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SENTINEL STEEL

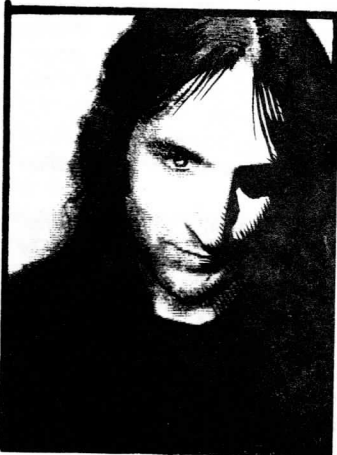
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"WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN, DENIS? WHY DID IT TAKE SO LONG?" Read your minds, didn't I?! SENTINEL STEEL #2 was right on schedule, everything was going good, when it came: THE CALL. An editor at DC Comics wanted my inks on one of his books. After years of toiling away, learning my art stuff (and having fun too!), I finally got THE CALL. At the time, I took it humbly, and started working for the company. Little did I know that they had more openings, and I got even MORE jobs. Am I happy? OH YES. For the best representations of my work, pick up a copy of ANIMA #14 or (especially) #15. Both are DC titles, available at your local comic book shop. But HEY! Enough of my own self-promotion! I've got something else to be equally as proud of: SENTINEL STEEL #2!

Because of the delay, this monster ended up being twice the size of #1, with ten times the amount of info. Regretfully, the computer option was not available, but I had fun doing everything 'old school'--the way zines were MEANT to be put together! Yeah, I nearly puked a few times from inhaling too much rubber cement (how you can get high off that stuff I'll never understand!), and sure, some columns may not win awards for being 'straight', but that's just the way it is. I hope you enjoy everything nonetheless!

I couldn't find the time to gather a 'THANK YOU' list together (or a letters page--weeding through 2000+ pieces takes time!), but there are some people I have to thank: 'Courtly' Craig Wisnom--he did more than half the typing this issue, and found the time to contribute two great articles; I am extremely grateful for what he's done. Many thanks go out to Sue Nolz...for letting me reprint the MTV article, and the awesome work on SENTINEL STEEL #1! And how about that Kurt Hoff guy? I love the cover, and hopefully we'll be showing more work from this comic book artist (August House's THE DARK). Thanks also go out to Al Spremo, for the DEATH SS interview; Marco Barbieri, for hooking me up with Christian/SAVAGE GRACE; Tony Zangara, who supplied the old METAL FORCES issues; and thanks to all the bands, labels, zines, and especially YOU for making SENTINEL STEEL happen! Like I said, I wish I could do a proper thank you list, but maybe next time.

I'm really excited about this issue's content, as it is pretty much all 'TRUE METAL'. And it's going to stay that way!! Send in your comments, suggestions, etc.--I love to read the letters!! You may get a slow response, but everything is read with great interest. All right, let's end this introduction and get on with the rest of the mag! HAVE A GOOD TIME.



DENIS

©ALL CONTENTS 1995 DENIS GULBEY

This issue is dedicated to my maternal Grandfather, Abdullah Yurci. Rahat ol, Dede.

SENTINEL STEEL
P.O. BOX 123
ROCKAWAY, NJ 07866
U.S.A.

C R E D I T S

Denis Gulbey--Everything, minus contributions by:

Craig Wisnom--HELLOWEEN article, Words To The Wise article, all interviews typesetting, and general nice guy.

Al Spremo--DEATH SS interview.

Sue Nolz--I Don't Want My MTV article

Kurt Hoff--Cover artwork, plus 'pumpkin man' art.

A D R A T E S

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Remember Ingo Schwichtenberg; He may have ended his life too soon, but his drumming will live forever. Peace, Ingo.



HTT 95

HEAVENS GATE

INTERVIEW WITH SASCHA
P A E T H



I seem to have a weird habit of finding out about good bands in the most unusual places. As you know from SENTINEL STEEL #1, Germany's GRINDER were the first 'cool' foreign band to play in Istanbul, Turkey. The thrash foursome, then on the No Remorse Records label, were 'hosted' by a metal record shop in downtown Istanbul. I didn't catch the GRINDER gig, but I did manage to find this store, and hang out for a little bit. The place was run by some chain smoking kid (his poison: Marlboro), who obviously had well-to-do parents. To make a long story short, GRINDER had left behind a bunch of NRR compilation cassettes. While I knew of GRINDER (who are, by the way, now known as CAPRICORN, sort of. I believe they're on the Shark label in Germany), names like BLIND GUARDIAN and HEAVENS GATE were unfamiliar to me. My ignorance was thankfully shortlived.

Luck would have it, on my return to the States I found a copy of HEAVENS GATE's first CD, *In Control* (8). Produced by Tommy Hansen, I found this disc to be a fine addition to the legacy left by HELLOWEEN's Keeper Part II opus. Sure, there are no Hansen/Weikath type duels, but for sheer catchiness, *In Control* is tough to beat. At about this time (barely into 1990), CHROMING ROSE released their first, *Garden Of Eden*. Also produced by Tommy Hansen, this major label debut showed that CHROMING ROSE could be the very sons of HELLOWEEN themselves! What I'm getting at here is that producer Tommy Hansen did not change his successful routine (i.e. Keeper Pt. II), hence the similar approach to production style with HEAVENS GATE and CHROMING ROSE. Before saying good-bye to CHROMING ROSE, be aware that they released another HELLOWEEN-heavy album called *Louis The XIV*. Production, once again, by Tommy Hansen. Their third, released in 1993, is titled *Pressure*, and was produced by Flemming Rasmussen, known for his work with METALLICA, ARTILLERY, and PRETTY MAIDS. *Pressure* was a departure, a 'trial' album, as the group tried to gain their own identity. While enjoyable, the disc is let down by a few average songs. I'd say the first two CHROMING ROSE albums are essential for fans of 'happy' German power/melodic metal. Eight, er, squirrels apiece. *Pressure* gets six and a half. Hey, what is this, a CHROMING ROSE article??

Back to HEAVENS GATE. After releasing *In Control*, the group followed it with the *Open The Gate... EP*. Upon putting out a split CD of both of the 1st LP and EP for Japan, the group started to take off. With new management (L.M.P.) and new label (Steamhammer), HEAVENS GATE put out their most powerful offering yet in the form of *Livin' In Hysteria* (8). So, in 1991, while HELLOWEEN struggled with *Pink Bubbles Go Ape*, HEAVENS GATE grew taller. Regardless of what the band says, I still think this second full length album would appeal to HELLOWEEN fans. Singer Thomas Rettke does have a voice possessing a character of its own, and the guitar duo of Bonni B. and Sascha Paeth do create some moments of magic (check out "Fredless" and "Gates Of Heaven"). True, as I said earlier, the axemen don't have that 'zing' that Hansen and Weikath delivered, but HEAVENS GATE more than make up for it with their irresistible brand of powerful German metal.

In 1992 *Hell For Sale!* was released; unfortunately, this album does very little for me--see the interview for details. Capitalizing on the group's popularity in Japan, HEAVENS GATE recorded a live album in that country. Thankfully, this is a mostly solid collection of the best from the HEAVENS GATE catalog. A slight hinderance was the production, which is a touch bland.

So here we are in 1995, and HEAVENS GATE are gearing up for their new album. Making the necessary arrangements with their U.S. representative, Empire Entertainment, I gave guitarist Sascha Paeth a call at home. Upon saying "hello!", I learned he new nothing about the interview! But, true to German hospitality, Sascha immediately dropped what he was doing (from what I understand, seconds before my call he had just come up with his most incredible solo ever; but not having the time to tape it, the solo managed to wipe itself clean from Sascha's memory during our conversation. Oh...well.), and talked with me for close to an hour. Be prepared, as this turned out to be a favorite interview of mine, as Sascha was not only candid about HEAVENS GATE, but more than willing to plug the German metal scene. No wonder the metal community in Germany is so closely knit....

L to R: Thorsten Muller/drums,
Manni Jordan/bass, Bonny
B./guitar, Sascha Paeth/guitar,
Thomas Rettke/vocals

You are in preproduction now. Do you have new material, new songs ready to go?

Yes, uh, we just built up our own studio. Kind of, ha. We will produce there, this time. We wasted a little time, building it up, took a little. We started working on new material. But nothing is done yet. It's going to be...we're in the progress of writing songs [that we will record].

So you don't have any finished songs then?

Because it's going to be finished when it is recorded. We want to try this kind of work this time. We make the rough idea, then we work on it [in the studio]. When we have ten or something [songs roughed out] we go for one song, work on it hard, then record it. You know what I mean, no song is 100% done now.

There are no song titles available?

No, we know some things about songs, of course. Like there is going to be the fourth part to "Path of Glory". It's part of the trilogy that started with "Path of Glory" [from *In*

Control], going on with "Neverending Fire" [*Livin' in Hysteria*], and should've finished with "He's the Man" [*Hell For Sale!*]; but now we are going to do a fourth part, "The King is Dead", ha ha. That's one thing. Then of course we're going to do two ballads, one a long song, like 13 minutes, trying to go for that this time. Maybe some really hard, different influences this time. Bonni is really into heavy METALLICA type music. And I'm more into this blues, Frank Zappa! So it's totally different. I think, this time, the [new album] will be totally together.

Hell For Sale! definitely had more blues in it, which I did not like. I like the more *In Control*, *Livin' in Hysteria* type sound. But you are going to continue with the different styles?

But it's going to sound different. 'Cause the basic songs are more into the old direction. It's a matter of how we're going to work with the instruments. When we do songs like "In Control" and this stuff, you normally go for a

very tough, hard guitar sound. When you go for blues or something, you try to experiment with different sounds. That's what we are trying to combine. I think the songs are more in the old direction.

That is reassuring to hear. I'll be straight with you; from your last studio album, Hell For Sale!, "Underfire" and "White Evil" are fine, as is "He's the Man". The best is "Rising Sun", a brilliant piece of German power metal. Great song. But then you had these more...unusual songs, like "America" or "Up An'Down", which were bluesier. But it seems you are trying to go in the right direction now.

We have to. It's not fitting with the band. Even if we tried in this direction [*Hell For Sale!*], it is not fitting with the band. The band doesn't play this, so it doesn't sound...honest. That is what I know now.

I suppose you could do your own side project, blues stuff. Well, how about a producer? Will it be Charlie again?

I think so, yes.

You'll co-produce too?

Of course, yes.

You've toured with DREAM THEATER, you've worked with ANGRA...both bands have a...you know, a "sound"...did they influence you and HEAVENS GATE in any way?

I'm not sure, if we tried this [type of sound]. I have much fun doing these things...but it's different part, doing it for other people. Maybe we'll do one song, try some of it, I can do keyboard arrangements or something. But it's not fitting with the band.

Wasn't In Control...when it came out HELLOWEEN were very big...you had a HELLOWEEN type of sound.

We had the same producer!! But we didn't go for a HELLOWEEN type of a sound. Some of the songs, like "In Control", was five years old when it was recorded. So it was not influenced directly by HELLOWEEN. It's just the same time, bands like this were coming up. It is a problem in the German metal scene, since you are always compared with HELLOWEEN! It's just that, it's a style that HELLOWEEN first had success with it. Many bands were doing this before, like BLIND GUARDIAN, etc. [They] always say, sounds like HELLOWEEN!!

The band before HEAVENS GATE was STEEL TOWER.

The band right before HEAVENS GATE was called CARRION. That was HEAVENS GATE already, not including me. I came about two months before the recording. The thing was, I wasn't in the hard rock scene that much. They came to me, first to ask for some solos on the record [*In Control*]. So I rehearsed with them. It was great fun! We changed some songs...I worked on the material too...then I was in the band!!

What happened to the old guitarist, Ingo Millek?

He's not into the music anymore. It's like a hobby. Sometimes he plays. I don't think he's had a gig in the last five years.

Before CARRION, Thomas and some other guys were in a band called STEEL TOWER. They put out one album, right?

Yeah, *Night of the Dock*. Recorded an album in Horus Sound, with Jan Nemeč. We recorded the first three there. He produced the SCORPIONS as well.

STEEL TOWER had an AC/DC type sound, from what I remember.

A little, but it had some of the HEAVENS GATE sound too. Thomas was in there, along with Thorsten and Manni.

It's been a while since the last studio album. Why is this?

I've done like 12 productions in the last 1 1/2 year. So that's a reason maybe we are not that fast [in releasing albums]. I was one year in the studio without a day off. I've taken some time off now. Next month I'm going to work with...GAMMA RAY. Do you know'em? [he asks in a semi-serious tone.]



Special Bonus Track: Cry It Out

Never heard of them.

Oh yes, of course you do! Ha ha. So in January I'm recording with Charlie, the GAMMA RAY, then in February, we [HEAVENS GATE] work on our own material.

With GAMMA RAY, have you met or discussed the new material, I know you worked on their last one [Insanity and Genius]...whoops, I'd better stop, or else we'd be doing a GAMMA RAY interview! Ha ha.

Ha ha, that's okay, you can ask me!

I was wondering what kind of a direction they were going in...similar to the last one?

I think it's going to sound harder than the last one--'cause Ralf is not singing any more!

WHAT!!!!?!!

You don't know that? Kai is singing.

Kai is singing? Oh boy. But what happened to Ralf.

They decided...he's not going to be the singer anymore! I don't know that much about it. He's not with the band anymore.

He did try out for JUDAS PRIEST.

Yeah, he was in the tight last three. But he didn't make it. But I think that no one made it at all, because they had problems with Rob Halford; with the name 'JUDAS PRIEST' or something...that's what I think.

Everybody wanted Kai to sing...even though he's not the greatest singer...

I like his personality, when he sings. Of





course he's not a big singer, like technical wise. But he has a good feeling for it.

Good 'character', yeah, I mean, I love Walls of Jericho, it's a classic...

Even the song on the last record was cool too. I was in the recording [of that album].

Getting back to HEAVENS GATE history, you guys were signed originally to No Remorse Records (NRR).

We were with them for two.

You put out In Control and Open The Gate, what was the deal behind the label? They went bankrupt?

Kind of. He didn't invest the money he made. And he made money with BLIND GUARDIAN and HEAVENS GATE. He had

bands that sold good, and he put the money into new bands. That's it. He invested money, but never worked on bringing money into the company. [For us], it was a tough point of quitting the contract. It seemed like he wanted, from bands like BLIND GUARDIAN and HEAVENS GATE, he wanted to suck out the money from the bands. We had problems in the end; in the beginning it was cool, it made a good build up [for HEAVENS GATE].

Who is 'N.R.R.'

Charly Rinne. He has a really bad name in the German scene, ha ha.

What is he doing now?

He was underground two, or three years. Lots of people were very angry with him...not

only bands, but publishing companies, other people. But now, he's going to run another company, I think. I don't know how he'll manage...I [just] heard about it.

Well, he definitely had some good taste in music, he signed some great bands: HEAVENS GATE, BLIND GUARDIAN, GRINDER...and...

DIMPLE MINDS, a German band.

Yeah!

You know 'em? HA HA!!

They have funny songs.

They always do 'drunk' songs...

...in the punk vein.

We did their last record, Charlie [and I].

Unfortunately, you can't get their records here in the States. I've only heard one song by them on an SPV compilation.

Nice band.

About the HEAVENS GATE lyrics, are you guys going to be continuing in the Hell For Sale! vein? It wasn't really serious.

No, not at all.

You will be changing...

To be totally honest, I hope so. It could be a little more deep. You see, I'm not into lyric writing--I do for me my own writing, but it doesn't fit in HEAVENS GATE music. I always write totally complicated..."second sense" type. Thomas has learned more, and Bonni tries to write more now.

It's good that HEAVENS GATE wants to progress in that area.

We have to.

Especially to break into the U.S. market, which I'm sure you'd like to do.

It would be very cool, yes. But it is a hard thing.

Explain the HEAVENS GATE phenomena in Japan.

I can't explain!! I don't know, it just happened. We got into the import shops, and from that point on, the first release we sold lots of records; suddenly, we had lots of fans, fan letters, and we were wondering, too, [about the popularity]. We didn't do special things for the Japanese market, in the beginning; then, for example in the last album we did, was the song "Rising Sun" for the Japanese people. Some German bands are really successful in Japan. I know they like the European culture, when they come over here. They watch all the churches, they are totally into classical music. That's a point--they like this progressive stuff--classical influences. Blues stuff doesn't do much for them. It's a matter of culture.

Here in the States, there is an interest in Japanese flavored music now.

I like it too. Do you know these 'big' drums?

Uh, big drums?

It's the traditional drums--you like this kind of music?

I think more along the lines of melodies, stringed instruments...hmm, this might be an area that HEAVENS GATE could get into.



I'm working on it. JVC just sent me five CD's with "?" and "?" instruments, it's kind of religious, kind of Buddhism music...for mental health, ha ha. I want to work with this kind of thing with **ANGRA**.

Yes, yes!

Fits really good, I'm trying to do some samples, some loops. It's hard...if you can hear it on the next record...

...then I'll know its source. Speaking about ANGRA, you'll be working with them after HEAVENS GATE, right? So it is GAMMA RAY, HEAVENS GATE, ANGRA, and then... DIMPLE MINDS, then SIEGES EVEN...

SIEGES EVEN are back! What do their new demos sound like?

Yes, I worked on them.

Is it still progressive and mellow?

Still, but it's in a way more song oriented. It's better, the parts are still there, but in the old [material], it was part, part, part. Very hard to detect the song. They have a new singer, who is much better, I think. I heard some live recordings, we mixed these for record companies. They are not with SPV anymore. And now, they are about to sign a contract with a very small label. Then we go to Hungary, to Budapest, going to record there.

What label are they going to sign with?

Oh, I don't know. Very small...sorry, I forgot. All these labels...

There are a lot of labels in Germany, are there not?

Yes, a lot of small indie labels.

So after SIEGES EVEN...

...RUNNING WILD, maybe.

Great! Switching gears, this is interesting: HEAVENS GATE did a soundtrack for an anti-drug video series.

It's true, but it's not 100% true. Because they took songs from us, we didn't write especially for them. They took "The Best Days of My Life". That was the main title. They always repeated and repeated the beginning [of it], ha ha. They played 5 or 6 songs from ...uh...oh, I just forgot the name!!

What, the album? Living In--

Hysteria, HA HA HA HA, Hell, unbelievable. But it was a German movie, first on TV, then shown at schools for kids

It seems natural for HEAVENS GATE to work with a project like this. I find your songs positive...

Yeah, I mean, drugs are not there when it comes to our band. Me, for example, I don't even drink alcohol.

I bet all you guys smoke though!

Oh yeah, I smoke. I smoke a lot! But that's German culture, ha ha. In the States it's totally different. I saw Danny DeVito, on German TV, smoking a cigar. He said it's unbelievable, it'll never happen in American TV.

I think cigars are okay--I think David Letterman smokes cigars on TV...

In Germany, it's not a problem...In America it

is a drug these days, huh?

Smoking, yeah.

Okay, then I'm addicted [to drugs]! HA HA. I have a drug problem, ha ha.

It is tough to quit, is it not?

Oh, yes!! Very tough. I started when I was 14. Smoked my whole life through.

How old were you when you started with HEAVENS GATE?

I was 18.

Your album covers for Livin' In Hysteria and Hell For Sale! were done by Richard Corben. How did he get involved with HEAVENS GATE?

I think Manfred Schutz, from SPV Records, he was in contact with him before. He gave [Corben] the title of the record, and Corben offered us a picture that was already done. We bought the rights to release our record with these covers.

Do they represent the band well? Sometimes labels get covers that the band does not like.

No, no, we decided...and we liked it, very cool cover. If it's possible, we will get him again next time. It is a funny thing, 'cause his wife runs his office--it's a family company. We can't afford for him to paint us an original painting for the next album, but something should fit the next title. Which we don't know right now.

I'm looking forward to the next album. From your words, my hopes are high.

We didn't get along with the *Hell For Sale!* material live.

I could see that. On Live For Sale!, you didn't play the bluesy stuff.

The band is not made for this. It wasn't even the best gig, you know. We took the last gig. Thomas was singing much better before. We liked the atmosphere on the recording. We recorded two days, but didn't take anything from the [first] gig. In the same hall, but the drum sound was better [in the second gig]. We cut out two or three songs [from *Live For Sale!*].

Which songs were cut out?

We played "Rising Sun", "Turn It Down", and one more--can't remember.

Is this next recording a make it/break it album?

If it doesn't make it, we can say goodbye. It is very important. If we don't do the recording [and album release in 1995], then nobody's interested anymore. I think, it is also important because the last one was a little experimental. I like the last one [*Hell For Sale!*]. I like this kind of experiments. But I can understand some people not liking it because it's a musician's ego. It's fun doing this *Hell For Sale!*--sometimes you have to do what you want. (END)

RECORD COMPANY

ADDRESSES

NOISE RECORDS U.S./8721 Sunset Blvd./Suite #P6+P7/WEST HOLLYWOOD, CA 90069

MASSACRE RECORDS U.S./11526 Burbank Blvd./Suite #6/North Hollywood, CA 91601

CENTURY MEDIA U.S./1453A 14th St./Suite 324/Santa Monica, CA 90404

METAL BLADE RECORDS/2345 Erringer Rd /Suite 108/Simi Valley, CA 93065

MAGNA CARTA RECORDS/208 East 51st Street./Ste. 1820/New York, NY 10022

HOLY RECORDS/4 BD Gutenberg/ 93190 Livry-Gargan/France

PAVEMENT MUSIC/17W 703 Ste. A/ Butterfield Rd./Oakbrook Terrace, IL 60181

MASSACRE REC. Ger/Rauheckstrasse 10/ D-74232 Abstatt/Germany

MAUSOLEUM U.S./18 East 53rd St./ New York, NY 10022

NOISE Ger/Kufurstenstr. 23/ 10785 Berlin/ Germany

NOISE UK/Euston House, Business Ctr/ 81-103 Euston St./London NW1 2ET/UK

SIEGEN RECORDS/P.O. Box 28452/ Baltimore, MD 21234

WITCHHUNT/P.O. Box 658/8029 Zurich/ Switzerland

SEMAPHORE-FLAMETRADER/Andernacher Strasse 23/D-90411 Nurnberg/Germany

LIGA RECORDS/Liegnitzer Str. 42/ D-58454 Witten/Germany

BLACK MARK PROD/Luxemburger Str. 31/ D-13353 Berlin/Germany

MASCOT RECORDS/P.O. Box 231/2650 AE Berkel/The Netherlands

D&S RECORDS/In Der Marpe 13/45525 Hattingen/Germany

RISING SUN RECORDS/RosenstraBe 5/ 25557 Gokels/Germany

SPV GMBH/P.O. Box 11 47/30531 Hannover/Germany

ART OF MUSIC/Postfach 1117/25501 Itzoe/Germany

ROCK THE NATION/ 2. Cite am Duerf/ L-6195 Imbringen/Luxembourg

RAVE MUSIC/Francoper StraBe 49/ 21147 Hamburg/Germany

MAUSOLEUM Ger/Paul Ehrlich Str. 17/ 63322 Rodermark/Germany

(more addresses to follow! Send 'em in, thanks!)



AMAZINGLY ENOUGH, THE FIRST PART OF THE BRIAN SLAGEL INTERVIEW (see SENTINEL STEEL #1) GOT A GREAT RESPONSE; EVEN KERRANG LIKED IT, SAYING "It is worth the price of admission alone"--AND PEOPLE COMPLAIN THAT KERRANG HAS GONE DOWNHILL!! NONSENSE!! THEY STILL DO HAVE THE ODD SENTENCE OR TWO THAT IS COMPETENT. BUT ANYWAY (no need to make fun of Slagel's former employer!), METAL BLADE'S MASTERMIND CONTINUES HIS TALES...

SATAN's Court in the Act. You licensed this from Roadrunner?

Yeah, that was probably the biggest selling record we licensed from Roadrunner! Believe it or not, it was funny; at Foundations Forum, I did this panel there--which was basically myself alone in a room, answering questions. Some guy asked me about that record, wondering why it wasn't available on CD. 'Well,' I said, 'you'll have to ask Roadrunner for that--they have the rights to it!' Monte Conner walked in 5 minutes later--'Here's Monte! How come the SATAN record is not out'--he says, 'Oh, we're not interested in putting it out. Do you want to put it out?' I said 'Sure, why not,' ha ha. We did really well with that [Court in the Act] back then, something like 15,000 units!

That was your first licensed album...

Yes, I believe so, that and DARK HEART.

Now, at this time, you are expanding, licensing, etc...

By that time, 1984, the European scene started to happen. A lot of European labels were cropping up. We had all our European distribution through Roadrunner, which is who we licensed quite a few from; like SPV, like SODOM, CELTIC FROST; no, we licensed them from Noise; SODOM, uh, DESTRUCTION, most of those companies didn't have distribution in the U.S., and we were in the U.S., and I was a fan of a lot of that stuff, so we in turn

licensed them for over here.

Nowadays, it seems like European music is not as popular as it once was.

Yeah, somebody asked me why we didn't sign more European bands. Well, we actually have quite a few! We have DESULTORY from Sweden, PARADISE LOST from England; in general, I really don't think that the European bands are as good as they used to be--which the person got upset about, but I'm sorry, that's my honest opinion!!

That would upset me too; because I feel a lot more is happening over there.

I think a lot of good bands are happening there too, I don't wanna say it's all terrible and stuff; but I don't think the percentage of good to bad bands is as strong as it was 6 to 7 years ago when there was so much great music coming out. Again, I would say, in the last year and a half, I've heard more stuff from Europe that I thought was really good...PARADISE LOST, for example.

But that's like...DESULTORY...that's a little more 'extreme' in music style. There are bands like ABRAXAS, HEAVENS GATE, BLIND GUARDIAN, etc., who are a bit more melodic and...well, the bottom line is that they are not getting exposure in the States...

A lot of the stuff they're doing is...well, I guess you'd call it dated. It sounds like...it's influenced by late

80's, '87, '88. That kind of stuff is still really popular over in Europe, because people in Europe don't get into the trends that the people in the U.S. do. IRON MAIDEN is still huge in Europe, and they'll be huge in Europe forever. But they're pretty much over here. What they are doing is out. The 'new' is either, metal wise, the death metal stuff, or alternative stuff--everyone in the U.S. is so trend oriented. The Europeans are not interested in anything like that. That's why a band like PSYCHOTIC WALTZ from San Diego is huge in Europe, but they mean nothing in the U.S.

Exactly. A cult band of sorts, where Malmsteen got his start, is SILVER MOUNTAIN.

Another licensing thing we did with Roadrunner; they offered us the record--it's a great record, so I said, yeah, let's do it! So we put it out.

TROUBLE. Your story.

WE did three records, the first three: Trouble (now Psalm 9), The Skull, and Run To The Light They were a band from Chicago, that I had been hearing about a couple of years before we actually signed them. I used to get live bootlegs from them and stuff. I thought they were always pretty cool, they finally got out a proper demo tape. I thought it was great, so I called them up, I said 'Let's do a record!' They actually wanted to do the record out here in L.A. They really wanted to work with Bill Metoyer and myself.

There weren't any good studios there in Chicago, so they all schlepped out in a van. Again, nobody had a lot of money back then, so they came in a van to record their first record. They ran out of money at end of their recording, so they ended up sleeping at our office, which was not very big at that time. They had like five guys in the band, plus a couple of roadies; that was kinda frightening in the morning to walk in and see all these bodies!! Poor guys. They did very well. Rick Rubin decided he loved them and wanted to have them. He wanted to give them all this money, and they said okay, so...

You've listened to their last one, Manic Frustration, did you like their toned down, 70's type psychedelic influence?

I think that was a product of the mixing, and Rick didn't spend a lot of time mixing the record. I think there are some really good songs on there, I think it's very poorly mixed though. That's what he's into, and that's what came across on the record.

LIZZY BORDEN always seemed to typify Metal Blade, i.e. to be your 'house band'.

Ha ha. He came into the record store one day, really shy guy, he didn't think he was shy at the time, but he was. I was talking to a bunch of people, and noticed him standing there for like 20 minutes. So finally he came up to me and gave me this tape, and said, 'Would you listen to this tape.' I said, 'Yeah, sure.' So I popped it in right then and there, in the store, which I think surprised him!! I played it, it was the song "Rod of Iron", and it was great. I was like, wow, this is really amazing! So we put the song on METAL MASSACRE, and got a real good response; and in turn we did an EP, which did very well. And then we started doing records; we had a nice long run with them. Again, what happened with them, is that a lot of these bands get to a point, especially with the way metal was in '87, '88, where you get a lot of pressure from outside sources to become commercial. They went for the whole thing. They said, well, we're gonna go and become really commercial, see what happens with it. The record [Master of Disguise] did very well, but for the amount of money that was spent on it, it didn't do what we hoped it would. He's a really good guy, he's been a really good friend of mine since 1983. He's got a new project together now, called DIAMOND BODS.

Is he still going for a commercial...

No, it's actually kinda hard to describe--kinda like a 70's dirty punk--like if KISS and DAVID BOWIE met the...NEW YORK DOLLS, and SEX PISTOLS maybe. Throw it all together, like that. Kinda fun!

Night on Brocken--its cover art--

[Massive howls of laughter!]

Something in the books for...

...all time worst album cover, ha ha? Back then, and still today, I give the band complete creative control

to do whatever they want. Now, if we saw something like that, we'd say, guys, can you do something a little bit better? Back then, when I got the album cover, I said, well, are you sure this is what you want? They said yes, so I said okay! So we put that album cover out. It was really miserable. So then we had somebody else do another album cover. And that was equally as miserable. So there is actually three versions of it. Finally, when it came out on CD and cassette, I said look, we got to do something really simple, like take a picture of the moon. Let it be that! The band always laughed at that. I think we had a ceremonial burning of the cover art, at one point. When we actually got rid of the cover, we took the original artwork and burned it. They [FATES WARNING] were young, I was young, we didn't know any better.

How old are you?

32.

And you're heading your own record company.

Yeah, I feel old now! When I was 21, 22, that was kinda unusual. It was fun. It still is fun.

At this point, you got rolling, putting out MAD MAX's Rolling Thunder, one of my faves from your catalog; then came DARK HEART...

That [DARK HEART] holds the distinction of being the worst selling METAL BLADE album of all time. 514 copies, ha ha!

What did they sound like?

Oh, really boring German—I think they were German-metal. That was kind funny. When we did the MAD MAX record—I like that record a lot—they [Roadrunner] said, if you do do MAD MAX, you have to take DARK HEART. I said, all right, whatever. I'll put out the record. So we shipped a couple of thousand copies, and they endlessly kept coming back! I think the final figure was 514 records. I remember telling Cees Wessels from Roadrunner—'Thanks a lot Cees!!' So if you own one, you're one of 514 people to have it!

Do you still have all the left over vinyl?

In the warehouse? Probably somewhere. I have a whole bunch of vinyl—when vinyl went out of style, instead of destroying it, I wanted to keep a bunch of it, so we stuck it in the warehouse somewhere.

THRUST.

A Chicago band TROUBLE told me about. A good, hard band.

Morbid Tales is a classic...I like ATTACKER too. Who were SYE?

A Canadian band who sent me a tape that I thought was pretty good. Actually, the artist [on the album cover]; we actually did quite a few album covers with him. His company is now called VOODOO. He's done work with Foundations, he's done a lot of album covers now. But he did some of the better album covers that we did, like HALLOWS EVE's Death and Insanity, and METAL MASSACRE #7 and #8, I think.

Who is that other artist who's done a lot of work for you...The Spectre Within, Awaken the Guardian, etc.

Ohh, Ioannis. He's actually still around doing a lot of album covers. He does a lot of stuff for New Age things. He's done very well as well.

SLAYER's Live Undead wasn't 'live', was it?

It was live, but it was live in the studio. We wanted a live recording, because they are so amazing live, and we couldn't do it properly at a venue. So we had a contest with one of the radio stations in New York. I think 150 to 200 won a pair of tickets to go and see the special live-in-the-studio show. It was in a studio with an actual audience. SLAYER just ripped through about 8 or 9 songs. We took a few of the best ones and put it out on an EP.

A few releases later, you put out SODOM's In the Sign of Evil. Did you listen to it before you put it out, ha ha??

Absolutely!!!

What were your thoughts...

I just thought it was really over the top. One of the reasons why I put out HELLHAMMER in the beginning, which ended up turning into CELTIC FROST, was because I saw a review in Kerrang that said it was the worst heavy metal record ever put out. The worst heavy metal record ever put out!!! I have to put that record out!!! So SODOM was kinda the same way, just really over the top, VENOMesque sort of band; I thought that was cool.

They did get a lot better, have you listened to--

Oh, their new stuff is great!! They've progressed over all their records. SODOM are one of those bands that just put the band together because they wanted to be a band but couldn't play. But actually, over the years, they play quite well.

NASTY SAVAGE was a 'name' in the underground back then, they had an image thing going.

It was an interesting experience! Nasty Ronnie was the king of hype and publicity. He had his band hyped so much before we signed them. Everybody was talking about them. And two things that happened once we signed them was he stopped doing publicity because they were signed, and the other one was they never toured, because the band's manager was also the drummer's father. And he was in a band in the 50's or something. He got messed around by some people. So he is very mistrusting of

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Baphomet

New year, new flyers... What seems to be an usual practice for millions of people, in this case it's done for necessity! We are talking of some address correction and news of one of the oldest fanzine (sure this is the proper description?) around... BAPHOMET! ENRICO LECCESI, C.C. 263, 1900 LA PLATA, BS. AS. ARGENTINA.

European bands should send their stuff for review to the following: EMANUELE, SICA, VIA TIMAVO 3, 00195 ROME, ITALY. Guys this has been done to help you saving some money, so don't be ashamed or afraid, ok???

Underground horror directors interested in having your stuff seen and honestly reviewed on our cinema pages, send your stuff to: LUIGI DE ANGELIS, VIA TARO 1, 00199 ROME, ITALY. All systems supported (VHS).

Still available is #11 with the following interviews and stuff:

SOULGRIND, MORTUARY DRAPE, NOVEMBERS DOOM, BEYOND DAWN, NECROMASS, MONUMENTUM, SEPOLCRUM (now SETTIMO ARCANO), ETERNE, OLTRAGGIO E RESISTENZA, + LUCIO FULCI, MARIANO BAINO, SHIVER RECS, SLUGS AND LETTUCE 'ZINE and over 120 reviews (demo zines videos albums). Available for 5\$ from one of the addresses above mentioned.

Before giving the deadline for the next issue, I forgot to you that it's entirely professional printed as never seen before I guess...

Ok, deadline for bands is around June 1995 so send your stuff in for that date ok?

a lot of people in the music business. I didn't have a problem with him, but every time they would book a tour to go someplace, it would get cancelled by him at the last minute. So they never actually ended up touring, which was really too bad, because they were a great band.

Sales wise, I heard they didn't meet expectations...

No, if they really toured, they probably would have done much better. But they just never went out and toured; and really, you have to go out and play, if you're gonna sell any records. I tell you, more people ask me about that band [than any other] from that era on Metal Blade. Every time I turn around—it's amazing!!

Yeah, they're still pretty popular in Europe. It was a good thing to reissue the first album on CD—the production still stands the test of time.

Let me tell you one other funny story about NASTY SAVAGE really quick. That [first album] was one of the first records I think I went outside of L.A. to mix; 'cause I mixed the first NASTY SAVAGE record at this tiny little studio in Florida called Morrisound. I think it's the first record Morrisound ever did. It was this little dinky studio—they didn't really even have 'real' equipment—they were trying. Now it's the death metal capital of the universe!! It's a huge, monstrous—now they have three rooms, this beautiful building and stuff.... It's kind funny, being there in the very beginning, seeing how it has grown. It is really good, the guys who run it are real good guys.

OMEN.

The rhythm guitarist is from SAVAGE GRACE; he left SAVAGE GRACE after the EP [The Dominatrix] and formed this band OMEN. They were just a very European metal band; they were hindered by this horrible artwork [Battle Cry's album cover]—ed.]

They also went, the commercial route, with their last album Escape to Nowhere.

Yeah, same thing with this band, they came to the crossroads—fortunately for Omen, they got involved with Paul O'Neil—who did the Savatage records—who unfortunately thought they'd be a real commercial success. The last record again was very, very commercial, and I was not very happy with it. But if that's what they want to do, then that's what they want to do. Unfortunately, they broke up after that.

JUGGERNAUT...no wait, let me get to SOUND BARRIER...they were a special metal band. They were black.

They suffered from being a black band, because the record...we also did a lot of promotion on it...I think it's a great record.

Same here.

But you know, back at that time, this is prior to LIVING COLOR—I hate to say this, but I really think that them being a black band really hindered them a lot. I think a lot of the white heavy metal community just didn't want to accept an all black heavy metal band. Which is really a sad thing to say, as people should listen to the music, to listen to the music, and not care if it's a male or female, black red, blue, green...it's much better now. But back then...it was really a great record, and we got great reviews, but it just didn't sell what we thought it would sell. Unfortunately that had a lot to do [with the band's demise].

Yeah, I...hmm, let's see, BLOODLUST, PREDATOR... PREDATOR had a nice album cover!!

HA HA, horrible cover, we got into a lot of trouble for that! A lot of women were like, why are you doing this? I said, hey look, I told the band they could do whatever they wanted to do. This is what they did, this is their statement, albeit tasteless as it was. The music wasn't very good, actually. That was one thing, when I heard the demo tape I thought it was pretty good; when we did the record, it didn't turn out the way I wanted it to.

I've never listened to it, but--

--Don't bother!!

Ha ha, o-kay. JUGGERNAUT's two albums were excellent. Trouble Within and Baptism under Fire.

Two awesome records.

Two classics.

Great band from Texas; they were huge in Texas, but they could never get out and play anywhere else. Yeah, I like those records a lot, they did pretty well actually.

LIZZY BORDEN—you really got behind him on this one—*Murderess Metal*—and put out a double live LP set, plus a video. That must of been a pretty big thing at that time!!

Yeah, it was a big thing back then! I remember when Lizzy came up to me with the idea of doing this, I said, 'Oh my god, are you kidding me?' But we—being an independent label—we begged and pleaded, and got them to do things for next to nothing. He was a real big fan of the visual aspects [of the live show], and we both grew up watching **KISS** and **ALICE COOPER** and all the bands that had the visual stuff. **LIZZY BORDEN** incorporated this into their shows, which is one of the things I really liked about them. And we really wanted to document their shows. Because at that time, it was a unique happening, I guess. We had a big Halloween show, and we got all these video cameras there. Got a truck in the back to record it; and we kinda crossed our fingers, 'cause we had no time or money to do anything other than just roll through the show and hope that there was no disasters! Because we couldn't go back and redo anything, 'cause we had cameras there only for the show. Same thing with the truck, and...luckily it was a pretty good show!! And it came off pretty good! It was fun!

Soon after that you got major label...Capitol distribution. Did that help you out in a big way?

Not really, because we ran into a lot of problems with Enigma. Enigma said that the deal is going to be where our bands could 'graduate' to Capitol. We're a small label, and we know we are a small label. We can get bands to the 75,000 to 100,000 unit mark, but after that you really need the big push of a major label, to get behind a record, to really get it to sell. And we can't do that. We know that. We were promised by both Enigma and Capitol, that if bands got over a certain level, Capitol would take them over and make them a part of Capitol, make 'em happen. What happened was, Enigma sold a lot of **POISON** records and **SMITHEREENS** records. They felt that they did all the work and Capitol did nothing. So they switched the deal to where Capitol could take **POISON** and **THE SMITHEREENS** but could no longer take any other bands from them. Which changed our deal, which meant that Enigma was the label that was supposed to break our acts. They were just unable to do it, they didn't know what they were doing. Hence, they went out of business. We're actually in a lawsuit with them, trying to get our catalog back. Which is almost reaching an end, finally. It's kinda been a nightmare, the past 3 or 4 years. When we left them, we really had no catalog. It was all stuck with them. A lot of records, like **FATES WARNING** records, had been out of print for 2-3 years in the U.S. It's all finally coming to an end, and we're going to get the catalog back. So we'll be able to reissue a lot of stuff finally.

Restless has quite a few of—

--yeah, they had quite a few [of our catalog]; 'course, they haven't paid us yet, which is part of the problem. We're sorting it all out now, and we'll get it together.

During this period, you also had 'Death' Records and 'Dimension' Records.

The 'Death' came about when the guys from **SLAYER** turned me on to both **DRI** and **CORROSION OF CONFORMITY**. At the time, being a strictly metal label before, we thought it would be kind of unusual to have these more hardcore bands on the actual Metal Blade label. So we decided to put them on another label—Death Records. Sounded like a fun name for a label. So we created that and put out **C.O.C.**, **DRI**, **BEYOND POSSESSION**, **UGLY AMERICANS**, and a lot of hardcore punk stuff.

Is Death Records still around?

Actually, we kinda put it to bed for a while, but we've resurrected it with some of the death metal stuff, just because...what a perfect name for death metal bands! **CANNIBAL CORPSE** was the first one we signed,

we had them with the 'Death' logo on there. We are trying to keep...any of the death metal stuff we're signing we're putting both the Metal Blade and Death Records logo on there, just so people will know that it's a death metal band. So they might not be confused it's the...**GOO GOO DOLLS**!!

You haven't explored the video tape market that much.

We've done a few, we've done the **LIZZY BORDEN** one, **DRI**, a compilation of Metal Blade Stuff, called **VIDEO MELTDOWN**, **ARMORED SAINT**, and of course 3 or 4 **GWAR** ones now, so...it's a tough market!! We're going to put together another Metal Blade compilation video, a bunch of videos from the past few years.

Is the METAL MASSACRE series still happening?

No, unfortunately these days, people just do not want to listen to compilation albums. So, what we're doing instead...because there are so many bands out there that need to be heard...now there are so many labels that bands could get signed very easily. There aren't that many good bands who aren't getting signed, as before, when each label could only sign so many bands; so few labels back then...we're toying with the idea of doing some more 7 inchers; we've done a couple of them. Those seem to be a fun new way of exposing new bands and not having to do a whole new record with 'em. Someday we'll resurrect the **METAL MASSACRE** series, when the time comes around when people want to listen to compilation albums again. [Editors note: apparently that 'time' has come—look for **METAL MASSACRE #12** in 1995.]

I liked the last one you did, with MYSTIC FORCE, FORTE, NIGHTCRAWLER...I think very few of #11 were pressed...

Yeah, I think we only did about 7-8,000 copies, which was okay.

I had a hard time finding it. A friend recommended I ask you about Ron Quintana.

WHO??!!—just kidding! Ron is a **METAL MAINSTAY**!! He followed me directly with doing a fanzine, called **METAL MANIA**; did **KUSF** radio; he played an integral role in the early years of **METALLICA**. In fact, **GIVING THEM THEIR NAME!** Actually, Lars stole it from him, but...Ron was starting a fanzine, and Lars said 'Call it **METAL MANIA!**' and took the first name [**'METALLICA'**, of course] on the list [of possible 'zine names] and took it as his band's name. Ron's a good guy, he's definitely one of the original people back in the early 80's who really supported metal. His fanzine was the 2nd American fanzine by probably 6 or 7 months or something. We competed at the fanzine level for a short period of time, 'til I dropped...he kept doing his forever. Of course he does the radio shows on **KUSF**, which he still does on occasion. [It's] a legendary show, one of the first college radio shows ever. He still is a big supporter of metal.

I heard he went through some tough times.

He kind of disappeared a little bit for a while. But I see him at the Foundations every year now, and I saw him at The Day On The Green with **METALLICA**, in 1991, I think it was. He's doing okay. A lot of people like that who were doing stuff like that [zines, radio, etc.] ended up having 'real' jobs. Fortunately, I don't have to have a real job, ha ha. Even though this is turning into a real job!! (END)



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MACBETH-Beware Of Human Agression/
D&S-Semaphore

Don't let the name 'MACBETH' fool you! Instead, look at the CD title. It says it all! A nice, healthy chunk of power metal and speed. I am reminded of a younger RUNNING WILD, both in the vocals and song structures. In a way, I suppose you could hear a lot of different styles. With the number of bands coming out today, a little bit of similarity is unavoidable. Let's just say that if MACBETH keeps on going (I hope so), they'll have no trouble competing with the veterans.

"Savage Dreams" opens the disc, with a robust portion of speed. On to "With Or Without", a mid paced crusher that has occasional double kick work. The rest of the tracks weave back and forth between mid paced and speed cuts. Again, as with the AVALANCHE CD, B.O.H.A. is very well arranged. The lyrics, as with most bands of this genre, deal with life and its little tie-ups, and how they deal with them. Although I think the whole CD is good, my favorite track would be "Macbeth", which is obviously their theme song; again, it sounds to one of the faster songs from RUNNING WILD's Death Or Glory LP. Check out MACBETH!! No contact address was listed on the CD, but write to their studio/label for info: D&S Records Studio Hattingen /In der Marpe 13/45525 Hattingen/Germany

AVALANCHE-Here Comes The King/inde

From start to finish, Here Comes The King is a well produced, pro sounding, and all around EXCELLENT CD! The vocals alternately remind me of either Michael Kiske or John Arch. A tight rhythm section and melodic, intelligent guitar work make up the rest of AVALANCHE. The CD kicks off with "Flame Of Life", which is melodic speed metal at its finest, in a HELLOWEEN (early years)/HEAVENS GATE style. "A Romantic Love Song" is more of the same, with a slow, ballad style passage in the middle. The third track is "The King"--a mid paced anthemic style track. "B.W.G." follows as an instrumental, with many rhythm changes. Very cool! "A Song About A Lady" slows the pace down a bit; although I am not a great fan of ballads, one well done track per release makes for a nice blend of styles! Such is the case here. They immediately change back to high gear with "Private Guardians"--a track that switches between speed and almost doom, grind style meters. The remaining tracks (with the exception of "Silence", which is only 2 seconds long) alternate between speed metal, anthemic metal, and mid paced power tracks. A great blend, very well arranged. It makes for a good listen. Try to find this CD if you can (best bet would be Dream Disc--Denis). Contact the band at: AVALANCHE/Poststrasse 12/59439 Holzwickede/Germany

FATEFUL LEGACY-Fateful Legacy/inde

Others might disagree, but I would place FATEFUL LEGACY's debut in a sort of power metal vein. The production is not as strong as it could be, but the power is there nonetheless! They strike me as a young band finding its way; the potential is there. The vocals are okay, the guitar work is good, but the drummer tends to lose his meter now and then. He makes up for it on other tracks where the playing is crisp and tight. A bit of seasoning all around will turn FATEFUL LEGACY into a good pro unit. Only two tracks, "Circle Of Live" and "Stones Don't Bleed" are a let down; the writing just isn't there. "In The Dead Of Night" is a pure slice of mid-eighties sounding German metal. The remainder of the tracks are good chunks of melodic power interlaced with a light doom style rhythm. Not a bad release; the sort of CD that does not, at first, really catch your ear. But with every listen you tend to get a feel for what they are doing. I think it's a safe bet to look forward to their next release, as the time passing should solidify the band. Contact: Jurgen Lobinger/Lichtensternstrasse 19/92660 Neustadt-WN/Germany

Words to the Wise...

The Interplay of Metal Lyrics and Classical Literature

By Craig Hunter Wisnom

For those who find heavy metal a true passion, it can be a frustrating one, because not only is it such an obscure interest, it is one that is either given no respect or attention, or completely denigrated. From the inaccurate and slanted blasts of the PMRC in the mid-80's, to most prevalent humor that is ever directed at the subject, metal lyrics are presented at best as simplistic and mindless; and at worst, as dangerous and evil. It is one of the great ironies about the genre, because even discarding the incredible power, breadth, and complexity of the actual music, heavy metal lyrics are the most consistently intelligent, intellectual, and enlightening of any music.

Not all bands that could generally be considered metal necessarily live up to this standard. The vast majority of hard rock bands seem concentrated on the themes of fun, love, sexuality, music, with occasional tributes to more serious subjects. In this way, these bands are closer to the level of most mainstream lyrics, though still above the moronic lyrics they are projected as having by mainstream critics and opinion.

But those of us know that the vast majority of heavier metal, ranging from traditional Priest-Maiden followers through the spectrums of speed and thrash and even into the vocally limited death metal, consistently deals with intelligent subjects. I can't imagine any other style of music with so many diverse lyrical subjects and concept albums. At the least, metal lyrics deal with the themes of life, death, war, pain, religion, and society in thought provoking, questioning ways. At the most, they weave together powerful poetic images with lush literary allusions, melding their thought and emotion together with the music for a magic reaction that I find unsurpassed in any other art form.

I could fill up books analyzing how powerfully metal lyrics deal with the same kind of intellectual themes we find in literature, drama, and poetry. This article must be limited to some brief examples I happen to be aware of, to those specific times when metal artists are referring to authors or subjects that would truly surprise those without an awareness of the intellectual depth. If you are familiar with metal, many of the bands don't at all hide the source of a lot of their lyrics, while others you might not be aware of until you happen to come across the stories or poems they were taken from.

Edgar Allan Poe, with his brilliance for terrorizing stories and romantic poetry, has been a great source for metal lyricists. His short story, "Masque of the Red Death", has yielded two metal adaptations, **CRIMSON GLORY's** and **MANILLA ROAD's**. **MANILLA**

ROAD also penned a song dedicated to E.A.P. called "Mystification." **METAL CHURCH** based "Of Unsound Mind" on one of his more famous works, "The Telltale Heart". **ANNIHILATOR** similarly penned "Ligeia" to retell the ghostly story of the same name by **Poe**; as did **IRON MAIDEN** with "Murders in the Rue Morgue."

His poetry provided a more obscure source for lyrics. **TESTAMENT's** "Into the Pit" is composed almost completely of slightly modified fragments of his poetry: "Where death has reared itself a throne/ We're all the good the bad the worst and the best/And where they land is their eternal rest..." ("Lo! Death has reared himself a throne/In a strange city lying alone/Far down within the dim West/Where the good and the bad and the worst and the best/Have gone to their eternal rest"-**Poe**, from "The City in The Sea"). **FATES WARNING's** "Ivory Gate of Dreams", which takes its initial imagery from **Virgil** and Greek Mythology, uses a lot of imagery from the **Poe** poems "Dreams" and "A Dream Within a Dream."

Poe isn't the only famous author well-represented in metal. Not only does metal so often parallel the themes and thoughts in **Shakespeare's** darker plays, but often bands allude directly to the bard. **HADES' "Aftermath of Betrayal"** is an entire epic song based on the story of **Hamlet**. **MANILLA ROAD's "Throne of Blood"** is similarly a metallic retelling of **Shakespeare's Macbeth**.

References in parts of songs are even more common. **SKYCLAD**, featuring former **SABBAT**-vocalist **Martin Walkyier**, my vote for the best lyricist in metal; quotes **Shakespeare's The Merchant of Venice** on the back cover of *Wayward Sons of Mother Earth*, a quotation about the sufferings of affluence that perfectly captures the themes running through all the songs on that album. In "Alone in Death's Shadow", **Martin** talks about the "Double-backed beast", a reference to sex from **Shakespeare's Othello**. ("Your daughter and the Moor are now making the beast with two backs."-**Othello**, Act I, Scene i). He also refers to one of **Macbeth's** victims in "The Wickedest Man in the World" when he says, "Kill me off but like Banquo I'll come back to plague you." Just one more example is punning that **Shakespeare** himself would have appreciated, when **SKYCLAD** penned a song called "The ilk of Human Blindness", a reference to another line from **Macbeth**. ("It is too full o' th' milk of human kindness..."-**Macbeth**, Act I, Scene iv.)

What's amazing is how easily and unpretentiously bands play upon the intellectual themes in such sources and integrate them into their lyrics. **DREAM**

THEATER's existential "Pull Me Under" also pulls some lines out of **Shakespeare's Hamlet**: "Watch the sparrow falling/Gives new meaning to it all/If not today nor yet tomorrow/Then some other day..." ("There is a special providence in the fall of a sparrow/If it be now, tis not to come, if it be not to come, it will be now; if it be not yet, yet it will come."-**Hamlet**, Act V, Scene ii.)

There are also so many other sources referenced in metal. **Samuel Taylor Coleridge's** poetry has been revitalized in two different metal songs, **IRON MAIDEN's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner"** based on the epic poem of the same name by **STC** (And if anyone cares, in an interesting coincidence that poem starts on page 666 of my poetry anthology...) and **RUSH's "Xandadu"** based upon "Kubla Khan" by **STC**. To the almost bizarrely obscure, **CELTIC FROST's "Tristesses De La Lune"** is the actual poem of that title written by French poet **Charles Baudelaire**, and "Sorrrows of the Moon" is its english translation, both in title and lyrics.

There's just my brief sampling of one side of the intellectual level of heavy metal. There are many other examples, some I've forgotten and some I may not be aware of, but this just shows you a good sample of how such references are prevalent in metal. So keep remembering how much there is to think about while you read those lyric sheets, and the next time someone makes a derogatory comment about metal, smile as you prepare to unleash a torrent of literary fact upon them to back up the love in your heart. Never surrender....

Craig Wisnom's a third year law student, eager to become an unemployed lawyer. He's a Tucson native, happily stuck there, with his wonderful, beautiful, and brilliant wife of 7 months, Patti. First hooked by Quiet Riot's Metal Health (Boy, he's come a long way since), Craig's been ecstatically bound to heavy metal ever since, worshipping especially the most ascendant power metal like old Fates Warning, old Helloween, old Queensryche, and he's becoming quite annoyed at how he has to type "old" before all of his favorite bands, and is thankful he can simply say Angra on its lonesome. Lover of poetic, intelligent, and passionate lyrics, he's very glad to be a part of this issue of SS.... And hello to all from Craig's Metal Board and correspondence (Our Prodigy creation where we learned how great a bond metal can be, even online), Brian, Jon, Chuck, Curt, Glenn, Dave, Val, Anish, Dan, Rick, Julie, Chris, Jim, and Scott... Thanks for all your friendship... If you feel like chatting, you can reach him at :10651 Timeless Drive / Tucson, AZ 85748... or online at Craig@aruba.ccit.arizona.edu...

Savage Grace

WHEN TRYING TO COME UP WITH A 'DEFINITION' FOR SENTINEL STEEL, I PUT TOGETHER THREE WORDS THAT REPRESENT THIS PUBLICATION: "POWER, SPEED, AND GRACE". THESE THREE WORDS CAN ALSO DESCRIBE WHAT SAVAGE GRACE IS ALL ABOUT. THE GROUP, LED BY GUITARIST CHRISTIAN LOGUE, ALWAYS HAD POWERFUL DRUMMING, SPEEDY RIFFS, AND DAZZLING MELODIES. FROM THE 80'S, SAVAGE GRACE WERE ONE OF THE FEW BANDS WHO COULD PLAY, AS SHOWCASED ON THEIR TWO LONGPLAYERS *After The Fall From Grace* AND *Master Of Disguise*. THE FOLLOWING IS AN INTERVIEW WITH CHRISTIAN LOGUE...AT PRESS TIME, HE WAS PREPARING FOR THE CD REISSUES OF ALL THE SAVAGE GRACE MATERIAL (2 EPS AND 2 LPS). READ ON.....



CHRISTIAN LOGUE

How ya doing Denis?

Okay, how are you?

Pretty good, what's happening?

Well...what's happening with you?

Oh, well, those flakes from Europe [Rock the Nation] never got a hold of me, so I don't know what label...I'm assuming it's Black Dragon, [they're] gonna put it out. I haven't heard from this other label, so I think Black Dragon will be putting it in stores any day now. I guess!!

Any day now?

Oh yeah. They were already in production, I asked them to stop production, to see if they could work a deal with this other guy. And he hasn't called back. I guess the next record, the 2nd CD we're gonna put out, will be with this other company. I haven't signed the contract on that so I don't know when we're gonna do that. But this first release will be out any day now with Black Dragon. And then we'll do something else for the States and other territories.

Are you going to be making any money off of this?

Aaaah...I hope so, we'll see if we can sell a couple.

They're not paying anything up front.

Black Dragon is not, but the other company would have, that's why I wanted to go with the other company, but I already signed the contract, so the guy made them an offer, and I guess they didn't want to go for it. Which is

kinda stupid.

*Did you get paid straight for **Master of Disguise**, etc., when you were on **Black Dragon** before?*

Oh yeah, I never had a problem with any money from them, as opposed to a lot of other European labels, ha ha. A lot of the bands we talked to would tell you they didn't get a good shake on things. We did two tours of Europe, and they financed all that, I think we came out all right.

***Master of Disguise** was on **Important in the States**.*

That's true, we just had a pressing and distribution deal with Important. All the other bands were on Combat, but we didn't want to go with Combat, so...we had a lot more control on the deal.

*Why didn't you want to go with **Metal Blade** for **Master of Disguise**?*

Uhhh, well, when they do a deal with you, they want to control the rights of the record, for the whole world. By doing the Black Dragon deal, and Important, I could then go ahead and license the album to other territories. Like South America, Japan, so you can make a lot more money when you're on a smaller level. On the independent level you make a lot more money. See, when Brian Slagel puts it out, he keeps all the deals he makes with other territories. He may not make money but he'll get exchanges, with Roadrunner, and other labels, and the band

doesn't see any of that. So that's why I do it [by myself].

*After the **Fall from Grace** was back on **Metal Blade**.*

Because at this time I already had the record done, and paid for, by the time we licensed it to Metal Blade. We already toured Europe off of it. We were looking for people to license it to in the States. So we did a straight licensing deal with Metal Blade.

You're a smart guy, licensing your product, having full control.

Yeah, it would work better if you had a big record. If your record does nothing, then it doesn't matter, but if your record does something, you don't want to give up the rights to it. One day you may need it, and you don't have it. It's just protecting yourself, in case you have a hit.

*Tell me about your current band. Are you guys still called **SAVAGE GRACE**?*

Well, right now, we really got to think about

that. We don't want people to get the idea that we are speed metal anymore. We may have to do something about that. The music is more current to what is happening, but definitely not grunge.

Is it like...well, take the new JAG PANZER, described by many as sounding like PANTERA...

No, ours is a little more downbeat, darker.

There's no IRON MAIDEN type...

Nope....

...twin guitar...

Nope, nothing like that..

[Pause as Denis weeps...] How many ["sniff"] demos have you put out with this band?

[Pause again as Denis blows his nose and wipes his eyes...with a different tissue.]

I have been through a lot of people over the years, we've done about 4 to 5 demos [since the last EP].

Why didn't Black Dragon put out the Ride

seeing Master of Disguise?

Ha ha, oh really? Over our record? I'd have to put that in our scrap book. Well, we never sold many records in England anyway. No big deal. We sold about 300 over there. Something minimal like that.

I always questioned their taste, so...

Ha ha ha...a strike...Ha.

Yeah, that was in METAL FORCES, like number 11.

When we first put out *M.O.D.*, we had like a thousand pieces returned from some of the bigger chains in the States. Wait 'til they could see the picture disc!!

Getting back to the Ride Into the Night picture disc, what were the songs like? Did you sing on that?

Yeah, I did all the vocals on that.

It was 1988, was it a bit more updated, or thrashy, or...?

We had a couple of upbeat numbers, we had two midtempo, and then we did a cover of



Into the Night picture disc EP?

Uh, I guess they didn't want to pay for it. And they didn't think putting out an EP was a good idea. I really don't remember at this point but I think I got a better deal from Flametrader....Nice picture disc...I wanted to license it out here, but I couldn't get the right deal for it. And then we also licensed that to V.A.P., that was also available. We had a contract out on that, in Japan with V.A.P., and sent them the parts, but I don't think they even released it. They were pissed off, they needed it by a certain date, the cover art was a little too hot for the Japanese market. So they wanted it toned down, and by the time they got it they were pissed off. They said they wanted their money back. I said forget it, the deal's done, and if you wanna put it out, put it out. I don't think they ever put it out.

Man! You guys and these album covers!! You know about that British distributor whose female employees threatened to strike after

DEEP PURPLE's "Burn". It was mixed.

It was a natural progression from After the Fall From Grace.

Not...really. It has a little more diversity in it, it wasn't total speed. Not every song was fast, we were trying to broaden out, a little more midtempo.

That sounds like your first EP, just heads down, crunchy...

Right.

Production wise, the 2nd EP...

...was similar to *After the Fall From Grace*, we had the same producer.

I always thought the Dominatress EP had the best sound of 'em all.

It was a little more raw. I didn't produce that one. *After the Fall From Grace*, I had a real hand in producing it, so I could...the production on that is more hi-tech, more commercial, really clean production.

Do you do production work for others?

Yeah, I did a band last year, called QUEEN OF HEARTZ, with a female lead singer. And I have a demo of that. We shopped it but they didn't get picked up. It's straight ahead hard rock, with female vocals.

You had a song on METAL MASSACRE #2; "Scepters of Deceit". That was off a demo...

Yes, off an 8 track demo, recorded in Phoenix.

That was in 1982. From there you went direct to The Dominatress.

Yup.

I noticed, from your voice, you sound Canadian.

Nope, I'm from L.A.; actually, I'm from Hawaii, but I've been living in L.A. most of my life.

You're a native Hawaiian?

Yup.

When "Scepters of Deceit" was done, you were the sole guitarist. For The Dominatress you got Kenny Powell [pre-OMEN]. You wanted to beef up the sound or get the MAIDENesque leads...?

We wanted to have guitar harmonies, to have the two-guitar attack.

After The Dominatress, Kenny left. Why?

I think he wanted to get his own band, so he put OMEN together.

And we are better off for it, as two great bands emerged. What happened to him?

I saw him about 2-3 years ago, when we were on the road, and he was in a band in Texas, or Oklahoma. He's from Oklahoma, so he's doing the Midwest circuit. Last I heard, the name of the band is...

STEPCHILD?

Yeah.

Vocalists! You had Dwight Cliff, John Birk, Mike Smith...you had a problem with vocalists...

Yeah. I couldn't get guys that wanted to go on the road and do it, y'know. They were just...flakes.

Did you "know" you could sing?

My attitude is basically, if I'm ever gonna do anything, I'm gonna have to do it myself. Otherwise I'm going to be auditioning singers until I'm fifty.

Did you have any vocal 'effects' on After the Fall from Grace?

The only thing as far as effects would be like some 'delay'; on the production the top end was brought up. But that's pretty much...everybody does that in the studio. The only song where we had any effects was "Trial by Fire".

Yeah, I wanted to ask you about that! TENSION [DEUCE] has a very similar song on their album Breaking Point.

I didn't write that song! Brian East wrote that song, so if there's any plagiarism in it, you'd have to talk to him about it, ha ha. Wasn't me! When was TENSION's written?

Right about the same time, maybe earlier, definitely not later.

Oh boy, well, I don't know what Brian was listening to.

THE
PIC
DISC
COVER.
THOSE
OF
YOU
UNDER
21--
ER,
...
DON'T
LOOK,
OKAY?
I
CAN'T
AFFORD
WISNOM!

Well, what happened to him?

Last time I saw him, he owned two recording/rehearsal studios.

He's doing okay.

Yeah, but that's the last I heard!

Brian was the one consistent band member you had. Mike Smith sang on Master of Disguise, I thought he was brilliant. What happened to him and the other singers?

The guy had a terrific voice. He basically retired, and John Birk retired, and I think he wanted to become a pro-wrestler.

A pro-wrestler.

Yup, he looks like one now, he's really pumped up on steroids.

How many Master of Disguise picture discs were pressed?

Two thousand.

Out of all the bands that came out in the 80's, why does SAVAGE GRACE have such a long standing popularity?

Good question, ha ha. I really don't know! I just tried to make stuff that had as much quality to it as I could. I didn't want to copy anybody else's sound out there. I wanted to have something that had some melody to it, I didn't want to do something like SLAYER. I think we had a lot of integrity in the songwriting, the songs really had to be there.

I know people's tastes change, but why couldn't you keep that old SAVAGE GRACE sound going?

We tried to do that speed metal stuff in '87, '88, and here [in the States] the market was so saturated, every other band was doing speed metal, and it blew the whole market out. We couldn't get on tours doing that stuff anymore. We got on the MOTORHEAD tour in 1987. That's when we started going into more midtempo stuff. Because it was the only way we could stay out there and keep doing it. The majors were totally sick of speed metal, and the European market was totally blown out of speed metal by that time also. If you look back at the magazines in 1987, they were flooded also, with speed metal bands.

When you say 'speed metal', do you mean 'thrash', or traditional fast metal?

Both. All the German bands that was coming out, like HELLOWEEN... There were so many bands, and not enough money was in the market to support all the bands that were doing it. The market just killed itself.

But HELLOWEEN and SAVAGE GRACE are considerably different from thrashers like DESTRUCTION, TESTAMENT, etc, that were popular in the magazines.

Yes, you're right as far as music goes, but as far as the people buying the records, that was pretty much the same...guys who were buying HELLOWEEN and SAVAGE GRACE records were buying DARK ANGEL and SLAYER too. By that time there were so many other bands, that is when we started going into a more mid-tempo; by '88, '89, we were doing an AC/DC and ZODIAC MINDWARP thing.

[Pause as Christian waits patiently while interviewer Gulbey blows in-and-out of a paper bag, trying to end the hyper ventilating. ZODIAC MINDWARP?]

That's what we were doing when we got to New York.

That is a shock to hear.

Ha ha. We didn't have any releases then, we had a good band, we had a strong image. For about two years in New York we were about the biggest band going. We were playing the Limelight, we were the only band there that had any kind of buzz on the street. CIRCUS OF POWER, we played with them.

CIRCUS OF POWER and...SAVAGE

GRACE? [Denis looks desperately for a different bag, the kind found on airplanes...]

Yeah, we did a few gigs together. We had that type of a sound. It was really working, but we couldn't get the tape sold [to a label]. We had the demos, the management...

Hmmm, big turnaround in sound.

But see, it kept the band going. If we kept trying to do speed metal, it couldn't have gotten us gigs. I probably could've worked out a German record deal or something, but I didn't want to wind up like SLAYER, and keep playing the same gigs for ten years. They never got any bigger, they're kinda in a grind. I was trying to do something to broaden the band out, and have a little more mass appeal to it.

The people in Europe and Japan don't know about your New York era.



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No, they don't, 'cause I tried to totally concentrate on getting an American deal.

It's been 7 or 8 years...would you consider a 'true' comeback with your original SAVAGE GRACE sound? Updated with a '90's' production, I think it would go over really well in Japan and Europe.

A year ago, I was talking to one of the editors from BURRN magazine. He told me speed metal was totally dead in Japan. The guy didn't even want to talk to me. I was thinking of re-releasing some stuff in Japan...I'd be interested, but I don't see the market right now being able to...who knows, anything could happen. Things come around in cycles. It would be great if it could happen, but I don't think if I were to release an updated speed metal album right now...we'll see, if the [reissue] CD's go over, and I [can] get a budget, get a label to put it out, then I'd be up for it.

Do you think you can get the two CD's released in the States?

Yeah. I'm working with Carl Canedy, he's got something going in the States.

Does he have a label?

Yeah, he's working with a label.

What's the name of it?

Oh, boy, I don't have it on me at this time. It's out of Chicago.

Carl Canedy of the RODS...

He was managing a band last year out of Miami, he got a deal for them on Virgin; first on Geffen, then on Virgin. It's like a latin rock band...the name escapes me. He's in management now.

END

SAVAGE GRACE
Master Of Disguise
(Black Dragon Records 001)

The newly launched, French based, Black Dragon Records have certainly come up trumps with their first release.

"Master Of Disguise" is SAVAGE GRACE's second vinyl offering and a vast improvement on their "Dominatress" EP. They have brought in a fine DIO inspired vocalist - Mike Smith to replace John Birk as well as ex-AGENT STEEL guitarist Mark Marshall, though he doesn't appear on this album.

After a somewhat dodgy opener in the instrumental "Lions Roar" which reminds me of TOKYO BLADE, the album is a deluge of speed metal without a ballad or a mundane rocker in sight. "Sons Of Iniquity", "Sins Of The Damned" and "Bound To Be Free" are power metal at its best with the latter featuring some maniac leadwork from Christian Logue.

"Into The Fire" and the superb title track are more in the thrash mould whild "Fear My Way" and "No One Left To Blame" sound more like MAIDEN on speed. Finally "Betrayor" is a little more subdued (just a little) and in the DIO vein but great just the same.

"Master Of Disguise" does have one weakness and that's the production which lacks the crispness of the recent RAZOR and EXODUS releases. But this apart the album is a strongly recommended buy.

BERNARD DOE



SAVAGE GRACE

CONTACT
CHRISTIAN VIA
SENTINEL STEEL



SAVAGE GRACE have had their latest album, "Master Of Disguise", which has recently been released in Europe by Black Dragon Records, banned in the UK. It appears that some girls working at Rough Trade, the labels English distributor, threatened to go on strike if the company carried on with distributing the album, because of the "outrageous sleeve" showing a naked girl tied to a motorbike (see ad in MF 10). Black Dragon are currently seeking a new UK distributor for the album.



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I DON'T WANT MY MTV

"MUSIC TELEVISION" DROPS THE BALL. A COMMENTARY BY SUE NOLZ

MTV was still in its early years when Jello Biafra and his Dead Kennedys proclaimed, "MTV Get Off The Air!" If only we all had listened. For the pathetic fact is, MTV was a hell of a lot more respectable then than it is now, even if the music was horrible. At least it was pure. But when video killed the radio star, it also created a monster.

The network was dreamed up with the intention of being all music, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and that is exactly how it was launched. But gradually, as the faces changed and power increased and all the mega music corporations seized the day, MTV became the nervous system of a generation, incorporating fashion, trends, youth culture, p.c. oriented politics, humor, commercialism, sex, glitz, greed, and less and less music all the time. It even helped get a President elected - that's a far cry from Billy Idol dancing with himself. And so, wielding its big, ugly fist, the MTV monster has chosen to squash its most neglected child, laughing at its friends, not caring about the damage being caused, not listening to the cries to stop. After years of never living up to its potential, of being pushed back, cut down, preempted, repeated, or otherwise ignored, the Headbanger's Ball has finally been - cancelled. Word has it that Riki Rachtman quit (reason not known) and so the show went with him. Done, fini, goodbye. It had its good points, but really folks, we always felt it could've been better. And it *absolutely* could've - '93 was as good as it got, and still it was laden with regular during-the-day videos and stuff that wasn't metal. But even during the glam years, and the times when things were slow in metal, and when you just wanted to punch that Riki Rachtman (as Layne Staley put it), the Ball was *there*, and it was *ours*. It was an institution and something to wind down with on Saturday night after you got home, or laze around with on tape Sunday morning. No doubt we've all got some fond memories associated with the Ball, and no matter how silly it may sound, it just won't feel like Saturday night without it, for a while. And I will probably be sadder about that than any other implications this move may have - because in terms of the future of heavy metal, it just might be a good thing.

REWIND BACK before the "One" video, when Megaforce and Metal Blade ruled the world, but hairspray and big boot heels and Adam Curry ruled the Ball. The MTV show was the equivalent of

radio's watered-down m-m-Metalshop, avoided at all costs by thrashers and the burgeoning legions of death and crossover fans. Did lack of airplay stop Metallica from becoming the biggest band in the world? Hell no! Were smaller bands like Manowar, Exodus, D.R.I., Destruction, Celtic Frost and a certain bunch of crazy Brazilians still able to get their names around? Hell yes! There was such an excitement to making a pilgrimage to an indie record store, or going to a gig at L'Amour [*another recent casualty - Ed.*], or running into a kid in a Sodom shirt with 500 buttons on his jacket then talking about your common love of metal all afternoon. That all changed in the late '80s, here in America at least...but from what I hear, that kind of underground solidarity has never left in Europe. Tiamat, Wicked Maraya, Merciful Fate, etc. have outsold big pop stars in Europe, and bands like Psychotic Waltz will trek for months overseas but never play a note outside their home state here in the U.S. Why? Because most young Americans [*and I'm just spouting here, 'cause if you've got this fanzine in your hands this probably doesn't apply to you - Ed.*] are trend-following, media-fed, short-attention-spanned, apathetic, unenculturated, rootless, lazy sheep that can't or won't think for themselves. If MTV isn't telling them over and over that something is cool, then it can't possibly be cool, right? If MTV sticks the Headbanger's Ball on at 12:00 midnight to 2 AM on Sunday morning when only losers would be up watching, then those metal bands they show, like White Zombie and Biohazard and Danzig, must not be cool at all, right? But hot damn, when those same videos are on Beavis & Butthead (and the fucking morons like the song), those same bands are suddenly the coolest ever! I must say I felt for Riki's chagrin when B&B's commentaries on bands clearly bore far more weight than his ever did. If anything, MTV should have realized right then that once people were exposed to some of the lesser-known hard rock bands, they liked them, and went out and bought their records. But did MTV expand its hard rock programming? Did it give the Ball freer reign to play more than the biggest bands? Did it act like anything was proven at all?? NO!!! Even before cancelling the Ball, they cut it down to two hours, moved it back up to midnight, showed less hm/hr videos in the daytime than ever, and even started featuring a lot less heavy stuff on Beavis & Butthead. Anyone who saw MTV News' The Year in Rock in December will agree that MTV ignored the fact that metal

existed in '94, with only a tiny anecdote with Phil Anselmo representing metal on the program at all (and in the bit, of course, Phil was his usual self, the posterboy for metalhead jerkoffs). I suppose MTV feels it can do without our kind, thank you, so "fuck us"! Indeed.

Fear not, friends. It's a new year, and a fresh start. Let the underground return. Get excited when someone you meet has "actually heard of" a new band. Go out to clubs to see bands because they're not playing for you on TV anymore. Read every zine you can get your hands on to keep up, and find a college radio station to keep your ear tuned to what's good. Chances are your eyes will open wider, your ears will get more to hear, and your mind will enjoy the challenge of deciding what you like, not what MTV tells you to like. And while you're at it, boycott MTV. If they don't need us, we don't need them.

Since I always got a warm, fuzzy feeling when Riki closed the program, I can't think of a better way to close this rant & rave session. So for the last time, brothers and sisters, keep one foot in the gutter and one fist in the gold, but do it without MTV.

Metal will live on.

Sue Nolz is a nearly lifelong devotee to heavy metal. A rainy night in March of 1977 changed her life forever, when she heard KISS Alive! for the first time. All thoughts of Donny Osmond left her mind and she's never looked back. In high school she became an avid tape and zine trader, and began hanging out with local bands and going to shows as early as 1984. After capping off the 80's with a 4-year stint as a metal dj on college radio, graduation brought the thought of losing touch with the scene. This could not happen. So, after a pivotal string of unforgettable live shows, Manic Reaction was born to tell the world about the metal it had been missing. Now in its 5th year, MR provides Sue with an outlet of expression as well as lots of free stuff.

Sue is also an ex-Catholic New Ager, employed as a graphic artist and copywriter at Capricorn Advertising of Lincoln Park, NJ. She is single, has long brown hair and green eyes, drives a zippy black Honda and watches hockey games, even in the regular season. Write: Sue Nolz, Manic Reaction, P.O. Box 3154, Wayne, NJ 07474-3154. Or e-mail: VisionSkr@aol.com.

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METAMORPHOSE--The zine filled with music, art, poems, stories, dreams, politics, stories and much more. #5 (out soon) will feature interviews with Dave Lombardo (ex-Slayer now with Grip Inc.), Wicked Maraya, and unsigned band Mother Earth. Also with a true, first-hand story of domestic abuse, dealing with an obsessed ex-lover, an expose of an underground "passive hate" group, pedophilia in IL, dating in the 90s, beer stories, zine reviews, music reviews and much, much more. A supplement of album/demo reviews is out and the full zine will be out late spring. Order your copy today! Send \$3 post-paid to Metamorphose, c/o William Morrow, 214 E. Jackson, Carlinville, IL 62626.

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Interview By AL Spremo

EDITOR'S NOTE: UPON HEARING I WOULD NOT PUBLISH HIS DEATH SS INTERVIEW, METAL-LPS-BY-MAIL KINGPIN AL SPREMO INSISTED THAT HIS PIECE WAS "The greatest interview ever done". UNFORTUNATELY FOR HIM, I KNEW NOTHING ABOUT DEATH SS. SPREMO CONSIDERS 'EM THE CULT METAL BAND IN THE WORLD. WELL, SOON AFTER HIS SOLICITATION, I DID FIND A COPY OF THE LAST STUDIO CD BY DEATH SS, CALLED Heavy Demons. THE PRODUCER IS NONE OTHER THAN Sven Conquest, A GERMAN GUY KNOWN FOR HIS WORK FOR RAGE, AND OTHER POWER BANDS. SURE ENOUGH, DEATH SS REMINDS ME OF RAGE, WITH A TOUCH OF (ANTHEM-Y) RUNNING WILD, AND ALSO SOME JUGGERNAUT. Heavy Demons DOES HAVE SOME GOOD THINGS GOING FOR IT--AND APPARENTLY IT IS NOT THEIR BEST ALBUM. I'D LIKE TO HEAR MORE!! SO, IT IS MY PLEASURE TO INTRODUCE TO AMERICA, ITALY'S #1 POWER/DARK/HEAVY/HORROR METAL BAND, DEATH SS. HERE YOU GO AL.....

From L to R: Al Priest, Ross
Kukather, Steve Sylvester, Andy
Barrington, and Jason Minelli

Back in 1977, **Steve Sylvester** decided to form a band that would cross his occult beliefs with stage theatrics/ histrionics that would dwarf all previous, and future, attempts--HE SUCCEEDED! Predating such tamer acts as **MERCYFUL FATE & VENOM**, **DEATH SS** played/recorded for several years and achieved an international "cult" following. Unfortunately, a final split in 1984 with fellow member **Paul Chain** led to Chain's taking the other musicians and forming **PAUL CHAIN VIOLET THEATRE**. Following a time of hiatus, Steve reformed **DEATH SS** with four new musicians and has been playing away ever since, steadily increasing **DEATH SS'** notoriety as the first and ultimate "old style" Black/Horror Metal band.

This is the **FIRST** interview ever given to an American publication. I doubt it will be the last....

What is the actual name of "DEATH SS"? Different records have had different band names, and this has caused some confusion.

Actually, we use the name **SYLVESTER'S DEATH**, and under this moniker the new album *Do What Thou Wilt* will be out on the first months of '95. The old name, **DEATH SS**, will be used only for the new stuffs made by the first line-up, composed by me, **Paul Chain**, **Claud Galley**, and **Thomas Chaste**. After the reunion for my solo album, *Free Man*, last year, we have decided to play together again, but only sometimes, without planning the things. So now exists: the **PAUL CHAIN** solo band, the old **DEATH SS**, and

SYLVESTER'S DEATH (my modern and personal evolution of the old band, with: **Vincent Phibes** and **Felix Moon** on guitar, **Judas Kenton** on bass, and **Ross Lukather** on drums). The name **STEVE SYLVESTER** alone was used only for my solo album.

How did the band start and how did you meet the rest of the band and develop the Black Metal philosophy? Was this your aim from the start or was it something that developed over time?

The band start in 1977, when I decided to blend in an original and Italian way a certain glamorous taste made of strong visual characterization with the iconoclast punk energy, all of this mediated by **Hard Rock** (like the first **BLACK SABBATH**) and **Progressive** (like **BLACK WIDOW**, **HIGH TIDE**, etc.). I was always obsessed by horror movies, black literature, and esoteric doctrines and the first two years were spent in sorting the right line up out; many musicians were auditioned before settling to **Paul Chain**, **Claud Galley**, **Danny Hughes**, and **Thomas Chaste** as **Death** and **Zombie**/guitar, **Mummy**/bass, and **Werewolf**/drums. The key element to enter the band was, beside playing abilities, a specific interest in the occult world which was my *raison d'être* from the start.

There has been a lot of confusion about the Evil Metal 7" that maybe you can clear up. Some people say it was a bootleg and never officially released, while others say it was official but recalled. What is the true story and

how many copies were actually distributed to your knowledge?

Evil Metal was a 7" with the songs "Chains of Death" on A-side and "Inquisitor" and "Schizophrenic" on the side B. It was realized by our first label, **Metal Eye Records**, on 1983, but was immediately recalled for some defects in the final print. I don't know how many copies were actually out of this EP but I think they are few... This record signed the passage from **DEATH SS** to **PAUL CHAIN'S VIOLET THEATRE** 'cause it was recorded after the split of the first line-up and was realized by **P. Chain** with another singer.

*Also, there is confusion as to whether Evil Metal was actually your first 7". Some discographies list three different 7"s as having preceded it. These are **Zombie**, **The Night of The Witch**, and **Profanation**. As no copies of these are even known to exist in the U.S.A. (even in my own collection) maybe you can set the record straight and give the full story behind them, whether they exist and, if so, who was in the band at the time?*

Before *Evil Metal*, **DEATH SS** recorded other 3 singles self-produced and recorded in 8-tracks Home-studio. They were printed only in 500 copies each, and was sold by the band itself during the live shows. The original copies are now very rare, but I know that the next year they will be reprint in a limited box by **Avantgarde Records**. At that time, the band was formed by me, **Paul**, **Claud Galley**, **Danny Hughes**, and **T. Chaste**.

How did "Black and Violet" end up appearing on the **HEAVY METAL ERUPTION** compilation LP? That was not only **THE** definitive Italian Heavy Metal record of the 1980's but also one of the all time great Heavy Metal records.

"Black and Violet" was the last song recorded under the name **DEATH SS** before the second split in 1983. It was published on **H.M. Eruption**, a compilation of all the Italian metal scene of the '80's. It was the second song of the band that appeared on a rock compilation (the first was "Terror" on **Gathered** in 1982).

Do you think that the old **DEATH SS** material that is out of print will ever be re-issued? Many people are new to the band and would like to be able to get things like **Black Mass**, **Vampire**, etc.

Unfortunately, I haven't the rights on my old material and so I can't have a direct control on it. By now, only the production after **Black Mass** is possible to find, while is hard to find the old stuff, especially out of Italy. Nevertheless we're in train to publish a compilation on CD with all the rare and inedited songs of the band; it will be a special edition with a full-color book with all our story from 1977 to 1995.

Have you had any trouble playing live? You have quite a reputation for your stage shows.

Oh yes! Very often! You know that our stage-act is very theatrical and violent! We use naked actress, real blood and horrific scenographies. You can see a little part of our show in the inside cover of **The Cursed Concert** album, or in our home video VHS **The Cursed Show** that we have recorded during that "Heavy Demons Tour" in 1992.

When and how did the original band start to split up and why did you continue it? How, if at all, did the split affect your thinking and why did you choose to continue it?

The reason of the split of the original band in 1983 were principally caused by the "shock and return" due to unexperience and the inner danger of our magical practices. We were really involved in black magic and this get the better of our musical continuity. In 1987 I was recovered both physically and spiritually from the grim events of the past and I decided to reform the band with a new, fresh line-up. The **DEATH SS**'s mission, to me, was not yet concluded!!! However, on the heels of my previous experiences, I didn't make the mistake of letting the new members to partake too much in my evil practices, and I started to consider them just a serious material of study.

Should **DEATH SS** be considered basically **STEVE SYLVESTER** or a true band effort?

DEATH SS/SYLVESTER'S DEATH is undoubtedly MY band, 'cause I've found it alone in 1977; the name itself mean "in **DEATH** of Steve Sylvester," which is the death of my old persona and my reborn as initiated towards the dark light of occultism. But **DEATH SS** is also a **TRUE** band! Every member is always a very important and integral part of the band for all the time of his permanence.

The **Free Man** LP was released as a solo effort. However, as it features so many **DEATH SS** members old and new, many people have come to regard this as **THE** ultimate **Death SS** album. Was this your intention or did this simply develop on its own? It really is an incredible album.

Free Man is at all the effects a solo album. It is the result of all my musical roots and experiences and I consider it a kind of personal tribute at all the bands that formed my musical background, like **BLACK WIDOW** ("The Wail of the Ocean"), **BLACK SABBATH** ("Underground Life"), **URIAH HEPP**, **ANGELWITCH**, **SLADE**, **STOOGES**, **ALICE COOPER**, etc. I had this project in mind from many time and I decided to make use of six different line-ups to realize it, as the feeling of each song. I know that the songs with Paul Chain sounds very "**DEATH SS**", but this is the inevitable result of each time that I and Paul play together! However, we can consider **Free Man** one of the ingredients that forms the **DEATH SS/SYLVESTER'S DEATH** sound (the "old-fashioned" one), but not the only.

Why are three extra songs listed on the CD although only one extra song is actually on it?

This is a mistake of the first 5,000 copies only!!! The songs "Time To Live" and "Buried Alive" will be present in the B-side of the EP **Broken Soul**, out on January '95 that also will feature a long industrial version of the

song "Run Away." The right track-list of the CD end with "Dirty Game."

How do Paul Chain and you get along these days?

Actually, I and Paul are newly good friends, and our collaboration will continue in the future.

Do you think that Paul Chain's increasing popularity has helped **DEATH SS**?

I don't know, 'cause in Italy **PAUL CHAIN** is less popular than **DEATH SS**.

Do you have any particular religious/philosophical beliefs and, if so, what are they? Are they pretty much reflected in the music?

All the lyrics of my songs are the fruit of my philosophical beliefs, 'cause I try to explore the dark side of our life, the great mystery of our existence, and the keys to reach the real freedom... I'm decisively not a Christian, but I don't think to be neither a Satanist. I'm an O.T.O.'s member and I follow the Aleister Crowley's philosophy, "Do what thou wilt..."

What kind of music do you generally listen to?

Generally, I listen every kind of **GOOD** music! As you know, my favorite is the old, dark progressive of the 70s (**BLACK WIDOW**, **HIGH TIDE**, **ATOMIC ROOSTER**, **URIAH HEPP**, **MONUMENT**, **NECRONOMICON**, **STILL LIFE**, **GHOSTS**, etc.), but I love also **MINISTRY**, **NINE INCH NAILS**, **MONSTER MAGNET**, **PARADISE LOST**, **CATHEDRAL**, **PRONG**, **SEPULTURA**, **SISTERS OF MERCY**, and, of course, **BLACK SABBATH**!

DEATH SS OUT FOR A WALK....



What do you think of the way Heavy Metal has changed since the "Golden Age" of the early 1980s into its current state in the 1990s? Especially in Italy?

Undoubtedly H.M. has suffered many changes from the early '80s, and great bands like ANGELWITCH, WITCHFINDER GENERAL, SAMSON, AIIZ, etc. are now dead. This can be considered the natural evolution of the things, the result of the changes of taste of the new generation. But personally, I'm a little bit nostalgic of the "Golden Age." I don't like so much the new fashions like grunge or funky/rap, but I think that bands like SOUNDGARDEN are great! Between the new things, I prefer the "industrial" sounds of MINISTRY, NINE INCH NAILS, and PEACE, LOVE, and PITBULLS... In Italy, all the old bands that started with me are now dead, and the new ones now generally follow the style of METALLICA, SEPULTURA, and PANTERA...

Any chance of you ever playing in the U.S.A.?

Would to Hell! If it depends on me, I will play everywhere, but DEATH SS/SYLVESTER'S DEATH have never had a real distribution in the U.S.A., and our old labels cannot sustain the expenses of an international tour. Now we're looking for a new deal and we hope for the future...

How do you feel about the "cult" status that DEATH SS is achieving these days, particularly in the U.S.A.?

I'm very proud of this! You must know that DEATH SS have never reached the kind of publicity or promotion out of Italy. We've reached the "cult-status" everywhere only for the good quality of our music and for the consistency in which we've carried on with our musical speech in all those years. Remember that we were THE FIRST who started to play a kind of Death/Horror metal with masks (no KISS relations!) and Satanic sceneographies, in 1977!!!

What projects are you planning in the future?

Actually, we're looking for a new deal after the split of Contempo Rec., our last label. We have just finished a 8-tracks demo with new songs and very soon we'll choose one of the new offers.

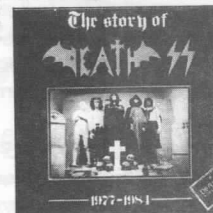
Any final comments you'd like to make to your American fans?

First of all, I wanna really thank all the kids who supported us during all those years. And for everyone that heard about DEATH SS only now, I wanna say: "spread the SYLVESTER'S DEATH disease! The true Esoteric/Horror Metal rules!!!!"

And many thanks to you Steve for this illuminating interview.

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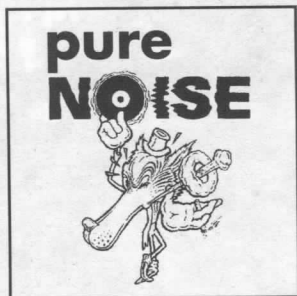
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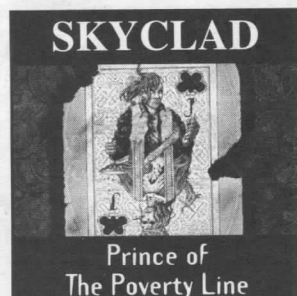
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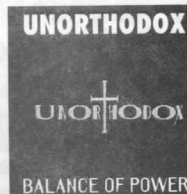
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REVIEWS

A FEW COMMENTS...there are a few typo's, to my regret. I used what I had, and that was a typewriter without adequate memory capabilities. Considering I did everything in one 'take', I think I did pretty good. Apologies also to the bands that were left out this issue. The amount of material I got in since the newsletter was incredible, so in the end I was forced to filter out certain kinds of reviews, i.e. the extreme, commercial, Seattle, hardcore, etc., types of music. Because of the 'booming' true metal scene (hey, I really think it's finally 'happening'!!), I don't foresee any problems in making the future reviews all of a power/progressive/traditional nature. With a few exceptions, of course. As for the number (in parenthesis)...well, the difference between a '0' and a '4' is next to nothing; 4 to 6½ show definite signs of promise; 6½ to 8 tend to have average/unoriginal moments, but are worth checking out; 8 to 9 are above average; and 9 to 10 are exceptional pieces of work. However, always read the review itself before coming to any conclusions. If I say a band sounds like PANTERA, and you love those guys--and I gave 'em a '3'--disregard my number and check the band out, okay? Enjoy the reviews.....

CENTAUR-Power World/Liga

I believe Liga Records is a division of Ralf Hubert's Aaarrg Records; then again, I could be wrong. Speaking about Hubert--he produces and engineers this Power World, and what a nice job he has done. A few years back, I recall his flat boardwork that really hindered discs by TARGET, LIVING DEATH, MEKONG DELTA, etc. He's improved! Compared to his previous work, it's a bit odd to find the man with a melodic power metal group like CENTAUR. CENTAUR remind me of a heavier, livelier PRETTY MAIDS (around Red, Hot, And Heavy). Unlike PRETTY MAIDS singer Ronnie Atkins, CENTAUR's Rainer Kuppers seems limited in his range, covering the 'gruff' style well, but not able to reach the higher pitches. Still, Kuppers does a good job of it--as long as you don't compare him to the once great Atkins. As for the music itself, I think a little maturity in the songwriting might better things, but overall, CENTAUR succeed. My favorite songs tend to be the fast ones, like "Insane", and the three-in-a-row 'triple threat' of "Black Rain", "No More Rules", and "Break It". All feature memorable choruses and hook laden riffs. This Power World CD closes with 2 bonus tracks, culled from their previous disc, Mob Rules The World. Neither of the two bonuses are essential; in a way, they are interesting, as CENTAUR have definitely come a long way--in all departments--since their first release. So Power World is good, and two friends who have it are big fans of CENTAUR. Quality German metal once again, this time in the form of CENTAUR's 'keyboard power'. If you'd like to contact the band direct, for info, etc., write to: CENTAUR/P.O. Box 120150/47121 Duisburg/Germany (7½)

PARAZITE-Consider It Done/(Indpndnt)

Consider It Done is a four track self released EP from Swedes PARAZITE. "Live In Pain" is quite good, recalling STRATOVARIUS in all areas. "A Different Kind Of Livin'", on the other hand, is a very heavy SKID ROW crossed with the STONE TEMPLE PILOTS--bluesy as hell and it sucks. "Bastard" is a quicker number, with a choppy main riff, recalling STRATOVARIUS and, somehow, ONLY LIVING WITNESS. Vocalist Larsa Bertilsson shines here, clearly a guy to watch for. "Cry Baby" was written by the same band member who did track two, and you guessed it, it is a total blues trip. If PARAZITE can get rid of guitarist Renske, they'll be in business. (5) PARAZITE/Smalandsgatan 40/432 30 Varberg/Sweden

ALLEGIANCE-Destitution/ID-Pgram

Excellent production aside, ALLEGIANCE are about 7 years out of date with their major label (Australia) debut. I know I shouldn't talk about 'dated' material, considering my tastes, but Destitution is a mix of METALLICA, XENTRIX, PANTERA, etc., and I'm not a fan of those bands. If we were talking about a HEATHEN or FORBIDDEN-type sound, I'm there. But ALLEGIANCE are really into a fast METALLICA type sound, and that's what they do. Expertly played too, with 12 songs in all--but I've grown to dislike Hetfield's voice, and Conrad Higson lays down every Hetfield mannerism. I think, in general, ALLEGIANCE would appeal to many SENTINEL STEEL readers, because of the Australian's pure, clean, pointed thrash approach. I doubt Destitution will see release outside of its home, so contact the band's friendly bassist/spokesperson at: ALLEGIANCE/David Harrison/P.O. Box 97/Armadaale W.A. 6112/Australia. (6½)

VISITOR-Visitor/self release CD

VISITOR come forth with 10 tracks, clocking in at 35 minutes. These guys play somewhat simplistic U.S. power metal, with a 1986/87 flavor. Don't expect streams of harmonies or melodies...VISITOR relies on punchy riffs and snappy drumming to put their ideas across. There are some PRIESTish leads on occasion, but they fill the bare minimum for solos. A big positive are the distinct vocals of Kurt Schultz, who possess a John Cyriss-like style, minus Cyriss' amazing range. With practice...as for the lyrics, they do attempt serious topics, but the quality of the writing is a bit cheesy in my book. Again, with a little more time spent...nevertheless, many of the songs are enjoyable, in that no frills, straight ahead PRIEST style. There are a few lame cuts towards the end ("Johnny Law"), but otherwise, VISITOR is okay. I think another year of practicing would have produced better material, but what is done is done. Contact the band at VISITOR/P.O. Box 25403/Anaheim, CA 92825. You can also get this disc for about \$10 from Dream Disc. (7)

P. DIANNO+KILLERS-S.A. Assault/MAP

A live 12 tracker from KILLERS, recorded in the summer of '93, and released this passed year. Dianno and crew performs 3 songs from his weak BATTLEZONE project, and 8 MAIDEN tunes (from the debut and Killers, of course). The songs suffer from a tame guitar sound in the mix, but other than that, this is a pretty fun CD. To be honest, I do prefer the Piece Of Mind, Powerslave, etc. material over the Dianno era, but hearing MAIDEN's original singer do "Runnig Free" again is cool. Disc closer "We Will Rock You/Smoke On The Water" makes an odd appearance, but the audience ate it up. (6)

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SEDUCER-Trials And.../self rlse CD

Without a guitar lesson in his entire life, Tripp McNeill is quite impressive...not for any lead work, but for sculpting a few cool razor riffs and for achieving a neat guitar tone. "Deepest Secrets" has a phenomenal 'hook' riff, something that could've been on LAAZ ROCKIT's Annihilation Principle. SEDUCER contrasts this riff (THE RIFF!) with a verse backed by a more groove oriented rhythm. Still, this is a very good thrash tune. "Well Enough Alone" also has a memorable riff, not as intense as the first song's, but with its additional melody, it is potent. The verse is full of bludgeoning speed, in excellent thrash fashion. Again there is that LAAZ ROCKIT influence, along with a touch of SABBAT's Dreamweaver. With track #3 we get the gallop. "Inflicting Blasphemy" has one of the heaviest William Tell's I've heard in quite a while. The song is mostly midtempo, but forceful as hell. It's with "Snapping Of The Cord" that Trials And Tribulations begins to descend. This song has a SABBATHy groove thing going for it, and that style continues for the rest of this album-long CD. SABBATHcore? Yeah, that might work as a description. I believe this CD contains material recorded at different times, so I'm not sure what was written when. But the first 3 songs are excellent, and they are probably the latest of SEDUCER's catalog. Trials And Tribulations is only \$8, either M.O. or well hidden cash, made payable to 'Tripp McNeill'; send to: SEDUCER/TRIPP MCNEILL/4625 Murray Hill Rd./Charlotte, NC 28209

ACCEPT-Deathrow/Pavement

Give Deathrow the chair. The jolt should wake up ACCEPT. What's wrong? Too many songs; Wolf with a mechanical PANTERA axe tone; Wolf STILL without good riffs or classical melodies; too many midtempo songs; and it goes on and on. I don't want todays kids getting the wrong impression of ACCEPT; go for Balls To The Wall, or Russian Roulette. And Udo's U.D.O. is just as good, especially Timebomb and Faceless World. Skip this Deathrow. (3 restless and wild squirrels)

MOMENTO MORI-Life Death and.../BMark

Rhymes Of Lunacy is a 'classical' doom metal masterpiece. It's not something I take out everyday to play, but when the mood comes, it's either MORI or AETURNUS' Into The Depths. How about this Life Death and Other Morbid Tales...it begins on a good note, with the stunning "To Travel Within". Mike Wead has brought up his playing another notch, and it's amazing what he does now compared to his HEXENHAUS days. So that was what I was thinking after this first cut. But as the disc unfolded, it turned into a letdown. Call it avant garde, call it experimental--it's no good. Tracks 3 and 4 use PANTERA riffs, played at a doom pace, of course. An annoying mix. Besides the bizarre influence (which is not just limited to those two cuts), the outright weirdness of some of the music is plain irritating. I've never been a fan of abstraction, vocal effects, or such bouts of so-called 'artistry'. The second half of Picasso's career was a joke, and so is this second album from MOMENTO MORI. Watch for Messiah Marcolin's new project with the band that used to be called STILLBORN. (3 blue squirrels)

HOLOSADE-A Circle Of Silent.../demo

It alarms me to see these 'trendy' or cliché ridden groups come out of the once great metal land known as England, and bands like HOLOSADE are shown no respect. HOLOSADE formed from the ashes of DARK HEART (yup, 514 copies). Unlike DARK HEART, the HOLOSADE nucleus of Philip de Sade (vocals) and Gary Thomas (guitar) created a truly powerful force to be reckoned with. Hellhouse was released in 1988, on Britain's Powerstation label (nope, no CD was pressed). This album was a ferocious blend aggressive power metal and clean, precise (and very catchy!) thrash. It baffles me to have seen XENTRIX, D.A.M., VIRUS, etc., make it to the States, while HOLOSADE, with their dynamic sound of traditional metal coupled with thrash, never make it over here in the late 80's.

Ups and downs aside, break ups forgotten, and the loss of bandmates to 'name' outfits (LITTLE ANGELS, SABBAT, and ACID REIGN) not missed, de Sade and Thomas are back with a new 12 song recording entitled A Circle Of Silent Screams. "Maximum Security" makes up for lost time, with a superb speed metal riff, showing off a tighter, cohesive HOLOSADE. "Masquerade" follows suit, keeping the breathless pace with a slightly less speed oriented rhythm--but the intensity is a constant. de Sade's vocals are still in that loose 'Britishy' style, but he complements the music well. Still, a tighter delivery would be welcome. With a deliberate beginning, "The Return" rises to be HOLOSADE's anthem. Gloriously colossal in its gallops, and brilliant structure throughout, "The Return" is an epic, and possibly the best thing here. Why 'epic'? Because the song combines with the next track, "I Am The One", in forming a masterpiece. "I Am The One" uses the same riffs as "The Return", but at a faster pace, for stunning results. "Superstition" is a fabulous instrumental, with tons of power and an endless assault of melodies. And so ACOSS continues, perhaps not at the rollercoaster pace of the 1st half, but the quality of the songs make up for the speed. Tracks 9-12 should be left out, as they seem to be 'tag-alongs', and possibly even older cuts. Last I heard, HOLOSADE were at the negotian stage with several labels. If a band can't get signed with a tape like this, I don't know who can. My only qualm would be de Sade's vocals, but that's just a minor point--a little tightening, and he'll be set. Now, to get the tape, send \$4 to: HOLOSADE/8 Westcliffe Court/Darlington/Co. Durham/DL3 7UQ ENGLAND. Note!! Write first before sending money, 'cause if HOLOSADE got signed by the time you read this, the ACOSS won't be available.

ENCHANTMENT-Dance The Marble.../CM

I'm not a fan of either atmospheric doom, or growly vocals. This British bunch features both to a large degree. The lyrics are of an introspective nature, very deep and relatively interesting. Add to the category that includes PARADISE LOST, ANATHEMA, TIAMAT, etc. (3)

JOE STUMP-Night Of The.../Lvthn

Never a fan of guitar/instrumental albums, I seem to need a voice in the mix to add some 'humanity' to the proceedings. Plus, no matter how good a guitarist is, I find it a stupefying bore to sit through his senseless noodling and doodling, covering all musical styles with his axe. Only one 'guitar' album has one me over, and that is Joey Tafolla's (ex-JAG PANZER) Out Of The Sun. This disc is basically a classical power metal album, with real songs (without the vocals, of course). It is very memorable, and I consider Out Of The Sun SENTINEL STEEL's 'house' instrumental album. All of you should own it! Stump, on the other hand, is a phenomenal guitarist, but he can't equal Tafolla in the writing department. Stump's material is split between frenetic blues 'shredding' and the constant classical soloing. I'm sure musicians will love Night Of The Living Shred, Stump's second release on the Leviathan. As a non-musician, I'd like to see this guy in a band. And that's what Stump is currently working on (see CHASTAIN interview). (4)

REGICIDE-All In The Family/Expndr

Intros are a dime a dozen these days, yet REGICIDE's "The Great Gedangel" is unique. No big production, no classical music, just a single acoustic guitar with tight, enthusiastic strumming. "Adrenaline" plays at a medium clip, very much like a DEATH SS' Heavy Demons style. Since REGICIDE sounds like DEATH SS, they can also sound like RAGE, circa Perfect Man. Things start rolling with song #2, "Don't Cross My Way", and the speed element is pretty much consistent 'til the end. At their fastest, REGICIDE also brings to mind S.D.I.'s Sign Of The Wicked. Who are S.D.I.? A German group from the 80's, with about 3 albums to their credit. But back to All In The Family; "Regicide", the song, whizzes by in an excellent fashion, easily able to find a spot on RAGE's Trapped. "Never Surrender" continues the wave, riding high: "Your heads will be smashed by the iron hammer we had forged, so get down on the anvil and take the iron force--we never surrender!". Next up is "Schwanz" (hello Boller!), a stupid title, but the song is a personal one for the band, as the title is a word of frustration. The lyrics are about some friend they lost, to an alcohol-induced accident. Don't expect a ballad, as the main riff has a 'hurried' anthemic pace. "Schwanz" is very good (whoops, I misspelled it above), with the German's penchant for vocal melody and catchy songwriting. "Welcome To The Family" is a song about drugs, and I'm not sure if REGICIDE got their message across. Right now, it reads as a pro drug tune. I think they meant to have a 'turn-the-tables' ending, but it didn't quite work. Oh well. A few more tracks follow, and the disc is done. REGICIDE's All In The Family is a typically strong German power metal album; nothing new, nothing groundbreaking, but it is good. The CD cover had a budget of 99¢ though. Contact: REGICIDE/P. Dahlmann/Ariovivst. 3/42389 Wuppertal/Germany. (7½ squirrels)

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XERXES-Beyond My Imagination/GITRWhunt

From the label that brought us the brilliant MAYFAIR (see #1½), plus the terrible INNER THOUGHT (amongst others), comes XERXES, a young fivesome from Switzerland. This project is something of a prog folk rock/metal offering. Imagine a very mellow TYTON and some FATES WARNING... I'm kinda stretching my comparisons on this one; well, you get an idea of what XERXES sounds like, right? A noticeable problem is pre-accented vocalist Moser doing an Irish put-on for the whole disc...it doesn't ring true. Otherwise, Beyond My Imagination is an interesting presentation, with fine conceptual lyrics, but musically too mellow for my tastes. \$15 from Witchhunt Records /P.O. Box 658/CH-8029 Zurich/Switzerland. The MAYFAIR CD can be ordered for the same price at that address. (5½)

IRON RAINBOW/Demo

New Yorker's firmly entrenched in that 1978-1982 metal sound. "Spaceship Suicide" has nifty riff straight outta MAIDEN's Killers, done a simplistic, foot tapping style. It is apparent, though, that the vocalist and guitarist so play it a bit safe. "I Am The Fire" further backs this opinion, as it is, while tight, lacking enthusiasm. Both tracks are not going to get anyone foaming at the mouth, but IRON RAINBOW do have the excellent production. The band tells me they will go for a more MANOWAR type sound in their next outing. Should be good, as this band has a 'direction' in mind, unlike others who try to incorporate EVERY single influence. Check out the IRON RAINBOW 'speech' elsewhere in this issue. IRON RAINBOW/P.O. Box 932/Middle Island, NY 11953

ELEND-Lecons de Tenebres/Holy

Interesting idea, but...when I want violins, I want 'em fast!! This three piece called ELEND uses electric violins, keyboards, plus chanting, spoken vocals, a female soprano, and an occasional growl or two. Lyrically, most of this is adapted from Milton's Paradise Lost. The music is slow, 'dark symphonic'; no metal here! ELEND would make a good soundtrack, and...that's about it! (4) To order, send \$18 (postpaid) for the CD, \$11 for tape, to: HOLY RECORDS/4 Bd Gutenberg/93190 Livry-Gargan/France.

BELIAL/demo

I liked the technical sound/production right off the bat; while BELIAL's logo displays a 'death' demeanor, the group are in fact an aggressive, semi-techno thrash foursome. There is a big time late 80's feel in the tunes. Kinda SLAYERistic, I suppose. With additional melody and stronger writing, BELIAL could stand out. The group should have 5 new songs; I have no prices, so write to: P.O. Box 5844/Lawrenceville, NJ 08648

BROKEN ARROW-In The Maze.../demo

I have no background on this French band, as I got this demo in a trade. Basically, this is power metal with a lot of time changes, due more to unskilled song-writing than technical prowess. Some of 'parts' are good, even unexpected; but the playing tends to be sloppy, and vocalist Faye, while not annoying in a 'whiny' way, is just not near the level, talent wise, to begin making demos. There are 4 cuts on side A, each averaging about 5 minutes; Side B has two: "Ground Banes" is an 11 minute plus MAIDENesque epic, and it's good. "A Minor Improvisation" clocks in at 7 1/2 minutes, and is just too loose/abstract for my tastes. In the area of production and packaging, there is also ample room for improvement. In The Maze Of A New Realm does lay down foundation--a weak one, but it's something--and I'll be looking for BROKEN ARROW's next one (can't dismiss these Frenchman so easily these days!!). Contact: BROKEN ARROW/Marc Fortunato/49 bd des Brotteaux/69006 Lyon/France



ANTAGONIST

ANTAGONIST/slf rlse 6 trck CD

Before writing this review, I decided to look over ANTAGONIST's bio again. Their disc has been a semi-regular guest in the CD player, and I've been in touch with band leader/guitarist Todd Tousey for a while now. Looking at the bio and press clippings...man, these guys sell themselves off as pure viciousness, full of spite. The band's attitude is full throttle death metal; but mention the word 'death' or even 'thrash' near Tousey and he'd "shove a crowbar down your &§##*% throat", to quote the ANTAGONIST flyer. I tend to agree with Tousey...I mean, is ANNIHILATOR truly 'thrash'? Or HEATHEN, FORBIDDEN, etc.? Not in my book. ANTAGONIST is, for a simple comparison, like intense, early ANNIHILATOR topped with melodic SLAYER-type leadwork. Tousey has one of the liveliest guitar sounds around, especially on the first few cuts on the CD. Vocally, singer Darren Rae is very much in the early ANNIHILATOR style; he's a tad behind in the mix, but otherwise this recording is incredible. Tousey swings the credit over to Engineer Eric James. As I did with BATTALION's sound man, I recommend James very highly. Contact him via Tousey. Lyrically, ANTAGONIST pulls no punches, so this disc is not for the faint hearted. Song titles include "Black Sands Of Time", "Cracking Skulls", etc. My faves are "Black Sands..." and "Live In Fear"; but basically the whole disc is pretty good. It's only \$7 (check (cash or M.O. payable to 'TODD TOUSEY'), and not only do you get the disc but other surprise goodies. Right now the group are preparing for a new recording in time for '95's Metalfest. Send orders, questions, etc. to: ANTAGONIST/TODD TOUSEY/1841 Oakdale Ave./Green Bay, WI 54302

AGRESSOR (NY)-Crucified/demo

I caught this band opening for FATES WARNING and they blew me away. Having never seen a band like BLIND GUARDIAN, AGENT STEEL, i.e. 'Euro speed metal', I thought these New Yorkers (not to be confused with Boston's weaker AGGRESSOR) were superb. On this three tracker, AGRESSOR opted to go with only one speed tune; so "Can't We Just All Get Along" and "Crucified" are solid--but they did not capture the glory of the live show. However, "The Legend Of Frankenstein" does...oh, boy, is this a great song or WHAT!! Old HELSTAR, WRATH, ICED EARTH...I hear some great influences. A new CD will be out by the time you read this, and a song from Crucified will be on a compilation from Rodell. Meanwhile, Crucified is available for \$4. Contact: AGRESSOR/John Rup/64-68 84th Place/Middle Village, NY 11379

NILE/demo

This is NILE's debut 5 tracker. They're a trio, playing heavy/down-tuned thrash. There's an equal number of intense slow sections as there are the more bulky speed parts. 'Unclassifiable as a death or thrash act' and, well, yes; but it's nothing noteworthy--NILE plays both styles! The prevalent thrashcore vocals are boosted by the occasional death gurgling. The vocals are never really offensive, nor is the speed of the songs inappropriate. Even though the songwriting is usually generic, there is the odd moment when NILE creates something special, like "Worship The Animal"; the chanting in the background adds the extra atmosphere to separate these guys from the masses of riffy thrashcore groups. 5 songs, super package/recording, and interesting lyrics. Send your \$5 to NILE/105 Edgewood Dr./Greenville, SC 29605

MOTHER EARTH-Transitions/CD+CS demo

Of all the demos/independent releases reviewed this issue, MOTHER EARTH's Transitions gets the most play on my deck. Yes, even more so than the brilliant DREAM CHILD, just because Transitions is on CD and Create A New World is not. MOTHER EARTH's previous release, All Things Connected, received an '8 1/2' rating in SENTINEL STEEL Newsletter #1 1/2. Transitions contains that demo, plus 4 superb new songs, in a fine package available on CD and cassette. These fresh tracks are yet again a blend of old FATES WARNING, MEANSTREAK, and TROUBLE (circa their Def American debut). MOTHER EARTH's songwriting thrives on its simplicity, with just a few leads thrown on for dessert. It's not doom, but well-crafted, very catchy heavy-duty metal. One of these new cuts is an instrumental, something not unlike old HELSTAR! Bassist Elena happens to be a big fan of HELSTAR (we're both waiting for Remnants Of War to be pressed onto CD), along with MAIDEN, SABBATH, DIAMOND/FATE, SOLITUDE AETURNUS, etc. As with old SABBATH, TROUBLE's 'Trouble', MEANSTREAK's Roadkill, etc., MOTHER EARTH offers a stripped down, 'real' production--and don't misunderstand that! I'm a stickler for good sound and I love Transitions. Yes, this disc continues to be on my play pile, and I've had it for some time now. The songwriting is THAT good. And vocalist Dominique is, without question, one of the highlights here. As I said in their previous review, she has a very supple voice, "capturing feel and melodies with the same lines". Dominique is the best female vocalist in metal/thrash today. Transitions is a must for all 80's traditional metal fans. As a special offer, this album-length cassette is free, with \$2 to cover postage & packing. The CD is only \$8, postpaid. Make your check/M.O. payable to 'ELENA REPETTO', and send orders/questions to: MOTHER EARTH/P.O. Box 3442/Santa Clara, CA 95055-3442.

ELEGY-Labyrinth Of Dreams/TTNoise

ELEGY's second disc, *Supremacy*, should be reviewed elsewhere; since I had soooo much time, I decided to give you the review of their 'acclaimed' first. Well, in short, ELEGY possesses a superb high vocalist and two guitarists that are able to pick apart their frets with great dexterity. I'd hesitate to call ELEGY 'power metal', as this stuff is more in the vein of MALMSTEEN, IMPELLITTERI, etc. The songwriting has a distinct commercial edge, and the lyrics tend to be very superficial. My fave tune is the quick "Guiding Light", but the lyrics are so incredibly bad that I have this love/hate feeling toward the song. The album follows suit--skillful guitar antics does not save average songs. (6 squirrels playing air guitar)

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PSYCHO SCREAM-Virtual Insanity/demo

This is guitarist Jim Dofka's latest project, and I predict PSYCHO SCREAM will be around for a while. To begin with, the packaging is very professional, and the cover sports a painting by none other than Boris Vallejo's son, Dorian. Opener "Strength" is a powerhouse number, with a repetitive chorus that should crossover well with today's MTV dopes. "Memories" is a more 'feel' oriented piece; because of Tim Aymar's vocals and Dofka's guitar gymnastics (he's the fretmaster!), the duo remind me of the Bonnet/Impellitteri team on IMPELLITTERI's *Stand In Line*. One difference is the production, however; *Virtual Insanity*, while smartly produced, could have used more bottom end. "Sacred Hymn" continues in that midtempo IMPELLITTERI style, with the sandpaper vocals of Aymar standing out. "No Sign Of Life" is probably my fave tune, with a speedier approach (compared to the other songs!) and a high quality verse-bridge-chorus showcase. At times Dofka sounds like he has ten fingers on his left hand! Aymar reminds me of HELLOWEEN's Deris in "Stare Into My Eyes", which is again in that noodly heavy rock/metal format. As always, Dofka's solo gets the air guitarists going, and real guitarists scratching their heads. By the time this 5th cut finishes, I'm desperate for material with a faster pace! Final song "Can't You See" doesn't answer my cravings, but it is in fact the heaviest thing on *Virtual Insanity*, with a crushing, rolling riff and Dofka giving a guitar lesson midway through the song. To sum up, *Virtual Insanity* is a step up from Dofka's previous ventures (SCREAMER, DOFKA, BRICK MISTRESS), but I think some variation in tempo would add spontaneity to the proceedings. I'd like to hear Aymar also varying his delivery, and adding smoother moments to his vocal lines. All in all, *Virtual Insanity* is a good heavy metal tape, and can be purchased for \$6. Make the checks/M.O.'s to 'PSYCHO SCREAM', and send to: 1200 Valley View Ave./Wheeling, WV 26003. Other merchandise is available--be sure to ask for it!

NEVERMORE-Nevermore/CMedia

Oh, how high my expectations were. And how they have been crushed. *Refuge Denied* will always be an album to judge others by; *Into The Mirror Black* is different; darker, atmospheric, and just as solid as it's predecessor. And NEVERMORE's debut will known as the over-hyped disaster that it is. This 'Nevermore' is composed of their two demos, incompetently directed by the tasteless producer of FLOTSAM's *Cuatro*, Neil Kernon. Look, I'm not going to waste your--or my--time with this review. What NEVERMORE have recorded is a messy doom/Seattle album, like breeding SOLITUDE AETURNUS and some heavy 'buzz' band, then adding DDT/Agent Orange/radiation. The result is a mutated child, sadly hindered by it's influence. And the worst thing is Warrel Dane's voice. This guy (a has-been?) sounds like a hysterical, panic stricken opera singer. The vocal lines rarely carry a structure, and suffer the consequences of being abstract. And what about the music? I complain about WICKED MARAYA and ZAXAS using tired riffs--but at least they can write songs. NEVERMORE stumbles through a whole album without conjuring a bit of memorability. Sad as it is, NEVERMORE will sell some CDs. Even sadder is the fact that there are SO MANY BETTER BANDS OUT THERE! And that pisses me off. Save your cash for the local bums--it's a better investment. (0 squirrels here...apparently becoming roadkill was a better alternative)

BENEDICTION-The Grotesque+Ashen.../Rlp

Slightly above average death/thrash on this EP. Like countrymates CANCER, these guys keep the brutality and speed in check, in favor of more thoughtful riffing. Based on this disc, I'd like to hear more. (5½)

DISGRACE-Machine/demo

The bio has every musical category mentioned in describing DISGRACE's sound. Tremendous production, but this eclectic collection of thrash tunes with the many influences is not to my taste. Still, it is well played, and in the current musical climate, DISGRACE should prosper. If you like thick, crunchy riffs and Phil-like abrasive vocals, write to: DISGRACE/P.O. Box 1215/Georgetown, CA 95634

ROGUE-In The Face Of Evil/demo

Wow! I'm amazed at times how a band can recreate a certain sound, like how USURPER is a CELTIC FROST clone; ROGUE is the same way, but they do an entire era--that late 70's to early 80's gothic metal sound. I'd put 'em on METAL MASSACRE #2, and they'd probably fit right in. *In The Face Of Evil* is underproduced for additional nostalgia. "Judgement Day" is the best track, with a cool, old style/up tempo doom riff and 4th rate Ozzy style vocals. "In Dreams" is the crusty speed tune, with the CIRITH UNGOL stamp of approval all over it. There are four other cuts in a similar fashion. Now, I can't see ROGUE going anywhere with this tape (beyond a small cult following), as it's just...well, you know, cheesy. Write to ROGUE's power metal maniac, Chris Allred, at: P.O. Box 26581/Birmingham, AL 35226

AMORPHIS-Black Winter Day/Rlpse

"Black Winter Day" is, of course, from the excellent *Tales From The Thousand Lakes*. Three cuts follow it: "Folk Of The North" (short instrumental led by piano); "Moon and Sun" (it's okay, but it's just as well that it did not make it onto the album); and "Moon and Sun Pt. II: North's Son" (a little better, with a stomping thrash riff, and some of that good AMORPHIS melody. No clean vocals though! I'll say it again: LET'S HAVE VILLE TUOMI IN THE LEAD SPOT!!). Not an essential EP (especially at just 14 minutes), unless you're nuts about AMORPHIS. (5)

AGGRESSOR-Self Inflicted/demo

So many AGGRESSOR's around...don't confuse these guys with the AGGRESSOR from NYC. Self-Inflicted, by Mass residents AGGRESSOR is an exercise in powerthrash, circa 1987, reminding me of ANTHRAX, NUCLEAR ASSAULT, etc. While I like the style, the 4 tracker is kinda boring. Not much variation in pace--it's mostly 40 mph. A better production may of helped things too. One saving grace is cut #4, "Bio-Atrophy", where the entire band contributes--strong bass lines, twin lead harmonies, and some twists to the otherwise samey demo. A good song to expand from. I've no price; write AGGRESSOR at: KFD Mngmnt/23 Laurelwood Dr./Stoughton, MA 02072.



(l. to r.) Larry Howe<ds>, Geoff Thorpe<g>, Carl Albert<vo>, Tommy Sisco, Mark McGee<g>

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VICIOUS RUMORS-Word Of Mouth/RSun
I had sent Geoff Thorpe a copy of SENTINEL STEEL #1 when it came out. I think I had requested an interview or something like that. Several months later, after no reply (the group were overseas, supporting their popularity with touring, etc.), I acquired a copy of this Word Of Mouth CD. Now, I've never been a major V.R. fan, but their last two studio discs had quite a few good songs on them. The group were a welcome sight in the declining U.S. metal scene in the early 90's. Several weeks after I got Word Of Mouth, Geoff gave me a call. We exchanged info for a few minutes, then he asked if I'd like to do the interview. I explained my feelings about the disc, disappointed that they had gotten bluesier, more 'big' riff oriented, with added alternative/avant garde touches to their material. The pace of the album was also impatiently slow to mid-tempo. Geoff insisted there were more hooks in the music, and that I should listen to it more. Both of us knew we had better things to do, so we parted amicably. Even with the incredible reviews Word Of Mouth got in the European press, I still think it is a terrible metal album. This is surely VICIOUS RUMORS' 'Cautro'. (2 squirrels--one each for "Ministry Of Fear" and "Sense Of Security"). To purchase this CD, send \$9.99+\$2.50 check or money order to: VICIOUS RUMORS/dept. S.S./P.O. Box 297/ Alameda, CA 94501-9397.

PYOGENESIS-Waves Of Eurostasia/Rlpse
A four tracker (about 15 minutes) by PYOGENESIS. "Through The Flames" is quite good, a la AMORPHIS. "In The End" is generic music of this style, as is "Down", in its sludge paced growly doom. The EP ends with an acoustic version of "Lost In Revery", showcasing some clean vocals by 'other' guitarist Schwarz. If PYOGENESIS has done a whole album like "Through The Flames", someone let me know....otherwise...(4)

PETER AND THE TEST TUBE BABIES-Pissed And Proud/CMedia
Very 'Britishy' early 80's melodic punk rock. So PETER and his kids are okay, nothing essential, but still, it's fun. Song titles from this live album include: "Moped Lads", "Elvis Is Dead" (reggae punk?), "Keep Britain Untidy", and more. It's rock 'n roll to me. (6 1/2 crazy soccer fans)

NOMED-Requiem/demo
These Frenchmen continue to impress. DREAM CHILD are phenomenal, and NOMED, while not in the same level, are still appealing. Guitarist Andre tells me the group are doing a more power metal thing now, and I expect their new recording momentarily. Meanwhile, on Requiem, NOMED cross that 'techno' guitar tone (a la early BELIEVER) with early SABBAT and CREMATORY. It's a very cool sound, done entirely in the French language to boot. The 4 piece have been around since '86, starting out as a hardcore band. Getting better with their instruments, they evolved into a death-like outfit, then to this gothic-thrash sound on Requiem. Soon, it'll be power metal! Requiem is \$7, as will be the new recording. Write to: NOMED/Andre Lemesle/13, Rue de la Solidarite/76620 LE HAVRE/France

PHANTOM CREW-No Compromise/demo
'No Compromise'; well, that does sum up the band's pseudo-PANTERA attitude. What we get on this tape are riffs--lots of them, sometimes PANTERAish, other times like the last few TESTAMENT, OVERKILL, and EXODUS albums. You know, that thrash with groove type crap. There's no holes in the band's performance or general recording quality (as a matter of fact, it sounds great), but I don't dig the style. I believe PHANTOM CREW (cool name) used to be a power metal group, but with the way things are in the current scene....best cut is "Killdozer", with it's memories of HEATHEN. Other than that, No Compromise will do good with the 'power riff' fans. I'll pass. Write to: PHANTOM CREW/155 Route 85/Home, PA 15747. By the way, 6 songs, ultra pro packaging.

AXE LA CHAPELLE-Grab What.../C&C
Both bassist Uwe Wessel (post GAMMA RAY) and drummer Uli Kusch (post GAMMA RAY, preHELLOWEEN) are on this disc, so one should expect quality. Unfortunately, no matter how good the rhythm section is, they can only do so much. Even ralf Scheepers guests on this, as a backing vocalist, but...well, AXE LACHAPELLE is a bland project. The music is somewhere between heavy metal and power metal. The two guitarists are probably veterans of the German scene, and they play well. But the main riffs, be it fast or slow, tend to be 'ploddy'. Good solos are not enough. Vocalist Harry Krieger is forgettable, as he is a bit drab, covering the midrange, and that's it. Plus he's got a bluesy edge to his voice, which is a no-no here at S.S. headquarters. Even the lyrics, while well intentioned, tend to be cynical. All around, AXE LACHAPELLE is disappointing. (5)

ZAXAS-Zaxas/Noise
ZAXAS, like WICKED MARAYA, supply U.S. melodic power metal that is...not bad. The vocals are good and the songs are undeniably catchy. As with WICKED MARAYA, I've got a problem with the riffs, as they are too predictable. Most of the weight lies on singer Dale Anthony, but he succeeds in making this debut quite memorable. Production wise, the album is a bit sparse, and the playing could be tightened up; for a bunch of ex-marines (they met while stationed in Okinawa), ZAXAS is a surprisingly good effort. For the legions of U.S. 'true' metal fans, ZAXAS will be a worthwhile purchase. Nothing exciting, mind you, but if you cross DIO's best material with CRIMSON GLORY's first release, that would probably equal ZAXAS. Anthony can be likened to a less-polished combination of Dio, Tate, and Dickinson. That's the good news; On their next outing, the group must get better production and inject more speed into the songs. The music is just too laid back. My fave tunes are "Revolving Door", "In The Beginning", and "Ashes To Ashes". A good disc--available everywhere!! (7 1/2)

DORSAL ATLANTICA-Musical Guide To Stellium + Alea Jacta Est/Cogm
DORSAL ATLANTICA's records always had the words 'thrash opera' associated with them. Liking the idea, I got in touch with them, only to be left disappointed with the music. It's not bad per se, but these Brazilians are a thrash band, and that's it. Thick riffs and guttural vocals add up to RAZOR, EXODUS, SEPULTURA, DEMOLITION HAMMER, etc. While surprisingly well produced, these South American veterans play energetic, yet generic thrash. Write to: DORSAL ATLANTICA/ Caixa Postal 33 132/Rio de Janeiro, RJ/22.442-970/Brazil. (4 Squirrels)

ICED EARTH-Burnt Offerings/CenMe

This is the last review I am typing for this issue. When I got Burnt Offerings, I made a conscious decision to listen to the album up until the end, to an honest and thorough review for one of my most favorite bands. Let me say this...I had NO problem keeping this CD IN the player...it's very good. But it is also different from all the previous ICED EARTH outings. My opinion regarding Night of the Stormrider still stands for today: it is one of the greatest power metal albums to ever come out of the United States. However, looking back, I do deem their first album, self-titled, as somewhat average. ICED EARTH's second demo, Enter The Realm, is totally 'cult', and definitely in my list of top 5 demos ever done.

That unique ICED EARTH crunchy-riffs-laced-with-melodies approach is still intact, but there is SO much more to the band now. Burnt Offerings is not an instant work, like its predecessors. Even I, on an initial listen, was left with a question mark. But after 3, maybe 4 'experiences', Burnt Offerings opened itself up to me. It's unpredictable nature, with the many musical subtleties, force the listener to 'grow' with the album. And that factor makes for a more durable piece of work. Don't worry, as this is still a 'power metal' band; but with Burnt Offerings, ICED EARTH can transcend boundaries, and actually 'crossover', without compromising their 'true' sound. How can they do this? For one, new vocalist Matthew Barlow has feeling--and yet, is a classy power metal singer. Vocally hounding Barlow's heels is guitarist Jon Schaffer, who contrasts his singer's voice with his own rough lungs (people with Night of The Stormrider, see "Stormrider"). Sweetening the vocals are other enhancements...that have to be heard.

Besides the usual bass, guitars, and drums set-up, there are other instruments. These additions broaden ICED EARTH's trademark sound, even improving on it. Fans of atmospheric doom/death should find a treasure in the Burnt Offerings package. Atmosphere, feeling, and...power. This is the heaviest ICED EARTH record to date. There is speed, too; but it's used in moderation, achieving a striking balance amongst all the different elements to be found on this disc.

The triangle of "Burnt Offerings", "last December", and "Diary" make an immense opening statement. The title track is a mini epic, and epitomizes all that I have described for you in

the last paragraphs. "Last December" is a hypnotizing number, with a hauntingly memorable chorus. The eerie doom-like verse of "Diary" is tempered by ICED EARTH's typical choppy, high powered riffing. And so the album goes... 'til the last track, the 16+ minute epic, "Dante's Inferno". I remember browsing through Sue Nolz's bookshelf on a visit, and she noticed my interest. She pulled out her ragged copy of DANTE'S INFERNO, exclaiming, "A band has to adapt this--it would be perfect for metal!". ICED EARTH has taken the 13th century novel, and by using their own dynamic sound, with orchestral support (without overdoing it), they have brought it to life. "Dante's Inferno" is one conceptual ride that cannot be missed.

Burnt Offerings will doubtlessly get 'album of the month' honors all across Europe's magazines. It is a very good disc. Available all across the U.S. ICED EARTH's two previous discs are still in print, by the way. This is one of America's best power bands, and it is time they get recognized. Get Night Of The Stormrider, then move to Burnt Offerings. (8½)

ELAN-Firestorm/Mist Entrtmnt

Lightweight prog-rock indie release. "Chasing Princess Moon" stands out, like YES covering MAIDEN's "The Trooper", with cool lyrics. The rest is okay, somewhat thin sounding rock with prog-like appeal. Firestorm is a full CD, for \$10.00, made payable to "ELAN". U.S. currency only. Send everything to: MIST ENTERTAINMENT/P.O. Box 71509/ West Des Moines, Iowa 50325

ELEGY-Supremacy/T&T Records

Yes, this is a considerable improvement over ELEGY's first, Labyrinth Of Dreams. The songs are certainly faster, and considerably more interesting, leaving the sappiness behind. The two hyper-talented guitarists show us what Malmsteen would sound like in a power metal band. Still, the songs are somewhat cold, even with the great playing. Singer Eduard is his usual excellent self, but even he can't rise above the drivel known as "Lust For Life". In fact, he is continuously hampered by inane lyrics, which is again a problem area for ELEGY. With better songwriting, nothing should hold these Scandinavians back. (7½)

METALMORPHOSIS-Embrace Your Creation/demo

Despite the fuzzy production, METALMORPHOSIS aren't bad. AS with many out-of-the-way (in this case, South Africa) bands, the group are behind the game, playing a late eighties form of 'hard' thrash. The vocalist sounds like Martin Walkyier with a cold, and musically, they tread worn ground, using tired riffs a la DARK ANGEL and TESTAMENT ("Democracy"). This 9 song cassette is \$11.00; a previous demo, The Spawning (4 songs), is \$5; some other merchandise is available. The Embrace cassette has a full color, glossy J-card, which also folds out several times. Pro cassette shell. The band accepts cash only. Write to: METALMORPHOSIS/P.O. Box 31846/Braamfontein/ 2017/ South Africa

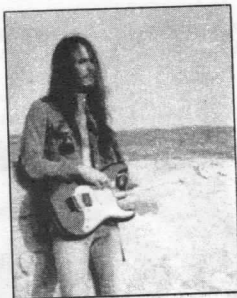


ICED EARTH



NIMBUS/demo

Georgia--the future metal capital of America? Start counting those bands...NIMBUS, a power trio, deliver 4 numbers: "Confusion" is a simpler WARGASM (Why Play Around) type tune, and it's effective. In a simple way. "Dracula" is my fave song, with rough edged vocals (keeping to a 'true' metal style) and sturdy gallops. The songwriting is tight, with easy structuring. The next two songs are the newer ones, written for NIMBUS, and not leftover from a bandmember's previous gig. "Black Plague" has the skeleton of a good song, but guitarist Derek Sikes isn't convincing vocally (the three NIMBUS guys trade off on vocals). "Black Plague", also suffers from a worn rhythm idea and predictable lyrics (which are throughout the tape). "Fugitive" is plain drab, and needs fleshing out. To sum it up, NIMBUS are a mix of very recent MEGADETH, the older WARGASM sound, and basic U.S. heavy metal. The group is currently looking for a bassist who can sing full time, or a bassist and a 'separate' singer. As far as this first tape goes, it has a professional presentation, with a masterful production, but it drops a few points for underdeveloped songwriting. Band spokesperson Sikes is well aware of this, and rest assured, he'll get the job done on the next tape. Having spoken to him at length, I know HE knows what he is up to, and, like Howie Bentley, Sikes is a 'believer' in the music he creates. In the J-card, the following people/bands are listed as inspirations: Akira Takasaki, METAL CHURCH, SAXON, SANCTUARY, Wolf Hoffman, etc. The tape is \$4, made payable to 'DEREK SIKES'; write: NIMBUS/Derek Sikes/ 1150 Collier Rd. NW/ Apt. L-8/ Atlanta, GA 30318



Derek Sikes
Guitars

GOGMAGOG/demo

I thought Mustaine was whiny, but GOGMAGOG's Nick Kubida ups the 'DETH man. Actually, it's not that bad, as Kubida OUTSINGS Mustaine in the long run. As described in the band's bio, the group has 'roots' in the NWOBHM. To me, GOGMAGOG is very much like DEAD ON, with traditional metal rhythms (like recent MEGADETH) and sneering vocals. For the most part, I found the 3 songs to be lacking the catchiness to make 'em work, and towards the end, Kubida does annoy. Good production and presentation. It's only \$3 from: S.I.D./P.O. Box 10806/Rochester, NY 14610-0806

CORONER-Coroner/Noise

For those of you who liked Grin, buy this. The new songs are in that style, and the worst from the past (not including "Reborn Through Hate" and "Masked Jackal") put in appearances. 73+ minutes of the past and unreleased tracks.

SERENITY-Serenity/Holy Records

Brit's doing the 'clean', (clear vocals, etc.) doom deal, with gothic romanticism. In the vein of PARADISE LOST's Icon, the new SOLITUDE AETURNUS, and concepts of MY DYING BRIDE, ANATHEMA, etc.

STEEL PROPHECT-The Goddess Principle/inde-Ger release

STEEL PROPHECT has been around forever, and some of you may remember their popular (in Europe at least!) Inner Ascendance demo from about 6 years ago. In fact, STEEL PROPHECT, led by Steve Kachinsky Blackmoor, have their origins as far back as the early eighties! At that time they were based in Connecticut, and by 1985 had two demos under their belt, along with, allegedly, a video. Music writer Steve Hammonds, in METAL FORCES #11, said the following about STEEL PROPHECT's music: "God is it awful! That's a bit harsh, as the group were young, and still developing their playing skills, songwriting, etc. Push forward about 4 years, and one comes to the Inner Ascendance tape (which can also be found on CD, on the Reborn Classics line, with JAG PANZER's Shadow Thief sharing the CD). This 1989 release is a tremendous piece of melodic/technical power metal; the growth since the early days was ABSOLUTELY amazing. This tape did very well in Europe, and STEEL PROPHECT soon became a 'cult' act, mentioned in the same breath as WARLORD, SAVAGE GRACE, HELSTAR, MEDIEVAL STEEL, etc. Well, worry not, 'cause The Goddess Principle is along the same lines, but twice as powerful, twice as heavy. I commend STEEL PROPHECT for sticking to their original sound, and nurturing it over the years, waiting for the right time.

As mentioned, STEEL PROPHECT plays an eye opening blend of inspirational power/melodic technical metal. The group couples crunchy, crisp riffing with many neo-classical leads. It's a mixture of HELSTAR, AGENT STEEL, LETHAL, HEATHEN, etc. Vocalist Rich Mythiasin is blessed with the lungs of a vocal God, melding Cyriss, Tate, Rivera, etc., with his own charm. Sounds like the perfect band, right? One problem: STEEL PROPHECT does not complete their songs. They do not come full

circle; they don't milk all those beautiful 'one-off' choruses, all those 'one-time' hooks, etc. All the songs begin brilliantly, but never finish in a satisfying manner. I shouldn't say never, actually; but if STEEL PROPHECT could come back to where they started, and draw the circle to a close, they would have a bunch of classics on their hands. I truly believe that if anyone could make it big in the U.S. power metal scene, it would be STEEL PROPHECT; they have all tools necessary to make the next step. But first, the circle...

The group have done a one time deal with Germany's Art Of Music label; 2000 CDs of this The Goddess Principle has been pressed; more will follow if this initial batch sells out (I know it will). The disc has 10 songs, just shy of the 60 minute mark; the production is excellent. For info, contact STEEL PROPHECT at: Steve Kachinsky/7525 Haskell/Apt. 109/Van Nuys, CA 91406

RIOT-Nightbreaker/RsngSunSPV

Best production yet, but songwriting wise, it's a step backwards through time. RIOT have returned to the sound that had made 'em popular in the early days of metal. Me, I prefer the classic melodic speed of Thundersteel. A new RIOT album is in production as I type, so expect it later in 1995. (6 squirrels)

STEEL REIGN-Change To Insane/ind

One look at STEEL REIGN's airbrushed CD cover and you'll feel like you never left the eighties. Inside, the disc has a outstanding production, which would have gained these New Yorkers IMMEDIATE attention 8 years ago. See, STEEL REIGN sculpt a sound around ANTHRAX, FORBIDDEN, and TESTAMENT, all at their best years ('87, '88). STEEL REIGN are also similar to STYGIAN, playing that style of heavy, pure melodic thrash. I know many of you enjoy METALLICA-sized towering riffs and smart solos...STEEL REIGN are not doing anything fresh on Change To Insane, but I give 'em credit--this CD is brimming with confident material, and it would have stood out in the original thrash wave. Song titles include "Cease To Exist", "Deadly Hypnosis", "Death Con 5", etc. Very professional 10 song CD; excellent playing all around, and a quality vocalist, a la BATTALION. I got this CD in a trade, so I have no price; contact STEEL REIGN at: STEEL REIGN/P.O. Box 492/Garden City, NY 11530

CEMETARY-Black Vanity/BM

Black Vanity is like PARADISE LOST's Icon: The vocals are gruff yet clear, the riffs are big, and there are no ultra slow sections. While CEMETARY does not have the number of melodies that Icon did, they do have the better songs. Black Vanity is very song oriented atmospheric goth/doom metal. This is the only disc I've heard from this group, but clearly CEMETARY are at the top of a genre that I'm not too keen on. (7)

DESULTORY-Bitterness/MB

While not perfect, their first, Into Eternity, blew me away, especially side one. I thought the group would pursue a more melodic direction, which they did, sort of. The music is more accessible for sure, but follows the typical Swedish 'deathrock' sound. I was hoping for a North From Here-type musically inspired album, because of the excellence of DESULTORY guitarist Stefan Poge. Nope, no luck. Nonetheless, Bitterness does sport a few cool tunes, like "Life Shatters", and the PARADISE LOST style "A Closing Eye". An okay follow-up. As always, I do hope the group gets rid of the growly vocals. They are too good for that. (6)

PURE NOISE Compilation/Noise Int.

NOISE IS BACK! The label head is in town, and he's gonna take care of business. What better way to learn of the company's current roster, than a compilation? Why waste time with intros? 17 tracks in all, herewegoooo! LOST BREED begins with their bluesy stomper "Circles". If you're familiar with the Hellhound label, you know what to expect here. UNORTHODOX follows with "Junkie", a weaker tune from their last album. "In Honour" is track 3, courtesy of the well known COUNT RAVEN. Classic riff in this one, very SABBATHY--hey, is that Ozzy ghosting on vocals? THE OBSESSED present the rather ploddy "Forever Midnight". Made up of former INDESTROY members is WRETCHED. "The One I Seek" is 70's acidic doom, and I don't like it. KREATOR finally picks things up (hey, Hellhound is not exactly the most exciting label in the world!) with "Zero To None". I believe this is from Renewal--and what do know, I'm impressed. The change in vocal technique is commendable. Next up is CORONER's "Internal Conflicts", from their inept Grin. Look for new product from both these bands in mid 1995. From SKYCLAD's Prince Of The Poverty Line is "Gammadion Seed"; it sounds much better out of context--see the SKYCLAD review for more on these Brits. CELTIC FROST! "Inner Sanctum" is one of the few 'hard' cuts from Into The Pandemonium. Great song, from an album about 7 years AHEAD of its time. Track 10 is by Australia's SHIHAD. "Derail" is a very rhythmic cut, somehow crossing PANTERA and intense industrial music. Ugly. One messy song is VOIVOD's "Ripping Headaches". Killing Technology was okay, but this older material makes for a tough listen. Swiss veterans MESSIAH 'A.D.' come up with "Epitath", which is kinda generic 90's thrash. Want a German BIOHAZARD? Check out PUNISHABLE ACT, with "Identity". Annoying, and so is HUMUNGOUS FUNGUS, with "Shout", a rap metal anthem.

But Rejoice!! This comp ends with the three best tracks. #15 is the first official 'showing' for CONCEPTION in the States. It's only one song, but expect Noise to release an album by these guys in late 1995. "My Decision" is a heavy number from these Norwegian power/progressive metallers, with fine vocal harmonies, searing leads, and confident song-writing. Remember the name CONCEPTION! U.S.A.'s ZAXAS follows along, presenting "The Anvil". The production is noticeably weaker after CONCEPTION, as is the playing, vocals, etc. Don't mean to chop ZAXAS to bits--they come as a relief after struggling through the majority of tracks 1 to 14. See their review for more details. And finally, PURE NOISE closes the best way it can: with a HELLOWEEN song. I can listen to "Ride The Sky" over and over, and I can never get sick of it. A masterpiece.

To sum up, a very diverse compilation (not my favorite kind, but...). This is a very different Noise line-up from 6-10 years ago...gone are SCANNER, CELTIC FROST, DEATHROW, VENDETTA...and at least for 1995, 'Germanic' groups like RUNNING WILD, MIND ODYSSEY, etc., will not see release here in the States. Disappointing. All I can say is... WRITE IN!! Let's tell Noise what we want! Send me your top five albums, old or new, that you want Noise to release or reissue. Anything, from DEATHROW's Riders Of Doom, to the forthcoming RUNNING WILD disc. This is a label with an INCREDIBLE back catalog, as well as a current roster (only available in Europe and Japan) second to none (don't forget STRATO-VARIUS and ELEGY are a part of Noise too). So send in your postcards, letters, etc., with your lists. I'll print the results in the next issue of SENTINEL STEEL, and also, until then, keep feeding Karl Waltherbach your requests. Tell Noise what you want!



CONCEPTION

MAGELLAN-Impending Ascension/MCarta

I described MAGELLAN's first, Hour Of Restoration, as 'ultra progressive technical symphonic metal'. Many time changes were in evidence, but it somehow came together well. Impending Ascension continues in that vein, but is infinitely more complex, and more electronics are present, rendering the word 'metal' null and void when used near 'MAGELLAN'. KERRANG calls Impending Ascension 'gothic pomp rock', and says it bears a definite likeness to 'YES and KANSAS'. The lyrics are as elaborate as the music; and also note that there are 3 cuts over 11 minutes in length. Magna Carta is the same label that brought us SHADOW GALLERY (see S.S. #1 1/2), who will be releasing a new album in 1995. (5 perplexed squirrels)

UNORTHODOX-Balance Of Power/Hllhnd'

It's universally known that one knows what to expect with Hellhound acts. However, one thing that surprised me about UNORTHODOX was their ability to play their traditional bluesy doom at fluctuating tempos. I respect that fact, and also the their general sound, as it is not terribly 'bottom' heavy. Besides the obvious SABBATH influence, there is TROUBLE, and other such '70's style influences. I know my review falls short of being 'in-depth', but this is the best I can do for a line of music that's not my thing. (6 squirrels)

DONOR-Release/Mausoleum

I know band's have to progress, but the difference between DONOR's Triangle Of The Lost and their new Release is just too much. The former disc, collecting the DONOR demo and a bunch of fresh cuts, still stands as a very interesting collection of progressive speed metal. 'RUSH on 45 rpm' is what I described TOTL a few years back. Release's main problem is the recent addition of a earthy/alternative (Hetfield x Vedder?) singer, and the sudden bottom/groove angle that did not exist before. If DONOR had the backing of a major label, with a video, etc., then they may be able to get somewhere. But in reality, with Release, DONOR have lost what little fan base they had, including me. (4 1/2)

WRETCHED-With Malicious Intent/demo

I don't know what to say. If WRETCHED (not to be confused with the one on Hellhound) had a Tate-like vocalist, they would be a minimalistic power metal band. But the vocals, while clean, are rough on the edges, and done in a clear thrash style. But the music isn't really thrash; or aggressive, or very melodic either. It's just generic, foot stomping U.S. metal. The production is decent, and the packaging is nice, but the music is too timid to do anything. This tape is \$6/US or \$9/foreign; write to: WRETCHED/Adam Rymarczuk/P.O. Box 982/Crystal Lake, IL 60039.

WARGASM-Fireball/Massacre

This band is over. It's a sad situation actually, and much of the blame can be attributed to a bad deal on the label(s) front. To me, I think their musical output just degenerated, as evidenced on Ugly, this Fireball EP, and a dub I have (thanks Kit!) of their unreleased third album. As a supporter of music from the 90's as well as the 80's, I will always push WARGASM's first disc, Why Play Around. WPA is a U.S. classic, an album with a cult following. But I digress. This is a Fireball review...the cover of "Fireball" is okay, I guess. The edited version of "Dreadnaught Day" still does nothing for me, as well as the indifferent "Enemy Mine". "Wasteland" and "Revenge", both live versions, from WPA, are semi-twisted here. The trio adds that 'groove' thing to the songs, to 'update' the music, but the facelift stinks. So does the sound quality. Someone forgot to dub in the audience for the live tracks! This is not a good memorial for these Bostonians. Sigh....(4)

GUARDIAN ANGEL-Beyond

The Twilight/7" independent rlse Greece has one of the most dedicated power metal scenes in the world, believe it or not. Take RUNNING WILD, for example; Greece is one of their biggest markets outside of Germany--maybe even second to Germany! So you get the idea...Greeks have taste. And what about GUARDIAN ANGEL? As expected, they have the teutonic influence; and they are good, VERY good. Lavish melodies saturate their sound, and the singer is quite majestic in his performance. "Beyond The Twilight" follows my description of GUARDIAN ANGEL, so lovers of old CRIMSON GLORY, MYSTIC FORCE, etc., take note. "Give Way To The Rush" is a bit faster, in the vein of those melodic German power metal bands. So there's only two songs here (I'm working from a normal bias dub of the 7", so I can't say much about the production, but it should be good), on a limited edition 7" press of 500 (300 of which have sold already). The group, while unable to send the 7" itself (rest assured I'm going to do my best to get a hold of one!), did send a color xerox of the cover art, and it looks really nice. This piece of vinyl is \$7 postpaid/world; it may seem like a lot for just two songs, er, 'scuse, two GREAT songs, but hey, at only 500 copies, this thing is bound to be a collectable. Once I get this out top to the printers (the zine), I'm going to see what I can do about bringing a number of these 7 inchers into the States, and get the band's name out there. Write to: GUARDIAN ANGEL/Tirinthos 3/111 43 / Athens, Greece

CAIRO-Cairo/Magna Carta

Well played, extravagant prog rock, from the label that brought (and continues to bring) us MAGELLAN and SHADOW GALLERY. CAIRO are pretty much in the ENCHANT style, i.e. 'intense elavator music'. Resident prog expert David 'Swiss cheese' Boller declares Cairo as being 'classic'. So does the European press. Yes, er, I..think I agree; that is, when taking a long elavator ride (say, from the basement of the Empire State Building, to the top floor, which is about an hour), CAIRO do create some nice background music.

NEW EDEN-Savage Garden/demo

Here's an album length tape making considerable headway in Europe (Savage Garden got 'perfect' reviews in the issues of ROCK HARD and HEAVY ODER WAS that I reviewed this issue) as I type this review. The group sound very much like STEEL PROPHET (they share a guitarist) and HELSTAR, so one can see that the group are into the 'classical' stylings of power metal. Unlike STEEL PROPHET, NEW EDEN don't get too involved in complexities, relying more on streamlined compositions. So if you're a fan of HELSTAR (from the power riffing of Remnants to the hypermelodious Nosferatu), Savage Garden is a must! In fact, all power/progressive/true metal fans should make this tape a priority purchase. The NEW EDEN package comes highly praised, and is one of the best available this issue. As a special offer, NEW EDEN is selling this 7 tracker for \$5, just for SENTINEL STEEL readers. (foreign orders are \$7, postpaid also). Send to: NEW EDEN/DISARRAY PRODUCTIONS/17402 Salais St./La Puente, CA 91744

ELECTRIC FRANKENSTEIN-two 7"/ind

I rarely tire of metal, but occasionally I need something different, so I put on THE CARS, LOVE LIKE BLOOD, GENGHIS KHAN (Germany, circa early 80's), and punk, like DIE TOTEN HOSEN and THE RAMONES. ELECTRIC FRANKENSTEIN are a local bunch of punkers, doing a blend of THE RAMONES meets THE MISFITS, and hey, it's good! The group have done two 7 inchers, totalling 6 songs, which were quickly snatched up by a German (of course!) label and pressed onto a CD. Now where's Epitath? Anyways, ELECTRIC FRANKENSTEIN are keeping busy on the local club circuit (NYC, NJ, etc.), so keep an eye out for 'em. Meanwhile, write to the group and see how you can get copies of their limited press singles. Write to: Dan Canzonieri/ELECTRIC FRANKENSTEIN/204 Birch St./Boonton, NJ 07005

HELSTAR-Multiples In Black/Msscr

Yup, it's a new HELSTAR CD. I was surprised when i got it too. Sigh...there was going to be a HELSTAR interview this issue (thanks to Mike Osborne of Lynn, MA for hooking me up!), but singer James Rivera never really got back in touch...disappointing it is, coming from a band that means so much to you. Oh well, nobody said this zine thing would be bed of roses.... HEY! Let's get on with this review. At the time Rivera ans I had talked, he had just changed his band's name back to HELSTAR after releasing two demos under the VIGALANTE monicker. Once more named HELSTAR, the group, with Dave Ellefson 'directing', created this Multiples In Black. NOW, according to the Massacre Records Bio, HELSTAR signed FIRST to the label, THEN procured the services of Ellefson to do the production. This TOTALLY contradicts what I was told from various sources, including Rivera himself. When I spoke with Rivera, well after the Ellefson sessions, he did not mention any record deals or anything. Plus, to back up my statement, let's look at the recording itself: it sounds like a demo. It IS a demo. I doubt Massacre would have signed the band, then allowed them to such a cheap job on their album. I mean, hold Multilples up to Nosferatu (or ANY other HELSTAR disc!), and there is NO comparison. This 5th album is lame in all aspects. Cross their 1st album, Burning Star, with a MEGADETH disc, and reduce the sound quality. That is Multiples In Black. Is it listenable? Yes. But is it possible to play it after Nosferatu or Remants Of War? Definitely not. To make matters worse, I could have sworn that Rivera told me he was unhappy with what Ellefson did. I sure am! At just 35 minutes, M.O.B. tarnishes the HELSTAR legend. Let's hope they channel the money they make from M.O.B. into a new album. (5 1/2)



UNDERGROUND EMPIRE #7

As you know, I feel that ROCK HARD is the best 'overground' publication today. Sadly, it is only available in the German language. What is the best 'underground' publication at this time? Without a doubt, the INCREDIBLE 'UNDERGROUND EMPIRE'. Sadly, it too is written in German. So what. This #7 just BLOWS THE MIND! IT IS AMAZING! 200 PAGES OF THE MOST TIGHT, READABLE TYPE IN HISTORY STRIKES YOU FIRST! IN ANOTHER MAGAZINE'S TYPEFACE, UNDERGROUND EMPIRE WOULD BE 1000 PAGES! THERE ARE THOUSANDS OF BANDS FEATURED HERE! U.E. IS A HEAVY METAL BIBLE. AND GUESS WHAT?! IT IS TOTALLY POWER/PROGRESSIVE METAL. YES!! HUNDREDS UPON HUNDREDS OF REVIEWS TRANSLATE INTO 100's OF ADDRESSES. EVERYTHING YOU EVER DREAMED ABOUT IN A POWER/PROGRESSIVE PUBLICATION IS HERE. HAVE DOUBTS? INTERVIEWS INCLUDE HELSTAR, MAYFAIR, VANDEN PLAS, ANGRA, TITAN FORCE, ASIA, AND DOZENS MORE. 'CLASSIC' REVIEWS, TO INDEPENDENT CD RELEASES: FROM THE GERMAN METAL SCENE TO THE CHRISTIAN MARKET: NOTHING IS LEFT UNTOUCHED. DON'T BE A FOOL!! I CAN'T READ GERMAN, BUT THE INFO I GET OUT OF U.E. #7 IS COMPARABLE TO A 100 YEAR SUBSCRIPTION TO METAL MANIACS, RIP, CIRCUS, ETC. COMBINED!! Whew!! Now, to ship this monster from Germany via airmail would probably cost \$10.00 at least; I think what publisher Stefan Glas does is, for \$5, he mails it surface mail; it takes about 4 weeks to get to the U.S. Write to him, reserve a copy, and request the proper purchasing/ mailing procedure. UNDERGROUND EMPIRE/Attn: Stefan Glas/Seufzerweg 5/66877 Ramstein-Miesenbach/Germany. IF YOU GET ONE ZINE, GET THIS!! (Thanks, Iron Mike, for hooking me up!)

EIGHTBALL (aka TRIPWIRE)

This is a photocopied hardcore zine, that will be retitled TRIPWIRE and renumbered. I don't know how this zine would appeal to S.S. readers, but EIGHTBALL co-editor Bart Krom is into 80's metal, so he's a cool contact. Bands featured include DIVE, SHIFT, CONVERGE, etc. Lots of ads too, and grainy photos. These guys appear to be straight edge also, which I salute. In fact, I think EIGHTBALL is a 'straight edge' hardcore zine. Write to: Bart Krom/23 Rogers Ave./Milford, CT 06460

DELIRIUM #2

Very professional goth/vampire 'mega' zine. DELIRIUM is mostly music heavy (DEAD CAN DANCE, CYNIC, ALICE IN CHAINS, TYPE O NEGATIVE, etc.), but there is also abundant art/book/comics reviews and interviews. Lots of other stuff too. Ultra clean layouts, computer typesetting, and a very broad in scope for just 68 pages. A good deal for \$4.00, if this is your cup of...blood. Write to: DELIRIUM MAGAZINE/Sophie Diamantis/779 Riverside Dr. #A-11/New York, NY 10032

UNDERGROUND SCENE REPORT #14

ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL!! This 6 page metal newsletter is packed with an incredible amount of info, and contains demo reviews, mag reviews, label addresses, and much more. No signed bands, i.e. 'overground' material presented; all content is strictly underground, spanning all genres of metal. USR is similar to SENTINEL STEEL Newsletter #1½, but it is 'full' sized, with computer layouts, and hence USR is considerably less burdensome on the eyes. Small type, yes; but the fine graphics make USR easy to read. Covering the world metal scene, USR has more info in it than most 'big' zines. At only \$1 per issue, everyone should at least give UNDERGROUND SCENE REPORT a try. Write to: USR/Paul V.D. Burght/P.O. Box 5086/4380 KB-Vlissingen/Holland. By the way, it is written in EXCELLENT English.

SCREAMS FROM THE ATTIC #5

Power/progressive metal's 'Hustler' style zine returns, with its best (or tackiest?) cover to date: Lizzy Borden giving the 'axe' to a poor girl who seems to have lost ALL her clothes. Where did Editor Lon get this photo? I'm sure it's not a Metal Blade promo pic--or at least I don't think so. Anyways, yes, #5 is a special LIZZY BORDEN issue. Good info on the man and the band, plus there is the usual assortment of interviews, somewhat stiffly done, with MERCURY RISING, ANGRA, WICKED MARAYA, TAD MOROSE, and more. The album/demo review are there too, and it's good to see imports like ELEGY and CONCEPTION in the mix. As usual, great bands included this issue, but I wish Screams would have 'conversational' interviews instead of doing 'em by mail. Also, there is a bad use of space--#5's 32 pages could easily fit into 24 pages, with very little adjustments. Finally, Lon has to 'up' his initial print run!! Apparently there is a demand for his zine! This #5 has had at least 2 printings. I have no price, but \$2 should cover it. Write to Lon for info at: SCREAMS FROM THE ATTIC/300 Cedarcroft Ave/Audubon, NJ 08106

PLETHORA OF SOUND Vol.II #1

This is a half-sized 'extreme' metal zine, intelligently done, with computer typesetting, and is photocopied. This issues features MOONBURN, SALEM, THD, NUCLEAR DEATH, OPPRESSOR, IMMOLATION, and a few others. Issue two will have CRUCIFIER, MY DYING BRIDE, BLIND MELON (!!), NUCLEAR DEATH pt. 2, and more. In the U.S. send 2 32¢ stamps, foreigners send 2 IRC's or \$1.25 cash to: Craig POS/11 Crestmont Dr./Dover, NJ 07801



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HELLOWEEN-Master Of The Rings
 -Mr. Ego EP
 -Perfect Gentleman EP
 (all above on Castle Comm.)

Keeper Of The Seven Keys Part One is my favorite HELLOWEEN album. I love all the older material too (see the Walls of Jericho review elsewhere), and it is with Keeper Part Two that HELLOWEEN's descent began. Now, this isn't the place to analyze where the band went wrong (or how many 'wrongs' they have done), but the fact is, HELLOWEEN have done themselves a BIG favor in making Master Of The Rings what it is.

At the mention of a new HELLOWEEN release, I get excited. The word has some sort of magical hold over me, I guess. When I read that blurb in KERRANG (see newsletter #1½) preceding MOTR release, I became anxious beyond belief. Here we go...at first, Deris didn't do much for your SENTINEL STEEL scribe. But he grew on me, as there was no escaping the sheer classiness of the new HELLOWEEN material. Deris is the main element to adjust to; his delivery, while in the Kiske tradition, is different from his voice, which is in the 'earthy' style of Ian Gillan or Graham Bonnet. As said, Deris is not Kiske (and vice versa), but he retains that HELLOWEEN 'feel' that made the earlier HELLOWEEN albums so great.

Master Of The Rings starts off true to the Keeper style, with the classical intro "Irritation". It makes a fine appetizer for the powerful "Sole Survivor"--HELLOWEEN haven't sounded this fresh since Keeper Part One!! A great song, not unlike the faster GAMMA RAY stuff (I wonder why!). And HELLOWEEN does not let up, to my delight, as the masterpiece "Where The Rain Grows" runs through. The superb arrangements (particularly the bridge) and lively solos (Weikath and Grapow are no slouches here!) crush my memories of the dismal Chameleon and average Pink Bubbles Go Ape. "Why?" is next, and is a very non-HELLOWEEN song, yet it is of the same songwriting quality of

the first two cuts. Deris shines here, carrying heartfelt emotion that Kiske, I now realize, could never quite muster. "Mr. Ego (Take Me Down)" was, initially, a low point for me. It does not continue the brilliance of the first few tracks. But after repeated listens, I could not help but get caught up in its singalong chorus and head nodding mid tempo gait. I still feel it makes an improper single, and it does stop the momentum started by the opening songs (a momentum that would not be equalled from this point on). Continuing in the hard rock mold (but still keeping the HELLOWEEN sound) is the quirky, foot tapping "Perfect Gentleman". Like "Mr. Ego", this number is blessed with a sing-along chorus of the highest caliber. I'm sure the verse's melody has concert goers whistling like mad. A sight, alas, never to be seen in the States. "The Game Is On" picks up the pace; not nearly as intense as the beginning of the album, but "The Game Is On" is enjoyable 'happy' metal nevertheless. This trait continues into "Secret Alibi", which begins in a classic HELLOWEEN fashion, but changes (regretfully) to a hard rock rhythm, sweetened by a catchy chorus. Two of MOTR's weakest moments are up next: the VAN HALENish "Take Me Home" and the embarrassingly sappy ballad "In The Middle Of A Heartbeat". There are MUCH better replacements on the two EPs, which we'll get to in a second. "Still We Go" closes this disc, balancing the midtempo heavy rock with the speed of vintage HELLOWEEN. A fine closer, somewhat shadowed by the two diasters before it.

Master Of The Rings is satisfying. It is also a major comeback, and was recognized as such in many of the overseas publications. But there are several areas of concern: one gets the feeling that some of the writing is forced, even stiff. If HELLOWEEN were known for anything, it was the freeflow of melodies, riff changes, tempo alterations, etc. and not lazy

VARECH-Reekhearsals demo

Sparsely produced (my copy is a dub) gothic keyboard death/doom. I suppose CREMATORY started out the same way, but...well, VARECH can be good, especially with the haunting keys of "My Gothic Morticia". The swirling synths and speed make this cut stand out. There is definite potential from this French group, but the growly vocals have to go, and a better recording is a must. CREMATORY fans write to: VARECH/Regis Blanc/31 ave blanqui/69100 Villeurbanne/France

DORIAN GRAY-World Of Lies/D&S

A German band who veer very closely to the Scandinavian keyboard metal territory. There is the odd glimmer of STORMWITCH ("World Of Lies", "Freedom To Fight", and "Under The Horizon"), and these make up the 'cool' material. But then there is the more commercial stuff ("Free 'N Easy", "Hold Back The Tears", etc.) which are too wimpy for me, in the style of recent EUROPE and WHITE SISTER. A note of some value is that Chris from RAGE does the drumming on "Rocktime". (5½)

midtempo hard rock rhythms.

HELLOWEEN may be trying to please everyone with this disc; I understand, because the pressure was definitely on them, new label and all. But they've got to loosen up, and write for THEMSELVES; that's what they did with Keeper Part One, and look what happened; worldwide success. The next album will be interesting...

Looking at the singles (or 'EPs', if you prefer), "Mr. Ego (Take Me Down)" has, in addition, the breathtaking "Where The Rain Grows", plus two unreleased cuts: The Deris penned "Can't Fight Your Desire" (which should have been on the album, to replace you-know-what), and the seventies style heavy rocker "Star Invasion". The Perfect Gentleman EP, besides the title track, has a cover of Thin Lizzy's "Cold Sweat" (which is okay), bassist Grosskopf's "Silicone Dreams" (the other 'B side' deserving of space on MOTR), and the 6½ minute "Grapowski's MalmSuite 1001 (in D Doll)"; this instrumental features Kai's replacement Roland Grapow going through his frets in the way a butcher takes apart his product. This "MalmSuite" is a pleasure, and has the fluidity that could've empowered some of MOTR average material.

I have seen listings for a "Where The Rain Grows" single, as well as a "Sole Survivor" single. In April of '95 "In The Middle Of A Heartbeat" was released as an EP, with a KISS cover in "I stole Your Love" and a unreleased tune in "Closer To Home". So many songs with the word "home"...

Master Of The Rings (7½)
 Mr. Ego (Take Me Down) (7½)
 Perfect Gentleman (6½)

STRATOVARIUS-Fright Night/Sony
-Twilight Time/TT Rec
-Dreamspace/TT Rec

Finland's STRATOVARIUS are, without a doubt, one of the brightest hopes in the European power metal front. I've pointed out vocalists in other reviews, and I'll do so again. Singer Timo Tolkki (who is also the group's leader, only guitarist, main composer, and producer-engineer-mixer-caterer (?) extraordinaire) has an stunningly 'pure' voice--kind of angelic, in a way, as it's not aggressive or really operatic either. He didn't start out this good, though, as shown in the first STRATOVARIUS outing, '89's Fright Night. The disc is in a youthful German power style, and Tolkki's voice matches the music, as he is a touch tentative, and expectedly not as refined vocally (as seen in later albums). Guitar-wise, Tolkki has a love of all things 'classical', with metallic admirations for SAVATAGE (Sirens), HELLOWEEN, and early KING DIAMOND. Fright Night is consistently speedier than later efforts, but, as noted, not as cultured as Dreamspace. Still, the songwriting is well above-average, and, I believe, better than the sophomore effort Twilight Time. Fright Night makes a fine addition to the collection, in my opinion. (8)

Twilight Time is a major step forward for STRATOVARIUS, but the songwriting could have been more developed. When comparing this disc to Dreamspace, this is apparent. Otherwise, Tolkki's exquisite set of lungs are near full maturity ('angelic') on this album, and the production and playing are heads 'n shoulders above Fright Night. There are 7 full songs (plus a instrumental), which are carefully balanced between out 'n out speedsters ("The Hands Of Time", "Out Of The Shadows") and midpaced numbers ("Break The Ice", "Twilight Time", etc.). Twilight Time is good, but gets eclipsed by the awesome Dreamspace. (8)

Dreamspace is, as stated, a tremendous offering of power metal. But there are some problems which cannot be dismissed. First off, 14 tracks are TOO MANY. Some trimming should have been done--cut's like "Thin Ice", "Atlantis", and "Abyss" lack the 'special' songwriting that the other songs possess. As for the other tracks, Tolkki needs to hold back his influences or else he may run into LEGAL trouble. "Magic Carpet Ride" is pretty much RAINBOW's Gate Of Babylon", with some LED ZEPPLIN thrown in. Does Tolkki have guts or WHAT! He brazenly sings the phrase 'gates of babylon' several times in "Magic Carpet Ride". Same deal with "We Are The Future"--a near carbon copy of HELLOWEEN's "Save Us"; and yet again Tolkki includes the words 'save us' as part of the chorus!! Most obvious is "Reign Of Terror", which is an outright steal of Savatage's "Sirens"--from the guitar tone to the chorus! When I first heard it, I laughed. What's this Tolkki up to, anyway? Now, here's comes the surprise...these 'copy' songs BLOW AWAY their 'originals'!! It's a terrible thing to say, I know, but STRATOVARIUS add their 'thing', and make 'em fantastic. I mean, "We Are The Future" had me foaming at the mouth -- just a few seconds into the song. As with the opener ("Chasing Shadows"), STRATOVARIUS are at their peak with the speed metal tunes. But, overall, Dreamspace is a major success, covering all the tempo ranges in power metal, and even approaching progressive tendencies ("Dreamspace") once in a while. The production quality has risen to another level, and doesn't get much better than this. Tolkki is a talent, pure and simple. I do hope he invest's in his bandmates when it comes to songwriting, or else we'll have another 'SKYCLAD' situation. But for now, I listen to Dreamspace and enjoy it. You will too. (9)

The 4th Dimension has just been released, and I missed an initial opportunity to pick it up. Damn. It'll get reviewed in the next SENTINEL STEEL paper. Meanwhile, as a 'taster' review, my pal in Virginia, Tony Zangara (that'll be a \$20.00 charge to see your name in print, pal! Just kidding...we're having a sale this issue, so...), who says The 4th Dimension is...not as good as Dreamspace, but retains the same sound. We shall see.....

For info, fan club, merchandise, etc., write to:
STRATOVARIUS LEGION/P.O. Box
35/01731 Vantaa/Finland

AVATAR-Violent Music.../demo
'Original Groove Oriented Thrash Metal'. AVATAR combine 80's style uptempo thrash with a BIOHAZARD rhythm on occasion. Because the vocals are clear, the vehement lyrics (against society mostly) stand out; unfortunately, the topics they have picked have been done to death. Having said that, I must say I rarely tire of songs like "Deceived", a very simplistic yet angry anthem for all those stupid racists...white AND black, I might add. Back to the music though...a countless number of bands are playing AVATAR's type of music on the club circuit...I find it wearisome. Contact: Mike Smith/3485 Monarch Dr./Decatur, IL 62526

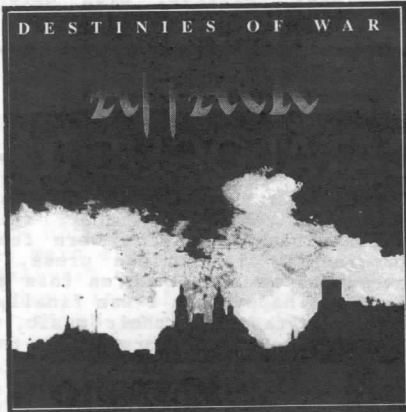
JACKAL-A Safe Look In Mirrors/Zero
I heard much about this Danish band over the past year; their releases Vague Visions and Rise were featured prominently in foreign press. Burrn seemed to be very keen on this group, so I was happy when I was finally able to get a taste of their music. Well, "A Safe Look In Mirrors" opens this CD of the same name, with a quick riff reminiscent of SKID ROW. Now don't take that the wrong way; SKID ROW can be a powerful band when they want to be, and "A Safe..." is no poser metal. But this album is, as it unfolds, a 'rootsy' power metal disc, in the style of MORGANA LEFAY, recent METAL CHURCH, ARTCH, etc., and harder mainstream outfits like the said SKID ROW. "Nothing To Lose" supports my description, as it features the mentioned riffing technique, plus vocals belted a la Dianno, and a few fine leads mastered by sole guitarist Benny Petersson. Now, as you can gather, I'm not fan of this blues-tinged metal. But, in my continued habit of seeing something positive in everything (except NEVERMORE, haha), I must say I really liked the oriental-melody charged excursion called "Taken Away". It's further enhanced by what must be the best production by the Bauerfeind/Paeth duo. Another good cut is "Journey", with its head-nodding, anthemic bouncing. But that's it. As much as I feel the U.S. is missing out on some great foreign bands, JACKAL, based on A Safe Look In Mirrors, is not one of them. (6)

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FRAGRANT EXPERIMENT-As Man.../demo

A friend commented that singer Gary Dostal is singing one song while the band plays another. It's kinda true...Dostal has a fine voice, but like the fellow from HIRAX, he has absolutely no structure or technique in his performance. However, with some conditioning, Dostal could be good--really good. As for the music itself, "Man" is proficient old-school power metal. "Infidelity" is okay, with more of a 70's influence in the riffs. "Bad Pie" closes the demo kinda poorly. The sound is fair, on a high bias tape. Send \$4 to: Gary Dostal/RD1 Box 154, Everett Rd./Goshen NY 10924



METROPOLIS-4 Track Adv./demo

Well, going by each member's bio, these guys are impressive. In terms of experience and training, METROPOLIS have been there. The music is progressive rock/light metal with a jazz influence. Comparable to a weight-less DREAM THEATER, with a more jazzy sound, I guess. The production could've been fuller, and the song-writing needs some more development. A good start. Supposedly, a full length CD was released in December of 1994. I know the disc is \$12.00, and a cassette is \$8.00; add \$2 for any size order. However, write first for more info. METROPOLIS/P.O. Box 18225/Greensboro, NC 27419

ATTACK-Revitalized/Iclnd-Victor

ATTACK are probably THE 'veteran unknowns' in L.M.P.'s roster. The evershuffling group, led by 'constant' leader (in a Rock 'N Rolf custom)/vocalist/guitarist/bassist/keyboardist/flute player (whew!) Ricky Van Helden have put out at least four discs between 1984 and 1993: Seven Years In The Past, Destinies Of War, Return Of The Evil, and Danger In The Air. This 'Revitalized' is basically a 'best of', composed of several unreleased cuts and 9-10 'oldies' that have been rerecorded or remixed. To put it simply, ATTACK's music is typical of what SENTINEL STEEL is all about. Van Helden's is highly influenced by Number Of The Beast/Piece Of Mind/Powerslave-era IRON MAIDEN, and it shows. However, ATTACK have meatier riffs too, very much in the RUNNING WILD style, circa Branded And Exiled. Van Helden's voice does sound like Dickinson on occasion, plus Rock 'N Rolf in his rougher moments. Rest assured, as Van Helden is a fine singer (amongst other things). In the 'melodies' department, ATTACK are heading for an 'old' HELLOWEEN--I know Van Helden aspires to have the Hansen/Weikath-type duels, with the MAIDEN/RUNNING WILD motif. Judging from Revitalized, he and ATTACK are on their way. I fell for the ATTACK sound on a first go, upon hearing "Return Of The Warrior". After that, songs like "On The Run" (only Germans can write tunes like this!! Absolutely amazing! MAIDEN would've died for these riffs) and "Wonderland" made me an instant ATTACK fan. The lyrics? Totally in the fantasy/mystical vein: Warriors, witches, dragons, castles, dark ages, etc.--very refreshing compared to the 'whiners' in the current U.S. scene. HEY! At the last second I was able to get ATTACK's last two studio CD's. Both are excellent, and edge out Revitalized because of the way album flows, that a 'best of' could never match. Both Seven Years In The Past ('92) and Destinies Of War ('89) come

highly recommended, though I'd go with the '92 disc to start the ATTACK. I hope we get a new album in 1995 from Van Helden! Write to the Empire Entertainment (see: ANGRA) address for information on ATTACK. (8 1/2 squirrels w/ swords) To Contact ATTACK: P.O. Box 2026/32220 Bunde-Westf/Germany

SKYCLAD-Prince Of The Poverty Line/Nse

What better way to celebrate the return of Noise, but with a SKYCLAD album? POTPL is their fourth full length, having originally being released over in Europe nearly a year ago. 1995 will produce SKYCLAD's fifth. Which is, I feel, bad news. This one-disc-a-year pace, while keeping their name in the press, will surely hurt the band in the long run. Prince is a good album, consistent with the other SKYCLAD product, in terms of basic quality; but in a way, it's the same old thing, and the best cuts on Prince equal the average ones on the previous platters. Steve Ramsey continues to write all the music, and he's playing some tired riffs throughout POTPL. It's deja vu...the same thing happened while Ramsey was in SATAN/PARIAH. SKYCLAD has some very talented musicians...I hope they compose as a band for their next outing. Another area that could some diversity is, surprise surprise, Martin's voice. As usual, he is brilliant throughout POTPL, and without a doubt the man is THE pensmith in metal today. But he needs to expand, he needs melody in his vocals. Martin has shown us he can sing (the ballads); now let's here faster songs with more variety. So POTPL, while flawed, is still recommended 'thinking man's' metal. Plus, our U.S. pressing comes with several bonus tracks. (7 1/2)

HATRIX-12 song CD/self released

Actually, this CD has now been succeeded by an album on Massacre Records, titled Collisioncourse-withnoplac. Gee whiz, talk about last minute names...anyways, this Massacre thing came in at the last second, but it is similar to the band's independent CD, so I'll go with my old review. The production is massive, as showcased on opener "It's Not Hard To Hate". It's a pretty simple tune, with a bludgeoning riff and pounding double bass work. In a way it reminds me of the type of material found on DEMENTIA's only CD outing, recuperate from reality. Much of this disc also reminds me of 'middle' period EXODUS (Fabulous Disaster) too, while also crossing over into PANTERA/BIOHAZARD territory. HATRIX will DEFINITELY appeal to both crowds. Unlike today's 'power riff groove' outfits, HATRIX can play, especially in the solo department, as heard in "Bad Religion", with its neo-classical leadwork. Their singer, who sounds like a likable Zetro Sousa in the faster stuff, puts on a vocal show wily with the METALLICA-style power-crunch ballad "No One". Things do degenerate as the CD nears its completion, but still, HATRIX are impressive. Up to now, they are the best band doing this kind of music. Get yours on Massacre Records everywhere; you can write to the band at: HATRIX/8570 Ridgedale/Cleveland, OH 44133. Kudo's to engineer Bill Korecky at Mars Studio, Cleveland; the guy is impressive. (6 1/2 squirrels)

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SENTENCED-Amok/CMedia

North From Here was sooo brilliant, it is surely THE best death metal album ever done, and a 'classic' in the overall metal scene. On a new SENTENCED disc, all I'd want is for the group to retain the NFH style--that's all I'd ask. But no, on AMOK, SENTENCED have done a complete 180, going for the now popular 'deathrock' sound. Unlike the majority of death-rockers (ENTOMBED, DESULTORY, etc.), SENTENCED do not use the services of Skogsberg, making for the most musical deathrock album ever done. The songs are basically traditional heavy metal, with the growly vocals. But if SENTENCED 'painted' with North From Here, then Amok is just a crayon sketch. While I can't fault Amok, it is not something I would listen to again--it's too loose, the vocals don't complement the music, and...it just pisses me off to see a band create a masterpiece, then purposely change their playing style. SENTENCED are also holding back their musical abilities, playing this kind of 'simple' music (and I can say that, being a fan of the RAMONES, Morbid Tales, etc.). Well, enough blubbering. I'm happy I didn't follow SENTENCED from their early stages, up to Amok. 'Cause if I were a longtime fan, Amok would be a major letdown. (5½)

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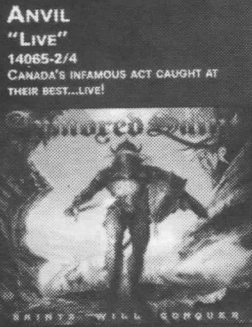
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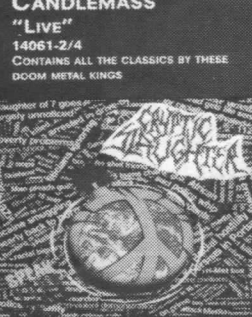
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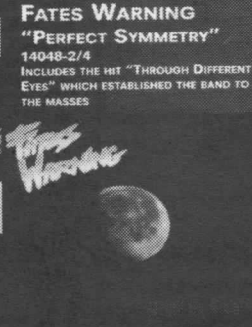
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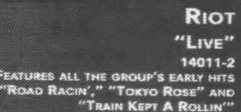
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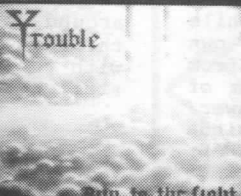
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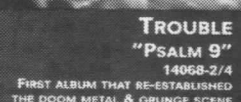


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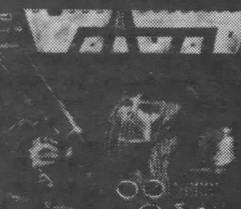


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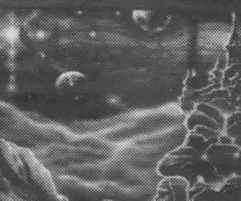


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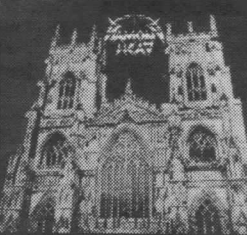
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REIGN-Embrace/Mausoleum

Dark, extreme British thrash (but it's not death) that divides its time between doomier sections and the more faster (no blastbeats) periods. Long in duration, and somewhat dull songwriting.

ORACLE-As Darkness Reigns/Msscre INNER STRENGTH-Shallow Reflections/I.O.Art Records

These two came out a while ago, but wanted to throw my own two cents in, so...ORACLE, from Florida, play a complex form of crunchy, riff oriented power/progressive metal. It's kinda like SACRED WARRIOR or LETHAL, but there are a hundred times more time/rhythm/melody changes than those two groups. It's no secret that a band without structure is a band without songs. ORACLE aren't that directionless, but the addition of rather generic riffs render As Darkness Reigns into an 'average' category. The songwriting is not strong. The plodfest of "Prisoner (Of Your Own Soul)" backs my opinion; not only is it boring, but it is too long, as are most of the songs on this album. Now, some people like long songs with this type of music; I don't. After numerous listens, track 2's "Nightmares" is the only cut to my liking. If ORACLE could create a whole album using "Nightmares" as a guide, they'll succeed BIG TIME. To conclude, ORACLE have a good concept behind their band, but excellent playing abilities, good production, etc., do not constitute good songs. (6)

Like ORACLE (and countless other U.S. bands), INNER STRENGTH are signed to a German indie label. Also, Shallow Reflections is longer than the average disc, and has a terrible album cover, too. Musically, INNER STRENGTH rely on ULTRA ploddy rhythms (see ZAXAS + WICKED MARAYA), with jazzy/technical bits to add interest. Like ORACLE, INNER STRENGTH's first number is sheer boredom, but the second track improves the scenery. The bassist drives the machine gun riff, making me recall parts of BITTER END's Harsh Realities disc. Of course, INNER STRENGTH are a progressive band, and have that 'feel' throughout Shallow Reflections. This is a band with greater technical abilities than ORACLE, yet they possess very little skill in the area of songwriting.

To see what's up with these two U.S. bands, WRITE! They enjoy the feedback.

ORACLE/6332 Anvil Rd./Jacksonville, FL 32211

INNER STRENGTH/P.O. Box 481/Lake Grove, NY 11755

MESSIAH-Underground/Noise

Naff cover idea; a few good songs in the beginning ("Battle In The Ancient North", "Revelation Of Fire"), but nothing new in the end. MESSIAH have been around forever in the 'bitter' thrash field, but seem to miss with their songwriting. The good stuff here has melody--a hint.

VAUDEVILLE-To Dimension Logic/Advent Records Australia

First the guys from FAITH? zine sent me flyers for VAUDEVILLE (or VAUXDVIHL, as their bio spells it--I've no idea why!), then FAITH? mastermind surprised me with a copy of To Dimension Logic on CD. After one listen, I felt...odd. On the surface, VAUDEVILLE are the perfect median between FATES WARNING (Parallels) and DREAM THEATER (Images And Words); yes, nothing new, I had thought. But something was there...five (or so) listens later, my opinion of To Dimension Logic changed from 'it's okay' to THIS IS ONE OF THE BEST PROG METAL RELEASES IN A LONG TIME! Now, the guitar sound and rhythm section aren't going to win awards for originality, as they are in the framework of the above mentioned influences. VAUDEVILLE's strengths are in its songwriting, lyrics, and the vocals of Stacey Handchild (a 'he', if you need to know). Handchild's voice is a constant object of interest to me; he captures the style of British prog rock with the U.S. 'high end'. Before hooking up with VAUDEVILLE, he toured his country (1 year) for the Australian production of JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR. Oh yes, I forgot to mention that VAUDEVILLE is an Australian outfit; unlike their countrymates, the group are 'with' the times, and not playing a 'dated' type of music (see ALLEGIANCE review). Now, not only does Handchild have great delivery, but the WORDS he sings are also powerful. Band leader/guitarist Fab Gallen is the lyricist (he did the vocal arrangements too), and he's not only adept at word plays, but the implications of what he writes has much meaning to me. The title track, "To Dimension Logic", is, I feel, the epitome of what I'm trying to explain. In this song, as the music rises deliberately to an inevitable climax, the lyrics follow similarly to the oncoming crescendo....it begins...

"Sitting in rooms, we let time pass by
In solace we heal, in pictures we hide"

The next few lines reveal 'pictures' to be television, and how this visual medium works... it reaches out, and the viewer accepts it...

"It Blinds Us And Lights The Way To Follow"

The music, at this point, can ascend no more, so it explodes....

"Your self image is a program that you turn on everyday
Sitting still, it moves everything around you

It's why there's only black and white and no greys in between
Negatives are what you only see in pictures.

Want to know the reason why, Transcend to the sublime
Ideas have never been your own
Colored in by modern screens...
Naturally you're reading the lyrics without the music, which, as a unified force, pull at the heart and mind. Provoking thought, moving the emotions, VAUDEVILLE has created a piece of work that needs the world's attention. Distribution in Australia and Japan has been secured; other areas are being explored. New material has been written. To Dimension Logic is also available for \$22.00 direct from their record company. Make bank cheques or international M.O.'s payable to 'ADVENT RECORDS'. Cash is acceptable also. Postage is included in the price. Address: Advent Records/Attn: Jay Kells/P.O. Box 146/Bundoora 3083/Melbourne, Australia. Copies of this CD should be available from U.S. mailorder companies too. (8)

PROJECT SYNERGY-3 To 1/demo

PROJECT SYNERGY are a three piece progressive "metal-edged rock" band from the Boston area. Guitarist Tom Mitchell also handles the vocal slot, and has a fine voice. In the mix, however, there's no question that the upfront vocals/set back guitar hurts the sound. As it is, '3 To 1' can be likened to (old) RUSH and FATES WARNING's Perfect Symmetry. PROJECT SYNERGY are 'safe' in their approach, but I can respect the straightforward writing. Mitchell does have the training to pull off a more 'experimental' piece of work, but he sticks to a more simplistic endeavor. When I last spoke with him, he told me the group were going through some personnel changes. '3 To 1' is a packaged cassette, with three songs. \$4 should be okay (payable to "Tom Mitchell"), but you may want to write first to see what is up. PROJECT SYNERGY /Tom Mitchell/123 Littleton Rd. #22/Ayer, MA 01432

METAMORPHOSE #4

This is great! Metal music makes up about 1/4 of the zines content (which is photocopied--the look is clean and simple), and the rest of the mag is directed towards ideas, opinions, and expository articles. #4 has, music-wise, FATES WARNING and THOUGHT INDUSTRY interviews. And that's it. The rest of the 40+ pages has the following: An excellent dissection of a KKK application/pamphlet; a diatribe against SPIN, for its statement that 'Zines are for losers, done by loser' (or something to that effect); Editor Morrow gives us his tale of how he took on the police and made a mockery of them, in 'BENLD'; The 'Boiled Angel' article covers the Florida incident of the idiot (in my opinion, anyway) Mike Diana and his 'gore scribbles' zine, which got him in deep trouble with law--to the point where he was banned from scribbling! Er, or 'drawing', as some would say. The limits (and rights) of the 1st amendment are ALWAYS a focus in METAMORPHOSE. There are also hilarious newspaper clippings ("Man Collects 10,000 Toilets", etc.), Smokers rights (I say we quarantine you smokers, Morrow!), pro-NRA propaganda (which I also disagree with, but...I'll save my speech for a later date...), and much more. As you can see, I don't agree with Editor William H. Morrow all the time, and neither will you; but does he make you think? Definitely. When ordering, Morrow also throws in some supplements, with CD/demo reviews, so the page count is about 50. It's \$3 postpaid; probably \$4 will do it for overseas. Make everything payable to WILLIAM H MORROW, and send to: METAMORPHOSE/Attn: W.H. Morrow/ 214 E. Jackson/Carlinville, IL 62626. #5 should be out by the time you read this, and has interviews with Lombardo/GRIP Inc., WICKED MARAYA, and MOTHER EARTH (yeah!), plus even MORE thought provoking articles. Recommended.

METAL HAMMER (Ger) March '95

Like ROCK HARD, and in contrast to U.S. mags, Germany's METAL HAMMER caters to all tastes. It is, though, a touch more trend/MTV oriented than its #1 competitor, ROCK HARD. In this March issue, one can find industrial (MINISTRY) to power (ICED EARTH), and much more. Guitar reviews, fan club info, good live reviews, and...everything else, with a trendy bent. This original German edition is NOTHING like the putrid Brit version. A subscription will probably cost you \$80-\$100. For info, write to: METAL HAMMER/ZAG Zeitschriften-Verlag/Baarer Str.22/CH-6300 Zug/Germany

SYMPOSIUM #4

Good fanzine covering all the current stuff, much in the way that ILL LITERATURE does. #4 has bands like NAILBOMB, SAMAEI, etc. with a special doom surplus featuring ANATHEMA, SLEEP, COUNT RAVEN, etc. Ultra clean layouts and good writing are also part of the picture. Content-wise, SYMPOSIUM is not really my 'thing', but at the back of this #4 is a 'Metal Daze' article/review section, with bands like AGENT STEEL, HOLY TERROR, etc. Unfortunately, much of it is unreadable, thanks to a computer glitch. Darn. #4's Editor, Jeff Wagner, is now at Relapse, so his buddy Michael Hope has taken over the editorial/publishing duties. #5 should be out by the time you read this. 60+ pages, computer layouts, really nice job. \$3.00. I'm not sure about who to write to, but send inquiries to Jeff Wagner at: RELAPSE Records/Attn. Jeff Wagner/P.O. Box 251/Millersville, PA 17551

FEH #12

The last issue for Editor Geri Nible, who goes on to write for Marco Barbieri's ILL LITERATURE. This issue, as always, keeps you up to date with the U.S. scene. Interviews include EPIDEMIC, OVERKILL, MACHINE HEAD, C.O.C., etc. A big highlight is the lengthy MISFITS interview! The reviews also cover all the current stuff. FEH is printed on newsprint, with fully professional layouts, typesetting, etc., by artist Nible. FEH #12 has 48 pages, and is...free. Just send \$1 for postage, to: FEH/Geri Nible/P.O. Box 40361/Overland Park, KS 66204

POWER METAL NEWS #1

PMN is a six page newsletter from France, done by SENTINEL (nope, no connection to me!) editor Chris Dessaigne. I have yet to see his 'real' zine, having sent him a copy of SENTINEL STEEL #1 a loooong time ago. Chris' newsletter is directly influenced by UNDERGROUND SCENE REPORT and my own '#1 1/2'. However, it irks me to see a lot of my #1 1/2 info in the pages of his newsletter. Chris has Europe at his fingertips, yet he relies on a American with a weak power metal home scene. Oh well. Maybe I should take it as a compliment!! Nonetheless, POWER METAL NEWS is informative, with many reviews, addresses, and news pieces. There is also interviews with both ANGRA and DREAM THEATER. It's all in French, but approximately 50% of you Americans took it as a foreign language while in school, so no excuses, okay?! Chris should be a good contact in France--write to him at: POWER METAL NEWS/Dessaigne Chris/2 Rue de Pinsons/66680 Canohes/France



EDGE OF TIME #7

#7 of EDGE OF TIME was the last issue done by editor Giedrius before he took off for Denmark for some additional Computer Science courses, to supplement his college work in Lithuania. EDGE OF TIME #8 should be out by now, done by his contributors/friends. As for #7, there is a definite tipping-of-the-scales towards power/prog metal, with PATRIARCH, SIEGES EVEN, HAGGARD, HIDDEN, PSYCHOTIC WALTZ, etc. Other bands include MORDOR, MY DYING BRIDE, etc. There are 28 pages of interesting computer layouts, a cut above the average zine. Everything is in English, with confident writing. Giedrius promises a more streamlined prog metal direction beginning with #9. Can't wait! Write to him at: Giedrius Slivinskas/Kildehusvej 2D St. L. 3/4000 Roskilde/Denmark (until June 25th; after June 25th, write to:) EDGE OF TIME/Giedrius Slivinskas/Justiniskiu 73-1/2056 Vilnius/Lithuania (a contributor address, who's handling the work for #8:) Audrius Ozalas/Didlaukio 20-9/2057 Vilnius/Lithuania

ELDRITCH PALMER #2

A half-sized zine from Poland, specializing in extreme thrash and death metal. Includes thorough interviews with CATHARSIS, RESURRECTION, TRAUMA, ASTAROTH, and others of that ilk, plus the reviews, and other odds and ends. Informative, small type and clean layouts. Good English. It's \$2 for Europe, \$3 for the rest of the world (including the U.S.). By the way, 40 pages. Write to: ELDRITCH PALMER MAG/Attn: Krzysztof Sadza/Napoleonska 25 A/06-510 Mlawa/Poland.



PROGRESSIVE POWER

Catchy title, huh? Actually, this mag is no more, as Editor Robert Grzesiak now concentrates on other things, like his own radio show. This issue I have, from '92, features FATES WARNING, WATCHTOWER, SECRECY, MEKONG DELTA, MYSTIC FORCE, and you get the idea. Robert is a very cool guy, a good contact in Poland (of all places!). Here is is 'Private Poll Results' for '94: 1) DREAM THEATER-Awake, 2) WINTERS BANE-Heart Of A Killer, 3) FATES WARNING-Inside Out, 4) HELLOWEEN-Master Of The Rings, 5) CONCEPTION-Parallel Minds, and he continues up to '20'. Write!: Robert Grzesiak/ uL Staszica 28-40/82-500 Kwidzyn/ Poland

DER TOTER ESEL #1

The cover of Manson, with the zine title above him (translation: The Dead Ass), is eye-catching, but really has no relation to the interior content. There are 22 photocopied pages; most have been typeset on the computer, but without much creativity. Basically, this first issue is very poor. Editor KRS Jackson agrees. There is a zine rundown, and run-of-the-mill interviews with DEBAUCHERY, SARCOPHAGY, ABBATOIR (no, a different one), and EVISCERATED. There is also poetry too. The layouts are...well, none of the interviews have 'masts', so they run into each other....I could go on, but I'm sure KRS is aware of his mistakes. Basically, he needs to pick up ANY magazine, and understand how layouts, design, paste-ups, space usage, advertising, etc., works. DER TOTER ESEL is \$2; KRS Jackson/2949 Hwy 52 W. #33B/West Lafayette, IN/47906-5543

ROCK HARD #94 March '95

ROCK HARD started out as a cheap fanzine, and became a monster. At 180 pages, this mag is Europe's most 'complete' metal publication. Its glossy, full color pages service every genre, leaving no fan unsatisfied. Nothing else to say. Everything involving metal is here. Sample copies are \$8; 6 month subs are \$45, a years worth is \$80. Write: ROCK HARD/Postfach 11 02 12/D-44058 Dortmund/Germany. When writing, beg 'em to publish in the States. They can may revitalize the scene...

CROM #2

Photocopied with rough repro, burdened with typos in each sentence, plus skewed paste-ups, etc., this zine was a bit of a let down. CROM was reputed to specialize in power metal, but this issue has a major TYPE O NEGATIVE interview, a WARGASM (RIP) interview, and that's it for interviews! There is also a lightweight MANOWAR tribute page, plus a sparse yet decent review section. Albums include stuff by FATE, HEAVENS GATE, SAVATAGE, MALMSTEEN, TWISTED SISTER, and a few others. 'Lost In The Ice', CROM's 'oldies' section, sports a misplaced KILLDOZER, but the piece on PICTURE is cool. 3 live reviews are spread over 2 pages, and 5 demo reviews are done over 2 1/2 pages. Why mention the page count? Because the type is SO big, I could read it a mile away. The 36 pages presented here could easily fit into 24, if not 16. Imagine the postage you'll save guys! But CROM does give DREAM CHILD a perfect score, so you know that the CROM CREW has taste. I think I got an off issue--since #2 has come out, the CROMians have corrected all the errors, and have proceeded to finish a 3rd issue. Most, if not all, of the contributors are MAJOR power/progressive/trad metal fans. Good contact/source of info. Here's several people to write to: Carl Frederick/8 Harmac Dr./East Haven, CT 06513 Bernhard Eichholz/1336 No. Whitenall Hwy/Burbank, CA 91505 (The 2 guys above are the Editors) Boris Zaidenberg/132 West End Ave./Apt. 2F/Brooklyn, NY 11235 Tell 'em SENTINEL STEEL sent ya, if you want royal treatment, that is!

MANIC REACTION #9

Editor Sue may of been looking ahead for the 10th 'Anniversary' issue, but she made sure to come up with the goods on #9 first. In fact, I think this is my favorite MR yet. There are 36 photocopied pages, fueled by great computer graphics, making MANIC REACTION rise above many PRINTED zines. Band interviews include TIAMAT, FATES WARNING (a good introduction to the band), SKREW (the best metal/ industrial band out there today), WICKED MARAYA (melodic metal? Have I converted Sue?!) DEAD HORSE, and local band DIRT CHURCH. One of two monumental pieces is the 'I Don't Want My MTV' article. In this one-pager, Sue speaks out (for all of us) on the Headbangers Ball debacle. I liked it so much, Sue gets my vote in 1996! The other highlight is the once-in-a-lifetime (1/13/95) RAVEN/ ANVIL gig here in Jersey (a similar event took place in Long Island, I believe). Sue relives the show for us, and boy, she filled me with much regret! I wish I had gone... The reviews section covers everything current and available in the U.S., i.e. TIAMAT, GODFLESH, NEW IDOL SUN, SOLITUDE AETURNUS, SLAYER, etc. Plus there is a zine column, a '94 countdown, a letters page (graced by Borivoj's presence, no less...he says, quote "(MANIC REACTION is) very well done, and I like it a lot"), and more bits 'n pieces, done in MANIC REACTION's quality writing. Send your \$2 (payable to Sue Nolz; no foreign orders) to: MANIC REACTION/ P.O. Box 3154/Wayne, NJ 07474 -3154 or you can reach MR via Internet at ManicReact@aol.com Tell Sue I sent ya, thanks!

IRON PAGES (sample issue-#29)

Another good, glossy German pro mag. This issue stands at a very compact, info laden 32 pages--more entertaining than a year's worth of METAL MANIACS! Even though it's written in German! Just kidding. IRON PAGES is like a kid brother to HEAVY ODER WAS; if you like the latter, you'll definitely dig the former. Again, no ultra extreme coverage, but PROPAIN is cover fodder. Inside, VENOM, FORBIDDEN, ANGRA, SABBATH, PANZER, etc. get things rolling. A 'collectors' section is an interesting feature. Contact: IRON PAGES/Otger Jeske/ Alt-Lankwitz 72/12247 Berlin/Germany

DAMAGE JACKAL #1

DAMAGE JACKAL is a smaller sized, photocopied zine devoted to METALLICA. Highlights include a detailed chronology of METALLICA's history, and honest bootleg CD reviews from editor Metallifreak. Plus there's some minimal reviews on other current bands (SLAYER, GREEN DAY, etc.). A complete listing of EVERY single METALLICA release is also included. At 28-32 pages, I can't really recommend DAMAGE JACKAL beyond the bigtime METALLICA fanatic. Editor Metallifreak (yeah!) promises to expand his zine, so we'll see how it progresses. Send \$3 (cash may be best) to: METALLIFREAK Inc./620 Stonechurch Rd. W. #10/Hamilton, Ontario/L9B 1V3 CANADA. By the way, this is not the same issue that was taken apart by Alicia in a past issue of Metal Maniacs.

ILL LITERATURE #9

At 128 pages, Marco Barbieri's ILL LITERATURE is currently the definitive 'extreme' metal journal produced in the States. The album, demo, and 7 inch reviews number well over a hundred, covering dozens of pages. There are over twenty interviews, most spanning an in-depth 2-3 pages, while there are a few one page 'update' talks. Questions are very straight, but could use some jazzing up, in the form of humor or style. ILL LITERATURE's main focus is, without question, the presentation of information; and it succeeds. Except for interview appearances by FATES WARNING (a good one!), MANOWAR, and a couple of others, this mag caters to, as stated, more 'extreme' tastes (SLAYER, EXIT 13, GODFLESH, ASPHYX, OBITUARY, etc.). The reviews are the same way (though that's no fault of Barbieri's--he reviews everything that comes in), but RUNNING WILD makes a positive entry, as does HELLOWEEN's latest. Radio friendly rockers like PRIDE & GLORY and CINDERELLA (plus others) show up too, so there is something for everyone (at least in the album reviews; the demos tend to be of the death/etc. variety. Melodic bands! Send your stuff in!). Sometimes I think Barbieri could be stretching himself a bit thin in areas with his writing (interview intros, reviews), as the enormity of his work is considerable. I hear even more contributors will be lending him a hand, which should work well, making ILL LITERATURE rise to an even MORE professional level. 128 pages, full color glossy cover, newsprint interior, computer layouts, pro printed newstand/bookstore magazine. It's \$4.00 (everything payable to 'MARCO BARBIERI'); send to P.O. Box 480275/Los Angeles, CA 90048. P.S. Marco--"Maiden's Fall"?

WRETCHED CORPSE NEWSLETTER #11

At 50¢ or two 32¢ stamps, I guess you get your money's worth. Basically this 20 page (stapled at the corner) newsletter is made up of band bios and record label press releases. The original material makes up about 3 pages of WRETCHED CORPSE--and that includes the 'Thank You' list and subscription page! Content wise, master xeroxer Wayne Klinger photocopies whatever he gets in, so one can find a commercial band like DEADLINE next to a noisy grindcore band like GROINCHURN. I find Klinger's sincerity questionable, as his review of DEADLINE clearly described this band as a MOTLEY CRUE/GUNS 'N ROSES clone; in a letter to me describing what he had to trade, he described all his tapes as some form of power metal--DEADLINE included. And from a trade that we did do, he still owes me a part of my share. Klinger has some sort of power metal publication in the works...I hope it's an honest effort, and not a bandwagon hopper. Clenching my teeth, I must say that ANY publicity is good publicity, so Klinger IS contributing to the scene. In his own way...write to: Wayne Klinger/17 Dey St./Danville, PA 17821

BURRN!

Probably the world's best melodic metal publication. Very little to none in terms of 'extreme' music coverage; BURRN house bands would be MR.BIG, ANGRA, HELLOWEEN, IMPELLITTERI, etc. Unfortunately, its only available in Japanese. BURRN is monthly, at a backbreaking 200 pages, with incredible coverage and ads. It's available from Tower Records, and also mailorder companies, like Dream Disc, etc. I'd give subscription info, but the cost is so large, you're better off getting BURRN from a source in the States. Bands, however, can send their tapes/CDS to: BURRN Demolition/Toei Mitoshiro Bldg. 2F/Mitoshirocho 7, Kanda/Chiyodaku, Tokyo 101/Japan. Tell 'em I sent you, okay?

BLACK SHEEP #2

This eclectic zine returns with an even better second issue. If you're looking for good metal content, forget it (unless INNER THOUGHT is your thing); no, what's good here are editor Kat's 'personal' writings, like this issue's 'One Fine Weekend'. There's also a large 'pirate radio' article, and other bits, like a column on tattoos, zine reviews (which could be more critical), music reviews (a wide array of styles, that could also benefit from more 'in-depth' analyzation), Kat's expressionistic cartooning, and more. At \$2 + 2 stamps, BLACK SHEEP makes fun reading for a couple of hours. It is 32 pages, with clean delivery, etc. Make checks/M.O.'s out to Mike McNeeley (yeah, I don't either!), and mail to: BLACK SHEEP/Kat Mouse/P.O. Box 10087/Knoxville, TN 37939-0087



METAL STAR March '95

This is probably Germany's weakest newstand/mainstream metal mag, but it still blows away the best U.S. metal rags. BON JOVI is the cover cheese; inside we can find SEPULTURA, the 'new' RAINBOW, MELVINS, X-WILD, ACCEPT, STONE ROSES, and much more. At 84 glossy (photos are fuzzy though) pages, I guess you could call METAL STAR a 'METAL HAMMER' wannabe. Address: METAL STAR/Bockmannstr. 15/20099 Hamburg/Germany.

HEAVY ODER WAS #18 April '95

This is probably my favorite German pro mag. Its title means 'HEAVY OR WHAT!?'; there are just under 100 pages, have half in glorious color, the rest in black, white, and half tone. The graphics are just incredible, and the type is compact yet highly readable. Power and prog metal is definitely 'in' with HEAVY ODER WAS, getting the most coverage. However, there are also other genres presented. BLIND GUARDIAN is on the cover of this April issue, with a mega interview/article inside. Other groups include DR. BUTCHER, VAN HALEN, VIRGIN STEELE, MACHINE HEAD, SAN VOISEN, and so much more. Excellent demo/unsigned band coverage...just complete in all departments. HEAVY ODER WAS is a great excuse to learn German!! It comes out bi-monthly, and is 26 DM's a year. I don't have a U.S. price, so contact: HEAVY ODER WAS/Postfach 53/71145 Bondorf/Germany. Whoops, I think I can give you a better address for questions: HEAVY ODER WAS/Baumgartenweg 47/71149 Bondorf, Germany. POWER PROG TRAD METAL BANDS! Send your stuff to these guys (along with the other German mags)--they'll give you great European exposure....



TAKE IT #3, #4

It figures! Frank Stover does the world's premier death/black/etc. zine, and he's also involved in the best hard rock/melodic metal zine that I have come across. I have issues 3 and 4; bands interviewed include HITTMAN, LION, SKID ROW, SVEN GALI, D.R. NETWORK, LILLIAN AXE, TYKETTO, VIRGIN STEELE, CHERRY ST., and tons more. Once again, as with VOICES FROM THE DARKSIDE, I'm not into this style of TAKE IT music, but everything is so thoroughly, so smartly done, that it makes for enjoyable reading. I know that many SENTINEL STEEL readers enjoy 'lighter' forms of metal--so I consider this zine an ESSENTIAL purchase for fans of U.S. glam, hard rock, and commercial metal. TAKE IT averages 40 pages per issue, with strong English and lots of info. Issues #1 through #4 are still available, at \$4 (cash only) per issue. #5 should be out soon, if not already. Send mail to: TAKE IT/Tina Ehmke/Postfach 210 212/28 222 Bremen/Germany

VOICES FROM THE DARKSIDE #5

Editor Frank Stover has made the mag a full size publication now, so at 68 pages, this is, without a doubt, the worlds most comprehensive death/black metal publication. Yeah, sure, the graphics aren't flashy, but NO ONE has more info than VFTD. You think you know every death/black band in existence? You don't, but Frank does. This #5 apparently sold out immediately after publication, but maybe Frank did a second printing. #6 should be out by the time you read this, in the Spring of 1995. Contact Frank Stover, see what's up...he's a very nice guy, and knowledgeable on ALL forms of metal (see the TAKE IT review!). VOICES FROM THE DARKSIDE/Frank Stover/P.O. Box 210 212/28222 Bremen/Germany

TERRORIZER #14

Subtitled 'The UK's #1 Extreme Music Magazine', and so it is. At nearly 60 pages, this 'son' of Metal Forces has, in this sample issue, bands like BRUTAL TRUTH, TIAMAT, SOLSTICE UK, BOLT THROWER, etc. TERRORIZER is intelligently written (now that incompetent contributor Phil Sunderland has been banished!), has excellent layouts, but I wish they would cover other realms of metal too. I do not know exactly why Metal Forces went belly up, but that was the best English publication in the world at one time, covering everything from glam to death. I hope TERRORIZER editor Rob Clymo expands his magazine's content--I know Clymo is into quality power/progressive/thrash metal, so it would make sense to do so. But for those of you who live for death, industrial, doom, black, etc. metal, then TERRORIZER is for you. TERRORIZER can be found at TOWER Records magazine department, local metal specialty shops, or through a number of metal mailorder companies. Subscriptions are \$35.00/6 months or \$60.00/1 year. Make international check/M.O. payable to 'The Trumpington Publishing Co., Ltd., and send to: TERRORIZER Subs/Neil House/3-13 Whitechapel Rd./LONDON E1 1DU/ENGLAND.

G.A.S.P. Etc. #6

This may be Editor Mike Baronas' last issue for now, but what an issue it is! After hitting a personal low (with me) with issue #5 (PUNGENT STENCH, NAPALM DEATH, etc. suck, understand?), Mike comes up with all new, mega interviews with BATHORY's Quorthon and the ENTIRE CELTIC FROST crew. Great reading here! Plus there is a thorough SLAYER interview with ex-FORBIDDEN drummer Bostaph. And token grinders DEMOLITION HAMMER, OBITUARY, and EPIDEMIC get undeserved space. This issues movie special is on Wes Craven's NEW NIGHTMARE. Plus there is the regular spots on film/book/zine/score/album/demo/etc. reviews, letter column, artist profile, and much more. 52 pages, pro neo-magazine look, glossy cover, etc. Recommended for extreme thrash/death/horror movie fans. \$4 cash/check/M.O. payable to 'Mike Baronas, sent to: G.A.S.P. Etc./Mike Baronas/P.O. Box 661/Brockton, MA 02403-0661

SHOCKING IMAGES #3

Excellent zine on cult horror/shock/exploitation films. There are 32 pages of clean, compact copy and interesting film pics. Nope, I'm not an expert (or even a casual viewer) of these movies, but like VOICES FROM THE DARKSIDE, this is a great read. Where else can you find information of films like 'Geek Maggot Bingo', 'The Human Tornado', 'The Acid Eaters', etc.? Worldwide coverage. Back issues are \$3 U.S. or \$5 foreign, and subs are \$14 for 4 issues. Make checks/M.O.'s payable to 'Mark Jason Murray'. For info, write to: SHOCKING IMAGES/P.O. Box 7853/Citrus Heights, CA 95621

FAITH #1

What is this?!? The VILLAGE PEOPLE are on the front cover, with a subtitle of 'SAN FRANCISCO HARDCORE GAY MAYHEM' !! Oh, it's just the guys over at FAITH zine playing a joke on us. Actually, now that I think about it, this issue would not sell well on a store's rack. Who'd wanna pick it up? FAITH is a great zine, a hair above 50 pages, with solid computer layouts...the writing, in English, is very good too, with many humorous touches. Funny Frenchmen/pseudo-editors do admit that this issue regretfully leaned towards the more 'harder' edged acts (AT THE GATES, MASS PSYCHOSIS, DOOMSTONE, etc.). Uh oh, I made a mistake! After 'pseudo-editors' (above), stick in the names 'Ruan, Max, and Luc', okay? Thanks. Anyways, yes, there are more 'harder' edged bands this issue, and a somewhat confusing interview/article with LEUKEMIA. In contrast, there is a fabulous interview with SECRECY, and a 'classic' AGENT STEEL/PONTIUS PROPHET interview, plus KINGSBANE, etc. The reviews have many power/prog metal reviews, to make up for the lack of 'melodic' interviews. Looking at the Three FAITHateers playlists, all I see are band names like LETHAL, MANOWAR, WARLORD, RIOT, MYSTIC FORCE, HELSTAR, and more. In truth, Editor Ruan Rossi is the power/prog metal 'purist', while Luc and Max delve into other musical genres. The zines content may be varied, but it is a enjoyable read, as it DOES have many addresses and...it's a fun, info packed zine! I'm eagerly awaiting a second issue, as this one kinda old now. For some cool correspondence, write to: Ruan Rossi/3 Bis, Rue Des Ecoles/95540 Mery-Oise/France

EPITATH/BACKSTAGE vol. 3 #2

A mini 'split' zine, yet the layouts and writing are top-notch. EPITATH/BACKSTAGE, like most other U.S. zines, cover the 'current' extreme/alternative metal scene. This issue, though, the two main interviews are with CHASTAIN and KING DIAMOND. DAMIEN (yes, the real DAMIEN, a la Stop This War, etc.), who have a new album coming out (Angel Juice), do a guest review page. The rest of this tiny zine has bits on OVERDOSE, SPUDMONSTERS, THOUGHT INDUSTRY, BROKEN HOPE, etc. Like I said, the 'current' stuff. 24 packed pages. It's free, but send a few stamps to: EPITATH Mag/Jeff Cooch/50 West Delphi Rd./Ann Arbor, MI 48103-1814

SENTENCED-The Trooper/Spinefarm
A MUST. ESSENTIAL. BRILLIANT.
"The Trooper" sounds like a
SENTENCED song, and that's the
way covers should be done. The
MAIDEN-meets-death metal aura
continues in the catchy melodies
of "Desert By Night"--pure
excellence, on par with the
North Here material. "In
Memoriam" wanders a bit, but is
still very good. This EP closes
with "Awaiting The Winter
Frost", from the masterpiece
North From Here. Three un-
released and a song from the
album. No Amok in evidence. (8½)

HOWIE BENTLEY-Beyond The.../demo
CAULDRON BORN-Swords, Sorcery,
and Science/demo

What the American power metal
scene needs are visionaries, so-
called 'True Believers', like
Rock 'N Rolf, Van Helden,
Hansen, Matos, etc. When was the
last time you heard about a new
guy, coming out of nowhere, with
his path in place, a direction
in hand, a destiny to fulfill? A
Howie Bentley is such a man.
Based in Georgia, the guy has
put out two tapes of his
fantasy/sword and sorcery
inspired music. Beyond The Shade
Gates came out in 1993, and I
was immediately taken in by
Bentley's dark, intelligent
lyrics, his powerful neo-
classical guitarwork, and superb
songwriting. The vocals on this
first effort are handled by Cat
Denton, who does miss her marks
here and there, but WHAT A
VOICE! In fact, if Bentley
hadn't told me, I would have
kept on believing that she was a
'HE'--Cat's vocal prowess are
comparable to the best of the
high pitched male singers.
Bentley handles all the arrange-
ments (include vocal lines,
etc. into his resume), and this
tape works all around, from
"Dreaming With The Incubus" to
track 4's haunting balladry of
"On Broken Wings Of Sorrow".

Bentley's current project is
CAULDRON BORN, and the tape is
called Swords, Sorcery, and
Science. This demo continues
where the other one left off,
but with all new band members
(shades of RUNNING WILD!). The
vocals are handled by a guy this
time, and he continues the
classy style, with perhaps a
little more control to his
voice. He is a hair higher than
the guitars in the mix, which
does unbalance things, but I
don't have a problem with that.
Bentley's persistence for catchy
songwriting makes the minor
thorns diminish. Again, check
out the song titles: "Calling
From The Crystal Tower", "In
Fate's Eye A King" (my fave tune
--fantastic 'classical' power

metal with some of those
consistently memorable
choruses), the battle ready
"Crusader" (sooo memorable!),
and, in the early 80's style,
"The Final Incantation/In The
Dreaming City". I can see
MANILLA ROAD fans digging
Bentley's stuff, not only for
the conceptual lyrics, but for
the cool music too.

At present, CAULDRON BORN is
doing the personnel-shuffle, and
the vocal slot is again open.
It's a matter of time before the
Europeans catch on to what
Bentley is up to, and then we'll
see him take off. Meanwhile,
pick up both tapes: they are \$5
each. As a special deal for
you SENTINEL STEEL readers, you
can get both for \$8 postpaid (in
Europe/overseas, \$6 for one, \$10
for two). Both are pro tapes; I
haven't seen the J-card to
CAULDRON BORN yet, so be sure to
demand the lyrics, just in case
they're not on the card. Make
everything out to 'HOWIE
BENTLEY', and mail to: CAULDRON
BORN/Attn: Bentley/P.O. Box
921252/Norcross, GA 30092

CRIMSON-Pharoahs/demo
CRIMSON-Evolve/demo

When I got Pharoahs, I was
amazed that I hadn't heard of
this group before. It's the type
of tape that usually creates a
'buzz' in the power metal
circles. Well, upon contacting
bassist Kristian Johnson, I
realized that CRIMSON were a bit
laid back in their ways, and
not too educated on the 'inter-
national marketing plan'. If it
appears that I'm 'picking' on
CRIMSON, I'm not; a musician is
dedicated to his/her music
first, then business. This is a
very common trait in bands...in
any event, Pharoahs has a ready-
to-be-on-CD sound, further
enhanced by 8 full length songs
and a cool J-card. Musically,
the group are technically very
efficient, playing a mostly
speedy concoction of early TOXIK
and HADES, plus a touch of
WATCHTOWER. Except for TOXIK,
I'm not really into this type of
music, but I know a lot of other
people are, so I think this
Pharoahs tape should be popular.

Evolve, the 1995 tape, is a
natural progression for CRIMSON.
Unfortunately, since the group
is made up of so many different
influences (I got their story
from Kristian), this tape is too
eclectic for my, er, 'straight'
tastes. CRIMSON sound like
VOIVOD in a few areas, with an
avant garde attitude, and also
FAITH NO MORE ("Junkmouth"). So
I find Evolve an acquired taste.
Like Pharoahs, it too is a full
length tape, with 8 cuts, color
cover, etc. The first tape is
\$5; Evolve is \$6. Both for \$10,
postpaid. Make money out to
"KRISTIAN JOHNSON", and send to:
CRIMSON/Johnson/9818 W. Palmetto
Ave./Wauwatosa, WI 53222

NOT FRAGILE-Lost In A Dream/Unrl
Compilation of NOT FRAGILE
EPs, LPS (?), rare tracks, etc.,
running the full length of the
CD. This is German power/melodic
speed metal; not as intense as,
say, BLIND GUARDIAN, but
consistently faster than HEAVENS
GATE, ATTACK, etc. NOT FRAGILE
are a solid speed band, a la
EMBARGO, REGICIDE, and the usual
smattering of 4-piece era
HELLOWEEN. Want some trivia? A
NOT FRAGILE EP, titled Who Dares
Wins, was supposed to come out
on the Borivoj-managed 'Mean
Machine Records' here in the
U.S. The EP (not on Lost In A
Dream, by the way) got pressed
onto vinyl and cassette, but
never really distributed, as the
label backer pulled out. So
ended Mean Machine. More
trivia?? NOT FRAGILE have ties
to another German band called
MAD ALIEN (guitarist/vocalist
played in both, but don't ask me
when! Whoops! I meant to say
'Guitarist/vocalist RAICO
EBEL...--sorry!), who put out
a six track demo CD in 1991 with
that typically good German power
metal sound. The EPs name is We
Are Alive. Now, MAD ALIEN had a
previous incarnation, by the
name of PROPHECY. Get this:
PROPHECY lost three singers
before changing their name to
MAD ALIEN (and later, NOT
FRAGILE): first, Michael Kiske
left PROPHECY to join some band
named HELLOWEEN; so PROHECY
brought in Chris Klauke, only to
see him leave to MANIA (and
later, ABRAXAS); finally, the
group brought in Ralf Scheepers,

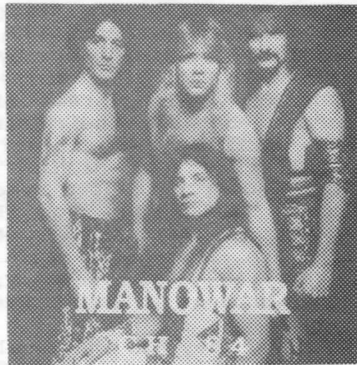
thinking they had the vocal spot
set. No dice. Kai Hansen had
just left HELLOWEEN, to form
GAMMA RAY; he nabbed Scheepers
before PROPHECY could say
SCHWANZKOPF! It's amazing how
ONE band could 'pick' three
outstanding singers (and then
lose 'em, haha!). Even more
trivia?!? This one isn't as good
as the previous ones, but...be
aware that there is another NOT
FRAGILE 'compilation' available,
titled 'Hard To Be Alive'; it
contains many of the same tracks
found on Lost In A Dream, plus
the mentioned Who Dares Wins EP.
Both of this compilation CDs are
on miniscule German indie
labels; get 'em while you can...
many of these German obscurities
'disappear', as they have very
small print runs. (7½)

Contact Address: NOT FRAGILE/
T. Buczko/Schimmelreiterweg 36A/
22149 Hamburg, Germany

KILLERS-Menace To Society/MetBla
I cringe. Paul Di'anno is now
a 'metal gangsta'. He plays
'gangsta metal'. Fans of
PANTERA/BIOHAZARD, get this.
Fans of IRON MAIDEN, get out
their debut and Killers, and
reminisce. Paul Di'anno, get a
life. (3)

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AMNESIA/demo

France has NOMED, and Mexico has AMNESIA. both sing in their native language, and both have that crisp riffing style that I like. Nothing original, but it makes for fun listening on occasion. Unfortunately, while NOMED has cool vocals, AMNESIA's sucks. They are too high up, and plain; plus the vocals are 'layered', so it sounds like two guys doing a thrash duet. No good. Also, side one's three cuts (especially "Donde La Muerte Camina") are much stronger than those found on side two. So AMNESIA, a two man project, have some tinkering to do. Meanwhile, I'll go ahead and predict a MINISTRY type effort on their next release. We shall see. They answer all letters, so write, and also find out what their tape goes for. AMNESIA/ Attn: Miguel A. Quiroga/ La Gloria #177ote. Colonia Hacienda El Rosario/ San Pedro Garza Garcia/ C.P. 066240 Nievo Leon/ Mexico

ABRAXAS-The Liaison/Teichiku

This may be old news for some but I felt the need to follow up Iron Mike's ABRAXAS demo review from the last issue. That 'Signs' demo (a masterpiece, by the way) got the German six piece a deal with L.M.P./Empire. This Liaison CD came out in Japan, and was supposed to come out in Germany. But their German label, not long after signing the contracts, decided to clean house--and ABRAXAS got ditched. Whether L.M.P. was able to shop the band around again, I do not know. It'll get released in Europe sooner or later. It has to. Making The Liaison a 'Japan-only' release would be a grave injustice. ABRAXAS are a group of young musicians bordering on genius. Of the two dozen or so bands on the L.M.P./Empire Entertainment roster, ABRAXAS are second to ANGRA. (ATTACK are third, in my book). Coming off the 'Signs' tape, I do admit to being skeptical towards ABRAXAS' album. But once hooked, I could not stop playing the disc, and humming the wonderous melodies. To the uneducated, ABRAXAS play all your favorites, rolled into one: HELLOWEEN, HEAVENS GATE, SCANNER, DREAM THEATER, etc. The vocalist is none other than Chris Klauke, formerly of MANIA (who made their only U.S. appearance on DOOMSDAY NEWS Vol. II). He's strengthened his abilities since MANIA--he's great. So is the rest of the band. The Liaison is one of the best power metal albums ever. In this issue, it's second to Angel's Cry. We're talking about special albums that need to be in every SENTINEL STEEL reader's collection. Write to the EMPIRE ENTERTAINMENT address for info (see ANGRA interview), or try Dream Disc, etc. Currently, the ABRAXAS has gone through some member changes--I'll keep you posted. Let's hope for a new album this year. (9½)

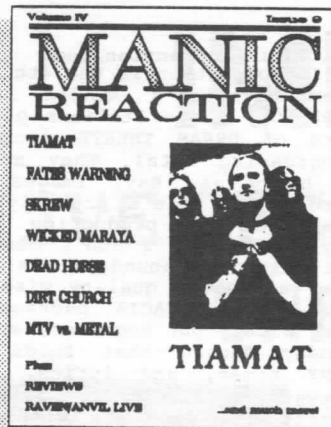
CHROMING ROSE-Artworks Live Now/ Miez Records

For background on CHROMING ROSE, check out the HEAVENS GATE interview 'intro'; also see the 'oldies' review section in the back. This live CD is split into 3 sections; the first is from 1991, featuring 4 cuts from their classic first 2 albums. While the playing is good, the sound (from a bootlegged, out-in-the-sun-too-long cassette, no doubt) is horrible. Even worse than the VIPER LIVE CD. The next 5 songs, recorded in Japan in 1992, are much better, but the song line-up is not as strong as the previous installment. Still, these 5 are a credible showcase of CHROMING ROSE live. The last 4 cuts ('3rd' section) feature CHROMING ROSE's new singer, Tom Reiners, plus all-new material, with a thin sound. "Alert" is terrible, like a high/whiny singer over a BIOHAZARD type rhythm. "New World" is just as bad, as Reiners scratches the chalkboard, much in the way Alan Tecchio did in his early days. This new CHROMING ROSE music is a far cry from their origins, what with stiff riffing and high pitched, bluesy vocals on top. Reiners even manages to sound like Axl on the last tune "Far From Nowhere". Ohhh, man. Hugely disappointing. I hope that this live CD DIDN'T do the band justice--that way I can hope that the new CHROMING ROSE album will be good (should be out later in '95). (4) Contact: CHROMING ROSE/Hubert Miesauer/ Astern Weg 11/ D-89 264 WeiBenhorn/Germany CHROMING ROSE FAN CLUB/P.O. Box 1327 / D-47498 Neukirchen-Vluyn/ Germany

ACACIA-Introspection/demo

Introspection is the 4th demo from Sicilian's ACACIA. Like ELDRITCH, these Italians play a form of DREAM THEATER-inspired progressive metal. They aren't as heavy as, say, Images And Words, but that's probably due more to the production than anything else. I don't mean to criticize the sound; it is more than adequate, quality wise. In fact, this ACACIA package is very nicely put together, with a glossy J-card that folds out MANY times, and lyrics, etc. Anyway, "I Don't Believe" starts the tape off with that 'light' DREAM THEATER sound, and it's catchy. The keys do tend to stand out in the mix, but it's not so high, to the point of annoyance. "The Day Begins To Droop" showcases a mellower side to the band, with wind instruments, classical guitar, and the keyboards. Singer Franco's moment is here; and while he doesn't escape totally from the 'accent' thing, he is better than 90% of the Italian singers I have heard up to now. Franco's got enough style and experience to make it on his own. "Behind The Lies" is also at a slower pace, but midway it changes gears to a more uptempo clip, reminding me of early PRETTY MAIDS. If you can picture it, imagine a progressive Red, Hot, And Heavy, and you'll understand where ACACIA is coming from. The instrumental "Tears Of Life" closes out Introspection, and, like "The Day Begins To Droop", it incorporates many different instruments. It's a sad number, just under 3 minutes (the other songs average 6 minutes each). This is not an exciting tape (as you know, I prefer power/speed), but it is still worth checking out. \$6 should do it. Write to: ACACIA/Martino Lo Cascio/ Via Tasca Lanza, 24-E/ 90135 Palmero Italy





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RUNNING WILD-Black Hand Inn/Nsev

On one hand, this thing is RUNNING WILD's best thing since Death Or Glory; on the other hand, there are WAY too many filler tracks that leave me numb. I've got a Japanese press of this CD, so there are 13 cuts total (over 70 minutes). Of the 13, 5 are bona fide filler: "Mr. Deadhead", "Soulless", "Freewind Rider", and the wretched bonus tracks "Poisoned Blood" and "Dancing On A Minefield". So if we took out these 5 'intolerables', we have 8 'above average' to 'brilliant' RUNNING WILD tunes left. And hey, 8 songs=whole album. So Black Hand Inn, at 13 songs, rates about a '7'; minus the 5 accidents, I'd give it a '9'. I mean, in the better songs, like the title track, and its 'part II' "The Phantom Of Black Hand Hill", Rock 'N Rolf's unique picking style has NEVER sounded better (or so fast!). Yeah, he may not be 'singing' as he used to (Death Or Glory), but he's in top form. The other noticeable thing on this album is the drumming of Jorg Michael. It may sound mechanical at times, and even flat (I'm not a major fan of Rock 'N Rolf's production), but he adds that element of freshness to Black Hand Inn. So this is a decent album, and RUNNING WILD don't sound completely tired...yet. Watch for the new one later in '95.(7)

DREAM CHILD-Create A New World

The Germans had better watch out!! Frenchmen DREAM CHILD are geniuses, and this 4 song demo, Create A New World, is destined to become a power metal CLASSIC!! Their last tape, First Visions, was really good, but this new one captures the best of the first, and has the new 'input' to make it the BEST demo of this issue. Everything I love about power metal is here: vocals that capture every range (yet Gerard Fois is NOT a Tate sound-alike), with great style to him apart from others; sole guitarist Dominique Leurquin comes up with the crunchy, uppity riffs ("You Shall Lie In Hell"), classy solos, and a good amount of time changes to keep everything ALWAYS interesting; bassist Philippe Bocquet and drummer Alain Blanc round out the powerful rhythm section. It is singer Fois who gets the immediate attention; French singers have had bad reputations in the past for their funny accents--but Fois has no problem in this department, and when there is a slower piece, like "Create A New World" (the BEST power ballad I have heard in YEARS!!), his heritage brings forth added character to the English words. He is one of the freshest sounding 'power/melodic metal' singers to come out in a loong while. All songs hover at the 6 minute mark; yet they are so good, they seem too short. The production is excellent too, as well as the full color J-card (with lyrics). DREAM CHILD were supposed to have recorded a full length album for the French label (and recording studio) NSR in September of 1994. But it has been a while, and I haven't been able to follow up these guys (wanna ride a rollercoaster? Live My life!!). If you but one tape this issue, be sure it's Create A New World by DREAM CHILD. For info, write to: DREAM CHILD/P.O. Box 98/74 604 Seynod Cedex/France

JAG PANZER-Dissident Alliance/Pavement Records

Universally condemned, and rightly so. This is a mix of PANTERA and METALLICA's ...And Justice For All; totally different and vastly inferior to the classic Ample Destruction. JAG PANZER is a band with name value but no value to their music. Uninspired writing, average production, insipid vocals...I hear the band is not taking the criticisms well; I'd be insecure too, if my name was on Dissident Alliance. Back to your roots, guys! Forget the wasteland known as the U.S. metal scene--just be true to yourselves.

SOUL CRUSHER



SOULCRUSHER-demo

A four piece, SOULCRUSHER hail from beautiful MA (please don't ask me to spell it, it's really late at night...if you still don't know what MA stands for, well...Boston is its capital), and play some catchy U.S. power metal. The tape is a pro job all around, but the treble is a bit high. EQ it. The guitarwork is really crisp, with that edge that makes ICED EARTH what they are. SOULCRUSHER do have some ways to go before they're at that level, but the seeds have been planted with this tape; with cultivation, SOULCRUSHER should get some recognition. Guitarist Mat Ford is proficient with his solos--but always keeping the 'song' ahead of any selfish showcases. The whole band is that way. The one thing that bugs me are the vocals of Mike Pineo--he usually sounds like he has something in his mouth. That's on the faster songs; on the power ballad "Redemption", the way he takes his breathes before his vocal line is annoying--it sounds like he's breathing through a very congested nasal system. He's a good singer--I've got nothing against the guy--but with a different breathing technique, he'd improve his performance tremendously. For comparisons sake, if any one remembers the singer from TARAMIS' Queen Of Thieves...that's what Mike sounds like. Besides the fine "Redemption", there is "Go To Hell" (with those crisp riffs), and the speedy "The Powers That Be". This track, the third and last on the tape, has a RAGE like appeal, with a nice HELSTAR type riff bringing out the chorus. The end is highlighted by guitarist Ford's finest leadwork on the tape. If he could be a little more spontaneous (as he was here), it would definitely be an asset to the band's sound. Objectively speaking, SOULCRUSHER can get predictable. As far as first tapes go, this is above average. A group to watch for...Make check or M.O. payable to

'RICHARD PINEO' (\$4.00), and mail to: SOULCRUSHER/Pineo/P.O. Box 1456/Attleboro, MA 02703

DREAMSFEAR-Echoes/demo

'Heavy Skullcrunching Metal Entwined With Acoustic Melody'. DREAMSFEAR, from Ireland, are a two piece, as they've been having trouble finding quality help. The duo play all the instruments on this roughly dubbed 4 tracker. What we get here is music in the vein of METALLICA's "Orion" and "Call Of Cthullu"--quietly dark, brooding with a contrasting balance of Bay area type riffs. Except for the final cut, the vocals remind me of Leif Edling, circa the CANDLEMASS demos/NEMESIS. Echoes is, to put it simply, a cross between METALLICA and NEMESIS. NOT nearly as classy as either, I'm afraid, but Echoes does have promise. While this tape is for sale (\$3), I view it as a rehearsal demo than something available for the public. But in any case, the band can use your support, so write to: DREAMSFEAR/Cathal Rodgers/3 Cuba Ave./Banagher Co. Offaly/IRELAND

ENGLISH DOGS-Bow To None/CMedia

Y'know, this may not be the 'real' ENGLISH DOGS to me, but does it blow away the bloated NEVERMORE or what!! In truth, Bow To None would probably not appeal to SENTINEL STEEL readers; but I've got an affection for the RAMONES, and 'happy' punk of that style. And that's what the DOGS deliver, with the Brit 'lip' setting the vocals apart from their U.S. counterparts. And the quality production makes this second 'punk wave' a legit music trend, as the punk pioneers, good songs in hand, usually suffered from nonexistent recording budgets. So, while people complain that punk has already 'happened', I disagree; the 90's present new possibilities for punk rock. And 'punk' is, when you think about, just rock 'n roll stripped down to its barest essence. But I digress. The DOGS began as a pure punk outfit at the end of the 70's, releasing some vinyl here and there. Their then (and now, current) vocalist Wakey left his mates in 1984, and the DOGS went on to pursue a more metallic direction. They put out an EP, and two longplayers, titled Forward Into Battle and Where Legend Began, respectively. According to Century Media, these three records were a 'misguided trilogy'. In fact, the two lps mentioned are the best things the band has ever done. I doubt the Century Media person even listened to either album when writing the bio. Forward Into Battle is a storming blend of METALLICA and IRON MAIDEN, leaning more towards the former than the latter. Where Legend Began came next (both were on Combatcore in the U.S.), with a fantastic 'medieval fantasy' style gatefold. As with their previous release, the vocals were still in a aggressive semi punk/metal vein, but the music was even more melodic. The MAIDENesque/Eurometal passages really stood out, without compromising the crunchy riffs and snappy drumming. Excellent songs coupled with a crisp production make Where Legend Began one of my fave albums from the 80's. And back in the 90's, we have Bow To None, with the original DOGS formation. Be it metal in the 80's, or punk in the 90's, one thing has always remained consistent with the band's material: good songs. (7 1/2)

HEXALON/demo

Half this band is soooo pumped, I was expecting an exercise in powerful, MANOWAR type 'real' metal. Nope, not the case, unfortunately. "Bone Pointing" is generic metal, the type you'd find on a low budget Hollywood movie soundtrack. Same goes with the drawn out "City Of Blood". And by the time #3 rolls around ("Everything For Nothing"), it's clear that singer Edward Steele is a weak singer, and that these guys cannot write a good jingle. Considering who HEXALON has worked with before (ALICE COOPER, KANE ROBERTS, etc.), who'd expect at least an ounce of promise on this recording ...maybe they should quit pumping and practice the songwriting. HEXALON/Iron Door Productions/P.O. Box 454/E. Syracuse, NY 13057-0454

LEVIATHAN-Deepest Secrets.../RTN

After a first listen I really liked the overall sound of this album. But for some reason, I wasn't returning for repeat listens. Produced by Jim Morris, I can in no way fault the bands playing ability or delivery. What we've got here is crunchy, guitar oriented progressive metal--like a heavier FATES WARNING. LEVIATHAN's singer is okay...but he could be the one weak link, as he does have a certain lack of charm. Without delving into every song (As none really stand out), I think LEVIATHAN's problem is songwriting. Like recent FATES WARNING, the hooks tend to be subtle, and I believe musicians would get off on this album more so than non-musicians (like myself). If I take away the vocals from Deepest Secrets Beneath, what's left is a tremendously boring instrumental album. A band can't place all of the 'memorability factor' onto the vocalist and expect to succeed (especially when the singer is not that entertaining!!). This disc is \$11.00, postage paid. An earlier EP (said to be better) is also available on CD (5 cuts) for \$7 postpaid. For info, orders, etc., write to: LEVIATHAN/P.O. Box 1215/Littleton, CO 80160 (6 1/2)

SQUADRON-Storming The Desert/demo

What a great tape! I got this in a trade from a friend in Chicago, and SQUADRON turned out to be a major surprise. They play traditional power metal, and they play it good. The tape is a few years old, so sure enough, I got my letter of inquiry sent back, with 'box closed' stamped on it. If anyone in Des Plaines, Illinois knows about SQUADRON, please contact me! What we have on this tape are three melodic power metal numbers: "Deep Dark Dream", "Political Insanity", and "Looking Back". The opener is speedy, reminding me of early AGENT STEEL. "Political Insanity" is a midtempo tune, with good melodies; and "Looking Back" returns to the pace of the 1st cut, with galloping riffs and strong, high vocals. With a cleaner sound, SQUADRON can be compared to GARGOYLE, MYSTIC FORCE, etc. Yes, Storming The Desert is good stuff, and I want more! So if anyone as info on these guys...

BLISTER'D TOAD/demo

Here's a band, like PARAZITE, that has to choose between the blues and all-out power metal. Half the stuff on this tape sounds like LA metal, and is NOT 'cutting edge'. Thankfully, this 5 piece from Utah have a fine vocalist, and the songs pick up in the end. "It'll Be All Right" has a meaty 'crunch' riff and anthemic delivery. Kinda like OVERKILL with a more detailed Bush on vocals. BLISTER'D TOAD also pen "Rain", a tune that is mellower than "It'll Be All Right", but continues the classy music. The (mostly) balladic song lifts into a hefty gallop halfway through the song. Well done! So what will it be, guys? Blues or power? Can I decide for you? Write to: BLISTER'D TOAD/Matt Reis/P.O. Box 1017/Salt Lake City, Utah 84152-1017



MERCYFUL FATE-Time/MB

On the heels of the 'live' EP comes Time. As with In The Shadows, there are a few filler tracks, much to my chagrin. But overall, I think I prefer Time to In The Shadows. Time is catchier, the songs are tighter, and once again, the material resembles the best of King's solo work. It was pointed out to me that the Sherman/Denner duo had very little in the way of solos. While I don't notice those things too much, the comment is true. The leadwork on Time is kept to a minimum. Anyways, cuts one through six are top notch Eurometal; "The Mad Arab" stands out with its exquisite 'pita bread' melodies, as does the haunting "Time" itself. Track seven, "The Preacher", is one of the average tunes; but "The Lady In Black" follows it, and it's pure class, FATE at their best. The last three cuts are somewhat filler, too. Each has its moments, but I think, with more time, they could have been brought out more. Besides the songwriting, I also feel the production could have used more 'bottom', and also a little more spped would have been a good idea. I do miss intense workouts like "The Oath" and "Night Of The Unborn". Basically, I'd like more 'power' in this new incarnation of FATE. Otherwise, Time is good. Look for the KING DIAMOND disc in mid '95. (7 1/2)

USURPER-Visions From The Gods/demo

Essential demo for CELTIC FROST fans. Very pro package, and expert delivery. The music is, except for the BATHORY-like opener, pure Morbid Tales/To Megatherion type stuff. Tom Warrior's unique lead work and accented vocal grunts pop up every so often--this is nostalgia! Somehow, because USURPER are better musicians, this Visions From The Gods is like a more 'musical' FROST. There are a few '90's touches here and there: a occasional blast beat, snappy 2x bass ala Scott Burns production, and more. CELTIC FROST may be gone but their legacy continues...best tune is the title track...send \$5 to: USURPER/Mr. Slaughter/P.O. Box 388897/Chicago, IL 60638-8897. P.S. USURPER is supposedly the DEAD YOUTH (or was it DEAD BOYS? I don't know...) in disguise.

BLIND RHINO-Let There Be Pain/Damage

The band's name itself brings up an 'alternative' musical bent. And yes, BLIND RHINO does have touches of MTV-like accessibility. But opener "Beg To Die" has a creepy main riff, which is more in tune with the darker SANCTUARY material. And the rest of this 6 song EP, while not true 'traditional' metal through and through, has the crunchy, biting riffs that should appeal to power metallers. If anything, BLIND RHINO remind me WRATHCHILD AMERICA; and, to pull a more obscure comparison, a more serious/gloomier SACRED RITE. BLIND RHINO probably started out as a straight metal band, then progressed into this 'diverse' act, as showcased in Let There Be Pain. The production is very good, by NUCLEAR ASSAULT/TT QUICK alumni Glenn Evans and Scott Metaxas. Overall, a respectable tape, but not outstanding. It's \$7 tape or \$10 on CD. Write first though, for more info. P.O. Box 50601/New Bedford, MA 02745-0021

ATTICA-Pitched Black/demo

This is New York's ATTICA, not to be confused with Florida's power metal band on Massacre records. Based on Pitched Black, I'm sure these guys would have been picked up immediately--back in the mid-to-late 80's. Singer Scott Featherstone has a voice mix of Hetfield and Bush, and the music is kind of that vein too, sorta bluesy U.S. thrash. It's a balanced delivery, with slower thrash parts contrasting the speed workouts, plus a few good solos here and there. It's all in the 80's style, 5 songs in a pro package. The CD is \$8, cassette is \$5. Send to: ATTICA/P.O. Box 11396/Albany, NY 12211-0396

DECORYAH-Wisdom Floats/Wtchhnt

At nearly 70 minutes, this atmospheric doom album is tough to sit through once, much less several times. A youthful Finnish four piece, the band incorporates piano, flute, and other more exotic instruments into the mix. Wisdom Floats is, basically, a soundtrack (to God knows what!). I don't remember any vocals, though in my notes I jotted down something about 'surreal vocal effects'. Beats me! With song titles like "Astral Image Of Paradise", etc., this album occasionally veers into New Age territory. I can't imagine anyone sitting in front of a speaker, engrossed with DECORYAH. Maybe as background filler, or Halloween music, yes, but otherwise...I just found out that Metal Blade will be releasing Wisdom Floats in the States. I'm flabbergasted! What do they expect to do with Wisdom Floats? If it sells more than 514 copies (see SLAGEL interview) I'll, I'll, I'll eat this review!! There you go! Sure, DECORYAH may produce something worthwhile, in the future, but right now, in the present, there are SO MANY BETTER BANDS OUT THERE!! (1)

SALIENT-The Lesser Evil/demo

THIS TAPE IS FREE. There are four songs here, and they ain't bad. I don't think it was a good idea to start the tape off with the two slower cuts, but that's the way it is. "Lesser Evil" and "Days Of Ruin", because of their laid back pace, do not pull in the listener as effectively as a speedster would. "Legend" is faster, kinda like MEGADETH, with a bluesy middle section solo. The demo closes with its best song, "Battered (Body and Soul)". Again, from the vocals to the music, SALIENT sounds like a more powered MEGADETH, i.e., nothing special, but there is some speed involved, with a nice 'classical' guitar fill in between some of the verse changes. The production and packaging are good. However, the main objective of a demo is to get noticed, to get signed. I'm afraid The Lesser Evil doesn't make the grade. The group have had a number of previous releases; they should be at a stage to get a deal. To understand what I'm saying, get the tape. Write to: SALIENT/Russ Hulett/P.O. Box 7655/Redlands, CA 92374

MANNIX-Visions Of Sickness/demo

MANNIX are of the 'old school' of dark powerthrash. The vocals are a bit, er, 'evil', in the mid-80's 'death' style, like a friendlier POSSESSED. Potent razor riffs are abundant, with cool changes. The group sent me a dub of their recording; I'm not sure if it is what the public gets, as the sound is murky. Titles include "Visions Of Sickness", "Forgotten Souls", etc. 4 tracks total. A new tape should be out by now, write to: MANNIX/Mick Walsh/63 Redcliffe St./Keighley, West Yorks/BD21 2PX/England



KAREN KENEDY/demo

An interesting tape on a first glance. This demo was recorded with members of JAG PANZER--I don't know who's in that band now, but here's Kenedy's musicians: Mark Briody and Chris Kostka on guitar, John Tetley on bass, and Rikard Stjernquist on drums. Influence-wise (vocally), Kenedy lists Tate, Dickinson, Halford, (Geddy) Lee, and Dio. Impressive influences, and it's admirable that Kenedy prefers the more powerful metal, instead of the candy-floss stuff that females get stereotyped with. However, on the three songs presented here, the JAG PANZERites put very little into their playing, and it shows. It's pretty much unenthusiastic mid-tempo heavy metal.. This affects Kenedy, who is already singing over material of average quality. She does have a fine, 'high 'n mighty' voice, but at times it appears that she may be overextending herself. Nonetheless, I like the idea of a real powerful female singer in metal, vocalizing in the 'classical' mode; with a proper band behind her, and some uniqueness to her voice, I think Karen Kenedy could capture the past glory of her influences. We shall see...send \$4 to: KAREN KENEDY/P.O. Box 15914/Colorado Springs, CO 80935



TAD MOROSE-*Leaving The Past.../BM*

I'll keep this short, as *Leaving The Past Behind* has been out for a while now, and a new TAD MOROSE disc is out. Christer Andersson, the band's only guitarist, had sent me a massive package of press releases, etc., so I had to mention something about their first album. *Leaving The Past Behind* has a mega-production, and a sound that can be likened to DREAM THEATER's *Images and Words*, but without the technical/jazzy parts. TAD MOROSE also pack in the melodies and undeniable 'class' into their brand of heavy rock/metal. Some songs are weaker than others, and it is well known that the group did not enter the studio with a full set of songs for *Leaving The Past Behind*. Nonetheless, this is very enjoyable heavy/heavy melodic metal, and the new album should correct any 'Past' problems. This disc, along with all other Black Mark product, is available from Stage 3 Promotions. To contact the band, write to: TAD MOROSE/Granbergshojden 1 U/ S-82141 Bollnas/Sweden (7 squirrels)

THUNDERSTEEL-*Thundersteel/BM*

A German 5 piece described as a HELLOWEEN soundalike in the Black Mark catalog. The label is a bit off, as THUNDERSTEEL can be compared to GRAVEDIGGER with a PRIEST/Painkiller type 90's production. Speaking about sound, it is stunning, with great clarity, but the vocals (which are not that great) are deep in the mix, and sometimes get lost in the shuffle. There are 8 songs total, with titles like "Flash and Thunder", "Face The Evil" and "In The Night". The band looks relatively young, but most of their riffs are of the early eighties variety, sped up for a 90's delivery. "Burning In Hell" is the first cut, and the best. The other songs, on a first listen, sound great; but after a few spins it's obvious that this debut could use considerably more hooks. No surprise that "Burning..." was written by the entire group, while the rest were done by one member. All the songs are pretty fast; what's not fast still has a good amount of intensity. To conclude, this is an album that should be better, but nearly falls flat. Having said that, when the group release a second disc, I'd be first in line to grab it. THUNDERSTEEL/Gerrit Schafer/Zaunewiese 3/37235 Hess/Lichtenau/Germany (7)

LAKE OF TEARS-*Greater Art/BM*

Uh oh, another Sunlight band. I'm just really tired of Skogsberg's guitar tone...but anyway, LAKE OF TEARS is an atmospheric gothic doom/death outfit. The vocals hover between being understandable and just growly gibberish. Musically, things get off to a simple start, with "Under The Crescent"; simple in the way that the arrangements are the standard verse/chorus/etc. All songs (but one) are about 4 minutes in length. I like that. Greater Art is okay, even when the vocalist seems to be straining to keep his 'growliness' intact. Check out "Netherworld" to see what I mean--basically it's a rock 'n roll, and vocally there is a lot of room to move around. The growler realizes this, but sticks with his 'deathly' style. I think Greater Art is a stepping stone for LAKE OF TEARS...watch for 'em in the future. (5)

STORMWITCH-*Shogun/StmhmrSPV*

This new STORMWITCH, titled *Shogun* (I believe it adapts the novel/TV series of the same name), is a very long disc. There are 12 pieces, from 4 minutes to nearly 10 minutes in length. The bulk of *Shogun* is mellow--if not mellow, then at a medium clip. "Stranded" and the excellent "The King Of Winds" are the STORMWITCH uptempo staples--but the only ones. As for the rest...some songs are good, and some just drag on and on. *Shogun* is pretty much an album for STORMWITCH fanatics, and nobody more. I mean, this disc has the qualities for mass appeal, but not to a heavy/power metal audience. The bulk of *Shogun* is conceptual hard rock. I doubt, however, that this 'epic fantasy balladeering' (as I'd describe it) would get STORMWITCH anywhere. Their first album, *Tales Of Terror* (put out nearly ten years ago!), remains their most powerful; and, in my opinion, STORMWITCH's 'definitive' album is the superb *The Beauty And The Beast*. Because of the way the market is, I hope this German group is able to put out a successor to *Shogun*. (6)

SOLITUDE AETURNUS-*Through The.../Pvmnt*

A sleeper. No, not like that--this album puts me to sleep. It's boring. As expected, SA have opted for a 'SABBATH meets the 90's' sound, ridding themselves of the classical doom of the first two. Robert Lowe continues to be an excellent vocalist, in the 'high' tradition...but this dark, even angry music does not suit his abilities. I do like the fact that he can add variety to his voice ("Pain", "Pawns Of Anger"), but perhaps it's me--I'm a relatively happy, full-of-life kind of a guy--I can't relate to the whole 'picture' of *Through The Darkest Hour*. This album is not me. Yeah, sure, I like some of it, like "The 9th Day: Awakening", with its powerhouse riff rife with oriental/arabesque melodies. But that is it. TTDH received 4K's in Kerrang, and was selected as Rock Hard's album of the month. My friends like this disc too. (5½ squirrels without nuts for a devastating blizzard. A depressing time for our heroes...)

DOOMSDAY-*Scum Of Society/demo*

French group reminding me of a more metallic/thrash AGNOSTIC FRONT. Speed is always in check, in a more OVERKILL style. Nothing new here, but honest, straightforward music. Sound is a touch muffled, but the packaging is there. \$6 from DOOMSDAY/Hozotte Lionel/184 bis rue du Plessis Bouchard/95130 Francoville/France

DEMOLITION HAMMER-*Time Bomb/CM*

Very big change here. Previous platter *Epidemic Of Violence* was a thrash/speed fest, with swarming guitars, etc. Very energetic, near-death thrash metal. *Time Bomb* is strictly mid-tempo, grinding thrash, not too distant from BIOHAZARD, and the groovecore style. (2)

DEMENTIA-*Of Unsound Mind/demo*

I remember picking up this band's CD on Tombstone/Progressive a few years back. *Recuperate From Reality* was produced by DEATH's ex-manager, and the sound was absolutely amazing. DEMENTIA, at that time, were an above average, incredibly heavy power metal/mid tempo thrash group. The songwriting dipped here and there, but the disc delivered some fine tunes. Few years later, we come to their demo, *Of Unsound Mind*. Brushing aside "The Worst Demo Cover Of All Time", the group have toughened up their sound, and added more speed. Singer Mike Walz, a one time Blitz sound-alike, is now more of a straight ahead melodic thrash vocalist. The slow-to-mid-tempo songs have given way to spirited EXODUS/HEATHEN/METALLICA type workouts. And yes, NO PANTERA OR BIOHAZARD. Good. As far as aggressive power/melodic thrash goes, this tape comes with my backing. While not perfect (better choruses would be an asset), a veteran producer like Johns or Metoyer could add the needed input to make DEMENTIA a great band. The tape has seven songs; I believe it is \$5, but write first. DEMENTIA/RR&A/P.O. Box 17409/Chicago, IL 60617-0409

ORPHANED LAND-Sahara/Holy Rec

The opener, "The Sahara's Storm", left me stunned. It's like AMORPHIS, but with more movement, more Middle Eastern melodies. The chorus is brilliant, and vocals vary, from a clean death delivery to a monotone style. Things do descend a notch with the next track, "Blessed Be Thy Hate", as the interesting melodies are held back. There is a nice duet between throater Kobi and a female singer, but the song is too long. Track #3 is okay, and Sahara's first half ends with a traditional Arab folk song. The second half (the first half were new compositions, while the second is ORPHANED LAND's demo pressed to disc) begins again with the cool melodies, but they are given a backseat to a straight doomdeath sound. "The Beloved's Cry" is a beautiful duet, in a ballad form, and very removed from the death style. I like it-- I don't know if others will, though! "My Requiem" returns to the heavy sound, and "Orphaned Land" closes the CD, over 9 minutes in length. Many of the cuts are long, which is a detriment to memorability. While nothing matches the excellence of "The Sahara's Storm", there are enough instances of brilliances that ORPHANED LAND cannot be dismissed. I'm looking forward to their next one, which should be out before '95 ends. You can order this CD from Relapse, or send \$18 direct to Holy Records/4 BD Gutenberg/93190 Livry-Gargan/France. (6 Squirrels)

SKITZO-The Skulling EP/demo CD

SKITZO-Synusar Sukus/slf rlse CD
The Skulling is comprised of 4 songs (nearly 30 minutes!), with the vintage S.F. Bay Area sound, along the lines of early EXODUS and DEATH ANGEL. SKITZO incorporates a great number of tempo/riff changes, making The Skulling CD something you'd listen to more than once. The production is a bit thin, lacking the fullness for a big sound; but with some adjusting to the EQ and the sound is better than 'just tolerable'. The highlight here is "The Skulling" itself--at nearly 10 minutes in length, it covers pretty much every thrash riff invented. Lots of melody too. "The Skulling", along with "Love Butcher", "Race With Death", and "Castle Of Blood" should be incredible live.

Synusar Sukus, on the other hand, features the top-notch production; but I think SKITZO had too much fun with the songs. With titles like "Infant Head Surgery", "Phone Sex", "Cellulite Cellular Bitch", etc., you kinda know what to expect. Overall, the musicianship is good, but nowhere near as interesting (or complex) as The Skulling. There are a couple of good songs: "Eat On You '94" (like a simpler FORBIDDEN, but twice the speed) and "Mental Hell" (probably the most musical/accessible thing here). The rest of the album is either too fast or too weird.

Your contact person would be bassist/singer/horror film actor/spewer Lance Ozanix. He's a very cool guy, a long time member of the Bay Area scene. The CD's are priced ridiculously low; for info, write to: SKITZO/Lance Ozanix/P.O. Box 1712/Healdsburg, CA 95448

AXEMASTER-5 Demons/demo

There I was, reviewing the first THE AWAKENING demo in SENTINEL STEEL #1, wondering outloud what their older material sounded like (when they were known as AXEMASTER). Well, band leader Joe Sims read that, and fired off a dub of 5 Demons for my enjoyment. The music is in a similar vein as THE AWAKENING, but perhaps more stripped down, being without the keys and all. Just heavy, pounding metal. My fave cut is "Black Dungeons", with its monstrous, galloping chorus (one of the heaviest gallops I've heard--ever! And I'm a connoisseur on gallops!). Other than that, the rest of the tape is good, but could use a few more hooks in spots. THE AWAKENING project is clearly a step ahead. Look for a new THE AWAKENING release (full length, on CD) in 1995. I know I will. 5 Demons has 5 songs, with pro packaging, etc. for \$5/U.S., \$6/elsewhere. Make check/M.O. payable to 'Joe Sims', and mail to: 1300 Brimfield Rd., Apt. D-11/Brimfield, OH 44240

BATTALION-Excessive Force/demo

Incredible production. WOW! This album length cassette was produced by BATTALION drummer Bill Fitzpatrick, but I've got a feeling that co-producer/engineer Geoff Michael had a big end in the sound. I recommend any bands in the Minnesota area to contact Michael via the BATTALION address--he's major label material. And how is BATTALION? Excellent! The tape starts with "Excessive Force", a monstrous tune with pummeling double bass and clean riffs, keeping to an aggressive power/neo thrash style. When angry, vocalist Lee Davis sounds like Phil from PANTERA; HOWEVER, unlike Phil, Davis can really sing, as he DOES have a fine set of lungs. The closest comparison to BATTALION would have to be FORBIDDEN's Twisted Into Form. While is all 'power', the guitar duo of Chuck Marshall and Kevin Linn dish out memorable riffs in spades, with melodic precision leads (predominately on side one). After "The Black", the instrumental "Orchestrated By Fear" is showcased, sounding not unlike a RUNNING WILD song without vocals! "Red Fist" closes the first side; it's an anthem, in a non-traditional way, that should be a crowd pleaser. Onto side two! "The Postman Always Shoots Twice" is WAY too close to PANTERA--the way Davis says "Stress" reminds me of the word "Walk"--you understand. This song is BATTALION's lowest point here. Davis is at his best vocally on "Devastation Trail", with it's eerie verse and torrent of double bass at the chorus. "Tribe Of The Razor Eaters" is another tune in the 'power riff' style--it's solid, but not as special as anything on side A. "Final Solution" also misses that 'oomph' that side one featured. Overall, Excessive Force is a very professional release, and comes recommended. You folks who follow the "current" metal AND power metal will definately find BATTALION a joy to listen to. Send \$6 to: BATTALION/6700 Lingane/Chelsea, MI 48118. The group has other merchandise available--be sure to ask for details, and get on their mailing list.

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TELEPATHY-Legions Of.../slf rlse CD
Legions Of Frustration is an independent CD from South Carolina's TELEPATHY. Vocalist Jay Laettner has a fine voice; high, but not screechy. The music, in contrast, is mostly midtempo to moderate speed, with good changes, not unlike a melodic S.F. Bay Area/ANTHRAX type style. "Legions Of Frustration" is a good song, with a fine chorus, but it is also missing something to make it stand out. "Reality" is very ANTHRAX-like, and I suppose their fans would like it. "Orlock" is a song crying out for dark atmosphere, but again, this is ANTHRAX circa the late 80's. It's not bad, but I also thought of the Belladonna-era ANTHRAX as pretty bland, and that's what is hurting TELEPATHY. "Raging Side" is similar to early DEFIANCE (Product Of Society), with the Laettner's superior vocals. "Medieval Times" (another missed opportunity for atmosphere), the short instrumental "Catharsis", and the quiet build of "Innocence Dies" close out this 7 song/30 minute CD. Not bad, not great, but just a hint 'above average'...barely. I'm sure this would make a fine addition to many collections, but there are better things out there. TELEPATHY are young--another recording should get 'em in the right direction. This disc should be available from Dream Disc for about \$10, or write to TELEPATHY at: A.Kary/P.O. Box 5911/Hilton Head Island, SC/29938 (7 Squirrels)

TAUNTED-II/demo
Yes, one of the better bands from Newsletter #1 $\frac{1}{2}$ is back with two new songs. "Body Of Lead" is the first cut and...is this TAUNTED? Not only Jacques Serrano's high vocals raspy, but the guitar sound is downtuned, and while speedy, the riffs are generic. After repeated listens, "Body Of Lead" can be summed up in one word: forgettable. Not so much is "Against The Grain"; again, no 'happy' TAUNTED here, but this is a good song. It is less melodious than their previous work, but the general feel recalls ANACRUSIS, circa Suffering Hour, so I give "Against The Grain" a thumbs up. On the flip side of this cassette, to my joy, are the two older tunes "Taunted" and "Masque Of The Red Death". I finally have these two classics on a 'real' tape, versus the dub I had previous. Both songs are really catchy, with lots of melody--they're just good, old-fashioned U.S. power metal. Production-wise, they also surpass the two new numbers on side A. It's kinda heartbreaking...TAUNTED are a group of accomplished musicians, and trying to toughen their sound through simplification is a cop-out. Singer Jacques told me that "Taunted" and "Masque..." are of a dated style...yet, I believe that a band trying to play 'catch-up' will go nowhere. Bands who allow 'tastes' to catch up to them will reap the rewards. In any event, "Taunted" and "Masque" are more memorable than the new stuff. Still, this tape does go '3 for 4', so to speak, and it's good. I can't find a price, but \$4 should cover it. Write to: TAUNTED/Jacques Serrano/314 Richmond Dr. #6/ Millbrae, CA 94030

GOTHIC NIGHTS-To Hell And Back/demo
I saw an advertisement by these guys in a local music paper...the word's 'free tape' and 'traditional fantasy metal' caught my eye. Well, I got the tape, and...it's a good one. "Creature Of The Dark" is pure GENIUS!!! After one listen I deemed it a classic! Singer Rick Warlock immediately won me over (what a voice!) and musically, GOTHIC KNIGHTS are straight out of 1984, sounding very much like MEDIEVAL STEEL (who I doubt Americans know about, but you Germans are on my wavelength, right!?) and the exceptional WARLORD. "Creature Of the Dark" sports a chorus sooo 'classic', it's breathtaking. "Wicked World" has a slow build and swings into a speedy (early 80's pace) riff. The chorus is again strong, as are the vocals of the gifted Warlock. "The Song Of Roland" is a mid-tempo number, calling on (old) SIREN (FL) and a more melodic version of SKYCLAD, plus TYTON, etc. Lots of the fantasy element is present--knights, dragons, magic, etc. To Hell And Back closes with "Jokers Wild", again at a medium step, and it is a solid song. It is, to be honest, overshadowed by the first three cuts (especially "Creature...!!!"). As for the production, it is clean and consistent, but the guitars could be more upfront, to make GOTHIC KNIGHTS palatable for a 90's audience. To conclude: I love this tape. Now for some bad news. Guitarist John tells me there are no more tapes left. Being 'free', they just flew out of his hands. But rejoice! A new CD is being recorded as I type, and should be released in the spring/early summer of 1995. It'll feature 6 new tracks, plus two from the tape ("Creature..." and probably "Wicked World"). It'll be on 24 tracks, fully digital....I can't wait! Write to the band, tell 'em to get you on a mailing list: GOTHIC KNIGHTS/John Tsantakis/1844 Haring St./Brooklyn, NY 11229

SERAPH/demo
Produced by "Kurt and Joey of Believer, Trauma Studios, PA", I knew SERAPH would have good sound. "Blacken The Sun" stands out, with heavy, ultra crunchy galloping riffs. The vocals are clean, sporadically contrasted by rough, BELIEVER-like grating thrash hollering. "Carnal Rapture" is a midtempo heavyweight, catering to those who enjoyed CARCASS' Heartwork. Those harsh vocals dominate the SEPULTURA-ish "Shadow" Scott Laird of BELIEVER fame does his violin thing on "The Innocent Of Darkness", a moody slower number, like METALLICA doing a SKYCLAD ballad. The demo ends with two more tracks, one with a medium clip, the other with the more coarse attitude. While there is no discernable PANTERA/BIOHAZARD influence, I feel SERAPH could cross over to such an audience. As one can gather, I find SERAPH 'okay', and that's because, while musically strong, the songwriting leaves me unimpressed. Send \$5 to SERAPH/Justin Miller/7302 Sara St./New Carrollton, MD 20784

ACCUSER-Reflections/CM
Veteran German group's sixth offering, their first in the States. The 4 piece were once one of the many Teutonic thrash groups of the mid to late 80's, with DARKNESS, EXUMER, etc. Now ACCUSER play 'New Heavy Street Groove', a generic sell-out to the current trend of 'fat' bottom and little melody. Fine sound from Alex Perialis, but...(3)



HELICON-Helicon/Noise
A new Noise power metal band! This label knows what makes good melodic metal, so I greatly anticipated HELICON upon their release. Well, I like these guys, but there are quite a few problems with this, their debut. Right away, I noticed the underworked production--it is suitable for a clean demo, not a label budget recording. Singer Uwe Heepen did the producing; he has a lot to learn, I'm afraid. Heepen also had a hand in the drum tracks...according to the CD booklet, he 'played' the skins. I think the word 'programmed' would be a bit more factual. Now, good drum machine work I can tolerate--KING DIAMOND's The Eye, for example--but HELICON's rhythm section is already thin from the lackluster production, and the addition of simple beats in the mix is a major negative. Another area deserving immediate improvement are the lyrics, whose cheesiness spill over to the song titles: "It's Rock 'N Roll", "Junk", "Victim Of Love", "Come On Rock", etc. Oddly enough, even with all the above elements going against them, HELICON can sure write a catchy tune. The intro "The Story Of Helicon" does 'em no favors, a does the first (and poorest) cut, "Helicon Pt. II". But it is with "It's Rock 'N Roll" that the group really cooks, bad sound and all. Singer Heepen has an okay voice, not as high/full as Kiske, but he's smooth, in the typical German power metal fashion. This third track has it all: speed, lots of melody, and fine vocal harmonies. HELICON can never be considered a 'dangerous' band, as their material is pretty much 'happy' speed metal. Yes, speed! All the songs are fastfastfast, except for the last song, which is HELICON's salute to Wagner, in the shape of a 'big' ballad. All the songs are long, as 8 of the 11 tracks clock in at over 5 minutes. The whole album contains great choruses, plenty of melody, etc. The band is talented...so, yes, I like this disc, but you won't. So I can't recommend HELICON's first. Their second one, Mysterious Skipjack (what the hell is that!?!), just came out; from what I recall, it should have a legit producer, and a real drummer. We shall see...(7 $\frac{1}{2}$)

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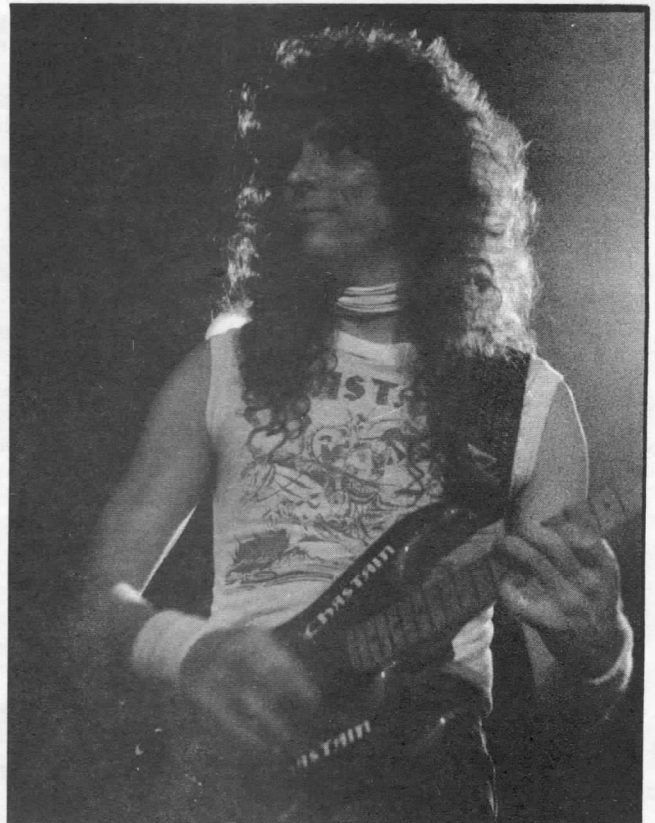
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DAVID T. CHASTAIN

David T. Chastain is a known 'name' in the music industry, but metalheads, not having heard the man's music, tend to shove him into a corner with other guitar 'wiz' types; the same ignorance works for the jazz/fusion/prog community, who occasionally assume that Chastain is a metal guitarist 'trying' to play intelligent instrumentals on his solo albums. HA! David T. Chastain's band project, CHASTAIN, plays heavy duty metal, catering to people who enjoy thick, raw riffs and eloquent solos. Nope, no noodly-doodly workouts! As for Chastain's solo projectsI'm not a regular in 'jazz/fusion guitar' fandom, but if his last effort, Next Planet Please, isn't an annoying, overbearing, jazzy masterpiece, then I don't know what is!! If you need expert proof, consult the guitar mags! Chastain is at the top of their lists.

My favorite CHASTAIN (the band) album is Mystery Of Illusion. Other titles include The 7th Of Never, Ruler Of The Wasteland, Voice Of The Cult, and For Those Who Dare. This last disc, released in 1990, features an incredible song by the name of "Night Of Anger". It's been five years, though, and Chastain is back with a new singer and new ideas. A new album is ready for release, so David T. Chastain, with a mellow Southernor's voice, tells us the story....



Let's find out about the new 'vocal' project you're working on.

I have a new singer, her name is **Kate French**. She's from Sacramento, California; she's very good, she can also play bass, guitar, and keyboards. She's a good writer, and...we're in the middle of it right now. I have finished recording all my parts, so now...it's her turn.

What was Kate's previous experience?

She was in some local band down in CA. Never really did anything, as far as I know. I was out at Foundations Forum, and she...handed me a tape. I listened to it there...and was pretty impressed.

What is her voice like compared to Leather's.

Well, it's somewhat similar! When you first hear it, you may not know the difference! But, upon different listens--there is a lot of difference. This girl is a little more...I would say...I hate to use the word 'blues' but--more

bluesy-type of voice, I guess.

What's the deal with two female singers in a row?

Well, I've been looking for the past 4 or 5 years for a male singer, and I just never found one that wasn't a...flake.

A flake, ha ha. Define a flake.

Ha, ha. Well, you start working with one and you find out they're a flake. I didn't have to put out another vocal record, so I wasn't going to work with somebody I didn't want to work with.

What happened to the CJSS guy? Russell...

Right, well actually CJSS just put out two records in 1986, and that was a long time ago. The reason why we never put out another one, was at first, the singer kinda FLAKED OUT. He fell in love, and the girl's father was a preacher, so he got religious, it was more important to be with her than be in the band. At the same time, I had the CHASTAIN project, the people in that band

were anxious to do something, so I said, "To the hell with it!, I'm not going to sit here and deal with his head trip.--I got something else that's working."

What happened to Leather, that made you decide to get a new singer?

Well, we did five albums together, the last one was in 1990 [*For Those Who Dare*], and...we just kinda...after that tour, I just didn't want to listen to that stuff anymore. I just didn't proceed to do another record. I haven't even seen her since 1990. She's a great singer, a great person...it's just...if I was going to do something with vocals again, I wanted to do something with different people. We were together long enough, and...we did some good records...and I like a lot of that material, but...I just wanted to change. It's not that important this time, but she was living out in San Francisco, and she wanted to be in San Francisco, and it was just really hard to communicate. Now of course Kate is only a hundred miles closer,

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but she's willing to move here tomorrow if I wanted her to.

Do you think that, with so many albums between 1985 through 1990, your creativity level may have been diluted?

Well, yes; I don't think I would of put out any better or worse records if I would have cut out half a dozen records; it was just hard for people to grasp what I was doing, uh, what project was what, it never failed any time a review came out, or an article came out--they always had their facts mixed up. So that didn't help matters either. But, in another way, it kept the name out there constantly. I had two full time projects--everyone in those bands wanted to put out records, so I had to put out records, then I threw in my instrumental stuff, because that's what I wanted to do. And actually, that's always been the bigger seller, believe it or not. 1986 there was three records out. Since the 90's I've averaged about one a year.

Why move to Georgia?

Well, that's where I'm originally from to begin with, secondly, change--I've been living in Cincinnati for a long time. As far as real estate goes, you can get a much better deal in Atlanta, Georgia than you can in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Why move to Cincinnati in the first place?

Originally, I was in a band in Atlanta, and...the drummer **Les Sharp** [who was in **CJSS** and my band **SPIKE** at the time] and a singer who was in **SPIKE**--they were going

to move the band to Atlanta, where I lived. But at the last minute I had an offer to join a band in Alabama, who had a big financial background, etc. But that eventually fell through, so me and the keyboard player from that band moved up to Ohio to play in **SPIKE** with those guys, and I never intended to stay there, but Cincinnati is a very good place to be if you're a musician--you can play constantly. Cincinnati is centerly located for the Midwest, so you can be a full time musician and make a good living, and people are into heavy stuff up there.

Did you release anything with these previous bands?

SPIKE put out one record in...1983. It was called *The Price of Pleasure*. And...there some good guitar on there, but the songs are pretty commercial compared to anything from nowadays. **SPIKE** basically turned into **CJSS**, we just changed singers.

*Speaking about 'commercial'--one thing constant in your **CHASTAIN** albums was the raw guitar sound and the heavily textured vocals of *Leather*, lending a decidedly uncommercial sound.*

That's...just the way it is.

Uhh...your guitar tone--most 'guitar-whiz' type players are known for noodling too much, but you consistently deliver heavy riffs, with an occasional fill here and there, plus the solo.

I've always tried to do songs, not just exercises. I'm trying to be a songwriter first...I

didn't intentionally try to become the guitar whiz, it was just bestowed upon me.

The new music is more... 'updated', is that right?

Lots of influences have happened since 1990 to 1995, but if someone hears this record, it's not going to be far removed from a previous **CHASTAIN** album. But it's definitely heavier, a little bit more aggressive, I think the vocals are a little bit more modern sounding. We have not heard the finished product ourselves, so...I've done all my parts, and it's definitely really heavy. From my point, definitely my heaviest playing.

*When bands tell me they are modernizing their sound, I think of **PANTERA**: stiff, power riffing with little or no melody.*

There is some power riffing going on, but there is real singing over it, there's forays into some serious musical passages. There is a little bit of everything. But it's not going to sound like a **PRONG** record or anything.

*Oh, okay, ha ha. Your influences... **SABBATH**?*

I was always into the **SABBATH** riffs; I was never into Ozzy's lead vocals or the actual lead guitars, so...what I was trying to do in the eighties was take some doomier type music, put some real vocals, some real guitars over it. I guess that's where that aspect of my music comes from.

Do you have any titles for the new material?

Yeah, I have all of it. The name of the album will be called *Sick Society*. That's the name of one of the songs, plus "Love and Hate", "Angel Falls", "I Know the Darkness", "Coming Down", "Vampire", uh, let's see, "Violence and Blame", "To The Edge", "The Price of War", "Every Emotion", "Sugarcain", "Those Were The Days"...how many is that?

Uh, I don't know, it sounds like a full album.

Ha ha, there's 12 total.

A lot more topical lyrics?

Yeah, well, there were always topical lyrics in our songs. People may not have known about it, but a lot of them were. Very political. Very seldom wrote about dungeons or dragons or anythinglike that.

Did you write the lyrics?

I did four, and Kate did the rest. It is something...she is pretty good at. I am happy with that.

*Could you go over the Japanese front? I remember reading in the eighties how your albums were on major labels in that country, and now, when flipping through **BURRN!** magazine, I see your company logo representing bands I've never heard of before.*

It's just not Japan, but it's all over the world...nowadays, bands record CD's on their own, and they sound pretty good. But they don't know what to do with them, and they can't do anything with'em in the United States. The United States is...on the whole, not receptive to real music, but the rest of the world is. So these bands send me their CD's,



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and we do some sort of little deal, and I go around and shop them to all these companies in the world. Korea, Japan, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand; then of course, all of Europe. We do pretty well with that. It gets a lot of these bands--who'd never get their record released--released.

What bands do you have?

Of course, everything that is on Leviathan, then we deal with other bands, such as MARA, TILES, ARCHRIVAL--

--With Michael Harris.

--KRAKENSTEIN, SURREAL, GENETIC WISDOM, etc. They have some pretty good CD's they've done on their own, and they have no connections in the world, and I've been able to acquire quite a few. A record like ARCHRIVAL's would not do well in the United States. It is a possibility that that band could do well in the States, but it would take a major label, dumping tons of money in videos and ads, and we can't do that; I don't even try to do that. I tell the band that.

Japan is a better musical climate.

For me anyway, yeah. For people who like PRONG, maybe not, ha ha. One thing that never really hit over there was all that alternative nonsense. They like people who can usually play and sing on pitch, and stuff like that.

Have you done shows there?

I've done two tours of Japan. I'd love to go back.

Changing gears, was Joe Stump in BELLADONNA?

Originally, he was in BELLADONNA. We arranged a deal for him in Japan and Germany with a company. And Joey Belladonna a day before they were supposed to sign, backed out of the deal. And so the other three guys (Stump, etc.) started a new band, and Joey started his own band.

BELLADONNA's still gonna happen; I think someone signed them.

Mausoleum. See, Joey's getting sued by his former manager, who lined up the other deal--for backing out at the last minute. All these people--including myself--spent a bundle of time arranging this deal--at the last minute he backed out because the deal "it just didn't feel right." So the manager got ticked off at him, he's suing him for tons of money. But now, Joe Stump and the other two guys started a new band called SHOOTING HEMLOCK. It has the singer now who used to be in CYCLONE TEMPLE--Brian Troch. Very good singer. Their new band is much better than when they had Joey, but they just don't have the name value.

Mystery of Illusion, Voice of the Cult, and For Those Who Dare have had distribution in the States--any chance of the 'middle' CHASTAIN albums being released on CD in the States?

We have no control over *Ruler of the Wasteland*, but I know you can get that as an import. *7th of Never*--I'm debating, as we speak, whether to put that out on CD; I know we can sell some, but...to do a run, you have to do a minimum amount--

Which is--?

Probably at least a thousand. I'm sure we can sell a thousand, if we can let these people know...that they are available ...spending all this money...I don't know, I've been flip flopping on that one for a while. But in Japan it was released on CD, so I have a CD of it, ha ha. So I'm happy. But I probably should [release it]--it's like *Instrumental Variations*; we stopped printing that up, and then just so many people kept asking me, calling up, trying to order it, we didn't have it, so we ordered a big hunk of 'em; now they sold out again, so...with a new CHASTAIN coming out, we should do it, just open up the catalog. Now, in a way, I want these old records to die, 'cause there is so many of them.

Have you considered doing a 'best of' CHASTAIN [the band]?

Unfortunately, Leviathan only has rights to two of those records, *7th of Never* and *The Voice of the Cult*. The first two [*Mystery of Illusion + Ruler of the Wasteland*] were on Shrapnel, and *For Those Who Dare* was on Roadrunner.

Hmmm...so when the Mystery of Illusion "Price Killers" CD came out, did you get

anything from those?

Well, see, Shrapnel Records has been ripping us off for years. All I know is that we haven't received any accounting in 3 or 4 years. And they are still selling our stuff.

How about Black Dragon Records?

I haven't released anything to them since...1992. When we first started putting stuff out through them--like the *CJSS* stuff--they were really, really big. They were putting a lot of promotion into their releases. Now if we do a deal with them, they don't do anything. And they don't really put out any new records anymore. They kinda...faded away. The lady--who's really nice--but her husband is really rich, I just think they got tired of messing [with the record business], because they really weren't making any money. They owe us a lot in publishing money, which is not the same thing as record royalty money. They probably owe us 15-20,000 dollars.

Wow.

See, legally, they can squirm out of it. We can probably go to Europe--I've talked to a lawyer about it--he was telling me, basically, to sue somebody outside of the United States...if it ain't worth \$100,000, don't do it, 'cause it'll cost you \$100,000 to collect it. Lawyer fees, flying back and forth, etc, etc. So there is not too much we can do about it.

Does this type of thing happen often? Have you seen it happen to other bands?

We do hundreds of deals, and probably in five percent of them, somebody's gonna screw you. It may not be that they want to screw you, it may be that they're not getting paid. But the bottom line is, you're not going to get paid all the time in this business. That's the way it is.

Anything you'd like to add?

No, I think you covered quite a bit...hopefully, we'll go on tour--haven't done any U.S. touring since 1990. Well, that ain't true, we did do a tour in 1992; that was an instrumental band. Hopefully, we'll do one this year, in 1995. I've done tours outside the United States, because, believe it or not, those are a lot more enjoyable.

Yeah, I understand, ha ha.

It's really hard for me to break away for a week, much less a month or two. The business kinda falls apart.

Do you have a job 'outside' the music business?

Oh no, I've made my career out of the music. I've never had any other jobs. We make it from record sales, from royalties; and then we have our foreign deals. You might want to mention in there that any bands who have fully recorded full length product, that's of professional quality, they can send it to us, we'll check it out...we can try to get it released someplace.

*That reminds me...I saw in *PSYCO DRAMA*'s newsletter that you had 'checked out' the band. What did you think of them?*

I like it a lot. I didn't like the quality of the recording, but they sent me a DAT copy, and it sounds much better. I think I can get them some deals, once they get a full length. You can't do anything with an EP, it's got to be at least 40 minutes. I know they're in the studio right now, or they just finished in the studio, and they're supposed to send me some new songs, in a week or so. And once that's together I feel I should be able to get them a deal. And the way I got their address was through that newsletter you did.

Ha ha, well, I hope it works out for them. Great band, excellent songs.

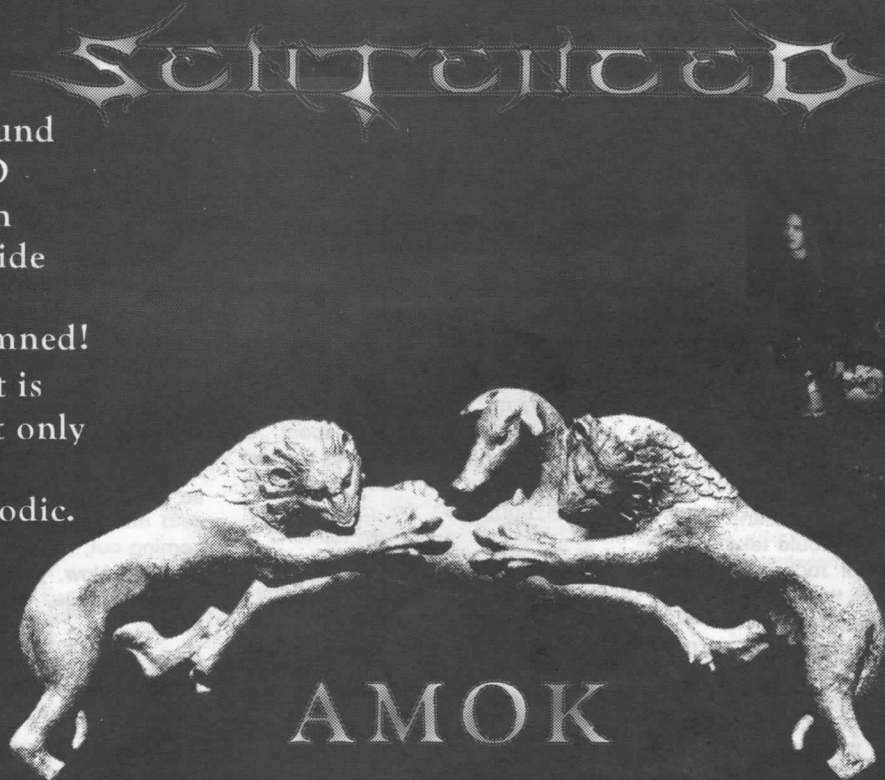
I think *PSYCO DRAMA* will do really well in Japan.

And in Germany, I think too. Or at least in the press. Sometimes I think the press is ahead of the buying public in Europe.

See, the European press and the United States press, that's the big difference. The European press is always looking to find the next 'thing'. They're more happy to write about a new unknown band, than writing about *SOUNDGARDEN*. Most of the United States press writes about the same damn band in every damn issue.

*If we had a magazine like *ROCK HARD* [Ger.], something like that here, that would be incredible.*

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EVERYONE KNOWS NOISE! This Germany-based company has produced some of the biggest names in power metal and thrash: HELLOWEEN, RUNNING WILD, CELTIC FROST, KREATOR, CORONER, GRAVE DIGGER, SABBAT, and countless others, many of whom never saw release here in the States. Karl Walterbach is the president of NOISE, and has been involved in 'hard' music for a long time. In fact, in the beginning, his business was not 'metal' at all, but 'West Coast Punk'. In NOISE's infancy, it was bands like BLACK FLAG, GBH, HUSKER DU, and at home, SLIME, DIE TOTEN HOSEN, etc., that caught Walterbach's interest. Soon, however, his tastes matured (so to speak), and one of the first, if not the first, metal album under the NOISE umbrella was licensed BITCH-Be My Slave. METAL MASSACRE compilations soon followed, and Walterbach signed one of his first German band's in the form of SCORP's imitator's RATED X. At this time, more faster/heavier groups started to catch on (all of which is tame by today's standards, of course), and so NOISE released the DEATH METAL compilation. This album, released in 1984, jumpstarted the German power metal/thrash scene. Three of the band's on this comp (RUNNING WILD, HELLHAMMER/CELTIC FROST, and HELLOWEEN) plus KREATOR became the 'core' of the NOISE stable. Upon entering the 90's, NOISE had become one of the largest indie labels on European soil. But back in the U.S., they continued to struggle; while racking up the name recognition, business politics (be it dodgy distribution, lackluster interest from licensees, or major label hassles) hurt 'em in the long run. In the early days, NOISE put out their albums through Metal Blade (HELLHAMMER, CELTIC FROST), Megaforce (GRAVE DIGGER), and the rest through Combat. In the late 80's they opened a U.S. office and used Relativity as a distributor. At the beginning of the 90's NOISE then secured major label distribution through BMG; this eventually fell through and NOISE pulled out of the States. But not for long though, as Futurist/Mechanic inked a deal to promote new NOISE product here in the U.S. as well as press 'n push the long out-of-print NOISE back catalog. However, within one year of the NOISE/Futurist deal, it was obvious that Futurist was doing a bad job. So Karl Walterbach decided to take care of business himself.

Record company president's rarely do interviews, but Walterbach, now residing in the States, is eager to get NOISE involved in the U.S. metal market. Walterbach, in contrast to Metal Blade's laid back Brian Slagel, is a man of business. He is very direct, yet, in his precise German accent, also open and talkative. It comes to no surprise, considering Karl Walterbach's strong personality, that HE leads the interview in its opening moments....



Can I ask you a question about your magazine? How long has it been around?

Since the beginning of 1994. I got sick and tired of reading about Seattle bands, and death, black metal, that I had to put out something on real metal, traditional.

Ahh, yes, that's pretty fresh. That's interesting, because the American, when it comes to magazines, is very limited. They support the big sellers, and that's it. Quite a few of the underground magazines are into the trendy stuff.

In Europe, the publications are great, you've got Rock Hard, which covers everything, while here in the states...

What I also did not understand is why most of the magazines limit themselves in terms of reviews. Only few, let's say 10 to 15 reviews per issue and that's it. I don't understand that.

That's the major magazines. Some good fanzines do hundreds of reviews...

But that has the opposite effect! With hundreds of reviews, you lose track one way or the other. The European magazines try to highlight certain releases per month, and seem to be more focused on the scene than most American magazines. There are a lot of magazines out there, no doubt. But most of them lack real overview in terms of giving readers a hand, and also digging in other markets—but that may be because the American market is so huge.

The American press is vastly behind Japan and Europe in terms of quality and information.

That's quite true, ha ha.

I wish a German magazine like Rock Hard would publish an English version for the States.

That would be great. Do you like KERRANG?

Nope.

It has changed a lot. They play it safe, because of the recession in the U.K. market has forced them to look into the readership, and for that simple reason they

now play a safe 'card', which means, "Let's take the big names" and that's it. Very rarely do they go and support the younger bands. The U.K. market these days is very strange in terms of...I think they have been taken over by big American companies, they follow slavishly whatever goes and happens...they are no longer discovering music, and digging deep enough. So that's the status of the U.K. press these days. So what can I do for you then? You want to do an interview?

Yes. After years of letting others represent you here in the States, you are here taking care of business. What made you do it finally, and what are your objectives with the 'new' U.S. NOISE?

Yes, there are two reasons for us opening up the L.A. office over here. The main reason is, of course, to have a presence in America, which is such an important market, and do it on our own. Especially, in 1993, when we were licensing quite a few acts to Futurist and Mechanic, and we were really not happy about the limited support. We thought, by doing it ourself, we'll have much more belief (in the product), and we can throw in much more support than a third party would be willing to do. That's the #1 reason. We have distribution arrangements, licensing arrangements in virtually 37 foreign territories outside of Germany. And the American market has been the most difficult one over the last few years, for us. So that had to be changed. The second reason is, we have to mix our artist roster with American talent as well. So far we have signed bands from all over Europe. But very rarely have we done an American band. We have done MORDRED, WATCHTOWER, and VOIVOD. But that is more or less it. I believe with the growing awareness of American rock in the world, we need to look into that area as well, if we want to have an international appeal. So that was the second reason. We are now here, we are carefully selecting whatever makes sense to be released in the U.S. out of our European signings; then we carefully look into the American scene, and whatever we feel has a chance to translate in the markets in Europe, Asia, and in America, we will go and sign. But that will take

quite a while, because we will be very careful about this.

Looking at your forthcoming releases I noticed there are no 'German' flavored bands, like RUNNING WILD, RAGE...is that done on purpose?

Yeah, that is done on purpose. Because, our belief is, it is easier to first have bands where we have translated them into different markets, rather than, let's say, just Japan, German, and Scandinavia. Those are the 'home' markets for what you call "German" sounding bands, or classical metal bands. Like RUNNING WILD, RAGE, GAMMA RAY, or HELLOWEEN; those bands are automatically selling in Germany, Scandinavia, also Spain, Greece, and Japan...those are their native markets. But based on our experiences we have tried RUNNING WILD, quite a few albums, back in '85, '86, '87, with Relativity, and we made the experience that it is very difficult, and not so easy. So, especially if you start a new company over here, you have to look into your chances, and we believe a band like SKYCLAD, for example, who we're trying out on the first run, are easier. It's proven to us, they have had good responses across the board throughout Europe. Other bands, we'll have to wait, and we will be very careful. We might be considering a GAMMA RAY on the long run, but it is still not decided yet. Because they're right now in the studio, doing a new album, with Kai Hansen's singing, rather than someone else. That is all in the works. But at this point in time, we have decided to pick up acts who have crossed into other territories, rather than those melodic metal territories. This means that three releases we feel very comfortable about (within the first 6 months of 1995) are SKYCLAD, CORONER, and KREATOR. Those bands will have new releases coming out in the first 6 months. And then, of course, we'll look into other bands who have appeal, which you call, heh, is NOT German. After, when we know better what this market is about, we will probably bring one or two of the more melodic bands. But that has to wait.

I feel that a U.S. melodic/power band, like ZAXAS, is usually outplayed by their European/German

counterpart by a wide margin.

I know what you mean! **ZAXAS** is in between **DIO** and...something which...can you remember the band **CRIMSON GLORY**? They had some serious response through Roadrunner on their very first record. They later changed musically but...they were appealing to European tastes, and this scene (which I call melodic metal) in a very competitive way. Most recently we signed a band from Tampa, which is called **KAMELOT**. They fit into this tradition very well and they are very sophisticated in terms of musicianship, and playing ability, and songwriting. That is like a different cup of tea in comparison to **ZAXAS**. **ZAXAS**, we have some mixed emotions about; on one end, they are melodic, and they would fit into what we expect as being their main market, which is Holland, Germany, and Japan. We only signed them for those markets. Whether they are competitive is very questionable. You never know in the beginning what is competitive. Sometimes you have to try it out, find a way. But I basically would have to agree, that some of the European bands...probably the musicianship, and the way the playing is much more advanced, when it comes to classic, melodic metal, then on behalf of the American counterparts. But again, there are exceptions. I feel that **QUEENSRÛCHE**, **DREAM THEATER**, **CRIMSON GLORY** (in the past) were having incredible talent. And, for a while, they were all showing this. But as you know, and I know, (they are) a rare species over here. They, on their own, are isolated, as there is no scene around them. There are no other bands around them trying to do the same in either a small or big way. It's not really a scene over here, especially in this climate, which is an anti-metal climate. It is very difficult, because managers, record companies, every one is forcing musicians to copy the latest trend, which is punk or whatever that is. It is difficult to survive under these atmospheric times. In Europe, it's different, it stays there. It grows, it shrinks, but I believe, at this point (melodic/power metal) is growing again, because it is an answer to all the trendy stuff from America. Especially, in **ROCK HARD**, there is a great belief that the classical metal is

coming back within...it's already happening. Talking again about our label policy, because we are an international label, we had to put out...we have two different product lines. One product line is definitely something we have grown on, which is melodic metal. The other product line, which is the one that appeals more to the English/American market, which is the so-called "international" product line. We always have had a mixture of these two product lines over the last ten years. Even in the early days, when thrash in '85, '86, was popular, we had to do this mixture. On one hand we were signing **KREATOR**, on the other hand, we were doing **RUNNING WILD**. That has continued up until today. For survival reasons, we need to have talent which are like-take Roadrunner--**MACHINE HEAD**, or **SEPULTURA**, or **TYPE O NEGATIVE**, which appeals to an underground audience in a certain trendy way. We will never give up on this 'base' we are associated with--classic, melodic metal--because that is the bread and butter of what we do. But we have to accept that certain markets work better, than others. In America, for some reasons, and the U.K. market, for other reasons, are the most difficult markets for this type of music. Sometimes, it changes, but in general it stays as it is, and that makes it very expensive, if you consider a release and do some marketing support. Especially when it comes to rock music--our interest is really rock music--and that's why we do rock music, and live performances, and live bands, and our company's policy has always been to support our bands and their activities on the live scene. And if you do so, this is your philosophy: you can't really do a release over here and then release a band at home. That brings up the real question: can you get these bands on tour, that's virtually impossible. Virtually impossible. I know managers, managers who do **RUNNING WILD**, and who are involved with **HELLOWEEN**, or **GAMMA RAY**, and for them it's a nightmare, to deal with American agents, club promoters, and stuff--it's an expensive nightmare, I tell you.

About your catalog--I noticed your prices are very fair. Is that because of the discs being made in Czechoslovakia?

No, that has nothing to do with Czechoslovakian pressing. Up until now we had no control over our catalog because it had been licensed, to the major part, to Futurist Records, which is Mechanic, Steve Sinclair. The price policy has been coordinated with (distributor) R.E.D. If you rerelease that catalog for a third time over a period of 9 years, you have to be very careful about the pricing, if you want to make it attractive enough for the kids to buy those records. I believe this was a consideration that they wanted to attract kids and pricing was the only chance. They were very aggressive about the pricing, and making it cheap. I have had no control over this, because again, these records were with Futurist/Mechanic for a while. 1995 will be the last year they can control these releases, and then after, the rights will come back to us.

So all these releases in your catalog are Futurist pressings.

Not all, I'd say 85%. There are some holes, because Futurist had not made it through the whole catalog, and certain portions are (missing)--a **CORONER** here, a **KREATOR** there, whatever. He (Sinclair) could not release because of R.E.D. (who were) willing to put out only two per month..

The early MESSIAH CD's were never released...

No, they were never released (in the states)...

Those (MESSIAH's) are European pressings...I was also wondering, Keeper Pt. 1 and Keeper Pt. II were originally put out by RCA/BMG...but now you have the whole rights?

The deals with major companies are always strange. The rights have not come back to us. We are right now talking to RCA about giving us the rights back for a limited time period, so we can pay attention to that catalog, because these guys have deleted the records, and that's it. So ignorant are these companies about what they consider 'minor' stock. It's funny, because with **KREATOR**, RCA recouped all advances, all tour support on those two releases (*Extreme Aggression, Coma of Souls*), so the

account with them is like positive. But they are still looking into that band. It takes probably a million selling copies for these guys to wake up. We are talking to them about having the rights to those records for further exploitation. That is something in the works.

The Keeper CD's on sale in your catalog are what pressings?

That is a good question! I doubt they are RCA pressings, I believe they are European pressings. Most recently, we received a request from a big wholesaler in the U.K. for 1500 copies of each release. And we only could figure out that this must be for the American market. Reasons given is that on MTV, **BEAVIS AND BUTT-HEAD** picked up on, a while ago, one of the **HELLOWEEN** clips...

Ha ha.

...Yeah, that has created a buzz, we did by accident, in January (of '94), we did a double CD, which is a combined *Keeper I and II*, for the price of one. That sold out of the box, really tons of records in Europe; we charted in Germany, and of course we did some serious advertisement, but that would not have moved those numbers...we found out that simultaneously (this was not coordinated by us) MTV picked one of the **HELLOWEEN** tracks, and created this type of buzz.

Ha ha.

So this record was our biggest seller in 1994.

Oh my God!

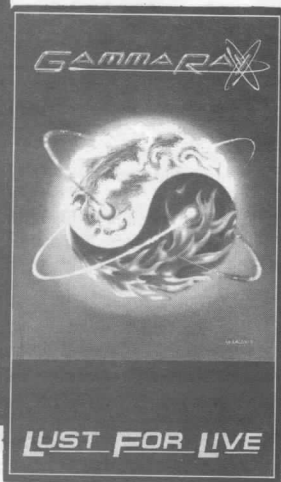
Yeah, a band with a record that is six years old, selling tons of records--close to 100,000, without any effort, was a big surprise to us. That was something out of the dark, it happened because of MTV. I believe that has created some underground interest in **HELLOWEEN** again. We are considering doing a double CD of *Keeper I and II*, for an attractive price, like \$15.98, for the U.S. market. I hope we will come to terms with RCA shortly. I mean, **HELLOWEEN** now are somewhat in a crisis, but to a certain extent, **Kai Hansen** from **GAMMA RAY** picked up on them. Especially with his new record, he is right now doing, going back to his roots. And he incorporates a lot of classical opera-style melodies, into heavy metal, and we all believe that the new record he is right now recording--will be his breakthrough record, in a big way. Because, he was the main songwriter with **HELLOWEEN**. He is a real talent.

When you say 'back to his roots', do you mean a Walls of Jericho-type sound?

Yeah, not sound, but some of the musical images. Especially with him singing. But he will probably add more in the opera style, like "Ride the Sky", and stuff. Make it really, like, impressive. And he is into this mixture of classical, and metal, and blowing it up. I listened to all the advance material, the preproduction material. And it is definitely going that way, back to the roots. His vocal performance has increased, and he is much better now than he was years ago. Again, on the other hand, tastes have changed, and a lot of kids don't like the high pitched voices anymore. I think his voice is more or less there, where all the people find it accessible. We have scheduled that release for an early April release. The record (was) done early February...I have a feeling it will be his best record so far.

Why did Ralf leave GAMMA RAY?

He did not leave. Kai made him go, because Kai felt that he was not the greatest performer. I believe the performing aspect came into place; and his limitations, in terms of Kai wanted a voice which is like more in the middle range. Ralf always tended to sing in the high end. And that was always a dispute. All the action on the stage was basically relying on Kai. You've got a frontman--the frontman has to deliver the goods, has to be the one man who attracts most of the attention. With **GAMMA RAY**, it tended to be that Kai took over the whole show. And that did not look good. He couldn't stop this, and Ralf never caught up to Kai, and that was a constant conflict. There were a lot of questions from the kids: "Why don't you sing, Kai?" And finally, he said, that might bring the band two steps forward, rather than a half-step. And that's why the whole band then



decided to go in that direction, rather than continuing with Ralf. There is another (reason), in that Ralf never integrated himself into the band, because he was located, I would say...400 miles away south. Can you imagine how difficult this is for the chemistry of the band, when the singer lives in a town 400 miles away, and he never ever was a full time musician; like he was having a full time job, so he only could make it to the band every two or three weeks on the weekends. You can imagine, that can get annoying. And there were a lot of discussions of him moving over to Hamburg, which is **GAMMA RAY's** hometown. (Ralf) never ever made that decision, because he always tried to play it safe, and the rest of the band are full time musicians, and they are committed in what they do. And they don't have any spare jobs--it is the music, and the music first. The outcome was finally that the band split with Ralf.

Let's get back to HELLOWEEN. When they tried to split from Noise, a controversy ensued. The public got to hear HELLOWEEN's side of the story, but not yours. What happened prior to Pink Bubbles Go Ape?

It is very simple. We are an independent label; as soon as independent labels have success with certain artists, then the 'sharks' will show up. Who shall I call 'sharks'? Major companies and management companies. They all would like to steal the band from an independent label who has been the build-up label. And that happened to us in 1989, when HELLOWEEN was having close to a million in sales for *Keeper II* records worldwide, when the management of **IRON MAIDEN** showed up, and they picked up the band. And finally, forced the band to terminate their contract with us. The usual way to terminate a contract is, of course, finding a lot of good arguments. You can construct a lot of arguments based on disputes (with this and that), and then "BOOM!!" Blow it. So they went to court, and the outcome of this was like a big problem for them, because at court they never had a victory, because every court case we won. (This) resulted finally in the paralyzation of the band. 'Cause we got an injunction, not allowing them to play live anymore, not allowing them to do any more recordings with certain parties, rather than us. And so, finally, they recognized there was no way out of this, so they needed to settle with us. So we all had to sit down and do a so called settlement. Which means we receive compensation for them leaving our company. Which cost them quite a lot of money, I must admit. And resulted in a lot of emotions because we had frozen the band for almost two years. That was their risk, and their problem, because in the beginning, they were blaming us with under accounting, and then the court ruled that that was not true, and based on the records, they still owed us money. We had overpaid them, funny enough. That's why the court decided not to allow them further live activities, and further studio recordings with 3rd parties, because they were in a breach of contract. Finally, we settled, and the management moved the band over to EMI; EMI did just one record, and dropped them thereafter. After a disastrous record. We saw a band declining all over Europe. I believe their European market share right now is close to 100,000, where with *Keeper II* record they sold almost 600,000, not talking about other territories, where they declined as well. Except for Japan and South Korea, where they still have a very solid base. In Japan they just made a gold record, of the most recent one (*Master of the Rings*), and in South Korea they are also very strong. But in all other markets--you know about America as well as I do, they declined substantially, there is no interest anymore. And that is true for most of the European markets as well. That is because the management and EMI did not care about the band. And talent wise, Kai Hansen left the band. It's a very sad story about this. Finally, also, **Michael Kiske** left the band. So, we couldn't do anything and it was very frustrating to see a band you had built up being destroyed so quick. And that is the business, which is sometimes very annoying.

Have you listened to Master of the Rings?

Of course; the new one is better than most of the stuff they have done in the past few years. It could've been better, and I believe they picked the wrong video

L to R:

Hansen,

Grosskopf,

Kiske,

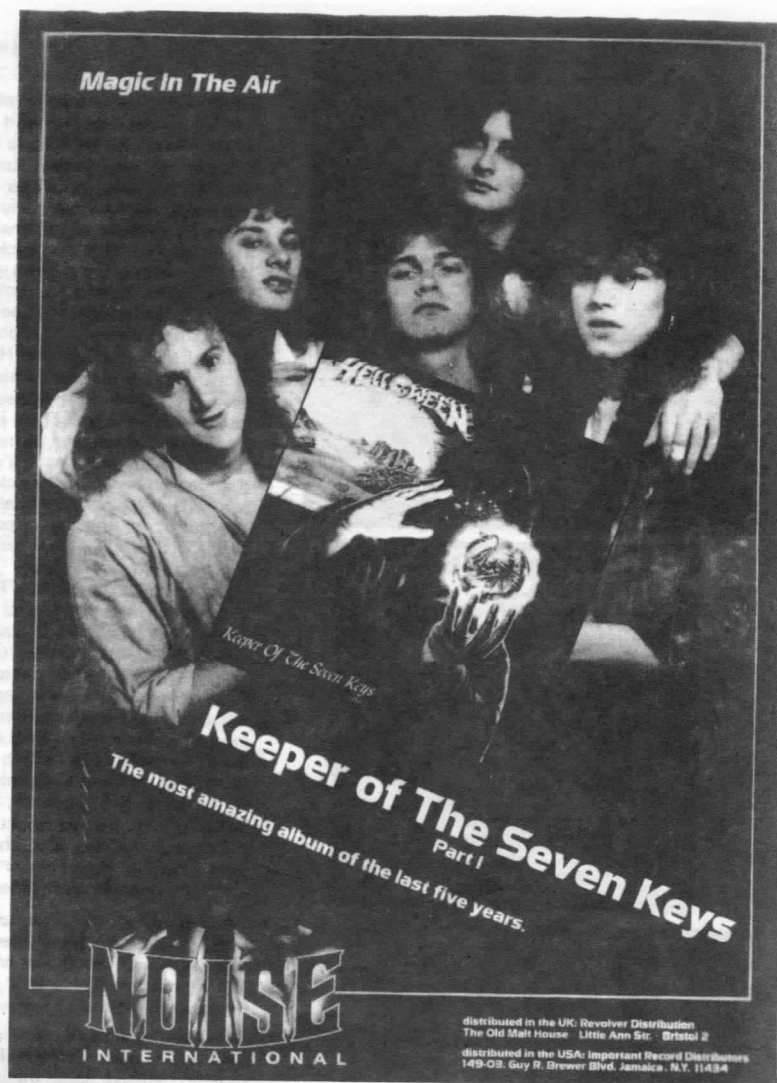
Weikath,

and

Schwichtenberg,

circa

1987



(I think it's "Mr.Ego"--Denis), but, whatever, there is more in that album as I expected.

I like it too. It's a lot better than Chameleon.

Oh yeah, ha ha. It's a step forward, but after all these changes, and after all these problems with the fans, it is very difficult to make a comeback. It is virtually impossible. Markets don't forgive.

They are picking it up...I saw sales figures for Master of the Rings approaching half a million worldwide... OHHHH!!!

Yes, I read that!

That is all bullshit!!!

Ha ha ha ha...

Because, in Germany, they have sold of the new album, somewhere around 30,000. Germany (is supposed to be) the strongest market in Europe. I would think the numbers they sold throughout Europe might go between 60,000 and 80,000, and another 80,000 in South Korea, and another 125,000 for Japan. So it is likely they are close to 300,000 on a worldwide base. That would be an optimistic figure. I believe they are closer to 260,000. It is, under no circumstances, more than 300,000. And that is only because Japan and South Korea are so huge for them. But Germany with 30,000, where as before, they were selling 300,000 records. That tells it all. In the UK market, where they originally sold 60,000 records, they probably don't sell more than 2,000.

Oh my God.

You see, a nightmare come true when you look at the figures. I'm involved, because based on the settlement, I have an override on all their worldwide sales. So I know what they sell. And it's not a healthy figure, I tell you, because my override is not paying me back any of the advances I have received; because I am always under-recouped--the advance I received don't recoup because the sales are so poor.

Another former band on your label--RAGE--were said to be out of money.

No, no, they're not out of money. The deal came to an end. I signed **RAGE** in 1985, we did about 7 or 8 albums, over these last 9 years. These guys contract came to an end last year, and now they are free, and they signed to a label called **GUN Records**. Which is a German label signed to **BMG**. It is one of **BMG's** offshoot labels. So **RAGE** never ever made it in a big way in Europe; they have a solid base in Japan. They survived because of Japanese income. But really, the European side was reduced to Germany as their major market. They never translated to any other European market.

You put out that 10 year anniversary album by RAGE--is that all original material?

No--yes, it was partly material they have done as demos, preproduction, which never really got a release over the last 10 years. Especially some of the material is out of their period before they even signed to us.

AVENGER?

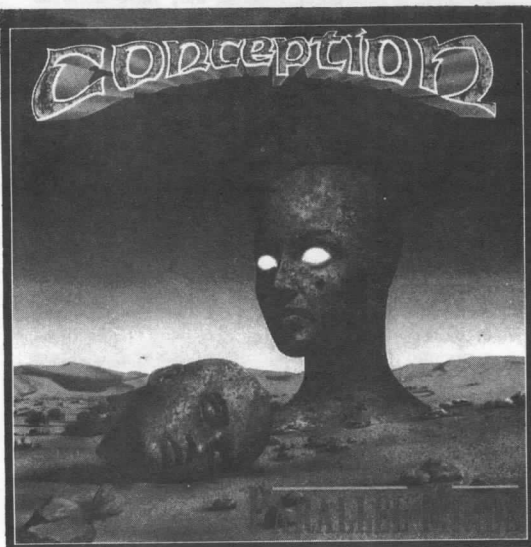
Yeah. Right now they are working on a new release, which might come out in the spring of 1995, through **GUN/BMG**.

Their last one, The Missing Link, is very popular amongst RAGE fans here in the U.S. They consider it the best Noise release ever.

Oh yeah, it was a strong seller for us too, and it was getting very strong support in terms of press support in Europe--that's true. But the band never ever supported it strong enough on the live end. That is a management problem. We always had an argument with the management about **RAGE** doing more live shows. Which they did not want to do. They did a tour with **SAXON** and **MOTORHEAD**, but, that was it, and we wanted more, but they did not come through. That (*Missing Link*) was definitely the strongest record they did to date

I heard Rolf from RUNNING WILD had mental problems...judging from the way he goes through band members...

No, no, **Rolf Kasperek** is like a typical type of rough



band leader. He keeps the reigns very close. And he has full control over the band—but it is his band! He's writing the songs, he is more or less the co-producer. He has a very certain understanding of which direction his band should go, and he hates all trendy musical styles. And that's why he is always suspicious about his musicians, influencing his band in what is trendy. At the slightest suspicion, he drops musicians. He is not mental, he is just a very conservative type of person, when it comes to protecting his musical style. Which I can understand, because he has seen so many bands passing by, because they change their musical style, and decline. He claims, "I stick to my roots. I keep my audience satisfied, I know I have to be in line with what I started; if I move away, I will lose all that base, and I hate all these RUNNING WILD for commercial reasons, to incorporate trendy styles." He doesn't do this, and that's why he's constantly in dispute with his fellow musicians. The average period someone stays with him is about two albums. But on the long run, that is a point which has earned RUNNING WILD a lot of respect among kids. Rolf is the one who has been recognized as a true believer...How did JUDAS PRIEST say...? "Keeper of the faith"—and that is what Rolf is all about. He tries to keep the metal tradition, which we all know started with NWOBHM in the late 70's. He tries to keep that metal tradition, and against everybody, against journalists, against his manager, against his record label, against everybody. Finally we had learned this, we had to accept this, what ever he does, we let him do it. He delivers an album as he wants it, and we release as he wants it. It is his album in the true sense of the word. And you know, the success he has had, especially in the continent of Europe, so far, is justification for him enough. He is making a solid living with the type of music he does. Even in difficult times, he is stable, sales wise.

Getting back to your distribution, just briefly; regarding Futurist and Steve Sinclair—I'm out here on the East coast, and I sort of watched as they got the Noise product out, and it just disappeared, and it seemed like they didn't do anything.

We received a lot of complaints from our bands, like KREATOR and CORONER. Especially KREATOR was so negative about that company, that finally, we had to look very seriously into what they were doing.

I had a few people in the music business tell me that Steve Sinclair is a rip-off.

Yeah, I would think so too. Releasing records, and then cashing in, is not the way you should do it in this business. KREATOR went on tour with PARADISE LOST and MORBID ANGEL, and they (KREATOR) did not see a single person from Mechanic/Futurist. They did 30 shows over here (in the U.S.), and they did not see the publicist, or the president himself. Can you imagine how upset KREATOR were? That is not fair treatment.

An album, unavailable in the States, that everybody wants, is the DEATH METAL compilation.

I know this, ha ha. It's really underground, I recall this...we have had it released, and there was a lot of dispute about this, because it was censored, the artwork was causing problems. We had to take it from the schedule, and put it back on schedule, yeah! It was an experience. It came out...years ago. It is "cult", we did this, like we did CELTIC FROST, at a very early stage, when the scene was still not really there. That was one of the reasons why we never moved into death metal, because we felt, hey, we don't like these clones. All these bands copying whatever VENOM or CELTIC FROST/HELLHAMMER started, that's why I never took it seriously. I saw it when it all started, with especially, Earache—this label is doing a cheap job, exploiting badly produced music for the simple reason because they don't have any money. That's what I thought was the truth, and that's why I ignored (death/black/grindcore, etc.). Because Peaceville and Earache, are British labels who started it all, were labels that were badly run, and with bad taste, I said, "Hey, I don't know what those idiots do, let them do it." Finally, it caught into a big wave, and some serious bands were growing, like OBITUARY, and ha ha, we were out of the field, and I did not intend to move back into that field. So I stayed away from that (kind of music).

Is there a chance of this DEATH METAL comp—

YEAH! What we will do is, we have a reissue plan for catalog stuff, that is right now in discussion. Not before the end of 1995, because our distributor cannot deal with too many products at the same time. So we have to do it step by step, but sometime, we will get it released. It is no longer available anywhere in the world. I guarantee you. I'm aware of that; what surprises us as well is how 'cult' the first HELLHAMMER is. It has been so influential on quite a few bands. That was a very important back catalog record as well for us.

What happened to the band DARK AVENGER, the only group on the compilation to go nowhere? [The three other bands featured were RUNNING WILD, HELLHAMMER, and HELLOWEEN-Denis]

Ceased to exist. I don't know what happened to them. We received the demo, we did these tracks, and then they disappeared. I have no idea, don't ask me, ha ha. I can't tell you.

How many were pressed of the first RUNNING WILD EP?

Ohh, maybe a thousand? Very limited numbers...it's a collectors item. It is impossible to get—you need a lot of luck—no chance.

One of the best bands ever, under the Noise banner, was SECRECY.

They have a great talent, I know. They did two albums with us (*Art in Motion, Raging Romance*)...there was a rumor that they might be back—I spoke to one of the guys six months ago. It was a sad experience; we dropped them because we did not see these guys willing to support the release touring wise. There was a dispute about tours; being a part of a religious group, (the religion leaders) did not want their members being exposed as stars. When we caught that rumor, (and asked SECRECY about it), we did not receive a strong 'no, we are not a part of this religious group.' We decided to step away from that band. It sounded strange to us. They blew a tour, did not do the tour, in support of the second album, and that all resulted in such a mess, and finally we stepped away. And you're right, musically this band has such a great talent, it's so sad that they ceased to exist.

There's great bands like MANIA, MIND ODYSSEY,—

Yeah, MIND ODYSSEY! That is one band...very good band. They are, right now, producing their new (second) album. They are not that active either, that's why we have had a dispute with them. Because in the long run, when it comes to metal, you have to have a live band on stage. These musicians who think they can do it part time, going into the studio once in 18 months, that's not something we are interested in. That's something that always causes conflict and results in such a scenario that a good band is being dropped by us. These bands are not cheap in terms of producing a record, I can tell you. That is a pressure on us. We have to have some sales because otherwise we can't justify recording budgets. Which is tens of thousands of dollars.

MIND ODYSSEY has former members of MERLIN, right?

No, there was another name, partly, two of them were in MERLIN, and there was another name...that band was managed by the Studio Musiclab—and these guys...I forgot the name. Two bands were behind MIND ODYSSEY.

What are your personal favorites that you've released over the years?

Right now, I honestly must say CONCEPTION. CONCEPTION is one of my personal favorites in terms of melodic metal. I really must admit this, and that's why I'm so positive about this band. Then, of course, you lose distance when you're working with your bands. In terms of SKYCLAD, and so on, it's like you simply start liking your bands because you are so close to them. You should know the band, we have done most recently, which has not been brought out, which is following SECRECY line—very intelligent, very good, melodic—POVERTY'S NO CRIME. Actually, we had tons of recordings for August and September of last year—we have not yet released the album; it is coming out in June (of '95).

It's incredible how much time we need to do this. We have a packed release schedule over the next six months, and we couldn't get them on schedule, because we did not want to interfere with **CONCEPTION** and **SHIHAD**, with the new **GAMMA RAY**, or with the new **SKYCLAD** [Their fifth full length-Denis] record. That's why we had to put (**POVERTY'S NO CRIME**) back into (late) 1995. They are following along the lines of **SECRECY**, and **MIND ODYSSEY**, with strong melodic and progressive touch. Very talented guys. You will get the record as soon as it comes out. You should also know that we are, as Noise, we have two sub-labels: one is a label called TT Records; one other label is Hellhound Records. "Sublabels" means that we don't do the A & R, the promotion is also different, but somehow we have an influence. The TT label is solely melodic.

STRATOVARIUS and ELEGY.

YEAH! So you named the two bands which are the most important ones on that label. There are more bands we have releases...there was one band from Frankfurt...**CAPRICORN** which is melodic power metal [CAPRICORN has former members of GRINDER-Denis]. But they had a good release on my label; there is a whole stream of releases coming up (on TT Records) in the very next future...even a band like **VIRGIN STEELE**, ha ha. This is a label committed to melodic styles. Whereas Hellhound is more like the **BLACK SABBATH** influence, slow **TROUBLE** tradition, with bands like **THE OBSESSED**, **ST. VITUS**, and whatever the names are. These are little, small labels associated with us, where we do international supervision, and the distribution, and they concentrate on artist development, and creator's side.

Yeah, TT is a cool label...

Yeah, especially **ELEGY** is a very good band. There is something very special about these guys. We're not considering those two releases (**ELEGY & STRATOVARIUS**) for America. It's too much for us at this stage. We have to limit ourselves.

Reunion of SABBAT.

That is a rumor I heard about, but I don't trust that. Because Martin is so deeply involved in **SKYCLAD**, that I don't believe this. There was a dispute between me and **SKYCLAD**, for a while, a year ago; which resulted in their manager approaching me about a reunion of **SABBAT**, and I said I don't like that. **SABBAT** declined, and is history. **Martin Walkyier** should stick to **SKYCLAD**, and his future with **SKYCLAD**, and obviously, that is where the band is going right now. The band is recording their new album at this moment, and we have scheduled that album for a March 1995 release over here (in the States).

A History of a Time to Come is 'cult' in the U.S.

Ah yes. **SKYCLAD** is definitely one of our top bands here, very talented band, and Martin is a good performer, and **SKYCLAD** is like the band we strongly support, and in the long run we hope that they would have some fans in America as well. We first released their last album they did in Europe (**Prince of the Poverty Line**), with some single tracks added, so that the kids over here can buy not only the last album, but bonus tracks never available in the United State. Probably they never showed up even on import channels. That album came out in January of 1995, and the very new one will come out probably in the summer of '95.

That's about it for the interview (Actually, I could've gone on for a few hours more, but I was allotted a certain amount of time-Denis). I was wondering if you could do me a favor. I'd like to have a complete Noise discography list.

Impossible, HA HA HA, IMPOSSIBLE!!! Ha ha! But that is a bad state of an independent, being unorganized on that end. But we have tried to do these things over the years, and it never worked out. You also miss out, and people point their fingers at you, and say, "Hey, but you forgot about that release!" And then you feel, "Ecchh!!, what is this, are we so stupid. We don't know our own releases anymore?" And it is virtually impossible.



DEATH METAL
(Noise - N006)



"Death Metal" is the latest in a string of HM compilations currently being unleashed on the headbanging public from all corners of the metal globe. Noise, are the first and biggest independent HM label in Germany and have brought together one Swiss and three home-grown bands for this, their first compilation.

Each band are given two tracks and side one kicks-off with **RUNNING WILD** from Hamburg. Both "Iron Heads" and "Bones To Ashes" are not bad efforts but I know the band are capable of much better than this. Also the somewhat casual vocal style of the ridiculously named **Rock'n'Rolf**, just doesn't suit the hard driving metal that the band produce.

Next up is the recently deceased **HELLHAMMER!** Well, there's not much more I can say about these Swiss psycho's that hasn't already been said. Although I must admit that the versions of "Revelations of

Doom" and "Messiah" are a little more listenable here than on the bands demo, thanks no doubt to the engineering of Horst Muller.

Onto side two and the pace really begins to hot up with **DARK AVENGER**. Two cuts - "Black Fairies" and "Lords Of The Night" - guaranteed to keep the blood boiling that predicts a bright future for the German five-piece.

Even better though are **HELLOWEEN** with "Metal Invaders" and the excellent "Oernst Of Life". Both superb tracks of Power Metal frenzies in the highest order and without doubt the band most likely to succeed in achieving global metal acceptance of the four bands on show here.

Overall, "Death Metal" may not be the most satisfying package of metal acts ever assembled on vinyl. But it's certainly produced a couple of bands worth noting for future reference and an essential buy for **HELLOWEEN** alone.

BERNARD DOE

NOISE

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 <p>LP N 0013 08-166109-1661 MC SPV GmbH Dirk Steffens, ace producer, above all known for his work with ACCEPT took charge at the Soundhaus-Studio to produce a screaming display of guitar fireworks, accompanied by emotionally charged vocals, courtesy of fat SINNER.</p>	 <p>LP N 0012 08-167109-1671 MC SPV GmbH RUNNING WILD are proving that Germany doesn't have to take second place behind England and America. Rooted in the tradition of Black Sabbath it's obvious that their music is not a mere copy. RUNNING WILD play superhard speedmetal as well as impetuous hardrock of the old school.</p>	 <p>LP N 007 08-1670 SPV GmbH Powerful Speed-Metal with rough n' ready vocals. A startling debut by one of Germany's most promising Heavy Metal Bands.</p>
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 <p>LP N 0011 08-1667 SPV GmbH</p>		

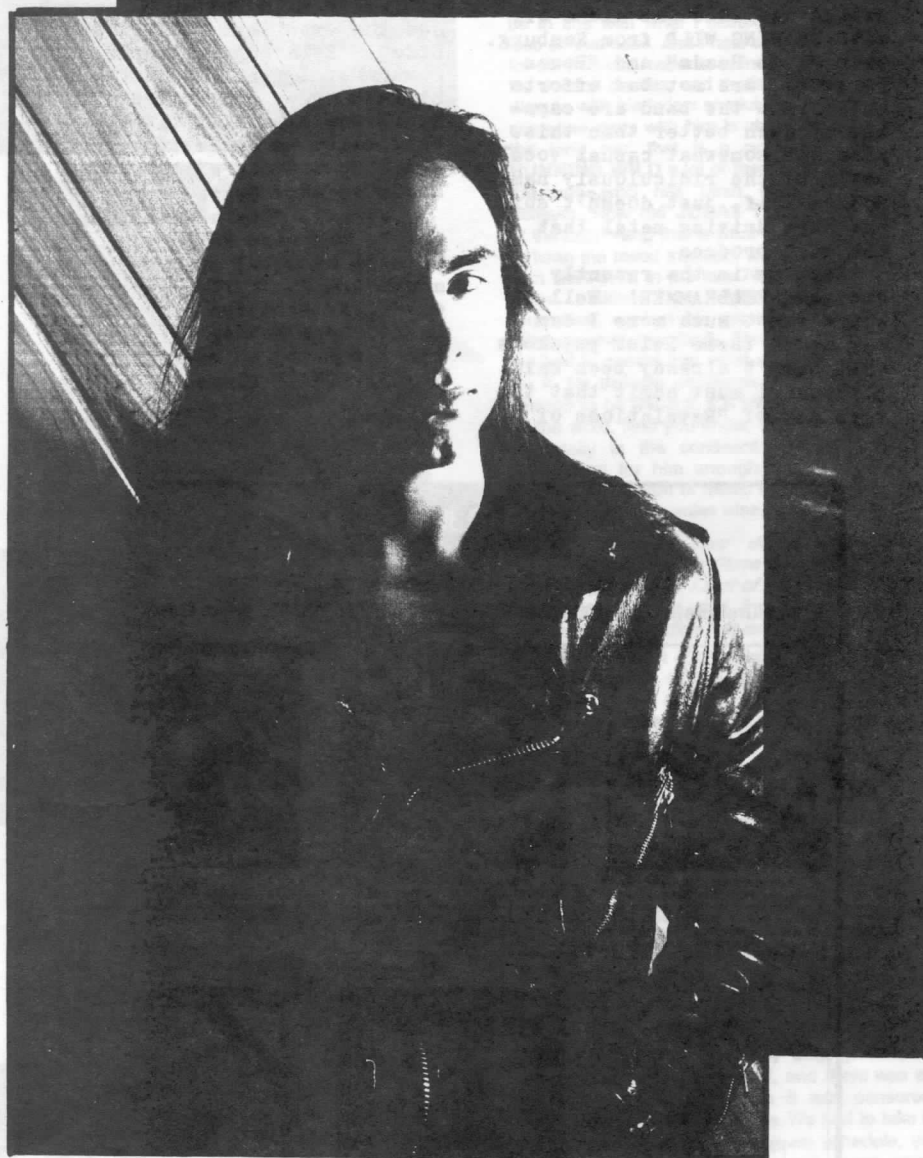
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... if this band receives a fraction of the hype given to the likes of W.A.S.P. then S.A.D.O. will become enormous. To be honest, if S.A.D.O. were an American act, then they would certainly be MEGA. (Bernard Doe, Metal Forces No. 6)

ANGRA

(INTRO ON LAST PAGE)

ANDRE MATOS



What are you up to right now?

At the moment we are finishing our *Angels Cry* tour in South America. We've played all over Brazil and some other countries in South America. But we didn't play in Europe, U.S., or Japan. The *Angels Cry* tour is just an SA tour...but it was great, because the band could gain some new experiences, could get better on stage. So for the next album we'll be prepared for a big tour of Europe or Japan. The plans are to record the next album--these recordings are pretty close now. We'll start recordings in April, early April--right after the recording we'll tour Europe, and soon after Japan.

This new recording--you have new compositions ready?

Yes, after this tour, after New Years Eve, we'll be closed in the countryside, away from Sao Paulo, we'll be there for one or two months, as a whole band, composing and doing stuff for the next album. We've got already some new stuff--but it would be better to be away from the town, with all the "hurry" -- it's better to be away, with a fresh brain. We're planning that for January.

I get asked often--will "Reaching Horizons" and "Queen of the Night" make it onto your next album?

Ha ha, okay, we didn't record these two songs for many reasons--for instance, about "Reaching Horizons"--this is a ballad, and we already had two ballads, on *Angels Cry*--which were "Lasting Child" and Kate Bush's "Wuthering Heights." And even "Stand Away," kind of. So to have "Reaching Horizons," it would be too much--slow songs, y'know? That's one of the reasons. The other one was we kept it for the end of the *Angels Cry* recordings--we just started recording other songs, and when we had to record "Reaching Horizons," we thought we were already running out of time. It was too late. We had to make a choice. We had to choose the best ones. But that doesn't mean we're not going to use the other ones. It's in our plans to record the other songs ["Queen of the Night" and "Reaching Horizons"] for the next album. If not, then we'll feature these songs on an EP or something like that.

Hope to see them on CD soon.

Oh yeah, live, we play "Queen of the Night" with a new arrangement now. It sounds a little more heavy, with keyboards.

Do you have any other songs, originals, that may show up that you have song titles for?

Yes, [one is] called "Don't Despair"--it's not on the *Reaching Horizons* demo tape. It's on another demo tape that wasn't published. It was for the band. We had recorded this song for *Angels Cry* as well, but we didn't choose it.

Is it a fast song, mid tempo...?

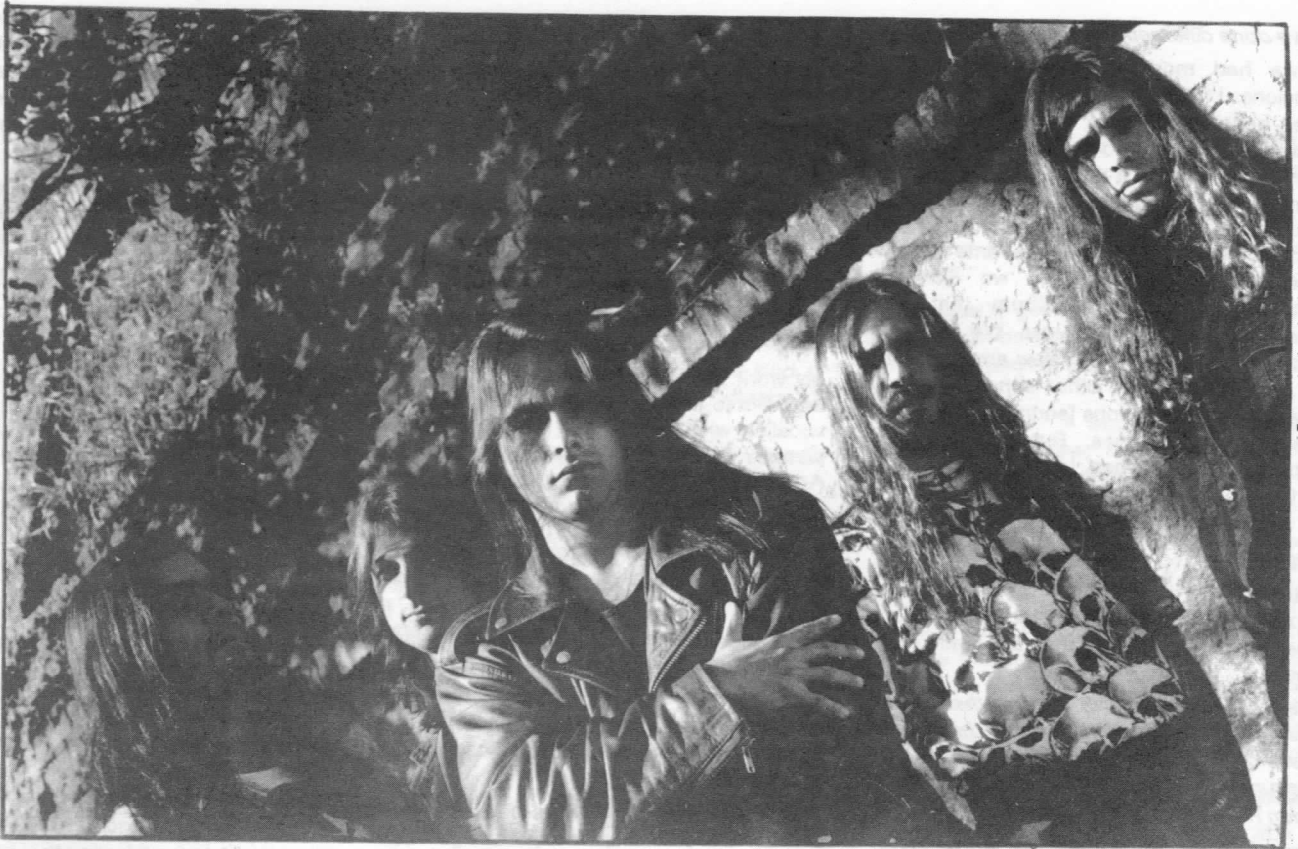
It's a kind of...rock'n'roll kind of song. It's interesting, it's a little different from ANGRA type songs.

You mentioned KATE BUSH before. Is there going to be another KATE BUSH cover on

FOR INFO ON ANGRA AND OTHER POWER PROG METAL BANDS:



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From L to R: Ricardo Confessori,
Rafael Bittencourt, Andre Matos,
Luis Mariutti, and Kiko Loureiro

the next ANGRA album?

Ha ha--I'd love it!! I don't know. We don't mean to be a **KATE BUSH** cover band, ha ha. But I love **KATE BUSH** so much, I'd do it. There are so many other good songs from **KATE BUSH**. We'll have to think about it!

I heard you recorded a more thrash/speed version of "Wuthering Heights." Will that ever come out?

Yes, that would be cool. It's different, yet it's the same song. I think the arrangements are very interesting [on the speed "Wuthering Heights"]--have you heard it?

No!

This version is also on the same demo as "Don't Despair"--so only a few people know it.

What is it about KATE BUSH--her music, her lyrics, that get you into it? She has a great cult following.

I think that **KATE BUSH**, in 'pop style', does the same thing I do in 'heavy style'. I know very deeply, her work--everytime more and more and more. She works in the same way I try to do. She mixes electric instruments with orchestra. In her albums, usually Michael Kamen, I think you know him, he does the arrangements--he does the same for **MANOWAR**. He worked with **QUEEN**, and many other artists. Her orchestral arrangements are pretty nice, and the music is touching, the melodies are pretty beautiful, the harmonies are great. Even the lyrics are very deep. That's what I like. Sometimes it's a

little depressive. But I think it's very realistic--I like it very much.

Would you ever like to compose an opera, or replace the guitars you have now with an orchestra? Would you like to do something for a big audience, instead of a heavy metal audience?

Ha ha, I would like, I would like. I think it's a dream to compose someday for the opera or an orchestra. Maybe not traditional kind of opera, something different. I think I was born in another time, and have other influences. I think what I do with the band, is what I want to do with the music. But for me, I don't mean it's enough for now. I think I could go better, reach something bigger. But I think the musical way should be different from what I'm doing now. I used to study music--in the university; this is my last year of university. Next year I will be a conductor.

Aaahh....

Yes, I'm [tittling] myself as a conductor, a maestro.

Yes, please go on--Maestro Andre!!

Ha ha, yes, that's true!! I had a lot of contact with this stuff. I had to conduct an orchestra, a choir, and I liked it very much. But I don't think it is as complete as heavy metal can be. Because heavy metal has the same kind of language. I just mean, when you have a full orchestra playing, and a heavy metal band playing, it's pretty much the same thing. The density of the music is more or less the

same. You have a heavy, deep sound. Sometimes, in the orchestra, I miss the rhythm part of it, because it is much more melodic than rhythmic. The same happens with heavy metal, on the other hand--it is too rhythmic, and not so melodic. My dream is to unify both things, and make a new kind of music.

ANGRA's band members come from differing musical backgrounds; would you consider incorporating jazz, blues...?

Of course. Kiko, for example, the guitar player, he is a recognized jazz player--his school is jazz. What he likes to listen to is jazz, more or less. For the next album, we're pretty sure we'll have all the new influences, not only the classical and orchestral ones; of course, I think those are the most important ones. But, we got to make something new. Because otherwise, the new album would sound the same as the last one, y'know. We don't want it.

Wouldn't you be scared that the difference between the two albums might be so great, that a difference similar to Theatre of Fate and Evolution would occur?

I know what you mean! But you can be sure we'll be careful with it. We don't think that just because we got a little success from this first album, we can make whatever we want. No, no, that's not true...what we want is something like *Angels Cry*. But, I just think I can improve it more.

Speaking about improving, what would you

have done differently on *Angels Cry*?

If we had more time for the recording sessions...I think the album would have went even better. But...I think actually that, for the time that we had to record--the album is perfect. For the next album, we'll have even better sound, we are going to work with other equipment, even the band [will be] more experienced. I could feel this time when I went to Europe this year, we did new recordings for a mini-album that was released in Japan this year. We did new vocals for "Evil Warning", new arrangements for "Carry On", and other songs. You can check, the new versions [sound much] better than the other ones. But for the short experience that we had, I think the final result of the album is very nice for me, I really like it.

I agree.

I think this is due to the work of the producers [Charlie Bauerfeind and Sascha Paeth] as well--because they are pretty good ones.

Well, Idisagree with you on that. I don't like Charlie's work that much. I have other discs by him--he has difficulty separating the instruments in the final mix...the drum sound I don't like either...

Okay, but what did you think of *Angels Cry*?

Angels Cry is the best thing he's done, but it is also the most complicated, and sometimes, like on "Carry On", parts sound a touch muddy. I think, overall, Charlie's best

work has been with *HEAVENS GATE*, it is simpler.

Okay, let's see how it goes next album. Probably we're going to record with Charlie and Sascha again. But, I think, the next album, the band will tell him better what he should or shouldn't do, about the sound of the instruments, etc...

Okay, maybe you could even co-produce it. Compared with your past efforts, on *Angels Cry* you broadened your voice, gaining more power.

My work with *VIPER* was not so [powerful]; but I like to mix both things. I don't like these vocalists who used to sing rough all the time, y'know? That's why I like people like Eric Adams from *MANOWAR*. Because he used it sometimes, and other times he makes a very smooth voice. I don't like people who sing smoothly without any strength. I don't have a clear way to follow--now, I just want to follow for me, the better way of sounding for the songs. So if I got a more aggressive song, of course, I'll use a more aggressive voice, which will, of course, depend on the character that I'm looking for.

Your voice has broadened considerably since *Soldiers of Sunrise*.

Thank you, yes. But that is due to the fact that for the past four, five years ago I have singing lessons from a teacher who is an opera singer. I use it to follow the opera steps, the opera technique. But not being an opera singer myself, because the opera

singer has another kind of technique that rock singers don't have. The normal breathing technique is the same. I think that made me much more steady in my way of singing. I still have lots of things more to learn! But time will tell.

Speaking about learning, what have you done at the university, and also outside of heavy metal.

My university lasts for six years. This is my last year--well, I finished it now! Yesterday I did my last concert. Did lots of things in the six years. Conducted small orchestras--I haven't conducted big huge orchestras, but that's a dream. I don't know if in the future I can do it. I have conducted a lot of choirs, I have sung in a lot of choirs. I was a fixed member of a good choir from Sao Paulo--but not any more. I have no time left because of the band. I had a parallel project with other friends...in pop music, not heavy metal. Pop music like Peter Gabriel stuff, which I like very much. But I'm not in that band any more, as I don't have time for that as well.

As a final question...you can add anything you like...but what albums really interest you right now?

Right now I'm listening to some Brazilian stuff, some progressive bands from Brazil--we have very good bands. I've been listening to new releases that come out...The new *HELLOWEEN* album.

How do you like that?!?!?

Well [pauses] I don't exactly...the vocals...I



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really didn't like that much, not because he's not good...he's a good vocalist, but ...I can't say anything against the quality of the record...the sound, the arrangements are wonderful. Well, **HELLOWEEN** is **HELLOWEEN**, and they are a very experienced band; I wouldn't do something similar to it, y'know. Sometimes I really get angry, because some people used to say, **ANGRA** likes **HELLOWEEN**. And I don't think it's true! I try to do something different; more or less it's the same style. We play a kind of power, speed metal, but it has nothing to do...we work much more in an orchestral side of the vein; **HELLOWEEN** is much more pure heavy metal y'know? It's pretty good (*Master of the Rings*), but I like the old **HELLOWEEN** stuff very much. I think **Michael Kiske** is missing there, ha ha.

Yes, I, er, agree....

Well I listened to the new **QUEENSRYPHE** release; it's very different from the last one!! The tendency now--bands are getting much more heavier now...even **DREAM THEATER**'s new one...pretty much all the bands are heavy now. They have lots of thrash influences. But **QUEENSRYPHE**!! It's surprising. **QUEENSRYPHE** is one of my most favorite bands, so are **DREAM THEATER**. I didn't know about [them] 'til two years ago. Since the day I knew **DREAM THEATER**, I love it...fantastic band. I think, from the newcomers, they are the best ones. The new one from **DREAM THEATER** is a very interesting album, but I'd rather [listen to] *Images and Words*.

Have you listened to the new VIPER album?

Yes! I listened to it! It's different as well. It's following the same way, it's more heavy, sometimes it sounds...**RAMONES**-like. It's much more punk rock style, but it's good, it's a good production by Bill Metoyer.

He's a great producer, one of the best in the States I think.

About **VIPER**, I want to clear something with you about them. It wasn't personal problems with them, it was musical problems, musical difference. They came to the point where they wanted to do different kinds of music. So I didn't agree with it. I'll be frank with you, that even to record *Theatre of Fate*...was a difficult thing for me. Because they didn't want all that orchestral things on that album. And they got a little pissed when me and the producer [Roy Rowland] decided to put all those keyboards there. For the next album, they said to me, [it's] going to be something totally different, we want to do something **ANTHRAX**-like; all those arrangements you like to do--you're not going to do that anymore. And so I thought, I have nothing more to do here, with **VIPER**. Then I left the band. For about one year I was alone, just practicing classical music. And then I met the people from **ANGRA**. They are much more open minded, each one has a different influence. Nowadays, we don't fight one against the other. Me and **VIPER** are still friends, we live close together. All the things in the past, I ask you to forget; I'm doing

what I want, **VIPER** are doing what they want. Everybody is happy now.

Yes, except VIPER must be envious of your success.

If **VIPER** lost their people, it is their fault, they chose to change their style.

Right.

I want to ask you something--what about the scene there in the U.S.A.? We don't know exactly how it is--people usually tell us that the U.S.A. is a dead country for this kind of music, and we shouldn't ever dream of releasing it there.

You know what the problem is? TV controls the people. MTV controls...

I know what you mean...

MTV basically picks what is big. There are power, progressive metal fans here, but there is no organized, central system to get information, CD's, etc.

It is a... fancy thing.

[Denis keeps silent, not comprehending.]

Uh, fashion thing, fancy...

Er, uhm, fascist thing?

No, no, fashion thing!

Oh yeah, trends! Yes! That's the problem here in America! People are trendy here, while in Japan, or Europe, people listen to everything, they don't care. Sometimes they can be trendy, but at least they're more open minded!!

I hope that's going to change! One more thing, Denis--do you think it's possible going to America, playing in America, even in small place?

Oh, it's tough!! I went to see FATES WARNING this year, in New Jersey, and only 50 or 60 people showed up!!

My God.

This is one of the biggest progressive metal bands in the U.S., in the world! Very few...

Unbelievable. Thank you very much for this interview. America is a very strange country, because the people from America don't like progressive metal, they don't like soccer, ha-ha!

Hey, thanks for the beautiful music.



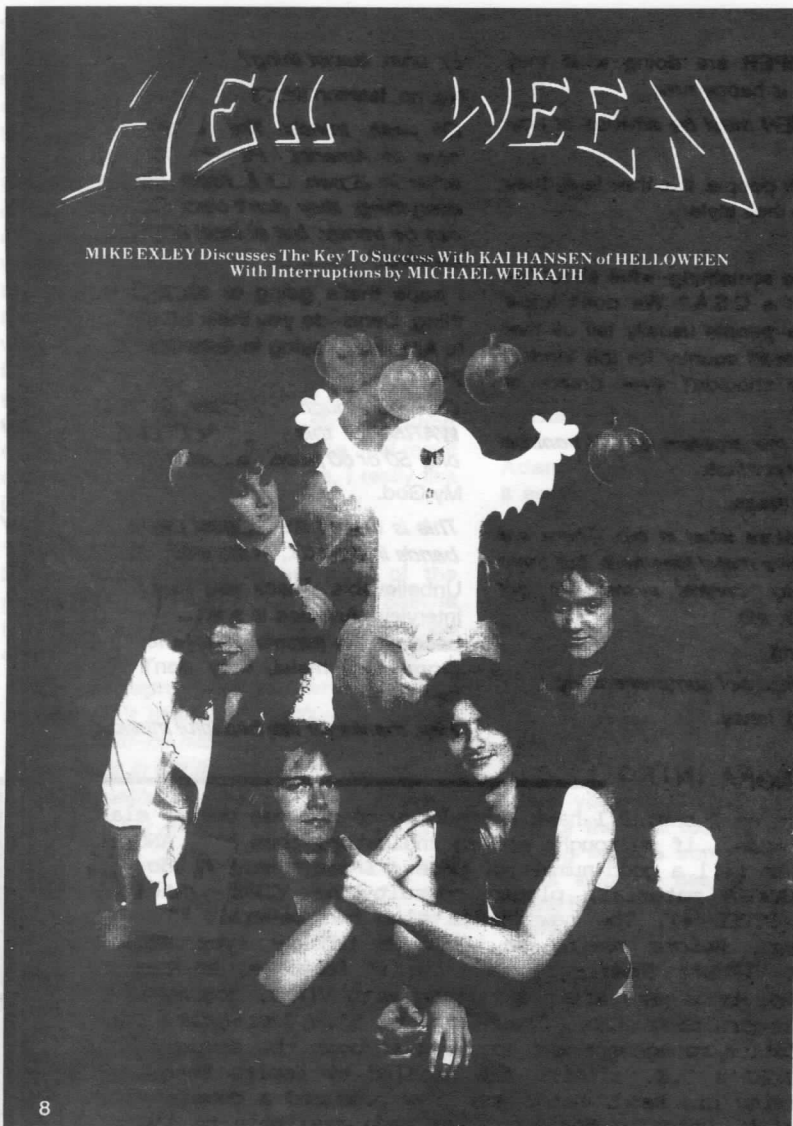
ANGRA INTRO

Where do I begin? I have a tendency to compose overly elaborate introductions...if my roughs are an indicator, then this ANGRA piece is going to fill a good number of pages. I don't want to do that! So for pre-ANGRA material, please consult the **VIPER** interview in **SENTINEL STEEL** #1. The newsletter also had several lines on the ANGRA camp. Before moving on, I have to say (yet again) how brilliant **VIPER**'s *Theatre of Fate* is; it features, as most of you know, **Andre Matos**--who, after splitting with **VIPER**, journeyed across Brazil, recruiting his 'Magnificent 5'. Immediate worldwide representation/management was acquired through the company known as L.M.P. ANGRA's U.S. affairs are handled by Empire Entertainment. After forming his band, **Matos** and crew produced a couple of demos, one of which, *Reaching Horizons*, was made available to the public. Capturing only the best elements of **DREAM THEATER**, **QUEENSRYPHE**, and **HELLOWEEN**, *Reaching Horizons* was (and continues to be) an astounding success. A deal was secured immediately in Japan, and *Angels Cry* was recorded in July, August, and September of 1993. Upon its release, the response was unbelievable--not only from the press but from metal fans alike. Not only in Japan, mind you, but also in the band's home of Brazil. With such critical acclaim, a European deal was secured shortly, with **Dream Circle Records/Polydor** in Germany (by the way, **JVC/Victor** handles the group in Japan, while **Eldorado/Sony** does the work in Brazil) being the winner. For the European release, ANGRA 'retouched' three tracks from their album ("*Carry On*", "*Angels Cry*", and "*Evil Warning*"), which were later released also for Japan, in the form of an EP, with a bonus track.

Now that you've got a brief look at the chronology of things, let me review the album *Angels Cry*. Ten for ten. A must have. Masterpiece. "*Carry On*" is the pinnacle of symphonic speed metal; "*Never Understand*" is, at print time, my favorite song--it cozes classical 'emotion', lush melodies, and, at times, speedy riffs. **Matos**' voice soars, drifts, and flies again, like a leaf caught in a wind. "*Never Understand*" is the **shortest** song you will hear that is 8 minutes long. It is so good...and ends too soon. The whole disc 'ends' too soon. *Angels Cry* is absolutely essential. My album for 1994, and one of the best, if not the best, of the 1990's. Let's turn to the future. Yes, things are confusing, as true to form, the Japanese (and the Europeans, and the South Americans) are ahead of us in this game. *Angels Cry* does not, incredible as it may seem, have a North American deal. Nonetheless, Empire Entertainment has made the disc available via mailorder in the U.S., as have a number of the better mailorder companies.

HELLOWEEN

MIKE EXLEY Discusses The Key To Success With KAI HANSEN of HELLOWEEN
With Interruptions by MICHAEL WEIKATH



8

HELLOWEEN
Helloween
(Noise Mini-LP)



HELLOWEEN were the pick of the bands that appeared on last year's "Death Metal" compilation, and have certainly come up with the goods on their debut mini-LP.

The twin lead guitar attack of Kai Hansen and Michael Weikath gives the band a slight MAIDENish feel, especially on "Starlight" and "Murderer" but the bands overall intense frenzied approach, results in HELLOWEEN being one of Germany's most exciting new bands.

"Warrior" is power metal at its best while the slow intro to "Cry For Freedom" soon makes way for an orgy of superb thrash. However the best track has to be the totally brilliant "Victim Of Fate" where the instrumentation is faultless.

So an excellent debut and all we want now is the full length album. Over to you Karl.

BERNARD DOE

HELLOWEEN



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Helloween..... The Albums.

-By Craig Hunter Wisnom

HELLOWEEN blazed onto the international recording scene in 1985, with a self-titled EP, and followed it at the end of 1985, with their first full length glory, *Walls of Jericho*. The next year they released *Judas* in the U.S., another EP. Luckily, for anyone with good enough taste to count these teutonic terrors in their personal metal pantheon, all three of these (except for the live tracks) have been re-released on one CD by Noise records. The import versions of this tremendous single disc even include the lyrics, (but, alas, the U.S. version doesn't).

As a whole, this early work was dazzlingly fresh and powerful. The guitar work by Kai Hansen and Michael Weikath was absolutely tremendous, melding a frenetic energy with tight control and beautiful sections of melody. Marcus Gro?kopf (Apparently Marcus has done a reverse Lew Alcindor or Cassius Clay and Americanized his letters; on the latest album he spells his name Grosskopf.) provided the vigorous bassline, and Ingo Schwichtenberg pounded out the generally manic drum beats, weaving together intricacy of rhythm with a relentlessly driving force. The music as a whole was exceptional, because it was undeniably aggressive and fast compared to most of the work produced by that time. Yet rather than lapsing into a sense of bludgeoning thrash, the music unmistakably retained its sense of pure heavy metal, chaos that was always firmly in control and exceptionally musical. The early lyrics ranged from the charmingly immature style of "Metal Invaders", "Reptile", and "Heavy Metal is the Law", to the presciently inspirational "Ride the Sky" and the striking "How Many Tears."

Hansen also provided the vocal work on this early work, and his singing was a bit inconsistent, at some points rather strained and rambling. But he also was capable of some absolutely brilliant moments, with piercing cries like the chorus of "Ride the Sky" that drove through the soul and called Denis' patented squirrels in from the next national border. As a whole, this early work was an example of tremendous heavy metal, pure and traditional, yet completely original.

In 1986 they followed up *Walls of Jericho* with *Judas*, released as a three song single in Europe consisting of the title track and two live songs. In America it was released as an EP with two additional tracks from the first mini-LP. "Judas" was the only original song on it, a blistering mix of precisely hammered aggression and distinctive melody. Lyrically, the song compared the insouciant crimes of modern government to the betrayal of Christ for money, although not quite as skillfully as their later lyrics would mix such imagery.

In 1987, the band teamed up with a full-time vocalist, Michael Kiske, a singer in the style of Geoff Tate, and, in doing so, set out to create what I consider one of the greatest metal albums ever, *Keeper of the Seven Keys I*. Kiske's vocals had the power and range of Kai

ANDREA...
NEWS

MANIACS IN JAPAN

at his best, but his voice was far more consistent throughout all the songs, able to sing resonantly and passionately on the ballads and still tear through the ceiling with shrieks of steel on the heavier tracks. The instrumental work only got better, tempering the all out aggressiveness of *Walls* with more diversity in the songs that only made the faster sections more effective. The leads were simply inspirational, soaring and melodic, yet ripped out with a dynamic, precise speed. Hansen and Weikath's guitar work magnificently blended the classical playfulness of **Ritchie Blackmore** at his best, with the cleanest metal aggression and tandem interplay of **Tipton** and **Downing** at their purest. Lyrically, the band projected a new optimism, with songs of hope like "Future World" and "I'm Alive" (which showed how much incredible music you can put into a song under 4 minutes long). As a contrast the album also included the blistering "Twilight of the Gods" which used the Wagnerian symbolism of Gottadamerung to visualize the personality of nuclear annihilation. The masterpiece of the album, and in my opinion, one of the masterpieces of human creation, was "Halloween", a 13+ minute epic transforming this Germanic quintet's favorite holiday into an eclipsing combination of Peanuts characters, terror, evil, and hope. The music covered the band's entire range, and featured one of the great guitar solos of all time, highlighting 'Ween's classical influence with a deliciously playful version of Brahms's Hungarian Dance. The album to me was not only magnificent in any objective ways I could describe, but it came together with a sensational magic.

Keeper of the Seven Keys II followed the next year, featuring all the elements of *Keeper I*, but adding a bit more playfulness with tunes like "Rise and Fall" and "Dr.Stein". "Eagle Fly Free" continued the tradition of soaring, up-tempo **HELLOWEEN** like "I'm Alive", and "Keeper of the Seven Keys" provided another 13 minute epic in a fantasy motif. Kai Hansen left the band after this album, to form **GAMMA RAY**, which continued tremendous music in the **HELLOWEEN** mold.

In 1991, **HELLOWEEN** released a superb greatest hits collection, *The Best, The Rest, and The Rare*. It was over 70 minutes long, and included both of their ostentatious epics. It was nice because, unlike most greatest hits collections, it included all the lyrics, and featured some truly rare tracks. Included in these were "Ride the Sky" and "Judas" from their second and third offerings, respectively, and a rerecording of "Victim of Fate" from the mini-LP with Michael Kiske now doing the vocals. Also included were "Don't Run for Cover", "Savage", and the playful "Livin' Ain't No Crime", all of which were previously only on singles from *Keeper II*. The songs may not have all been those that I would have chosen to round out this album, but it was nevertheless a disc worth buying for both initiates and long-time fans alike.

In the studio, **HELLOWEEN** had replaced Hansen with **Roland Grapow**, and released *Pink Bubbles Go Ape* in 1991. The guitar work didn't seem to suffer, as it was still breathtaking, even if without the ultimate



HELLOWEEN KEEPERS LIVE

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 We Got The Right / I Want Out / How Many
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HELLOWEEN

exhilaration of *Keeper I*. The album featured classic metal anthems like "Kids of the Century" and "Number One", more playful numbers like "Heavy Metal Hamsters", and the best kind of melodic metal chorus that drips with sugary steel in "The Chance." On "Mankind", the band touched a new height of emotion in lament for the sins of the human animal. Michael Kiske's voice reached new heights as well on songs like this, reminiscent of the magical soaring of *John Arch* in the way it sounded like his soul was straining into each ascendant note.

Chameleon was the band's next album, released in 1993. The work was their biggest departure to that date, and I think it disappointed a lot of fans. Looking on the album as a whole, I still think it's a wonderful album, but I agree it doesn't quite measure up to their earlier work. Some were disappointed in the band's commercial accessibility on songs like "Windmill" and "I Don't Wanna Cry No More." But although these songs were vastly more able to be appreciated by non-metal fans than anything on *Walls*, they were also truly beautiful songs. Kiske's soothing, rich vocals combined with lush melodies to create wonderful, moving ballads. The all out frenzy of their earlier aggressiveness did seem pretty much gone, with mawkishly lyric-ed "The First Time" being basically the heaviest track on the album. Their playful side was emphasized in songs like "Crazy Cat", while "When the Sinner" had a truly different sound to it, with its horn section and bouncy chorus. "I Believe" highlighted the band's Christian beliefs and sounded closest to their earlier works. All in all, *Chameleon* on its own was an enjoyable, original album. It just can't stand up in comparison to their earlier works, and was more an example of masterfully crafted hard rock than pure power metal.

Master of the Rings, released in 1994, retreats away from the mellowness of *Chameleon* and returns more to the style the band had somewhere between *Walls* and *Pink Bubbles...* to a certain degree. Michael Kiske has departed the band and has been replaced by *Andi Deris*, who does a good job, but sounds more like *Paul Dianno* than he does Hansen or Kiske. Ingo (How many drummers can you name whose first name ends in ...ingo? Coincidence?) has been replaced by *Uli Kusch*, who does a great job similar in style to the *Keeper I* and *II* drumbeats, complex and intricate, yet driving and forceful. The best of the album are its heavier songs like "Sole Survivor", "The Game Is On", "Where the Rain Grows", and "Still We Go", which bring together aggressiveness combined with wonderful melodies and strong songwriting that makes them an absolute joy to listen to. The production on these numbers also seems toned to make them sound as heavy as possible, and that's a nice touch, even if the music itself is still not as heavy as anything on *Walls*. I still prefer Kiske's vocals, but these are great songs in the suddenly rare vein of pure heavy metal. But "Mr. Ego" and "Perfect Gentlemen" begin the descent of this album, with songs that still have strong songwriting and performance, but just begin to sound closer and closer to more

commercial hard rock numbers than the noble elegance of *HELLOWEEN*'s best work. Songs like "In The Middle of A Heartbeat" start to sound more and more commercial, and in this case they don't even have the rich beauty of *Chameleon*'s similar numbers.

Lyricaly, the band starts out with an approach which feels closer, at least in subject matter, to their earlier work. The lyric sheet begins with a wonderfully *Helloweenesque* tale about the Master of the Rings, with even more fantasy indulgence than they've allowed themselves before. But unfortunately, there isn't any epic tune accompanying it, or any actual relevance to any of the songs on the album. There are other serious songs, like "Sole Survivor", about the survivor of apparent nuclear devastation. "Why?" is a great anthem, which juxtaposes the classical tragic questioning of pain on this earth with what seems like Christian belief. But the lyrics seem to start falling off at the same point the music does, until we are left with lines like "*Ding by ding, can you ding my dong/It may come short but it might come long/Limb by limb you're climbing my tree/Making things more fun for me.*" This quote from "Secret Alibi" makes the *Walls of Jericho* lyrics look like Walkyier-penned-libretto by comparison.

Overall, *Master of the Rings* is a great album, that delicate blend of memorable, infectious melodies, and energetic, powerful metal. And that's the way it must be evaluated, because the classic glory of *Keeper* and *Walls* hasn't been equalled (But how could that be expected?). It also definitely has some weak and decidedly cheesy spots that the band has never quite descended to before. But it's still pure metal at its core. These days, that's a wonderful find in contrast to the grunge, death, and industrial onslaught that dominates the American metal market. *Master* has reportedly been selling phenomenally in Europe and Japan, so hopefully it can find its way towards an American release soon, and perchance even meet some commercial success here as well. And maybe, just maybe, American record companies can be persuaded to sign and release some of the great traditional power metal available in Japan and Europe...Well lastly, and most importantly, the lyric sheet to *Master of the Rings* is again rife with the obligatory cartoons, and if one is very careful to always spell the band with an "e" and the song with an "a", you might even see a pumpkin! (In addition to avoiding that dread punitive transformation into a stale, half-priced pumpkin!) Keep following the sign.... (END)

HELLOWEEN Keeper Of The Seven Keys Part 1 (Noise)



It was way back in MFS in my review of Noise's "Death Metal" compilation that I predicted major success for *HELLOWEEN*. Well with this album, their follow-up to the excellent "Walls of Jericho", it looks as though *HELLOWEEN* are on the verge of breaking into the big time. But unfortunately, for me at least, the band have had to change style quite dramatically to achieve that success.

So have *HELLOWEEN* sold out? Well not exactly, but the band have always hated the "speed metal" tag that I seem to of handicapped them with in past reviews and they have certainly tried their hardest here to veer away from the speed approach to a more pedestrian and more accessible sound.

Fortunately the speed element hasn't vanished entirely from *HELLOWEEN*'s music as the first track proper, "I'm Alive", shows, but overall the album has a much more polished sound that lacks the raw edge that made "Walls Of Jericho" such a powerful release.

The talents of co-producer Tommy Hansen came to everybody's attention on *PRETTY MAIDS* "Red, Hot And Heavy" album where he was responsible for adding some nice touches to already strong material. With *HELLOWEEN* he's done pretty much the same thing, although I must say that there's a few ideas here that have already been used on the *MAIDS* epic. For instance the choir-like atmospheric intro to "I'm Alive" is almost a deadringer for *MAIDS* "Queen Of Dreams". And what about that distinctive riffing sound that can be heard on tracks like "Twilight Of The Gods", who does it remind you of? Yep, that's right - *PRETTY MAIDS*!

Anyway enough of these irrelevant technicalities, what about the rest of the album? Well, "Little Time" has a fairly catchy medium-paced riff but I'm afraid I cringe at the *STYX*-like harmony backing vocals, while the aforementioned "Twilight Of The Gods" races along quite happily and highlights the strong Geoff Tate cloning of new vocalist Michael Kiske.

The final track on side one "A Tale That Wasn't Right" is the first ballad that *HELLOWEEN* have put onto vinyl and if this is anything to go by then it will hopefully be their last - totally abysmal.

Side two opener "Future World" (yet more *PRETTY MAIDS* connections in the title) isn't much better. The track is the kind of boppy pop metal that you'd expect to find on *PRIEST*'s "Turbo" album, which breaks into a pathetic sing-a-long at the end.

All is not lost though, for next up is a 13 minute epic in the shape of "Halloween". This is literally the saving grace on a generally disappointing album and displays the bands talent to the max. The twin guitar soloing of Michael Weikath and Kai Hansen is immense whilst the whole complexity of this piece de resistance is held together by the dynamic rhythm section of Ingo Schwichtenberg (drums) and Markus Großkopf who is undoubtedly one of metal's finest bass players.

The album ends with "Follow The Sign", a haunting outro which sets the mood for "Keeper Of The Seven Keys" part two, which is due for release in a couple of months.

With this album *HELLOWEEN* are sure to loose a lot of fans, but at the same time will probably gain three times as many which will certainly make "Keeper Of The Seven Keys" part one, the bands most successful release to date, so good luck to them.

As for me, well I certainly acknowledge that all bands have to progress musically, but, even though this album is quite commendable, sometimes those changes are a little hard to accept, so at the moment I'm kinda sitting on the fence in the hope that Part Two will rekindle some of the power and aggression from past glories. Time will tell.

BERNARD DOE



RUSTY REVIEWS FROM MANIC REACTION

HELLOWEEN • *Walls of Jericho*

I vividly remember the day. We were living in Turkey at the time. City of Izmir, to be exact. My Dad's job took the family to many an exotic place.

Anyways, I was into metal—just getting into the heavier bands, like Metallica, Megadeth, Metal Church, etc. I was getting into new territory, and began aggressively to look for new groups to check into. But in Turkey, the pickings were poor. Record stores in this nation were not really "stores" at all—they just had one copy of a release—and sold cassette copies of the vinyl. No CD's. No pre-recorded tapes. Just look at the album covers in the window, pick a band you want, and place your order. For several bucks, and a 2-4 day wait, one could get a hi-fi recording of an album.

Making my rounds one day, I spotted a Slayer cover in a store window. I had heard great things about Slayer. So I walked into the place and asked for a copy job. For side two (it was a 90 minute blank tape) I requested something like W.A.S.P. or Malmsteen. The dealer (who knew me) insisted on taping something else for side two. The cover, poorly airbrushed, sported a giant, robed monster, in the act of toppling the walls of some castle. The name: Helloween—*Walls of Jericho*. "No, no," I insisted, "I want what I wrote down." But I finally gave in, after he promised he would tape over Helloween if I had a problem with it. "Just tape the Slayer on side one, OK?"

Several days later I returned to the store, picked up the tape, and walked back to the ferry station, to take the boat home. It was a hot, tiring day, and I fell into my seat with relief, took out my Walkman and looked at the tape. The bastard! Slayer was on side two! Now I'd have to sit through Helloween! (I was thrifty—fast-forwarding would've eaten up the batteries). So I just pressed play and sat back. A classical piece, entitled "Walls of Jerich" eased my aching body. All of a sudden a burst of speed and a wall of sound jumped at me with great force! "Ride the Sky" had my head moving. I could not believe how good the thundering symphony of a chorus was. The singer, raspy as his lungs were, had the ability to soar with the relentless, dueling guitarwork. The music was devastatingly heavy and fast, yet at the same time had the melodic touch of Iron Maiden. "Reptile" and "Guardians" stormed through, followed by "Phantoms of Death"—the greatest song ever composed. Its 6 minutes and 34 seconds have everything: hooks, memorable riffs, brilliant chorus, catchiness, and the greatest "solo's" section ever. Again, the smothered production and keyboard work in the background aided this massive tune, bringing it to a thick, orchestra-like proportion. I must have hyperventilated in that ferryboat! Next up is the speed fest of "Metal Invaders"; the staggering "Gorgar"; pseudo-live "Heavy Metal"; and the album *Walls of Jericho* closes with the epic "How Many Tears". I arrived to my boat station nearly lifeless.

I have never experienced anything like that since. Oh, "perfect" albums have been heard/treasured. But I've never encountered an album that gave me the feeling that *Walls of Jericho* did. What of Slayer on side two? In a few days, I had them taped over! —Denise—

CHROMING ROSE • *Pressure* (EMI/Electrola)

Worshippers of Helloween on their first two releases, Chroming Rose opted for a change on their third. The German group hired Flemming Rasmussen (Metallica, Artillery) to produce; on *Pressure* he beefed up their sound and virtually eliminated the speedy rhythms. Crossing over from heavy rock/metal to more powerful offerings, Chroming Rose should appeal to listeners of Helloween, Accept, and King Diamond. The riffs are thicker, but the vocals and guitar leads still retain that Germanic flavor. Catchy songs are plentiful, as "Skyline of the World" and "Temple of Shelter" particularly stand out. Not available in the U.S., *Pressure* may be hard to find, but worth looking for. —Denise—

ICED EARTH • *Night of the Stormrider* (Century Media)

Best known for its Death metal, Florida has been spewing out more of that kinda stuff than some could care for. Morrisound studios...home of Scott "Putrid Death" Burns...yes; constantly booked with raging death bands...yes; but out of the despair and gloom (not to mention the humidity!)...comes Iced Earth; with Tom "Who is Scotty Burns?" Morris twisting the knobs. Right now, Iced Earth are the greatest metal band in the U.S. of A.

No it's, and's, or but's. The demo *Enter the Realm* showed hints—the first release, simply titled *Iced Earth*, had clear indications of greatness—and now, the awesome *Night of the Stormrider*—a masterpiece of no frills, razor riffs; brilliant choruses; atmosphere, power; a textbook of metal played with aggression and heart. No filler, no ballads—just seven songs, unrelenting, pilediving...nothing stands in the path of Iced Earth.

The impact of the music is immediate. Because of the numerous time changes and unorthodox song structuring, Iced Earth has a sound that does not wear on the listener. Names like Artillery, Metallica, Iron Maiden, Helstar, Sabbath, Judas Priest, etc., could be thrown about as for what they sound like, but this five piece does its own thing.

The past few years, (non-crossover) metal has been losing its favor. Boredom and broadening tastes have paved the way for this glam, death, funk, industrial, etc., trendy crossover stuff. For a while, I was even starting to think, "Is there anything left to play in the straight ahead, power metal genre?" Yes there IS! Watch out, you crossover crudlings!! The metal throne is about to be usurped—let the icing of the Earth begin!!! —Denise—

YNGWIE MALMSTEEN • *Fire and Ice* (Elektra)

Except for the rapid thrill-ride of "Forever is a Long Time" and "No Mercy", plus possibly the Wagneresque "Final Curtain", this album is avoidable. There are 14 tracks, 11 of which are too commercial or go for the heavy, snail's pace riff. Malmsteen's production skills have improved, though. Sad to say, but *Odyssey* has the best sound — and Malmsteen didn't work the boards. —Denise—

UNLEASHED POWER • *Quintet of Spheres*

Unleashed Power, led by guitarist Ken Jacobsen, [see interview in this issue] evolved from the Denmark-based band Avalon. Singer John Mathias appeared on the Avalon demo, then skipped U.P.'s demo tape (also titled *Quintet of Spheres*). But Mathias returned to record with Jacobsen for this full length CD. I'm glad he's back, as his voice is better suited to the progressive/ techno sound, compared to the former U.P. singer's coarse throat.

After programming out the 12-minute, overlong, over-pretentious hot aired six-part title cut that sits right in the middle of the disc, what we've got left is a very respectable 44 minutes of fine music. There is a great cross section of material, from 80's Avalon tunes to newer, more technical work. Like with Donor's *Triangle of the Lost* (reviewed elsewhere), it's fun to see how a band develops.

Riffs change in timbre from song to song; Jacobsen successfully switches styles often, going from speedy riffs ("Unleashed Power") to a neo-techno sound ("It's About Hypocrites"). The production could've been fuller, with more bottom, but overall Q.O.S. is quality listening. Unleashed Power are not blatant when showing off their influences. Whenever I get in the mood for something original, I seem to be turning to this *Quintet of Spheres* CD. —Denise—

DONOR • *Triangle of the Lost* (Mausoleum)

Found in a used CD bin in NYC (Venus Records, in St. Marks), I persuaded the store clerk to play some of this *Triangle of the Lost*. Never heard of Donor before, but their record label caught my interest: Mausoleum. The Europe based Mausoleum Records released tons of vinyl in the early/mid eighties, kinda like the overseas equivalent of our Metal Blade. Mausoleum went under, but have now resurfaced in the early nineties. Anyway, the clerk pressed 'play', and I tuned into some happening stuff—Geddy Lee-type vocals backed by frenetic picking and inventive drumming. I bought the disc on the spot.

The CD booklet's bio on Donor sums up their sound well: "Donor's music is a blend of progressive metal with a definite thrash oriented live approach." The release is actually a 5 track EP, with 5 bonus cuts culled from their *Inexplicable Knowledge* demo. The demo tunes are less progressive but catchier/specdier than the newer tracks. But taken as a whole, T.O.T.L. is a complete album. Vintage Rush played on 45 speed...yeah, that sounds good. Damn, another CD that missed my Top 5 of '92. —Denise—

IRON MAIDEN • *Fear of the Dark* (Epic)

Wham BAM!! "Be Quick or Be Dead" opens the new MAIDEN and we're off to a fast start. Their best, most aggressive single since "The Trooper" many years back. Unfortunately, "Be Quick..." is not a good indicator of how the rest of *Fear of the Dark* shall turn out at all.

Like in *No Prayer for the Dying*, Iron Maiden continue to show off their rock oriented roots. The group seems to be shying away from the distinct "Eurometal" sounds of *A Seventh Son of a Seventh Son*. But a lot of this new, rockier material is pretty weak. From *No Prayer*, for instance: cuts like "The Assassin" and "Bring Your Daughter to the Slaughter" were pathetic. *Fear of the Dark* has similar misses—the Zeppelinish "Fear is the Key"; the very AC/DC-like "Weekend Warrior", and "Chains of Misery" with its "the whole gang's here" style chorus. The good stuff is exceptional; check out the eerie, hypnotic "Afraid to Shoot Strangers" and the educational "Judas Be My Guide". But the bottom line...for the second album in a row, the average songs tend to outweigh the prime Maiden tracks.

Iron Maiden are beginning to sound tired—perhaps showing their age. It has been two so-so discs since the peak of *A Seventh Son*...and I think things need shaking up in the Maiden camp. Instead of giving us 12 songs, the group should have streamlined *Fear Of*...with a more impact prone 8 or 9 cuts. Y'know something with a little more direction; both *NPTD* and *FOTD* came across as choppy and uneven. *A Seventh Son*, on the other hand, was short at only 45 minutes (or so) for a Maiden release; yet from beginning to end it was a masterpiece.

So, if you are a diehard Iron Maiden listener (as I), you will probably treat *Fear of the Dark* as "Maiden '92" and listen to it when in the mood. If you did not like *No Prayer*, approach this new disc with caution. And finally, if you, the reader, are a little wet behind the ears when it comes to metal...well, get *A Seventh Son of A Seventh Son* or try *Live After Death* for the best stuff. —Denise—

CIRITH UNGOL • *Paradise Lost* (Restless Records)

What a comeback album! It's been, what, six years since *One Foot in Hell* was released. Considering that Cirith Ungol was never a household name in metal, it's amazing that Tim Baker and crew didn't just fade away while in limbo. Remaining with vocalist Baker is drummer Robert Garven; new blood includes Jim Barraza on guitar and Vernon Green on bass. The nineties Ungol is several levels above its predecessor; gone is the horrible production and loose, lackadaisical songwriting. This unit is tight and knows what it is doing. *Paradise Lost* contains fast songs; doomy songs; gargly vocals, smooth vocals; cruncy riffs, fluid melodies; fantaswy lyrics and lyrics dealing with topical issues. Cirith Ungol is never going to get praise for being original—but that is not what the group is trying to do. Straightforward, in-your-face-metal is what Ungol plays.

"Join the Legion", now the official Ungol anthem, sports a simple, catchy riff that will dance around your head once you hear it. "Fire" is the quartet at their heaviest, with great bottom end and an excellent chorus. Heads and shoulders above the old material is "Heaven Help Us". The cut contains intelligent lyrics and an off-speed galloping rhythm. And Baker's voice—when I first heard his singing, real singing, I could not believe it. Now I know what happened during the six years...there's six more top-notch tunes to get into, including the title track at the end.

A fine return by Cirith Ungol—though not "spectacular", it's just some real good power metal. I am eagerly awaiting a follow-up...hopefully within the next six years, if possible. Recognition should also go out to Restless Records, who have been releasing some fine "Real Metal" albums over the past couple of years. And lastly, I need to mention Cirith Ungol's cover art. All four of their albums have featured paintings by the brilliant Michael Whelan. Buying the CD just for the cover alone would be...well, maybe not this time—I think the music outdid the art, for once. —Denise—

New Sodom Rams The Music Home

SODOM • *Tapping the Vein* (Steamhammer/ Century Media)

Tapping the Vein is a monstrous thrash album, and a convincing one at that. Simply put, the fast parts blaze by, and the heavy sections just devastate. Demolition Hammer [reviewed in last issue] come close in general attack, but Sodom uses the smarter tactics. The German trio writes the better tune, and knows when to keep a good idea going, instead of trying to be too self-indulgent with the time changes/technicality.

"Body Parts" and "Skinned Alive" are short, brutal excursions in death/thrash. "One Step Over the Line" is one of the brilliant heavies, with Tom Angelripper's voice a tad clearer in presentation. Another speed tune, "Deadline" reminded me of Dark Angel. "Bullet in the Head" and side two's extra track "Wachturn" (sung in German!) are thrashy punkcore—infectiously delivered. Last track on side one (and one of my faves) is "The Cripper". It takes Priest's "The Ripper" and hyperspeeds it up, adding gargly vocals and a cool, creepy riff. Shattering kneecaps was never so much fun!

Flip the cassette over (which, by the way, seems to have been dubbed overload, to the point of distortion—get the CD instead), and after "Wachturn" comes "Tapping the Vein". This, the title cut, shows how far Sodom has come. Remember, they were once the joke of the metal scene—and now listen to 'em! The titanic opening section (for a threesome, they are sooooo heavy) leads into a ferociously paced verse, which then slams into a hell of a chorus. Sodom closes the song the same way they started it—with that oppressively massive riff. Whew! "Back to War" is pure thrash; "Hunting Party", like "Deadline", is decent but may be too fast for its own good. But the epic "Reincarnation" brings things back to life. The song captures the best of Bathory (*Hammerheart*) with some of Candlemass' melody and Winter's grungy doom. Again this closing cut indicates how much Herra Witchhunter and Angelripper (with new axeman Tony Brings) have grown. And Harris Johns can't be forgotten, as I'm sure he can be considered Sodom's fourth member, albeit in the studio. —Denise—

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