

Transcending THE MUNDANE

Chiaroscuro



Isis



ANGEL DUST GLENN HUGHES
AUTUMN TEARS HYPOCRISY
AVERSE SEFIRA
THE BERZERKER
Boulder
CELESTIAL SEASON
CHIAROSCURO
Condition Red
dark tranquility
COPRO
EARTH CRISIS
EIDOLON
F5
40 GRIT
The Gathering
HAYES LOW
HOLLENTON
HOLLOW GROUND

LONG WINTERS STARE
MEAN BEAT
MUZZY LUCTIN
OPPROBRIUM
PANDEMIA
peccatum
Power Symphon
PRIMITIVE BRUTALITY
sadist
SCARY GERMAN GUY
THE SINS OF THY BELOVED
SYNTH
TRANSPORT LEAGUE
WINDHAM HELL
POWER/MAD FESTIVAL
WACKEN OPEN AIR FESTIVAL

REVIEWS
COPRO RECORDS
WONDERDRUG RECORDS
FREE C.D.
COMPILATION



AUTUMN RUMBLINGS 2000



S.O.D.

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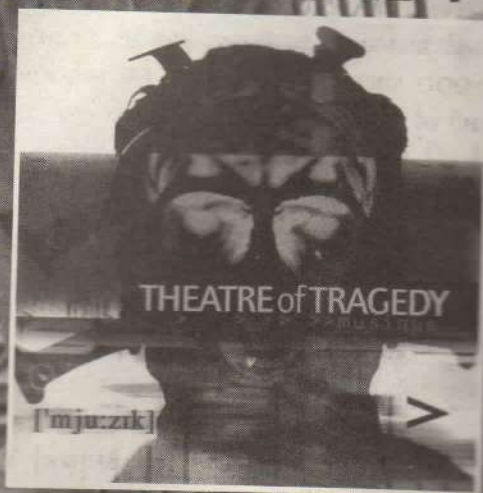
HAMMERFALL



RENEGADE

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Hello and welcome to Issue #12 of Transcending the Mundane. If you did not receive a copy of our Powermad 2000 special (Issue #11), let me know, as there are several left. There will be one more issue before the end of the year, so keep your eye out for it.

First of all I would like to thank Divine Rapture's Mike Hrubovcak for the artwork. I received more comments praising Issue #10's cover art than any previous issue. Mike's work is first class and I hope to continue using his services. Be sure to get in contact with him, as he also designs covers as well: www.divinerapture.net.

I would also like to thank the people integral to the operation; they include Brett Clarin, Rich Black, and Don Howell (cover design) at Aidemedia. Get in touch with them for c.d. duplication, website design, etc. Their ad is in this issue. Tell them you read about them in Transcending the Mundane and you will get a discount.

I would like to acknowledge Jeff Brown, Y.Y.P., and Keith Oswald's continuing contributions. They allow the reader to hear a different voice once in awhile.

Transcending the Mundane would not be possible without the help and support of labels, bands, distributors, and publicists. From each independent band to submit a disc for review and/ or participate in the compilations to the labels who advertise every issue (Century Media gives zines tremendous support and deserve special recognition). You know who you are and you know you have my gratitude.

Thank you to Samantha for your undying support and for always being there for me. My life is dedicated to you.

Issue #13 will be out before the end of the year. Look for a Prog Power Special issue around the middle of January, as there is a festival happening near Chicago that includes bands like Nevermore, Jag Panzer, Pain Of Salvation, Evergrey, Ion Vein, Reading Zero, Zero Hour, Etheria, Destiny's End, Power Of Omens, and Onward. Check out www.progpowers.com for more information. www.transcendingthemundane.com will be in operation soon.

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ANGEL DUST

Interview with guitarist Bernd Aufermann

One of the hardest working bands in the business in recent years is the German progressive power metal band **Angel Dust**. It appears that they are making up for the lost time, ten years, that occurred between their second album, *To Dust You Will Decay*, and their third album, *Border of Reality*. The band has written and recorded three albums in as many years, and all three are simply brilliant. **Angel Dust** take the traditional elements of power metal but add a touch of progressive and inject some modern keyboard and electronic influences for an updated sound that is appealing to all fans of metal. It is a curious title on their most recent release, *Enlighten the Darkness*, as **Angel Dust** have always had a sense of darkness that comes natural while other bands try and can not duplicate. I spoke to guitarist Bernie Aufermann about the new record.

What are your thoughts on *Enlighten the Darkness*?
We're definitely satisfied with almost everything.

You guys have written and recorded a lot of songs in a short period of time.

Yes, maybe. We take a comeback very serious. We're not out to make one album and get money. We just want to be one of the top German heavy metal bands.

How do you take this band to the next level?

We hope to reach a lot of people, especially in the United States. The reaction to *Bleed* was unbelievable. Jon Drenning from *Crimson Glory* e-mailed me and told me to go to the Perpetual Motion board and just say hello, they would love it. I logged in and said this is Bernie from **Angel Dust** and I got four hundred and eighty three e-mails in just one day. It took me hours to read them, but everybody got an answer. We were very glad about all this because we didn't expect that. It seems that a lot of people in America like our music because they say this is what metal in the year 2000 should sound like. The record company tells us we have to sound like **Helloween** or **Blind Guardian**. We don't care what they say.

You can't compare your band to anybody.

That's a good sign. We've doubled the selling rates for *Enlighten the Darkness* now, here in Germany. I don't know what it is worldwide. I heard that *Enlighten the Darkness* should have been released on the 18th of June. Now I heard that it will be released on the 18th of July.

Is there any talk of you guys coming to America?

Yes, we've had a few talks about that with Century Media, but they said it depends on the selling rate. Our manager tells us the same. If we sell ten thousand copies in the U.S. it is really good for a German metal band but it's not enough to tour down there. We're supposed to play South America. We would love to play the United States in places like New York and San Francisco where we've had a very strong following. Maybe in January or February of 2001 we'll make it over there.

You've got a sound that has progressive and power metal elements.

I don't think we're that progressive sounding. We do have a power metal approach. Hopefully we'll have more people on this tour in Europe than the last one where we had three or four hundred at each show. We doubled our sales in Germany so it should be better for this tour. We're touring with **Lefay** from Sweden. We're gonna go on tour in August and September in Europe. Do you know the guys in **Symphony X**? They're a very cool band. We played a festival in Germany together. Russell was so kind. He comes up and says "I don't know anybody here, do you mind if I come by and sit down and say a few words?". We had a drink and talked. We were nervous about playing the show because it was in our home town.

Russell stayed on the side of the stage and watched the entire show. I got terrible tinnitus during the show because I forgot my earplugs. I had to leave immediately after we finished. I was angry about it because I would have loved to talk to Russell. I would really love to make contact with him again and see if he would sing on my solo album.

Tell me about this solo album.

It's too early to talk about this, but when you play in a band there's a few things that you can't release. If you can't offer it to the band, then you need another outlet. I would compare it to **Ayreon**. I want more guitars than synthesizers on my album though. I'm looking for a few singers. I've got Warrell Dane from **Nevermore**, I've got Tobias from **Edguy**, and I would love to get Russell Allen from **Symphony X** because he has the same direction of vocal approach as our singer, Dirk, has. With Dirk it would sound too much like **Angel Dust**. Maybe I'll get a few female singers too. We're gonna record it in November. We're talking to Century Media about re-releasing the eighties albums. We have to remaster them because the sound is awful. Now we have more possibilities to get a good sound.

Angel Dust uses the keyboards in a prominent manner.

Yes, this is a point that I'd like to stretch. We don't use the keyboards in the background. I was always a guitar player who liked to play with a very strong and good keyboard player. Steven plays the keyboards in a traditional way, like Jon Lord or Kevin Moore. He comes up with sounds that nobody has come up with before. **Angel Dust** has a lot of keyboards and it's important to our sound. It's aggressive with all the loop things that he does. "The One You Are" crushes you skull.

***Border of Reality* is my favorite album.**

Looking back at that album, it wasn't perfect. When we recorded *Border of Reality*, Dirk, the lead singer, was in the band for only about three months. Most of the songs were the result of the songwriting between Steven and me. We were in a band together before we were in **Angel Dust**. Such songs like "Nightmare", "Where the

Wind Blows" were in a hard rock direction like we did before. After Frank Banx and Dirk Assmuth asked us to join the band, we were very much into writing hard rock music so we were quite sure if it would work out for **Angel Dust**, but it definitely did. We were very satisfied with this album.

Discography:

2000... *Enlighten The Darkness* (Century Media)
1999... *Bleed* (Century Media)
1998... *Border Of Reality* (Century Media)
1988... *To Dust You Will Decay*
1986... *Into The Dark Past*

Current line-up:

Dirk Thurisch... vocals
Bernd Aufermann... guitars
Frank Banx... bass
Steven Banx... keyboards
Dirk Assmuth... drums

Website:

www.centurymedia.com



AUTUMN TEARS

Interview with vocalist Erika

Autumn Tears is one of the few bands that have had the ability to play a genre of music that has nothing to do with metal, yet they have an undeniable appeal for that crowd. There is a pervading sense of darkness and evil that underlies the passionate female vocals of Jennifer and Erika and the beautiful classical based music from Ted. **Autumn Tears** have created three concept albums titled *Love Poems For Dying Children*, through the past few years and have drawn praise from the underground masses. I spoke to Erika about **Autumn Tears**.

What was the original idea behind Autumn Tears?

Autumn Tears was formed by Ted in the late summer of 1995. Ted originally intended the band to be a guitar based project with spoken female vocals reciting poetry over the music. He quickly changed his mind and decided to make a keyboard based project and shortly afterwards he asked me if I wanted to sing. We had been friends since college and he thought it would be nice to include. I always wanted to be in a band. The concept of the band came from personal experiences that Ted had, he's made a very loose allegory of these personal experiences and he's turned it into a vampiric story.

We were working with lyrics that he had written years before. It seemed to fit very well with the music he was writing. That's how the first c.d. came about. We went into the studio to record this in February of 1996. That came out in April of '96. We have been writing and working together ever since. I left the band for a little bit in '97. I had a lot going on in my life and I was trying to finish a novel. I had to simplify and **Autumn Tears** was the thing that went. I was always involved with the band because Ted and I were always really good friends. He asked me to do some session vocals. Back in the winter of '98

I came back as a full time member. In the meantime he had already located Jen, who is now the second female vocalist for **Autumn Tears**. She worked out really well so we've been a three piece ever since.

Did you get your novel written?

I did. It hasn't been published. The title was *The Apocalypse Gods*. It was a science fiction novel, very complex. I was gonna do it my way, but that doesn't please the critics. I'm probably gonna start re-writing it some time. I think I'll then publish it in a serial format through Dark Symphonies. The hell with these people who are saying I have to make it shorter and the characters nicer. I put myself through the ringer a couple of times with agents. It was incredibly frustrating and depressing. You're doing the same thing with a novel as you do with a c.d. You're putting your soul on the line. You're leaving yourself open to be ripped apart. They wanted me to make compromises that would completely subjugate all the reasons why I decided to do the thing to begin with. If I wanted to have it published in the mainstream public I would have to sell out. I'm not about that and nobody in Dark Symphonies or **Autumn Tears** is like that. That's why it's sitting on the shelf. If I'm gonna rewrite it I want to show it to the people in the metal community and I know that they will appreciate it for what it is. People are so worried about money and having a good return. You end up being a slave to what the masses want. For someone that's creative that's a hard thing to do. Some people don't mind doing that. I went to school for commercial illustration. That's one of the most uncreative type of jobs you can go into. You're working for somebody who tells you what they want. It better be that way or you're not getting paid. Needless to say, that's why I didn't work out as a free lancer.

Despite the beautiful music and vocals, there's a sense of darkness in **Autumn Tears**.

That's what we've tried to do. We're all of the dark outlook. We've all been into

metal since we were little kids. We're not all about sunshine and flowers. It gives us a lot of pleasure if they listen to the music and they pick up that dark message. We want to reach people emotionally, because that's what we feel inside. We want to express that in a way as beautiful as possible yet as true to what we're feeling. We want people to get into our own heads and see what we're feeling and what's going through our minds as we're creating this music and expressing it.

Would you consider *Love Poems for Dying Children* an ongoing concept?

Yes. That was a complete concept. The story revolving around that concept is now done. We didn't know how many acts it would take to complete the story. We weren't going to limit ourselves or promise people we were going to do this in five acts or six acts or ten acts, we just took it as it went. The way the music and the lyrics came out for this album, it seemed appropriate to end the story at this point in time. We're going to explore some new ideas at this time. We're going to explore some different design because the parchment paper and the William Morris illustrations are great but I'm really sick of designing c.d.'s that look like that. We've done four of them in that style of design. It works very well because it's a cohesive set. It's an idea that spans all four c.d.'s but I think to expand it on to a fourth full length c.d.

would be inappropriate. Who knows what the next thing's going to be. We're taking a break now and relaxing. We're not trying to come up with new music right away. It did take us three years to write the third album, we're a bit burnt out from that. Whatever comes out is still going to be dark and trademark **Autumn Tears**, but it's not going to deal with the story of Autumn, the beautiful, and what the lyrics from the previous album dealt with. That's why **Autumn Tears** is on Dark Symphonies, the only pressure upon us is what we put on ourselves. We would

completely fail if we had a label breathing down our neck. It's probably going to be thirteen or fourteen months before the next album comes out. To do it faster would be to compromise the quality of the music. What are you doing if you aren't making music to please. To compromise that would be ridiculous and a failure on all levels.

You've managed to cross over to a metal fanbase.

Autumn Tears was originally distributed through Dark Symphonies and we used all of our metal contacts and spread it around to the metal community. We knew people would like it because they were already enjoying the stuff that **Mortis** was doing and the Cold Meat Industry stuff. Metal people are some of the most open minded people in the whole world when it comes to music. They're not as close minded as people would think. People generally appreciate nice music. It doesn't have to have heavy guitars and double bass for people to enjoy it. We have fans of all walks of life.

Discography:

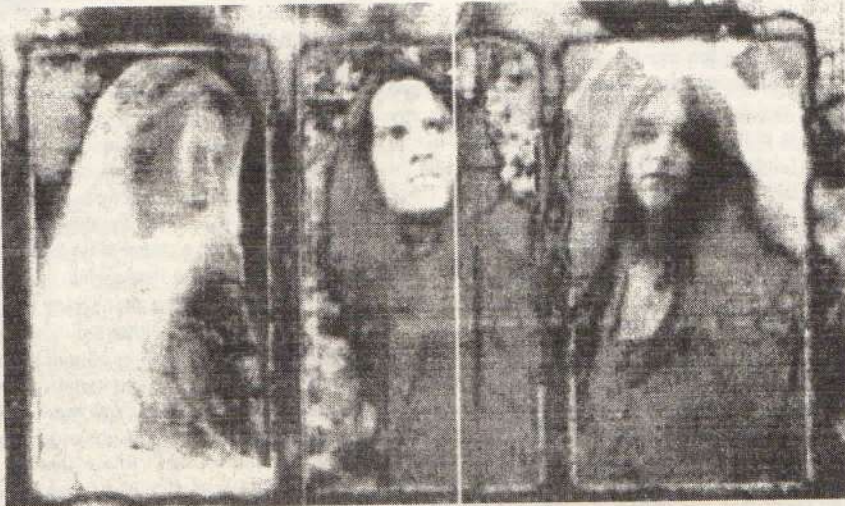
2000... *Love Poems For Dying Children Act III* (Dark Symphonies)
1997... *Love Poems For Dying Children Act II* (Dark Symphonies)
1996... *Love Poems For Dying Children Act I* (Dark Symphonies)

Current line-up:

Ted... keyboards
Erika... vocals
Jennifer... vocals

Website:

www.darksymphonies.com



AVERSE SEFIRA

Interview with vocalist/ guitarist Sanguine and bassist/ drummer Wrath

Averse Sefira is an American underground black metal band that has been causing some comotion this year with some successful live dates. They self released their debut, *Homecomings March*, last year and now find themselves joining the growing Lost Disciple roster. I spoke to the duo of Sanguine and Wrath about their future plans and their sound. I have become so enchanted by the name I have also named one of my rats Aversefira. Due to being unable to properly distinguish the two voices on the other end of the phone I have decided not to categorize who said what, I think this is fair because **Averse Sefira** is obviously a unified vision of these two artists.

How do you feel about the debut?

The response has been very good and we were satisfied with it when we put it out. We had been working on new material for the next album which has been consuming my thoughts a lot. Now we're concentrating on the second album. It'll be a year old in August. Everything went so fast. People are still finding out about it for the first time all around the world. By the time we get the second album out we will not have lost any momentum.

What is your new stuff sounding like?

That's something we've been discussing for a few months. We've official signed to Lost Disciple now. The new stuff's a lot more aggressive and a lot more stripped down. The songs are more compact and quick to the point. They're also shorter for us as some of them are clocking in at the five minute mark. The way I like to describe it is that it is us. We haven't done any radical change at all. We and a lot to say on the first album because we were writing those songs for two years. These songs are coming a little bit quicker. I like to tell people that it is a meaner, fiercer interpretation of what people would expect from the first album. It's also a lot darker and brooding than the first album.

My favorite aspect of your band is that you accomplish an atmosphere without the use of keyboards.

It's a point of pride not to use keyboards. It started just the two of us, we made the initial conscious decision that we weren't gonna have keyboards. We didn't really care for that element. Also, neither one of us could apply them effectively and do them justice like some bands are able to do. A lot of the bands that we are influenced by are older. I grew up listening to a slew of bands that didn't use keyboards. The first time I really heard that was with **Emperor** and **Cradle Of Filth**. I thought it was cool, it just didn't apply to anything that we were doing. There are some people who are playing black metal that don't feel it's black metal unless they are using all the elements. What we are trying to do is create an atmosphere without the symphonic stuff. We are trying to maximize what we have to work with on the upcoming album- that's the guitars, the drums, the vocals. I'd like to think there's going to be another wrinkle added to our sound. I played a lot of the bass lines by matching what was being played on the guitars. It's fine. It made it sound powerful but at the same time it wasn't realizing our potential as a power trio. There's going to be a lot of stuff where I'm supplying a low end that's different and diverse from what the guitars are playing. It will have that atmosphere again without the use for anything other than stringed instruments. It's important to strive to learn from what you did before and improve upon it.

Where are you guys living now?

We lived in New York for this past year and now we just moved back to Texas. There was this weird feeling that we needed to move. We were both native Texans our entire lives. We did the move in the name of creating inertia and a sense of chaos. We were going to a place that we didn't know. We were setting up shop and it accomplished what we were hoping it would. I don't know why we decided that would work but it did. We left the following winter, after one of the hottest summers on record. People died in their homes. We enjoyed the snow the first time around. It was a neat experience shoveling twenty inches of snow off your porch. At least Rochester had a faint pulse of life. A lot of the people were born and will die there. They can't see beyond living anywhere else anywhere.

Would you say the lyrics have a strong literature base?

We're working from an overall story and concept that all the songs are taking place on. Once we've decided to quit we will be able to take every song that we



have written and put it out in a point A to point B fashion. Right now the songs are being written out of order and in linear terms but there's a working story going through the whole thing. We both graduated from college so we're at least putting our education to some good use. There's a lot of cinematic references, literary sources, even what some people would consider lowbrowish influences. It's all in the name of telling a story. Everything we write we are borrowing from sources that come from within and don't necessarily have anything to do with the band. Each song had a personal tie to it. There's a lot of veiled references, but at the same time that's what gives the songs a little bit more passion. It's not something that we're writing external of ourselves. It's a product as we are, either individually or as a band. We've taken a lot of different elements from religious beliefs and created a new myth cycle through synthesis. The majority comes from the Kaballah mixed with old testament things, and mesh the whole thing together. The more efforts that we put out, the more clear it will become. There's a lot of things that we don't follow that we write about. We're looking at the rise and fall of monotheism and the arguments behind it and the mechanics of it. I've gone through a lot of different things in terms of what I believe, there's a lot of things that are now becoming radically changed than say it was four years ago when we started this. People ask us all the time whether or not we're Satanists. I say not really. We never really were per se. At this point I am tired of addressing that. Nobody asked us in awhile. It's not right to say we're Satanists, there's a lot more going on than just that. There many roads out there.

What are your plans for the rest of this year?

Right now we're in the process of writing. We have a couple other shows this year, but we're concentrating on going in the studio. We have a new album to promote this year. There's some bands who play the festivals every year- that's fine, but for us we want it to be a special occasion. We don't want to do it unless we have something new to offer.

You guys seem to do a good job at self promotion.

It's so hard to promote a band. It's a strain on your time. Even if you do a lousy job. This is our life, it's who we are. I don't see why anybody would want to get involved in this thing unless they realize that. We spend a lot of time, energy, and money- even on a small scale like we are now. Some bands think they are really gonna make it by playing every weekend, but they don't make any steps beyond that to make noise.

Discography:

1999... *Homecomings March*

Current line-up:

Sanguine... vocals and guitars
Wrath... bass and drums

THE BERZERKER

Interview with the Berzerker

The Berzerker is one of the most extreme albums you will ever hear. This full length debut they have bestowed upon us combines techno's speed with death metal's brutality. It is truly a unique listening experience and this sounds like it was meant for the new century. I can not think of any band I can directly compare these guys to, it is that original sounding. Surely your death metal purists will be turned off when they hear the electronic influence but there's no denying the *Berzerker*'s brutality and that's what draws people to death metal to begin with. Here's the *Berzerker*.

Tell me about the concept of the Berzerker.

The *Berzerker* is a group of sentient beings more powerful than man. We chose the name the *Berzerker* in tribute to the Berserk or bare-sark Norse warriors. The physical appearance of the berzerk was one calculated to present an image of terror. The berzerk was thought to possess the ferocity and strength of the bear. By the twelfth century, the berzerk, with his Odinnic religion, animalistic appearance, his inhuman frenzy upon the battlefield, and terrorism within the Scandanavian community, disappeared. The berzerk, like his patron deity Odinn, was forced to yield to the dissolution of pagan society and the advent of the White Christ. At this time and in this age, the year of the Iron Dragon, the concept of berzerk applying only to pagan Scandanavian warriors is obsolete. The *Berzerker* is about musically fulfilling the statement "he who makes a beast of himself, is free from pain of being a man." The *Berzerker*'s sound is the most natural form of extremity known on this planet.

What are you trying to create musically?

The *Berzerker* style is the progression of the peak of the early nineties death metal scene when bands were serious about pushing the dark side of music all the way. I guess this was before the scene started an infatuation with their instruments, stagnating extremity in a desperate bid to validate death metal as a widely respected musical style. Meanwhile, all the extremity in the scene was left in the treble end of the mixing board and the northern end of Europe. Imagine the promise of the early nineties death and grind scene reduced to this. We still have people supposedly on the cutting edge of extreme music, telling us that gabba doesn't mix with metal and vice versa. We will evolve past them, and leave them with their fading memories of years gone, when music actually seemed like it was going somewhere.

I'm sure you've received some negative reactions due to your willingness to take your music to unprecedented levels, what are some feedback you've been getting and how does it affect the band?

Unfortunately there has been all too little negative press, which makes me wonder who is listening to this record. A lot of the feedback I get is from kids between seventeen and nineteen. Of course, I still get positive feedback from *Morbid Angel* and *Cannibal Corpse* fans in the mid to late twenties. But it seems like people are currently looking for the most extreme music they can find, and we seem to fit the bill well.

What does the future hold for the Berzerker?

Earache have asked for finished masters by the end of the year with an April or May release. This may or may not happen, depending on touring commitments with the current record. As technology evolves, so does extremity. Actually, I think we've already evolved past ourselves. The next album certainly needs to be a lot more brutal. Music has still a long way to be pushed yet. But if I set out to make the heaviest and fastest album that could ever be recorded, where would I go from there? The self titled album is the first installment with many more already in the planning stages. My intention was to make a record that would be brutal enough to surpass what is currently available and to leave myself with enough room to progress forward for the next installment.

Tell me about the Morbid Angel tribute album that you did.

Maybe you can fill me in on that one. I didn't do a *Morbid Angel* tribute album. I did two *Morbid Angel* remixes on the *Hellspawn* c.d. Originally I was approached by Earache Records to remix some of their bands. I immediately chose four bands to remix: *Carcass*, *Brutal Truth*, *Morbid Angel*, and *Napalm Death*. I chose *Carcass* to start on, but Earache had trouble finding the master tapes for the songs I wanted. Second I chose *Brutal Truth* but again they had trouble finding some of Kevin Sharpe's vocal tracks. So finally three *Morbid*

Angel tracks were agreed upon, "Day of Suffering", "Abomination", and "The Ancient Ones". The first two were mixed in a gabba style and "The Ancient Ones" was mixed in an industrial death style very similar to the sound of the *Berzerker*. This mix remains unreleased and is brutally fast.

Is there any other Berzerker releases besides the Morbid Angel one and the self titled release?

There are three other *Berzerker* e.p.'s but they are more of a speedcore style. These records are all from 1995 to 1997 and are very outdated by the *Berzerker*'s standards.

Why was your video banned from M.T.V.?

M.T.V. have banned the broadcast of the *Berzerker*'s extreme video clip "Reality" on the grounds of "horrific imagery", epilepsy inducing flashing images, and "ghoulish faces that would frighten children". The video, which was due to be aired this week on M.T.V.'s Superock show, treats us to rare visuals of the enigmatic maniacs intercut with eye catching autopsy footage. The actual freakish appearance of the band is such that at no time will the I.T.C. (Independent Television Commission) allow their faces to be shown during the daytime as it may traumatize young people, "switching on their televisions after getting back from school." Concerns were also raised regarding the rapid successive editing of flashing images within the video which has been known to induce epilepsy. The entire unedited video can be enjoyed on the Earache website, www.earache.com, or for faster download go to www.antimtv.com. The full effect of the clip is only realized by watching it on a television. The webs display rates not fast enough to capture some of the very fast single frame edits. I had to cut an edited version of the clip to make sure it was aired- that in itself may be considered as somewhat of a sacrifice. I see it as a way to make people aware of the *Berzerker*. The people who enjoy the band can then seek the clip out through the underground tape traders or on the net. For me it was a very easy decision; edit, have it aired or no edit, you will never see it on t.v.

The lyrics are very violent and vicious, are your topics derived from fictional or non fictional experiences?

The lyrics deal with facts. Not fantasy horror. There is no coarse language contained in the lyrics, I find it disappointing that the majority of extreme bands must resort to vulgarity to achieve any impact. The lyrics are about life on the planet earth, and the way different societies view various topics. I would like lyrics to be interrupted through the eyes of the listener. I view the lyrics as a calling card. Our philosophy is a simple one, and that is to unite worthy, like minded beings. Beings who are honest, motivated, and self driven to do the things they say they will. It is to create a sub race somewhere on this planet where we can exist without being surrounded by inconsiderate beings. To be given the rare opportunity to have the utmost respect for the others who are chosen to surround us.

How did this idea of merging techno and death metal originate?

Death metal is my background. I have always been into death metal and I always will be, I did not see it as a fad and I was not attracted to it to shock others around me in a desperate cry for attention. But towards the mid nineties the death metal scene seemed to die out somewhat and almost all of the bands from the late eighties and early nineties seemed to lose their direction. Around the same time I was exposed to hardcore gabba, and was attracted to the violent forces that are in play when gabba kicks are fed through a large p.a. Death metal has always been associated with little clicky triggered kick sounds that have no real sonic impact. So the plan was to make death metal all the more aggressive by replacing the kick drums for something that has a lot more sonic impact.

Final comments?

Embalming is essentially a process designed to present a dead human individual in the most natural likeliest attitude and appearance possible. Anything which detracts from the appearance of naturalness will lessen the success of the embalming operation. In the strictest sense of the word, any result which is not a complete success must be regarded as a failure.

Boulder

Interview with vocalist/ bassist Jamie Walters

Raw, energetic, brutal rock 'n roll is what **Boulder** is all about. I spoke to on the same day he had his wisdom teeth pulled. **Boulder** has been around since 1991 and they give off the aura that they are really simply in it for the fun of playing. They have recently had two twenty track c.d.'s released. The first one is *Ripping Christ* which was released by a small independent label and compiles tracks from early in their career onto one c.d. The other is *Ravage and Savage*, which was put out by Tee Pee Records. This also includes bonus tracks which make up the album *The Rage of it All*. Here is Jamie to tell us about them.

It was cool to get two discs in one.

You mean *Ravage and Savage*? You don't have *Ripping Christ*? It came out after it, but it's all our old stuff. It's got twenty songs on it so that's like a double disc too. It's not released on a legitimate label, it was something that a friend of ours put out on his own label.

Are you guys playing shows?

Yeah, we're playing shows. We actually have to turn stuff down. Some bands want us to go on tour with them, but we can only do the weekend shows. We're not too cool about doing things during the week right now, because everybody's working. We play around here all the time. We try to play once a month here in Cleveland. We've been playing out of town more than in town. Sometimes it's good, sometimes it's bad. New York and Toronto are usually pretty good.

You've been around for about ten years, correct?

Yeah, pretty much. We've been together since the seventh grade. I've known Terry since pre-school and I've known Jamie since seventh grade. Mark was in a death metal band with Jamie and Terry in the early nineties.



We started in about 1992, so it's been about eight years.

How many releases have you had in that time?

It would start with '94 *Jailbreak* which was recorded 2/22/94, then 3/28/95 we recorded our second cassette which is *Sticky*. We recorded *Fistful of Sun* seven inch in 8/95, *Toadsters Bible* in 9/96, 555 ten inch we recorded 10/13/96, *We Like No Heroes* we recorded 12/97. That's all our old stuff. We have two self released cassettes, three or four seven inches, and a ten inch. That's all on what's known as *Ripping Christ* now. You can simply lump it all into *Ripping Christ*. *The Rage of it All* we recorded sometime in 1998. The last one that we recorded was *Ravage and Savage* in December. *The Rage of it All* was supposed to be put out by Twilight Records. I don't know to this day, what happened. It was the same thing with another label which was supposed to put *Ripping Christ* out. This stuff never happens, or they say they don't have the money. *The Rage of it All* is out on vinyl. It's been out on vinyl since it was released in '99. This is the first c.d. we've ever had, everything else was on vinyl.

Was that by choice?

Jamie and Terry are really big into collecting vinyl. Me and the other guy wanted to put a c.d. out because we thought it would sell more and get us more exposure. I would never have minded having a c.d. out. We usually record pretty quick. All of our stuff is usually recorded in the first or second take. It's as inexpensive as you can go. We're just playing rock. We don't consider ourselves stoner rock or heavy metal. I don't even know what we are. The older stuff is a little different. It's a little darker and like thrash metal. It's crazier. The stuff now is more rocking.

Everyone's getting older. We've been playing together since we were twelve, thirteen years old. We have tapes from back then. We practice every week. We have set practice days and we're religious about it.

Do you have any specific goals for the band?

I guess so. I would consider us the furthest thing from rock stars or people who are actually out there trying to make it. There's plenty of bands in Cleveland who are really trying to make it. They think they're going to be the next **Metallica**. It's sickening. We're real bad self promoters. We never put flyers out for our shows. People still come and it's in the paper, but we're a hundred times lazier than the other bands. We still do fine. We do as good as we want. Sometimes you can tell no one wants to practice but once we get there and play it's a lot better. We're definitely dedicated and we practice all of the time. We also have **Motorhead U.S.A.**, which is a **Motorhead** tribute band. We did the *Ace of Spades*, *Iron Fist*, we're about to do *Bomber*. When we play out we just do whole albums. All of it's on video. We started it to try to make money as a cover band. Some bands are pretty big here in Cleveland. You can get paid decent money in a cover band. Unfortunately, no one wants to see a **Motorhead** tribute band. We do just as good as we do with **Boulder** but it's not like we're a five hundred dollar wedding band. We thought we were a wedding band once. We played late eighties heavy metal. It was a one time thing and I don't even know how we got it, but someone paid us five hundred bucks to play a wedding.

What do you think of the new Motorhead stuff?

I like it. I'm real strange about music. I just like it. I like something before I don't like it. It's all good. They just came through here a

couple of months ago with **Nashville Pussy** and **Supersuckers**. Lemmy was pissed off because someone threw something at him and it wasn't as crowded as he wanted it to be. It must've been an off night for them. I don't even listen to new music so I don't even know what trends are.

What are some of your all time favorite

bands?

Probably **Judas Priest**, **Motorhead**, **Led Zeppelin**, **Venom**, **Slayer**, **Metallica**- pretty basic bands. Jamie and Terry are into so many obscure bands. They're into bands I've never heard of, they're really into music. Me and Mark are just the standard, although he likes a lot of guitarists like Michael Schenker. I'm always into drummers. We grew up listening to the same things together. We went through the same phases; death metal, punk rock. Those guys are all thrash and death metal, I've always been into punk rock. Stuff like **Cryptic Slaughter**. That's how I learned to play drums. We're very anti-serious.

Discography:

2000... *Ripping Christ*
2000... *Ravage And Savage* (Tee Pee)
1999... *The Rage Of It All* (Tee Pee)

Current line-up:

Jamie Walters... vocals and bass
Terrence Hanchin... guitars
Patrick Munn... drums

Website:

www.boulder.8m.com

Celestial Season

Interview with guitarist Olly Smit

Celestial Season is a band that has been around for a long time and has evolved over the course of their career like no other band before. In the early to mid 90's they were a slow, melancholy, atmospheric, doomy, death metal band. They released two ground breaking albums, *Solar Lovers* and *Forever Scarlet Passion*. When their third album came out, *Orange*, there was a distinct change in sound. The band was going in a more rock direction. Their last two releases, *Chrome* and the impressive new album *Lunchbox Dialogues* sees the band in top form. No two albums are the same when it comes to this Holland band. I e-mailed guitarist Olly Smit some questions to get American audiences up to date with **Celestial Season**.

How do you feel about the new album?

I think that *Lunchbox Dialogues* is the first album that we look back on and feel that we have created the most complete and balanced album of **Celestial**. This mainly because everything finally clicks in **Celestial**. Everyone is in the right spot now and once together, things just seem to work out right. We have made no compromise on the technical side of things, we had the time to redo a take if it didn't feel right. We also had the possibility of experimenting with a multitude of sounds/ effects and not to forget we had great help from our producer Pieter Kloos. We picked the songs for the album in such a way that it's one long musical trip to listen to, without making it a ten song compilation.

How would you describe what the music on *Lunchbox Dialogues*?

It's really hard to describe *Lunchbox Dialogues* to someone who hasn't heard **Celestial** before. People who have followed **Celestial** know that not one album sounds alike. The change is a natural process for us and its developing continuously. *Lunchbox* is therefore a natural progression from *Chrome*. It is as intense as *Chrome* although there is a more song like structure visible. We have tried the less is more principle on *Lunchbox*, the art of leaving stuff out to create more space in the songs. The freight train type of riffs, which were clearly noticeable on *Chrome* are still there, but we also have tried to make room for fragile, melodic songs. *Lunchbox* is more like a trip which we like to take our crowd on during a live show. We have also brought back the violins and cello on this album. Furthermore, we had the possibility of experimenting with different instruments and sounds as we had more time to record the album than the previous ones.

Why has it been a problem keeping a steady line-up?

It hasn't been a problem, but more of a luxury. When you come to think about it, presently there is no one in the band from the beginning. It's really a big part of the development story. Personal interests change and if there are six people in the band, it's inevitable that people's interests grow in different directions. The musicians in **Celestial** have always left the band for these reasons, and luckily enough there was always good friends around to fill up the gap. **Celestial** has always consisted of friends, and we have never had auditions of some sort. We prefer a person who fits in not only musically but also on a personal level. We all have our own lives apart from the band but when we are together we are a close bunch of guys. **Celestial** at this moment is the most stable, mainly because everyone has their own and equal input in the whole and things seem to happen when we play together. We are more versatile on stage and depending on the feel of the show, we adapt our set to the crowd. In the past it has happened that, for whatever reason, our shows were quite sloppy.

How do you feel about *Chrome*?

The songs on *Chrome* were created over a two year period. Some songs were created with the same line-up as on *Orange* some were written in the transition period when Jacques and Rob were new to the band and some songs were written just before entering the studio. We call *Chrome* our transition album as we were still searching for the right direction as the songs on *Chrome* weren't as stoner as on *Orange* mainly due to the influences of Jacques and Rob. We also had very limited time to record the album which meant that although we knew what it was supposed to sound like, we had to compromise on several occasions. I think the change from *Orange* to *Chrome* is more obvious than the differences between *Lunchbox* and *Chrome*, mainly because *Lunchbox* is the first album with the same line-up as the previous album. *Chrome* was the small step but a giant leap for **Celestial**.

Lunchbox however is the most complete album till now on which we took the time to get everything right. Recording an album is always like taking a snapshot of the band at a given time.

Why did you change in sound following *Solar Lovers*?

On *Forever Scarlet Passion* and *Solar Lovers* the musicians were nearly all on the wrong spot. The drummer was a good bass player, I used to play bass although I am actually a guitar player. The vocalist was really good at doing his thing, but when we decided to try out melody lines instead of grunt vocals his style was too different than what the rest of us had in mind so he quit. The rhythm guitar player at that time, a brother of the vocalist, Cyril happened to be a very good drummer and at that time he fulfilled both parts, although during live shows we used to have back up on drums from our good friend Eva of **Beaver**. The line-up changes, together with our diverse tastes of music created the new melting pot of the new **Celestial**.

Care to comment on your innovative use of violins at that time?

I think at that time when we were using violins we were the first to have the violins play such a dominant role. The violins brought the melody in our music which the grunt vocals lacked. When Cyril came on vocals, we could bring the melody in our music through him, together with the guitars, which had more or less the same effect. I look back at when *My Dying Bride* just started and realize that we were doing that thing way before them. I sometimes think that we would have been more successful if we continued. We still believe that you should always do what you feel is best and not hop on with the first trend that comes along. We considered ourselves lucky that we have never had to compromise on our style because of contracts with record labels. We always knew that the violins would come back someday, and so they did on *Lunchbox*.

What are your goals for *Lunchbox Dialogues*?

The main objective of **Celestial** is to get the music to the people through live shows outside of the Netherlands. We have done extensive touring in Holland but now it is time for the rest of the world. We have not play many shows abroad. We aren't very good commercial promoters of **Celestial**, we like to play music and that's it- we don't run around hanging up posters and dealing out stickers, that's what a record label should do. We finally have good management and this is what **Celestial** really needs. Now we are doing everything possible to get our music to the people outside of Holland.

How have the long time fans responded to the growth and change of *Celestial Season*?

We had to take a lot of shit from people when we developed into what we are now. I say developed because we believed in what we did back then as we believe in what we are doing now. We don't think that our first two albums suck because of the difference in style as opposed to now, it's just not our thing anymore. We make the music that we want, as anyone can listen to what they want, and I don't feel that we are obligated to anyone at all. It's great that people listen to our music and that it moves them but if it doesn't then don't buy it.

Discography:

2000... *Lunchbox Dialogues* (La Guapa)
1999... *Chrome*
1997... *Orange*
1995... *Solar Lovers*
1993... *Forever Scarlet Passion*

Current line-up:

Cyril Cruetz... vocals
Olly Smit... guitars
Pim Van Zanen... guitars
Jacques De Haard... bass
Rob Snijders... drums

Website:

www.celestialseason.com



CHIAROSCURO

Interview with vocalist/ guitarist/ keyboardist Ian Dorsch

When I read about **Chiaroscuro** in *Metal Maniacs* I was pleasantly surprised to see the popular magazine do such a big feature on a progressive metal band that I had never heard of before. I immediately contacted the band and vocalist Ian Dorsch got the disc out to me right away. Sure enough, this debut from the Seattle based band was very impressive and deserved all the attention. Like New York's **October Thorns**, **Chiaroscuro** represents the new breed of progressive metal that is not afraid to go into heavy and more experimental directions. Here is Ian to tell us all about the band.

What are you up to now?

Right now we're just playing gigs around here and trying to write some new material. We're basically broke at this point, in terms of the kind of money it would take to do a new c.d. We gonna write some stuff and demo it for some labels and guys who have expressed interest. We'll see where it goes from there.

It was shocking to see Chiaroscuro in *Metal Maniacs*.

Jeff Wagner is the man. He ended up with a C.D.R. or a cassette with a couple of tracks from the album and he loved it. He got in touch with me via e-mail. He asked if we wanted to do a two page spread because he wanted to give us some coverage. That was a huge thing for us.

I'm surprised that you didn't get label interest.

We did from Nuclear Blast, Century Media, and Inside Out; but we have yet to hear back from them. I don't know what we'll do if we get signed. Three of the guys in the band are married, everybody has day jobs. You have to do this because you love it and not expect to make anything from it.

If I'm not mistaken, the material on this album is a bit dated.

At the time we were recording it was a bad scene. Our guitar player was finishing up his degree three and a half hours away. The bass player was trying to organize his wedding. It was really tough. It took us a good four or five months to get the tracks done. I was still in school at the time. When we were about half of the way through the mix down I had to go back to school. On Thanksgiving break I mixed down a few more tracks and Christmas break I mixed the rest of them. It was absurdly protracted. By the time we took it to a duplication house and had it mastered a year had gone by.

How is the live situation?

We've been received reasonably well out here. The scene is not great here. There's a couple of bands that are along the same lines of what we're doing; there's **Nevermore**, **Botch**, but otherwise the scene is not good at all. We have enough of that new metal sound to what we're doing that people don't find it totally alien. If anything they're freaked out by my voice. We have people who appreciate what we're doing. We get a couple of hundred people out. If I was willing to quit my day job, I had the opportunity to tour as the keyboardist for **Fates Warning**. Maybe that opportunity will come again. It's one of those things I'll probably look back on ten years from now and say, damn I should have done that.

How is the new material sounding?

The new material is stronger than what's on the c.d. I'm looking forward to getting it on tape and sending it out to people. It's a more refined sound. The aggressive stuff is more aggressive and the atmospheric stuff is more atmospheric. I think a lot of these labels are waiting to see how it evolves. What has helped congeal what we're doing is the addition of a new keyboard player. It's a buddy of mine from high school, we go way back. When we put out the c.d. we realized that we were gonna have to rely too much on sequencing. It helps a lot to have another keyboard player. He's also a good singer and a good screamer. He's almost a dead ringer for Devin Townsend. I'm a better melodic singer than him because I've had all the training, but when it comes to sounding like a scary bastard Jeff fits the bill. When you have someone who is menacing filling in the vocal blanks it makes the

band heavier. When we put out the c.d. I was deadset on doing everything. You have to take into consideration that the songs on this album span from when the band originated in '96 to when we recorded the album in '98. "Childrens Crusade" is the first song that we ever wrote as a band, that was when we really wanted to be **Dream Theater**. Moving on to the newer stuff like "Crucifixion", "Bloody Hell", and "Broken Everything"; is more diverse and aggressive. The new stuff takes that and goes further with it. It's got more texture and it gets more adventurous with the arrangements.

What are your goals for the band?

If we had the chance to pack up and tour for six months out of the year I think we would probably do it. We're at a stage where we don't know where everybody's priorities are in the band. We don't have any show booked for about a month, so we're gonna see where everybody's at and see what everybody wants to achieve. Personally, I want to keep doing this until I get sick of it and die. I'm not done with school. I'm gonna go back and try to get my master's in classical vocal performance. That might necessitate drastic changes in the way the band works. I would have to go to the East Coast. We're hoping to get some kind of inkling that something cool is gonna happen with the band before the next school year's up. If I feel real wild and crazy I might go for my doctorate. It's hard for me to rationalize not studying music because I'm so into it.

If you were forced to move to the East Coast, would it be an option for you to get new musicians?

Maybe. If I did that it wouldn't be **Chiaroscuro** anymore. It would be something different and I wouldn't be trying to do the same thing with them. I would hope that if I went to the East Coast I would maintain ties with these guys and keep writing and promoting. If I were to come back during the summers or something we could play out and record stuff as a band. At the same time I don't think I'd want to limit myself to classical music 24-7. I would need to do something more than swap C.D.R.'s to get my metal fix.



What are your thoughts on some of these metal bands like Therion and Tristania who are incorporating classic and metal influences together?

I don't know. I always thought that it was weird to describe metal singers as operatic. There's not much in common. Guys like Geoff Tate and Bruce Dickinson are considered operatic, if you listen to an operatic singer there's no similarity. It's just a convenient adjective. It's interesting what **Therion**'s doing with these big choral arrangements. I direct choirs for a Catholic church in the area. That's what I do during the day, when I come home I don't want to think about how I can incorporate that into my metal. I go home from work at the end of the day and put on the **Dillinger Escape Plan** so I can get those unwholesome things out of my brain.

Chiaroscuro has a pervading sense of darkness and beauty.

I have this problem where happy things fail to inspire me. I need carnage and emotional chaos to inspire me to write, but I'm not pissed all the time.

Discography:

1999... Brilliant Pools Of Darkness

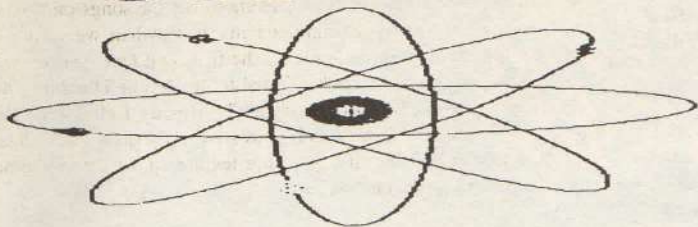
Current line-up:

Ian Dorsch... vocals, guitars, and keyboards
Richard Chambliss... guitars
Clif Chambliss... bass
Aaron Ellsworth... drums
Jeff Moses... keyboards

Website:

www.chiaroscuro.net

Cobalt 60



Interview with guitarist Chris O'Shea, bassist Steve Little, and drummer Tom Campione

Cobalt 60 is a Long Island based band that has been creating some commotion on the scene lately. Their style of music is modern, yet transcends the constant anger associated with the contemporary scene. **Cobalt 60** is a talented group of musicians who play their music with feeling and conviction. While they remind me of the amazing **Last Crack** at times, vocalist Eddie Pullman is unafraid to use some hard edge vocals. Eddie's transition from melodic to coarse singing styles flows with a natural and split second veracity, a trait that will surely take **Cobalt 60** to the next level. They have released two albums independently and are getting ready to write for their third, which will surely be an album to take them to a larger audience. Here's the band minus Eddie to tell us about their trials and tribulations.

Let's talk about the origins.

Tom: We came together with our old bass player, we got wind of Chris O'Shea, who was not playing in a band. We called him up and got together shortly thereafter. We acquired my old guitarist from my last band, **Project 19**, to sing with us and shortly after we got Steve.

Chris: We started out with one guitar player and Eddie singing. Now we've incorporated Eddie playing guitar and singing with us. With two guitar players we sound a lot fuller. When we first started out we were trying to be raw, not metal, we just wanted to be original. It was simple, no leads, with chord progressions that move. It's not fast but it has a groove. We've gotten a little bit heavier, but with Eddie playing guitar it's gotten fuller.

Steve: As a whole, in the past year, year and a half, I feel like we've matured a lot more in our writing. We're not going out to please everyone else, we're going out to please ourselves in what we're writing. We want to play something that you haven't heard before.

Chris: You can hear the influences though.

What are some influences?

Chris: I'm an old metalhead. It depends on the song.

Steve: Everything from Billy Joel to **Pantera**. It's that extreme. I was brought up on all types of music. When I was ten years old I was jamming to

Billy Joel, **Journey**, and **Genesis**- then came **Iron Maiden**, **Slayer**, **Metallica**. Nowadays you've got the **Korn** fad and the **Limp Bizkit** fad. They aren't as big as when they first started. Who knows how long they're going to be around. When you look at a band like **Tool**, somebody who is as low key as them, they've been around a hell of a lot longer than some of those other bands.

Chris: They aren't trying to set any trends. They just go out and play.

Tell me about the new c.d.

Chris: We never really had a release, we've just been giving them out at shows. We give them to people we know. We recorded it in November, it's our second one. That was before we had two guitar players. The first one was with the original bass player. It was released in '97 and had six songs. We never named any of the albums.

Tom: We're working on going into the studio again and try out some of the new stuff we're doing with the two guitars. We may put out four or five songs again.

Steve: You can definitely hear the difference with the new songs. It's very versatile, you go from one extreme to the other. It's a good mixture.

Tom: Now we have four wheels moving at the same time, with all of us writing.

Steve: It helps incorporate new influences, new styles.

Do you get to play out live a lot?

Steve: When we first got together we had one or two shows and then we took almost a year off and did a lot of writing.

Tom: We've had a lot of places that we've played lately calling us back because they like what we're doing.

Chris: Nobody wants to go out and support live bands and go see them play.

What are your goals at this point in your career?

Chris: Somehow to get a deal.

Steve: Personally, a big goal of mine is to play big shows, gain popularity, fame and fortune would be glorious- everyone wants fame and fortune. I love creating music. I've been doing it ever since I was little.

Chris: I never wanted to play a Coliseum show, I always dreamed of touring Roseland for the rest of my life. You get all the real people in front of you.

Tom: It's the whole idea of being there with the people, it's not like you're up there in a picture.

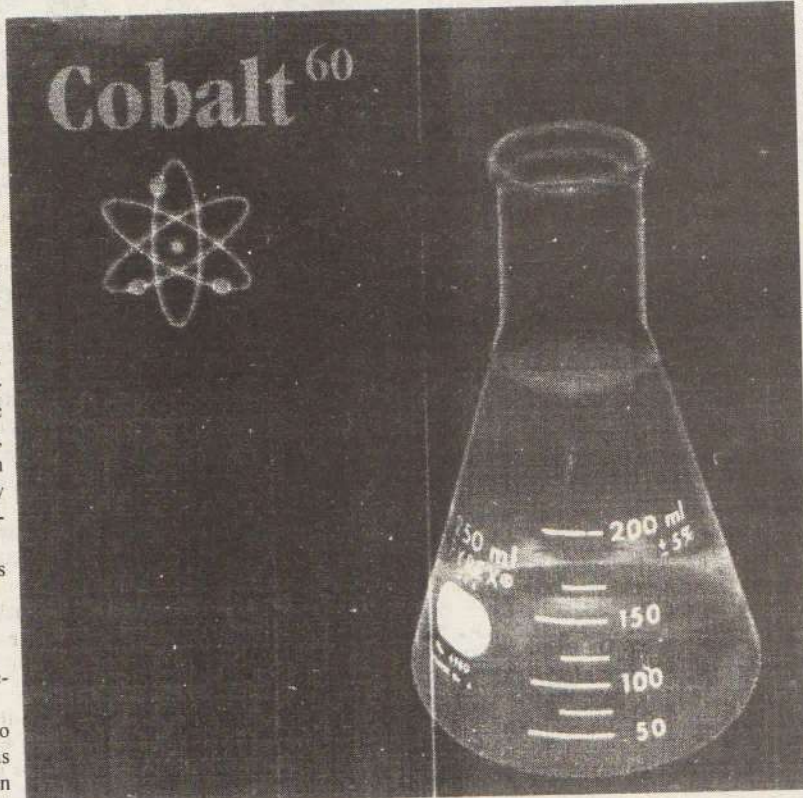
Steve: You have your ups and your downs. You have to play your bad shows in order to get your good shows. We all understand that. Some of us don't want to have to deal with it because it's really discouraging.

What are your plans now?

Tom: We've played some shows. We want to get back to the recording studio and promote some new songs.

Chris: In the beginning, me and Tom used to write a lot of the stuff. One of our main rules wasn't to sit at home and write music, but go to the studio and write right there. Let it flow. If it's gonna be good, it'll show right there.

Tom: There's so many times that we spend days on songs but end up dropping them because they aren't good enough. If there's too much thought involved it kills it. We do it on the fly and it seems to work to our advantage.



Discography:

1999... Cobalt 60

1997... Cobalt 60

Current line-up:

Eddie Pullman... vocals and guitars

Chris O'Shea... guitars

Steve Little... bass

Tom Campione... drums

Website:

<http://welcome.to/Cobalt60>

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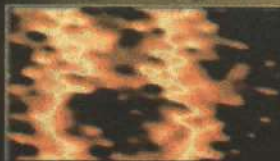
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Stepping Stone - SEX PISTOLS
Confused - ANGELWITCH
California Uber Alles - DEAD KENNEDY'S
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Condition Red

Interview with guitarist Lars Eric Mattsson

I recently received a big package of c.d.'s that included almost all of Finnish guitarist extraordinaire Lars Eric Mattsson's work to date. I was amazed at what I had been missing. This guy is supremely talented and does not stick to one formula. He has released nine discs as a principal songwriter in various projects. He has his own label, Lion Music, which released almost all of his work to date and he has worked with some of the finest musicians (Alex Masi, Derek Sherinian, to name a few) around. His latest release is called **Condition Red**. It includes an upcoming vocalist/ violinist Ella Grussner, vocalist Torgny Stjarnfelt, Masi, Sherinian, keyboardist Alexander King, drummer Eddie Sledgehammer, and of course, the skills of Lars Eric Mattsson who is here to tell us about his work.

Tell me about Condition Red.

The original idea was to merge a lot of different influences and allow the music to develop into something new that hasn't been done before. From the start I didn't know if this would end up being labelled progressive rock or progressive metal or whatever. I thought it was important that the music had the freedom to go wherever it wanted. The way I see it, when I write music it is not really like I write it, but rather as the music writes itself. I know this sounds corny, but that's how it feels. I also had a lot of help from a keyboard player called Alexander King. It was real important to have all the different musicians on the album and early on I know Ella Grussner who plays violin and sings had to be a part of this. It was also cool to have Derek Sherinian on it, and since I didn't want this to be a Mattsson solo album I thought it was a good idea to also have Alex Masi on guitar as well.

How do you feel this compares to your other releases?

Some of the stuff is more complicated than anything I have done before and there is a lot going on musically besides the guitars, actually the guitars are not as important as on my other releases. It was great working with all these great musicians. I must say that I have no idea of how people will react to the album as I don't think it is what they might expect. On the other hand I am not a guy who does the same album over and over each time, I need to experiment to be able to grow as both a musician and person.

How was it working with all these great musicians?

It was amazing. I really enjoyed all of them and wouldn't be able to rate them against each other. I knew Alex Masi and Derek Sherinian were able to deliver and I had high expectations on them which they lived up to, but working with Ella Grussner, a very talented young girl playing violin and singing, was more of an experiment because I didn't really know how it would fit in and how comfortable she would be with this music, but I think it turned out really great.

I really liked your bass playing on Condition Red.

Actually I started out as a bass player so that was my first instrument but I hadn't played much bass for years, only sometimes in the studio. Before I started recording I played bass four hours a day for about two weeks because I knew the parts needed that and I really got to enjoy it a lot. I was going to use another bass player but it turned out he couldn't make it due to an injury.

You released Another Dimension last year, are you pleased with it?

Yes, I am quite happy with it. I think it beats all my previous albums easily. I feel that it is like the beginning of something new. I have plans to follow up this album with something that expands on this concept perhaps at the end of next year.

How do you think this album fits in with the progressive metal scene?

I don't know really. I think a lot of bands are labelled progressive metal are not progressive at all, because progressive should mean what the word means. Instead most of these bands copy a style and sound just to be part of a movement. I don't want to slag anyone but there are bands out there that copy old **Helloween** and have huge vocal choirs, there is nothing at all progressive about that. Speaking for myself, I can't say that I have succeeded but I have at least tried to experiment and expand on what I did previously. There were times when I lost faith in myself and actually felt a bit lost, like when I did the **Astral Groove** project and later the second **Vision** album. In the end I think it was good that I did these because it made me realize who I am and what I should do, so I decided that I should just try to be the best me I can, don't deny my roots or who I am but rather try to do the

best I can with that. I don't really care if my music is considered old fashioned or modern or whatever, because all I want to do is timeless music as good as I possibly can without ever calculating how people will react to it. Maybe what I did on *Another Dimension* is a cross between classic hard rock and progressive metal but I don't know.

How do you feel about some of your past releases like Astral Groove and Vision?

I have done different things at different times, maybe I have also been a different person but I'm most happy with my own solo releases, especially *Obsession* and *Another Dimension*. I am not happy with everything I have done but I am not someone who looks back, I always look ahead. Career wise, I have done many stupid things but I have also experienced a lot and I think that often mistakes turn out to experiences which makes you grow.

You are the common denominator in several different bands, how were these experiences?

Both **Vision** and **Astral Groove** were meant to be real bands, but both failed due to other people's commitments. **Vision** was more on the melodic hard rock/ A.O.R. side and **Astral Groove** was exploring the blues and funky side of hard rock. We did an album called Lars Eric Mattsson's **Vision** in 1992 that did really well in Japan but then we got in trouble with the Japanese label and the band slowly died. We wanted it to be called only **Vision**, but the label wanted my name added to it because I had released two solo albums before that one in Japan. For the future I only see myself working under my own name and with **Condition Red**.

Tell me about Lion Music.

My initial goal was to take control of my own music as I was really frustrated with how things were handled by others. We are a small label and we don't make enough money but we will grow. My goals are to support good music and help some talented musicians who deserve it. I am not interested in hits but I want Lion Music to be a quality label and not too big, nor too small.

How is it working with Alex Masi?

Alex Masi is great. I hope that he will stay with Lion Music, we don't make slave contracts so it's up to him but I would surely love to keep working with him. He is working on some new stuff which I haven't heard yet.

What are your goals for the future?

I will need to concentrate my work on Lion Music for the rest of this year. It is very hard to tour here as I don't really see it happening except perhaps some festivals next summer. I have so many things I want to do now, but I am mailing plans to re-work and re-release my first album, *Eternity*, which is out of print. Originally it was more or less a demo that became released by the French label Black Drafog and later in Japan. I think some of the music is quite good but the recordings suck big time so I will see what I can do about it. Except from this I will begin to write for a new Mattsson album. On Lion Music we will release three other acts this fall beginning with a very talented Danish guitarist Torben Enevoldsen and then a German act plus a Swedish band's fifth album, these two I can not name right now.

Final comments?

It has been a pleasure. I just want to thank everybody who is supporting independent music- without you there would only be... nothing.

Discography:

2000... Condition Red
1999... Mattsson: Another Dimension
1998... Lars Eric Mattsson: Obsession
1997... Vision: Till The End Of Time
1995... Astral Groove
1992... Lars Eric Mattsson's Vision
1991... Lars Eric Mattsson: Electric Woodoo
1989... Lars Eric Mattsson: No Surrender
1988... Lars Eric Mattsson: Eternity

dark tranquillity

Interview with vocalist Mikael Stanne

Dark Tranquillity rapidly follow up last year's successful Century Media debut, *Projector*, with *Haven*. *Haven* is more focused than the largely experimental *Projector*, yet it sees the band still using some modern technology and further distance themselves from their trademark Gothenburg roots. While *In Flames* and *Dark Tranquillity* were two of the main bands that started the Gothenburg movement that are still together, it is interesting that both bands continue to distance themselves from that scene with some creative music and forward thinking music. Vocalist Mikael Stanne returns with a more harsh vocal style than the previous disc, which actually made use of some gothic tones. I spoke to Mikael about the new *Dark Tranquillity* record.

What is different between *Haven* and *Projector*?

The whole approach to writing is different. For *Projector* we said anything goes. We incorporated every influence, all the things that we enjoy musically and put into a big experiment. This time it was based on the songs. We went through each song individually and decided what the song needs. What is necessary and what is not. We threw a lot of stuff away. Instead of being a five or six minute song it got cut down to a three minute song. It much more focused on the intensity, the aggression, and the emotional parts. It's more compressed and it's more like a homogenic album.

What are your tour plans?

We've done a couple of festivals so far. We were down in Italy a couple of weeks ago doing the Gods of Metal Festival with *Iron Maiden*. There was twenty five thousand people. We're doing a tour on the eighth of September in Europe with *In Flames*, *Sentenced*, and *To/Die/For*. Hopefully we start an American tour in November. There's been talk of us coming over with *Moonspell*. It would be a dream come true if it happens. We'll get to look outside of Germany for once, which is good.

Where do you see your sound going from *Haven*?

I don't know. We had the first rehearsal since recording the album today. We sat down and talked about it. We decided to what we do always; forget about what we did before and start making music and see where it ends up. We want something that's a bit weirder, perhaps heavier- we'll see. It's hard to tell in the early stages. I think it's going to be a bit experimental again.

How are the line-up changes working out?

Fredrik, our previous guitar player, didn't have the time and he didn't really put the effort in so he had to leave after the recording of *Projector*. It was really sad because he's a really talented guitar player. Martin, our bass player at the time, went over to guitar, and we got a new bass player in Michael Nicklasson. He is an old friend of ours and he's always been into the band so it was easy. Then an old friend of ours, Martin Brandstrom, who plays keyboards joined. He's never been into metal. We asked him to join before but he wasn't into it, but then he heard *Projector* and decided to join. He saw the potential of what he could do in the band and for this kind of music. He's really getting into it. We're teaching him stuff about metal every day. It's been two years now and it seems like forever. We're really happy with them. We're very different and determined. Everybody has strong ideas. Being democratic as a band, it takes forever to make decisions on what parts to use. We can do anything, but we'll never lose the identity of the band. You have to have the organic background, because some bands lose their identity when they add electronics and use technology.

I don't think people can call *Dark Tranquillity*, or *In Flames* for that matter, a death metal band.

I really don't know. We're pleased being a bit outside of that. A lot of people ask me to categorize our music, but I prefer not to. It's not up to me. It is melodic

death metal like people say, but I would like to think that's it's more than that. You could say aggressive heavy metal. There are always people who don't understand our music. *Projector* was an antithesis reaction towards the Gothenburg scene.

Do you still see bands popping up in your area?

Not anymore. It's hard. There are never any shows. I talk to people here and there, but it's not the scene that everyone thinks it is. There's tons of bands. We hang out and drink together and then go to rehearsal rooms and make albums that go over way better everywhere else than they do in Sweden. It's a weird climate here. *In Flames* went on really well and our albums are climbing the charts too now. We're starting to know some of the people in the music press around Sweden so perhaps it will change a bit.

Are you involved in any side projects?

No. A couple of years ago me and Niklas started *Hammerfall*. We had some other things going on but nothing was ever serious. We know we can do what we want with *Dark Tranquillity* so there's no need for another outlet. Perhaps I will do something by myself some day, but I'm happy with what we are doing now. I don't need anything else. Once I get my aggressions out by rehearsing three times a week, then I am happy.

Are you happy with where you're living?

Oh yeah, it's amazing. We're really satisfied. We live in the central part of Gothenburg. This summer's been awful, but it's usually pretty good. We make money from the music and other sources of income from working here and there. I'm able to do what I like best: being laid back; sitting at my computer, watching movies, hanging out with my friends drinking, and I get to travel a couple of months every year. We have great contact with our fans

through the internet and talking on the phone. There's always people coming from Italy and Germany living with us for a couple of weeks. I wish the weather was a little nicer so that we could hang outside more, but it's shaping up to be the worst summer ever. It's been raining and cold.

Discography:

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

Current line-up:

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

Website:

www.centurymedia.com



DESECRATION

Interview with vocalist Ollie

Desecration, along with **Infestation**, have proven to me that English death metal is stronger than ever. **Desecration** has been on the scene for many years and have three albums to show for their hard work. On their third album, *Inhuman*, the band is in top form. The sound is punishing, yet fresh- and still maintains the true death metal stance. There seems to be a healthy resurgence of death metal band, it's a new wave which includes bands like **Desecration**, **Pandemia**, **Infestation**, etc. These bands are doing it with quality while shunning modern influences and remaining focused. Here is Ollie to tell us about **Desecration**.

How do you feel about the new album?

We're real pleased with it. This is the first time we've been happy with the production. Dave Chang's done a great job and we definitely want to use him again. This time we've experimented a bit more with voices and we've got a real drummer. I did the drums on the last one. It's a lot better than anything we've done before.

How do you feel about your scene in England?

There's not many bands here but from what there is, there is definitely quality in the music played. London is obviously the best place to play in England, but people tend to save up their money and wait for the major shows rather than underground gigs, a bit like everywhere else I suppose.

What does each member bring to Desecration?

This line-up is without a doubt the best we've ever had. It's working great. We play live together very well. Each of us listens to different stuff so we all put different ideas into what we write. The more ideas the better, although sometimes it's like "what the fuck is that shit?"

Tell me about your first album and the problems you incurred getting it out.

Our first album, *Gore and Perversion*, was banned upon its release. We were locked up over that. The police thought we were dangerous. The artwork and lyrics were sick minded to say the least. I've never read sicker lyrics than those and I've been into the scene a long time. It was later released by a Norwegian label but is no longer available. After all that hassle we had to tone down the content of our stuff. This is why there are no lyrics on *Murder in Mind* and the cover is mild.

How has your sound developed?

With our debut, we were very inexperienced and we rushed the recording of it because we couldn't wait to hear the finished product. This shows when you listen to it, although what was eventually released was the rough mixed that were not confiscated. A lot of people liked it due to its raw sound. *Murder in Mind* kept the real underground sound and feel but we played the tracks a little better. We were still on a tight budget. This time around, Copro Records fronted the studio costs so we found it much easier and this album kicks the shit out of the others.

What were your goals for *Inhuman*?

Personally, all I've ever wanted was to have an album out that sounds as good as the world dominating bands out there. How hard is it to bring something new out these days? Fuck it, as long as we like the sound of it, that's all that is important. I've never done this for the money.

Did you make it to America last year?

Yeah, we came to Texas last November for the metal fest. It was okay but the slot we were given sucked. I think there was thirty bands over three stages and of all the slots we had was one at the same time as a sickness competition. Which would you rather see? People eating innards and shit or yet another death metal band? A pure waste of fucking time. We had a great time otherwise and returned the next month to do a full tour with **Monstrosity**. The people all over the States were cool, didn't think much of the food- all donuts and burgers. We didn't like the cops much but they didn't like us either.

What are you up to now?

We're currently working on new tunes and we're just about to go into Europe for some festivals out there. There are plans for us to tour in the new year now with possibly **Mayhem** or **Dismember**.

Where do you plan on going from here?

I haven't a clue. Not downhill that's for sure and we won't wimp out, we promise.



How would you describe your visual imagery?

Imagine *Eaten Back to Life* without the cannibal in there, pure **Desecration**. We all have a sense of humor but our music is very serious portrayal of destruction and horror.

How do you feel about death metal in general?

As long as we're playing the good stuff, we'll continue to support our scene. These days it's needed. Years ago it was terrific, you'd get death metal played in clubs without having to kiss the d.j.'s ass.

Describe Desecration's lyrical topics.

Horror, porn, sex, horror, vodka, sex, porn.

Final comments?

Thanks for the interview and support. Hopefully we'll be back over there sometime. We don't disappoint so any fans of real death metal should check us out. Keep desecrating.

Discography:

2000... *Inhuman* (Copro)
1998... *Murder In Mind* (Copro)
1996... *Gore And Perversion*

Current line-up:

Ollie... vocals
Julian... guitars
John... bass
Mike... drums

Destruction

Interview with vocalist/ bassist Schmier

Destruction is back! Actually they never went anywhere, let me rephrase that, Schmier is back! **Destruction** have released their first album with their original frontman in over ten years and it is surely a return to form for the German thrashers. Old time fans of classics like *Eternal Devastation* and *Mad Butcher* are pleased with the classic in your face thrash of *All Hell Breaks Loose*. The same can't be said about the four albums they released in the 90's. I have been a big fan of the nineties era of **Destruction**, and to honest, except for some funky bass every once in awhile, the music was not all that different than that found on the new album. Anyway, enough about the past, let's have Schmier fill us in on the great comeback album *All Hell Breaks Loose*.

Are you happy with the new album?

All over the place, people are loving the record. It feels really good. Things are going really cool, it's more than we expected. People seem to be happy with it. In the first couple of practices we could tell that we had it again. It was very easy to do this record, because we have a good time together. It's easy to write songs. For Mike and me it was just like in the beginning. We discussed that if we were going to come back we want it to be like in the beginning when we were a three piece. It was the greatest time we had together and it's easier to get along. It's just the guitar, bass, and the drums, and it's kick ass rock 'n roll. Mike loves to play alone again with no second guitarist. He's really good at riffing and a second guitarist would put mud on his riffs.

I thought your vocals on this album were the best you've ever done.

I grew up a little. I can handle my voice better these days. I've been practicing through the years and I never gave up. I think I know how to use my vocals better now. That's nice to hear, thanks man. When it comes to the blackened thrash scene I think it's bad because a lot of the vocalists copy the popular singers. My voice is different, you love it or you hate it. **Destruction** was successful in the old days because we sounded different than other bands.

How do you feel about the three Headhunter records?

It was a fun time. We had some kick ass musicians. After **Destruction** I had nothing to lose. We had some good records. It wasn't really like **Destruction**, it was more of a cross between **Destruction** and **Judas Priest**. It was more power metal and it wasn't popular at the time. Grunge and rap metal was becoming trendy. People told me that if I want to become successful I would have to rap, but I said fuck off. The old **Headhunter** albums are hard to find because the record company went out of business. Now we're gonna concentrate on **Destruction**.

How did the writing process go for this record?

Things happened quickly. We wanted to surprise people. People at the festivals last year were really surprised by us because it seemed we came out of nowhere. We started writing songs before we even played the festivals. We were practicing three or four times a week and writing new songs. It was a really good time together. I don't know how much time it took to write all those songs but it wasn't long.

I remember when Destruction came out to Milwaukee with Mike but not you, the response was horrible.

Mike didn't really think about what he did with the new band. They were all good musicians, they came up with some good stuff, but it wasn't **Destruction**. It was a new band. That band wasn't **Destruction**. Mike doesn't give a shit what other people think, he just wants to play guitar. He didn't realize what was going on. A lot of people were disappointed in the Milwaukee show. Maybe he realized afterwards that it was something wrong with what he did. He had the name for such a long time and he didn't want to give it away. It's the best name for a band on this planet. It kind of ruined the name for a lot of people. Mike was skeptical about

getting back together in the beginning, but the first time we played "Mad Butcher" together it worked right away.

How do you feel about all these bands that are coming out today who are influenced by Destruction?

It's great to see all these bands come out who are influenced by **Destruction**. It feels really good. On the other hand there are too many bands that don't have any originality. This **Slayer**, **Destruction**, and **Venom** period was very influential on many death and black metal bands. I just heard the new **Immortal** album which was very good, there's some **Destruction** inspired riffing on that album. It's a compliment that our style is so definitive that people are stealing from it.

When you think back to those 80's records, what sticks out in your mind?

It's difficult for me to say which album sticks out. The fans would probably say the *Infernal Overkill* album was the best album. Of my top five **Destruction** songs there is of course "Curse the Gods", "Life Without Sense", "Mad Butcher", "Eternal Ban", "Total Disaster". We always play those songs live because they are a big part of **Destruction**. People are surprised at how much energy those songs have after fifteen years. My favorite record is *Live Without Sense* because we had a great tour and I like my vocals on this album. I hope I'll feel the same about *All Hell Breaks Loose* after a couple of years. It was difficult to get a good sound in the 80's because the scene was still young and the producers didn't know what the fuck we were doing. We had the first release from Europe of this style. Only **Venom** released an album before us. We had the first European thrash release, before **Kreator** and **Sodom**. Now we have to go all over the world and play so that we can prove **Destruction** can kick ass again. We are already writing new songs for the second comeback album.

Will you be exploring new territory on the next album?

No, I think we want to just write good songs. I'm very satisfied with the last album, but some things could be better. We'll work on that and improve on it.

What was Destruction thinking by covering "My Sharona"?

That's why I left the fucking band. I said I don't sing this fucking song. The whole songwriting on *Cracked Brain*. It came out a lot simpler than those songs were supposed to be. I forced them to go straight forward and not get too technical but finally they

kicked me out. It was a sad period. Maybe it had to be that way. Now **Destruction** is back. It's Mike and me. All the other people who had caused trouble at that time are no longer in the band anymore.

Discography:

2000... *All Hell Breaks Loose* (Nuclear Blast)
1998... *The Least Successful Human Cannonball*
1995... *Them Not Me*
1994... *Destruction*
1991... *Cracked Brain*
1988... *Release From Agony*
1987... *Mad Butcher*
1986... *Eternal Devastation*
1985... *Infernal Overkill*
1984... *Sentence Of Death*

Current line-up:

Schmier... vocals and bass
Mike Sifringer... guitars
Tommy... drums

Website:

www.destruction.de



King Diamond

Interview with vocalist King Diamond

This is the third time the metal legend King Diamond has appeared in these pages. Every time I have talked to him, he has been open and so talkative that we are always being cut off by Metal Blade so that he can get to his next interview on time. He has recently released a new solo album, *House of God*, which is of course, another concept record. Although I have been more of a fan of his late eighties stuff, I have only really liked one of his last four records, it is all a matter of taste and there's no denying that this man has stuck to his roots. Without further ado, here is King to tell us about the *House of God*.

How do you feel about this new record?

I feel very good actually. It's an album that we all respect. It's got a more aggressive feel and reminds me of the old King Diamond in a way, but I think there's more melody on this album. It sounded much better and much clearer. The vocals and arrangements are more like the old King Diamond than anything else. There's more of these bigger harmonies. It feels really good.

Tell me about the lyrical concept.

It's probably the most different for me than anything else I had ever done. It's really a different approach. Even though you have a concept story, there are some completely different things that have gone through my mind in the past year. I'm not just writing a horror story with a certain amount of people involved. I was getting extremely deep. Imagine if Jesus Christ hadn't died on the cross, it would be horrible for Christianity. It was proved that Christ didn't die for all our sins. That's a different theory. It's not something that I came up with myself. There's a church in southern France that has some of the things that I mention in the story. That scenario puts the story there. It's a very strange church. It has about twenty thousand who visit this every year because of the things that are related to it. It's up on a hill and there is a devil figure looking at you as soon as you walk in the door. Most of the visitors don't actually go into the church because they feel this hate coming towards them. The thing does not belong there. There's some cryptic messages written inside the church. The story goes that one of the priests that was in this church found a scared scroll. They proved that he didn't die on the cross and that there were some secret graves there. The priest went to the vatican with his proof. You never heard anything about it again and the guy came back filthy rich. On his death bed he was trying to tell about these secrets he was hiding. I say in the beginning of the story, this is something told by someone else. All the theories start going. I like where the story of that specific place in France goes and my own story starts.

That's what I like about your stories, you take fact based stories and turn them into your own hypothetical situations.

It's very odd, you almost have a love story here on a King Diamond album. If you think about where that comes from, you would think it was written by a girl. I used to have a wolf for about three months but they grow pretty quick. It had these major blue eyes and it was simply black and white like the wolf in the story. It was called Angel and that's why the girl is called Man. When I had to say goodbye to that wolf it was a really sad day because I loved that wolf. It meant a lot to me. It had been a present to my ex-wife. We couldn't have it where we lived. A wolf needs a lot of land to roam, otherwise he's not treated well. We had some really cool times. It's funny that this love story with the little girl was inspired by a wolf. The story goes through these different stories. Then you get to this little catacomb with the devil and it talks about this main issue which is about God. You have this confrontation in the story because you have this human being and this God planning to be the highest. The guy wants to know why this God is here in his church. The highest God tells him he doesn't know anymore because he already went too far. He knows too much already about Jesus' mother falling down in the catacombs. He tells him that maybe he was kicked down there so that God couldn't find him and couldn't walk the earth again so that maybe he could be kept away

from people like you who would probably crucify him again. You shouldn't bother yourself with what we are about, just know that we are. That's not enough for this guy. He doesn't want to feed an unknown God. If you want me to follow you, you have to prove it. That's what a good God would do. Prove to mankind that you are the one. Prove it so that we can all see you and feel you. What are we trying to achieve with our lives? When we die, what happens then? Show us these things. It would be good because we would believe in you, one God. We wouldn't have these stupid wars that go on until this day. That is the thing that I can't fathom. Nobody on this earth can prove to the rest of the population that whatever God they believe in is the only, right one. Nobody can prove it. That's why we have all these different religions. It's not God who created man in his image, it's human beings who created all these different Gods in their own images. That's not even me making it serious. That's complete fact. If someone was able to prove that their God was the right one, everyone else would believe in the same thing. That's not what's happening. People fight each other and kill each other over imaginary Gods. That blows my mind. I respect religion for being in existence, if it's used right. I view God as a pacifier. If you stick a pacifier in a babies mouth you calm it down. There's things that bother human beings, it bothers me too- I don't know why I'm here. I probably will never know until I'm not here anymore. I'm going to heaven, people say, if you have a clue- why don't you take a couple of pictures and show me. Again, there's thing you can't prove. We waste so much time being afraid of it and we don't even know what it is.

Fear holds people back and limits their potential.

If someone believes in what they think their God is, that's fine but keep it to yourself. You can't even prove what you are believing in. I don't know what's going to happen when I die, I have no clue. But, because I don't know it, I can't keep worrying myself for years and still not get the answer. To hell with that shit. I don't want to waste time on it. That's why I take all the time and say- what do I know? What are the facts? I am a human being, I live on this planet called Earth, when I do certain things it makes me feel good inside, I spend all that shit time I would otherwise waste and do these good things. Then I feel better inside. When you feel good inside, you have an easier time helping others. If there really is a God, why doesn't he show himself?

Discography:

2000... *House Of God* (Metal Blade)
1998... *Voodoo* (Metal Blade)
1996... *The Graveyard* (Metal Blade)
1995... *The Spiders Lullabye* (Metal Blade)
1990... *The Eye* (Roadrunner)
1989... *The Conspiracy* (Roadrunner)
1988... *Them* (Roadrunner)
1987... *Abigail* (Roadrunner)
1986... *Fatal Portrait* (Roadrunner)

Current line-up:

King Diamond... vocals
Andy LaRocque... guitars
Glen Drover... guitars
Chris Estes... bass
John Luke Hebert... drums

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EARTH | CRISIS

Interview with vocalist Karl Buechner

Earth Crisis have returned to familiar territory as **Earth Crisis** have come back to Victory after one album on the trendy Roadrunner label (they figured out that hardcore was not a trend so they dropped all such bands immediately). However, a new sound has followed them to Victory. *Slither* sees the music becoming more open minded and expansive, but it's actually the vocals that have matured the most. Karl is now utilizing a melodic style and does a shocking job with his ability to express a myriad of emotions. Who knew he could pull it off, especially after five albums of one dimensional vocals. Here is Karl to catch us up on the growth.

How did all these changes come about?

We wanted to do something different than what we had been doing. I wanted to return to my original vocal style which was a mixture of spoken word and actual singing. We put that back into the equation.

What happened with Roadrunner?

The point to signing with Roadrunner was the reach a broader audience quicker. Ultimately it did work. *Breed the Killers* was well received. It got us in some of the bigger music magazines. We ended up touring with *Sepultura*, there was another tour with the *Misfits*, we played a show with *Gwar* and *Fear Factory* off of that album. We did our most successful European tour to date. We reached a lot of people with that record. Roadrunner decided that they wanted to clear out all of their hardcore division so us, **Madball**, **Shelter**, we all went to different labels. When the deal ended our management let everybody know and three labels stepped up with interest. Victory made the most sense. They offered us what we wanted, which was serious radio push and a high quality video. We signed back with them because they understood us.

Given a forum to speak your mind, what does Earth Crisis promote as far as lyrical content?

We are very much into environmentalism. We try to concentrate on the events and ideas that the media didn't necessarily cover. We try to document what goes on in the natural world. We try to do that with a lot of our records.

How can people become more involved in their environment?

All I can suggest is that people read the essay about environmentalism and what's happening to the animals in slaughterhouses and farms. It's on the *Breed the Killers* essay and it's also on our site. I think that's a good starting point.

What are your tour plans?

We just did a tour of the West Coast and the Mid West, and the East Coast. We were out with **Candiria** and **Walls Of Jericho**. We're gonna be going to Europe to do some festivals with **Slayer** and **Iron Maiden**, then we're coming back for a continental tour **Skinlab** and **In Flames**.

How are the metal fans accepting of Earth Crisis?

We see a lot of **Fear Factory**, **Deftones**, **Machine Head**, and **Slipknot** shirts in the audience. I'd say that's about fifty percent of our audience nowadays. I think it helps that we did the *Ozzfest*.

Was there any reason why you left Victory to sign with Roadrunner?

Yes, we toured with **V.O.D.**, we toured with **Shelter**, we toured with **Madball** and all the bands were happy with the label. It seemed like they were trying to get the cutting edge hardcore bands. They had been interested in us for awhile. When we fulfilled our contract with Victory we were free to go where we wanted so we gave them a try.

What was your opinion of Ozzfest?

I thought it was incredible. I had never seen **Slayer** and **Danzig** before and they were right there. That was the first time I saw **Powerman 5000** and **Coal Chamber**. **Ozzy** didn't forget us, he came out to see us when we were out in L.A. He and his wife.

Would you say any of those bands influenced the sound on this new record?

No, we're doing our own thing.

Have you noticed your fanbase growing as a result of this new album?

It's growing, but it's very slow for us. We'll never open for a bigger band. It's us pushing ourselves. I think if we got a support slot in Europe it would help. We do very well, but the extremely aggressive music is more popular in Europe. If we had a good support slot we could get directly to those kids who are into this style of music. I think it'll happen this year.

Why did you call the record Slither?

I think it sounds very different than any of our previous titles. They were all straight forward. I think the word itself is interesting.

What are your goals for Slither?

I'd like to get a video on M.T.V., get played on commercial radio, and tour with bigger bands.

How do you feel about your career thus far as a musician?

I feel that the day *Breed the Killers* came out was like crossing the finish line after ten years of hard work. We always said we're gonna take our message and push it to a whole crowd. We accomplished what we set out to do. We've been having a blast over the years. We've to Europe, to Japan, everywhere.

Discography:

2000... *Slither* (Victory)
1998... *Breed The Killers* (Roadrunner)
1996... *Gommorahs Season Ends* (Victory)
1995... *Destroy The Machines* (Victory)
1993... *Firestorm* (Victory)
1992... *All Out War* (Victory)

Current line-up:

Karl... vocals
Scott... guitars
Eric... guitars
Bulldog... bass
Dennis... drums



EIDOLON

Interview with guitarist Glen Drover

Eidolon is one of those bands, like **Brainstorm** and **Eldritch**, that give the underground power metal scene a great name. They released two records, *Zero Hour* and *Seven Spirits*, in the mid nineties, to much critical acclaim, but the Canadian quintet failed to make a major impact on the scene. Their guitarist Glen Drover soon got a gig playing guitar next to Andy LaRocque in **King Diamond** and a deal with Metal Blade came shortly thereafter. The result is now out and is titled *Nightmare World*. Like the previous releases, this is a straight ahead power metal album that goes for both the mind and the gut. Here's Glen Drover to catch us up to date.

Are you happy with *Nightmare World*?

We're really happy with it. The album's been done for about a year, a year and a half now. It's been done for a little while. At the time we were shopping and working out the deal with Metal Blade. At this point, normally we look back and say it's good, but the next one's gonna to be better- but we're still happy with it and feel that it's a valid product. We're getting a lot of good feedback. If I had to pick my favorite out of the first two, I would probably take *Zero Hour* because it's got more uptempo stuff on it. The second one has a lot of strong music on it but it's more sludgy and the vocals suffered a little bit. If I had the chance I think I would've done things a lot different.

Of course, you hear a lot of people saying this. The last one that we did is a serious comeback for us. Vocally, we are very happy with Brian's approach and how he is singing now. It really fits in with the music more, he's singing more aggressive and he's more in tune with what we're playing. Whereas before he was a lot heavy for the way he was singing and it was a little too nice. He's captured a lot more of the elements on this one, a lot more emotion, a lot more aggression. He did a really good job on the record.

Do you think this album is more diverse than the last two?

I think it may be more diverse than the last one. I think it's more of a combination of the first two, musically. You have songs that have a feel of the first album but it has more of the heavy songs that the second one has. The second one had songs that were heavier than *Zero Hour*. When I listen to those records, I like them, but they never blew me away. When I listen to this last one, I get into because I like the performance. It's as much our fault as Brian, we're just trying to find the direction we're going for as well as the production, which I am doing. I'm not really a producer, I'm a guitar player. We've learned a lot along the way. I think we've found the direction we want to go into. I don't think the music has changed a lot, I think it's gotten stronger with the musicians that are in the band. The music is still the same kind of format. The production is different too. You have that period from '92 to '97, where you had the invasion of all the grunge and alternative bands. The metal thing died. It was still there but it went under a little bit. Now there's a resurgence of bands that were from the eighties. **Armored Saint**, **Lizzy Borden**, are all coming back. There's a reason for that. It's a lot stronger than it was four years ago. It's the same thing in Europe, even though it never really died.

How is the metal scene up in Canada?

The metal scene in Toronto has never been actually that good. There has been some classic bands that have come out of here but it's always been the same. There never has really been a market. **U.D.O.** came through town two or three weeks ago and there were about one hundred people there. This is the guy from **Accept** and there's nobody there. Of course, part of it is the promoter who didn't do his job. There's never been a market here. There seems to be a lot of people who buy albums, but not many who go to support the shows as much. It used to be you put out an album and the big way to promote it was to tour, it's not that way anymore. There's so many other tools of promotion now. The actual album sales aren't based on people going to see the shows and then buying the c.d. the next day.

Will you be able to get out on the road with Eidolon?

Although there has been talk and offers to go do Europe and some other stuff, right now the first priority is the **King Diamond** tour. That starts the 20th of July. I

think the duration is six or seven weeks. We come back home the beginning of September and we're home for about a month. Then we ship all the equipment over to Europe for the European tour. That will probably be six or seven weeks in duration also. We may do South America. Maybe Christmas, or even sooner, then we're gonna do something for **Eidolon**. It's not mandatory for us to play live, but they want us to play and we want to as well. We're basically a recording band. Although the rehearsals sound amazing, we've never played any shows. We're not gonna play any shows in Toronto because there's no reason too. If a band with a name in metal comes and can't draw people, we aren't gonna draw anybody. We would probably play here for a couple of warm up shows before we played somewhere else. There's never been any question about what we played, we always play what we want. It's self indulgent. We do keep in mind structures and making songs that are a bit more memorable within this type of music, we try to please ourselves as well. You can't lie. If you aren't whole hearted with what you're doing it's gonna come across.

It must be easy for you by having your own studio.

I started back in '93 and I always wanted to have some sort of studio set up at my house. We've been upgrading things ever since. We're happy with the set up we have now. It was a lot of work. We had a studio set up in the house I used to live in, then we moved into another house and got married, and then I built another studio. It was the same as the old one but bigger. We're able to do what we need to do in the set up. The production that we want to achieve we can get in the studio. When we first started out we did what we wanted to and didn't care who was or was not going to like it. Most of the bands play what they are inspired by and we're no different. We try to have some kind of identity. When we first started out it was instrumental stuff and no vocals. It was a three piece and it was like Tony

MacAlpine meets **Cacophony**.

Do you have any input with King Diamond?

I haven't been in the band that long, but they do value my opinion. We're in rehearsals in Denmark and they did show a lot of enthusiasm into the band and the songs. On certain parts that Andy didn't remember, he'd ask me, so he knows that I know the material and that I grew up on this stuff. King and Andy write all the material but in the short time that I've been in the band, they value my opinions. It helps motivate me as well.

What are your future plans?

The whole next album is already written. All the drums tracks are done. The new album was done awhile back. Shawn wrote a lot of material and when he came down to do pictures for this album shoot, we decided to get him down here for a few extra days and we'll do the drums tracks. I'm gonna start doing some guitar tracks. Let's start it now and do it sporadically, in between tours. It won't be rushed and there won't be too much to do at once. There's gonna be some strong stuff on there.

Discography:

2000... *Nightmare World* (Metal Blade)
1997... *Seven Spirits*
1996... *Zero Hour*

Current line-up:

Brian Soulard... vocals
Glen Drover... guitars and keyboards
Slav Siminic... guitars
Criss Bailey... bass
Shawn Drover... drums



Interview with guitarist/ keyboardist Chris Rifkin and vocalist Leann Serao

When I first talked to Chris Rifkin about his new band **F5**, the way he described his debut album made him sound arrogant. How dare he tell me that his new band was doing something that hasn't been done before. Once I received the disc in the mail I was immediately hooked because it was exactly how Chris described it but it was even better and more original than expected. He has come up with an album that is forward thinking, diverse, futuristic, and groundbreaking. It's a combination of guitar wizardry, ambient keyboard structures, but backing it up is genius programming that takes **Fear Factory's** heaviness and technique to a new level. Just when you realize how original the music is, you get to hear the mesmerizing and enchanting vocals of Leann Serao. She adapts her style to fit the vibe of the music, but I feel it is her best performance on the potential hit "You Don't Know Me" that allows her to truly shine. I spoke to both Chris and Leann regarding the diverse and futuristic masterpiece.

What are your goals for F5?

Chris: My ultimate goal was to come up with something that no one's done before. I've been into heavy metal ever since I was a little kid. What was going on in the nineties with metal made me sick. I figured I'd bring in my other influences like trance electronic and ambient music. I had originally done a project called **Eye Of The Storm**. My old singer from **Sahara** had that Geoff Tate sound, but I wanted to get away from that because it sounded so typical. I figured I'd try a female vocalist because I had heard things like the **Gathering** and the female voice always got to me. I decided to take a year off from recording and find the best singer.

Where did you find Leann?

Chris: She was somebody I had known for about five or six months. I was beating my brains in trying to find a vocalist and she was right under my nose. She used to work at a food mart that I used to go for lunch every day and somebody suggested her. She has a top forty style voice. She's got a great look. It enhances the product even more. What's great about her is, most girls in entertainment or music look sloppy and grungy, she cares about how she looks and has an identity. **Kittie's** about the only band that I can see that has a look- it's not a good look, but at least it's something. Having her gives an identity to the band besides the music.

How do you feel about the disc?

Chris: I'm so psyched. I don't want to sound pompous, but for the first time in my life I got the result I was looking for. I finally have a totally unique sound. I think I've only scratched the surface as far as the songwriting. I've been working with Leann for about nine or ten months and I know where she's coming from musically and lyrically. I can't wait until the next one comes out. If you think this one has a different sound wait until you hear the next one, I'll be branching out all over the place. I'm interested to see how I can modernize and metalize her top forty vocal style with the **F5** treatment. I'd like to get her influence even more so it becomes even more unique sounding.

This music is certainly ahead of its time.

Chris: I just I hope I reap the rewards of it. There's plenty of music that was ahead of its time but unfortunately it falls through the cracks. There are albums that were ten years ahead of their time, like **Queensryche's** *Rage for Order*. They got popular five years after that. Listen to **Queen's** "Sheer Heart Attack" or "Stone Cold Crazy". You can see where bands like **Motorhead** and **Metallica** got their sound from. It would be a great honor to have people cite me as an influence five or six years down the road. I plan on doing this until I get the support, I want more people to hear it and the fruits of our labor can be appreciated by more than just me and my close circle of friends.

How does it work with just the two of you in the band?

Chris: I've been in bands way too long and it seems to me that too many cooks spoil the soup. You always get someone who wants to be trendy. You can't tell the difference between these bands anymore. Labels sign the same type of bands and it kills the scene. There's very little artistic value, it's people being angry for the sake of being angry. It's better to start off in the underground because fans are more loyal and they can help break a band.

Tell me about your background.

Leann: I've been singing all of my life but I started professionally when I was about seventeen in your typical wedding band. I started with my family because I have a very musical family. I was doing that for a while then I bumped into Chris.

Did you ever envision yourself doing this type of music?

Leann: I never did. I'm into new age. I like **Enya**, **Yanni**, but I also like pop. People often tell me that I sound like **Gloria Estefan**. When Chris first told me about the project I was a little nervous because I do write quite often but I've never wrote anything like this before. It was a challenge. That made me want to do it. I enjoy a challenge and to explore different types of music.

Is there any particular direction you might want to explore the next time around?

Leann: I like going for different things. I'd like to throw a few more pop rock type of songs in there. I want some power ballads with strong guitars. Some of our songs, like "Dawn of a New Age" are quite heavy, and I'd like to go into that heavier realm. I'd like to experiment that side too.

"You Don't Know Me" is your strongest performance.

Leann: Let's just say I was a little angry that night. It's your typical girl fighting back. I was thinking of **Alanis Morissette** when I wrote that song. I love her and the way she writes. I was definitely feeling it when I was singing it. I took every bad relationship I ever had and I put it into one song. I know we don't fall into one particular category. Most metal has a different type of vocal. I don't sing metal but that's exactly what Chris wanted. I'm hoping that we reach a very diverse audience. I hope we create a whole new genre of music. Like when alternative came out, there was a few bands deemed alternative and then it grew. I think we can create our own genre, I don't know what it'll be called.

When do you see F5 going back into the studio again?

Leann: Hopefully we'll be in the studio again within a year. He and I are corresponding long distance and writing. His stuff is easy to write to. He writes very emotionally. I've started creating stuff and I'd like to do it as soon as possible.

How does the distance affect the band?

Leann: **Federal Express** is a wonderful thing. I have some studio friends, so I can lay some stuff down here. He can lay things down here. He records and then sends the D.A.T.'s to me and I can record up here. We talk on the phone about music and how we can try to promote ourselves more.

Final comments?

Leann: I hope to reach a lot of people. I hope people will enjoy it. Give us a shot.

Discography:

2000... Dawn Of A New Age

Current line-up:

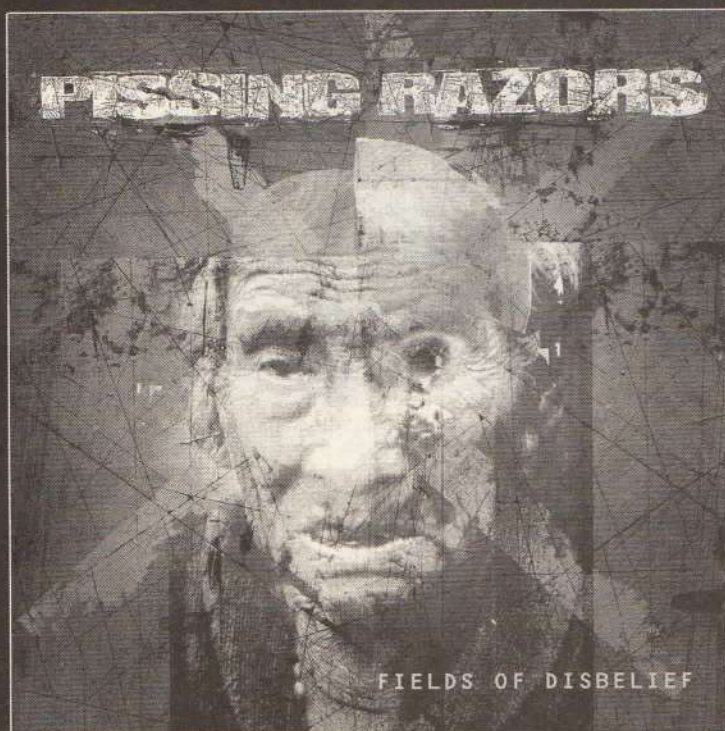
Chris Rifkin... guitars, bass, and keyboards
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40 GRIT

Interview with guitarist Chris Anderson

40 Grit is a band that Metal Blade is pushing because of their modern sound and potential to become a big seller. This California band is out to prove that they aren't just another trend that will quickly disappear and that they will last on the scene and carve their own niche. Their debut, *Heads*, is a nice piece of work. They may not offer anything new stylistically, but they play with confidence and they will certainly appeal to today's younger crowds. I spoke to guitarist Chris Anderson about their first album and future plans.

How do you feel about this new album?

I love it. It turned out pretty good.

When did you first get together?

It was in about 1997. We put out a demo and started playing some shows. Our first shows were with **Exodus** on their reunion tour, and we did some shows with **Stuck Mojo**, we did a European tour last year. We recorded three demos. We did a West Coast tour with **Skinlab** and **Crowbar**. We did the Texas Metalfest. We were shopping around for awhile. Metal Blade showed the most interest so that's where we went.

Where did the name come from?

It was a party thing. We first started the band as a side project. As a joke in a bar we decided, let's call the band **40 Grit**.

How has the response been so far?

Everything we've played has been very good. Even though we play with a lot of death metal bands, the crowd loves us. Even when we were playing death metal we were playing with bands like **Pissing Razors** and **Meshuggah**, so there's a lot of diversity there. We used to be heavier, we didn't really change- but this is what we like to play more. We've always had melody in it but we decided we would do what we wanted to do.

What are your tour plans?

We're gonna go out with **Pissing Razors** for a few weeks. We're gonna play the L.A. Metalfest in November. We've got some other tours coming up and we might be making a video.

40 Grit is the first modern metal signing for Metal Blade.

It's our first record as a band so we're learning as we go ourselves. I hope it goes well.

How would you describe what you're doing as a band?

It's definitely got it's heavy low end and it's got a groove. There's a lot of diversity going on and it's heavy. I don't mind comparisons but I don't think there's one band that we sound exactly like. Of course we've got our influences, everybody does. When **Slipknot** came out everybody thought it was **Primus** mixed with death metal. Ross Robinson basically agreed with me. I guess labels are interesting. If I heard someone say their band sounds like **Slayer**, **Slipknot**, and **Sepultura**, I would think that sounds interesting. That's better than saying it sounds exactly like this. We don't try to sound like anything but ourselves. We have so many influences and they aren't just metal. I think it does show in our music because we like to experiment. I think our next album will be even more experimental. I think we all have pretty good ideas and a good outlook on what we want. Even though I write most of the riffs and me and the drummer arrange everything, we never write by ourselves. I will not write a song without them there, even if someone does not contribute anything at all, except for playing the part. If you're

sitting there sweating with us, you're writing with us. Even if somebody doesn't like it we'll figure out a way that everybody likes it.

Are you involved with any side bands?

This is our focus. This band started out as a side band.

What do you want to accomplish before you start working on the second record?

The bands that I grew up listening to I respect so much and I hope that people look at my band that same way. As far as album sales and stuff like that, I would never count my chickens before they hatched. Hopefully by the time our second album comes out we'll be way more known than we are now.

I think this is the type of album that will have some shelf life.

Yeah. I would like to tour as much as we can on this album. By the time we're ready to record the second album we'll be ready to try something different too. I respect bands that change, sometimes it's not good, but at least they aren't boring and putting out the same album everytime. It's good to maintain the same basic sound but you want to keep people interested. There's nothing wrong with gaining new fans. You're not trying to diss your old fans. I look at it this way, when I was a kid **Slayer** was my favorite band, and they still are, but when they were more underground I wanted everyone to know who they were. Once they got

popular, I was like- no, this is my band. I think a lot of people look at it that way. You're not selling out, there's just a lot of people looking at you now.

Is there any direction you hope to take 40 Grit on the next album?

I like the real dark melodies. I like some of the stuff that **Stabbing Westward** and **Type O Negative** do, but at the same time I'm sure we won't sound like any of those bands. I want it to be darker, but at the same time once we start jamming it will sound like **40 Grit**. That's all that matters to me- that we sound like **40 Grit**, but still be able to try something different. At the same

time I want to get more aggressive on certain things. It's so early in the game it's hard for me to imagine.

Discography:

2000... *Heads* (Metal Blade)

Current line-up:

James Santiago... vocals and guitars

Chris Anderson... guitars

Kevin Young... bass

Mike Bennett... drums

Website:

www.40grit.net



The Gathering

Interview with vocalist Anneke van Giersbergen

The **Gathering** have been really busy in recent years. Last year they released the double disc, *How to Measure a Planet* and the live album *Superheat*, this year we see yet another studio release, *If Then Else*. The new album is more focused and less experimental than the previous disc, but all of the **Gathering** trademarks are still apparent. This is a band that is comfortable with what they are doing, yet still are able to come up with original and inspiring songs on each new disc. I caught up with vocalist Anneke van Giersbergen to talk about *If Then Else*.

Are you happy with the new record?

Yes, I'm very happy. We worked very hard on it. We didn't get exactly what we wanted because there's always room for improvement. It's not perfect but it's perfect as possible. A lot of people really like it.

It was interesting to see the responses to *How to Measure a Planet*, people either loved it or hated it.

It is interesting. We made an opus magnus, *Measure* was an experiment. The honest feelings we have come out on the record. All our albums are very honest and because it's so honest it's also you either like it or don't like it. It's a very special feeling there. It's also long and not very flexible. People who like loud metal music, they don't take the time to listen to it and they don't like it.

How would you describe what was going on in your mind when you wrote *If Then Else*?

After *How to Measure a Planet*, we knew it was very long. You start writing immediately after the album because there's a lot of inspiration. The reaction was short rocking songs. The music is a book. The song will tell you what kind of album you're making. It's very natural for us to make a ten minute song, but it didn't need to be ten minutes, we could say it all in four or five minutes. The songs were shorter and more kick ass and in your face. We decided to make a short album as well, to make it more in your face. Some people think the length of *How to Measure a Planet* makes it boring. You don't keep making this double album over and over again, you have to change and make something else.

There are many female vocalists popping up in extreme and heavy music nowadays, but you were one of the very first female vocalists in the spotlight- how do you feel about your status?

I don't know exactly. It's a big compliment. There's a lot of girls and women writing and saying that we have been inspirational. That's why we make music- to inspire people in any kind of way. If they're forming a band that's the best kind of inspiration you can have. I don't really think about it, we just make music that we like. I was already singing before I joined but we just kind of came together. They said we like your vocals and I said I like your music and we just came together. We didn't think about it- which is probably what people like about it.

You've set a standard by which many bands with female vocalists are measured by.

That's great, I'm proud of it. We were inspired by things as well, so it's a process. Maybe we did something new but we had the idea from another band anyway- like Celtic Frost.

How would you describe your style- it's full of emotion?

It has to do with every day life. That's probably why people like it so much. You can think- I've been there before. People know what we mean when we sing about it. We have the skills to put it on c.d. and have people enjoy it as well. My lyrics are about nature, love, my friends, the band, touring and everything that we go through. The music itself, is also about it. I think the last album was very emotional for me and very pure for me. It's a special album for me because I sing a lot about things that I went through which were sad. You go to therapy and you

still have something to write about. I love nature and the sun shining, but after awhile you have to look for new topics. This time I also broke up with my boyfriend.

There's probably a lot of material to write about there!

Yes sir! There's a lot of things in life that's going really fast. There's fast food and fast culture everywhere. It's the same for relationships- is this going to fast, I want to slow down. It all comes back. I don't really write about my lost love, because the lyrics were already written, but I sing all of it. I was in the studio like fifteen hours a day and the only things I had were cigarettes and chocolate. I cry myself to sleep. When my throat is hoarse you hear it. I didn't sleep for twelve hours, I didn't drink my herbal tea, I didn't drink my milk, and I didn't sing an hour before I went into recording. I couldn't care less about these things. It has to be good and it has to be real and this is real.

What are your tour plans?

There's a lot of talk about us coming to the States. It costs a lot of money. We're searching for ways to get back, because we loved it last year. We had a bad booker. There was not a lot of promotion made. In San Francisco there was only like twenty people. There was only people who drove by and saw the poster, which was put up that day. When we look back on it there's a lot of things which were influenced by our trip to America, songs like "Colorado Incident". This song was made in L.A. We'd love to come back but we can't afford it. We're trying to get some people together to get it done. Even if it's just for four shows, we don't care as long as we don't lose too much money. Maybe it's not gonna happen this year, but definitely next year. We're touring in Europe a lot and we hope to make it back to Mexico again.

We're already writing new stuff and we have about five songs together now.

How is the sound progressing?

About the same but more edgy and rough, with some more crunchy sounds. Those five songs are all very trippy. It's not gonna be long. We liked this album so much that we want to continue doing stuff like this. After *Mandylicion* it was really hard for us to make another record. It was quite successful all at once. We took half a year to write new stuff and we had so little for our minds to put on c.d. After *Nighttime Birds*, which took so much effort thinking about it and being uncertain about it, so we let go of that idea altogether. Then *How to Measure a Planet* came along which was really good for us. We made a double album and then we started writing again right away as well. It's a state of mind. We don't do anything that we don't like. We don't tour for more than three weeks because we miss our girlfriends and we want to come home. You

have to be free to do what you want.

Discography:

- 2000... *If Then Else* (Century Media)
- 1999... *How To Measure A Planet* (Century Media)
- 1997... *Nighttime Birds* (Century Media)
- 1995... *Mandylicion* (Century Media)
- 1993... *Almost A Dance*
- 1992... *Always*

Current line-up:

- Anneke van Giersbergen... vocals
- Rene Rutten... guitars
- Hugo Prinsen Geerligs... bass
- Hans Rutten... drums
- Frank Boerjen... keyboards

Website:

www.centurymedia.com





Interview with vocalist Carlos Bellotti

GF93 is yet another band on England's Copro Records that deserves notice. The band plays a unique style of aggressive music that can not be labelled, yet this Italian band creates some of the most evil and sadistic imagery imaginable. They have toured incessantly with bands of various musical styles and have proven they can adapt their originality into a convoluted scene and stand out ahead of the pack. I spoke to the bands frontman Carlos Bellotti about this rising band, **GF93**.

How do you feel about the new album?

We are really proud of our work. We are receiving a lot of good reviews and a massive number of people wrote us and continue writing every day. The feedback is going amazing and I also think that we are selling. The album's production by David Chang is excellent and the songs are good enough to be the first international release. If I look back I can not describe how far we are going because we started from our own country in 1997 and now we are present in the European market and scene in a massive way. This is great for us, believe me. We are still working a lot. We want to promote the album. We are preparing the new U.K./France/ Italy tour that will be in October with **Area 54** and **Angel Whore**. We are organizing the Italian headliner tour for November with **Snub** coming here from the U.K. We don't think we have arrived. We are simple people so we'll never stop working hard. Is this a mission? Isn't it?

What does GF93 stand for?

We want to keep this a secret. We don't want to explain our moniker. This is a frequent asked question, but we will not explain what **GF93** stands for. People must be really interested in discovering the meaning so they have to search for it. Somewhere there's the explanation, but if they search the meaning will remain deeply in their minds. Who is not interested will remain with the doubt.

Tell me about the origins of the band.

GF93 is something really deep. We play for these reasons. We take the violence from our violent pasts. The songs are about my past so when I sing the songs I see all these unbelieving silences of violence again and again. So I'm blind in these moments. The same is for the others in the band that are playing the soundtrack of the nightmares. Our music drives me mad. We started in 1997 and we released one album before this, *Beaten* was the title, with Paolo Favati; he worked with **Einsturzende Neubauten**, **Dive**, **Pankow**, and a lot of industrial bands, producing. Then we released *G.oetia Fetish 19.93* this year.

How would you describe your sound?

We mix ultra violent moments with melodic ones. Grooves and rapping voices with new school hardcore. People used to say that we sound different because you can listen to a strange dark gothic feeling without thinking of us as a gothic band. I remember one definition that I really love from Owen Packard of **Earthtone 9**. He told me after the first time that he saw us live: "you are the hardcore version of **Paradise Lost**. Finally something new- gothic hardcore." Not because we play like **Paradise Lost**, but it was just to let me know the mood that he felt in hearing our songs. I like this.

Tell me about your lyrics.

GF93's lyrics explore everything that is hidden from the general masses. That is what is considered wrong for the moral majority. We started shocking the audience with a new violent live set, and three t.v. interviews based on a continuous challenge with the crowd. Our frequent trips to London and consequently the practice of fetish sex, body art, and all underground culture studies carried the band in this direction. The deep studies of black magic influences our music and lyrics. My large collection of bizarre and S&M paraphernalia were also influences.

How does your life relate to GF93?

Music is our life that has to relate to what we are doing with **GF93**.

What have you done for tours recently?

We toured Italy with our brothers **Earthtone 9** and the U.K. with **Misery Loves Company** and **Snub**. We are still playing here in our country. Soon we'll have another U.K. tour with gigs in France as well.

How do you feel about living in Italy?

I hate it. There's nothing here and nothing is serious here. The art that comes from the past is something great but it is still from one hundred years ago. Italy is shit.

What are your goals for GF93?

We only want to communicate with people and become something positive for them. We live in this shit like all the boys and girls of our century. They use drugs, kill E.C.T., and the society is only able to say that they've degenerated without thinking of what is driving them to do these things. We know what living in the year 2000 means. There are no changes, no future for them so we take care about this generation, which is our generation. We reflect their problems in our songs like a mirror. We try to tell that they're not shit, but that is society that wants them to be shit.

What are you writing now?

We have seven new songs ready. We are moving in something that is also scaring us. It's something emotional, something really dark.

Is GF93 something that metal or industrial fans can get into?

Everyone can get into and everyone can stay out. I don't care.

What are your future plans?

We are going to record our video for the song "Sleepless", do another tour, then prepare our new album.

Discography:

2000... *G.oetia Fetish 19.93* (Copro)

1998... *Beaten*

Current line-up:

Carlos Bellotti... vocals

Daniele Passarelli... guitars

Mario Magnani... guitars

Agnes Pittari... bass

Leonardo Venturini... drums

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HAZELOW

Interview with vocalist Kyle Symons

Rarely have I been disappointed with a debut album only to have the subsequent follow up impress me in a high capacity, but that's exactly what happened with **Hateplow**. While I thought their debut was quite average, their follow up, *The Only Law is Survival*, is a very impressive piece of extreme metal. Despite having three members of **Malevolent Creation** (guitarists Phil Fasciana, Rob Barrett, and drummer Dave Culross), **Hateplow** have created an album that exceeds any direct comparison. There is more grindcore present in their sound. Together with ex-**Sickness** vocalist Kyle Symons and ex-**Revenant** bassist Tim Scott, **Hateplow** will most likely be out on the road with **Malevolent Creation** later this year. Here is Kyle to update us.

Are you happy with the new record?

Shit yeah, I'm ecstatic with it. It's been awhile since the first record came out. It's good that we got Culross to do it because that's the drummer I wanted in the band since the first record came out. We wanted to tour, but he had the **Suffocation** gig, then they broke up and he was definitely the one on the list. It came out good for the amount of time that we spent on it. It's raw sounding. We didn't do too many guitar tracks, not too many overdubs. It sounds really raw, like it was live. It was a really good recording, it didn't take that long. We had no problems in the studio.

Do you have people who still think of Hateplow as a side project?

It goes both ways because some people still haven't heard of us, but we're getting our name out more with this second record. This guy has a **Malevolent** fan site and for us it says side project on it, you click the button and **Hateplow** comes out. We want people to know that we're around. We don't tour as much as **Malvolent** because we don't feel like it, but we're gonna tour a lot more for this record. When the drummer, Larry, passed away, we couldn't go out on tour. We did try out other drummers, but they just couldn't keep up. We'd rather wait for somebody who could make it sound right, than take anybody out there and do a half assed job. Once I saw that website, I was joking around with Phil- that's got to be the name of our next album- *Side Project*. I would love that for the third record.

Are you involved with any other bands?

I used to be involved with a band called **Sickness** down here. The drummer is still writing tunes. He was the one who wasn't really into it anymore and we broke up. I was fine, I had my shit to do with **Hateplow**. Now he wants to get back into it, but I've got so much to do with this band- so he can do it all if he wants, I don't have time. He's written all the songs. He wrote the guitar riffs, I guess he's recording it right now. He's writing the lyrics too. He did that for the first shit too, so it's nothing new for him. I don't have the time to write another ten songs for that band. It's more death metal style. That's the reason why I want to do it, the **Hateplow** stuff is more grindcore. I would just do the vocals lower. Everbody else in the band is in **Malevolent**.

How does the new Malevolent Creation sound?

It's being put out next month. They just went in to remix it because the first mix was used with tired ears. If you don't have crisp ears for that mix, you're fucked and you have to go in there and do it again. They went in and remixed it and it sounds great now. I think it's a lot better than the last two, music wise and sound wise. I think the last one could've sounded better. It's now more like **Malevolent** because Brett is used to being back in the band. He lets out those killer long screams that were on the first two. It's a lot more metal, the riffs are more death metal. It's really good.

Are you going to do any shows for Hateplow?

It's not like we're in a hurry to. We want to tour. We want to get the fuck out of south Florida for awhile. We have to make sure the tour is right so we don't go out there and lose our ass. We're trying something now in Europe where it'll be **Malevolent Creation** and **Hateplow**, with a couple other bands in between. Phil, Rob, and Dave can then rest before they have to play in **Malevolent**. There would be an opening band, then us, then another band, then **Malevolent**. We're always looking for something over here, there just isn't many opportunities. We're not gonna go out on our tour. It's just our second record and we've only

done that S.O.D. thing. We want to make sure we have enough base first, before we go out on our own. For right now the most definite possibility is Europe in the beginning of the year with **Malevolent**. They're a more established band so they're gonna get better tour offers. I love it because it'll just promote this band more.

How do you like living in Florida?

It's good. From the tours with **Hateplow** or helping **Malevolent** out, I get to see a lot of the other states, but I like Florida. It's cool down there. Everybody is a prick, but I just stay in my house. It's nice and I don't have any problems. It's good when winter comes and it's sixty. I'm not gonna die of hypothermia or freeze my ass. They've finally started getting shows down here again. A few months ago **Dismember** and **Mayhem** was here. There's always Tampa, which is a three hour drive. I don't have any complaints about it. If you want to go out and drink until four in the morning there's enough places to do that. The only other place I was impressed with was Arizona. It was so nice and clear. They have a good show this Halloween, **Deicide** is playing up in Tampa. **Pantera** is playing up there, but I want to go see **Morbid Angel** open up for them.

What other types of music do you like?

I like a lot of other types of music. The main ones are death metal and grindcore. I like black metal a lot. My friend got me into black metal like seven years ago, when the first **Burzum** record came out. I like a lot of forms of extreme music. It's got to be fast. I wouldn't want to play in a slow death metal band. That seems boring to me. It's got to have blasting in it. As long as the drummer can go that's fine with me. I just got the new **Rotten Sound** and that's great. The new **Napalm** is really good, they went back to what they used to do. I got it from Napster. That's what I love about Napster, it lets me hear what's coming out. It's like the new **Napalm**, I won't spend thirty dollars to have someone send it from Europe, I'll wait until it has U.S. distribution. I like to read the lyrics. There's so many times that I've spent a lot of money for a disc and it sucks, like the **Entombed** record *Same Difference*, but I like the new one.

Disography:

2000... *The Only Law Is Survival* (Pavement)
1998... *Everyone Dies* (Pavement)

Current line-up:

Kyle Symons... vocals
Phil Fasciana... guitars
Rob Barrett... guitars
Tim Scott... bass
Dave Culross... drums

Drugaskan was formed out of the demise of the U.S. band **Helistorm**, and play older style thrash with touches of Black and Death Metal. Clean guitars and various vocals are also present. The band has recorded a demo in a pro studio. **Drugaskan** is currently looking to sign onto a label for this kind of music. So if anyone's interested, get in touch for further info/ promo tape, etc.

207-588-0601

Alick Andreades, RR9 Box
1240, Chelsea, ME 04330

ACCOMPLICE... Accomplish... 76... This is the self titled debut from New York's **Accomplice** who, like **Aztec Jade**, come to us via Italy's Adrenaline Records. While I do hear potential here, **Accomplice** is a patchy, rather forgettable affair. They venture from progressive metal to hard rock, yet they don't seem to have found their niche. Stephen Green has a high pitched voice with a good range, but like the band, I don't think he's reached his full potential. **Accomplice** can conceivably appeal to fans of **Queensryche** and **Fates Warning** as easily as those into **Yes** and **Rush**. There's nothing aggressive here, yet they do have an organic sound. The guitars are readily heard with some keyboard accompaniment. **Accomplice** is not a bad album, it's just a little inconsistent and the type of record you would expect from a debut. I'm sure their next release will see the band start to realize their potential. **ADRENALINE.**

ACUMEN NATION... Strike 4... 87... Finally! Three years after their amazing third album, *More Human Heart*, these Chicago musicians return with a solid follow up. While *Strike 4* doesn't boast the variety of *More Human Heart*, it does provide the needed energy and emotion that have allowed this industrial metal band to experience cross over appeal. While the music is modern, groove oriented, and industrial influenced, the vocals are always clear and **Acumen Nation's** decline of using vocal effects creates an intimate, deep emotional quality. *Strike 4* features nine tracks which run at almost forty minutes, but **Acumen Nation** are considering this an e.p. I just hope we don't have to wait another three years for the next product. Why aren't they huge? **CRACKNATION.**

ALL OUT WAR/ DESCEND... All Out War/ Descend... 83... This is a split c.d. featuring four songs each from **Descend** and **All Out War**. Cleveland's **Descend** are really showing a lot of potential here. Their style of death metal is artistic with some excellent guitar playing. Opening track, "Unseen", displays the band's slithery style to perfection. The vocals are undistinguishable, inhuman, and tortured. Most of the time Mike Guinther's style works well, adding to the eeriness of this recording. No two songs from **Descend** sound alike and I imagine they will someday soon join the ranks of the elite death metal artists. **All Out War** represent the other half of this split. Their brand of death metal is listenable but not all that special, especially after listening to **Descend**. They aren't as adventurous as **Descend** but are worth listening to nonetheless. The guitar has a nice bite to it. **CUTTING EDGE.**

ALL TOO HUMAN... Forever And A Day... 82... Talk about impressive. Opening track "What Do You Call Me Now" is one of the best tunes I've ever heard. It's a well written song that has well placed hooks and a great performance from departed vocalist Paul Vander. It's the type of song that made **Last Crack** so special. **All Too Human** is a band with lots of talent. They have the ability to make even the mellow material like the title track and "Life Begins Anew" sound good. "An Untitled Masterpiece" sounds like Geoff Tate singing, but since their new singer, Don DuZan fronted **Operation Queensryche**, I'm sure he'll capably replace Vander. Unfortunately, following the amazing opening track, the rest of *Forever and a Day* pales in comparison. They take too long to develop their songs and those with a short attention span may not last. They will release a new disc soon, which is said to be heavier than *Forever and a Day*. If only the rest of the disc was as good as "What Do You Call Me Now", I'd nominate **All Too Human** for band of the year. **R/R.**

ARENA... Immortal... 77... Progressive rock veterans return with their fourth full length and third vocalist to date. New frontman Rob Sowden has a charismatic, identifiable voice that many would compare to ex-**Marillion** singer Fish. *Immortal* is a laid back prog album with Sowden providing a dramatic performance which helps enhance the music to an extent. Legendary keyboardist Clive Nolan creates some haunting melodies but there is nothing flashy here. While England has been a rather weak scene for prog rock; only **Marillion** and **Threshold** have made recent impacts, **Arena** has kept busy and are making a name for themselves in the prog rock scene. Due to their laid back and dramatic nature, I think it will be difficult for **Arena** to cross over into other genres and there simply isn't anything heavy enough to be considered metal. Another controversial cover by Hugh Syme. **INSIDE OUT.**

AUTUMNBLAZE... Bleak... 86... I always find any release from Prophecy Productions interesting. They may not always work but at least they are challenging, dark, and genre defying. **Autumnblaze** is no different. *Bleak* may have more in common with alternative rock than metal but **Autumnblaze** incorporate a strong and trippy electronic influence while proving to have aptly titled their second release. The electronics provide an interesting touch to this music and while they fall short of dominating the disc, they sure are prominent. People who are into recent **Katatonia**, **Anathema**, and the like will surely be intrigued by the pure, raw emotion found on *Bleak*. Eldron is an intense vocalist who whispers and whines, providing an overall intense performance that accentuates the mellow and the more aggressive passages. *Bleak* can get quite trippy at times. **PROPHECY.**

AYREON... The Dream Sequencer... 78... This is the first part of the *Universal Migrator*, a.k.a. the mellow disc. This is the one with the better artwork and visually, it reminds me a lot of Ayreon's last album *Into the Electric Castle*. This first part of guitarist/ bassist/ keyboardist Arjen Anthony Lucassen's ambitious epic space opera reflects his dreamy, progressive side. If you're a **Rhapsody** fan you get *Flight of the Migrator*, if you're a **Pink Floyd** fan you buy *The Dream Sequencer*. There is nothing heavy here, as *The Dream Sequencer* is loaded with synthesizers (Erik Norlander) and surrealistic passages. **Tiamat's** frontman Johan Edlund does an outstanding job on "My House on Mars". Joining Arjen is **Celestial Season** drummer Rob Snijders and vocalists Lana Lane, **Threshold's** Damian Wilson, and **Spocks Beard's** Neal Morse among others. The music complements the concept to perfection and once again I must stress that *The Dream Sequencer* is meant for prog fans and those who worship **Pink Floyd**. **Ayreon** is synonymous with epic and ambitious. **INSIDE OUT.**

AYREON... Flight Of The Migrator... 92... This disc represents the metal side of Arjen Anthony Lucassen's songwriting. Joining him are **Symphony X** guitarist Michael Romeo, ex-**Gorefest**, **Elegy** drummer Ed Warby, and keyboardist Erik Norlander. Vocalists? Take your pick from some of the best ever- **Symphony X's** Russell Allen, **Primal Fear's** Ralf Scheepers, **Helloween's** Andi Deris, **Elegy's** Ian Parry, **Stratovarius' Timo Kotipelto**, **Rhapsody's** Fabio Leone, and **Iron Maiden's** Bruce Dickinson all appear. Unlike *Into the Electric Castle*, Arjen has the vocalists sing individual songs rather than interacting within each track. Despite all these big names, the real star is Arjen. The intricate science fiction story, the catchy symphonic choruses, the complex yet foot stomping riffs, the futuristic, stunningly innovative keyboards, they are all of his creation. You get over an hour of symphonic metal here on *Universal Migrator Part 2* and it is fresh and brilliant. **INSIDE OUT.**

AZTEC JADE... Paradise Lost... 84... *Paradise Lost* is a compilation of seventeen tracks that come from the first two releases, 1995's *Modern Prophet* and 1997's *Frame of Mind*. **Aztec Jade** hail from upstate New York and play their own brand of progressive metal. The music is adventurous and keyboard laden, yet heavy enough to appeal to metal fans. Vocalist Leon Ozug is a true gem. His vocal style is very impressive and he avoids sounding like anyone else. That is a rare quality for this style of music, where Geoff Tate and Ray Alder impersonations run rampant. There is nothing predictable about **Aztec Jade**. Just when you think they are going to bore the listener they turn around with another surprise and/ or astounding interlude. There are some weaker tracks and seventeen songs is a lot to wade through, but one can tell **Aztec Jade** is a band on the rise. Hopefully their third album will soon be recorded and released. **ADRENALINE.**

BABYLON A.D... American Blitzkrieg... 77... *American Blitzkrieg* represents **Babylon A.D.'s** first record since 1992's *Nothing Sacred*. It looks like they've cut their hair short and added a dose of modern sounds to their arena hard rock/ heavy metal. Similar to bands like **Asphalt Ballet** and **Tora Tora** in the sense that they were underrated and overlooked for their talent, **Babylon A.D.** released two albums before going on hiatus. Four of the original members return, including talented frontman Derek Davis, although bassist James Pacheco's brother Eric replaces bassist Robb Reid. The opening title track sees Derek's vocals drowned in effects and its modern edge is a turnoff but by the third track, "I Wanna Live", and its satirical bite, **Babylon A.D.** fans should be happy again. "Sinking in the Sand" is perhaps their best work to date. The ripping guitars working well with Derek's swagger. "The Unreal" sounds like it could've come from **L.A. Guns' American Hardcore** album. "One Way Ride" and "Glyde" have some nice grooves, but overall *American Blitzkrieg* is too inconsistent. I always appreciated Derek's voice but he lacks the same identity he created on the first two records. **APOCALYPSE.**

BABYLON WHORES... Errata Stigmata... 77... I can only assume that this four song e.p. is being released to help promote their American tour with **King Diamond**, **Shadows Fall**, and **Deep**. Things kick off with the title track and its infectious "say you love Satan" chorus. It is a winner of a track and should've been a huge hit. The unreleased version of "Fey" is slow and gothic sounding with a strong **Type O Negative** sound. There is a dance mix of "Errata Stigmata" that's quite interesting. Things close off with "Sol Niger", which is also a video here. Buy *King Fear*, it is a timeless album filled with catchy songs and the genius lyrical and vocal prowess of Ike Vil. Helsinki death rock? It sounds more like heavy gothic rock to me. **NECROPOLIS.**

BAR 7... The World Is A Freak... 86... This is the same band that was touring last year under the name **Sofa King**. The distinguished pair, vocalist Jeff Keith and guitarist Tommy Skeoch are back together again and old fans of **Tesla** will not be disappointed. These guys were always meant to jam on raw, dirty, bluesy, hard rock and the low budget presentation of **Bar 7's** debut fits perfectly. I know some old school **Tesla** fans will cry blasphemy when they hear vocal effects

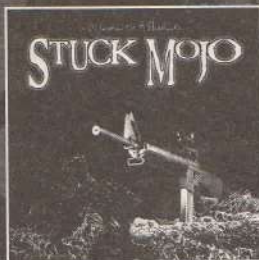
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on Jeff's voice on rousing opener "Freaked". "No Show" has some of that heavy groove Tesla experimented with on their last album together, *Bust a Nut*. The doomy and dark "Cellophane" and the moving, deeply emotional ballads like "Got a New Life" and "Love is Such" let the listener know these guys know how to express their feelings. "She Don't" has an energetic groove and Denis Bostok creates some cool percussion. "All Natural" should have fans remembering the pure emotion of "Love Song" and "American Dream" will do the same as an acoustic rocker for "Signs", but it's "4 Leaf Clover" that represents the pinnacle of an excellent record. Welcome back, we missed you. **Bar 7** is a hell of a lot closer to Tesla than Soul Motor was. **IDABELL**.

BEHEMOTH... *Satanica*... 88... Behemoth take the best of Morbid Angel and twist it with the icy coldness of Mayhem. The result is black metal that never becomes predictable. The biography sure paints an accurate endorsement. Behemoth know that when you call an album *Satanica* it should be aggressive, raw, brutal, powerful, and unpredictable. If Slayer was a black metal band perhaps this is what they would sound like. No keyboards, but somehow despite the brutality of the riffs, Behemoth actually convey a melodic atmosphere amidst their mayhem. It can't be all craziness and no hooks, that would be ineffective. The subliminal background vocals on "Ceremony of Shiva" is a brilliant example of their subtle melodies. Behemoth have toiled on the Polish underground scene for a long time. They have four full lengths and several e.p.'s to their discography. *Satanica* was actually released last year, but it represents the band's first official U.S. release, now via Dwell Records. Look for a new album this fall, but in the meantime marvel at the incredible guitar work by Negal on *Satanica*. **DWELL**.

BENUMB... *Withering Strands Of Hope*... 75... With the band name, album title, and cover artwork for the sophomore release from California's Benumb it is clear that their lyrics are quite bleak. Benumb are as famous for their hyper speed blasts as they are for their appreciation and support for the underground scene. Most of *Withering Strands Of Hope*, like their debut, *Soul of the Martyr*, is a blur. Almost all of the thirty two tracks blast by with no memorable qualities. Like most grindcore bands, Benumb are at their most interesting when they vary the pace and slow down for a moment. I long for the day when a band realizes how effective they can be if they had some variation in the pace. Dying Fetus do it and nobody has done it as good as Brutal Truth. While I can envision some hardcore people getting into this, Benumb is too extreme for most people's tastes. **RELAPSE**.

BESIECH... *Black Emotions*... 78... You may remember Besiech released their debut album, *From a Bleeding Heart*, two years ago through Metal Blade Records. *From a Bleeding Heart* was an atmospheric metal album with death metal and gothic influences, it was recorded while Besiech was still developing and the new album, now on Pavement Music, is more representative of the band's sound. The result is *Black Emotions*; a more mellow, electronic based effort that recalls early Cemetery and recent Tiamat in nature. Besiech is still rooted in metal, but show a more open minded nature than most bands of this style. Jorgen Sjoberg maintains a rough style to his vocals as Besiech have, thankfully, not progressed into the modern, mellow realm of Paradise Lost and Diabolique. *Black Emotions* is a little better than average but very little stands out and there isn't much to get your blood flowing. **PAVEMENT**.

BLAZING ETERNITY... *Times And Unknown Waters*... 84... Germany's Prophecy Productions is rapidly making a name for themselves in the world of atmospheric/ experimental metal. Bands like Drawn, In The Woods, and Bethlehem have found a comfortable home on Prophecy. Many of these bands, Blazing Eternity included, take the scene that spawned bands like Anathema and My Dying Bride and expand that atmospheric sound into progressive areas yet retaining the aggressiveness and esoteric nature of the original vision. Thus, Peter Mesnickow can be heard singing anywhere from a clean gothic tone to raging black metal screams. Blazing Eternity create atmospheres, or as they like to call it, their brand of Nordic night metal without the use of extra instruments (although Saturnus' Anders Ro Nielsen plays the keyboards). Blazing Eternity is a band that restores faith in this avantgarde metal scene. They effectively utilize aggression and melody while most bands sound uncomfortable at one or the other. **PROPHECY**.

BLOOD STORM... *Pestilence From The Dragonstar*... 82... Pennsylvania extreme metallers Blood Storm are back with their second full length album and first for Soul Sold Music, a new label operated by Metal Core's Chris Forbes. Blood Storm play old school metal that may remind listeners of bands like Sodom with a more aggressive and black metal slant. Like their Cacophonous debut, *The Atlantean War Dragon*, *Pestilence from the Dragonstar* is an old school speed metal/ black metal fans dream. One complaint I have is the lack of variety and the one dimensional fast pace. While that may be a pleasure to some, others may find *Pestilence from the Dragonstar* a tedious listen after awhile. It's still nice to hear the spirit of old Sodom and Hellhammer being revived. Nice cover artwork. **SOUL SOLD**.

BLOT MINE... *Porphyrogenesis*... 76... Blot Mine has been a name I've heard kicked around the underground for a few years now. They feature several ex-members of Setherial in their line-up. This Swedish black metal band play their music raw, dirty, fast, and pure underground. Some intelligent ideas and interesting musical twists are obscured by a weak and muddy production. Most of *Porphyrogenesis* blasts by at a rapid pace, but Blot Mine work best when the music slows down and a doom like quality takes over, "My Soul in Fury Flew" for example. I would like to give Blot Mine credit for writing some intelligent, thought provoking lyrics. "Without Words" is a good example of a song that is written with a mature audience in mind, not your typical blood and guts lyrics. The drum sound is very poor and muddled, which makes *Porphyrogenesis* less bearable to listen to at times, especially on the fast sections, which is the majority of the time. There is certainly potential and one can tell why Blot Mine is revered by the underground fanatics. **NEAR DARK**.

LIZZY BORDEN... *Deal With The Devil*... 87... It's been eleven long years since Lizzy Borden's last metal masterpiece, *Master of Disguise*, was released and he finally returns with his sixth studio album. Lizzy has the same touring line-up from that disc, including long time members; guitarist Craig Nelson and drummer Joey Scott. After listening to the first three tracks, especially the first two, I was disappointed because it appeared that Lizzy jumped on the European power metal bandwagon but once the middle of the disc came to fruition, the experimental and theatrical side of Lizzy Borden shined through. "Zanzibar" has soem crisp and heavy guitars, "Loving You is Murder" is an anthemic gem in classic Lizzy tradition, and then comes the three highlights. "We Only Come Out at Night" is a groove and percussion heavy sing along with strong bass and a heavier "One False Move" feel. "Generation Landslide" also has a catchy chorus that sounds technical and organic at the same time, and finally another strong anthem, "The World is Mine". *Deal With the Devil* has some of Lizzy Borden's best songs to date and overall it ranks up there with *Visual Lies* and *Master of Disguise*. **METAL BLADE**.

BOULDER... *Ravage And Savage*... 82... "Pretty damn raw, Marshall's cranked", screams the bio. Enough said. If EyeHateGod turned to rock 'n roll, they probably would sound something like Boulder. Those fine folks at Tee Pee Records not only give us the nine song, new disc, titled *Ravage and Savage*, but also Boulder's previous disc, the ten track *The Rage of it All*, as well. Boulder is not pretty. There is nothing melodic here. No anthemic, catchy choruses; just raw, blistering rock 'n roll. The result is *Ravage and Savage*, an energetic, live sounding disc that's in your face and fun. Basically, *The Rage of it All* presents more of the same. It sounds like these guys had fun recording this. The vocals are a little on the abrasive side, but anyone who's ever been into good time rock 'n roll, from Motorhead to Lynyrd Skynyrd to the Ramones, Boulder is for you. **TEE PEE**.

BOZZIO LEVIN STEVENS... *Situation Dangerous*... 87... Terry, Tony, and Steve return with a second album of instrumental songs that are exciting, diverse, and effectively show off their talents without sacrificing songwriting. Even though I enjoy the over the top music that Liquid Tension create, I am more of a fan of Bozzio Levin Stevens. They make each song special and use their creative talents to engage a listener through an entire album, not overwhelm them. While songs like "Endless" and "Spiral" are the most musical and have a flamenco influence, my favorites are the fast, upbeat tracks "Crash" and "Dangerous" (that riff sounds straight from Led Zeppelin's "Immigrant Song"). On "Tragic", Steve Stevens really shines and shows his eclectic style the best. Terry Bozzio presents his beast and most innovative work on "Tziganne". From start to finish, *Situation Dangerous* may be the best instrumental album these ears have heard. It's more focused than their *Black Light Syndrome* debut. **MAGNA CARTA**.

CANAAN... *Brand New Babylon*... 83... Brand New Babylon is Italy's Canaan's new disc and follow up to the double disc, *Walk into My Open Womb*, their third overall. *Brand New Babylon* is an atmospheric and depressive release. While there are vocals throughout the fourteen tracks, it is clear that Canaan wish to express themselves with depressive atmospheres within an alternative yet almost gothic rock structure. There isn't anything really aggressive about Mauro's vocals or the laid back music, but *Brand New Babylon* sure is bleak and depressing. Canaan is not as structured as Autumnblaze but surely if one can get into one band, they will enjoy the other. Like other bands of this genre, there is a deep Pink Floyd influence, especially the underrated classic *The Final Cut*. **PROPHECY**.

CANNIBAL CORPSE... *Live Cannibalism*... 79... *Live Cannibalism* was recorded live on Cannibal Corpse's Death Metal Massacre 2000 tour. Two shows



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were recorded to make up the c.d., one February 15th in Indiana, the other February 16th in Milwaukee. You get eighteen tracks in all. Among them are from *Bloodthirst*; "Blowtorch Slaughter", "Unleashing the Bloodthirsty", "Dead Human Collection", and "The Spine Splitter", from *Gallery of Suicide*; "Gallery of Suicide", "I Will Kill You", and "Disposal of the Body", from *Vile*; "Perverse Suffering" and "Devoured by Vermin", from *The Bleeding*; "Staring through the Eyes of the Dead", "Stripped Raped and Strangled", and "Fucked with a Knife", from *Butchered at Birth*; "Covered with Sores", "Meat Hook Sodomy", and "Gutted", from *Tombs of the Mutilated*; "I Cum Blood" and "Hammer Smashed Face", and from *Eaten Back to Life* we get "A Skull Full of Maggots". *Live Cannibalism* sounds great for a live album, but I'm sure you know by now how I feel about live records. George Fisher sounds amazing when he can display his range like on "Staring through the Eyes of the Dead". The c.d. is fine, but I'd rather watch the video. **METAL BLADE.**

CARPATHIAN FOREST... *Strange Old Brew*... 89... One listen to *Strange Old Brew* will prove why *Carpathian Forest* is considered an underground legend. It is almost like *Slayer* around the time of their debut, only instead of thrash, they decided to play black metal. It is raw and cult, but it's also brutal and punishing. Many bands try to achieve that underproduced, underground sound but often the result lacks needed punch- that is not the case with *Strange Old Brew*. This album is heavy and brutal, but it is true black metal through and through. Those who thought *Mayhem* sold out will find solace in *Carpathian Forest*. Joining Nattfrost and Nordavind are Tchort and Kobro. *Strange Old Brew* runs the gamut, from the dark and doomy "Thanatology" to the eerie "House of the Whipcord", the chaotic "Bloodcleansing"; *Carpathian Forest* play with equal fervor no matter the pace. This being their third release, *Carpathian Forest* have come up with another classic. **AVANTGARDE.**

CELESTIAL SEASON... *Lunchbox Dialogues*... 88... If you listen to *Celestial Season's* 1993 debut *Forever Scarlet Passion* and then throw on their newest disc, *Lunchbox Dialogues*, you would never believe it's the same band. Their newest album is a cross between *Kyuss* and *Soundgarden* and has some of the most emotional material you will ever hear. Opener "Lonely Man Burning" has that retro energetic vibe, but once "Sharks and Razors" kicks in you are being exposed to some of the most raw emotion imaginable. "Outside" continues this gut wrenching trend. These two songs are what music is meant to be about. Vocalist Cyril Cruz is not the most talented vocalist you will ever hear but no one would do a better job at conveying these emotions. Once you get to "Celestial Dragon" you have been exposed to one of the truly classic emotional driven songs ever recorded. After two albums of atmospheric doom death metal, and a dull retro rock album (*Orange*), *Chrome* and *Lunchbox Dialogues* puts them on the map. **LA GUAPA.**

CHIAROSCURO... *Brilliant Pools Of Darkness*... 90... Chiaroscuro is an American progressive metal band that has some amazing tunes. Even though four of the members of *Chiaroscuro* met waiting in line at a *Dream Theater* concert, they are anything but a clone and can not be compared directly to anything out there. Mark my words, just like *Queensryche* did in the 80's and *Dream Theater* did in the 90's; *October Thorns* and *Chiaroscuro* will be the bands to lead progressive power metal in the next decade and beyond. *Chiaroscuro* prove they are like no other band immediately. "Broken Everything" and "Crucifixion" are heavy, unpredictable, yet melodic. The latter contains a rapid vocal section that reminds one of *Stuck Mojo*, and it is the same type of bold statement *October Thorns* made on "Exhausted Minds". Even though tracks like "No Need", "Divinity", and "Childrens Crusade" are average and forgettable, the other seven tracks, especially "Waiting" and "Luminescence" are shockingly experimental and exciting, yet song oriented tracks that prove *Chiaroscuro* can leap to the progressive power metal elite. **www.chiaroscuro.net.**

C.J.S.S... *Kings Of The World*... 82... The classic power metal team of Chastain/ Jenkins/ Skimmerhorn/ Sharp return from a lengthy absence with their first album in over ten years. Not much has changed soundwise as C.J.S.S. play straight ahead power metal with David Chastain's ripping guitars. It's the same style that made *World Gone Mad* and *Praise the Loud* popular albums in the eighties. While C.J.S.S. never officially broke up, they did go on a lengthy hiatus. Bassist Mike Skimmerhorn played with Chastain on his solo albums, while vocalist Russell Jenkins and drummer Les Sharp did not officially release anything. If you liked C.J.S.S.'s previous two discs, they were reissued last year together as 2-4-1, *Kings of the World* should be up your alley as well. Songs like "141" have an appealing thrash sound to Chastain's guitars. C.J.S.S. play power metal the way it was meant to be. **PAVEMENT.**

COBALT 60... *Cobalt 60*... 89... This is a five song e.p. and second release from Long Island's *Cobalt 60*. This is a band which is sure to become huge some day soon. They play a style of heavy music that conjures bands like *Faith No More*, *Life Of Agony*, and *Last Crack*- that is unpredictable, deeply emotional, with a contrast of feelings and styles. Quiet and introspective passages build intensity which is eventually released in a powerful expression of emotion. Ed Pullman's vocal style can be alternately beautiful and then an explosive screaming. Somehow, *Cobalt 60* manage to avoid the trendy trappings of today's wanna be bands. There is substance to their music. The band (guitarist Chris O'Shea, bassist Steve Little, and drummer Tom Campione) create a formidable background for Ed to express the various emotions that make *Cobalt 60* a band worthy of attention. This band will be huge, watch them closely. **cobalt60@welcome.to**

COLD MOURNING... *Lower Than Low*... 85... In the grand tradition of *Black Sabbath*, *Pentagram*, *Cathedral*, *Trouble*, and *Witchfinder General*; comes California's *Cold Mourning* and their debut, *Lower than Low*. *Cold Mourning* will surely be a delight to fans of any of the above bands. They are true metal all the way. While their pace is not exceedingly slow ala early *Trouble*, *Cathedral*, or *St. Vitus* but they are not far from that style either. *Lower than Low* is a ten track album that would fit quite nicely on Lee Dorrian's *Rise Above* label. The only weak spot, like many of these same bands, is the vocals. They offer nothing new or exciting to this music. There are certainly worse vocal styles but the singing on *Lower than Low* fails to distinguish itself. They also cover *Discharge's* "Possibility of Life's Destruction". **GAME TWO. www.eccentral.com/members/hiltgren.**

CONDITION RED... *Condition Red*... 84... Condition Red is an all star project put together by guitarist Lars Eric Mattsson. It is not as focused as his latest release, *Another Dimension*, but *Condition Red* is very diverse and energetic. It is less power metal sounding and more progressive with a touch of neo classical. Mattsson is joined by vocalists Ella Grusser and Torgny Stjarnfort, whose female/ male vocals provide nice balance. Alex Masi shares guitar duties, a match made in heaven for some shred fans, while Ella also contributes violin, Alexander King keyboards, Esa Pietila saxophone, and Eddie Sledgehammer drums. Prog fans would be happy to hear *Planet X*, ex-*Dream Theater* keyboardist Derek Sherinian contributing to "Life is Now" and "Final Words". While there are some brilliant passages and Mattsson provides some great bass playing, *Condition Red* can be a tedious listen. Half of the eight tracks clock in between eight and a half and ten and a half minutes. Fans of prog should love this, but it is not as focused as most of Lars Eric Mattsson's other work. **LION MUSIC.**

CRACK UP... *Dead End Run*... 75... Germany's death rock combo *Crack Up* is back with their fourth release and first since a two album stint on Nuclear Blast. Visually, thematically, and musically; *Crack Up* pick up where their previous disc, *Heads Will Roll*, left off. The *Entombed* style heaviness, mixed with *Corrosion Of Conformity* style of southern rock, and Tim's deep, death metal vocals help create a sound that has the punch and drive of *Motorhead* but a distinct lack of variety and the one dimensional vocals make *Dead End Run* a long and tedious listen. The lyrics to songs like "It's Shit", "Dead Good Motherfucker", and "Whores Suck It" give *Crack Up* a dirty, offensive feel. Fortunately, the songs are generally short and right to the point, but I can't help but feel a different vocal style would greatly benefit the band. **MOONSTORM.**

CRUACHAN... *The Middle Kingdom*... 72... I'll be damned if *The Middle Kingdom's* artwork looks like the same fellow who does *Cathedral's* covers. That is the best thing I can say about *Cruachan*. They were one of the first bands to combine folk music and metal. They clearly get the authenticity of Celtic ideology, however the translation is lost and sounds out of place with metal audiences. You get an odd assortment of accompanying instruments, among them; mandolin, bouzouki, bodhran, Irish flutes, tin whistle, and Uilleann pipes (no, I have no clue what they are). *Cruachan* disbanded following their 1995 release, *Tuatha Na Gael*, but due to an overwhelming response they have reformed. *The Middle Kingdom* has an audience, they would be the same people with *Vintersorg*, *Morgenstern*, and *In Extremo* and their collection. Unfortunately, *Cruachan* don't do much for me. **HAMMERHEART.**

CRUSHDOWN... *Like This*... 87... For a major label, M.C.A. Records knows what they are doing. This has been a productive year for them (at least critically). First you've got *Pitch Shifter*, then you get ex-*Saigon Kick* frontman Jason Bieler and his compadres. The *Supertransatlantic* vocalist/ guitarist produced this debut and almost half the band (drummer Ricky Sanders and guitarist Pete Dembrowski) are also with him in *Supertransatlantic*. Soon you can look for *Nonpoint*, sure to be another great record tied to M.C.A. *Crushdown* comes mainly from the minds of vocalist Justin Raymond and guitarist Bruce Sonneborn. Like *This* is filled with catchy songs that actually remind a little of *Saigon Kick*, but is incomparable to other bands. It's heavy, but every song is hook laden and memorable, yet with enough depth to make you want to keep listening. Raymond creates some truly memorable and spine chilling lines on "Monday". His emotional performance on "Dosage" is awe inspiring. They also have a cover of Iggy Pop's "Loose". Excellent debut. **M.C.A.**

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CRUXSHADOWS... *The Mystery Of The Whisper...* 79... The Cruxshadows is a four piece band that has become quite popular in the gothic and darkwave circuit due to three full lengths and an e.p. The four individuals who comprise the Cruxshadows are vocalist/ keyboardist Rogue, violinist/ keyboardist Rachel McDonnell, guitarist Kevin Cage, and keyboardist Chris Brantley. Needless to say, *The Mystery of the Whisper* is keyboard dominant. While maintaining that dark, gothic vibe, the Cruxshadows also create music you can dance to. The seventeen tracks here feature some atmospheric interludes, but this is a long album that is interesting enough to maintain your interest. While the guitars are buried deep in the mix, the Cruxshadows are not the type of band you would often see in these pages, but it is listenable and has some memorable moments. **DANCING FERET.**

CULTUS SANGUINE/ SETH... *War III...* 80... This is the third installment of Seasons Of Mist War series. The first featured And Oceans and Bloodthorn, the second Anata and Bethzaida, and now we get Cultus Sanguine and Seth. As per the first two War releases, each band presents two new originals, a cover, and a cover of a song by the other artist. Cultus Sanguine continue to mature in their style of gothic metal as they present the new tunes, "My Journey is Long but My Time is Endless". They have an ambient remix of "We Have No Mother" and make Seth's "L'Hymne Au Vampire" sound like their own song. One of my favorite upcoming bands, Cultus Sanguine scores an 87. Seth presents two new tunes that accurately reflect their fast, raw, yet still symphonic black metal sound. I was impressed with their Cultus Sanguine cover, "The Calling Illusion", which maintains a great balance between their gothic style and Seth's black metal scream, but then it gets lost in a whirlwind of speed before returning to the gothic overtones. Oddly enough both bands chose Depeche Mode's "Behind the Wheel" to cover. Both offer their own unique versions. Score a 73 for Seth. **SEASONS OF MIST.**

DAMNATION... *Resist...* 82... Resist is Damnation's introduction to the U.S. shores and an album that combines the best of old school death and black metal into a powerful assault with a nostalgic nod to metal's eighties roots. Some may be aware of Damnation due to some members' involvement with Behemoth. Others may be familiar with their other two full lengths and two e.p.'s. Like Behemoth, Damnation creates lyrics attacking Christianity and similar hypocrisies. While Resist is straight ahead metal, with death metal registering the strongest, the band plays with such a conviction that one can overlook the lack of variety and dated sound. This contains one of the thickest booklets and unique packaging. Some slick melodic guitar solos can be heard throughout. **DARK REALM.**

DARKEST HOUR... *The Mark Of Judas...* 84... Darkest Hour is a Maryland based metal band that will have followers of the modern Swedish death metal scene interested. Like fellow Americans Shadows Fall, Darkest Hour have a strong Scandinavian influence; although Shadows Fall have more melody. That is not to say Darkest Hour is without its moments. Even within the chaotic opener "For the Soul of the Savior" there's an interesting change of pace to end the song. While the Gothenburg scene has become over populated, it is nice seeing American bands provide their take on the scene. Somehow, Darkest Hour add their own hooks at the right moments which keeps *The Mark of Judas* an enjoyable listening experience start to finish. The originality of the music makes up for John Blakemore Henry's acid tongue, one dimensional style. Excellent debut. **M.I.A.**

DARK TRANQUILLITY... *Haven...* 84... People sometimes forget that Dark Tranquillity was one of the originators of the Gothenburg trademark sound. When they released their Century Media debut, *Projector*, last year the band proved they had moved on and have progressed into new realms. A year later and we now have *Haven*. On *Haven*, Dark Tranquillity incorporate new bassist Michael Nicklasson and Martin Brandstrom who provides the electronics, which are not as prevalent as you would expect, yet complement the music well. Upon first listen one can tell Mikael Stanne has returned to a harsher vocal style than found on *Projector*. The best aspect of *Haven* is the depth of the music Dark Tranquillity present. It is aggressive yet still retains enough melody. The electronic element enhances the adventurous music and gives it a strong atmospheric touch. After four full lengths and two e.p.'s few bands can conjure the ability to further expand and explore their music in such a way as Dark Tranquillity have on *Haven*. **CENTURY MEDIA.**

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DEEP... Pieces Of Nothing... 79... Name the band who had Ty Tabor (Kings X) and John Perez (Solitude Aeternus) work with them on their independent debut album, toured with Nevermore and Arch Enemy, got Logan Mader (ex-Soulfly, ex-Machine Head) to produce their follow up, and then jump on tour with King Diamond, Shadows Fall, and Babylon Whores. Their name is Deep. Like Darkest Hour and Shadows Fall, Deep represent the new breed of American metal which evolves their own influences with a Swedish sound. However, like the former, Deep falls victim to a vocalist without much range and/or diversity. Some songs blast by at a fast pace without much direction but songs like opener "Hear Their Own" prove Deep has outstanding potential. The melodic guitar playing in between the aggressive verses on "Hear Their Own" is remarkable. While In Flames and Dark Tranquillity continue to evolve past their roots, American bands like Deep are keeping their tradition alive. **PAVEMENT.**

DESECRATION... Inhuman... 90... With bands like Desecration and Infestation, I'm becoming quite impressed with the English death metal scene. Desecration inject needed enthusiasm into their attack. Unlike many of their peers, Desecration like to change the pace ever so often. Even Ollie's vocal style is arranged to fit the music. My two main complaints with death metal are taken care of on Inhuman. Desecration can grind with the best of them, but they also know the importance of catchy riffs and biting, guitar crunch. On songs "Dig Up Dig In" and "Asphyxiate on Blood", guitarist Julian truly shines through with melodic harmonies and ripping solos. For the uninitiated, Desecration has been around since the early 90's and caused quite a stir with the obscene nature of their debut, *Gore and Perversion*, which landed them in court. Following a deal with Copro Records and a second release, *Murder in Mind*, Desecration now unleash Inhuman, a death metal classic in the waiting. New drummer, Mike, does an amazing job also. **COPRO.**

DIES ATER... Through Weird Woods... 79... Dies Ater is a German black metal band and *Through Weird Woods* is their second offering. They have achieved a more professional and complex sound on *Through Weird Woods* and there are some indications that Dies Ater will be a band to keep an eye on in the future. While the music is aggressive in grand black metal tradition, the keyboards give Dies Ater a symphonic vibe and the songs are clearly thought out and structured. In other words, they aren't raw and aggressive simply for the sake of doing so. The vocals are typically raw and they don't try to get fancy with acoustic passages or female vocals. The heaviness and complexity of songs like "Wintersturm" allow Dies Ater to rise above your typical black metal band. I'm curious to see them take their music to the next level. **LAST EPISODE.**

DILLINGER ESCAPE PLAN... Dillinger Escape Plan... 82... This is not the new Dillinger Escape Plan, it is their self titled six song e.p. from a couple of years ago, which was released via the small New Jersey label Now Or Never Records. The six tracks found here, "Proceed with Caution", "I Love Secret Agents", "Monticello", "Cleopatra's Sling", "Caffeine", and "Three for Flinching"; are similar in nature to the Relapse Records debut e.p., *Under the Running Board*. The Dillinger Escape Plan was produced by Steve Evetts, who worked with notables like Snapcase, Human Remains, and Deadguy. As their subsequent releases, this e.p. proves the Dillinger Escape Plan's wacky genius and extreme nature has been a band trademark from the start. **NOW OR NEVER.**

DOMINION... The Hand And The Sword... 77... An air raid siren offers a warning to the listener that *The Hand and the Sword* is not going to be a typical metal release. "Apocalyptic Views" uses electronic percussion mood enhancing keyboards, and heavily distorting spoken vocals- at once proving Dominion to be genre defying. While this style works very well on the opening track, the rest of the disc becomes a little redundant, especially when the heavy percussion is taken away in favor of ambient keyboard passages. Songs like "Transmitting" offer some experimental keyboard work. Most of *The Hand and the Sword* is musical with sparse vocals, which always appear in the distorted, non sensual fashion. This may appeal to the industrial scene or the ambient crowd but the lack of guitars will limit the appeal from metallers. Perhaps they can take this groundwork and expand upon it in the future. **NAPALM.**

DORO... Calling The Wild... 81... Calling the Wild is ex-Warlock frontwoman Doro Pesch's first American release in some time. One listen will have fans of Warlock cringing, thinking Doro has gone modern metal. For people more willing to allow her to grow and evolve, *Calling the Wild* should be an enjoyable listen. Her voice is still powerful and metal sounding, although the music backing her up is rather generic. There are several well known guest musicians, and it appears that Doro has not found a unified direction to take the music so it does sound disconnected as a whole. Joining Doro on two tracks is Motorhead legend Lemmy Kilmister. "Love Me Forever" is a ballad that originally appeared on Motorhead's 1991 release, *1916*, and "Alone Again" is another similar ballad. Doro also performs a cover of Billy Idol's "White Wedding". "Kiss Me Like a Cobra" sees Doro significantly updating her sound. I enjoyed the upbeat, energetic, somewhat anthemic metal tunes like "I Wanna Live", "Pain", and "Now or Never". "Scared" will be too electronic dominant for some. Doro still have her distinctive vocal style, her updated music works sometimes but is too inconsistent. **KOCH.**

DRAGBODY... Flip The Kill Switch... 84... Flip the Kill Switch is Florida noisecore upstarts, Dragbody's full length debut. Like other bands on their roster, Diecast and Maharajah, Dragbody is part of this technical, noisy, screaming vocals, and all around intense scene. The music is always interesting, especially the guitars, which are fast, abrasive, and insanely heavy. It's the constant barrage of screaming that becomes monotonous and at times unbearable. It is nice to see the underground legendary producer Steve Albini working with a band of this style. When you listen to these type of bands you hear a logical progression from what EyeHateGod created in the early nineties. Expect some whiplashing changes in pace and Dragbody can get surprisingly quiet at times, especially towards the end of *Flip the Kill Switch* on songs like "Baton Rouge/ May 20th" and "A Game of You". **NOW OR NEVER.**

DROWNINGMAN... Rock And Roll Killing Machine... 90... Finally a band of this style has got it nearly perfect. While most bands of this blossoming noisecore style incessantly scream their heads off, Drowningman actually manage to inject some melody and diversity without losing their edge. Simon Brody does a good job diversifying his style and becomes perhaps the first vocalist of this genre to actually be as interesting as the complex music. While the musicianship is amazing, Drowningman don't forget that you need melodic hooks every once in awhile to draw the listener in. They may not be as extreme or even as intense as bands like Converge or Dragbody, but Drowningman sound like they've taken a step further than most of their peers have dared. *Rock and Roll Killing Machine* is a very impressive follow up to last year's popular e.p., *How They Light Cigarettes in Prison*. Highly recommended. **REVELATION.**

EARTHTONE 9... Hi-Point... 88... Every aspect of the great English band is a high point. Take the best elements of bands like Therapy?, Sepultura, Helmet, and Breach, but create their own energetic sound. They can be convincingly melodic and harsh within the same song, with both styles infectious. *Hi-Point* is a four song e.p. which bridges the gap between last year's *Off Kilter Enhancement* and their crucial forthcoming third full length. The first two tracks are new, "Tat Twam Asi" and "Alpha Hi", and they reveal the direction Earthtone 9 will be heading on the next release. No drastic departures, yet it's slightly more intense and melodic. There is a cover of Shihad's "You Again" and a reworking of "Vitrolis H.S.F." which originally appeared on their debut *Lo Def Discord*. Be sure to get a hold of this rising and exciting unknown band. **COPRO.**

EDGUY... Theatre Of Salvation... 78... This is one of a trio of releases (Squealer and Steel Attack being the others) A.F.M. Records licensed to Metal Blade in the States. *Theatre of Salvation* has also been out for a year and this being Edguy's fourth album, the band has gained considerable praise in the power metal circles. Edguy play anthemic power metal with uncanny similarities to Helloween. *Theatre of Salvation* is well produced, well played, and well written; however there is a distinct lack of originality, spontaneity, and it lacks passion. These guys are still in their early twenties and surely they will find their identity with time. For those who worship bands like Helloween, Edguy is a good purchase. The lengthy epic title track is a ray of light and finds Edguy at their catchiest and most creative. **METAL BLADE.**

EMPEROR... Emperial Live Ceremony... 78... Like tribute albums, I feel there should be some requirements before a band releases a live album. I realize that it is not always the band's decision to do so and often live albums and greatest hits albums are the result of record label politics, but I do believe the time is not right to release an Emperor live album. Anyway, they do sound like a great live band and *Emperial Live Ceremony* is mixed very well. There is a video for "I Am the Black Wizards", which opens *Emperial Live Ceremony*, then you get nine live tracks. Among them are "Curse You All Men", "Sworn", and "An Elegy of Icaros" from *IX Equilibrium*. "Thus Spake the Nightspirit", "With Strength I Burn", and "Ye Entrancemepium" from *Anthems to the Welkin at Dusk*, "I Am the Black Wizards" and "Inno a Satana" from *In the Nightside Eclipse*, and "Night of the Graveless Souls" from their *Hordanes Land* split with Enslaved. At least there are a lot fewer live discs than tribute albums. **CANDLELIGHT.**

EXHIBITION... Exhibition... 84... This is the three song debut e.p. from New Jersey's Exhibition. You may recognize some of the names in this band as the members have appeared in *Transcending the Mundane* in other bands. Vocalist Bobby Lucas doubles with Seven Witches and the trio of guitarist Jeff Shernov,

debut is no different. Sometimes it works brilliantly (**Night Conquers Day**), sometimes it is mediocre (**Into The Sunless Meridian**). There is an old school metal vibe with technical thrash, and even touches of black metal and death metal. On songs like "A Depraved Indifference to Human Life" Mikael uses a King Diamond falsetto to go with his snarl. This influence culminates in a cover of **Mercyful Fate's** "A Corpse Without a Soul". It appears that the music on *Into the Sunless Meridian* has been written by Mikael over the course of seven years. You will hear some of his best guitar playing, especially on "The Birth of Psychic Energies". **NEAR DARK.**

ISIS... Celestial... 88... *Celestial* is Isis' full length debut. After two e.p.'s; *The Mosquito Control* and *The Red Sea*, and countless shows, Isis are ready to take the next step. Unlike many of their contemporaries who like to bludgeon the listener with a barrage of notes and riffs, leaving no lasting impression, Isis create a hypnotic groove with their style of weirdness. They create dreamy soundscapes and build upon a solid, repetitive structure. At times Isis reminds one of **Neurosis** in their songwriting and overall structure, but they are more listenable and you never know what trick Isis have up their sleeve. This is a band that is very open minded and creative. Their vocals are usually coarse but don't be surprised to hear Aaron Turner become more accessible at times. *Celestial* makes a beautiful counterpart to the relentless styles of most bands doing this style. Check them out on tour with Candiria and the Dillinger Escape Plan. **ESCAPE ARTIST.**

LANA LANE... Secrets Of Astrology... 83... Anyone familiar with Lana Lane's style of symphonic hard rock or any of her previous four full lengths; *Love is an Illusion*, *Curious Gods*, *Garden of the Moon*, and *Queen of the Ocean*; will be surprised to see some changes have taken place. She is no longer working with American musicians and she's got a new cover artist. Joining Lana once again is legendary bassist Tony Franklin. New members involved on *Secrets of Astrology* are ex-Gorefest, Ayreon drummer Ed Warby, Ayreon, ex-Vengeance guitarist Arjen Lucassen, and Velocity guitarist David Victor. Lana and her collaborator/producer Erik Norlander have produced a diverse clear sounding record that expresses her symphonis metal style (i.e. "Speed of Sound", "Secrets of Astrology"), her hard rock style (i.e. "Tarot"), and her majestic balladry (i.e. "The Bell"). *Secrets of Astrology* is a beautiful sounding record. The keyboards are dominant and symphonic through out, yet there's plenty of guitar work to appease metal fans, just listen to "Long Winter Dreams" for proof. **LIMB.**

LEAKH... The Wreckoning... 77... Leakh is a Swedish duo (Jimmy S. Coven on vocals, guitars, bass, and keyboards; and Johan Tjust on drums, vocals, keyboards). The nine tracks on *The Wreckoning* are minimalistic in nature. The music is mostly acoustic, but with pervading sense of darkness. The vocals are clear, but diverse and suitably haunting. Often Leakh will build a forboding atmosphere but do nothing to break the tension, thus creating an intensity but no release. I find it interesting that Leakh can create a dreaded feeling with their simplistic and grassroots approach while many over dramatic evil entities fail to do little more than look like clowns. It is a passionate performance, especially the vocals, on *The Wreckoning* but one that fails to hold my attention. **PROPHECY.**

MAALSTROOM... The Final Days... 76... *The Final Days* is subtitled, *Instrumental Rock Guitar*, and that's exactly what you get. The name Maalstroom reminds me of some other guitarist from Sweden who now resides in Florida, but I forget his name. *The Final Days* is obviously an outlet for guitarist Mike Spitzer to shine. His rhythms are heavy enough and of course, he can shred, but even at just five tracks, listening to Maalstroom without a vocalist can become tedious. Maalstroom had to change their name from Maelstrom due to another band owning the rights and Mike plans to use a vocalist on the next release so I am really curious to hear how that will sound. Even household names like Alex Masi and that guy from Florida rarely make an all instrumental album sound interesting. Phenomenal artwork from Keith Parkinson adorns the cover.

MACHINE... What Are You Looking At... 82... *What Are You Looking At* is Hawaii's Machine's second album and follow up to their acclaimed *White Knuckled Embryo*. Most of the eleven songs here are short and right to the point. "Criminally Insane" is a punishing, raw, thrash attack that will have metalheads reminiscing about the glory days of thrash. This trio play metal with a punk attitude. The guitar is raw, brutal, and in your face. Unlike bands like **Raw Noise**, I find Machine an easier, less redundant listen, although that might be because of my nostalgia regarding late 80's thrash. Anyway, it's nice to see New Renaissance finally release something in the 90's that's not a side project of **King Diamond** or **Mercyful Fate**. *What Are You Looking At* is a blast of punk thrash metal that helps fill a gigantic void. **NEW RENAISSANCE.**



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ARCTIC

FLOWER KINGS... *Space Revolver*... 78... I'm not sure whether to give the **Flower Kings** an award for their eye catching album covers or for the band who has come up with the most material in the last two years. In fine **Flower Kings** tradition, they come up with two tracks which reach double figures in the length department. While opener, "I Am the Sun (part one)" contains a great guitar groove, fascinating spacey keyboards and a heavy bass sound, it is the epitome of the **Flower Kings**' style. The sum of the parts do not equal the whole. Songs become lengthy, indulgent, and unmemorable despite quite a few impressive parts. The star here is Roine Stolt. His keyboard wizardry is innovative and futuristic, but still pays homage to the classic prog rock masters. Like **Spocks Beard**, I keep waiting for the **Flower Kings** to come out with an album to floor me on an equal level with the cover designs. **INSIDE OUT.**

40 GRIT... *Heads*... 82... It was bound to happen. Metal Blade has jumped on the same bandwagon that Roadrunner has occupied for several years now. Yes, **40 Grit** can join the ranks of modern metal clones; **Machine Head**, **Fear Factory**, **Slipknot**, and **Sepultura** are just a few of the bands listeners will conjure up when listening to **40 Grit**'s debut album. Despite the trendiness of *Heads*, this is a good album. The music and vocals tend to go to a more commercial version of the aforementioned bands, thus making them more radio and teen friendly. This could be the band, like **Sepultura** did for Roadrunner, that puts Metal Blade in a league of major labels. I enjoy the melodic sensibilities but **40 Grit** lack a feeling of urgency which has always benefitted similar bands like **Sepultura** and **Soulfly**. Despite it all, I don't mind listening to *Heads*. It is quite catchy and there are worse evils out there. **METAL BLADE.**

GAMMA RAY... *Blast From The Past*... 85... For **Gamma Ray**'s tenth year anniversary they release this two disc digipak, greatest hits album. There are twenty tracks in all. Through their website, **Gamma Ray** asked fans to chose their three favorite tracks from each of their six studio albums (*Heading for Tomorrow*, *Sigh No More*, *Insanity and Genius*, *Land of the Free*, *Somewhere Out in Space*, and *Powerplant*). Thirteen of the tracks chosen were re-recorded for this compilation, the other seven remastered, so these tracks sound better than ever. The packaging is amazing. Not only do you get **Gamma Ray**'s typically first class artwork but also a twenty page booklet and over eighty various photos and graphics. The music adds up to two hours worth with a bonus track, "The Silence", along with popular tracks like "Lust for Life", "Rebellion in Dreamland", "Land of the Free", "Valley of the Kings", and "Send Me a Sign". If you aren't familiar with these power metal legends this is the best way to familiarize yourselves with them. Even people who own all their albums will find *Blast from the Past* worth purchasing. **NOISE.**

GARDEN OF SHADOWS... *Oracle Moon*... 78... *Oracle Moon* is Maryland's **Garden Of Shadows** debut. What you get is six epic tracks of melodic and technical death metal. **Garden Of Shadows** will draw comparisons to the early work of **Amorphis** and **Septic Flesh**, but the one dimensional, brutal, and non compromising vocal style will limit their appeal and is sorely limiting compared to the adventurous music. Let's focus on the music. The guitar meanderings and style will recall the Swedish melodic death scene. The work of Brian and Mary is complex, and heavy, yet melodic, memorable, and deep. To simply focus on the guitar playing is ideal because it is first rate from start to finish. Background keyboards make *Oracle Moon* have needed atmosphere and provides an easy transition in relation to the time changes. Unless **Garden Of Shadows** is at least willing to experiment with their vocals they will most likely be overlooked. **EARACHE.**

THE GATHERING... *If Then Else*... 85... Three albums in two years proves the **Gathering** are as strong as ever. *If Then Else* is the antithesis of last year's *How to Measure a Planet*. While the latter album was a double disc; lengthy and experimental, the former is a focused and emotional disc. With "Analog Park" and "Colorado Incident" they have written quintessential **Gathering** tracks. It's got Anneke van Giersbergen's beautiful, emotive vocals while the music is trippy and ultimately heavier than anything they've done in years. A lot of the experimentation the **Gathering** used on *How to Measure a Planet* is still there, it's just more focused and used within the structure of the song. You could go as far as to say *If Then Else* is a combination of *How to Measure a Planet*'s jams and *Nighttime Bird*'s beauty. Of course, Anneke is in top form. She was the woman who started the whole idea of a female fronting an atmospheric metal band and while many have followed, she continues to grow and master her voice with the ever evolving music. **CENTURY MEDIA.**

GF93... *G.Oetia Fetish 19.93*... 88... **GF93** play a style of metal that meshes metal, hip hop, hardcore, and industrial into a cohesive, incomparable sound. Unlike American bands who sound like derivatives of each other, a perusal of English bands (**Kill II This**, **Earthtone 9**) and Italian bands (**S.K.W.** and **GF93**) show signs of originality and innovation. Vocalist Carlo Bellotti does a good job of varying his vocal styles. He often sings in a coarse style but he is as impressive on cleaner songs like "Ulterior Motive" and "Bread". Their debut, *Beaten*, was more industrial based but on *G.Oetia Fetish 19.93* they have obviously expanded their sound. While **GF93** have yet to make an impact in the U.S. (sadly) they have stirred plenty of controversy overseas and are a band that everyone should keep an eye on. **GF93** is filling a void and exploring directions **Faith No More** never did. Love that guitar sound and eclectic vocal attack on "Today's the Same". **COPRO.**

GRAVEN IMAGE... *Emperor Of Eternity*... 87... I've encountered some really amazing independent metal bands while online, one of those with whom I got in contact with is Missouri's **Graven Image**. In turn, the band sent me one of the most impressive and professional packages I'd ever seen (although **Machinery** still gets the nod for the best). Like fellow Americans **Twisted Tower Dire**, **Graven Image** play a style that nods to the roots of power metal but does so with their own style and do not sound like any of the rereads out there. While Maxx Christopher sounds like a more talented version of Ozzy Osbourne, the music is true metal all the way. Stunning artwork, great mystical lyrics, and a talent for creating atmospheric acoustic passages give **Graven Image** a further sense of professionalism. While it has been five years since their *Game of Iron* debut, **Graven Image** will be soon releasing a new album, *Fool's Prayer*, and have another one written. Fans of true metal rejoice. Find this. www.gravenimageonline.com

GREEN CARNATION... *Journey To The End Of The Night*... 88... *Journey to the End of the Night* is a work in progress that has taken almost ten years to complete. The band formed in 1990 but fell apart and have since reformed with a unique cast of characters that includes members of **In The Woods** (vocalist Synne Soprana and guitarist Chris Botteri), **Drawn** (vocalist Atle Dorum) and **Tristania** (vocalist Vibeke Stene). What **Green Carnation** has created on its length debut is an album of atmospheric doom influences, and some psychedelia. Being that much of the band is comprised of **In The Woods** and **Drawn** members, this style is not a surprise. Oddly enough, **Green Carnation** is actually more open minded, diverse, and heavier than those bands. There's some slow to mid paced doomy parts and plenty of atmosphere, clear male vocals and operatic female vocals. This is highly recommended. **PROPHECY.**

GREYHAVEN... *Greyhaven*... 76... **Greyhaven**'s self titled debut came out almost a year ago but it was brought to my attention due to their appearance at this year's Powermad Festival. While you can tell **Greyhaven** is a talented band, much of the music they create is rather forgettable. Ethan Matthews create plenty of keyboard passages to complement the progressive guitar playing of he and Nate Howard. The music is rooted in prog but there is a metal side that creeps up in various songs. While Brian Francis is not a vocalist who would disturb the progressive metal crowd, he generally lacks identity or discernable passion. Unfortunately, this is often a complaint regarding this style of music. One track that particularly stood out was the epic "Shards of Sky", which has an engaging build up and some nice atmospheric keyboard and guitar interplay. The title track offers subtle keyboards and drums creating an eerie sense of intensity when combined with Brian's subdued vocal approach. There is potential here. I'm anxious for the new release. **RECT ANGULAR.**

GRIFFIN... *Wasteland Serenades*... 84... While **Seasons Of Mist** has developed a reputation for cultivating avantgarde metal talent, their recent releases of **Syrinx** and **Griffin** shows they know how to discover bands that play with a more direct approach. **Griffin** originated as a side project headed up by ex-**Bloodthorn** guitarist Kai Nergaard, along with members of **Atrox** and **Dark Ages**, but soon the band became a priority. Without any obvious influences, **Griffin** combine old school thrash, a touch of **Metallica**, and N.W.O.B.H.M. for a timeless, aggressive yet melodic metal sound. Tommy Sebastian has a unique voice that is clear, yet true metal sounding and close to the classic thrash sound (i.e. Hetfield, Billy). An unusual band to come from Norway, **Griffin** offer a much needed kick to a genre that has been sorely missed. In an odd pairing, **Griffin** hit the road with **Mayhem** and **Red Harvest** this fall. **SEASON OF MIST.**

HALFORD... *Resurrection*... 86... What a fitting title. Most people consider **Fight** too modern sounding and no one dared to acknowledge his atrocious band **Two**, so *Resurrection* is Rob Halford's first full on metal album since 1990's *Painkiller*. That's ten years that people have been waiting for this. While the opening title track is not the classic that "Painkiller" was it does make Halford's intentions clear from the start. He can still hit those high notes and scream his lungs out, that's for sure. Overall, *Resurrection* is an excellent metal album. The four musicians who back him present material that rivals **Judas Priest**. They are mostly unknowns although some may be familiar with the outstanding work of guitarist Mike Chlasciak and **Riot/Spastic Ink** drummer Bobby Jarzombek. "The One You Love to Hate" is bound to be a metal classic as Halford trades barbs with **Iron Maiden**'s Bruce Dickinson- it is a legend making

performance by two names synonymous with the word metal. I love Ripper Owens but don't be surprised to see Halford reuniting with Priest next year. Rob Halford has been resurrected. **SANCTUARY.**

HATEPLOW... *The Only Law Is Survival...* 83... What an improvement. I found myself bored by Hateplow's debut, *Everyone Dies*, but on *The Only Law Is Survival* the band has created an intense album of fast paced old school death metal. For me, the highlight of *The Only Law Is Survival* is the brutally heavy yet headbanging riffs of Phil Fasciana and Rob Barrett. Despite an obscenely fast pace they allow the guitar to shine through. This time around **Malevolent Creation**, ex-Suffocation drummer Dave Culross steps in for the deceased Larry Hawke and bassist Doug Humlack replaces Tim Scott. Basically, **Hateplow** features three **Malevolent Creation** members but one can tell the difference between the two revered death metal bands. Kyle Symons can sing with a ridiculously coarse style that borders on grindcore. With song titles like "Addicted to Porn", "Incarcerated", "Random Acts of Violence", and "Resurgence of Hate" one can tell the lyrics are similar to the debut. **PAVEMENT.**

THE HAUNTED... *Made Me Do It...* 85... The **Haunted**'s debut was a popular disc in the underground metal scene and once Jensen's other band, **Witchery**, took off many felt the **Haunted** might fall by the wayside. Not the case. While Jensen is joined by returning members- brothers and ex-**At The Gates** guitarist and bassist respectively, Anders and Jonas Bjorler, the **Haunted** welcome aboard new vocalist Marco Aro (**Face Down**) and drummer Per Moller Jensen. Like their debut, *The Haunted Made Me Do It* is a **Slayer/ At The Gates** influenced form of modern thrash from a band who play their instruments with passion, power, and emotion. The eerie vibe creeps up when they slow things down from hyper speed like "Leech" and vocal experimentation on "Hollow Ground" is a welcome change of pace. All these Swedish bands like **In Aeternum**, **Death Witch**, etc. don't come close to sounding as good as the **Haunted**. **EARACHE.**

HEAVENLY... *Coming From The Sky...* 78... With a name, logo, and album cover like that; the word beautiful automatically comes to mind. When you listen to **Heavenly** the word **Helloween** comes to mind. Most reviews have unmercifully ripped apart *Coming from the Sky*, yet just because they haven't created an original sound doesn't mean it's not good. This is a great sounding record with solid performances from the four members. "Time Machine" makes good use of vocal arrangements and choruses. "Riding through Hell" is instantly catchy and has some nifty guitar playing. "Our Only Chance" is a cool anthem with some crunchy guitar riffs and perhaps is a mirror to early 90's Michael Kiske fronted **Helloween**. Speaking of Kiske, he lends his hand to **Heavenly** and original **Helloween** guitarist Piet Sielck handles production. Yes indeed, **Heavenly** are for classic **Helloween** fans and this record sounds great. Hopefully these two new Noise signings, **Heavenly** and **Iron Fire**, will display some originality on their second discs. **NOISE.**

HOUITSER... *Embrace Damnation...* 79... I was not impressed with **Houwitser**'s debut, it appeared that they were trying to make the most brutal album without any sense of melody or desire for innovation. **Houwitser** was originally put together by ex-**Sinister** members Aad (drums), Michel (guitars), and Mike (vocals), and in actuality **Houwitser** sound is not far from **Sinister**'s brutal death metal style. This time around, new vocalist Arjaan replaces Mike. I have a preference for Arjaan's heavier, more discernable style and as evidenced by the stop and go power of "Feeding on Fools", the music has improved as well. While they still play straight ahead death metal, *Embrace Damnation* is a step in the right direction and sees **Houwitser** adding more memorable parts to the equation. Some great, sick, and controversial cover artwork from Jon Zig. **DISPLEASED.**

MARK HUETTMAN... *Machinist Hands...* 85... California guitarist extraordinaire Mark Huettman releases his second solo instrumental album, *Machinist Hands*. It is his most accomplished work to date. It is exciting watching Mark grow both as an instrumental artist and with his band **Asteroids**. In keeping with my love it or hate it attitude regarding instrumental discs, like **Uncle Gut** and **Bozzio Levin Stevens**, Mark has created an interesting disc from start to finish. Each song exposes another facet of his talent and he capably balance his leads and rhythms which maintains the listeners attention. For the shredders there are tracks like "Carving a Path" to keep you satisfied. **Asteroids** bandmate and multi-instrumentalist Scott Bishop helps out on drums and some occasional bass. Oddly enough it was the Scott Bishop track, "@the Beach" which I felt was the highlight with its funk, groove and percussion heavy programming. Perhaps a new **Asteroids** album will soon follow? I expect great things to happen for Mark and Scott in the near future. **BISHOP.**

GLENN HUGHES... *Return Of The Crystal Karma...* 93... Out of all the veteran hard rock vocalists, (i.e. Joe Lynn Turner, Graham Bonnett, etc.) Jeff Scott Soto and Glenn Hughes have always been the two of my personal favorites, but I never expected anything this good. In many respects, *Return of the Crystal Karma* comes across like a combination of Glenn Hughes 70's era of **Deep Purple** and **Living Colour**. The music is high energy, sometimes funky, bluesy, but always top notch. His vocal style is actually not far removed from Corey Glover's soulful delivery. Being a talented bassist for years (he played bass and shared vocals with David Coverdale in **Deep Purple**) Glenn makes sure the rhythm section is powerful and full of life on this disc. It is a rare solo album that makes use of Glenn's vocal talents without forsaking the expert, professional musicianship. Highlights? You pick them. The stomp of "Midnight Meditated", the soul of "It's Alright", the groove of "Switch the Mojo", the power of "Gone", (are you sure that's not **Living Colour**?), the nergy of "The Other Side of Me", it's all incredible. What a great, enthusiastic, professional sounding disc. It's a hell of a lot heavier than you'd expect. **S.P.V.**

HYPOCRISY... *Into The Abyss...* 83... There were rumors that 1997's *The Final Chapter* would be **Hypocrisy**'s swan song, but since then a live album and two studio records have emerged so it's safe to say that **Hypocrisy** is still going strong. *Into the Abyss* is **Hypocrisy**'s seventh studio full length and it is safe to say all the trademarks are present here. Opener "Legions Descend" is a fast and furious song that will have fans of their early material salivating. "Blinded" could easily have come from their masterpiece *Abducted*, due to its relentless speed and precise rhythms. "Resurrected" is typical of their latter day slow paced, heavy guitar crunch. Songs like "Digital Prophecy" and "Fire in the Sky" contain the characteristic **Hypocrisy** crunch, grind, and screamed vocals. Peter Tagtgren's vocals are screams, near black metal but he is reapplying some old school death grunts and he truly sounds demonic and inhuman on "Sodomized". Most of songs on *Into the Abyss* are blazing fast and furious, more death than black, yet with elements of the latter. If you're a **Hypocrisy** fan of any era, you will not be disappointed. **NUCLEAR BLAST.**

ILLEGAL ILLUSION... *Shy...* 90... How the hell do I describe this Czech Republic band? How do I describe the cool, very different packaging? I don't even know where to begin. *Shy* is **Illegal Illusion**'s second release and first in about six years. The music is very creative and impossible to compare to any standard. What is lacking in production is more than made up for in enthusiasm. What is lacking in talent is more than made up for in experimentation. The lyrics are just as weird and thought provoking. I'm not even sure if **Illegal Illusion** makes sense, I do know it is good and one of the most interesting discs I've listened to this year. They're almost like a more mainstream (that term is used loosely) **Thought Industry**. **Illegal Illusion** is destined for a cult status and it is just a matter of people hearing what they have to offer. *Shy* is a thirteen track album with such weird song titles as "Dtto", "Xanthix", and "Cosmical Poster of Misfortune Inzertions Anulator of Dreams". At times Jiri Bialik sounds a little like Alice Cooper. Weird, but very good. www.illegal.avizo.cz

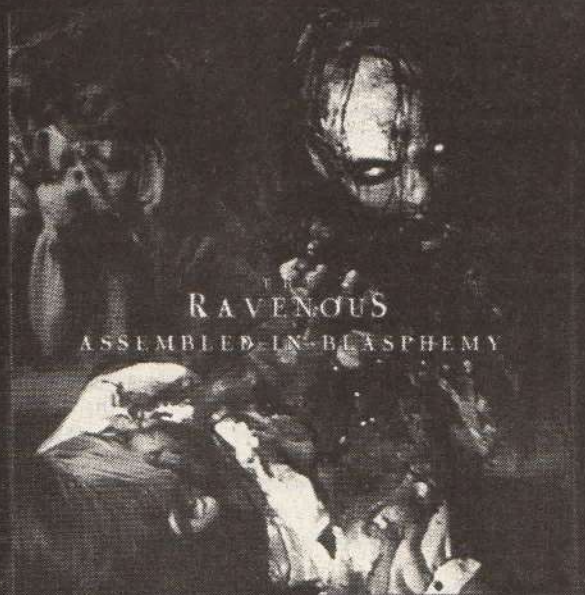
IMPALER... *The Gruesome Years...* 77... Here is the reissue of punk shock metal legends **Impaler**'s debut full length, *If We Had Brains We'd Be Dangerous*, and the *Rise of the Mutants* e.p. As a bonus you also get four unreleased tracks recorded before *Wake Up Screaming*. The music is nothing special, straight ahead punk rock with hints of **Kiss**, **Alice Cooper**, **Motorhead**, **Ramones**, etc. For **Impaler**, the image is half the appeal. Through out their lengthy career (these albums originally appeared in the mid eighties) they have maintained their clothing and make up, thus the shock rock tag. Some people consider these albums underground classics and I'm sure there are people happy to see these two finally released on c.d. Look for a new album, *One Nation Under Ground*, to appear soon. **ROOT OF ALL EVIL.**

IN AETERNUM... *The Pestilent Plague...* 75... Sweden's **In Aeternum** return with their follow up to their debut, *Forever Blasphemy*. Like *Forever Blasphemy*, *The Pestilent Plague* is a fast, noisy, and raging black/ death crossover that ultimately leaves a lot to be desired. The pace of the music is so fast that the guitars are like an incessant buzz saw. The few times a guitar riff does break through the madness ("Eternal Devastation", "Ultimate Warfare", for example) **In Aeternum** are very effective and show a hidden, unrealized potential. This time **In Aeternum** moved from Studio Fredman to Peter Tagtgren's Abyss Studios and the results are an improvement in sound. The drums in particular, are powerful, brutal and always heard crisp and clear. Considering the overall fast pace, the guitars are well mixed as well. This is a band I will not give up on, they sound good and they are ruthless, if only they would allow themselves to slow down and let some brutal riff come through, it would surely break up the monotony. **NECROPOLIS.**

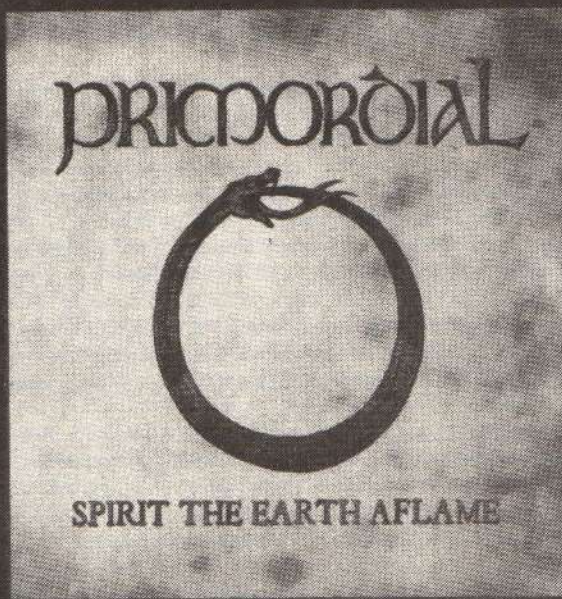
INTO THE SUNLESS MERIDIAN... *Into The Sunless Meridian...* 80... Multi-instrumentalist and vocalist Mikael K. Bayusik has always been quite self indulgent when it comes to his music with bands like **Night Conquers Day**, **Tearstained**, and **Shadowcaster**; well *Into The Sunless Meridian*'s self titled

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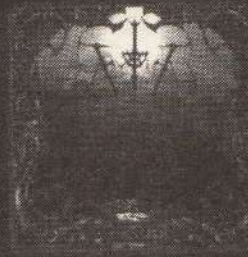
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debut is no differnt. Sometimes it works brilliantly (**Night Conquers Day**), sometimes it is mediocre (**Into The Sunless Meridian**). There is an old school metal vibe with technical thrash, and even touches of black metal and death metal. On songs like "A Depraved Indifference to Human Life" Mikael uses a King Diamond falsetto to go with his snarl. This influence culminates in a cover of **Mercyful Fate's** "A Corpse Without a Soul". It appears that the music on *Into the Sunless Meridian* has been written by Mikael over the course of seven years. You will hear some of his best guitar playing, especially on "The Birth of Psychic Energies". **NEAR DARK.**

ISIS... Celestial... 88... *Celestial* is **ISIS's** full length debut. After two e.p.'s; *The Mosquito Control* and *The Red Sea*, and countless shows, **ISIS** are ready to take the next step. Unlike many of their contemporaries who like to bludgeon the listener with a barrage of notes and riffs, leaving no lasting impression, **ISIS** create a hypnotic groove with their style of weirdness. They create dreamy soundscapes and build upon a solid, repetitive structure. At times **ISIS** reminds one of **Neurosis** in their songwriting and overall structure, but they are more listenable and you never know what trick **ISIS** have up their sleeve. This is a band that is very open minded and creative. Their vocals are usually coarse but don't be surprised to hear Aaron Turner become more accessible at times. *Celestial* makes a beautiful counterpart to the relentless styles of most bands doing this style. Check them out on tour with **Candiria** and the **Dillinger Escape Plan**. **ESCAPE ARTIST.**

LANA LANE... Secrets Of Astrology... 83... Anyone familiar with Lana Lane's style of symphonic hard rock or any of her previous four full lengths; *Love is an Illusion*, *Curious Gods*, *Garden of the Moon*, and *Queen of the Ocean*; will be surprised to see some changes have taken place. She is no longer working with American musicians and she's got a new cover artist. Joining Lana once again is legendary bassist Tony Franklin. New members involved on *Secrets of Astrology* are ex-Gorefest, Ayreon drummer Ed Warby, Ayreon, ex-Vengeance guitarist Arjen Lucassen, and Velocity guitarist David Victor. Lana and her collaborator/producer Erik Norlander have produced a diverse clear sounding record that expresses her symphonis metal style (i.e. "Speed of Sound", "Secrets of Astrology"), her hard rock style (i.e. "Tarot"), and her majestic balladry (i.e. "The Bell"). *Secrets of Astrology* is a beautiful sounding record. The keyboards are dominant and symphonic through out, yet there's plenty of guitar work to appease metal fans, just listen to "Long Winter Dreams" for proof. **LIMB.**

LEAKH... The Wreckoning... 77... **Leakh** is a Swedish duo (Jimmy S. Coven on vocals, guitars, bass, and keyboards; and Johan Tjust on drums, vocals, keyboards). The nine tracks on *The Wreckoning* are minimalistic in nature. The music is mostly acoustic, but with pervading sense of darkness. The vocals are clear, but diverse and suitably haunting. Often **Leakh** will build a forboding atmosphere but do nothing to break the tension, thus creating an intensity but norelease. I find it interesting that **Leakh** can create a dreaded feeling with their simplistic and grassroots approach while many over dramatic evil entitties fail to do little more than look like clowns. It is a passionate performance, especially the vocals, on *The Wreckoning* but one that fails to hold my attention. **PROPHECY.**

MAALSTROOM... The Final Days... 76... *The Final Days* is subtitled, *Instrumental Rock Guitar*, and that's exactly what you get. The name **Maalstroom** reminds me of some other guitarist from Sweden who now resides in Florida, but I forget his name. *The Final Days* is obviously an outlet for guitarist Mike Spitzer to shine. His rhythms are heavy enough and of course, he can shred, but even at just five tracks, listening to **Maalstroom** without a vocalist can become tedious. **Maalstroom** had to change their name from **Maelstrom** due to another band owning the rights and Mike plans to use a vocalist on the next release so I am really curious to hear how that will sound. Even household names like Alex Masi and that guy from Florida rarely make an all instrumental album sound interesting. Phenomenal artwork from Keith Parkinson adorns the cover.

MACHINE... What Are You Looking At... 82... *What Are You Looking At* is Hawaii's **Machine's** second album and follow up to their acclaimed *White Knuckled Embryo*. Most of the eleven songs here are short and right to the point. "Criminally Insane" is a punishing, raw, thrash attack that will have metalheads reminiscing about the glory days of thrash. This trio play metal with a punk attitude. The guitar is raw, brutal, and in your face. Unlike bands like **Raw Noise**, I find **Machine** an easier, less redundant listen, although that might be because of my nostalgia regarding late 80's thrash. Anyway, it's nice to see New Renaissance finally release something in the 90's that's not a side project of **King Diamond** or **Mercyful Fate**. *What Are You Looking At* is a blast of punk thrash metal that helps fill a gigantic void. **NEW RENAISSANCE.**

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MACTATUS... *The Complex Bewitchment*... 85... One of, if not the most underrated Norwegian black metal band is back with their third release. While they've been around for over a decade, **Mactatus** has only recently been able to reap the rewards of their hard work. **Mactatus** pick up where they left off on *Provenance of Cruelty*. While one can easily label **Mactatus** a black metal band due to Hate Rod Vitnefson's coarse vocals (although he comes up with some **Emperor** like cleaner moments), the music has more depth. The production is top notch and elements of death and traditional metal creep through. **Mactatus** employ a full time keyboardist, but its use is to complement the music and add melody not to dominate. A sense of professionalism can be found on *The Complex Bewitchment*, it shows **Mactatus** is a band that knows what they are doing and how to play their instruments. **NAPALM**.

MAHARAHJ... *Chapter One: The Descent*... 84... *Chapter One: The Descent* is the debut of the Canadian noisecore band **Maharahj**. While Garren's screamed vocals are typical for the genre, the guitar playing of Clyton and Neil is over the top and incredible. They are unafraid to change pace, to experiment, or to throw in unorthodox technical runs. The guitars are up front and in your face, making **Maharahj** an easy band to move to. For a metalhead, this is the most appealing quality of **Maharahj**. The beginning of "Becoming the Hunt" is a good example of crushing riffs, interspersed with technical exercises. The rhythm section (bassist John and drummer Dave) keep things tight and have the uncanny ability to stop on a dime. When you have music this good you can forgive the lack of diversity in the vocal department. **NOW OR NEVER**.

MANEGARM... *Havets Vargar*... 85... It's another one of those logos in which you can not ascertain one single letter. It reminds me of the **Summoning** logo. I do like how they incorporate the wolf into the logo. The Swedish black metal band has encountered some problems in recent years regarding line-up changes and studio problems, but their long awaited follow up to *Nordstjarnans Tidsalder* is finally upon us. *Havets Vargar* is quite impressive. Viktor Hemgren's vocals are extreme, yet he sings with sincere conviction. Likewise, the music is deeply rooted in black metal but **Manegarm** to care in getting an excellent production and you can tell they know how to play their instruments. They achieve a symphonic sound on some of the fast parts without the use of keyboards. Acoustic passages like "Vargtorne" create a healthy contrast to the mayhem heard elsewhere on this disc. A great surprise. **DISPLEASED**.

MATTSSON... *Another Dimension*... 87... Lars Eric Mattsson is an incredible guitarist who I have only recently become familiar with. His career stretches back into the mid eighties. He has released solo instrumental records, **Mattsson** band efforts, and bands such as **Vision**, **Astral Groove**, and the upcoming **Condition Red**. *Another Dimension* is a lengthy, fourteen track affair, which highlights Mattsson's talents as a guitarist first and foremost, but also as a bassist and keyboardist. The soulful, powerful, and melodic ex-**Baltimore** vocalist Bjorn Lodin returns. Flashy guitarists like Rob Johnson and Patrick Rondat also make guest appearances. Perhaps the best aspect of **Mattsson** is the ability to pull off various influences into their music, giving *Another Dimension* an incomparable quality. Some have compared Mattsson to Yngwie Malmsteen but there is even more depth and soul to Lars Eric Mattsson's art. **LION MUSIC**.

MEDULLA NOCTE... *Dying From The Inside*... 85... What is it with Copro Records? How do they find so many quality bands? **Medulla Nocte** play the new breed of hardcore, reminding one of a cross between **Breach** and the **Dillinger Escape Plan**, yet with their own style. Paul's vocals are almost always screamed to the utmost extreme, but there's something appealing to his style where others usually tend to annoy. Musically, **Medulla Nocte** do an excellent job maintaining the listeners attention. You can hear the instruments with surprising clarity even at near grind speeds. "Nothing for Second" for example. **Medulla Nocte** aren't as technical as ost of the modern mathcore bands but they make it known that they can play their instruments. The follow up to their 1998 debut, *A Conversation Alone*, is very impressive. Yet another band (**GF93**, **Earthtone 9**) that is really doing something special on the English label Copro Records. **COPRO**.

METALIUM... *State Of Triumph*... 84... **Metalium** follow up their excellent debut, *Millennium Metal*, with *State of Triumph*, a more modern sounding album that is equally impressive. Joining vocalist Henning Basse, guitarist Matthias Lange, and bassist Lars Ratz, are drummer Mark Cross stepping in for Mike Terrana and guitarist Jack Frost (**Seven Witches/ Speed/ Bronx Casket Company**) replacing Chris Caffery. Frost adds a heavier, crisper, more modern sound to **Metalium**. The music is heavy, fast, and powerful. They even develop a deep power metal groove on songs like "Years of Darion" and "Stygian Flames". While songs like "Prophecy" are over dramatic, there is a sincerity to **Metalium's** stance. Henning Basse has seemingly adopted a Michael Kiske/ Andi Deris tone on many of the tracks, and while his style is impressive there is a lack of originality at times. To further the point, **Metalium** perform a cover of **Helloween's** "Music". **PAVEMENT**.

MINE... *Mine*... 85... Raven from **Nightmare's End** passed this four song e.p. to me at Powermad. Knowing his superior taste in music, this was going to be good. There is a warning here: "This was the band's first attempt at recording, mixing, and mastering anything and should not be taken too seriously." What? The music on here is seriously good. Opener "Empty Space" may lack a little in production but it's an okay song. Next up is "Sharp", a better representation of **Mine**. Kase Villand's vocals are more emphatic and they are quite original. People into John Arch (ex-**Fates Warning**) or Rob Lowe (**Solitude Aeternus**) would enjoy his vocals as they are charismatic and unique. You get some flashy playing here as well. "Rather Burn" shows their progressive metal side and closer "Unfair" is the heaviest track, although the guitars have a weird sound to them. I can't wait to hear what **Mine** does next. dymaxian@mailcity.com

MISFORTUNE... *Forsaken*... 87... I really don't know much about this band. I can't even tell you where they are from until I do some research. The earth tones that appear prominently through out the booklet do not betray an obvious musical style, although the logo hints at something extreme. Well, how about the music you ask? It's damn good. Especially the guitar playing of Unoson and Rudhberg. There is a connection to the technical Swedish melodic death metal scene, but Saidi's vocals are raspy and he clearly sings in a black metal style. These guitarists unleash some of the most technically brilliant solos since **Theory In Practice**. On "Rape of Bewildered Dreams" **Misfortune** show their melodic side before an assaulting barrage of speed. Musically, rarely has such an extreme band exhibited such a refined sense of melody and ability to write memorable songs. While some may link them to the Gothenburg scene but **Misfortune** have obviously taken things a step further. **BLACKEND**.

MONDO GENERATOR... *Cocaine Rodeo*... 83... From the twisted mind of **Queens Of The Stone Age/ ex-Kyuss** bassist Nick Oliveri comes the long awaited debut from **Mondo Generator**. Joining Nick are **Queens Of The Stone Age/ ex-Kyuss** guitarist Josh Homme, **Fu Manchu/ ex-Kyuss** drummer Brant Bjork, who also shares drum duties with **Karma To Burn** skinbasher Rob. Three tracks; "13th Floor", "Simple Exploding Man", and "Cocaine Rodeo" were apparently written for **Kyuss**. Of course, **Mondo Generator** is a hell of a lot heavier, more brutal, and raw sounding than **Queens Of The Stone Age**. They fall somewhere between **Fu Manchu** and **EyeHateGod**. It is clear that Nick is not completely satisfied in **Queens Of The Stone Age**, because on *Cocaine Rodeo* he plugs in, cranks the distortion, and screams his lungs out. Now if only **Kyuss** could make a comeback with this type of raw energy. Loved that **Kansas** reference at the end of "Dead Insects". **SOUTHERN LORD**.

MORBID ANGEL... *Gateways To Annihilation*... 88... There are always elements to a new **Morbid Angel** album that can be assumed- each successive disc title will begin with the next letter of the alphabet and it will be another progression for the undisputed death metal leaders. *Gateways to Annihilation* is vocalist/ bassist Steve Tucker's second disc with the band and he is obviously feeling more comfortable than ever. The guitar work, as always, is forward thinking, experimental, and creative. Even without their usual trademark; slow and slithering tune (i.e. "Where the Slime Live", "God of Emptiness") on here, Trey Azagthoth comes up with some logic defying, technically brilliant guitar playing. Some call it ridiculous self absorbed lyrics, but Trey and company have created an instantly recognizable lyrical content as titles like "Summoneg Redemption", "He Who Sleeps", and "Kawazu" further prove. Until they actually come up with something less than spectacular, **Morbid Angel** will always be the best in death metal. **EARACHE**.

MOTORHEAD... *We Are Motorhead*... 76... Yes indeed, they are. I have really enjoyed **Motorhead** in the 90's. Albums like *Sacrifice*, *Bastards*, and *1916* are grossly underrated and rank as high as *Bomber* and *Iron Fist* by my standards (although they'll never top *Ace of Spades*). Recent releases like *We Are Motorhead* and *Snake Bite Love* lack any tracks that would be considered classics and it is starting to appear that **Motorhead** is losing steam in the studio. Some will surely consider songs like the title track, "Wake the Dead", "Stay Out of Jail", or even "One More Fucking Time" anthems in the classic **Motorhead** tradition, but they don't sound very inspired. Hopefully Lemmy and crew will prove me wrong next time. **C.M.C.**

MOTORHEAD... *Best Of*... 88... Another best of? It seems as though **Motorhead** is periously close to having more live albums and best of's than studio albums. This *Best Of* was designed to celebrate **Motorhead's** twenty fifth year anniversary. You get live versions of "Fire Fire", "Bite the Bullet", "The Chase is Better

Than the Catch", "Shoot You in the Back", and "The Hammer"; you get **Hawkwind's** version of "Motorhead", **Headgirl's** version of "Please Don't Touch", and **Girlschool's** version of "Bomber"; but otherwise there isn't much special here. Most of the forty tracks on here were cumulated from the late seventies and early eighties. There is a detailed career biography of Lemmy Kilmister and **Motorhead** in the inside panels. If you want to find out why this band is a legend and you don't have many of their albums, this two disc set is the best, *Best Of* out there. **SANCTUARY.**

MUSHMOUTH... Lift The Curse... 83... Blistering hardcore from Pennsylvania is what **Mushmouth** have to offer. *Lift the Curse* is their follow up to **Mushmouth's** *Out to Win* debut and sees the band retaining their intense style. Unlike many Northeast hardcore bands, **Mushmouth** throw in a healthy dose of metal to their hardcore attack. Just check out the beginning of "Life" for proof. *Lift the Curse* is one of the few hardcore releases that holds the listeners interest beyond the first two tracks, but then again quality hardcore has become a trademark of Triple Crown Records. There is a great breakdown part on the title track by the way. Chris Henzel has the characteristic intense screaming vocal style but he is more listenable than your average hardcore frontman despite mainly using one style. Members of **Fury Of Five** and **Bad Luck 13** make guest appearances. **TRIPLE CROWN.**

NAPALM DEATH... Leaders Not Followers... 77... *Leaders Not Followers* is a six song e.p. in which **Napalm Death** cover songs by various artists; **Raw Power's** "Politicians", **Slaughter's** "Incinerator", **Pentagram's** "Demonic Possession", **Repulsion's** "Maggots in Your Coffin", **Death's** "Back from the Dead", and the **Dead Kennedys's** "Nazi Punks Fuck Off". Of course, that was Canada's **Slaughter** and Brazil's **Pentagram**. It would appear that **Napalm Death** is a perfect fit for Relapse Records, following their split from Earache. This tribute e.p. doesn't do much for me, although Barney Greenway actually shows some range on "Politicians", I would much prefer new material. Hopefully, that should be on the way soon as **Napalm Death** prepare to release their follow up to *Words from the Exit Wound* this fall. **RELAPSE.**

NIGHTMARE LODGE... Tentacled... 81... *Tentacled* is a ten track anthology chronicling this mysterious instrumental group's lengthy career. **Nightmare Lodge** has been putting out albums since the mid eighties and this compilation of seven remixed tracks and three new tracks has been in the making for a few years now. There's a song from 1987, one from 1988, two from 1991, one from 1994, one from 1995, one from 1997- one track each from seven albums. Among the three new tracks is a reworking of John Carpenter's *Halloween* theme. The music on *Tentacled* is diverse, experimental, and often plays out like a soundtrack. Unlike many trance/ ambient acts, **Nightmare Lodge** will create upbeat tracks as songs like "War Chant", "Mirage IV", and "Snake Function" are upbeat, yet still mysterious. Certainly one of the most unique listens out there, **Nightmare Lodge** is making this style of instrumental music more listenable. **RED STREAM.**

NIGHTWISH... Wishmaster... 82... Finland's **Nightwish** have taken advantage of the positive momentum their *Angels Fall First* debut created and now release their third album in as many years. People have become attracted to the power metal nature of their music which all but abandons the usual gothic overtones which often make people cringe. To be sure, Tarja Turunen's vocals are an acquired taste. She sings in an operatic style that may turn off some people, she is passionate but does not have the dynamics of Dawn Smith from **Rain Fell Within**. For the most part **Nightwish** keep the pace upbeat, excepting the melancholic ballads; "Two for Tragedy" and "Dead Boys Poem". "Fantas Mic" is the only lengthy song, yet a fitting epic to close *Wishmaster*. I'd like to see more of that guitar crunch on "Wansderlust". For those keeping track at home, **Babylon Whores'** Ike Vil makes an appearance on "The Kinslayer". **Nightwish** is all about class and quality. **SPINEFARM.**

NILE... Black Seeds Of Vengeance... 85... The Relapse biography states that "Nile has raised the bar for death metal bands musically, lyrically, and conceptually", and I must agree. Their third release and first full length, *Amongst the Catacombs of Nephren-Ka* made one of the deepest impacts ever on the death metal scene and suddenly Nile became a standard to measure other death metal acts. *Black Seeds of Vengeance* picks up where *Catacombs of Nephren-Ka* left off, once again the lyrics deal with Egyptian culture and the music integrates some of those influences within the death metal song structure. While Nile have added some interesting passages their musical and vocal style has not grown tremendously since their last release. There's no denying a lot of time and effort went into creating *Black Seeds of Vengeance*. Nile has done a career making job developing their unique and identifiable craft and this is another step in what should be a challenging and rewarding career. **RELAPSE.**

NOCTURNAL RITES... Afterlife... 84... Changes have occurred within the **Nocturnal Rites** camp without them distancing themselves from their core audience. Gone is original vocalist Anders Zackrisson and in steps Jonny Lindkvist with a style that's a little more raw and aggressive, but still melodic and hook laden. One look at the futuristic cover and the song titles reveal that **Nocturnal Rites** have left behind the medieval topics of their previous three albums. They still have that **Riot/ Rainbow** sound with hints of **Iron Maiden**, it's just ballsier on *Afterlife*. In my opinion, this is easily their best release to date and reinvigorates a band that seemed to begin showing signs of stagnation. The best part of **Nocturnal Rites** is that they don't sound like the European power metal scene and they show more feeling in their playing than most power metal bands can dream of. **CENTURY MEDIA.**

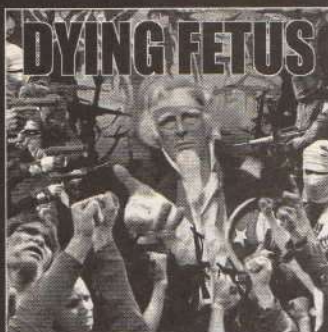
NOKTURNAL MORTUM... Ne Christ... 87... It seems as though **Nokturnal Mortum** is burrowing themselves further underground. I've seen demos that were more extravagant. A horn introduces *Ne Christ*, and then it's total chaos. After three good albums, **Nokturnal Mortum** have arrived. *Ne Christ* is raw and lacks production values, yet they effectively incorporate atmospheric keyboards and many traditional ancient instrumentation to enhance their ancestral ideals. **Nokturnal Mortum** do a good job keeping the listener on their toes. The scathing thrashing guitar on "Night Before the Flight" is a welcome sign of clarity amongst claustrophobic chaos. Unlike similar black metal bands, **Nokturnal Mortum** treat each track as an individual entity, thus creating a memorable album that still adheres to the original aesthetics of black metal. *Ne Christ* ranks up there with **Dark Throne's** *Panzerfaust* and **Gorgoroth's** *Inspit Satan*, let's see if they can maintain the same level of quality. **THE END.**

NORWAY... Arrival... 75... One would think their moniker is their place of origin, but it's actually New Jersey. Go figure. When their biography states: "**Norway** plays a diverse style of music which draws from their roots in classic rock sounds of bands like **Journey**, **Night Ranger**, **Def Leppard**, and **Nelson...**", I cringe and think- what is this 1984? Unfortunately, **Norway** have the same soulless, cheesy keyboard dominated tendencies you would expect. *Arrival* is **Norway's** follow up to their debut *Night Dreams*, and it sounds good and has classy lyrics but no true emotion. It is too slick and pretty. In some ways, **Norway** reminds me of the early work of fellow New Jersey-ites **Prophet** in the mid eighties. Don't get me wrong, I love some of the bands of the eighties, but I can do without bands that sound like **Journey** and **Night Ranger**. **FRONTIERS.**

OLD SCHOOL 101... Pura Vida... 77... *Pura Vida* is **Old School 101's** second release for Victory Records and the New Jersey quartet's follow up to *United Brotherhood of Scenesters*. *Pura Vida* is eleven tracks of *Pure Life*. Unlike many bands who play this style of punk rock, or even on Victory's roster for that matter, **Old School 101** is about having fun and not beating in some personal agenda. While I can appreciate that attitude, I do find this style of music boring and very pedestrian- I realize that's the point, but I don't want to feel like I'm listening to elementary school kids playing their instruments. Even I can sing better than Skip Skool. Hey but I guess that's the whole point. It is nice to be able to always hear the bass though. There's an audience for this, but I don't see them in my office. **VICTORY.**

ONE WAY RIDE... Straight Up... 74... *Straight Up* is the debut of the California rock band **One Way Ride**. Their biography compares them to **Stone Temple Pilots**, **Creed**, and **Matchbox 20**, and that's an accurate description. Most of the songs on *Straight Up* are rather forgettable. A noted exception is opening track and first single, "Painted Perfect". This song revolves around emotion and melody, proving **One Way Ride** can write some good songs. I find the lighter, mostly acoustic material like "Beautiful Blue" and "You Say" to be boring and lacking substance, but the most aggressive alternative rock tunes like "Litefoot" and "Pot of Gold" are more creative and thus, more interesting. Vocalist/ guitarist Leldon has the right voice for this style but unfortunately not much separates **One Way Ride** from other bands of this style. They have potential and hopefully album number two will be more consistent. **M.C.A.**

ON THORNS I LAY... Future Narcotic... 84... Another, typically professional, beautifully packaged disc from France's Holy Records. *Future Narcotic* is **On Thorns I Lay's** fourth disc and a rather quick follow up to last year's *Crystal Tears*. As with the previous disc, we see **On Thorns I Lay** at their most mature. Like their contemporaries (**Anathema**, **Katatonia**, etc.), **On Thorns I Lay** have forsaken the deep vocals and fast, death metal parts for a more refined, melodic, and clearer approach. Basically half of **On Thorns I Lay's** line-up has been turned over as they have added new vocalist Claudia J to complement



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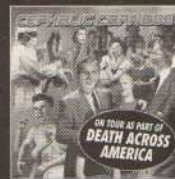
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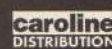
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Marcela. On another change, Stefanos now sings in a clear style as well. *Future Narcotic* is an album you must give time to develop. Nothing is rushed and the melodies and sound scapes take time to become familiar but they have created a solid album that I feel is better than recent *Katatonia* releases, while striving for a similar vibe. **HOLY.**

OPERA IX... *The Black Opera: Symphoniae Mysterium In Lauden Tenebrarum...* 87... Italy's **Opera IX** are certainly a unique specimen. This quintet has been around nearly a decade and have released two previous albums of impressive metal with songs that often venture above and beyond ten minutes in length. The one common complaint has always been the shoddy production found on *The Call of the Wood* and *Sacro Culto*. That has improved on *The Black Opera*, as has Cadaveria's vocals. She still sings in a deathly coarse style but has the ability to turn on the charm and sing melodically when appropriate. As always, the music is adventurous, thrash like, with intense guitar riffing, and prominent keyboards. Unlike the name implies, **Opera IX** is not symphonic. Yet, while it is raw and primitive, it is well thought out and never boring. This is arty enough for fans of bands like **Tiamat** and **Moonspell**, yet extreme enough for those into **Behemoth** and **Mayhem**. **DWELL.**

OPPROBRIUM... *Discerning Forces...* 79... **Incubus** was a death metal band who transported themselves from Brazil to the United States and released two albums; *Serpent Temptation* and *Beyond the Unknown*, in the late eighties. They broke up but reformed recently and resigned to Nuclear Blast. Due to the popular California alternative metal band of the same name, **Incubus** now became known as **Incubus Rage**, only to finally decide on **Opprobrium**. Original members and brothers; Francis Howard (guitars and vocals) and Moyses Howard (drums), return with new guitarist Luiz Carlos and new bassist Andre Luiz. *Discerning Forces* is old school, straight ahead death metal in which **Opprobrium** still retain a Brazilian influence. While *Discerning Forces* sounds modern and not out dated, the music is unimaginative and limiting. **NUCLEAR BLAST.**

ORIGIN... *Origin...* 78... This is the self titled, nine song, debut e.p. from the technical death metal band **Origin**. While you can tell the **Suffocation** influence, **Origin** almost cross over into the burgeoning mathcore genre as well. Many people may remember **Origin** from their opening stint on the 1998 tour with **Oppressor**, **Cryptopsy**, and **Gorguts**. The band added ex-**Angel Corpse** drummer John Longstreth and ex-**Cephalic Carnage** bassist Doug Williams last year and now they present their Relapse debut. While it would seem that this style would be impressive, I think **Origin** needs a little more time together to improve their songwriting skills and make the music have even more of an impact. Don't get me wrong, this is a decent release, but I can sense a lot of unrealized potential that should surface given time. Songs like "Mental Torment" and "Manimal Instincts" actually remind me of **Fear Factory** circa their debut *Soul of a New Machine*. **RELAPSE.**

THE ORION CODE... *Success Will Write Apocalypse Across The Sky...* 83... Unfortunately, I can tell you nothing about this band. The address on the envelope is from Pennsylvania but there is no letter, no biography, no song titles, no pictures, nothing. Keeping in tradition with modern mathcore bands like **Dillinger Escape Plan** and **Mararajh**; the **Orion Code** get very technical, very chaotic, and very extreme. The vocals are screamed through out the six tracks of *Success Will Write Apocalypse Across the Sky*. It is almost like a cross between grindcore and hardcore. What always surprises me is how listenable these bands are despite the extreme nature and the **Orion Code** is no exception. If you're into this style of music, this is a good disc. If you find it, let me know where because I have no contact or distribution information.

ORPHANAGE... *Inside...* 91... I'm surprised Nuclear Blast didn't kill me, because I was bugging them about **Orphanage** so much. Sorry Liz! When you hear this band you will know why I was clamoring to get my hands on this disc. If you followed *Transcending the Mundane* since the early days perhaps you will remember my slobbering over their second disc, *Oblivion*. After releasing two full lengths and a live album, and a three plus year gap, **Orphanage** return with a new label and a new album. All the qualities that made *Oblivion* brillinat are still here... it just sounds even better. You get the vocal duo of George Oosthoek (death metal) and Rosan Van Der Aa's beautiful and enchanting vocals. The guitars are dynamic, sometimes brutally heavy, and well placed, atompheric keyboards. My descriptions can't do this band justice. We are talking about a band that is essentially peerless and a standard upon which music should be measured, with all the professionalism and grandness of **Therion**... but better, more diverse, and heavier. **NUCLEAR BLAST.**

ORPLID... *Orplid...* 72... The idea behind **Orplid** is intriguing. This large group of musicians play a style of folk music that uses unorthodox instrumentation with lyrics written by a popular German stage actor, Uwe Nolte. This is a reissue of **Orplid's** self titled debut which originally came out in 1997. Prophecy has added on three bonus tracks, but I have a feeling that not many people know they existed before anyway. While I do find parts of the disc to be interesting, as a whole, this is a lengthy and tedious listen. It appears that **Orplid** are trying to be authentic in their approach to songwriting, but for the metal audience **Orplid** is too folksy with no aggression. They released a mini-c.d., *Geheiligt sei der Toten Name*, last eyar but I am not sure if there will be any new material emerging from **Orplid** any time soon. **PROPHECY.**

PARAGON OF BEAUTY... *Seraphine Far Gone Gleam...* 82... This is **Paragon Of Beauty's** second full length release which sees this German quintet experimenting with various esoteric sounds, yet maintaining a dark, doomy and melancholic atmosphere. Even the many acoustic passages have a forboding nature to them. *Seraphine Far Gone Gleam* features six lengthy tracks which include a tribute to English poet Keats, "After Dark Vapours Have Oppressed Our Plains", and a cover of ex-**Marillion** frontman Fish's "The Company". The slow nature of their music and their ability to let a song develop demands the listeners attention but if you stick with **Paragon Of Beauty** you will be rewarded with some great atmospheres and textures. You won't find anything fast (or mid paced for that matter) or aggressive here, but this is very dark and haunting. **PROPHECY.**

PECCATUM... *Oh My Regrets...* 83... After a very impressive debut, *Strangled from Within*, **Peccatum** return with a three song e.p. featuring two new tracks, "Rise ye Humans" and "Oh My Regrets", and a cover of **Judas Priest's** underrated "Blood Red Skies". The new songs actually remind me a little of **Misanthrope** when they enter that avant garde goth style. Their cover of "Blood Red Skies" sticks close to the original but still adds **Peccatum's** stamp on thigns. Look for Ihriel, Ihsahn (**Emperor**, **Thou Shalt Suffer**), and Lord P.Z. (**Source Of Tide**), to return next month with a new full length, *Amor Fati*. This is a must for fans of Celtic Frost's *Into the Pandemonium* and other gothic/ avant garde bands. **CANDLELIGHT.**

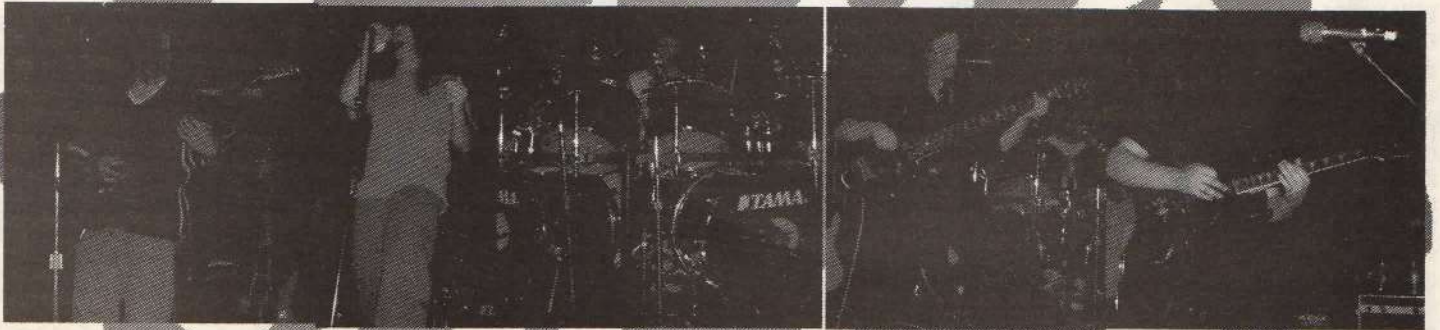
PECCATUM... *Amor Fati...* 88... Here we have the new full length from **Peccatum**. The trio of Ihriel, Ihsahn, and Lord P.Z. have once again come up with an explosive and diverse album of indescribable music. It is metal but borders on classical, gothic, black, Celtic, and art metal. All you people into artisic bands like **Areturus** or artistic albums like *Into the Pandemonium*, should get into **Peccatum** big time. Don't be surprised to hear Ihsahn use vocals that are even more raw than anything he did with **Emperor**, but combined with his wife, Ihriel's beautiful vocals, it is something creative and unique. There's even hints of doom on songs like "A Game Divine". This was a quick follow up to their *Oh My Regrets* e.p. and the only track which appears on both is "Rise Ye Humans". As with their debut, *Strangled from Within*, there is plenty of classical music. Excellent. **CANDLELIGHT.**

AXEL RUDI PELL... *The Masquerade Ball...* 77... Mr. Soto please come back. The only thing that remains from Axel Rudi Pell's classic albums like *Magic* and *Black Moon Pyramid* is the amazing cover artwork and the purple hue. I must admit that *The Masquerade Ball* is a marked improvement over *Oceans of Time* and Johnny Gioeli's bluesy vocal style is put to better use here, but there's nothing to get really excited about. The majority of the songs are too long, only one track and an intro are less than five minutes. Pell's playing is excellent as usual, it's just the songwriting that's questionable. The Blackmore/ **Rainbow** influence is readily apparent on tracks like "Voodoo Nights" and "The Masquerade Ball". I guess it's just a matter of taste. Gioeli is a talented singer and he proved me wrong by doing a great job on the fast and heavy "Earls of Black", this disc's highlight; however I just prefer Jeff Scott Soto's vocals. **S.P.V.**

PERSEPHONES DREAM... *Moonspell...* 88... While I always enjoy my weekend at the Powermad Festival, a definite highlight is getting introudced to bands like **Persephones Dream**. *Moonspell* is their second release and like **F5**, it proves to be an open minded, experimental, futuristic affair. This Pennsylvania act places no boundaries on their art. While people will obviously make the **Gathering** references, mainly due to Karin Nicely being a female vocalist, this is an unfair comparison because **Persephones Dream** is original and incomparable. They create an ethereal bass groove on "Evident Dreams", while the combination of Karin's emotional vocals and the depth of the music works to perfection on tracks like "Learning Curve", "Alternate Reality", and "Full Moon". The highlight of *Moonspell* is "Electronic Exotic" with its dominant percussive groove and industrial influences with Karin's most diverse performance. I don't know how to describe the music, it has progressive elements but it is creative and deep. www.mindspring.com/~persephone/

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PETROLEUM... *Emerge...* 83... Petroleum is a vision created by the duo of Braden and Ian Wurth. Most of the musical ideas appear to come from Braden as he contributes vocals, bass, guitars, and keyboards; while the visual presentation appears to come from Ian. As the biography details, there are lots of contrasts going on with *Emerge*. The three main components are industrial, gothic, and alternative music; intertwining to create a fresh sound. Braden utilizes a variety of vocal styles. On tracks like opener "Julips Ride" he uses vocal effects and distortion. On others, like "Images You Steal" he sings in a clear, deep goth tone. On "The Room" he sounds like the lost spirit of Jim Morrison. Lots of jamming acoustic guitars and throbming bass lines create the alternative rock side of *Petroleum*. Ultimately a lot of *Emerge* is refreshing, energetic, yet weird and experimental- it works most of the time, but there are some moments where it doesn't work. You have to give them credit for trying something new. **DIGITAL VINYL.**

PISSING RAZORS... *Fields Of Disbelief...* 84... Another year, another *Pissing Razors* disc. One of the hardest working bands in metal has created their best release to date. It's crisp, tight, and punishing with a superb production job from Sterling Winfield and drummer Eddy Garcia that is even better than Andy Sneap's job on *Cast Down the Plague*. New guitarist Cesar Soto replaces the departed Matt Lynch and surprisingly he is an improvement over his predecessor. Like their contemporaries *Stuck Mojo*, *Pissing Razors* is continually growing and perfecting their sound. For the most part, Joe Rodriguez's vocals are still the one dimensional screaming kind, but he is starting to incorporate some variety here and there, "The Other Side" is a good example of this. No longer considered *Pantera* clones, *Pissing Razors* have proved they're here to stay but more evolution must take place, especially in the vocal department, for them to reach the elite. **NOISE.**

PLANET X... *Universe...* 80... Some people really like this band, but I never have been a big fan of instrumental albums, although *Bozzio Levin Stevens* is awesome. This is the second effort from ex-Alice Cooper, ex-Dream Theater keyboardist Derek Sherinian. Joining him once again are guitarist Tony MacAlpine and drummer Virgil Donati, along with bassist Tom Kennedy. Even though it is almost like a Sherinian solo project, MacAlpine and Donati get to flaunt their stuff as well. Any fan of MacAlpine is sure to enjoy how well he works with Sherinian's playing. Donati offers two compositions, "Dog Boots" and "Bitch" (maybe it's more of a Donati solo project. Anyway, this is a solid follow up to their *Planet X* debut from last year. It is surprisingly song oriented and not as self indulgent as you would expect. Look for *Planet X* opening for *Nevermore* and *Fates Warning* this fall. **INSIDE OUT.**

PRIMITIVE BRUTALITY... *Ten Years...* 83... *Ten Years* of Roger J. Beaujard. This is basically twenty two tracks of solo material from Mortician guitarist and *Malignancy* drummer Roger Beaujard. It is an excellent display of his talents as a musician and a vocalist. Among the tracks presented are three from as far back as 1989, five from the *Primitive Brutality* (1991) demo, five from the *Burned Away* demo (1992), three from the *Spoils* demo (1994), three from the *Defiled* demo (1995), and three from the *Xenomorph* demo (1999). The music is what you would expect in light of Roger's work in both *Mortician* and *Malignancy*- brutal death metal with the drum machine pounding two thousand beats per second. He does present some slithering and haunting guitar playing, check out "World of Sorrow" for proof, but the constant pounding from the drum machine may turn off some potential listeners. Roger's vocals are mostly in the gurgled death metal style. Fans of brutal death metal should definitely track this down. Look for some unreleased discs from *Malignancy* and *Mortician* via this upcoming label real soon. **PRIMITIVE RECORDINGS.**

PRIMORDIAL... *Spirit The Earth Aflame...* 87... *Spirit The Earth Aflame* is *Primordial*'s third full length release and solidifies their status with bands like *Opeth*, *Katatonia*, and *Anathema* a top the atmospheric metal genre. Now on their third label in as many albums, *Primordial* haven't let anything prevent their growth as a band. While reviewers cite common comparisons, *Primordial* shows more diversity and a willingness to use scathing black metal screams or even deep gothic tones to complement the diversity of the music. This Irish quartet is able to create songs with such depth and structure that many bands can't come close to matching. There is no sense in trying to pigeonhole *Primordial*'s sound as they place no boundaries on their art. They have not forsaken their roots like *Katatonia* or *Anathema*, instead they build upon them and capture their essence with ease. **HAMMERHEART.**

PSYCHO MOTEL... *Welcome To The World...* 83... *Psycho Motel* followed up their debut, *State of Mind*, a year later with *Welcome to the World*. While guitarist Adrian Smith was rejoined by drummer Mike Sturgis and bassist Gary Liedeman, vocalist Solli left the band and new vocalist Andy Makin stepped in. Makin lacked the charisma of Solli but due to the quality of the music, the strong hooks, there was not a drop off in quality. Smith, again, exhibits guitar playing skills that were not as apparent in *Iron Maiden*. While *Welcome to the World* sounds a little more restrained than *State of Mind*, it makes for a more cohesive listen. There seems to be more depth, and therefore more maturity on this second disc. I preferred the more diverse debut but both records are recommended. **SANCTUARY.**

PSYCHO MOTEL... *State Of Mind...* 85... *Psycho Motel* is a band that was put together by *Iron Maiden* six stringer Adrian Smith in the mid nineties. They released two discs that were only available here in the States on import only... until now that is. Their sound is actually more in tune with what American audiences are into anyway and it's nice to see them get some deserved attention. *Psycho Motel* is certainly the most modern thing Smith has done. This debut featured the charismatic vocals of Norwegian frontman Solli. His soulful, powerful delivery worked very well with the modern, melodic groove of *Psycho Motel*. Smith's playing is at its peak and there is no resemblance to his work with *Iron Maiden*. *State of Mind* kicks off with three of their best, most energetic tunes but once the ballad "Western Shore" kicks in, *State of Mind* appears to lose momentum. Still a very good disc. **SANCTUARY.**

RAW NOISE... *The Terror Continues...* 78... Raw noise is what you get from these English punkcore metal veterans. *Raw Noise* originally formed in the early 80's but eventually a few members of the band went on to form *Extreme Noise Terror*, which is very similar to the music found on *The Terror Continues*. Long time scenesters Dean Jones (vocals) and Pig Killer (drums) are joined by *Cradle Of Filth* guitarist Gian, bassist Rocky, and guitarist Ali Firouzbakht. One complaint that I have is that these guys have not advanced this abrasive genre and even though it is heavy and punkish, *Raw Noise* sound as dangerous as *Motorhead*. You would think they would tire of rehashing such a limiting style of music, but for most I guess therein lies the appeal. So if you like bands like *Napalm Death* and *Extreme Noise Terror*, this should be right up your alley. **RHYTHM VICAR.**

REIGN OF EREBUS... *Of Blackest Magick...* 78... *Of Blackest Magick* is *Reign Of Erebus*' debut e.p. This six track (including an introduction) was recorded as a demo but is now seeing a proper release through Blackend. In typical symphonic black metal tradition, they feature a female keyboardist, corpse paint, evil imagery and follow in the footsteps of fellow countrymen *Cradle Of Filth* and *Bal Sagoth*. Overall, *Of Blackest Magick* is not a bad release. What they lack in originality they make up for in conviction. I do enjoy the occasional female accompaniment and the death metal interlude on "Betrayed in the Manger". *Reign Of Erebus* is in their primitive stages but they have shown they can play their instruments and have the ability to come up with classy material, let's see where they take it from here. **BLACKEND.**

RIGHT DIRECTION... *Bury The Hatchet...* 82... *Bury the Hatchet* is *Right Direction*'s fourth full length. They began in the nineties and were clearly influenced by originators like *Suicidal Tendencies*, *Agnostic Front*, and *D.R.I.* Through out many triumphs and disappointments *Right Direction* has persevered. It is difficult trying to describe *Right Direction*, as they do not sound like anything else out there. This Netherland band is clearly rooted in hardcore yet they refuse to adhere to the genre's limitations. Even when they do a cover, in this case *Thin Lizzy*'s "Out in the Fields", they do it their way. It almost sounds like a *Cemetery* tune. Many of the tunes on *Bury the Hatchet* are anthemic and catchy. Dave Reumers can sing in a variety of ways, enabling *Right Direction* to play what they want. This is probably the first time a band rooted in hardcore gave me such a hard time trying to describe them. That, my friends, is a good thing. **VICTORY.**

RIVER CITY REBELS... *Racism Religion And War...* 76... "River City Rebels mix three chord, infectious punk with raw, melodic horn lines"- so states the biography and right they are. There is no doubt a huge audience out there for *River City Rebels* exists. The same audience who made the *Mighty Mighty Bosstones* huge would eat this up. This is just not my taste. If I want melodic choruses, this pedestrian style does nothing for me. The horn section gets to be annoying, thankfully, it's not overdone. I admire and applaud their lyrical stance and their obvious support for Martin Luther King. Here's another quote: "This album is dedicated to Ned (R.I.P.) and to all the people who fight for peace and equality". Despite the catchy music and vocals, the lyrics are abrasive and intelligent. I just don't find the music all that appealing. **VICTORY.**

ROCKBITCH... *Motor Driven Bimbo...* 89... First off, I want to address it and get it out of the way. Yes, *Rockbitch* consists of six women and one male. Yes,

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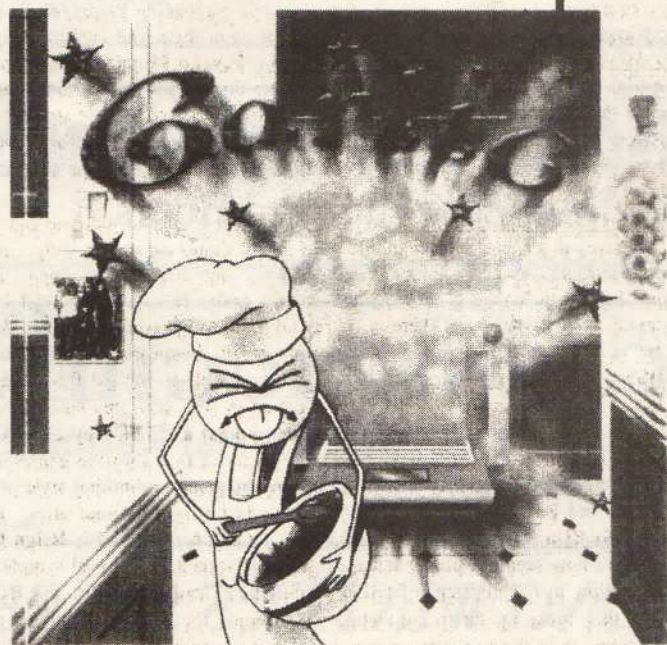
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www.theendrecords.com

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12.



“Created Again”

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14. **SCARY GERMAN GUY**

“Light of Day”

Taken from The Sake of Man

www.scarygermanguy.com

15.



“Sacrilege”

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www.listen.to/terminaldisease

16. **UNCLE GUT**

“Trail of Doubt”

Taken from Uncle Gut

gbigmon@supernet.com

17. **[vaginal] cleansing ritual**

“Pure Digital Silence”

Originally appeared on the Melvin's Prick

these women drop their clothes and perform naked. Yes, they are hot. Yes, **Beast** is the luckiest man alive. No, they really can play and they do have talent. True metal fans, especially those who fail to embrace the other gender infringing on their territory, will hate **Rockbitch** because of the Bitch's funky playing. She is the most talented bassist I've heard in awhile. Just check out opening track, "S.N.A.F.U.", for proof. "S.N.A.F.U." comes across like a **Faith No More/ Rage Against The Machine** hybrid, especially the way Julie sings it. Just when you think you've got **Rockbitch** cornered they pop you with some surprises. No two songs sound the same and all are full of energy and talent. Julie shows her range and though she can be annoying at times, there's no denying her passion and desire to give it her all. Songs like "Lucifer" show a gentler, yet more emotional side to **Rockbitch**, and this track in particular has massive potential to become a break through hit. There is so much variety on *Motor Driven Bimbo* that even industrial fans can be satisfied. The Bitch is a rare talent who is in a league of her own, and you can't fault her bandmates for being boring or overhyped. **CULTURAL MINORITY.**

ROTTEN SOUND... Still Psycho... 85... *Still Psycho* is a six song e.p. that is introducing **Rotten Sound** to the Necropolis legions. This Finnish band has released two previous full lengths, *Under Pressure* and *Drain*, and are currently getting ready to finish their third full length and Necropolis Records debut. *Still Psycho* features five new songs and a cover of **Carcass'** classic "Reek of Putrefaction". After listening to this e.p. you can tell this is a band with a lot of talent. You can hear a Swedish death metal influence (old **Entombed**) but the speed would indicate a punk influence (**Extreme Noise Terror**), yet there's always a twist and turn that allows them to show off their creativity and technical ability. Very impressive, I'm curious to see where they take this next. **NECROPOLIS.**

ROTTING CHRIST... Khronos... 84... The evolution of **Rotting Christ** continues. While *Khronos* starts out in a rather mundane fashion, as you delve deeper into the disc, **Rotting Christ** shines through with some of their best material ever. In many ways, they have returned to the cold aggressiveness of *Thy Mighty Contract* and *Non Serviam* without forsaking the maturity found on *A Dead Poem* and *Sleep of the Angels*. "You Are I" comes across as the best **Rotting Christ** track yet. A dark, yet brutal heavy guitar riff; and cold, militant percussion combine with Sakis' rhythmic singing to create a track that surpasses anything they've ever done. The rest of the disc is certainly their most diverse. It is almost as if the band has been spending the last ten years building up to an album that takes elements of each of their previous six full lengths and culminates it into *Khronos*. **CENTURY MEDIA.**

RUN DEVIL RUN... Sinking Deeper... 77... *Run Devil Run* is a side project featuring members of **In Cold Blood**, the **Spudmonsters**, and **Brothers Keeper**. The intention is old school (think the **Cro-Mags**, **Agnostic Front**) hardcore and they deliver. As a matter of fact, when you listen to *Sinking Deeper* it sounds like John Joseph singing in **Agnostic Front**. While *Run Devil Run* don't score any point for originality, an album of this sort hasn't come out in some time. Personally, I'd rather just take out *Victim in Pain* or *Age of Quarrel* and listen to the originators. It's not that *Run Devil Run* is bad, it's just that we've heard this before. As if we need to be reminded of their influences, *Run Devil Run* cover the **Cro-Mags** "Life of My Own" as a hidden bonus track. **VICTORY.**

SACRIVERSUM... Beckettia... 77... For literature geeks out there, Poland's **Sacriversum**'s second album, *Beckettia*, is named after Irish poet Samuel Beckett and the lyrics were inspired by his writing. While I quite enjoy the atmospheric passages, especially at the beginning of the songs, once the pace picks up the music fails to captivate me. It lacks a certain punch and the keyboards tend to dominate more than they should. There also aren't many memorable riffs, as the guitar tends to take an atmospheric role as well. Vocally, Kate and Remo provide a capable and compatible female/ male combo but neither stands out as being anything more than average. Where did these guys come up with their stage names? Sunrise, Burger, Zombie Attack?! This band has potential but *Beckettia* is a mediocre release. **SERENADES.**

ST. MADNESS... Scare The World... 88... The under appreciated Arizona metal band **St. Madness** return with their fourth disc and follow up to the excellent *God Bless America*. While I prefer that album as a whole, there are some great songs on *Scare the World*. This album is a little darker, but maintains Prophet's confrontational, thought provoking lyrical ideas. The album kicks off with "Prophet/ Profit", with the frontman performing the role of a greedy, vulgar, evangelical character. As usual, **St. Madness** serve anthemic, straight ahead metal. Fans of **Ozzy Osbourne** will appreciate Prophet's vocals on "The Sky is Falling" and the creepy "Spiders of Suicide". Any metal fan should appreciate the **Metallica** attack on "Money Pigs". On songs like "The Anger I'm Feeling", "Scare the World", and the two minute instrumental "Olos Rising"; Dr. Frankenshred truly lives up to his name. To prove that **St. Madness** possess superior

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songwriting skills check out the doomy "Here Comes the Judge" and the epic title track. Now if only the rest of the metal community would catch on. Their lyric topics are always up to date and relevant. **NASTY PRICK.**

SCARVE... *Translucence*... 87... I love surprises. I picked up Scarve's second release not knowing anything about the band, but I noticed it was produced by the underrated Daniel Bergstrand and it was released on War Music, so I knew it had to be good... and right I was. Scarve play a style of music that is extreme, but with Bergstrand's production it is sharp and heard with clarity. Most people would consider Scarve death metal but they can get pretty technical and the counteracting clear, monotone vocals give *Translucence* a futuristic feel without industrial elements. The dual vocal styles; Alain Germonville (screams) and Guillaume Bideau (melodies), highlight Scarve's creativity. To go with the futuristic vibe, *Translucence* is a concept album that will satisfy fans of intelligent lyrical topics. This is a band with great potential, it will be very interesting to see where they take these elements from here. France is proving to be a great place for modern metal. **WAR.**

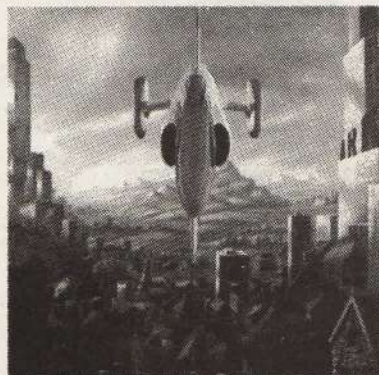
SCARY GERMAN GUY... *For The Sake Of Man*... 88... This is the eight track debut from New York's Scary German Guy. What a cool cover by the way. Scary German Guy specialize in metal that is neither industrial nor hardcore, but somehow utilizes both those influences in a cohesive, powerful sound. Most of the vocals are harsh and brutal, but like the music they can become quite eclectic. At times on he may be reminded of Pantera, but in a good way as the Texans could use a lesson in diversity and brutality from Scary German Guy. *For the Sake of Man* contains eight tracks in all and is a very good representation of a band offering something fresh and exciting. Just when you think you've got a handle on them they twist and turn into a new direction without contrivance or straying from the original formula. Like R22, Scary German Guy is a new band with an open mind and a wealth of ideas. www.scarygermanguy.com

SEASONS OF THE WOLF... *Lost In Hell*... 92... Very impressive. *Lost in Hell* is Florida's Seasons Of The Wolf's second release and a vast improvement upon their self titled debut. The same excitement that I felt listening to Crimson Glory's *Transcendence* nearly twelve years ago, I feel again listening to *Lost in Hell*. While nothing can match *Transcendence*, Seasons Of The Wolf should attain the same type of loyalty among progressive power metal fans as their status grows. Like Midnight, Wes Waddell has a distinctive voice that listeners will either love or hate, however, when you hear his vocals on "Witchfinder" you will be inclined to lean toward the former. Wes comes across as a combination of King Diamond, Ozzy Osbourne, and old Geoff Tate. Musically, like the underrated Braindance, Seasons Of The Wolf play progressive power metal with a touch of gothic and doom for a completely original sound. While the production may not be the best, one can tell this band is special and writes amazing songs. The packaging and layout is remarkable. A highlight among many is "Interstellar", an unpretentious, beautiful melodic tune, with subtle depth. This song is the epitome of Seasons Of The Wolf's unique style. *Lost in Hell* is a must have. **ADRENALINE.**

SEGRESSION... *Smile*... 83... Segression is an Australian band who have released two previous albums but are experiencing a higher profile now through Roadrunner. Segression play a modern style of metal that would fit on Roadrunner's roster in the States quite well. Elements of Sepultura, Machine Head, and even Fear Factory are incorporated into a heavy, groove filled, energetic disc. They have that same type of rhythmic percussion that Brazilian bands (Sepultura, Overdose, the Mist) have mastered. Vocalist/ bassist Chris Rand has an emotional vocal style which he delivers in various styles, depending on the song. Check out a song like "External Action Retraction"- it combines Sepultura percussion, Korn bass playing, and Machine Head guitar riffs- yet it all works and does not sound as contrived as you would expect with these popular names being thrown around. Segression have been working hard for seven years now, it would be nice to see them get some attention in America because they could be huge here. **ROADRUNNER.**

SERPENT OBSCENE... *Serpent Obscene*... 79... This is the self titled debut from Serpent Obscene. This Swedish bands offers a thrash/ death metal sound that we have grown accustomed to from Necropolis. While I have not been a big fan of bands like In Aeternum, and the like, I must admit that I find Serpent Obscene more appealing. It has that old school vibe but as usual, yet another band is plagued by poor, one dimensional vocals. The lyrics are of your typical, orthodox metal variety. "Devastation", "Rapid Fire", "Morbid Horror", "Violent Torture", and "Act of Aggression" all reveal the generic nature of the lyrics. As I alluded to earlier, I think Serpent Obscene is one of the better bands on the Necropolis roster, it's just that this band doesn't have anything new or exciting

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or exciting to offer. **NECROPOLIS.**

SHUTDOWN... *Few And Far Between...* 83... That title could refer to the number of hardcore bands offering something original and accessible. Brooklyn's **Shutdown** are one such band. This group of teenagers have matured into something special and they could become the new leaders of New York City Hardcore. *Few And Far Between* has many of the sing along choruses we've come to expect from **Shutdown**, they are especially strong on the second track, "Within Our Reach". Steve Della Croce's guitar playing can get a little experimental at times and the band pulls out a real winner on the open minded "Homestretch". It is songs such as this and "The Judged" which allow the rhythm section of Dion DeNardo (bass) and Jimmy McCormack (drums) room to find their groove. They finish the album off with a cover of **Warzone's** "Don't Forget the Struggle Don't Forget the Streets". **VICTORY.**

SINGLE BULLET THEORY... *The Anatomy Of Being...* 92... It's finally here. The five song debut from the upcoming band **Single Bullet Theory**. Out of the ashes of **Cipher** comes guitarists Matt Difabio and Doug Rush, original **Cipher** vocalist Mark Shveima Jr. along with drummer John Sasso and Seven Witches bassist Bill Mez. While the qualities that made **Cipher** so special (i.e. Matt's signature **Non-Fiction** inspired riffing and Mark's multi-faceted range and Chris Cornell like emotion) are also present in **Single Bullet Theory**, the music on *The Anatomy Of Being* has more in common with modern bands like **Sevendust**. The five songs which comprise *The Anatomy Of Being* exhibit **Single Bullet Theory's** songwriting prowess and diversity. Opener "Imperfect Fit" displays their aggressive side, while "One Bullet" and "Space to Breathe" both have a deeper edge, the latter their most explorative and melodic work. "Surface Tension" is perhaps my favorite track as Mark creates a myriad of styles to blend with the complex emotions of the music. "Crawl" is an apt closer to this hard hitting debut. With talent like this and music appealing to today's popular scene its just a matter of time before a major label sees the potential here.

MONUMENTAL GROUP.

SIXTY WATT SHAMAN... *Seed Of Decades...* 89... This rocks! **Sixty Watt Shaman's** Spitfire Records debut and follow up to *Ultra Electric* sees the band writing music that will put them in a class all their own. The music has the 70's nostalgia yet a 90's energy. There's nothing pretty about **Sixty Watt Shaman** but it's all about rock 'n roll. You can't really compare **Sixty Watt Shaman** to anyone. It's dirtier than **Black Sabbath**, heavier than **Monster Magnet**, and more focused than **Kyuss**; yet fans of any of that trio will dig *Seed Of Decades*. Unlike other bands of this genre, Dan Kerzwich displays some range. He's got some grit, some hellish screams, and a sense of melody. Unlike artists such as Zakk Wylde and Dave Wyndorf, Dan sounds like a singer. *Seed Of Decades* isn't without it's faults, but they earn extra points for spontaneity and energy. When you listen to this disc you feel like you're hanging out and listening to a great rock 'n roll band in practice rehearsal. **SPITFIRE.**

S.K.W... *Techno-Logical...* 82... Formerly known as **Skywalker**, **S.K.W.** play an inbred of industrial and metal that would appeal to fans of modern bands like **Fear Factory** and **Sepultura**. There is an unusual amount of solos for this type of music. "The Mirror House" has runs that would make **Megadeth** proud. Marco's vocals remind one of James Hetfield, and coincidentally, **S.K.W.** perform "For Whom the Bell Tolls" as the final track on this six song debut e.p. This Italian quartet has lots of potential. I eagerly await the release of their full length debut later this year. while **Prophecy** and **Malignant Eternal** have created remarkable metal albums with industrial integration, given time I think bands like **S.K.W.** and **Project Hate** will do the same. **ADRENALINE.**

DEE SNIDER... *Never Let The Bastards Wear You Down...* 80... *Never Let the Bastards Wear You Down* is a new solo effort from **Twisted Sister's** Dee Snider. It features tracks from various stages in his career; from early **Twisted Sister** through his aborted **Desperado** project. None of the ten tracks here have been officially released before and anyone who is/ was a fan of Dee and **Twisted Sister** would do well to pick this album up. Dee has re-recorded these songs with a line-up that includes ex-**Twisted Sister** drummer A.J. Pero, guitarists Tony Palmucci and Dan McCafferty, and bassist Derek Tailer. Some highlights include the opening balls out rocker "Hard Core (tribute to Lemmy)", "Ride Through the Storm", and "Our Voice Will be Heard". *Never Let the Bastards Wear You Down* is obviously filled with classic metal anthems. Dee's voice is in top form; the only complaint here is that most of the disc sounds dated, which indeed the material is. Unfortunately, Dee appears to be retiring his microphone now that this batch of unreleased tracks are out. **KOCH.**

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SNUB... Memories In Richter... 89... Another gem from England's Copro Records. *Memories in Richter* is **Snub's** full length debut and sees the band incorporate several different backgrounds and styles into a refreshingly intense and open minded direction. The guitars are heavy and sometimes venture into some creative fretwork. Unlike **Pantera**, the vocals are excellent and even the well placed, conservative use of vocal effects keep the listener's interest. After hearing bands like **Dillinger Escape Plan** and **Dragbody**, the vocals on *Memories in Richter* sound melodic. Like other bands on Copro's roster (see **Earthtone 9**, **Medulla Nocte**) **Snub** is early in their career and it will be interesting to see how they continue to mature. "The Cynic the Rat and the Fist" has some of the most intense and infectious grooves I've ever heard. While **Machine Head**, **Pantera**, **Slipknot**, **Rage Against The Machine**, etc. are in the spotlight, all these English bands do it better, more skillfully, and more creatively. **COPRO.**

SOCIETYS FINEST... The Journey So Far... 77... *Society's Finest* is yet another of this new breed of modern hardcore metal. Joining the same roster as **Zao** seems appropriate as both bands have similar roots, and obviously, religious beliefs. There is some depth to the music, as they try to add a sense of dynamics to the brutal and chaotic music, however Josh Ashworth's one dimensional screaming vocal style limits the unfathomable potential musical presentation. Being a big fan of **Embodiment's** early work I am happy to see their former vocalist/ guitarist Kris McCaddon turn up playing guitars on *The Journey So Far*. I'm sure many of these bands will follow **Cave In's** lead and figure out that constant screaming can become burdensome. The music is really impressive though. **SOLID STATE.**

SOIL... 2000 Demo... 88... This is a new three song demo that Chicago's **Soil** is shopping to labels in search of a new, hopefully, major deal. They released an e.p. and a full length on the now defunct M.I.A. Records, both of which were impressive pieces of work. While the members had strong ties in the death metal underground, **Soil's** sound is timeless and groove oriented. The three tracks found here are catchy and slightly heavier than their previous work, especially "Halo"- the highlight here. Though the comparison may not be obvious, I feel fans of **Blind** era **Corrosion Of Conformity** would like this because this is I wish C.O.C. sounded like today. No worries however, because we have **Soil** to fill the void. This is heavy and raw, yet diverse just enough to allow different audiences of heavy music to enjoy. www.soilmusic.com

SOUL SYCHADELICS... Soul Sychadelics... 87... When I read a small feature in *Metal Edge* and a review in Michael Knight's *Guitar 2001*, I knew I had to track down this band. Among influences listed are **Living Colour**, **Soundgarden**, **James Brown**, **Primus**, **Fishbone**, and **Prince**- and somehow you can hear how they are all incorporated into the Seattle based trio's self titled debut. This band will be hot, trust me. There is a lot of funk going on and it's got enough heaviness to draw fans of metal into the foray. There's a lot of diversity on hand. Frontman/ bassist Mike Singleton "has opened and / or toured for: Shelia E., the Artist Formerly Known As Prince, Red Hot Chili Peppers, George Clinton, Arrested Development, Funkadelic, Jermain Jackson, Randy Hansen, Fishbone, Ronnie Montrose..."- wow! This band is something special and a nice complement to that Glenn Hughes disc for anyone who misses bands like **Living Colour**. www.soulsychadelics.com

SPIRIT WEB... Spirit Web... 90... When you listen to **Spirit Web** or the last **Syris** album, which vocalist Scott Huffman also appeared on, you will instantly recognize a vocal legend in the making. Take James Rivera, John Arch, Bruce Dickinson, and Ray Alder and combine them into one vocalist and you will come close to Scott Huffman. Now for the musicians behind him; you have **Syris** guitarist Paul Speredes, **Slaughter** **Xtroyes** bassist Brent Sullivan, and **Winterkill** drummer Tony Rios. The influence these members bring to **Spirit Web** is apparent. This self titled debut is a full on metal assault with power, melody, and a touch of doom. The songs are on the lengthy side but as they weave and ebb through you realize you are listening to a band destined for the same type of cult status as **Solitude Aeternus** or **Agent Steel**. This is going to be raved about the more people hear it. Don't miss out. **STENTORIAN.** www.spiritwebtheband.com

SPOCKS BEARD... V... 79... It's hard to believe this is **Spocks Beard's** fifth studio release. While I felt they really came into their own on last year's *Day for Night*, *V* is a solid follow up. You have to give them credit for coming up with an original, characteristic sound. This is something fans of **Kings X**, **Yes**, and even the **Beatles** would easily get into. Chief songwriter Neal Morse has sandwiched an opening sixteen minute epic, "At the End of the Day", and a twenty

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seven minute closer, "The Great Nothing", around four tracks of progressive hard rock. "Thoughts (Part 2)" will surely conjure memories of vintage Yes with the complex vocal harmonies, dominant keyboards, and heavy Chris Squire-sque bass lines. There is definitely an audience who will adore **Spocks Beard** and there's no denying the talent or Neal's brilliance, I just don't have anything to grip me when I listen to them. **RADIANT.**

SQUEALER... The Prophecy... 89... *The Prophecy* is this German metal band's fourth full length album. They released two early nineties albums and have returned with last year's *Made for Eternity* and *The Prophecy*. **Squealer** are one of the better true metal bands coming out of Germany. They have the melodic sing-along choruses of **Blind Guardian**, the heavy guitar style of **Judas Priest**, the true metal vocals of **Accept**, and the power of **Manowar**. "Friends from Life" is perhaps the catchiest song I've heard in some time. "But No One Cares" is a perfect blend of melody within the metal. At times **Squealer's** rhythm section is deceptively fast. Despite the melodic elements, they never sound cheesy or **Hammerfall** like clean. **Squealer** is rough and dirty, but meaningful, diverse, and talented. Check out the talented playing on "To Die For" for proof. The more I listen to this, the more I like it. Find this and buy it. If you like power metal and don't own this, bow your head in shame. **METAL BLADE.**

STEEL ATTACK... Where Mankind Fails... 81... Here is yet another European power metal band, with another predictable album, with another high pitched vocalist. **Steel Attack** is not a bad band, there is clearly talent here. I would take them any day over **Hammerfall**. **Steel Attack** are melodic but they play the way heavy metal is meant to be played. Perhaps the best aspect of *Where Mankind Fails* is the brilliantly melodic guitar solos. Most of the album is above average, however, "Heading for the Lair" shows **Steel Attack** have the potential to someday rank among the best. Songs like "The Creation of Be-Lou" have **Iron Maiden** gallop among a thrash based riff. Other than that, **Steel Attack** create their own identity even though one can hear **Priest** and **Manowar** influence. *Where Mankind Fails* would fit nicely on a shelf next to **Gothic Knights**- two late nineties bands upholding traditions initiated almost two decades ago. **METAL BLADE.**

STITCH... Stitch... 84... Here is another great debut of a good modern metal band. **Stitch** is a little more raw sounding than their label mates in **40 Grit**, and have a heavier groove. I know there are people ripping apart Metal Blade for including these two bands on their roster but at least they signed two good ones. **Stitch's** self titled debut is familiar sounding. The often distorted vocals, the tribal and Latin flavored percussion, the heavy groove all sounds like it came from obvious influences? **Korn**, **Sepultura**, **Machine Head**, **Skinlab**, **Puya**, etc. Surprisingly, it does not sound generic and there is a raw, energetic vibe throughout. They don't really try to broaden their horizons as the album sounds like it was recorded in the same night. Despite all these obvious handicaps, somehow **Stitch** has come up with an entertaining album that has won over at least one fan. The interesting thing will be to see if they last for more than one album and if they can expand their sound. Why do I have a feeling I may be the only person to like this so much. **METAL BLADE.**

STORYTELLER... Storyteller... 76... No Fashion is a Swedish label better known for bringing some of the most extreme death and black metal bands to the world, but they have recently added the **Helloween**-esque power metal of **Insania** and now **Storyteller**. Here's a bio quote: "mix old folk and medieval music, fantasy lyrics, and then add melodic and aggressive power metal to it, and there you have it." Sounds like it might be pretty damn good, right? Like several bands that keep coming out overseas; **Sonata Arctica**, **Stratovarius**, and **Hammerfall** come to mind; **Storyteller** lack a certain passion for what they are doing. With bands like **Blind Guardian**, **Grave Digger**, and **Rage** coming up with folklore concepts and the overall rising popularity of this genre I can't help but think that perhaps **Storyteller** is a band that would not have even put out an album five years ago. If you're into this style, you'll probably like this, otherwise look elsewhere. **NO FASHION.**

STREET LEGAL... Thunderdome... 89... A trio of Norwegian veteran musicians have gotten together and finally recorded an album of original material. Once the title track kicked in I was instantly reminded of ultra talented and underrated musicians John Norum and John Sykes. The guitars are melodic, technical, and blazing, yet with a concentration on songwriting. Ken Ingwersen has also produced **T.N.T.** Vocalist Bjorn Boge doubles as bassist. As a singer, he truly shines.

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that would impress fans of **Blind Guardian** and the like, **Symphony X** avoid the trappings that many European power metal bands fall into. These choruses aren't expected from **Symphony X**, but when present they provide a memorable source for the listener, effectively bridging the gap presented by the often complex music. There is still some easy comparisons to **Dream Theater** but this band has perfected their craft and none can do it better. New bassist Michael Lepond steps in and they don't miss a beat. **METAL BLADE**. **SYRINX... Crystal Cliffs... 96...** Amazing! This ranks with the new as the best albums of the year. What an amazing debut. This French quintet has come up with a debut worthy of the same reverence bestowed upon **Crimson Glory's Transcendence**, **Fates Warning's Perfect Symmetry**, or **Watchtower's** two discs. The music is technical, heavy metal. There are some really technical passages reminiscent of **Watchtower**, or for a modern reference, **Spiral Architect**, yet there also sections heavy enough to compare to death metal. Like **October Thorns'** drum God Joe Fu, it sounds as if Lahouari Belarbi comes from a death metal school of thought with some punishing double bass, groove inducing sections, and an ability to create weird time signatures. The true gem here is vocalist Henri Ebeyer. This guy has a vocal style that is one of a kind and a performance that will undoubtedly cause comparisons to Midnight from **Crimson Glory**. His talent knows no boundaries and he has a personal style that is one of a kind. Album closer, "At Dawn" is one of the best songs ever recorded. Whether it's the heavy groove and venomous vocals, the pummeling double bass, death metal parts, or the progressive **Rush** like interlude; this song is on par with **October Thorns'** masterpiece "Soul Forge", for similar reasons. This will be mentioned in the same breath as **Crimson Glory**, **Watchtower**, etc. and will be considered a landmark release... trust me. Hopefully **Syrinx** is not the new **Lordbane**. **SEASON OF THE MIST**.

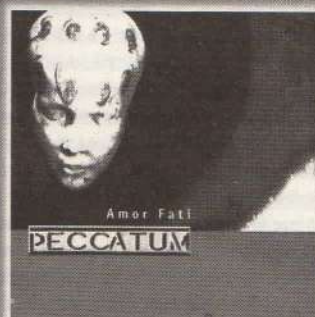
TERMINAL DISEASE... Mortality... 84... Based on the band name, album title, and logo, I would think Sweden's **Terminal Disease** is either thrash metal or death metal. I guess I was right. The riffs are thrashy and there are some nice technical flashes while John Andersson's vocals are in that old school 80's metal vein, with a touch of death metal. *Mortality* is a five song e.p. and **Terminal Disease's** follow up to last year's demo, *Out of the Ashes*. Oddly enough they let a **Meshuggah** like riff pop in at the end of first track, "Burned from Birth", but otherwise this is basically old school thrash. It's played very well and it sounds more than adequate. I love to hear bands like this that use melodic leads and Andreas Hedberg accomodates. "Sacrilege" begins with a slow intro just like bands like **Testament** and **Metallica** used to do in the early days. This is quality stuff and **Terminal Disease** does not sound anything like those melodic death metal bands from Sweden.

TIDEWATER GRAIN... Tidewater Grain... 79... This is the debut of the heavy rock band **Tidewater Grain**. I must admit, this will never become one of my favorite albums but if major labels are going to sign bands like this I will be a happy man. You have guitar solos, an energetic frontman who may not possess the best vocal pipes, but he has the ability to make you feel what he's singing about, and a heavy rock vibe that makes early nineties fodder like **Pearl Jam** and **Live** sound mellow. Despite not distinguishing themselves as a separate and unique entity, I am happy to report that **Tidewater Grain** don't wallow in ballad territory and avoid blatant cliches of the genre. I really hope this album sells well, maybe labels will start looking for some real bands. **WARNER BROTHERS**.

TODAY IS THE DAY... Live Till You Die... 78... I'm not sure why **Today Is The Day** is releasing a live album. They are one of a kind band and must be heard to be believed. Their live shows are a twisted, powerful experience, but, with the exception of a few surprises *Live till You Die* is not a necessary purchase. Among the fifteen tracks are covers of **Bad Company's** "Feel Like Making Love", Chris Issac's "Wicked Game", and the **Beatles'** "Why Don't We Do it in the Road", as well as an acoustic version of "Ripped Off". The remaining eleven tracks come from their five studio albums. The cover tracks are interesting because of the way Steve Austin twists them into **Today Is The Day** without forsaking the songs original vibe. You must experience **Today Is The Day** in some capacity. **RELAPSE**.

T.T. QUICK... Ink... 88... After an eleven year wait, New Jersey's almost famous metallers **T.T. Quick** are back. *Ink* is an angrier, more modern sounding album than when we left off with *Metal of Honor* or *Sloppy Seconds*. The band is in top form here. Mark Tornillo's signature vocals are raw, catchy, and supply an unpolished grit but still maintains a strong sense of melody and prowess for vocal hooks. "Ink" kicks things off perfectly. "Subterranea" with its **AC/DC** like chorus, "World on Display" with its heavy

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Powerful, melodic, and with distinctive characteristics, Boge proves to be one of the best. Tying it all together is drummer Bjorn Olav Laundal. It's been a long time since a hard rock/ heavy metal album has kicked ass like this. Unlike many of their labelmates, **Street Legal** rarely slow down and wallow in pretty ballads. Only two, "Calling for You" and "Will I Ever Love Again", ballads present of the doze tracks. Why can't there be more bands like this? Where most bands fall prey to substandard musicianship and try to write radio friendly ballads, **Street Legal** plug in and rock. **FRONTIERS.**

SUIDAKRA... The Arcanum... 89... Very impressive. Germany's **Suidakra** has greatly matured over the course of their four releases. *The Arcanum* has the class and sophistication of **Tristania** or the **Sins Of Thy Beloved**, but integrate some folk touches, black metal influences, and a penchant for writing complex guitar harmonies and headbanging worthy riffs. The band proves to be equally adept on acoustic passages like "Rise of Taliesin" and it all comes together on their passionate closing cover of **Skyclad's** "The One Piece Puzzle". Conversely, tracks like "Rest in Silence" show a scathing rawness and intensity broken up with some clear, melodic vocal passages. Only a select few are able to seamlessly blend such different genres and do so without losing focus. You've got medieval folk, thrash, black metal, traditional power metal, goth, and even more wrapped in a package with stunning artwork. First rate. **LAST EPISODE.**

SUN CAGED... Scar Winter... 87... *Scar Winter* is a four song e.p. designed to help **Sun Caged** sign with a label. **Sun Caged** is a project put together by ex-**Lemur Voice** guitarist Marcel Coenen. Marcel is inspired by the underrated **Ayreon** project and **Sun Caged** will be operated in a similar fashion as Marcel with various guest singers (male and female) to join him and drummer Dennis Leeftang. Bassist Rob van der Loo and keyboardist Thijs Cuppen contribute their talents and vocalists Nick Hameury, Gregoor van der Loo, and Laura van Driel also appear. The music is heavier than anything Marcel did with **Lemur Voice** and there's a **Meshuggah** like feel to songs like opener "Zombie Resurrection"- although there's enough melody to please other fans as well. "Killer Banshee" allows Marcel to strut his stuff on the fretboard like never before. The vocals kick in again on the title track and we are exposed to the brilliant melodic/ coarse dichotomy in regards to the vocals. "Caged" reflects the quieter side to **Sun Caged**. After meeting Marcel at the Powermad Festival, I would have to say the nice, well respected man deserves all the success he attains with **Sun Caged**. www.suncaged.com

SUPERSHINE... Supershine... 82... What happens when **Trouble** riff master Bruce Franklin and **Kings X** soul man Doug Pinnick jam together? "Take Me Away" effectively meshes the two revered musicians' backgrounds to perfection. Unfortunately, the rest of **Supershine** is not as brilliant. "Kingdom Come" has a deep, emphatic groove. Once "One Night" kicks in with a heavy **Kings X** feel, I realize **Supershine** should be a hell of a lot better than this disc proves. Songs like "Won't Drag Me Down", "Candy Andy Jane", and "Shadows/ Light" sound like they were quickly written for a side project. The best material on here, songs like "I Can't Help You" (psychedelic), "Automatic" (doom), and "Going Down", offer that trademark **Trouble** riffage that we've been missing for well over five years now. *Supershine* is not a bad album at all, but when you look at the two main songwriters and the supporting cast which includes ex-**Trouble** drummer Jeff Olsen and Doug's **Kings X**-mates Jerry Gaskill contributing some drums and Ty Tabor producing, you would expect pure brilliance. If you don't already own **Trouble's** *Manic Frustration* or **Kings X's** *Out of the Silent Planet* you are a fool. **METAL BLADE.**

SUPER TRANSATLANTIC... Shuttlecock... 87... I've been waiting for ex-**Saigon Kick** vocalist/ guitarist Jason Bieler's new band, **Super Transatlantic** to release their debut for quite sometime. Here it is and I'm not disappointed. Actually I'd go as far as to say, as a whole, *Shuttlecock* is his best work since **The Lizard** back in 1992. On *Shuttlecock* you are treated to thirteen tracks of catchy, alternative hard rock with Jason's signature vocals and songwriting. Open minded people into bands like **Kings X** should love **Super Transatlantic**. Only "Superdown" veers toward the whiney, annoying pop of today. The rest of the disc is focused and right to the point. Jason is perhaps more restrained in light of his recent solo effort, *Houston We Have a Problem*, and last year's **Saigon Kick** disc, *Bastards*. Joining Jason are ex-**Extreme** bassist Pat Badger, ex-**Saigon Kick** guitarist Pete Dembrowski, and drummer Ricky. A very solid debut not a million miles away from **Saigon Kick**. **M.C.A.**

SYMPHONY X... V... 91... They've done it again. Five releases and **Symphony X** keeps getting better. One of the very few bands that actually live up to the hype, New Jersey's **Symphony X** finally have an official American release. For those who worship this progressive/ power metal institution. *V* offers all of what you would expect from **Symphony X**. Michael Romeo has some incredible licks and Russell Allen is in top form. While they have sing a long choruses

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chorus, "World on Display" with its heavy funk, and "Run" with its psychedelic overtones, display T.T. Quick's diversity. Ex-Nuclear Assault, ex-Prophet guitarist David DiPietro gets to throw his riffs and leads all over *Ink*. His uncanny sense of groove lets him lock into the rhythm section (Walt Fortune and Erock) to create timeless riffs. A triumphant return for these veterans. **OCEAN.**

TOWNE CRYER... Revolutionize... 83... I was first introduced to this upstate New York band via this year's Powermad Festival. In my interview with guitarist Erik Deitz he revealed that he was a huge Saigon Kick fan. One listen to Towne Cryer and you will realize that Saigon Kick is an influence but the band creates their own hard rock style around that reference. *Revolutionize* originally came out about three years ago, but it is the band's most recent release, as they are now working on a new, better produced effort. Chris Kopp's vocals remind me of a cross between Tommy Shaw (Styx) and Matt Kramer (Saigon Kick) at times, and his melodic approach fits in perfectly with the rocking sometimes heavy sound. On *Revolutionize*, Towne Cryer manage to come up with an interesting, catchy sound, with enough variety that you don't become bored yet you can always identify their sound. You can't help but want to sing along to songs like "Days Gone By" and "Seize the Day". **PSYCHOTIC.**

U.F.O.... Covenant... 77... The storied history of U.F.O. completes another chapter as they unleash their sixteenth studio album. After a lengthy absence, legendary guitarist Michael Schenker rejoined U.F.O. in the mid nineties and recorded *Walk on Water* with them. After showing his dissatisfaction with the tour, Michael walked off stage and restarted his band, M.S.G., meanwhile, vocalist Phil Mogg (only member to appear on all the albums) and bassist Pete Way released a Mogg/ Way album. Soon the three legends reunited with veteran drummer Ansley Dunbar and *Covenant* is the result. If I were to judge the album on the lead off track, "Love is Forever", I would say this is their best work since 1978's *Obsession*. However, the remaining songs are quite average- not bad, but none that you would consider classics. **SHRAPNEL.**

ULTIMATUM... The Mechanics Of Perilous Times... 86... You never know what you'll find when you go on ebay. I didn't recognize Scott Waters' name, the fellow who won my Kreator *Cause for Conflict* disc but when he sent a postcard promoting the new *Ultimatum* album I was excited about the prospect of getting a new release from these old school Christian thrashers. Like their previous disc, *Puppets of Destruction*, *The Mechanics of Perilous Times* is an album that metallers into bands like Metal Church, Overkill, and Megadeth will love. Scott's vocals come across as a twisted combination of Udo, David Wayne, and Blitz. A recognizable snarl that fits perfectly with the mid paced thrash riffs. While I have emphasized the classic metal nature of *Ultimatum*, songs like "Warlords Sword" convey a sense of groove and don't be surprised to hear Tom Michaels intense and heavy bass. They include a cover of Vengeance Rising's "Burn". Michael's playing ranks with Dave Ellefson and D.D. Verni's best. Another impressive release. **ROWE.**

UNCLE GUT... Uncle Gut... 82... This is the second self titled reissue from the Maryland instrumental prog band Uncle Gut. Uncle Gut is a three piece featuring guitarist Mike Pizza, bassist Mike Galway, and drummer/ sampler David Grollman. One listen to *Uncle Gut* and you can tell these guys can really play. For an independent release it is produced well and you can clearly hear what each musician is doing. Like *Hematovore*, this band does a really good job creating interesting tunes that are memorable and not boring. It is a rare time that I can listen to an instrumental album from start to finish and not become bored. During the seven tracks we get open minded and experimental sounds. "Trial of Doubt" is Uncle Gut at their heaviest, "Blue" their most technical, and "One of Five" their most melodic. This band will be noticed. They prove that you don't need vocals to make an interesting album. gbigmon@supernet.com

UNLEASHED POWER... Absorbed... 85... California's Unleashed Power hits us with their third release, the five song e.p. *Absorbed*. This is one excellent band. Unleashed Power play a style of metal that blends elements of thrash, power metal, with a dose of modern metal that is fresh sounding and well executed. Unleashed Power is a band that should appeal to many fans of metal. They are not trendy, rather they know how to play their instruments and how to write good songs. Unleashed Power really don't sound like anybody, however, fans of bands like Vicious Rumors, Single Bullet Theory, and Forbidden will surely enjoy them. Look for a full length later this year. **VERDICT.**

UNLORD... Gladiator... 88... *Gladiator* is the second release from black metal veterans Unlord. While it is apparent that Unlord plays with raw, aggressive,

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true black metal style, they will actually allow some subtle melodic moments to shine through. Yet another reminder of what black metal used to be about prior to **Dimmu Borgir** and **Cradle Of Filth**. I'm not sure who is the main vocalist as both **Gor-Gho-Phon** (wouldn't that be a great name for somebody in **Pan-Thy-Monium**?) and **Thorgrim** get credit for both vocals and guitars, but the vocals on *Gladiator* are perhaps the most convincing extreme metal vocals I have ever heard. The production is quite good as well. While they are a traditional black metal band, **Unlord** is not afraid to add keyboards when needed for embellishment. With bands like **Unlord** and **Manegarm** on their roster, **Displeased** has some of the best black metal available. **DISPLEASED**.

VICTORY FLAG... 2000 Demo... 82... This is Cleveland's hardcore band **Victory Flag's** four song demo. This disc is all about old school hardcore that has drawn several comparisons to classic bands like **Agnostic Front** and the **Crumbsuckers**. The four songs, "Pound for Pound", "Guttersnipe", "Sick of You", and "Fallen", are short, punishing and right to the point- the way hardcore was meant to be played. While **Victory Flag** offer nothing new to the scene, they play with conviction. The vocals are certainly old school and not as abrasive as many of today's bands. Look for them to record their full length debut later this fall. www.angelfire.com/on/victoryflag.

VIRUS 7... Sick In The Head... 81... **Virus 7** is a modern metal project featuring **Mercyful Fate** members, guitarist **Hank Sherman** and drummer **Bjorn T. Holm** and **Original Sin** vocalist **Paul Allen**, they are joined by bassist **Dave Moreno**. *Sick in the Head* starts off on an excellent note. The title track is heavy, grooving, and right up the alley of any fans of **Machine Head**. "Stuck on it" is funk laden and both tracks have distorted vocals. "Obey or Die" sounds like pre-reunion **Anthrax**. From there is goes down hill. "Danger Me", "The Execution", etc. all have moments but one can't help but think **Virus 7** is an outlet to try to catch a trend. Like most side projects, there are some weak tracks but the good ones make up for some of the mediocrity. Why is it when these **Mercyful Fate/ King Diamond** guys do side projects (i.e. **Ill Will**) there is a modern sound to them? **METAL BLADE**.

VOIVOD... Lives... 79... After nine studio albums, *Voivod Lives* is their first official live album. We get four tracks recorded in 1996 at the **Dynamo Open Air Festival** and seven tracks from a 1996 performance at **C.B.G.B.'s** in Manhattan, and two bonus tracks; "The Prow" and "Forlorn". The majority of the tracks; "Insect", "Nanoman", "Planet Hell", "Negatron", "Project X", and "Cosmic Conspiracy" are culled from **Eric Forrest's** on going and controversial tenure with the band. He also does a good job with his abrasive vocal style on old classics like "Nuclear War", "Ravenous Medicine", and "Voivod"; as well as their cover of the **Venom** classic "In League with Satan". **Eric's** vocals sound weak compared to **Snake's** style on "The Prow" and "Tribal Convictions", as **Voivod** wisely chooses to avoid much of the material between 1987's *Killing Technology*, 1989's *Nothingface* and 1993's *The Outer Limits*. It's nice to see **Eric Forrest** make a recovery from that near tragic car accident and this album proves that **Voivod** still *Lives*. **METAL BLADE**.

WALHALLA... Firereich... 82... *Firereich* is the full length debut of **Walhalla**. This Finnish band features members of **Thy Serpent**, **Soulgrind**, and **Gloomy Grim**; however, **Walhalla** is more straight forward than those previously stated bands. The vocals are screamed in the extreme manner that **Soulgrind** fans have become familiar with. While the music takes elements from thrash and death metal to create an energetic and punishing sound. At times, the guitars contain a crushing groove oriented, modern sound. It is not too much that your picky classic metal fans will be turned off, but it is enough to captivate any metal fan's interest. It's about time that a band was able to effectively combine thrash and death metal into an invigorating sound without sounding dated or contrived. **ROOT OF ALL EVIL**.

STEVE WALSH... Glossolalia... 84... **Magna Carta** always puts out albums with great, often weird, artwork. Their albums are always eye catching. Now the question is, does **Steve Walsh's** new album captivate the ears as well? I think so. In my opinion, **Walsh's** solo disc is more exciting than his work on the new **Kansas** record. On *Glossolalia*, **Walsh** partnered up with the innovative genius of **Magellan's** **Trent Gardner** and also reunited himself with his ex-**Streets** bandmates **Billy Greer** (bass) and **Mike Slamer** (guitars). What **Walsh** has created on *Glossolalia* is an exciting album of progressive rock that balances modern technology with the experience of a classy veteran. "Glossolalia" and "Heart Attack" are the best examples of the unpredictable nature of the music. "Haunted Man" and "Smacking the Clown" offer variety and passion, while "That's What Love's All About" represents **Walsh's** most daring vocal performance. It makes me smile to think two of the biggest surprises of the year come from older veterans **Glenn Hughes** and **Steve Walsh**. **MAGNA CARTA**.

WHITE SKULL... Public Glory Secret Agony... 78... With titles like "Burn Rome Burn", "The Roman Empire", "Greedy Rome", and "In Caesar We Trust"; it's safe to say what *Public Glory Secret Agony* is about. This is Italy's **White Skull's** fourth full length and second in two years. While this is not a bad album, and it is perhaps their most focused, I feel that last year's *Tales from the North* was clearly superior. *Public Glory Secret Agony* has its share of anthemic, fast, power metal but there are no instant classics like "Asgard". Once again you do get some beautiful artwork on the cover, perhaps **White Skull's** best yet. Vocalist **Frederica de Boni** has charisma and an instantly identifiable vocal style that conjures images of a female version of **Grave Digger's** vocalist, but unlike her pretty voiced contemporaries, **Frederica** is all true metal. **BREAKER**.

WHITE WILLOW... Sacrament... 79... **White Willow** are an interesting entity because they are a progressive rock band that is drawing fans from the black metal community. Maybe it's because they're from Norway, or perhaps it's because of the esoteric, ominous nature of their material. One thing's for sure, **White Willow** is not your typical progressive rock band. Their use of flutes and keyboards are creative and like nothing heard before. *Sacrament* is their third release and is said to be heavier than previous albums; *Ignis Fatuus* and *Ex Tenebris*. The music is certainly prog with hints of early **Genesis** and **King Crimson**. **Sylvia Erichsen's** vocals are passionate despite being somewhat abstract. **White Willow** is an eccentric looking band playing a weird style of prog that is open minded and true to the term. I like the contrast from quiet and subdued to busy, but I still don't quite understand the black metal following. **LASERS EDGE**.

WORKHORSE MOVEMENT... Sons Of The Pioneers... 89... I can't stop listening to this band. The music on their debut, *Sons of the Pioneers*, is infectious and timeless. For those of you who remember the forgotten and great underrated **Big Chief** from the early nineties, **Workhorse Movement** is a band for you. Mixing modern heavy music with funk, soul, and classic rock influences; this Detroit band can do no wrong. The vocals are big throughout. You can't help but let the vocal hooks reel you in and keep you listening. Without ever straying from their signature sound, the **Workhorse Movement** experiment and allow each song evolve into something special. They vary the pace and here's the biggest surprise- it's a Roadrunner band that you can not compare to any other trendy band. There's something here for everybody. This band should be huge if there's any justice in the world. **ROADRUNNER**.

ZONATA... Tunes Of Steel... 78... A title like that betrays another European power metal band is out. That's basically what **Zonata** has to offer. This was only released in Europe last year, but *Tunes of Steel* should be easy to find via **Century Media** mailorder. Like all those dime a dozen European metal bands, **Zonata** possess adequate performance skills but have a distinct lack of personality. Nothing stands out as being particularly interesting but sadly I find myself happy that at least **Zonata** is not another **Helloween** copycat band. If this came out five years ago, *Tunes of Steel* would be welcome, but at a time when the European market is saturated, **Zonata** get lost in the mix. **CENTURY MEDIA**.

VARIOUS ARTISTS:

BLITZKRIEG OVER YOU... A Tribute To The Ramones... 75... A German tribute to the **Ramones**. Well there's a novel idea. The **Ramones** were one of, if not the, most influential punk bands ever. This compilation features twenty six tracks of mostly punk bands covering the **Ramones**. Of course, "I Wanna Be Sedated" is included, this version done by the **Adicts**. **Joey Ramone** jumps in with the very popular **Die Toten Hosen** to cover "Blitzkrieg Bop". **Nina Hagen** is joined by **Dee Dee Ramone** for "Lass Mich In Ruhe". One surprise was the inclusion of **Motorhead's** "R.A.M.O.N.E.S.", a previously released track also made available here. I apologize for being biased but I just find nothing interesting about punk music and my most recent memory of the **Ramones** was of **C.J.** (a.k.a. **Chris Ward**) **Los Gusanos** bandmate **Ed Lynch** ripping me off for twenty bucks to buy drugs. **NASTY VINYL**.

CHILDREN OF THE DAMNED... A Tribute To Iron Maiden... 80... Finally someone gets a tribute right. My biggest complaint about tribute albums is you don't get a chance to hear what these bands have to offer as far as original material is concerned. In comes **Adrenaline Records** with a two disc set. Disc one features twelve songs from the same bands. The packaging is amazing. It's a fold out digipak with great artwork and a color panel dedicated to each of the twelve bands. Hard working, independent American bands like **Aska** and **Seasons Of The Wolf** appear. We also get the upcoming progressive metal band **Delusion** and Italy's **Mesmerize**. Sweden's **Gooseflesh**, the American cult black metal band **Night Conquers Day**, India's **Moksha**, and relative unknowns like

Diphtheria, Cessation Of Life, Realm, Last Disciple, and Innocent Exile. First class packaging. **ADRENALINE.**

DEAD ZEPPELIN... A Metal Tribute To Led Zeppelin... 78... Another tribute album from the tribute capital of the world, Dwell Records. Bands who frequently pop up on these that also appear here include **Vladimirs, Wasteland, and Orange Moon.** Czech Republic's **Silent Stream Of Godless Elegy** offer a very good version of "Kashmir" to kick off *Dead Zeppelin*. The female vocals work well with Robert Plant's higher register. **Postmortem** do a good job with "The Ocean" by retaining its original vibe with their style. **Malamor's** version of "Out on the Tiles" is interesting enough. The clearer vocals of **Assisting Sorrow** on "Achilles Last Stand" were a nice change of pace. You have bands on here from around the world; Czech Republic (**Orange Moon, Silent Stream Of Godless Elegy**), Norway (**Black Debbath**), Germany (**Wasteland**), Singapore (**Doxomodo**), and Canada (**Solus**), as well as America of course. I'm sick of tribute records but at least Dwell tends to do a good job with theirs. **DWELL.**

DELIVERING THE GOODS... A Tribute To Judas Priest... 86... Just as Century Media did with their **Dio** tribute, they have again put together a definitive tribute disc. Some of the best power metal bands appear on this thirteen disc compilation. Including German metallers **Blind Guardian, Gamma Ray** twice (once with Ralf Scheepers singing), **Rage, U.D.O., and Iron Savior.** We get veteran metallers like **Stratovarius, Virgin Steele, and Saxon;** **Angra's** cover of "Painkiller", and three odd but no less worthy choices; Devin Townsend's "Sinner", and two cuts from two grossly underrated and now defunct bands, **Radakka** and **Forbidden.** All the classics you would expect are here- "Beyond the Realms of Death", "You've Got Another Thing Coming", "Metal Gods", "Screaming for Vengeance", "Victim of Changes", etc. No surprises and no obscure tracks, but this is a quality tribute. **CENTURY MEDIA.**

FOR THOSE ABOUT TO ROT... A Tribute To AC/DC... 75... AC/DC has been around long enough and have written enough quality songs to warrant a tribute disc but I feel a band that is still active should not have a tribute record. Having said that, bands like **Dementia** "Back in Black", **C.O.L.P.** "T.N.T.", **Wasteland** "Riff Raff", **Lesser Known** "Dirty Deeds Done Dirt Cheap", and the excellent **Enertia** "Walk All Over You"; do more than acceptable cover versions. I recommend you check out **Enertia's** latest disc and website at www.animatedinsanity.com. They are an excellent power metal band from upstate New York who is trying to help raise the metal scene in America to new heights. Oh yeah, this review is for *A Tribute to AC/DC* not *A Tribute to Enertia...* but I've already said enough about AC/DC. Find any of **Enertia's** three releases, you will not regret it. **DWELL.**

GATEWAY TO HELL 2... A Tribute To Slayer... 78... If I remember correctly, when the first *Gateway to Hell* came out it was 1996 and then the whole tribute idea exploded. There is fifteen tracks on *Gateway to Hell 2* and almost all of them comes from pre-*Reign in Blood* era; although "Post Mortem", "Jesus Saves", and "Piece by Piece" come from said album, and **Enter Self's** "Mandatory Suicide" comes from 1988's brilliant *South of Heaven.* Veterans like **Angel Corpse (R.I.P.), Incantation, Abigor, and the Chasm;** appear alongside up and comers **Black Witchery, Thy Infernal, Mystifier, Cephalic Carnage, and Enter Self,** and relative unknowns like **Perverseraph, Sanctorem, Hate, Nocturne, Equinox, and Messe Noir.** You can't fault the line-up of bands, all of which have **Slayer** influences and they have properly chosen the underground material to cover, but isn't this redundant? **DWELL.**

IN THE SIGN OF THE HORNS... A Tribute To Venom... 78... As would be expected, this **Venom** tribute features plenty of underground black metal bands with all but two of the fifteen bands coming from America (the exceptions being Sweden's **Mork Gryning** and Japan's **Ritual Carnage**). Highlights? Well, **Coffin Texts** do a near perfect version of "One Thousand Days in Sodom", **Black Witchery** cover the classic "Warhead" on their terms, **Ritual Carnage** deliver the heaviest guitar on "Welcome to Hell", **Noctuary** present an energetic version of "Die Hard", and **Morpheus Descends** closes with a raw cover of "Angel Dust". If you're into the underground of extreme music here in America, you get some of the best on this disc. Again, I wish someone would put out a compilation of originals by these same bands. **DWELL.**

KING DIAMOND TRIBUTE... 80... We get a lengthy commentary on King Diamond's career by Necropolis Records boss Paul Thind and a paragraph description of the band's choices, so right away I find this tribute better than most. Most of the bands on here are of the underground black metal variety. **Dark Funeral** kicks it off with their superior version of "The Trial". **Damnation** (members of **Behemoth**) perform a surprisingly melodic version of "Mansion in Darkness". There's one of my personal favorite bands, **Usurper,** and their cover of "Charon". **Destinys End** sound out of place with James Rivera's high pitched vocal style (the other bands have vocalists who like to growl). Ancient do an amazing job with perhaps King Diamond's most signature track, "Halloween". As we get towards the end of the disc, Necropolis Records exposes us to two unsigned acts, America's **Fallen Empire** and Norway's **Enthrall.** Closing is the underrated French metallers **Agressor** with "Welcome Home". In **Aeternum, Exhumed, and Aurora** also appear. Not a bad tribute at all. **NECROPOLIS.**

MAMA'S FALLEN ANGEL... A Tribute To Poison... 65... Now this is proof that tribute records are out of control. While Dave Scott (guitars and bass) and Gary Stryder (drums) provide most of the instrumentation, various vocalists help out in the Bret Michaels role. While I was impressed with **Hear Here's** vocalist Larry Sandfort on "Sexual Thing" and **Wraith's** Joseph Alexander on "Valley of Lost Souls", the rest of *Mamma's Fallen Angel* is hideous. Why is there a tribute to Poison?! The people involved in this project have put out some of the best American bands around- **Opposite Earth, Without Warning, Hear Here, Klank, Nonpoint, etc...** why a **Poison** tribute? **RETRO ACTIVE.**

METAL DREAMS VOLUME 2... 72... This is a sixteen track compilation put together by Nuclear Blast to promote power metal bands like **Stratovarius, Iced Earth, Sinner, Helloween, Nightwish, Blind Guardian, Steel Prophet, and Sonata Arctica...** why the hell are **Mr. Big's** "To Be With You" and **Skid Row's** "18 and Life" on here? They give no historical or contact information. They also have gothic bands like **Zacrimosa, To/Die/For, and Love Like Blood** which sound out of place. Horrible ballads from average hard rock bands; **Gothard** and **Bonfire.** *Metal Dreams* closes with **Macbeth's** "Moonlight Caress", a gentle, sweet tune and a righteous closer. The best part of *Metal Dreams Volume 2* is the cover artwork. This is obviously directed to people who are not familiar with the metal scene. **NUCLEAR BLAST.**

MUSIC FROM THE SUCCUBUS CLUB... A Soundtrack To Vampire: The Masquerade... 77... Goth leader Patrick Rodgers has put together a line-up of thirteen bands to create a soundtrack for the *Vampire: The Masquerade* role playing game. Of course, my background is metal, although I am obviously open minded and I do like many of the gothic metal bands, but some of the material on here is of the poppy **Cure** like variety. Therefore, I will touch upon the labums highlights. Most of the artists cross over between industrial and gothic. My favorite song is clearly **Seraphim Shock's** "Prey". This dynamic tune is very impressive and has some metal influences and well placed screams. I'm going to track this band down to find out more. The **CruXshadows** kick off with "Deception", and **Carfax Abbey** is another good band, both providing some interesting moments. **Wench** build a seductive groove on "Heart of Darkness" but fail to take it anywhere. Although I liked the **CruXshadows, Seraphim Shock, and Carfax Abbey,** most of the material on here doesn't appeal to my tastes. **DANCING FERRET.**

PUNK CHARTBUSTERS... 74... This twenty five track collection comes to us via Wolverine Records in Germany. There are twenty five bands, most with stupid ass names and some surprises. "Stoned Age" kicks off with a cover of the **Cranberries** "Zombie", and it is quite good. Among the songs covered include artists as diverse as the **Rolling Stones, John Denver, the Beatles, ABBA, Elvis Presley, the Talking Heads, Depeche Mode, Bananarama, and ex-Hanoi Rocks** frontman Michael Monroe. The only bands I have ever heard of on here are **Anti-Seen** and **Youth Brigade.** Not impressed. **WOLVERINE.**

PUNK CHARTBUSTERS... Volume 3... 76... This came out two years ago and three years after *Volume One.* The artwork is better, now it's two c.d.'s, and there are fifty bands covering all types of weird shit like **Elton John, the Beatles, A-Ha, Bryan Adams, R.E.M., the Kinks, Cyndi Lauper, Madonna, the Police, Neil Young, Chuck Berry, Elvis Presley, Fine Young Cannibals, Simon and Garfunkel** on disc one; **Chris Issac, Golden Earring, Frank Zappa, the Monkeys, Billy Joel, Sweet, Elvis Costello, Leonard Cohen, John Fogerty, Pat Benatar, and the Culture Club** on disc two. I don't understand this. **WOLVERINE.**

REBELLION... A Tribute To Queensryche... 80... There is a lot of **Queensryche** tributes coming out this year. **Rebellion** is Dwell Records' forty second tribute record to surface this month. Thankfully there is no **Queensryche** covers played by **Coffin Texts** or **Opera IX.** With the exception of **Darkside,** the eleven bands that appear on *Rebellion* play in the same genre as **Queensryche.** The best known bands on here are rising American bands, **Ion Vein** and **Black Symphony,** and Italy's hard working **Mesmerize.** Of the eleven songs here, eight come from early **Queensryche;** the self titled e.p., *The Warning,* and *Operation Mindcrime.* Among the best unknown bands here are **Rewind, Templar, Silent Shadows, Black Earth, Black Art, England's Shadowkeep, and Czech Republic's Orange Moon.** **Darkside** does a cool, almost gothic version of "Someone Else", featuring guest vocals from Martina Hornbacher of **Therion.** Overall, **Darkside** is the only band to make their version better than the original. **DWELL.**

RUNNING WITH THE DEVIL... A Tribute To Van Halen... 77... Another day, another tribute album. At least some bands I really enjoy like, **Hear Here** "Feel Your

Love Tonight", Wraith "atomic Punk", and Klank "I'll Wait", are on *Running with the Devil*. To liven things up guitarist Don Sullivan performs "Eruption 2000" with impressive results. Appropriately, five of the twelve tracks covered originally appeared on Van Halen's self titled debut. I would assume 1984 and 1985 are actually Van Halen tribute bands. Also appearing on *Running with the Devil* is Aces Wild, Elephant Orange, Drop, Baby Jones, and Project X, which features different members performing cover material. I know people will buy this but this tribute thing is reaching the point of overkill... speaking of which, even Overkill released a covers disc, *Coverkill*. **PROGRESSIVE ARTS.**

SCENE REPORT... 84... That's exactly what this is, an audio scene report. In addition to the music you get a collage of photos, contact information on all twenty one bands, and a variety of hardcore styles. Features the following bands: Mushroom, Death Threat, Disciple, Ringworm, Voice Of Reason, Downlow, Five Minute Major, No Redeeming Social Value, Strength For A Reason, Hoods, Son Of Skam, Desperate Measures, Two Man Advantage, Coming Correct, Irate, One 4 One, Cipher, Krutch, Billy Club Sandwich, Home 33, and Locked In A Vacancy. Some of *Scene Report* is generic hardcore, however, bands that impressed me include Disciple, Ringworm, Hoods, Coming Correct, Irate, One 4 One, Cipher, Krutch, Billy Club Sandwich, and Locked In A Vacancy. Obviously, I lean more towards the metal and extreme influenced bands. Great purchase if you want to catch up on modern hardcore bands. **TRIPLE CROWN.**

TRIBUTIZED... A Tribute To Def Leppard... 75... As much as I really want to tear this apart, I admire the fact that songs like "Let it Go", "High 'n Dry", "It Could Be You", and "Wasted" are covered. Of course, these songs were originally recorded before Mutt Lange destroyed the band (he made the band millions so I guess it depends on your perspective and mine is as a fan obviously). Classics from *Pyromania* like "Too Late for Love", "Rock of Ages", "Photograph", and "Fooling" appear as well as their first big hit, "Bringing on the Heartbreak". I always thought "Women" was the best popular song from *Hysteria* and when performed by Vent it takes on a new heaviness and edge. The band Cleaner do an effective job making "Pour Some Sugar on Me" sound industrial. Wraith, Hear Here, and Premonition are bands I'm familiar with but who the hell are Vent, Drop, Elephant Orange, Baby Jones, Crease, and the Eric Knight Band? I want a compilation with original material... please! **DWELL.**

REISSUES:

DESTRUCTION... Best Of... 83... This is a two disc set featuring twenty seven classic tracks from Destruction. This *Best Of* was originally released in 1992. It includes tracks from *Sentence of Death*, *Infernal Overkill*, *Eternal Devastation*, *Release from Agony*, and *Live Without Sense*. One listen and you can hear why Destruction is so revered. This is a ground breaking band who created their own scene. All the famous tracks are here: "Mad Butcher", "Release from Agony", "Confused Mind", "Curse the Gods", "Unconscious Ruins", "Release from Agony", "Confused Minds", "Curse the Gods", "Thrash Attack", "Reject Emotions", etc. Also includes their version of "Pink Panther" from *Live Without Sense*. If you are just getting into Destruction and *All Hell Breaks Loose* was your first purchase of Destruction, this *Best Of* is your best buy for their origins. **S.P.V.**

GOREFEST... Chapter 13... 84... Gorefest... the name conjures images of bands like Impaled, Engorged, and Exhumed- it would be the perfect name for a gore metal band. Well, Chapter 13 is nothing near gore metal. Gorefest originated in 1989 and promptly released their lauded death metal debut, *Mindloss*, some two years later. *False* was more of the same and *The Eindhoven Insanity* was perhaps the first proper live death metal album. Upon the release of their third studio album, *Erase*, it became clear that Gorefest wished to transcend the limiting boundaries of their name. Their final two releases; *Soul Survivor* and *Chapter 13*, showed a band willing to experiment and grow. Chapter 13 is a heavy record, yet contained a sense of dynamics and a touch of darkness that any metal fan would enjoy. After a successful tour in Europe, opening for Judas Priest, Gorefest sadly called it a day. This is their final release. **S.P.V.**

AXEL RUDI PELL... The Ballads... 70... Axel should have called this the lameass weak songs. Maybe if Bon Jovi or Poison put out an album called *The Ballads*, it would sell. The only album your quintessential Axel Rudi Pell fan would get excited about would be called *The Shredders*. Amazingly, Axel came out with *The Ballads II* just a few years ago. At least the majority of the tracks are sung by Jeff Scott Soto. Axel Rudi Pell also has covers of Deep Purple's "Tearing Out My Heart" and "When a Blind Man Cries", the latter with ex-Impelliteri vocalist Rob Rock. *The Ballads* is just too mellow for my tastes and Axel doesn't get to unleash his famous leads very often. This came out shortly after cheesy but classy albums like *Wild Obsession* and *Nasty Reputation*. If you want Axel Rudi Pell at his finest, find *Black Moon Pyramid* or *Magic*. **S.P.V.**

SODOM... Masquerade In Blood... 84... *Masquerade in Blood* came out in 1995 and is pure Sodom mayhem. Your anthemic, two and a half minute rants are all over *Masquerade in Blood*. This is classic Sodom all the way. Like a bastard child of Motorhead and Slayer, if you don't know Sodom, you don't know metal. The title track and "Mantelmann" are the best from this release, although a weak track you will not find. Joining the legendary Tom Angelripper are drummer Steif and guitarist Strahli. Long live German metal. **S.P.V.**

Reviews by Keith Oswald:

These reviews are a continuation from Issue #10 of Transcending the Mundane.

ANCIENT... Svartalfheim (1994)... 4 out of 5... Debut from Ancient. *Svartalfheim* is a very diverse black metal album for 1994. Tempos are mid paced to blast beats, songs are sung in English and Norwegian, piano and keyboards are included in the majority of the songs, the production is crude, but that's what you'd expect for early 90's metal. Their best record by far. Follow up albums were released by Metal Blade Records. **ANCIENT... The Cainian Chronicle (1996)... 1 out of 5...** With *Cainian Chronicle*, Ancient strips off the corpse paint, drummer/ vocalist Grimm leaves the band, all lyrics are now in English, Ancient adds musicians that are not even from Norway, and they are now a current member of Brian Slagel's company Metal Blade. The music falls flat on your face with no dynamics or power at all. Dan Swano produced this record and in my opinion Swano is not the greatest black metal producer out there. I consider him a brilliant musician and songwriter, but when it comes to producing these type of bands something just doesn't click. **BURZUM... Aske (1992)... 2 out of 5...** The legendary Varg Vikernes' first record. Aske is just low budget recording of crude death/ black metal that has all its influences from early Bathory. **BURZUM... Det Som Engang Var (1992)... 3 out of 5...** Very similar to *Aske*, however *Det Som Engang Var* begins to show the black metal world the introduction to keyboards and synths. Varg Vikernes expanded his sound, and gave moodier more eerie approach on this record. Still not his best. **BURZUM... Lyset Tar Oss (1993)... 4 out of 5...** The words I think of when I listen to this record are; cold, loneliness, depression, evil, and hatred. These songs on this record will frighten you and make you think twice about life. Varg really hit his peak with this record. The only thing you need to overcome is the production, but in a way the muffled echo like recording gives the morbidity to this record. **BURZUM... Filosofem (1995)... 4 out of 5...** Released after Varg was put in jail for the murder of guitarist Euronymous from the influential black metal band Mayhem. *Filosofem* is one of the rawest recordings I have ever heard. The album sounds as if it was recorded in a damp cave. No distinction on the instruments, however the first three songs are great. Lots of distorted guitars, ambient like keyboard effects, and some of the most evil like vocals ever recorded onto tape. If you can find this on digipak, it's really worth it. Lyrics in German, Norwegian, and English, as well as stories describing each song. If you can read German or Norwegian that is. **DARK THRONE... Soulside Journey (1990)... 1 out of 5...** Dark Throne started as a death metal band that had some similarities to Entombed or Dismember. No corpse paint, no leather or spikes, lyrics in English and no stage names yet. I really don't like this album, but looking back at it now, it definitely has some good moments. The real Dark Throne is about to take form. **DARK THRONE... A Blaze In The Northern Sky (1991)... 2 out of 5...** The album that set the stage for true Norwegian black metal. Everybody that was on *Soulside Journey* is here but with their silly stage names, such as Fenriz, Nocturnal Culto, and Zephyreous. In my opinion this wasn't the album that I categorize with Dark Throne for being so ground breaking. Production of this album is horrendous, as well as the packaging and musical skills. **DARK THRONE... Under A Funeral Moon (1993)... 2 out of 5...** Very similar to *Blaze in the Northern Sky*. Dark Throne begins mixing Norwegian lyrics with English in some of the songs. Again mid tempo black metal that does absolutely nothing. **DARK THRONE... Transilvanian Hunger (1994)... 5 out of 5...** One of the greatest black metal albums of all time. Four songs written by Fenriz and the other four written by Varg Vikernes. *Transilvanian Hunger* created some of the coldest, mystical, blackest music ever to go to c.d. Again a bottom of the barrel production, but the primitive melodies and blast beats work this time

COPRO RECORDS

Interview with Jose

England's Copro Records has made a major impact upon me due to recent releases by **Snub**, **Desecration**, **Earthtone 9**, and **GF93**- all of which were top quality and original. Like many independent labels, Copro Records is operated by a group of individuals who have established roots in the metal scene in the past through bands who have been exposed to the business side of things.

How and when did the label start?

It was more to help out some friends originally. The first release came out the tail end of '97 or beginning of '98. The idea to form the company came in December of '98. We're in our third year. Our distribution is set up quite nicely now. Japan is still the one area we haven't conquered yet. Everyone else is covered.

One thing that strikes me about your label is the diversity.

It's a bit less contrived here. There's a mass underground area in America because of the vast area that it is. What we see, there's commercialism and mass marketing going on in America. You've got so many bands that sound like **Slipknot** and that kind of thing. I think we have more honesty. Everyone here has to struggle to get noticed. The truer bands come through because they have to try that much harder to get noticed. Even our own press looks to the other side of the pond. There's that sense of sincerity and honesty about what they do. **Visible Noise** is another label that's doing the same sort of thing. Variety was something that we didn't really count on. I think it extends from the fact that there is three of us who run the company, so there's three different tastes at the top of the chain. It's not something that we purposely went out to do. Most labels of our size get holed into a niche. Most independent labels start off as a hardcore label or a black metal label, which is great because they establish an identity. We never went down that road and for some reason we seem to have gotten away with it. We can put out a punk band like **Violet Ultra** right next to a death metal band like **Desecration**. You have **Medulla Nocte** which is extreme and then you have the mellow tunes of **Earthtone 9**. It's all about quality. It's extreme music of one kind or another. As long as it's quality and we like it, we'll put it out.

What are your plans for the rest of the year?

We're looking at a couple of bands, but we want to concentrate on the new **Earthtone 9** release. That's a big, big record. We spent some money making this one. We got in top producer Andy Sneap to work with him. We decided that we'll push this as the last record we'll put out this year. We'll push for some new signings in the new year. We have our eye on one or two bands but nothing definite yet. I think people are getting interested in **Earthtone 9**. They've got big management behind them and I'm starting to see a lot of stuff coming up about **Earthtone 9** in the last couple of days. We held back in the States on this release because we've had the opportunity to license this record. Maybe someone else will do it in the States and they'll get the attention they deserve over there.

Do you have distribution in the States?

We do have distribution but it's very limited. We deal with a company called Dutch East in New York. Unless we get out there and get involved financially, we won't be able to make an impact. It's such a big territory. We spend what we consider a fortune here. It would be so expensive to get into the American market. We've always had interest but no one's come through with definite plans. We're more interested in getting a band exposure than the money. We're more interested in having people work for bands. One of the nice things about the market we're in is that it's a long term project. We are like one big family at Copro. We work very closely with our bands on all decisions. We all come from a band background. The three of us were in a band together. We were all on **Gomorra**, on Black Mark. We went over to the States and did the Milwaukee Metalfest. We've been fortunate the first few years to either work with bands that we've known from the past or we were friends with already and we generally get on with. That probably won't always be the case.

What are your ultimate goals?

Providing we can continue to bring out quality, that would be good. We were at a conference in Germany and someone said to me, there's one bad thing about the **Earthtone 9** record, I don't think you'll ever put out an album that is equal to it. That's a nice thing to say. If we achieve nothing else, I can put my hand on my heart and say that I am proud to have brought out this record. We produced one of the best records to come out of England. At the end of the day this is still an

artform. So many kids are denied real music because of the marketing machine that's out there. It's a shame. Financially it gets harder with each year because we put more into it. The label is always a sponge, you put more and more money into it and hope it all works out. We hope it gets more comfortable and easier. We hear so many good demos, we're often wracking our heads hoping to put more bands in the studio. It would be nice to be in a comfortable position down the road so that we can bring out more quality records. We believe in a lot of these bands. It would be nice to get England on the map again. Since **Maiden**, **Priest**, and **Def Leppard** in the eighties we haven't really done anything. We have some excellent bands and it's a shame that even our press turns on us a little bit. There's been a slow down for death metal albums in this country so I was glad to hear great albums from **Infestation** and **Desecration**. You have been like the **Haunted**, **Nile**, and **Hate Eternal** coming through with some new stuff and a modern twist to it. There is a resurgence in death metal. I also run a booking agency here and we got **Dismember** and **Lock Up** here, the shows have had really good turn outs. Things have also really come through on this third **Earthtone 9** album. It's so easy to put out mediocre albums. I think that's criminal. Major labels are mainly responsible for doing this. I was talking to Henry Rollins and he pointed out that major labels just have to have the next **Rage Against The Machine** or the next **Korn**. We strive to find something with an original twist. Look at **Medulla Nocte**, you either love his voice or you hate it, but I can't think of another band that they sound like. Bands like **Snub**, **GF93**, and in their own way, **Desecration**, also have their own sound.

Will all these bands remain on the label?

Absolutely, we believe in developing our bands. We come from a band background so we view things different. We always want to give bands a chance. It was originally nothing more than a hobby having the label, we never dreamt it would be this good and that we would be able to bring out such quality records. I think we've achieved more than we hoped too. **Medulla Nocte** and **Earthtone 9** are established bands here now. It's nice when people pick up on things like **GF93** because we obviously saw those things as well and that's why we wanted to do their record. It's sad sometimes when it doesn't show up wholesale. We really want these bands to be successful. We've also started a sub label that has four releases out now, it's called Casket Records. We did that because of the overwhelming amount of decent demos that were coming through. We have a recording studio and we see a lot of bands go through there. We help these bands out and advertise them for free. Copro has gotten to the stage where we advertise regularly in this country and we are going to other countries. We figured if the album is of a decent quality we could put it through our distribution network. We give them a name, free advertisements, and a big helping man.

Discography:

Acid Death: Pieces Of Mankind
Desecration: Inhuman
Desecration: Murder In Mind
Earthtone 9: Arc Tang Ent
Earthtone 9: Hi Point e.p.
Earthtone 9: Off Kilter Enhancement
Earthtone 9: Lo Def Discord
GF93: G.O.E.T.I.A. Fetish 19.93
Hexecution: Beyond All Evil
Medulla Nocte: Dying From The Inside
Seizure: Life In Freefall
Snub: 360 Conviction
Snub: Memories In Richter
Unfounded: Corrode
Violet Ultra: Psychobabble
Various Artists: Ballistic
Various Artists: The Rufus Show

Website:

www.coprorecords.co.uk

Address:

P.O. Box 4429...Henley On Thames... Oxon... RG9 1GH... UK

wonderdrug records

Interview with Ken Cmar

To celebrate Wonderdrug Records tenth year in existence, label president Ken Cmar put out a two disc set that is a chronicle for the label's growth throughout the nineties. The bands which have appeared on his Massachusetts based label all are from the Boston region and play their own style of heavy rock- hardcore to metal. Among the many bands to come through the Wonderdrug label include; **Stompbox**, **Scissorfight**, **Sam Black Church**, and **Tree**. **Colepitz** is one of my favorite new bands and I am hoping that they will experience the deserving popularity that they ahead of their time **Stomp Box** missed out on. Ken is an ardent supporter of the Northeast music scene, and I have never encountered someone so eager to promote what he believes in as much as he is. Here is Ken to tell us all about his label.

Did you ever imagine still doing this ten years later?

Hell no. The reason that I started the label was to put out stuff that I engineered and produced. When I graduated from Berkley College of Music back in '90 I was trying to get a gig at a studio as a full time engineer. It's hard to get your foot in the door in a lot of places. What I decided to do was go around and record a bunch of cool bands and I'll put out their records so I could bring this shit to the studio and say look what I've produced and engineered. They don't have to know that I put it out myself. I started working with bands like **Stomp Box**. I put out their first seven inch and their first demo tape. I started working with **6L6** and **Honkeyball**. The records started selling. It was getting crazy. I was still working forty hours a week at a regular job. After a few years the label started taking over and I started focusing on the label a lot more. I really started to like it. I gave up on the idea with trying to work full time as a sound engineer. I liked doing the business end of running a label and signing bands. I was putting out music that I liked. It took off from there. I imagined myself being a producer not the head of a label.

Do you still do any producing?

Yeah, I was just in the studio this week with **Anal Cunt**. I'm recording all their new material for the past year. They've got a bunch of seven inches and comps coming out and I'm doing all their recording. I only work on projects that I really want to do. I don't have to make my living as an engineer so I don't have to take shitty things.

What are some obstacles that you've had to overcome through the years?

It's always getting paid from distributors. It's the worst thing. Back in 1995 I was dealing exclusively with a distributor and they went bankrupt. They owed me like six thousand and they had about seven thousand dollars worth of my product in their warehouse. I never got the money but luckily I got about eighty percent of the c.d.'s back. They are all cracked, crushed, they had stickers from stores on them. It was a big mess. That almost put me out of business. Luckily I was still working a day job so I wasn't relying on income from the label. I would have been destitute. Dealing with fanzines can be difficult too, just because there's a lot of fly by night fanzines. You want to help these kids out and you want to advertise but they'll put out two issues and they'll stop doing it, meanwhile they've cashed your check for the ad that's supposed to come up in the next issue and the next issue never comes out. That's shitty. I try to be a little more careful with my zine advertising now.



How would you describe the bands you work with?

They are all heavy in their own way. We've done straight edge metalcore, noise metal like **Slughog**, straight up hardcore bands like **Honkeyball**, all of our bands represent the best of the genre that they're in, in this area. We try really hard to keep it a regional label, which is why we don't put out that much stuff. There's only so many great bands in a certain area. We want to be a Boston based label. Most of our bands are from Boston. We try to look for bands who have something new to say in heavy music. **Scissorfight**, how do you describe that band. They're not a hardcore band, they're not a metal band, they're not rock- they're their own beast. **Sam Black Church**, they're their own animal. We like bands that are hard to compare to anybody. It's a blessing and a curse. You're doing something original, but it's hard to market that record. It's not metal enough for metal kids, it's not hardcore enough for hardcore kids, and it's not punk at all. How do you advertise that? I like it like that. I don't want to put out records by bands who sound like everybody else. Luckily the other musical endeavors that I involve myself in; like c.d. manufacturing, distribution, and I make enough money from

that so I don't have to put out six or eight records a year. I'm not gonna put out something I don't like. I don't ever want to get to the point where I have to put out something to sell records. We're trying to keep the quality as high as it can be.

Do you have any upcoming releases?

It looks like we're gonna do a **Sam Black Church** greatest hits, probably a double c.d. We're trying to license some of the early Tang stuff. We're also going to be releasing a solo c.d. from George, the lead singer of **Honkeyball**. He's got some mellow, trippy stuff he did in his own bedroom with keyboards. We've got two new bands that we're negotiating with right now. It's been a little dry later, but we've finally found two bands that we're psyched to work with. We're probably gonna go in the studio in November. We're going in the studio with **Tree** in November, so they're be another **Tree** release in February. There's gonna be a lot of stuff the beginning of next year.

Care to elaborate on the *Swallow Whole* compilation?

It goes from the first release we ever put out, which was the first **Stomp Box** seven inch. We tried to keep it in chronological order. It's got the best songs from all of our releases, some demo stuff, some live stuff, and we're really proud of it. It shows the cool, original, heavy bands who have been in Boston in the last ten years. It's two full c.d.'s worth, a quick history of the label, cool pictures.

What are your goals for the next ten years?

To keep up the quality. To keep seeking out cool, heavy bands. I want to put out stuff that really appeals to me. I know if I want to get this label to a certain level, I should look outside of this area and deal with bands on a national level. I started this label to showcase great regional bands. That's what I want to continue to do.

Website:

www.wonderdrugrecords.com

Discography:

1990... Stomp Box 7": Pick it Up
1992... Stomp Box/ Slaughtershock 7": What it's Worth
1992... Jigglescreen: The Glorious e.p.
1992... Stomp Box: Travis e.p.
1994... 6L6: Not Even Warm
1994... Chucklehead: Fuzz
1995... Honkeyball: Honkeyball
1995... Slughog: Grit
1996... 6L6: Superstar
1996... Scissorfight 7": Human Head
1996... Take Your Medicine compilation
1996... Scissorfight: Guaranteed Kill
1997... Honkeyball: One Time
1997... 6L6: Incendio
1997... Non Compos Mentis: Smile When You Hate
1997... Chucklehead: Belly Up
1997... Slughog: Ungodly Amounts Of Meat
1998... Up the Dosage compilation
1998... Scissorfight: Balls Deep
1998... Sam Black Church: That Which Does Not Kill Us...
1998... Sam Black Church: The Black Comedy
1998... Piecemeal: Somewhere Between Crucifixion...
1998... Honkeyball: Down By Three
1998... Tree: Radio Bootleg for the Restless Masses
1999... Honeyglazed: The Trouble with Girls
1999... Tree: Our Day Will Come
1999... Piecemeal/ Die My Will split
1999... Sam Black Church: Unincorporated
1999... Colepitz: Colepitz
2000... Duncan Wilder Johnson: Heavy Metal Spoken Word
2000... Roadsaw: Taking Out the Trash
2000... Swallow Whole compilation

Wacken 2000: by Jeff Brown

Another summer, another plane ticket, another cult heavy metal festival: I think a pattern is being established here. For the third straight year, I've had the great fortune to be able to pack my bag and head to the north of Germany for the annual gathering of the true headbangers of the world: the Wacken Open Air. While the festival doesn't seem to be growing in size so much, (a comfortably consistent twenty thousand or so) it does seem to be taking on more and more of an international significance with each passing year.

While strolling through the festival grounds, I had the opportunity to talk with people who came from every conceivable European nation; Japan, Canada, and even one guy who made the trek from South Africa. Hopefully the promoters will resist the temptation to bring Wacken up to the Dynamo or Rockskilde level by adding mega star headlining acts, and instead retain the cult feeling that comes from not having superstar bands on the bill, and thankfully not having too many jerkoff fans in the crowd either.

Like last year, things kicked off on Thursday, with warm up sets by **Krokus**, **Molly Hatchet**, and the **Company Of Snakes**. Thankfully the bands were all allowed to play on the festival's main stage, rather than in a cramped and unbelievably sweltering tent, like last year. Another improvement over last year was my accommodations. This year I was lucky enough to have a living room floor to crash on, right in the town of Wacken. (close enough to hear the sounds of brutal death metal come wafting in the kitchen window during breakfast.)

As with most things in Germany, things run on time and efficiently. So when the program lists **Krokus'** starting time as 6:00 p.m., I shouldn't be surprised to hear the opening chords of "Long Stick Goes Boom" as I'm walking down the main street in town, towards the festival entrance. In the time it takes me to wait on line, have my ticket ripped and wristband attached, I also overhear the band doing "Bad Boys Rag Doll", "American Woman", "Lionheart", "Screaming in the Night", and "Bedside Radio". Now I'm mildly pissed. Not pissed enough to throw my camera on the ground and start stomping on it, but kind of bummed that this rare opportunity to see the legends of Swiss hard rock was being squandered.

When I finally do make it inside to catch a glimpse of the band, I'm relieved in the sense that it appears I haven't missed too much. Yeah, Fernando Von Arb still have the classic stage poses down, but with no Freddy Steady, no Chris Von Rohr, and most importantly no Marc Storace, this couldn't help but come across as nothing more than a really good **Krokus** tribute band. I did manage to catch all of "Flying Through the Night" from '94 respectable comeback release *To Rock or Not To Be*, before replacement vocalist Carl Sentece of Persian Risk fame bid farewell to the crowd.

While waiting for the obligatory encore, I'm thinking of all the classic tunes they have to choose from: "Headhunter", "Eat the Rich", "Playing the Outlaw"... I could go on and on. So what do they do instead? "Heya"!!! Yes, "Heya". The lamest track from arguably one of the lamest releases of their twenty five year career: last year's *Round 13* c.d., a conglomerate of tribal beats, vocal loops, and effects. Well, about this time I decided to have my own metal rendezvous with some pals outside of ear shot from the stage. I'm sure even with these third string guys helping Fernando keep the **Krokus** moniker alive, seeing them in a small club here in the States would be a cool way to spend an evening. Hopefully they'll do the proper fine tuning to the set list necessary to insure that the old fans who come out (is there any other kind?) will walk away pleased.

After about an hour of walking around, saying hello to familiar faces, and generally talking metal, it was time for **Molly Hatchet**. Some might question the logic of having an American Southern rock band warm up for a European heavy metal festival, but judging by the warm reaction they received, and the frequency at which rebel flags could be spotted flying proudly over various tents across the festival campgrounds, I'd say the booking made perfect sense. Worth mentioning is a funny story I caught wind of at some point over the weekend. **Molly Hatchet** were recording a live album over the weekend and a documentary video to coincide with it. Apparently they were to be met at the airport by the film crew, from whence filming would commence then and there. However, with so many bands arriving in Hamburg in a short period of time, someone else (allegedly **Lock Up**) was mistaken for **Molly Hatchet** and apparently proceeded to play up the error for all it was worth: leading the film crew about town to document their activities. Anyway, getting back to the **Hatchet**, they ended with "Flirting with Disaster", but I can't tell you too much beyond that. (Nobody's talking).

Last on the bill for this festival warm up was the **Company Of Snakes**. Here again, old **Whitesnake** was one of those bands that I was never totally into, so this was probably more of a treat for others than I. This Coverdale-less line-up featured Neal Murray, Mick Moody, and Bernie Marsden from the old 'Snake and Gary Barden from **M.S.G.** and **Praying Mantis** fame on vocals. Sounded okay, but I'm not the person to ask about this one. Rather than retreat to the Headbangers tent til the wee hours, I opted to call it an early night and save my energy for the two days of metal mayhem that lie ahead.

Friday morning came with clear blue skies, a trend that would thankfully carry through the duration of the weekend, especially considering the cough I brought home from last year's rain soaked Wacken that managed to stick with me up until October. The first for me today would be **Samson**, whose lineup currently features Paul Samson (obviously), Thunderstick, Chris Aylmer, and Nick Moore back on vocals. While the guy can still carry a tune, judging by his appearance, I wouldn't recommend any lengthy magazine subscriptions at this stage of the game. "Vice Versa", "Losing My Grip", and of course "Riding with the Angels" were among the crowd pleasing highlights of this lukewarm set: along with the cage breaking antics of Thunderstick, who remarkably looks the same as he did twenty years ago.

After collecting my thoughts together I strolled around the grounds a bit to see what was happening on some of the other stages. "How many of you are followers of Satan!!", shrieked the frontman of Swedish black metallers **Dark Funeral**. What impressed me the most about these guys (along with fellow Scandinavians **Marduk** and **Immortal**) was not the lengths to which they've managed to stretch the rather limited genre of black metal to, but the tremendous following that they have amassed in the process. In fact, some of the largest crowds pulled all weekend were by the bands that send the needle far into the red on

the brutality scale. Having said that, a few moments of unholy evil was about all these fragile ears could take and I was off to one of the small stages to check out **Gaskin**.

As I've said in previous write-ups on these festivals, N.W.O.B.H.M. comebacks are always a crap shoot. Sometimes, a band like **Blitzkreig** or **Girlschool** will rock so hard that you'll feel like you were back in some seedy pub in Newcastle, witnessing it happen for the first time around, and then sometimes a comeback will be as utterly futile as Grandma trying to fit back into her

prom dress. (anybody seen **Sweet Savage** or **Jaguar**?) While I can't be quite so hard on **Gaskin**, I did find their set, sprinkled with a liberal dose of newer material, somewhat uninspired. One humorous highlight came when Paul Gaskin, between songs, commented on the sound of **Dark Funeral** heard off in the distance, "I can't relate to this death metal stuff, just play rock 'n roll mate."

Keeping the N.W.O.B.H.M. ball rolling, after a short break it was time for **Angelwitch** on the big stage. Now, despite having never had the opportunity to see Kevin Haybourne and company before, the revolving door lineup and less than stellar quality of later **Angelwitch** records had me not expecting so much. Unlike **Gaskin** however, **Angelwitch** did manage to stick mainly to the first l.p. era; the material that people really want to hear. I caught "White Witch" and "Confused" before realizing my buddies from back home, **October 31**, were about to get underway on one of the small stages.

To anyone who has ever seen King Fowley with his band of veteran power thrashers **Deceased**, it's no secret that this guy has a sincere love of metal and its heritage like few others. Stepping out from behind the drum kit to front the band for this, the biggest gig of their career, proved to be quite entertaining. Tracks from both last year's *Fire Awaits You* and the new *Meet Thy Maker* l.p. mixed together nicely for a set entirely devoid of low points. In total contrast to bands like **Stratovarius** (who I happen to like), **October 31** proudly proclaim their love of the genre, evoking in praise names from the past that speak to the dihardes especially: **Manilla Road**, **Cirith Ungol**, old **Razor**, old **Annihilator**, etc. And why do we have to pay \$35 for the new **Maiden** on vinyl in



Lizzy Borden

the States anyway?!

After a couple drinks and a visit to the urine trailer, it was time for what would be not only the biggest letdown of the weekend, but the LAMEST showing of any band at any Wacken I've seen to date: Steve Grimmert's **Grim Reaper**. Despite waiting in anticipation from my front row center vantage point, I should've known that something was up when the stage crew began setting up the keyboards. (Were there ever any synths on **G.R.** records?) So out walks Grimmert and his band of stone washed denim clad rockers. After opening with "Fear No Evil", which I have to admit sounded okay, it was a sharp slide downhill from there on out. Before the second track, Steve announced, "I also have a new band, and we're going to play you some of those songs as well." With that the better part of the next twenty minutes are taken up with compositions in that lame, hard rock mold that can be found on those all stars of N.W.O.B.H.M. projects that were being released in the early 90's, featuring guys like Lea Hart and Graham Oliver. One track, a power ballad called "I Need Love" could've been right at home on a *Best of Firehouse* comp or something. So when the band finally decided to give people what they expected (this was billed as **Grim Reaper** right?), the mood had been dulled severely and "Rock You to Hell" and "See You in Hell" were somewhat less than the show stoppers that they should've been. However, after this scant thirty minute set, the band did return for an encore of... "Rock You to Hell" again?! "We don't have any more songs so we're going to do one for you again" states Grimmert. Well, with only six months to get together 45 minutes of material, it's no wonder they had to play some songs twice. At this point I was well on my way checking out something else. Steve Grimmert, hopefully this review makes it into your hands, so you'll know just how much your devious promotion of your crappy new band has tarnished the fine name of **Grim Reaper**. You owe ex-members of the band, as well as all of us who witnessed this debacle an apology.

Next up was the eleventh hour addition of **Armored Saint**. Originally they had been slated to play, but had to back out when **Anthrax** received the opening slot on the U.S. **Motley Crue**/ **Megadeth** double bill. However, when the promoters realized that nobody was showing up to watch them, they received the boot, reopening the door for John Bush to get the **Saint** together for a Wacken appearance. I'd already had the opportunity to catch them back at L'Amours in May so I basically knew what to expect. When they play the classics, it still sounds like the old days. But looking at 'em takes some getting used to. With the exception of Gonzo, the rest of the guys look like they should be coaching little league teams now. I'd also prefer it if when John Bush does **Armored Saint**, he would leave the goofy **Anthrax**-ish stage mannerisms back home. Petty complaints aside, tunes like "Reign of Fire", "March of the Saint", and "Can U Deliver" are still a major kick in the ass live, ensuring a **Saint** gig to be a fun time for all. (except that one guy)

Next up on the main stage, making their second appearance at Wacken, the mighty **Iced Earth**. Since I'd already seen them on four occasions, my intention was to watch only the first few songs and then make my way over to the party stage for the short set from Denmark's finest thrash metal export, **Artillery**. Opening with "Unconditional" off their signature *Dark Saga* l.p., it became immediately apparent that there were major sound problems: no guitars and a completely uneven mix. Problems persisted into the second song, as roadies repeatedly ran out to make adjustments to the backline and monitors down front. I must say I felt bad for the guys as there was a humongous crowd gathering to watch their set, and the sound was worse than it had been for anyone all weekend. It was also worth noting that Jon Schafer was performing this night wearing a neckbrace, due to an injury, I overheard someone say suffered while headbanging. I guess if you are going to get hurt then that's about the coolest way it can happen! So with that, I took my early leave of them and headed over to catch the "Terror Squad" about to take the stage across the field.

Given about 45 minutes, there's a ton of classic stuff that **Artillery** were forced to choose from, given their three stellar l.p.'s (though some would disagree about *By Inheritance*) and an admirable comeback disc in the form of this year's *B.A.C.K.* As with **Armored Saint**, the passage of time may have been less than kind to the guys, they still delivered the goods in fine fashion; showing that at

least somebody remembers the essence of real thrash metal.

Headlining the True Metal stage tonight would be **Gamma Ray**. Leading up to the set, I was surprised by how many Germans I talked to that were of the opinion that German heavy metal was sub standard. "Running Wild are repetitive and boring", "Blind Guardian is too happy sounding", and "Kai Hansen just can't sing very well" were some of the comments that I was just not prepared to hear. From my vantage point, when metal totally shrivelled up and went into hiding in the States, the above mentioned bands were still releasing consistently solid l.p.'s and playing to respectable sized crowds in Europe. While U.S. bands like **Savage Grace** and **Omen** produced some great early works, they lapsed into inactivity or cheesed out with relative quickness when compared to their German contemporaries. Anyway, back to the festival. Despite some panning from die hards, there was a really nice sized crowd to watch Hamburg's favorite sons. Whereas in '98 they had to take the stage in broad daylight, tonight's headlining slot in the dark of night allowed for much more elaborate staging and lighting to be utilized. Basically the set consisted of many of the reworked songs featured on the current *Blast from the Past* c.d., performed in chronological order. After the obligatory rendition of **Helloween**'s "I Want Out", the stage lights came up for good: a mere 65 minutes into a one hour and 15 minute allotted space. Though there's certainly no shortage of tunes I could think of that would've filled those last ten minutes nicely, I guess it's better to leave the folks wanting a little more.

At this point I was pretty much spent, and staying up was becoming more of a chore as time passed. Though I'd had the rare opportunity to catch Cleveland cult metallers **Breaker** play a rare club gig in Bremen two nights prior, I still grabbed the chance to hang back and watch their shortened set tonight in the wee hours. Here was a band that was pretty much ignored in the U.S. outside of their home state of Ohio, but managed to maintain a respectable follow-

ing amongst European die hards up to now. While I did prefer the longer set I'd witnessed earlier in a more intimate setting, the guys still managed to fit in all the essential tunes from their lone studio l.p., 1987's *Get Tough*, along with a nice version of "Pictured Life" from an upcoming **Scorpions** tribute album on Nuclear Blast Records. It's also worthy to note that the label responsible for releasing the **Breaker** l.p. (and a ton of other classic Midwest heavy metal) Auburn Records, is back in business with a double c.d. reissue of their lone studio l.p. coupled with a disc of outtakes, demos, and comp tracks, that I was more than happy to lay my hands on.

Now it was time to head back to the campsite, (a living room floor thankfully) for a few hours of necessary rest. The third and final day of this year's Wacken would have to begin as usual with a trip to the Metalmarkt, a separate tent erected to host a record fair that coincides with the festival. Two improvements were evident this year. First, a separate admission fee of DM 4 was charged only the first time you entered, allowing one to come and go at will. The second improvement was expansion of the Metalmarkt to both days instead of just Saturday. This was quite helpful in alleviating some of the brutal overcrowding present last year. As usual when I'm in Europe, money was a bit on the short side, so mega-rarities such as the **Overdrive Reflections** m.l.p., or the second **Steel Angel** record had to wait for another year, or wind up in someone else's shopping bag. (usually Rob Preston's!). Who could resist making a few purchases though? As I'm now the owner of a blue vinyl version of **Manilla Road**'s third l.p. *Crystal Logic*, an Aussie pressing of **Bengal Tigers**' *Metal Fetish*, and a couple vintage t-shirts from **Acid** and **Crossfire**. One could write a separate feature on just the rare and beautiful l.p.'s offered for sale, but since it would hold interest for such a small percentage of *Transcending...* readers, perhaps



it's best to abstain from such an undertaking.

While Saturday was not as jam packed with bands that I had to see as yesterday was, there were still some gems in the lineup: not the least of which was **Venom**, for whom I'd have made the trip had they been the only band on the bill. First up for myself today would be **Blaze**, the new outfit of former frontman Blaze Bailey. As many of you know, I'm in the minority among the metal community for the pro-Blaze position that I've defended since the release of *X Factor* in late '95, and the flood of criticism that ensued. "Blaze can't sing" was a typical barb that would be hurled by those longing for the hasty return of Bruce Dickinson. Though I'll concede that there were some great gigs in the mid 80's there were also some terrible clunkers later on. I never found myself nostalgic for the drunken on stage Bruce, who took his legendary status for granted and refused to give 100% for a quality performance. I also never missed the phony altercations Bruce would stage with someone in the front rows during the second song of nearly every set. Is this to fire up the crowd or what? The first time I witnessed it was back in '87 on *Somewhere in Time*, but after about six times it clearly has signs of being completely contrived.

But getting back to Blaze, his new outfit has a somewhat more modern sound-delivery than did **Maiden**, but the down tuned heavier approach is more aptly suited to Blaze's bluesy rock 'n roll singing style. Opening with "Ghost in the Machine" from the recently released debut, I was happy to see an admirable sized crowd gathered to see what it was all about. What Blaze lacks in range, he more than makes up for in stage presence and dynamic persona. As he did at the N.Y.C. *X Factor* gig during a snowy February night, Blaze pumped the audience by picking out faces in the crowd; "you, you, you, with the glasses on, get your hands in the air". All in all, a set consisting of seven, mostly strong tracks from the new album, as well as the Maiden gems "Futureal" and "Man on the Edge" was enough to rank the return of Blaze Bailey to the boards as one of my highlights for the weekend. Hopefully, *Silicon Messiah* can generate sufficient interest Stateside to merit some U.S. tour dates; and if I hear one more person complain that Blaze can't sing, and then proceed to praise **Nashville Pussy** or some other third rate rock screamer, I just might snap!

Given the sheer volume of bands playing over the weekend, it's virtually impossible to catch everything that you want. In fact, just compiling all the bands I missed would make for an interesting festival bill that could include **Praying Mantis**, **Liege Lord**, **Mob Rules**, **Solstice**, **Nightmare**, and **Skew Siken**, among others. One band that I absolutely couldn't allow to be included on the above list though is L.A. shock rock master **Lizzy Borden**, and his muderous metal roadshow. Anyone I spoke to regarding their appearance at last year's Bang Your Head festival had nothing but good things to say, so my expectations were rather high. Opening with a track from the forthcoming *Deal with the Devil* l.p. Lizzy scaled the scaffold that forms the frame of the stage. Classics like "Master of Disguise" and "Me Against the World" were presented with top notch theatrical gags like Lizzy biting the neck of an unsuspecting leather clad damsel. (after ripping her top of course). I was a bit disappointed by the exclusion of both "Bive 'em the Axe" and "American Metal" from the set: in my mind two of his most show stopping tunes. Anyone who felt let down by the exceptionally lame *K.F.D.* album and comeback tour from **W.A.S.P.** back in '97 would do wise to check out the true kings of L.A. shock rock when they roll through your town. (oh yeah, no lip synched backing vocals either)

Another band I'd heard great things about from an earlier Bang Your Head appearance was **Demon**, the brainchild of founder Dave Hill nearly twenty years ago. I was a huge fan of the first two l.p.'s, but despite some strong tracks here and there, found the bulk of their progressive material to be lost on me. Today's set would be an equal mixture of the two eras, including: "Into the Nightmare", "Don't Break the Circle", "Sign of a Madman", "Night of the Demon", "The Plague", "Blackheath", and a few others. I was disappointed that the theatrical element, still present in the band as recently as '97 had been abandoned for the jeans and t-shirt approach. I mean, how cool would it have been to see Dave Hill

emerge from below the stage as if rising from the grave, totally covered in leaves and soil? Okay, the tunes were so flawlessly delivered that this time I didn't mind so much. Certainly along with **Blaze** and **Lizzy Borden**, **Demon** will go down as one of my personal faves for the weekend.

For the next couple hours I wandered a bit, getting something to eat and taking another sweep through the Metalmarkt. I caught most of the **Doro** set on the main stage, which was neither amazing nor bad. When she performs the classic material from *Triumph and Agony* or *Burning the Witches* my attention is captured completely. When it's newer material from her experimental industrial phase, even her looks can't save her. Hence, once her repertoire of classics had been extinguished, I took an early leave to head towards the Black Stage to wait for **Rose Tattoo**, and ultimately the return of the mighty **Venom**.

Not knowing so much of their history or recorded output, perhaps I'm not the best person around to critique a performance from Australia's rock 'n roll outlaws. Similar to a less adrenalized version of **AC/DC**, **Angry Anderson** and company looked haggard enough to profess to have lived out the stories they've told through l.p.'s like *Scarred for Life*. On a festival bill stuffed with bands like **Rhapsody** or **Marduk**, the gritty rock stylings of **Rose Tattoo** would seem to be out of place, but judging by the rather large crowd amassed for their set, Europeans might be a bit more open than we, to appreciating good music, regardless of its classification.

After the end of the **Rose Tattoo** performance (which incidentally was recorded for a live l.p. to be issued later in the year) a good portion of the crowd headed back to the main stage area for the first German appearance of **Dee Snider** in well over a decade. Dee, having himself cancelled last year, was a last minute stand in for this year's no show headliner **Thin Lizzy**. Now, being from New York, a **Dee Snider** performance is nothing to really go out of your way for. Since the mid 90's, he's been on the club circuit playing **Twisted Sister** covers with his **S.M.F.** band. This is kind of sad, as Dee was once a legendary guy, and the prospect of a full fledged **Twisted** reunion could still have the makings for a rock 'n roll success story. Yet,

by doing the full **Twisted** show, without original members (okay A.J. Pero was on drums tonight) he's kind of diminished the importance of a legitimate reunion. I also recently caught wind of the news that he's releasing a new studio album of... re-recorded T.S. song: talk about beating a dead horse! **Widowmaker** was a good band that was something fresh, **Desperado** wasn't so bad either. I'd be much happier to see a guy as talented as Dee put his energies toward something new, (be it music related or not) with an occasional nod to the past, to keep the interest in **Twisted Sister** alive, until it's time for a proper reunion with ALL original members. Having said that, the reaction Dee's band received from the crowd was one of the strongest of the whole weekend.

But I was holding firm during all this at my front and center position, waiting for the 7 gates of Hell to open and the witching hour to arrive. In all my years, never before had the opportunity to see **Venom** presented itself. I recall both the Studio 54 taping of "Ultimate Revenge", and the Ritz appearance the following year that spawned half of the **Venom** live double l.p. However those were my early teenage years and such ambitious aims were not yet realistic. So here in Northern Germany 14 years later, I patiently wait, enduring the crush of rows upon rows of rowdy headbangers behind me, as the chants of "**Venom, Venom...**" become louder and more belligerent.

From the delivery of their infamous intro, "From the very depths of Hell... **Venom!**", all around, drunken headbangers raised their hands in devil horned salute to two thirds of guys who started all this mayhem



20 years ago. Sadly, the momentum was temporarily halted by the unwise selection of a new track as the set opener. (possibly "Resurrection" but I'm unsure). You might have read in some less than reputable publication that the new **Venom** album was one of the strongest of their career. Don't believe it for a second. While the addition of Anton is a musical improvement, nobody ever bought **Venom** records to hear good drumming anyway. What *Resurrection* does is take the most modern and aggressive elements of their comeback effort *Cast in Stone* and amplify them. Gone almost totally are the thrash metal traces that could still be found on tracks like "Raised in Hell". But this is supposed to be a review of the gig not the album, right? So after the completion of the first song, Cronos says "This one's the title track of the second l.p." and the band launches into "Black Metal". Now it can safely be said that all heads were banging. For the next one hour and ten minutes, **Venom** treated us to the standard selection of classics, "7 Gates of Hell", "Warhead", "Die Hard", "Welcome to Hell", "Buried Alive", etc., replete with a liberal dosage of pyrotechnics and profanity. Also included were "Evil One" and "Flight of the Hydra": two of the stronger tracks from the '97 reunion l.p., and two more songs off *Resurrection*: from which sadly there are no strong tracks. Despite a few bumps and lumps, when the smoke had cleared, I was finally able to someday tell my kids (well, someone else's kids maybe) that I'd seen **Venom**.

It was pretty much wind down time from here on out. After hanging out with the **Stormwarrior** guys in the **Headbanger's** tent for awhile, I ventured back out onto the festival grounds for one final time to catch the **Twisted Tower Dire** set on one of the small stages. Despite having released a record of theirs on our **Bad Posture** label some years back, this was actually my first opportunity to catch them in a live setting. First off, it should be noted that guitarist, and main songwriter **Scott Waldrop** had unfortunately split camp earlier in the day and headed back to the U.S. Rumors circulated that he was ill, or at odds with other members of the band. Where this leaves the future of **T.T.D.** I'm not sure, though it would certainly be a shame to see this fine hope for the future of U.S. power metal extinguished so early in the game. However, they did do an admirable job as a four piece bringing the festivities to a close with a nice version of "A Dangerous Meeting".

After wandering the campgrounds in a bit of a haze, saying goodbye to various pals from throughout Europe, it was back to my lodgings for the night and the beginning of my long journey home the following day. For another year, the **Wacken Open Air** has been more fun than I could possibly conceive of having anywhere else. I don't know if the metal renaissance that we've experienced over the last few years can continue forever or not, so if bands from the golden age of heavy metal are as important to you as well, I would implore you to consider making the effort to attend one of these glorious gatherings.

P.S. Unlike last year, I didn't see a "Wacken Suggestion Box" for offering preference as to who should be booked onto next year's bill. So let me end with the following list of love to see bands, should my opinions per chance carry any weight with the promoters: **A.D.X.**, **Witchfinder General**, **Baron Rojo**, **Obus**, **Blue Cheer**, **Malice**, **Nasty Savage**, **Wargasm**, **Cirith Ungol**, **Slaughter Xstroyers**, **Uli John Roth**, **Ritual Carnage**, **Onslaught**, **Voivod** (only with **Snake**), **Halloween**, **Manilla Road**, the **Rods**, **Bathory** (there's a first time for everything right?), **Gillan**, **Heavy Load**, **Metalucifer**, and **Y&T**. It's always nice to dream...

Keith Oswald continued...

around. This album is pure evil. Please when listening have an open mind. **EMPEROR... In The Nightside Eclipse (1995)... 5 out of 5...** Emperor's greatest album, as well as another flawless black metal record. This record features the blast beats and the faster than the speed of light guitar playing, but the main focus here is Ihsahn's exceptional keyboard work. The mysticism he creates in each song has not been challenged since. If it wasn't for Ihsahn and his songwriting skills, his demonic vocals, his lead guitar playing, and lyrics there would never be an **Emperor**. Another great factor is the sleeve art by Necrolord (aka Kristian Wahlin). So if you do not have this record and you're looking to get into real extreme black metal buy this. **ENSLAVED... Vikingtigr Veldi (1994)... 3 out of 5...** First album for Norway's **Enslaved**. Five tracks all clocking at ten minutes or more. Lots of piano, keyboards, and electronics mixed in with the black metal sound they created. **Enslaved** plays more of a viking metal, since their lyrics revolve around tradition and heritage instead of Satanism and the occult. A solid album, however, the tracks are way too long and repetitive. **ENSLAVED... Frost (1994)... 4 out of 5...** Their first to be on Osmose Productions. **Frost** is exceptionally fast and tight musically. The songs are much shorter and easier to comprehend than their debut. **Enslaved** began mixing viking metal with some folk music giving **Frost** a very original sound. **GEHENNA... Seen Through The Veils Of Darkness (1995)... 4 out of 5...** This is **Gehenna's** first full length album and their best. The music revolves around Sarcana's keyboard work, with mid tempo rhythms and heavy guitar playing. Musically, this will remind you of a much slower **Emperor** with a touch of **Dimmu Borgir**. **IMMORTAL... Diabolical Full Moon Mysticism (1992)... 2 out of 5...** The debut by Norway's black metal kings, come forth with an album that has some similarities to early **Dark Throne**. The rhythm section is very death metal, borderline thrash. The label at the time was J.L. America, which gave every band a shitty production. They were associated with Osmose Productions for a few years. Recording reminds me of another J.L. America band, **Beherit**. **IMMORTAL... Pure Holocaust (1993)... 3 out of 5...** **Immortal's** second release is much more of a black metal record than its predecessor. Demonic screams, blast beats, speedy guitars, and a much thicker production. Not a bad album, it just doesn't have any memorable songs. **IMMORTAL... Battles In The North (1995)... 3 out of 5...** Some of the fastest drumming I have ever heard. Drummer **Erik** leaves before the making of *Battles in the North*. His replacement is none other than bassist/vocalist **Abbath**. I can not believe the speed he is playing. There are no triggers or samples included here. Amazing. **IN THE WOODS... Heart Of The Ages (1995)... 4 out of 5...** A very dark and atmospheric debut from **In The Woods**. **In The Woods** creates a sound unlike no other. Influenced by the likes of **Bathory** and **Mayhem**, **In The Woods** showcased another side to them as well. They were also influenced by art rock. Bands like **King Crimson**, **Hawkwind**, and **Genesis** are portrayed in their sound. This giving the band an almost avantgarde feel to this album. Every song has a strong melody with lots of doom and gloom. Vocals vary from screaming to bellowing, in an almost gothic like approach. Plenty of keyboards, mellotrons, and other devices to give a spacey 1970's sound. And yes there is black metal involved in each song. A definite classic. **ISENGARD... Hostmocke (1995)... 5 out of 5...** **Isengard** is a one man project made possible by **Dark Throne's** **Fenriz**. His second album as **Isengard**, *Hostmocke*, captures the raw brutality of **Dark Throne**, mixing the album with lots of traditional Norwegian viking music. Half of the album is in Norwegian and the last two tracks are in English. Production is limited, but it's not all that bad, creating a disturbing morbid sound unlike any other. Released on Moonfog. The first album is titled *Vinterskugge* and was released through Peaceville. **MAYHEM... De Mysteriis Dom Sathanas (1994)... 5 out of 5...** Released after the death of guitarist **Eurononymous**, this is **Mayhem's** first full length album. The eight featured tracks also include **Attilah** from **Tormentor** on vocals, drummer **Hellhammer** and the infamous **Varg Vikernes** on bass. **Mayhem** destroys the listener by shredding through each track with pure evil intentions. Black metal is what **Mayhem** created and this record shows their ability to kick everyone else's ass. **STORM... Nordavind (1995)... 4 out of 5...** **Storm** features **Fenriz** on drums and vocals, **Satyr** from **Satyricon** on guitars, bass, and vocals, and **Kari** from **Third And The Mortal** on vocals. All lyrics are in Norwegian and all the music is traditional Norwegian folk songs with a tinge of metal. No black metal on this at all. An exceptional release.

Well that's all for now. If you would like to e-mail me please do at Disheartment@yahoo.com. Thanks.

Powermad 2000: by Y.Y.P.

For the fourth consecutive year Keith Menser has managed to put together one of the most important but somehow most overlooked American music festival. Centering mostly on progressive bands, this year saw a very adventurous selection of styles that included many bands outside of the standard prog realm.

ANTITHESIS: This band has been making a lot of waves this last year and their fire ball set showed they were deserving of the praise. Intricate bass work and rock solid performance were the highlights of their set.

ATTACKER: Bringing back the old school, this band has returned after a thirteen year absence to find their fans just as rabid and ferocious as when they left. Many of the band members from the original line-up have gone their separate ways but original vocalist Bob Mitchell won't let that stop them as they blast out to support Sentinel Steel's re-release of their first two c.d.'s.

MARCEL COENEN: If you haven't heard *Lemur Voice* go out and get some immediately. Marcel was the guitarist for this great band before their premature demise due to musical differences. But now at the helm of newly formed *Sun Caged*, Marcel made the trip to America with drummer Dennis LeFange to promote their new project. It's phenomenal stuff, mixing the distinct tonalities and approaches of three different vocalists. I can't wait for its official release. Marcel's set was a unique performance as he played unaccompanied "guitareoke" with a c.d. playing as back up musicians. Everyone was on their feet in anticipation as this modern guitar master brought effortless technique to the hungry ears of the Powermad crowd. Each blazing lead run was met with cheers as Marcel showed that shred is NOT dead and that Joe Satriani needs to consider a day job.

DEFYANCE: Pretty solid music but I was distracted by their lack of decent stage attire. I know you should judge a band solely on musical merit but for me a live presentation is a SHOW and seeing a front man in denim shorts makes me feel like they are taking a half asses approach to it. I'm not saying everyone should be in leather and chains but I think a band should be something more than just a bunch of guys that looked like they just rolled in off the street.

ETHERIA: Probably one of the biggest surprises of the show, this was the band's FIRST performance and they handled it like pros. Drawing comparisons to *Queensryche*, they played a variety of textural tunes that bordered on prog but stayed closer to power metal. They covered "Eyes of a Stranger" to perfection and for many this was a religious experience. My only complaint is that the lead vocalist, Mike Blair, is a little too close of a match to Tate on their original material. If he loses some of the overly dramatic aspects of that style and finds his own sound they could have a real future. I was especially impressed with the mood and feel of the music with the synth/ guitar interplay and the phenomenal drumming of Ed Faust.

EVENT: For a long while they have been burdened with the label of being a "Berklee band" and the criticism that they were more focused on technique and what color their shoelaces were than on delivering the music. This was never a personal issue with me. I've seen them three times in the past few years and have a preference for the more technical stuff but this show they pulled out a great set of new material that was short, powerful and to the point. The new c.d. is getting high praise from everyone including small label heads and web radio d.j.'s and it's justified. Lead vocalist Dave Deluco has a powerful voice matched with a cool, "I could give a rat's ass" stage attitude. Drummer Matt Scurfield is a Powermad favorite, combining restrained flash with a solid groove. He also handles the keyboard parts live, it's a secret... the rest of the band displays a real sense of maturity and kinsmanship as they evolve into a seasoned act. Matt and Jay (bass) also play with Joe Stump when schedules permit.

EXHIBITION: With former members of *Eternity X* and *Seven Witches* vocalist Bobby Lucas you couldn't ask for a better combination. This was another debut performance and like *Etheria* they pulled it off admirably. Bobby has a very unique style, picture Sean Connery and Bruce Dickinson combined. Instrumentally, the band held their own with the rest of the prog crowd with each member delivering a tight and focused performance. My only complaint with the music is that it seemed less than challenging in the area of chord structure. One expects to hear more depth and variety in this type of music and straight bar chords all night just doesn't seem to cut it. Regardless, they sounded great and the music was substantial enough to warrant my full attention.

GREYHAVEN: This is one of the few bands that have received so much buzz on the net but didn't really knock my socks off live. Don't get me wrong, I enjoyed the set but from what I'd been hearing I guess I was expecting the second coming or something. They've been compared quite a bit to *Dream Theater* but I think they had a sound of their own. The synth player doubled as bassist ala the *Doors*

(if you don't know, there's no point in explaining it) and possessed a great palette of sounds and textures that added a great deal to their set. **HADES:** After witnessing their dismal set at the March Metal Melt-down (where they were victims of faulty judgement having a curtain separate two stages in a relatively small space) I wasn't sure what to expect. I remember the vocals being very good what little I remember hearing them but the rest of the band was a wash. This show they proved to be one of the best return to roots bands out there. Back to best of what the 80's had to offer, *Hades* pounds out riffs and grooves like the mighty *Priest* and *AC/DC*. A roaring, guttural guitar tone is what to expect from Lorenzo and Furman as we stared in astonishment at their lack of fx. Gibson straight into a Marshall, oh yeah, THAT'S the way metal is supposed to sound! Vocalist Alan Tecchio is a complete powerhouse delivering high octance range and smooth stage presence. Definitely a band to catch live.

JACOBS DREAM: Another band to fall victim to the Metalfest fiasco, *Jacobs Dream* was swamped with bad sound in New Jersey but even with a better mix they failed to deliver here. I'm not sure what all the excitement is about this band but they fail to impress me live. Complete lack of stage energy plus my confusion as to why they need three guitarists left me scratching my head wondering what all the fuss was about. I must be missing something so I'll have to check out the c.d. **JAG PANZER:** Since missing their set at the Milwaukee Metalfest I was really looking forward to their set at Powermad and they didn't let me down. Harry Conklin is a metal God along the lines of Halford and Dio but never made it to that level of respect or notoriety. All the musicians delivered flawless performances, playing to the small crowd as if they were in an arena setting. Scorching guitar solos and blistering rhythms set this band head and shoulders above the rest of the performers many who were in the front banging their heads in respect.

MASTERMIND: For the first song or two I was completely mesmerized by the beautiful lead vocalist, a shapely blond in black leather. However, I was soon overcome by her voice and the superb musicianship of the rest of the band. Brothers Bill and Rich Berends have combined forces in a powerful way adding a distinct 70's prog feel to the modern scene. Shades of Gentle Giant, *Tull*, and even the *Allman Brothers* occasionally crept into their freewheeling set. Bill was clearly one of the best guitarists at this three day fest, moving beyond shred and giving us all a reason to go home and rediscover our Mahivishnu albums. **MYSTIC FORCE:** Finally, after all these years of seeing Keith in a frantic mood, Hawaiian Bermuda shorts in a bunch over some organizational snafu, I got to see him in his true element. There are few stage performers who put on quite as good a show as Powermad organizer Keith Menser. With the strong and soaring vocals of frontman William Wren, *Mystic Force* set out to show they were in top form and succeeded. Wren was one of my favorites for this show, with a great powerful voice that left the ceiling fans shaking.

OCTOBER 31: If any of you are familiar with *Deceased* you are probably aware that King Fowley is one of the most outspoken characters in modern metal and a decent drummer and vocalist to boot. This show actually pushed him up into the spotlight as he took center stage for the first time in America. Not the prettiest boy in rock, and to quote King himself, "we put the HEAVY in metal!" Fowley delivered a brutal set that was reminiscent of *Testament's* latest offering. Less technical and more organic than most prog and metal bands, **OCTOBER 31** slammed through songs off their new c.d., *Meet Thy Maker* that skirted around death metal and morbid themes. This is a great band to see live, they place their emphasis on putting on a great show above everything else. Kudos to the organizer for having the balls to put on a band that doesn't necessarily fit in with the rest of the bill and hats off to the normally stodgy crowd who embraced them. I've always said that proggers INVENTED the arms folded, "I can do better" front row pose but there was none of that for this band.

OCTOBER THORNS: Widely considered to be the surprise of last year's show, they had a good ol' one lined up for this year's show. Since last year they have lost two band members, both of them guitarists. While last year had lead vocalist Paul LaPlaca doubling as the synth player, this year he opted for the co-lead guitarist spot. At the last minute their new guitarist became ill and even though I've heard that they were planning on doing the show as a four piece, Marcel Coenen came to the rescue and learned three songs in two days. This was no easy task as any

of you who are familiar with their brand of fast paced intricate prog metal can attest to. Opening with "Circle Game" which is featured on the Powermad 2000 sampler disc, the crowd quickly got to its feet in support. The band moved quickly through a short set, highlighting tracks off their demo c.d. Reliving a moment from last year's performance Dave Z. once again astonished us with a bass solo that incorporated a two handed tapping version of the "Pink Panther" theme and Michael Jackson's "Billy Jean" complete with moonwalk. They lost a bit of momentum with a long goth like number but quickly got the crowd back with their last tune. Newcomer Sean Meahger on synth is a perfectly composed complement to this band of wack jobs. Did anyone get a good look at the drummer?

PERSEPHONES DREAM: Very interesting band but impossible to define. haunting textures and female vocals remind one of Sioxie And The Banshees but they are much more aggressive musically. One of the highlights was the huge percussion set up and thick guitars. They had the unenviable position of opening the show and the sound crew took many liberties using them to check out the system.

RAVEN: I can't say enough good things about this band. I first saw them a few months ago opening for U.D.O. and let me tell you there isn't a band anywhere that enjoys themselves more onstage than these guys. The energy is just infectious as they rip through their extensive back inventory of songs. Anthemic, fist pumping 80's metal raw and in your face. John is still hitting notes that were shattering glass in neighboring states and Mark (even though a tad sloppy) ground out relentless riffs like a chain saw. Probably my favorite performance of the whole fest.

READING ZERO: Probably the band with the biggest buzz on the net right now following the release of their new c.d. *Satellite Sessions*, this performance was highly anticipated by all. Fronted by the unique Chris Roy on vocals and bass, they have managed to capture quite a bit of attention recently. Their set was full of power, guitarists Chris Pellerin and Joel Decatur blending together to create a sheer wall of sound. I'm really looking forward to getting a copy of their new stuff.

SINGLE BULLET THEORY: While Matt DiFabio (guitar) goes to work on self destructing his career with a bad attitude, the rest of the band seems hell bent on destroying you with their take no prisoners attack. Former members of one of last year's best bands, *Cipher*, S.B.T. has taken the strengths of that band and put them into orbit. Vocalist Mark Shveima Jr. combines a hardcore stage presence with full on metal assault, flying through the air as if he had Flubber on his heels. DiFabio adds the subterranean growls and it's this vocal mix that really gets my attention. One of my favorite bands at the show. I hope to see more of them in the near future.

TOWNE CRYER: Another surprise of the show. Progressive but with a very emotional grinding feel. This N.J. band makes use of many different styles and approaches but their strong point is in writing good melodic hooks. Tim Kopp almost got doomish in a few sections which was actually quite cool.

ZANDELLE: What can I say about these guys? It takes a lot of heart to come out to a festival and play dead last especially when the previous year they had to open it but they came with the perfect attitude. "A lot of people have said that this is the worst slot of the show," remarked vocalist George Tsalikas, "but I think it's the best! We get to play for the real die hards, the true fans who stick it out until the very end." Of course the crowd roared its approval and they launched into their newest material. This is a band that deserves a most improved award as they've moved away from a washy unfocused sound to a crisp and tight pummeling assault. George has put down the bass to concentrate on just being the frontman and he couldn't have made a better move. Both guitarists Joey and Anthony have improved their lead playing to the point where it doesn't even sound like the same band as they were last year. Drummer Bobby Delminni is also becoming a monster in his own right as he lays down a crushing beat. The highlight of the set and the entire show was when a young vocalist wanted to sit in with the band was allowed up onstage. Young Trent (2 years old) was headbanging at the front of the stage when he was gently lifted up to George who held him under one arm while continuing to sing. At the end of the song Trent gave a shout out to all his homies back at the crib (literally) and was handed back down to his mother.

This was the best Powermad that I have ever attended and with a little luck it should continue to grow and prosper. This is the only show of its kind and I encourage anyone within driving distance to make a nice summer vacation out of it and go and support this scene. There were people there from all over the world and it's a great chance to meet new and interesting people as well as see the best taht prog has to offer.

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HOLLENTHON

Interview with vocalist/ guitarist/ bassist/ keyboardist Martin Schirenc

One of the best albums I've heard in a long time came to me from **Hollenthon**. This is a new band that features ex-**Pungent Stench** leader Martin Schirenc. Also in the band are his wife, Elena Schirenc, and drummer Mike Groeger. **Hollenthon** released its debut, *Domus Mundi*, on import last year and those who have heard it are amazed. *Domus Mundi* is a symphonic, theatrical; yet total metal album. Martin sings in various styles and his wife complements him with her beautiful voice. The music is in the realm of **Therion**, but **Hollenthon** keep things on the extreme side. It is a well produced album and maintains the right amount of rawness, yet it's polished enough for the symphonic sounds to be heard with power and clarity. In short, this is a masterpiece. I corresponded with Martin via e-mail and here are the results.

How did the idea for Hollenthon originate?

I started **Vuzem** as a side project to **Pungent Stench**. I never intended for the music to be released and it was more or less a way for me to express myself musically without the limits imposed by a band like **Pungent Stench**, or rather the style of music that we played. With **Vuzem** I was able to do what I wanted without having to consider the opinion of other band members. Through Ray Wells' coaxing, I released two songs on a compilation I produced called A.B.M.S. Norici Obscura Pars. After that, I took a break from this project and concentrated on producing other bands. When I started to write new material again, about two years ago, it was so different to the **Vuzem** stuff that I thought it best to change the name. Silenius of **Summoning** heard some demo versions and played them to Max of Napalm Records. He liked the stuff and offered me a deal.

What are you creating with Hollenthon?

It is quite difficult to put a label on **Hollenthon's** music. But if we must, it is a mixture of death, black, and heavy metal with classical, and on the debut, some ethnic influences. Definitely very symphonic and somber.

When are you recording the second record?

I have already begun work on the second coming of **Hollenthon**. Because the songwriting process is often a lot of trial and error, I can not really give a good indication of what the sound will be like until it is done. I can say that it will be creepy and very bombastic.

I know you have a side project coming out next month, care to discuss what it is about?

Kreuzweg Ost is a new project headed by Silenius and me. Musically, **Kreuzweg Ost** associates itself with modern avantgarde and rhythmic industrial, capturing the listener within its threatening sonic world. Thematically, **Kreuzweg Ost's** debut release documents Germany's rise and fall during the Second World War. Original samples taken from both Allied and German propaganda are worked into the rhythmic setting in order to create a disturbing, stomping, stormy atmosphere often taken to the point of ridicule. The debut, entitled *Iron Avantgarde*, is scheduled to be released by Napalm Records on August 7th. Actually, you can download an mp3 from the Napalm Records homepage. Our homepage will be up by the time it hits the stores: www.kreuzwegost.tsx.org.

Describe your vocal style for Hollenthon.

Domus Mundi uses a wide variety of vocal styles: male, female, and sampled. Anything and everything you can imagine. I didn't want to ruin everything by simply giving it my trademark **Pungent** vocal style, although it also made it on the c.d.

I believe your debut was one of the best records released last year, it takes what bands like Therion are doing but takes the music to new levels. How would you like people to perceive and feel about Hollenthon?

I just would like people to give it a chance. They shouldn't expect a rehash of **Pungent Stench**. How they feel about it is a matter of taste. So far, I have been very satisfied with the reviews and with the feedback I have gotten from the public.

What are your thoughts on your time with Pungent Stench?

It was a very positive experience that allowed me to live off my music and travel extensively. I hold this time in very high regard. Sure, there were problems, but isn't there always when a band is together for nearly a decade?

Why did the band break up and how do you feel about that last album?

At the time we decided to split, I think that we reached everything that's possible with a controversial band like **Pungent Stench**. We were tired and the spirit of the early days wasn't there anymore. As I mentioned, we had some personal problems, which is quite normal when you hang out with the same people for such a long time. All these circumstances made it impossible to keep on playing together.

Any chance of there being a reunion?

There is always a chance. I'm still in contact with the guys, so who knows?

Are you happy with where you are now as a musician?

Very happy. I have gathered much experience over the years, both in the creative and technical side of things. Naturally, there is always room for improvement.

How do you feel about metal in general?

I grew up with metal of the 80's. Back then **Venom** was the first black metal band. I am a bit disappointed by the mediocrity of some bands today. They think that because they play the theatrical part, they don't have to learn how to play their instruments. It seems that it isn't about music anymore, but about belonging to an elite group of people. I also don't know if it is such a good thing that bands today take themselves so seriously. Many go about it the wrong way in the attitudes they portray. As a somewhat veteran of the death metal scene I have to say that I liked the scene better when bands were able to laugh at themselves. Once a band begins to take itself too seriously they quickly forget the real reason why it stands in the spotlight every night in front of their fans.

What are your future plans?

Future plans include finishing up the follow up and supporting it with a tour. It will of course require that I do some planning, since taking **Hollenthon** to the stage is not such an easy task. Both financial and technical considerations to think through. Either way, I'd really like to play live, although it would mean finding the right musicians first. If everything works out the way I'd hope, I should tour after the release of the second album. The live shows, if I have my way, should be comparable to **Iron Maiden** or **Venom** shows, but I guess we have to sell more c.d.'s for that to happen.

What are your goals as a musician?

Sex, drugs, and rock 'n roll and to continue doing what I am doing. The music takes me, so this is a hard question to answer. I guess I want to continue to create something original and of a high quality.

Any final comments?

Just like to thank the people who have bought the c.d. and made it possible for me to record a follow-up.

Discography:

1999... *Domus Mundi* (Napalm)

Current line-up:

Martin Schirenc... vocals, guitars, bass, and keyboards
Elena Schirenc... vocals
Mike Groeger... drums

Website:

www.hollenthon.com

HOLLOW GROUND

Interview with guitarist and vocalist Matt

When my best friend Samantha went to see a band play at All Aboard Pub she brought me back a c.d. by the band who played there. What I heard from the band called **Hollow Ground** was quite impressive. They played a modern style of metal but one could tell that they clutched to their traditional metal roots as well. It's been a few years since their first two discs were released and now comes a new full length titled *Zero Hundred Hours*. This disc sees the band with a new sense of maturity and a crisp, heavy sound which should get mosh pits moving everywhere. I talked to frontman Matt about his band and what they are doing.

When did you guys get together and what was your main focus for the band?

I'm the only original member left. Me and a friend of mine, Jeremy, started the band in '92. We got the drummer we have now, Dan Sweeney, in '94. Jeremy left the band and we got Rob, the bass player, in '96. We wanted to play something heavy. We're from that eighties back-ground, that's what we all grew up on.

What types of crowds do you get at your shows?

It's very mixed. There was a time around '96 when we were getting a pretty decent response from the people but then the rap metal shifted into high gear and the crowd went with that. We do a lot better outside of New York than we do inside of New York. When people stay around they are usually impressed with us and end up buying the c.d.'s. The problem is a lot of times we get the band going on before us is either really bad or they're so far different than what we play that people end up leaving. We just want to get on the road and start playing shows everywhere.

Have you had any label interest?

We had a little bit of an interest in early '96, unfortunately we lost the original bass player and things fizzled out until we got Rob. By that time we had to get Rob up to speed. This year we played the Milwaukee Metalfest and there was a scout out there checking out all the bands. He hooked us up with this promotion company. They sound like a real estate agency. They're not gonna get paid until we get signed. We had a great time in Milwaukee. Even though it's not totally people who are into our kind of music, people in that crowd are more willing to sit back and see what you're gonna play. We were on the main stage with **King Diamond** and it worked out really well. We were surprised, the place was huge. We went to the *Tattoo the Earth* tour the next day and we were shocked because we just played a place like twice the size.

What are your influences?

Old **Metallica**, any **Slayer**, old Ozzy especially Randy Rhoads, those are my own influences. As for the rest of the band, they're into **White Zombie**, **Testament**, **Pantera**, anything hard and heavy.

Tell me about the first two releases.

The first two releases were recorded on a Tascam eight track. We recorded all that ourselves. We wanted to make a step up with the production. We've been growing even more as a unit writing songs. We wanted to package this new album and hopefully someone will pick it up. We were on a top ten playlist on a radio station in Brazil. He e-mailed us the playlist and "Glass Dick" was up there with **Sepultura**. There's a couple of area radio stations also playing us.

What are your plans for the next year?

We've got a gig coming up at the All Aboard Pub. We're also playing sometime in November. Other than that we're focusing on playing outside of New York now. We're trying to nail a few more shows on the East Coast. We just got back from Massachusetts two weeks ago. We played a twelve hour marathon of metal bands.

How do people react to your use of samples?

It's weird. We just got rid of the guy who did the samples. It didn't work out too well. We're currently looking out for a guy to do samples for us. We're in the middle of hooking it up so the drummer, Dan, can trigger them off. The people like the samples. There's people who liked us on the previous disc where we had some of it going on, when they saw us they said we're great but it's too bad we didn't have someone who could do that live. It's almost a full time position for a band member because of the amount of samples that we do. It really does make a difference because people noticed it sounded just like the c.d.

How has the response been for this new album?

It was released officially the first week of August. People have been great. People are buying it at stores

which is good. We've put it in Slipped Disc, Tower, Looney Tunes, two other ones.

Discography:

2000... *Zero Hundred Hours*
1997... *Rape At 2000 Decibels*
1995... *Sik Fuked Up Godlike* e.p.

Current line-up:

Matt... vocals and guitars
Rob... bass
Dan... drums
Ed... keyboards

Website:

www.hollowground.com



GLENN HUGHES

Interview with vocalist and bassist Glenn Hughes

One of the most impressive releases I've heard in a long time came in the form of Glenn Hughes' new disc *Return of Crystal Karma*. It is almost as if Glenn Hughes has merged his classic blues and funk background with **Living Colours** soul and groove and his former band **Deep Purple**'s classic rock sound. Glenn began his career with the cult act **Trapeze** in the early seventies. After a short stint in **Deep Purple** where he shared lead vocals with David Coverdale, Hughes jumped from various different projects before finally getting his solo career on track in the mid nineties. While Glenn came through with what some may call arrogance, my chat with him showed a man who was open, honest, and confident. Here he is...

How do you feel about *Return of Crystal Karma*?

Before I made the record I took a look at the work I had done in the past and I realized I've made a very diverse background. I thought I am who I am, I've been pigeonholed as the voice of **Deep Purple**, you know my history- I've been veering off into funk and jazz for quite awhile, I want to make what I consider the most cohesive rock record I could make at the moment. I put it together very quickly. I knew what I was going to call it, I knew the titles of the songs before I wrote them, I had a vision of where the album should be and how it should be made- I just had a feeling it was gonna be a strong album. I had been two or three years without an album before the last one and I figured I'd push out another one this year.

The heavy groove on this record reminds of what **Living Colour** was doing before they broke up.

I had no reference to that but you must remember that Glenn Hughes is an extreme closet R&B fan. I am a soul guy. I wanted to combine British hard rock with American R&B. I wanted these songs to transfer to my live show, I will do at least four songs live.

What are your live plans?

This fall I'm going out in Europe with **U.F.O.** They're going out in January in the States. I'm pretty sure that I'll be on the same tour. I know I'm coming to New York February 10th or 11th. We have the same management so I'd imagine we'll be on the same tour. People in our wonderful country have been begging me to play in the U.S. and what they don't realize is I need an opening slot and it's difficult getting an opening slot on tours. I want them to know there's no market I want to play other than the U.S.A. It's the best market in the world, it's the best audiences, and there's a huge current of underground Glenn Hughes fans out there who would love to see this.

Where do you go musically from this record?

I already have the next album title in my head. It depends on how many units I sell on this record. I wanted to make a rock record, hence the name *R.O.C.K.* How many closet hard rock Glenn Hughes fans are buying records? This album is a yardstick for me. There's a huge following of R&B fans out there as well, in the real world I would like to combine the audiences. *Crystal Karma* is more rock but I'd like to incorporate more funk into it. If I have my way the next one will be more like that. I never write the same record twice. I'm a songwriter, I just happen to have a gift to sing. That's what I do.

Who's gonna be in the band when you tour?

The guys on the album. I know my keyboard player and guitar player will be the same, I don't know about the drummer because Gary's kind of busy. They've been with me for three or four years. Sometimes Gary's playing with other people.

Was it intentional for you to focus on your solo career now?

I could've sold out years ago by doing more metal music. I don't want to sell myself out. I want to make music that is good for my soul. I'm writing a hell of a lot of music that one day people will get to hear. I have a Hughes/ Thrall album that I'm making right now, a Hughes/ Travers album, Hughes/ Emerson, and my own Christmas c.d., a full length video, there's a lot of stuff coming out. In the eighties I had a bad decade. I just lifted myself out of that at the turn of the nineties. I went through a reality check. I decided I'm gonna get well and just make music. I make diverse sounding records. I don't make records for guys in

suits. I make records that I like. Sometimes it's difficult because there's always gonna be that one guy who doesn't like it. You can't please them all. I have a lot of emotional carry on. I've had a lot of things go on in my life that a lot of people don't get to see or hear. I was in **Deep Purple** in the seventies, a huge group, and I went through a period of making a lot of records and a couple of bucks and then I decided that I was gonna screw up for awhile. I wanted to die. It was good for me to get off my ass and work. I spend a lot of time in Manhattan. I'm there every ninety days for a week. I fell in love with New York again.

Where do you live now?

Los Angeles. I've been living here for about twenty five years. I've been offered a lot of work in New York so I might move there at some point. I might get an apartment there but it's so fucking expensive. I'm getting married in November. Everything in my life is on schedule. It's my second marriage. She's the woman of my dreams.

How is the Hughes/ Thrall album sounding?

It's every bit as adventurous as the first one. You can't pigeonhole it. It runs the gamut of extreme heavy to very R&B. It's big production down to trio sounding stuff. It's all over the place. It's fucking deep.

What happened with the Tony Iommi *8th Star* album?

I started writing and producing Tony's solo album in 1996. I did some demos with him that we were maybe going to release as a solo album. Somebody got a bootleg of that and then Tony couldn't use those songs. Tony was upset that I didn't get to do anything on his album. That's okay because Tony and I are friends- that's the most important thing. He asked me if I'd like to use any of the songs and I called him back and told him I'd like to use "Gone".

There's lots of press dedicated to your vocal performance but I think you're a grossly underrated bass player.

Check out the bass playing on "Days of Avalon". It's monstrous. I'm not playing a fretless, I just use a lot of vibrato. I'm playing bass better than ever right now. I love playing that instrument. I'm really lucky to have this gift.

Looking back on your career, what was the most exciting time for you?

'70 to '73 with **Trapeze** because this was a band that I formed and created. This is where I found my style. Without me being in **Trapeze** I wouldn't be in **Deep Purple**. I was a huge fan of American R&B and I was living in England in industrial north and I mixed that with R&B and that's the backbone of who I am.

How was the time with **Deep Purple**?

I thought it was very complementary of our vocals with David Coverdale. I didn't have a problem singing with somebody else, he may have had a problem singing with me. I thought we worked our parts extremely well.

How was it working with George Lynch?

George was a good friend and he called me in to do a couple of tracks. I sang them in an afternoon and I haven't seen him since.

Discography:

2000... *Return Of Crystal Karma* (S.P.V.)
1999... *The Way It Is* (S.P.V.)
1996... *Addiction* (S.P.V.)
1995... *Feel* (S.P.V.)
1994... *From Now On* (S.P.V.)
1977... *Play Me Out* (Casablanca)

Current line-up:

Glenn Hughes... vocals and bass
Joakim Marsh... guitars
Marc Bonilla... bass
Gary Ferguson... drums



HYPOCRISY

Interview with drummer Lars Szoke

Hypocrisy is back with another new album, *Into the Abyss*, that sees them writing the best music since the 1996 classic *Abducted*. It's all here, their patented ultra fast music with Peter Tagtgren's screaming vocals over top; there's even some old school death metal influences popping up again. The trio of Tagtgren, bassist Mikael Hedlund and drummer Lars Szoke has been together for over five years now and have created several albums that have solidified **Hypocrisy's** status as a unique and groundbreaking specimen. After a brief period around the time of *The Final Chapter*, Tagtgren felt his two bandmates were slacking in the promotion department but it appears things are back on track as two studio albums have followed. Here is drummer Lars Szoke to update us.

How do you feel about the new album?

I'm very happy. There's more aggression than the last one that we did and I'm more into that. I really like the fast stuff. We don't have all just fast songs, we plan them very well and put a lot of variety on our records.

What are your tour plans?

We have planned a tour with **Destruction** and **Kataklysm** for two weeks in September. In December we're gonna do a two week European tour with **Morbid Angel**. We don't have anything more planned than that. There's no plans for us to come to the States, but I hope that happens soon because the last time we came to the States it was really great. We did a couple of shows in Florida and the Milwaukee Metalfest and they were amazing.

I remember there were rumors that you were going to break up around that time.

Peter was tired of doing everything with this band. He planned the tours, he wrote most of the music, and he recording it, everything. I understood him. Me and Mikael are trying to help him out with the interviews and doing some more music and work with him in the studio as well.

Did you have some writing input on this album?

Yeah, I'm involved with three songs and I did one myself. I did "Unfold the Sorrow" and I'm involved with three fast songs, the first one "Legions Descend", "Sodomized", and "Total Eclipse". This is the way I like it. The last one we did was okay, but I really need the fast parts. We booked the studio for just five weeks and we only had some riffs. We did everything in the studio. Wrote the music, lyrics, and drank beer in five weeks. We had a lot of fun this time. The last one we did we were in the studio for two months and that was too long. We got bored. This time we really enjoyed it. We worked as a team this time. Next time we do a record we're gonna book for four weeks and try that. We didn't have one left over song. Everything went smoother.

Are you involved with any side bands?

Not really. I was supposed to do something with **War**. I think that album came out but it was bootlegged from **Necropolis**. I played the drums on that and I am

supposed to play the drums on the new record. I'm not sure what's happening with those guys. I haven't heard from them. I have been working at the Abyss Studio since January. I am helping Peter with the recording of bands here. We have **Children Of Bodom** here right now. It sounds really good. Peter's my boss right now, he's paying my salary.

I guess that means he'll let you take a vacation when Hypocrisy goes on tour!

I hope so.

Does his production duties hinder Hypocrisy at all?

It's really hard to book the bands and then we have to move them and they can't wait the extra two weeks. Peter also has his Pain project. I don't understand how he's got the time to do everything.

Are you going to be back in the studio as quick for the next album?



We talked about this. We are going to do some boxed set for our ten year anniversary. We will have songs from each album. We'll put all our video clips on c.d. rom. There are about seven or eight video clips. It's fun for the fans to look at. We'll throw in some pictures from tours. Maybe later next year we'll do a new studio record.

Did you ever think it would last ten years?
No. We don't fight at all. We're really good friends.

Final comments?

Hopefully we'll come over to the States to play some shows. It was a long time ago and I look forward to it happening. It was amazing last time.

Discography:

2000... *Into The Abyss* (Nuclear Blast)
1999... *Hypocrisy* (Nuclear Blast)
1997... *The Final Chapter* (Nuclear Blast)
1996... *Abducted* (Nuclear Blast)
1994... *The Fourth Dimension* (Nuclear Blast)
1993... *Osculum Obscenum* (Nuclear Blast)
1992... *Penetralia* (Nuclear Blast)

Current line-up:

Peter Tagtgren... vocals and guitars
Mikael Hedlund... bass
Lars Szoke... drums

Website:

www.hypocrisy.com

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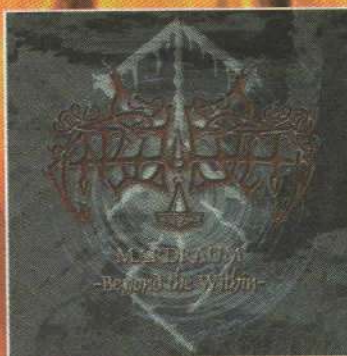
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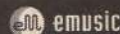


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ISIS

Interview with vocalist/ guitarist Aaron Turner

This past month has brought some of the most impressive modern hardcore albums I've ever heard- **Maharjrh**, **Dragbody**, and especially **Drowningman** and **Isis**. **Isis** are currently finishing up their tour with **Candiria** and **Dillinger Escape Plan**- while those two bands are constantly in your face aggressive, **Isis** will slowly build up their intensity and add certain dynamics to their sound. This is the reason why some have compared them to **Neurosis**. **Isis** is fresh, aggressive, yet deep and thought provoking. They recently released their first full length album, *Celestial*, an amazing album that defies categorization. Here is vocalist/ guitarist Aaron Turner to tell us about **Isis**.

How do you feel about the new record?

We're very happy. We had some problems with our albums in the past because we've been rushed in the studio and we didn't have a lot of time to write in the studio. On *Celestial* we finally had the time to spend. We were able to try different things and we had a lot of material ready. We ended up with more than a full length's worth when we were done with the session. We could pick and choose. We spent a lot of time figuring out the sequence of the songs. We had a good flow to the record. The sound quality is better, the songs are better, and I think **Isis** is a band that is better presented in the full length format just because our songs are so long. It gives people time to get into it. A lot of people don't have the attention span to get through an entire record but hopefully a lot of people are able to listen to the record all the way through because I think it is good. It is songs, but we don't like to think of it as a collection of songs. We think of it as one big flowing album.

It must be difficult to write an album like that without it being a full blown concept album.

That's been our writing style since the beginning. I think we were in a groove. We wrote a lot of material that was cohesive and fit together well. That was a conscious effort. It was all written around the same time. I think the writing process for that record flowed pretty well. We had a line-up that was ideal for what we were doing. We've had problems in the past trying to find the right people.

What are your other releases?

We recorded our demo in '98 with our original four piece line-up. That was me playing guitar and singing, Jack Caxide playing bass, Aaron Harris playing drums, and Chris Marishark doing vocals and electronics. The same line-up also recorded *The Mosquito Control* record. We had another guitar player in there, this guy Randy from a band called **Cable**. There was a mutual separation between him and the band before *The Mosquito Control* was recorded. After *The Mosquito Control* we got Mike Gallagher on second guitar. He was in **Cast Iron Hike** before he was in **Isis**. On the second record we had Jay Randall from **Agoraphobic Nosebleed** on vocals and electronics but he left shortly thereafter to pursue other interests and then we got Cliff. That's the line-up that we recorded *Celestial* with. After *The Red Sea* we solidified the current line-up with Cliff. It's remained that until the present day. We also recorded a **Godflesh** cover and a **Sabbath** cover. The **Godflesh** cover came out as a split seven inch with **Pig Destroyer** on Relapse. The **Sabbath** song will be for the Hydra Head **Black Sabbath** compilation. We also recorded a bunch of other songs when we recorded *Celestial* that will be coming out as an e.p. on the Neurot label. That will be out the beginning of next year.

How has your sound evolved?

In the beginning it was pretty sludgy and derivative of the bands we were influenced by; the **Melvins**, **EyeHateGod**, **Buzzov-en**, **Neurosis**, **Godflesh**. Since then we've become more textural, not just straight forward bludgeoning this time. We've added more electronic elements, there's a lot of almost psychedelic, **Pink Floyd** sounding stuff. Our interests in other types of music has shined through as time's gone on. We aren't dedicated to pure heaviness and volume, although that is still one of our main tactics. Dynamics became very important to us. We didn't want to make an album that was monotonous and crushing through out. I think the parts help accentuate each other. The melodic are more soothing and the heavier parts are more devastating.

Do you see **Isis** perhaps experimenting with the vocals in the future?

I don't want to have any set objective. I try to do what is more comfortable for me. On this one I thought the vocals were more dynamic. I tried singing and yelling as opposed to screaming. In the past it was straight forward screaming. I think as time goes on the vocals will evolve and a little more sung and a little less screamed. I don't have any set goal, I do what the music dictates. The vocals are important to **Isis**, but I think it's more of a detail. It's not the focus of the band. I think the music is the focus. The vocals are just an added detail that add more depth and more dynamics to the music where needed. A lot of us just listen to instrumental music. When a singer sings too much it's really distracting to me. It's almost like an instrument soloing over the whole song. In a lot of hardcore bands the vocalist doesn't do anything else so they feel a need to fill in these gaps with singing and it doesn't allow the music any time to breathe. We're a jam band. We like to get into it and draw things out. You can't sing all the time over a ten minute song.

How was your tour with **Candiria** and the **Dillinger Escape Plan**?

It went awesome. We did the U.S. last summer with **Cave In** and that worked very well. We did the U.S. again this summer with **Dillinger** and **Candiria**. We were a little sceptical going into it, we didn't know how we would be received by the **Candiria** audience. Not necessarily that they attract a different audience than we do but they have a bigger following and they've toured with bands like **V.O.D.** and **Scarhead**, that's something that we never exposed ourselves to. We were really surprised at how we got good responses and we sold a lot of records. We played better than we ever played in the past. They were great to tour with and the tour was great in every facet. Next month we do a bunch of dates with **Botch** and **EyeHateGod**. We have plans to do another U.S. tour next summer, this time it will be a headlining tour. Next fall we plan on going to Europe. We try to condense our shows into tours. That allows us to have solid practice and writing time and solid touring time.

What do you think about this scene you guys are now a part of- **Neurosis**, **Drowningman**, **Diecast**, **Candiria**, etc.?

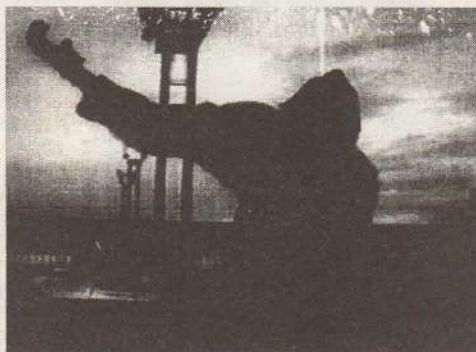
It's very exciting just to be a part of it. There's been an explosion in the Northeast for this type of music. You have **Cave In**. I think it was started by **Converge** around here. It's been aided by other bands around the country like **Coalesce**, **Botch**, and bands like that. We're all in the right place at the right time, we're all playing some new musical facet of hardcore, or whatever it is that we're doing. I don't really like to pin a specific tag on the music but I think we're all doing something different. We all inhabit the same space and all are going for a specific feel in the music. **Dillinger** is the antithesis of us, they've got a lot of riffs in a short period of time and they're very fast, but at the same time we work very well together. They're fast and punchy, we're slow and dirty and heavy. It complements very well. We don't inhabit the same ground but there are elements that relate to each other. I'm definitely into it. I feel lucky to be part of an environment where there's so many active bands and they are all creative and expansive in thought. Bands are now able to do what they want to do.

Discography:

2000... *Celestial* (Escape Artist)
1999... *The Red Sea*
1998... *The Mosquito Control*

Current line-up:

Aaron Turner... vocals and guitars
Mike Gallagher... guitars
Cliff Meyer... guitars and keyboards
Jeff Caxide... bass
Aaron Harris... drums



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LAST CRACK

Interview with guitarist Paul Schluter

One of my favorite bands ever was the early nineties sensations **Last Crack**. This was a band filled with charm and charisma. When they released their second album, *My Burning Time* in 1991, the record caused people to take notice of this great talent. With the enigmatic and philosophical frontman, Buddhø, **Last Crack** were one of the few truly emotional bands to ever release an album. Anyone who has heard songs like "Wicked Sandbox" and "Mini Tobogan" know what I am talking about. While Buddhø quit, the band recovered with a new vocalist, Shawn Brown, and released a rare out of print disc titled *Runheadstartscreeaming*. This album was just as good, if not better than anything **Last Crack** did with Buddhø. They reformed the original line-up one more time but ultimately it ended again. I spoke to guitarist Paul Schluter, in one of my favorite interviews ever, about the legacy of **Last Crack**.

When you originally put together Last Crack what was your vision for the band?

I think we all thought we would get signed and do the records that we did end up doing. When we got signed we were really young. I was signed when I was twenty, Buddhø was about twenty five. We just did it. It was five unique personalities. We had the band together for a year before we had Buddhø and he came in and added his flavor. The band was five different cooks all working together. We weren't going for anything, it just happened.

How would you describe Buddhø and his contributions?

He was really wild. We ended up moving to Minneapolis before we did our first album. We did our first album in Paisley Park, Prince's studio. We all lived together in this house. Most of the time he tried to separate himself and the band was more together. He's a unique guy, he's definitely a loner. At the times it mattered everybody came together and got it done. It was hard to do what we did. Everybody moved away from home and lived together in a house with some other guys too. In some ways, it brought everybody together but also made it more hard. We all went in to do the photo shoot we did for the first album, and he wanted to do other pictures of himself naked. We all left the room. The record company saw those photos and ended putting that on the album cover. Nobody was happy about, including him. He didn't plan on that. It was a wild ride with him. He was up and down. He was pretty crazy, sometimes intentionally, sometimes not.

I'm sure a lot of people who hear the third album, the one without Buddhø, would realize how special the band was and how well you carried on without him.

When he quit the band we were six weeks into our tour. We had great stuff in the works. We were talking about going to Europe with **Janes Addiction** and **Alice In Chains'** manager was talking to our manager telling us they really dig the band. When he quit the band our management team split. One guy went with Buddhø and the other guy stayed with us. My manager got us out of the contract and felt we could get a better deal. They let us out of our contract but they kept Buddhø. They latched on to him. he and his manager thought they could get a new band and he could run the show, but the record company got the demos and they eventually dropped him too. It was nothing like **Last Crack**. Musically, most of it came from me initially and then the band stewed it together. Buddhø wrote "Blue Fly Fish Sky", but the more intricate stuff was the band. That's the angle they liked. They finally saw that. You would've thought they would've known that the whole time or cared to find out. I got into **Magic 7** and we had a huge talk together. He quit in the middle of our way up the ladder. I know he thinks it was the stupidest thing he ever did. I feel better about it. I know he regrets it as much as everybody. I think working with him, we had a really good writing relationship. It drew us together to be in the other band. **Magic 7** is like **Last Crack**, but more commercial and not as weird. I love that weirdness too.

How do you feel about Runheadstartscreeaming?

They are demos. There was three different demos. There was a different drummer on every set. The drummer that was our last drummer, the guy who went to Europe with us, wasn't even on that album. We wanted to get back to where we were. It had to be as good, if not better than the old band. We were very critical. Me, Todd, and Don were the original members. We tried to show those guys the ropes in a way. The first demos included "Speak the Ocean" and "Theory", three

LAST CRACK



RUNHEADSTARTSCREEMING THE DEMO SESSIONS 1993-94

others. I really like the album a lot. We still talk about. I pulled out *Runheadstartscreeaming* the other day and it sounds so good. We were kicking ourselves for not keeping it going. The main reason that band broke up, was when we can back from the European tour; Phil, our original drummer was out of **White Zombie** and Buddhø wasn't doing anything so we got the original **Last Crack** back together. We did one show and it was so good. It was outside in the middle of the summer, under the moon, it was perfect- you could feel the energy. I was talking to Don, the other guitar player, about it the other day, that we should do that sometime. We could spread the word so that people would come from all over. We'd do a couple of shows. There's people around, if they knew about it, people would come. When we did the Dynamo Festival with Shawn Brown we met some guys who said they drove all the way down from Sweden to come see us. Everybody who liked **Last Crack** was really into it. They still listen to it today. On the **Last Crack** page there's a message board and I get a lot of e-mails about the band. It's ten years later. Shawn was a great singer. He was a huge fan of **Last Crack** before he joined the band. The record company put out some ads saying **Last Crack** was looking for a singer and he saw it somewhere and called our manager. He came up for the audition and he was a really cool guy. He was very nervous. A lot of people liked him even better than Buddhø. It's more likely that we would do a reunion show with him and play some stuff off of that album. I've been thinking about burning fifty C.D.R.'s at a time and selling them locally just to get that album out more. There's only fifteen hundred in print. It was a European release only. We did that to help us for the Dynamo Festival. We ended up selling the rest of them to a distribution company and that's probably how it ended up in the U.S. That's very, very rare. If you're a die hard Buddhø person you might not get into that. At least we got another good singer. All the lyrics were written by Shawn Brown. I think the whole album is up on www.lastcrack.com. There's a couple of rare things on there that you might want to check out. There's Shawn Brown doing "Blood Brothers" live. There's two unreleased tracks with Buddhø that was originally on pink 45's out of a label in Minneapolis. They are rare as well. They kidding around songs, but they fun. One's called "Pointy Cone Titty" if that gives you an indication.

Discography:

- 1994... *Runheadstartscreeaming* (Diamonds)
- 1991... *My Burning Time* (Roadrunner)
- 1989... *Sinister Funkhouse #17* (Roadrunner)

Last line-up:

- Buddhø... vocals
- Paul Schluter... guitars
- Don Bakken... guitars
- Todd Winger... bass
- Phil Buerstatte... drums

LONG WINTERS STARE

Interview with guitarist Clint

Long Winters Stare is yet another band to be released by the experimental, challenging, and exciting American label, Dark Symphonies. The band has been around for a few years and their debut for Dark Symphonies is actually their third release to date. The music is slow and doom laden, with plenty of surprises and atmosphere. It is a forgotten style of metal that **Long Winters Stare** plays, yet they have added their distinctive mark on the music. I had a very interesting chat with guitarist Clint about the past, present and future of this band.

Where do you live?

I'm up in Rhode Island. I like it a lot but I'm thinking about moving out west to Oregon. I got a job offer from Solar Moon Records out there, so I might go and work. It's an electronic, dark wave, and ambient label. That's the other love of my world. I run a record label called Dragon Flight that I put out that style.

Do you have any bands in that style?

Oh yeah. I'm in a band called **As All Dies**. We have a split on Dragon Flight. It's neo-classical ambient stuff. I have a noise project called **When Joy Becomes Sadness**. It's guitar manipulation stuff. I've got several side projects. **Long Winters Stare** is just the one that got signed first. The other ones are signed now. I've got a whole bunch of stuff coming out. I like to be busy.

How do you feel about the new album?

I'm real happy with it. It turned out better than I thought it would. I was afraid there wasn't gonna be enough time. We only wanted to be in the studio for two weeks and we were looking for a month so that we could take our time on it. When it came down to mixing time it was a little short. Besides that I think everything came out way better than I expected. I'm gonna give props to Jim, our engineer, because he helped out a lot. A lot of people sometimes complain about the guitars being too low but that's the way I like it because I play the guitar. I want the guitars to be in the mix of everything. I don't like overbearing guitar work. That's the only complaint that I've gotten from a couple of people. They see that the guitars are equal with the keyboards and it's not really dominating. It's not supposed to be dominating. If you've ever heard any **Long Winters Stare** material before, you're not going to hear the guitars dominating. Maybe the next time around I will go crazy and put some more guitar on there. Then they'll tell me, it's not like the other ones.

When you created the band, what goals did you have in mind for Long Winters Stare?

Me and the drummer Jason, who's on the first c.d. were doing like an **EyeHateGod** sludge/ doom thing, with more crusty sound and the broken glass throat kind of vocals. It had a hardcore edge mixed into the music. The band was called **Man Thing**. We were doing pretty well, we had some offers from labels. Jason happened to work with Greg, the keyboard player, and he said he knew this guy who played bass. He came down to practice and around that time I had been listening to old **My Dying Bride** and **Anathema**, so I wanted to incorporate some more atmospheric and progressive elements to the music. When I found out he played keyboards I thought it would work. We started to write more like the *Turn Loose the Swans* period of **My Dying Bride**, before they became a gay goth band. We realized that **Man Thing** wasn't the same anymore. We changed the name to **Long Winters Stare** in the beginning of '97. From there on it's been whirlwind trip. We definitely have another one coming out next year because we signed for two with Dark Symphonies. From there on I don't know if the project's going to continue or not. Me and the keyboard player are going in different directions. I don't want to do anything the two of us don't want to do. We're real happy and we're definitely going to do one more record. We're writing right now. People always think of us as a band but it's always been the meeting of our two minds. It's never been a full time band even though we'll do some shows. Greg doesn't want to play live anymore, he's focusing more on other kinds of music. It might be better for the both of us to go our separate ways and stay friends. We co-own the record label and the magazine together. We have a lot of stuff that we do together. We both want to experiment in different directions. I know if we do want to do another record Ted's all gung ho for it. I don't see us leaving Dark Symphonies because he always does what we ask him. He always wants to hear our other

projects first. Things are ever changing and growing. I just don't want people to think that **Long Winters Stare** is a band, it's just these two guys. We do have a female singer, but she's just a session member. She works real well with us but she's not a full time member. We like so many different types of music that it's impossible to concentrate on one project fully. A lot of these bands now get sterile because they rehash one idea over and over again. We like to be real honest. We focus on what we're doing at that moment and time.

Do you see any new types of experimentation on the next album?

We decided that **Long Winters Stare** is never gonna play live again because it's too much of an undertaking to do. We don't want to do it live anymore. People say when they see us that they really like us. We don't have a live drummer and it's just the three of us, it would become too much of a hassle. This will be the record that you can not play live. We're gonna go into a forty eight track digital studio and we're gonna bring in a live string section. I hate to disappoint the metal fans but it's gonna be far more progressive. It's a space epic. It's gonna be a story line with a cast of characters. We're gonna have six main characters and everyone is going to be doing something different. It's gonna have a lot of guitar overdubs, a lot of strings, a six or seven piece vocal choir, it's gonna be quite an undertaking. We decided that if this is the last

record we're ever gonna do, it's gonna be the best. I shouldn't even say it's gonna be our last, we're gonna take some time off and do some other stuff, but we may be interested in making another album. The next one's gonna be very over the top. We're very inspired by **Arcturus**, **Ved Buens Ende**, and **Oxiplegatz**- the really experimental stuff. That's where we come from. Greg grew up on progressive rock like **King Crimson**, **Yes**, **Rush**, and **Gentle Giant**. When we mesh the two of them together, that's what it becomes. I think the doom metalheads are going to be disappointed because it's not gonna be as heavy or as dark as this record. I've become disillusioned with metal lately. No one wants to support it anymore. Nobody comes to see you when you play live. Everybody's out for themselves. Playing the Milwaukee Metalfest

was the biggest disappointment I've ever had in my life. They treat you like cattle. We battled **Enslaved** and **Children Of Bodom** in our time slot. We were lucky to have fifty people watching us.

What did you hope to achieve with this new record?

I'm very into Odinism. I have a Thor's Hammer around my neck. I am a follower of the belief system. I won't call it a religion because it's not a religion. I wanted to tell some kind of story within that frame. I wanted to do the story of Ragnorak and the fall of the Valkyries. Between the two of us we got a story of what a Valkyrie is, what it does, and Ragnorak is the giant ending battle of the Gods. What allowed the human race to stay alive in Nordic history is basically what this story is about. It's a myth to some, a true story to others. We have times when we don't know how not to be grandiose. If you want more information on Odinism you should read the *Edda*. It's the Nordic version of the beginning of time.

Discography:

2000... *The Tears Of Odin's Fallen* (Dark Symphonies)
1999... *Before The Dawn So Go The Shadows Of Humanity* (D. Flight)
1998... *Cold Tale Eternal* (Pantheon)

Current line-up:

Clint... guitars and vocals
Greg... keyboards
Jason... bass

Website:

www.darksymphonies.com



MONDO GENERATOR

Interview with bassist and vocalist Nick Oliveri

Mondo Generator is a band that has been talked about for several years now. Ever since **Kyuss** broke up at the peak of their commercial and creative career, various members have kept their musical ambitions alive in bands like **Slo Burn**, **Queens Of The Stone Age**, **Desert Sessions**, and **Unida**. **Mondo Generator** was put together by Nick Oliveri (**Queens Of The Stone Age**/ ex-Kyuss), in order for him to get out the rawer, more aggressive side that was not utilized in **Queens Of The Stone Age**. Joining Nick is guitarist Josh Homme and drummer Brant Bjork, both of whom have worked with Nick in **Kyuss** and **Desert Sessions**; and **Karma To Burn** drummer Rob. Nick took a break while on the road with **Queens Of The Stone Age** as they tour with **Ozzfest**.

How do you feel about the Mondo Generator album?

I dig it. I recorded that stuff in '97, so we put it out because it was sitting on a shelf. I didn't do anything with it. I was looking at these tapes thinking I should listen to this, so I pulled it out and listened to it and I liked it.

How's everything going with the Queens Of The Stone Age tour?

It's going really good. We're in Little Rock, Arkansas right now. It's an off day from **Ozzfest**. We're playing our own show here and then we pick up with **Ozzfest** tomorrow in K.C. We fill in our off days with our own shows. It's a day on, day off. We're out here to play music, not take days off.

How would you describe Mondo Generator compared to your work with Queens Of The Stone Age and Kyuss?

It's got brutal guitars. It leans to the heavier side of stuff that I like to write. We do a lot of melodic stuff with **Queens Of The Stone Age**. This has melodic stuff as well, but it tends to lean more toward the punk rock side of the stuff that I write. Josh and myself do side projects all the time, sometimes we decide that a song is not for **Queens Of The Stone Age**, it's not that it's not good. You like the song and you want to put it out there, so this is an outlet to release different styles that we like to play.

Will this be an ongoing project?

If we have time between tours with **Queens**, I'm thinking of doing a little run over to Europe to play a few shows and let people know that we will do some live stuff with it eventually. It's a matter of time. I play with the **Dwarves** as well, but I can't tour with them. I play on the new record but I can only tour with one band. We stay pretty busy. We get home and then we go right back out on a tour. It's tough to find time to do it.

Any chance of there being a Kyuss reunion?

We're satisfied with doing something different right now. John's got his own band going. Right now, it's a big no. You never know what is going to happen in the future.

Any good Ozzfest stories?

Some guy got struck by lightning and died in Minneapolis. It was pissing rain big time, apparently after the show, one guy got struck and three guys got injured. That was pretty wild. You never hear shit like that at rock concerts. Usually it's some guy that got crushed in the front. We do what we do every day but it's pretty

tame. Besides **Pantera** and us I don't see anybody really rallying and partying. For **Pantera** and **Queens Of The Stone Age** it's like, how much can we do before we fall down? Everybody's been mellow and nice. A lot of the bands aren't necessarily my cup of tea, but everybody's nice. It's not our thing to play something like **Ozzfest**. I don't know if we're a breath of fresh air for the people who are watching or who the fuck is this? Everybody else is pissed off all the time, while we're only pissed off once in awhile. A lot of the stuff I don't get. I can't put it down because it does real well. The kids really like it. They sit and watch us and think we're different. They don't leave.

Mondo Generator has variety.

It was two different sessions. There was three songs that I recorded with Brant and Josh. "13th Floor", "Simple Exploding Man", and "Cocaine Rodeo" were the three. Then I came back in the studio like four months later with two other guys to record the other songs. There's three of them where I got together the original **Kyuss** guys. I hadn't played

with Brant for a long time so it was cool to bring them all together in the same room to do it. We got Johnny G. to sing some background vocals. It was really fun to do it. It was weird that I didn't do anything with it. I hadn't listened to this for three years. I called Greg and asked him if he wanted to do it. I'm really happy that it's out now. This stuff is good enough to be heard. For awhile there I didn't listen to it so I didn't know if it was good enough or not. It added new life to it. I've always been a fan of Greg's stuff, I love **Goatsnake**. I'd rather do it with him than Man's Ruin or something like that.

What are your plans for the rest of this year?

We get back from this tour September 3rd and we're home for about five days so we're gonna record

some b-sides. Then we shoot back on the road. We're gonna stay busy until about this time next year touring. Hopefully by this time next year we can have a new record out. I'm not the best bass player but I keep busy. That's all I could ask for. We love to do the side projects. I've played in bands we're they were weird about you playing with other people or doing other things. I never understood it. It's nice to be in a situation like **Queens Of The Stone Age**, there's no ego trips. It's important to have other outlets. The things that I write might not be right for one band but it will be for another.

Discography:

2000... Cocaine Rodeo (Southern Lord)

Current line-up:

Nick Oliveri... vocals and bass

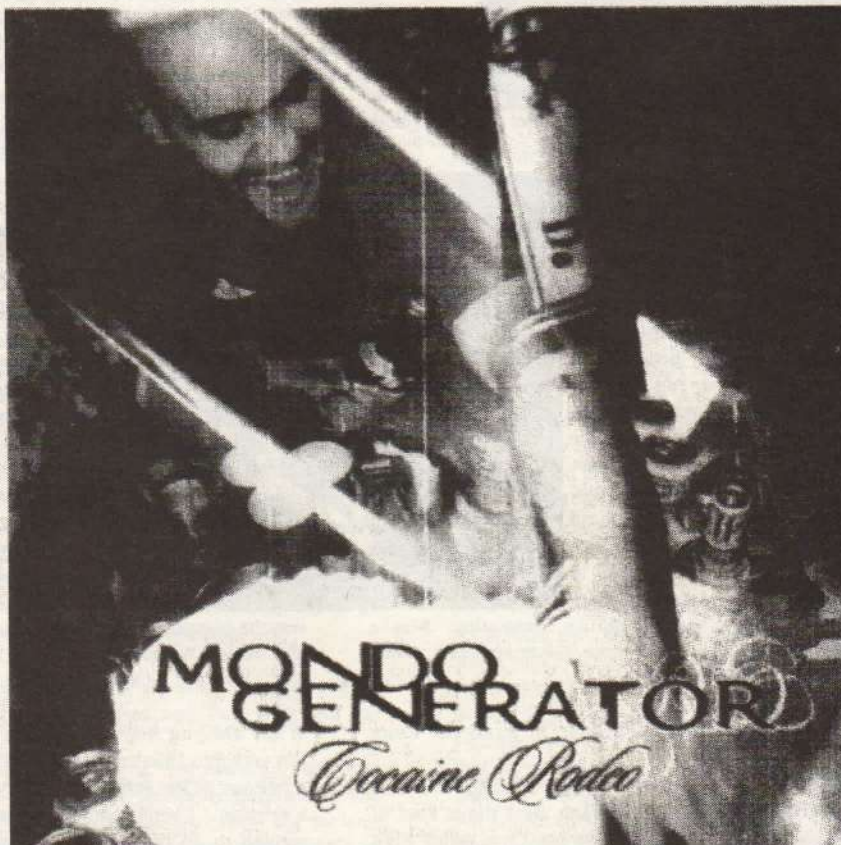
Josh Homme... guitars

Rob... drums

Brant Bjork... drums

Website:

www.southernlord.com/mondo.htm



MUZZY LUCTIN

Interview with guitarist Paul Schluter

Muzzy Luctin is a name that a lot of people out there should be excited about. It is the name of the band led by former **Last Crack** guitarist and songwriter Paul Schluter. Paul put the band together following an e.p. released by a band called **Magic 7**. **Magic 7** featured the original and charismatic vocalist Buddho as well. Once Buddho quit the band, Paul and his bandmates moved on to form **Muzzy Luctin**. While the band has distanced itself from **Last Crack** vocally, the music shows some of the creativity from Paul that made **Last Crack** so special. While I spoke to Paul about **Last Crack** we also dedicated some time to his new band, **Muzzy Luctin**.

What are you up to now?

The new band is called **Muzzy Luctin**. That band's been together for about a year. It's stemmed from **Magic 7**, because the bass player, the drummer, and myself were in that band together with Buddho. It's not the original **Magic 7** because there were some line-up changes. Then we parted ways with Buddho. We were going on our own for about a year and then we hooked up with this guy, Ken Thrift-Kennedy. He was in a band called **Inner Sanctum**. I produced their album at the studio I worked at. That's how I got to know him. His guitar player and bass player quit music and it seemed like the perfect thing for him to join. We've been playing around the area for about a year. We've got one song getting play on about three radio stations around here, it's getting play in Milwaukee a little bit. We're working on the album.

When will the record be out?

Hopefully sometime this winter. It will be our own release but we're really gonna push it. It will be a great demo to send out to labels. In February we hooked up with the **Last Crack** manager, Gary Taylor. We're back in the swing. We went to New York in April and going back again in September, so it's cool to have somebody in the industry working for us.

How would you describe the sound?

You can hear it on the website. The one song that's getting airplay is on there. Some people locally who don't know what's going on heard that song and thought it sounded familiar. You'll probably hear elements of **Last Crack** in it. The vocals are pretty different. Ken has more of a modern sounding voice, but not rap. The vocals on the single sound like **Rage Against The Machine** or **Kid Rock**, but we're all over the board like **Last Crack** was. We've got some jamming stuff, some mellow commercial songs, and the biggest change is that it's the most commercial stuff that I've done. It's a little less weird but we come from our own place. I miss that weirdness a little. We have commercial material but I want to write musically out there stuff and be more creative and not worry about how long the song is or if radio will like it or not. It's still got flavors of the old stuff. There's nothing weirder than **Last Crack**, but my mindset has changed. I love listening to the radio, I want to be on the radio, I like the stuff that's on the radio. We were talking about it at practice. Even though we are commercial, we aren't the flavor of the month. We've had the labels see us and they say it too. They look past good music because we don't have enough tattoos and piercings. I think that what we're doing right now is the strongest thing I've done in a long time. I believe in all the songs. Every record company passed on the **Beatles**. So I have faith in it. When we had **Last Crack** with Shawn Brown, we all expected to get signed but that was a great learning experience. We thought we'd get a deal out of our show in New York in April but we didn't get anything out of it. We will go back. As long as the band sticks together and keeps writing good music, I think any band can get there, you just have to stick together. **Magic 7** is probably the closest you get to **Last Crack**. It's not a full length, but it is six songs. It's a cool taste. When you hear Buddho's voice it will pull you right back.

What ever happened to Buddho after Magic 7?

He threw it away. We were getting some calls at home from different record companies. We were on the play list for local radio stations and that draws record companies. We had an A&R guy from M.C.A. call my house and we talked to the

guy who signed **Creed** at Wind Up Records. He's from Madison and he's the best record label person we ever talked to. He loved our single, which is called "Drifter". I felt we were really close to getting a deal. Buddho is a drifter himself. He's never content to stay in one thing. When it gets good, it's time for him to leave. He hasn't hooked up with good enough musicians to trust them. He won't let them do their thing. He's trying to run the show and write everything. He even sits behind the drum kit. That's how things were going in **Magic 7**. Musicianship wise, **Magic 7** was up there with **Last Crack**. He wants total control and that's probably what his dream was when he left **Last Crack**. He wanted everything that we had but have it be his thing. There's nothing wrong with that, but that's not what made **Last Crack** good.

Have you recorded anything else besides the three Last Crack albums and Magic 7?

If something goes down or goes wrong, I get something else together. I'm endlessly trying to get it back up to the level we were at. The worst thing you can do is lose a member because it sets you back. Now I've got a year, two years into this. I've been jamming with the musicians for two years and the singer for a year. I think he's got a lot of potential too. That's so important, as your singer and frontman. I don't write lyrics or vocal melodies so that's important for me because I write the music. I'm finally in a thing where I think everybody's gonna stick it out. I don't think anyone's going to flip out and quit the band. The

singer is kind of flaky too, but he's not a control freak and I know he'll never quit because he wants it as bad as I do. It's really funny that everyone is still around. I see Todd, the bass player, around once in awhile. Phil hasn't been around for awhile, but I think I'll be seeing him soon. It's funny, Buddho has come to our last two gigs with **Muzzy**. He's been in the crowd. It's really cool. It's very respect-

able that he's gonna take time out of his life to come see my band. We've had our ups and downs for sure, over the years, but there's something special to **Last Crack**. I could see those guys, anyone who has been in the band, fifty years from now and we'll feel like it was only two weeks. It's definitely like a brotherhood. Here's an interesting story. The way that **Last Crack** got signed was so bizarre. We were together for a couple of months. We did this four song demo. It was "Concrete Slaughter Dogs", "Sarahboyscage", "The Last Crack", and "Shelter". We were going to parties every weekend and play the tape. We're at this party and it is totally dark, this guy comes up to me and asks me if this was my band. He tells us he knew a seventeen year old kid who runs a fanzine in Minneapolis and he talks to record labels all the time, so I said "here take it". This guy sent it out to Roadracer and Shatter Records. Shatter Records flew out to Milwaukee to see us. It's amazing to have a seventeen year old kid get that to happen. Even our managements haven't had people fly out to see us, we're going to see them. Monte flew out to Madison to see us. Both labels offered us a twenty thousand dollar deal. Roadracer was bigger so we went with them. We got signed off a demo tape at a party and a seventeen year old kid with a fanzine.

Current line-up:

Ken Thrift-Kennedy... vocals and guitars
Paul Schluter... guitars
Darren Soderholm... bass
Michael Haefner... drums

Website:

www.muzzyluctin.com



NOCTURNAL RITES

Interview with bassist Nils Eriksson

While I will not question the talent displayed on their previous three releases, but I find *Afterlife* which features the debut of new vocalist Jonny Lindqvist, to be a major step up. Lindqvist's more metal and rougher style of singing puts *Nocturnal Rites* in a league of their own. *Afterlife* represents some more changes as the lyrics are no longer in that medieval vein and even the artwork has been updated. *Nocturnal Rites* are still all about metal, it is just change that is reminiscent of *Riot* when Tony Moore joined the band over twelve years ago. I spoke to bassist Nils Eriksson about the changes that have ensued and this great album called *Afterlife*.

How do you feel about the new record?

I feel very good about it. So far the response has been really amazing. Everyone seems to really be into the album. I couldn't be happier.

There seems to be a change in sound on *Afterlife*.

Yeah, it's a bit more aggressive and it has more edge to it. It's got a bit more attitude. The stuff that we lacked on the other albums, I think we've got that this time.

What are your tour plans?

We're definitely gonna start touring soon but there's no concrete plans so far. We've got people working on it.

What happened with the change in vocalists?

Anders realized that he couldn't give the band one hundred percent so he willingly stepped off. We all talked about it. There's no hard feelings, we're still friends. He just wanted to focus on other things and try different kinds of music. He's been doing this for a long time so I guess he was just tired. He's got a studio and he likes to record bands. He wants to try something new.

How did you hook up with Jonny?

He played with the drummer, Owe, in a band like ten years ago so we all knew him. This is not a big city so we know everyone who is into music. It wasn't too hard to find him. It wasn't that painful, the change happened very quickly. I think his vocal style really blends in. He's got a lot of edge and attitude in his voice and that really suits the new style that we're having.

How do you think fans are going to react to the changes?

When we launched the idea that Anders was leaving the band the switchboard on the internet showed that a lot of people thought we'd be a crappy band with a new vocalist. Now that it's out, almost everyone thinks that Jonny is a better vocalist and he really blends in with the sound. I don't think it's going to be a problem. Everyone seems to be into the album. I know how it feels. When Bruce Dickinson left *Iron Maiden* I was heartbroken because they are my all time favorite band. I can see how some people will think that it's not that good that Anders left. I think it's for the better.

It's been about ten years that Nocturnal Rites has been together, correct?

Yeah, I joined in 1991. We've had different line-ups through the years. When we started we were very young. We played a different style of music. We've changed the style a lot, but we're still like a new band. We have a lot of fun and that's what it's really all about. The day that I don't like it anymore I'm gonna quit.

I thought the album cover had a futuristic feel to it.

A lot of people like it. I'm happy about that because it's nothing like we've ever done before. It's modern fantasy. We didn't come up with the concept but it looks like our image of hell. When I look back on all the lyrics that I've written, they are the same thing- death and what happens when you die. I think it's an image of hell, having to be chained to a machine and staring at a gorgeous girl for another millennium.

How would you describe the lyrical approach on this record as opposed to past records?

It's different. On the past three albums we wrote a lot about fantasy; wars, warriors, kings, and queens. I felt tired of that. When I write my lyrics I sit down and listen to the song and see what it says to me. I didn't get that fantasy vibe that I got before. The songs felt more fresher and up to date than before, so it felt natural to change the lyric direction.

It's interesting that Nocturnal Rites was playing a style of metal that has now become popular and you are now changing and growing away from that.

When we write music we don't think about what people will think about the songs when the song is done. It's got to be natural or it's gonna sound like crap. We write music from our hearts and this is what came out. I'm very happy with the results.

Is there any talk of coming to the States?

We don't have any concrete plans as of yet as far as touring goes. We will play as

much as possible. With the right package a U.S. tour would definitely be a possibility. It's a big country so it would be great to tour there. As always, it's a matter of money and somebody has to pick up the tab.

Discography:

2000... *Afterlife* (Century Media)
1999... *The Sacred Talisman* (Century Media)
1998... *Tales Of Mystery And Imagination* (Century Media)
1996... *In A Time Of Blood And Fire* (Dark Age)

Current line-up:

Jonny Lindqvist... vocals
Fredrik Mannberg... guitars
Nils Norberg... guitars
Nils Eriksson... bass
Owe Lingvall... drums
Mattias Bernhardsson... keyboards

Website:

www.centurymedia.com



OPPROBRIUM

Interview with guitarist and vocalist Francis Howard

Opprobrium would appear to be a new band on Nuclear Blast, however, they were actually in existence a decade ago and released two albums under the name Incubus in the late eighties and early nineties. **Incubus** played straight ahead, old school death metal. They ended up breaking up after releasing their second album, and their first for Nuclear Blast. They have been dormant for several years now before reforming about a year ago as **Incubus Rage**. They were forced to change their name due to the California alternative metal band owning the rights. They are now known as **Opprobrium** and have released a new album titled *Discerning Forces*. The new album basically picks up where the band left off before. It's old school death metal but it retains their Brazilian background. I spoke to bassist Francis Howard about **Opprobrium**.

How do you feel about the new record?

I think it's got some great songs and it's one of my best records so far that I've done. I'm completely happy with the production and the sound. It's perfect for me. I'm really enjoying it.

What made you decide to get the band back together?

We went to Brazil about a year ago to visit parents and cousins, there were so many fans. I didn't know how popular we were. We went to some shows in Brazil and that's how we met Louis, the guitarist. That gave us the inspiration to really appreciate what we had before. That's what inspired us to return and gave us the push that we needed. We never appreciated what we had in a way. We had our eyes opened.

What made you decide to change the name from Incubus Rage to Opprobrium?

Even though we had the name **Incubus** before the band from California, we left the scene for so long that we lost the name. It bothered us in the beginning, but now we're happy with the new name. What really counts is the songs.

Would you consider Opprobrium an extension of Incubus?

Incubus was really just me and my brother. We always did everything together; the songwriting and the lyrics. It is an extension of **Incubus**. We are also trying to offer a new style of death metal. We're searching for something that is fresh in our songwriting. It's still going to have us in there but it's also going to be something that's new and improved.

Were you or your brother involved with music in the meantime?

No, we would pick up the equipment sometimes and jam some songs. That trip to Brazil got us serious about it again. We're here to stay. I regret leaving the scene. We could've been a bigger band. We've got to build ourselves back up again. We have a great opportunity that Nuclear Blast gave us, with marketing and distribution. I have a lot of respect for the fans, they're so loyal and they still write us. We see how we changed their lives. That's what gives us strength.

Where are you guys living?

We're living in the States. We've been living in the States for eighteen years now, so we're Americanized now. Speaking from the heart, there's no place like America. Everything in the States is so organized. Brazil is good if you want to have and good time and party, but to live you've got to have a lot of money. That's my own

personal feelings. If you travel around the world and come back here, you feel the difference. It's a great place to be.

Do you still travel to Brazil?

The last trip was when we recorded the album. It was in October. We tried to rehearse with Louis down there but they didn't get the chance to record the album. Right now we're just waiting for a Nuclear Blast tour, then we'll get together about two months before and we'll rehearse.

What are your tour plans?

I'm told that Nuclear Blast gets you out on tour about three or four months after the release. We are starting now with this new name and we want to circulate around the scene. We don't want to do shows and not have a big turnout. We want to build the name first and then really go at it and start touring. I'm amazed at how the scene is building up now. I think we came back at the right time. It's like that in Brazil also. There's so many great bands out there in Brazil. I wish they all had the chance that we had. The problem is that you have to know people. Most of the equipment in Brazil is imported and it becomes twice the price. It's difficult for a band to build something out of that. That's why I appreciate when a band comes out from Brazil, or Italy, or France, they really proved how strong they are. It shows how far they're willing to go.

What are your plans now?

I want to move on to bigger and better things. People think we're dreaming but if you don't think that way you'll never go anywhere. You've got to think big. We are writing new songs for the next album. Hopefully, we might write some music for a horror soundtrack, anything to keep us active. We may have some shows in Denmark and

Brazil in the months to come.

What direction do you see the new songs going?

We are going to do something different and keep things fresh. I have to hear a riff or beat that moves me. It's got to have emotion. I don't have to write a death metal riff, I don't discriminate.

What was the most difficult thing to overcome reforming?

It was the new name in the beginning. We're still the same band, it's just a new name. I'm happy with the new name. I think it'll open more doors for us, it's more flexible.

Discography:

2000... *Discerning Forces* (Nuclear Blast)

Current line-up:

Moyses Howard... vocals and guitars

Francis Howard... bass

Andre Luiz Oliveira... drums

Fax:

504-889-1668



PANDEMIA

Interview with guitarist Alex Marek

One of the best death metal albums I've heard in year's came to me in the form of **Pandemia's** debut, *Spreading the Message*. You may remember me naming it one of the top seven picks for last issue's list. This band has a tremendous sound and where a million bands try to come up with what **Pandemia** easily does, this is the band that is for real. They have been touring relentlessly and spreading their message that great death metal is here to stay and no trends can take that away. Here's Alex via e-mail.

Are you happy with the new album?

I'm still very satisfied with the way the album turned out. Of course, it's been one year since we recorded the songs so I would definitely play some parts differently but that's a normal evolution.

Can you give a brief background on Pandemia?

Pandemia is a death metal band playing since July 1995. We rose from the ruins of another band called **Suffering** and after three months of rehearsing we recorded our first demo tape, *The Dust on the Eyes*. It was pretty far from what we play now. Then we got a new singer and recorded a second tape. This was in 1997 and the tape was released as a split with another Czech band called **Ehumance** on Anti Nazi Productions. We also started to play more often live and we also did a mini tour with **Vader**. At the end of December of 1997 we got the honor to support legendary **Kreator** on their show in Praha, this was definitely an important achievement for us. Many people could see us live and we learned a lot from the masters. After that we played another important show, playing with **Death** in Praha in July 1998. Then we recorded a three song promo to find the right label ready to release our first album. After really long time of searching the label we got to know Rich from Lost Disciple and signed the deal. Our first album was called *Spreading the Message* and has been out since January 2000. To promote the album we went on a European tour with **Vader**, **Vital Remains**, **Fleshcrawl**, and **Rebaellion** in June and July 2000. The rest is just present.

What were your goals when you started out?

We wanted to take the band as serious as possible. Playing in **Pandemia** has always been, for me, the most important thing in my life and when we started I just wanted to keep the band going, not stagnate in any moment, just to keep on the fight. No concrete goals, like playing with **Morbid Angel** or such.

What is it like living in the Czech Republic?

We all have one pair of legs, one pair of eyes, and we all speak Czech. That's it. The communism here fell in 1989 and since that time we are a typical European country with a growing economy and normal freedom. I know that for you it must be still very exotic to hear about a band from such a country but I have no problems with playing here and there are many other bands playing in the Czech Republic.

Is metal accepted there?

It's the same like the rest of Europe. The gods are worshipped and shitty bands are damned. Of course, a few years ago, right after the fall of the communism, people were very hungry to listen to any band and bands sold thousands of copies. Now it's a bit worse cause people have no money to buy c.d.'s and they are a bit fed up of all the bands playing here. I can feel that the real metal is more and more accepted and hope people will find again the way to the pure and honest bands instead of listening to the trendy shit which is all over here in radio, t.v., and mags.

How does it feel to be able to go out and tour?

It's a natural thing for me. I love to play live and to meet metal fans at clubs. All this is twice better when we play a really good gig with many people and a cool atmosphere. Then I'm really happy I do this music and I can be a part of the metal scene.

How did the tour with Vader and Vital Remains go?

It was cool. We met many new fans and we did a good promotion for our c.d. We also played in some new countries where we had showed up before and thanks to the tour we could play some songs in there. The tour was very important for us, it was our first bigger tour and it was really nice to be in a package with such great bands as **Vader**, **Vital Remains**, **Fleshcrawl**, and **Rebaellion** are. I also did a

tour report, so anybody who wants to know some stories and stuff, should check out www.masterful.art.pl

How would you describe your album?

The album sounds to me as a very intense and pure piece of death metal. I don't listen to the album too often, it's just enough I play the songs live, but I like the way it sounds and it respects the real metal roots.

How do you approach your recording to make it sound so powerful and damn good?

I really don't know. For us it's a natural thing to play like this and we made the album sounding the way we wanted to.

What are you up to at the moment?

Now we are collecting the ideas for our new material and soon we will start writing new songs. We also prepare some touring for this fall in Italy, Spain, and Portugal with Polish **Devilyn** and we want to play more shows over here during the fall and winter. As soon as the new songs are completed we will enter the studio and record our second album.

Is there any talk of coming to the U.S.?

You are not the only one who asks about that and I'm really seriously talking to Rich from Lost Disciple to figure something out. I believe that sooner or later we will show up in U.S. and spread the message over there. We really want to play in U.S.

When will you be recording again?

I think the recording sessions will happen someday in spring of 2001. It depends on how good our writing process will be going.

What are your interests outside of Pandemia?

I'm a fanatic reader and a computer maniac. All my life is more or less connected with **Pandemia** and anything I'm up to has something to do with the band. There is not too much time left outside of **Pandemia** and when there is some time left I read or go out with my friends. With the rest of **Pandemia** it's different. Jarda is the only one who is also one hundred percent in the band and does some work. The others are involved in **Pandemia** just when we rehearse, play gigs, or organize some gigs. What they do in their spare time is mostly reading or hanging around.

How much time do you spend working on the band?

I quit my job in December 1999 and since that time I've been fully interested in **Pandemia**. I can say I spend twelve hours of every day just working for the band. I love it and it gives me some meaning in my life. Pure fucking metal.

What are your future goals?

Expect just the purest death metal from us. We will always play as many live shows as possible and keep on the fight until the very end. I also hope we will come over to the U.S. soon and hope I'll meet all the great maniacs I'm in touch with.

Final comments?

It was really great to answer your questions. Thanks a million times for the space you gave us. Anybody who wants to get in touch with us, write to alexpandemia@hotmail.com or Alex Marek, Lesni 7, 350 02 Cheb, Czech Republic. Keep the flame of brutality burning.

Discography:

2000... *Spread The Message* (Lost Disciple)

Current line-up:

Michal... vocals

Alex... guitars

Jarda... bass

Pavel... drums

Website:

www.pandemia.cz

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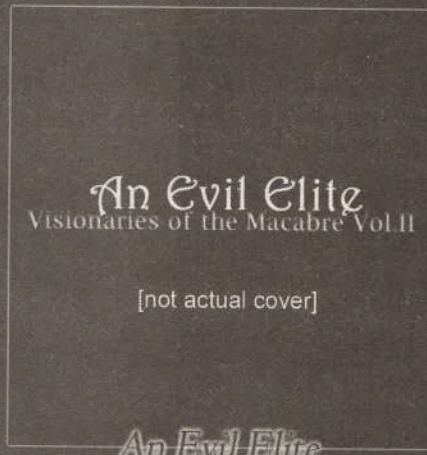
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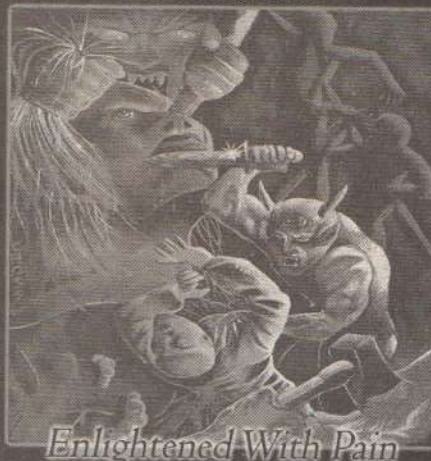
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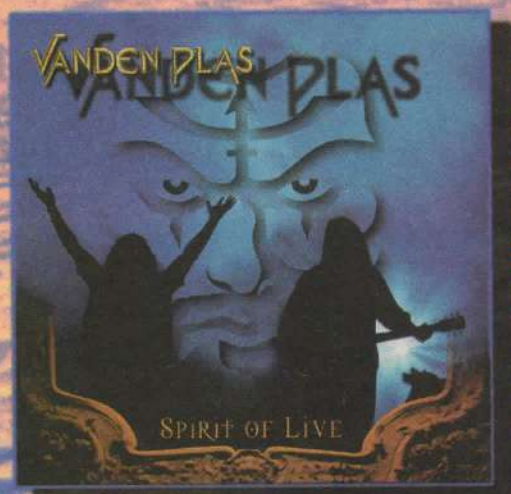
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PECCATUM

Interview with vocalist Ihriel

When **Peccatum** was first formed many people assumed it was simply a side project of classical music put together by **Emperor's** Ihsahn, but one listen to their debut *Strangled from Within* proves that this trio is for real. Their music is dark, esoteric, but not simply classical- it's a combination of influences from classical to Celtic to metal, often intertwining all three, making one think of **Celtic Frost's** undisputed masterpiece *Into the Pandemonium*. Ironically, Ihsahn is joined in the band by his wife Ihriel and her brother Lord P.Z. They have already released a third album and second full length, *Amor Fati*, which proves their debut was no fluke. Here is Ihriel to tell us about **Peccatum**.

How do you feel about the new Peccatum?

I am to the degree that one would be happy with their own album. I'm quite happy with it.

I think some people thought Peccatum would simply be a side project but you've come up with a lot of material in a short period of time.

We've been working quite hard at music in general. It just happens that way.

How was your tour with Emperor in America?

We had fun. The American audience was brilliant. That wasn't what we were told when we went over. We were told that American audiences were quite difficult to get along with when they come see the bands. Our experience was quite different. It was my first time in America so it was nice to see your country. It's bigger than Europe. It seems very complex, different nature and people. Unfortunately we spent most of our time sitting on a bus or in vans.

How were you able to do Peccatum live?

There's the three of us in the band and we have a session guitarist and a D.A.T. player with drums and synths on it. That's the way we perform live. Some people aren't used to seeing those types of bands but this how we have our ordinary set up. It functions okay.

Are you a classically trained vocalist?

No I'm not. My mother is a classically trained vocalist but I'm not. The knowledge that can be learned from classical music is very high and I don't have that type of knowledge yet.

What is your musical background?

I wasn't in any bands, but I've grown up with music all along. I've played some piano, which I found boring. I started taking singing lessons again. It comes from the wish to create. Music seems to be my part.

It must be great being in a band with your brother and your husband.

It is great to some extent, but for us it doesn't really matter if it is my brother or my husband it is the music and the way we cooperate with each other. We wouldn't mind having other people in the band, it's not really a family situation. We don't care much about that part, it's about the music.

What do you hope to accomplish with Peccatum?

Nothing apart from the creation of music. We had a desire to create and visions of what we wanted to create. We took the step and did it. That's what all things are about. If you want to play in a band or play music, it's comes down to the wish for

creation. That's another thing, we wanted to create something new. When you create something new you often get a lot of criticism as well. You can't just copy another band because the original will always be the best band. That's why you have to try to create something original and create an identity. You just have to have an open mind to enjoy it.

How would you describe your lyrical perspective?

I don't know what I should say to this question. We don't normally say too much about the lyrics, we want people to have an open mind to them. It's about one thing and that's to be human. It reflects upon that topic. There's a lot of issues to that. It has to do with death and the human search. I think we made a statement with this album- that there aren't any final answers, only questions. When we release an album we give our music away, we don't want to tell them what to think of our music. We want them to have an opportunity to have their own experiences, their own opinions- whether it's good or bad, it's good anyway to have an opinion. People might find everything in our music and I'm happy if they find anything. I respect people in general, so I think they should have an opportunity to make our product theirs.

How do you determine how the vocals will work?

We write our music in a special kind of way. When we write our music we write lyrics, music, and vocals together. We don't just make some riffs and join them. We have some strings and bass, sometimes we start with the vocals, sometimes we start with the strings or the guitars. We write the lyrics to try to capture the essence of the music. I don't really know how to describe it. It doesn't matter how we write, you just try to get a certain wholeness as the result. The music is a bit Celtic. We do rehearse a lot on the vocal lines before we go into the studio in order to make the best material we can.

What made you decide to cover Judas Priest's "Blood Red Skies" on the e.p.?

We love that band. We've all been into the metal of the eighties. Lord P.Z. has been in various metal bands in our home town since '87 and Priest has always been one of his inspirations. We thought we'd record that as a tribute. I like that song, it's a forgotten song. It's always difficult to take someone else's song, we couldn't just copycat the song. We tried to make it, to a certain extent, a **Peccatum** track.

What are your tour plans for this album?

We've had a couple of offers, but they haven't been financially profitable. We just have to wait to see. We don't have any concrete plans apart from a concert here and there. It's always difficult to get on a tour. We don't need to make money on it, or even break even, but you need to pay a lot of money to go on tour. We've had some interesting offers but we just couldn't go with them.

Are you involved with any other bands?

This is my only musical band at the moment. I'm doing some things for myself but nothing special.

Has anyone approached you to sing on their album?

A couple people, not from the extreme metal scene, but I don't think that's my kind of thing. I don't want to do guest appearances. Of course if I like the music it would be okay, but that's not my thing. I think quite a few bands are using females as objects, that irritates me. Some of these female singers are good singers and could be used to a greater extent, not just having their tits on the front cover. Some of these women are underrated. I'm not too keen on being a part of that thing.

Discography:

2000... *Amor Fati* (Candlelight)

1999... *Strangled From Within* (Candlelight)

Current line-up:

Ihriel

Ihsahn

Lord P.Z.



Power Symphony

Interview with guitarist Marco Cecconi and vocalist Michela D'Orlando

Perhaps the best band to come from Pavement's roster, Italy's **Power Symphony** is creating quite an impact on the American power metal audience. Their debut, *Evillot*, did not come over here in large supply, but its follow up, *Lightbringer*, has been a much talked about record. *Lightbringer* has all the classic elements of power metal, but **Power Symphony** add their own Celtic, folk, doom, and symphonic influences through out the disc. Upon further listens I was continually surprised by the diversity and quality of this disc. Fans of bands from **Iron Maiden** to **Solitude Aeternus**, to **Therion**, will find something here to please them. I conducted an interview with the band via e-mail and here is the finished product.

How do you feel about the new album?

Marco: We feel very good about it. We're thoroughly satisfied by our work. We've been working with a great producer and given one hundred percent to our songs, why could we ask more? I think the songs work, and even eight months after recording the album I still love the songs, and wouldn't change a bit of the recording. The responses have been very good. We've definitely established our position in Italy, got a better foothold in Europe, and the response from the U.S. and Canada has been nothing short of amazing.

How would you compare *Lightbringer* to *Evillot*?

Marco: *Lightbringer* is a more focused album than *Evillot*, but *Evillot* is maybe rougher in a good way, if you get my meaning. The songs are shorter and therefore a little easier in *Lightbringer*. *Evillot* though is more epic. I like to think that *Evillot* is about Epos and *Lightbringer* about Pathos. Recording *Lightbringer* there were good vibes, we were extremely sure it was good material and knew how to put down on tape what we wanted. I think it shows in the album.

What does **Power Symphony** offer that you feel is lacking or different than other power metal bands out there?

Marco: First of all, Michela. Our singer is a really remarkable, exceptional person. She's a talented singer and she's really metal, not like other female singers around. Metal singing as it should be if you ask me, melodic and powerful, reminds me of Jeff Scott Soto or Bruce Dickinson, in style. Also I think our style of composition is quite unique. We merge very many sub-genres of metal into our music, symphonic, doom, folk, epic, power; these are just the most evident influences, but we like all of metal and I'm sure it will become more evident in the future.

What does having a female vocalist add to **Power Symphony**?

Marco: Michela is very important in the band. She writes all the melodies and the lyrics. She founded the band together with me, so **Power Symphony** is a bit like our creature, it couldn't live without us. We never thought in terms of male/female singing, we've always thought in terms of good/ bad singers.

Some bands use female members to also flaunt their sexuality, Goddess Of Desire or Rockbitch for example, how do you feel about Michela seen as a sex object, and ultimately perhaps taking her talent for granted?

Michela: It would be a real hypocrisy to say I'm not expecting some of this. I think it's sort of "part of the job". Some people are more interested in your music and into your talent, some others just look at you and like your appearance. Up to now it's not a problem. Depends on you, what's more important. I am not used by the band because I'm female, I'm here because this is my place- that's what matters to me. Every good looking girl is seen as a sex object by somebody at some point,

I mean always, not just if you're a heavy metal singer.

Why is it important to include classical and doom elements in your music?

Marco: What we do is write and perform metal music. What comes out is then defined by the people who listen to our material, not by us and not beforehand. I like to think we try to compose with our hearts not with our heads. We would never say let's put a doom part here, it would not work for us. We just say, here it should go like this, and then people say we have a doom part. That's all there is to it actually.

The Italian metal scene appear quite strong, how do you view the Italian metal scene as a musician rising through the ranks?

Marco: I see a lot of stupid competition between the bands. I'd love to see the bands more into mutual cooperation, it would help make the Italian scene stronger than it is now. There's a lot of underground growing, but it's mostly unoriginal stuff. Nothing wrong with being unoriginal, it's just not my kind of idea of being a band. I've actually tried to help a couple of bands emerge, I find it very hard to accept the situation as it is now, you know all the envy and stupidity. People who would not say hi to you, although they did before, because they're more famous than you.

What are your tour plans?

Marco: Pavement is trying to put us on tour in Europe first and then maybe in the U.S. as well, our manager is also doing the same thing. We'll see. If a good occasion arises we'll be around. In any case, we're composing the new album and we're not lacking ideas or inspiration. The next album is going to be killer. We can record the album either at the end of this year or beginning of next year, unless a tour comes around and we have to change our plans. We're organizing an Italian mini-tour in the fall as well, being at home too much is not good.

Any ideas for record number three?

Marco: Well I promised I wouldn't talk but, maybe a "Evillot Part III" song is in the pipeline. We are going to record a songs about Mordred and Morgan LeFay titled "Nine Moon", maybe we'll be using Joey Vera again as producer.

Final comments?

Marco: I would invite all the readers to check our website at: www.powersymphony.com and download four songs for free. I'd love to say a big thank you to all our American fans, you're awesome. I hope to see you on tour soon.

Discography:

2000... *Lightbringer* (Pavement)
1999... *Evillot* (Northwind)

Current line-up:

Michela D'Orlando... vocals
Marco Cecconi... guitars
Lino Sistu
Marco Volpe
Claudio Berra... keyboards

Website:

www.powersymphony.com



PRIMITIVE BRUTALITY

Interview with Roger Beaujard

Underground death metal legend and multi instrumentalist Roger Beaujard has created a new label with his **Malignancy** bandmate Danny Nelson and the first release is a disc called **Primitive Brutality**. This disc celebrates ten years of recordings Roger has created through the nineties. Fans of both of Roger's full time bands, **Malignancy** and **Mortician**, will hear the influence he brings to those bands on this impressive debut. Roger proved to be one of the most helpful and pleasant people to talk to... here he is.

What made you decide to put this material out?

I've been thinking about putting this out for like the last five years. Will and Danny bugged me until I did it. We just wanted to get it on c.d. I hadn't written anything for that project since '95 because I was busy with **Malignancy** and **Mortician**, then last year I wrote three new ones- which are the first three on the disc.

How would you describe your work on here?

It's a mix between **Mortician** and **Malignancy**. It's got bits from both bands. It's the other side of me that I didn't fit in **Mortician** or **Malignancy**. I didn't want to throw away riffs that I liked doing. The newer stuff is written different. I sat down intentionally to write and whatever came out I put it down. It's interesting listening to it over the time span. It was fun getting all the old tapes and remastering them. Imagine if I put it out then, especially the stuff from '91 and '92. I still love those. Ron from **Malignancy** was the only one locally who could play the shit that I wanted to play. Back then you couldn't even find people interested in this type of music, much less to be able to play it. There's no way I would've found a drummer back then. I had a drummer who wasn't too bad and we tried doing some stuff, but he stopped playing drums.

What's going on with Malignancy?

We're gonna be touring in November. It will be double duty for me. I'm gonna be doing **Mortician** and **Malignancy** twice a night. I'm gonna be playing drums for both. I'm not drinking at all on this tour. We've got **Goatwhore** going with us. They'll be between us so I don't have to kill myself. Ronnie's now playing guitar in **Mortician**. I'm playing drums for now. We've got a drummer who's gonna be working with us in **Mortician**, Brian- he plays in **Funeburm** right now. He's gonna be learning the shit now until the end of the year and then next year I'll be back on guitar with Ronnie, two guitars in **Mortician**. Desmond has left both **Mortician** and **Malignancy**. He's pursuing his job and that's what he'll be doing. We have our old guitar player Lance coming back to **Malignancy**. He's gonna be on bass until the end of the year and we've spoken to our buddy Greg who used to be in **Evilution** from Connecticut. He's gonna then play bass and Lance will go to guitar. He's living in Prague now. We saw him when we did the Czech Republic show. He's down with the idea. He's moving back in December. We'll have full line-ups and double guitars in both bands now. Hopefully we'll do another double tour next year. We've got the *Motivated by Hunger* c.d. from **Malignancy** coming out. It just came out. Rich just got them in. It's got five new songs and a live track from Castle Heights. I think it smokes *Interuterine*. It's a real step up for us in terms of writing and structure.

How did the new Mortician come out?

I just sent it out to Relapse today. *Domain of Death* is seventeen songs, two covers, it's really sick. It was supposed to be out for Halloween but Wes Benscoter was busy. He couldn't get the artwork done in time. We should have maybe a thousand to go out on the road with. I don't think the official release will be until

next year.

Do you have any shows in New York?

We're probably gonna kick it off in Castle Heights. We'll start it in November and then we'll head out west towards the November to Dis-member festival. We'll do Ohio, Chicago, Denver, Frisco, the fest during the weekend, hopefully a day off in Vegas, and then come back home through the southwest- Texas, Florida, and up the coast. We'll probably finish up in Albany or Massachusetts. We'll be out for five weekends. We're looking into Europe right now. Hopefully we'll be able to take the double package over. We're talking to **Cephalic Carnage** about going over next April and do a European tour. We're gonna make sure we get somebody who knows what they're doing over there. We don't want to be stuck in some foreign airport not knowing where to go or what to do. We almost had that happen at the Brutal Assault show in the Czech Republic. It was a good opportunity for **Malignancy**, we got to play in front of sixteen hundred people. We were at the airport for about four hours because the guy got the time screwed up. We couldn't even figure out the damn phones, we didn't know what we're doing. Everything's in a different language. We did get into the Czech Republic like a breeze. The guy knew the border guards. We stopped by this gas station and the cops were in there drinking beer and reading porno. The beer was like two dollars for a whole round of pints. The party never stops over there. They have this go on every month. They actually have **Cephalic Carnage** pillows over there. One of our dollars is equivalent to about thirty five of their dollars. You can go over there with two hundred bucks and live like a king. A pack of Marlboros costs the equivalent of about two dollars over there. The festival didn't shut down. Here, at the American fests, they kick you the fuck out when it's over. They continued selling beer until the next day. There were people sleeping in pools of vomit. It was great.

Will Primitive Recordings be a regular record label?

Yeah. Danny and I started the label. We wanted to put out the **Primitive Brutality**. I was gonna do the whole thing myself but Danny's got a lot of assets that he's gonna bring to the label. He's got a lot of contacts and he's a good guy and I trust him, which is the most important thing. You also need somebody who's competent and he's all that. We decided to do this together so that we could split some of the load. We started to do **Primitive** and rerelease our **Malignancy** merchandise under a legal entity. We now have a legal company name to put everything under. We're gonna do a live **Mortician** release. I'm probably gonna be doing the drums on it. I'll do one guitar

track and Ronnie will do one guitar track. We wanted to take twenty or so of the older songs and redo them with live drums. Everybody always asks us for that. It will be cool. We're also gonna rerelease the *Ignorance is Bliss* demo, the splits, and the promo demo.

Discography:

2000... **Primitive Brutality** (Primitive)

Current line-up:

Roger Beaujard... vocals, guitars, bass, drums, programming

Website:

www.primitiverecordings.com



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SCARY GERMAN GUY

Interview with Scary German Guy

Scary German Guy is a Long Island band that I was introduced to through Rich Black's long running and amazing zine, *Under the Volcano*. This is a band that is very difficult to describe. They are extreme, but not enough to push a listener away. There is the use of samples which can give them an industrial sound at times, but they go beyond those limitations and find themselves unable to be categorized. There is some hardcore, some Swedish death metal, and some straight ahead metal. The vocals are intense, but once again catchy enough to be considered listenable. I got together with the band at a diner in Hempstead to talk about their exciting band. As usual, once transcribing the interview, I have found that it was nearly impossible to be sure of who was speaking so I apologize to the band for not making clear distinctions. These guys were the most fun group I have had the privilege of spending time with and I look forward to seeing them again in the future.

What are your live shows like?

You have bands who continually use samples in their recordings and then they play live and it loses a lot of the effect without the samplers. It's not to say that our scripts are rehearsed. We like to keep it like **Fear Factory** or **Machine Head**, super efficient. People don't really come over after the shows, I think it's because they are afraid. I don't get it. We knock each other over, beat up each other, break guitars. With us you can always count on us showing up early, setting up in ten minutes and breaking down in ten minutes. My guitar breaks every show, it's on its way out. A lot of bands will talk between songs, but you can't hear what we're saying anyway, so why bother. We're playing in Massachusetts, where my old band used to play, this weekend. That's our next show. We're playing in the same town, at the same time as a **Hatebreed** and **E-Town Concrete** video shoot. We booked our show first. They had their show a week before but they had a rain date, so it fell the night of our show. We're screwed. We're gonna drive up there for three hours and have nobody there. But that's okay. We'll play for less than nobody. We open with a long sample and we stand there with our shirts and ties. We don't look like we belong, but then we go crazy and people can't believe it.

How would you describe your sound?

We don't know what the hell we are. People come up to us after shows and say, "you're the best hardcore band we've ever seen", we don't deny it we just say thank you. If they say we're the best metal band, we'll say thank you. If you look at the last song on the c.d., it's kind of evil. People have called us frightcore for some time as well. It's stupid because people think of **Marilyn Manson**.

Have you had any label interest yet?

We were in contract talks with Dwell Records but that fell through because they were dealing with our ex-guitarist and he was screwing up a lot of the ideas that were presented. We want to find a label that's open minded. We get a lot of people who don't understand our name. We played reunion shows for a band called the **Berserkers** in New Jersey, two weeks apart and at the same place. There were all these skin head guys there and they thought we were a Nazi band. Once we had a guy who was an English teacher come up to us and see our shirt and say- "I like that", and then he walked away. We had one guy at the Roadhouse, there is always one asshole at the Roadhouse, he asked us if we were Nazi's and we told him to get the fuck out of there. We didn't want to talk to him every again. He was the only one who said that, didn't he feel like a jackass. We were joking around about bands

we could never have a tour with because of our name- **Scary German Guy**, **Cleanser**, and **John Cougar Concentration Camp**. People don't realize that we got our name from the movie of the same name.

How do the new songs sound?

I would say as far as guitars go, it's a little more technical. The theme is the same throughout the c.d. it's just that we like to express it in as many different ways as possible to get as many people as possible. Whatever we happen to write is how it comes out. There are no boundaries. If you listen to a band like **Dimmu Borgir**, they could never write a black metal song or their fans would leave them. We don't have to worry about that, we can do whatever we want. We're trying to keep our new technicality but we aren't gonna go crazy with it. We listen to a lot of **In Flames**, hardcore, and metal. The c.d. is not super complicated, we're more about the songwriting. If you look at **Meshuggah**, they happened to write in 7/8 but it was catchy. We don't want to have to feel like we have to write a rapcore song now because that's what's popular. We do whatever we want with the music. We have been doing the time changes with the new stuff. I'll go to program the riffs these guys come up with and I have to work at it because it's in odd time signatures. It's a lot more fun to program. I just hve to figure out how to do a fill in 9/8.

What made you guys stick with the programming?

That's because me and Fro have known each other since kindergarten, I saw him at Hofstra during a **dayinthelife** show. Right off the bat, he said let's start a band. We decided to use a drum machine because I had a drum machine already. We don't have anything to worry about. It's hard to find a drummer who can play this live. We can have a congo set drawn in for one part if we want. Of all the local bands, we're the only who can do what we have on c.d. live. It's the same tempo, there's an amazing melody line, and it sounds excellent everytime. People on Long Island always bitch about open mindedness, unity, and diversity and nobody has any idea what it means. We admire bands like **In Flames** for what they do. We expect the worst and hope for the best.

Final comments?

We're very easy to get along with. If you've fucked us in the past, don't expect us to go out of our way for you. We sound a hell of a lot better now that we have a new vocalist, and these two new guitarists. We never set out not to be pinned down. We started out playing all hardcore shows and it put pressure on us to write more hardcore songs, but

we decided we weren't gonna do that. We are always going to play what we want to play. We're making our own sound which isn't identifiable.

Discography:

2000... For The Sake Of Man

Current line-up:

Mike Curley
Chris Frobose
Chris Klapak
Dave Campagnoli

Website:

www.scarygermanguy.com



THE SINS OF THY BELOVED

Interview with vocalist/ guitarist Glenn Morten Norbo

One of the most talked about bands and hyped up releases this year comes via Napalm Records and the *Sins Of Thy Beloved's* second full length album, *Perpetual Desolation*. While I still prefer *Tristania*, the *Sins Of Thy Beloved* play a professional, powerful sounding style of gothic metal. All the characteristics that make this genre appealing to some and appalled by others, is here. An obvious comparison would be *Theatre Of Tragedy*, because that band was one of the first to do this and is better known, however, many of the bands on Napalm's roster, like those mentioned here, are becoming the leaders of this underrated but rising genre. I spoke to the *Sins Of Thy Beloved* vocalist and guitarist Glenn Morten Norbo about the new album *Perpetual Desolation*.

Did you guys just finish your tour with *Tristania*?

Yeah, about one and a half weeks ago.

How did that go?

Just perfect. It was fantastic.

What are your thoughts on the new record?

We're pleased with the album and the sound. The critics have been great.

What was your original vision for the *Sins Of Thy Beloved*?

We started off four years ago as a normal rock band. We got together with the same line-up we have now. We tried out some different things and ended up playing this kind of music because everyone in the band liked this kind of music and wanted to play this kind of music. We tried it out and it worked.

What were some obstacles getting this together?

I'm not sure. The most difficult thing is to be able to play everything live exactly how it is on the album. We have done that okay. In the live shows we try to make it sound like the c.d. without using any programming. That's why we got two keyboard players, to play what's on the album. That's the main idea for the live shows.

Has there been any talk of the *Sins Of Thy Beloved* coming to the States to tour?

There has been some talk. Maybe we can come over and do some shows in America. We also have something lined up in Mexico. I don't think we'll be able to do it this year, but hopefully next year we will come over and do some shows.

What are you up to now?

We did some festival while we were on tour. We have two left now. In August we have one in Belgium and one in Holland. We do those festivals and then we start writing for the next album. If everything goes well with the writing process, hopefully we can go in the studio in February.

How has the band grown since *Lake of Sorrow* came out?

We have all become much better musicians and we play much better now. The new album compared to the old album is better. We have done some changes on this album. We have gone in a faster direction. The drum beats are faster and we have

a more aggressive use of the male vocals. We try to get our own sound. We want people to recognize us for our own sound and not compare us to other bands. That's the main idea when we make a new album.

How have people responded to the more aggressive parts?

Most of the response has been just great. Most fans like the change in style in a way. Some people like the more doomy and slow thing we had on *Lake of Sorrow*.

Where do you think the new music is going?

That's hard to say. I think we will try to make a new album which won't sound like this album, but not really big changes. It's still the same band, but we'll always try to make something new and better.

How have things been on Napalm Records?

Everything's working okay. We're really satisfied with the job they're doing. We have a close connection with them. They've gone out of their way to promote the album and they've given us the chance to play tours and gigs in Europe.

Where is the band most popular?

In Germany. That's the main area for us. Germany is the country where we've played the most times as well. Everyone goes crazy there.

How about Norway?

Really great, I would say. We have played some shows in the local area. We sold out on every gig. There's not much publicity for gothic metal. It's mostly the same people coming to the shows.

What part of Norway do you guys live?

It's on the West Coast of Norway. It's okay living here. It's a normal place. It's pretty quiet where we live.

What's the weather like there?

It's sunny for a change today. I think it's about twelve degrees. It's not too warm today, at least we don't have snow.

Final comments?

I want to give the readers my best regards. I sure hope we can come over and play in the States.

Discography:

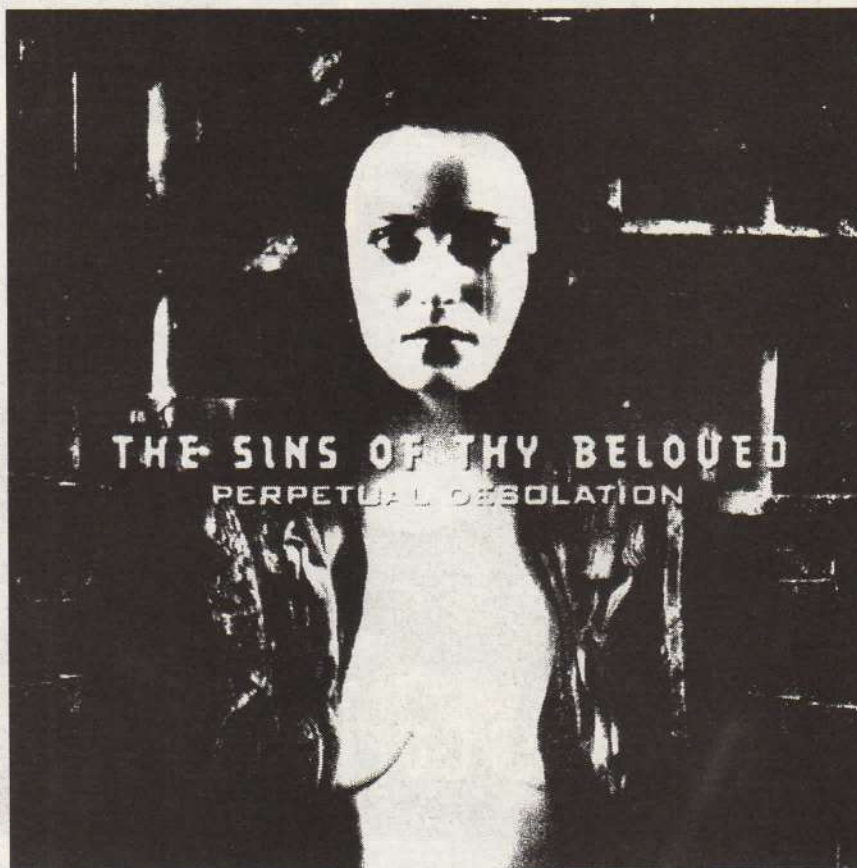
2000... *Perpetual Desolation* (Napalm)
1998... *Lake Of Sorrow* (Napalm)
1997... *All Alone* (Nocturnal Music)

Current line-up:

Glenn Morten Norbo... vocals and guitars
Anita Anuglend... vocals
Arild Christensen... guitars
Infrid Stensland... keyboards
Ola Aarrestad... bass
Stig Johansen... drums
Anders Thue... keyboards

Website:

www.tsotb.com



SYRINX

Interview with Syrinx

Syrinx is one of those bands that come around once every five years or so. Looking back through out the history of power metal there have been some timeless, forward thinking classics like *Crimson Glory's Transcendence*, *Fates Warning's No Exit*, *Psychotic Waltz's Bleeding*, and now we get **Syrinx's Crystal Cliffs**. This is the French band's debut and the music and the vocals are outrageously good. Vocalist Henri Ebeyer has that once in a lifetime charismatic, instantly recognizable style that is reminiscent of Midnight and the music is adventurous and very technical, but still retains enough emotion to keep listeners in tuned to what they are doing. There is one song, "At Dawn" that is truly one of the best songs I have ever heard. Here is **Syrinx**.

Tell me about the origins of Syrinx.

Syrinx come from the south of France, precisely from Marseille. With Henri and Xavier at the bases, **Syrinx** were grounded in 1994. Together they formed several groups with which they gave live shows. Later on, when Jean-Charles and Lahouari "Momo" joined permanently, **Syrinx** focused only on heavy metal. In 1999, keyboards were added to the music and it is Serge who completed the line-up.

How do you feel about the debut album?

This first album is the result of long years of work and perseverance. It ripened with the time and with members of the group. The exit of *Crystal Cliffs* is a challenge for **Syrinx**.

How would you describe your sound?

Syrinx privilege the technique to the service of the melody and not the inverse. The technical remains a tool to the service of compositions besides. **Syrinx** search for the originality through the multiple musical influences that enliven its creations; heavy metal, hard rock, thrash, death, black metal, prog rock, neo-classical, punk rock. It's true that **Syrinx** are a group of heavy prog with a side more aggressive and more forceful that differentiates it of others.

This album has a timeless quality to it.

It's funny, there is no border in music. Henri likes the album *Transcendence* of *Crimson Glory*. Midnight is one of the references as well as others like Geoff Tate, Ray Alder, Alan Tecchio. **Syrinx** wishes that its music arouses some varied emotions to the listening of this album. *Crystal Cliffs* announces the future while doing reference to the past. The concept draws in the traditional resources the strength of an ultra modern future, the strength of the future.

Will you be playing any live shows?

Syrinx didn't plan any tours to promote *Crystal Cliffs* for the moment, but we want to make concerts as soon as possible in order to present this album to the public. We are open to all proposition to this topic. Music is above all a passion for all members of **Syrinx**. We are impatient to know the opinion of the public and let's wish to make live quickly.

Tell me about the lyrics.

The lyrics of the album *Crystal Cliffs* have been written for the most by an outside person to **Syrinx**, but that is an integral part of the concept of the group. Marie-Helene finds her inspiration in the music that **Syrinx** creates, she works alone or with Henri who is the other songwriter of *Crystal Cliffs*. The themes are chosen in common and Xavier, Jean-Charles, Lahouari, and Enzo focus especially on music. Henri has the easiness to place a text without ever having read it.

What are some of your influences?

Watchtower is undoubtedly one of **Syrinx's** influences, but we recognize ourselves in groups like *Fates Warning*, *Rush*, *Helstar*, *Dream Theater*, *Symphony X*, *King Diamond*, *Iron Maiden*, *Judas Priest*, *Helloween*; the list would be too long. **Syrinx** fits in the world of heavy metal by its diversity.

"At Dawn" is one of the best songs I have ever heard.

"At Dawn" is the last composition of **Syrinx**. It announces a new concept in view of a second album. This song is not entirely representative of **Syrinx** but it is an important song on the album. We take a lot of pleasure to play it. Not finding an end to the song "Crystal Cliffs" we linked a classical speed metal riff to a groove riff, "At Dawn" was born of this jam, the result surprised us. The vocals reflect the weight of words evoked serious reality, they are revolted, revengeful, forceful as can be the extremism of the human nature.

How does Henri perform his vocals with such complex and intense music?

Henri likes the difficulty. He adjusts easily to asymmetric parts and has a lot of ideas. Besides he actively participates for vocals as well as for music in the development of songs. In U.S.A., Germany, and Scandinavia there are a lot of good singers, in France there is very little. Heavy

metal remains a minority. Henri is the asset of the group. Henri's singing is an instinctive approach that holds amount of the technique. It is the reflection of a sensation that is born of melodies and lyrics. The originality also resides in the state of mind of the group.

What are your future plans?

In the future, we don't know what we can expect from **Syrinx** and it is exciting. Everything is new for us. We wait patiently for the following of events and let's keep feet on earth.

Discography:

2000... *Crystal Cliffs* (Season Of Mist)

Current line-up:

Henri Ebeyer... vocals
Xavier Richez... guitars
Jean-Charles Ciffreo... bass
Lahouari Belarbi... drums
Serge Santaliestra... keyboards



TRANSPORT LEAGUE

Interview with vocalist/ guitarist Tony Jelencovich

One of the bands that I feel have the most potential to come out with an unbelievable album is Sweden's **Transport League**. The band play a style of aggressive metal that is not afraid to add melody or hooks to a punishing groove. What is perhaps the most amazing thing about **Transport League** is their ability to avoid the cliches of this normally one dimensional style of music. **Transport League** released two albums overseas and their third and best album to date, *Satanic Panic* finally introduces the band to the United States. The band made a trip over to the Milwaukee Metalfest and will be playing some shows across America. I spoke to frontman Tony Jelencovich about **Transport League**.

Are you happy with how everything's come out with the new record?

Yeah, really happy. It was a long time since we recorded it, because we recorded it in 1999. It feels really good to finally get it out there.

When you were shopping this record around how was the response from the record labels?

We have a manager and he was looking for a deal for us for approximately one year. He got Century Media and Pavement on the hook. We chose Pavement because we felt they had a more fair deal than Century Media. They tried to rip us off. We had a studio booked and we had mutually agreed on a budget but suddenly they changed. We told them to fuck off. I just spoke to the president of Pavement and he said that we had a top five most requested on a radio station in Phoenix. The week before that it was played fourteen times in one week. We're excited about it because we didn't get this kind of response before. It seems like the industry has been changing a little bit. We've been sounding like this and doing this for quite awhile. We mix melodic vocals with aggressive vocals since the first album and even since the days I was a singer in **B-Thong**. We want to make a living out of the music. We haven't been able to do that in the past, hopefully that'll change now.

How has the response been over in Sweden for the band?

In Sweden the response has been good so far. It's always difficult in Europe because if nothing happens in the first two months then you're dead. We've been finding out that in the U.S. you could be kicking around for like twelve months before things kick in. It's such a big continent. It's totally different than in Europe. We've been trying to do our thing in Europe for awhile, but it's been difficult. On the first album we sound very American. In Germany power metal and melodic death metal is so big. We don't fit in there because we don't do that stuff. We've never had a chance to support a band like **Hammerfall** or **Dark Tranquillity** because it's a totally different audience. If we would play for somebody it would be an American band, but when an American band comes over to tour in Europe they always bring their own support band. Hopefully it'll change now. It's been frustrating because we haven't been playing that much. We did a small

tour for one month in May, we did two gigs in Germany on off days. The key market in Europe is Germany. We're longing to get to the States. We will play at the Milwaukee Metalfest, then we hit Chicago, St. Louis, and two gigs in New York. We have a private showcase for Atlantic and Universal Records. Hopefully things will start to happen. When something gets hot there's lots of bands that pop up. There's an image and an attitude but when you scratch the surface there isn't much in there. It's very difficult nowadays to be original because everything has been done. We are also recycling some stuff. We have this seventies **Black Sabbath** kind of groove in some of our songs. We try to mix it with a nineties metal style.

How did your sound evolve on those first two records?

The first record was done as a three piece. I played guitar and wrote all of the songs. In **B-Thong** the guitar player wrote songs. I wanted to have more of a groove in the music and they didn't understand what I was talking about so that's why I formed **Transport League**. I formed it as a side project when I was still in **B-Thong**, but I knew this is what I wanted to do. The first album was experimental. We got really good reviews in Germany. The reviews in the European press have been excellent, but we never reach out to the audiences. **Prong** and **Warrior Soul** always got really good reviews in the media but they never made it. We spent one week recording and one week mixing *Stallion Showcase*.

It was really basic and sloppy with a seventies groove. It was like **Black Sabbath** and **Cathedral** meets **Led Zeppelin**, with thrash metal. It was really weird. Then we recruited other members to the band. The second album was a lot more structured than the first one. We were focused on what we wanted to do. It was something like a mix between **Corrosion Of Conformity** and **Pro-Pain**. We got a new drummer for *Satanic Panic*. This album is also more structured and focused than the other two. It has a hardcore metal attitude to it.

Discography:

2000... *Satanic Panic* (Pavement)
1997... *Superevil* (Mascot)

1995... *Stallion Showcase* (Mascot)

Current line-up:

Tony Jelencovich... vocals and guitars
Peter Hunyadi... guitars
Ken Sandin... bass
Patrik J. Sten... drums

Website:

www.pavementmusic.com



WINDHAM HELL

Interview with vocalist/ guitarist/ keyboardist Leland Windham

Windham Hell is one of the most unique bands you will ever find. This Washington state band is comprised of two members, guitarist/ drummer/ bassist/ keyboardist Eric Friesen and guitarist/ keyboardist Leland Windham; their music is instrumental and weird. Eric has a talent for playing his instrument that is close to Yngwie in proportion. To call **Windham Hell** esoteric would be an understatement. They have kept a low profile despite releasing three full length albums. I spoke to Leland, who I found to be very pleasant but also very humble regarding his craft.

When did you get started with Windham Hell?

In 1988. I got started in '88. Eric started in '93, that's when he became a part of it. I did a demo, solo in '88. It didn't do anything for awhile. I did another one in '92.

What was your original vision for the band when you started?

Twelve years ago, I don't really remember. I don't know. I was just doing what I thought needed to be done. It's hard to describe. We just go out there and play what we want to play. A lot of people describe it as being David Lynch like, like *Twin Peaks* which was filmed out here. Some people compare the two, it is very similar. **Windham Hell** changes from one second to another. I'm always thinking about going to one sound but I just can't do it. Expect more of that in the future.

I think it's different that you're almost strictly all instrumental.

We've always hated vocals. They're cool, but growing up I felt that's what ruined a lot of music for me. A classic example would be Yngwie Malmsteen. He would be so much better without vocals

What is your philosophy?

It's got to be super dark and powerful, but there's got to be some music in there. I grew up listening to classical music. I got into death metal, black metal as well. I think those styles can be combined. That's basically the foundation of it. Eric is an unbelievable guitar player, that's something that's missing in a lot of bands. Nobody does that anymore.

The album covers are all very nature based with mountains.

I'm a full blown rock climbing addict. I've been rock climbing for years. There's a new climbing video coming out, *Masters of Stone*, it's basically the top rock climbing video in the world- it comes out every couple of years and **Windham Hell** has a track on it. I'm always out climbing.

Where do you go?

I don't travel much, I stay in the Northwest. There's no reason to go anywhere because there's so many places to go out here. Within ten minutes of my house there's unbelievable climbing. I go at least three days a week.

Do you conduct any instruction?

I have. I've guided before. I spend all my time doing what I want to do, including climbing. There's some really good stuff around here.

Did you release a seven inch recently?

Yeah, *In Order of the Deathbed*. Steven from **Landfill** does the label. They're good friends of mine from Vancouver. It's all pretty similar to the albums. There's

more going on because we recorded more tracks, but it's standard **Windham Hell** and how do you describe that?

Are you going to be recording new songs soon?

Yes, we're always recording. We have tons of stuff, it's just a matter of who wants to release it. Hopefully we'll have something soon through **Moribund**. Our c.d.'s were released on **Moribund** and other smaller labels and people who want to release stuff like that seven inch and we did a split with the band **Nothing**- that was in '96. We've been on many compilation c.d.'s so there's lots of stuff floating around out there. Eric just finished two c.d.'s of his own. One's just got **Freidenburg's** concertos and it's all classical stuff. They're like the Vivaldi peices on the **Windham Hell** album.

What are some bands that you're into?

Landfill, Nothing! I really haven't been into bands. I haven't been checking out what's out there. Jason is still doing **Nothing**. His new c.d. is on an Italian label. I'm into that kind of hypnotic, confusion music. I've known Jason since about '92 from exchanging stuff.

I heard that either you or Eric also has a side band with a new album coming out.

That was Eric. It's just a solo deal.

Are you involved with any other bands?

Nope, this is it, just **Windham Hell** and lots of climbing.

Is there any chance that you'll play live shows?

I'll never say that we won't, but it has to be worthwhile. It would be a major effort to get a band together to play this stuff. I haven't played live since the mid eighties. I don't have the urge to play live shows and it seems to be contrived. Maybe I'll freak out someday and put something together.

Is there any new realms of music that you would like to explore?

Yeah, I think we'll go cleaner sounding. I'm not sure if that means anything. I don't know how to describe it. I'm really pushing for some good keyboard stuff. It's got to be the perfect sound, so we're still looking for more money or somebody who has the right equipment. I listen to the **Windham Hell** stuff all the time but it's not totally what I want yet. I'm always up for what sounds best.

Discography:

1999... *Reflective Depths*

Imbibe (**Moribund**)

1996... *Window Of Souls* (**Moribund**)

1994... *South Facing Epitaph* (**Moribund**)

Current line-up:

Leland Windham... vocals, guitars, and keyboards

Eric Friesen... guitars, drums, bass, and keyboards

Website:

www.blackmetal.com/~mega/moribund



NOCTURNAL RITES



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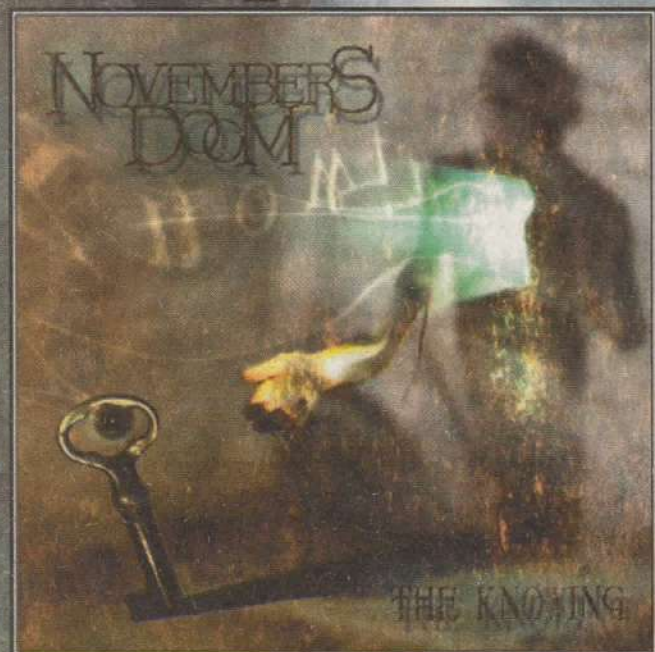
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