. Just to go in and hear your own stuff on tape helps- we went from a band nobody knew to 14-16 months later really owning Sacramento, as far as the local scene. We were living in a cow town compared to the Bay Area, where there's 50 bands playing like EXODUS, LAZ ROCKIT, POSSESSED plus LEGACY who turned into TESTAMENT. You had a whole generation of bands that just roared out of the Bay Area. It was Moon Studios in Sacramento where we recorded both our demos, and it was a 24 track studio. We had a good friend who worked at a high school radio station spinning us constantly and helped spur our following. I think the "Depths Of Death" demo got pushed a little more because that's the one we sent out to record companies."

**Debbie:** "I remember how excited I was- Moon Studios had a nice set up. It was a three song demo and I remember drinking a lot of coffee. Trying to get the vocals done was my major focus- we did the music first and then the vocals. We mixed the demo on a separate night."

What were the live shows like for SENTINEL BEAST in those days- as I imagine you helped shape the Sacramento area?

**Michael:** "Actually, we opened up twice for other local bands and then we became a headlining band, playing a show every six weeks in a concert atmosphere so we wouldn't burn everyone out. Then we'd get the middle slot of touring acts, say with KING DIAMOND playing right before them. We were lucky enough that Scott worked at a place called Sacramento Theatrical Lighting- he could get anything we needed- lights, spotlights, fog machine, the works. After the "Depths of Death" album came out we had a 10 foot by 15 foot backdrop of the album cover that we used. Lots of energy, the start of the Metal mosh scene versus a Punk pit. It was a fun to be a part of the scene."

**Debbie:** "The first show was in a theater in Sacramento. The theater had just received a brand new film screen-



and I remember a lighting tress falling during the show to break the screen. For our first show there was over 100 people. We were the first Thrash band in town- other bands were content to play MOTLEY CRUE style music. We played a lot of opening slots- the clubs took to us right away. We set the pace for the Sacramento scene."

**Were there other bands in Sacramento developing a following like RABID as a result?**

**Michael:** "Oh yeah...I'm surprised you know about RABID. They were only out for ten months but my friend Ron who played in the band was making sure they were in the scene, making demos. RED RUM is a band that sprang up after us- they had Kerry King backing them a little bit. I can't think of a lot of other bands outside of RABID- maybe DISSIDENT AGGRESSOR, they worked with Frank Hannon of TESLA producing their demos. That was a pretty METALLICA sounding band. TESLA was a band known as CITY KIDD, playing bars four nights a week and honing their chops. As we got the Metal Blade deal that's when Cliff Burnstein came out from Q Prime Management and wanted to work with them. They did the name change and within eight months were off and running. Tommy their guitarist was a Punk Rocker- totally into Hardcore music and he tried to keep as much edge as he could in TESLA."

**Was Debbie accepted as a female front person considering Metal had a decidedly more male appeal in those days?**

**Michael:** "Yes because she wasn't very timid on stage. She was aggressive and the people were amazed that someone 5'3", 115 lbs. could have a voice that she did. She could belt it out and have a great growl. She was really attractive and other bands I'm sure thought it was fun to play shows with us and try to hit on the singer. They respected her due to her knowledge of the Metal scene. We had problems opening for D.R.I. and KING DIAMOND down at Long Beach- that's the only show where they didn't like her."

**Debbie:** "I was always worried how people would accept me singing for a Metal band. If I want something I work hard at it. When I first looked for a band I went to a party and tried to convince the band that was playing at the party to let me sing. They didn't want any part of this because I was female. Then I started talking to the members about the bands I knew like THE SCORPIONS and IRON MAIDEN. They gave me a chance so I got up and sang "Running Free" and opened a lot of minds that night. I just had to throw my abilities in their faces."

**One 1/2 years after the debut demo you put out the five song "Depths Of Death" demo- tell us about those songs, the recording and how the band was developing?**

**Michael:** "The band started developing into a faster sound. We had put one song on there that was completely over the top as something we never played live. That was something Greg wrote. Our six-seven minute epic song- it's a story about a king in ancient times ("Behind The Walls"). "Sacred Line" is a song where Deb's brother wrote the lyrics and I just wrote the music to it. That's one of the first songs where I wrote everyone's individual parts, as far as melodies/ guitar hooks coming in and out of the verses. "Hell Affair" was a song where everyone locked in together, very riff oriented and that was a tight song for us. "Depths Of Death" was a song written by Jerry Fraiser and myself- that was a very different song for us."

**It seemed like you were balancing the new speed elements with the MAIDEN/ RAINBOW like foundation you started with...**

**Michael:** "I'd agree with that. And when we played live



**Mark Koyasako**

we'd structure our set list like that. When we played the Bay Area if you didn't play 90 miles an hour, you'd get spit on at Rutkie's Inn. We'd still play songs that were heavy- because I don't necessarily equate fast with heavy. If you have the right tempo it can be very powerful in that form of heavy. Even in Northern California with the drug use at the time, quite a bit of the bands were doing crank/ speed as the music's getting faster. That infiltrated into the Bay Area and bands were having drug problems."

**One show playing with OMEN helped you gain the attention of Brian Slagel of Metal Blade Records. Tell us about the show and the events that led to you gaining a slot on "Metal Massacre 7"?**

**Michael:** "The show was at a club called El Dorado Saloon and I basically called up Brian myself because OMEN got a lot of airtime on the high school station that was spinning us. LIZZY BORDEN and OMEN did a tour, and I was more impressed with the guys in OMEN and their sound over the theatrics and vibe of LIZZY BORDEN. LIZZY BORDEN came in thinking they were bigger than they were, maybe they were big in the LA scene but playing in front of 15 people I don't think they should have the attitude they did. OMEN were very cool to the audience so three months later I called Bill Metoyer and asked him who books the shows. OMEN were going to tour again but didn't plan on playing Sacramento- covering Los Angeles to Seattle. I set up the show because I was a contact point for Sacramento. Even Andy Summers who booked MEGADETH and KING DIAMOND, we would network shows. I was the agent for the club to get the gig, in return SENTINEL BEAST would get \$400-\$500 to open the show and Andy would ask for advice like who should headline. KING DIAMOND or MEGADETH. At the time KING DIAMOND was bigger in Sacramento so King headlined- a year later MEGADETH would've headlined. OMEN was surprised to play in front of 400 people versus 15 people the last time, the crowd was totally into it and we had a good time playing the show together. It was a good night with no attitudes- we flipped them our demo and they slept at my apartment. The next day they told us they'd make sure Brian heard the demo and shortly thereafter Brian got in touch with us."

**Metal Blade at first picked "Fight For Your Life" off the second demo but you couldn't use the song due to the departure of guitarist Greg Williams. Tell us about the discovery of new guitarist Mark Koyasako and the recordings you did following that lineup change?**

**Michael:** "Mark was recommended by a friend of ours that worked at a local music store in Sacramento. His band THE BOYZ had broken up and he had always wanted to join a band that was a little heavier. We auditioned four-five people- our problem was we were all 21-22 and a lot of 16-17 year olds were the guitarists up and coming in the scene, we wanted to make sure that we had someone who could relate to us. Mark was in his late 20's and totally dug what we were doing. He had no problem doing solos and picked up all our songs quickly. We gave him a three month trial run and it worked from there. Mark was Asian and he clicked well with DEATH ANGEL- you never saw his face when he played live because he was always banging. The song "Fight For Your Life" didn't really represent SENTINEL BEAST- it was a song Greg had before SENTINEL BEAST even formed. It was a commercial Metal song- and if you look at "Metal Massacre 7" there were a couple other bands who had that commercial tinge. It's funny how on "Load" or "Re-load" from METALLICA there's a song that sounds exactly like "Fight For Your Life". We popped in to do two recordings- "Dogs Of War" is one Greg and Deb wrote, and then "Sentinel Beast". Brian fell in love with "Sentinel Beast"- he told me if we were writing songs like this, let's talk about doing an album. We got the second slot on "Metal Massacre 7"."

**You gained a lot of attention as a result of "Sentinel Beast" off "Metal Massacre 7" along with FLOTSAM and JETSAM and HERETIC. Do you remember those early reviews and did other labels take notice outside of Metal Blade?**

**Michael:** "I recall the reviews- it felt good to know that people were picking up on us. The

compilation was female heavy as far as vocalists- and Deb was seen as the best if not second best on the album. Our sounds were different too- I was into SLAYER at the time as I liked the minor scales they used. A lot of people may have preferred Kerry King's guitar playing but for me Jeff's solos were the things I liked to pay attention to."

**Debbie:** "I liked that version better than the one that appears on the album. That's the song that Brian wanted and I liked it. It was a heavier song and he wanted us to be heavier. I felt proud to be a part of the "Metal Massacre" series- another band that I liked on there was DETENTE with Dawn Crosby."

**Tell the readers of your good fortune to record a debut album with Metal Blade at a time when SLAYER moved on to sign their major label deal?**

**Michael:** "SLAYER went to Def Jam and gave Metal Blade their notice. That freed up a spot to get us in the studio. Bill didn't have a band to produce during that 6 week window and we had our songs ready to record. They were a West Coast label and we thought Brian was really into us and treated us nice."

**Debbie:** "Kerry King came to one of our shows and he told Brian Slagel to sign us- plus Kenny from OMEN helped us out. I didn't know about the part concerning the SLAYER move to Def Jam- Michael kept more in touch with Brian than I did."

**How do you feel about the recording of the debut album- and what prompted the IRON MAIDEN cover "Phantom Of The Opera" considering all the original material you had written?**

**Michael:** "I'll start with the MAIDEN thing- that was our sort of cover tune. We had a lot of requests from people wondering if we were going to put that on the album because we were knocking two minutes off the song. I was leery because of having a major tag as a Thrashy MAIDEN to be targeted. We left it up to Metal Blade and they loved the idea of "Phantom Of The Opera" on steroids and it was still tight. In the CD days it would've been a hidden track. On the recording of the



**Michael & Ed**

album I wasn't too happy with the tones or how fast we played the songs. We were knocking three to five seconds off every song in the studio prior to the month. We were playing way too fast and that doesn't equate to heaviness. I had issues with Bill Metoyer, who had head colds the whole time we were there. He was trying to mix the album with his head not all right. If he was all clear headed we may have had a better tone throughout. FLOTSAM and JETSAM came in behind us and they had a little more of what we would've looked for."

**Debbie:** "That was the only cover we ever did- as far as the album, there was a lot of crank going on in the studio. The album was too fast and the production could have been better. Everything would've been different. The songs live weren't as fast. It doesn't have that bottom end I look for. I worked with Mike on the songs all of the time."

**How many shows did you do in support of the debut album?**

**Michael:** "The record came out in June/ July 1986- my last show with SENTINEL BEAST was in November of 1986. We did maybe 10-12 shows- we had good representation for booking with Stuart Katz, who booked all the Punk/ Metal shows. He was our lawyer/ agent- he got us MEGADETH/ KING DIAMOND in Sacramento and at Fenders Ballroom in Long Beach. We did a show with EXODUS in Long Beach, it was a happening ballroom that could pack 1,500-2,000 people. The last time we played Los Angeles I left with all of my gear and Eric A.K. and Kelly Smith from FLOTSAM and JETSAM picked me up and we drove to Phoenix to do the audition. I brought all of my gear, six bass cabinets and effects."

**You were writing material for a second SENTINEL BEAST album, tentatively titled "Escape From Within" and open-**



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ing shows for such bands as MEGADETH and KING DIAMOND in Los Angeles. Tell me about these newer songs- how were they stylistically compared to the first album?

**Michael:** "There were three new SENTINEL BEAST songs- Brian loved "Forbidden Territories" and he wondered when we would record another album. He liked the direction of our songs- "Escape From Within" was also there. I let FLOTSAM use the title- I put that together with Michael Gilbert and Eric Braverman wrote new lyrics. I had everything laid out with SENTINEL BEAST's next album- I had the concept mapped out, an artist for the cover, and we were really excited. The material on "Depths Of Death" was older, and we wanted to get the new album out. It didn't get to happen though because I left for FLOTSAM and JETSAM. Musically the songs were on the SLAYER side- we had heavy, slow breaks. Deb was writing decent lyrics and we were getting her away from singing just with the guitar riff- we needed her to do more melody and she could do this."

**You spent one year with FLOTSAM and JETSAM yet never appeared on the album "No Place For Disgrace", outside of songwriting credits on "Hard On You" and "Escape From Within". Tell us about your time with the band and why you left? Also did Jason Newsted's new association with METALLICA help FLOTSAM and JETSAM land a deal with their label Elektra?**

**Michael:** "I don't know- it may have helped. Jason and I had already helped each other out in our respective bands. We had networked shows- I got FLOTSAM and JETSAM a show opening for MEGADETH New Year's in 1985. Before any of the albums came out. It propelled them- because being from Phoenix they weren't familiar with the Bay Area scene and it was ruthless. Even MEGADETH got spit on- if they didn't like you, they spit on you (laughs). They played in Sacramento and felt they weren't as heavy as they thought they were- so they sped up their songs and just accelerated the pace. They nailed good tempos without losing the power or speed. They notched up the RPM and got tripped out by being spit on. They retooled their stuff and within six months got hooked up on "Metal Massacre 7" with Brian Slagel. We were in the process of swapping those shows

when Jason got the METALLICA gig. Jason wasn't interested in auditioning- he was in the process of preparing for a tour. Michael Gilbert helped work with Jason and he got the gig. I found out that their first gig with Jason was a show opening for METAL CHURCH in Reseda. I went to the show and Jason and Brian hinted at FLOTSAM and JETSAM needing a bass player. Brian felt I was parallel to Jason, being a guy who handled the business and wrote the material for the band. FLOTSAM and JETSAM were having a horrible time finding a fit- so my audition went great. A week later I roomed up with Kelly Smith. Kelly let me know we were getting a European tour with MEGADETH and 13 dates on the East Coast. We had MEGADETH's management interested in managing us. The tie in with Elektra was Jason was already in contact with Mike Alago, who was METALLICA's A and R representative. He wanted FLOTSAM and JETSAM as well- he liked Jason and encouraged METALLICA to take a look at him. Now he wanted to see if FLOTSAM would still be signable without Jason. Mike Alago came to see us play and he told us that we didn't lose a beat. From there we wrote for six months and toured and got the deal. I had conflicts with Eric Braverman being the sixth member of the band and where he wanted the band to go direction wise. It made my decision easier- as I changed my attitude they didn't see my commitment and had Troy Gregory lined up before my last tour was done. Halloween 1987 was my last show with FLOTSAM and JETSAM and I was let go. My mistake was not having the right to record the album with my material that I had written in contract. They should have let me record- Troy went in to record in December and didn't do any of the melodic bass parts I had worked out. The record sounded smaller and it didn't capture the way we sounded. They burned me on "The Jones"- I wrote parts and they didn't give me credit. I didn't get any advance money- the band only owed me \$600 according to them

which they never paid me. The studio time was \$100,000- the advance was \$60,000. Michael Alago quit Elektra and joined MCA- that's why FLOTSAM got dropped and rejoined Michael at MCA. That second album should have sold better just based on the Jason/METALLICA association. On our last tour together we opened with "Forbidden Territories"- it was SENTINEL BEAST music and I wrote lyrics based on the movie "Escape From New York"- the whole forbidden territory of New York. That was a very strong song that never got recorded- and I think there were one or two other songs of mine that never got released that I just took with me."

**Why did SENTINEL BEAST break up? Was the drug culture taking ahold of the core of the band?**

**Michael:** "Yes- like I mentioned earlier with the crank/speed scene- that was where guys in our band felt they had to indulge in it just to play or feel the energy. With me I only did pot but many others did crank/ speed. Scott couldn't do double bass parts because he had been doing crank for three days- but he's off drugs now."

**Did the core try to go on as SENTINEL BEAST?**

**Michael:** "Manny Bravo (later seen in MUTILOUS MUCOUS and HEATHEN-Laurent) joined- he was a guitar player who converted to bass- they went on for another year. SENTINEL BEAST was falling apart- and the scene in Sacramento was going to bands like GUNS N ROSES. They didn't mature and were going in more

of an "And Justice For All" territory- 13 parts per song. I thought it was all scattered and hard to keep up with as songs. I guess that's the direction Barry and Manny were writing. They lost the basic structure- people needed to catch the core of a song. Brian lost interest probably after hearing the new material."

**Debbie:** "There were some songs we had that had 13 songs within one song. We auditioned all over the place- we found Manny Bravo and he had never played in a band. The songs weren't the same. We didn't record a demo-

we had an option for a second album but it never developed."

**How quickly did you get the chance to join ZNOWHITE? How did the time go with the band- what shows did you do?**

**Debbie:** "I believe Greg Fulton called Brian- he was friends with Bill Metoyer and he told me who he was. I sent him a tape and I loved their stuff. They had a tour coming up. As far as personal manners he's a great guy- but business wise he was hard to work with. When the next album came he was really hard to work with- it was weird. He wanted to tell me what I could do after the show. Otherwise I got along great with him- I did two US tours with them. We didn't have hotel rooms because our tour budget was very small so we slept in rest stops. The first tour was with RAZOR, then with LUDICHRIST and those guys were crazy. Before I left there was no change of the name to CYCLONE TEMPLE- I think he changed the name due to a male singer. I felt bad for leaving but I'd had enough."

**Next came ICE AGE- where you recorded a demo but never received an album deal. How was your time in this band?**

**Debbie:** "Roadrunner gave me a call as ICE AGE was an all female band. They sent the package and I was blown away, I had never heard female musicians playing so well and the guitarist was great. I got right on it and they flew me off to England. After I got there we rehearsed every night- it was like our full time job. We'd get up, write songs and go to the studio to rehearse. At night we had our free time- I had no complaints. Two months later we went to London to do the first demo- then when we played Sheffield we taped a live version of "In The Name Of Science" which was amazing considering I had a throat infection during that show. We did



"Instant Justice" as a video for MTV- which was a great video and it was neat. RCA in Holland was interested in signing us and a lot of people I found out later didn't like our manager. As a result we didn't get a lot of press/ magazine features due to the manager we were working with. We did a European tour- we kept getting tighter. Once we left our manager behind we ended up stranded in Sweden- so I moved to New Jersey with the band and we eventually broke up."

**Following FLOTSAM and JETSAM did you start/ join and other bands?**

**Michael:** "I worked with Scott and Dale Roberts in NOVEMBER 17- I wrote 12 songs with those guys and it lasted until I turned 25. That was my breaking point- so I got a real job and I went to trade school for air conditioning. I worried about getting my profession- and didn't play the bass much. Four or five years ago I picked it back up- I now listen to KING'S X and went back to where/ why I played the bass. I listened to old Funk bands and realized I wanted to be in a Hard Rock/ Funk band- Lenny Kravitz on steroids. So I have that in SUPERPHAT- we make people move."

**Did you follow Debbie's career moves into ZNOWHITE, ICE AGE and so forth?**

**Michael:** "Yes I did- always kept in contact with Deb. She had her issues with the mainman of ZNOWHITE- so she went to England to join ICE AGE. The girls in ICE AGE I met when I went to Europe touring with FLOTSAM and JETSAM- before Deb even met them. After ICE AGE they did S.I.S.- STRANDED IN SWEDEN. They relocated to New Jersey. After that she moved back to Sacramento, started BRUTAL GROOVE, then after that broke up she stopped singing. She got into acting and almost full circle back to singing."

**Do you keep in touch with the other SENTINEL BEAST members?**

**Michael:** "I talk to Scott every once in a while. Barry lives in New York and plays in a cover band doing PRIEST/ MAIDEN covers. Scott still does lighting and plays drums. Mark is a postman."

**How do you feel about the Old Metal Records re-release of your debut album with two demo tracks as a bonus on CD?**

**Michael:** "It's almost flattering to be considered one of those bands that are considered special enough to be put out on CD. The demo songs on there are cool- but they aren't giving me any royalties for this. I don't know if Metal Blade gave them the rights to release it. I'd like to get a copy on CD."

**Would you change anything in retrospect so that SENTINEL BEAST could have had a longer career?**

**Michael:** "SENTINEL BEAST- I would've stayed in the band and not join FLOTSAM and JETSAM. I would've had certain arrangements made to record with FLOTSAM- I would've let the band go in the direction they wanted. If FLOTSAM and Cliff Burton dying never happened SENTINEL BEAST may have had a great future. I played with a great drummer in Kelly Smith- he had such a good groove and could play every Neil Peart part. I love Clive Burr from IRON MAIDEN more than Nicko McBrain for the same reason- the John Bonham vibe is cool. I only had issues with Barry in SENTINEL BEAST- everyone believed in the band but him."

**Any final thoughts?**

**Michael:** "I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you. I like the support you give for the scene and the way you look for the older Metal bands."

**Debbie:** "I plan on putting together next year another band. I listen to a lot of Celtic stuff and I want to do something heavy with an edge to it."

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Matt Coe

FLOTSAM photo group by Michael Richard





You began your musical career with THE VIOLATORS around 1976/1977, which included future WILD DOGS vocalist Matt McCourt. Describe this Punkish sounding act and what demos/ efforts came from this?

**Jay:** "Well there was a kid on drums named Mike Tuttle, who coincidentally is playing drums for James Brown right now- the Godfather of Soul. Mike and I were jamming in a high school cover band and I'd known Matt from a few other bands he'd played in- that was one of my first bands when I was 16. We did a little bit of everything- we jammed together with Matt and everything fell together. Our first show was playing at a party and we played for 3 hours. We knew cover songs and we jammed and improvised. It was a Punk energy with a Heavy Metal edge- we did a lot of Heavy Metal covers but we loved to play everything louder and faster. No real regard for polish- we'd play anywhere, anytime at the drop of a hat. We'd play for beer- we'd play parties on Tuesday nights and we were self contained- we had all our own gear, P.A., lights. In fact we used to do lights with foot controls- I'd do the lights and Matt would do the flashpots (laughs). They were hit and run gigs sometimes where we'd play a party and bail before the cops came. We were MOTORHEAD without being aware of it. The spirit of the band was fast, loose and we didn't care."

You formed your first lineup as MALICE after the break up of THE VIOLATORS (I believe), but had to stop in 1979 due to public indifference during the Disco/ New Wave times. Who was in this lineup and what style of Metal were you developing?

**Jay:** "Actually after I was playing with Matt and THE VIOLATORS, I played in another band called JADE with Mick Zane, who became the other guitarist in MALICE. As a matter of fact Pete Laufmann, MALICE's first drummer, he now plays with Matt McCourt and he was in JADE also. I was sitting in on guitar for a few gigs with JADE and they were in the midst of losing a couple of band members and that's when I got frustrated. It was a predecessor band to MALICE- except with a different bass player and singer. It didn't have



Mark Behn and the guy on vocals was Bill O'Riley. The bass player was a German guy named Chris- god, this was a long time ago. We had a huge warehouse, a full PA with lights. We had a backline of Marshall amps- we used to get bands like UFO and JUDAS PRIEST to come over to our warehouse and have jam sessions where we'd have refreshments and girls for them. This is back in 1979- we could get backstage to all the local Portland gigs and we'd throw parties. The frustration was exactly what you said- the New Wave/ Disco thing. No Rock bands were getting booked and we had this great rock band. I bailed after JADE failed and went to Hawaii for a year."

Did JADE develop any original songs or was it another cover band?

**Jay:** "We were starting to work on originals at the same time we were going to change the name of the band. We all knew a bunch of mutual covers- I probably knew over 200 songs at that age because I learned to play by playing off records. I'd take a JUDAS PRIEST record, slap it on the turntable and learn every song. Then take a SCORPIONS record and learn every song."

So when you had those jam sessions with UFO/ JUDAS PRIEST were you playing their own material?

**Jay:** "We'd play some of their songs and also jam on some Blues songs. I played "Jumpin' Jack Flash" with Glenn Tipton."

Next you joined THE RAVERS while living with Matt McCourt in 1981- where you would also play again with future MALICE guitarist Mick Zane (then known as Mike Landauer) who joined after the

Many of the readers should notice this issue a spotlight on the 80's California Metal scene with the many interviews from a variety of genres. Stepping in on these pages is a quintet that the faithful will remember from their first appearance on "Metal Massacre 1"- which led to a major label deal and two full lengths plus an EP that still cruise through a number of stereos on a given week. MALICE had the makings for being an American answer to JUDAS PRIEST- sensible in their riffing with all the right hooks and a vocalist that had the captivating qualities to raise a yell in every headbanger worldwide. What follows is an interview with guitarist Jay Reynolds and bassist Mark Behn- who will take you through the life and times of another cult act who were on the cusp of major success...



debut album's release. Tell us more about this band...?

**Jay:** "What happened was I was sitting in Hawaii and I went to a newsstand one day to see an issue of Creem magazine in early 1980. It said- "Look out- here come the goons! Heavy Metal Returns!". It was a silver chrome cover and it had Rob Halford in full leather regalia. That was a new direction for him- they started to go that way on the "Hell Bent For Leather" album. The magazine had reviews on DEF LEPPARD, IRON MAIDEN and I was blown away by the New Wave Of British Heavy Metal. I was on the next plane back to Oregon- I found some cool jam situations in Hawaii but nothing substantial. The day I got back I called Matt and he told me he had a record deal with a band called THE RAVERS. Within a week of being back I was recording an album. We did a few gigs with THE RAVERS and then I got the idea to do MALICE. Before I actually put MALICE together with Mick of course I had to conceptualize the whole thing personally and try to make it happen. I had an idea and knew what I wanted to do so I started writing some songs. The first MALICE sessions were with Dean Castronovo on drums and Kip Doran on guitar- plus I had James sing. Mick and James had been in a band together that I saw when I first got back from Hawaii. James had an amazing voice and I knew I wanted him to be the singer. I picked the people I wanted to play with- I wrote some songs and talked to Mick and Mike to move down to California with me. We auditioned guys and couldn't find the right people- we had to get Mark Behn and Pete Laufmann- so we got rid of Mike Tuttle. The three of us rehearsed

in a living room at a place in Simi Valley- we wrote tunes on a four track. We played the songs for a guy in a record store that did a fanzine called The New Heavy Metal Revue- that was Brian Slagel. He liked our material and he wanted it for "Metal Massacre". I called up the other guys Mark and James, told them of the record deal and we recorded the songs in one day in Portland. This was December of 1981- I returned those songs to Brian Slagel and went to Europe for a month. I went to London and read the Sounds interview about L.A. Heavy Metal- a famous Sylvie Simmons article about the happenings in Los Angeles. It was exciting- so when I got back Mick was down in California and a couple of underground radio stations were playing the "Metal Massacre" album. Someone said on faith that if they could get RATT and STEELER to play a gig that MALICE would play it too- they didn't know we weren't a full band yet. After a couple of months I coerced everyone to come to California. I guaranteed them we'd have a major label deal in two years- they all moved down and within six weeks of rehearsing we played our first gig on Thanksgiving 1982 at the Troubadour- with METALLICA opening for us- we drew 64 people, METALLICA drew 17 and the band in between drew 120 people PANDEMONIUM- three brothers from Alaska. That was a weird gig- within three more shows we were headlining the Roxy. It took off and within two years we were on Atlantic."

As stated by you in 1982 you had hooked up with vocalist James Neal, bassist Mark Behn and drummer Pete Laufmann- how did you meet these musicians as James originally hailed from Texas and Mark from Chicago?

**Jay:** "That's true but they were all in Portland bar bands in the 70's- so we all knew who each other were in rival bar bands. THE VIOLATORS played gigs with JADE- and so on. James was also in a few bands that everyone knew about. I'm not actually sure when I first saw Mick play with James- it might have been 1980 or 1981. James was living up in Portland, Mark too- they did come from other places but everyone came to Portland to play in bands."



How many demos did MALICE record before moving from Portland to Los Angeles?

**Jay:** "I did that first demo with Dean and Kip and then we did four songs for the "Metal Massacre" sessions in Portland before it was a band. That was all the demos pre-MALICE and it was pretty quick. Once we assembled a lineup we wrote songs quickly and almost every song wound up on the first album. There are probably a good ten songs floating around on eight tracks that didn't make it on either of the two MALICE albums- the songs were written intermittently between 1983-1987. When we recorded the original first album, it was only a demo. The recordings with Michael Wagener- I found this guy laying on the beach. We moved to Redondo Beach, CA- we had this big three story, four bedroom condo on the beach. We played in Hollywood and lived on the beach- what more could you ask for? Herman Rarebell of THE SCORPIONS lived right around the corner from us- and in the South Bay scene there were also guys from RATT, Don Dokken, GREAT WHITE- there was a scene. Herman was a friend of Don Dokken's and working on a project with Michael Wagener at Total Access Studios. It was the first time Michael had been to America and he was redoing the DOKKEN "Breaking The Chains" album for Elektra- cause it came out on Carrere Records from Europe first. I saw Herman on the beach and I asked him who his friend was and he told me it was Michael Wagener. My jaw hit the floor- I knew he used to work in Dieter Dierks studios. I told him about MALICE and said we have to record together. I asked him how much he wanted and he said \$50 an hour- I told him it was on. I got the

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money together and we did five songs, then three more songs with Wagener. We were going to release those eight songs as our first album independently, and we held out for a deal. We re-recorded all the songs for Atlantic and they got rejected because they liked the Michael Wagener stuff better."

**Your first formal appearance on album came with "Metal Massacre 1" on Metal Blade Records. Tell us about the recordings of "Captive Of Light" and "Kick You Down"- how did it feel to appear on a classic album with future noteworthy acts like METALLICA and RATT?**

**Jay:** "We were right there in the middle of all that. I've always been good at being in the middle of things- in L.A. it was great. I used to go to L.A. in the late '70's on little two week trips and see all the bands at the Starwood like VAN HALEN and QUIET RIOT. It turned into the Metal scene overnight and we were all brand new bands. It was the greatest time in the world. As much as METALLICA liked to disallow the L.A. scene they were born out of it! There was a lot of competition between bands and that upped the ante in the guitar playing- but there was also a lot of camaraderie so it was easy to set up shows. We all partied together, talked about business on the phone. That whole scene was an education in itself. Going back to the recording- the thing about those songs is we did it on a shoestring budget of a couple hundred dollars as a spur of the moment thing and unrehearsed. The production values- they don't sound as good as they should be but the spirit of the music is there if you can get past the horrible sounding drums (laughs)."

**MALICE's California debut occurred on Thanksgiving 1982 at the Troubadour Club with support act METALLICA- any special memories about the crowd, the playing or the show overall?**

**Jay:** "I remember it being really cold. It was our first gig and some things went wrong but we played pretty well. We got a great response and as a band we knew we were definitely on to something. If it works live in front of people it'll succeed- there's no substitute for chemistry."

**During the next two years you recorded some demos including "Into The Ground", "Godz Of Thunder", "Murder" and "Dues Paid In Hell", plus the Michael Wagner efforts. What can you tell us about these tapes and the quality of songs MALICE worked on?**

**Jay:** " "Dues Paid In Hell" and those other songs were recorded with Dean C. way before the Michael Wagener demos. I had recorded that and "Into The Ground" way before there was even a MALICE. The Wagner demos came together as we were starting to gel together as a band. We had done enough live shows to become a solid unit. We let go of Pete at that time- it was more of a personal thing. His playing was good but I don't think he was as motivated as the rest of us were. He's a great drummer and I still dig the guy. He played at least ten shows with us- we have a couple of those shows on videotape. I know we did one of the big Roxy shows with him. We got our new drummer Cliff Carothers through Carlos Cavazo- Cliff was in a band with Carlos called SNOW- I had seen them play in the QUIET RIOT/ VAN HALEN days. Cliff is a cool drummer, not super flashy but he had great sounding drums and he was experienced. We broke Cliff in right before we recorded with Wagener- everything just clicked. Mick and I really honed our guitar tones- we were very proud of our guitar sounds. We spent a lot of money and went through a lot of effort to get custom guitars made- custom Warmth built guitars, with Floyd Roses and custom designs. We had vintage Marshalls finely tuned- I had a 50 watt Marshall head that sounded one in a million. I plugged in and recorded with Wagener- I set up my head and settings, plus my one secret box that was a tone getter. Michael listened to the sound and he said in five minutes I got what it took ACCEPT two days to get on "Restless and Wild". It was an amazing sounding

guitar head- Michael went on to rent my guitar head to record a GREAT WHITE album and other sessions. The recordings went very smooth- Michael worked like a madman for us working 20 hours a day. Within two days we had done the first five songs and they sounded better than he had hoped for. We went from there and got those songs played on the radio. People were calling the station and freaking out- thinking they were listening to the new JUDAS PRIEST material. From there we just got bigger and the labels got more interested. That was one of the first big things. It happened quickly- from the time we got down there in late 1982, and by 1984 we were just smoking. We got signed in 1984 but the album didn't come out until mid 1985."

**As a result of these demos and your developing live act you landed a management deal with Robbie Randall Mgmt. and received interest from a bevy of independent labels like Metal Blade, Combat and Megaforce. Why did the band decide on Atlantic in July 1984 instead of signing an independent deal?**

**Jay:** "Oh God! You know what- that's a sticky situation because I was managing the band for the guys. It was getting to the point where I either play guitar or manage the band. I had a single minded determination- Randall was the first management company that we met with, we possibly should have waited but that's hindsight. That was our biggest mistake of our career- we signed with a lesser management company. It wasn't signing with or without Atlantic that broke the band. The inept management really slowed our career. We were mismanaged- Atlantic was already interested by the time we got management. Things were busting- that's why the guys wanted a manager. They outvoted me on the first manager we met with- I wanted to shop for other managers. Randall got us a deal- but then anyone could have got us a deal. We had A+R guys that were hanging out with the band. Metal was happening and people were believing that MALICE were going to be one of the next big bands. We really could have been- mismanagement brought dissonance in the band. We missed 1984 because of bad management decisions. Atlantic wanted to put out the eight songs that Wagner had done- but the management wanted to do the album with a name producer. We went over budget and the songs didn't come out as good as the original sessions. We took four songs of the session and six songs off the Wagner sessions. We were a working band though. We moved to New York after the first album to avoid working with our manager. We played anywhere and everywhere."

**Mark:** "In hindsight we should have gone on an independent- with Atlantic we had stars in our eyes. There was a certain prestige being on a big label- the label threw \$100,000 a record at us. I know Robbie Randall had a fantasy of signing us to a big label. This was all before independent labels had established a track record of breaking new bands."

**Your debut album "In The Beginning" was recorded in two months and should have come out in the summer of 1984 but got delayed for almost a year before appearing on the market. What circumstances led to this problem- and had the album come out earlier do you believe it could have dramatically changed MALICE's career?**

**Jay:** "Absolutely. Once Atlantic said yes our management and legal team took their sweet time solidifying the deal and the decision was made to wait for another producer. That held everything up for six months to a year- then the album got rejected and we had Michael Wagener remix songs and we went over budget. If we had released the songs a year and a half before we would have caught the Metal wave. Our management also had a technique for pitting the band against everyone else so that they could have total control. I can't even start to explain how corrupt the music business can be."

**Mark:** "That's a good question. When we signed we assumed it would move forward quickly. To our surprise we wanted to use Michael Wagener for the album- he cut us a good deal for the demos and we thought he was an excellent producer. Due to inner politics the label wanted to bring in Ashley Howe. It was rammed down our throats to use him- he had done some work on albums from QUEEN and URIAH HEPP. He changed some things that weakened some of the songs- Michael ended up mixing the songs but a passion was missing. Atlantic wasn't going to release the album- so the delay influenced how the album was received. At the time it should have come out it would have been the happening thing. We were well ready for it to come out."

**Which songs on "In The Beginning" were remixed demo songs?**

**Jay:** " "Rockin With You", "Air Attack", "Tarot

Dealer", "Hell Rider", "Godz Of Thunder" were all Michael Wagner's remixes. Ashley Howe was "Into The Ground", "Squeeze It Dry", "No Haven For The Raven" and "The Unwanted". The core songs were the original demos."

**Do you believe that Atlantic wasn't impressed with your debut album- and that they would have preferred a more "Glam"/ hook oriented band over your traditional though still melodic street styled Metal?**

**Jay:** "We did ok- but Atlantic used us as a tax write off because we went over budget and they hated our management. We got dropped by our booking agent so I was booking the band- we were supposed to be with ATI Booking and they dropped us like a hot potato when they found out Atlantic wasn't going to push the album. We went from being a big priority to being bottom of the barrel. Nobody wanted to deal with us- so we went out and played clubs for a solid year. We toured everywhere in two rental cars and a Ryder truck. We played everywhere- headlining clubs in New York and L.A. We did as many gigs as we could. When we made it to New York we fired Robbie Randall."

**Mark:** "Perhaps- like I said things had changed in a year. With MOTLEY CRUE's success and TWISTED SISTER- maybe that would've influenced them more. We'd written new songs and played as many shows as possible. It was maddening- I experienced the bureaucracy of the major labels."

**What were the shows like back then in support of the record?**

**Jay:** "We played five to six nights a week and James would lose his voice sometimes on the road- but MALICE was definitely a good live band. We'd drive through blizzards in Chicago or Buffalo and James would get sick. Other than that- some of our big hometown shows had special effects and a great show. We had an athletic assault. Balls out energy. That's what sold the band. We received some spoty accounting of sales- I heard "In The Beginning" sold 100,000 copies worldwide and it was killed. The second album did double that."

**Mark:** "We forged our own way- Premier Talent out of Detroit was our booking agent. We played 500 to 1,000 seat clubs on this album. Later on we did link up with other acts for headlining shows but it was good. We also spent a lot of time developing a relationship with college radio. We moved closer to New York to be closer to the record label. We did mini-tours at that time for one-three weeks- hit an area and come back home."

**Your second album "License To Kill" came out in the spring of 1987- another competent Metal effort that hit the US charts and featured some guest appearances from MEGADETH and BLACK N BLUE. How were these recording sessions and how were you feeling about Atlantic at this point?**

**Jay:** "We got a reprieve from Atlantic because of Jason Flom- he was a great guy. The grassroots part of Atlantic saw how hard we worked- they saw me work college radio in their New York offices and that MALICE wouldn't give up. They must have figured once they pulled their support we'd roll over and die and we didn't. We talked to our road manager and he was a good friend of Jason's so he talked Jason into going to bat for us. They gave us \$80,000 for a recording budget and we did it right on time, right on budget with Max Norman. They liked the album and gave us some tour support to go to Europe. If the band would've lasted we could have turned things around on Atlantic by the third album- who knows. I was palling around with Dave Mustaine for years- I knew him from the METALLICA days. The guys from BLACK 'N' BLUE also sang background vocals. MEGADETH was recording "Peace Sells" at the same time. Max was great producer- we did it in six weeks and he was a stickler for getting takes right on. We got a new booking agency and we played with everyone for a year on the road. We did a tour with ALICE COOPER right out of the gate- there was Vinnie

**Mick Zane- Europe 1987**





Vincent, MEGADETH and us as openers. Then we went out with NAZARETH, QUEENSRYCHE, SAXON, W.A. S.P., ARMORED SAINT. We also played with MOTORHEAD on the "Orgasmatron" tour- that was a great year. The whole year was magic. We always did well in Texas, New England and the eastern seaboard. We did well in Detroit and Chicago- where we did the "Vice Versa" movie."

**Mark:** "The fact that we got Max Norman was a choice of confidence. Paul Cooper was the man in Los Angeles responsible for handling our affairs at Atlantic when we first got signed. He was a very important part of the company but then he got sick and somehow faded away. Atlantic wined us and dined us with him- but when he was out of the picture we lost a lot of clout. When we moved to New York Jason Flom became our A+R guy. We wanted to have Max Norman or Ted Templeman produce the record- I liked Max due to his previous work with the Ozzy records. He loved to have a good bass sound on albums and we felt really good about this. Max and MALICE was a match made in heaven. I thought the product was very good at the time. My favorite tour was with NAZARETH- they were great guys. It was fun because we played to 3-5,000 people a night. It was a good mixture of our crowd and their crowd. We went through Texas and all the way up to Michigan and Missouri. While we were on tour in Illinois, we saw the producers of "Vice Versa". The club we were playing at in Champaign wasn't that big- but NAZARETH are a class act band and let us have all the spotlight for that show and gave us a lot of help to impress those producers."

**With this album you finally toured Europe opening for SLAYER on the "Reign In Blood" tour- how were these shows as I've heard some wild partying occurred with singer James Neal liking to do crazy things when drunk?**

**Jay:** "Oh hell yeah! It was one of the most well organized tours that I've ever been on- we had METALLICA's crew doing SLAYER's setup and they helped us as well since we only took two guys to Europe with us. We stayed in some great places and got along real well with SLAYER. They had a great time- Dave Lombardo had just re-joined the band. At that time Dave just smoked live. James had signed a contract where he wasn't supposed to drink alcohol on tour and there's some stories. I saw someone get knifed and killed in the crowd in Belgium and saw someone almost beaten to death in Berlin. We got pretty well received being a straight Metal band- especially opening for somebody as heavy as SLAYER. In the UK they were spitting on us- which showed that they liked us."

**Mark:** "The SLAYER crowds hardened us- our fans couldn't see us because of the hellish moshpits. When we would hear applause it would be from the wings to the left and right in the back. SLAYER's crowds are pretty fanatical. In Europe we got great press, playing 5-10,000 seaters a night. James had a complex that the bigger we got, the more fearful he got of the success. The pressure got to him- some of us relished it, James didn't like that. With that attitude and the friction we became impatient with him. Plus James was violent when he would get drunk- and we talked to him about it and he threw it out the window while in Europe. He'd show up like a beaten dog and he couldn't sing. His voice was gone at the Hammersmith Odeon- plus he wouldn't alter his voice due to the sickness. If he had to sing a high part by God he was going to try to do it- but he couldn't. I equated this to the Shuttle disaster."

**You left the band in 1987- what were the circumstances behind your departure and how long did you stay in MEGADETH?**

**Jay:** "What had happened was I was friends with Dave and when we came back from recording albums we did some catching up. We were on the same touring schedule so when we got back we were going to fire James because he was getting hard to get along with. "License To Kill" sold 200,000 worldwide and "Peace Sells"

had gone gold. They were getting ready to fire Chris Poland and Gar, so they gave me first shot. I passed the audition and lasted five months in the band. Dave was impossible to get along with back then- it was a weird time. We had a split in MALICE over direction at that time- I wanted to go heavier but Mick and Mark wanted more commercial songs like THE SCORPIONS. They had a year to produce a new lineup and concept for Atlantic and it didn't gel."

**Mark:** "We knew we had to get a new singer- I felt we had to do it and our last eight or nine shows in Europe, we were just nosediving. He'd leave the shows and take off. When we got back we heard that Jay was going to join MEGADETH. Should we continue to go- we got a singer named Mark Weitz- a 19 year old who could pull off James' vocals as well. With MEGADETH they found out that Jay couldn't pull out the solos- the doubling up on "License To Kill" plus solos were Mick's. Max had a problem with Jay's timing. MEGADETH never mentions this- I don't think he ever was a full time member."

**The band got the chance to have a song in the movie "Vice Versa"- how did this occur?**

**Jay:** "Our manager approached us with that while on tour- we had an offer to do something for "Trick Or Treat"- we got the script and didn't get that. We filmed the movie in Chicago, did the songs and went right back out on tour. We never missed a beat."

**Mark:** "It was supposed to be a completely different deal. Columbia Pictures was going to put up half the money for a video- Atlantic needed to put up the other half. Judge Reinhold was going to host MTV and talk about the movie and show our video. They shot footage live in IL and CA. It came down to the last day for Atlantic to pay for it- management got the word that Atlantic is balking at this video. Columbia wasn't happy- they wondered why Atlantic didn't want anything to do with this. The whole thing fell through- so Judge Reinhold couldn't play our video."

**A final mini-LP appeared on Metal Blade called "Crazy In The Night" featuring some vocals from Mark Weitz and Paul Sabu. What were your memories of these recordings?**

**Jay:** "It was one of my ideas- we had some odds and ends that I thought should be out."

**When and why did MALICE finally dissolve?**

**Jay:** "Mick and Mark had their own band, but it just wasn't MALICE anymore. They tried to keep it alive but then changed the name to MONSTER. I'm still good friends with them- if you listened to MONSTER it's noticeably different than MALICE. Right now I'm getting ready to release some material I recorded after I left MEGADETH, a band called WAR PARTY. It had Chuck Behler on drums from MEGADETH, Ron Cordy from BITCH and the L.A. OVERKILL on bass, and a singer Dave Anthony from SHYER- a Don Dokken produced album. We formed in 1990-1991, did 10-15 songs and we toured up and down the West Coast. We had some label interest but the timing sucked due to the new wave of Alternative. When Chuck quit the band we had more tour dates booked and we had a hard time trying to replace him. We will release this on O.P.M. Records- vinyl only at first. After they sell this we will put out a couple of CD's. It's heavier than MALICE but a lot like MALICE. Some of it is SCORPIONS-esque with MALICE. It was a fun band. After that band I formed PLANET X with Dave again on vocals- I played bass in this band. It's like Industrial QUEENSRYCHE on speed- there's 24 songs in the can on that. Then once that band dissolved I played with Jim Morrison's son and did a Heavy Metal DOORS thing. I did some Industrial stuff also- in the MINISTRY/ NINE INCH NAILS vein."

**Mark:** "Mick and I continued to play the whole time. After awhile Cliff just gave up- Atlantic was losing interest as well. So we decided to call the band MONSTER- BLACK N BLUE was breaking up at the same time. I wish Pete Holmes in retrospect would've done the MALICE stuff with us. I wish MONSTER would've been signed to Atlantic. We searched for a singer for two-three years. In the time there Max and Mick built a studio- we had Jeff Scott Soto sing on a few of the MONSTER songs- but he was uncommitted. The singers would freak out hearing Jeff sing on the material- so we had trouble. Guys from all over the place would try out, and the minute they heard the material and said, "No problem!" is the minute we knew they couldn't pull it off. Mark Isom was singer #87- he came from New York and he fit right in. He knew he could sing but not like Jeff. He flew out and casually nailed all these songs we did. Mark had the writing ability we needed as well. After that I did SPLASH PALACE- that's a different



James Neal- Europe 1987

style- more Peter Gabriel with a heavy edge. That was another band with Pete Holmes. I was burning out after MONSTER- I was quite disillusioned with handling all the songs and business at the same time. After dealing with all the record labels worldwide it was nice to have a project where all I did was record the CD. It just turned out to be a great CD. We did a project with Ian Gillan in between DEEP PURPLE albums- so Tommy Thayer played guitar, plus Pete and I played on it. That was cool to talk about for three months- talk about a complete professional. He's one of the guys who will sing those amazing melodies from the chest- it sounds like it's coming from all different parts of the room. I also did a Blues project."

**Name some of your favorite bands and concerts through the years?**

**Jay:** "God that's virtually impossible but I'll try. I'll give you favorite three albums from the 80's- "Ace Of Spades", "Restless And Wild" plus the original MALICE demos. Concertwise- the late 70's PRIEST tours. The one which was supporting "Unleashed In The East". Seeing Michael Schenker play in UFO- from then on it's a blur. I liked everyone from JUDAS PRIEST to QUEENSRYCHE- seeing Tate pull it off live in 1986 was amazing. MOTORHEAD and SLAYER on tour were amazing- seeing them night after night blows you away. I was one of those guys watching shows on the side of the stage every night."

**Favorite memories through the years- and anything you would have changed to make things better?**

**Jay:** "If I could go right back to the spot where we'd got bad management- I'd hit rewind and everything would be different. Robbie Randall thought he was a rock star. When you are older you try to do everything you can to right the wrongs but we were already the underdogs. We gave it our best shot as MALICE."

**Mark:** "Oh boy- that almost falls under the category of regrets. I truly believe longevity is the key to things. Mick and I when we get together we hash this out- but back then we were still struggling to keep it together. MALICE lasted as long as it did- I wish we could've done a couple more albums. But to choose songs was such a struggle. We should have stuck to Michael Wagener producing the first album. If you play the demos and album you can hear the patchwork presentation, compared to the fluidity of the second record. As mature as we thought we were the band got a lot rougher after the first tour."

**Do you follow the Metal scene today and are you aware of the current interest in older, classic bands such as MALICE?**

**Jay:** "Probably not as much as I should be- I read a lot of the press. I'm waiting for the right opportunity to jump back in. I talk to everyone in MALICE but James."

**Mark:** "Honestly, no. I was surprised to hear in every MONSTER interview people still wanted to talk about MALICE. I'm glad we made a little splash- every now and then I hear a new band and think they may have gleaned a little influence from our sound."

**Any final thoughts for the Snakepit readers?**

**Jay:** "It's great to see this happening. A lot of the new Metal is regressive musically- they are ripping off Rap and for the most part I see no movement. What's cool for me is seeing fans of Metal at its pinnacle- to see people go back and find the best bands. I hope to be a part of the scene again someday."

**Mark:** "Oh boy- I always just like to pick the bands that were the truest. We used to research bands as kids- now bands are thrown at you. It always was such a goldmine to find bands and look under the rocks. Don't be rammed by MTV- seek out who is making something different."

Matt Coe



Mark Behnwo- Europe 1987





Describe growing up in Perth Amboy, NJ and your evolution from listening to music until your cousin Alan helped you discover Heavy Metal- what were the first bands, albums and songs that captured your attention?

"Well my cousin Alan introduced me to Heavy Metal when I was in grammar school still. It was the 7th or 8th grade and I was being turned on to stuff like ALICE COOPER, KISS, LED ZEPPELIN and BLACK SABBATH. I was into the heavier sounds so by the time I got to Perth Amboy high school it was a very segregated school- a lot of blacks and Hispanics. The whites who loved Heavy Metal would hang out at a place called The Ramp- that's where you'd hear the boomboxes blasting the latest Heavy Metal. "Killers" by IRON MAIDEN had just come out, "Point Of Entry" by JUDAS PRIEST- I remember listening to ANVIL "Metal On Metal" and ACCEPT. I used to go to L'Amours every weekend and see a show- I was 16 or 17. I'd see FATES WARNING with John Arch singing- ARMORED SAINT/ W.A.S.P./ METALLICA- which was my first introduction to ARMORED SAINT and they blew the other two bands off the stage. I met KING DIAMOND back then- AT-TACKER as well. Growing up was going to Rock and Roll Heaven plus partying in the woods. There wasn't much else to do."

By your freshman year of high school you joined your first band HARLOT, a cover act that chose to play IRON MAIDEN, ACCEPT, TWISTED SISTER and AC/DC covers among others. How was the band and what are your memories concerning shows

to check out MEGADETH- I remember hearing the MEGADETH demo at Rock and Roll Heaven. Johnny Z pointed us the right way. I remember meeting David Defeis of VIRGIN STEELE- he was doing an autograph signing promoting the first VIRGIN STEELE album at the flea market. Johnny had to move to Clark later. That's where I discovered ANVIL, RAVEN, METALLICA, OVERKILL- prior to him forming Megaforce Records."



You stayed with HARLOT for two years before forming your own band MORBID SIN- why did you move on and tell us how the lineup of MORBID SIN formed? What were you hoping to accomplish that you couldn't with HARLOT?

"MORBID SIN was a band that was actually put together out of a dare. A friend of mine Larry Diablo (who I would later hook up with), he was in a rival band called METAL STORM and they had just won a couple Battle Of The Bands. They were riding high on the success- Larry bet that I couldn't put together a band that could beat his band in these battles. We were 17 years old and we were having pipe dreams. So I put together the band in two weeks- I was playing only guitar, Chris Mase was on lead guitar, Brian on vocals, Andy on bass and Julius on drums. We learned some cover songs, played our first Battle Of The Bands and



beat METAL STORM. MORBID SIN wanted to do originals though- so that's what we did. We got another drummer John Cosak who recorded our first demo with us. Then we got Steve Decker and he was prior to us getting Brian Vincent. The lineup was steady- I dropped guitar and started singing when everyone complained that our singer sucked. When Brian got in the band we also had Wade Tyler who took over on guitar for me."

MORBID SIN became infamous in your local area for putting on a theatrical show a la KING DIAMOND- can you describe some of the shows and what the music was like? How many demos did the band record and what were the sales?

"The demos- we did two. "Arrival Of The Sin" was in 1988, we got 500 demos and they are all gone. We got 500 of the second one in 1992 called "Cauldron Of The Souls" and sold out that, made another 500 and most of those are gone. We did very well- we were notorious for a good stage show. We started out all wearing makeup and we were more of a KING DIAMOND Thrash band. We pared that down to me just wearing makeup- we acquired a coffin somehow and cemetery gates that our roadies would lug me on stage with in this coffin. We'd have the coffin in the bathroom of Club Bene- they'd climb it on stage and women would scream in horror. We'd get 100 people to see us back then- I'd pop up and start singing. We opened for HADES, CELTIC FROST, MANOWAR, VICIOUS RUMORS, BLOODFEAST. We were supposed to open for SAVATAGE and the club burned down two weeks before the show."

MORBID SIN consumed your life for almost ten

## BOBBY LUCAS SPEAKS FROM THE METAL SOUL

and experiences you gained?

"We had a great time- they were all juniors and seniors in high school and I was a freshman. The way I got together with them was I was heavily into Rob Halford and I was screaming "Victim Of Changes" in the locker room. The drummer Johnny Blade looked at me and asked if I could sing that on a microphone. So I went to their garage and met Angelo and Ronnie, the guitar players- plus Tommy on bass. We did songs like "Under The Blade", "Shoot 'Em Down", "Another Piece Of Meat", "Wrathchild", "Killers", we'd pull out a couple of SABBATH tunes, "Mothra" from ANVIL, plus "Buried Alive" from VENOM which we played at a Battle Of The Bands. We'd practice two times a week- we played some battle of the bands. HARLOT lasted two years if I'm not mistaken. The seniors graduated and the girlfriends came into the picture which broke up the band."

Tell the readers about Johnny Z's "Rock And Roll Heaven" stand at the flea market you used to frequent in the early 80's. How important was his table towards your Metal tastes and do you believe he helped spearhead the American Metal movement especially on the East Coast?

"Definitely. Johnny Z was very important in getting the Metal out to the people. We'd get the latest album by recommendation from Johnny Z at the time. He'd tell us

Upon seeing EXHIBITION at Powermad last year in their first live performance, I was surprised to hear vocalist Bobby Lucas was out of SEVEN WITCHES. Knowing how much our readers love that traditional Metal band, I decided to get in touch with Bobby when he vacationed last Halloween in my home state of Massachusetts. We had a lengthy discussion about his Metal past, his views on the scene as well as anything else that came to my mind. This was one of my favorite interviews to do as Bobby has a passion for Metal that bleeds much like the staff at Snakepit.

years- yet you never got signed. What do you think the band lacked to get signed, especially considering the attention other NJ acts were getting like AT-TACKER, HADES and DEADLY BLESSING to name a few?

"Unfortunately we became so popular in our local area we became satisfied with being local legends. We were focused on partying and getting ladies- that's why I left. We should've gone for the record deal. We'd play places like Escapades in Jersey City, Club Bene, Obsessions, and The Rock Horse- plus Studio One in Newark. We did a lot of shows- one bogus label tried to get us called Rodell Records. They wanted us to pay for songs to appear on a compilation but we didn't buy into it. The music was very strong throughout our career."

Next came PROUD FLESH, a Doomier band that included former MORBID SIN members Brian Vincent and guitarist Wade Tyler. Describe the band's sound and how the shows/ demo went during this phase of your career?

"This was just prior to me joining SEVEN WITCHES. Wade Tyler, Al and myself put together the band. We loved SABBATH and wanted to put together a Doomier band. Wade was from MORBID SIN- and Brian was our second drummer in PROUD FLESH. The first drummer was the son of ex TWISTED SISTER drummer Tony Petri. JJ was his name he was a great drummer on







single bass. The Rock and Roll guys didn't agree with our Heavy Metal ethics- so that's why Brian came in. Al wanted to be more Rock and Roll so I left because I love Metal and want to pursue that direction. I'd like to shop that material and get it released because it's really strong. You'll hear some SEVEN WITCHES sound on it- but it has a SABBATH type feel. We have one demo done with JJ on drums that was never released- that had more of a Rock and Roll feel to it than Doom Metal. That was in the early stages of PROUD FLESH. The other demo I'd like to see released as an album."

A key turn in your life occurred when PROUD FLESH opened for FATES WARNING on their "Pleasant Shade Of Grey" tour in NJ, where you would speak with Jack Frost from FROSTBITE who were also on the bill. Tell us about this night and your initial conversation which led to the start of SEVEN WITCHES?

"It wasn't much of a conversation- I finished our set and Jack had also finished his set with FROSTBITE. We talked for a couple minutes- he complimented me on my voice and he asked me if I was interested in singing with him, he had some label contacts and wanted to start up another band. He told me I should be making records- which is what I had been saying all along through the years, so I gave him a call."

How soon after that first meeting did you get together to jam with Jack, and how quickly did the songs for the SEVEN WITCHES demo come together- the three songs that includes "Seven Witches", "Second War In Heaven" and "Scarlet Tears"?

"We got together a month after that gig. Jack wanted Larry and Brian as well. It was supposed to be a full fledged band and not the project it turned out as. The songs flowed- we came up with the basic riffs for "Second War In Heaven" and "Scarlet Tears" the first time we jammed. It went well."

What do you remember about the demo recording, the studio used- and why did Larry leave the band before the recording to be replaced by bassist Scott (last name unknown)?

"We went to Sound Spa Studios- at that time Larry left because he didn't see eye to eye with Jack. Scottie was someone Jack got to do the bass tracks. The recording went smooth- we knocked out the three songs and a month later Massacre Records contacted us wanting a deal."

A month after the demo's release you received a record deal from Massacre. Were there any other labels interested and were the terms of the deal satisfactory?

"I found out through Jack that Brian Slagel of Metal Blade had heard the demo after SEVEN WITCHES signed to Massacre- he tried to get the label to sell the rights and Massacre wouldn't give us up. That would've been awesome. That was the only offer. Massacre advanced us \$10,000 to record the album, they treated us well. We met Bernie who was working for Massacre- it felt like a decent deal for a beginning band."

Your debut album "Second War In Heaven" was an amazing release in 1999- a fine traditional Metal album in the vein of classic JAG PANZER, SAVATAGE and ACCEPT in my mind. Tell us about your sessions at Woodhouse Studios- your favorite songs and how you chose the FLEETWOOD MAC and MANOWAR covers?

"The FLEETWOOD MAC cover was one I wanted to do in PROUD FLESH. Jack wanted to also do this FROSTBITE- so we wound up doing that. MANOWAR "Metal Daze" was my idea- I love that song. I heard Eric Adams screams when I was younger and I was blown away. The sessions were great- Siggie Benm and Woodhouse Studios were awesome. We got to work with a genius- he has a great way of motivating people to

give 110%. He'll tell you you've got a better take in you- or if it's crap he'll let you know. It was a shame we didn't get to work with him on the second album. I love "Bewitchment" and "Dying Embers" the most."

When did SEVEN WITCHES play their one and only show in New Jersey? Did the band get other offers to tour after the album's release, and did Jack's other projects interfere with this?

"Yes- our first show was at the Birch Hill opening for MANOWAR- 1,200 people in attendance. It was my best show of my life- the audience was very accepting. We were going to do "Metal Daze" but we didn't due to MANOWAR. We did a lot of songs off "Second War In Heaven" and "Atlantis" off the second album as a treat for the fans. We had a lot of promises that were unfulfilled- Jack got involved in his other bands and I didn't want to stand in his way. As a result SEVEN WITCHES was always on the backburner."

You played guitar on "Bewitchment"- why didn't Jack allow you to play more in the studio (especially considering the songwriting you did on the debut)?

"I really didn't want to because guitar playing is always a hobby to me. I get more satisfaction out of writing a riff and watching another guitarist bring it to another level with my vocals. I'm a good rhythm guitarist but I suck at leads (laughs). That's why I want to do a solo project and show off a little of my guitar playing."

The second album "City Of Lost Souls" was recorded in the winter of 1999 at Impuls Studios in Germany, co-produced by Jack Frost. How were these sessions, as I understand that only 45 minutes of music appeared yet other songs were ready to be included on the album but Jack wanted to save them for the third album?

"The other producer JP did 60% of the work- but I don't think the production was as good as the first album. Massacre and Siggie had a falling out- originally we were supposed to record at Midas Touch Studios in Hagen, Germany. That studio was on a farm- the equipment wasn't that great and the guy who ran the studio gave us an attitude so Jack got us quickly into Impuls Studios. We left for Hamburg to record that album. "The Answer", "No Man's Land" and "We Are The Coven" are my favorites. I had a song called "Children Of War" ready to go on there, that was supposed to be on there as well as "Blood Of The 7th Cross"- but those will be on my solo project. "Pounding Metal" was my choice because EXCITER is my favorite Power Metal band of all time."

Considering the European magazine/ fanzine acclaim for these two records, were you shocked that Massacre wasn't willing to give you tour support to further the sales of these albums? Also, why wasn't a US company willing to license these albums?

"Supposedly Jack was talking to Pavement about licensing our albums in the states. I don't know whatever

BRONX CASKET COMPANY, SPEED and then the offer to tour with METALIUM which led to him joining the band?

"I'm not one to hold anyone back- he tried to get his name out there. Billy was more upset by it than I was- he wanted SEVEN WITCHES to play more. Billy moved to another band once Jack joined METALIUM."

Which European festivals did SEVEN WITCHES have to turn down? Did it frustrate you to see people

buying the CD's and sending you tons of email/ fan mail without ever getting the chance to hear the band's material in a live setting?

"This is the thing- a lot of the business aspect was really shared with us on a need to know basis from Jack. Jack handled the business, did all the interviews, talked to all the labels. It was not like a band situation- in SEVEN WITCHES it was the Jack Frost situation. I would rather be involved- a band should share information. Massacre appointed Jack as the boss of the band."

Tell us the events that led to you joining EXHIBITION- and the ensuing problems that arose from Jack's side with you starting another band. Why would he have a problem while he was off with METALIUM for you to do EXHIBITION- a band that's obviously more Progressive oriented than

SEVEN WITCHES?

"It's the same thing I ask myself on many occasions- why he reacted the way he did considering all the projects he was doing. I waited two years before I joined another band- I didn't know if I could come up with enough songs for two bands. What happened is I heard stories about EXHIBITION- friends were telling me about them. One day I got a phone call from John my friend and I heard them on answering machine. I went to their studio and we jammed. I worked on their material and came up with melodies for two songs and then I joined EXHIBITION. SEVEN WITCHES wasn't a band that practice anytime- we only got together for two-three weeks before recording the albums. In EXHIBITION we rehearse three times a week, have band meetings and really hang out together."

You quit SEVEN WITCHES a day before EXHIBITION played its first show at Powermad 2000- tell me your thoughts on this gig and the impressive response you got from the Power/ Progressive Metal crowd for an early Sunday afternoon show?

"Again- a very strange situation. When I got in EXHIBITION Jack had come back from the METALIUM tour. He called my house after hearing a rumor that I had left SEVEN WITCHES for EXHIBITION and he flipped out on my answering machine. Jack always told me if I wanted to do something else, do it. I don't think he expected me to follow through with it. I heard in EXHIBITION a high caliber Progressive Metal band that could compete with DREAM THEATER or FATES WARNING. I need to explore other avenues- after talking to Jack and telling him it wouldn't affect our efforts in SEVEN WITCHES he seemed fine. Jack got really weird and we started drifting apart, as my birthday had come up and he didn't show up at my party. Two weeks before Powermad Jack told me they wanted SEVEN WITCHES. I said no problem, I'll sing for both bands. Two days later Jack calls and says don't worry about it because drummer John Osbourn couldn't fly in from Florida to play the show. We didn't want a sit in drummer- so Jack gave us the ok to play with EXHIBITION. Jack didn't come to my birthday party- so I emailed him and he was ranting about Billy and I not promoting SEVEN WITCHES at Powermad and only pushing our respective bands EXHIBITION and SINGLE BULLET THEORY. This floored me- I promoted to everyone that I am a part of SEVEN WITCHES. Read the fanzine "Transcending The Mundane" and people will see this. I don't know but I left SEVEN WITCHES the day before Powermad. The egos were getting problematic- I wanted things to be 50/50 and it turned into the Jack Frost band. I just want to set the record straight though that Powermad did not break up SEVEN WITCHES."

Now in addition to EXHIBITION you are now the lead singer for the cult 1980's legends (at least in the underground) OVERLORDE. What can people expect and what are your vivid memories of singing for a band you grew up watching play in your previous act MORBID SIN?

## Bobby & Jack Frost



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## Bobby live w/ SEVEN WITCHES



became of that- eventually SEVEN WITCHES will get a distribution deal stateside. Again we had rumors from Massacre that we'd be going out with DIO or U.D.O. for two-three weeks- that never materialized because the METALIUM thing came up."

What were your feelings on Jack's sidework with the





**EXHIBITION**

"That was so freaky to see Mark and John at Power-mad. I knew them and they were looking for a singer. They used to play Jersey City! Escapades when I was playing with MORBID SIN. We played a few shows together. I told them I'd try out- EXHIBITION doesn't have a problem with me playing in another band. OVERLORDE were leery at first- they wanted me to hook them up with other singers. They had three people picked and Mark asked me if I wanted to audition. Being a fan of theirs I said yes- because through the years I had been amazed at John's bass playing and Mark's guitar sound which are quite unique. So we never have to have a two guitar lineup because John is the bass master general. I did the audition and the guys like what I did. I love Power Metal and I have fans that support me in this genre. Power and traditional Metal is what I grew up with- I'm having a ball. OVERLORDE practices once a week- everyone lives far away so it's more of a relaxed atmosphere. We've done a four song demo and there are 12 labels that have expressed interest. The OVERLORDE EP goes for over \$100 on the internet. When I got into OVERLORDE the Europeans were excited to hear that I joined this band."

Eventually these unreleased songs that you've written will come out in another band called WYKKYD MYSTYK. Have you completed the lineup plus when will you find the time to record this project? Stylistically will it be a continuation of your work in SEVEN WITCHES?

"This will be done in the future with Larry and Brian

and I'm going to demo three songs with them and see if someone will put the album out. This will be my gift to SEVEN WITCHES fans of songs that should have come out. It'll just be a one album project."

**What are your likes and dislikes about the music business?**

"What I love is writing and performing- meeting and playing for the fans. I love Heavy Metal first and foremost- I consider myself lucky to be in this business. I don't like the trendy American scene- I don't like the Rap/ Hip Hop infusion into heavy music. It seems like getting tattoos and piercing matter more to get signed than musicianship. Bands aren't following through and going beyond two albums. Bands should be friends and hang out together- communication is very important for a band to work. In EXHIBITION we all talk about things and iron problems out. For instance SANCTUARY was a great band and two albums later they were gone. We have NEVERMORE now- but I miss SANCTUARY. I hate the suite who make decisions on who should be big or not. I wish labels would get behind



Bobby Lucas & Matt Coe

bands more." **Where do you see the Metal scene headed stateside in 2001 and beyond?**

"I think the scene is coming back slowly in America. Bands like OVERLORDE are now going to get their due."

**What would your dream tour or festival be- name the bands and if the act is deceased, what incarnation would you like to see?**

"I'd love to see SABBATH with Dio- that would be the headliner. JUDAS PRIEST with Rob Halford, IRON MAIDEN with Bruce Dickinson- QUEENSRÛCHE. EXCITER- even their new lineup is great, but I have a soft spot - though with the old lineup with Beehler on vocals. This is tough- MERCYFUL FATE, VENOM- they put on an awesome show live. NEVERMORE- PRIMUS for something different. DREAM THEATER, FATES WARNING, PAIN OF SALVATION. I'd throw EXHIBITION and OVERLORDE on there too. ACCEPT back with Udo."

**Final thoughts for the Snakepit readers?**

"I'm looking forward to making music with EXHIBITION and OVERLORDE- I've got a lot to offer the Progressive Metal fans and the Traditional/ Power Metal fans. You'll be seeing a lot from me. Snakepit is a magazine I've always loved- you cover the histories well and I'm glad to be featured. Keep supporting Metal and the local scenes. We need more bodies at shows, otherwise Metal will have no live shows. Bands should play together and gather more fans- hang out and listen to other acts. In the long run this helps the scene and everyone involved."

Matt Coe



OVERLORDE 2000

EXHIBITION live pic by Cheryl Tarlaian

Right from the moment that I got their self titled double album on my doormat through O.P.M. Records, I knew that this band was very interesting to introduce to our readers. I got in contact with their guitarist Rex Alan, who is a devoted Metalhead. I found out that this band existed for a long time already. They breathe Heavy Metal, they play Heavy Metal. And they play it in the way I like it best. Their album even deserved a place in my personal top ten of the year 2000. Reason enough to provide you with all the details about this band, I think. A band that now consists of Mike Skelton on guitar and vocals, Tony Blair on drums and vocals (no, he's not the English prime minister, too!), Dan Bippes on bass and vocals and their spokesman for this interview, Rex Alan, on guitar and vocals. They're already preparing themselves for a big Heavy Metal Festival in Kalamazoo this year, where they will play together with a lot of legendary cult names from the American Heavy Metal scene. Names like HALLOWEEN, SKULLVIEW, OCTOBER 31, OMEN, DAMIEN THORNE, MANILLA ROAD, EXCITER and the recently reformed ABBATOIR play there too, amongst other interesting names. Rex starts his story by telling us how the band actually got together. Here's what he had to say.



**When did IRON CROSS get together and who was in the band back then?**

"The band formed back in the late 70's and the first real show was on New Years Eve 1979. The band at this time was Tony Blair on drums, Mike Skelton on guitar and Max Chuites on bass."

**Who came up with the name IRON CROSS?**

"Actually, Tony and Mike did."

**Didn't you ever get mixed up with the other IRON CROSS from Finland for example?**

"No, we were not even aware there was another IRON CROSS at the time. We found out about them when we talked with John at O.P.M. Records."

**Please tell us a bit more about the history of the band, cause I think that almost none of our readers will know you!**

"Tony, Max and Mike moved from Pensacola to Orlando in the early 80's and started making rounds in the

music scene, Max left and was replaced by Jody Cole and this line up was around to '85 or '86. Then Rex (Alan) joined and then we started working on our first album simply titled "Iron Cross". It was completely an independent effort and only about 500 were pressed. It was for promotional use so we did not even put any contact info on it because we always sent a promo along with it or sold it at shows. We then did a four-song EP, called "Die Like That". Soon after Jody left the band and was replaced with Kris Tarr on bass and then we released a half live, half studio tape called "Pieces". Soon after Kris had some personal problems and had to step down. Dan (Bipp) Bippes joined on bass and this line up is the one we still have today."

**Who are your musical influences?**

"I would have to say BLACK SABBATH, ALICE COOPER and KISS."

**How did you guys get in touch with O.P.M. records and how come other companies said 'no' to IRON CROSS and releasing such an outstanding US Metal record? What took you so long to get the people interested in these great Metal tracks?**

"O.P.M actually tracked us down after hearing our first release and when we were playing back in the late 80's we just did not have the contacts or the management

with the ability to get us anywhere. We were not even aware of the interest in Europe until O.P.M. contacted us in 98."

**Most of the pics in the gatefold sleeve of your album were taken at the Halloween bash '89, where you played with MACHINA. Was this your biggest and most important gig ever? Please tell our readers a bit more about this gig.**

"No, it wasn't. At the time they were laying out the new album, these were the pictures we had access to. It was a great gig, until we started playing. Then somebody





tried to steal the tip jar and our friend Mike Tromble tackled the guy. The jar shattered and cut the guy up. Then the police and paramedics showed up and we had to shut down the show. The only good thing was we got US\$2500.00 at the door and only had to play three songs."

Are there any other nice or spectacular stories from being 'on the road' that you'd like to share with us?

"One good story is from when we were playing with DEATH in Tampa and we were partying hard and heavy and about two in the morning the guys from DEATH knock at the door and asked us to keep it down. We have always said since then we could wake up death."

You also played with DEATH, NOCTURNUS and FESTER at the Sunset Club. How the hell did you get to play as support to DEATH, who are definitely playing another music style than IRON CROSS?

"We were friends with Rick Rozz, who was the guitarist at the time for DEATH and we got the gig through him."

What does a show of IRON CROSS look like? Do you use any show elements? On a few pix I saw that you decorated the drum kit a bit with bleeding skulls and spider rags, but I reckon that this might have been for the Halloween party only.

"Every IRON CROSS show is like Halloween. We use smoke machines, flash pods and many props to give it that creepy element."

Do you also play covers during a live show and if yes, which ones do you play?

"We usually do 'War Pigs' by BLACK SABBATH, 'Victim Of Changes' by JUDAS PRIEST, 'Killed By Death' by MOTORHEAD and 'Black Diamond' by KISS."

You also recorded the ANGELWITCH song 'Angel Of Death' - why this song?

"It was a favorite of Mike and Tony's. It has been in the set as long as I can remember."

Before you released your album you released a tape, which was half live/ half studio. Where did you record the live part and which songs are on it?

"The tape was released after our first album and it was recorded at the Central Florida Fair. As far as the song order goes none of us at the time even has a copy of this and all we can tell you is on the live side we did 'South Of Heaven' by SLAYER, 'Demons' and 'Demons Disciple'. Other than that we are pulling a blank."

And which songs are on the studio part of this tape?

"The only we are sure of is 'Dark Dreams'."

How many tapes were distributed and how were the reactions of the media?

"Only about 300 and the reaction was very positive."

What's the Metal scene like in Florida? Are there any other (new) interesting bands around that you know of? And is it possible to play gigs easily in your neighborhood?

"The Metal scene is quite okay. PAIN PRINCIPLE and FLO AND GRUMPY are a few of the good Metal bands on the scene today, but our selection of places to play is very thin."

How are the press reactions on the double album you released only recently?

"All of them have been great. One good review after another and this completely caught us of guard."

Are there any negative reactions too and how do you handle these in general? Do you take any notice at all?

"Thankfully, there has not been any negative reactions so far and if there was, our attitude is F#\*k'em!!"

What do you think about all the interest coming from Europe for IRON CROSS?

"We think it is great. We are looking forward to playing for all our fans there."

What's the profession of each band member next to being a member of IRON CROSS?

"Mike and Rex are just musicians at this time. Bipp installs engines in boats and Tony drives a truck."

You told me that IRON CROSS exists again at this moment. Are you playing live too already? And will the band sound the same as on the double album, or will the sound differ a lot from this old style Heavy Metal that you played then?



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"Yes, we are playing live again. We played Halloween to a full house at Headlights and also did the same on New Years Eve. As far as our sound goes, we recorded "R.I.P." and "Halloween" for the double album. John was amazed at how close we sound to the original recordings. He even thought we took old and vintage amps in to get the sound, but that is just how we sound. No matter what we play, it sounds like IRON CROSS."

Are there any line-up changes compared to the line up on this double LP?

"No, we're all still here."

There's also a rumor that you're willing to play on the Wacken Open Air Festival next year. True or false, and how far are these plans at this moment?

"Yes, we definitely want to play the Wacken Festival. It would be a great honor to be invited to play. We are trying very hard to get on the bill but one person is causing a lot of problems for us. Supposedly Jürgen Hegewald from Hellion Records has a lot to do with the booking and he is dead set against us playing. He had approached O.P.M. about distributing their albums in Germany but they already had made a deal with Soul Stripper Records and could not do this. Now he is taking this out on us. We do not think this is fair at all. We had no knowledge of this disagreement and feel he is unjust trying to punish us. Hopefully all of this can be resolved."

What do you expect from this festival? I can imagine that you all have certain thoughts about this festival through the stories that are told to you from the people who've actually been there.

"Just a chance for our fans and the fans of Metal in general to see us in our favorite element, on stage and kicking ass. We really have not talked to anyone much about the festival and are going on what we have heard from the media."

What are your plans for the future?

"We are planning to release a new cd on Iron Glory and then try to tour as much as possible to get maximum exposure. Beyond that it all depends on the fans."

With whom would you like to play in the future?

"We are willing to play with anyone as long as they are in the same music vein we are from. As far as American bands go PANTERA, ALICE COOPER, MEGADETH and many others. We would also like to play some European bands like ANGELWITCH, SACRED STEEL and CARPE DIEM, to name just a few."

How important is the internet for the Metal bands of today? And where can the fans of IRON CROSS find the bands internet site, and please tell us briefly what we can find here?

"It is very important. It has taken down all the walls that distance had put between. It gives Metal fans from all over the world info and a chance to listen to thousands of bands otherwise they would never have heard of. You can find us at [www.ironcrossonline.com](http://www.ironcrossonline.com) and you find info on the band pictures and links to our favorite sites like Snakepit Magazine."

Do you sell any merchandising of the band, like t-shirts etc, and where can the fans order this stuff?

"Right now we have sold out of t-shirts but we do have a few videos and cds that were made just for Halloween left. Email us at [kromealter@aol.com](mailto:kromealter@aol.com) for more info."

Was the drawing on the right

part of the inner gatefold sleeve of your album, that is right under the band photo, used for your demo recordings or the half studio/half live tape. Or is it just a drawing from one of your fans or even one of the band members?

"That is the artwork for our first album drawn by Mike our guitarist. It will also be on the CD re-release of that album that is due out in March on Iron Glory."

What do you think of the madness that's been going on for weeks now during the elections? And who's the best man in your opinion?

"We are all politically pretty neutral but the attempt by Gore to change the election was sad. It pretty much split the

country along party lines and just made a mockery of the election system that we have in place. Rex and Dan voted for Bush of course and Mike and Tony are nonvoters."

A statement of mine about Heavy Metal is that it's not a music style, but Heavy Metal is a way of life. Do you agree with this and what's your opinion? Are you playing the music for fun or is Heavy Metal like a way of life for you?

"It is most definitely a way of life. Our band mate Mike is living proof of that. He does not leave the house hardly ever without his leathers. He lives and breathes IRON CROSS and Heavy Metal and so do the rest of us. We do this for the love of the music. If it was for the money, we would have quit fifteen years ago. We have put thousands of hours into this and we are not about to give it up now."

Now you are on a desert island and you only have room for ten of your all time favorite albums there. Which albums would you choose to have there?

"We would have to say 'Black Sabbath', 'Uriah Heep Live', 'Billion Dollar Babies' (ALICE COOPER), 'Destroyer' (KISS), 'The Alice Cooper Show', 'Abigail' (KING DIAMOND), the self titled release by TROUBLE and after that, it is too hard to say."

Are there any rare records or demos you have in your collection that you are very fond of having them?

"The only rare records we have are copies of our first release. Other than that Rex is the only one that still collects vinyl."

Let's have some fun too at the end of this interview. What's the best joke you've heard since ages?

"Ok, a Japanese lady gets married and has been taught to always service the man first, so on her honeymoon they do it all nightlong and the next morning she is picking and folding his clothes when she lets a loud fart. Startled she say so, so, sorry, front hole so happy back hole laugh out loud."

Do you have any messages for our readers or something you'd like to add to this interview? Now's your chance to say what's on your mind.



"We just want to thank Iron Glory for their support and all our fans for all the great response we have gotten so far and a special thanks to you, Toine, for giving us this opportunity to speak with the fans. With your help, we will get to play over there and get a chance to meet all of you. And last but not least, a special thanks to our brother at arms Sascha, who is setting up our fan club in Germany. There are too many to list, so thanks to everyone who has helped us getting this far."

Toine van Poorten



# The Return Of (The) Iron Cross



Hi Lips, I got your new album "Plenty Of Power" last week.

"And what do you think?"

I think it's excellent, more mid-tempo based than the last one and more basic Metal stuff as in the old times.

"That's right."

Was this an obvious step back to your early 80's roots?

"I think it's a natural progression, I do not think it was anything obvious, we did the fast stuff and we thought let's do something different. I mean that's basically what happened. I can only write one album like "Speed Of Sound". It's a very natural progression, it's not out of our realms of our style, that's for certain. I didn't work any harder or less harder than I have in the past. To me it's another ANVIL album, I put as much into this album as I always do and you know it's just whether people like it or not."

I like it more than "Speed Of Sound", the production is better and the songs remind me more of the "Forged In Fire" and "Metal On Metal" times.

"I know, the new one is a particular album that if you listen to it a couple of times you find yourself hearing it in your head and you go "what the hell?", to me it was a new album during the mix, so I was waking up like a good month and a half after the mixing with the songs in my head and I had not even been listening to the cd yet because it was not out yet. It was really bizarre that I was waking up singing the songs in my head and I have never gone through something like that. That's what people like, probably more longer lasting."

Excellent stuff for live shows.

"Because you can hear all the parts. Yes. We play the Heavy Oder Was festival in Balingen with JUDAS PRIEST and SAVATAGE and we are not allowed to play in Europe until after the festival because that's what the festival people insisted. We've toured Europe quite a few times now. When we played Wacken, I walked around in the crowd and I had met most of the people before. And there were a lot of people there but in some cases people even from the United States were there that I knew. Unbelievable. And I come from Canada. Even Canadian guys were there. The Metal world is not that big, it's not as big as we all believe it would



ANVIL live in Japan 1984

ing hundreds of thousands of dollars on promotion and if the music does not hold the people's interest it's gonna be wasted money. So, myself I prefer to stay on a smaller label, I have always been on smaller labels in my entire career, so I really don't know any different. It's more for the cause than it is for the money and that is okay."

Don't you think that Attic was kind of a major label concerning the marketing and distribution at that time when you released "Hard'n'Heavy" in 1981?

"No, they were not. Attic was an independent Canadian label, they spent a lot of money on us. Our first album was only released in Europe and Canada, not in America. We've had an American record contract on Metal Blade, "Strength Of Steel", "Pound For Pound" and the live one "Past And Present - Live In Concert" and I guess that says it all. You are not gonna break big on Metal Blade and if you do you're never gonna get your money. They are legal music pirates. They are not



# Speed Metal Pioneers

be. And if bands put out a really good album that's why the word spreads so quickly because it's not necessarily the magazines and radio shows, it's from word of mouth and everybody is connected in one way or another. Of course, there are missing links but generally in the computer world and the internet the word of mouth is important."

You are still on Massacre, are you satisfied with them, I mean they have some outstanding artists on their roster such as PRETTY MAIDS, IMAGIKA and ROB ROCK?

"It's really important to have a good label behind you, how can you carry on without a label or somebody promoting the product? You still need somebody to start the fire and then it's up to the fans to carry the torch. Generally speaking, you need somebody to start the word of mouth and the rumors, obviously some of the major labels are spend-



straight shooters at all, man. When you give them records you are giving it away, I realized that but at the same time sometimes you wanna get the record out so that the fans have it and I have done that for a couple of records for Metal Blade. I give them their things and I

ANVIL 1992

know I never get paid. That's the kind of label they are. Anybody who's been on that label will tell you that but that's not really negative (what else?-Heinz), basically if you know what you are doing when you deal with them you know what to expect, so if you want to get your records in the stores which is important and make a market place and go out and play, then use Metal Blade. Because they will do that, but do not ever expect Brian Slagel to cut you a check. I do not think his right hand works."

When you released "Strength

Of Steel" which was a way too commercial album did you know all these business things?

"I think I kinda knew that. Because in most cases there's no money made. 98% of the bands who want their money do not know what is going on. If you read the contracts carefully you are only getting like 1% of the sales at the end of the day. And they only manufacture some couple thousand cds maybe, 50% the record stores keep, the other 50% goes to Metal Blade, okay they have to pay for all the manufacturing. If they have 10 dollars on the 20 dollars to work with, 2,50 dollars is just the costs of the manufacturing, then the art-work and production cost a fair bit of money, that was a lot of stuff for Metal Blade to recoup before they actually make money but at the end of the day they are getting about 5 dollars per cd profit but the way that their contract works is unfair. The band has to pay back their debts, let's say they gave you 10,000 dollars for your tapes, that means that you have to sell 10,000 copies of the cd before they pay you a penny, and that means that they have seen 50,000 profit by then. That's how the business works. You can see why musicians do not get rich, it is not possible. Metal Blade is not doing anything different from anyone else. The band has no control about the costs and has to believe what they got told and you know it's not always the truth what you get told. Sad but true."

Maybe Brian Slagel would say your albums did not sell that much and not enough and hence he could not pay you more at the end.

"Yeah, that's what he said at that time."

At least you toured with LIEGE LORD in 1988 overseas.

"Yes, that was okay from what I can remember. LIEGE LORD had a lot of problems with their shirts and they were pretty fucked up. That's where I met Sebastian Marino and Joe Comeau, great people."

Why did Dave Allison leave the band then?

"Because he knew that commercial success with ANVIL was not possible."

But he was a band member since the beginning ten years before.

"Yeah, but after the "Strength Of Steel" album he came to realize it, that's it, it's over for him. He said to me "What's the point in going, I'm never gonna be as big

as MÖTLEY CRÛE or CINDERELLA, I am finished.", and after that he left the band."

But ten years later ANVIL is still here, releasing a great album and playing a fantastic festival, isn't that enough?

"Of course, but I was talking about success and having the big smash hit album like TWISTED SISTER. You are right, having a band for 20 years and having loyal fans, that's the thing I want."

What were your feelings when you played the first festival in Europe in the early 80's?

"The festivals that we did in Europe was Donington, the first one. Monsters Of Rock that was great and the worst, hard to explain, 1982, then we came back in 1983 and we played the Reading festival, we played the Heavy Sound in Poperinge and one in Ireland with BLACK SABBATH, TWISTED SISTER and SWEET SAVAGE. We played some festivals in Japan, a touring festival that had WHITESNAKE, SCHENKER and SCORPIONS on the bill in 1984. That's all the festivals I have done other than playing the Wacken and now the Heavy Oder Was. We are talking over a 20 year period of time, not many festivals."

Existing since 1978, 12 official albums released, at least two Metal classics with "Metal On Metal" and "Forged In Fire", having one of the most charismatic frontman, delivering a blood, sweat and tears live show and standing for true Metal in the real sense of these words - don't you think that's enough for the first interview with ANVIL in SNAKEPIT? We do and for me they are the original Speed Metal pioneers. Which band played this break-necking style in the year 1982? For still being here and a constant source in these extremely fast ticking times I worship these Canadians. Outfits like this band make it worth every second to be a fanatic Metal supporter and with Lips it's easy to talk. Not everybody will share his views but Metal history is here to stay when he told us some parts of the ANVIL story.



But you toured with OVERKILL and then with EXCITER and FLOTSAM AND JETSAM and not to forget the TITAN FORCE European tour, plus in America with ICED EARTH and JAG PANZER.

"Right. We've become much more active in the last years than we have been in the 80's. But still nowhere near what it should be to my expectations and desires."

Let me know about the problems there were with ICED EARTH on the American tour, what's the story behind this?

"With whom?"

Jon Schaffer from ICED EARTH.

"I did not have any problems with him or ICED EARTH, I do not know what to say."

In some interviews he mentioned that there were some problems between ANVIL and ICED EARTH, in fact they said that you had a kind of rock star behavior.

"I do not know what he was talking about. I am trying to think. Actually when I think about it there was only one moment but not with ICED EARTH, it was with JAG PANZER. Harry Conklin and I toured in Europe with TITAN FORCE in 1993, so we are pretty good friends. Everything was fine. But one night we played in Columbus, Ohio, and he ran out on stage and called this Cleveland and when we played after JAG PANZER, I joked that at least I know that we are in Columbus. After the gig the bass player came to us and complained about our joke but Harry said to him to take it easy and that was just a joke and everybody was just laughing. Those things happen, when something does not go quite right I kind of make fun of it to get over it. It did not go so well with the other guys in JAG PANZER but everything was cool after that. I said, okay sorry for that. With ICED EARTH there were no big problems. All these bands in small clubs, there was nowhere to go when you are not on stage because ICED EARTH would not let us use the dressing room and the other bands as well. If anybody caused problems I guess they did. I do not care about their opinion but such rumors are not very friendly if they are not true. What the fuck did we do that they say shit about us? All I can tell you is that a lot of people left the clubs after we and JAG PANZER played, but that happens to anybody who goes on last in clubs, no big deal. They wanted us to go on last in Toronto, but I refused because I did not want to, maybe that was a problem for this guy. I thought they are a pretty good band and now they say nasty things about us. That sucks."

When did you meet Chris Tsangerides the first time as he was quite unknown as a producer when he produced your classic "Metal On Metal" in 1982?

"Attic wanted us to work with a producer and they found him. They were looking for somebody who was kind of unknown but up and coming. Chris was an engineer before, of course we knew that he worked on the second JUDAS PRIEST record, he's an engineer in the first place."

What do you think of the sound on "Forged In Fire" which has always been named as a Metal classic in comparison to the crispy "Metal On Metal"?

"I think "Forged In Fire" is the worst sounding ANVIL album. Definitely. But for some reason everybody thinks that it's the best one, so I am not gonna argue with it. Chris Tsangerides mixed that album in two days, you know what I mean. "Metal On Metal" sounds way better than "Forged In Fire" does concerning the sound quality. Maybe not the songs but the sound. I do not know why people praise that particular album, it sounds thin, no bottom, the guitars sound like a million miles away, the vocals are blasting loud in the mix."

For a lot of people their Metal story began with that album and maybe therefore they love it to pieces. It's a classic for a lot of people and they define a part of their youth with songs like "Free As The Wind" or "Motormount".

"People have their opinions and that's fine, I accept that but I am just saying this for what it is. It should have been re-mixed, it was just rushed through at the end, we had no time and if you could have witnessed how it happened you might get shocked. Pretty bizarre. The circumstances were terrible. John Sykes went to screw the wife of Chris back in England while Chris was recording the album with us. His spirits were not the best ones, I had my own personal problems at that time and to me it's a miracle the songs came out as good considering all the problems that rose during the recordings. Unbelievable. Somehow it worked out. We

lost our record contract and management contract after that album, the entire business aspects of the band went down the toilet after that album. So, it's a real painful dilemma because everyone wants to compare the band today to that standard and to me that standard is full of bad memories. Basically it decimated us. At the end of the day, it was the reason why we did not come to Germany in the 80's, why should we go there, we had no record contract (but a lot of fans - Heinz). "Forged In Fire" was considered a big failure, no one wanted to touch us, that's what really happened then."

"Hard 'n' Heavy" came out in 1981 and "Metal On Metal" was released in 1982 and there was no METALLICA, no SLAYER, even no EXCITER, only ANVIL, so you were the Speed Metal pioneers.

"Have you heard our song "Stolen"? It's only on the "Anthology" album. I wrote that song about all the things that were stolen from me. But it's unbelievable in its success. Everybody takes a bit from you, METALLICA shook my hands on their way past, "thanks a lot,



you opened the doors, see you later". The "Forged In Fire" album was the opening for Metal at that time but the record company and the people around me did not comprehend it as that. They looked at it as "Oh there's no radio songs!"

Why did you change the band name from LIPS to ANVIL back then?

"LIPS INCORPORATED. We had to change it because the record company thought that it would be a bad idea to get mixed up with Disco music."

Are there any vinyl copies left of the first pressings of "Hard 'n' Heavy"?

"You mean the LIPS album?"

Yes.

"Yeah, I have some. Sure. I got a lot of offers to sell them but I will not do that. Maybe later, when we do our next live album we could do this as a special bonus, would be cool."

Definitely. Going on, "Worth The Weight" in 1991

was a lot heavier than "Pound For Pound" that was for itself better than "Strength Of Steel".

"No doubt about that. It was the fact of adding another lead guitar, another aspect that was new to ANVIL too but I think that I liked that aspect, I like the band today better than the old band. For a lot of different reasons. More than anything else the playing, the ability of the musicians that I am with is of a much higher caliber. Eventually people come to realize what I am saying."

Sebastian Marino- did he contribute anything to that album?

"No, he did not write anything. Seb believed he did, but in reality he did not write one song because I have written all the songs before he joined the band. All the lyrics, all the songs, of course he can write his guitar solos, but all other things."

You asked Paul Nelson from LIEGE LORD to join ANVIL before Sebastian Marino, didn't you?

"That's true. I asked Paul first. Sebastian was their soundman. I didn't even know how well he played. What happened was I called Paul and he said, "I can't do it". I asked him if he knows anyone else. And then next thing I know Sebastian calls me to say I wanna do it. I said, "You can play? Okay, let's try."

Then you got the offer to tour with TITAN FORCE in Europe.

"Right. Finally, that was cool. That was Ian Dickson's last tour. It's all on video tape. It was a good time and it was a bad time because a bass player that's been with you for ten years is deciding to leave and that sucked. Honestly, I can still remember flying back and I was sitting behind him, I got drunk and we said to him a hundred times he should stay in the band and he didn't want to do it. Today I am not sorry he left, as a friend I am, as a musician I am not. I guess that's much the same way I feel about Dave. When the band started I was the dominating force and then Dave Allison tried to dominate and that's what "Strength Of Steel" was. It was his influence on that album. That's why "Pound For Pound" was a way better album because he knew I will never do an album like "Strength Of Steel" and after the live album it was clear so that's why he left the band."

"Plugged In Permanent" was again a faster album or Thrasher so to speak.

"Yeah that's right. Well, Sebastian Marino got stolen from us. We went down to play a gig in New Jersey with RAVEN and Bobby Blitz came to the show and asked Sebastian to join his band OVERKILL. That was the end of him in ANVIL."

But then you toured with OVERKILL, strange indeed.

"We went home and we did not hurt long for his leaving, it's actually very easy to replace guitar players, it's a lot harder to find somebody dedicated and who's a friend and does the same drugs (laughs)."

So, ANVIL is the band of Lips and Rob Reiner.

"Yes, we have been playing together since we are sixteen years old, a long time before ANVIL did a record we were playing together."

Robb Reiner is an underrated drummer, his playing is unique...

"He is underrated. The whole band is, really if you asked me. You don't get ratings until you make it and make money. There are thousands of drummers all around the world who know who Robb Reiner is. How many great drummers are out there? Not that many. If you're looking for a great drummer, it's very difficult to find one that can play that well. Robb is only underrated to the mass public but certainly not if you talk to other bands. They tell others, "Oh yeah man sick drummer!"

I think your playing is unique as well, hardly to compare to other guitar players, in particular the riffing.

"We come out of a special area in Canada, maybe therefore. You had to be extremely unique before you got a record contract in the old days. If you did not have your own style you would not get signed. These days you just need four guys that can play a little bit and go record. That changed. In the early days, you did not have digital tape recorders."

For me, ANVIL is an old-school and original Metal band to worship.

"If you do, fine. If not, no problem. We do not care what other people think about us, otherwise we would not be here after so many years of struggling but we are here to stay, that's Metal, isn't it?!"

Heinz Konzett



# VANDALE

**When did you guys get together to form VANDALE and who was actually in this first line up?**

"VANDALE was formed in the springtime of 1979. The first line-up consisted of Eddie Bopp (guitar), Luc Garé (drums), Hans van Klaveren (vocals) and myself, Bert van Klaveren, on bass."

**Hans van Klaveren was your first singer, while you (Bert) played the bass guitar. Why did Hans decide to leave VANDALE and how come you took over his job as a singer?**

"Hans left VANDALE because he couldn't combine his private life with the band and because Bert had the biggest mouth of us all, obviously he became our new singer."

**Who picked your bandname and what does it mean?**

"That was my idea. Actually, it has two translations: the Dutch dictionary van Dale en the name used for a bunch of vandals (= vandalen)."

**In the early days of VANDALE, you covered songs by HERMAN BROOD. Did you never think about singing in the English language or did you (except for those cover songs) always sing in Dutch?**

"In the early beginning of VANDALE - let's say the first three months - we weren't really sure what to decide. Except our own (Dutch spoken) songs, we played (like you mentioned already) covers of HERMAN BROOD, but we also did "Fool For The City" by FOGHAT for example. Well, you had to bash away a whole evening, right? As soon as we noticed that the people liked our own songs much better, we cut the knot and continued singing in the Dutch language."



**Did it never occur to you to release both albums in the English language in order to achieve a possible international break-through?**

"For a second, it has crossed our minds of course. Especially when Adrian Vandenberg (former guitarist of VANDENBERG/ WHITESNAKE) advised us, it would be a good thing to do. But it hasn't come that far."

**I have a recording of the song "Evelien", which is the 'unreleased' B-side of your first single ("Wij Zijn) Vandale" from 1979. Why did a great song like this never make it on your first album "Schandale"?**

"Well, by the time you're really into the studio to record an album, a lot of the earlier songs are not as exciting anymore and you only want to record those songs, which have been written most recently."

**Who are the ladies that sing on backing vocals in ("Wij Zijn) Vandale"?**

"They are called THE HEARTS OF SOUL. Three Indonesian sisters, who represented the Eurovision song contest in the seventies with the song "Waterman, Mijn Tekel En Talisman". The idea came from Alfred Lagarde, the late disc jockey of Dutch Metal radio."

**Can you still remember more 'unreleased' songs from this period or maybe even before your debut album? What happened for example with great tracks like "Loes" and "Sophietje"??**

"Yes, I would like to mention a song like "Poen" for example. It's a very fast and short song. Our first singer Hans sang all the vocals on this demo. I think we wanted to break the record that made The RAMONES famous..."

**Once you even occupied the Vrijthof (the large central square) in Maastricht, The Netherlands, to be able to rehearse freely.... What can you still remember from this?**

"That's true. We occupied the Vrijthof in Maastricht with a rather frivolous campaign. We drove up the

*In the eighties, Holland had a lot of good Hard Rock and Heavy Metal bands. One band however did have a special place in the heart of every Dutch Metal head. That was VANDALE (line up: Bert van Klaveren-vocals, Tekkie-guitar, Dr. Eddie Bopp-guitar, Pat 'Red Hair' Rademakers-bass and Luc Garé-drums). They were the only Dutch Hard Rock band that sung in their native tongue. Their lyrics were rebellious and critical for that time and their music was loud. All of a sudden they disappeared from the scene, to return back in 2000 in their most well known and 'successful' line up after seventeen long years. The reunion of this line up didn't last that long though. Original guitarist Tekkie left the band in September and he was replaced by Gino Rerimassie, who came from ZINATRA. Singer Bert van Klaveren decided to become the spokesman of the band for this interview with Snakepit. An interview that will introduce you to the only Dutch singing Hard Rock band in Holland, VANDALE.*

*Vrijthof with all our gear, chucked our junk on a big newspaper stand in the middle of the square, wrapped a few wires to the pubs and started playing in the frosty cold. I handed out a couple of flyers about the cultural policy in Maastricht. We applied for a rehearsal room in the provincial capital, in the most friendly way. After almost half a year later, we got a note from some kind of public servant saying that we are number 684 in the list... Ridiculous!! Talking about public servants!!!!"*

**Back in the eighties, VANDALE was a very popular band on the Dutch stages. Please mention some of the bands that you played with or toured with around the clubs?**

"Oh boy, there were way too many!! Let's see we played with NORMAAL, HERMAN BROOD, WHITE HONEY, MASSADA, VANDENBERG, BODINE, VENGEANCE and PICTURE of course."

**You released a lot of singles from your debut album. Which ones?**

"As far as I can remember they were, "Weet Ik Veel" and "Geitenwollensokkenrockers". Or did I forget about one?"

**Can we refer to your former manager, Lou Beerens, as the sixth 'part' of the band? Did he also bring out any musical ideas in the band?**

"Lou was definitely our sixth part... Mind you, he also had one...(joke)!! Lyrically, he wrote a lot of our stuff and musically, we came out with a lot of ideas, which were usually swept off the table at once!"

**Who were your musical influences? I guess the only other Dutch speaking (Hard) Rock band at that time was NORMAAL.**

"I never considered NORMAAL as a Hard Rock band. They played Rock music with some touches of carnival. I think the influences from each band member were very different. Probably that's why we had such an unusual sound."

**Everybody knows your guitarist as 'Tekkie'. I assume it's his nickname, but what is his real name?**

"Tekkie is his Moluccan nickname. It means: 'never at home, always from home.'. His real name is Peter Tiithalawa."

**Your second album was called "Stale Verhale".**

**What in your opinion is the big difference between this album and "Schandale"?**

"Schandale" came from the bottom of our heart and was very spontaneous, while "Stale Verhale" sounded better and more taken care of..."

**The layout for the record sleeve of "Stale Verhale" was done by Ted Rechman. How did you get in touch with him?**

"Ted worked as a lay-out man at the editorial office of The Limburger. He was also a colleague of mine, as I was the editor of the newspaper."

**On "Stale Verhale" you recorded a cover of the Dutch band HET, called "Ik Heb Geen Tijd Om Op Te Staàn". Why did you choose for this particular song?**

"Actually, it was our intention to get some recognition for Hard Rock music on the radio. We thought that if we would come up with this very well-known 'old farts' song, people would play our record. It didn't quite work out the way we wanted though..."

**Did you release any singles from this album?**

"I think we only released "Ik Heb Geen Zin Om Op Te Staàn"..."

**One of the favorite VANDALE songs amongst many of your fans is definitely "Paddestoel". I hear the album version differs quite a lot from the original demo tape? (in a positive way of course!!). What are the big differences?**

"If you beat me to death... I really don't know! Do you have this demo tape? Give it to me!!!"

**Like I mentioned before, "Paddestoel" is one of your crowd pullers. I would like to add to this "Geitenwollensokkenrockers", "Rot Op", "Niemand" and "Weet Ik Veel". What are your own favé VANDALE tunes and why?**

"I think that would be "Vrienden Uit De Kroeg" and "Lolita". Uptempo songs like that are always doing great at the audience and a song like "Paddestoel" has very strong lyrics - especially back in those days. A song



like "Vrienden Uit De Kroeg" gets you thinking about your so-called friends... In the end you only have a very few REAL friends..."

**Why did you never record a video clip? I think that was very common back in those days....**

"Excuse me - mistake. It really wasn't that common to record a video clip in The Netherlands in the early eighties... Only in the second half of the eighties, when the CD became a hot item, people started recording video clips and yet only a very few..."

**Why did Luc Garé leave the band after "Schandale"?**

"Luc had to choose between the music and a social career. He's now a very successful architect! So obviously, his choice was the right one... However, he is still a great drummer!!"

**Why did you change your record label Papagayo for Pierot, who released the 2nd album?**

"We didn't change record labels. The name of the label was changed. Label manager Charlie Prick (yes indeed, his name was chosen very poorly by his mother, but how could she have known?) liked this name better. We thought it sounded a bit woozy. We drew a thick cross through the label on a thousand copies of the album."

**Leon Biessen replaced Luc Garé. He came from BLACK ROSE and could choose between VANDALE and a band called HANGOVER. Why did he choose VANDALE?**

"He didn't feel like getting a headache... No really, he only played for a very short period in HANGOVER. He probably thought that VANDALE had much more potential. He was an awesome drummer, by the way!!"

Stories of Steel



After your second album, you recorded the single "Wij Willen Willem Van Oranje". Are you into the Royal family that much?

"Royal or not. "Wij Willen Willem" was a protest song against the weak politics in The Hague. At the same time Dutch TV stations like Veronica and AVRO broadcasted a series about the life of Willem van Oranje (leading part: Jeroen Krabbé). As far as we were concerned, a good political leader would be in its place. But we didn't write this song for just one strong person...Heavens no!"

You (Bert) were mentioned on the thanks list of the EP "The Third Move" by the Dutch band AVALON. Why was that? Did you contribute anything there?

"Actually, we came from the same neighbourhood. And because I was the editor of The Limburger, I could give them some attention from time to time."

Some magazines write about a third VANDALE album under the most different working titles, like "Fatale Indeale" and "Blijven Douwe". What was the real album title and why did you never bring it out? It got very favorable reviews!!!

"That album has started to live a life of its own!"

Do you think this third album will ever see the light of day?

"At the moment, we are busy negotiating with Marlstone to bring out a special CD box with our three albums. But we still need their cooperation in this..."

Can you tell us a bit more about the songs on this album? And maybe you can describe the album cover or didn't you have a final cover design yet?

"We really didn't have an actual design for the record sleeve at that time. But I can tell you that the songs are very unbelievably ingenious! Especially when drummer Ed Rokx joined VANDALE, our songs became very rhythmic and much more structured... They certainly were ahead of their time..."

In 1983 you played as a support act for IRON MAIDEN in Kerkrade. What can you still remember from this show?

"Yes, that was indeed a wonderful experience! A jam-packed hall, we played a great set and on stage we had three catwalks, where I could jump up and down whenever I liked. The guys from IRON MAIDEN watched us from behind the monitor-mix the whole time. It meant a great deal to us!"

Did you really get to meet the guys of IRON MAIDEN or was it just a matter of arriving at the venue, doing your show and then go home again?

"Only a few of us really did talk to the guys of MAIDEN. But you are so busy with your own show..."

Can you tell us something about the way a VANDALE song came about? Or didn't you work on established lines?

"We didn't work along established lines. Usually someone came up with an idea, which slowly developed into a song."

Whose idea was it to print photos of all your loyal fans on the inside sleeve of "Stale Verhale"?

"It was Leo's idea. He thought it was kinda cool and it was. Our fans came up with the most crazy pictures!"

After the release of your second album, drummer Leon Biessen left the band and his replacement is a guy named Eddie Rokx. What happened?

"Leo was too busy with his job at the hospital. He wanted to get higher up the ladder there and then you have to choose..."

As far as I can remember, you have never appeared on any Dutch samplers. Didn't you feel neglected here towards the many other bands, because you were quite famous....

"Yes, and that really bothers me a lot. Especially when they release sample albums of the 80's with Dutch music. They don't look any further than bands like DOE MAAR, TOONTJE LAGER and FRANK BOEYEN... How about us for a change?! It's so unfair."

How about your popularity outside Holland? I can imagine you also had a large fanbase in Belgium and maybe Germany, but what about the other countries?

"Like I mentioned earlier, we got letters from all over the world. It was a very nice experience for us."

During the final radio broadcast of "Stampij" (a Hard Rock show hosted by Hanneke Kappen, ex-WHITE HONEY), you guys made quite an impact. You even wrote a special tune for this show based on



the melody of "Als Je Hart...". Can you still remember it? And who was present there? Maybe you can also add a couple of nice stories?

"I can't remember much, because I was at home being sick! However, I listened to the radio and from what I can recall it was a very cozy mess!!"

Your (former) guitarist Tekkie was also heard on the radio once during a guitar contest. Amongst eight other people, he played a solo of one minute. The winner of the best guitar solo was chosen as 'The Best Guitarist in Holland'. Did he prepare himself for this at all and how did you like that he was involved in it?

"Tekkie didn't rehearse anything... like always... Tekkie is Tekkie and if he had a good day, he played like a madman, but if it wasn't... I think it wasn't

one of his lucky days..."

What was the real reason for VANDALE breaking up?

"After we released our last single "Wij Willen Willem" on WEA, the boom of Dutch music from the early eighties had almost come to an end. Record labels didn't want to put a dime into it anymore...of course, we wanted to continue making records..."

Later on, Tekkie and Eddie Rokx were found in the band of Elvis Presley look-alike Rene Schuman. What happened with the rest of you, musically? I can't believe you suddenly vanished into thin air.....

"I formed the band VIA VIA from the ashes of VANDALE (with Ed Rokx and Eddie Bopp). We were fronted by a female vocalist with big boobies and an even big-



ger mouth. After this adventure, I formed ZINATRA together with producer Erwin Musper and Ed Rokx. Eddy Bopp went his own way and Pat played in various cover bands."

Your lyrics were very critical towards the social structure. Was that your image or did you really think this negatively about everything? (or just being realistic - it's the way you put it!). Did your opinion (s) change much over the years?

"I guess we were just being realistic. In fact, we were holding up a mirror to our faces and the faces of our generation youngsters. Of course, our opinion has been 're-adjust' today in several ways, but I think songs like "Vrienden Uit De Kroeg" and "Geitenwollensokkenroekers" are still a topical subject And what about "Pet In Bed"?"

We'll also find Eddie Rokx back as a drummer in ZINATRA, while Bert becomes the manager of this band. How come?

"Arnie Treffers (a.k.a. Long Tall Ernie) had some songs lying on the shelf under the name KELLY. "Love Or Loneliness" was one of them. I formed a band around it and searched for a record label, a producer and people, who could raise some money... Very commercial, but it worked!!!"

Did you (Bert) recognize certain things of VANDALE in ZINATRA?

"Absolutely not! VANDALE was

very spontaneous and straight from our heart, while ZINATRA was something I invented. But they were really good and very professional!"

What went wrong with this band?

"Vocalist Joss Mennon wanted more and more his own input (songs) in the band, but they didn't quite match the concept. He got really frustrated by this. When Robbie Valentine (who went solo) broke through, his frustration became even bigger and finally he ended up by dragging along a few bandmembers in a coup against the management. That didn't make ZINATRA too popular at our record company. We tried to make the best of it, but failed... A real pity, because we were just about to sign a record deal in the States through our producer Erwin Musper. Our dollars down the drain, so to speak..."

How did the reunion of VANDALE come about and is it for keeps?

"The idea for a VANDALE reunion actually came from me. It was more the result of people asking on and on what really caused the fact that we split up at the time. Luckily, the other guys thought it was a great idea, too! For the time being we want to play a couple of clubs in Holland and maybe a few festivals this year would be great as well!"

Did you ever think about releasing both your albums on CD?

"Yes, we did. In fact, a lot of people asked us about it. But Mrs. Kraft of our previous record company, Marlstone, is giving us a really hard time. First, we want to solve those problems..."

What's your opinion about today's Metal scene? Don't you think it's getting more like a money business these days and the music comes second place?

"That's absolutely true, but it's always been that way. Our whole society is like that and obviously, the record companies can't escape from it. On the other hand, all these bands want to sell as much CDs as possible... Doesn't that sound like commerce?!"

What's your favorite music these days?

"Everything, except for house and the so-called 'slobber' music. As long as it has a pounding rhythm, a good melody and a nice production, I'm willing to listen to it."

At your reunion show in Sittard this Summer (2000), I thought you sounded like you've never been away. Did you rehearse at all or was it all spontaneous?

"We rehearsed at full speed for this about six times. For the rest, everything was spontaneous from our side!"

How did you compile the setlist for this show and didn't you think of playing one of the songs from your 3rd unreleased album?

"We put together all the songs that sounded really great live in the early days. This year we want to play a few songs off our unreleased third album as well."

Did you feel honored that people travelled for hours just to see you play for an hour or so?

"What do you think???"

Any plans for a new CD?

"Plenty!!!!!"

Please respond to the following names:

BODINE - "Colleagues, but we never became friends"

VENGEANCE - "Fine band, good music, a bunch of good guys and a good dose of humor!"

PICTURE - "Stays a great memory..."

VANDENBERG - "We all can still be very proud of them..."

HIGHWAY CHILE - "We had a lot of fun with these guys!"

With whom would you like to tour sometime or play a support gig?

"VAN HALEN!"

What are the plans for VANDALE, as we speak?

"We want to play like fifteen to twenty times a year in Holland and Belgium. Also, we want to see if it's possible to record a new CD..."

Do you have anything to add to this interview or maybe you have a message for the readers of Snakepit?

"We hope to see many of our old fans at our shows and perhaps even win a few souls of the new generation of Hard Rock fans..."

What's the latest good joke that you've heard?

"I think our life is one big joke!"



Toine van Poorten





Can you give us a brief history of the things that you have done since the release of "La Pierre" two years ago?

"When "La Pierre" was released, we weren't expecting so much interest from the Heavy Metal fans. That record was done mainly because at first people were asking for an album at shows. So that was a great surprise to get such a great feedback for a record done with not so much money. Then we got even more feedback- maybe more from foreigners than from here! So that was kind of surprising considering that we sing in French, I think we own you that bit of success... So it gave us the strength to work harder for this band despite our daily work. We also have done a video clip which hasn't been used yet. We haven't toured much but the 1.500 cds that were pressed have been sold. And then we spent time on a studio, released a demo in March 2000 which was the starting point for the development of our new album which has just been issued."

Would you say the interview we did with you in issue 5 helped you to create a sort of a fanbase in foreign countries?

"No doubt about that. Snakepit was the first foreign mag to show interest for OVERSTEP and encouragement letters- without mentioning tee-shirts and record orders, started to arrive following the reviews. It definitively gave a kick in the ass to our career. We're just really very happy everytime we get a letter from Germany, Greece, Switzerland or Japan, pure happiness!"

Did you try to find a bigger label for the release of "Karrig.." or were you completely satisfied with Brennus' work for the first album?

"We did send our 2000 demo to several French and foreign labels, some contacts have been established but when it was studio time to do the second album, only Brennus did bring a real help for that new project, they were the only one around to help us. We always had an excellent relationship with that label, and even if sometimes we feel like isolated, we know we can rely on them. Alain Ricard (Brennus boss) himself told us that he would have liked to do more for "La Pierre" but Brennus is a small label who's fighting to give small French bands a chance to exist. Without them, maybe you wouldn't have heard from us! Sure they doesn't have the means of N.T.S. for example but... Of course we always expect more, of course we'd like to sign to a bigger label but we have to be patient and down to earth. If OVERSTEP must be known one day, it's gonna happen. Money doesn't do everything even if you need alot just to live daily."

But did you get serious interest or offers from foreign labels?

"Just like I said, nothing really interesting or adapted to our situation. I don't want to say more, but we must be realistic, our music style is hard to impose as we have chosen to sing in French but we knew it wouldn't be easy. Maybe we'll be rewarded one day if a sudden interest for French Heavy Metal rise again one day... By the way, since "La Pierre" was issued, we've never heard so much talking about Metal! There's even a N.W. O.F.M. which have been created, thanks to the hard work from some small fanzines which does their best to make this happen."

Sylvie Maigné



# OVERSTEP

How do you feel to be one of the only bands in France- along with NIGHTMARE, KILLERS and MALEDICTION, to play traditional Heavy Metal? I mean is it hard for you to follow that musical direction in a scene overcrowded with happy/ Progressive Metal bands and stuff like that?

"It's a daily fight! It's true that right now it's way easier to come out as a Progressive act than as a Hard Rock one. Sometimes we have to promote OVERSTEP under the banner "Melodic Heavy Rock" or "French Rock band" but once you say Heavy Metal or just Hard Rock, the doors are closing. But when people take the time to listen to us, when they trust us, then they doesn't regret it. But there's such a huge demand right now for Progressive Metal or happy stuff that we don't have our place inside that. We don't care, we do what we want. If

Could 2001 be finally the year of the French Heavy Metal revival? It's maybe it a bit too early to be so optimistic but considering the quality of the recent releases issued by NIGHTMARE, MALEDICTION, KILLERS and OVERSTEP, there's hope in the air. It's about time to have some bands in that fuckin' trendy country who can remind us the great H-BOMB, SORTILEGE, HOLSTER and others and as you know OVERSTEP is one of those acts who showed lots of promises with their first album, now their second record is out and it brings us more classic Heavy Metal. OVERSTEP singer, Morgan Marlet agreed to tell us about the recent developments of the band.

we wanted to be into the "in" thing, we would play techno!"

Who came up with the idea to name your album in Breton language?

"At first we wanted to name it "Rendez Vous Chez Le Malin". When the song "Karrig an Ankou" was written,



Christian & Christophe in action!



I couldn't sing the chorus other than in Breton. Later, we did a complete translation of the song in Breton by curiosity and it was a bit of a challenge too. And despite the difficulties, it was a cool idea since this song has received more and more praise everytime we play it. The lyrics deals with a Breton legend and since the drawing of the cover was inspired from it, it was just natural that we call the record "Karrig an Ankou". Well it's true that I bored everybody with that idea but I finally convinced them and it seems everybody is satisfied of the result."

By the way is there any plans to issue the album with English lyrics just like KILLERS did with their latest release?

"KILLERS had to release a bunch of records before they adopted English singing. I wouldn't be against doing that sort of thing in the future. I mean it could be interesting to hear "SDF" or "Ange Ou Demon" in English. But before that we have other projects that could be much more effective and interesting...wait and see."

Is there any serious plans for you to tour outside of France in the

Sylvie & Morgan



upcoming months now that people in Greece and Germany mainly start to show interest for the band?

"There's projects but nothing official. Like I told you, we would like to tour in Greece and in Germany but we have to be prepared for that, we have to organize everything the best we can."

I know some OVERSTEP members attended Wacken 1999- if you were asked to play there in the future, would you do it?

"You imagine OVERSTEP at the W.O.A.?! Killer! The pleasure and the honor to appear on the bill on one of the biggest Metal festival in the world! Well following the advices from some people, we have written them for this year's festival because if you don't try, you don't get nothing and if they would offer us to play, that would change alot of things for our small band. We don't expect much from it but it's so good to believe in something. And if it's not this year, it'll be maybe next year, no?!"

I hope so! Any last comments?

"We'd like to say that we like Snakepit and you guys. You do a great job and we're happy to appear sometimes in the mag. This is a recognition that we barely get in our own country... Thanks for the interest you put into OVERSTEP and every Snakepit reader that will write us will always be welcomed. Long live to you!"

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Laurent Ramadier

# Journey Into War



# METAL KARNAGE!

As you certainly remember, the SLAUGHTER feature in our last issue was kinda poor due to the lame job Dave Hewson did answering our questions and I just couldn't be satisfied with that so I made sure to have a more involved individual in the person of Terry Sadler to answer my questions clearly, and this time the result lives fully to my expectations. Here's more basic, raw but effective old school Thrash Metal courtesy of Canada's SLAUGHTER!

## SLAUGHTER

**How did you get into Metal music and when exactly?**

"I got into Metal music in 1972 when I first heard 'Schools Out' by ALICE COOPER on the radio. I wanted to become a musician/performer ever since! I got into bands like KISS, ALICE, RUSH, ZEPPELIN etc. There was no Thrash out then, except for maybe MOTORHEAD. There were alot of real decadent bands though like: NEW YORK DOLLS, MCS, AMBOY DUKES etc. Vicious stuff, ahead of it's time!"

Unlike Dave Hewson and Ron Sumners also I presume, SLAUGHTER was not the first band you joined as you had been in outfits such as METAL FATIGUE, BLISSMASS, BLIND AMBITION, LIZZY BORDEN, NAZZ, MEGOLITH etc. What kind of music did those bands play and did you record demos or whatever with 'em? Did you also play shows with those numerous acts?

"I was in a ton of bands from 1979 until 1984 when I started SLAUGHTER! They were all extreme, heavy and theatrical with the main goal, being outrageous, over the top, and very Hard Rock. NAZZ and LIZZY BORDEN were very ALICE COOPERish! BLIND AMBITION and BLISSMASS were total BLACK SABBATH. METALLION and RIFF RAFF etc, were total JUDAS PRIEST and early IRON MAIDEN. In these bands I was either the drummer or the lead vocalist. I didn't play bass until SLAUGHTER! All these bands had tapes and demos, but the only ones I still have is one tape by my band in 1983 called METAL FATIGUE- on that I'm singing all JUDAS PRIEST stuff like 'The Sinner', 'Hell Bent For Leather' and 'Metal Gods'! I have a web site called 'TERRYSWORLD', where I'm documenting my other bands days etc. <http://interactive.rogers.com/terrysadler/TERRYSWORLD>."

Considering the numerous acts you have been in before SLAUGHTER, I suppose you didn't stay long with 'em, correct?

"Most of those bands had lots of line-up changes and were not dedicated to being serious about the music. We had a manager tell us one time that Heavy Metal, leather and studs, and long hair would never make it, and that we should wear suits and ties and do covers of BEATLES songs! I told him to 'fuck off' and I quit that band!"

**How did you hook up with Dave and Ron in the first place?**

"I first met Dave Hewson and Ron Sumners through my brother-Chris who was friends with them first. We met, clicked and became legends!"

If I'm correct, you planned to eventually name the band SLAUGHTERHOUSE but changed that idea for SLAUGHTER in the end, is that correct or did you use the name SLAUGHTERHOUSE for a while?

"We called it SLAUGHTERHOUSE for a week and thought that SLAUGHTER was better!"

So the band was born in August '84 and you immediately started to pen your own songs like rehearsals from August(!), October or November can attest to

this, but the songs sounded very childish and not really Metal since the guitar sound wasn't so...

"Those early rehearsal tapes were usually just Ron and myself, writing and experimenting with songs. A lot of them all sound the same with different lyrics. A lot are 'Incinerator' with different lyrics. I'm playing bass or a cheap guitar and playing into a regular tape deck. We did them just for fun and gave them to friends who circulated them around the underground/ tape-trading scene in the early days. If you listen, you can hear riffs that became classics like in 'Death Dealer' or 'Tyrant Of Hell'. 'Disintegrator' used to be a song called 'Battleaxe' from another band before SLAUGHTER! Some of those best songs were 'Meatleaver', 'Hell Hath Returned', 'Age Of Deception' etc. They were very Hardcore/ Punk songs, much like 'Eve Of Darkness'."

**During '84, SLAYER and METALLICA on their respective Canadian tours played in Toronto, did you check out those shows and what do you remember from those events?**

"I saw almost every Metal show that came to Toronto back then. The scene was young, vibrant, fresh and very aggressive! Everyone knew each other and were friends and hung around together. I was known back then as an insane performer who would do almost anything for attention!"

**The next step was the demo/ rehearsal 'Bloody Karnage' which was issued around December '84 and it showed a huge improvement compared to the stuff I had mentioned before...**

"'Bloody Karnage' was our first 'serious' attempt to record a tape to mail to the underground/ tape-trading world. We recorded it in Ron's basement at the stroke of midnight on January 1st, 1985 for the new year of '85! We just screamed into a tape deck and recorded it 'live' with no re-recording of anything! That tape is live, raw and totally off the top of our drunken heads! It featured me, Dave, Ron and Rob Urbaniak and Joe Rico from SACRIFICE on it. Rob sings with me on 'One Foot In The Grave'. We mailed it out to almost everyone, and the response was 'legendary!!!'"

**Were you at that point influenced by the older Canadian Metal bands such as RAZOR, RAPID TEARS, ANVIL, KRAKEN, EXCITER or even SACRED BLADE from Vancouver, hearing what they had done with their previous recordings?**

"Oh hell yes! We loved ANVIL, RAPID TEARS, EXCITER, DIRECT ACTION, SUDDEN IMPACT, etc. I knew ANVIL from another band I was in before and Lips was a major force for me in particular! I used to watch ANVIL rehearse and Lips would spit when he sang and sweat was flying off of him and I thought THAT IS TRUE HEAVY METAL!!! DIRECT ACTION was another Hardcore! Punk band that blew me away. The guitarist named Zig used a sword on stage and stabbed his own leg-on purpose! The singer Tim was also an idol for me. I also had a friend who knew EXCITER from Ottawa and I met them a few times."

"Violence And Force" was an ultimate album from them! I was in a band in 1982 called BLIND AMBITION and the guitarist was friends with Clayton Bonin from RAPID TEARS! We jammed a few times and RAPID TEARS was a very underrated band! They should have been big stars! On stage when I scream "Make way for the Incinerator", that is my homage to RAPID TEARS who had a song called 'The New Chopper'. The singer would yell "Make Way for The New Chopperrrrrr"! I worshipped them!!!"

**At which point did you discover faster/ heavier stuff like EXODUS, SLAYER, HELLHAMMER or BATHORY as you were mainly influenced by PLASMATICS, KISS and ALICE COOPER to start with?**

"In the early years I was influenced by the showmanship of KISS, the horror of ALICE COOPER, the mayhem of the PLASMATICS, and there was no SLAYER, EXODUS etc. I got into them after I had ideas for SLAUGHTER. I was also very much into the Punk Rock scene like THE SEX PISTOLS and TEENAGE HEAD etc., and when I began SLAUGHTER, I took all these influences and tried to copy them and mix them all together. What came out in the SLAUGHTER songs sounded very original and not like the more 'Speed-Metal' at the time. If you

compare us to other bands like SACRIFICE, DEATH or SLAYER, you can tell that we were more on the 'Punk' side of things. The vocals were not like the others so much and I tried to play bass like Gene Simmons, sing like Alice Cooper and Wendy O. Williams etc. Dave tried to be DISCHARGE and G.B.H. and Ron loved Neil Peart of RUSH etc. We were coming from a totally different place and time. As we got more into tape trading, we got demo tapes by EXODUS (when Kirk Hammett was still in the band), MEGADETH, METALLICA, HELLHAMMER etc. We liked what they did and got into it."

**In March '85 you recorded your first real studio effort, the 13 song demo tape 'Surrender Or Die' which received critical acclaim from the underground, and the material sounded much more mature...**

"'Surrender Or Die' demo was the result of us joining forces with Brian Taylor and a new label he was going to start up called Diabolic Force Records. Brian had a copy of 'Bloody Karnage' and played it on his radio show 'Aggressive Rock', on C.K.L.N. 88.1 FM in Toronto. We contacted him and go along great! We loved the same music past and present, and he showed me his collection of rare ALICE COOPER, KISS, and Punk video stuff he had and I loved it! He really loved 'Incinerator' and wanted us to record it properly. He sold the cassette through mail order and through his record store The Record Peddler in Toronto and the tape took off. We got all these record label offers but stuck with Brian because he liked Speed Metal."

**Also you played your first show on March 25th 1985 with SACRIFICE as support at Larry's Hideaway, how was that first show? And what can you tell the readers about the song 'Bloody Karnage' when it was performed live as Dave Hewson seems to have forgotten that he has played that song live!**

"Our first show was insane! We went on stage with the attitude to just rape the audience with sound and visuals! We 'hurt' about 10 baby dolls and smashed an amplifier during 'Bloody Karnage'. Someone smashed a beer bottle on stage, so I rolled around in the broken glass on the stage floor. I heard there is a bootleg video of this show and if anyone has it-I want a copy!!! (Me too!!!-Laurent)"

**Were you also a tape trader? I mean did you collect tapes from other bands for your own pleasure?**

"We were all heavily into trading demo tapes and rare stuff. I know they are not Thrash Metal (No, they're GODS!!!- Laurent), but I had a rare demo tape of the Canadian band RUSH doing two cover songs! Stuff like that!"

**Do you know how many copies of 'Surrender...' were sold? On which basis did they sign you for an album?**

"The demo sold 2,000 copies in a year (if I remember correctly!) and there became a huge worldwide demand for our tape. Recording an album was a given! Of course it was to be with Brian Taylor who was the ZAR of Metal in Toronto. Our minds were the same and he was almost like the fourth band member."

**You always made clear that you were also inspired big time by Hardcore/ Punk stuff, what were some of your fave bands? How did you feel when that cross-over scene started to burgeon in '85 with S.O.D., CRUMBUSCKERS...?**

"I was especially into the Punk stuff. Since 1976 I had liked bands like the SEX PISTOLS, JOHNNY THUNDERS & THE HEARTBREAKERS, THE RAMONES, DEAD BOYS, FORGOTTEN REBELS, THE DIODES, THE VILETONES and TEENAGE HEAD! I was a very rebellious kid and always loved the Punk attitude of

"fuck you & never sell out"! I'm still like that to this day! I'm still rebellious and I've never sold out my music! I still wear ripped t-shirts and army pants and leather and never have a colgate smile or gelled hair. I've settled down a bit, but I'm still mad-as-a-hatter! I'm not too sure I'd consider S.O.D. really Punk or not? I loved D.R.I., DISCHARGE, G.B.H. and C.O.C. etc."

**CELTIC FROST/ HELLHAMMER were one of your main influences also, what did you find so killer in their ultra basic but yet effective material? Did you meet them at the World War III fest in December '85 before you opened for 'em on July 4th '86? What**





about MESSIAH as it seems you had developed a strong friendship with Tschossi?

"CELTIC FROST on 'Morbid Tales' had this real BLACK SABBATH type string-bending riffing that I loved and the song 'Into The Crypts Of Rays' totally blew me away, but truthfully-I was doing that sound since 1979 in other bands I was in. People just compared us to CELTIC FROST because Dave Hewson's vocals were very similar to Tom Warrior's! I also did worship Martin Ain as well! I can't remember how I got to know MESSIAH but it just happened that we loved each others music. We met FROST in 1986, when we played a show with them and Dave met them before that at that Montreal festival. Very dedicated guys! Reed St. Mark was very humorous and was a good laugh!"

In 1986 you were joined by Chuck Schuldiner from DEATH following his short San Francisco stint...

"Over the Christmas holidays of 1985, Dave had been talking to Chuck over the phone and one joke led to another sort of, and it was decided that Chuck would move to Toronto and try playing with SLAUGHTER and see what would become of it. We met Chuck at the airport and we hit it off instantly. The same sick humor (green tampons!!!!) and the same ideas musically. He lived in my parents basement with me for awhile and my parents had no idea. They found out and the shit hit the fan. They wanted him and me out!! I think that Chuck overheard our fighting and he took off. We never saw or heard from him again! It wasn't until some of Chuck's friends started a rumor that we all started slagging one another. We had no bad feelings towards Chuck, but his friends kept leaving messages for us that we sucked and that Chuck was too good for us! We know for a fact that Chuck never felt that way, but the rumours started flowing and bad feelings began! We now wish Chuck the best of luck with his health and we're not kids anymore slagging each other!"

Why did you choose Chuck when there was tons of musicians in Toronto...

"We had originally been looking for a second guitarist (big mistake) and since Chuck was a 'star' we thought it would be ideal!"

The next thing released by SLAUGHTER was the promotional three track single that was released at 1,000 copies, which was not only distributed to magazines and radio stations but also sold to the public. What do you think of that first vinyl effort 14 years later?

"For a beginning record and promo it was cool, but the original production was bad. The guitar sound was too buried. It was just tape-trading taken to the next level-record trading. A lot of free singles were sent out and when they were all given out, we sold the rest!"

Do you still receive mail from people looking for it and are there any copies of it still available?

"A few e-mails for it, but not much. The 'Strappado' album is more sought after. I have two copies and Dave has one."

February '86 was spent for the recording of "Strappado" and despite the fact that it was only released one year later, you made sure to send out advance tracks in the tape trading network. Do you remember what sort of response you immediately got?

"Immediately we had a tremendous response. The original rough mixes we sent out had a better rawer sound than the album had after it was mixed. Some songs we sent out never made it onto the album. When we will re-release 'Strappado' on CD in 2001, we will hopefully include these bonus recordings! Songs like 'Silent Scream', 'Twisted Flesh' and 'Snarling Death'!!!" (GODLY material that has to be heard!!!-Laurent)

So what really happened at that point with Diabolic Force/ Fringe since it took them one year to release it?

"To this day, we still don't know why! Basic thoughts are that they didn't have enough money to put it out right away and the head of Fringe Records- Ben, lied to us and Brian Taylor about a lot of things. To this day, we have not received a single cent for the album or CD! Fringe Product were/ are a rip-off artist."

Who came up with the "Strappado" cover concept?

"I can't remember all the details, but Ron Summers and Rob Urbinati (SACRIFICE) designed the basic logo and a guy from Toronto named Al Warnock painted the cover for us. I love the cover. He also did the 7" cover as well!"

During '86 you also distributed those joke tapes, silly phone calls and stuff... any memories about that?

"Those silly tapes were stolen from me and traded to people. We taped crank phone calls and did insane

phone questionnaires to random people on the phone."

Even though the album was still not out there was already news coming from you that you had a second album planned under the working title "Paranormal" featuring songs such as "Life Force", "Realms Of Void", "Schizo"....

"'PARANORMAL' was going to be our second album, but never was! It was an experiment in doing new lyrics and new music to be in a more Heavy Metal direction, rather than the Punk/ Hardcore style. It was going to be a "concept" album with the story lines revolving around the unexplained and the paranormal, like ghosts, e.s.p., telepathy, lucid dreaming, the Bermuda triangle etc. When I wrote all the lyrics, I was trying to take the ideas of "Nocturnal Hell" and "Tortured Souls" to the next level. At the same time, Dave was coming up with more technical song writing and in my case I was very influenced by RUSH at the time. We were trying to be like RUSH on their "Hemispheres" album, but taken to the world of Thrash! There was a song called "Galactic Dynamics" which to me now, is such a joke! We all realize now that this album would have been a big mistake and was not what the fans expected from SLAUGHTER."

But what made you go for a more technical way?

"I don't know what we were thinking! We just wanted to stay ahead of everyone else and not be a typical, "Death Metal-weenie band" with the overdone death lyrics. Dave wanted to increase his musical song writing as well and when we first started these new songs, Ron was becoming a very excellent drummer and was very influenced by RUSH and Neil Peart at the time. We all wanted to take Thrash Metal to the next level, like CELTIC FROST was doing!"

During 1986, you organized a contest concerning the song "Fuck Of Death", do you remember what the owner submitted to you which represented so well the Fuck Of Death?

"That contest was hilarious! I think the winners name was Dale, and he sent us a picture of him, jolly naked, fucking a girl that looked dead, with blood all over her and a knife in her stomach. I still have the photo! The only way we knew that he didn't actually kill a real girl was because she was laughing in the picture!"

What happened with Ron Summers at that point, in September '86 exactly?

"Our STRAPPADO album kept being delayed in being released and he, Dave and myself were getting very fed up with all the record company bullshit and Ron stopped wanting to rehearse and he and Dave, who were best friends since they were young got into blows and Ron quit! We waited awhile for things to settle down, but realized that Ron was not willing to come back. Dave never spoke or saw Ron again but I kept in touch with him for a year or so after that, and then we lost track of each other."

Why did you replace him with Scott Day (EX-STORM/ DEATH ADDER)? Were you familiar with this guy? What went wrong with him since he was replaced in February '87 by Brian Lourie?

"Scott had been a drummer in an old band of mine called DEATH ADDER, so we joined forces without ever rehearsing, and found out that he had no drum set anymore and was hoaxing us the whole time for publicity. I had started getting very sick, obscene phone calls (which I loved!) and found out later that it was another drummer named Brian Lourie! We instantly knew that he was the drummer for us-totally out of his mind, and completely out of control. He may not have been as good as Ron at the time, but the attitude and aggression in his drum style was perfect. He learned all our songs in a few days and even the new "Paranormal" songs were given a new life! One time on stage in Quebec City

at our first show with him I yelled into the mike to play "Tales Of The Macabre" (which he never played before!) and we did the song perfectly!"

Then it seems Ron joined INFERNAL MAJESTY replacing Rick Nemes around July '88, is that correct? What did you think of his job with his record label Epidemic who released debut albums of MAL HAVOC, BEYOND and OVERTHROW?

"As far as I remember, Ron never joined any other band after SLAUGHTER, that was all rumors and gossip. I don't think he had a label either!" (Well I always heard he was the owner of the short lived Epidemic Records-Laurent)

During '87 you finally came to Quebec playing a couple of shows for the first time, like opening two nights for KREATOR in April and a couple of headlining shows in September '87, what do you remember from those trips?

"We did those shows opening for KREATOR. We did almost all "Paranormal" and new songs at those shows and we stopped using swords and baby dolls on stage. Looking back, it was a huge mistake. The fans should have seen our all-out "Bloody Karnage"/ "Surrender Or Die" and "Strappado" show, but what were we thinking? These shows were all captured on bootleg videos!"

So that's when you started to play newer stuff such as "Timewarp" etc.. but the stuff wasn't as killer as before, to be honest it was average material I would say. What happened to your songwriting as you had proven that could come up with technical stuff yet still effective with "Internal Fire" etc...the year before...

"I (we) totally agree-those songs were stupid and I forgot about "Internal Fire"! I began to fight with Dave about this and I began to want to leave the band over it in 1988. I wanted to go back to the Punk/ Hardcore thing for our fans and Dave wanted to get more technical."

Mid '87 saw the release of "Strappado" and the album got rave reviews in Metal Forces, Aardschock etc... how did you react when you became aware of that reception?

"I knew that it had come out too late and a lot of interest in the album and the band had been lost. I also realized that that direction is where we should have stayed in. I became very distant from the other band members and there was a lot of drugs and drinking going on that was destroying the band completely. I also believe that this is what also drove Ron away!"

During May '87, Bobby Sadzak (formerly with LETHAL PRESENCE, now in INNER THOUGHT) joined SLAUGHTER as a second guitarist to the line up. Were you familiar with his previous outfit and how did you recruit him exactly?

"We had always wanted to experiment with another second guitarist and Dave was all for it, and we saw Bobby play and wanted him, got him, but once again-huge mistake! He played good but it was not the sound for SLAUGHTER! We began using acoustic guitars and keyboards in some songs and it got silly! I had the last straw on stage in Quebec City and in Hull, Ottawa, and walked off the stage and threw my bass on the floor. I quit SLAUGHTER for a few months in 1988 and re-joined in 1989 to do a "last R.I.P." show with just Dave, Brian and myself as a three piece! I then quit the band for good in December 1989 and quit music, and lost contact with everybody for ten years!"

But with this new line up, you recorded in 1988 two demos "Paranormal" and "The Dark" and you appeared on a "Metal Massacre" compilation, any memories about what were the last recordings with you?

"We recorded "Paranormal" in two parts. The first recording session we did as a three piece and the second part with Bobby Sadzak on second guitar for two songs "Telepathic Screams" and "The Dark". We put all the sessions together plus a re-recording of "Fuck Of Death" and considered it one demo! We sent a copy to Metal Blade Records and they asked us to put a song called "The Fourth Dimension" on their upcoming compilation album "Metal Massacre 10". This demo was not really mixed yet, but we mailed it out to fans and tape traders to get their reactions. We were going to mix it and release it as our second album, but that all flew out the window when I quit the band! I liked those songs and hated them as well. I felt that it wasn't SLAUGHTER anymore and I felt that only the songs "Timewarp" and "Schizo" were close to being SLAUGHTER tunes!"

How do you explain that you didn't get any record deal at that point?

"We didn't get a record deal because we didn't really try. Things were falling apart and I wasn't in the band





100% anymore to do the promotion etc... We could have put it out on Diabolic Force again, but that was considered sort of a step backwards!"

**Did you leave the band only because you weren't satisfied with the new material or did you have the feeling that SLAUGHTER was going nowhere just like it was the case with most of the Canadian bands?**

"I finally left the band for many reasons; the fun was gone for me. It became a burden and I didn't have the will nor the energy to work in a band anymore. I had been in bands for so long that I felt I needed time to get back to a regular life. I was sick of rehearsing every day. Also I felt that the energy of the band and the new songs were gone and dried up and the band had started losing ground, since "Strappado" had been delayed for a year to be released. I wanted Ron (Summers) back in the band and to remain a three piece band. The new guitarist was not cutting it live and the band sucked live!"

**As you said you rejoined and played a show in '89 with SLAUGHTER, so at that point did you try to get the band going again or was it just the final show?**

"When Dave and Brian kicked out Bobby Sadzak, I rejoined the band for a while and we did the last show as a three piece, but I knew at that time that it was going to be my last show and I insisted that we bring back a lot of our old, classic songs. We did "Surrender Or Die" and a lot of older songs but when we played a few new ones, the audience didn't know them and it put a total damper on the whole show. We ended by throwing rubber chickens at the audience. It was so far from the original SLAUGHTER show and energy that it was just not happening. Nobody's fault, it just was time to stop! After that they wanted to bring Bobby Sadzak back into the band and I quit for good."

**At which point Bobby, Louie and Dave decided to continue under the name STRAPPADO? What was the reason behind the fact that they didn't continue under the SLAUGHTER moniker?**

"They decided that it was a different band and wanted a fresh, yet familiar name. Plus around that time, another Glam-Rock band called SLAUGHTER emerged from the U.S.A. and stole the name with a big label and money behind them. They didn't stand a chance. Everybody would hopefully still remember what "Strappado" was. I think that in the beginning that we could have used that for a name, instead of SLAUGHTER. It was original and had a violent meaning behind it!"

**What was your feeling towards that STRAPPADO thing honestly as they were just rehashing the later SLAUGHTER material?**

"I liked the new material, but I hated the fact that they redid versions of classic SLAUGHTER songs. Whenever a song is re-recorded I don't think it's ever as good as the original. I thought that they should have just started with the new name and all new material! I loved the songs "Noi Dead Yet", "Flake" and "Fatal Judgement" etc., but I feel it was destroyed by remade versions of the older songs, especially redone versions of "Nocturnal Hell" and "Fuck Of Death"! Those songs are legendary in my opinion and should never have been re-recorded, except maybe on a live recording. Bobby's leads and guitar playing just didn't suit the band and took away the heaviness. Dave Hewson's guitar playing needs to be alone and classic. Dave is an originator and his classic chainsaw guitar sound should not have been shared by another technical player like Bobby. Bobby was very good musically, but Dave Hewson blew him away as far as heaviness, feel and aggression were concerned! The same with my bass playing. I was not a good bass player but I had an aggression and a style that fit the songs and they needed that "dinosaur farting-vroooms" that spill out from the original songs. More open -E, jazz bass from the Cronos/ Gene Simmons/ Lemmy style!"

**Tell us more about THE HALO OF FLIES that you formed following SLAUGHTER....**

"Some time in 1991, I went to a club to see STRAPPADO play live. In the audience were two guys I knew from older bands I was in, plus Clayton Bonin from RAPID TEARS. One guy, Russ Frank (guitarist) and Ace Hunter (guitarist) from DEATH ADDER asked me my ideas on starting a new band to be called THE HALO OF FLIES. It was planned to be Russ on guitar, Ace on bass, Clayton on guitar, and me on lead vocals! We jammed together maybe four times and did versions of "Incinerator", "Tales Of The Macabre" etc. I wanted to be a "theatrical" band with a stage show like older ALICE COOPER with ripping apart feather pillows on stage and setting off fire extinguishers at the audience etc., but I got disillusioned again and we never took it



any further! An interesting note is that when I first wrote "Disintegrator" and "Incinerator" it was for a band called BLIND AMBITION that this line up was going to do originally! I disappeared from everyone I knew around 1991/ 92 and stopped music completely and never saw Dave or anybody again. I disappeared for 10 years until now!"

**At one point during the early '90s there were flyers distributed from an Italian company called Tortured Souls who wanted to release on vinyl the "Surrender Or Die" demo but it wasn't released at the end, were you aware of that?**

"News to me! I had no idea! I am aware of a bootleg CD floating around with "Strappado" and "Not Dead Yet" on it! I'm looking for a copy! I want one! Somebody please find me one and send it to me! Also any bootleg or live SLAUGHTER bootleg CDs or video's, I'm looking for! I'll pay!!"

**The "Strappado" album was issued on CD with bonus tracks during the mid '90s, how did you feel about that as it seems you weren't consulted for that re-release thing?**

"I was in a record store and came across STRAPPADO on CD and that's the first time I knew of it. I had to buy it, because I wanted it! I think the production is better than the original album and the inside sleeve notes are very humbling and flattering! I just wish it was easier to find and distributed better. I'm now working on getting it put out on CD for next spring/summer of 2001 with extra tracks, pictures and lots of band notes from Dave, Ron and myself. Our new web page will have all the details at <http://interactive.rogers.com/terryadler/INCINERATOR>"

**Then the next thing we heard about SLAUGHTER was the recent CD released on U.M.V., so how was it released exactly? I mean did the guy ask all of your opinions about that?**

"A guy by the name of Ed Balog had known us for years and vice-versa and he has his own record company now, so he approached Dave and Ron about releasing the demo on CD. I'm glad they all agreed to do it, because I think they did an excellent job. I wasn't in the picture at the time so I wasn't involved, but it still sounds brutal and the way SLAUGHTER should sound and made by the people it should be made by. I'm 100% happy with it!"

**Are you happy with the final result?**

"I'm very happy with the result so much that I'm pushing to get Ed to release "Strappado" on CD next, and it will be out in the spring/summer of 2001!"

**As it seems there's good chances to see a SLAUGHTER reunion in the upcoming months, will it be just for one show or more?**

"SLAUGHTER has decided to reunite as the original three piece, classic line up and to play a couple of shows in Europe and the U.S., if everything goes smoothly! Yes it will include the full "Bloody Karnage" with baby dolls, rubber chickens, smashed glass and all the songs from "Surrender Or Die" and "Strappado"! No new stuff!!!"

**If you were given the chance to play at a festival like the Wacken fest in Germany, just like RAZOR were offered two years ago, would you do it especially as you never made it to Europe?**

"Yes, if everything was right, we'd love to cause chaos in Germany! We'd have to have something special for the Germans who have always been loyal fans!"

**Would you say that SLAUGHTER have entered the cult status in its relatively short lived career?**

"In the ten years that I was out of the Metal scene, I had thought that nobody remembered or cared about SLAUGHTER. When I got on the internet, I found out that a lot of people are calling us "legends" and "godfathers" and that we were one of the bands that were responsible for the Thrash Metal bands of today. It surprised me. I put together the new web site and watched it take off! I've done about five interviews in two months and I've gotten back in touch with Dave and Ron and a lot of other people after ten years. I was surprised to see that USURPER, MORTICIAN, NAPALM DEATH and a few others had recorded versions of our songs. It gave me some new inspiration to carry on a little bit. I will see how it is to play live and maybe

record again and I'll keep the web site up and going, just as long as there is interest still in the band. It will take me a lot of work to re-learn how to play and sing all those songs again after ten years and to give everything the same intensity that fans expect: LOUD BOMBASTIC, THRASH WITH SCREAMING VOCALS AND FULL VOLUME!"

**You said that you plan to re-release once again "Strappado" in 2001, will it be on Utopian Music Vision again? Will you add the "One Foot.." on it as bonus along with "Silent Scream", "Snarling..."?**

"We're in "talks" right now about putting "Strappado" out, and it will be on Utopian Music Vision. If all the original tapes are found and/or salvaged, I'd like to put on everything from that era on it "One Foot...", "Snarling Death", "Silent Scream", "Twisted Flesh" etc. These songs are from the "Surrender Or Die"/ "Strappado" era and are fast, Punky, violent and very much in the classic, SLAUGHTER category! I even get to sing "Silent Scream" which is a more violent song like the song "Strappado"! It's about being in a coma and you still feel pain, and you are being tortured mentally, sexually and physically. Another song called "Electric Doom" from just after recording "Strappado" will probably be on it for sure! It's like "Tortured Souls" crossed with BLACK SABBATH's song "War Pigs" with some speed to it. We also want to include lots of pictures and band notes etc."

**You have also created a SLAUGHTER website, what do you think the Net adds to the underground nowadays?**

"If you asked me ten or more years ago about the internet, I would have told you that it sucked and had nothing to do with music, but now in the year 2000 it is the single most important thing for keeping all forms of Metal alive and thriving!! Information on every band is everywhere on the net now. Television and especially MTV in the U.S. and Muchmusic in Canada suck massive cock! All they care about is BRITNEY SPEARS and manufactured boy-band crap! Other forms of music, especially Metal, are tossed in the garbage. When people wake up and get sick of being force-fed this sterile shit, these music stations will flounder and die or kiss our asses to play our thundering Metal and Rock music! Hard-Rock, Metal and Rock and Roll is underground again and heavier then ever! Thanks to the web and the cyber sea, we don't need the corporate bum fuckers to get our music out to the fans! No need to "sell-out" people!!!"

**What are you doing by the way actually? Are you still playing Metal music or..?**

"Until reforming SLAUGHTER, I have basically been a "recluse" and work in factory's etc., for a living. I live in my own apartment now and have a reasonable amount of money and luxuries. I'm still into music but as a fan now. My current favorite albums are ROB HALFORD "Resurrection", ALICE COOPER "Brutal Planet" and I love the new INTERZONE "Cydonia" CD by my old friend Rob Urbinati."

**Are you still interested in what's going on in the Metal scene nowadays or have you lost all your interest into it? How do you feel when you see bands as influential as AGENT STEEL, ABATTOIR, EXODUS or RAZOR reforming?**

"To be honest, I don't listen to much Thrash or newer stuff nowadays because I just find that it's all been done before and all sounds the same! I still think to myself that I already did that 15 years ago or I could do that better. I'm bitter and jaded, what can I say? (laughs) Any older bands that reform though are great because it shows the younger kids how the big boys did it, back in the beginning! All us "old-school" bands can still kick some ass and run circles around some of the newer guys who think that they know it all! To this day, can you think of anything heavier or more exciting, than classic VENOM going out of their minds on stage playing "Bloodlust" or even SLAYER screaming "Chemical Warfare"?"

**Anything you want to add?**

"Check out our web site, sign our guest books and let us hear some of your memories and your favorite songs etc. Keep loyal to your music, never sell-out, and when you get older and married etc., don't forget your roots, your music and especially your dreams!!! If you have a band, keep it true to yourself and never play what others expect or change to meet the trends. When it's over and done with in your old-age, you can have a few drinks, smoke a joint in your rocking chair, and hold your head high with dignity and say to yourself "I did it man and I had a damn good time doing it"... SEE YOU AT THE SIDE OF THE STAGE... 1, 2, 1, 2, FUCK YOU!!!!"



# PARAGON

Hi Jan, after the excellent "Chalice Of Steel" in 1999 you got dropped from B.O. Records. Why?

"They said we had not developed our style enough, but to be honest I'm glad they dropped us because for "Chalice Of Steel" everything went wrong and I had the feeling they didn't really believe in us, and it seems also not in some other bands. We are not angry about them but I think for us it's better now."

You played some successful gigs after the album, like on the Wacken open air or the pre-evening gig at the Heavy Oder Was festival, how did these shows go and what were your feelings?

"It was a very good feeling to play at THE most important festivals in Germany. Both shows were good for us: In Wacken we were not so tight because we were very excited to play to such a big crowd but the fans liked us anyway. There were people from Spain, Italy, Greece etc. and they were singing almost everything along with us. It was the first time that happened at a PARAGON gig and I got goosebumps almost all over my body when I heard it. Balingen was not as big but it was fun with the crowd, the guys from EDGUY and the other bands. All in all it was like a dream has come true- in 1998 I was backstage at Wacken and said to a friend "Next year we play here!"- and we did!!!!"

I saw you playing live in Wacken and I liked the concept a lot though I think the action on stage could be a bit more aggressive...

"As I said in the question before, we were very nervous to play to such a big crowd and we had no soundcheck so I think everyone of us wanted to play as good as possible and put the focus more on the playing than on the show. I think we improved a lot on this level and many people who saw us live the last year said that we are now stronger live than on record! Some people even said that we almost sound like a Thrash band live!"

You recorded a three track promo tape in 2000 with "Thunderstorm", "Deathsquad" and "The Dark Ages" (called "New Dark Age" now on "Steelbound"), what did you intend with that recording, a new deal or just a sign of being alive after the split with B.O.?

"When we recorded the promo CD we still had the option to record another CD for B.O. Records. But after hearing the songs they refused and we were glad about it. They said to us we had not developed our music and are no longer interested to work with us- but what do they expect? We play HEAVY METAL and no trend shit, and if you ask me we developed our songwriting and our arrangements a lot!"

Did you get some offers and why did it not work out with Iron Glory or Noise?

"The only label which was interested- except Remedy Records, was Iron Glory but they couldn't give us the money we needed to have a good production so we had to refuse. We were a little bit sorry for that but I think with Remedy Records we found a good partner."

I mean you can be called one of the few real German Power Metal bands with a future and no bigger Metal label is interested, strange, isn't it?

"It's very strange because I had the feeling after some people of "bigger" labels heard the finished recordings of "Steelbound" it seemed like some of them were interested NOW to sign us!"

Remedy Records is a very small one, isn't it a disadvantage concerning the distribution and stuff being on an underground label?

"In some ways it is perhaps a disadvantage because big labels have more power to push even an average act to a certain level, but Remedy really believe in us, we're Number one on the label, they are in Hamburg so it's not so easy for them to fuck us up (laughs), and Jörn of Remedy is a long term friend of mine. For "Chalice Of Steel" B.O. almost fucked everything up- no tour, they spread the interviews through some months, with Remedy it seems to be fine so far. We will go on a "real" tour with IRON SAVIOR in April/May, "Steelbound" will come out as digi-pack CD and picture disc and is distributed by Zomba. There will be ads in the most important magazines and we will have new

After hearing "Steelbound" it was no question to support PARAGON with an interview in our magazine. Heavy Metal out of Germany was never more special and brilliant than on this particular album. Their history goes back to the early 90's and after two better distributed albums on B.O. Records they had to fight their fight to come back on a very small label. I seriously wonder why no bigger independent label was interested in this killer called "Steelbound", are the pure Metal bands not welcome on the happy Metal roster? Don't ask me as I am quite upset about this "development" in today's Metal scene. Let's be happy that PARAGON release a Metal gem in the year 2001 and let the Metal fist of bassist Jan Bünning rise!

## Thundersteel

shirts, longsleeves and even girly shirts this time!"

Coming to your fifth album, "Steelbound". It's a killer with the best sound so far on a PARAGON album, was Piet Sielck not very expensive as he does not produce so many bands outside of IRON SAVIOR?

"When he mastered "Chalice Of Steel" he was not very glad about the sound of it and we realized that he liked our music. We had the idea to produce the next album in Hamburg and so one day we asked him if he would like to produce our next record and he just said yes! He is not so expensive as you might think, but he has a family and children so he has only time to produce bands he likes."

The crunchiness and melodic power in your music stands in the line of old ACCEPT as well as JUDAS PRIEST and some US Metal touches, so Metal needs balls, right?

"You got it right- PRIEST, ACCEPT and old US Metal are major influences. Piet is also a very big PRIEST fan so it's obvious that we sound a little bit like them. And you can bet that we have METAL BALLS!"

The digi-pack looks beautiful, with the red background and the two swords and skull in front, but where's the barbaric man?

"He is on vacation to slaughter all the pseudo so-called Metal bands! No just joking. We had this shield before on two more PARAGON releases, but on "World Of Sin" and "Into The Black" it was just a bad copy of the original artwork. This time the old PARAGON singer contributed for us a very professional scan of the original artwork he still owns. And we always wanted something like fire on a cover so I combined the shield and this fire-like effect for "Steelbound". It's like a new beginning for PARAGON with a new label etc. and I think it works."

What do you listen to besides PARAGON, name me your current top five albums...

"WARRIOR "Code Of Life", RIVAL "Modern World", HALFORD "Live Insurrection", WASP "Unholy Terror", PHANTOM LORD "Evil's Domain", "

Excellent choices. A person who knows the OMENESQUE RIVAL has taste! If you look at all the GAMMA RAY, HELLOWEEN and STRATOVARIUS clones, is there a place for PARAGON?

"I think we are much more influenced by "classic" Metal bands than these bands, so why should there not be a place for us? We play music from the heart to me and it seems that the fans realize it more and more and say goodbye to these clowns. To me it also seems that the old "classic" Heavy Metal will have a little comeback and I think that is good for us."

Besides WIZARD, XIRON, RAWHEAD REXX and DARK AT DAWN you are the leading force in real Power Metal out of Germany. Do you agree?

"Thank for the flowers! I like all of these bands. I also know some of the musicians personally, but it's always unfair to judge other bands in interviews so I will leave out this one."

You re-recorded the track "World Of Sin" from the so-called album in 1995, so we can not await a re-release of that rarity?

"I don't know, I think only 1500 copies of "World Of Sin" were pressed and not even all got distributed before the record company went bankrupt. We recorded "World Of Sin" as a bonus track for "special releases" when we recorded "Chalice Of Steel" because we realized that the songs on "World Of Sin" are strong but the new line-up could play them much better. I think when we sell enough copies of "Steelbound", Remedy is perhaps interested in releasing a new edition of it."

What about your first mini-album "Into The Black" in 1994, I do not know it as it's sold out I guess, what does it sound like?

"It was self financed and there are some very good "unreleased" songs on it but the vocals were terrible, sorry Kai. The first PARAGON vocalist was thrown out shortly before the recordings of the EP and so the new singer Kai had not much time to learn the songs well or to create new vocal lines. I think it was rushed a little bit."

Do you think "The Final Command" or "Chalice Of Steel" is better when you look back?

"I think "Final Command" had the better sound- and we spent less money on it, but "Chalice Of Steel" had the better songs and vocals. A combination of both with the best songs of both would be great."

Are you satisfied with the success and reputation you've received so far with PARAGON?

"It could have been better, but it's always hard when you are on a small label or a label which does not believe in your music. But we will not compromise and start to play trend music like so many others. But



Jan

Martin



who knows, perhaps we are the ones to laugh in the end."

You'll tour with IRON SAVIOR and NOCTURNAL RITES, a good chance to show the people what Metal is all about, right?!

"Yes it's our first real tour and I hope our fans will be at clubs early so they don't miss us. It's good for us in a way because we have nothing to lose and we will only play half an hour so we can put all our energy into this half hour. We will try to kick some butt and drink some beers with our fans!"

Are there any t-shirts available from the awesome cover pic and where to get this?

"There will be a t-shirt and a long-sleeve with the cover motive and even a girlie shirt but with a different design. You can order them from the mailorders or from Remedy Records directly ([www.remedycords.de](http://www.remedycords.de))."

Roland Grapow played some leads as well as Piet Sielck, so the Hamburg scene is still alive and well by helping each other out?

"When you drink a beer here in one of our notorious clubs you always run into somebody of another band so you get to know each other and the "big" bands are always willing to help the smaller ones. Roland is a friend of our drummer and it was clear that Piet would contribute something to the album because he produced it."

What is the status of RUNNING WILD in Hamburg as Rock'n'Roll only tours a few weeks and it seems at least for me in the last couple of years that he does not make music for his pleasure anymore, more for the money department?

"I think the fans still like them but you NEVER see anyone of them in a pub or concert hall. They rehearse in the same building where we rehearse but you only hear them play when they have gigs. One time they visited us in our room and they were very friendly."

I know you are a Metal die-hard and you know your shit, what bands have impressed you the last few years and what do you think Metal is all about?

"That's the hardest question so far because I am into



this shit now for twenty years and there are so much feelings inside me concerning Metal. There were some times when I wanted to throw it all away and become a "normal" fan because the whole business bullshit pissed me off, but I know I can not quit the music, it's like a drug to me and I got to know so many nice people the last few years because of my "hobby". I know I will keep on 'till I die. What can I say- Metal is in my blood and perhaps I will die on a stage- or in bed with a nice girl, someday. Bands which impress me are bands which do their own thing and not look at what the flavor of the month is and play then that kind of bullshit. I love bands which stay true and believe in what they play and don't do it for the money. If they can live from the music, great, but if they only do it for the money fuck them! Heinz thanks a thousand times for your support and you can bet your ass off that we will stay HEAVY. Thanx also to all the Metalheads out there! Cheerz, drink some beers on tour with us!"

Heinz Konzett

The band is still interested in fixing distribution deals with "Steelbound" outside Germany, [contact: www.paragon-legions.com](mailto:contact@www.paragon-legions.com) or [VanDoom@gmx.de](mailto:VanDoom@gmx.de)

# Fanzines

DREAM WARRIORS

Issue # 1

This English-written fanzine hails from Italy and features real Metal acts as ANVIL, AGENT STEEL, SKULLVIEW, WIZARD, DESASTER, TANKARD, BLIZZARD, DOMINE, METALUCIFER or NE-CRODEATH. You get the clue, an underground Metal mag and for their dedication to print 72 Metal pages they have my deep sympathy. The interviews tend from very enjoyable (the one with Atomic Steif about the old days for instance) to short ones (the one with Lips). It would be a welcome idea for the second number to hire a proofreader for the interviews and reviews in general, in particular for the more difficult talks with German and Japanese bands. A promising start and hopefully there comes more pure Metal mayhem from these guys. Order it for DM 10 or US\$ 5 from: **Dream Warriors**, P.O.Box 666 Villesse (GO), 34070 Italy.

Heinz Konzett

IRON WOLF

Newsletter #3

Well this four pages newsletter is a huge surprise as far as I'm concerned as it comes from...France! I haven't read something as good in this country since the early issues of Enfer or Metal Attack, it's that good! There's so much passion and fire in Patrick's writing that it really captures all your attention. The guy obviously knows his stuff and he's not a newcomer in Metal, that's another essential point. You can read excellent penned articles on BROCAS HELM, CIRITH UNGOL, TYRANT, an interview with EXCITER and CATCH 22 plus reviews about the latest real Metal releases. Right now it's written in French but Patrick considers to eventually write it in English as the response in France is poor- just like it's the case with Snakepit by the way, but if you understand French, send 20FF for three newsletters to: **Patrick Lefevre- 91 Avenue Porterat- 88500 Mirecourt- France.** You won't regret it.

Laurent Ramadier

METAL MAIDENS

Issue # 23

Already number 23. Insane. Rita and Toine van Poorten are very fast in finishing a new number and as Metal Maidens is only dedicated to women in Hard Rock I always wonder where they find the peculiar topics because not every band has a female member... Don't await a pure Metal magazine, Metal Maidens is a bit more tolerant and interviews with THE SLITS, Jen Leigh, AMETHYST or VAMPIRELLA and a Latino Metalera from Brazil special deliver underground stuff in a fine manner. Of course, Rita and Toine are die-hards and part of the Metal scene for so many years, so they know how the play has to be played. I enjoy every issue of this special magazine. You can order the 48 English-written pages for Nfl 10 or US\$ 6 from: **Metal Maidens, P.O.Box 230, 4140 AE Leerdam, The Netherlands.**

Heinz Konzett

SLAYER Magazine

Volume 14

Total Destruction - so the title of Metalion's new extreme Metal attack. As our mag he comes up with 104 English-written pages full of underground stuff, more in the extreme section but always with the kind of madness and Metal idealism that is needed so badly these days. From more traditional acts as DESTRUCTION, HELLHAMMER, POSSESSED (in fact it's Laurent's interview which was featured in SNAKEPIT no. 4, so Metalion knows what is good...), HELLION, NASTY SAVAGE to more Black/Death topics as NIFELHEIM, AGRESSOR or MAYHEM - Metalion knows his shit and what he creates with this fat magazine is brilliant. In-depth questions, no shallow stuff here, and the right attitude, even if some topics are way too Black-ish for me (as you might know I am no supporter of that category), it's highly interesting to read through this postille. SLAYER magazine rules. Order it for DM 10 or US\$ 6 from: **Slayer Magazine, P.O.Box 447, 1703 Sarpsborg, Norway**

Heinz Konzett

## Playlists:

### Heinz Konzett:

ART OF FEAR - Pride Of Creation  
BELIEVER - Sanity Obscure  
LUTHER BELTZ - Hell Hath No Fury  
HELSTAR - Remnants Of War  
LILLIAN AXE - everything  
MALTEZE - Count Your Blessings  
PARAGON - Steelbound  
RAWHEAD REXX - Rawhead REXX  
RIVAL - Modern World  
STYGMA IV - Phobia

### Matt Coe:

ANTHRAX - Fistful Of Metal  
BREAKER - Get Tough (reissue)  
CORONER - everything  
CYCLONE TEMPLE - I Hate Therefore I Am  
FORMICIDE - demos 1-3  
INTRUDER - Psycho Savant  
KRAZE - demos 1-4  
PURGATORY - Tied To The Trax  
RIVAL - Modern World  
TAD MOROSE - Undead

### Laurent Ramadier:

ANVIL CHORUS - everything  
CHEMIKILL - Deadline (track)  
DEFENDER - Remaining Tales  
IRON SAVIOR - I've Been To Hell (track)  
MERCYFUL FATE - Melissa  
RAZOR - Executioner's Song  
SLAUTER XSTROYES - everything  
SLAYER - Show No Mercy  
WARHEAD - The Day After  
ZOSER MEZ - Demo 1992

### Christophe Abraham:

ADX - VIII Sentence  
ATHEIST - everything  
IMAGIKA - And So It Burns  
JAGUAR - Power Games  
KILLERS Mauvais Graines  
MALEDICTION - Demo 2000  
RUSH - Different Stages  
SUPERSHINE - Supershine  
THIN LIZZY - One Night Only  
TROUBLE - everything

### Toine van Poorten:

ANGELWITCH - Live At The LA2  
APOLLO RA - Ra Pariah  
BLITZENHAMER - Pawns Of The Predator  
BROCAS HELM - Black Death  
GILGAMESH - everything  
IRON CROSS - Iron Cross  
JAG PANZER - Ample Destruction  
FRANK MARINO - Eye Of The Storm  
SAMSON - Live In London 2000  
WITCH CROSS - Fit For Fight

### Frank Stover:

ANTHEM - Heavy Metal Anthem  
PARADOX - Collision Course  
DESTINY'S END - Transition  
HEAVY LOAD - Death Or.. / Stronger Than..  
INTRUDER - Live To Die  
IRON SAVIOR - Dark Assault  
LOST HORIZON - Awakening The World  
ONWARD - Evermoving  
OLIVER MAGNUM - Oliver Magnum  
PRAYING MANTIS - Nowhere To Hide



# Album & Ep Releases

## **ABSOLUTE STEEL** **We Sentence You To Death** (self-financed)

Now we're talking about pure Hard Rock/ Heavy Metal, the way it was played and written in the early '80s with this Scandinavian outfit. Catchy basic riffing, great emphasis on the vocals and the kind of chorus that sticks in your mind right away coupled with a typical fast executed lead part, this is what ABSOLUTE STEEL offers here with that one track promo single. This band shows a lot of promise based on this track and it's obvious that their upcoming first album "The Fair Bitch Project" should be something to check out if you like traditional executed Heavy Metal! Thank you guys for not being another Black/ Death Metal outfit by the way judging from where you come from! Website: [www.absolutesteel.com](http://www.absolutesteel.com)

*Laurent Ramadier*

## **ACID DRINKERS** **Broken Head** (Rising Sun)

This band hails from Poland and releases their 12th album (!!) since 1990. I am not familiar with lots of their early works but it's for sure that they changed their sound radically. Now staccato riffing got added to their angry Thrash Metal and unfortunately the shouted BIOHAZARD-ish choirs as well as some Hardcore riffs annoys me deeply. The mixture of Thrash Metal in the vein of PRONG (hear the rip-offs "El Pecado" or "Calista") and the aforementioned anti-genre influences makes it hard to listen to all eight tracks, even if some tracks are sung in Polish, a fact that is no surprise as they are well-known in their home country. Below average album.

*Heinz Konzett*

## **ADAGIO** **Sanctus Ignis** (N.T.S.)

Stephan Forté, a French guitar player, hired David Readman (PINK CREAM 69 frontman) and Dirk Bruinenberg (ELEGY drummer) to record his personal album. Neo-classical, Progressive Metal, comparable to SYMPHONY X meets MALMSTEEN, is the result. With the tremendous voice from David it is impossible to release weak music, he is one of the most skilled melodic Metal shouters these days. Stephan's play is - of course - excellent but he noodles too much and the instrumental parts are a bit too important in the band's sound. When he plays more band orientated, the music is fabulous ("Second Sight" and my fave "The Inner Road"). All in all a fresh sounding and above average album in the aforementioned category.

*Heinz Konzett*

## **ADX** **VIII Sentence** (Axe Killer)

At last here's that long awaited live album recorded on October 30th 1999 at the Summum, Grenoble in France at the same time that "Live Deliverance" from NIGHTMARE was done, "VIII Sentence" sees the light and the result is here! A powerful live album from the intro to the encore. Classic after classic, ADX gives us in 14 tracks a taste of their vast repertoire opening with "Resurrection", then "Notre Dame De Paris", "Déesse Du Crime", "Marquis Du Mal", "Brocéliande", "Caligula" and "Suprématie", ending this with a five track medley including two English tracks taken from "Weird Visions", no album is spared and it's in front of more than 800 crazy people that they reassert their supremacy of best French live act. With this live album, they won't have any problems recapturing their old fans and even hopefully new fans ready to discover what the French scene does best right now in a live situation. "VIII Sentence" is a real bomb that you must own absolutely! (Now on the other side, those little boys should definitely break up considering that the words motivation

and serious minded aren't part of their vocabulary, sad but true- Laurent)

*Christophe Abraham*

## **AMETHYST** **Flames To Eternity** (self-financed)

AMETHYST hails from Victoria, Australia and they play Heavy Metal like it should be done. The band consists of Georgie Larin on guitars, Nestor Melone on drums and Liz Galea on vocals. Evan Harris helped out on bass on this CD and Endel Rivers played the keyboards. Opener "Black Widow" will certainly blow you away, while "Eyes Of The Innocent" is based on a PANTERA-like riff, brutal, doomy and very heavy. In the middle of the song they change it into a fast monster, ending with a great guitar solo. "Amulets Curse" opens with a riff that reminds me of THIN LIZZY's "Bad Reputation". Another Metal anthem arises! "Stay" is the ballad. When you look at the variety of styles, you might want to compare them to ICRI'S WITCH (who are now called ELLIS) with their great album "In For The Kill". Because after the ballad they play a swampy kind of Blues that has got a bit of ROSE TATTOO sound ("Butcher And Fast Eddy" at a higher speed!) and then they easily change to a more BLACK SABBATH-like approach in "Flesh" with a guitar solo reminding me of riff master Tony Iommi himself! "Enough Is Enough" they scream in the next song. It's a short track that, although the title suggests something else, simply asks for more. The Thrashy "The Kill" will get all those heads banging again. It also has a doomy part that will easily take you by force. The Bay Area sound is captured in four and a half minutes here. The riffs could very well have been on the earlier METALLICA albums and the guitar solo fits in perfectly, screaming very high at times. Let's raise a mosh pit ladies and gentlemen! "The Archer" is a classical interlude- the intro to "Point Of No Return". A song which has a nice construction. Opening as a ballad and then changing to a mid tempo song with a lot of power. "The Ballad" (which won't surprise anyone) is the second ballad on this absolutely good debut CD. The CD ends with "Wasted Youth". Another great Metal track, just like the opener. If you don't buy this album it's all up to you but don't say we didn't warn you!! To order your own copy of this CD, get in touch with the band by writing to: **Amethystmetal, P.O. Box 486, Thomastown, 3074 Victoria, Australia** or send an e-mail to: **amethystmetal@hotmail.com**. Twelve brilliant Metal tracks with a playing time of fifty-six minutes will soon come your way, so don't miss it! I'd like to thank my good friend Peter Fundeis for making this review possible.

*Toine van Poorten*

## **ANGELWITCH** **Live At The LA2** (Zoom Club Records)

What we have here is a fifty minute live show of NWOBHM heroes ANGELWITCH. You can read from the title that it was recorded at the LA2 in London on May 26th 2000. ANGELWITCH consists of Richie Wicks on bass and vocals, Keith Herzberg on guitar and backing vocals, Scott Higham on drums and the only remaining original member and founder of ANGELWITCH, Kevin Heybourne on guitar and vocals. What you'll hear is really magic! It sounds like time stood still with this band. They still sound as fresh as they were in the very early eighties. The CD opens with "Atlantis" and we can also enjoy great versions of newer songs like "Psychopatic" and "Twist Of The Knife" or classics like "White Witch", "Baphomet", "Angelwitch" and my personal fave "Gorgon". But watch out, this release contains more than just heavenly music. On the second CD you can see three songs on video as well- "White Witch", "Baphomet" and "Angelwitch", live on the screen of your PC. If there's more you need to have a good time, just let me know. A live CD by SAMSON from this tour comes out very soon on the same label, which will also contain a video CD. If the excellent show at the Wacken Open Air didn't bring them back on top, this release will. ANGELWITCH rules and this essential CD is the f\*cking proof of it. Life can be beautiful!

Toine van Poorten

## **ANGRA** **Evil Warning** (Lucretia/Rising Sun)

What's that? After the demise of ANGRA, there comes a previously released Japanese five tracker with mainly 1994 dated versions of "Evil Warning", "Angels Cry" and "Carry On", an edit of "Wuthering Heights" and a demo version of "Time". Is it only to make some more money with a senseless release or a gift for their die-hard fans? Is it the last official ANGRA release in Europe or are they able to carry on without Matos? Will their music get more balls with a more powerful singer? Will there be a future for ANGRA? Time will tell, this dated album will not.

*Heinz Konzett*

## **ANKHARA** **Ankhara II** (Locomotive Music)

Spain was a no-man's land for me concerning Metal for a long time. I knew BARON ROJO and OVERLORD but then what? Recently I discovered that the Spanish Metal scene has far more to give, looking at MURO, TIERRA SANTA, MÀGO DE OZ, EASY RIDER or ANKHARA with their second album "Dueno Del Tiempo". What can you expect? Traditional Metal with a clean, mid-ranged singer and lyrics in Spanish (this language fits perfectly to real Metal music, don't you think?). There are some similarities to TIERRA SANTA as the IRON MAIDEN link. The melodies are quite opulent and the eleven songs deliver some very fine moments (the Power Metal-ish "Mundo De Odio" or the neo-Classical "Quema Tu Miedo"). What I dislike is the far too loud drum production, here the wish to have a powerful sound was meant to be direct, next time the drums should be better integrated in the band's sound. Without that major critique ANKHARA can convince my Metal heart with honest, traditional Metal and if you love TIERRA SANTA the same way I do, you can do nothing false in giving another band from Spain a listen.

*Heinz Konzett*

## **ANNIHILATOR** **Carnival Diablos** (Steamhammer/SPV)

Jeff Waters hired a new singer - no news at all but this time it's someone special. Joe Comeau, frontman of the 80's legends LIEGE LORD and ex-OVERKILL guitarist, contributes his lessons to the new one. How does he sound? Critics may say that he copies various models - Jeff himself, Tom Araya (on the SLAYER-ish "Battered"), Anselmo (on the (too) angry "The Perfect Virus") or even Bon Scott (on the AC/DC homage "Shallow Grave"). I disagree. Jeff Waters wrote a diverse album, going from staccato Thrash Metal to Power Metal hymns (on the best track "Epic Of War") to different tunes (the groovy "Shallow Grave" or the melodic instrumental "Liquid Oval"). I am not enthusiastic by some tracks as they sound too New Metal influenced to me (the first two ones in particular) but on the other side Jeff wrote such staccato stuff long before PANTERA jumped on the angry and brutal Metal train. There's the awesome production, the upfront guitar mix explodes on my stereo and Comeau sings his lungs out, far more aggressive than on the LIEGE LORD masterpiece "Master Control" though he's still a helluva singer. You see, my vote is positive on the new ANNIHILATOR and I will not slay them as others do because of the few tracks I do not like that much. "Carnival Diablos" has much to offer for every Metal maniac and as said the guitar sound makes my day every time I get blasted by Jeff's killer riffing and soloing. Still being an ANNIHILATOR fan.

*Heinz Konzett*

## **ANVIL** **Pilny Of Power** (Massacre)

What a positive surprise. After the rather average "Speed Of Sound" album, I didn't await such a crunching, mid-tempo based Heavy Metal album with balls from the Canadians. Lips and his mates were part the whole Speed Metal beginning, if not the forerunners and more than 20 years later they are still active and come up with a real smasher. The production sounds fat and powerful - at last on an ANVIL album - and both the unique vocal style of Lips and the insane drumming of Reiner are combined with lots of real power songs- hear the title track, "Ball Of Fire", "Computer Drone" or "Real Metal" (title of the year for me!) and you know it's time for ANVIL Metal. The main difference to the last three albums is the focus to groovy mid-tempo stuff



which fits excellent to their style of Metal and if you have liked "Forged In Fire" or "Plugged In Permanent", you have good taste as well as you will like this one a lot. Don't believe others who tell shit about ANVIL in general and this album in particular- it's a real Metal one.

*Heinz Konzett*

**APOLLO RA**  
**Ra Pariah**  
**(OPM Records)**

If you've read the interesting interview that Frank Stöver did with this band in issue 8 then you might already know the musical background of APOLLO RA. OPM records has decided to release the demo that was mentioned in this interview on LP. It became a very limited release of five hundred, hand numbered copies. The difference with the original demo is that "Coming Of Age/ Rukkus" is left out. Instead they put "Creating Zero" on the album, a song that was mentioned on the tape, but actually was not on it at all. APOLLO RA's music can be described as a mix of CRIMSON GLORY and QUEENSRYCHE ("Queen Of The Reich" period). High quality Heavy Metal with a melodic touch. Vocalist Daniel John Miller has the same high screams as Geoff Tate in his early days. And the twin axe work of Kevin Bulkeley and Billy McKeown is mind blowing. The rhythm section that consists of Stephen Al binak on drums and Todd Channing Weaver is very tight. And although the original recordings of these songs were done in 1987, you can definitely say that they stood the test of time. The album comes with beautiful artwork and liner notes on the inlay by the original band members. This album is a real treat for all the quick deciders out there because five hundred copies is not that much. Highlight for me was the fast headbanger "March Of Fire", with great high screaming guitarwork on it. But the other nine tracks are highly enjoyable too. Great album!!!!

*Toine van Poorten*

**ARACHNES**  
**Parallel Worlds**  
**(Scarlet)**

I don't really know from where this band comes from as no info was given with this promo CD but this band despite the cheesy intro followed by an even more opening cheesy track still manages to deliver quite heavy songs as the CD goes on. Stuff such as "Lobotomy", "Running Now", "Angel Of Death", "Sheet Steel" sounds really professional and it's obvious that the four members are good musicians as they prove it during the whole album. Progressive stuff with a harder edge than most of their actual counterparts. In an oversaturated Metal market, it's gonna be hard for them to prove that they're way more inspired than many of the press favorites, but they should not give up because with "Parallel Worlds" they have proven that they easily can compete with most of those overpraised acts and maybe the bigger press will see the light one day... wait and see.

*Laurent Ramadier*

**ARCHONTES**  
**The World Where Shadows Come To Life**  
**(MetalAgen)**

I've received a bit of criticism for being too harsh with happy Metal outfits but it's hard to be any other way listening to them... Russian ARCHONTES delivers typical happy stuff, not worse than the many other ones I already reviewed coming either from Italy, Finland etc... Maybe this act sounds a bit more amateurish- and cheesy, like on the opening track especially but beside that, they're just another band to add on the already long list of happy/ melodic acts. The production while being killer is still way better than what we can expect from a Russian band considering the economic situation in this country. Given the press and time I can assure that they could definitely compete with RHAPSODY and STRATOVARIUS- as they're actually somewhat more enjoyable than the aforementioned bands- of this world...for this sort of "Metal"! Contact: MetalAgen-Valiant, 5e-0/d, P.Box -179, Glawpochtamt, 101000 Moscow, Russia, e-mail: metalagen@spoyuz.ru

*Laurent Ramadier*

**ARK**  
**Burn The Sun**  
**(Trust Me/ N.T.S.)**

No poppy Metal here! Hell those guys dominate their stuff beautifully. I never enjoyed most of their previous bands such as CONCEPTION or TNT, but one thing is sure, Jorn Lande (vocals), Tore Ostby (guitars), John Macaluso (drums), Randy Coven (bass)- a hell of a rhythm section but you know that already, and Mats Olausson (keyboards) spend no time on boring arrangements and the likes. No they prefer to deliver powerful intense and somewhat Progressive Metal here. Hard also to compare them to anybody else in fact. "Heal The Waters", "Burn The Sun", "Resurrection", "Just A Little"- starting very Jazzy like and features some insane lead parts, "Noose"- with its modern overtones at first but soon turns out to be a killer intense tune where Lande does a killer job, a truly brilliant singer, "I bleed" or "Missing You"- a beautifully nine minute penned ballad, are all great examples of how Hard Rock/ Metal songs can sound nowadays without doing much compromises to neo Metal, Alternative, Symphonic or whatever you want. Despite being definitely highly technical, this album can appeal to every Hard Rocker around if you're looking for something versatile and involved as it has all the arrangements, hooks and vibes you can find on a traditional Metal album.

*Laurent Ramadier*

**ARTILLERY**  
**Jester (picture 7")**  
**(Die Hard)**

If you're an ARTILLERY fanatic just like I am, then you have to find this collector item as it features two brand new tracks (also available as bonus on the Japanese version of "B.A.C.K."). Just like with most of their comeback album, those tracks sounds like typical good old ARTILLERY songs. "Jester" being a raging thrashing song featuring more twisted riffing courtesy of the Stützer brothers and demonic vocals from Ronsdorf. Good stuff. On the other hand "Fly" is a more melodic tune in the vein of "Don't Believe" but unfortunately not as good. Kind of a spacey track. Add to this some excellent artwork for this single and you get something very interesting. Copies can be obtained from Hellion Records.

*Laurent Ramadier*

**ART OF FEAR**  
**Pride Of Creation**  
**(self-financed)**

I admit - I can not be "objective" when reviewing ART OF FEAR music. Thomas Metzler on guitar and Chassy on vox were both formerly MORTICIAN members, one of the best Austrian traditional Metal bands ever (remember the tremendous "No War" ep in 1987), and I saw them about 30 times live now, so I know them better than anyone else besides themselves. And I know that they are a helluva live band. Now with the "new" re-joined singer Chassy the vocal side improved a lot in comparison to the last "Kill The Demon" recording as he reminds on a kind of European Harry "The Tyrant" Conklin, singing high pitched and aggressive with melody! So does the music as well. Powerful Heavy Metal, with brainstorming riffing and cool double basses. All four tracks on the rough and dynamic production are high quality real Metal: the speedy "Against The Law" with its "Bark At The Moon" riff, the mid-paced title track, the captivating "Braveheart" with a great GRAVE DIGGER-ish refrain and the hard rocking "Living On The Razors Edge". A cross between classic European Metal and filigrane US Metal - simply the real Metal stuff with a cool PSYCHOTIC WALTZ-like cover. Order the four tracker for DM 20.- or USS 10 from: **Johannes Leierer, Austr. 48a, 6800 Feldkirch, Austria** (this includes postage and packaging). Email: [artoffear@hotmail.com](mailto:artoffear@hotmail.com)

*Heinz Konzett*

**ATHENA**  
**Twilight Of Days**  
**(Noise Records)**

After their tour with AXEL RUDI PELL the line-up changed radically and the new singer Francesco Neretti had the difficulties to follow the successful path of RHAPSODY vocalist Fabio Leone who left the band after the second album "A New Religion" because of too little time for ATHENA. On "Twilight Of Days" the Italians changed their style as well, the melodic Power Metal part increased again and the Progressive elements that were so evident on the debut "Inside The Moon" are nearly gone. A good decision and so the music can

be labelled as typical Power Metal from Italy. The riffing is quite aggressive and fast forward, the keyboards too important as it's the case by 99% of the Italian bands and Neretti has not the same class as Leone though he sings his melody lines with enough conviction and range. So, an okay album from ATHENA, not the stormer it could have been but at least more enjoyable than the last LABYRINTH (okay, this wasn't that difficult).

*Heinz Konzett*

**AVANTASIA**  
**Avantasia (MCD)**  
**(AFM)**

Now this is what I call melodic Speed Metal with a good dose of feeling and talent unlike most of the bands around who call themselves melodic Speed Metal. Tobias Sammet's songwriting while far from being the most original in this world is okay, well structured and he penned good melodic songs without too much cheesy choruses parts, good point boy! The first album should be rather enjoyable based on this debut four song effort if he retains this type of songwriting. Check out in particular "The Final Sacrifice", a non album track which carries a good deal of heaviness during the verses coupled with some good Dickinson like vocals.

*Laurent Ramadier*

**AVANTASIA**  
**The Metal Opera**  
**(AFM)**

No, AVANTASIA ain't a new Disney movie (even though the name sounds quite like that), this is an extremely dedicated project brought to you by EDGUY vocalist Tobias Sammet. As you can already suspect by the album's title, musically this is supposed to be a Metal opera, connected with a concept story, which we better not go into here for the lengths sake of this review. Tobias managed to gather a whole lot of established and highly respected musicians for this album, such as David DeFeis (VIRGIN STEELE), Kai Hansen & Henjo Richter (GAMMA RAY), Timo Tolkki (STRATOVARIUS), Rob Rock (ex-IMPELLITTERI, now WARRIOR), André Matos (ex-ANGRA), Markus Grosskopf (HELLOWEEN), Alex Holzwarth (most recently in PARADOX) and so on and so on. Even though Mr. Sammet completely wrote everything on his own for this release, the material here and there still tends to sound like some of the participating musicians' main bands. Which means that you'll get very well executed, pretty melodic Heavy Metal with lots of uptempo parts and really catchy melody lines. The main difference to EDGUY probably is the more epic / classical overtone in the songwriting, which turned out really convincing and for obvious reasons immediately brings VIRGIN STEELE's Metal opera "The House Of Atreus" to mind. All vocalists impersonate certain characters of the story line, which gives the album quite a big variety in that department alone already. So, this professionally and powerfully produced offering is an ultimate purchase for fans with a musical taste somewhere between RHAPSODY, HELLOWEEN and (of course) EDGUY. Impressive one!

*Frank Stöver*

**BACKSLASH**  
**Insanity**  
**(Black Arrow)**

This German quintet have a debut album that weaves an interesting cocktail of one part melodic Metal with straightforward drumming and riffing, and another part nodding towards the speedy HELLOWEEN styled choruses and charging guitars that barrel like a freight train. Through the eleven songs you'll hear cool pacing that proves BACKSLASH have a good grasp of making each arrangement varied. Upon each listen you'll also be impressed by vocalist Heike Grebita's uncanny resemblance to Doro Pesch- only with a slightly heavier German accent. I enjoyed the quicker "Make Me Walk" and slower building "Lies" which made me think of the sadly missed LETTER X. The front cover could've been better than just showcasing the singer's obvious beauty- as this band have a chance to appeal to diehards who miss WARLOCK from the "Triumph and Agony" days on music alone. When I want to listen to the softer side of Metal, "Insanity" has the quality playing, songs and production needed to please me. Discover the German scene of today- for it is not all derivative....

*Matt Coe*



**BEHOLDER**  
The Legend Begins  
(Dragonheart)

Aaargghh a seven piece Italian Epic Symphonic Power Metal band we have here now! Of course they have an original style, technique, symphony and two amazing vocalists... who believes me here? Nobody I hope because again it's just more of the same where cheesy/happy keyboard parts dominate most of the thing along with some absolutely disgusting sing along choruses all the way mixed with uninspired double bass drumming. I'm sorry but I can't find anything good to say about such false Metal. 15 years before this silly stuff would have been labelled as poser/ false Metal with the likes of RATT, CRUE and WASP and it's really where it belongs but still give me anyway the first CRUE or the first WASP over this! I guess it says everything.

*Laurent Ramadier*

**BLACK ABYSS**  
Land Of Darkness  
(B.O. Records)

B.O. Records lost the three best bands of their roster (WIZARD, BRAINSTORM and PARAGON). Hard for them to fill this quite huge hole. What is the connection to BLACK ABYSS, a German Metal newcomer? Well, their sound can be described as a cross between these three plus GRAVE DIGGER and older BLIND GUARDIAN. The melodies are typical German-ish and the riffing also. Decent stuff, supported by a solid production, in particular the first part with "Eye Of The Storm", "Black Mirror", the mid-paced "Chainbreaker" and "Burning Bridges" (killer refrain) sounds very enjoyable, so nothing to complain about? I miss their own character such as DARK AT DAWN or RAWHEAD REXX already have, so far they only copy their models in a fine way. A band to bookmark and hopefully a bright future for this teutonic outfit.

*Heinz Konzett*

**BLACKEND**  
The Last Thing Undone  
(Massacre)

Hmm. Are BLACKEND or PERSONAL WAR the better German METALLICA in their "And Justice..." times? Both are welcome bands with skilled musicians, both know how to play powerful Thrash/Power Metal, both have the same problem - namely the too obvious copying of the deceased Metal heroes. Fortunately not the utterly boring last years of METAL(?)ICA, the power factor in the mainly mid-tempo based music of BLACKEND can convince and the clean (but using too many Hetfield melodies) voice as well as the fat sound make it a passionate album with some highlights ("Long Now", the mighty "Darkest Day" or "Exclude The Included"). Adding some more up-tempo stuff and some sheer power Bay Area parts for instance would help a lot to jump away from the METALLICA syndrome. Still a powerful (Thrash) Metal effort, at least for people who are into songs such as "Harvester Of Sorrow" more than a hot tip.

*Heinz Konzett*

**BLITZENHAMER**  
Paws Of The Predator  
(self-financed)

WOW! Great CD cover, cool name, can we go wrong here? No, these guys play an ultracool mix of good old Thrash in the well known Bay Area style and Heavy Metal. The band was formerly known as SS DAGGER. And already from the intro on you know that this is great stuff. It grabs you by the throat once the alarm goes off in the beginning of opener "The Major", "Tunnel Rat" is fast and speed records are broken here. The ending of "Chamber Of Horrors" is a bit chaotic maybe. But who cares when you hear the rest of these great songs. And when you hear the air raids go off in "Alien Maximus", then you'll know it for sure. There's absolutely no one who can escape from the claws of BLITZENHAMER. Once they've caught you, they simply won't let loose. "The Northstar Rapist" has a strong piece of guitar playing at the end. "WW III" ends this fifty minutes Thrash attack. After that I suggest you just press the replay button for the best result. Here and there the vocals reminded me of good old SACRED REICH singer Phil Rind, which is a compliment. The band consists of Fritz Patrick on vocals, eyes painted black so he won't be recognised when he's out

up front chasing his innocent victims. Drummer is Douglas Texeira, who's dressed in an old SS DAGGER t-shirt. On bass we have the Tim Cardoza, together with Douglas he forms the unbeatable rhythm section. The guitarist of this very talented band is Len Goldschmidt. Watch his guns 'cause he's a sharp shooter. Don't mess with this band, 'cause they have only one goal. They put it in one short slogan which is easy to remember: HEAVY METAL FOREVER. What more can I say? Anything that isn't said here about BLITZENHAMER can be found at [www.blitzenhamer.com](http://www.blitzenhamer.com). Hail BLITZENHAMER, they're gonna get you, no matter when. Thanks go out to Len and the rest of the band for making this review possible. Look out for an interview with this band in one of our upcoming issues!!!!

*Toine van Poorten*

**BLOOD RED ANGEL**  
The State Of Insanity  
(Gutter Records)

Their second record is an improvement to the unbalanced debut. No doubt. Thrash Metal in the SLAYER way ("South Of Heaven" area) and a huge dose of GRIP INC. in general. Sometimes copying their models nearly 1:1 ("Disturb The Celebration"), on few tracks with more own characteristics ("Insanity Divine"). What I dislike is the too much used staccato riffing which annoys me deeply, simply of the fact that staccato riffs cause no emotion in my mind, absolutely no emotion. For people who liked the GRIP INC albums, BLOOD RED ANGEL are a nice addition. I like my Thrash Metal more traditional (thrashing to the end with forgotten jewels as XENTRIX, D.A.M., ATROPHY, VIKING.....).

*Heinz Konzett*

**CAIN'S ALIBI**  
Sanctified  
(Nightmare Records)

I have always been a LILLIAN AXE supporter as their unbelievable hooks without sounding sweet or superficial was unbeatable. So every band that reminds me of my personal Hard Rock faves has my deep sympathy. CAIN'S ALIBI does. A bit more in the Power Metal section, more groovy and with a bass dominated mix, classic US Metal with wide, open melodies in the LILLIAN AXE way. Cool. Their debut was released in 1998 and "Sanctified" can be called their first official release. In particular the first five tracks sound mature and with that sound they found their own, small niche in the US Metal category. Then the quality falls with songs six to nine. However, if they pack an album full of "Guilty Of Humanity", "Sanctified", "War Gods", "Rise Up" and "Live By The Sword" we can await a killer. Five goals out of nine this time.

*Heinz Konzett*

**CATHEDRAL**  
Endtyme  
(Earache)

It's time for U.K.'s best Doomsters since WITCH-FINDER GENERAL and PAGAN ALTAR to issue their new album. I didn't know what to expect here as I was slightly disappointed by their latest release "Caravan..." - but don't take me wrong it was still a strong Doomy album. It seems they wanted to explore different horizons on that album instead of concentrating themselves in delivering non stop crunchy Doomy stuff like they did so perfectly on "Supernatural Birth Machine" and I can say that "Endtyme" is just a follow up of that somewhat new direction. Of course, you'll get those slow crunchers like "Requiem For The Sun", "Whores To Oblivion", "Ultra Earth", and "Melancholy Emperor". At the same time you get tracks which are more spacey, more psychedelic orientated with some HAWKWIND influence and I can't get much into that stuff personally. I really hope they'll get back to the "Carnival Bizarre", "Supernatural..." material in years to come instead of trying to diversify their approach towards something that doesn't have much in common with traditional Doom because they always made it clear that they were a Doom band in the first place after all. Is it another case of a band's progression where they sacrifice their first approach? I hope it's not. By the way this album is still a very good Doom Metal release, not as good as the mid '90s stuff but still way better than the crappy shit they delivered on their first two albums when they started the band. Thankfully those days

where Dorian was barking are gone.

*Laurent Ramadier*

**CENTURION**  
Hyper Martyrium  
(Scarlet)

What happened to these Italians? Their first one offered JUDAS PRIEST-ish Metal with a shrieking vocalist. The new one comes a lot more aggressive and more modern. A weak blend between TESTAMENT, "Jugulator"-PRIEST and PANTERA with a growling, angry vocalist and a below average production. Sorry, but this is not the way to make me happy, I awaited a pure Metal mania release and not a kind of trendy one. Yes, it's a martyrium to hear the whole album. I am soooo angry now.....

*Heinz Konzett*

**CHILDREN OF BODOM**  
Follow The Reaper  
(Nuclear Blast)

Third studio platters usually solidify a band's stature or signal the slow spiral into Metal's long legacy of acts that have reached their demise. CHILDREN OF BODOM sit firmly in the earlier category, for "Follow The Reaper" blends seamlessly the grace of melodic power guitar runs, symphonic/ classical keyboards and the rawness of death with sandpaper grit vocals. What I enjoy most about this band is their ability to juxtapose tempos and riffing while keeping the song lengths in check- you won't hear parts that go on for days in tunes like "Bodom After Midnight" and "Mask Of Sanity". This band isn't for the happy Metal crowd- you need an appreciation for DESTRUCTION and KREATOR in addition to STRATOVARIUS to really like CHILDREN OF BODOM. When I'm in need of brutality with my musicianship, this band whets my appetite adequately.

*Matt Coe*

**DAVID NEIL CLINE**  
Thorough Scrutiny  
(self-financed)

It's been quite a while since David's first full length album, "Malefic Influence" had been issued so this second album was a very awaited one. So what do we have here? Has the man changed much from his previous musical orientation? No way guys, David stayed completely true to his roots and hasn't betrayed us so all power to him for that first of all. Throughout the whole album, he offers us traditional Hard Rock with lots of emphasis on the guitar parts but without putting aside the importance of the vocals. Actually he reminds me more and more of early Michael Schenker, Pat Travers (maybe that's not so much a coincidence that there's a great cover of "Snortin Whiskey" here) or Joe Perry when they started their own bands and if you clearly remember, their main device was to let the music do the talking. Well that's exactly what he does here. He never tries to impress anybody with his playing or whatever, he just plays what sounds right to him and he does a great job for sure. Hell, tunes such as "Queens Of The Skyways"- which could be easily be a powerful hit, "Take It Or Leave It", "Miss Minority", "Life Under Glass" are just excellent classic Hard Rock songs exactly like what old bands were giving us back then! The production job is rather good considering the fact that it's a self financed product. Let's hope a Metal company-small or big, will finally invest in his guy because much more should hear what he delivers! David Neil Cline rocks, that's for sure! [Website: www.davidneilcline.com](http://www.davidneilcline.com)

*Laurent Ramadier*

**COMPANY OF SNAKES**  
Here They Go Again - Live  
(Steamhammer/SPV)

Bernie Marsden, Micky Moody and Neil Murray were part of the best WHITESNAKE times and grandiose albums like "Lovehunter", "Saints & Sinners" or "Come An' Get It". As David Coverdale plays more crappy Pop than Heavy Rock through the last years and let WHITESNAKE die without any pride, the old members thought it would be a cool idea to play the old WHITESNAKE classics live under the banner COMPANY OF SNAKES. And that was indeed a good idea. But it became a very bad idea to record two of those gigs and release it as a double live cd. The album fea-



tures nearly all the old 'SNAKE classics such as "Trouble", "Ready And Willing", "Lovehunter" or "Here I Go Again" (ah, "Fool For Your Loving" is missed), a few ALASKA tracks (the Marsden post-WHITESNAKE band) and the RAINBOW hit "Since You've Been Gone". With a big fault- the vocals suck big time. Instead of hiring a young, fresh singer who has balls to sing their classics, Stefan Bergren fails in any emotion and can not compete with Coverdale in one second. And it's indeed very strange to hear songs from the Wacken gig where Gary Barden sang with Stefan Bergren on vocals... kind of a fuck-up! Hey old fellows, listen to "Live In The Heart Of The City" in 1980 and you know HOW those songs should sound. Avoid this dull and non-inspiring live disc by any means and grab out your old, timeless WHITESNAKE pearls. Shame on you, Micky, Bernie and Neil.

Heinz Konzett

**CUSTARD  
For The King  
(B.O. Records)**

Sophomore offering from a German Speed/ Melodic Metal band who have ties to a bevy of influences that feed into the current popularity of HAMMERFALL-like acts. From a warrior laden illustration on the cover to lyrical titles like "Charon's Call" and "Up To The Sky", you will hear many known passages from the book of Metal convention. The high-pitched vocals have little strength as they are delivered in a monotone manner-screaming for some variation in the lower ranges. "Deliver Me" gives the best hope for CUSTARD's future- interjecting some tender acoustics and build up with a killer solo for a ballad. The opening riff in "Freedom For All" eerily brings back CHASTAIN's "The Wicked Are Restless"- and while most of the eleven songs have enough variety in the tempos the layered keyboards and synthetic drum sounds bring the overall production down. I know that some critics lap up happier Metal bands- but I am more discriminate and recommend DRAGONHEART or NOCTURNAL RITES over this average release.

Matt Coe

**CYDONIA  
Cydonia  
(Metal Blade)**

Produced by LABYRINTH guitarist Olaf Thorsen and co-written by him also, I expected this Italian quintet to sound vaguely like the sons of thunder. Surprise, surprise- for CYDONIA have that speed happy sound with keyboards filling up the gaps nicely and a vocalist in Dan Keying that resembles Rob Tyrant and a smoother Michael Kiske. Dan can hit some high notes that only Kiske or Tate could imagine in songs like "Legend Of Time" and "Last Prayers". Musically the band like to mix up some off tempo measures amidst the powerful arrangements- especially noticeable during the refrain in "The King" where drummer Mat Stancioiu (also a LABYRINTH member) showcases a quick drum clinic before guitarist Steve Sguario throws down his lead section. While a song like "Land Of Life" would normally lead me to turn this disc off due to its obvious HELLOWEEN mirroring, soon follows a darker song like "Great Soul Of Steel" that proves CYDONIA want to create variety to their Metal foundation. This disc places CYDONIA in the class of SONATA ARCTICA as a band to look for in the long term.

Matt Coe

**DAMIEN THORNE  
Former Life  
(self-financed)**

If you read the in-depth DAMIEN THORNE interview in our issue #6 you know their history (if you did not already) and their US Metal jewel "The Sign Of The Jackal", released in 1986. Now they come up with a four track cd after so many years of nothing. From the original line-up only singer Justin Fate is in the band. And his rough, powerful voice gives the music the special approach which makes it highly enjoyable. Who cares that the production could be better as it is low-budget, though all instruments can be heard well and the guitars are okay, but you get the thing. METAL CHURCH in their mid-phase comes to my mind when hearing the opener "Stranger Amongst The Living", the mid-tempo riff "Exit Jekyll, Enter Hyde", the groover "Enter The Nightmare" and the fast "Former Life". Rough US Metal with Justin's unique voice - with such an offering

it should be possible to start a second try and sign a label deal soon - powerful Metal is needed in times of happy Metal overkill. DAMIEN THORNE are back. Contact: Ken Mandat, 7830 s Rutherford #1 N, Burbank, IL. 60459, USA.

Heinz Konzett

**DAMIEN THORNE  
Wrath Of Darkness  
(self-financed)**

This recording dates from 1986 and has never been released to this day but following the new interest that people show again for D. THORNE right now, guitarist/mainman Ken Mandat has decided to release it now and dedicates it to the late Mike Monroe who used to play guitar in that band. I must state right away that I don't find the same kind of enjoyment I had with "The Sign.." album with that release for some reason. Out of the ten tracks here, nothing really catches my attention or really sticks in my mind to be more exact minus "Sentenced To Die" and "The Balance" (an instrumental). This doesn't mean it's a bad album or it's totally different from the first album, it's just that it seems at least for me that the stuff is monotonous and except the aforementioned songs, nothing really stands out of the rest despite repetitive listens. The fact that the majority of the material is based on a mid paced tempo doesn't help to erase that impression of monotony. Of course the guitar riffs sound really intense as Mandat and Monroe deliver intricate riffs all the way, not talking about the shredding lead work all the way but it's not enough to make those songs as catchy and neckbreaking as it was the case with "The Sign..". The overuse of high pitched vocals doesn't help either as it was pushed way too far on this album. I recommend this album to those who always liked D. THORNE of course and to everybody into intricate Metal because it's still a strong album- and after all it's only my opinion that I state here, but don't expect something exactly similar to "The Sign Of The Jackal" this time. The sound quality is quite good considering that it was recorded on a two track machine. This said, I just can't wait to hear their next studio release as the "Former Life" demo showed lots of promise! DAMIEN THORNE still lives! You can get it by sending 12\$ (U.S. funds or IMO) to: Ken Mandat, 7830 S. Rutherford #1N, Burbank, IL 60459, USA or order it on internet at [www.damienthorne.com](http://www.damienthorne.com) , e-mail: [kjm208@aol.com](mailto:kjm208@aol.com)

Laurent Ramadier

**DARKANE  
Insanity  
(Nuclear Blast)**

I saw DARKANE live on the Dynamo festival soon after releasing their debut "Rusted Angel". The live-mixing was terrible and the guitars couldn't be moodier though I liked the high-speed Thrash Metal stuff. With "Insanity" they hired a new singer and they varied the tempo a bit from very fast to fast this time, very brutal music on the border to Death Metal and the rough, angry vocals support this impression. On the other hand STRAPPING YOUNG LAD parts can be heard also and some aggro parts tend to the PANTERA corner. For me, it's not melodic enough - not to say there is nearly no melody on the whole album.- maybe I am too wimpy for this kind of harsh music as I prefer newer but still traditional Thrash Metal played in the vein of IMAGIKA, AZOTIC REIGN or HYPNOSIA. DARKANE are more for the brutal Thrash faction or some open-minded Death Metal supporters. Aarrghhh!

Heinz Konzett

**DARK AT DAWN  
Crimson Frost  
(Iron Glory)**

One of my personal favorites! After the mini-cd "Oceans Of Time" and the promising and good debut "Baneful Skies", "Crimson Frost" became a true gem. First of all, Andy Classen and Achim Köhler worked out a fabulous production, sounding extremely powerful and wide. Then their music matured - the old PARADISE LOST guitar sequences are still there as a strong trademark, with the increased traditional Metal factor and the deep but emotional voice from Thorsten Kohlrausch "Crimson Frost" can be called an essential album if you like original, dark traditional Metal. They covered the GARY MOORE classic "Out In The Fields" in a well-done manner and some highlights such as "The Frozen Tear", the insane groover "Isle Of Smile" or "In

A Watery Red" are among the most captivating songs I've heard from a German band for a long time. The wonderful looking booklet gives DARK AT DAWN the extra kick to be labelled as number three of the new German Power Metal movement behind RAWHEAD REXX and PARAGON.

Heinz Konzett

**DARK MOOR  
The Hall Of The Olden Dreams  
(Arise Records)**

I recently discovered DARK MOOR with their contribution of an astonishing "Halloween" version on the HELLOWEEN tribute. I heard from a friend of mine that the debut was quite weak (though I haven't heard it, I trust my friend as he is a die-hard Metal maniac). Hence, "The Hall Of The Olden Dreams" seems to be a rather big improvement. DARK MOOR deliver some decent stuff regarding the other faceless releases of the European Metal movement, reminding me of STRATOVARIUS and like SINERGY bringing in fresh blood with female singer Elisa and her clear and smooth voice as well as their bombastic approach on some tunes and the long instrumental parts. With "Somewhere In Dreams" they wrote a kind of neo-Classical smasher; also enjoyable are the speedy and catchy "Maid Of Orleans" or the killer refrain in "Silver Lake". The second part of the album isn't of that quality and a heavier approach would be more of my liking in general like others female fronted bands WHITE SKULL or FATIMA HILL. All in all, only for the neo-classical section but a promising one.

Heinz Konzett

**DEATH ROW  
Death Is Alive: 1981-1985  
(Game Two Records)**

Can anybody believe how much PENTAGRAM/DEATH ROW material has been issued during the last two years?! Holy shit, before we had to wait a long long time to get any kind of new release and now it's just an ocean of material coming out from these bands. This vinyl features DEATHROW live material recorded in 1983 and a song "The World Will Love Again" taped at their last rehearsal according to what's written on the album. The live stuff is interesting as it presents early versions of stuff like "Petrified", "Live Free And Burn", "Burning Saviour" (now this is what I call an epic song!), "Sign Of The Wolf", "The Ghoul", "Review Your Choices"- most of 'em having been released only in the '90s when PENTAGRAM was reformed, and the unreleased "Drive Me To The Grave". The sound quality is far from great sounding at times and more like a good bootleg than anything else but if you want some of the finest/ heaviest Heavy Metal around then you must own that. By the way expect a huge DEATH ROW/ PENTAGRAM feature next issue with the original members here. For now get in touch with Game Two to get a copy of that vinyl at [www.ecentral.com/members/hultgren/](http://www.ecentral.com/members/hultgren/)

Laurent Ramadier

**DECEASED  
Supernatural Addiction  
(Relapse)**

When King asked me during the last few months why DECEASED wasn't featured in Snakepit as they were supposed to play real strong Metal like the acts featured in the mags, I was kinda sceptical as I remembered their early works having discovered the band back in '86 but had ceased to follow them for about as long but once I started listening to this last effort, I knew he was right. The album starts with "The Premonition", a greatly penned aggressive heavy track with riffs that stick in your mind right away. I can't help but thinking of Nick Holmes from P. LOST circa "Icon" or "Shades Of God"- in other words before they turned sadly their back on Metal with "Draconian...". listening to King Fowley's vocals at times. "Dark Chilling Heartbeat" starts with a strong riff which soon goes into a quite fast tempo but kind of loses some of its initial super heavy approach, I would label this a filler track but fortunately the mid paced break in the middle with the calm part saves it from biting totally. "A Very Familiar Stranger" fortunately is better, having its own identity with another strong main riff all the way, very good. "Frozen Screams" sounds quite similar to the first track, same tempo, same vibe and same vocal delivery, strong powerful Metal very reminiscent of the last OCTOBER 31



album. The lead work on this album while being far from shredding is correct and well thought but what really stands out are the catchy riffs that they deliver on most of the songs. "The Doll With The Hideous Spirit" follows in the same path, going from mid paced parts to faster ones, really catchy and definitely one of the highlights of the album. "The Hanging Soldier" is another extremely intense (guess that it is the word that describe the best the vibe of this release) catchy track. "Chambers Of The Waiting Blind" starts in a slow melodic way before going to a faster pace without having any real identity until it goes much faster and finally a dominating riff appears, what sounded at first like a filler song finally become another fine Metal tune. The album ends with "Ely's Dementia" an eight minute kind of epic track, slow and mid paced grinding Metal tune where the similarities with Holmes are more than present. All in all, a very good album- produced by Simon Effemey, my only complaint is the fact that almost all the songs are constructed in the same manner so it can be monotonous after a while, but that said, this is a strong effort. I'm glad they turned their back on the average Death Metal stuff they offered before and finally came up with something which really kicks ass, but still I don't see so much difference between this and OCTOBER 31? So my question is, is it necessary to have two bands which deliver almost the same type of Power/ Heavy Metal- DECEASED being maybe a bit more on the Thrash side.

*Laurent Ramadier*

**DEFENDER**  
Remaining Tales  
(self-financed)

Now this is a nice release when you're into Dutch Metal and I know that there are a lot of people that like the Dutch scene a lot (Hi Stefan). This compilation CD is a collection of songs of DEFENDER from the period 1984-1990. It's a journey of over fifty minutes through the rich history of this well talented band. Their album "City Ad Mortis" easily reached the cult status here. This CD ends with four songs from the demo "Tales Of The Unexpected", when the band existed of Harm Noort on bass, Bart van Rixtel (ex HAMMERHAWK) on guitar, Jos Baltus on guitar, Simon Menting on vocals and Remco Bouwens on drums. This is in the period of 1984-1986, when the band had a very tight Metal sound. They played together with bands like MARTYR, CYCLONE and AGENT STEEL. For "City Ad Mortis" they changed guitarplayers and the bands newcomers were Henk Verbeul and Stef Köhler. This line up will stay together from 1986-1988. Simons voice will sometimes remind you of Midnight of CRIMSON GLORY but the music of the band was a bit darker. Thundering double bass rolls, a constant roaring bass and the twin speed attacks of the two guitar players turn the songs from this period into real jewels. DEFENDER created their own Dutch version of the so well known Bay Area sound of that time. They even appeared on the Dutch radio. "Moloch" a song from this live gig is also on this compilation. The last line up that is presented here is a line up that lasted from 1988 to 1990. Harm Noort had left the band and he was replaced by Arwin Vergers. Harm will start GODDESS OF DESIRE later on. The CD opens with two songs from this line up, taken from their single CD "Journey To The Unexpected". They played live with Dutch pride JEWEL, and did a farewell tour with TOXIK. Arwin will join JEWEL after DEFENDER disbanded in 1990. The CD booklet contains a lot of rare pics and the lyrics of the songs and is very well taken care of. The musical highlights of DEFENDER can be found on this CD "Remaining Tales", which is a must for every Dutch Metal freak. Finally you'll get the chance to add "City Ad Mortis" to your collection. A rare item that is wanted very much by a lot of die hard Metalheads. Check out [www.defender-music.com](http://www.defender-music.com) for more information about this Dutch Metal band.

*Toine van Poorten*

**DEMOLITION**  
Out Of Noland  
(Gutter Records)

Austrian Metal rules. If you didn't know that already, I tell you right now.... To be serious, with STYGMA IV, ART OF FEAR, ANGRY ANGELS and DEMOLITION the small Austrian scene offers some fresh blood to the real Metal scene and these outfits follow the path bands as U8, NO BROS, MORTICIAN and SPEED LIMIT went in the 80's. DEMOLITION release their

second album "Out Of Noland" and their style is hard to describe - it's Power/Thrash Metal, the riffing is quite traditional, mainly mid-paced and with the dry production it's coming good. The vocalist Peter Musch has a rough, quite low, sometimes growling voice, reminding of ANGRY ANGELS maniac Bruder Cle, the old KILLER singer and even Barnes from SIX FEET UNDER. Few Death Metal influences ("Hate Inside") were added as well as the deep guitar sound supports that feeling, and I can hear TESTAMENT-ish song structures ("Awake"). An un-typical Metal album, mixing different sounds, and I can imagine that some people will not like it that much as it's not easy to categorize. For me it's a highly interesting one and a band I want to see live in the near future.

*Heinz Konzett*

**DERVISH**  
Some Monsterism  
(OPM Records)

Here is the latest gem uncovered by O.P.M. Records during their never ending archeological dig of the Metal underground. This find comes from the Metal land of Kent, England and man does it sound like it. For those that like to feed your Metal hunger with a taste of late 70's British Hard Rock and very early sounding NWOBHM, this should suffice your appetite. As soon as I put the needle in the groove (sorry MAMA'S BOYS), (and yes, this is a vinyl only release) my brain was pelted with flashes of BUDGIE, DIAMOND HEAD, BITCHES SIN and JAGUAR. Dervish's sound tends to teeter totter on the boundaries of Metal and Hard Rock and is covered in searing lead guitar solos from axeman Brian Matthews that sound along the lines to those leads that can be found gracing the grooves of any LEGEND (Peter Haworth) or BITCHES SIN (Pete & Ian Toomey) albums. Prior to this release, the only vinyl appearance of DERVISH to my knowledge is a track on the rare "Kent Rocks" compilation LP, "Some Monsterism", compiled of demos that were recorded between 1980 - 1982, preserves the raw sound and production of that era. Contained within is even some powerful double bass drumming (ala early SAXON & MOTORHEAD). Other than the varied changes during "The Mover" all are mid paced to upbeat tempo raw rockin' tracks, including the instrumental "Speeding Fine". All 11 songs are worthy of mention. The only trying part about this album I find is the vocals of Dave Montgomery. He is a good singer, reminiscent of Geddy Lee (RUSH) and Burke Shelley (BUDGIE) (some even say he compares to some of the stronger female Metal singers in the business), but I just have to be in the right mood for it. The vocals are really not a big issue at all, this record is definitely recommended to those who cherish the sounds of the very early 80's/ very late 70's Heavy Rock/ Metal. Order from: **OPM Records - P.O. Box 956845 - Duluth, GA 30095 - USA.**

*Jim Powell*

**DESTINY'S END**  
Transition  
(Metal Blade)

After listening a bunch of times to this much awaited second effort by the acclaimed Texas Power Metallars, I still have mixed feelings about it. The album starts with the title track, a good fast paced song in the vein of what could be found on "Breathe.", classic. "The Watcher", a mid paced heavy song with James Rivera's vocals sounding very similar to Halford on that one, okay stuff but nothing exceptional. "A Passing Phase", the best song along with "From Dust To Life", typical killer D. END material with lots of emphasis put on the riffing and on the vocal melodies, the kind of songs you expect from 'em and nothing else in fact. "The Suffering", a mid/ slow paced tune which didn't sound too good at first due to the strange vocal part during the verses, but it finally grew on me, good stuff which includes an atmospheric part with a spoken part in the middle. "Storm Clouds" is adequately heavy but it sounds like filler material, just like "The Watcher" previously. "First You Dream, Then You Die" features more moderately fast double bass drumming but unfortunately to my ears this song sounds very much like a late added tune as it sounds very weak and can be considered as third rate stuff, the weakest song. "The Legend" is another great mid paced song featuring some convincing drumming from Brian Craig, a song similar to some of the best HELSTAR material! Powerful Metal. "A Choice Of Graves", on the other hand sounds very average, not the kind of number that will blow you away, weak. The

good but nothing spectacular lead work courtesy of Dan Delucie and the now departed Perry Grayson (replaced by Eric Halphern from Z-LOT-Z) doesn't save it. "Vanished" is the last number and is long, drawn out and quite dull. That said, it's still a good album with a very good production but it just doesn't live up to our expectations following the classic "Breathe." album.

*Laurent Ramadier*

**DI ANNO**  
Nomad  
(Encore Records)

Paul Di Anno the ex IRON MAIDEN vocalist is back in business. His new album "Nomad" is a true killer. It contains eleven new tracks including one intro. Besides the voice of Paul, you'll also hear his new backing band which exists of four unknown but well talented musicians. Paulo Turin on guitars, Chico Dehira on guitars, Felipe Andreoli on bass and Aquiles Priester on drums. For me Paul has always been the ultimate IRON MAIDEN frontman. "Iron Maiden" and "Killers" have always been my favorite albums. Well this album sure is a killer too. Listen to the great, long guitar solos in "Mad Man In The Attic" and in the title track "Nomad" and you'll go crazy. During "War Machine" and "Cold World", Paul sounds like the other returned Metal god Rob Halford. And "S.A.T.A.N." reminded me a bit of ARMORED SAINT's "Can U Deliver". "The Living Dead" is the compulsory ballad on this forty-five minute monster. Paul has also released a new live CD called "The Beast Live 2000" under the name of PAUL DI ANNO'S KILLERS. Don't miss both albums and don't miss the man at Wacken Open Air. Nomads come and nomads go, but this nomad is back again that's for sure!! Great CD artwork by the way.

*Toine van Poorten*

**PAUL DIANNO**  
The Beast Live  
(Spitfire)

From "Wrathchild" to "Running Free" to "Phantom Of The Opera" - "The Beast Live" features ten early MAIDEN classics. No tracks from BATTLEZONE, not even one from his "Murder One" album. Maybe Paul wants to earn some money from the IRON MAIDEN comeback with this release? For me that's more than okay if you look at Paul's hard times through the last years. Paul Dianno made some big musical mistakes in his career after the first two MAIDEN classics and after he got fired by Harris. Why did BATTLEZONE have to die after three albums? Why did he jump on the PANTERA train after the Power Metal killer "Murder One"? Why did he release so much AOR crappy stuff? He is still the only one if it comes to call the real IRON MAIDEN singer for me and he is still a helluva singer which he proves on this best-of live album. Strange that no musicians are named, but who cares - Paul Dianno was a part of Metal history - and hear these ten songs live - although I am not sure about the live thing cos I doubt if Paul can sing this quality live and the guitars sound too clean and low for my taste - check this out and you'll know why.

*Heinz Konzett*

**DOUBLE DEALER**  
Double Dealer  
(VAP Inc/ N.T.S.)

Holy shit, this album starts with a real scorcher in the form of "The Long Way Road" followed by more good heavy songs such as "Raise Your Fist", "Primitive Life", "Pandora's Box" or "The Enemy". Inspired Hard Rock/ Heavy Metal music all the way delivered by a Japanese project formed by three CONCERTO MOON members and two SABER TIGER members who joined forces and I can say with enough confidence that it easily blows away everything released by their respective outfits. It's that good! Norifuma Shima does an excellent job with it's Graham Bonnet inspired vocals and so does Takenori Shimoyama with its ripping lead work and good songwriting. There's a few filler tracks in the middle ("Look At Your Face", "Too Young And Vane"...) but those tracks are still enjoyable. Now that is what I call real Hard Rock/ Heavy Metal music and those into old M.S.G., RAINBOW in particular should check this out because the Japanese boys have released a solid album. Recommended.

*Laurent Ramadier*



**DREAMS OF DAMNATION**  
**Let The Violence Begin**  
(Necropolis)

The one thing that makes D.O.D. a bit special is that they are fronted by Jim Durkin, ex-DARK ANGEL former member and guitarist. "Let the Violence Begin" is a six track affair and honestly I expected the same kind of demonic type of riffing that the man used on the three D.A. albums he recorded with the L.A. caffeine machine, but that's not so much the case. D.O.D. is no more than just listenable, I mean their main problem lies in the songwriting. What the six tracks lack here is simply something memorable, like a particular riff or a chorus. The only two tracks which really stand out are openers "Blood To Free a Soul" and "Unholy Invocations". Their brand of Death/ Thrash Metal being aggressive for sure, no doubt with singer/ bassist Charlie Silva growling quite alot- but still sounding a bit too exaggerated at times and not that convincing, but that's definitely not enough to make this a great, impressive effort especially in an oversaturated market. Add to this a guitar sound buried in the mix and it doesn't help them at all. Right now, they sound decent but that's surely not enough.

*Laurent Ramadier*

**DYSLESIA**  
**Who Dares Wins**  
(MD productions)

This French based five piece Power/ Progressive act have matured a great deal since their first effort, that's for sure as "Who Dares Wins" features some well written songs, a good production but also stuff that I could live without, depends if you like or not the RHAPSODY, FRETERNIA, or STRATOVARIUS of this world. This second effort starts in a great way with "Beware Of Life Demons", a Metallic semi scorcher featuring great riffing, great lead work and adequate vocals courtesy of Thierry Lebourg, still somehow the low point in the band along with the mechanical/ uninspired work delivered by the drummer on the whole album, his vocals being not strong and distinctive enough. "Rest In Space" is a track verging on the likes of HELLOWEEN/ STRATOVARIUS, but it still has a very heavy feel. "Unknown Fighter" sounds very weak on the other hand, just like the title track, featuring cheesy keyboard parts especially on "Unknown.", while "Who Dare Wins" features impressive axe work from Fabrice Dufour and François Loprete. "Fighting And Gone" fortunately features a more Metallic approach as is the case with "Bringing The Sunlight Back" too. "Living In The Winter" is a sort of ballad/melodic slow song, perfectly penned and well done guys! "Just About A Dream" is another filler track featuring totally cheesy backing vocals when actually the main theme of the song is quite heavy, a shame. The album closes with another melodic tune, yet heavy and enjoyable "The One You Are" while "Masquerade Of Life" is just another happy sounding song. All in all, a quite surprising affair, but it could have been way better- for my tastes at least without those clearly RHAPSODY and the likes inspired tracks. Please guys, despite what you wrote on the booklet, don't follow Luca Turilli's advice in the future, just follow your own path and bring us real Metallic material like "Beware Of.". [www.dyslesia.fr.fm](http://www.dyslesia.fr.fm) and [www.musicdiv.com](http://www.musicdiv.com)

*Laurent Ramadier*

**EASY RIDER**  
**Evilution**  
(Locomotive)

Another Spanish band. Another one to worship? Not yet, but another one to add to the promising Metal bands book. The vocalist Eugenio Garameda (who sadly left the band after "Evilution") has a Rob Halford touch in his timbre and their stuff could be described as a blend between JUDAS PRIEST and CONCEPTION, coming heavy and sometimes Progressive but luckily without any keyboards which makes the music sound rather basic. Not all tracks can hold the quality of the opener "Wormwood", a lovely traditional Metal song with a more than decent hook. I do not know if they are popular in Spain as they already released two albums before and they sing in English instead of their countrymates TIERRA SANTA, ANHKARA or MAGÓ DE OZ who prefer the Spanish language. For me, a really nice one, and I mean nice in a positive way.

*Heinz Konzett*

**EIDOLON**  
**Hallowed Apparition**  
(Metal Blade)

I don't know if the fact that guitarist Glen Drover played with K. DIAMOND in recent years had an impact on EIDOLON's songwriting speed. You all know how many releases K.D. can release in a short period of time by now, as it's a real surprise to see those Canadian Power Metallers releasing a new album so soon as "Nightmare World" was released during the winter 2000. That said the guys still have enough inspiration to deliver another good- but not killer- release dominated mostly by some absolutely frantic ripping guitar work from Glen. I mean the guy comes up with some killer first rate riffing at times and it's enough to make them enjoyable tunes, it's just too bad that the guitar too upfront on the mix- despite a killer production job done by brother Shawn who also did all the arrangements, writing etc on the album wauuh! Check out the verses of "De-evolution", "Prelude Into Fear", "You Will Burn" (featuring crunchy/ skullcrushing parts). His lead work being also very impressive. On the other hand stuff like "Forever Be Free", "Feed The Machine", "Forgotten City", "Mind Alteration" are just mid paced songs and they definitely lack the kind of braincrushing riffs to make them hit the right spot. Okay stuff but nothing to rave about. Brian Soulard's vocals are still delivered in the same manner as he did on the previous three other releases and I'm of the opinion that the guy will have to change his vocal delivery in the future if they want to come up with albums that can make a real impact as his vocals start to be annoying after a while. A good release but next time they'll have to make sure they'll come with a 100% power crushing album with no filler stuff if they want to hit the next stage.

*Laurent Ramadier*

**ELECTRIC WIZARD**  
**Døperthrone**  
(Rise Above)

Here's a perfect example of a band who play and write "Doom Metal" for the sake of being "Doom", plain and simple. I worship Doom Metal: ultra heavy music when it's done with feeling because you can feel it through your body like it's the case with the mighty PENTAGRAM, P. ALTAR, TROUBLE, W. GENERAL, NEMESIS, MERCY, ANGEL WITCH, WAR CRY or CATHEDRAL (since "The Carnival Bizarre"), but E. WIZARD have strictly nothing in common with those acts. My advice would be that they should stay Doom Metal listeners instead of playing and recording such crappy stuff with an awful production on top of this.

*Laurent Ramadier*

**ENCRYPTION**  
**Perishing Black Light**  
(self-financed)

The German five piece ENCRYPTION started out back in early 1995 and released one demo ("The Cryptogram" in 1996) and their debut CD ("Shrouded In Misery" in 1997) ever since. And after some delays their newest offering, the second full length "Perishing Black Light", finally got released most recently. The band quite obviously consists of very skilled musicians with good songwriting abilities and delivers a melodic and nicely balanced mixture of the so-called Swedish Gothenburg style (without the Death Metal vocals) and adds BLIND GUARDIAN - like melody lines and several acoustic parts to it. The result is surprisingly unique sounding at this stage already, while the playing time of each song varies between 5:18min and impressive 13:15min. The overall CD packaging looks extremely professional, but the band unfortunately suffers pretty heavily from poorly pronounced English vocals (their main problem) and a production that easily could be improved here and there as well. Due to the very upfront lead guitar department their rhythm section doesn't really shine through enough, which results in a rather thin overall sound. But anyway, all that could certainly be changed pretty easily if some established company would hook them up with an experienced producer and supply them with a decent recording budget. "Perishing Black Light" sells for 25,-DM (Germany) / 30,-DM (Europe) / \$16 (world). **Contact: ENCRYPTION c/o Norbert Hartmann, Braugasse 3- 91468 Pahren-Germany, e-mail: nobby666@gmx.de, website: www.encryption-web.de.**

*Frank Stöver*

**ENTER VI**  
**Dreams**  
(self-financed)

Nothing really interesting for the Snakepit readers in this Australian outfit in all honesty. What they deliver on their first album is just more of the usual mix of neo Metal- basic overpowered riffing, with modern Thrash Metal sounding tones, so it's really the kind of music that doesn't do anything to me... and to anybody who read this. [Website: www.entersix.musicpage.com](http://www.entersix.musicpage.com)

*Laurent Ramadier*

**ETERNA**  
**Papyrus**  
(Scarlet Records)

Mixing a cocktail of STRATOVARIUS, newer HELLOWEEN and DREAM THEATER and the result is ETERNA. I do not want to slay ETERNA from Brazil for their nice Metal music on all 11 songs, their good musicianship and their willingness to play this kind of neo-Classical, Progressive Metal. "Papyrus" stands for the armada of keyboard Metal bands- most of them can play well, most of them have no characteristic of their own, most of them do not stand for Heavy Metal as I define it. Where's the aggressive emotion, the balls, the attitude to play rough, in your face yet still melodic music? I miss this feeling by such releases. And now I put on RAWHEAD REXX again - one of the few new releases that delivers the special Heavy Metal feeling I thirst for. These guys don't.

*Heinz Konzett*

**FALCONER**  
**Falconer**  
(Metal Blade)

Never heard of them? Naturally, it's a new band out of the viking MITHOTYN camp and I bet my ass that Mathias Blad, Stefan Weinerhall and Kerten Larsson did the right thing to change the style! Nordic traditional Metal (if you ask what's that - hear these guys!), IRON MAIDEN-ish arrangements and most important - GREAT epic melodies in the WARLORD vein. If Heavy Metal transports emotion and power as FALCONER deliver it's the most beautiful thing on this fuckin' planet. I heard this awesome piece of Metal about twenty times now and every time I discover some new aspects in their medieval Metal mix. This is not light-weight, this is not keyboard soft Metal, this is the real stuff. A dynamic production, a wonderful cover painting and 10 pieces of captivating European Metal make FALCONER along with RAWHEAD REXX and PARAGON the winner of this issue in European traditional Metal for me. FALCONER - a name to book mark and an absolute fave to my book. Essential.

*Heinz Konzett*

**FIFTH REASON**  
**Within Or Without**  
(Scarlet Records)

Looking at the line-up with all these professional Metal musicians Simon Johansson (ABSTRAKT ALGEBRA), singer Kristian Andre (MEMENTO MORI and TAD MOROSE) and Marco Nicosia (HEXENHAUS) who contributed to several killer albums, nothing, absolutely nothing can go wrong. Nothing? There's an identity which is hard to describe as the music comes Progressive, bulky, heavy, melodic, staccato-ish, quite modern and sometimes strange. Crossover Power Metal from mighty tracks ("Day's Undone") to odd ones ("River Of Lust"). Personally I awaited a bit more from the line-up as the impression is neither positive nor negative, and being neutral isn't enough at all if you awaited killer Metal.

*Heinz Konzett*

**FLOTSAM AND JETSAM**  
**My God**  
(Metal Blade)

After the letdown called "Unnatural Section" in 1999, I was excited to hear rumors that the new FLOTSAM album should sound like their classics "No Place For Disgrace" and "Doomsday For Deceiver". It does not. I also liked the mid-tempo based "High" and "Drift" works quite a lot as Eric A.K was one of my top five favorite singer in the Speed/Thrash Metal genre. I love his powerful timbre and FLOTSAM AND JETSAM are still one of the most energetic live bands on the whole



planet. Coming to "My God" - it's a diverse album with some excellent stuff as "Nothing To Say" or the Thrasher "Frustrate" but also some un-typical VOI VOD meets strange Metal (...) kind of song-writing. I would not call it modern Metal as on the last failure but it's still far away from their heydays. "My God" is not an easy-listening album, the dynamic from quiet parts to aggro stuff makes it quite bulky. If you await a classic Speed Metal album, you will be again disappointed, although it's a non-compromising album and I can't help it, my heart is still with FLOTSAM AND JET-SAM- they were a part of my youth, you know.

*Heinz Konzett*

**FORBIDDEN**  
**Trapped**  
**(WFW)**

Following the interview I did with ex-FORBIDDEN members, now I'm sure this CD is a bootleg so I should not review it but when at the same time this release features some incredible material that remains unreleased to this day, then I can pass this out under silence, no way!! This CD features three demos, the '92 demo with Steve Jacobs on drums featuring "Disillusions" which features so much talent in itself that it's simply indescribable, it's that killer!! Amazing vocal lines completed by godly guitar parts, not mentioning the totally unreal lead playing!!!! GODLY stuff that can't be matched! Then comes "Hypnotized By The Rhythm", a version close to the one that can be found on the "Distortion" CD. A real good song on it's own but as everybody knows, it shows a different FORBIDDEN face for something more "current", and still in my opinion is the weakest on this record by far. Then comes "Minds "I" which was fortunately used on "Distortion" as it's without any doubt the best song from that album. Anyway, that song features more twisted intricate arrangements and more godly vocal parts from Russ. "The trip begins again" as Russ says, hell yes that's a fuckin' trip for sure! More amazing material that takes you by the guts and never leaves you! Then it's time for the '91 demo, the last material recorded with Paul Bostaph to be exact and it starts with "Trapped", a good song but the great parts start in the middle with an almost spoken word part from Russ followed by some more ripping axe work courtesy of Mr Locicero and Calvert, everything surrounded by precise and effective drumming from Paul. Then comes the first acoustic! ballad song ever penned by FORBIDDEN, the beautiful haunting song called "So Dark" which features simply so much feeling in itself that it's just truly fuckin' insane to see that all this material was never put on any real album, shame on all the labels that never understood how this band was just superior. I doubt the term ballad is really adapted for that kind of emotional song - that has nothing to do with the ballads we hear from other bands, it's just way ahead of everything. Absolute jewel!! The last song from this demo is "My Sorrow's My Own", another typical FORBIDDEN scorcher that starts with a melodic intro which soon explodes to give us more ripping Metal, featuring even more killer lead work and godly drumming, well the typical odd stuff that every FORBIDDEN fan could expect from this band at this time. The CD ends with the '87 three song demo that led the band to get the deal with Combat, "Chalice Of Blood" "Follow Me" and "March Into Fire" being the tunes from that tape, all featured in slightly different versions on their first classic album. All in all despite the fact that it's a bootleg release, I urge you to get this if you're a person into high quality Thrash Metal penned material and if you're an old FORBIDDEN freak, no need to tell you what to do.

*Laurent Ramadier*

**FREEDOM CALL**  
**Crystal Empire**  
**(Steamhammer/SPV)**

As a magazine writer you see the marketplace in a complete view- especially if every record label submits all their offerings to your doorstep. Within mainland Europe the string of HELLOWEEN clones getting record deals these days is frantic. FREEDOM CALL only have two advantages over the plethora of other German acts parading their melodic happy Metal wares- drummer Dan Zimmermann's longstanding connection to GAMMA RAY and the mixing talents of Charlie Bauerfeind. Outside of those distinctions, FREEDOM CALL's second album "Crystal Empire" doesn't deliver anything unique if you are already the owner of albums like "Angels Cry" or the "Keeper Of The Seven Keys"

saga. Vocalist/ guitarist Chris Bay assimilates his singing like the best days of Andre Matos- while the music features choir choruses, free flowing double bass runs and a grandiose, epic feel throughout the ten songs. I won't discount the guitar/ keyboard tradeoffs that permeate winning songs like "Farewell" or "Heart Of The Rainbow"- but as a whole "Crystal Empire" won't satisfy consumers who are looking for a new product in a crowded Metal arena.

*Matt Coe*

**GOTTHARD**  
**Homerun**  
**(BMG)**

I can not believe it. The Swiss Hard Rock superstars (they sell more than 100.000 copies in Switzerland with each album!) are releasing an even weaker album than the commercial "Open" already was. Bubble-gum music without any heaviness in the vein of crappy BON JOVI! If you look at the first three real Hard Rock albums where the guitars dominated, it's nothing more than a big letdown. Not one track can be called Hard Rock on "Homerun". Commercialism in the true sense of the word. Music for the garbage can.

*Heinz Konzett*

**GRAVEN IMAGE**  
**Emperor Of Eternity**  
**(self-financed)**

Epic US Metal with a low-budget production. Like WARLORD or CIRITH UNGOL. Peculiar music. The band, hailing from Kansas City, is not the 80's outfit that disbanded quite a long time ago. But the medieval touch and the epic Power Metal with the unique voice of Maxx Christopher make the band something special as well. Reminding on SEASONS OF THE WOLF a bit as they have the same odd sound. US Metal needs such bands badly to survive in the Metal jungle and because of some MANILLA ROAD and some BLACK SABBATH parts GRAVEN IMAGE come up with an underground nine track gem. No price mentioned, it's available at Hellion Mailorder, or contact the band: maxx@gravenimageonline.com

*Heinz Konzett*

**GUN BARREL**  
**Power-dive**  
**(LMP)**

Considering that I have no info about this four piece (German?) act, I can't really write much about their origins and stuff but after all it's only the music that counts and out of the 12 tracks presented here, the lone "Only A Passenger" managed to catch my interest with its MOTORHEADlike execution. Besides that, the rest is just a bunch of boring/ childishly executed tunes. I guess (hope) they'll impress nobody but themselves. Ninth rate stuff.

*Laurent Ramadier*

**HADES**  
**DamNation**  
**(Metal Blade)**

I never really liked any of HADES previous releases but this one kind of has me changing my opinion towards them. I would not call this a killer release by any means because only half of this album offers first class ripping material ("Absorbed", "Biocaust", "DamNation", "Blast") to very enjoyable stuff ("California Song"-featuring some total SABBATH like riffing) but the other half is just in my opinion average/ filler tunes that have no real identity unlike the others I cited before. Of course they are very heavy sounding tunes and stuff but this is the kind of stuff that doesn't have the capacity to make you want to break your fuckin' skull on a concrete wall. This said, I would still give WAY MORE praise to this release than to the new ANVIL for example as Lorenzo/ Tecchio have managed to come up with a bunch of excellent Metal songs here unlike the Cannucks on their absolutely disappointing last release. Uncompromising material all the way here.

*Laurent Ramadier*

**HALFORD**  
**Live Insurrection**  
**(Metal-Is)**

Uh. A 27 track live double-cd of the self-claimed "Metal god". Two FIGHT songs that he played in his

normal live set ("Into The Pit" and "Nailed To The Gun"), 11 (!) JUDAS PRIEST tunes (from "Running Wild" to "Breaking The Law"), the obligatory "Resurrection" stuff, the two Japan bonus tracks from the HALFORD debut (the good "Hell's Last Survivor" and the killer "Sad Wings"), one totally new one (the okay "Screaming In The Dark") and two re-produced demo tracks "Heart Of A Lion" (RACER X song) and "Prisoner Of Your Eyes", both reminding of very old PRIEST stuff, both with Rob's mid-ranged voice. The live cover pic from the Rock In Rio festival is awesome and the fine booklet with cool pics from the world tour prove that it was the right step for Rob himself to come back to his Metal roots (even if I still doubt if that is of pure dedication...). Again produced by Roy Z, the "live" sound is crisp and better because it's not as hollow as on "Resurrection". Nothing to complain about this live cd as some real classic stuff is delivered and Rob sings just excellent. Well, after only one studio album it's strange to come up with a double live album full of old classics, like "Unleashed In The East" it sounds not really live and I bet a thousand bucks that it is more a studio than a live recording. But you know what?, I still like it very much.

*Heinz Konzett*

**HAMMERHAWK**  
**War (7")**  
**(Stormbringer Productions)**

I am not very familiar with their history (time for Toine to bring light in my tunnel with an interview) but it seems I missed quite good stuff on their previous albums. MOTORHEAD-ish sound and rough Metal in a pure form - that is HAMMERHAWK playing "War" and "Heavy Metal Forever" (yeah!) on this 7" vinyl single. Cool that this kind of vinyl recordings exist furthermore as every Metal collection has more beauty with such recordings. Order it for US\$ 6 from Stormbringer Productions (address see the VORTEX review).

*Heinz Konzett*

**HAMMERHEAD**  
**Heart Made Of Steel**  
**(Pseudonym Records)**

Another jewel dug up from the precious vaults of the Dutch Heavy Metal scene from the roaring eighties. Next to DEFENDER's "Remaining Tales" we finally get to hear the full length version of "Heart Made Of Steel" of HAMMERHEAD. Before this line up of HAMMERHEAD went into the studio to record "Heart Made Of Steel" a lot of people had already played in the band and moved on to other bands. In early line ups we'll find back Dick Stamp, who also played in GILGAMESH, Schmoelik Avigal who moved on to PICTURE and THE RODS, Chris van Jaarsveld who also moved on to PICTURE and later on he was in SLEEZE BEEZ, plus Erik Karreman would continue his career in SEDUCER and HIGHWAY CHILE. On this CD we will hear Ian Parry on vocals, who we all know from his work with AIRRACE (with Jason Bonham), VENGEANCE and now with ELEGY. Ian Bisshop on bass, Joe Franco on drums (who also played with TWISTED SISTER, he replaced drummer Bert van de Watering), Wilko van Beek on guitar and David Rosenthal (ex RAINBOW/ ROBERT PALMER) on keyboards. HAMMERHEAD plays melodic Rock. Think about GARY MOORE (just listen to the ballad "Don't Cry Your Love Away") or RAINBOW and you'll get the point. Eleven great melodic Rock tunes are to be found back on this release which has a running time of almost 40 minutes. A world tour with the SCORPIONS was cancelled on last notice and this album officially never saw the light because the band parted company with their record label EMI. Now you can finally witness the great songs this band has composed. Ian Parry tries to bring the band back to life again with Noppy Ton on drums and Arco Bommer on bass. But that didn't last very long also. Arco and Noppy go to FIRST AVENUE and Ian starts PERFECT STRANGERS, leaving behind these beautiful songs that will have to find their way to the fans, sixteen years after they were recorded in Germany.

*Toine van Poorten*

**HANKER**  
**Snakes And Ladders**  
**(Metal Disk Records)**

Next to Mississauga's EIDOLON- who have recently proven with their last offering that Canada's real Heavy/ Power Metal was still alive and kicking, it's time for Quebec's HANKER to unleash their third release, a



really enjoyable affair also. "Ad Patres" starts the hostilities, a quickly executed Power Metal song with a real catchy chorus featuring excellent vocals from Pascal Cliche. Lots of melodies but nothing cheesy, that's where the difference lies between a melodic yet heavy band and happy/cheesy melodic stuff. "The Pardoner" had a majestic riff, the kind of stuff that will stick in your mind for days, quite fast but totally controlled material, excellent intense Power Metal! "Hail To You" is a bit slower yet very dynamic with more killer vocal delivery, not forgetting some effective twin lead guitar work from Patrick Gravel and Pascal Cliche. "Save Your Life" is more Oriental orientated featuring excellent arrangements, a mid tempo affair that really kicks ass, killer! Nothing that haven't been heard before but it's so well done that it sends shivers to my spine. "Saver Your Life" is more average and sounds more classic. "Confidence Man" is based on a strong bass line and a solid chorus, but that still sounds like last minute added material. "Far From The Cradle" puts the band back on intense Power/Heavy Metal trails, great stuff. "On The Verge Of Tears" is another Metallic assault and Pascal's vocals are just unreal on this one. Majestic material I have to admit. Metal ecstasy! "Fool's Paradise" is a short emotional instrumental showing if needed that the guys totally dominate their stuff, and opens an eight minute track, "The Eternal Struggle". Starting like a ballad but soon turns out to be another Metallic cruncher alternating between galloping riffing and slower parts during the chorus, never sounding too melodic for its own good- while sounding close at times to the European melodic stuff that so many people enjoy right now, some '80s influences being blatant at times, but who cares, this is pure Metal. "Behind The Curtain" ends this impressive affair in a fine fashion being a mid paced heavy track with a chorus reminding me of DOUBLE DEALER haha! A highly recommendable album for real Heavy Metal lovers, I just hope next time, some record company will finally give them the financial backing to use a proper producer because this is the only low point that I find here- an okay production but it could be definitely better, but other than that Canada's real Metal still rules! Websites: [www.hankermetal.com](http://www.hankermetal.com) and [www.metaldisk.com](http://www.metaldisk.com), e-mail: [realmusic@videtron.ca](mailto:realmusic@videtron.ca)

Laurent Ramadier

**HIGHLORD**  
When The Aurora Falls  
(Northwind Records)

Parts of the European press slay this Metal armada out of Italy with quite unfair reviews. "If you hear one Italian band, you know them all", so the tenor in general without remarking that bands as THUNDERSTORM, DOMINE, RHAPSODY or DOOMSWORD can not be thrown all together as they play different and high-class Heavy Metal styles. Of course, the success of RHAPSODY or the recently disappointing LABYRINTH made some impact there and the followers do not have the original Metal stamp on them. Plenty of them play the same kind of neo-classical, somewhat happy keyboard Metal such as bands like HIGHLORD which are evidently STRATOVARIUS clones with the only differences not having such a good keyboard player and having too many light-weighted melodies. HIGHLORD deliver average played stuff with some decent tunes and a skilled singer, not enough for the real Metal supporter but if someone is looking for a STRATOVARIUS rip-off, you can do nothing wrong with these Italians. There's only one thing to ask if the world needs more STRATOVARIUS copies.....

Heinz Konzett

**HIRAX**  
El Diablo Negro (picture 7")  
(Black Devil Records)

Well there's not much I can write on this review that hasn't been said about this recording in the previous Snakepit issue. This new material still disappoints the hell out of me considering the kind of killer Metal HIRAX delivered in the past. But I still have hope concerning their upcoming albums. Anyway if you're a HIRAX collector like myself, I still urge you to order that picture single as the artwork is excellent. Get in touch with Katon via e-mail: [blkdevil@gte.net](mailto:blkdevil@gte.net). The guy is still as dedicated and insane as before! Look out for the forthcoming release on CD of the "Blasted In Bangkok" demo and a PHANTASM album!

Laurent Ramadier

**INSANIA**  
Sunrise In Riverland  
(No Fashion Records)

Already their debut offered neo-classical, somewhat happy Metal. On the second output the professional elements increased, better production, better song-writing, but still highly non-original music. Not that I am from the original Metal police but if a band sounds exactly like STRATOVARIUS and on some tracks as HELLOWEEN, there's always the problem of not being themselves. Musical-wise the band is top-notch, the high-pitched singer really skilled and some tunes energetic Metal ("Time Of The Prophecies" or "Lost In Time"). Still wondering why a band that has such high possibilities copies more popular bands 1:1. INSANIA get the prize of the best STRATOVARIUS copy so far, maybe next time they'll discover their own way which would be interesting.

Heinz Konzett

**INTO ETERNITY**  
Into Eternity  
(DVS/Rising Sun)

This album was already released in 1998 but now Rising Sun and DVS Records decided to license it for the European market. What a great decision that was. INTO ETERNITY from Canada could best be labelled as progressive Metal with some Death growling. But that's by far not enough to describe the adventurous music from a band that knows nearly no boundaries. ANACRUSIS, early QUEENSRYCHE, ORPHANAGE and PINK FLOYD come to my mind when hearing the album and as I love the first two, like the first two albums of the third and accept the fourth one as forerunners, the mix of those four bands has to be highly explosive. Supported by a transparent and dynamic production the variation of the deep growling as well as clean and emotional voice reminds me strongly of the type of singing the genius Ken Nardi used on the ANACRUSIS songs. The music goes from acoustic parts to complex Thrash arrangements to a few mid-tempo Death Metal riffs. Well it's hard to describe music that wants to mix different styles with their own quality and sound unique. INTO ETERNITY prove that originality still exists in today's Metal music and I really, really like their approach to sound their own, personal way - for complex Metal music lovers only but they will love it to pieces. I do.

Heinz Konzett

**IOMMI**  
Iommi  
(Virgin)

Ten songs fill this solo release of BLACK SABBATH guitar player Tony Iommi, and each song has a different singer. People who think that they will hear some kind of second rate BLACK SABBATH songs will be very surprised I think. IOMMI makes sure he will survive in this new millennium. But the die hard SABBATH fans will scratch behind their ears and they may find it tough to comprehend this album at once. Iommi used some well known singers to perform his new tunes. And so we hear back people like Peter Steele (TYPE O NEGATIVE), Billy Idol, Dave Grohl (FOO FIGHTERS), Skin (SKUNK ANANSIE), Philip Anselmo (PANTERA), Billy Corgan (SMASHING PUMPKINS), Ian Astbury (THE CULT) and OZZY. A lot of the band names printed above won't make you happy and so does the overall sound of this album. Most of these songs sound like new songs of the bands mentioned earlier, but they definitely have got nothing in common with BLACK SABBATH. Except for the guitar sound of Mr Iommi himself then. Tip for the newborn Metal heads is to give this thing a try, you might like its dark heavy sound. Die hard SABBATH fans should start searching for the other 'unreleased' solo album of Mr Iommi with Glenn Hughes on vocals. This will knock you off your feet, that's for sure. But it was really nice to hear Brian May (QUEEN guitarist) back on a few songs here. Highlights of this CD are the last two songs, namely "Who's Fooling Who" with OZZY on vocals and "Into The Night" with BILLY IDOL on vocals. But I suggest you'd better pick out your faves for yourself.

Toine van Poorten

**IRON FIRE**  
On The Edge  
(Noise Records)

Soon after "Thunderstorm" these Danish traditional Metallers release their second one. I wasn't very pleased about the HAMMERFALL copying on the debut and this time the quality is rather diverse. A bit more basic Metal on a few songs ("The End Of It All", or "Thunderspirit"), a zero point spandex cock Rock tune ("Miracle") and even a 70's track with "Wanted Man" are added to IRON FIRE's European Metal sound. Again produced by Tommy Hansen, the vocals of Martin Steene are still a conflicting part, too, as he sounds a lot like Vince Neil, could be his singing brother with the nasal timbre (like on the terrible cliche ballad "Lost N' Alone"). Imagine MÖTLEY CRUE jumping on the new European traditional Metal band wagon and the result would be IRON FIRE playing "On The Edge"...

Heinz Konzett

**IRON SAVIOR**  
Dark Assault  
(Noise)

You like '80s European Metal? Well don't wait more and check out that new album from German's IRON SAVIOR. Stuff like "Solar Wings", "I've Been To Hell" (which is one of the best/catchiest Metal tracks I've heard in a while!) etc are all mid paced stuff similar to PRIEST circa 1980, pure Heavy Metal with no frijls. On the other side I love Speed Metal, but when I hear lame Speed Metal played for the sake of it as it's the case with "Seek And Destroy" it's another story. Fortunately that's the only crappy song on this record. Yeah this album is obviously and blatantly inspired by old PRIEST just like a track such as "Firing His Guns" with its verses very close sounding to "Rapid Fire". Add to this a real convincing cover of "Delivering The Goods" and it gives you an idea of how good yet unoriginal this new release is. Pure heavy stuff!!!

Laurent Ramadier

**KAMELOT**  
Karma  
(Noise Records)

A band that becomes big? Maybe, the commercial catchiness is obvious on the new KAMELOT. Khan comes up with some awesome melody lines, this singer has emotion in his voice and as I like his singing since the first CONCEPTION album I am not surprised about his immense talent in writing smooth melodies in KAMELOT's melodic Metal cocktail. What are the differences to the excellent "The Fourth Legacy"? The keyboards! They have a much more important role in the sound and so the music comes across more commercial and not as brain-storming as on the last studio album. Well, there are some real great tracks such as "Forever", the three track opus "Elizabeth" or "Across The Highlands" and even the ballad "Don't You Cry" has quality because of Khan's performance. I wonder why main-man Thomas Youngblood accepts the up front keyboards in this kind as he was a dominant guitar player on all KAMELOT albums so far. Not to say that I am disappointed, "Karma" offers too much quality and with a singer like Khan you can not release weak music - as long as it can be called Metal and it's still the case - only a bit too catchy for my taste.

Heinz Konzett

**KILLERS**  
Mauvaises Graines  
Killing Games  
(Brennus Records)

Incredible is the exact word to qualify this new KILLERS album! We never thought that KILLERS could do such a come back especially from Bruno Dolheguay, the bandleader. A very fast and powerful album with inspired lyrics, my only complaint concerning the drum production, sounding at times like a drum machine especially during some intros. Listening to songs like "Le Loup", "Mauvaises Graines", "Sous France" and the autobiographic "1984" we can say with enough conviction that "M. Graines" can be put in the list of the three best KILLERS release ever, could be even their best album! Of course, there's the typical track written in Basque language but it still fits the album really well. The album cover was done by a comic strip drawer Xavier Lorente and the booklet is just superb, featuring 24 photos taken from their Wacken appearance from 1999. To end it, this 10th KILLERS release is definitely a major piece for French Metal in 2001. This album is also the first KILLERS release to be issued as an English version called "Killing Games" featuring a different



but cool artwork. As with much of their counterparts who did English versions in the past, the way the English lyrics are delivered still sounds somewhat blended, but in no case do they sound ridiculous, don't get me wrong. Definitely KILLERS strongest album... just hope the next one will be even better and totally flawless. **Contact:** [brennus.hardrock@wanadoo.fr](mailto:brennus.hardrock@wanadoo.fr)

*Christophe Abraham*

**KREATOR**  
1985-1992 Past Life Trauma  
(Noise)

Hot on the heels of an impending German Thrash tour de force with SODOM and DESTRUCTION, the legend of KREATOR gets a greatest hits package courtesy of their former label. Expect an exciting capsulation of material from the early days ("Pleasure To Kill", "Endless Pain", "Tormentor") and the later days with their more refined/ produced era ("When The Sun Burns Red", "Renewal", "People Of The Lie"). Also included are four rarer live/ single/ demo tracks from this period, most of which I enjoyed the live renditions of "Winter Martyrium" and "Europe After The Rain". A solid one hour package of 18 tracks with liner notes on each song from Mille, a boatload of live/ promo shots featuring the band plus other acts they toured with through the years. I haven't been a huge follower of KREATOR the past few years as their music veered further away from the raw Thrash and sandpaper vocals we've always expected- so if you've missed out on older KREATOR you should get this. And to anyone new to extreme Thrash- pick up your required textbook in KREATOR now!

*Matt Coe*

**LIONS SHARE**  
Entrance  
(Massacre Records)

Oh, another LIONS SHARE. And with a new singer called Tony Niva. And here lies the problem on my side. The guy has a pleasant, clean voice. Only - it's too pleasant. More on the AOR/Hard Rock side, not bad at all, but for a (Progressive) Power Metal band too lame. I liked the rougher voice of Andy Engberg more, no doubt. And the music? They skipped the progressive parts and came up with some solid Metal riffing again ("Lost" or "On And On"). Though nothing spectacular and if you look at promising new outfits as LOST HORIZON or RAWHEAD REXX, they can not compete with those. Just okay, you know what I mean.

*Heinz Konzett*

**LOGAR'S DIARY**  
Act Four  
(self-financed)

It's sometimes astonishing how good un-signed bands sound. As we only review the "better" ones out of the underground sector ("better" in our personal view and in the real Metal sector only as SNAKEPIT stands for support of the traditional Metal field, skipping all modern, alternative Metal shit and all Black stuff also, this is not our world and will never be, you know). LOGAR'S DIARY are among the "better" ones. Fantasy Metal is delivered here on 11 tracks, surprisingly good produced for a self-financed record. Mix newer BLIND GUARDIAN and RHAPSODY with some SKYCLAD-ish parts and you have their sound. Professional cover and booklet, skilled song-writers and an ambitious aim to reach their models. "Act Four" has some weakness in the vocal department - the voice lacks in enough power and range sometimes - and not all tracks are forcing Metal in the arrangements. To sum it up, a welcome start and more to come hopefully. **Contact:** Christoph Uhl, Adolfstraße 17, 13347 Berlin, Germany (no price mentioned, I think DM 25,- are okay).

*Heinz Konzett*

**LOST HORIZON**  
Awakening The World  
(Music For Nations)

Out of nowhere. The guys played in a band called HIGHLANDER which can be called the fore-HAMMERFALL band. Fortunately the sound has nothing to do with another dull happy Metal outfit. LOST HORIZON are musically top-notch, crossing CRIMSON GLORY, MANOWAR with typical traditional Metal melodies. And they have one big plus that makes

them more enjoyable than 99% of the other upcoming Metal outfits: they have a real Metal singer with a great, powerful range. Their nicknames are quite stupid, their music is high-quality Metal. Highly recommended album.

*Heinz Konzett*

**LYZANXIA**  
Eden  
(Trepan Records)

Despite the rather industrial/ modern look of the whole product, LYZANXIA appears to be a surprise on the French scene. "Eden" starts in a quite aggressive way with "Dream Feeder", but soon turns out to be a good inspired heavy mid paced track with catchy vocal lines. "Addicted" and "Lost" sound also aggressive with an overall modern sound but still quite enjoyable yet I could live without some rather boring growling vocal parts done on "Lost". "Medecine Slave" and "Bewitched" appear to be more "melodic", while still having that modern feel, but the former features more excellent vocal and lead guitar work delivered by David Polvin, excellent song. "Labyrinth" and "Eden" can be considered as filler material as those tracks just go nowhere, growling vocals and uninspired riffs that bore the shit out of you. "Terrible Old Man" starts with some excellent lead work, followed by some raging riffing, impressive. Once again the growling parts have nothing to do here! "Positronic" is undoubtedly the fastest track- yet not super fast, featuring more raging strong riffing from the Polvin brothers, great stuff. "Dome" closes this first effort in a positive way, while I still find it a bit too long with some industrial part that are not that good. This first album reminds me alot of what THE COMPANY delivered on their two albums a few years ago, not as good- don't forget that Mr Piercy was in THE COMPANY. Still a very promising debut as they know how to mix the current sounds with the old ones, there's still some uncertainties about the direction but given time I'm sure they'll mature in a very very promising act. Add to this that the record was produced by Fredrick Nordström and recorded at Studio Fredman and it gives you a better idea for what these guys stand for. **Website:** [www.lyzanxia.com](http://www.lyzanxia.com)

*Laurent Ramadier*

**MADOG**  
Dreamland  
(self-financed)

Hmm... this Austrian quartet have a fantasy filled cover, portraying a king, the universe and a ring with adorning dragons. I expect some speedy Power Metal...and that's what these nine songs contain. Will the trend ever end? Don't get me wrong- I love HELLOWEEN, GAMMA RAY and most originators of this genre on up to BLIND GUARDIAN. But when the best element of "Dreamland" is the twin guitar lines and that's all, it makes for tough going with each stereo pass. Leader Hans Zedrosser displays obvious talent in his guitar play (listen to the two part "The Warrior" which fuses acoustic picking and Progressive guitar harmonies) but has a low monotone melodic vocal range that sounds very weak next to the Metal MADOG plays. The drumming also leaves a lot to be desired, as a producer could've tightened up their efforts immensely. Even those who worship the "Keepers" albums probably would cringe at this 50 minute plus disc. Abysmally average. **Contact:** MADOG c/o Chris Koller- Adlerstrasse 12- A-9523 Landskron- AUSTRIA. **Web:** <http://www.madog.net>

*Matt Coe*

**MAGNITUDE 9**  
Reality In Focus  
(Inside Out)

We already interviewed the band in our number five and for melodic Progressive Metal lovers MAGNITUDE 9 are more than a hot tip. Of course, they are influenced by DREAM THEATER but they do not use their fickle parts, they add more straight arrangements and for being progressive they do not show in every song that they can play the hell out of their instruments. For that I like these Americans. And the second album "Reality In Focus" stands in the line of RADAKKA or DOKKEN, just a bit more progressive and musical-wise more atmospheric. They have these long running tracks as "Afterlife" (9:11) or "Mind Over Fear" (7:32) and they have the straighter stuff as the hook monster "No Turpin'g Back" or the rocking "The End Of Days". And they remind me in some ways of older QUEENSRYCHE,

playing catchy and complex is not easy and only few bands are capable in doing that without neglecting the song-writing. MAGNITUDE 9 can do it and bring in a tremendous Progressive Metal album. Well done.

*Heinz Konzett*

**YNGWIE J. MALMSTEEN's RISING FORCE**  
War To End All Wars  
(Spitfire/ Dream Catcher)

The king of classically infused arpeggio guitar shredding adds another record to the fold. Reuniting with vocalist Marc Boals allows the RISING FORCE moniker to have validity- but these 14 offerings (three instrumentals) don't differ or even better the best works on "Marching Out" or last year's "Alchemy". I've been able to accept the more melodic "Odyssey" or the Irish-tinged dynamics from "Facing The Animal"- but this new album just puts more masturbation musical techniques to the test with some Middle Eastern flavoring for texture. "Crucify" and "Tarot" were the only two songs that captured my attention- yet that proved trying due to the lackluster basement demo quality production which muffles the rhythm section horrendously. The packaging also features Yngwie's son over placing any pictures of the band mates- verifying Yngwie's ego filled complex. Music technicians will like this- but most of our readers would rather focus on complete bands over one man shows.

*Matt Coe*

**MANTICORA**  
Darkness With Tales To Tell  
(Scarlet)

Danish dynamite? It seems so. The second MANTICORA record also has its own touch, not as strong as their land-mate forerunners (PRETTY MAIDS, WITCH CROSS, ARTILLERY, MERCYFUL FATE) but who is awaiting this in the year 2001? Older BLIND GUARDIAN, German Metal melodies and Progressive elements and a clean Hansi Kürsch like singer, this is my description. The excellent "Dragon's Mist", the epic and powerful "The Nightfall War" or the fast-paced title track- above average stuff that I like more than all the light-weighted HELLOWEEN copies, and the upfront guitars prove it more that this band has Metal balls. Good one.

*Heinz Konzett*

**FRANK MARINO & THE MAHOGANY RUSH**  
Eye Of The Storm  
(self-financed)

Wow, Frank Marino is back. I always liked the music of this Canadian guitar legend. It's been too quiet for a long time, but with this album it looks like Frank is ready to rock again. Sometimes his songs sound a bit experimental, and so does the opener of his new album "Eye Of The Storm". Don't let these first chords disillusion you, 'cause later on he will definitely blow you out of your chair. This man is still real fast on his guitar and he will astonish you with his very own style of guitar playing. He turns back the time for twenty five years and especially the older Hard Rockers and Snakepit readers will know what this means. This means that there are loooong guitar solos on this CD. He simply starts to play a solo, but he never knows how to stop. His style can be compared with people like Robin Trower, Randy Hansen, Uli Jon-Roth or Jimi Hendrix. You can call it old fashioned. You can call it out of date. You may even think that I'm a boring old fart, but I enjoyed every note of this CD. Nine long tracks with a total running time of about 75 minutes (!!!) made the investment needed to get this CD worth every penny. Right now the CD is only available from the Internet. Simply go to: <http://www.wildwilly.com>. Highlights for me were the HENDRIX like "Learned My Lesson Well" and "He's Calling". I've got no idea who's in the band right now because I wrote this review from a promo copy, but I think that nobody gives a shit! As long as Frank Marino is in it, it's okay. Great release!!!!

*Toine van Poorten*

**MASQUERADE**  
Flux  
(Metal Blade)

I guess the best thing about being an independent label band is the record company doesn't place much pressure on you to deliver the same album twice. However- the fans make the ultimate determination if your style



changes translate into a wider following. I liked MASQUERADE in the past as a melodic Metal band. Their latest eleven song creation "Flux" turns their style 180 degrees into a bluesy KING'S X-like fusion that bores me to tears. Forcing myself to complete the album without screaming in agony at the typical riffing, the cliched lyrics and the zero inspiration used was a chore in itself. MASQUERADE have taken the plunge into obscurity- an album that instantly should hit the trade lists and cut out bins. "Flux" sucks.

Matt Coe

**MASTERMIND**  
Prog, Fusion, Metal, Leather & Sweat  
(StellarVox)

I won't give you all the details of all the difficulties I had finding this CD. Everywhere I searched the title had either been deleted from their catalogue or they'd never heard about it. After hearing their previous CD "Angels Of The Apocalypse", I was very interested in this live CD. It was recorded during the USA tour from June 18th till June 26th 1999, where they also played at the Nearfest. The title of this eighty (!) minute CD is made out of the music of the band (Prog, Fusion and Metal) and the weather conditions during the tour (Leather and Sweat). It's a pity that keyboard wizard Jens Johansson was unable to join the band on this tour. So the band had to hire a friend of theirs named Mickey Simmonds (ex FISH, CAMEL, MIKE OLDFIELD) to do the very important keyboard parts. The rest of the band consists of Bill Berends on guitars and backing vocals, Rich Berends on drums, Bob Eckman on bass and Lisa Bouchelle on vocals and acoustic guitar. Right from the start this CD grabs you by the throat. The production is good and it gives you a good overview of the virtuosity of the band. When you know that there are ten songs on this CD, you already expect very lengthy songs with long instrumental parts ranging from speedy Metal attacks to experimental Fusion pieces. But everything was done in a very professional way which makes it easy to listen to these great compositions. For example, listen to "The Approaching Storm" and close your eyes. In the middle of the song there's a segment that indicated the storm is getting nearer. You can almost feel it! To explain the magic can be difficult, just think about the "Images And Words" CD of DREAM THEATER and you'll get the point. It's the same kind of magic you'll hear on this CD. Well at least I did then. If you're into DREAM THEATER and you already liked the previous albums of MASTERMIND, then it's definitely time to search for "Prog, Fusion, Metal, Leather & Sweat". Highlight for me was the encore called "Jubilee". Here we can hear the virtuosity of the band at its best. It starts instrumental, then a drum solo is added and in closing they run through some well known instrumental classics like "Hall Of The Mountain King" (SAVATAGE/ EDVARD GRIEG), parts of the fifth and the ninth symphony of Beethoven, "The Sabre Dance", "The Star Sprangled Banner" and "God Save The Queen". It seems that Lisa has left the band already and she has been replaced by Tracey McShane. The music will basically stay the same though I think. If you can't find this precious little diamond, then you better go searching for it on the following addresses. Go to the website of the band at: [www.k2nesoft.com/mastermind](http://www.k2nesoft.com/mastermind) or go to the website of their record label at: [www.stellarvox.com](http://www.stellarvox.com) or drop a line to **Offline Management- P.O. Box 1259- Browns Mills, NJ 08015-USA**. The CD will probably cost you about US\$15.00 and US\$3.00 for shipping and handling.

Toine van Poorten

**MENNEN**  
Circle Of Live  
(Snakebite Records)

Not a new Dutch Hard Rock band by any means considering that they have released three albums so far but not a band I'm familiar with either and I didn't imagine a H.R. could be found here under such a strange moniker and rather poor looking packaging to be honest. MENNEN offers on this live album 13 accessible- yet not wimpy, H.R. songs ala old TESLA, SKID ROW (actually singer Joss Mennen looks a lot like Bach on the pictures) and the likes. Solid H.R. songs like "War", "Circle Of Life", "World Affair" sound honest and well executed while "The Age Of Fools" for example sounds quite disgusting with its modern sounding overtones and I really wonder why they included such crappy influences in their musical style. The necessary ballad in the shape of "River Of Tears" can be found here also but we

all could have lived without it as it sounds very average and soulless. MENNEN are not gonna take the world by storm but armed with a solid frontman/ singer and backed up by competent musicians, they could go a lot further if the market for that kind of H.R. would return to what it once was. E-mail: [mennen@cucl.nl](mailto:mennen@cucl.nl)

Laurent Ramadier

**MERENDINE ATOMICHE**  
The Holy Metal  
(No-Brain Records)

This young Italian outfit started around 1997, playing originals but in 1998 they choose to become a METAL-LICA tribute band and released an album during early 2000 which received praise at least in Italy. Now they're back playing their own stuff and they do it okay despite the obvious METALLICA and old SEPULTURA influences. I would give them more credit without those raw, aggressive Cavalera like vocal parts like those used as second voice on opener "War Or Peace", totally out of place. The riffing is basic all the way but convincing and that's the most important. The title track is a moderately fast paced song with okay verses but the chorus just sounds cheesy due to those crappy vocals and out of place drum parts. "The Truth" starts very promising but the Chris Notaro (CRUMBSUCKERS) like vocals on this one makes the whole song sound too Hardcore like and it loses its initial impact. It also includes a very cheesy fast double bass part mixed with crappy vocals, a shame. "The Guardian" is totally awful while the ending song "Mental Agony" is certainly the most accomplished track of that five song effort being another medium fast paced track featuring some quite catchy riffing and catchy vocals. Special mention goes out to the guitar players for delivering some very well thought soloing, great work guys! All in all, nothing to rave about, just another average Speed/ thrash Metal band to add to the list. Contact: Luca Cerardi- Via g. Leopardi 14- 35010 Onara di tombolo (Padova)- Italy. Web: [www.merendineatomiche.no-brain.com](http://www.merendineatomiche.no-brain.com).

Laurent Ramadier

**MIRROR OF DECEPTION**  
Mirrorsoil  
(Iron Glory)

How many bands play real Doom Metal in these days? I am sure not to count more than 20 but at least with OVERSOUL, THUNDERSTORM, IRON MAN, REVELATION, SOLITUDE- AETURNUS, PENTAGRAM, DAWN OF DREAMS, SOLSTICE and MIRROR OF DECEPTION there are some active outfits that play majestic Doom Metal that is not for the masses but for people that know that music can be far more than jumping around. I prefer the Power Metal influenced Doom stuff as CANDLEMASS played and THUNDERSTORM delivered with their debut. MIRROR OF DECEPTION are among the more psychedelic Doom bands, though still powerful and with wide, open melodies from the clean voice of Michael Siffermann. With the slow, mighty SABBATH riffing, the music can transport deep feelings. For Doom Metal lunatics a must, for Power Metal supporters as I am a cool listen and surely worth checking out if you wanna get psyched and doomed....

Heinz Konzett

**MOLLY HATCHET**  
Kingdom Of XII  
(Steamhammer/SPV)

I doubt any Snakepit readers will be interested in this because it's not Metal and M. HATCHET has never been a Metal band after all, just a Southern Hard Rock outfit at best in their career, nothing more. And this album is just the same stuff, they haven't changed much from what I remember of them from the late '70s/ early '80s. It's still WAY BETTER than the new LYNRYD SKYNNRYD which sucks big time, but I wouldn't trade my old BLACKFOOT albums for this!

Laurent Ramadier

**MORIFADE**  
Cast A Spell (MCD)  
(Loud 'n' Proud/N.T.S.)

The fact that Andy La Rocque produced that five song CD won't save it from sucking and from my immense anger towards such crappy/ happy sounding shit! I know a journalist should not give his opinion, and should just describe the product he listens to but I do believe that

it's our responsibility to try to help out with our tastes the record buyers (that we are too!) so people can choose some stuff in the million or so albums that come out every week what can be good and what's not according to our respective tastes. We're not here to lick the ass of record company owners and that's the point. Right now avoid this like the black pest or rest assured to be damned 'til death!

Laurent Ramadier

**MORTIFER**  
If Tomorrow Comes  
(MetalAgen)

This Russian outfit while being far from truly impressive or killer have learned enough from the old '80s Thrash bands like KREATOR, SODOM and SEPULTURA especially to come up with some solid, yet totally unoriginal material on this effort. The most impressive songs being the title track, a raging well executed tune, "I'm Your Fear", "Slave Of Fate" and "Sea Of Tears", all of them sounding at times alot like old SEPULTURA "Schizophrenia" period mainly with some vocal delivery close to what Massimilio Cavalera was doing back then- before he decided to be the most angry man on earth through his voice and delivering some crappy bullshit in the '90s. You can expect some quite effective ripping work from those guys, never trying to be the most extreme fuckers on this earth or whatever, just being themselves and I give them praise for that. The album closes with "Don't Say Never", a quite boring ballad which sounds somehow out of place here. I won't say it's a highly recommended release or whatever, but for those who like retro thrash, then this band is definitely one of the best until now. Contact: MetalAgen-Variant, 5c-o/d, P.Box -179, Glawpochtamt, 101000 Moscow, Russia, e-mail: [metalagen@spoyuz.ru](mailto:metalagen@spoyuz.ru)

Laurent Ramadier

**NARNIA**  
Desert Land  
(Nuclear Blast)

Third album from these Swedish Christian Metallers... and I'm happy to report that "Desert Land" will get repeated plays in most stereos as this act continue to improve on every recording. Featuring a neo-Classical slant this band navigate from a standpoint of DIO-era RAINBOW meeting Yngwie Malmsteen- while lyrically tackling the C.S. Lewis stories for positive topics. There are a number of songs which explore a doomer terrain to good effect, especially the double shot of "Falling From The Throne" and "Revolution Of Mother Earth"- while the production also accents NARNIA's desire to move into heavier pastures with a lower emphasis on keyboards and a bigger emphasis on the guitar riffing. Another area I enjoy are the vocals that have a slight AOR tinge to them- they aren't reaching for notes beyond the highest pitch which provides an easier performance to handle. Not in the league of originators- NARNIA will appeal to listeners who like guitar hero songs. Above average considering the cookie crunching most European melodic Metal acts have been churning out over the past year or so.

Matt Coe

**NODE**  
Sterilized  
(Lucretia Records)

Another album that doesn't like the world. You have to be very angry and pessimistic to come up with such a destructive sound. And none of us will like it- or can you hear Industrial meets modern Metal without getting a headache? Any PITCH SHIFTER or TREPONEM PAL supporters here? No. Fine. So it's no use to write more about this six-tracker, just a question of good taste, isn't it?

Heinz Konzett

**JOHN NORUM**  
Worlds Away  
(Mascot Records)

The ex-EUROPE guitarist released this cd some time ago and now Mascot licensed it. And I am disappointed. Too much Alternative influences from the little all-star band with Simon Wright (AC/DC, DIO) on drums, Peter Baltes (ACCEPT) on bass and Kelly Keeling on vox. Norum's soloing is still formidable, I like his melodic play in the vein of Michael Schenker. The riffing



and arrangements are - as said - too less traditional and too much ZEPPELIN-esque with somewhat alternative interludes. The best track is the bonus one "From Outside In" which also stands on the excellent "Face It Live '97" album that is recommended if you look for a high-quality JOHN NORUM output. "Worlds Away" isn't.

Heinz Konzett

**OLIVER/DAWSON SAXON**  
Re://Landed  
(Phoenix Music)

I can't believe it. Should I review an album that uses the SAXON logo and the name SAXON in the album title when it is NOT a SAXON record? I decided to. The SAXON original members Graham Oliver (guitar) and Steve Dawson (bass) put together a strong line-up with Nigel Durham on drums (ex-SAXON member) and John Ward (ex-SHY) and played some gigs with only SAXON classics, beginning with "Power And The Glory" and ending with "Wheels Of Steel", and release it as a live album now. Nothing against that, the music is - of course - out of any critique, Ward is an excellent singer and the production for a live record nearly too good. BUT: this is NOT the real SAXON. Do they want to destroy the reputation of a Metal legend with this false play? Do they want to sell some records with that wrong game? That sucks completely, so if you can dub this one, do it, there's no problem as Oliver and Dawson have the right to play SAXON classics, but they have no moral right to use SAXON as their band name. I wonder what Biff Byford says to that deception...

Heinz Konzett

**ONWARD**  
Evermoving  
(Century Media)

Hell, it seems C. Media did their maximum to add this band on their roster based on what they say - as they were signed by Sentinel Steel to start with, and it's definitely obvious that ONWARD can go far considering the quite impressive album they deliver here. The star on this release is incontestably vocalist Michael Grant, known for his vocal work with the South America based band LEGEND MAKER. The guy has an incredible pair of lungs in the same range as James Rivera I'd say, not that bad huh?! The other star is guitar virtuoso Toby Knapp who already recorded an instrumental album for Varney but sometimes he just puts too much of himself with some faster than the speed of light guitar parts, something totally unnecessary for ONWARD. I just hope next time he'll concentrate a bit more on delivering non stop ripping flawless riffing and put more emotion in his lead style, that's all we need. As for now, this album starts in a ripping fashion with "The Kindness Of Strangers" (minus a small cheesy happy part), "Onward", "The Last Sunset", "Witches Winter Eternal", and "The Lost Side Of The World" good stuff all the way. There's a couple of fillers such as "Storm Coming Soon" or "The Waterfall Enchantress", but not that much fortunately. Add on the top of this an adequate production for that style. Definitely a promising melodic Power Metal act for the future!

Laurent Ramadier

**ORDAINED**  
The Second Coming  
(Sinternational Records)

Second record for Virginia's own Heavy/ Speed Metal band. Ordained are still quite a new band as they were formed in 1996 but this is still the kind of band which could have delivered an honest album considering the first two tracks, unfortunately their efforts are totally ruined by some totally out of place Hardcore like vocals by The Reverend - a stupid moniker if you ask me, as his "vocals" are just disgusting. Sorry guys but you should change your singer right away if you really want to have a chance to make any sort of impact. Apart from that, guitarist Rob Soul manages to come up with some interesting music at times especially with "Caught In A Trap" (which features fast ripping riffing), "Sealed With A Fist" (again quite wasted by the vocals), and "I Am The One" featuring a CELTIC FROST kind of Heavy/ mid paced tempo. Besides that the other ten tracks (a little too much by the way), just go nowhere. These guys still need to work deeply on their songs and find a proper singer, for now they're just another average act. Website: [www.ordained.net](http://www.ordained.net), e-mail: [rob@sinternational.net](mailto:rob@sinternational.net)

Laurent Ramadier

**OVERDRIVE**  
Overdrive (picture 7")  
(Stormbringer Productions)

Who will not remember the two albums "Swords And Axes" and "Metal Attack" and the rare EP "Reflexions" made by the Swedish band OVERDRIVE? Well Stormbringer Productions (who also released picture disc singles of Dutch bands like VORTEX and HAMMER-HAWK) now release the very first two songs of these Swedish Metalheads. They printed them on a super quality vinyl 7" picture disc. These are two songs that were recorded even before the songs that were on "Reflexions". We hear Kenta Svensson on drums, Pelle Thuresson on vocals, Kjell Jacobsson on guitars, Kenth Eriksson on bass and of course Mr Sweden Heavy Metal himself Janne Stark on guitars. Kjell and Kenta came from OCEAN, while the rest of the band started their career in PARADIZE. The songs that are on this limited, hand numbered release are called "Overdrive" and "20th Century". The melodic Metal of the band is of a very high quality, as we know it from their two full length releases. The song "20th Century" is a bit more Metal. Both songs sound a tiny bit like MOTÖRHEAD through the hoarse voice of Pelle. This band kicks ass and it would be a good investment to buy yourself a copy of this great release. For more information about this very well taken care of 7", you can get in touch with Stormbringer Productions - Linnégatan 24-38062 Mörybylänga - Sweden or send an email to [stormbringer@mbx302.swimpnet.se](mailto:stormbringer@mbx302.swimpnet.se). If you like to get more information about this Swedish band called OVERDRIVE, then I can direct you to [www.algonet.se/~stark](http://www.algonet.se/~stark). I want to thank Niclas Johansson for making this review possible!

Toine van Poorten

**OVERSOUL**  
Seven Days In November  
(Gutter Records)

Markus from Gutter seems to be a big Doom Metal frak as he has some Doom bands on his roster (IRON MAN, REVELATION). The best of those is OVERSOUL. SABBATH-ish lava riffing meets slow-motion melodies. I already said it before, this is totally un-commercial music - as Doom Metal is meant to be. I prefer THUNDERSTORM or SOLITUDE AETURNUS in this honest genre though because of their Power Metal parts and the using of double basses. OVERSOUL are more basic Doom Metal, like SAINT VITUS or PENTAGRAM which is more than okay and if you support underground slow stuff give OVERSOUL a listen (or two).

Heinz Konzett

**OVERSTEP**  
Karrig An Ankou  
(Brennus)

Second full length release for the French Heavy Metalers which follows very well what they started on "La Pierre" two years ago. Nothing has changed and they remain true to their sound/ roots which is great if you ask me. With this new opus they tried their best to come up with something really solid productionwise as they used a well known French producer who managed to give them a heavier/ better sound than before, a great layout and musically they give us a bunch of very good tunes and some filler ones also unfortunately. I mean of course everybody is entitled to his own opinion but I just can't give credit to "Heavy Metal", "Les Nouveaux Croisés" and "BCBG", those being extremely annoying and had simply no place here. BUT on the other hand, following a very good introduction the title track opens the festivities in a great way, intense Heavy Metal with a killer break section coupled with excellent vocal work - delivered in their native Breton tongue, and effective yet basic riffing. "L'Instant Supreme" follows with never ending intensity, very good stuff and close to what SORTILEGE were doing years ago. "Ghost Dance" is another great mid paced track with more great vocal work from Morgan Marlet and some really well added female backing vocals. "Space Cat" is a good Metal instrumental but nothing truly outstanding. Then comes "Voyage De Guerre" which is my fave track next to the title track, it starts with a great "prepare for battle" intro and then goes into a war march with Morgan's vocals being very reminiscent of Marc Ferry (BLASPHEME), the music being quite similar at times to what MANOWAR were doing in their early days,

killer. Then comes "Au Dela" which deals with near death experience stuff, a great haunting slow paced super heavy track featuring more excellent female backing vocals. The album closes with the title track again but this time with French lyrics. All in all a very good second offering but there's still some flaws in the songwriting department that need to be corrected if they want to come up with a full monster next time. For now this album is worth every bit of money you put into it. Contact: [brennus.hardrock@wanadoo.fr](mailto:brennus.hardrock@wanadoo.fr)

Laurent Ramadier

**PARAGON**  
Steelbound  
(Remedy Records)

Glad that these Germans are still alive! After "The Final Command" and "Chalice In Steel" on B.O. Records (get both if you find 'em), the new crusher delivers again a high dose of pure Metal made in Germany. This time the ACCEPT meets JUDAS PRIEST meets classic US Metal cocktail was mixed with some IRON SAVIOR-like melodies; because Piet Sielk produced the album in a fine way. I have no clue about this but what I surely know is that bands like PARAGON stand for Heavy Metal in its purest form - no keyboards, no bombastic interludes - just honest, basic Metal which I adore deeply. The singer Andreas Babuschkin will not be of everybody's liking with his unique, mid-ranged voice but what the heck do you await from a real Metal shouter besides emotion, balls and power? The band's performance on tracks like the riff monster "New Dark Age", the oldschool German Metalish "Steelbound", the angry "Face II Face", or the re-recorded "World Of Sin" (from the same album which is out of print a long time ago, if someone wants to sell it - let me know I would buy it...) make this piece of Metal something special. A wonderful Metal cover, ten killers and only one filler with the slow "Don't Wake The Dead" should make you look for the other side of the coin - meaning the two words which make our life rich - Heavy Metal.

Heinz Konzett

**PENTAGRAM**  
Pentagram  
(Picoroco Records)

When I got offered to buy that release, I just didn't waste any minute and got it just because Chile's PENTAGRAM has always been one of South America's brightest Thrash/ Death hopefuls. In fact I always thought that those guys could blow away SEPULTURA everyday considering the off the wall arrangements and brutal riffs they delivered. PENTAGRAM bandleader Anton Reisenegger has finally agreed to release the two demos from '86 and '87 with the addition of two live tracks as bonus. Everything kills here, no need to name any song or whatever, all you have here is pure high quality Death/ Thrash Metal obviously influenced by SLAYER, EXODUS, POSSESSED, CELTIC FROST mainly but they still managed to come up with a quite original sound - a huge achievement back then if you ask me. It's just too bad that this talented outfit never got the chance to receive any sort of label interest except from the tiny Chainsaw Murder label who issued a PENTAGRAM single around 1987. Now Anton is involved with CRIMINAL - following the demise of FALL OUT, unfortunately this band has more in common with the PANTERA and MACHINE HEAD of this world than with the mighty PENTAGRAM. Website: [www.picoroco.cl](http://www.picoroco.cl)

Laurent Ramadier

**PERFECT CRIME**  
Crimetime (MCD)  
(Starfish Music/ Point Music)

These guys originally started out as PERFECT CRIME, but quickly changed their name around a little bit to avoid confusion with another German band of the same name. Apart from winning a band contest, they recently got some attention in the underground for having covered the BREAKER classic "Ten Seconds In" in their live set, which even resulted in a show together with the Cleveland bunch. The five-song mini CD "Crimetime" (playing time approx. 30min!) is their first "real" official release (following a self financed demo CD) and features very well executed traditional Metal, often on the edge to the melodic Rock genre and partly even touching the progressive field. Apart from the rather superfluous spoken intro with strong German accent, the whole disc turned out surprisingly convinc-



ing. It's actually really refreshing that (unlike many other German bands) PERFECT CRIME do NOT follow the path of "happy" Metal veterans HELLOWEEN/GAMMA RAY, but concentrate on deeply structured compositions instead. The strong, clear melodic vocals are above the average and their nicely balanced mixture of heavy guitars with melodic keyboards just works out fine. The band covers a big musical variety, from the heavy uptempo opening track "Perfect Crime", to the kinda AOR-ish "Inner Strength" and the rather Progressive "Hands Of Fate", but never to the extent that it sounds pathetic or weird in any way. It's more like that all those elements just seem to fit together perfectly. The CD packaging already looks pretty professional while the sound/production could certainly be improved a little bit more with a bigger budget on future releases. You can contact the band for further information directly through their website: [www.perfect-crime.de](http://www.perfect-crime.de). If you'd like to order a copy of the MCD send 15,- DM (+ postage) to: Hot Shot Records-Obnstr. 32-28195 Bremen- Germany Phone: +49 (0) 421 70 47 30, Fax: +49 (0) 421 70 64 52.

Frank Stöver

**PHOENIX RISING**  
**Eternal Crusade**  
 (Face Front)

It's evident. The happy Metal movement goes on and on 'till most fans are fed up of the sweet melodies (and discover the real Metal bands, it's not forbidden to dream, isn't it?). PHOENIX RISING have no clue about Metal, their melodies are so sweet and happy that I fall asleep and after that I get angry over why such trendy outfits get a deal and hopeful ones do not. Take some RUNNING WILD riffs, all the happy melodies fungus of HELLOWEEN and GAMMA RAY and a sub-standard (and cheap) production and you have the result. Grrrr, what a waste to hear this keyboard-ish, happy "Metal" album. Avoid this.

Heinz Konzett

**PRIMAL FEAR**  
**Nuclear Fire**  
 (Nuclear Blast)

Does the title pay homage to their record company- who knows? Has the quartet from Germany delivered another album that all PRIEST freaks will adore? Most assuredly! The three gun blast of "Angel In Black", "Kiss Of Death" and "Back From Hell" pummel your sonic senses with rapid machine gun riffing, double bass drum fury and Ralf Scheepers highest vocals in quite some time. While the trademark hawk graces the cover and the production continues to be excellent, PRIMAL FEAR made it a point to concentrate more on writing memorable parts and melodies- something that "Jaws Of Death" lacked at times. While I'll be the quickest to note that this band aren't exactly forging a new style of Metal on to the public, what "Nuclear Fire" offers is a solid quality 12 song album that nestles itself firmly between "Screaming For Vengeance" or "Painkiller"- refusing to go more modern than necessary. Favorite tracks- the triplet fueled "Fight The Fire" that hints at previous METALLICA circa 1984 glory days and closing anthem "Living For Metal". Traditionalists already have "Nuclear Fire"- newcomers would be well advised to get this one and learn what PRIMAL FEAR can bring to the cause for 2001...taking steps from Metal's historic timeline, British and German.

Matt Coe

**PYRAMID**  
**The Immaculate Lie**  
 (Locomotive Music)

Second album from this Spanish Progressive Metal group, who've ascended quickly in their two year existence to play with BARON ROJO and OBUS among others. Founded by guitarist Tony Valles, PYRAMID play very close to their heroes DREAM THEATER- as the basic compositions leave their musical dexterity to the solo/ instrumental passages. You'll hear equal interaction between keyboard riffing and guitar parts that take the lead dependent on the mood- plus a touch of Arab and classical influences in longer songs like eight minute plus "The Mastery Of Flight" or close to 14 minute "Armageddon". Vocalist Javier Cespedes enjoys singing in his high range and rarely strays below his mid range which may turn off some listeners who prefer a more multidimensional singer. The production contains all the heaviness and clarity you could want for Progress-

sive Metal- and I think PYRAMID have displayed on these ten songs that they can write songs and play their instruments. What they haven't conquered is the ability to create originality from your mentors influence- so this one can only be for seekers of "Images And Words" clones. **Contact: Locomotive Music- PO Box 116094-28080 Madrid- SPAIN. Web: <http://www.locomotivemusic.com>**

Matt Coe

**QUO VADIS**  
**Day Into Night**  
 (Hypnotic Records)

I am surprised. These Canadians deliver some really decent Thrash Metal stuff with strong resemblances to DEATH. The drummer is an animal, playing incredible double bass, the music is full of great riffing and complex parts and the singer growls as Chuck Schuldiner used to. Wow. Just hearing "I Believe" - fantastic drum work from Yanic Bercier, this guy rocks. If you are into the last three DEATH albums or CYNIC's masterpiece "Focus", you will easily get into "Day Into Night"- crossing Speed/ Thrash/ Death Metal with complex yet melodic arrangements and some great musicianship. One of the most heard albums in my player the last few weeks. Highly recommended extreme Metal stuff.

Heinz Konzett

**RAGE**  
**Welcome To The Other Side**  
 (Gun Records)

What more can I say to RAGE other than I completely lost interest in the band through the last two disappointing albums ("XIII" and "Ghost"). The commercial approach and the dull post-METALLICA hooks got on my nerves and after watching the very weak live gig at last year's "Heavy Oder Was" festival it became obvious- Peavy got caught too much in the orchestra thing, selling more albums than ever but losing his Metal credibility. With the new album RAGE came back to the pure three-piece Metal outfit, having an outstanding band behind him with Mike Terrana on drums and Victor Smolski on guitar. For mainman Peavy at least a step back to the real-Metal direction. The music comes crunchier, not as easy to foresee, not as commercial and - in the end - more in their older traditional Metal direction. No, it's not another "Perfect Man" but I must admit that his vocal performance can be called his most mature so far and the guitar noodling from Victor is astonishing as well. The 14 songs (with three interludes) are a bit bulky on first listen and a few tunes sound a bit too modern or too sweet for me, but all in all it's the first RAGE album I've enjoyed since the aforementioned smasher "Black In Mind" in 1995. More than awaited.

Heinz Konzett

**RAWHEAD REXX**  
**Rawhead REXX**  
 (AFM Records)

Remembering the German QUEENSRYPHE clones GLENMORE? The ex-vocalist Jürgen Volk of that deceased band founded a new traditional Metal band from Germany and they release their debut album after playing the Heavy Oder Was festival last year and doing a good demo-cd. So their name is already well-known in the underground, quite a rarity in these days and reminding of the good old days where tape-trading could make a band popular BEFORE an official release. What should you expect? A bloody painting with skulls and a kind of punk monster holding his own heart in his hands... a disgusting cover, like OMEN's "Battle Cry" one. And like the OMEN classic "Rawhead REXX" is also a killer! METAL CHURCH-ish riffing, a clean, powerful voice and some more classic US Metal arrangements, like old VICIOUS RUMOUS used on their first four albums, make RAWHEAD REXX an untypical German band that stands out of the masses. The opener "Town Of Skulls" - a Speed Metal tune (Hell yeah, Speed Metal is not dead after hearing this tune), old ANNIHILATOR riffing in "The Wolf" or real power in "Holy War" - music for the real Metal maniac - a true Heavy Metal album.

Heinz Konzett

**REALLY CRAZY GERMANS**  
**Adolf Castle**  
 (MetalAgen)

Out of the three Russian releases I've received from MetalAgen/ Vaillant Productions, this one is the worst despite the fact that they seem to be "popular" at least in Germany considering the fact that there's one song on it which was supposedly recorded live in Dortmund- actually the "best" and "heaviest" song of the whole album, maybe they do a one song set! - But that said, this outfit absolutely suck with their totally cheesy choruses and in fact the cheesy songs ("Crazy Germans" with some silly harmonica parts, "Oh Grand Old Alarie", "Fall In Hate" etc...), they sound like anything except Heavy Metal and the fact that they include some folklore in their music make them sound even worse. Of course from time to time they come up with an interesting riff ("Gallow Tree", "Russian Poleizi", "Crown By The Sun" (with a huge Dickinson rip off vocal part), "Iron Riders" (not really a Metalic anthem by any means) but the arrangements are so childish and the production so non adequate that the stuff sounds weak. "Heart Of The Spring" is an okay ballad attempt featuring some adequate vocal melodies. These guys still have ALOT to learn and they're certainly not the HELLOWEEN or the TESLA of tomorrow! **Contact: MetalAgen-Valiant, 5c-o/d, P.Box -179, Glawpochtamt, 101000 Moscow, Russia, e-mail: [metlagen@spoyuz.ru](mailto:metlagen@spoyuz.ru)**

Laurent Ramadier

**RHAPSODY**  
**Dawn of Victory**  
 (LMP)

Finally proving their live worth last year on the road with SONATA ARCTICA and STRATOVARIUS- the Italian quintet that launched symphonic metal to the world has released their third full length. Compared to the first albums which started the craze, RHAPSODY's "Dawn Of Victory" channels more Metal and more Classical elements to develop a killer album. Witness the speedy riff changes in the furious "Holy Thunderforce" or the quieter flute passages and baroque recorders which permeate the slower marching/ epic feel of "The Village Of Dwarves". You would think that the choral parts and instrumentation have a highly cinematic/ theater shape- and you wouldn't be far from the truth in songs like "Dargo, Shadowlord Of The Black Mountain" or "The Last Winged Unicorn". Vocalist Fabio Leone puts forth his best studio performance- rising to the challenge in the slower, somber parts as easily as the bombastic, frantic movements. Those who enjoy Luca Turilli's Symphonic/ Classical guitar solos will savor plenty on each of these ten songs. Even the sampled bass drums which bothered most critics on their earlier efforts has been rectified. When done correctly I love classically infused Metal. Therefore- RHAPSODY attains the highest praise. Who knows what the fourth album will deliver.

Matt Coe

**RHAPSODY**  
**Holy Thunderforce (MCD)**  
 (LMP)

Can I expect from the people who worship/ listen to that happy "Metal" sounding stuff to wake up and realize how much harm these bands do to real Metal music?! I doubt it but I pray for this because as I already stated several times, that kind of stuff has nothing to do with Metal plain and simple! Oh I forgot, some people told me that they're good because they mix Classical music with Metal, but please check out Blackmore's past and recent work or Malmsteen instead, those people know what writing Metal music mixed with Classical music really means unlike these cheap Italian rip offs.

Laurent Ramadier

**RIVAL**  
**Modern World**  
 (self-financed)

Kudos to fellow traditional Metalhead/ editor of That's Metal fanzine Martin Brandt for turning me on to this promising Illinois quartet. Their second CD is a nine song true Metal feast, worthy of repeated listens and containing a great balance of melodic sensibility and riffing that ranges from high octave ("Half Alive", "Death Stalker") to quite understated and infectious (personal favorites "Tides Of Fate" and "Strange Wings" SAVATAGE-like vibe of "In Silence"). Musically RIVAL have their sound rooted in 1980's traditional power- although the songs normally range three-four minutes you'll hear loads of solo action, double bass pummeling and a solid vocalist in bassist John



Johnson that has a mix of David Defeis and the sorely missed J.D. Kimball in his pipes. Killer production, excellent packaging with live photos of the act in action- I'm surprised no labels haven't been clamoring for RIVAL. Those who appreciate old QUEENSRYCHE, older OMEN and a touch of VIRGIN STEELE would be well advised to pick up the next US Metal sensation. Also be aware that their earlier five song 1991/ 1998 CD EP is available and along the same line of the 80's Metal style. RIVAL deliver first class Metal- no hype, just pure heaviness on this stellar disc. **Contact: RIVAL- P.O. Box 30369- Chicago, IL 60630-0369-USA. Web: <http://www.rivalmusic.net>**

*Matt Coe*

**ROB ROCK**  
**Rage Of Creation**  
**(Massacre Records)**

Shock came to my face when hearing that IMPELLITERI let go vocalist Rob Rock because he wanted to record a solo record and tour more worldwide. Isn't that what Metal musicians long for- the mutual exchange of live gigs and crowd energy? I digress- "Rage Of Creation" sees the reunion of Roy Z as producer with Rob Rock- plus a welcome return from guitarist Jake E. Lee. All ten songs (plus the national anthem-like intro "In The Beginning") prove that Rob has a wonderfully versatile melodic Metal voice- equally adept on the speedburners like "The Sun Will Rise Again" or "Streets Of Madness" or a moodier piece like the epic "Judgement Day". Some of the lead guitar work from Jake E. Lee can put IMPELLITERI to shame- the pacing from slow note bending to the Oriental scale shredfest within 16 measures of "One Way Out" will make everyone a believer again in his guitar prowess. "Rage Of Creation" has a modern production like Roy Z's efforts in the latest HALFORD or Bruce Dickinson solo albums, yet the songwriting and performances recall the best montage of '70's and 80's Hard Rock/ Metal acts. The first tempo change in "Judgement Day" has a vocal melody akin to the refrain in "Rime Of The Ancient Mariner"- while other songs have pieces of DIO, JUDAS PRIEST and ACCEPT. Everyone who loves Snakepit should get this album- an early favorite for album of 2001.

*Matt Coe*

**ROSE TATOO**  
**25 To Life (DCD)**  
**(Steamhammer/SPV)**

The second Australian legendary band next to AC/DC is back with a double live album recorded in...Wacken of course! I suppose it couldn't be somewhere else but only in Wacken in August 2000. I remember buying a copy of their first album around '80 or '81 and being happily surprised with it. I mean you can't go wrong with stuff as hard and aggressive as the first TATTOO stuff. I never had the same feeling with their next album "Assault & Battery" and with the later stuff as the magic was gone as far as I'm concerned. But this live album rocks from the start to the end, no matter from which album the songs come from, pure Hard 'n' Roll music! It's easy to see that Angry Anderson and the band gave their best for this performance in front of a raging crowd. Lovers of the Australian sound, you will love this.

*Laurent Ramadier*

**SAMSON**  
**Live In London 2000**  
**(Zoom Club Records)**

This CD comes with an extra video CD. It was recorded on May 26th at the London Astoria 2. They played a live show there to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of NWOBHM, together with ANGELWITCH and PRAYING MANTIS. The ANGELWITCH gig was released on the same label. This SAMSON gig contains the line up with Chris Ayimer on bass, Thunderstick as the caged drummer, "The Voice" Nicky Moore on vocals and of course Paul Samson on lead guitar. It's the same line up that also attacked the Wacken Open Air festival in a very successful way. The band made a good choice between old and new songs (ie. "Brand New Day"). From opener "Test Of Time" on you can enjoy the great powerful Bluesy voice of Nicky Moore. His voice didn't change a bit over the years. Eleven songs are on this double CD release, good for one hour of pure SAMSON. The songs on the video CD are "Red Skies", "Earth Mother", "Thunderstick's Swedish Dance" and

"Riding With The Angels". But of course you can also enjoy great songs like "Vice Versa", "Don't Get Mad, Get Even" and "Mr. Rock And Roll" to name a few. I think that Paul Samson wrote "Mr. Rock And Roll" about himself, 'cause this man really knows how to rock and I'm glad that he survived over the years. Hopefully this line up will record a new studio CD soon. Until then, you can enjoy this great release.

*Toine van Poorten*

**SAVATAGE**  
**Poets And Madmen**  
**(Steamhammer/SPV)**

Looks like SAVATAGE are trying to make a powerful comeback with this eleventh studio album featuring also 11 songs where they tried to do something much heavier than usual. At least that's how it sounds at first listen with tracks such as "There In The Silence", "I Seek Power", "Drive" or even with "Surrender". For the rest of the album there's way too much piano introductions which can be found in most of the tracks before the tune becomes heavier and then coming back to something mellow which becomes rapidly very annoying, boring or whatever. That said, I think die hard SAVATAGE fans will enjoy this alot so I guess we can say it's a comeback to the "Hall Of The Mountain King" period.

*Christophe Abraham*

**SAXON**  
**Diamonds And Nuggets**  
**(Angel Air)**

Now this is what I call an interesting compilation CD. It contains 19 (!!) tracks from SAXON. All these tracks are previously unreleased in this form and some of them are on CD for the very first time. The CD opens with three live recordings namely "Stallions Of The Highway", "Midnight Rider" and "Frozen Rainbow". Then they continue with two tracks from the "Power And The Glory" sessions "Turn Out The Lights" and "Coming To The Rescue". Besides this we hear unreleased outtakes of "See The Light Shining", "Stand Up And Be Counted", "Freeway Mad", "Street Fighting Man", "Still Fit To Rock And Roll" and "Big Teaser". As you can see they sometimes changed the original names of the songs a tiny bit. But there are also a few songs that were never released on any album at all like "Walking", "Ann Marie", "Stone Room Jam" and "Ain't You Glad To Be Alive". The songs are to be heard in their rawest versions imaginable, with some very fine guitar work of Paul Quinn and Graham Oliver. On one version of "Frozen Rainbow" that is on this compilation you can hear Kevin Ayers (ARGENT) play keyboards. The liner notes in the CD booklet are by Dave Ling and the track by track comments by the songs were given by Graham Oliver and Steve Dawson. Graham believes that there will be more of these releases in the future. I would really like that cause this CD sounds awesome. And it was great to hear how SAXON sounded in their early days when they were still called COAST and SON OF A BITCH. It's a true must for every devoted SAXON and Heavy Metal fan on this earth.

*Toine van Poorten*

**MICHAEL SCHENKER**  
**Dreams And Expressions**  
**(Steamhammer/SPV)**

"Dreams And Expressions" is a 43 minute instrumental effort by the German god who still comes up with riffs, melodies and lead work that leaves me breathless just like in the old days. And even if some of his leads have lost some of their initial raw attack from the glorious '74- '82 period, the man is still GOD! I'm not gonna name any tracks as there's no song titles, each track being a letter from the album title, but the whole thing rules if you love Michael's work. Even if his solo albums don't do anything to me since the weak "BUILT TO DESTROY" release (so that's a long time ago!), when he does a pure instrumental effort or work with the revamped U.F.O., he's still number one along with Mr Roth to me! What's really enjoyable also with this album is the fact that the songs are all clocking around two or three minutes and they're almost all chained together so it sounds almost like a long track with lots of changes, very enjoyable unlike so many other instrumental releases! Schenker is backed up with Barry Sparks on bass and Shane Gaalaas on drums, a powerful and effective rhythm section. But yeah the man really smokes on this new recording! Reign of the Flying V!

*Laurent Ramadier*

**SEASONS OF THE WOLF**  
**Lost In Hell**  
**(Adrenaline Records)**

This release is a bit dated but it got no review in our magazine and that we have to correct. Because SEASONS OF THE WOLF, as you might know already, play unique Heavy Metal. In the heritage of CIRITH UNGOL and MANILLA ROAD, Wes Waddell, Barry Waddell, Wayne Hoeffle, Dennis Ristow and Chris Withford are a peculiar band. Already the self-titled debut in 1996 offered non-typical US Hard Rock, though the production was too mellow there. Their "Earth Mother Music" is living from the extreme voice from Wes Waddell, a love-hate one, and my decision is clear - I love it as it sounds like a cross between Udo Dirkschneider and Mark Shelton. The classic US Metal riffing gets supported by opulent keys, but attention - no happy melodies, only supporting the aggressive as well as bombastic approach. Outfits like SEASONS OF THE WOLF will forever stay underground, their music is too un-commercial for the masses, but the people who discover the musical beauty in "Lost In Hell" will get addicted. An important band because there are only few of that calibre in today's Metal scene. Simply a real Metal album.

*Heinz Konzett*

**SECRET SPHERE**  
**A Time Never Come**  
**(Elevate Records)**

I heard from JAG PANZER's Mark Briody that this Italian outfit is one of his current faves. So I was curious to know more about them. My expectations weren't fulfilled after listening to their second album. Mediocre neo-classical Metal in the vein of - guess who - STRATOVARIUS and the normal - annoying - HELLOWEEN influences. Like INSANJA, HIGHLORD, ZONATA or tons of others they are really skilled musicians, good songwriters, there's a talented high pitched singer, no doubt. "Under The Flag Of Mary Read" or the RHAPSODY-like "Hamelin" make it a bit more than "just like all others", but they do not come up with somewhat more than only music based on their models. A pity if you look at their talent.

*Heinz Konzett*

**SEVEN SINS**  
**Victim Of Sin**  
**(Headless Records)**

German bands with female vocalists are not that ordinary in the year 2001, there's the established DORO, the newcomers BACKSLASH and ?. So, the Germans SEVEN SINS are to count in here and Andrea Münster makes a good job, she can sing and her performance is not sweet or happy, more crunchy and basic. Well-done. The band supports here with groovy Power Metal and I like the simple approach, there's no frickeling, no complexity, few bombastic parts but in general more traditional German Metal stuff like older RAGE used to. I just read a quite bad review of the album in Rock Hard magazine and can not follow it - for me and my personal Metal taste "Victim Of Sin" is a rather decent Metal album, but only if you listen to the powerful title track or "Exstasy" carefully. Available at mailorders or contact: **Georg Palm, Mauerfeldchen 98, 52146 Würselen, Germany (DM 25,- should be enough).**

*Heinz Konzett*

**SHADOWBREED**  
**Only Shadows Remain**  
**(Painkiller)**

Well it could have been an okay Death/ Thrash release if the vocals weren't that Black Metal influenced but unfortunately those kind of crappy unnatural vocals just makes this album a very average one. A shame because at times these guys can come up with some real effective riffing which can easily compete with what SEPULTURA (when they delivered powerful Thrash a.k.a. "Schizophrenia" and "Beneath..."), THE HORDE OF TORMENT or PESTILENCE ("Malleus..." period) could deliver. Three songs particularly can attest of that, "Path In The Dark", "Lost Ways Regained" and "Avatar", those being extremely aggressive, powerful, intense and...well executed! But other than that, the rest of the album doesn't go anywhere especially with that crappy singing. If those Dutch guys would listen carefully to what has been done 12 years before they formed



and learn from that a bit more, then they could become as good as say THE HAUNTED for example. E-mail: [painkiller@infonie.be](mailto:painkiller@infonie.be), website: [www.members.xoom.com/Pkrecords/](http://www.members.xoom.com/Pkrecords/)

*Laurent Ramadier*

**SHADOWKEEP**  
Corruption Within  
(LMP)

Following up the demo EP that received high marks from me in a previous Snakepit issue, I predicted a quick ascent to the label ranks. Proof is held within this debut album- a 12 song platter (which includes a hidden track of "Queen Of The Reich") that features new songs added to re-recordings of the older demo songs. Rogue M. has a warble in his vocals that you'll either praise for its difference or hate for the same reason- and my feelings are split as he sounds adequate on "Dark Tower" but makes for choppy waters on the slower verses within "The Trial Of Your Betrayal". Musically rooted in dark Power Metal a la CRIMSON GLORY or QUEENSRÛCHE- this English quintet try to add some Progressive touches in the solo buildups and bridges that merge into the verses. I enjoy the quick off time guitar picking that burns through cuts like "Mark Of The Usurper" and "Murder"- but I'm not thrilled with the double bass sounds as once again its too processed for the savage nature of SHADOWKEEP's music. I believe "Corruption Within" represents a fine start, but I'll expect even more next time to capture my headspace or they'll only gain a cult following.

*Matt Coe*

**SILENCER**  
Kozmos  
(self-financed)

Second release and one that I was eagerly anticipating based on the brief samples I heard from their website. This Colorado quartet have expanded beyond the ACCEPT meets early Metal Blade tag I placed upon their first demo back in issue 6. Opener "Mourning Star" moves from heads down thrash to clean vocals that recall King Fowley's range in OCTOBER 31. The title cut features a spacey/ choppy riffing style and haunting melodies not unlike the Canadian master VOIVOD. Where the band gains points with me is the live styled recording as I appreciate the older production values that befit their metal revelry. I believe every member has improved at their respective instrument and the arranging has also improved with stronger parts and dynamic contrasts that keep these four songs (plus "Easter Island" instrumental) moving at a fair clip. Keith Spargo's normal rough vocals have a deep bite- you won't struggle to make out his words and I believe with more training his clean efforts can add another weapon to SILENCER's musical arsenal. My favorites include the chunky "Missing Hope" and the aforementioned title track. You like underground Metal with a grimy feel? You need SILENCER. Contact: Silencer-355 Goldco Circle- Golden, CO 80403- USA. Web: <http://www.silencer.cc>

*Matt Coe*

**SINDROME**  
Sindrome  
(self-financed)

Killer! Hailing from Chicago, Mick Vega, Shaun Glass, Troy Dixler, Tony Ochoa and Ken Sanich released the demos "Into The Hall Of Extermination" and "Vault Of Inner Conscience" in 1992 which now appears on a (bootleg) cd. Old EXODUS meets SACRIFICE, mainly high-speed, powerfully produced, with strong Bay Area parts and also some insane, complex riffing. When it arrived here, I was completely caught by this explosive gem as I missed the demos at that time. Unfortunately I have no contact address where you can buy this one as it's sold out at the mailorder I bought it and it seems to be a Japanese pressing without any booklet info. But if you search at Metal Markets or contact their old management (Midwest Management Exchange, P.O.Box 2112, Highland Park, IL. 60035-8112, USA), it may be possible to get your hands on a real Thrash Metal pearl that is a must-have for every serious Thrash collection.

*Heinz Konzett*

**SKY LARK**  
Gate Of Heaven  
(Underground Symphony)

More Symphonic/ happy "Metal" from Italy with those childish mindless double bass parts and cheesy keyboard parts all the way. Contrary to what some happy Metal fans can believe, I have nothing against keyboards actually as long as they are extremely well incorporated into the songs (U.F.O., NOCTURNUS, RUSH...) and played by competent musicians which is obviously not the case with these childish bands. Can we expect to see the end of that type of cheese soon?

*Laurent Ramadier*

**SLEEPY HOLLOW**  
A Legend Retold (MLP)  
(Old Metal Records)

Not being a specialist of S. HOLLOW's history by any means, and basing on the interview Matt did with Bob Mitchell in issue 5, I would say that it's the famous '89 demo which has been pressed on vinyl by good old King from Old Metal Records. Just like the excellent RAT ATTACK demo released two years ago by him on vinyl, this one is much better packaged as it features an excellent cover artwork and the lyrics are even printed on the back! As for the music, well it simply shreds! Nothing else! The killing starts with "Hypnosis" a medium paced Power Metal track with excellent riffing and singing all the way, "The Final Conflict" (the only song used later on their one and only CD) have a doomier feel and it truly captivates your mind, GODLY! "Winners Take All" is the only filler track, ordinary Heavy/ Power Metal. The MLP ends with "Sleepy Hollow/Dementia", a nearly eight minutes shredder which starts in a very heavy and quite slow way but it soon changes for a fast paced Power Metal tune featuring more raging vocals work from Bob Mitchell and absolute raging riffing courtesy of Steve Stegg- who wrote all the music here, killer stuff! At the time this issue will be out, that release will be probably sold out as I understand it was limited to 500 copies but if you happen one way or another to see it, then don't wait any longer and BUY IT! Killer traditional Heavy/ Power Metal! We need more demos pressed on vinyl like that King! What about the fabulous DEATH DEALER demo next time huh?!

*Laurent Ramadier*

**SNAKE**  
The Pearl Harbor  
(Mad J Records)

This band hails from Japan and the four tracker reminds me of METALUCIFER. The same approach to Metal, a bit more punky and TANK-ish rough played Metal, a sub-standard production and the typical Japanese accent in the lyric department. Standing for true Metal in the sense of the words. According to the info the members played in some 80's Japan bands as JEWEL or MEDIA (I am sorry but I do not know both). I like the rough and honestly played stuff, aggressive and with power - the band should pay attention more on a good sound the next time though. No price was added, contact the band at: [mad-j@millk.freemail.ne.jp](mailto:mad-j@millk.freemail.ne.jp)

*Heinz Konzett*

**SONATA ARTICA**  
Successor (MCD)  
(N.T.S.)

I guess that release was done to cash on the success of their first album as it features two new tracks "San Sebastian", and "Shy", the others being covers from SCORPIONS "Still Loving You" and HELLOWEEN "I Want Out", two live tracks recorded in June 2000 and a track taken from their first album done in a different version. "San Sebastian" is a typical "Speed Metal" track sounding totally ridiculous all the way while "Shy" is a melodic tune that could be used for Christmas, it's that bad. Totally useless stuff and certainly not Metal at all by any means.

*Laurent Ramadier*

**SONIC DEBRIS**  
Velvet Thorns  
(DVS/Rising Sun)

Is the style of these Norwegians really Progressive Metal? I doubt it. The Metal part of it is small. Okay, bands like MIND FUNK or THE ORGANIZATION can be compared to SONIC DEBRIS but even some U2 or FAITH NO MORE parts can not be denied. Cross-over music and Progressive as a trademark, but simply

only 10% Metal and that's too little for my taste. Skilled musicians and some nice tunes ("Dead Man" or the title track). Not enough, can't stand it after two listens. Just a matter of my ignorant Metal mind. Sorry.

*Heinz Konzett*

**SPELLDOWN**  
Damnation From The Highest Point  
(self-financed)

A Canadian album. Power Metal mixing Thrash Metal. Three tracks. A clean, high class singer. Good production. "Necropolis" - TESTAMENT with some Power Metal ingredients. "Clash Of The Swords" - again a great riff and some complex arrangements. "Mount Olympus"- a fast paced riff and the Thrash Metal one on this ep. Oh, if they come up with a full-length and are capable to write nine or ten songs from this caliber, I would call them the hopefuls no 1 from Canada besides HANKER. Let's cross our fingers. Order this welcome three-track ep for DM 15 from: Andreas Burger, Metal Knight, Westring 30, 64850 Schaaheim, Germany.

*Heinz Konzett*

**STEEL PROPHET**  
Genesis  
(Nuclear Blast)

What we have here cannot be called the new STEEL PROPHET CD. What is it then? It's a good compilation CD full of covers and the "Inner Ascendance" demo. Thirteen songs with a total time of about seventy minutes will tear your speakers apart. The "Inner Ascendance" tape is a very much wanted item in the tape traders world. And I think you will never get it in a quality like this anymore. It contains six songs from the beginning period of the band. The liner notes that were put with every song are very interesting to read. You can read the story behind each song while listening to it. The sound of the band comes very close to the old sound of bands like IRON MAIDEN and ancient FATES WARNING. The covers on the CD are from various great Metal bands like ACCEPT, IRON MAIDEN of course, BLACK SABBATH, JUDAS PRIEST, METALLICA and...THE SIMPLE MINDS. The liner notes will make you understand why they choose this song "Don't You Forget About Me" to cover. For me it's the only odd one out on this great CD, which is full of nostalgic moments. Some of the covers were produced by Joey Vera of ARMORED SAINT and FATES WARNING by the way. A very nice compilation of a very underrated band. Hail to the Prophets Of Steel!!

*Toine van Poorten*

**STEEL PROPHET**  
Book Of The Dead  
(Nuclear Blast)

With "Book Of The Dead", STEEL PROPHET returns to their roots again. Complex structures, catchy riffs and refreshing hooks fill their sound. Touches of IRON MAIDEN may still be present, but who's without influences these days. Twelve songs with a running time of forty powerful minutes fill this new CD. A masterpiece containing eight lengthy songs and four instrumental tracks. These four tracks can't too easily be seen as fillers. They enlarge the contrast between the different songs. Without these interludes, "Phobia" wouldn't sound as brutal and powerful as it does now for example. It's a killer track, which was the ultimate highlight for me on this CD, together with the ballad "Burning Into Blackness". A song in which Rick shows what a vocal talent he is. But also the switch to the part where the guitar solos come is very well done. The guitar solos of Steve Kachinsky Blakmoor in this song, are not from this planet, by the way. My God, how beautiful can Heavy Metal sound!! "Book Of The Dead" definitively has become the most mature CD of STEEL PROPHET until now. The packaging of it all (bookform) is really cool too. The book contains liner notes, lyrics, thanks lists and the story of STEEL PROPHET so far, written by Detlef Dengler of Hammer Magazine. "Book Of The Dead" is a must for all the headbangers out there that still like a piece of good old fashioned Heavy Metal, instead of the Alternative shit that we hear and read about today.

*Toine van Poorten.*

**STRATOVARIUS**  
A Million Light Years Away (MCD)  
(N.T.S.)



A new four track CD for the actual Finish sensation featuring the title track and "Celestial Dream", both tunes taken from their last album, two highly accessible yet well written songs and two live tracks "Phoenix" and "Infinity" recorded in Lyon, France during their last tour from May 2000. "Phoenix" being a total lame/happy sounding track ala HELLOWEEN while "Infinity" is actually a somewhat heavy tune completed by some good vocal work. A great release for their fans and those into that stuff, but I personally can't give much credit to that.

*Laurent Ramadier*

**STRATOVARIUS**  
Intermission  
(Nuclear Blast)

As the title says, this is only the interlude between two regular studio albums and can not be seen as a serious full-length. What to await? 15 tracks, covers from "Kill The King" (okay), "Bloodstone" (lame) and "I Surrender" (live - mediocre) and more obscure stuff as Japan bonus tracks ("Dream With Me", "What Can I Say" and "When The Night Meets The Day"- all three quite soft and nothing special), four new tunes, three of those balladesque and quite weak and two well-known tracks (a live version from "Hunting High And Low" and the European bonus "Cold Winter Night"). For me a bigger letdown (only the 7inch single "It's A Mistery" stand out) and if you do not call yourself a STRATOVARIUS fanatic, but all in all there's a lack of quality here. Quite disappointing one.

*Heinz Konzett*

**STREET LEGAL**  
Thunderdome  
(Frontiers Records/ Point Music)

Hell yes, this is it! This is the album all fans of John Sykes probably have been waiting for! STREET LEGAL is a Norwegian three piece and their debut offering "Thunderdome" has enough class and potential to make them famous within a short period of time. You find all necessary info on the guys in the interview that was featured in our last issue, so let me just tell you that this is well played, pro-written Hard Rock with a great production and several hints of BLUE MURDER (the title track for instance is of the same class as 'We All Fall Down', which should already give you an idea), late WHITESNAKE and THIN LIZZY! Powerful and melodic with vocalist / bassist Bjorn almost sounding like John Sykes' younger brother! As guitarist Ken already mentioned in the interview, this European edition of the album has a different bonus track to the Japanese version ('Wasted Love' got replaced by 'Folly Town') and also an additional live video of the song 'Red Light District', so you better get this instead of spending a lot of money on the expensive import (which I already had done... grrr!). Can't praise these guys enough! So, now it's up to you - go out and fuckin' buy "Thunderdome"!!!

*Frank Stöver*

**STYGMATA IV**  
Phobia  
(Rising Sun)

Oh yeah! Remember BIG HEAT, STIGMATA or STIGMATA IV or "Solum Mente Infirmis" and the opulent "The Count Of Eternity" of these Austrian Power Metallers? Hope so. They had really bad luck with their band names in the past as a techno band had the rights on STIGMATA and they had to change the name again in STYGMATA IV now. Never mind, thanks to Rising Sun they gave one of the most skilled European Metal bands another chance and they prove with every second on "Phobia" that they deserved another opportunity to show the world that Austria has far more to offer than political right wing idiots. "Phobia" is a diverse album- it's heavy in the METAL CHURCH direction, it's epic like newer SAVATAGE, it's Progressive as old QUEENSRYCHE and it's brilliant because it's standing for itself. The musicianship is top notch and the European scene will not offer something better, singer Harry Krenmaier performs as if Zak Stevens and a young Jon Oliva crossed their voices and their songwriting abilities are out of any critique. The snare sound sucks though and you can hear that more money for the studio could have been invested well. Nevertheless, from the stormy opener "Isolation" to the hard rocking "Ricochet" to the Jesus Christ Superstar covers "I.N.R.L." and "Gethsemane" (what a vocal per-

formance!)- each song has its own characteristic and makes this album so peculiar. Oh yeah!

*Heinz Konzett*

**SYMPHONY X**  
V  
(Inside Out)

When this album started, I thought I had put on a RHAPSODY album because of the prelude track which sounds like that symphonic crap, but once the first track started, I knew it would be something else because the guys have alot to offer and it's particularly evident on this new opus. I do understand now why more and more people get into them everyday as they deserve it with their relatively inspired brand of Progressive Metal. Songs like "Communion And The Oracle", "The Bird Serpent War/ Cataclysm", "Absence Of Light" are my personal faves as they contain a good amount of feeling and technicality. These guys deserve attention because they've proven again that they have the talent and intelligence to write real songs but I hope the keyboards will be put in the back a bit more next time as guitars must dominate.

*Laurent Ramadier*

**SYRENS CALL**  
Fantasia  
(Booster Productions)

If you remember the first WARLOCK "Burning The Witches" or the first two ACID records, you know how Metal with a female singer has to sound and can sound. SYRENS CALL comes from France and their female front-woman Valerie Paul stand in the neo-Classical Metal section with Hard Rock-ish basics and fail in doing a good Metal record. The arrangements are too superficial, no forcing Metal and the thin production makes it even more evident that good songs are needed badly. Sorry, don't like this one and will never listen to it again...

*Heinz Konzett*

**TAD MOROSE**  
Undead  
(Century Media)

Arising from a three year struggle to gain a new record deal these Swedes have furiously brought on "Undead"- a ten song disc illuminating a slightly heavier/ doomier tone to their normally Progressive laden Metal style. The opening cut "Servant Of The Bones" has a verse riff that will probably remind most Metal historians of the similar "Metal Heart" verse riff- but Urban Breed's Djesque delivery keeps this from being merely hero worship. My early favorite "Another Time Around" kills with its quieter intro building into a strong double bass riff monster. You'll hear the doomier moments in songs like the evil "Where The Sun Never Shines" (that blends some wicked low melodies and twin guitar harmonies like the best mid 80's acts) and the title track. Whereas the early albums had people thinking this was another DREAM THEATER type act, "Undead" shows that melody plus heaviness (i.e. real riffs, guitar solos and passionate playing) can equal a magnificent listening experience. The band seem willing to explore their roots while attaining new boundaries with Middle Eastern touches ("Order Of The Seven Poles", "No Wings To Burn")- plus the production captures a live bite like another Sweden band's latest album in NOCTURNAL RITES. One month into 2001 and TAD MOROSE gets a hearty hail from me...now get on the road and gain more followers.

*Matt Coe*

**TARANTULA**  
Dream Maker  
(AFM Records)

The veteran band from Portugal that has six (!) albums out since 1987 and is still un-known to the public out of Portugal. Already 1999's "Light Beyond The Dark" (licensed by AFM for Europe) was pretty good and "Dream Maker" stands in the same line. I am a bit more pleased by their new stuff because of the more forced arrangements and more compact song-writing. Hey, if you are into a crunchy DOKKEN-like band with a fine mid-range voice and a clean production by Tommy Newton that does not sound like the typical European happy Metal sound, support this peculiar band. The Barros brothers, Jose Aguiar and Jorge Marques need it otherwise they stay an underrated outfit

and that would be a pity. Hopefully quality wins in the end- as TARANTULA are a quality Metal band.

*Heinz Konzett*

**TERRA FIRMA**  
Harms Way  
(Steamhammer/SPV)

This Swedish four piece outfit formed during the mid '90s by Freddie Eugene (ex-UNLEASHED, LOUD PIPES) and Lord Chritus (ex-ST VITUS) deliver their third recording in the shape of "Harms Way". What we have here is a mixture of old SABBATH (again!) with some TROUBLE/ CATHEDRAL parts. I would not call this Stoner Rock as there's a lot more bottom to the sound but there's influences from that music genre at times. Should I do a track by track review? Not really as each track sounds a lot like the early SABBATH recordings but keep in mind that T.F. is only a copy. What I appreciate is that they made sure that the majority of the tunes have little hooks that make them catchy but not wimpy of course and distinguishable from each other. An impressive feat considering the background of Eugene and Chritus. Only "Threefive-nine" sounds too much like KYUSS and the likes, totally out of place stuff. A rather good surprising album, given time this bunch could become a great band, for now they're just promising.

*Laurent Ramadier*

**THE HAUNTED**  
The Haunted Made Me Do It  
(Earache)

Aaaaaarrggghhhhh! More Swedish ripping savage Thrash once again! THE HAUNTED is the only new band from the Nineties in the Thrash Metal field that I found myself to enjoy as much as every old classic and quality Thrash band from the '80s! These guys despite the fact that they all come from previous outfits which were average at best and absolute crap at worst deliver songs with a real identity. They come up with riffs and vocal parts that are memorable, not the usual bullshit crappy songwriting that we had to suffer from most of the Thrash/ Death bands from the '90s! In fact, to me THE HAUNTED have delivered two albums which are just the '90s versions of "Reign In Blood", sheer power and aggression with no frills all the way. Marco Aro happens to be a good and equal replacement for Dolving, maybe a bit too gruff for my liking, but this is effective stuff. I recommend this new album that I consider as good as the first without any doubt to all the real Thrash fans, THE HAUNTED show no mercy once again!

*Laurent Ramadier*

**THE REIGN OF TERROR**  
Sacred Ground  
(LMP)

Loving Mike Vescera's work in OBSESSION and also in LOUDNESS (but a bit less) since 1982, I had great expectations for his new project but unfortunately as a whole, this album leaves me quite disappointed. "Save Me" opens this in great fashion, fast paced Power Metal tempo with great vocals done by the man and then comes the title track, a heavy medium paced track with some good guitar work- by the way the guitarist on this album shreds but after all he's just another Yngwie and "feeling" must be an unknown word to him. After a great start the intensity kind of disappears with "The Unknown" (a somewhat heavy but somewhat wimpy song) plus "Paganini's Purgatory" (and later "Dante's Danza"), two boring guitar instrumentals. Next is "Set Us Free", a fast Metal song but without any real identity in itself and quite happy sounding honestly. Fortunately the band get back on the trail with "When Will We Know", a slow heavy track dominated by Vescera's vocals, a good number. "Last Time" is another average tune followed by the very RAINBOW-like "Undercover", but still quite average. "Hellhound" is one of the highlights here, a Power Metal classic. "Still Holding On" starts in a slow manner but soon turns out to be quite a raging song, not so far from what DIO was doing on "Holy Diver"... years ago! The cd ends with a cover of "Kill The King"- after HEATHEN, LIEGE LORD, PRIMAL FEAR etc... covered it, very well executed but I wish they would have opted for another choice. An okay album but considering what the guy has done in the past, I expected something way stronger in the songwriter department because his vocals are just as great as always. Maybe he needs to be backed up by



a new Bruce Vitale to come up with something that can compete with the classic and killer material from "Marshall Law"!

*Laurent Ramadier*

**THRESHOLD**  
Hypothetical  
(Inside Out)

The seventh album of the English Prog Metal/Hard Rock band. Andrew McDermott (formerly SARGANT FURY) with his pleasant voice gives them the right support for their catchy Progressive music. Not fiddling to death is the main goal, the melody and catchiness stand in the forefront and along with the high-end production "Hypothetical" is the best THRESHOLD album after their winner "Psychelicatessen" in 1994. The Hard Rock approach like on the very catchy "Turn On Turn In" or the ten minute running "The Ravages Of Time" with its dynamic arrangements can not be overheard. Some tracks are too sweet for my taste ("Sheltering Sky") but if the band can transport this all-in-all fine work on the live set (which was not the case so far), the future looks bright for the English men. THRESHOLD are back, better than awaited and for the progressive scene a positive sign that real songs are more important than only showing how good you can play.

*Heinz Konzett*

**THUNDERSTORM**  
Sad Symphony  
(Northwind Records)

Doom Metal from Italy? YES. This three piece made my day. Old CANDLEMASS and powerful BLACK SABBATH come to my mind when hearing this gem. SOLITUDE AETURNUS would be proud to release such an album like "Sad Symphony". The clean vocals, the intense riffing, the slow emotions, the double basses behind the lava guitar front, the Power Metal interludes, and - most important - the pure Metal feeling make this band and this album something special. There are only few outfits in the underrated Doom Metal genre, THUNDERSTORM are the most promising one, and maybe "Time", "The Rite" or "Vision Of Death" will soon be labelled Doom Metal classics. Who knows? Essential slow Metal stuff.

*Heinz Konzett*

**THY MAJESTIE**  
The Lasting Power  
(Scarlet)

Trying to forge their way into the ranks of RHAPSODY and LABYRINTH, this sextet from Italy have a debut album that attempts to mix Symphonic/ Epic Metal with less than stellar results. I guess when the older acts continue to pave new ground it's hard to get excited about concept records with typical medieval castle adorned artwork, chanting accented vocals and classical keyboards that sound too sweet for Metal. The adequate production favors real tones over digital/ synthetic samples- but you've heard all these songs done infinitely better by other proven acts. Not the next sensation to look for- THY MAJESTIE needs to focus on their masters originality and sculpt a new product or be banished to the depths of the underground.

*Matt Coe*

**TIMESCAPE**  
Strange  
(Adrenaline Records)

What to write about another DREAM THEATER clone band? They can play, no doubt, but they can not write good Metal stuff for sure. A high-pitched yet cold and non-impressive singer and complex arrangements are not enough in times of great Progressive Metal outfits such as ZERO HOUR, INTO ETERNITY or POWER OF OMENS. "Strange" - an album with too little quality, not my kind of Progressive stuff.

*Heinz Konzett*

**TITANIC**  
Maiden Voyage  
(Magdalene Records)

You awaited a bit more from ARMORED SAINT's comeback (not live but with the studio album)? Here is the alternative. TITANIC! The singer IS John Bush's brother, at least he has to be. And the rough Metal sound with the traditional, basic US Metal riffing re-

minds on "Delirious Nomad". Absolutely great "Ocean Of Blood", "Gods Of War", "Fight Back" - classic US Metal stuff. The album is produced by Robert Sweet (STRYPHER) and the label is one of the Christian scene, so TITANIC comes from that side that delivered some outstanding outfits as SACRED WARRIOR, RECON, GUARDIAN and the Thrash gods BELIEVER in the 80's, early 90's. And now TITANIC...

*Heinz Konzett*

**TONKA**  
...This Present Darkness...  
(self-financed)

This one reminds me of the deceased CORONER and their "No More Color" album. Okay, the guitarist can not play the same brilliant solos but who cares if the emotion and structures are in the same way and how many bands play this kind of anti-trendy Metal nowadays? I know that the guys are Metal maniacs and not jumping on the next band-wagon. So, the rough, a bit too pressed voice and the quite complex Thrash Metal could be of everyone's liking which still worships the good ol' Thrash Metal days where nearly all extreme outfits had their own sound, from ATHEIST to ZOETROPE. It's not easy-listening happy Metal here, it's heavy shit as on tracks as the dynamic "The Murder" or the opener "Secondary World" though not all eight songs can hold the quality of these two (like the too staccato-ish riff "One"), the second part of the album can't compete with the first four tracks, there's room for some increase on the vocal side and the tempo could be varied a bit more, means one or two faster tracks would fit well in the band's sound. Order it for US\$ 10 from: Yngve Jacobsen, Plommeveien 1A, N-4635 Kristiansand S., Norway.

*Heinz Konzett*

**TWILIGHT**  
Eye For An Eye  
(Lucretia Records)

This is kind of a re-release because their second output was already released in 1993 but didn't achieve enough attention at that time and was soon out-of-print. Why the hell could that happen? They are a highly remarkable band - Tommy Hansen produced "Eye For An Eye", the high-skilled singer Anders Engberg (joined LIONS SHARE then) gives the ten tunes his special approach and their somewhat bombastic but still down-to-earth Power Metal has sometimes very strong SAVATAGE resemblances ("Streets" period), for instance "Imperfection" with its "Jesus Saves" riff. Anders is a helluva vocalist and in particular with the heavy guitars on tracks like "Flashbacks", "Come Night Come Evil" or the killer tune "Trial By Fire" (with a tremendous hook) TWILIGHT deliver exemplary traditional Metal. In 1993 nearly nobody wanted to hear music like on "Eye For An Eye", but times have changed and now it's another chance to discover another hidden treasure that proves it right. Denmark has had a few remarkable Metal bands and TWILIGHT is one to count in.

*Heinz Konzett*

**TYGERS OF PANTANG**  
Live At Nottingham Rock City  
(Edgy)

I remember discovering "Wild Cat" 19 years ago and playing it at least four times everyday because the songs were just fantastic. There was a vibe on that album that I rarely found again for some reason and from that day I was addicted to TYGERS until they came up with the disappointing "The Cage" but that's another story. Anyway I have always considered this outfit as being the heaviest and most aggressive act out of all the big N.W. O.B.H.M. acts from that periods! Hell you can't resist vicious/ extremely effective riffs such as the ones on "Slave To Freedom", "Euthanasia", "Tyger Bay", "Blackjack", "Gangland" etc... And proof is that this official live recording from 1981- featuring John Deverill on vocals and John Sykes as second guitarist, shows that the band killed in a live situation! Classic after classic, the band rolls like a war machine! And if we have to believe what's written on the booklet by their old manager, the whole band was sick the night it was recorded! I just hope I'll never hear any recordings of them on a good day if I don't want to end up my life too soon. Seriously TYGERS OF PANTANG were a great live act and it shows on this first official live album, excellent vocal delivery all the way. Even on the "Wild

Cat" material which wasn't gained at first because Jess Cox raw and abrasive vocals always added something more to the songs in my opinion despite the fact that obviously Deverill was a better singer, killer lead trade between Robb Weir and Sykes and a powerful rhythm section courtesy of Brian Dick and Rocky. The only flaw I found was the vocal performance on "Insanity", Jess Cox can't be replaced on that one. Every pure Heavy Metal freak must own this, there's nothing else to add! A must! Now let's hope someone will discover a live tape in the dust from the "Wild Cat" period! I cross my fingers hard for that.

*Laurent Ramadier*

**TYGERS OF PANTANG**  
Live At Wacken  
(Spitfire)

Could 2001 be the ultimate comeback for TYGERS? It could be the case considering the fact that it seems a new studio album is in the works and these two almost simultaneously released live albums. As the title says, this one was recorded mostly at the 1999 Wacken reunion gig and a few songs during warm up gigs for that event. Despite the fact that only Jess Cox and Rob Weir were the original members for that reunion joined by BLITZKRIEG guitarist Glen Howes and an unknown rhythm section, they delivered a totally unforgettable live set that night. Judge by yourselves, "Rock'n'Roll Man", "Euthanasia", "Don't Touch Me There", "Wildcat" (sung by Rob), "Insanity" etc etc... everything but legendary material and there was definitely a magical delivery of these numbers that night as the men were totally into it and you could easily feel it. Rocky and Brian weren't there but their replacements did a good job, no matter what. If only they could have played the absolutely amazing "Slave To Freedom" during their set- which was only 45 min long for a headlining band actually then it would have sent me on solo, plus the fact that the recording sounds like it was recorded in front of 100.000 people which was not the case. Other than that, along with "Live At Nottingham", you have to add this cd in your Metallic collection no matter what. It's just too bad it's released on Spitfire but fortunately it should be released in Europe on Eagle Rock in the months to come and they can only do a better job than this crappy U.S. label. For now if you're a TYGERS afficiannado like me, go to [www.spitfirerecords.com](http://www.spitfirerecords.com) and try to get a copy of this killer album...

*Laurent Ramadier*

**ULTIMATUM**  
The Mechanics Of Perilous Times  
(Gutter Records)

EXODUS!!! Nothing less, nothing more. Scott Waters sings exactly like the insane Paul Baloff. The same timbre, the same aggression, the same range. After the okay "Symphonic Extremities", the US-Thrashers come up with another rough sounding bastard that wants to follow the path EXODUS left over. No, the riffs have not the same class, no, the music overall is not overwhelming, no, the song-writing can not compete with EXODUS in their heydays, no, the rumbling production is not the best in line. But the whole album is entertaining because of its brutal consequence to praise a Thrash legend. For old school Thrashers a hot tip.

*Heinz Konzett*

**VANISHING POINT**  
Tangled In Dream  
(Inside Out)

You like a Progressive Metal version of SAVIOUR MACHINE? If yes, read this review; if not, stop here. The first two SAVIOUR MACHINE albums were milestones in the epic Metal genre and VANISHING POINT have the same approach in their music, only being more in the Progressive Metal category. The wide, epic melodies with the melancholic, somewhat depressive melodies and the flooding guitars make "Tangled In Dream" an offering for all who search for deep emotional music and if you feel alone and sad, this album increases your mood. It's the second one from the Australians that played their first European gig at the Wacken festival last year in front of few people. This situation should change fast, listening to "Surreal", "Samsara" or "I Will Awake", an interesting band.

*Heinz Konzett*

**VARIOUS ARTISTS**  
Bat Head Soup, A Tribute To Ozzy  
(Triage Records/Eagle Records)



I like tribute CDs a lot, you may know that by now. Artists paying honor to their biggest influences by playing their songs. Combinations of well known people who get together for just one time to play a song together. This time it's Ozzy Osbourne again that's being honored. We hear a few session musicians but we also hear names like "Ripper" Owens, Yngwie J Malmsteen, Brad Gillis, Eric Singer, Dee Snider, Lemmy, Ritchie Kotzen, Dweezil Zappa, Joe Lynn Turner, Steve Lukather, Jeff Scott Soto, Bruce Kulick, Paul Gilbert, Vince Neil, Georger Lynch and Reb Beach to name the most important names. They selected eleven tracks that are mostly from the Randy Rhoads period, the first two albums so to speak. Some people try to give the songs their own twist, like the high voice of "Ripper" Owens in opener "Mister Crowley" is quite unusual, when you're so familiar with the voice of Ozzy in this song. Or listen to the tender voice of Lisa Loeb in "Goodbye To Romance". It makes this song slightly different than the original version. Enjoy these timeless songs in their slightly different form. The title of the CD was also the title of one of Ozzy's most wanted live bootlegs, that was released many years ago.

Toine van Poorten

**VARIOUS ARTISTS**  
Snakebites-  
A Tribute To Whitesnake  
(Dead Line Music)

This is a tribute album for WHITESNAKE. Again a lot of great musicians got together to record one of their favorite WHITESNAKE songs. Interesting is that most of the people are taking the newer songs of this English band. But we also hear older classics like "Here I Go Again", "Ain't No Love In The Heart Of The City" and "Fool For Your Loving". Twelve songs fill this CD with a full hour of WHITESNAKE music. The sound of this band became famous for the great voice of ex-DEEP PURPLE singer David Coverdale and the bluesy sound of twin guitar duo Micky Moody and Bernie Marsden. Later on, it got more melodic with guitar players like John Sykes and Adrian Vandenberg. On this CD we hear the voices of people like Dougie White (ex RAINBOW), Steve Grimmett (ex LIONSHEART/GRIM REAPER/ ONSLAUGHT), Nicky Moore (SAMSON), Bernie Shaw (URIAH HEPP) and Steve Overland (FM). A few other musicians on this nice CD are Merv Goldsworthy, Pete Jupp, Lea Hart and ex WHITESNAKE members Bernie Marsden, Neil Murray, Don Airey and Micky Moody. The only thing you might miss is the mighty voice of Mr. Coverdale himself. What's left behind are twelve fine tracks that give you a good overview of the whole WHITESNAKE career. The versions are only slightly different than the original versions. The CD booklet only contains the line up of the bands that play the songs. Die hard David Coverdale fans can now check out his new solo album "Into The Light" with Earl Slick playing the lead guitars this time.

Toine van Poorten

**VARIOUS ARTISTS**  
The Keepers Of Jericho-  
A Tribute To Helloween  
(Arise/ N.T.S.)

Do you have enough of the annoying tribute mania? I am totally fed up. Okay, HELLOWEEN were the biggest influence of all the happy sounding European Metal armada through the last four years and therefore it was natural that those bands wanted to tribute their models. And I have to admit that some of the best bands out of that category are contributing to this tribute. Beginning from RHAPSODY (with "Guardians"), DARK MOOR ("Halloween") or MORIFADE (with a very good version of "Judas") to the more real Metal based outfits such as BRAINSTORM (contributing the most convincing cover of this tribute with the thrashy "Savage") and METALIUM (playing a powerful version of "Ride The Sky"). You see the involved bands chose mainly older HELLOWEEN tracks and most of them sound enjoyable and partly very nice. LABYRINTH's failed try to cover "Future World" (because of a weak vocal performance, what happened to this formerly great band the last year?) and the too powerlessly played "How Many Tears" from SECRET SPHERE can not hold the quality work of the other outfits. So, this is one of the better tributes I've heard in the last few months, but still I doubt if that is enough for a recommendation because it makes more sense to discover original stuff, doesn't

it?

Heinz Konzett

**VARIOUS ARTISTS**  
Warning:Minds Of Raging Empires-  
A Tribute To Queensryche  
(Siegen/Adrenaline)

Some bands which contribute on this tribute would make a helluva billing for a festival: FORTE (with James Randall!), FACTOR FIVE (with Ski on vox!), NIGHTMARES END, MYSTIC FORCE, POWER OF OMENS, TALAMASCA, MAYADOME and BLACK SYMPHONY. The hopeful US Metal armada make this tribute of mainly older RYCHE stuff (from "Neue Regel" to "Nightrider") worth listening. On every tribute cd the problem to cover well-known songs 1:1 and in this case the problem to cover a singer like Geoff Tate in his heydays is evident, some outfits make their own version (like the awesome "Deliverance" from BLACK SYMPHONY) while some of them try to focus the original spirit and that fails in most cases (as MOON OF STEEL with "Anybody Listening"). To make it short, an enjoyable tribute with some vocal weakness (MIND'S EYE or CIRCLE IX) but some highs (especially FORTE, MYSTIC FORCE and BLACK SYMPHONY).

Heinz Konzett

**VORTEX**  
The Mill  
(Stormbringer Productions)

VORTEX is back and "The Mill" is good proof of it. Four Songs were recorded on this blood red vinyl, which is ready to be unleashed at their hungry fans. The cult band from Holland have spread their wings again. Hear the evil voice of Jurjen "Thundervox" Tichelaar and the mean riffs and solos of Martjo "The Whirlwolf" Brongers during the opener "Oubliette" and you know we're dealing with a great quality old school Heavy Metal outfit here. "I Got Mucho More" takes the speed up higher, crossing away in the fourth gear. You know when the solo will hit you, but you're not aware of the fact that it will hit you right in your face. The B-side of this 10" opens with a riff which can be compared with Eddie van Halem's "You Really Got Me" riff. But this song is much darker and heavier of course. The solo is fast and the rhythm section is grinding. Nonetheless, it sounds very catchy here. The last song is called "A Lovely Day". That's what you will have when you play this record over and over again. Jurjen growls like a chained madman, while Martjo plays his most flashing solo of these four tracks. If you survive this then you can call yourself a real metal head. This is definitely not for the faint hearted. How to get this 10"? Simply drop a line to: Blue Steel Agency- Gorechtkade 47- 9713 BE Groningen- The Netherlands or send an e-mail to whirlwolf@hetnet.nl. You won't regret spending your money on this one, 'cause this is what it's all about, my friends. Metal in its purest form! Hail to VORTEX and may they live on forever!!!

Toine van Poorten

**WARRIOR**  
The Code Of Life  
(Nuclear Blast)

Rob Rock joined WARRIOR. Big news for me as Rob is one of my fave singers. Joe Floyd is an absolutely slow song-writer, otherwise it would not be possible to release only three albums in twenty years- the classic "Fighting For The Earth" (I am still waiting for an official re-release as it's still a hard-to-find one on cd), the comeback "Ancient Future" and "The Code Of Life". The new one is not that different, still using the basic Metal elements and still playing mid-tempo US Metal. Crossing the music on "Fighting For The Earth" and Rob's awesome voice promised an album of the decade- it isn't. It's an above average traditional Metal release with cool songs, not more. Not enough for this line-up? Maybe, but enough to support WARRIOR as one of the last 80's bands that release pure Metal in the year 2001. Rob sings much more in mid-ranges and more aggressive than on his killer solo debut "Rage Of Creation". With "We Are One", the title track, "Day Of Reckoning" and "Open Your Eyes" there's enough typical WARRIOR arrangements to worship - Metal to the bones with a rather modern Floyd production that gives the music a more current and groovier touch than awaited.

Heinz Konzett

**W.A.S.P.**  
The Sting  
(A Snapper Music Label)

This is a live CD recorded live at the Key Club in Los Angeles, California on April 22nd 2000. It's a limited edition rerecorded recording, meaning that the recordings were taken from an internet broadcasting of a WASP live show. This also means that the sound quality may not be as perfect as it was on their previous live album "Live Assassins". But the song choice is okay and it covers the whole career of Mr Blackie Lawless and co. It contains twelve songs with a total running time of sixty-five minutes. It runs from newer tracks like "Hellorado", "Damnation Angels" and "Dirty Balls" to classics like "Chainsaw Charlie", "Wild Child", "L.O.V. E. Machine", "I Wanna Be Somebody", "Blind In Texas" and of course their anthem "Animal (F\*CK) Like A Beast". It's a bit disturbing that they fade away the audience after each song, it was better to let the songs fluidly go over into each other in my opinion. WASP's stage performance and lyrics were sick, but that was the strength of this band. They gave new guys like Marilyn Manson an example to go crazy on stage and become famous, not to say notorious and immortal. Crank up the volume and shout with the lyrics, they ask for it. I bet you know every word of the songs of these sick motherfuckers. The liner notes in the booklet were written by Dante Bonutto and the CD comes in a cardboard box. A nice document to have if you're a WASP fan and if you don't mind the softer sound quality of these recordings.

Toine van Poorten

**W.A.S.P.**  
Unholy Terror  
(Metal-Is)

Being a long time fan of the band since the days of their debut album that carried many a conversation during junior high, I'm very intrigued by the different facets of W.A.S.P. that try to make each album distinctive. "Unholy Terror" fits the bill as an album that captures the energy of the early efforts while lyrically challenging the listeners like "The Headless Children". The opener "Let It Roar" blasts your stereo and the force of Blackie Lawless and company barrel you through to other emotive songs like "Loco-Motive Man" and the haunting title track. Lyrically focusing on Blackie's religious upbringing and coming to terms with his beliefs, the music provides an inviting backdrop with the furious riffing, stirring arrangements and over the top drum performances that one always anticipates in this Metal unit. I think W.A.S.P. have produced their finest album since "The Headless Children" and one that should bring the old school crowd to their feet easily.

Matt Coe

**KIP WINGER**  
Songs From The Ocean Floor  
(Frontiers Records)

Uh. Cock Rock. WINGER's debut back in the 80's was not that bad, even delivering some fine US Metal tunes, but then I lost his out of sight career and he sold quite a few copies in the Sleaze Rock heydays. With "Songs From The Ocean Floor" he releases an output that is incredibly poppy and without one heavy riff. Cheesy stuff, missing any heaviness, not unplugged but not emotional either. One of the worst albums for a long time. In the league of the last BON JOVI garbage. Whoever wants it for free as a gift, should contact me. But be aware - it's a below zero one...

Heinz Konzett

**XIRON**  
Turn To Stone  
(Iron Glory)

Well, bands out of the Iron Glory camp have the real Metal stamp and the quality stamp as well. After the strong BLACK DESTINY album which is a side-project of the XIRON guys, the first official XIRON album sees the light of day. What to expect? Do you like the "Night Of The Stormrider" output from ICED EARTH? Then give XIRON a serious chance, the musical mood of "Turn To Stone" is non-compromising as well and the aggressive, rough pitched voice of Michael Seifert who bells out his lyrics in an astonishing way gives XIRON the real Metal point that makes them different to the new wave of European Metal bands. No



keys, pure traditional Metal (like the killer title track) and the evil voice that is still melodic. With the rough production, it's a bit too powerless on the guitar front, a Metal album out of Germany that's meant to be underground.

Heinz Konzett

**ZERO HOUR**  
The Towers Of Avarice  
(Sensory)

One of 1999's underground Progressive Metal finds was this California quartet- and holding on to a one song preview of this for a solid year had me awaiting a powerhouse full length. At six songs/ 45 minutes you may think that as a listener you're getting shortchanged for a musicianship filled effort. How wrong you'd be- "The Towers Of Avarice" illustrates the carefully delicious aural odyssey where craft meets brooding Metal headlong. The polyrhythms keep you guessing for the riff changes while vocalist Erik Rosvold sneers, whispers and commands with a dynamic but very palatable voice. Layering keyboards and guitars create the most tension filled arrangements I've heard yet from ZERO HOUR- trust me you'll gain hours of enjoyment trying to pick out your favorite song. Another solid production from Dino Aiden and band- plus I enjoy the stark/ bleak cover art that compliments the abstract music on offer. The top four bands in progressive Metal today are READING ZERO, HEAVEN'S CRY, SPIRAL ARCHITECT and ZERO HOUR. "The Towers Of Avarice" stands shoulders above FATES WARNING or DREAM THEATER's latest creations- those into technical Metal, Progressive or dark power will salivate over this masterpiece. Available at all fine mail orders. Web: <http://www.zerohourweb.com>

Matt Coe

**Z-LOT-Z**  
Tearing At Your Mind  
(Molten Metal)

Up till now this was still the missing link to me, the album that came out in between Z-LOT-Z's excellent '92" and kinda disappointing "Soul Existence" releases. And as I already expected, "Tearing At Your Mind" features a lot of trademarks of both those albums. There's the great, almost Geoff Tate like, crystal clear melodic vocal delivery on one hand and the rather dark and often pretty negative sounding guitar riffing on the other. The band evolved into an even less entertaining direction on "Soul Existence", but the majority of the songs on here don't really do anything to me either. I just miss the great guitar harmonies and the real classic Metal style, which unfortunately is not often to discover among the 8 featured songs. Ok, "Tearing At Your Mind" has its moments here and there, but to me the band was most enjoyable in their beginning, so I really hope they will manage to find their way back on the next album. You can find Molten Metal on the internet at the following address: <http://members.aol.com/jbmestad>

# Demos

**DRAGONHEART**  
Valley Of The Damned  
Demo 2000

I'll lay the unfortunate news out early- you can only get this through the internet or if you know someone in DRAGONHEART who'll kindly burn you a CD-R. Fear not- these London lads will have a deal soon as great Symphonic/ Power Metal talent doesn't go to waste in unsigned waters for long. Produced by Karl Groom (THRESHOLD) you'll hear five dramatic cuts that synthesize the best of HELLOWEEN, LABYRINTH and ANGRA into a charging, explosive unit. Favorites include the opening title cut and quick shifting "Revelations" with its off tempo marching strains. Their guitarists Herman Li and Sam Totman should get newcomers to watch in the Power Metal field- speedy and tasteful, melodic and energetic all rolled into one... picture Malmsteen, Tolkki and Schenker intertwined. I never imagined we'd be looking at the UK and real

Metal ever again with younger bands- but DRAGONHEART join SHADOWKEEP as two forces daring to deliver what they believe and should reach to European/ Far Eastern shores with ease...plus attract a few North American listeners. The ballad "Starfire" showcases an emotive side with higher than high melodies and more quick acoustic guitar interplay. The triggered double bass may irritate some...but the quality songwriting and performance outweighs this minor flaw. Ride into your stereo with DRAGONHEART. Contact: <http://www.dragon-heart.net>

Matt Coe

**HABEAS CORPUS**  
Crucified  
Demo 2000

Eleven years in existence, this California quartet have released numerous demos and one previous album outside of four Dwell Records tribute appearances. This demo has three original songs plus two bonus covers from the WHITE ZOMBIE and TESTAMENT tributes. Musically the band plays rough Thrash with death-like vocals. I can see why this band hasn't gained much label interest- yes the riffing is heavy but each of these songs doesn't have much substance to raise an eyebrow. Sub par third rate Metal equates a snooze for me. Contact: Habeas Corpus- 724 Cottonwood St. #225-Woodland, CA 95695- USA.

Matt Coe

**MONTANY**  
The Evermore  
Demo 2001

MONTANY is a very talented band from Holland that present their demo on CD. It contains three songs. The band is obviously influenced by bands like IRON MAIDEN, GUNS 'N' ROSES and HELLOWEEN. But I wouldn't call them a cheap copy of these bands. "The Evermore" is a fast Rock song with great MAIDEN like guitarwork in the middle. "Deep Water Rising" follows, which is a real headbanger. Furious riffs fill your room, there's simply no escape! Great song, in which we hear the HELLOWEEN influences pop up. The CD demo closes with the longest song "Pyramid Of Cheops". This is a ballad like song which again sounds like IRON MAIDEN. It has a great construction, especially when you realize yourself that this band only exists for three years now. Here and there you can hear the sound of Midnight (CRIMSON GLORY vocalist) back in the voice of singer Patrick. To be complete, here is the line up of MONTANY. We have Patrick van Maurik on vocals, John Brederode on drums, Stefan Brederode on bass and guitarplayers Albert Houwaart and Dirk Hoek. Bastiaan Wassenaar is to be heard as a guest performer on keyboards. If you're into the bands that I mentioned in this review then I would certainly check out this band. Their live show should even be more powerful than this CD demo, as I understand from the information that I have here. Reason enough to give it a try. Just email to [montany@most-wanted.com](mailto:montany@most-wanted.com) or write a letter to Patrick van Maurik- J. Th. De Visserstraat 90-2221 AX Katwijk- The Netherlands. You can also check out their website at [www.come.to/montany](http://www.come.to/montany), you won't be disappointed. A full length release of this band is scheduled for May this year.

Toine van Poorten

**OVERLORDE**  
Demo 2000

Little would people believe that you'd see all these 80's underground Power/ Melodic Metal acts reforming. While I question the integrity/ validity of some reunions, this one from New Jersey's OVERLORDE excites me and should appeal to all Snakepit readers. These four songs feature new vocalist Bobby Lucas (ex-SEVEN WITCHES) and his expansive emotional range carries OVERLORDE to new heights on songs like "Blackness" and "Hell Hath No Fury". Notice the 70's PRIEST influence from the guitar riffing of Mark Edwards in my favorite cut- the quicker "Ogre Wizard". The band has carried on without missing a beat from the EP days- gaining a stronger vocalist and an intense focus on putting out Metal the way it should be played- from within your head and heart and not for financial trend gain. They'll be signed to some worthy label by 2001 for sure- those who love traditional true Metal with out of this world bass playing need OVERLORDE- may New Jersey arise again in Metal glory. Contact: OVERLORDE- P.O. Box 160- Ironia, NJ 07845-

USA. Web: <http://www.overlorde.com>

Matt Coe

**SHADOWLORD**  
Demo 2000

The Midwest has one obvious Power Metal newcomer destined for success in SPIRIT WEB- and out comes another promising quintet from Illinois in SHADOWLORD. Eight songs that average six minutes a piece, the music a skilled stew of Dio-laden BLACK SABBATH, MAIDEN-like guitar harmonies and off tempo rhythm madness a la HELSTAR or NEW EDEN. The opener "Eye Of The Enemy" features a real piano intro that moves into a speedy roller coaster of riffing and long-winded melodic soloing from guitarists Chad Elliott and Dave Bryan. Vocalist Bill Jannusch has a piercing presence but I hope in the future he extends his melodies further as they often match the riffing too obviously on "Ceremony Of Fire" or actually weaken the dramatic impact of the slower "Stricken Within". I like the live production aspects as I don't hear much in the way of sampled/ filtered sounds- the snare snaps, the bottom end thumps and the guitars crunch at all adequate levels. Another young band who aren't merely mirroring the Metal veterans- SHADOWLORD have a great foundation set on this debut effort. People who live excellent musicianship in their Power Metal without a ton of technicality want more bands like this. Kudos! Contact: Shadowlord- P.O. Box 498- Grayslake, IL 60030 USA. Web: <http://www.shadowlordmusic.com>

Matt Coe

**SWINE**  
Demo 2001

Well I recently heard that this band featured ex DARK ANGEL member Eric Meyer this time so I immediately made sure to get in touch with them to check out what kind of music this guy was bringing us musicwise after his previous short lived band HUNGER (which featured also Ron Rinehart who's now involved in OIL). So I received just in time their first three song demo/ cd and unfortunately once again this ex D. ANGEL members has totally failed to come up with a real Metal offering as SWINE just produce some fake aggressive/ modern sounding material all the way without delivering anything that has something in common with the L.A. caffeine machine. For now none of the ex members of that once killer band have managed to produce something that is enjoyable as most of the guys except Durkin have decided to follow different musical directions- a real shame. Contact: [thebiitch@swinemusic.com](mailto:thebiitch@swinemusic.com) website: [www.swinemusic.com](http://www.swinemusic.com)

Laurent Ramadier

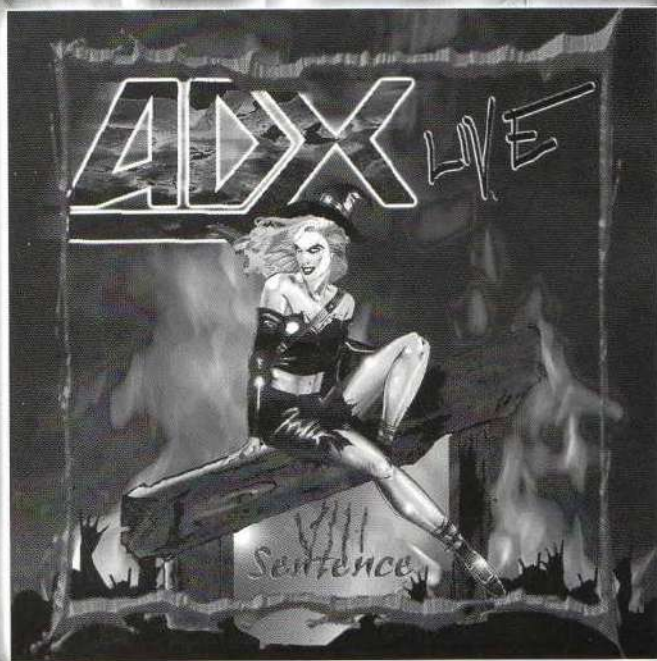
**WARHAG**  
Demo 2000

WARHAG is Kurt Philips new band and this four song recording is their first effort. The first time I listened to that tape, I was disappointed as I expected stuff in the WITCHKILLER mould, something WARHAG is not. Fortunately I didn't stay with that bad taste in my mouth and gave several listens to this tape and I finally discovered how wrong I was by giving such a bad judgement! This stuff is simply excellent! Excellent melodic Metal music all the way. The tape starts with "First Nations" as an instrumental melodic intro and "Rage Of Angels" comes to your ears, a damn great melodic tune with excellent vocals courtesy of Pat Brown, the chorus just kills! This reworked WITCHKILLER tune just blows away the original one which was mostly played by the last WITCHKILLER line up, forget the old lame version, here's the real version! Then comes "Into The Castle" which starts with a riff as strong and as heavy as any old WITCHKILLER song, but it finally becomes another very melodic but very well penned track! Once again the chorus is just excellent! It shows that Kurt is not a newcomer and that he knows where he wants to go in delivering such accessible yet not wimpy songs. The tape ends with "Sinister Grip" which starts also with a melodic feel but in the middle of the song comes a heavy riff that totally reminds us old WITCHKILLER with more great vocal lines. Well keep in mind that this band has not much in common with Kurt's previous outfit but WARHAG can please you as much if you're looking for extremely well penned melodic Metal. Contact: [kguitarworks@yahoo.ca](mailto:kguitarworks@yahoo.ca)

Laurent Ramadier



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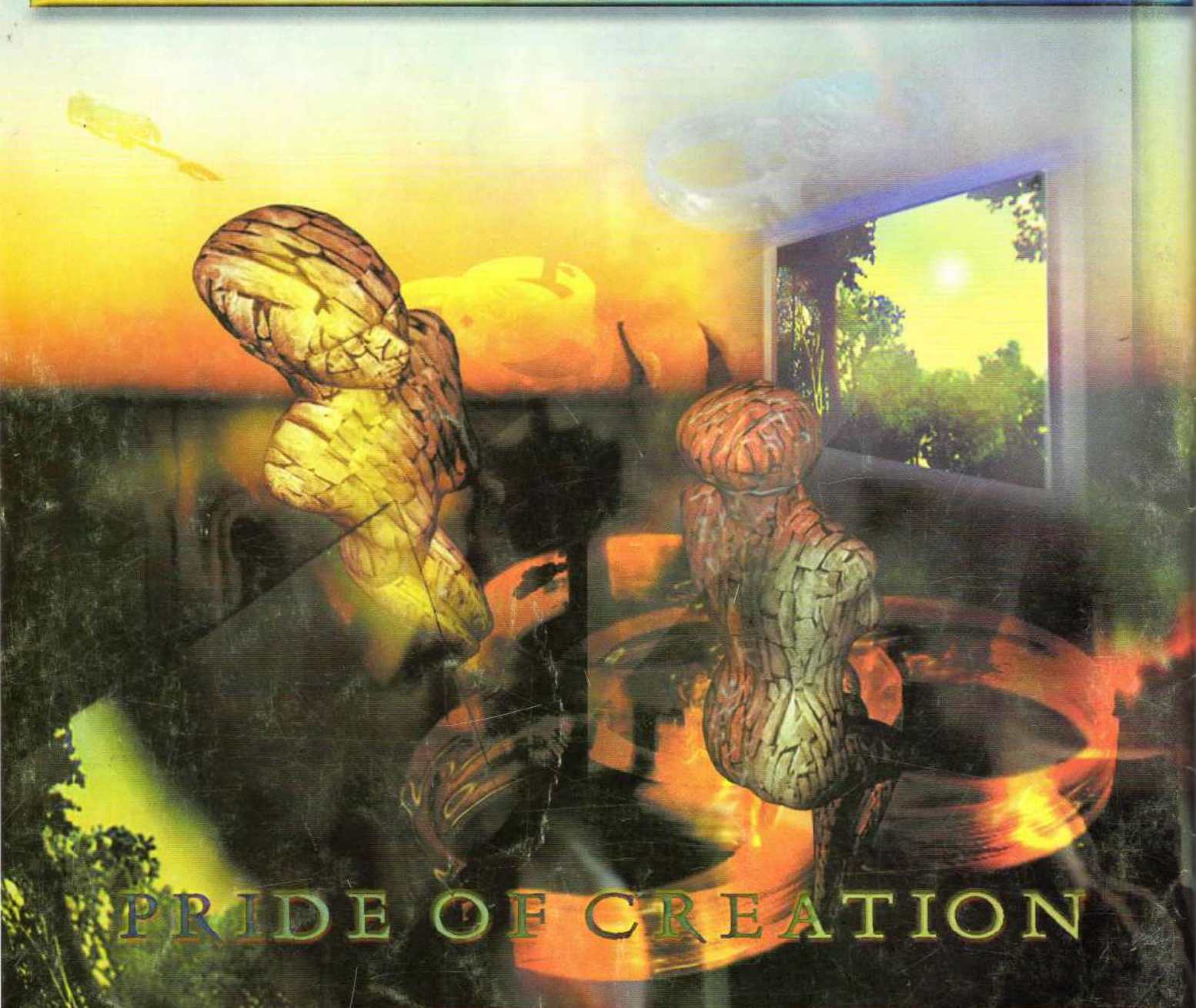
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