

edge of time

progressive metal, black/death metal, gothic and beyond

ISSUE #15

Agent Steel
Babylon Whores
Borknagar
Digital Ruin
Enchant/Xen
Nocturnus
Opeth
Pain of Salvation
Spiral Architect
Stratovarius

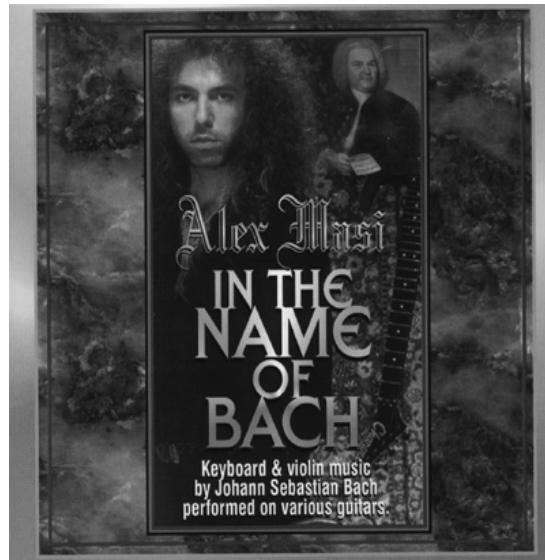
Arabesque
Chiaroscuro
Darshan
Darkstar
Evil Wings
Fatal Opera
Fly Machine
Fountain of Tears
Jacobs Dream
Martyr
Mayadome
Monster Records
Murder of Angels
Symmetry
WE
Winterhawk



Lion Music Presents:

MATTSSON - Another Dimension

NEW PROGRESSIVE METAL RELEASE FROM GUITARIST LARS ERIC MATTSSON.
FEATURING THE GUESTS PÄR LINDH, ERIK NORLANDER, PATRICK RONDAT, ROB JOHNSON.
VOCALS BY BJORN LODIN.
14 TRACKS - OVER 70 MINUTES.



Alex Masi - In the Name of Bach

THE GRAMMY NOMINATED GUITAR MASTER RETURNS WITH AN AMAZING COLLECTION OF MUSIC
COMPOSED BY J S BACH PERFORMED ON ACOUSTIC AND ELECTRIC GUITARS. A MUST
HAVE FOR ALL TRUE FANS OF GUITAR MUSIC.
15 TRACKS - INCLUDING THE 2 BONUS TRACKS.



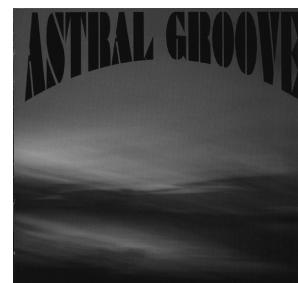
LARS ERIC MATTSSON
OBSESSION



LARS ERIC MATTSSON
ELECTRIC WOODOO



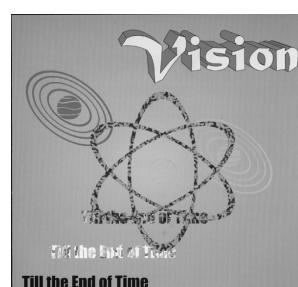
LARS ERIC MATTSSON
NO SURRENDER



ASTRAL GROOVE
ASTRAL GROOVE



All CD's are \$15 - No Checks please!
send payment to:
Lion Music
Stromsangarna 22 410 Godby Aland, FINLAND



OR BUY AT THE WEB

WWW.LIONMUSIC.COM

INFO@LIONMUSIC.COM

Lion Music

Progressive metal
hard rock label

playlists:

- Alban Schmid (AS)
 1. Spiral Architect "A Sceptic's Universe"
 2. Control Denied "The Fragile Art of Existence"
 3. Dream Theater "Scenes From a Memory"
 4. Wuthering Heights "Within"
 5. Therion "Deggial"
 6. Forbidden "Twisted into Form"
 7. Anacrusis "Screams and Whispers"
 8. Vitalij Kuprij "VK3"
 9. Greg Howe "Ascent"
 10. Kenziner "The Prophecies"

- Audrius Ozalas (AO)
 1. Death In June "Take Care & Control"
 2. Tiamat "Skeleton Skeleton"
 3. Katatonia "Tonight's Decision"
 4. Ataraxia "Lost Atlantis"
 5. Babylon Whores "King Fear"
 6. In The Woods... "Three Times 7 On..."
 7. Somewhere In Europe "Gestures"
 8. Samael "Eternal"
 9. The Atomic Bitchwax "The Atomic Bitchwax"
 10. A Murder of Angels "While You Sleep"

- Christian Rademaker (CR)
 1. Spiral Architect "A Sceptic's Universe"
 2. Martyr "Warpzone"
 3. Silent Exile "Dancing with Death"
 4. Aghora "Aghora"
 5. Symmetry "Watching the Unseen"
 6. Atrox "Contentum"
 7. Misanthrope "Visionaire" & "Libertine..."
 8. Opeth "Still Life"
 9. Alchemist "Spiritech"
 10. Saviour Machine "Legend Part II"



- Giedrius Slivinskas (GS)
 1. Anathema "Judgement"
 2. Spiral Architect "A Sceptic's Universe"
 3. Digital Ruin "Dwelling in the Out"
 4. Solefeld "Neonism"
 5. Aghora "Aghora"
 6. Steel Prophet "Messiah"
 7. Behind The Curtain "Till Birth Do Us Part"
 8. Pain of Salvation "One Hour"
 9. Opeth "Still Life"
 10. Darkstar "Heart of Darkness"

- Gregorio Martin (GM)
 1. Nevermore "Dreaming Neon Black"
 2. Dream Theater "Scenes From a Memory"
 3. Vinnie Moore "The Maze"
 4. Artension "Machine"
 5. Vitalij Kuprij "VK3"/"1st Album"
 6. Kamelot "The Fourth Legacy"
 7. Digital Ruin "Dwelling in the Out"
 8. Pink Cream 69 "Sonic Dynamite"
 9. Royal Hunt "Fear"
 10. Tierra Santa "Legendaro"

- James Sloane (JS)
 1. Therion "Deggial"
 2. Haggard "Awaking the Centuries"
 3. Marillion "Misplaced Childhood"
 4. Elend "Les Tenebres du Dehors"
 5. Summoning "Nighthshade Forests"
 6. Ashes to Ashes "Shapes of Spirits"
 7. King Crimson "In the Wake of Poseidon"
 8. Orphaned Land "Sahara"
 9. Gentle Giant "Octopus"
 10. Black Tape for a Blue Girl "As One Aflame
 Laid Bare by Desire"

- Sigitas Velyvis (SV)
 1. VAST "Visual Audio Sensory Theater"
 2. The Tea Party "TRIPtich"
 3. Anathema "Judgement/Alternative 4"
 4. Pain of Salvation all
 5. Stabbing Westward "Darkest Days"
 6. Crimson Glory "Astronomica"
 7. Masters Of Reality "Welcome to the..."
 8. Dream Theater "Scenes From a Memory"
 9. WE all
 10. Megadeth "Risk"



[contact information, credits:](#)

Website:
<http://www.mindcage.com/edge/>

Editor:
 Giedrius Slivinskas
 Sofievej 170
 9000 Aalborg
 Denmark
giedrius@cs.auc.dk

Writers:
 Alban Schmid
 Rue du Simplon 29
 CH-1800 Vevey
 Switzerland
alban@urbanet.ch

Audrius Ozalas
 PO Box 2309
 2300 Vilnius
 Lithuania
audrius.ozalas@kf.vu.lt

Christian Rademaker
 Franse Baan 564
 5627 RC Eindhoven
 The Netherlands
c.w.rademaker@philips.com

Gregorio Martin Gonzalez
 Ctra. De Boadilla 64 3-B
 Majadahonda, 28220 Madrid
 Spain
parallels@bigfoot.com

James Sloane
 8445 Indigo Sky Way
 Las Vegas, NV 89129
 USA
gilean@netcom.com

Sigitas Velyvis
 PO Box 471
 2007 Vilnius
 Lithuania
sigitas.velyvis@flf.vu.lt

Layout:
 Giedrius Slivinskas

Credits:
 Elonas Kvietkus
 [image on the front cover and on this page]
 Terhi Keskitalo
 [Stratovarius interview]
 Mike Clift
 [illustrations for this page and for the San Diego article]
 Thorsteinn Kolbeinsson
 [some proofreading]
 Vangelis Ntousakis
 [the eye on the front cover]

Promotional material:
 The main contact addresses are those of Audrius Ozalas and Sigitas Velyvis, but you can send promotional material to any of the above-given addresses.

Time again for a ramble in metal dimensions and, since our goal is to focus on positive points, now I want to pay your attention to the diversity of current heavy music scene and how widely it has expanded in the last decade. While the late 80s and early 90s were pretty much single-minded and very explicit years - you



editorial

had to like exclusively one genre at one point in time, be it heavy metal, thrash metal, or death metal - now it's totally cool to like Borknagar, Rhapsody, Iron Maiden, and Pain of Salvation altogether. Cross-breeding between different styles is widely accepted now and perhaps essential if you want to create something new. The increasing tolerance makes current trends of folk black metal or power metal not too frightening, since there is still a lot of what we can choose from. The only bad part is that indie record labels are not very adventurous in exploring innovative styles, when, say, 1993 was an experimental year with Cynic "Focus," Pestilence "Spheres," Anacrusis "Screams and Whispers" testing new grounds. The marketing considerations of label exec's leave adventurous bands with a (not so bad) option of releasing album independently, posting MP3 files on the web, and with a little luck selling 1,000 to 3,000 copies.

The current years will also be remembered in the history because of their "wow, the internet is great!" attitude. Reading underground fanzines five years ago, I could not imagine that one day it would be so

easy to get information about Death Angel, Steel Prophet, Heir Apparent, or My-Favorite-Band-Of-Late-80s-Obscure-Metal. The internet's use of getting your musical product to potential buyers is clear without discussion, yet a side effect is that the aureole of mysticism around underground music is not so thick anymore because of tremendous quantity of information at almost no price. This is actually what we all have wanted back in the early/mid 90s, but now I am not that excited to go around and visit thousands of similar web pages. Hopefully, I will find peace with myself on this point when the time comes for the next editorial.

This is the 15th issue of Edge of Time and it is certainly a small jubilee if not a milestone, so get yourself a drink before proceeding to the next pages. The last couple of issues together with this one represent the direction in which we are going, namely focusing on different progressive and atmospheric metal. Currently, we have both the printed magazine and the web site going, trying to take advantages of the interactive nature of the internet and the more relaxed feel of the actual paper. As it looks now, we will continue to do both until (and if) the internet will be the only way to the stars; so far, people say that the usage of paper in offices did not decrease due to the internet.

Thought-provoking or just plain, metal can be found everywhere in the following pages. We hope you will enjoy our selection of known and obscure bands. And I hope you know what to do with those irons.

Giedrius Slivinskas

index:

Agent Steel	42
Arabesque	74
Babylon Whores	54
Borknagar	56
Chiaroscuro	32
Darkstar	46
Darshan	78
Digital Ruin	11
Enchant/Xen	27
Evil Wings	34
Fatal Opera	82
Fly Machine	58
Fountain of Tears	25
Jacobs Dream	83
Martyr	44
Mayadome	40
Monster Records	64
Murder of Angels	72
Nocturnus	14
Opeth	8
Pain of Salvation	4
Spiral Architect	19
Stratovarius	84
Symmetry	16
WE	77
Winterhawk	80





[by Giedrius Slivinskas, Christian Rademaker, and Sigitas Velyvis]



PAIN OF SALVATION

Drugfree Mindtrips and Tricks

THE PHONE INTERVIEW WITH DANIEL

Tell me some words about the band's history.

I formed the band called Reality when I was about 11 years old. It developed into Pain Of Salvation with time. About 1990 or 1991 our line-up was something that could be called Pain Of Salvation. We took that name because at that moment I was really tired of the name Reality. Before the first album "Entropia," the keyboard player joined the band, but we had some different points of views with the guitarist Daniel, he didn't have the same kind of ambition that the rest of the band had. We had a kind of conflict before the second CD "One Hour," we felt that we should deal with this problem before the recordings of it, so that's why we changed the guitar player. I think it was a very good move. We're still friends with Daniel.

How did you contact the InsideOut label?

That was our Swedish management Roasting House who was contacting InsideOut. As we finished the recordings to "One Hour," they gave a copy to the label, and the people there replied in few hours only, they said: "It's a killer!"

Was "Entropia" a self-release?

It was originally released in Japan, actually. We had a Swedish management, but we didn't have a record company. We recorded "Entropia," and the management simply tried to sell our product to any label. But before our cooperation with Roasting House we already had contacts to a Japanese company, and they were interested in this release. We thought that we wouldn't wait for the European or the US labels answers, we released the album in Japan right away. When we recorded our second CD, we already had positive responses from every corner of the world. I think, we don't play that kind of trendy music, we're sure that our albums will not fade away after some years, it wouldn't matter if they were released in 1997 or 1999.

Tell me about the name of the band. Whose idea was it and why did you choose it?

That was my idea. Everything, that seems strange, is usually my idea. It was when I started music studies in the college here in Sweden, and I felt that we must change the name of the band. I wanted the name that not only sounded good but also would have a meaning. It's not religious, many people ask if it's religious. It means something like this: everything has a positive in a bad side. You have to have those black and white, good and bad, it's a kind of balance. Even if things look bad, you know that there is always a positive side to it.

What can you say about your studies at the University?

I studied Peacock, and later I started Radio Physics studies at the University. As I did my essay in Peacock, I felt that I want to learn more about

Our story on Pain of Salvation is nearly as complex as their music. Sigitas did an interview with them by phone, while me and Christian met them after their phenomenal and dedicated performance at ProgPower. The band conquered the hearts of many progressive metal fans in 1999, when both their albums, "Entropia" and "One Hour by the Concrete Lake" were released in Europe by Inside Out. Both were released earlier in Japan, but it was only last year, when the band toured Europe and got some recognition in the old continent. The complex, multi-part and multi-faced music of the band is not easy to grasp, and, for example, in the last issue of "Edge of Time," Christian wrote a good but not great review of "One Hour," giving it 4 points out of 5. Maybe that's why he was hesitant to enter the band's room backstage at ProgPower venue after their performance. I looked in and since the band members were eating, we arranged that we would meet after twenty minutes. Needless to say, we were floored by Pain of Salvation's stage performance and started to appreciate their music a helluva lot more than we did initially.



Of course, we showed up again, ready to give them the latest issue of "Edge of Time" just to show that we were in for some serious business. I thought that the best strategy would be to throw open cards about the damn review immediately. Both brothers, Daniel Gildenlow (lead vocals, guitar) and Kristoffer Gildenlow (bass player) didn't show their anger, and I doubt they had any, since they appeared to be very nice, humble, and friendly people.

GS: There is a review of your second album in it, which is a sort of good review, but not a great review...

Okay [laugh].

GS: But we were extremely impressed by your show today.

Thank you.

CR: I've heard before that your live shows were very good.

DG: Actually, we're not completely satisfied with the show.

CR & GS: Why?!

DG: I made some mistakes and my voice wasn't really good today. But the crowd was great.

CR: The crowd reception was unbelievable, because you were the only band that had a chance to do an encore. [The interview was done during a part of the Threshold show, and Threshold also played an encore.]

DG: I guess we could have made another one, but that was quite... I had to go.

CR: Well, I prefer a band that makes mistakes and really enjoys themselves, jumps a lot on stage. There was a lot of enthusiasm as opposed to the bands that are like robots on stage. I might as well watch a video or something.

GS: As far as I know, you have played live a lot. You were on a tour, weren't you?

DG: We were on a tour this March, and we were in Holland also. With Threshold and Eldritch. That was a great show in Uden [Holland], the audience was really great. We've been longing to get back.

CR: Why is the audience so receptive to your music then?

DG: I don't know. I think the main challenge is to actually make people listen to your music, because when they listen to it, it seems that they really like it. I know from shows that we've made in our home country, Sweden, where we played on festivals or shows that were not heavy-metal oriented. A lot of different music. The audience consisted of people listening to all different music and people listening only to the trendy pop music. They all would come forward and say, "Oh, I usually don't listen to heavy metal and hard rock, but this is great!" Old ladies even...



GS: I find it amazing that your music is so complex and has many parts, but people like it a lot. Usually it's different with those complex bands.

[Kristoffer took the magazine and rejoiced that it was in English. He didn't participate in the discussion until he had read the whole review.]

CR: When you play live, you always make mistakes. That's the charm of playing live. I noticed that you've added a lot of extra things to some of the songs. That's an additional plus.

KG: We try to make something extra. It should not be exactly like the album, coz then you can be at home and listen to it instead. But it's not meant to be as many mistakes as today.

GS: Your music should be too intensive for old ladies...

DG: [laughs] I think that songs like "People Passing By" from "Entropia" usually seem to get a lot of feedback from the audience. I think that the song "Inside," for example, would not be as appreciated outside of the progressive genre. The songs that have soft inserts, a little mixed with hard influences, seem to be very appreciated.

CR: Isn't it strange to you that you released "Entropia" in Japan, then you released "One Hour by the Concrete Lake" and you toured for that album, and then "Entropia" was released in Europe, and now you're touring again for "Entropia"...

DG: Yeah, really strange. I know that when we did our European tour, we played some material from "Entropia" even if it wasn't released in Europe then, and the record company was not really into that. "You shouldn't play songs from 'Entropia'"... And we were like, "Well, you know, we like the songs..." [laughs] So we did that anyway. It was a little bit anarchistic move.

CR: Is that the reason why you played so many songs from "Entropia" tonight?

DG: Yeah, we really like the songs, and now we have released the album in Europe, so it's kind of a "new" album in Europe. A pretty strange feeling.

KG: All promotion for our “old new” album is happening...

DG: It was really strange when we released “Entropia” here in Europe, because during interviews they were saying something about “your new album,” and I go “which new album?”, the newly released or the newly recorded? It’s a bit odd.

GS: What kind of crowds did you have on the European tour?

DG: It was different. Most of the gigs were kind of small. The biggest show was 300-400 people.

KG: That was in Holland, what town... [referring to Daniel]

DG: What?

KG: [deliberately] What town did we play in Holland?

CR: Uden. 20 kilometers from here. I didn’t go because I didn’t like Threshold. So today it was your biggest crowd?

DG: Yeah, I think so. I don’t know, how many people were there?

CR: Quite a lot.

GS: I think it was almost a thousand if you combine everybody inside the hall, outside the hall...

DG: And they seem to like it, too.

GS: How do you feel playing for a small crowd and for a big crowd?

DG: I try not to... I mean, in Italy we had 10 or 20 people and most of them were the relatives to the Italian band Eldritch. [laughs] You shouldn’t do a bad gig because those who actually came are the ones you should appreciate. So those who didn’t come are the ones you should do a lousy performance for, and they’re not there. It’s impossible, so you have to do a good performance for those who show up and actually stay, even though there are just 10 or 20 people. And they still stay at the show and still make as much noise as they can. But, of course, if you play for a lot of people, you get more feedback from the crowd. I guess that it’s impossible to play as good for 10 people as for 1,000 people.

KG: The more you get the more you can give.

CR: Can I ask you what symbol is on your forehead? [referring to an Indian-style dot on the forehead of Daniel]

DG: [laughs] I don’t know what is this symbol. It’s my wife who has these kind of stickers, and I thought it was, you know, a good idea.

CR: I thought it was something spiritual. In India, women have this red dot...

DG: I don’t know the English word for it, I think it’s called a cast sign.

GS: You talked about Italy. There are many progressive metal bands there, so how come that so few people showed up?

KG: For the whole tour it was something wrong with the promotion. It didn’t work out well. As we came to the venues, the stage manager and the crew with us were a bit upset with the handling of the promotion. They were having heaps of posters in offices when they should have been on the streets.

DG: For Italy, they said that it was a wrong part of Italy (a northern part). It was too far away from any big town.

CR: You played a new song tonight, that was very...

DG: [laughs]

KG: Yeah... That one didn’t go as it was planned.

CR: My impression is that it was kind of a rap song?

KG: There’s a little bit of Rage Against the Machine style. It’s not quite ready. It’s a song, but there’s a lot of things to be done.

DG: It’s a very raw version.

CR: Did you plan on playing that, or was that spontaneous?

DG: We had some plans that if we get to do an encore, yeah, we’ll do it. We were planning to go off stage first, but, you know, we didn’t have a chance. They were already cheering so much... It would have been ridiculous to walk off stage.

CR: You are working on your new album now probably?

DG: Yeah...

CR: Is it also going to be a concept album like the other two?

KG: Pretty much like it, yes.

CR: Can you tell a bit about your new material conceptwise?

DG: Actually, we’ve not decided on the concept yet. We have a few different ideas that we are working with. I’ve written this one lyric, it’s a lot about drugs and people going by with it in the streets because somehow they are unhappy with their situation or they have been raised in a bad way or whatever. This could fit to almost all of those concept ideas that are floating around in our heads. So I felt that it’s secure to wait with the lyrics until we have a complete concept.

CR: So does that mean that you write all the songs, then give them a concept, and put lyrics to the songs or...?

DG: It’s different for different concepts. That is the procedure with this concept we’re working on. We have a lot of material and a lot of songs, and we have the ideas of the concept, but we will finish up the songs first. But, of course, the concept ideas are kind of in the same area in a way. It’s not like, “Okay, we’ll do something on the death penalty or the treatment of drugs.” [laughs] It’s not at the same alley, so you feel some kind of mood that you want to have in the songs.

CR: What’s your attitude towards the drugs then?

DG: I am very much against this. I know that this is probably not the place to be against drugs. [laughs]

CR: Everybody thinks that people in Holland use drugs all the time and that drugs are legalized. But drugs are not legalized.

DG: It’s not?

CR: Okay, hard drugs are not legalized. Soft drugs are... allowed. You are not allowed to sell it. You are allowed to carry some with you. All the people that grow their own weed, for example, are only allowed to have 5 or 10 plants.

DG: Yeah, it’s kind of a restriction...

CR: Yeah, but if you have a big number of plants, those get busted quite a lot because energy companies see who has huge energy bills and know that something must be wrong. [Everybody laughs] But why are you against drugs, a lot of musicians use drugs to stimulate their creativity?

DG: I feel that it is a way of expanding your mind, but I think it’s a shortcut. Musicians that do a lot of drugs, they make one or two very interesting albums and they are kind of stuck in another kind of thinking. They’ve just changed their mind prison into another location, and I think if you find a way to access that kind of free thinking, and you do that without drugs, then you are able to reach those free-thinking spots whenever you want to instead of having to use something to get there. Of course, it’s a harder way to get there without drugs.

CR: Have you used drugs?

DG: No. Apart from alcohol.

radiation and similar things. It was very interesting to study those subjects, by the way, now I’ve been studying English for some years. I think, if I haven’t studied Peacework and Nuclear Physics, the concept of “One Hour by the Concrete Lake” would be not the same thing as it is today. The second album is completely based on things that I learned during those years.

Both albums are conceptual works. What’s



the story behind “Entropia”?

If you found the story of “One Hour” complicated, so this one is even more complex. When we wrote the material to “One Hour...”, we knew that everything, what we did, would become an album. But when we made the songs to “Entropia”, we didn’t have a record deal. The songs were not initially written for a concept album. We used some older songs, then added the new ones. Finally, we put them together as a concept. Entropia is a hypothetical world that is divided into West Entropia and East Entropia. We follow the situation of the family, and it’s not clear to the end whom we are following. They grow up in East Entropia, and war comes to this part of the world. The family consists of mother, father, and their child. The child dies, so the family moves to West Entropia to find happiness. You can transform it into our world, but we didn’t want to use any names of countries. Father has to take care of his wife, so he imagines West Entropia as a paradise. But people in that “paradise” consider them an outcasting society. Each song rests on the different lap of time, so there is no chronological account on this album.

What about “One Hour”?

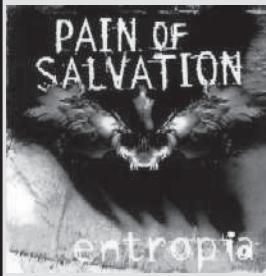
It’s easier to follow that story in comparison with “Entropia.” There is a person who is working in the weapon industry. It has a kind of inner doubts. This person makes a New Year’s resolution, he wants to find out what consequences his life and his work has on other part of the world. Chapter two of the story is his journey where he goes around the world, sees different places and sees what his weapons are doing. At the end he comes to the place in the former USSR, to the lake Karachay placed in Kyshtym. This lake was used to dump radioactive materials. In 1998, if you stand just one hour at that lake, it would kill you within two weeks, you will die from the physical injuries. Now they covered this lake with the concrete to prevent this danger. The message of the album is that everybody is the part of the machine, a little wheel in the big machinery. His idea from the beginning was that he would leave this machine, but he realized that it’s impossible to do that, because outside one machine there are other machines. You must choose what machine you want to be part of and you must be responsible for the direction of this machine.

I like the production of the CD very much. Are you satisfied with it?

I’m really satisfied. If I would change anything, I guess it would be a little more aggressiveness in the guitar sound. I heard some people saying that we have not enough delays and other effects on the record. That is completely incomprehensible thing for me, I think we have always had too much delays. I’m very satisfied with the production of the album, more than I am with the “Entropia” sound.

Sometimes the atmosphere of your songs reminds me of a nightmare dream...

First of all, I want to say that we don’t use drugs. I had people sending me e-mails and asking what we



take actually... Three of the guys in the band don't even drink alcohol, we don't even drink coffee. Having a clean mind is a good thing. It's harder to reach your inspiration, but if you reach it being sober, you know that you always have a contact with your inspiration. I don't need alcohol or drugs to get to my inspiration, and that is very comforting for me. Alcohol, drugs don't add anything to your brains. Everything is already in there, you have just a longer part to get there, but when you get there, you have a complete access. That's what I like. Life is a great inspiration in every kind of way. It's not what I'm seeking in one particular place, it's everywhere. I don't listen very much to music. That's perhaps a bit strange. Most musicians listen very much to music, and I don't listen much to progressive metal. That could be one explanation why it's so hard to place our music into one description. I try to find expression for everything. If I feel that I want to express anger, then I will do that. I won't think: "Okay, this is too angry for this genre."

Have you studied music at any colleges?

Most of us, except the drummer, have actually studied at the music colleges and universities. Personally, I feel, that, what I learned, as I was to music college, was not actually what I've used creating my songs. I think, I've learned a lot more before these studies, when I was learning by myself. Of course, I had teachers in guitar and everything, but the most important thing for me was learning to be a composer in any way. As I came to the music college, the best thing for me was meeting people, musicians of the same interest and having the same dream.

What songs are the most difficult to play live?

Some songs, that you wouldn't perhaps consider to be hardest to perform live, are actually harder to do than others. "Winning A War" is a bit harder to play, because the quality here depends completely on the right emotion. If you have a technical song and if you play it right, then it will sound good. But if the song is built up on emotions and you want to do it right in the emotional pitch, then it's hard to perform. Everything what we do in the studio, we do live. Take "Stress," for example. People think, okay, that must a very difficult song to play live, but if you rehearse it a couple of times, then it's not a big deal.



CR: Aren't you curious to just see of what you would be capable of doing?

DG: Yeah, of course, I'm curious, but then, you know, curiosity killed the cat. I get a lot of emails or letters from people saying "What kind of drugs do you use? How do you do it?" And I think that the solution is that I don't do it. I am already twisted, if I'd take drugs I would probably just become normal. [laughs] It could be dangerous.

CR: What makes your mind so twisted then?

DG: I don't know actually.

CR: Childhood?

KG: You got beaten by your brother.

CR: You are the older brother right?

KG: No, I'm the younger one. Five years younger. [laughs]

DG: I stay young. But you get old perhaps. You've got a bad back.

KG: Yeah, from the performance...

GS: Too much moving?

KG: We haven't been playing since the tour.

CR: You must have a wild imagination then?

DG: Yeah, I think that is something you can develop. Your way of thinking.

CR: How do you develop that then?

DG: I don't have a method or anything. [laughs]

CR: Well, some people read a lot of books for example...

DG: Yeah, that's one thing: to learn a lot, study a lot, and think a lot. I think that is the best way. You can't watch TV and expect a wild imagination.

KG: It probably depends on what you watch then. [laughs]

CR: What kind of books do you read?

KG: I read a lot of English "cannon" books. The books meant to be read by everybody. Hemingway, Shakespeare. I've studied English for one and a half year, there was a lot of studying literature. I try to read different things, I had a period when I really liked those...

DG: Are you having your period?

KG: Yeah, I am having my period now. [laughs] I really have a wild imagination, so I have my period. Then I read popular science, but now I read mostly big books that are different. But it's not very easy, because you seldom read about different books, you read about the books that are commonly accepted.

CR: Do you have a preference for English or American literature?

KG: I like the English language. When I read English literature, I want the spelling to be British. I appreciate that, like color spelled with "colour." I get annoyed when I read the American spelling.

GS: Some people get annoyed the other way around. They say that the American English is shorter and more convenient.

CR: [to Giedrius] Because I prefer the British and you use American. I don't like that. [Everybody laughs]

CR: So do you study now?

DG: Yes, I will finish my English soon. And then the problem is when we will record the next album next year, it's always difficult to go on tour or record an album when you study at the university. You don't get very happy when you go away for some weeks. I'll probably take a lot of small courses, so that I would be able to get away. Because we will probably take two months to record an album. Otherwise I would have probably studied English.

CR: Do the other guys have the same problems?

DG: Pretty much. Not everybody, but it's mostly jobs or school. You are kind of free now. [referring to Kristoffer]

KG: I am going to start my own business.

DG: At the moment he is working at the same place where we rehearse.

KG: So I can work and rehearse at the same time and get paid. [laughs]

DG: Yeah, he's paid when we rehearse. That's a bit annoying.

GS: Maybe you can share?

DG: Yeah!

KG: No.

CR: What do your parents think of your music?

DG: Well, I remember when I was 11 or 12 years old, my father really liked the music that I made. After that, he said that "people won't buy this." I know that it's very skilled and good music, but you won't sell any records. You should try to do some more commonly accepted type of music." So it's not the kind of music they listen to. They don't try to make a change too much anyway.

GS: By the way, what are the sales of your albums?

DG: I don't know at the moment...

KG: About 5,000 each in Japan.

DG: The territories were 4,000-5,000 kind of immediately after the release.

CR: That's not quite a lot for Japan...

DG: Yeah. I think that the problem with Japan was that we are not completely into the prog metal genre like Dream Theater. And we don't sound like the 80s bands.

GS: Well, I saw in the Burrn charts that Japanese are into bands like Children of Bodom, Cradle of Filth. They are not only into Helloween type of music, which might be an initial impression of many.

KG: We got good reviews but we didn't sell that many albums.

DG: We've got 82 for "One Hour" in "Burrn." Also, Yngwie Malmsteen's album received 99 in the same issue. It was "Yeah, so people would probably buy an album that got 99 out of 100 instead of buying an album that got 82 out of 100." That was too bad, because "Burrn" is the biggest magazine. We had really great other reviews that we got translated from Japan. 82 out of 100 was the worst of them.

CR: How do you deal with criticism?

KG: We have one really bad review from a really small town in Sweden. It actually said "It starts out really bad, and then it gets worse. These guys must have a lot of money because otherwise they would have not been allowed to record an album."

GS: "Entropia"?

DG: No, "Concrete Lake." We had surely 100 or 200 great reviews, and then this one bad review from a little small town in Sweden... And it still got to me. It was very strange. You work since you are very very young, that is everything that you do, and I felt very misinterpreted in a way. And he actually said that "it was shallow," I think that was the most.

KG: "Technical rubbish parts put on top of each other..." Yeah, we call this a song. Once we even got compared to Spinal Tap.

DG: That was several years ago. Have you heard the "Entropia" album?

CR & GS: Yeah, of course.

DG: In "To the End" song we had an intro with oboe, and, at the end of the song, we had a capella. The review said that they expected stone hands to come down from the roof like in the "Spinal Tap" movie. That was only great.

CR: Do the Japanese release have bonus tracks compared to European releases?

DG: Yes.

CR: But is that unforgivable for an artist who writes concept albums to let somebody take your piece of art, pull away two songs and...

KG: [laughs] For "Entropia," we had "Learn to Fly." We can take it away from the concept without too much damage.

DG: We actually added songs to the concept. We didn't take any away.

KG: For "One Hour," we knew that they wanted bonus tracks, so we just added two other songs to the concept.

DG: The songs that I wrote when I was 16. The funny thing is that everybody in Japan said "you should play more songs like these." The record company asked us immediately if they could use those songs in a national heavy metal contest.

CR: What did you say?

DG: We said yes, of course.

CR: What's the name of the company.

DG: Marquee/Bell Antique. The label is called Avalon.

GS: How did you get in touch with them?

DG: We had this book with addresses of different record companies. And when I read it through, I really like their name. [laughs] Together with Roasting House in Sweden, which we've been recommended, those two were the companies that we sent our demo to. We sent about 15 tapes. We immediately received a response from Marquee/Bell Antique, and they said that "we don't have much money but we'll do everything we can for promotion." We really got a good feeling from the company. We got an offer from a large Japanese company through Roasting House, but...

[One side of the tape ended and about 5 minutes of our conversation were lost. The story in short: the large company wanted them to change stylistically. Then Shrapnel came, Varney wanted to do it, but asked to simplify the music, change the name (too religious), and basically make another Dream Theater wannabe. When the band sent the already recorded album to Shrapnel and asked if they wanted to do it, they didn't get a reply. Finally, Roasting House called Shrapnel. The secretary asked to hold on and after a few minutes replied that "they liked it, but he [Varney] hated it." No Shrapnel deal. Inside Out have contacted them through Roasting House in some kind of "he knew him who knew some other guy" way (Kristoffer tried to make a complex combination with his fingers).]

CR [to GS]: Did you make any good live photos of the show?

GS: I made some, but I don't know how good they will turn out.

DG: Were you standing in front of the stage?

GS: No.

DG: Okay, because the other guitarist kicked some rolled tape in the face of a photographer. And then he was like "oh, I'm sorry..." [laughs]

GS: By the way, do you actually talk about what you're going to do on stage? Do you plan how to move?

KG: No. We just say "move"! [laughs]

CR: The other guitar player reminds me of Flea from Red Hot Chili Peppers.

KG: Oh yeah, no kidding. He is the image.

CR: The only difference is that he wears pants. [laughs] By the way, you didn't have a backdrop on stage...

DG: Hm... Yeah, what was it?

CR: The Evergrey backdrop.

DG: Yeah, the Evergrey backdrop. We usually use the Evergrey backdrop.

KG: That's our backdrop. They borrowed it. [laughs]

DG: No, we don't have it. No t-shirts even. [On stage Daniel announced that t-shirts were stolen during the night before the show.]

CR: Did they actually break into your van?

DG: Yeah.

CR: How many t-shirts were inside?

KG: 75.

GS: And only t-shirts?

KG: Yeah, only t-shirts. There were pairs of drumsticks. A stereo and things like that. And then they locked the car just on their way out. Not a scratch or mark or anything. Except the inside.

CR: That happened here in Tilburg?

KG: Yeah, on the parking spot just behind the hotel.

CR: There were no CDs or anything?

KG: No, we didn't have much inside. It was a rental car.

CR: How about Pain of Salvation cassettes?

DG: They are still there.

GS: You have some cassettes??

KG: We had a release in Romania we got on cassette. That was the demo.

[One guy just looked in the room to tell that the recording of the show was good. "I'm just telling that to everybody now."]

CR: There is gonna be a live album from the festival, one song of each band, right?

DG: We have to see how it sounds. I am not satisfied with my voice. And with my guitar playing either.

CR: This means you can veto your appearance on the live album?

DG: If the other ones would say it's a great song, we would release it.

KG: They could use the talk between the songs.

DG: Yeah, the talk between the songs went great. The thing is that originally the talk was that they would record everything on a master tape, so it would be possible to mix it afterwards. But somehow those that were in charge of the recording never arranged anything, so it's just a DAT tape. So we said that we had to see the results before we can decide on anything. We will be interested in hearing it.

[We talked about other performances. Christian enthusiastically commented on the Wolverine show and on the stage presence of the Forever Times singer.]

DG: That's too bad when you have to play guitar at the same time, because you're bound to microphone.

GS: I noticed that you felt free when you put your guitar down for one song.

DG: Yeah, that was very nice.

[Then they talked about wireless technologies and how they wanted to explore them more. Kristoffer played wireless for the first time, so he felt very strange, because he was always alert "where's the wire, where's the wire." Daniel borrowed two wireless systems from Threshold to try them out, but they lost contact on stage and produced a strange noise, so he couldn't use them during the show.]



Other songs like "Plains of Dawn" are more difficult to play live. It demands a certain kind of atmosphere.

What about "Handful of Nothing"?

It's okay. The only problem with the song is that you have at the same time the vocals and this jerking riff. I can do this, but the other guitarist has more problems with these technical things. We have actually performed the song live a few times.

What can you say about the CD cover of "One Hour"?

We were satisfied with Patrik Larsson's paintings for "Entropia" album. We contacted him when we were going to record "One Hour...", we gave him all the materials, all the lyrics and some demo versions of the songs. We are very satisfied with the cover and CD booklet. I think, Patrik has both: emotions and technical skills, and that's a good combination. The cover has a lot of symbols that fit the concept. We have the mask which is mentioned a few times. That could be a national mask, the global mask, or a mask of one part of society. That could be also the Indians oriented mask which we are talking about at the end of the second and in the beginning of the third chapter. Do you have the war planes behind the mask?

Yeah...

The Japanese cover has clocks instead. They thought that war planes would remind people of Hiroshima. Planes could be the symbol for the Western society coming to the Indians earth. It can also be this machinery which we were talking about earlier.

Your favorite tracks?

It's hard question. I think, one of my favorites from "One Hour" would be "New Year's Eve." It's not one of these songs that you initially get in love with. I guess most people would prefer either "Inside" or "Inside Out" or perhaps "The Big Machine." "New Year's Eve" is a song that grows on you. Every time you listen to it, it becomes heavier and more emotional. I like the undertow of that song. If we speak about "Entropia," "Winning a War" would be one of my candidates. I like almost all of the songs, I'm only tired of "To the End" and "Stress" a bit. "Revival" is a really good song. You can dig different things in the songs. One song can be really emotional and attractive, and another song has strength and aggressiveness. I think, "Winning a War" and "New Year's Eve" are my favorites at the moment.

Your musical influences and favorite albums.

I really like Faith No More, that's the band I enjoy the latter years. I grew up with The Beatles, Simon & Garfunkel, The Alan Parsons Project, I also like Genesis, Dalbello. I like classical music, but it must be intense in any way, I don't like the traditional classical stuff. When I was a young boy, I listened to Kiss and then I went into Helloween, Queensryche. By the way, Queensryche has been my favorite band for many years. I really like "Rage for Order," more than their famous "Operation: Mindcrime".

<http://www.algonet.se/~gilden/>

Unpredictability, as of *Opeth*

How many interviews have you done for this new album so far? It's over two hundred.

Is it only you who were talking?

Only me, actually. Well, I don't think the other guys have done anything. I think maybe Martin, the drummer, has done a couple of interviews though.

Do you still feel fresh and enthusiastic about sharing your thoughts on Opeth?

Well, yeah! It's been awhile since I did my last interview. The ones I do the last couple of days are the ones that we had to reschedule. So, I'm pretty much done.

Do you like being interviewed, or do you prefer the music to speak for itself?

Well, I don't have a problem with talking about my music. When I did my 150 or so interviews, I felt that it was a bit boring, you know. But I want to promote this album as much as I can. I don't have any problems in doing interviews, it's not hard work compared to working in an office. I think it's okay.

Let's talk about the new album, which is also a concept album. If you look at current movies or books, it's quite difficult to find a concept that is fresh and interesting. How do you come up with your ideas?

The basic story of this album is not very original. I don't expect to blow people's minds. An original subject shows in that I am trying to write in an original way. I basically started writing a "good versus evil" story, but I wanted it to be reverse, I wanted that that what people look upon as "good" would be the "bad." I think it made it a bit more interesting. If you combine it with my kind of writing lyrics - which is pretty "cryptic" - it becomes very easy for people to make up their own minds, to have pictures for themselves about what they think it's about. [This way] It doesn't look very naive. The basic theme is pretty unoriginal, but I am pretty satisfied with the results. It's like an adventure: it has all the parts you want the adventure to hold, like all these human emotions like love and hate, which to me are the strongest emotions a human can have. It's basically based around that.

Would you agree that it's easier to write lyrics than to write a book...

I think it's easier. You have music as well, you don't have to rely on words only. I think people don't look upon Opeth as a lyrics band. We can easily do an instrumental album, if you know what I mean. That would be no problem. But I surely think that I would never be able to write a book, a poem or whatever. I just write for this [album] and when I'm done, I'm exhausted. It



[by Giedrius Slivinskas]

Opeth achieved an elite status among death metal and progressive metal fans due to band's uncompromising, intelligent, progressive, yet rather extreme death metal. For those afraid of the extreme, the fourth album "Still Life" of this Swedish band should not seem too inaccessible, since it has harmonizing riffs, peculiar ballads, and a big dose of clean vocals. Mike Akerfeldt, singer and guitar player, didn't appear to be such a complex person as one could have imagined after listening to epic 9-minute long Opeth tracks. He gave a lot of detail about "Still Life," as well as revealed some unexpected twists which Opeth's music could take in the future.

perfectly okay; to hang out with your friends and have a good time partying or whatever. But that doesn't inspire. I think it's the same with most musicians in general, the depressive side of everything is more inspiring. I like it more, I like to have that kind of feel when I play and think "this is fucking sombre," you know. It's better than

than most. But basically for this album we were getting high or top scores everywhere. I don't complain about reviews. I think I've only got two bad reviews so far. We've got a good review in "Kerrang," which is our first time. [laughs]

How about "Terrorizer"?

"Terrorizer" was good, we got 9 out of 10. I think we got "Album of the Month" in "Aardshock." I think we got pretty okay basically everywhere. When people give us a bad review, I am pretty sensitive. [To me] It's so obvious that this album is a step forward, it's really frustrating when people can't hear what you hear. We've never sold out, we are always true to ourselves, so I'm so disappointed when people can't hear what I hear... It's just something you have to take. You can't have everything.

You didn't rehearse that much for the new album, is that right?
Yeah...

Why was that? What do you think in

doing a happy/drinking melody, which is not meaningful.

The average song length on "Still Life" is 9 minutes. Do you feel it's a bit difficult to reach people with such songs?

Yeah, it has put us in a hard situation, harder than most bands. But that is just the way we feel it's right for us. I really like having those adventurous, epic tracks. I have a pretty hard time writing 3 minute songs, and I never really cared for hits. We write for ourselves. When I write the music, I write for me, I want to write music that I want to hear. It's just a matter of taste. I have no problems with songs like "Smells Like Teen Spirit," that was a great tune, but it's not what I would prefer to write

myself.

How about reviews for the new album?

Yeah... We are in a position where we got bigger, it's our fourth album. And people have started to change their minds... It's totally okay to hate Opeth now. When, for example, we did our second album, not many people were insulting us, you know. Now we see some reviews that are basically insulting. I remember one, I don't know which country it comes from, which called us "gay," "homosexual"...

I think I have read it, it's on a website. It's quite a long one...
It's a really long one. It must have been written by a psychopath.

Well, it's also quite an ironic one...
Yeah, but when I read it, I was like "fuck!"... I didn't feel very good.

A bad review is also an exposure. There are people who want complex and challenging music.

Yeah, bad reviews actually can become good reviews. We got a review which was okay, like 6 out of 10, in "Metal Hammer UK." The guy said "ahhh, I didn't expect this: when I listen to metal I don't want the solos to sound like Eric Clapton." Which is, in a way, good because it shows that we are different

retrospective, was that a good decision?

It wasn't really a decision. We didn't rehearse because, at first, we don't have equipment. I don't have an amplifier, I had to sell my amplifier to pay the rent.

This is quite tragic.

Yeah, I know. And Peter, our second guitarist, broke his amplifier, it started smoking and burning. He didn't have money to buy a new one. And we didn't have a rehearsal room either, because we couldn't afford to have one. So that was the basic reason why we rehearsed, as a full band, two times before we went to the studio. I think there are two or three songs on this album that we haven't even played together. I didn't know how they would sound. It was a bit interesting to hear because I wrote the basic parts for the songs two weeks before we went into the studio. So I've never heard the tracks [beforehand], it was very interesting to hear how the tracks actually sounded like. I only knew the basic parts. But it was somewhat in a good way, because it gave us a room to improvize in the studio and experiment. I think the best thing that you come up with is the first thing.

And it had really put a pressure on us to come up with good things. The studio is a pretty inspirational place to work in. You don't do much else than just play



this music and try to record this album. So, I think it was good, but it wasn't intentional. You don't want to waste [money] - I don't know what the album costs to do - almost 200 000 Swedish krones. You don't wanna waste money because you haven't rehearsed, you know. I think it was a big risk, but, on the other hand, we were pretty confident. We don't make any mistakes in the studio.

It's quite surprising to hear that you didn't rehearse much, because the album sounds very good.

Yeah, it's not like we can't play or anything. It was a lucky strike I think... [laughs]

Also, you said somewhere that you were planning to fill the whole CD with music, 74 minutes that is...

I know that I said that. [laughs] I started writing this music so early on, I had a tape that was full of riffs. But when I listened to them wanting to put tracks together, I think there were 30 riffs or something that were not good enough. So, we couldn't do a 74-minute CD this time. I'm not sure if it will happen. It was just something I said.

One could probably guess that you want to make non-predictable music, but, on the other hand, the new album is not that much different from

think I can pretty much sing all the vocal lines I come up with. If I wrote a music that was written for a woman, it would have to be, but I'm not sure. It's very hard to say.

A little bit about old bands. Other writer for "Edge of Time," Christian Rademaker knows a band called Mefisto from Sweden. You list them as one of your influences. He has their demos and was very eager to know what happened to individual members...

Yeah, they are basically the first death metal band that I really like. What happened to them? They released two demos in 1986, and then they split-up. They had a record deal going, but they split-up because the guitarist Omar wasn't really like interested in death metal, he was more into Europe, glam kind of stuff. He also was a classical guitarist and he wanted to practice. I think he moved abroad to the States or something. The leader Sandro, who was the singer and the bass player, stopped playing metal and got into DJ'ing in clubs. That's all I know basically. They were supposed to have an album out, with two demos on the

"My Arms Your Hearse"?

With unpredictable music, I don't mean we want to change style, because we have our own style. With unpredictable music, I mean that when I listen to music, I don't wanna know what the next note will be. Predictable is when I can make up the vocal lines before I hear them.

Like Manowar?

Manowar. Whatever. Helloween, Stratovarius, that kind of power shit. It's predictable. Always. And that's what I mean with unpredictable. We are not Dillinger Escape Plan, crazy music, and stuff like that. We have our own style and unpredictable is just that it has to be something that people won't know what will happen. But we will always be Opeth style. It's not that we want to change styles...

What do you think about using female vocals?

There's nothing wrong with that.

Can it happen with Opeth?

I don't know. We never had any real guests on our albums. I feel that if it would be, it wouldn't just be for the sake of having a woman in the band. I

album.

Which label was supposed to release it?

I think it was Wrong Again or something.

In 1986?

No, no, no. I don't know what label would have released them back then, but now, a year ago, there was a talk about having two demos put on a CD through Wrong Again, but that didn't happen. I don't know what label was interested back then, it could have been Black Mark because they were friends with Bathory.

Basically none of the members are active now?

Not as far as I know.

VoiVod is your another influence?

Yeah.

Why, is it because of science-fiction concept albums?

No, it's just because when I was into thrash metal, like 80s, VoiVod was one of those bands that you couldn't put your finger on exactly what style they played. The first album was more or



less hardpunk album, but then they turned into more experimental music. Something that none of the thrash bands did, like Kreator or Coroner. Coroner, of course, is another of my favorite bands... But Voivod were really really special, they did music that nobody else had heard. They are a unique band. I think they've lost it maybe now, but "Killing Technology," "Dimension Hatross," and "Nothingface" are all really really excellent albums. They've really made a mark in the music. They haven't got any big recognition, which is totally strange. But they have a really disharmonic style that I really really like. That I want to put into Opeth more. I am basically getting sick and tired of these nice guitar melodies like some of the melodies we have on our two first albums. I could never ever write them now. I'm very very satisfied with everything I've done, but I want us

them live a couple of times, they are a really good band. Not my favorite band, but a good band. Fates Warning is, of course, one of the oldest bands. I don't mean to disrespect or anything, but it's just not my kind of style. But the rest, it just doesn't give me [what I look for in music]. When it's too much, when there's too many bands playing the same style, it gets uninteresting. I just can't keep track of who is doing what.

Yes, it's not easy to find an interesting progressive metal band today...

I think the term "progressive metal" is used as a category, if you know what I mean. On the other hand, the progressive metal bands don't progress.

Yeah, but categories like thrash metal or death metal are also tags that are put to music that sound similar to the originators...

Yeah, of course.

Okay, so you work for a record store.

Yeah, just extra, you know.

So which metal bands do sell good now?

Oh, it's power metal. Lots of power metal.

For example, Stratovarius?

Yeah, Stratovarius. Shadow Gallery. There is a new project called Wuthering Heights. We sold like loads of that album. I think it's worthless, it's shit. When I play it to customers, I think like "he's not gonna buy that shit," but they always buy it.

How about Samael and bands like that?

We haven't sold that many Samael records in the store.

Type O Negative?

Nah, not really. Actually, I met Peter Steele in a pub.

What was he doing in Sweden?

They were doing a gig in Sweden, and he was in a pub. [laughs] But we sell basically black metal, stuff like Darkthrone, and power metal. And progressive music.

This is quite interesting, I haven't expected that Shadow Gallery, for example, would sell that good.

Yeah, we sell everything! All of these power and symphonic metal bands.

Now, getting onto a different topic, what do you think about the image of bands and the packaging of CDs?

I think it's important in a way. It's not important for us, coz we totally rely on the music. We are not being marketed as





a "cool" band or anything. We are just about the music. But I don't think a band like Kiss would have been anything if they haven't had their makeup. When their first album came out in 1973, it wouldn't have sold anything if it wasn't for the makeup. Cradle of Filth and black metal bands are about the same thing from the beginning: to shock people and to have people raising eyebrows. Now if you say that you are a black metal band, you have to wear makeup. With some music styles, the image is very important. Then, the packaging of a CD is, of course, important to us as well, because people have to see what albums are like, if you know what I mean. We try to have album covers that are different in all albums. The first with the flower: it's something that if you put it on a shelf in a record store, it will stand out. We tried to do that with each album.

But for example, if you look at promo pictures that are on your web site, I think they are well done.

Yeah, well, it has to be good pictures. I wouldn't sit with my underwear or whatever. [laughs] People have to relate to us in a way. Like we have some pictures where we're sitting on my couch at my place - it's just that the fans would feel like they want to be there with us. Relax, have a smoke, or whatever. We want to have good pictures, we can't look ugly. But still, when you look at the pictures and see our faces, you clearly see that we don't have a special image. We're just normal guys.

I remember I saw Opeth picture from 1995 with some hats...

Yeah, yeah. [laughs] Those pictures



were supposed to be on the CD that we did, on the tribute album to Celtic Frost. But the record company [Dwell Records] thought they were too ugly, so they didn't want to use them.

So, you didn't elaborate on that image later on?

No, no. We sent them all the pictures with suits and everything, but they didn't use any of it. They used old pictures. I'm lucky they did that. [laughs]

Travis Smith did the front cover of "Still Life." How did you get in touch with him?

Well, he did the Katatonia cover. And I was working with Katatonia on their new album in studio. They got the pictures for their album on the computer there, so I saw them. He sent them maybe 40 different pictures, and they used 6 or 7 pictures for the CD. All the 40 were totally great! I was like, "fuck! this really looks good!" And Anders of Katatonia is like "Yeah! And this guy is a huge Opeth fan. He told me that he would love to do a cover for you." So I thought we could check him out. Eventually, I just got an email from Travis, where he asked if we were interested in working with him. I said sure. Then we had a couple of ideas, and he wrote me back that he needed the concept or the story of the album to get some inspiration from, to come up with ideas. And the first picture he ever sent to me now is the front cover! I was blown away, it was a real luck there.

Did you want to make any changes?

Yeah, we asked him to put more color into it. In the beginning, it was almost grey or brown. And we wanted to have a red theme on this album. Peter thought that the Madonna figure had a too big nose [laughs], so he told Travis to make it a little bit smaller. He did that.

The whole communication was by email?

Yeah. I never even talked to the guy on the phone. But I got an email from him today, we're still in contact.

He does many CD covers...

Yeah, he did the new Malevolent Creation, Control Denied, Overkill covers. He is basically the Daniel Seagrave for the 90s.

You switched record labels before the new album. Have you received many offers? Did you choose the best one or the combination between the best label and the best offer?

We got pretty many offers. We were talking with Century Media, Earache. Pretty much regular labels. But the Peaceville contract was basically the best one, and obviously we knew about them from before - they released a couple of classical albums. Hammy has been in the business for a long time, he has played drums in a band called Source Throat, who released an album on Earache in the early 90s. With one hundred and one tracks. [laughs] Just that is the reason alone to be on Peaceville... But basically they offered us a really good deal. It just topped everything. We were working on Earache, and the Peaceville contract

was just way above Earache. Especially in terms of money, which is, of course, important. We signed up for five albums, it's basically our entire career. We were really checking the contract, I think we paid just in lawyer fees alone 20 000 Swedish kronas or something like that. They were checking everything, and it was really good. So far, it's been really really good for us. They've been great, I would never have done 200 interviews on Candlelight. Forget it. But, as you should know, they work really close with Music For Nations, it's their distribution and their knowledge. Of course, it's better for us now than before. I think we really picked the best choice.

A good thing about Peaceville is that they don't have many bands.

Of course. I think it's only... what it's gonna be, eight bands or something?

Yeah, something like that.

And we are basically the only death metal band. Of course, My Dying Bride came up with their new album which has death metal vocals again, but, apart from that, none of the bands have screaming vocals or anything. So, it's a very good position for us. I wouldn't expect back in 1989 that we would be a priority death metal band on Peaceville. It's pretty strange I think.

You probably expect some sales increase?

Yeah, I think on the pre-sales alone we sold more than the last album.

Really?

Yeah, it's going pretty good. I know that the pre-sales were 15,000 copies, they sold out in a couple of weeks. Or shipped, but we don't expect any return copies. And it hasn't even been released in the States or Japan. I hope maybe 30,000 - 40,000.

The difference is probably Music For Nations and their distribution?

Of course, we have problems, too. When we were on Candlelight, we had the deal with the States done, we were on Century Media in the US. Now we don't have a deal, they are working on the deal now. A big fucking deal, you know, with Cradle of Filth, Anathema, My Dying Bride, Opeth, Katatonia, to sell to the States. So, it's gonna take a lot of time until the album is gonna get released there, which is a problem for us. US is a very good market for Opeth. Strange enough, I don't know why Americans like us. Canada is unbelievable, we sold a hundred copies on the first day of the release in HMV superstore in Toronto.

Of which album?

The new album. It's out in Canada. Plastic Head distribute it in Canada, it has nothing to do with US.

Which label is it gonna be in US?

I hope Century Media. I know they are giving a very good offer, because Opeth is one of their biggest sales. Especially among licensed albums. I really hope we are going to work with Century Media, because I know the guys, we're pretty much friends with them. They've done a really good work for Opeth in

the past. But I know they are talking with Metal Blade as well, which is a good company as well. We don't have any say, I don't have anything to say about it, we have to accept [their decision] no matter what.

Metal Blade sometimes have a strange selection of bands...

Yeah, of course. But we don't care about their own selections, we are just being a licensed stand. As long as they put our own album in the States, we don't care. I don't know any bands that are on Metal Blade today, I don't really care either.

Do you recall any events that boosted the knowledge about Opeth? For example, you were on a tour with Cradle of Filth?

I don't think the tour we did was something. That wasn't necessarily good for us, in terms of getting big or anything. We did a couple of shitty gigs on that tour. Black metal was really hot, we were not black metal.

The audience was not very happy...?

Yeah, in some parts. Some German gigs we did were disasters. People didn't even look. We were on stage playing, they were like sitting on the stage with their backs to us, which is awful. They didn't even clap their hands, you know. Fuck that, it's like when I go to concerts, I clap my hands, no matter what. But, of course, some gigs we did were really really cool. We gained lots of self confidence. Unfortunately, the Danish gig was one of the worst gigs we've ever done. In Copenhagen. That was terrible. I had a big fight with Anders afterwards. But some gigs, like in Italy, France, even Norway were really cool. Especially in Rome, where people, for the first time on the whole tour, cared more for us than for Cradle of Filth. And it is really good.

And which year was that?

That was the "Morningrise" album. We haven't done anything since that. We played two gigs in England.

I heard about the project called Bloodbath. The album was supposed to be out on Century Media, or was it a mini CD?

Barely a mini CD. It's just three tracks. It's twelve minutes or something. [laughs] It's just pure death metal. Like those flyers of old Swedish metal bands that were just saying "Brutal death metal from Stockholm." And that's basically what it is. It sounds like Entombed, Cancer, or Death. It's really brutal, and all the lyrics are about killing people, force-feeding glass to people, being baked in an oven... [laughs] It's plain death metal and it sounds fucking good, you know. It's really brutal.

Who is the main creator of the band?

Oh, you shouldn't call it a band. We just did it one day, we went down to Dan Swano's place. We were invited to a party, and he was like "yeah, let's record a couple of death metal tracks." And we drunk lots of beer, I even threw up before I did the vocals. [laughs] It was just partying for us, really. I think Anders from Katatonia wrote most of

the riffs, but I wrote a couple of riffs, and Dan wrote a couple of riffs, and Jonas did. So, we were working as a band basically, but it was just for those three tracks. I don't think we are going to do anything else than that. I know Century Media wants us to release a full-length album, but I doubt that it will happen. Besides, we are restricted with the contract, so we are not allowed [to do any side projects].

You had quite many members in Opeth in the past who left. But are any of them playing today in some known bands?

I don't know, I don't have any connection with them. Anders, our old drummer, played in a cover band or something for a couple of months. He is concentrating on his studying. Joe, our old bass player, I am sure he is playing in some band, I haven't been speaking to him since he left the band. The other guys, I don't know... I think most of the guys are playing, but I don't have any contacts.

Is Anders in Brazil?

He might be in Brazil now, but I'm not sure. He was studying in Sweden, he is getting a civil engineer [degree] or

something like that, and he was planning to get a job in Brazil. So that's what he is gonna do. I'm not sure if he has left already, I think he is gonna be in Sweden for another year or something.

Are you into culture in general? Sweden is not that known for painters or designers, but it's known for its musical tradition...

Yeah, the musical culture is always interesting to me, but that's where it stops I think. I don't go to see paintings, sculptures or anything. If I see a good painting, I can tell if I like it or not. But that as far as it goes. Culture in general, I don't know... I would be lying if I told you that I am interested in other lands' cultures. It might be if people were convincing me that it's interesting.

But what is your general view, United States are known for their sales oriented approach, and Europe is considered as a more 'culture' land...

I think it's true. I wouldn't wanna live in the States. I'm pretty fascinated by a country, coz it's so... people are fucking crazy there. Everything is big, and everything is better than everywhere else. It's fascinating, but I wouldn't want to live there. I think what we have

here in Europe is pretty straight and normal, if you know what I mean, while in America it's overblown. The culture, if you ask American about their culture, they are like "yeah, we like Disney-land"... I know they are too much americanized, even though they are Americans... I met a couple of Americans which are okay, but I don't know, I think it's a sick country in a way.

Which cities have you been in?

Cities? I've never been in the States. I've just met Americans that come over here. I want to go there, just to see how it is.

I went to two different places, it was New York, which was very intensive, big, and then it was Tucson, Arizona, which was very laid back, relaxed, almost similar to Scandinavia...

Yeah, that's what I would want to do. I would want to go to a countryside, to own a house, down south.

Then Arizona is a good place.

Yeah, I think so.

But the media, of course, screams everywhere.

I can only judge from what I've read in the papers or seen on a television. But I think most of that is true. I think it really is that way, or worse. But me and Jonas from Katatonia are planning to go over to the States, rent a car, get cowboy hats and just ride across the entire country...

Any possibilities about playing live in the States?

We were actually offered to do a gig in Atlanta on the first of April, but I am not sure if it's gonna happen.

Probably it would more worth to do several gigs instead...

Yeah, but we haven't really been offered anything. People have to offer us gigs. We don't have an agency, so we do everything ourselves. I don't have time to fix up gigs for us, if people want to play, they have to contact me personally.

<http://www.opeth.com>



The InsideOut Music press sheet says that the new album is more song-oriented. Do you agree?

Absolutely! Would you agree?

Yeah, of course.

That was a kind of a conscious choice. We definitely wanted to be more song oriented on this one. That's what we will be striving for on all our albums now. To write better songs, songs that would stand on their own.

How exactly do you understand song oriented?

For me song oriented means that choruses repeat, a song that you hear and you remember. Whether there are things that come back to you a few times, so when the song is done you remember those parts. Rather than just a song that sporadically moves along in five minutes with million parts that have no coherence. Remembrance to it, if you know what I mean, that's what I would say song oriented means to me.

The "Listen" album was quite difficult to absorb, it took many listens to really get it.

Yeah, absolutely, I agree. And it was meant to be that way.

The new one is not as dark and mysterious.

Well, it's still kind of dark.

Yeah, I agree but there is not that much mystery...

Yeah, I don't think we meant to do that. I heard a couple of people said that some songs were "poppy" sounding. I was like "poppy?", they don't sound poppy to me.

DIGITAL RUIN



(ESCAPING) YESTERDAYS CAGE

"Listen" brought up Rhode Island's Digital Ruin as one of the best unsigned progressive metal bands in 1998, together with Reading Zero and Heaven's Cry. That album struck as a very obscure piece of progressive art with its muddy production yet haunting melodies. Songs merged into one another forming a conceptual musical tale, which was complemented by a lyrical story in science-fiction style. After a while, the band recorded a four song promo CD to expose their new direction to record labels and media, and soon thereafter, bingo they were signed by one of the leading today's underground progressive metal labels InsideOut Music. The new album follows, and it surprisingly hits with its song-song-song!-oriented approach. Three tracks ("Darkest Day" [then as "The Darkest Day" -GS], "Night Falls Forever," and "Machine Cage") appeared previously on the promo CD, while the other seven songs are new. The album got reasonably nice evaluations in "Rock Hard" (8,5 out of 10) and "Heavy oder Was" (11 out of 12) and is one of the prog metal highlights in the year 2000. As soon as I received the promo CD, I contacted InsideOut Music regarding the interview with singer Matt Pacheco.

I know where it comes from. There was a post on the Perpetual Motion board, and the guy meant that the refrain of "Living for Yesterday" was very catchy.

That's cool then. I like that.

On the new album, are all songs tied together, or are they just separate songs?

They're pretty much separate songs. I think the whole theme of the new album has to do with what has been happening in our lives during the last couple of years. In that way it's all tied together.

What exactly is "Dwelling in the Out"?

There's actually two stories that go with that title. The first story, we were writing that song ("Dwelling in the Out"), and Dave was playing the guitar part. The way we write is that we kind of improvise for a long time, and whatever we like out of improvisation, we tie it into a song. And Dave started playing something, I looked at him and I said "Oh, I really liked the thing that

you did, it sounded like you were dwelling in the out." That's where it first originally came from. Then we put it up on the board as a tentative title. And then we had a thought that as a band we are in a country where nobody is playing this kind of music. We're like one of the only bands left. It's kind of being on the outside looking into what everybody else is doing. But we don't feel changing or conforming to what they are doing. That's kind of what it means. We've always been dwelling in the out. We've always been different. And we've been trying to stick to our guns and do it.

Fates Warning have a song called "Outside Looking In"...

Do they?

Yeah, on the "Inside Out" album. Oh, wow!

For example, if we take a song like "Living for Yesterday," what is it about?

"Living for Yesterday" is about all of us

people listening to prog metal for the last eight years. Ever since Dream Theater put out "Images and Words," ever since metal died. All these people who are still living for yesterday. I'm one of them. I still listen to all old 80s metal albums. That song is about living in this country which is like living for yesterday. My thoughts are always with metal of the old days.

Getting back to the debut album, the story was quite difficult to grasp. Do you agree with that?

I don't know. Some people e-mail me or talk to me on the phone, and they ask me what the concept is. And I ask them what they think the concept is. And they pretty much say the whole story. And I say yeah, that's it. Some people get it.

So the message is that you have to read the lyrics carefully...

Yeah, it's definitely not the album that you can listen in the car here and there to get it. You have to really sit down, put headphones on, listen to a lot of samples. Some of the samples tell the story more than some of the lyrics do.

Where do those samples come from?

They would come from watching TV late at night. I connect my tape deck to the TV and record hours and hours of radio shows, "X-Files," just weird movies. Then I take it down to the studio, and I just look through for little catch phrases that have to do with the story that I am going for. And I try to piece it to the songs.

Are there any legal issues involved with the usage of samples?

Yeah, there are legal issues. As a matter of fact, that's why the new album doesn't have as many samples as the debut. We would have to get rights, and it would have been a really big hassle. So we decided to cut down on them.



I have read somewhere that if you use 10 seconds, you don't have to get any rights...

Yeah, I am not sure exactly what the law is. The way I see here is that if you don't sell a million, no one is going to come after you. If you are already poor and you're not making any money, and you're only selling a few thousand albums, they don't even worry about it. If you are selling 30,000 - 40,000 albums they don't come after you probably.

You mentioned "X-Files." The refrain of "Adrift" reminds of the "X-Files" themes to me, even if it perhaps is not related to it.

Does it?

Yeah, that spacy sound.

Well, that really doesn't have anything to do with "X-Files."

And it looked to me that the "Listen" album was influenced by this show.

I would agree with that. I love that unknowing feel. That's definitely going to be a part of Digital Ruin in the future. Science fiction.

Especially on the "Listen" album, there were a lot of vocal effects used. Can you tell more about what kind of effects you use, and what you try to achieve with them?

I love weird things. That's why I try to bring to Digital Ruin things that are strange. I don't like classical keyboards, for example. If you noticed, on the new album the keyboards are very atmospheric, dark, strange and science-fictiony. That's what I like to go for. For the vocals, sometimes I wanna put a really strange effect on my voice. I kind of cut down actually on the new album. I was going for a more melodic approach. I could see it in the future, if we keep doing an album every year, I'm definitely experimenting forward with that. I still want to sing high, have harmonies, but I'd like to add strange effects on my voice. And it took a lot of time to do those effects for the "Listen" album. I was in the studio for hours and hours just playing with effects.

Sometimes when I sing vocals and I have to put the effect on my voice, it's lyrics what tells me how I'm going to sing. Whether it will be a fat vocal part or a melodic vocal part. The lyrics play a big part. As a band, we don't write a song and I sing with the band, and then we go to the studio and record exactly what we did there. The way we work is we record the music, and then I go to the studio and start doing vocals, and sometimes the effect inspires me to do something that I wouldn't have done.

Do others agree with your effects, or do you quarrel sometimes?

Nah, there's no quarreling.

Why did you cut down on effects on the new album?

Just because I wanted to be a little more melodic on this album. I wanted to have a more song oriented approach, maybe not as strange as on the "Listen" album.

What exactly influenced you to want a song oriented album?

It's a good question. [pause] I guess I'd

DIGITAL RUIN



say I just prefer to hear something and then remember what I've been hearing. I grew up listening to Manowar, which was a big band, Dio; and all these bands have structure. Dream Theater was the first prog band that started the whole scene, but that album, "Images and Words," as progressive as it was, it had hook all over. Every song was memorable. And I think that's what prog metal lacks. You got to try to find a medium, where you have to write a song which is memorable and you have to put the technical aspects in it. That's what every prog metal band should be struggling to achieve.

Are you satisfied with the amount of the technical aspects in this album?
[pause] Yeah, because we weren't really trying to do an album which would be totally wacky. If we wanted, we could have sat down and written 10 minute songs with crazy solos, wacky shit. We can do that, but we weren't really trying to do that. We wanted to make memorable songs.

You had a promo CD released after the "Listen" album.

When we did "Listen," we shopped it to a few labels. We had not a lot of interest. A lot of people liked for what it was, but they were afraid that it wasn't catchy enough, or that it was too out there. We had a bunch of new songs and we were heading in a more song oriented direction, so we tried to do a demo with four songs. Shop it to the labels that we've been talking to, and see what they thought of our new material. That promo was released in only 100-150 copies, we sent it to a few magazines, but mostly to labels. It's very rare. I only have one, which is all scratched up.

So, for example, InsideOut Music were familiar with "Listen" and the promo CD, weren't they?

Yeah, that's how everything came about with InsideOut Music. We sent them "Listen," Thomas from InsideOut Music really liked the album but he said - I don't know how he put it - he wanted

to hear new material or something like that. I told him that we had just started recording and it would be ready in a few months. Over the next few months, we recorded a new demo, sent to him, along to 10-15 other labels that we were interested in. He was the first one to get back, and he said that they wanted to sign the band. And we always wanted to work with InsideOut Music.

Why did you want to work with them?

Just because I hear nothing but good things about him. Growing up, I've seen the InsideOut Music logo on a lot of albums that I like. I loved to be part of that. It's really hard to find people that you can really trust. Everybody who ever talks about Thomas or InsideOut Music have only good things to tell about them.

There was a song called "Killer" on that promo CD. It's not on the album, why?

There's no reason why, we had three other songs that didn't make to the album either. You never know what may happen, someday we may rerecord them. Because of the money, we wanted to make it just a ten song CD.

You all just sat down and selected 10 songs that were the best?

Yeah, we sat down, made a list. Some of us wanted that song, but the majority of us didn't. That's how it worked out. Just like the other songs that didn't make it.

I was wandering how many copies of the "Listen" album have you sold?
The last count was 4,000 plus. We are not sure if somebody is still making them. Some people called us and said they had a copy of our CD, and it didn't look official. I don't know about that.

Which distributors did the best job?

I think it was moremetal.com. Between him and Ken Golden, Laser's Edge. They sold a lot.

What were your experiences from

dealing with Siegen Records?

It was a good relationship. When we were shopping "Listen," nobody wanted to give us money to make the CD. We made the CD ourselves. We tried to find a label that would want to put it out - nobody wanted to put it out. Keith from Siegen Records liked the album and he said he would put it out. He got us the money to burn the CDs and do the initial pressing. It was only a one year contract. Our intention was to get the CDs out and to get interest from labels like InsideOut Music or other labels that we really wanted to work with. So we talked about that with Keith, he was into it.

One of your guitarists left after the "Listen" album.

He left just because of personal problems. Without getting into it, he has been in the band for six seven years, "Listen" kept being delayed as far as the release date of it, for six seven months. I think that was the last straw for him. I don't think he had a belief that things were going to happen. We worked with a lot of people over the years, and we've always been getting screwed over. We met a lot of bad people, made a lot of bad choices for us. He left, but we're still friends with him.

Could you compare the playing styles of your old guitarist and your current one?

I would say Dave is more melodic and he is a little better guitarist. Although Joe has a sense for good quality, he'd always try to play what nobody else have tried to play. Something weird, or more technically challenged, or different than everybody else. Dave was more balls to the wall, George Lynch-type melodic soloing.

Do you have any plans of adding a new guitarist?

No.

If you are going to play live, will one be enough?

Yeah, absolutely. It might be hard to play some of the songs from "Listen"; we play them now, and they sound a little empty because Joe used to write different parts than Dave. As far as the new album goes, it is mostly a one guitar album, if you listen to it. No dual guitars that they were doing on "Listen."

Which songs are you going to play live?

We play "Machine Cage," "Living for Yesterday," "Darkest Day," "Adrift," "Letting Go," "Dwelling in the Out," a new song which is untitled, we're going give it a title, and we might play something brand new song which is also untitled. I think it's about 45 minutes set.

You have some new songs already?

Yes, we have about 13-14 new songs. We plan on recording them over the next few months, as a demo. We will work on them, and then we hope to go to the studio. We'd like to release the new album next January.

That would be very fast.

Yeah, that's what we want. We want to get the next one out very quick. We

don't want to take another two-three years. We want to get another album out right away.

Your band has been existing for 10 years, so it's quite a change...

I know, that's what we are trying to do. The first five years as a band we were working with people that were really screwing us over. Then "Listen" was delayed for so long, and when it finally came out, we didn't get a deal, we had to do a demo first. It seems like it took forever to get these two albums out. But now with InsideOut Music and things going good, we want to put an album out every year. That's what we shoot for, every January we'd love to put out a new album.

You think you'll be creative enough to release an album each year?

Absolutely. We're definitely not in any kind of writers block. We write songs like... Well, I can write a song a night.

Can you describe the new songs a little bit? Are they similar to "Dwelling in the Out"?

I would say they are kind of similar. They are maybe a little more aggressive, a little more uptempo. Very heavy. Yeah, I would compare it more with "Dwelling in the Out" than I would with "Listen."

What could you say if I'd ask you to summarize each member's contribution to the songwriting?

Everyone writes in the band. Everyone is equal.

What kind of input does everybody provide, what kind of parts do they like?

The way we write, it's not that somebody comes down and says, "Oh, I have a part" or something like that. It doesn't work like that. We get in the room where we play four or five times a week. At each practice, we play about four hours. What we do is that we just start playing, so it's kind of weird, nobody knows what is going to happen. We start jamming. We've been together for so long that we already all know what everybody is going to change, where everybody is gonna go. It's almost like a song writes itself. It's not like somebody writes a part at home, or writes a song at home. It's kind of weird how it works. And then, when we get a skeleton, then we sit down, we record and we listen. We add little technical parts in between things, or change things a little to make them sound more progressive, for example. Everybody has a very equal part. I might write a guitar part, or tell Dave to try this or try that.

Talking about samples, for example, it's probably you who arranges them?

Nah... Well, on "Listen," I put all the samples on, did all the vocals, played all the weird keyboards. For this one, I did all the keyboards, too, but when I'd do keyboards, I'd invite all band, they would all listen say, "oh, I don't like this or that." As far as the samples for this album, everyone was taping shows from TV. Then we had a meeting in the studio, we checked which samples we

liked. And then I was the one who actually put them into the songs, but I would always ask others what they think about this or that. Pretty much everyone was giving input on what would go where.

Are there any samples on the new album that you are particularly happy with?

Not really, samples to me are not like major things. I just put them in to create a little mood here and there. They do not really have an exceptional meaning. It's not like the vocal part, if you'd ask me about my favorite vocal parts...

I was going to ask that actually...

Okay. Favorite lyrics would be "Adrift," the opening phrase in "Adrift" where I say "I've always been on to follow through with all the things I said I would do"; I like the whole line, it had a lot to do with my life for the last two years. Also "Dwelling in the Out," the lyrics to that song mean a lot to me. And "Along the Way."

What about favorite vocal melodies?

"Dwelling in the Out"; I really like the heavy verse where I go "I'm older now and learning to forget, but I just can't seem to hide the stars you gave me," and I like the heavy part in "Living for Yesterday" where I go "Well I'm here for the day and closer to the chase," that whole part.

People usually say that progressive metal at the East Coast is better than at the West Coast. Do you feel any difference?

Yeah, I would agree with that statement. I think that East Coast is definitely more prog metal, or power metal oriented than California. From what I know. It's hard for me to tell, I've never been over there, but I'm judging from what I see on the Internet, from bands that are popular. For example, Symphony X are from around here. Reading Zero are from Florida.

Are you in touch with the current progressive metal scene, do you have any favorites?

Yeah, I am in touch with that, I like Vanden Plas' new album, anything of Symphony X, Angra are one of my favorites, I like Kamelot. And I have all local bands that have put albums out like The Quiet Room. I am in touch with what people are doing and with the whole scene.

Have you listened to the "Pleasant Shade of Grey" album of Fates Warning? How do you like it?

Yeah, I think it's a good album. It's a weird band, they seem to never get a break that they deserve. I don't know. Their favorite album for me is "No Exit," I like the heavy heavy guitar. That's the one thing I don't like about Fates Warning's new album, is that the heavy guitar is missing. I think if they would get an album with a heavy guitar, they would fuckin' sell. That would be my only complaint.

If somebody would say that Dream Theater and Fates Warning are doing progressive metal, and they would ask what Digital Ruin are doing

differently, what would you answer?
I would say we're doing prog metal, too. What we are doing differently?
[pause] We're heavier than them. I don't know, would you agree with that?

Yeah, especially considering their later albums.

We're heavier, and I would even say we're even more song oriented on the new album than a lot of prog bands out there...

That's probably true, too.

And I would say that our approach keyboardwise is different than, I would say, almost any other band in prog metal. You are not going to hear classical sounds on our album. You might hear here and there, but the overall vibe of the keyboards is different from what a traditional prog metal band would do. What would you say to that?

Yeah, I agree. I like the spacy sound of keyboards.

Cool.

Some people say that the guitar riffing reminds them of Dream Theater's "Awake" or "Scenes from a Memory."

Yeah. Dave is a big fan of John Petrucci. That's where it comes from.

Can you tell any other influences that are visible on your new album?

I don't know. Dream Theater is one, like you said, it sounds a little bit like "Awake," but I couldn't pick another



one. Maybe... Nah, I was going to say Queensryche, but it's too heavy to sound like Queensryche. Maybe Stuck Mojo or...

Oh yeah?

Maybe. The guitar work a little bit.

But they are a lot heavier I think.

Yeah, they are on the heavier side. I would say Dream Theater, they are probably the only one.

On the "Listen" album there were some vocal lines that were similar to Ray Alder, but on the new one I can't find such places.

That's good. I am trying to find my own identity. I don't think that was really conscious. Just in the last few years, when we were doing this album, I have been fighting myself just figuring out what I was comfortable with doing.

<http://www.digitalruin.com>



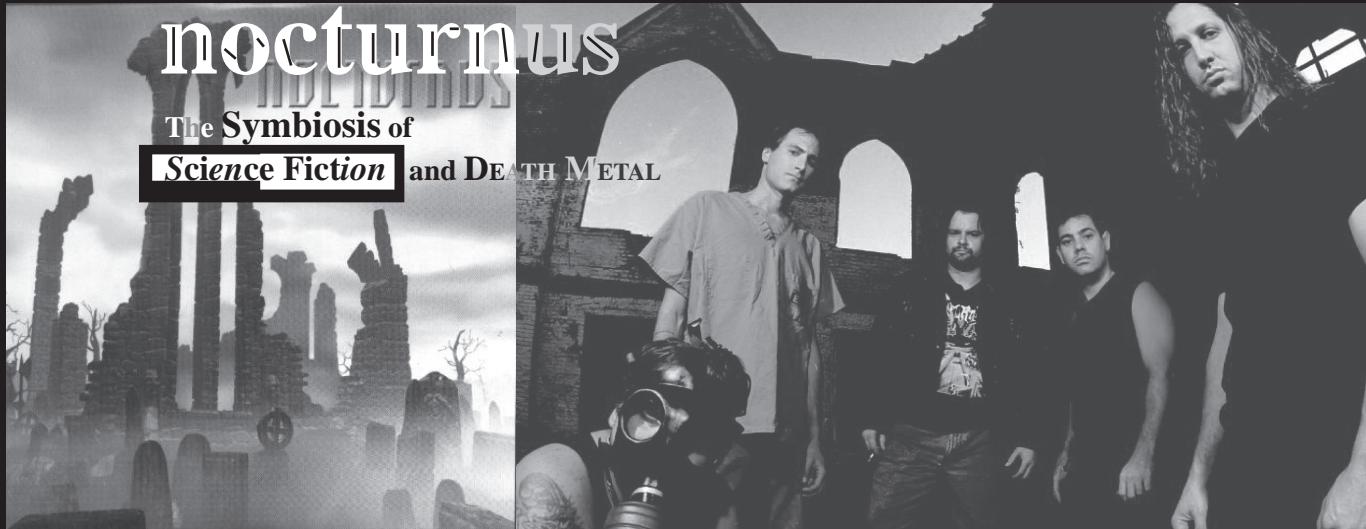
A NEW EXPERIENCE IN PROGRESSIVE METAL

DEBUT CD NOW AVAILABLE

TO ORDER VISIT WWW.AGHORA.ORG

**OR SEND
\$15 FOR U.S.
\$20 FOR INTERNATIONAL
TO:**

**DOBLES PRODUCTIONS
PO BOX 257
CHAPPAQUA, NY 10514
USA**



[by Christian Rademaker]

The combination of keyboards, death metal and science fiction might not seem unusual nowadays but in 1988 it did create a stir in the underground. A band from Florida named Nocturnus was responsible, in the shape of their demo entitled "The Science of Horror." The line-up consisted of Mike Browning (drums and vocals), Sean McKenny and Mike Davis (guitars), Louis Panzer (keyboards), and Jeff Estes (bass). Based on the critical success of this demo, Nocturnus were signed by the English label Earache, at that time a prominent label featuring the likes of Napalm Death, Entombed, and Carcass.

The Nocturnus debut CD "The Key" was innovative at its initial release back in 1988. Although the technical death metal had its merits, it was the haunting keyboards and the lyrical science fiction concept that made it stand out among the flood of releases. In the form of Louis Panzer, Nocturnus were the first band to incorporate keyboards as a distinctive element. The hegemony that dinosaur prog rock bands had on concept album was also violently broken by Nocturnus' concept. This lyrical concept told the story of a futuristic cyborg that was forced to flee 0 BC and culminated into the destruction of Christianity in favor of a modern empire.

The second CD "Thresholds" built on the musical and lyrical concept but wasn't able to create enough waves in the then over-flooded market. A tour followed with Confessor but the decline had set in due to personnel problems within Nocturnus (the departure of drummer Mike Browning). After the last convulsion in the shape of a 7", the Nocturnus saga seemed closed and the members disappeared from the musical surface.

Then the inevitable happens, the millennium approaches and the French quality label Seasons of Mist announce the release of Nocturnus' third full length CD "Ethereal Tomb." From the last line-up, the inseparable guitar duo Sean McKenney and Mike Davis, keyboard-player Mike Davis and bass-player Emo Mowery return. Mowery takes over the vocal duties as well and the new addition is Rick Bizarro on drums. Nocturnus 1999 AD is not that far removed from Nocturnus 1989 AD, the compositions have become more mature, the symbiosis between the instruments is better and the distinct soloing is more focused. The main differences are the improved technical drumming and Mowery adds another dimension vocally by switching between a more aggressive voice and mid range tone. Although there are no exceptional compositions on "Ethereal Tomb," songs like "Search for the Trident" and "Paranormal States" do tantalise. However, fans of the old Nocturnus might be somewhat disappointed as Nocturnus 1999 AD is less adventurous and tempestuous than Nocturnus 1989 AD.

In order to find out more about the period between "Thresholds" and "Ethereal Tomb," I did a short interview with keyboard-player Louis Panzer just after the European release in December 1999.

THE FIRST INSTALLMENT

After the release of "Thresholds" and the departure of Mike Browning you recorded a 7" with the songs "Possess the Priest" and "Mummified." I never saw so much media attention given to this release, was this an independent release and is the 7" still available?

It was an independent release on Moribund records. This record represented where we were after "Thresholds" and after we had released Mike Browning from the band. We had taken in a new drummer, James Marcinek and were preparing to complete another full-length album at that time. The label, Earache, decided that they were no longer interested in the band and cut us loose from our contract so we ended up simply releasing the two songs together as kind of a farewell to the fans. As far as I know, it is still available and people looking for it should visit Moribund Records' web site for ordering information.

I visited the Moribund website (www.blackmetal.com/~mega/moribund) but the 7" is sold out. However it does mention that a MCD was set for release in May 1999. I assume this is a reissue of the 7" on MCD. In which way are you involved with that?

Yes, they are reissuing the 7" and I think if you email Odin, he can give you specifics on when it will be available. We are in contact with him but lately the new release has been dominating our time.

Touring is a quite strenuous task and it really determines the compatibility of different band members. You did two European tours in the past. Europe is very different than your native Florida. What were your impressions of Europe on those tours, did you get to see anything else than the tour bus?

Yes, we saw quite a bit actually. We enjoyed the tours in that they were about a year apart and it was interesting to see the places that close together in time. It was extremely strenuous, especially the first tour with Bolt Thrower because we had to do so much ourselves. Then I twisted my foot in Germany, so I suffered through the end of the tour barely able to stand much less walk! We really enjoyed Holland and also had great experiences in France, Germany, and Italy. Denmark was really excellent, too! Probably the place least enjoyed was England although Scotland was great!

In the late 80s and early 90s, Florida used to

be known for its extreme metal bands. I could never really pinpoint what the cause was because the climate is infinitely better than the north of Europe for example.

Yes, you would think that the extreme weather would cause people to be more pissed off and discontent and therefore breed heavy, dark music... and certainly Mayhem falls into this category! But I think maybe the heat of Florida is so oppressive, that it was the cause of the origin. Actually I think once bands like Death, Obituary, Deicide, and Morbid Angel got started and everyone knew everyone else here, the quality of death metal was elevated... I mean, if you were going to do it, you know who the competition was! Plus, most of the shows here had a sea of musicians studying what everyone else was doing and taking that back to the warehouses for inspiration.

FROM THRESHOLDS TO THE ETHEREAL TOMB

There is a five year gap between "Thresholds" and "Ethereal Tomb," what did you do musically in that period, did you start other projects?

Musically everyone went his own way. Mike and Sean continued to play at home and write for their own enjoyment. I joined up with another band and put out two CDs with them. It was more alternative than metal. The band was called Cry Blue and the two releases were "Untitled" and "Indigo." We broke up when I moved to Atlanta and then I continued to write pieces (intros and short works) on my own.

Did you do anything with those pieces of music?

It is around. When we create material like this we affectionately call them "nuggets": this means that they are kind of snapshots of ideas that can then be used later. Generally I go back and listen to these and either expand on the idea or find something in it (either a melody or sound layer) that I would want to recycle. Also, I have done some session music in the studio for all different types of stuff... one project was a series of meditation tapes so the music was very dreamy and was designed to put you to sleep! A BIG departure from Nocturnus!!!

You played in Cry Blue. Are you interested in playing other types of music and how is your style of playing different then?

I am interested in all types of music. The style was totally different in that a lot of it was piano based. I also played trombone on some songs. This was an instrument I picked up when I was a kid. The style of music is dictated by the

people that I am playing with and the mood that we are trying to achieve.

"Ethereal Tomb" carries the unmistakable Nocturnus sound although your level of playing and musical interest must have changed over the years. However, it is a logical step to first regain your old fan base and then progress from that musically. What do you see as the major difference between "Thresholds" and "Ethereal Tomb"?

Well, I understand what you are saying about a logical step. But we cannot change who we are. "Ethereal Tomb" represents where we are now and not something where we decided to pick up where we left off. Hopefully our old fan base will see the "unmistakable sound" and appreciate the growth as well. The major differences are in the song structures. We consciously decided to make these songs more riff-oriented and less lead oriented. Rather than have riffs that were totally chaotic, we elected to establish more grooves in the rhythms and then when a lead comes up it is more able to stand-alone and be appreciated. The vocals are another major difference. When Emo began singing we felt that, while still heavy, he was more convincing than Dan. The flow is more even. On the keyboard end of things we also made the decision to let the guitars handle most of the actual riffs and let the keys sort of hang over top of them to accent the atmosphere.

One of the minor points of "Ethereal Tomb" is the fact that it has only 8 songs on it with a running time less than 45 minutes. I assume that you must have a lot of material still available in rough versions from the early nineties. Wasn't there enough quality material for a longer release?

Well, we actually didn't have a ton of leftover material. When we recorded "The Key" we used every song we had written with some non-interesting exceptions. By the time "Thresholds" was recorded, we again wrote for the album and there was nothing left over. "Possess the Priest" on the 7" was the only old leftover that was recorded and "Mummified" was completely new. On "Ethereal Tomb," we had other riffs and ideas but they haven't incubated into full songs yet. We now have a couple of new ones for the next release that are almost completed. We apologize to anyone who feels they aren't getting enough but we really feel the album is complete in its statement about where we are now.

Usually when moderately successful metal bands split up after having released one or more CDs, the incentive or inspiration to start over with a new line-up is difficult to find. When the chemistry is actually present, then there is the huge advantage of combining experience with newly found creativity. What can you achieve now with Nocturnus that you haven't been able to achieve before?

The addition of Rick to the mix is really inspiring. He has added an element of rhythm that we always wanted: someone that can establish grooves for us to pattern riffs over. He is still hard

hitting (he breaks sticks regularly) but able to capture a feeling that makes it easy to imagine music over. Also, Emo has brought to life the voice again and this is very helpful in writing. But the way we write is very similar to how it always has been. The chemistry between Sean, Mike and myself is what drives the ideas behind the rhythms, leads and keys. That chemistry is the reason I came back to begin with.

One of the trademarks of Nocturnus, apart from the keyboards, has been the guitar playing of Sean and Mike. There is a lot of emphasis on technical playing and soloing. How would you describe the difference in style between Sean and Mike?



Great question! I would say that there is definitely a difference. Mike tends to come from a more scalar school with his leads being in strange keys and stretches from top to bottom (sweeps). Sean has always been the rock when it comes to rhythm and his leads are generally always very precise. In the old days, I would have said he had more feeling than Mike but I think this is changing to the point where they both are more expressive in each lead. Mike is also able to capture weird groans, squalls, and stomach turning low bends that are great punctuation to intros or just fly ins during the songs.

THE SYMBIOSIS OF DEATH METAL AND KEYBOARDS

Nocturnus was one of the first death metal bands to incorporate keyboards in their music. Before that time keyboards were considered "not done." Strangely though, your use of keyboards was accepted almost immediately. This was, in my opinion, mainly caused by the fact that your keyboards were used to create an atmosphere as not to create melodies. Was this a conscious step at that

time?

Actually the keyboards were more prolific in "The Key" than just atmosphere... there were sequences that were embedded into some songs and there was quite a bit of following the guitars going on. The horror atmosphere part in what we decided it was most important to retain and then some departure riffs in the songs. It was readily accepted by the fans and the other bands and that was great because we weren't trying to be cheesy about it... just to support the heaviness and make it somewhat more bizarre. At the time I took full liberty to do whatever I wanted over the music and I still do but I am now more conscious of the other parts going on and interested in getting

"Ethereal Tomb"?

The title "Ethereal Tomb" was meant to reflect the dark, wet, dank desolation of a tomb accompanied by the empty airiness associated with things ethereal. It describes the music and lyrics of songs like "Edge of Darkness" and "Paranormal States"... Empty, spacious death... Insanity and hollow infinity.

Could you delve into the lyrical concept behind the "Ethereal Tomb"?

Well, each song stands alone as its own tale. We have delved more into the psychology of fear and horror with songs like "Edge" and "Apostle of Evil" and also looked at the idea of a ghost mating with a human in "Paranormal States."

Was that inspired by the movie "The Entity" from 1981 with Barbara Hershey in which a woman is tormented and sexually molested by an invisible demon?

Perhaps... It was more inspired by the concept of immortality being achieved through the union.

[Moving on to other lyrical topics...]

"Orbital Decay" really kind of links to the songs "Grid Zone" (off "Thresholds") and "Andromeda Strain" (off "The Key") and is somewhat of a fusion of those concepts (death in a space station). "Search for the Trident" was a study of an ancient alien race that existed on Earth before us... a race of giants that presumably bridged the gap between ape and man.

Could you explain this a bit more, what are for example, your views on the missing link theory between ape and man?

Well one theory has it that the evolution was helped along by aliens, for what I don't know... maybe they had travelled a long way, were lonely and the monkeys were just too fucking hairy to mate with? Something happened to accelerate it...

One of the key elements defining Nocturnus is the science fiction concept. This is a vague term because it originated from literature. There is a wide range of literature that is denoted as science fiction ranging from the Jules Verne books to the cyber punk writers like Gibson and Aldrich. In what way are you involved in the whole science fiction concept? What are your favorite science fiction authors/movies and why?

Of course, we feel that songs are short stories. They give you a plot, characters and scenery. The music often paints the scenery and the plot is derived from the title and lyrics. We sometimes cast ourselves in the roles of characters when imagining the events. We are involved in that to write science fiction means you imagine where the world is going or could go or may have been in the distant past and bring it to the present. I really like Asimov and his entire I Robot and Foundation series. Of course, "Martian Chronicles" by Bradbury is a classic and the Dune trilogy was also very transportive. We grew up on the Star Wars series as kids so it left a pretty powerful impression

a good solid crunch in the rhythms.

Your keyboard music would be perfect for computer games. Are you interested in that for example?

I would love it but have no idea how to pursue that end. Perhaps someone will see this that can point me where to go. Mike and I actually had a project called "Strategic Phenomena" in 1990 that had a piece called "Instructions" which was totally designed as video game music.

Nowadays, the musical genre within metal that uses a lot of keyboards is the black metal genre. What are your views on the use of keyboards there?

I haven't spent a lot of time studying the black metal genre but it I would imagine that it is a lot of pads, bells, organ and voices. I think that keys can add the element of spookiness to any genre, be it hard core rap to metal.

THE SCIENCE FICTION CONCEPT

I would now like to focus on the science fiction concept of the album. My first question, relating to this topic, would be what is exactly the

on us and for me the music as well. The soundtrack by Williams really carried the story for me.

Part One of the Star Wars Saga “The Phantom Menace” was released in 1999. It seems science fiction is associated more with battles in outer space than the science behind. What are your views on the commercial exploitation and hype surrounding science fiction these past few years.

I think it is a product of millennium hype and such. There have also been great movies dealing with other sci-fi issues such as “Contact” and “Gattaca” that have been more in line with potential realities. I think “The Phantom Menace” was somewhat disappointing in that there were several things that occurred that made me stand up and say “BULL-SHIT!!!.”

Florida is near the Bermuda triangle. In what way are you interested in that?

Well, we are aware that many strange things happen there. I think there are pockets of energy disturbances that exist all around the planet. Whether this energy is some form of magnetism or concentrated life/death energy I’m not entirely sure. I do have a theory about it. I call it the Veil Theory and it has to do with any mass containing life having a veil of energy surrounding it. So you have one and I do, too. The planet, since it contains many forms of life, has a complex veil structure that is constantly in flux as life and death occurs beneath it. I believe pockets of energy (much like clouds) swirl around in this veil and in concentrated form can actually create an effect in our experiences here.

In what way is your Veil Theory related to the phenomena of auras that can be visualized.

Auras are a phenomenon that very easily connects to the Veil theory. I think the energy exists and is all around us. Only our limited perception keeps us from seeing the threads that connect every living thing (and the dead for that matter). I have been trying to develop a mathematical description of this field but haven’t fully succeeded in locking down all the variables.

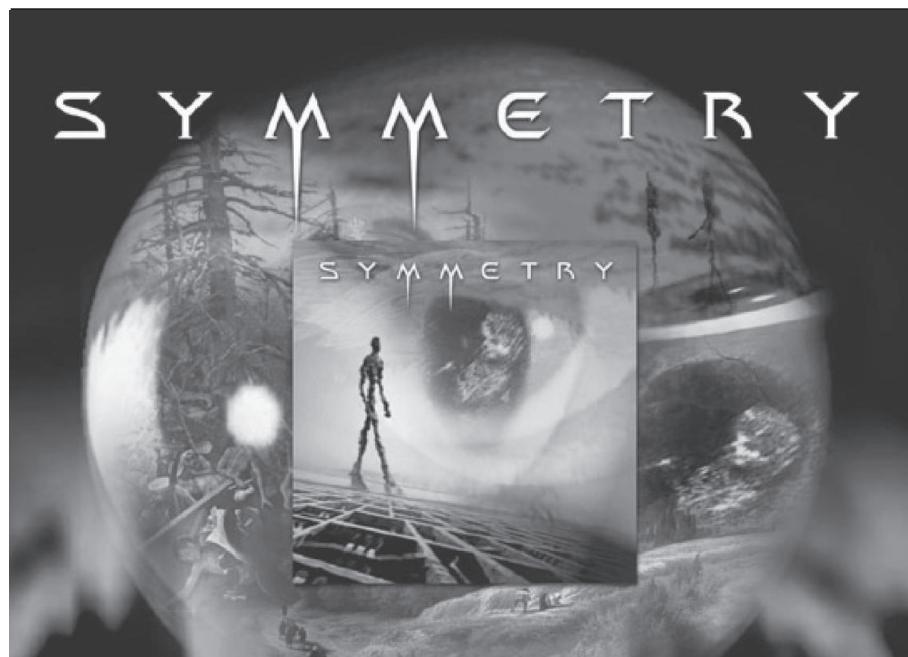
This is a complex mathematical task. In what way are you educated to attempt something this scientific and virtual?

Well, I wouldn’t attempt it alone! I have some understanding of physics and I used this (specifically some quantum mechanics) to relate the existence of vibrating levels of energy to particles. I have tried to liken my idea of a stratified veil with various energy level coexisting to that of electrons, which can only exist in specific shells. I have a degree in psychology, as far as formal education goes, but it really doesn’t relate to any of this! I have discussed the idea with a chemist in terms of trying to quantify something that is virtual at the moment. The feeling being that if it can be described in a balanced equation, it may help to lend credibility to the idea and also spring forth further discussion.

CLOSING COMMENTS

Louis, I would like to thank you for answering these questions. Do you have any closing statements you would like to make or discuss subjects we haven’t touched on.

I would just like to thank the fans for their support and encourage everyone to visit the website at <http://www.nocturnus.com>. We have a guestbook there and we would welcome reactions, thoughts, and comments. We do read these and respond accordingly! Other than that, always keep your minds open to new ideas and never believe that you know it all. We never will. But the journey is the destination.



[by Christian Rademaker]

As opposed to guitar-driven 80s prog metal, a definite change that has occurred these past few years is the domination of keyboards in the prog metal world. This trend started after Dream Theater reached a significant level of success, spawning many clones in its wake. Although the use of keyboards can add a definite dimension to progressive metal like Fountain of Tears for example, I personally feel that their role has become over-important: every metal band with keyboards is suddenly denoted as progressive. Progressive metal bands focusing on a twin guitar line-up have thus become as scarce as they were abundant in the late 80s. This style was exemplified by the likes of Fates Warning, Mekong Delta, Helstar, and Kingsbane (later renamed into In the Name) at the time.

The Dutch band Symmetry is one of the premier new acts that bring twin guitars to the forefront. Although I was already aware of their mini-CD “To Divinity” (released in 1998), it wasn’t until I saw their live show at the first edition of the Prog Power festival in Tilburg, The Netherlands that I was overawed. The live show of this five-piece consisting of vocalist Erik Masselink, guitarists Frank Schiphorst and Franc Tiehuis, bass player Bas Hoebink, and drummer Marcel Heitmann was refreshing. Although a minority was familiar with their material, the stage acting supporting the songs like “Land Evermore”, “Slave”, and “Chaos of Birth” contained enough variety and memorable parts to excite the sceptical audience. Symmetry showed that the typical twin-guitar heavy prog metal style of the late 80s/early 90s can still be played without sounding dated.

Enthused by the fact of having another opportunity to see Symmetry live, I travelled the long road to the north-eastern part of the Netherlands on December 4th 1999 for a small festival featuring Sore Plexus, Re-Vision and headliners Symmetry. Thanks to the very friendly and co-operative manager Rob Knol I had a chance to listen to some rough mixes of their debut full length CD “Watching the Unseen” to be released in January 2000. Building on their style, the new material contains more variety and tech metal influences (Sieges Even could be heard here and there). Before the festival I talked to the different members of Symmetry: Erik Masselink (EM), Frank Schiphorst (FS), Franc Tiehuis, Bas Hoebink, and Marcel Heitmann. Topics that were covered during the interview were the mini-CD “To Divinity”, the obvious Fates Warning link, the fact that they don’t have keyboards, their stage presence, the musical and lyrical aspect of the new CD “Watching the Unseen”, promotional issues, and Dutch animosity.



TO DIVINITY AND BACK

Your debut mini CD "To Divinity" was already recorded in 1997 but it took more than a year to get released. What was the cause of this delay? EM: You don't want to know [laughs]. We had a verbal agreement with a very small Dutch label. It was called Eastern Records I think. They had big stories about the things they were going to. We visited them and it already looked quite dodgy. At that time we didn't have any other contacts so we agreed to do it. After we had finished the recordings of "To Divinity", we sent him a CD with the master tapes and a CD with the cover art but we didn't get any reaction. The guy had disappeared from the face of the Earth and we had lost our master. That was the worst thing because we only had one master.

Did you finance the recordings independently?

EM: Yes we did. Getting back to the problem with our lost master, we then started calling all the pressing companies in the Netherlands to find out if our master was lying around somewhere. Finally our guitar player Frank got this guy in Tilburg on the phone that had the master. The guy already had had some bad experiences with the guy from Eastern Records because he owed him some money. Anyway, he was so nice to send us back the master in a registered letter. The whole thing took 7-8 months in total.

You then decided to release it independently.

EM: We were really fed up with the whole thing so we released it ourselves. We pressed a thousand copies and the distribution went through many different channels. We then received letters from people in Greece, Brazil and Italy who wanted to buy a copy so that was fun.

That's a very peculiar story. "To Divinity" only has four songs on it, didn't you have enough material for a full length CD?

EM: We didn't have enough money to finance a full-length CD. We preferred to have four songs with a good sound instead for more songs with a lesser sound.

MH: I'm not sure if we even had enough songs for a full-length CD though. It's on the edge.

Stefan Schipper took the band photo in the booklet of "To Divinity". He also used to do a metal magazine called "Crionics" back in the late 80s. Does he still do a lot of music photography? EM: He still does a lot of photography work for bands. For example when Sepultura broke up he made the book with photos. He has a very good name in this world. I think he's actually twice won the European Kodak award and five times the Dutch Kodak award. It's not just music photography [he's actually just released a book for charity with portrait photography of famous Dutch people like the Prime Minister as well as Kerry King - CR]. We are going to make the photos for our next CD with him next week.

THE FATES WARNING LINK...

Is your band name Symmetry actually trademarked because there are probably more bands with that name? EM: There used to be a German Symmetry, there is an Italian Symmetry, a Greek Symmetry and there's probably also an American Symmetry. We are not really worried about the fact if it's trademarked or not. It'll only become a problem if we get better known and so does the other Symmetry.

Have you ever heard these other Symmetries?

MH: I have heard the German Symmetry. Their logo also looks a lot like ours. I don't think its possible to make much more of the logo either.



I read a few reviews of your CD and the link to Fates Warning's "Perfect Symmetry" is of course easily made.

EM: We did actually take our name from that CD [laughs]. MH: Most probably the other Symmetry's did as well.

TO HAVE KEYBOARDS OR NOT TO HAVE KEYBOARDS

I read in your biography that you were looking for a keyboard player before you had a second guitar player. I'm glad you didn't succeed though but did you have a certain sound that you wanted to have?

MH: There are several passages in our songs which would sound better with keyboards. I ask our guitar players once in a while to create a kind of smeared sound but they're not able to do it [laughs]. EM: It has a lot to do with our background, it was really hard to decide if we were going to have a keyboard player or not. I'm a big fan of the old metal sound with two guitars like Iron Maiden. At that time Dream Theater was becoming popular and we are all big Rush and Fates Warning fans. We were thinking that we needed a keyboard player because every band had one. If we had met the right keyboard player then we would probably have a keyboard player now.

I'm personally beginning to dislike the way keyboards are used melodically in

prog metal bands.

MH: It becomes repetitive when you listen to a lot of prog metal bands. If I listen to new prog metal albums it tends to sound very familiar. I should listen to different music.

How do you look back on "To Divinity" musically, you probably don't like it anymore?

EM: Well, we still like the music but I think our new songs have been thought out a bit more. The songs are more open as well.

MH: "To Divinity" was a bit too dense. If you listen to "Why should I" then you can

hear that it's filled with guitars. I don't like that too much. EM: In the past I used to write the songs with Franc Tiehuis. Frank Schiphorst has become more influential in the writing process and he works differently. He is less focused on the guitars and more on melody.

How can you



compare the styles of the two guitar players?

MH: Franc Tiehuis is a very good rhythm guitar player, he's got very good riffs. Frank Schiphorst is better in terms of melody and writing compositions whereas Franc Tiehuis provides different guitar parts.

EM: Frank Schiphorst and I click together slightly better in terms of melody. Frank Tiehuis is the riff man, the Tony Iommi of Symmetry.

STAGE PRESENCE

Erik, your stage presence is very impressive. How many of this is intentional and how much is spontaneous?

EM: Most of it is spontaneous but I, of course, think about how to present things. We haven't done hundreds of shows so there are things that can be improved. For us it'll not become a routine.

But you have done hundreds of shows?

EM: Yes but that was with a top 40 cover band. There are things like control over my voice that I have learned from singing live so much.

At least you don't sound like many of these shrieky Labrie clones. Is that because you are slightly older and you didn't grow up with James Labrie and Ray Alder?

EM: I learned singing by trying to sing like Bruce Dickinson, Eric Adams and Geoff Tate. Those are my singers. I know Dream Theater from their first CD but I had been doing the Bruce Dickinson thing for so

many years that they weren't an influence.

Bruce Dickinson's voice has suffered over the years. How's your voice coping with age?

EM: My voice is getting better and better. We have more time to rest between shows. It is extremely hard on your voice when you play 250 shows in a year like Iron Maiden did on their Powerslave tour. I would be half dead after a show if I ran across the stage like Bruce Dickinson.

FROM BIRTH TO DEATH AND BEYOND

Are the lyrics to the song "Chaos of Birth" about a miscarriage?

EM: No it's not. It's actually about the chaos surrounding the birth of a child: the chaos of the mother who's having the baby as well as the baby which thrown in the deep end and has to survive. I don't have any experience with any of this though because I and my wife don't have any children.

Is "Raging Planets" a song about environmental activists?

EM: Do you know the program on Discovery Channel with the same title? It's about the unpredictability of the weather.

We took the title from that program and the theme of the song is about how the Earth fights back. I watch Discovery Channel every day.

I heard that you wanted to use samples in that song. Are you allowed to do that?

EM: We are busy with that. You are allowed to use samples from television but when you take it from movie sound tracks, like the sample of the movie "Hellraiser" that we use in "Slave," it may not last longer than ten seconds.

I'm curious now because I wouldn't really expect a reference to "Hellraiser" when I listen to your music. What's "Slave" about?

EM: When they open the cube in "Hellraiser" pinhead shows up and he wants the ultimate pleasure: pain.

MH: You have some strange ideas. The thing is that the lyrics are written when a song is almost finished, so when you have an aggressive song you can then expect such lyrics.

In that sense you're very original because I don't know any other prog metal bands that sing about "Hellraiser".

EM: I think our lyrics are different than most prog metal bands. We don't go for the pseudo-intellectual image, just straightforward lyrics and no beating around the bush.

The lyrics of "Land Evermore" are also quite mystical.

EM: "Land Evermore" is based on several poems by Edgar Allan Poe. Land Evermore is the eternal land in which a person accidentally shows up. There he meets his deceased family and friends.

Are you a fan of Edgar Allan Poe's work?

EM: Yes I've read several of his books. I read the original works and I really like his use of the English language. I still have to buy a book with synonyms like a thesaurus. In such a book you can look up a word and find ten other words with a



similar meaning. I like the way that Edgar Allan Poe uses words which you have to look up every time to find out what they mean. Moving on to the other songs on the forthcoming album, the song "In your World" is a more personal song about losing someone. The song "Mission" is about the movie "The Prophecy" with Christopher Walken. "The Circle" is the name of sect which a person has joined without knowing what to expect. He now wants to leave but that's not possible. The song "The Letters" has an X-Files like theme. Someone finds out that at the deathbed of a father of family member, that person is someone totally different, as he had known. In the X-Files it is often so that a person is not what he seems to be. The first line is "The world is not what it seems my son" and he has hidden a set of letters that have information about extraterrestrial beings.

COMBINING COMPLEXITY WITH CATCHINESS

Erik, being the vocalist, how do you contribute to the writing process?

BH: Erik is more the arranger of the songs. EM: I have a strong sense how to arrange different pieces of music when I hear. The other guys compose many different parts and I build them together. The band builds a song together, although the contribution can differ between songs but there's not a person that writes a complete song and then presents it to the other members of the band.

Bas, you have quite a free role on the new CD, you're not restricted to playing steady rhythms.

BH: That's true. Luckily I got the space to do so. It has a lot to with my background. I used to play in a band in which everyone wrote his own parts. We then fit everything together but there was never a discussion whether not to use something. Everyone had the liberty to play melodies and riffs at will. When I joined Symmetry I continued that process within boundaries of course. My writing is now more guided than before. Now we have discussions that in a certain section of the song the vocals need to be more pronounced so the rest has to hold back a bit. No frills, I had to go back to basics in several parts and I had some problems with that.

I notice that the new songs have technical parts where each musician can really excel.

EM: I agree. We couldn't do that so much on "To Divinity" because the old bass player wasn't able to fill in the room we gave him. Bas has the ability to contribute so we give him the room.

Is there still room for improvement after the new CD?

MH: It can always get better in terms of compositions.

FT: Lately, the writing has become more loosely and free.

EM: When you really listen to the new CD and compare it to "To Divinity" then you can really hear which songs were written later and which are already older. We're still moving ahead composition-wise.

FT: For example, "Chaos of Birth" used to be two parts, one consisting of two chords and the other of three chords. It sounds natural to the ear now because we've used slight variations to them.

What you see very often in the prog metal genre is that a band really shows off in terms of complexity on their first two albums and then evolves into a more melodic and less technical direction.

FT: We're not the type of band that needs to show off. Erik knows how a song should be structured/arranged and that is the most important thing. A technical part should be part of a song and not easily replaceable with a different part. I'm not a fan of music with technical parts in which a certain part could also be part of another song. If you hear a piece of music you should know to which song it belongs.

BH: Like you said before, there are so many musicians that play extremely well but their music isn't memorable.

The epitome is, of course, when complexity is combined with catchiness. What are examples of bands that have achieved this?

EM: Rush is the prime example.

MH: Their solos fit with the song.

EM: Rush is capable of including a highly complex piece of music that sounds great without hampering the natural flow of the song. If you analyze the piece then you find out how phenomenal it is.

MH: I personally prefer the Rush period after "A Show of Hands" when Geddy has lost his shrieky voice.

EM: "Counterparts" is a brilliant CD and so is the last triple live CD "Different Stages".

The ultimate Rush solo is, in my opinion, the guitar solo in "The Trees".

EM: That's right. Actually everything that Rush has done is worth having. I was just talking to Bas about the new Dream Theater CD. Although it's Dream Theater I think it's one of the best CDs I have ever heard. Everything is right from beginning to end.

I have a problem reviewing music in which I hear something familiar but it's hard to trace back the origin.

EM: When I hear music, I can just go to

my collection of CDs and easily grab one or two CDs and tell you to listen to that part which sounds almost like that part. For example, at the end of the 7th or 8th song of the last Dream Theater CD there's an instrumental, which flows into a tranquil guitar solo and that is stolen from Pink Floyd. On the Pink Floyd CD "Shine on you crazy diamond" there's a song from which the solo part originates from, I'm sure of it.

Are you so critical of your own music as well? For example when Frank comes up with a part and it sounds familiar, do you discard it at that point?

EM: Well, it's still so that it's better to steal something good than write something bad yourself. You listen to so many different things and you are automatically influenced. Coming back to Dream

Theater, I don't really mean that they've stolen everything but their influences shine through so evidently.

MH: You listen to a lot of music and when you hear something you like, the next step is to find out why it sounds good and then you start using that yourself. We all have different tastes.

EM: If you look at the way our songs are structured then you can certainly hear that the bands I mentioned earlier have influenced me. We're really starting to philosophize now...

If you listen to "Letters" there's a Sieges Even-like intro. Was that intentional?

FT: It's not really intentional but there are periods that I listen to a certain type of music. When I first listened to Sieges Even I was blown away, the combination of funky parts and still being progressive with different tones. After listening to that for a while I was composing some music for myself in that style.

Do you mean the later or earlier Sieges Even?

FT: It reminds me very much of the CD "Sophisticated" with the blue cover. One of the songs has the same type of intro and it's just a coincidence that it sounded like that. I like to listen and analyze different music and play in that particular style. For example "Slave" was written when I was listening to WatchTower, Meshuggah, and Spastic Ink. They write their music in a very arithmetical manner. You listen to a piece of music which then becomes very complex but when you analyze it, then it turns out to be the same set of notes with some random notes inserted. I still need the book with transcriptions that Ron Jarzombek has written.

PROMOTIONAL ISSUES AND DUTCH ANIMOSITY

Your manager told me that the contact you had with Zizania Entertainment has stopped and that you're now signed with Harrow productions. Is that a regular record company?

EM: He (Harry Wijering) doesn't want to be known as such. He's now signed one band Form [with the brother of the Lemur Voice singer on guitars and ex-band of Lemur Voice guitar player Marcel Coenen -CR]. His priority is his studio and he doesn't want to invest too much money. I think we did the right thing by joining Harrow Productions in terms of distribution and promotion. He's recorded with a lot of bands from Power Records, and next year he wants a joint advertisement with the independent bands he's produced in the larger metal magazines. In this way they can share the costs. He's built up a whole network of contacts

through his band Harrow that he's got distribution channels in France, Italy, etc. We're now going to divide the promotion work between us because he's got contacts with the bigger metal magazines and we have to do the rest.

In terms of promotion, you're now doing a series of gigs with two German bands Sore Plexus and Re-Vision. How's that coming along?

FS: Very well actually. They have connections in Germany while we have connections in the Netherlands.

EM: The advantage is that we now get the opportunity to promote ourselves in Germany and establish new contacts because nothing much will happen for us in the Netherlands. Everything needs to fit in a certain box with a label here and if you make one wrong move then immediately you'll have a quarrel with another band. I think that's one of the reasons why there's never been a Dutch band that has really made it big globally, except perhaps Vandenberg. But their split wasn't that amicable either. Which other band from the Netherlands has broken through from the rock genre?

FS: Sleeze Beez.

EM: They made a bunch of money in Japan.

FS: Yes but they also came back from the USA with their tails between their legs.

Doesn't that have a lot to do with the Dutch culture: everything foreign (except when it's from Germany) is always better?

BH: You don't have that problem with Re-Vision or Sore Plexus. We quarrel about who gets to play first on the bill instead who wants to be the headliner.

Are there any other worthwhile bands in the region then?

MH: Mystrez and Harrow.

EM: Mystrez have reformed and have a new CD out called "Out of the Blue." We played with them last week when they had their CD presentation. The guys from Mystrez and Harrow are just regular guys like us. I have the feeling that it gets worse once you go to the southern or western part of the Netherlands. Another thing is that beforehand there's already a lot of badmouthing about other bands in the magazines and such. For example, we were going to play with Within Temptation here in Hengelo and I had read that they were a very arrogant band and a clone of The Gathering bla bla. But when they came here, they turned out to be really nice people. I think that the magazines in the Netherlands pour a lot of oil on the fire as they say. On a lighter note, Symmetry and three regional bands Harrow, Mystrez, Ulcerate Feste want to organize a local tour here and if it's successful we might do something nation wide.

Do you have any final statements you would like to make?

EM: We really hope that the new CD will do well and that's all we can hope for. We are going to keep both feet on the ground though. I'm personally gambling on Germany. I'm hoping we can play there some more because the halls are ten times as big and you make ten times as much money. To be honest, the CD that we recorded was quite expensive so we do need to make some return benefits. We spent a lot of time on the CD and if it flops we'll start crying. If the bigger magazines like, for example, the German magazine Rock Hard give "Watching the Unseen" a bad review then I'll really be disappointed.

SPIRAL ARCHITECT

Creative Sceptics

[by Giedrius Slivinskas, Alban Schmid, and Christian Rademaker]

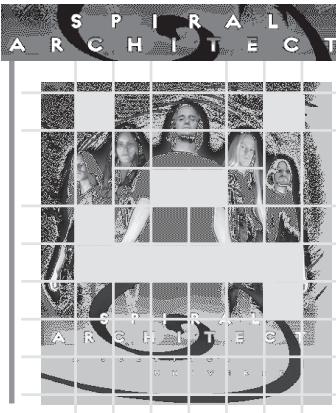
Much has been said about and expected from Norway's Spiral Architect. The band was founded in 1993, and, two years later, technical progressive metal on the two-song demo created a furor in the underground. The band displayed a focus and intensity that wasn't very common, and everybody was expecting the promised full-length album to be a technical-metal fan's best-ever dream. But as with all great dreams, they don't come exactly when one wants them to, and it took five years until the album was done.

The band recruited ex-Manitou singer Oyvind Hageland (a session singer sang on the demo songs) and started to shape their innovative style. In 1997, Spiral Architect signed a contract with Sensory, a division of Laser's Edge and made an agreement with Neil Kernon that he would produce the album. Neil's work on Nevermore's most technical and tight album "Politics of Ecstasy" certainly indicated that he was probably the most suitable producer for the even more challenging Spiral Architect endeavors. The album titled "A Sceptic's Universe" was recorded in June of 1998, mixed in February of 1999, and released in February 2000, resuming the five-year silence after the demo. During the recent years before the release, the hype around the band was constantly increasing due to three song files that were available on the internet prior to the release, as well as due to consistent and persistent band's efforts not only to create a true technical metal album, but also to promote it as such.

And yes, "A Sceptic's Universe" is a milestone. Spiral Architect are very but not overly sceptic when it comes to other music; but it's not about arrogance, it's rather about perfection. They have managed to elegantly and precisely combine their influences into an innovative and challenging album, taking the best out of WatchTower's technothrash metal, Cynic's technical fusion death metal, and Psychotic Waltz's weirdly graceful progressive metal. Spiral Architect are not as thrashy as WatchTower, but are more directly metal than Cynic, more technical and intense than Psychotic Waltz, and more focused than all the three bands. While WatchTower and Cynic were criticized for inappropriate vocals (high-pitched screams and death-metal growls, respectively), Spiral Architect shine in this department, as Oyvind has learned his lessons from John Arch of Fates Warning and Buddy Lackey of Psychotic Waltz. And the result is the album of true Norwegian technical metal, as looking carefully you may find out on the CD cover.

After the release of "A Sceptic's Universe," we conducted an interview with drummer Asgeir Mickelson. We started with questions about the recent departure of the original guitar player Kaj Gornitzka and then went over to questions about band's style and ideology.





After the recording of the album, Kaj Gornitzka left the band. What happened to him? It must be frustrating to quit right before the album finally comes out, after spending so much time on it...

Kaj slowly lost interest in the band during the last 2-3 years he was in the band. He wasn't very pleased with rehearsing 3-4 days a week because that left him very little time to pursue other interests. We understand very well the frustration it was to stand day in and day out down in the basement nitpicking the songs, hardly ever play live or record an album and get response for the struggle.

Finding a replacement for Kaj must have been a difficult task. How did you recruit Andreas Jonsson?

I was talking to one of the guitarists in Extol on the phone and just when I was going to ask him if he knew about any guitarists he asked me if we needed one. Christer had just got to know him two weeks earlier when Andreas had moved to Norway from Sweden with his girlfriend in order to get jobs. I got his phone number and called him up and invited him to an audition. We thought he was great at once, but we wanted to test some other guitarists before deciding on anyone, so it took at least half a year until he was offered the job. Luckily he hadn't joined another band in the meantime...

How does Andreas fit in the band? Did it take him time to catch up with the songs?

He still needs time to fully understand the Spiral Architect vibe, but he's a fast learner so it's not a big problem. We won't know how well he fit in the band until we start writing new songs.

Lars Norberg (bass player) is credited for most of the songs, a quite unusual situation in a metal band. His sound is also particularly upfront in the mix. Could you tell us more about his role in the band?

I always say that Lars is half of the band. Somehow the composing has shifted in his direction over the last couple of years. He is very dedicated and has often clear visions about the songs he create. He never throw random riffs together - the songs are always very thought out and planned. The bass sound is cool, but on half of the album it came through more than we wanted, and it's not as fusion sounding as originally planned.

How do you compose songs? Do you write full scores of the music you

create? How long does it take you to rehearse a song until you are all ready for recording it?

Most songs start with one of the members coming up with 2-3 riffs he wants to try out. We rehearse it real quick and record it on tape so the one who brought the riffs can take it home and listen to it. Then it's up to him to create a full song. We often rehearse a couple of songs simultaneously over a rather long period of time, and we often make rehearsal tapes. We keep making variations up till the day before we enter a studio (the actual recording and release marks the ending of the development of a song). I know Lars and Steinar writes scores on parts of the songs. Writing scores for entire songs is a big hassle which we fortunately don't need to do.

Since you spend so much time developing songs, I would imagine that, in the studio, you record exactly what you came up with. Is it true, or is there some room left for improvisations? If the latter, maybe you can give some example parts off the debut album that deviated from what was originally intended?

Most of the parts were written before the recording, but a studio environment always inspire you to come up with something extra - which we also calculated. From top of my head, I remember Lars made his part on the fade-out riff on "Conjuring Collapse" in the studio, and the two guitars on the bass section (the part called "Being And Nothingness") in the middle of "Cloud Constructor" was a spontaneous first take by Steinar. Apart from the obvious variations done by Oyvind, I guess the only one who really improvise is me. I just bash out full force and seldom play the same fills. I'm glad we're not doing any playbacks...

Which song off the new album has had the biggest number of revisions and, in all aspects, was the most difficult to compose?

I think that must be "Adaptability," but also "Spinning." "Adaptability" was hardest to compose because originally it was Kaj's song, but since he was on vacation when we had to finish it, it ended up as a song that none of us likes a 100% - there's just something wrong about it. I also think that was the song Oyvind had most difficulties coming up with satisfying vocal lines to. I don't remember "Spinning" as a difficult song to make, but the first edition of it was very different. We had in fact trashed the song, when Oyvind joined the band and said "Hey, there are cool riffs in here!". Luckily he did because it's one of my favorites now.

The production of this record is absolutely top-notch. Could you tell us more about how the recording happened? Did Neil Kernon give any memorable suggestions?

According to Neil, this is the album he's done less with as a producer in his whole career. It has much to do with the fact that he didn't have a label pushing him to make sure there would be radio hits on it. He was free to do whatever he wanted as long as the result became as good as it could get, and he didn't feel that there was much that had to be done

with the music. Naturally, he came up with some suggestions here and there, but remember, a producer is also there to stop the band using time trying out bad ideas. He was also there to help us finding a sound that would fit the band. Neil was our guide and he was very pleasant to work with. He came over to Norway in May '98 and worked with us for a week. Then we recorded the album in three weeks at Village Productions (<http://www.villageproductions.com>) in El Paso, Texas, two months later. We needed more time and did the last easy bits on our own at a small studio in Oslo, Norway, the following autumn.

El Paso is near the borderzone between Texas and Mexico. Supposedly, it's a barren part of Texas with not much civilization for hundreds of miles around. Was a change of scenery compared to Norway a definite inspiration while doing the album?

The studio was located in a serene and private country setting surrounded by pecan orchards 30 miles east of El Paso, only two miles from the Rio Grande and Old Mexico. The desert was close, but it was not at all a barren wasteland since it was so close to the river. Although it's cool living in a luxurious environment, I think the inspiration mainly comes from the actual recording process. The fact that you're finally recording all the songs that you've been working so hard for the last couple of years is really inspiring.

Oyvind is very low in the mix. Is that a choice to avoid covering or cluttering the permanent complex musical structure?

We think the vocals are just where it should be - neither too low nor high in the mix. It's correct that we didn't want the vocals to cover the rest of the music. We just wanted every instrument - including vocals - to be heard. Spiral Architect is a type of band that makes the vocals an instrument on the same level as the other instruments, so it needs to be treated that way.

How did your collaboration with Sean Malone as guest musician come along?

We talked to him about this a long time ago, but it eventually turned out he was moving at the time we were in the studio so he couldn't do it. Fortunately, he found time after all so we sent an ADAT express to his house and got it back a couple of days later with his stuff recorded - and it was perfect! The funny thing is that Lars wrote a letter with instructions to follow the ADAT to Sean, but when he was going to put it in the package, it was already sent. I don't know why we never phoned Sean, but he understood the song perfectly so we were happy. We had one chance and it worked. It's nice working with pro people!

Have you ever considered asking Ron Jarzombek for a guest appearance?

We talked about it, but we didn't want anyone to play on the album just for the sake of it. It had to be as in Sean Malone's situation - he played stick on the album because we needed it. It would've been cool if we had a part where Ron's expertise was needed, but

there wasn't. We are proud to have Sean playing on the album though - he understood the music perfectly.

Playing technical music like Spiral Architect is obviously not a simple matter and requires a solid music theory background. Have most members of Spiral Architect graduated from a music school?

We could play and read scores from the day we were born... Ehr, not exactly... If I'm not wrong, Steinar (guitar) went through gymnasium (similar to college) studying music, but I think he's learned most theory by reading guitar magazines. Lars graduated from BIT/MI (Hollywood) in March '92. Oyvind took some singing lessons but was told it was little they could teach him since his techniques were good. I don't have a clue what I'm doing - I just play...

What are the main music influences of the band, including non-metal genres?

Oyvind and I listen a lot to black metal, such as Mayhem, Emperor, and Dimmu Borgir. We all like 'the other' technical metal bands which are Cynic, WatchTower and Spastic Ink, which I'm sure doesn't come as a surprise... Early Fates Warning, early Queensryche, Psychotic Waltz, Death, and early Crimson Glory is cool stuff. Non-metal bands must be fusion/jazz artists such as Bruford, Brand X, Tribal Tech, Weather Report, Al DiMeola, and Chick Corea. I also listen to what I call 'intelligent pop,' which to me is Bel Canto, Tori Amos, Kate Bush, Cardigans, Madonna, Portishead, Dalbello, Peter Gabriel, The Police.

Jazz influences pertain the entire album. Particularly drums and bass lines display a typical jazz approach. How did you come to mingle this type of music with metal?

I think it was Lars who brought jazz/fusion into the band, but it took a while until at least I started to like it. It was a natural development, and it just felt right going in this direction. It's very important that the rhythm section communicates - something I believe we do.

Why don't you play jazz rock/fusion instead of metal?

Who knows where we end up...

When you listen to other technical metal bands, what do you look for in their music?

First of all, it just has to be good. Then it's nice if they have something of their own - or do something better than the others. They must have a cool vibe! Unfortunately, there are only three other real technical bands out there, namely WatchTower, Cynic and Spastic Ink, but the sad part is that only Spastic Ink exist today.

Though some other technical metal bands exist, none is really close to Spiral Architect's style. This makes your music kind of unique. What brought you to define your own genre? Did you intend from the beginning on to compose something different, a sort of blend never done before?

Yes, certainly. We have tried to come up with what we envisioned back in 1992/1993. Everyone who's heard Cynic,

WatchTower, and Psychotic Waltz will hear that there are similarities between these bands and us. But although we're big fans of them, we've been careful not to tread on their grounds, because it was never the intention to copy any of those bands. We just wanted to make metal, but very technical and melodic. We always wanted a singer who could tie up all the insane technical parts with interesting melodies, and frankly I don't understand people saying that "A Sceptic's Universe" lacks of melody - I think it has lots of it!

In what way you think Spiral Architect are different from what WatchTower and Sieges Even did in the late 80s?

Simple! They were thrashy, we are jazzy. I won't go as far as calling the guy who yelled out the lyrics in Sieges Even a singer, but despite many others, I just love Allan Tecchio's voice! But anyway, the vocals on both bands are completely different to us. Another thing is that our song structures tend to be more intricate.

"A Sceptic's Universe" was recorded in June 1998, mixed in February 1999 and released in February 2000. How can you explain such long delays?

In one word: music business (well, that was two words...). The biggest fuck-up was because of ourselves. We didn't manage to finish the record when we were in Texas, so we had to wait till all the other scheduled releases on Sensory was out. Then we had to struggle to get someone to release it in Japan, and when we finally found Avalon they wouldn't release it until December, which eventually turned out to be January...

Your work for Scream magazine should give you a good insight into promotional activities surrounding a release. In how far is a self-initiative from a band expected when you're signed to a small company with a limited promotional budget?

The only pressure we have from the label is that we follow up all requests for interviews and other activities around the promotion. So far I haven't had time to dig into what Sensory actually has done to promote the album, but to us it is like this: if the album doesn't get promoted to our satisfaction then there's no point recording another album for Sensory.

Why does the album contain 45 minutes, instead, for example, 60?

Because we think that all albums over 45 minutes are too long. Simple as that. If we had one more song we wouldn't have it on the album. We have crammed more riffs and twists and turns in 45 minutes than most bands do through a whole career anyway...

Technical metal will always remain a kind of "elite" music, even among metal fans. Thus, your potential audience among metalheads is probably quite limited. However, I imagine that your particular kind of music could also cross boundaries and appeal to open-minded jazz connoisseurs. Do you have any contact with critics of jazz magazines which could highlight or review your

album to broaden its potential audience?

No. We have no contacts within the jazz market. Since I have a feeling we haven't done the jazz/fusion parts good enough, I don't think that part of the music business will be much interested, but you never know... I have asked the label to send promos to the instrument magazines, so if we're real lucky we'll at least get some exposure through them. I think we'll wait till the next album before attacking the die hard jazz/fusion fans.

What you think are realistic sales for a technical metal album?

I have no idea. Noise told me 3-4 years ago they had sold 10,000 copies of WatchTower's "Control And Resistance" but I've also heard they sold 40,000. I think the market is more open minded for technical metal now, and it seems people are getting bored with the hordes of Dream Theater clones, so maybe we'll sell good. I don't know. It would be nice if we and Ken Golden at least got back all the money we've spent on the band...

You had an unofficial demo for record labels back in 1996-1997. What songs were on it, how they changed since then, how many copies have you sent, and what responses have you got?
I think we sent out about 10 copies. It contained "Spinning" and "A Sceptic's Universe" (which later ended up as "Adaptability"). The lyrics weren't even finished, so there are some strange words in there. I remember looking at a sheet of paper with all the parts written down when recording the songs. The only response I can remember was that Mike Varney of Shrapnel Records didn't like it (they had offered us a deal and had requested more songs). I guess they wanted commercial progressive metal... By the way, the demo sucks and it's best forgotten!

Did you get any proposals from bigger metal indie labels? Why did you choose Sensory which has only just in the last couple of years started to really consider metal?

As mentioned, we got an offer from Shrapnel which was the biggest label, but I think we ended up with maybe 10 offers - all small labels. The main reason why we signed to Sensory was because they were willing to give us a one album deal. Ken Golden also offered to sleep with all of us - an offer impossible to resist...

Since you spent so much time on the album music, it's interesting to know was it the same with the CD cover?

I started on some ideas two years ago and worked on it now and then. I guess it takes about two weeks - effective time - to make a cover like that since it's pretty complex. You can't see how complex it's made, but the Photoshop-file for each spread in the booklet was about 250 megabytes. I also used a lot of time searching for the right pictures and take pro photos to match the design.

Your representation on the band (on the internet and elsewhere) is very concise: one picture, a well thought-out piece of text, and a real-audio song file. Do you think this is a better

representation as opposed to bands that do not mind posting news and pictures from different live shows every week?

Yes, we don't want to let people into our living room. But! The main reason why our website is concise is because it's not finished yet (how strange that must sound). There's some stuff I want to put up but I haven't had time doing it. I would also like to do a 'real' design on it.

Do you mean that if - even if it's unlikely - "Metal Edge" shows interest in writing a whole article about what kind of food Spiral Architect members like, you would refuse?

I wouldn't refuse if I got free food and a trip to USA, haha. What about "Playgirl"? Well, even if a magazine wanted to do something like that, I'd have a hard time understanding who would be interested in reading about it. I mean, a picture of me eating cornflakes isn't very cool...

Sweden's metal bands often complain that the audience at metal shows in their country consists of only other musicians who just look for mistakes in playing. Is situation different in Norway?

It depends on who's playing, but I guess the situation is similar in Norway. There will always be some smart ass standing in the back row laughing at the band who's playing. I am one of them, haha.

"Moving Spirit" and "Fountainhead" contain in their lyrics titles of Ayn Rand's novels "Atlas Shrugged" and "Fountainhead." I can imagine that this is not fortuitous. Is there any fan of Ayn Rand or objectivism/libertarianism among you?

I know Lars isn't an objectivist but I know he's found Ayn Rand's books interesting. Kaj also likes her books.

The lyrical concept in relation to technical metal bands often revolves around either technological, ecological, or philosophical topics. The combination of extremely religious topics and technical metal would perhaps be revolutionary but somehow not appropriate. In how far does the lyrical concept tie in with your style of music?

First of all, I want to point out that I think religious people aren't thinking rationally. I am an atheist and have peace with myself knowing that there isn't a meaning of life - it's all just a coincidence that we exist, so when I'm dead then I'm nothing and I won't return. I think that technical metal lyrics have to be products of rational thinking. It is as important as the music. You just don't write religious lyrics to technical metal since it is nothing but a product of imagination. Superstition has nothing to do with this style of music. Note that there is a huge difference writing lyrics that ARE religious and lyrics that are ABOUT religion.

You did a Fates Warning cover of "Prelude to Ruin" on the tribute album. You also play "Silent Cries," why didn't you choose it for the tribute?

We've never played "Silent Cries," but

we've played "Anarchy Divine" and "Valley Of The Dolls." First of all, we wanted to pick a song from the Arch-era and we ended up with choosing between "Pirates of the Underground" and "Prelude to Ruin."

What do you see as the main difference between the Arch-era and Alder-era Fates Warning?

Heh, obviously the singer... Although I like most Fates Warning albums, I must say that I like better the old and more heavy style than the newer "prog rock style." My favorites are "Awaken the Guardian" and "No Exit" which are much more heavy than the "Zonder era." I think that Zonder brought control into the band - which is fine, but I think there was more feeling when sloppy Zimmerman handled the drums. John Arch is the king!

What role do you play in Borknagar? Do you contribute to the songwriting or do you just perform?

I am a full member and am free to contribute with as much as I can. I actually wrote two of the lyrics on the new album and did the cover design.

You like some black metal, and Borknagar are well known, is there a theoretical possibility that Spiral Architect will become a side project for you?

So far I've seen Borknagar as a side project, and I have a hard time seeing that to change. I've been in Spiral Architect since day one and I'm one of those who have created what the band is today - that's not the situation in Borknagar since they released three albums before I joined. It might be 50/50 one day.

Steinar plays in Satyricon, is his role similar to yours in Borknagar?

No, he's just hired to play live. Steinar is there mainly because of the money.

Where will you go musically from here? Since nearly two years have passed from the recording of the album, maybe you have a few newer songs?

Oyvind, Steinar, and especially Lars have a lot of new stuff which we're going to start working on soon. I have a hunch that the next album will be more dynamic - more fusion, more metal, and more technical. I would like to make a one minute part that is the most technical shit's ever been made. Total technical mayhem!

Do you have any thoughts about the next album? Will it take less than five years to make it?

First of all, I want to stress that 80% of the debut album was made during the 18 months prior to the recording. The band has existed since 1993, but most of the time has been used to develop the style we have. So, to your question - yes, it will take less than five years to make it. I guess we'll use a year if there's not too much happening with Satyricon and Borknagar, but since we know the words "music business" is the same as "delays" it's impossible for me now to predict when we'll release another album.

heavy, power, progressive, speed metal reviews



AGENT STEEL

Omega Conspiracy

Candlelight Records

Agent Steel, responsible for one of the definitive speed metal classics "Skeptics Apocalypse" (dubbed Iron Maiden on 78 rpm at that time to give you an impression) and the more toned down Queensryche-influenced "Unstoppable Force," is another band to re-emerge from the 80s. At that time, Agent Steel not only made an impact with their music but were also notorious for the megalomaniac antics of vocalist John Cyriss and his science fiction concept. Agent Steel mark 1999, and from the line-up that recorded "Unstoppable Force" the guitar duo Garcia/Versailles and drummer Chuck Profus are left whilst John Cyriss seems to have transcended beyond the stars.

The third opus "Omega Conspiracy" actually sounds like a cross between "Unstoppable Force" and early Evildead. They've managed to update the 80s Agent Steel sound and create a diverse album. Starting off with two speed metal tracks "Destroy the Hush" and "Illuminate is Machine," the album further turns out as a nice combination of uptempo songs and balladesque parts. Concerning the lyrical aspect, the science fiction concept has been taken over by vocalist Bruce Hall who, at times, bears an uncanny resemblance to John Cyriss. One of the more worthwhile comebacks of 1999. It misses the magic of the first two classics but, taken on its own, is a recommendable release. (CR)

[AgentMetal@aol.com]

4 1/4 [GS 4, SV 4]

Lifeson), and obviously Leger de Main. Although the influences are unmistakable, Andeavour focus more on accessible songs with recognizable choruses and relatively straightforward lyrics (and staying away from pseudo-intellectualism). At first glance, Andeavour don't seem to be doing anything wrong during the 12 songs on this 71 minute CD but after multiple listens only a few moments really stick. The main causes are the rather single-emotional vocals of Douglas Peck and the fact that several songs such as "Face Paint" could definitely use some more adrenaline: some of the songs seem to plod along in the same rhythm. Highlights are reached in "Crimson Tears," "The Long Walk" (when Andeavour do inject that much-needed boost), and "House of Bags" (reminding of The Quiet Room). The efforts of Andeavour are noteworthy but, as many before, Andeavour only partly succeed in creating a masterpiece. (CR)

[Progressive Music Management, 6802 Helena Drive, Erie, PA 16510, USA] [<http://www.velocity.net/~palasas/pmm.html>] [ilenrod@aol.com] 3 3/4 [GS 3 3/4]

ARMORED SAINT

Revelation

Metal Blade Records

Another comeback, but a decent one. Armored Saint deliver straight and hard heavy metal, American style, i.e., melodies are masculine and austere. This album balances between satisfying fans of Iced Earth and heavier "Garage-days" Metallica, and has a couple of excellent tracks like "Tension" and "Play Dirt." They sound modern and up to date, by the way, and with clean and strong vocals of John Bush (Anthrax) the band theoretically could appeal to a wide range of US Metallica-album buyers. Judging from "Tension," this CD could have been a remarkable millennium album. However, a good row of numbers including "Control Issues" are nothing more than your regular hard n'heavy injection. And occasional digressions like atmospheric/melancholic "Den of Thieves" don't justify themselves, resulting in nothing more but a decent album. (GS)

[<http://www.armoredsaint.com>]

3 3/4 [AO 3 1/2]

doesn't go towards more virtuoso-style metal like Symphony X, it's mostly melodic hard rock fans who will care of this band. (GS)

[Stefan Berg, Durnasv. 14A, 94140 Piteå, Sweden]
[stefan69@hotmail.com] [<http://home.bip.net/~ytle/mind/autumn.html>]

3 1/4

BEAST OF PREY

No Headroom

Black Arrow Production

This band was formed already in 1981, they recorded two albums and broke-up then. Now Beast Of Prey come back with a new record and begin all over again. "No Headroom" has really become a strong heavy metal album with a slight industrial touch. Sometimes they remind me of Accept or Judas Priest. Tracks like "Hangman," "Snow For the Victims," or "Born As a Bitch" bore their way into the brain of the listener and stay there for a long time. Once again a heavy metal album where is nothing to find fault with. (SV)

[<http://www.beastofprey.de>]

4

JASON BECKER

The Raspberry Jams

Shrapnel Records

The "Raspberry Jams" is a collection on 25 ruses and musical ideas recorded by the guitar genius Jason Becker between 1988 and 1991, before he caught ALS, an amyotrophic disease which left him crippled. Though he is now in a wheel chair and can only move his eyes, Jason wanted to publish this material, as many fans felt his parting from the music scene was a terrible loss. Most tracks are from 1990, i.e., the period in which Jason Becker was playing with David Lee Roth. Thus, the songs are mainly bluesy influenced hard rock riffs (don't expect neoclassical variations a la "Perpetual Burn" - yet his trademark, the semitone bend, is widely used). Furthermore, some less well-known aspects of Jason's playing are also displayed on this CD, like classic jazz standards (notably Harline Washington and L. Armstrong songs). Several tracks are recorded with a clean, mellow, sound, similar to the one featured on the famous song "Air." Of course, as these snippets were only recorded as ideas to be reused for future compositions, they present a raw, unpolished edge. Used instruments: guitars, bass and drum programming, all played by Jason. The sound quality is also of course very limited, being recorded on a 4 or 8 track recorder at Jason's home. Really sad that Jason Becker will never have a chance to unleash further his incredible potential. (AS)

[<http://www.intres.com/jasonbecker/>]

3 3/4

BRAYNDANCE

Piece of Work

self-released

In line with an artistically beautiful cover art, this German five-piece have decided to adopt the Brayndance monicker and are not to be confused with the American Braindance. Formed in 1996, "Piece of Work" is their full-length debut CD (11 songs, 44 minutes) after a self-titled promo CD released back in 1997. Enticed by the brilliant mid-tempo song "Peace of Work" featuring excellent guitar solos and nice flute, I was eager to hear the rest of "Piece of Work." Although Brayndance show nothing exceptionally innovative, for an independent release, the maturity in terms of songwriting and recording is very professional. Brayndance opt for a varied musical approach ranging from compact and not overly frivolous uptempo power metal songs to piano-style hard rock ballads.

Although there are some weaker moments (the cover of the John Miles classic "Music" is superfluous in my opinion, and the funk/rap influences in "Three Minutes" seem out of place), the mixture works out very well. The combination of memorable choruses and the powerful voice of Peter Gundlach should appeal to the general public. However, Brayndance's strength does lie in the more heavier, varied and uptempo songs such as the stand-out tracks "Peace of Work" and the Helstar-style "Nightmare." The piano-style ballads do have a tendency to become cheesy in the Savatage style. A band worthy

Best average scores

calculated from all this-issue reviews that got at least 3 ratings

1. Spiral Architect "A Sceptic's Universe"	4.92
2. The Tea Party "TRIPTYCH"	4.67
3. Opeth "Still Life"	4.62
4. Solefald "Neonism"	4.58
5. Therion "Deggial"	4.58
6. Aghora "Aghora"	4.50
7. Dream Theater "Scenes From a Memory"	4.46
8. Kamelot "The Fourth Legacy"	4.42
9. Samael "Eternal"	4.37
10. Behind The Curtain "Till Birth Do Us Part"	4.31

of investigation. (CR)

[Bodo Krah, Wolfhager Strasse 341, 34128 Kassel, Germany] [<http://www.brayndance.de/>][[info@brayndance.de](mailto:[info@brayndance.de])]

BREAKER

Accept EP

Auburn Records

Breaker were one of the underground best kept secrets in the Cleveland, Ohio metal scene throughout the 80s and early 90s before they broke-up. "Accept" is their first official CD release. The package features a great twist on the original Accept cover art, and the album includes the cover-version of Accept's "Breaker." The original Breaker songs go more towards Heaven's Gate meets the same Accept in early days. The older songs like "Still Life" or "10 Seconds In" are more melodic, the new ones shows the heavier side of the band. In my opinion, two poor sound quality demo songs at the end of the CD were really unnecessary. Apart from that, "Accept" is recommended for all HM fans. Auburn Records will release a double CD by Breaker this year, including their critically acclaimed "Get Tough" album. (SV)

[Auburn Records, PO Box 925, Medina, Ohio 44258-0925, USA] [www.auburnrecords.com]

[auburn833@aol.com]

4

BREAKING SILENCE

Impact

Serious Entertainment

Recently there are many power/heavy metal bands coming from Greece, but I haven't heard much about the prog scene in this country. Breaking Silence (remember Queensryche song!) is probably the first band for me from Greece that plays pure progressive music in veins of Queensryche (of course) or Lethal. "Impact" was recorded in Denmark, so you may not worry about the sound quality, 'cause the production is clear and powerful. Many reviewers are labelling their singer as Geoff Tate's twin, and they're right, George Baharidis has pretty similar voice, and his singing technique is excellent. The songs are of high standard, but real highlights are not available here. Okay, the opener "Silence?" goes very well forward and has a nice refrain, but the rest passes me by. Good, but nothing memorable. Breaking Silence must take their time over the new album, if they really want to attract attention of a wider prog audience. (SV)

3 1/2 [AO 3, GS 3 3/4]

CHIAROSCURO

Brilliant Pools of Darkness

self-released

Originating from the musical obscurity of the Washington State area, Chiaroscuro are another band that have just recently released their independent debut CD. Apart from the peculiar Italian name, their musical approach is also very refreshing in the sense that their music presents a hybrid of symphonic progressive metal such as Dream Theater and 90s hard-edged metal/rock such as Tool, Korn and God Lives Underwater. This contrast of styles is illustrated by the combination of heavy staccato riffing (and the use of some typical distortion), mellow ethereal keyboards, and progressive instrumental parts. Interwoven through the music are Ian Dorsch's operatic vocals which supply the coldness of some of the music with a warm and emotional undertone. Further assets such as the clear and powerful production and the running time of over an hour makes this a noteworthy release. (CR)

[Chiaroscuro, Ian Dorsch, 1303 Lakeway Drive, Bellingham, WA 98226, USA] [www.chiaroscuro.net]

4 1/4



AGHORA

Aghora

Dobles Productions

Technical metal starts well in the new millennium, Aghora is yet another example. Featuring ex-Cynic Sean Reinert (drums) and Sean Malone (bass), the creation of former Berklee School of Music's student Santiago Dobles (guitar) is ready to move a few hearts or more. Stylistically, Aghora is a softer but not less intense version of Cynic: guitars are often heavy but not as aggressive, and death-metal growls are replaced by high, perhaps not too varying soprano of Santiago's sister Danisha Rivero. The whole album is like a bright swirl of intense and mindful songs. Even if a few traces of The Gathering might be detected (the middle of "Frames"), atmospheric version of Cynic with eerie female vocals is a far more appropriate description; in addition to rhythmic similarities, an example is the re-used great idea of fading developing guitar harmony ("Existence"; also used in Cynic's "How Could I"). Melodic hooks do not come quickly, and I feel that - like in Cynic's "Focus" case - it will take many listens, sometimes spread within long periods of time, to adequately comprehend this album. However, female vocals give the band an obvious accessibility. Aghora are not very similar to Spiral Architect in style because they combine Gathering's "Mandylion" like flowing heaviness with a fair share of both heavy moments and laid-back yet intricate passages (while the Norwegian band is undeniably metal all the way), but what the two bands do have in common is that, being intense, they are easily listenable. Personally I am not keen on 11 minute instrumentals at all, but Aghora's "Jivatma" is one hell of an instrumental feast, starting in dark ambient style and developing into a groovy, jazzy, well-thought out improvisation. Life is good! (GS)

[\$15(USA)/\$20(everywhere), Dobles Productions, PO Box 257, Chappaqua, NY 10514, USA] [www.doblesproductions.com]

4 1/2 [AS 4 1/2, CR 4 1/2]

AUTUMN LORDS

Face of a Demon EP

self-released

A relatively new band from Sweden delivers a 3-song EP in the style of song-oriented Yngwie Malmsteen circa "Eclipse" era. "Face of a Demon" and "Dream On" are done according to the stereotypes of mid-tempo Scandinavian neoclassical hard rock, and "Sleep" is a sentimental ballad. Guitarist Stefan Berg, who is also the main songwriter, doesn't give himself a big freedom outside of contemporary solo sections, and, even if melodies are decent, the frame of the style throws a hackneyed shadow. The band also has a new demo out; and if their direction

ANDEAVOUR

Once upon Time

Progressive Music Management

From the label that brought us Leger de Main and RH Factor comes another act which features the involvement of Chris Rodler (although this time in a supportive role). Formerly known as Andromeda and Endeavour, "Once upon Time" is Andeavour's debut release. Endeavour play a style that is common nowadays, a style in which it is difficult to really show something new: symphonic prog metal. Stylistically, it is soon apparent that Endeavour float somewhere between Dream Theater (overall feel), Rush (the guitar work reminds a lot of Alex

JAMES CHRISTIAN**Rude Awakening***Frontiers Records*

A solo record of ex-House Of Lords frontman. Stylistically, it's close to early Def Leppard or the "1987"/"Slip of the Tongue"-era Whitesnake. A large number of ballads/half ballads chokes a bit the heavier songs, but, all in all, this album rocks. Especially James' voice shines with good melodies and adds some subtle nuances to the album. This is a re-release with 5 bonus tracks from demo recordings. Recommended for melodic rock audience. (SV) 3 1/2

CIRCLES END**Circles End EP***self-released*

The fine line between progressive rock and progressive metal is becoming very thin lately, and this young Norwegian five-piece thread this line very closely. Formed in 1993, this self-titled 5-song MCD is their debut release. It features a competently played mix between 70s art rock (especially the keyboards) and 90s Fates Warning. In my opinion though, the whole delivery needs more power and daring. This is evident in the lack of real highlights and the underdeveloped vocals (which remind of the typical 70s German Kraut Rock vocalists). When the adrenaline does get flowing, it results in the worthwhile instrumental track "Incognito" and the more up-beat Fates Warning-like "Next to Nothing". Points are scored by the transparent production and nice packaging though. As a whole, this release comes across as a band with potential (descriptions of their new material does raise hopes) but this release only shows a band in search of their own niche. (CR) [Circles End, Trond Lunden, Hyllebakken 6, 4622 Kristiansand, Norway] [<http://www.circlesend.com/>] 3 3/4

**CONTROL DENIED****The Fragile Art of Existence***Nuclear Blast Records*

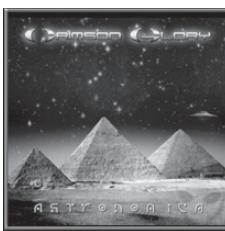
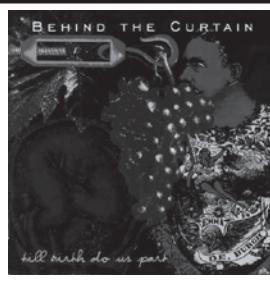
Basically, Control Denied is Death with power vocals, i.e. technical metal. Indeed, this side project stemming from Chuck Schuldiner's tortuous mind finally hatched. The musicians are more or less the ones of the current Death line-up (Schuldiner and Shannon Hamm on guitars, Richard Christy on drums), with the notable additions of Tim Aymar on vocals and the legendary Steve DiGiorgio on bass. As a matter of fact, the compositions remind a lot of Death: fast staccato riffing alternating with slower chords, the whole bundle integrating numerous progressive features, i.e. frequent tempo changes, atonality, complex rhythm patterns, chromatic scales, dissonance, intricate song structure, among others. The technical edge, though obvious, is in the mid-range complexity; yet the precision and tightness of this cutting edge band are absolutely top-notch, seldom achieved at such a level by others.

Tim Aymar's vocals are clearly the most important change in comparison to the usual cookie monster vox. Tim has a broad range, varying from raspy yelling to powerful, melodic singing, not to forget mentioning some high-pitched shrieks. The overall result is actually most of the time very pleasant. Extraordinary present is also the outstanding performance of Steve DiGiorgio. His bass sound is clean and astonishingly noticeable in the foreground. The production is by the way stellar, incredibly balanced without sacrificing the sheer heaviness and unbridled power of the music. Only a handful of metal bands dare to create a truly original music blend. Those who achieve such a great creative result must be acclaimed. Control Denied is one of them. (AS) [control_denied@hotmail.com] [<http://redival.com/controldenied/>] 4 3/4 [CR 4 1/4, GS 4, JS 4 1/4, SV 4 1/4]

BEHIND THE CURTAIN**Till Birth Do us Part***Sensory*

No doubt, one of the memorable releases of 1999. And because of two main qualities: first, the music shines above traditional derivative products we are fed up with nowadays, and, second, the originality doesn't leave a cold aftertaste, sometimes characteristic to guitaric prog/jazzy bands. Behind The Curtain combine poetic Buddy Lackey-style vocals with weird rhythms and hidden melodies, wrapped by warm keyboards. Though once you get into the music, "weirdness" is not the word that should be used...

Captivating but previously unheard music leaves me a similar impression like Psychotic Waltz's debut album did in 1990, because Behind The Curtain have the same passion as Psychotic Waltz in the early days (and which will be hard to maintain in the sequel to "Till Birth Do us Part" though). Songwise, this album is a collection songs of equal value, some ballads but mostly not. It 100 percent qualifies as a progressive metal album, even though it doesn't fit in the Dream Theater/Fates Warning frame. With each listen, one notices different things and this is a sign of a long-living CD. I had a CD-R of an unmixed version of this album for one and a half years, and I still plan to listen to the real album in the years to come. A pure five. (GS) [behind@intromental.com] [<http://www.intromental.com/behind>] 5 [AO 4 1/4, CR 4, SV 4]

**CRIMSON GLORY****Astronomica***Splitfire Records/Rising Sun Productions*

The Crimson Glory comeback album breathes with apocalyptic moods and shocks loyal fans with screaming voice of Wade Black, who replaced Midnight. Consequently, "Astronomica" doesn't aim to be "Transcendence II" and good so. Even if old fans may feel a nostalgia for "Painted Skies," the new powerizing face with shrieking vocals fits the new millennium (in spite of how banal it sounds), while a rehash would have hardly been interesting. In addition to the voice of Wade Black, who looks like a singer from some prog/thrash band of the late 80s placed in a more melodic band, Crimson Glory coldens their sound with electronic drums, which is quickly pointed out by many. However, the other side of a coin is that this CD has very distinct songs, what is rare among current metal albums. The highlights "Touch the Sun," "War of the Worlds," "Edge of Forever," and "Cydonia" differ from each other, as well as from the rest of the songs. A fresh modern melodic metal album (but not power/prog!). (GS) [cgmilitia@aol.com] [<http://www.crimsonglory.com/>] 4 1/4 [AO 3 3/4, SV 4 1/2]

DARK MOOR**Shadowland***B.O. Records*

The success of Nightwish's melodic metal sung by female singer will surely bring to the scene many of their followers which will also play melodic power/heavy metal with female at the microphone. Maybe Dark Moor wasn't straightly influenced by Nightwish, as they exist since 1994, but the debut album of this Spanish band has something in common with Nightwish, even if Dark Moor are more clearly influenced by Helloween, Rhapsody, Gamma Ray, and Blind Guardian; and the symphonic part isn't so evident as on Nightwish's "Oceanborn." In fact, Dark Moor play ordinary and not very exceptional melodic power metal. Some songs like "Walhalla" are well-played, but not the whole album keeps this balance. Of course, a female singer isn't so ordinary for power metal, so it is interesting to listen to this album, but it's clear that the group needs more ideas of their own. Now we get a well-performed mix in that "heard somewhere before" manner. (AO) 3 1/2 [GM 3 3/4]

DARSHAN**Innersanctum of Modernday Bughunter***self-released*

Experimental music of this nature needs an appropriate title. Although at first glance Darshan's music is slightly outside the regular focus of Edge of Time, the progressive musical ideology does deserve notice. The

compositions. Those technical metal parts contain a lot of time and signature changes, odd meter, chromatic scales, and other typically progressive features, but brought to extreme heights. The influence behind it are clearly LTE-ish, making those tracks kind of LTE2 sequels. The jamming and soloing on those tracks are strongly influenced by modern jazz, to which Jordan Rudess (DT's new keyboard player) contributes a lot. This performance culminates in the instrumental (6:13) track "The Dance of Eternity," a kind of unrivaled monument to progressive metal complexity.

Could there be any critics to that incredible album? Well, a few people will probably regret the strong LTE-ish style, and would have preferred more conventional, catchy compositions a la "Awake." Yet this era is over for the band and shouldn't be yearned for. My only personal disappointment is the guitar sound, which I would have preferred definitely heavier and crunchier on chunky riffs. On the overall, this opus is nevertheless a masterpiece. Don't miss it! (AS) 4 3/4 [AO 4 1/4, CR 4 1/4, JS 4 1/4, GM 4 3/4, GS 4 1/2, SV 4 1/2]

DREAM THEATER**Scenes from a Memory: Metropolis Part II***Elektra*

I consciously waited with my review of this album for months, trying to see how my opinion changes with time. My ratings at different moments of time varied from "great" to "not innovative enough," and the current conclusion is that it's a very good album. The only reproach is that it's not as groundbreaking as their first two albums were. Other than that, the songs and melodies are great and superior to anything else released in progressive metal genre in 1999 (which was not a very good year for traditional progressive metal, in my opinion). Purely musically, I prefer to listen to Behind The Curtain's debut release, but as far as a classy performance goes, Dream Theaters are clear winners.

"Scenes from a Memory" gives a good balance between heavy/technical material and ballads. The highlights include the "There's a room at the top of the stairs" vocal line ("Deja Vu"), vocal melodies and guitar riffs in "Beyond This Life," the whole "Home" and "Finally Free" tracks, and the unexpected retro-style keyboard solo in "The Dance of Eternity."

"Pull Me Under" remains the greatest Dream Theater song though, but "Scenes from a Memory" is still a magnificent release in definitive progressive metal style. (GS)

4 1/2 [AO 4 1/4, AS 4 3/4, CR 4 1/4, JS 4 1/4, GM 4 3/4, SV 4 1/2]

ELAN**Radio Valkyrie***self-released*

The whole album was recorded by only one man, Michael McCormick, and it's wonderful how he alone could have composed all these songs, record them and then release a CD. Stylistically, this music reminds me of early progressive rock mixed with some prog metal influences. It could be compared to King Crimson, some more quiet songs by Rush or even art rock on Sieges Even's "A Sense of Change." A quiet mood dominates on this disc, and no aggressive metallic interruptions destroy dreamy and melancholic mixture of 70s art/prog. Some things on this album aren't so enjoyable for me though, first of all, electronic drums don't suit well. Second, listening to this album I feel that these songs almost repeat the same atmospheres, and not so many musical decisions can be found here. And it's also strange that M. McCormick decides to do it all by himself. He's got a good voice, and with the help of other musicians Elan could compose a very good prog rock album. But maybe even now prog rockers will enjoy it. Anyway, this disc was released two years ago, so perhaps there's something new in their camp. (AO) [Elan, 3103 29th Street, #205 Boulder, CO 80301-1387 USA] [<http://www.michaelmccormick.com/>] 3 1/4

JOHN ELEFANTE**Defying Gravity***Frontiers Records*

Even if this record is one of the softer releases on Frontiers label, it's probably one of the strongest albums in the melodic rock sector recently. The opener "If You Just

"Believe" is a killer song in veins of Saigon Kick or King's X with fantastic vocal harmonies. Generally speaking, John Elefante's singing is the trademark of this CD. Sometimes it's pretty poppy, but you can't deny the class of the songs like "Defying Gravity", "Pass the Flame" or "Don't Leave the Band" (Saigon Kick send their regards again). The arrangements are very rich, including string parts and other instruments. A very enjoyable CD for calm evenings. (SV) [Fantos@MSN.com] 4

EMERALD Rebels of Our Time *self-released*

Emerald's pop metal is strange to hear today, because it reminds of the 80s hair metal (or hard rock) with clear melodies and very light guitars. Picture a US college band a la 1988 or a movie, where a band plays right when the main female hero enters a crowded bar. The songs are simple, but the melodies are quite good and catchy. However, the message "we are rebels of our time" will put a smile on faces of 9 out of 10 listeners. No offense, but it's a honest thought. Anyway, with a more thoroughly considered image and packaging (sorry, the front cover is weak) and a bit more advanced songs, Emerald would evolve into a good act. Now it's cheese all over; anyways, a thumb up for the melodies. (GS)

[20DM, Michael Vaucher, Rutschelengasse 27, CH-3400, Burgdorf, Switzerland] [michael.vaucher@ubs.com]

3 1/2 [SV 3 1/4]

ENTROPY *Perception EP*

self-released

Entropy from Holland have been romping around in the local scene since 1989. They released their first CD in 1995, and after some problems with the line-up, finally offer us a new mini-CD, entitled "Perception". With this 3-track record they present us the new female singer Maaike Breijman which could be the band's trademark in the future. Even if the first and third song are structured a bit too complex for her voice, Entropy definitely have potential. The best song is the second track "For He Who Walks Among Us" that goes towards the last Gathering release. Although I like intricate songs, I would advise Entropy to simplify their material and to give more space to the vocals. I'm sure this method will work. (SV)

[Erik van Duin, de Zuidgaard 5, 1741 MX Schagen (NH), The Netherlands] [entropy.nl@usa.net]

3 1/2

ESCAPETOR

Escapetor demo-CD

self-released

It's very strange how people of over 20 years age can write such a childish and naive music. It's hard to understand what they want to say with those 6 banal songs. Escapetor's idols come probably from trad heavy metal scene, Metallica or Manowar, for example, but their own material is simply vacuous and moreover badly produced. (SV) [Mona Opdal, Vagen 7, 4364 Sirevag, Norway] [John.egil.opdal@c2i.net] [http://members.xoom.com/escapetor]

2

EVERGREY

Solitude Dominance Tragedy

Hall of Sermon

A lot of buzz was generated about this album on the internet, but dark power metal presented here doesn't look more extraordinary or better than done by others (for example, Iced Earth or Sigma IV). The instrumental side is tight and focused, but this is none of what the others wouldn't have. Meanwhile, the songwriting and vocal melodies do not truly shine for the most part, and the raucous, a bit monotonous vocals don't help ("fares away!" shriek on "Damnation"). It's nice though, as well as vocal lines on "Solitude Within"). And not to say that the potential isn't here: for example, the beginning of "She Speaks to the Dead" and the whole ballad "Words Mean Nothing" are great, but other songs have too little grace and too many repeated lines (like "Nosferatu"). It's a decent album, and it will be interesting to see what their next one will be like, but, in my humble opinion formed after 10 listens, "Solitude Dominance Tragedy"



DIGITAL RUIN *Dwelling in the Out*

InsideOut Music

Proving to be of one of the most solid values I personally can glimpse in the progressive metal scene, it arrives the second full-length album of this experimental and, in my humble opinion, really visionary act from Rhode Island, US. After a few listenings to "Dwelling in the Out," one immediately notices the tremendous expendability and potential that Digital Ruin's music hides. Psychotic Waltz's "Bleeding" album came to my mind one night when trying to find a "close" reference to this brilliant compendium of mesmerizing passages with unique signs of identity. Compared to their debut "Listen," this is without a doubt a more cohesive, structured, and song-oriented album. Compositively, powerful haunting hooklines and blasting, crushing guitars sound very convincing on tracks like "The Darkest Day," "Machine Cage," or "Adrift," just to name a few. Complementarily, keyboards and sequencers are used along in a quite original and wise way, achieving its impact and representing an indelible stylistic characteristic and driving force of the album. This whole, blended together with Matt Pacheco's potent vocals, bring out all those untranslatable elements of Digital Ruin expression up to the surface, tie songs up melodically, and endow the album with a latent, dark, and twisted core. Summing up, this is a bright sample of what the word transcendence can mean in the prog metal panorama today. (GM) [http://www.digitalruin.com/]

4 3/4 [AS 4, CR 4 1/4, GS 4 1/2, SV 3 3/4]

should not be placed on a pedestal of power metal greats. (GS) [http://home.swipnet.se/evergrey/]

3 3/4 [AO 4]

EVIL WINGS

Colors of the New World

Adrenaline Records

I am not familiar with the first two Evil Wings albums, but I have always thought that they resided in the progressive/power metal genre. "Colors of the New World" is something different: variating progressive rock with some metal elements. The music is as motley and colorful as the very colorful CD booklet. It's progressive both stylistically and in the true sense of the word. The first track is a bit light and probably represents the album well; but we get a lot of diversity. For example, "Away" is a melodic rock song, "Big Old Roundabout" is a bit Sieges-Even like tech metal, and "The Secret" is an 18 minutes progressive rock/metal epic. "Colors of the New World" is one of the few 1999 albums that truly deserve the "progressive" tag. (GS) [http://www.enet.it/hpg/ew/]

4 [CR 4, SV 3 1/2]

EXISTENCE

Small People, Short Story, Little Crime

Black Pearl Productions

Canada surprises me with another talented modern rock band. Existence's second work "Small People, Short Story, Little Crime" belongs to the category of the albums that have a lot to offer musically and lyrically as well as in terms of design. The CD-booklet is made as a magazine in a small format. The articles and interviews in this "periodical" find their musical accompaniment in songs, and lyrics are the quotes from these reports about various people, events and other subjects. Very original and interesting idea. Musically, Existence draw inspirations from bands like King Crimson, Pink Floyd, Van Der Graaf

Generator, and probably some other names of the 70s. The album varies between dynamic rock cuts ("Beauty Teen," "Flowers Won't Do"), progressive compositions ("No Hero") or short calm pieces with dominant piano parts ("In the Kingdom of Madness"). I think, that's a matter of time when Existence will become big in their homeland and maybe also in other countries. The success of bands like The Tea Party in Canada proves the fact that this place of the world has many fans of modern intellectual rock. We must keep an eye on Existence, their concept material is simply a must for every admirer of progressive music with an intelligent touch. (SV) [Black Pearl Productions, C.P. 64016, LeGardeur, Quebec J5Z 4R4, Canada] [pearl@mtl.net] [http://www.blackpearl.qc.ca]

4 1/2

EYEFEAR

Dawn... a New Beginning EP

self-released

Record labels are hesitant to sign Australian bands due to a limited local fan base and tour possibilities. However, many probably regret ignoring Vauxdvhil, which achieved a remarkable recognition without label support or a proper distribution. It's a confirmed truth that an Australian band has to be above average to achieve an international breakthrough on even the smallest scale. And, as you may have guessed from the introduction, Eyeleaf's new EP demonstrates sheer proficiency over their European rivals (or be it friends in metal). "Dawn..." contains three songs of poignant progressive/heavy metal in the best traditions of old Queensryche and Crimson Glory (and maybe Vauxdvhil, too). The production is slightly raw and "live" sounding, and it's even more amazing that the band sounds very consistent and melodic. A minor remark is that the rhythm perhaps changes too often in a song, and slower parts do not always work towards the ultimate catchiness. Anyway, quite a promising EP. It's not the originality of the style, but the passion of performance what wins here. (GS)

[Eyeleaf, 28 New Rd., Oak Park 3046, Melbourne, VIC, Australia]

[Fotia_music@hotmail.com] [http://www.smart.net.au/eyeleaf]

4 1/4 [SV 3 3/4]



should not be placed on a pedestal of power metal greats. (GS) [http://home.swipnet.se/evergrey/]

3 3/4 [AO 4]

FOUNTAIN OF TEARS

Fountain of Tears

self-released

Just like it was with demos in the late 80s, the more innovative and daring music can be heard on independent releases. A prime example is the self-titled debut CD of Fountain of Tears. This CD showcases some of the most sublime moments in female-fronted progressive metal. At first glance, this should not really be surprising when the musical creativity of ex-members of Believer (drummer Joe Daub), Sacrament (guitarist Mike DiDonato and bass-player Erik Ney) and Sardonyx (keyboardist Jeff King) is combined. However, in contrast to the music of these bands, the current musical style could be classified as symphonic progressive metal.

The European touch of the French band Arrakeen is combined with the complexity and intricacy of old Dream Theater, the mood and atmosphere of old Fear of God and the emotional beauty of Soul Cages. This CD offers five songs and the same songs are also available as instrumentals. The talented musicianship of the individual members is combined to create several exceptional songs such as the haunting and ominous "The Sleeper" (a narration of an Edgar Allan Poe poem put to music) and the brilliant "Carousel". (CR)

[\$16, Fountain of Tears, PO Box 9016, Lancaster, PA 17604-9016, USA]

4 1/2 [GS 4 1/4]

GLADIATORS

Bound to Steel

Black Arrow Production

Another heavy/speed metal record from Germany. Gladiators also orientate themselves at the heavy metal bands from the 80s, for example, Accept or Helloween. The band info-sheet doesn't lie when it says that Alexander Thomae has the UDO-like

voice! His singing lends the band many pluses, it's aggressive and melodic at the same time. The material isn't original, what goes without saying, but this early Accept mixture has class, no doubt. The examples would be "Like an Eagle", "Glory or Die" or "Fire Storm". Good. (SV) 3 3/4

HALFEN HOURLOVE

Halfen Hourlove EP

self-released

Fab of Vauxdvhil got involved into a rock project, which was put together in two weeks and recorded live. Forget your progressive metal, this is Vauxdvhil's "Vog" EP minus its industrial elements and plus Monster Magnet. Opening song "The Light" presents a superb-quality rock with its crushing beginning, atmospheric "Vog"-style vocals, and catchy drive. The second song, "Lets" is notable for its annoying yet attractive vocal part, "All the Ladies" is more punk influenced, and "When You Know Your There" is again more into the "Vog" style. Overall, a short but pleasant experience. What else can I say, I'd love to see "The Light" on MTV, and it wouldn't be out of place there. Halfen Hourlove shouldn't be related to Vauxdvhil too much though, and Vauxdvhil's separate album is in the works. (GS)

[\$4 + shipping, PO Box 1669, Preston 3072, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia]

[vauxdvhilvorpt@yahoo.com]

4

GREG HOWE

Ascend

Shrapnel Records

This is certainly one of the most refreshing instrumental guitar albums for years. While the new generation of virtuosos like Bellas, Stump, etc. aren't really bringing new input and mostly deliver us again and again the same hard-rock or neo-classical inspired shredding, Greg Howe managed to bring new influx in a genre he revisited after several years of journey in other musical directions. Certainly, the main content is still neo-classical inspired shredding, but numerous other influences result in a radically different outcome: progressive features like atonality, rhythmic syncopation and time changes pertain the whole release. This unconventional groove for neo-classical music is emphasized by the soloing approach, which includes more fusion and even blues-rock phrasing. Needless to say that the performance of Vitalij Kuprij on keyboards adds a lot to the bundle, with epic solo trades. (AS) 4 1/4

TRACY HITCHINGS

From Ignorance to Ecstasy

Verglas Music/InsideOut Music

Lucky we don't receive too many releases like this, otherwise we would have to quit doing a fanzine. This album represents female-fronted soft rock with some prog tendencies. Mostly mediocre (okay, that line "Reach out and touch the sky" is catchy) tunes are clearly not the first thing adult-oriented rock stations would want to play, and definitely out of reach for any form of rebellious youth. Tolerant AOR/rock fans may accept this, but they won't be floored either, since the melodies are pale and the solos are weary... Sorry. (GS)

2 1/2 [SV 3 1/2]

IAN PARRY'S CONSORTIUM PROJECT

Ian Parry's Consortium Project

InsideOut Music

English singer/songwriter Ian Parry is no stranger to the music industry. He has appeared on numerous recordings and in bands like Hammerhead, Mono Pacific, Airrace, or Vengeance. It's his fourth solo album, the previous one "Thru' the Looking Glass" came out in 1995. "Consortium Project" contains 11 powerful and melodic tracks. It reminds me a bit of last Threshold, Vanden Plas, or Elegy releases here and there. No wonder, Stephan Lill from Vanden Plas, for example, plays guitar on 5 tracks of this CD. He's not the only one guest musician here, on the whole, there are 9 more persons who helped Ian out on this record, including Arjen Lucassen, Patrick Rondat, or Tamas Szekeres. The outcome is a very solid album with nice production. The only shortcoming is the fact that all songs are on a high level but there are no real highlights on the CD. A couple of more striking songs would not be out of place here... (SV) 3 3/4 [GM 4 1/4]



FOUNTAIN OF TEARS

lighting incense and writing by candlelight

[by Christian Rademaker]

In my opinion, the global progressive metal scene is becoming over-saturated with Dream Theater-clones. This makes the quest for new and original music within this genre increasingly difficult. However, sometimes, just by pure chance, you stumble upon a certain band name that captivates and tantalizes you. Fountain of Tears was such a band name...

Fountain of Tears' self-titled was released in the autumn of 1999. Coinciding with this solemn and moody time of year, it shows some of the most sublime moments in symphonic progressive metal as of late. The music is hard to categorize but I hear touches of the French band Arrakeen musically and vocally, combined with the complexity and intricacy of old Dream Theater, the mood and atmosphere of old Fear of God and the emotional beauty of Soul Cages. Curiously, this CD offers five songs with vocals while the same songs are also available as instrumentals. The talented musicianship of the individual members is combined to create several exceptional songs such as the haunting and ominous "The Sleeper" (a narration of an Edgar Allan Poe poem put to music) and the brilliant "Carousel". Apart from the independent and original song writing, an appealing aspect that sets them apart from a lot of other symphonic prog metal bands, are the beautiful vocals of Anna DeRose.

One of the most interesting facets about Fountain of Tears is the fact that the line-up consists of ex-members of Believer (drummer Joe Daub), Sacrament (guitarist Mike DiDonato and bass-player Erik Ney), and Sardonyx (keyboardist Jeff King). These were all Christian bands whose music was more or less original at the time (early nineties). Believer evolved from a thrash metal band ("Extraction from Mortality" released in 1989) to an avantgarde thrash metal band with touches of classical music on "Dimensions" in 1993. Sacrament released two CDs "Testimony of Apocalypse" in 1990 and "Haunts of Violence" while Sardonyx released one CD "Majestic Serenity" in 1992. Both of them never really managed to escape the confinements of the Christian metal community though.

Just before the end of 1999, I did an in depth interview with keyboard player Jeff King. Subjects that were touched on include the background their former bands, the musical and lyrical inspiration, religious themes in music and life, and finally the future plans of Fountain of Tears. It turned out to be a very informative read in which it can be seen that Jeff is a well-spoken person who certainly knows to contemplate and philosophize about the important things in life.

THE CHRISTIAN METAL LEGACY

Fountain of Tears consists of members of the now-defunct bands Sacrament, Sardonyx and Believer. Can you go into detail how this line-up came about?

I first met Sacrament while I was a member of Sardonyx and we played some shows together. Some time after Sacrament had disbanded, Erik joined us on bass. One day Erik heard me play some of my own musical ideas during a break in one of our rehearsals. I didn't know it til much later but my music had made a lasting impression on him. Sardonyx had placed so many restrictions upon my playing that he hadn't known what I was capable of. Some time after I left the band, Erik called me up and asked if I'd be interested in auditioning for a new band that he was working with. All of the musicians had pro experience and contacts, so I decided to give it a try. I was bummed out at the audition because they liked me so much that I wasn't able to play all of the songs I had prepared for them! I joined the band that day, and it didn't take too long for Erik and I to realize that we could write really well together. We discovered that we were heading in one direction musically and the rest of the band was resistant to any kind of change, so we decided to leave and do our own thing. We had many lengthy conversations about what we wanted to accomplish with the band, and basically made a list of the musicians we needed in order to accomplish it. If I remember correctly, Mike DiDonato and Joe Daub were the only names that appeared on the list. The rest is history.

It's probably a painful subject but I personally would like to know what caused the split-up of your former bands, Sacrament, Sardonyx, and Believer?

The break-up of Sardonyx was the result of internal conflicts. I left the band because it was an unhealthy environment, and I didn't feel like there was any more room there for me to grow. Most of the band members left around the same time I did. Sacrament decided to stop making albums for a number of reasons. As they promoted their second album, "Haunts of Violence," they realized that the market for technical thrash metal was fading. They were living off of fast food and driving 8 hours between shows on only 4 hours of sleep. When it came time to discuss a third album, vocalist Rob Wolfe was no longer in the band and they were all ready for a break from this lifestyle. Believer stopped for similar reasons. After coming off of an intensive tour with Bolt Thrower and Sacrifice, they decided it was time to slow down the pace at which they were working and put more time into other areas of their lives. They collaborated with Scott Laird on their third album, "Dimensions," which was intended to be more of a work of art in and of itself rather than an album to take on the road.



Usually when moderately successful metal bands split up after having released one or more CDs, the incentive or inspiration to start over with a new line-up is difficult to find. When the chemistry is actually present, then there is the huge advantage of combining experience with newly found creativity. What can you achieve now with Fountain of Tears that you haven't been able to achieve with your previous bands?

Probably the most important thing that we can do with Fountain of Tears that we couldn't do before, is have experience in the industry to look back on and to learn from. This allows us to see things more objectively. We can avoid many of the pitfalls that beset new bands like unrealistic expectations, a false sense of urgency, and taking yourself too seriously. We can avoid basing our self-worth upon the successes or failures of the band. If you've been shafted by the industry or people you thought had your best interest in mind, it's difficult to summon the will to start over again. We all came away from our respective bands with certain things that we never wanted to experience again. This time around, hopefully, we will know better. Although success is not guaranteed, we have an optimistic outlook on the situation because our music is accessible to a wider audience than those of our former bands. So far we have received great feedback from people across all ages, race, and gender. The challenge for us now is to find the proper channels for distribution.

You've just released your CD independently, what were the reasons for this? Were there any contractual obligations towards your previous record label R.E.X. Music?

No, there were no remaining contractual obligations to either R.E.X. or Roadrunner. The reason for releasing our album independently was simply so that we could write the kind of music we wanted to write and do it at our own pace. We feel that it's important for each one of us to have a life outside of the band, and so far we have made this a reality. Lots of musicians postpone their education or career and neglect their family and friends in the pursuit of unrealistic dreams. I know people exactly like this who have accomplished very little of what they set out to do. I think it's great that we have been able to record our own album and still have time to work, travel, go to college and enjoy our family and friends.

Being a musician is usually seen as youthful enthusiasm that has been taken a bit too far. Musicians in their late twenties often fall back onto, what society deems, proper jobs. What kind of work do you do and have you thought about your future goals in life?

Right now I am self-employed full-time. Part of my work is related to music and the other part consists of web services. I have a small project studio where I can compose, arrange and record music for my clients, using outside facilities to mix and master. I also design



THE VICTORIAN ERA AND THE ROMANTIC MOVEMENT

The moniker "Fountain of Tears" has a certain gothic, romantic aura surrounding it. However the word "Tears" has been used quite often in the past as part of a band name (the gothic metal band "Trail of Tears" springs to mind for example). Where did the moniker Fountain of Tears originate from and how does it fit the musical feel of the music?

In the beginning, we did what I guess many bands do while looking for a name. We searched through the dictionary, thesaurus, and various pieces of literature looking for something that would fit our musical vision and style. Ideally, the perfect name would give people some insight into who we are, even visually, without actually seeing us or hearing our music. Erik found the phrase "Fountain of Tears" in a Bible, and we felt that these words described us perfectly and helped us to tie together the philosophy behind our music. Our desire was, and still is, to create music that connects with people on a deep emotional level. It is fascinating to us that the extremes of any emotion involve tears. Ironically, laughter and crying often look the same. At the time, in 1995, we were unaware of any other bands using a similar name. Recently I've noticed a couple that use words that deal with water in general. Names that involve words like "Lake" and "Sea" in addition to our "Fountain" and "Tears." I would guess that it has something to do with the identification of water with the subconscious in psychological symbolism. That's one of the reasons why we were drawn to our name.

The combination of your name, music and lyrics, to me personally, conjures up images of nineteenth century England: Victorian mansions, misty moors, haunting. Kind of a cross between the England of Sherlock Holmes and Edgar Allan Poe. Do you have any interest in this part of history?

Yes, we do. The Victorian era and the Romantic movement in art and literature have had a great deal of influence in our artistic vision. Chris Ruch captured this perfectly in his artwork for the album. Besides those you mentioned, influences from that era such as William Blake, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Mary Shelley, Bram Stoker and Dante Gabriel Rossetti come to mind.



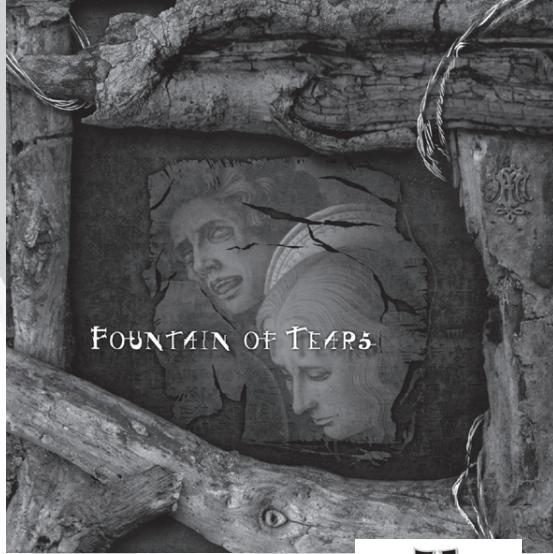
THE INSPIRATION AND PURPOSE OF MUSIC BY CANDLELIGHT

Your musical style could be described as symphonic progressive metal. The musical direction is certainly very much different to the musical style of Believer and Sacrament (speed/thrash metal). This implies that one and one does not always equal two. How did your current musical style come to be as it is and what is the influence of each individual to the whole? We lit incense and wrote by candlelight in order to place ourselves within the kind of atmosphere we wanted our music to evoke. When our songs began to sound natural in that setting we knew we were on to something. We discovered a style that worked for all of us and gave expression to each one of our personalities. The album is very transparent in that regard. On the technical end, I chose to rely on a limited number of sounds for my keyboard parts rather than constantly switching back and forth between different patches. Erik, Mike and Joey all have unique styles of playing their respective instruments. This music allows them to experiment with a broader range of dynamics than they did in Believer and Sacrament. It's interesting that you used the word "symphonic" because that is how we see our own

music. Most of the time our respective musical parts work independently but in harmony with each other. You can listen to one of our songs several times while concentrating on a different instrument during each pass and really see how this works.

Your debut CD has an unusual track listing, there are five songs with vocals and also five instrumental versions of the same songs. Are there differences between them, apart from the vocals of course, and what was the reason for this?

The instrumental version of "Real" is a few seconds longer. Just for fun we killed the clean fade at the end of the song. But aside from some differences in panning here and there, the instrumental versions are not too different, musically, from the vocal mixes. We included both versions on the CD because the songs were



originally written as instrumental tunes and we were playing and rehearsing them like that for a long time before we found Anna. When we tossed around the idea of putting both versions on the album as a way of including both stages of the band's existence, people thought it was a great idea. If you listen to the instrumental versions, you can really begin to appreciate the challenge that Anna faced when she joined the band. The music was already written, yet she integrated her melody lines flawlessly. Now that the disc is out, we hope that having both versions present will increase the chance of our music being used for movie soundtracks.

This intrigues me because I am a huge film fanatic and a fan of film music as well. Film music is inherently different, in terms of structure and purpose, than music that is played on the radio. With which type of movie would you like your music to be involved in?

Although I wouldn't want to limit its potential for use in other genres, I think that our music would go well with gothic, sci-fi or fantasy movies. The motivation and inspiration for our music certainly has more in common with film music than it does with music made for commercial radio. Our method for writing songs includes not only the visual component of a candle-lit environment but also the impressions of colors, shapes, or stories that we see in our minds. Therefore we basically create the musical accompaniment to a scene as one might compose for a movie.

The vocals of Anna DeRose are exceptional. Furthermore, her voice enables Fountain of Tears to stand amongst a lot of bands in the same musical genre. What is her background and was it a conscious step to use a female vocalist?

Although Anna did not have any professional band or recording experience prior to working with us, she had the voice we were looking for. Erik, our bass player, actually grew up with her but hadn't seen her for a number of years until she sang at a Christmas service in

1997 that he attended. He called her the next day to see if she would be interested in auditioning for our band. We knew immediately that the chemistry and talent were there and that a lot of people would be talking about her once they heard the recording. It was definitely a conscious step to use a female vocalist. We feel that the range of expression in our music basically dictates the use of a female vocalist. A female vocalist can be simultaneously strong yet vulnerable and sensual in a way that a male vocalist in this genre simply can not.



THE SLEEPER AND THE FEMALE POET

One of the outstanding tracks on your CD is "The Sleeper." This features a narration of an Edgar Allan Poe poem put to music. What is it in his poem that inspired you to do this?

Edgar Allan Poe is someone we have a great deal of admiration and respect for, and his body of work helped to inspire the vision of Fountain of Tears. His ability to take the reader out of the world they are living in and place them in a different yet strangely familiar world is something we hope to accomplish with our music. Poe's descriptions of people and place show acute attention to detail and a wonderful command of the English language. I find that his emphasis on the dark, the gothic and the mysterious inspires creativity and an appreciation for the mysteries of life. This poem in particular had the right combination of length and subject matter for what we wanted to do with a Poe theme, musically. We actually wrote a short story based on "The Sleeper" that we were going to use as a basis for lyrics, but we decided to use the original poem instead.

Sheree Kunkle did the narration to "The Sleeper." Why didn't your regular singer Anna DeRose do this?

The concept for this song as a narrative was in place before Anna joined the band. We felt that the song required a narrator with a foreign accent, and our graphic designer suggested Sheree Kunkle. Sheree is a native of New Zealand and happened to have the voice we were looking for.



Could you go further into the lyrical concept of Fountain of Tears?

Consciously or subconsciously, every human being is faced with death, uncertainty and insecurity from the time they are born until the moment they take their last breath. Our lyrics deal with these problems and how different people respond to them on an emotional level. We chose to do this by telling stories. Some people will totally miss the point and dismiss our lyrics as being meaningless or silly. Those who want to find meaning in them will see through their apparent simplicity and find plenty of things to think about. We have no easy answers for the difficult questions, but we tried to suggest an attitude of respect and appreciation for the mysteries of life and encourage thoughtful reflection for the individual. One of the most important lines for me personally is found in the song "Real": "Situations of discomfort are situations of discovery." Regardless of how painful or uncomfortable a situation may be, moving beyond the proverbial comfort zone results in opportunities for personal growth and self-discovery.

My favorite song on the CD is definitely "Carousel." The emotional beauty in combination with the lyrics is stunning. A part of the lyrics is as follows: "And the room is spinning like we're on a carousel. The smoking candles make it hard to see, If I am to find my love tonight, I am holding out my heart for you to see." Could you give me some more background information on what your inspiration for this song and lyrics were?

All of the music for "Carousel" originated from Erik's bass line, which you hear at the beginning of the song. He had written that line sometime before Fountain of Tears even existed and brought it out during one of our writing sessions. The inspiration for my keyboard lines came when I heard the news about the 16 children who had been murdered at a day care in Scotland. That state

of reflection summoned the melancholy keyboard lines that I wrote to accompany Erik's idea. We worked on it as a band for a while with the thought of the Scotland incident in mind, as well as the bombing of the Federal Building in Oklahoma City. Photos of the children that had been injured or killed in that blast were all over the news. When Anna joined the band we explained to her the background of our songs but gave her the freedom to write about what inspired her. "Carousel" was the first song she chose to work on and we told her to just sing about whatever images the music placed in her mind. She came back the following week with the entire song worked out and we thought it was perfect. There is a lot of symbolism in this song and several possible interpretations that we are aware of. My interpretation is that it is about someone who has made peace with life and is now ready to die and meet a loved one on the other side. It basically tells the story of her death.



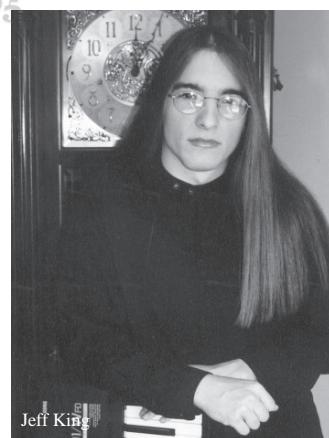
RELIGIOUS THEMES

The lyrics of your former bands Sacrament, Believer, and Sardonyx all shared a strong Christian theme. In my interpretation, the lyrics of Fountain of Tears are focused more on the individual than on a divine entity. Was it a conscious move to stay away from religious themes?

There was no conscious move away from the use of religious themes, specifically, but the purpose for our music is very different than that of our former bands. This is not to take away from the work that we did in our former bands. That work speaks for itself. It's just that Fountain of Tears is Fountain of Tears and not Sacrament, Believer, or Sardonyx. When we started Fountain of Tears, there were no lyrics at all because we were writing instrumental tunes. We wanted to explore the potential for music to communicate ideas that lay beyond the limitations of language. We felt that our music communicated enough by itself that any lyrics we might add later needed to be noticeably present but not overpowering. I do see religious themes in our lyrics but they are explored from the perspective of the individual rather than an all-seeing, all-knowing vantage point.

The predecessors to Fountain of Tears, Sacrament, and Believer, combined speed/thrash metal with Christian lyrics. I notice in your thanks list that you are the only one not explicitly thanking God. Do you have any specific religious beliefs and what are your views toward delivering the "gospel" through music?

I have a few specific religious beliefs and many more, which are non-specific. I think that when it comes to issues of faith people place too much value on words and too little value on observable behavior. Believe it or not, many will pass judgement on you based solely on whether or not you include "God" in your credits. I did not feel that it was necessary to do that for the people who know me personally, and I wasn't going to do it just to satisfy the people who don't. I feel that the most important beliefs and practices of true religion are those which cannot be put into words. That is why teachers of Zen Buddhism



Jeff King

speak in koans and Jesus spoke in parables. Today, in the Christian music industry, speaking in parables will cause you to be accused of teaching New Age philosophy. They want to be spoon fed with messages that are "safe" and easily understandable. To be quite honest, nothing is easily understandable. If the Bible has been used to justify racism and genocide than it is almost a guarantee that people will discover pagan or New Age interpretations of our lyrics. That is their prerogative, and we are completely OK with that. We purposely left them open to interpretation. I believe that music is an appropriate vehicle for delivering the "gospel," but I can't speculate on how much of that is actually being done today. Contemporary Christian music can be an agent of profound healing and empowerment in one's life. On the other hand, most of what I see of this phenomenon trivializes the sacred and contributes to a general attitude of irreverence and disrespect towards that which is holy.



FUTURE PLANS

What are the plans for a second CD? Is there a lot of material that you have written in the past that will be used?

We already have enough material for another full-length album and an EP for some songs that do not fit into our normal style. Some of this material is still in the process of being written or arranged, but the core ideas are there. I'm sure that by the time we are ready to go into the studio to record our second album, we'll have a lot more to choose from. We never seem to run out of ideas. Right now we are putting a lot of time and money into the promotion of our recent release, so exactly when we record our second album will depend on how well this one does.

Thanks very much for the interview Jeff. Do you have any closing statements you would like to make or touch on subjects we haven't considered?

I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to speak about Fountain of Tears in such depth, and I'd like to thank your readers for taking the time to learn more about us. Anyone who would like to hear what we sound like can check out the audio clips at www.FountainOfTears.com. Also, if anyone has any questions they'd like to ask us personally they can email us at info@FountainOfTears.com. The CD can be bought for \$16 by writing to: Fountain of Tears, P.O. Box 9016, Lancaster, PA 17604-9016, USA

XEN ENCHANTING

Conversation with Paul Craddick

[by Christian Rademaker]

The band Enchant has been kind of an enigma to me over the years. At the time of the release of their debut CD in 1994 called "A Blueprint of the World," I shoved them aside based on the marketing gimmick of the record company of all reasons. The gimmick was based on a link to Marillion. Marillion's Steve Rothery had co-produced the album and my disinterest of Marillion's music gave me no incentive to listen to Enchant. You can't make anyone to listen to every new band coming around the block and I was expecting some keyboard-based archaic sounding progressive rock so I didn't bother. Subsequently I didn't pay much notice to the following releases "Wounded" and "Time Lost."

The revelation came when I stumbled upon a copy of the '98 release of "Break." I was extremely in awe of that album. The combination of Ted Leonard's unique voice, the warmth of the instrumentation, and memorable compositions lured me into the Enchant camp. Subsequent purchases of their back catalogue have unveiled an accomplished musical outfit that grew from a talented progressive hard rock based "A Blueprint of the World" to what it is now. The fact that they have been somewhat underrated in the past by the music press has luckily not led to overexposure. In my opinion, Enchant is one of those gems that need some exploring because the effort is rewarded.

The band Xen is the brainchild of Enchant drummer Paul Craddick. With the aid of the other Enchant members (primarily vocalist Ted Leonard), he released the album "84000 Dharma Doors" on his label Furious Skeleton Records (the album was later re-released on InsideOut Music in 1999). "84000 Dharma Doors" takes the Enchant sound and adds different musical styles like grunge and funk to create something original. Although not all of the songs reach the Enchant standard, some gems like "Red Letter Day" shine through. I did a telephone interview with Enchant drummer and Xen multi-instrumentalist Paul Craddick to find out more about Xen and Enchant.

THE WORLD OF XEN

I like the Xen album a lot and it adds another dimension to the Enchant style. My first question of course is why was there the need for the Xen project if all of the Enchant members collaborate on the album?

That's a fair question. It's difficult for me to say. I think the main reason for me was that it was a challenge. If you look at the album credits you can see that, unlike on an Enchant album, I play different instruments (in addition to) the drums. It wouldn't make much sense for me to play bass, guitar or keyboards in Enchant. [Thus] It was an opportunity for me to stretch out and have more control. I also have a co-production credit on this album [Paul co-produced the album with Doug Ott -CR] which I have not had the chance to do before. Most of the music on the Xen album is written by me and there are more lyrics from me than on an Enchant album. So there was the personal challenge - and the sense of control was very appealing. Since I have some facility to play guitar and bass, it seemed like it would be a lot of fun, too.

What I noticed is that it was recorded in a lot of different places. How

difficult is it to take those different contributions and turn it into a real song because usually you have five people together playing the songs in the studio?

It wasn't as difficult as you might think because most of the tracks, if not all of them, had been demoed before the actual recording. Because of that I had quite a bit of time to experiment with the arrangements, to add and subtract parts. Plus I find it a benefit to work that way and have the time to keep listening to the demos, to (mentally) arrange ideas, and to explore other possibilities. So thanks to that, I think that there is quite a coherent feel to the music and the arrangements.

One of my favorite songs on the album is "Red Letter Day." The reason is that it has a lot of different aspects, from the funky bass to the heavy guitar riff and brilliant guitar solo. Could you tell me something more how that came about?

Sure. That song is one of my favorites as well. It may not sound this way to you when you hear it now, but it began as quite grunge-like, because of the main riff; the main guitar part's approach has been used in a lot of grunge music. Luckily, I think with the

XEN

bass-part, and the approach to the drums (not to mention the vocals), it didn't end up sounding like cliched grunge. That's something that I like to do a lot - to take elements from different styles and genres and mutate the end result into something original. So that's how it began, very simply with the main guitar riff, and then Ted Leonard and I sat down to discuss the approach we wanted to take vocally and lyrically. The whole song has a kind of heavy feel to it but also a sense of longing, reaching out to something. The music meshes well with the lyrics.

THE RIGHT TO WRITE LYRICS

You and Ted are responsible for the lyrics of the Xen album but for the Enchant albums you don't write too many lyrics. Why is that?

I don't know if I completely agree with that. I don't have "Break" in front of me, but I believe that on "Break" Ted wrote the lyrics to three of the songs, Doug Ott did four, and I think I did three as well. I am not sure exactly why things are divided up that way. I think it's natural for Doug, at least, to come up with piece of music and immediately start hearing vocal ideas. Doug is a very vocal-oriented person and a good singer in his own right, so it's natural for him to do that. I enjoy to write music but I find it much more difficult to write the lyrics - so my first inclination would be to pass it on to someone else to write them. As far as Ted goes, he doesn't contribute a lot of music to Enchant and is usually waiting for someone else to give him some music. So maybe that accounts for the division of labor.

How could you compare your writing style to that of Ted?

I think that Ted is better (than I am) at what I consider to be the most important and difficult aspect of writing lyrics - coming up with evocative phrases and picturesque images. I really like that aspect of his approach. He's got a real knack for coming up with pleasing combinations of words. I think I am more interested in exploring philosophical themes, so I write in that kind of style. I have a strong interest in - and practice of - philosophy. I do a lot of reading...

Because you studied philosophy, right?

That's correct, but for me it's not just an academic pursuit but really something that is personally important and meaningful. And, I think, lyric-wise, that is good up to a point, because I like to see nonstandard themes coming into my lyrics. But I think that sometimes my lyrics come off a bit too stiff or academic, whereas Ted has a more evocative approach. I guess my ideal lyrics would be a better combination of the two: using evocative expression, addressing philosophical themes that interest me.

In how far is Ted comfortable in

singing other people's lyrics?
Music is often written in an interactive manner between several people whereas lyrics are mostly written individually. The lyrics are therefore more personal than music.

That's a very good question. Actually that has been a bit of a problem and source of tension in the past with Enchant for exactly the reasons that you've given. So with Xen it was very important for me that the first priority for Ted was that he could relate to everything that he was going to sing. That's the reason that I wanted him to write most of the lyrics - so that naturally he would feel more comfortable and be more attached to the lyrics that he would be singing. So I was very careful to check with him that he could get behind the words (that I was writing) and really feel what he would have to sing. I tried to be sensitive to that in this project because in the past we haven't been that sensitive, in Enchant, as we should have been.

MINDFULNESS

The band name Xen and the album title [according to the info on the webpage, "84,000 Dharma Doors"] is a metaphysical description in Zen Buddhist Lore and there are supposedly 84,000 ways to reach the "Ultimate Reality." -CRJ, refer to the Buddhist religion. On the other hand, you studied philosophy. Are you a religious or spiritual person?

Well maybe more of the latter, more spiritual. I really have a small acquaintance with Buddhism, a very partial knowledge of what it all means. Mainly for me the interest in Zen (and relevance to Xen) focuses on the practice of what is called "mindfulness." The notion is that no matter what one is doing, whether you are writing, or working on music, or looking at a work of art (which are obviously things that we love to do), or doing something more mundane like washing or doing the dishes, that kind of thing - your life would be enriched if you could bring a high quality of attention to your activity. So to be mindful means that in the present moment, your mind, your attention and your focus is to and with the present.

So your thoughts shouldn't wonder about.

That's correct. I am sure you can relate to having to do the dishes or some other thing you don't feel like doing, so your first inclination is to rush through the job as quickly as possible. I have found that, inspired by Zen, if you really relax into the moment and try to make the washing of the dishes into a religious experience... when you do it very carefully, caringly and with focus, then it can actually be very enjoyable. I just want you to see the real truth and beauty of the idea that if you are present in every moment, whether it's mundane or important, then your life can become more fulfilling. That kind of dovetails/complements our Western notion that says "if something is worth doing, then it is worth doing well"; or "haste makes waste," as we say in English. If you slow down and really address what needs to be done, then it ceases a drag



on your time.

Are people in the West focused on materialistic aspects than spiritual aspects?

You mean if I think they are? I think that there is definitely that focus in the West - but I am not sure if there is less of that focus in the East.

A SINGLE STRIKING IMAGE

Getting back down to Earth. I noticed that there was a change in the album packaging from the initial (independent) release to the InsideOut Music release. Why was that?

The initial release was all done by me, I paid to record everything, and put it all together. When InsideOut Music came to me about releasing the album, we talked about adjusting some artwork to the packaging so we could add the lyrics. Unfortunately the situation was such that if we added to the album then it was going to have to be by a different artist (than had done the original artwork). Out of respect for the original artist - Richard Gray - I didn't want to pressure him to accept someone else's efforts. After talking with him about it, it seemed more sensible to let someone else do it from scratch. The InsideOut Music artist Thomas Ewerhard did, I think, a fabulous job and I really like the new artwork.

I find the design quite intriguing. What is exactly the meaning about the sea horse on the front and the bright blue colors?

[Laughs] Well I hate to disappoint you but to answer your question: there is no particular meaning behind the cover. I always liked the look of a sea horse, it looks like a living fossil. It's very beautiful, elegant in a strange kind of way. I knew that I wanted to have a cover with a single striking image in the center, kind of like the cover of the Rush album "Counterparts." That cover has a different shade of blue [than the Xen cover -CRJ] and it has a nut and a bolt in the center. Something like that could be a very simple, provocative and strong image. One of my complaints about a lot of album covers is that there is too much going on. That might have worked when we had [vinyl] records instead of compact discs.

If you compare the Xen album cover to "A Blueprint of the World" then

there is a big difference. That cover was very busy while the Xen album cover has a Hugh Syme feel to it.

THE APPROACH TO DRUMMING

There is a big trend in the prog rock/metal world to form these kind of super groups. Have you ever been approached or thought about doing something like that?

No, I've never been approached for something like that. I think it would be nice to be asked but it's not really something that I have much interest in. The kind of thing that I would fantasize about is being able to play the drums on an album or tour with someone like Sting or Peter Gabriel, or other musicians that I admire. That's the kind of thing that would appeal to me. For me, these "super groups" are a bit gimmicky - not really something that gets me terribly excited.

What I find intriguing about you is that you're not only the drummer but that you also contribute to the music and play different instruments. If I compare your drumming on the Xen album to that on "Break," then on "Break" to it seems more restraint and simple while on "84000 Dharma Doors" you let it flow and try a lot of different things. Am I correct on that statement?

Well, I think that I can't argue with your ears. That feels right to me, thinking about it. What you describe is the way things turned out but it wasn't the result of us planning things to be that way. I think you're right, with Enchant the weakness of my drumming - and perhaps the weakness of the music that we have done thus far - is that it is a bit too controlled. That's actually one of my big complaints about "progressive" music in general. I would like to see more breathing room, more spontaneity, the willingness to be a bit sloppy. That kind of thing - to put more personality into music.

But you can add those kinds of things during a live show for example.

Sure, although whether you like it or not those will slip into your music whilst playing live because there are so many variables in live music! I find myself moving more and more towards a more spontaneous, say, organic, approach to music. I'm not interested in playing mathematical/clockwork kinds of songs.



Which kind of music were you playing?

We've done all sorts of stuff. From classic 70s rock like Peter Frampton and ZZ Top, to later 70s rock such as Van Halen and Journey - we'd even slip in some Rush tunes here and there. We played a lot of grunge like Pearl Jam and Soundgarden. We played 80s rock like Mike and the Mechanics, Richard Marx that kind of thing.

But you didn't play any funk music.

We played a lot of 70s Motown as well the likes of the Commodores, Wild Cherry, a lot of James Brown, etc. There have been so many songs that we have all played together over the years, spanning all of the decades of rock music.

So you spanned the musical globe but you're not doing that anymore?

No, I am not at the moment; I might go back at some point. My time is limited and I really enjoy making music creatively and pushing the envelope as a player and a composer. It's certainly an honorable skill to be able to do a good job at cover music, but it's not my focus.

Can you live from your music?

Definitely not.

How many copies of each album did you sell then?

I don't know the exact figures but not a lot, actually. I think probably been 10,000-20,000 copies of each album and that varies from album to album based on different factors. I think "A Blueprint of the World" has been our best-selling album because it was released initially on Dream Circle Records which had a decent distribution, and then released in Japan by JVC, and in the America by Magna Carta. It filtered itself throughout the world and was then re-released by InsideOut Music. Plus I say that it's the most overtly prog album and, at the time that we released it, there weren't many bands that were trying to work in that area.

How would you compare your popularity in Europe to that in USA because you've toured Europe several times (in 1994 with Jadis, in 1997 as support to Dream Theater and Threshold, in 1998 as support to Spock's Beard and Marillion) but you have never properly toured USA?

That's correct. The small success that we've had has been in Europe. We haven't done any touring here in the USA and it all comes down to the fact that we need a good record company with money that is willing to take a (financial) risk. That has been something that we haven't had in the States.

How is your music accepted in the USA?

I really don't know, we don't really have a presence in the American music scene. I can only speculate. I've got to say that it's not so much that people have a reaction to it, but rather it's more that people don't know or don't even care!

Has that approach changed over the years?

Oh definitely. I think if you listen to "A Blueprint of the World," songs like "Nighttime Sky," "East of Eden," and other ones - not to say that there weren't mistakes, but they were executed to a precise standard, and to me it's very much like a well-oiled machine: picture a bunch of gears in an engine turning synchronously and working very smoothly together. I call it a "tick-tock" approach, it's very even-sounding. The drumming approach that I was taking at that time was to be very precise and have a very crisp and dry sound. There's been a certain sense of change to the way I play or like to play now.

Are you now playing the kind of music you'd like to be playing?

That's a good question. What I would like to be doing is always changing, so maybe there's always been a gap between where I am and where I would like to be. For example, I might be working on something new and then perhaps all of a sudden I hear something that I'd like to experiment with. So I usually feel that the next thing I am going to do is closer to what I, now, really want - that is, until we get to the next thing!

So you're resetting your goals each time.

That's correct but I'll tell you this. The music that I am doing right now and what Enchant is doing right now and what Xen has done thus far are all a lot closer to what I would like to be doing musically than what we've done in the past.

So you're feeling more comfortable with each album.

Very much so.

SPANNING THE MUSICAL GLOBE

I was surprised to read that you still play in Top 40 cover bands. Is that true?

Well, I am not at the moment, but Doug and Ted are. We have all done that during our Enchant career. For one, because the money is pretty good, and the second thing, even though playing covers is not fulfilling creatively, it's still fun to go out and play different styles and just keep up your musical chops.

ENCHANT

What would be a good idea in my opinion is that Enchant should release a live album after the next studio album. Have you ever discussed something like that?

Oh absolutely, it's something that we think about and talk about. It's just a matter of finding out when the next tour will occur and then try to make the arrangements. As you probably know, everything about touring is very expensive for a band like us so with our humble stature we try to keep costs as low as possible. We talk about it but when it will happen we can't say.

THE STATUS OF ENCHANT

What is exactly the current status of Enchant? I heard that you were about to enter the studio.

That's correct, we've been working on new material intermittently for the past three months. We have 19 songs written and hopefully we're going to be deciding tomorrow which songs we want to go ahead with. We're then going to start recording next month and the album should be out next fall. We may very well put another album out in the first part of the next year. We've been working on a lot of stuff.

Does that mean that of the 19 songs that you have now, the ones that don't appear on the new album will be used for the album next year?

Not necessarily, the thing is that we've been doing this long enough now; we've made song writing into a craft to the point that we find it quite easy to come up with ideas that we feel very strongly about. So whatever is left over from this album may find its way to the next album, or we may just write more stuff and choose from that. So we want to get two albums done this year and release the second one early next year.

Are there a lot of old and unreleased Enchant songs left?

Yes there are songs that have never been used, but the way we work generally is that we get the most excited about releasing new material. There is not a lot interest to go back to left-over songs from "A Blueprint of the World" and "Break" and use them because they represent a mood and style that we were into at that time. We're always changing and the current stuff is a lot different.

Do you have any titles as yet?

No, no titles that I know of. We just describe them with the chord progression or mood of the song.

Do you have a new bass player yet or are you using the bass player of Maximum Indifference Gustaf Fjelstrom?

Well neither actually [laughs] because Gus from Maximum Indifference had just been helping us out on the road. He's a very good player and a very good friend, but when it comes to doing stuff in the studio, then Doug, Ted or even I can do what we need, bass-wise. When

we go on tour, I suppose we can ask Gus to come along with us, but we're not looking for a new bass player right now.

MIXED FEELINGS ABOUT THE TRIBUTES

You contributed to several tribute albums on Magna Carta ("Changes" on the Yes tribute, "Man of our Times" on the Genesis tribute, and "Us and them" on the Pink Floyd tribute).

Oh God, don't remind me.

Well, I thought that your rendition of "Changes" was very good. What I would like to know is if you ever got any feedback from the original artist what they thought of your version?

No, never - but I heard through the grapevine, I don't know if this is true or not (from someone who was acquainted with Genesis) that Mike Rutherford heard our version of "Man of our Times," and that he liked it. I am only repeating that as hearsay because I don't know if that is the case. I never heard anything from Yes and I don't want to hear anything from Pink Floyd because I think our version of "Us and them" is so horrible - so I'm embarrassed for them to hear it!

I haven't heard that song actually. Don't go to the trouble.

Why did you actually take part in the tribute CDs?

It was purely a means to an end. I consider it a very bad decision looking back on it. Around the time of "A Blueprint of the World" we had to opportunity to have Magna Carta release it and one of the conditions of the deal was that we could participate in the tribute albums. We chose to do so, and I very much regret that we made that choice.

Talking about regrets, what is your biggest musical disappointment?

You mean that I have been involved in? That's a very good question. I think probably my biggest regret would be not working diligently or carefully with the mind-set of mindfulness, from an earlier age. I have always been quite an unfocused and undisciplined kind of guy. I am becoming less and less so with age. I wish I would've been more patient in the past, but I'm getting a lot better.

Let's end on a high note and tell me what your biggest musical achievement is? What are you the most satisfied with?

In the public domain it would either be Xen or "Break." The new stuff that I am working on is the best stuff that I've ever done, and I hope that it finds its way onto an Enchant or Xen album - or maybe something else.

<http://www.furiouskeleton.com/>

ICE VINLAND

Masters of the Sea - The Saga

self-released

This Canadian five-piece show that Viking metal doesn't necessarily have to come from Scandinavia. The group's name Ice Vinland is related to the Vikings that landed on Canadian soil and settled New-Foundland. These Vikings discovered and travelled the St-Lawrence Valley where they grew abundant orchards. This region was subsequently called "Vinland." Musically and lyrically, Ice Vinland take the listener on a historical journey. Musically, Ice Vinland goes back to the mid-80s with their continental sounding power metal showing influences of Iron Maiden and Manowar. Progressive touches can be found in the song structuring which at times also brings back memories of Slaughter Xstroyes. Lyrically, Ice Vinland describe historical themes such as the discovery of North America by the Vikings in the title track and the orphaned children of the Duplessis era in "Children of Sin." It must be mentioned that the dated sound and extremely thin production (not enough bass) do hamper full appreciation of this CD. Furthermore, the vocal delivery of vocalist Damian Leif is somewhat peculiar in his pronunciation and intonation (at times sounding like a typical Dutch vocalist of the mid 80s with a slight French accent). A promising band that, with the aid of a good producer and more studio time, could really shine on a second release. (CR) [<http://www.icevinland.qc.ca>] 3/4

KAMELOT

The Fourth Legacy

Noise Records

"The Fourth Legacy" is, of course, the fourth album by the premier US fantasy metal quartet Kamelot. Basically precise power metal married to sensuous progressive metal (as well as a variety of world/folk influences), Kamelot has very nearly mastered the art of power metal composition and execution. The songs are relatively straightforward but contain a good deal of subtle complexity and craftily implemented nuances and instrumental flourishes. "The Fourth Legacy" features a whole cast of guest musicians and singers, most notably the keyboardist Miro and flutist Simon McTavish - there is also a string quartet and some more "Oriental" instrumentation to be found on the album. As noted before, the songs contain several folk and world influences: both "Desert Reign" and "Nights of Arabia" contain what sounds like North African and Middle Eastern sounds (with really cool percussion and D-bass work), and both "The Shadow of Uther" and "A Sailor's Hymn" contain obvious references to Celtic music ("The Shadow of Uther" has a very slick pseudo-Celtic lead, which surfaces in both a metal and purely folk context). Khan's vocal lines vary greatly, soft or powerful as needed (there's not a whole lot of grit in his voice though), complementing rather than driving the music. While the rhythm section of the music is very much power metal, many of the leads and clearer moments are accented with clean prog metal tones - these moments lend the music a more varying tone and help make the album more complete and holistic in its overall effect. Kamelot play fantasy orientated metal, but it shouldn't be confused with the Rhapsody school; rather than smash you with pomp and heroic posturing, Kamelot attacks with subtlety and finesse. Kamelot is an eloquent and refined power metal band, and while they won't convert power metal haters to the cause, they have managed to create a very spotless and sophisticated brand of power metal. (JS) [kamelot@kamelot.com] [<http://www.kamelot.com>] 4 1/2 [GM 4 1/2, GS 4 1/4]

IMPROVISION

Energy EP

Instrumental

Norwegian ImproVision like to release MCDs: "Energy" is the fourth of them. The musical strength tells that it's hopefully the last one before a full-length. The band plays a heavy brand of prog rock with dramatics and power. I don't know why I tend to call it prog rock (in places it's heavier than Dream Theater, which I consider prog metal); maybe it's because the guitar sound is not very weighty, maybe it's the stylistics that tend towards heavy psychedelic rock (I'd say Tool, but they are not an influence). No direct comparisons, because the style and the physics/electronics-style image are rather original. My favorite song is "Where Are You Now" (yes, I love power and dramatics!). (GS) [dylan.hopkin@c2i.net] [<http://listen.to/improvision>] 3/4

IN EXTREMO

Verehrt und Angespren

Metal Blade Records

In Extremo play German-sung (mainly) heavy rock just like their countrymen Rammstein and Die Toten Hosen. While the latter two deliver industrial/metal and punk/metal respectively, In Extremo represent medieval-music influenced metal. Since the music is direct and directly melodic, it should appeal to the German market. The whole image

(including musician's clothing) is at a professional level, and so are catchy and uplifting songs. It may be too predictable and sometimes banal for twisted metal fans. (GS) [<http://www.inextremo.de>] 3 3/4 [AO 3 1/2, SV 3 3/4]

INNER RESONANCE

Solar Voices

self-released

The effort and determination of the duo behind Inner Resonance to release an independent product is noteworthy. Inner Resonance consists of multi-instrumentalist Jeffrey Ryan Smooths and vocalist Peter Orulian. They prove that the fact that only two persons are responsible for the writing and recording doesn't necessarily mean that it has to result in an inferior product. Although Jeffrey Ryan Smooths has recorded with several other bands in the past (for example, Axis), "Solar Voices" is their first combined recording and for a first outing the songwriting is very mature. Musically, "Solar Voices" takes the listener on a musical journey along the paths of melodic progressive metal/rock showing hints of Rush, Dream Theater, Leger de Main, and Tangerine Dream. There is a nice combination of ballads and more uptempo tracks. Surprisingly, within the songs there is a very good balance between the different instruments whereas I would have expected a shred orgy; the different instruments have equal prominence. However, there is a tendency to overdo things here and



positive sense). "1999" is a solid performance, but not a sensation. (SV) 3 1/2 [AO 3 1/4, GM 3 3/4]

JACOBS DREAM

Jacobs Dream

Metal Blade Records

The debut demo of this American band floated in the underground since 1998, yet it didn't look heads and shoulders above the medium. However, Metal Blade put their faith into the band, and the debut CD resulted in quite a treat for fans of Lethal, Queensryche, Steel Prophet, and Iron Maiden. Inspired by the epic side of power/prog metal genre, the 12 songs on this CD are not out of the norm, but competent, melodic, and, for the most part, graceful. Yes, the songs sound like they come from the late 80s, and if it is outdated or not depends on your personal rules on life and metal. Personally, I get sick sometimes of "true heavy metal," but Lethal-style melodic/epic metal is still dear in my book. The only shortcoming here is that songs like "Scape Goat" and "The Gathering" are a bit weaker than others (for example, "Kinescope" and "Funambulism"). (GS) [Jacobs Dream, 231 Eastcreek Dr., Galloway, OH 43119, USA] [jacdream@aol.com] 4 [AO 4 1/4]

RON JARZOMBEK

PHHHP

self-released

The mad guitarist from Spastic Ink gathered some 14 old tapes on this CD. It contains experimental songs which were written and recorded on a 4 track during the WatchTower years. Of course, the sound is very raw, with only guitars, bass, and drum programming. All tracks are solely instrumental and have a highly experimental bend: definitely not for the faint of heart! Expect some really, really insane technical metal strongly reminiscent of Spastic Ink. If fact, because of the chronology, it's a kind of pre-Spastic Ink! All characteristics of Ron's incredible playing are featured: free tonality, atonality, polyrhythms, exotic scales, complex chord progressions, time changes, odd measure, etc. plus some crazy noises (Donald Duck voices, female voices, an alarm clock, among others). Well, if you are not afraid to venture in a strange territory, grab this one. (AS) [CDR is available for \$10 (USA), \$12 (elsewhere). Ron Jarzombek, PO Box 34772, San Antonio, TX 78265 - 4772, USA] [ronjarz@ix.netcom.com] [<http://www.spasticink.com/>] 4

JENS JOHANSSON

The Last Viking

Heptagon

This release from the famous Swede brothers (Jens is former Malmsteen and current Stratovarius keyboard player, Anders also played with Malmsteen) features plain, old fashioned neo-classical metal. Don't search for progressiveness here: the music is straightforward, with easy and catchy melodies and choruses. Also present on this album are Michael Romeo (Symphony X) and another Swedish singer Edman. Jens' compositions feature mainly boring 4/4 rhythms with guitar filling, creating a kind of "background layer" for his keyboard forefront shredding. Actually, Romeo's riffs sound desperately underpowered and discrete because of the production, what results in a kind of light version of Stratovarius with emphasis on keys. The music sounds sadly deja vu. Looks like Jens never really went beyond the neo-classical stuff, as his music barely integrate a hint of nowadays progressive features. Considered the outstanding virtuoso skills of all the musicians on this release, I would have expected a much more daring endeavor. (AS) [<http://anansi.panix.com/~jens/>] 3 1/2 [GM 4 1/2]

KARMA TO BURN

Karma to Burn

MIA Records

Karma Burn hail from West Virginia and play instrumental hard rock influenced somewhat by metal and classic rock. The music is very riff-oriented, each riff milked for all its worth and then traded in for another riff. It's heavy, dense and somewhat concentrated and repetitive. Some of the riffs are very much aligned to modern rock, others to groove-orientated metal, and yet others to classic rock. The music is well executed, but lacks direction in my opinion. It's like hardrock

stripped to its barest requirements and suffers heavily from a sense of having no purpose. I do think that the band has potential, but they need more originality, more aesthetic ideas and less reliance on repetitious riffing. I feel that they can achieve greater success if they would simply bring more of themselves (as composers and musicians) to the table. (JS) 2 3/4 [AO 4 1/4]

KARMA TO BURN

Wild Wonderful Purgatory

MIA Records

Some stoner metal bands definitely don't like vocals. Just remember The Atomic Bitchwax whose music is clearly constructed more like instrumentals and jammings than psychedelic songs-oriented metal we are mostly used to. Already the previous album of Karma To Burn showed that these guys also concentrate on instrumental parts. And now we get their new album where vocals are absolutely absent. At first listens it may be unusual and strange - we aren't used to hear stoner albums that contain only instrumentals, are we? But later, when you get used to listen to all these songs recorded without vocals, the album begins to grasp you. Of course, I miss some perfect vocal songs from their previous album, but this band new outfit is clearly more polished instrumentally and presents almost everything psychedelic metal has in its area. One song (by the way, the musicians don't like titles and numbers, so we don't get any on this album) may be typically based on Sabbath-riffing, while another takes you over with a more psychedelic jamming, or yet another has solos reminding of Jimi Hendrix, later transforming into Kyuss-like improvisations. Strange, but this album survives without vocals and perfectly manages to transform energy and groovy sense. It consists of 6 new songs and 4 tracks available on the 10" EP "Wild, Wonderful & Apocalyptic" and is highly recommended to fans of stoner metal improvisations; it is one of the best examples of this genre and it truly rocks! (AO) 4 1/2 [SV 3 3/4]

KENZINER

The Prophecies

LMP/Leviathan Records

Finnish Master shredder Jarno Keskinen released his second album with his band Kenziner. It's again a pure neo-classical speed metal release with some hints of prog, actually quite close to the first one, though heavier, crunchier and faster. For those who missed "Timescape," Kenziner is similar to another Finnish band, Stratovarius. The recipe is more or less the same: fast classical themes and variations played in duet with guitar and keys, catchy melodies, ballads. As a matter of fact, Kenziner is more progressive than Stratovarius, and I find their melodies more appealing. On this release, Jarno Keskinen ensured the presence of a high level keyboardist (the 19 year old prodigy Mikko Harkkin), who adds a lot of depth in comparison to the first album, where Jarno played all instruments except drums. On "The Prophecies," Mika's keys are not a mere accompaniment but a real counterpart to Jarno's guitar, with excellent solo trades. The compositions are also more mature and intricate than on the first Kenziner album. Particularly the increased speed and the crunch in the riffs really add a lot of power to the music. Though neo-classical metal is a widely spread genre, only few musicians manage to really create outstanding, balanced compositions, which go beyond mere shredding. Jarno is one of them, with some excellent songwriting on this album and really impressive guitar virtuoso skills. The great songs however also alternate with some more commercial ones. The main thing that actually disappoints me with this band is the singer. Such great music would require an exceptional vox a la Russell Allen. Instead, Stephen Fredrick displays a monotonous, raspy voice in the mid-eighties glam hard rock style, which feels outdated, mechanical, lacking emotion, and eventually boring. (AS) 4 [GM 4 1/4, GS 3 3/4, SV 3 1/2]

VITALIJ KUPRIJ

VK3

Shrapnel Records

The prolific Ukrainian pianist is already releasing his third album since 1997. As with previous records, he hired a well-known master shredder guitarist to team up with. This time it's a member of the "old generation": Tony McAlpine. Stylistically, it is still a solely instrumental metal release, but

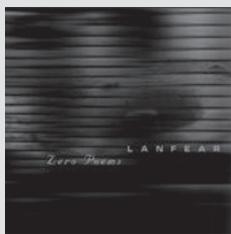
one can notice a slight shift: Vitalij became more progressive and his compositions more mature. It seems like each vintage is getting better! Of course, his incredible keyboard virtuoso skills are still put in the foreground, but more space is left for more calmer passages with "layered" keys. Furthermore, progressive elements are more and more replacing what was before a mere shredding feast. Hence, several tracks display and intricate structure and typical progressive elements (time change, etc.). Another interesting point to mention is the increased range of influences. Particularly noticeable in the jazzy one. Previously, Vitalij was almost only focused on neo-classical stuff. His style range has now definitely broadened, with tracks reminding of fusion bands. As before, the mix of distorted guitar riffs with clean piano playing creates an incredibly good sounding blend. One of the best 1999 instrumental prog metal albums. (AS) 4 1/4 [GM 4 1/2]

LABYRINTH

Timeless Crime EP

Metal Blade Records

And here it goes for a new 4-title album from the Italian metal band. In perfect continuation of "Return from Heaven Denied," the Italians deliver their melodic speed metal. Nothing really new, just super fast riffs backed by keyboards in neo-classical fashion. The vocals are quite good and the complete outcome pleasant. Nothing really progressive here, simply plain metal. Such a bore... The main lead guitarist has an impressive sweeping arpeggio technique, which unfortunately he abuses of in his solos, creating an impression of mechanical training. A catchy ballad concludes the album. (AS) 3 1/4 [GM 4]



LANFEAR

Zero Poems

Famous Kitchen

The second album of German band Lanfear is a big step towards originality. First of all, it applies to vocal styles. I have never heard a progressive/power metal to integrate black metal vocals and Paradise Lost-style gothic vocals so well, as exemplified by the title track and "How Come? (Part 1)." The majority of vocals are still in melodic metal style though. There is a lot of going on musically, from speed metal to mid-tempo melodic metal to Shadow Gallery-like ballads. You can even find some disco elements, not counting the Electric Light Orchestra cover "Twilight." Overall, the songs are very multi-threaded, and the whole album is like a kaleidoscope of different melodies. In places, the influences are not too thickly covered (Shadow Gallery, Dream Theater, Paradise Lost with those vocals), but the album is very diverse; in fact, I would stand puzzled if someone would ask for a trademark Lanfear song. The band uses quite a lot of keyboards here and there, which turns this release more towards fans of lighter and diverse progressive metal. (GS) 4 [AO 4 1/2, SV 3 3/4]

LOUIS CYpher

Cyphernation

Black Arrow Production

Louis Cypher from Germany dedicated themselves to power metal with early Metallica touch. The singer Guido Michels sounds like a young James Hetfield in some moments, the music, as I see it, is a bit pale. A band with two guitarists is able to do better arrangements. There are some good tracks on the CD, for example, "Frontline" or "White Light", but that's not much. Not bad, but not stirring either. By the way, there is the East 17 cover-version of "Alright." A strange choice... (SV) 3 1/2

MADRYGHAL

Dreamless Falling

self-released

Italy and melodic speed metal go very well, and Madryghal are another decent example.

Their favorite-band list obviously includes Rhapsody, Helloween, and Wuthering Heights (if they know them), but Madryghal seem to be honest fans of the style instead of trend followers. The music of "Dreamless Falling" reminds of folk-inspired epic speed metal of Wuthering Heights, with developed melodies and epic elements but not so straight bombastic power as that of Rhapsody. Overall, Madryghal sound a little more in-depth than a lot of happier German heavy/speed metal, and hopefully power metal fans will appreciate band's gentle intelligence. (GS)

[Madryghal, Edoardo Sola, via Roccolo 33, 23900 Lecco, Italy] [madryghal@libero.it] [<http://listen.to/madryghal>] 3 3/4

MANTICORA

Roots to Eternity

Black Lotus Records

While power metal is too common today, the amount of Helloween followers still outnumbers Blind Guardian followers by a big margin. Manticora, together with Swiss band Excelsis, belong to the latter group, especially due to similar chorus singing. The music of "Roots to Eternity" is not as complex as Blind Guardian, but the production does not make it even an inch lighter. In fact, the predictable songwriting is a bit. The bottom line is that if you like well-done power/speed metal, Euro-style, you should give this CD a chance. (GS) [<http://www.intromental.com/manticora>] 3 3/4

ALEX MASI

In the Name of Bach

Lion Music

Guitarist Alex Masi is a well-known name in the rock/metal scene. Already since late seventies this man have been recording albums and touring over the world. Having installed a digital studio in his home, Alex now controls all the creative and recording process, and the first project to come out of this new situation is a compilation of pieces written by J.S. Bach, performed on various solo guitars. However, it's not clear who will listen to this album. Classical music fans? Guitarists? We all know that Alex is a great guitarist, but I think, a solo album with his own compositions would be more interesting than this bunch of guitar "lessons" on Bach's music. (SV)

[15\$, incl. postage, Lion Music, Stromsangarna, 22410 Godby, Åland, Finland] 3 1/2

MASTERMIND

Angels of the Apocalypse

InsideOut Music

Mastermind have always been about the experiments, with each record they've made some changes to enhance their sound. New album is not an exception, and the good news is the fact that now in their ranks they have female vocalist Lisa Bouchelle who perfectly supplements the progressive sounds of Mastermind. I always thought that this band needed a good voice, and finally they have it. Stylistically, there are no big changes, it's the same complex, a bit symphonic prog metal, except that now it makes more solid and mature impression. Lisa's voice varies from powerful melodic singing to more esoteric, almost gothic attempts à la Dead Can Dance ("This Lover's Heart"). It seems that "Angels of the Apocalypse" is Mastermind's best output so far. Songs like "The Queen of Sheba," "A Million Miles Away," or the ELP cover "The Endless Enigma" will appeal to every fan of the genre. Well done. (SV)

[million@idnsi.net] [<http://www.idnsi.com/millennium>] 3 3/4

MASTERS OF REALITY

Welcome to the Western Lodge

Brownhouse Recordings

Finally, Chris Goss returns with the new CD. It's a mystery for me, why he releases his albums at such intervals. "Blue Garden" came out more than 10 years ago, "Sunrise on the Sufferbus" saw the light of the day in 1992, then we had the excellent live album "How High the Moon" in 1997. According to Chris, he promises to "correct himself" in this respect. Regarding the new CD, I would say, it's the most experimental and avant-garde record Masters Of Reality have ever done. The first four tracks sound a bit strange, the music is pretty primitive, distorted vocals

appear here and there. However, the following tracks show that Chris Goss is still able to write these timeless songs that we were used to hear from him. "Take a Shot at the Clown" and "Baby Mae" mark the "real beginning" of the album, further we have "Why the Fly?" with strong T. Rex influences, a bit futuristic "Annihilation of the Spirit" and "Calling Dr. Carrion" and the incredible "Boymilk Waltz." In time I notice that this album grows on you, so be patient with it. Shame, the CD is a bit too short for me (38 min.), who knows then, when Mr./Dr. Goss would do us a favor and release the next full-length. (SV)

[Troph111@aol.com] [www.mastersofreality.com] 4 1/4



MATTSON

Another Dimension

Lion Music

Lars Eric Mattson returns with the new output. The last album "Obsession" was above-average hard rock album in veins of Rainbow or early Yngwie Malmsteen. "Another Dimension" shows a great improvement in respect to songwriting. To make things more interesting, Lars invited some friends and musicians to guest on this project, for example, Patrick Rondat, Rob Johnson, or Par Lindh. The result is 14 compositions that move somewhere between classic hard rock, symphonic heavy metal, and progressive music. Rough, unique voice of Bjorn Lodin lends the album the necessary originality. Good. (SV)

[15\$, incl. postage, Lion Music, Stromsangarna, 22410 Godby, Åland, Finland] 4

MILLENIUM

Angelfire

Frontiers Records

Something for Harem Scarem or Pretty Maids fans, i.e., admirers of melodic hard rock with heavy guitars and nice part singing. The CD cover and booklet have a bit banal design, but the songs are pretty good for this genre. The production is also top notch, and even if the material is lacking some variety, "Angelfire" is a solid work among AOR releases. Check out the opener "Shaman", "Heaven Sent" or "Run". (SV)

[million@idnsi.net] [<http://www.idnsi.com/millennium>] 3 3/4

BORISLAV MITIC

Borislav Mitic

Shrapnel Records

Searching for some old-fashioned neo-classical metal? Then Borislav Mitic is for you. This Serbian guitar player draws heavily on the numerous successful instrumental albums of the late eighties (MacAlpine, Taftola, etc.) to create melodic songs based on classical harmonies & progressions. Even if his melodies tend to sound a little bit to close to scales and arpeggios practice and therefore bear a slight "mechanical" edge, he gets better on the tracks which integrate other influences. Most interesting are the songs inspired by balkanic folklore music: Borislav borrowed heavily from traditional Eastern Europe music to develop a unique metal blend. The highlight is "Bird Dance," a fast and furious neo-classical shred feast, with an pronounced oriental bend. (AS) 3 3/4

MOON OF STEEL

Beyond the Edges EP

Adrenaline Records

It's actually a comeback EP, even though many of you probably haven't heard "Passions" album released by this Italian band in 1989. The new EP contains 4 average-length tracks of melodic heavy rock with some dramatism, progressive tendencies, and female vocals. The style is

such that Dream Theater's "You Not Me" cover seems to fit well (though it's probably the heaviest/rockiest song on the EP). (GS) [moon_of_steel@yahoo.com] 3 3/4

VINNIE MOORE

The Maze

Shrapnel Records

Instrumental melodic metal is back! In the pure tradition of Vinnie Moore's first and second albums, "The Maze" features very dexterous, virtuoso guitar playing. This display of mastery is, however, always based on an extraordinary sense of melody, and thus does not really qualify as "shredding." Vinnie Moore has always been one of the most intelligent guitar virtuosos, and hence among my favorite ones. Discrepancies with "Mind's Eye" (1987) are, however, important: Vinnie Moore's music can barely be called metal, except on the title track; no more powerful, chunky riffs: only the melodic lead guitar, the bass, keys (played by Tony MacAlpine, actually very discrete) and drums. Interestingly, this solo effort contains very diverse genres: the main track "The Maze" is the neo-classical 8:39 masterpiece; "Never been to Barcelona" is an acoustic flamenco track; most other songs are gentler, and tend to a more commercial, AOR-blues-rock direction (AS). [<http://www.vinniemooore.com>] 4

NEAL MORSE

Neal Morse

Ear Candy Records/InsideOut Music

Neal Morse tries his hand at the solo album. This attempt has become quite successful, not completely though. The CD consists of relaxed (for the most part), calm, cheerful songs, but I miss something here. Many of the songs could go well with the Spock's Beard material, as the ballads, for example. Some of the songs are pretty poppy, like "Emma" or "Everything Is Wrong," and if not because of the overlength epic track "A Whole Nother Trip," I would call Neal Morse's debut a pop rock release. For me, it's a good, but a bit monotonous record. Anyway, I think, fans of soft rock, AOR, or prog rock will enjoy it. (SV)

3 3/4

MULLMUZZLER

Keep it to Yourself

Magna Carta Records

The overwhelming number of projects involving Dream Theater members gives a helping hand with cash to some labels (mostly one label, actually) and don't give any breaks to fans, who start like "what, again?" and end up with "well, this one is not bad either." LaBrie's Mullmuzzler is actually pretty much like Dream Theater (minus two songs written by the twisted rocky/jazzy/whatever mind of Magellan's Gardner, and minus the equally twisted CD cover). "His Voice," "Statued," "Shores of Avalon," and "Lace" are the highlights, performed in warm prog metal side (a softer "Awake?") with occasional 'differ' solos. However, the highlights (with a nice exception of "Statued") would hardly acquire a spot in any past or future Dream Theater album. The ballads are shallow, the Gardner stuff doesn't fit. To put it lightly, Dream Theater fans wouldn't mind, but, speaking sharply, the involvement of a Dream Theater member doesn't imply a must-have record. (GS)

3 1/2 [SV 3 1/2]

N8

Reality... Fate

Scarlet/SPV

Labeled as the best heavy/rock newcomer from Italy, N8 are indeed a very interesting progressive power metal quintet and one of those acts worth to keep an eye on, for the quality, broad-mindedness and vitality of their music proposal. The melodic electricity, modern vocal approach and accessibility of bands like Alice in Chains gets nicely mixed with more obscure and equally pleasant tendencies, transporting us mentally to avenues already traversed or explored by so varied acts like Psycho Drama, Seer's Tear, Conception, or Mayfair. Escorted by a wealth of good creative ideas, clever arrangements and contudent guitar riffs wrap up very effectively Andrea Palermo's clear voice, while a marked and elaborated general taste for the melody becomes a constant along this elegant and really complete album. I hope we'll be able to see N8 breaking through internationally short-term. (GM) 4 1/4

Your monicker Chiaroscuro is an Italian word that describes the use and effect of gradations of light and shadow in a picture, especially when there is a strong contrast between the two. There is a very close relation to the music, one might even argue which came first: the musical style or the name. How did the search for a proper band name come about and which others were considered but did not make it?

We were writing music in basically the same vein before we had a name at all. After we had been jamming together for a few weeks, we basically sat down and brainstormed names for a weekend. However, we have bunch of wiseasses in this band, and all people seemed to be coming up with weird names like "Dragqueensryche" and "Tuna Dog" (named after Clif and Richard's dog, Princess, who seems to have an inordinate fondness for tuna). Chiaroscuro was a name that I threw out and which wasn't initially met with a lot of enthusiasm, but after a few go-rounds we went back to our list and went "Hey, this really describes us!" People have a hell of a time pronouncing it, much less remembering it, but we're perversely fond of it.

Your debut "Brilliant Pools of Darkness" has recently been released to the general public. How difficult is it for a relatively new band to expose your music to potential listeners without the backing of record company? Which step are you undertaking to promote the album? How has the general reception been of the commercial and underground media?

Honestly, we really have only just begun to push the CD in earnest. After a year of agonizing over final mixdowns and cover art, we finally got the CDs from the duplication house in mid June, and we really didn't quite know what to do with them at first. We spent most of the summer getting a new promo pack put together, trying to assimilate a new band member, and getting our website up and running. Clif and I have recently been trying to promote the CD online, with some success. Initial responses have all been enthusiastic, and our CDs are being carried by a few online retailers (amazon.com and moremetal.com, to name a few), but it's really pretty early to tell how the CD will be received. Luckily for us, progressive metal fans seem to spend a lot of time scrounging for new music within the genre, and we've had a few cool surprises land in our laps because of it. Generally speaking though, we are just trying to play as many shows as we can, and let people know that we exist. All seems to be going well so far, but again, we've only just started.

The cover art depicts a symbol, what does the symbol stand for?

The logo is supposed to represent a crescent moon inside a sun, which kind of embodies the whole idea of contrast between shadow and light. The crescent moon also sort of resembles a 'C', which could be construed as standing for the band's name, but that wasn't my original intent.

Your promotional picture depicts five casually dressed short-haired individuals gazing causally into the

[by Christian Rademaker]

These past few years, unguided or indoctrinated by the commercialism of record labels, a wave of promising new acts has stepped into the limelight. This is evident by the increasing number of independent CDs being released. Several will be focused on in issue 15 of Edge of Time, being from the progressive, power, or doom metal genre.

Although Chiaroscuro is a relatively new name in the progressive metal community, the potential talent of this musical outfit could make them one of its premier exponents. Originating from the musical obscurity of the

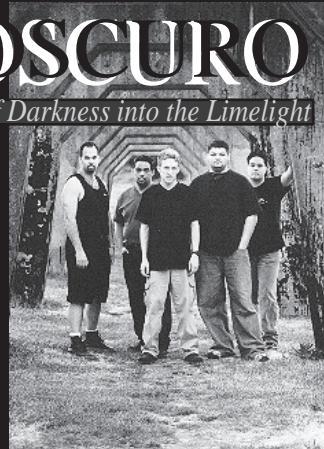
Washington State area, Chiaroscuro have just recently released their independent debut CD "Brilliant Pools of Darkness". The musical approach is refreshing in the sense that their music presents



CHIAROSCURO

Emerging from the Pools of Darkness into the Limelight

a hybrid of symphonic progressive metal such as Dream Theater which is updated with the 90s hard-edged metal/alternative music such as Tool, Korn and God Lives Underwater. This unusual combination is illustrated by the combination of heavy staccato riffing, mellow ethereal keyboards, and progressive instrumental parts. Interwoven through the music are Ian Dorsch's operatic vocals which supply the coldness of some of the music with a warm yet melancholic and friendly undertone. The line-up that is responsible, consists of Ian Dorsch (vocals, keyboards, and rhythm guitar), Richard Chambliss (6- and 7-string guitars), Clif Chambliss (bass), and Aaron Ellsworth (acoustic and electronic drums). The line-up was completed after the recording of the debut CD when Jeff Moses (keyboards and backing vocals) joined Chiaroscuro.



Riding on the waves of new found exposure, I contacted Chiaroscuro with the proposal of an interview. The following is an interview that I did with vocalist and multi-instrumentalist Ian Dorsch. This resulted in a very depth and informative interview in which topics such as the music and lyrical direction of their debut CD, the need for a (musical education) and how parents can positively spoil their kids' future, were covered.

camera lens or not even paying attention at all. How do you see need for an image that Chiaroscuro needs to convey to a country in which image plays an important role in society?
I don't think we're all that concerned with it. Frankly, I think we all find the image that most bands in the genre cultivate to be a little bit cheesy... if anything, we sort of follow in the footsteps of short-hair modern metal bands like Helmet. I mean, we dress differently for shows than we do for casual every day existence, but we're not preoccupied with looking scary, and we certainly don't do the long-haired embroidered-vest-over-a-puffy-black-shirt kind of thing that a lot of prog metal guys seem to do. What we DO try to do is play our asses off live, and put on the most dynamic show that we can, and people seem to respect the fact that a bunch of short-haired dudes can get up and rip it up with the best of them.

The duties for guitars and bass are taken upon by the twin brothers Richard and Cliff Chambliss. What are the advantages and disadvantages of having such a dominant role in the band shared by two twins?

The main advantage is that these guys have been playing together since they were both in high school, and they have sort of mutually guided and refined each

other's musical development through the years. As a result, they work together really well, from a musical standpoint. They have their share of brotherly bickering, and they are sometimes a little too brutally honest with each other, but with three other guys standing there refereeing, it's not a significant problem. They are not defensive or possessive about the band, as far as I'm concerned; they seem to have no qualms with me bossing them around, as long as I'm not trying to make them do something stupid. I think we have a healthy arrangement, though. Chiaroscuro isn't their band any more than it's my band. I sometimes take a little more of a musical leadership role, but it's really a very collective effort.

Chiaroscuro's music is determined by the contrast between heavy riffing and mellow ethereal keyboards and your crystal clear high-pitched vocals. In my opinion, your voice suits the more tranquil parts better than the aggressive parts. Do you find it difficult to adapt your vocal style to the different moods of the songs?

That's an interesting question. My voice is the one thing that people seem to either like or dislike about the band. They either say, "dude, you have an incredible voice! I love it that you don't scream all the time," or "You know, I like the music and I like the vocals, but I just don't

think they fit together." I always think of Dream Theater's "Images and Words". When I first heard that album, I thought James LaBrie was some kind of god: he was singing over all this heavy music, and he just soared over it, and I thought, wow, that's the kind of stuff I want to do. It never occurred to me that heavy music shouldn't accompany clean vocals - I just had never heard anything quite like it, and I thought it ruled. Not that there's not a few moments of shrieking on "Brilliant Pools", the song "Crucifixion" in particular has a little Patton-esque roaring on it, but I'm not as good at that. There's lots of guys who can roar better than I can, but not too many who can actually sing the way I do. The fact of the matter is, I have a pretty voice, and I will probably never sound like a pissed-off badass, but that's okay with me. At any rate, I wrote about half of the CD by myself, so it's not like everyone else in the band is writing this heavy music and I somehow have to fit my voice in there. I just happen to like the juxtaposition of crushing instrumentation and clean soaring vocals.

You are responsible for the vocals in Chiaroscuro but you also play guitar and keyboard. How does the fact that you are a multi-instrumentalist help you in the songwriting process? Is there ever a conflict that you for example composed a guitar part that you would like to play yourself?

Well, first of all, there's no comparison between Richard and me when it comes to the guitar. I'm a pretty decent rhythm player, but he blows me away hands down. It actually took a lot of encouragement from him for me to begin to play guitar live. So I don't begrudge him anything, he is the man. From a songwriting standpoint, though, being a multi-instrumentalist is invaluable. I do pretty much all of my writing on both guitar and keyboard, which allows me to think a little more vertically within the song; the keyboard and guitar parts are very intertwined in this band, sometimes to the point of being indistinguishable from each other. It is important to always consider how they coexist, both melodically and texturally. The guitar sometimes is a little subordinate to the keyboards in my writing process, but that's mainly because I'm a way better keyboardist than I am a guitar player. It's just priceless, though, to be able to pick up a different instrument and instantly get an entirely different musical perspective.

The order of the songs on "Brilliant Pools of Darkness" seems to me to be historic in the sense that the older songs are the first ones and the songs are newer towards the end of the CD. This is especially evident in the lyrical content. The first four songs are more straightforward, dealing with emotions like delusion, grief, and despair from the I perspective. The latter songs are more abstract and prosaic. Could you elaborate on this a bit more?

Ironically, it's actually the other way around. "Children's Crusade" is the first song we wrote as a band, back in 1996, and "Winter Girls" actually predates Chiaroscuro by a few months. "Broken Everything" and "No Need" are the newest, followed by "Crucifixion" and "Bloody Hell", and those are the first

four songs on the CD. You're right, the newer songs are more straightforward, and there's a couple of reasons for that. First, at the time I was going through an extremely drawn-out and unpleasant break up with my girlfriend of several years, and that was reflected in the darker emotional tone of the lyrics. I also felt like the music needed to be more immediate to express those emotions. Songs like "Bloody Hell" (which I wrote without really having the band in mind) are about refined anger and resentment, and I thought that a lot of flowery musicianship would not be the best way to represent that.

The second reason has to do with Chiaroscuro's evolution as a band. We began our existence as a full-on Dream Theater clone, and have gradually moved further and further from that and (hopefully) more into our own sound. Over time, we've become less influenced by the prog-metal gods (though we obviously still owe them a great debt) and more influenced by outfits like Faith No More and Strapping Young Lad, as well as the current crop of "new metal" bands like Tool, Sevendust, etc. A lot of these guys are still progressive in their own way, but their writing tends to be more immediate, visceral, and emotional. What we're trying to do is preserve our progressive roots while incorporating some of that violent immediacy. It inevitably results in things like shorter songs and less self-indulgent playing, though "Brilliant Pools of Darkness" still has its share of long songs and instrumental pyrotechnics.

Could you go into more detail about the lyrical content of some of the songs?

Well, it's kind of difficult to go into some of it without discussing a lot of gruesome personal things that are probably better left undiscussed. I tend to be more inspired by negative emotions, at least as far as lyric writing goes, so a lot of unpleasant stuff gets vented into Chiaroscuro songs. Some of it is rather less personal though, as you mentioned; songs like "Children's Crusade", "Caliban's Dance", and "Divinity" are a little more abstract.

The lyrics for "Children's Crusade" were almost stream of consciousness, scribbled onto a page as fast as I could think of rhyming words. It was the first weekend that we played together as a band, and we experienced sort of a creative explosion... musically. "Children's Crusade" happened very quickly, so I was just kind of scattering out melody lines to make sure that the vocals sat well in the arrangement, and when the rest of the band took a break I would sit down and scrawl out another verse. People often misinterpret the idea behind the lyrics; they are meant as a subtle satire on the idea that every generation blames all of its problems on the one before. They are probably my least favorite lyrics on the album, though. Because they were so spontaneous, I always felt that they were a little cheesier and less polished than some of the others. "Caliban's Dance" was inspired by a Tad Williams book that I read that was a retelling of the story of Caliban, the monster from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. The lyrics are basically about the self-destructive nature of Western society, viewed through the eyes of an innocent outsider who is kind of drawn

in against his will. Astute listeners will pick up a few snippets from the play, as well as a little Lewis Carroll reference. I was feeling literate, I guess. At any rate, I like these lyrics a lot... they are among my favorites on the CD. "Divinity" is an interesting case, if only because the song is so different from all the others on "Brilliant Pools of Darkness". I wrote the verse and chorus music in one or two hours, and Clif and I put together the wispy piano-bells-bass middle section, and then he, Richard, and I recorded the whole thing, all without vocals. So I sat there for another few hours after they left, humming melodies and playing with it, and it all just fell together. The lyrics have to do with spirituality, and an awareness of the presence of something a little bit divine even in the midst of the worst times of your life, even if it is only the beauty of a full moon on a winter night. It's interesting to note that this song was recorded long before the others on the album... it was left over from a session we did about two or so years ago when we first recorded that, "Caliban's Dance", and "Luminescence". We felt like we could make the first two sound a lot better by redoing them, but we decided to keep "Divinity" the way it was.

In the progressive metal community, the allocation of the term "progressive" to metal is usually related to the combination of drawn out songs in the melodic metal vein with the compulsory use of keyboards. Yet you also include bands like Tool under the prog music banner. What is your definition of progressive metal and how has this term evolved during the years?

I'm not an expert on progressive metal, and I probably would not give a very good summary of its evolution over the past ten years, but I have to say that I find the term a little ironic. The word 'progressive' implies something that is progressing, developing, evolving into something new. Now, progressive metal borrows the term 'progressive' from progressive rock, which seems to have to do with regurgitating the work of a few pioneers over and over again until it's just a big joke. Not that I haven't bought my share of albums from Dream Theater clones - in fact, Chiaroscuro started out as a Dream Theater clone - but I just find it hard to call the genre truly progressive with a straight face. It's just way too grounded in its own traditions. That said, I feel a little bit more comfortable with applying the term to bands that are trying to take a few risks. I think a certain degree of virtuosity goes without saying, and the use of extended song structures, but if it just comes out sounding like a bunch of dudes doing their damnedest to ape "Metropolis pt. 1", it's pointless to me. I admire a band that can build on what's been done, and take it further, whether it's experimenting with weird textures, or samples and loops, or unusual modal harmonies, or something. That's why I feel like there are progressive elements in a band like Tool. They experiment with odd time signatures, extended structures, their drummer RIPS (he's pretty much all the virtuosity in the band), and most of all, they're not afraid to go way out into left field every once in a while. Plus, you'll never mistake them for anyone but

Tool... people imitate THEM, not vice versa.

I don't want it to sound like I'm getting up on my high horse and have everyone think I'm some kind of arrogant jerk. I enjoy a lot of things that are going on in the genre, and obviously I enjoy the genre itself. I just find some of the terminology a little bit stupid. And for the record, I don't consider Chiaroscuro to be all that progressive. I don't think we are making music that's already been made, but I also don't think that we're particularly experimental.

Your debut is an independent effort in many ways. For example, you've been active in the engineering and mixing of your album. Did you learn this during your music study at the Western Washington University?

Actually, my studies at Western were limited to classical music. In fact, last winter, I got my bachelor's degree in classical vocal performance. So I studied theory and a little composition and lots and lots of voice technique,

but really nothing with much bearing on commercial music. My parents have a project studio, which is a legacy of their shot at professional music, and I sort of grew up in it. I recorded a lot of music there over the past ten years, which has allowed me to have countless hours to explore some of the technical aspects of recording music. In any other studio, I'm sure I would be lost, but in that one place, I am a guru. So I basically was able to engineer, record, and mix the whole album there, taking as long as I needed, and having complete creative control. It was a pretty sweet deal. There are some inherent limitations to not recording in a big studio, but we worked around those to the best of our ability. A lot of people have been really surprised to hear that we recorded the album in a project studio on an old 8-track.

I presume that the studio of your parents has analog recording equipment. A lot of musicians seem to prefer the warmth of analog instead of the precision and coldness of digital recording equipment. What are your views on the analog versus digital recording debate?

You're right, the tape deck that we used was an old analog Tascam 388 8-track reel-to-reel. The machine is as old as my parents' studio, which means it dates back to about 1987, but the thing is a work horse. I don't have very extensive experience with digital gear, but my experience with modular multitracks like the ADATs has been pretty annoying. I hear that the newer models have higher resolution and a warmer sound, but I haven't had any hands-on time with any of them. What intrigues me is the idea of computer-based digital audio, and the ability to cut and paste and layer and tweak to your heart's content. I like the sound of analog tape, but I think with modern gear (higher resolution converters, tube preamps to warm the signal to digital tape, etc) the distinction is less and less noticeable. Furthermore, I find the idea of that kind of creative freedom in the digital realm a little intoxicating.

You mentioned earlier that you have a bachelor's degree in classical vocal

performance. Do you do anything with this professionally or are you occupied daily in another type of work?

Nothing yet, really, at least as far as serious classical performance goes. I teach voice lessons, and am a part time music director at a Catholic Church, of all things, but I am actually still in school, and toying with the possibility of a masters in vocal performance. It's much more difficult to make any money singing that sort of stuff in the States than it is in Europe, and it's also very dependent on geography. For instance, you'd have a way better chance of doing it in New York than Seattle (obviously). The serious music scene in this country pretty much sucks. I was planning to see how Chiaroscuro was received before I started making any serious plans to follow that kind of career anyway. This band is my first musical love, and I would have to basically abandon it for a few years in order to cultivate an opera career.



Your parents had a shot at a professional music career. In which way have your parents influenced your musical choices in the past?

Mainly, they have been extremely supportive. The music that my parents were making ten years ago has very little to do with the music I am making now; they had a kind of regionally-flavored folk rock thing going on, a very friendly, accessible kind of music. I gained a lot of experience performing with them in my early adolescence, which probably serves me well today, and I am kind of influenced by elements of my dad's songwriting philosophy, but the most significant thing I think they did for me was give me opportunities. My dad trusted me with his studio at the tender age of 14, which was when I began my foray into the world of keyboards and MIDI, and from there on out my parents have just been really, really cool... I owe a huge amount to them.

In relation to guitar-oriented music, Seattle has been known for its metal exponents in the eighties (Metal Church, Queensryche) and grunge in the nineties. What is the current scene like and how do you position Chiaroscuro within that scene?

Well, once again, we are just reentering the local scene, so it's hard to say where we fit in, but so far we have not found Seattle to be the friendliest place for our type of music. We have had encouraging responses at our shows, but there is just no one making music like this around here. There's not even much of a metal scene; there are a few struggling bands, but very few of them receive any kind of local attention. The current Seattle scene is pretty eclectic, but in a really lame college-rock-artsy alternative kind of way. It will be interesting to see what happens over the next few months, if we can manage to build any local momentum.

Metal music is not the type of music that generally is accepted as challenging and worthwhile by music critics. This type of music is regarded



as typical for Neanderthals instead of intellectuals with refined taste. How did your co-students and teachers at the Western Washington University judge your music?

To be honest, not too many of them have heard it. WWU is in Bellingham, which is a few hours north of the Seattle area, and we do the vast majority of our shows in the Seattle/Tacoma neck of the woods. If Seattle is inhospitable, Bellingham is the prog metal antichrist. It's a nice town, and I love it dearly, but it's a granola college town if ever there was one. So we may never play there. The people who have heard it seem to think it's pretty cool, though. Even the people who don't care much for the style respect it for the musicianship. I think they are also intrigued. I'm a true lyric tenor, which means I sing a lot of lighter stuff like Mozart and Handel, and people who hear me sing in an academic setting have a hard time picturing what I must sound like singing with a metal band.

The songs on your debut are already more than a year old, in which direction do you aim to go and what are your plans for a second album?
Some things have changed within the band that will have a strong bearing on that. First, we added another member. Jeff Moses, our new keyboardist/singer, is a very good friend of mine from years and years ago, and he and I have a really cool musical dynamic. He is a pretty killer singer, and the qualities of our voices blend well, but he also has the capacity to sound extremely scary. In fact, he doubles all the screamed stuff from the album live, which lets me save my voice a bit. His presence in Chiaroscuro will open the

door for some moments of profoundly ugly heaviness, as well as bigger keyboard orchestrations (or guitar orchestrations, depending on which instrument I'm playing at the time). Second, we have acquired some new toys that will open even more doors: Richard picked up a guitar synth, and Jeff has been using a sampler live, and both of those instruments offer a whole world of textural possibilities. We have mainly been concentrating on pushing the CD, but the bit of writing that we have done I think takes the best elements of "Brilliant Pools of Darkness" and takes them further. It's dark, atmospheric, and heavy, and it just sounds HUGE. We're all eager to experiment and we have ambitious plans for the next album. We had talked about tackling a concept album - it seems to be sort of a prog-metal rite of passage - but who knows. We're trying to take it one step at a time.

Concerning the topic of doing a concept album. I could imagine you using the concept but what can you add to the long range of existing concept albums, lyric-wise and music-wise?

See, that's the thing. There's a grillion of those things out there, and you have to get pretty adventurous to get into territory that hasn't been walked many times. I would want to do something sort of gritty and cool like Mindcrime, something not too science-fictiony... I don't have the first clue how to go about doing it and making it original, though.

More information (including ordering information) can be found at Chiaroscuro's website: www.chiaroscuro.net or by writing to Ian Dorsch at 1303 Lakeway Drive, Bellingham, WA 98226, USA.

hole in the wall music

GLOBAL METAL MAIL ORDER
SINCE 1997!

Hole In The Wall Music is your worldwide source for metal in all its glories! We offer an extensive online catalog, secure credit card ordering, low prices, fast shipping and personalized service. If you haven't checked out holeinthewall.com yet, surf over today -- and find out where your metal brothers and sisters have been getting their metal! Hundreds of used CD's, Japanese and European imports, t-shirts and videos... we've got it all!

Mention EDGE OF TIME for 10% OFF your first order
(new customers only)

Visit our website at
[www.holeinthewall.com!](http://www.holeinthewall.com)

To our friends and customers: as of April 3, 2000, we have a new mailing address: HOLE IN THE WALL MUSIC, 140 Main St., Toledo OH 43605, USA. Our email and website addresses are unchanged.



EVIL WINGS
Bringing Color to the World

[by Christian Rademaker]

Evil Wings is an Italian band whose music I've only recently discovered and subsequently regretted not looking past my prejudicial thoughts concerning Italian progressive music: over pretentious, cheesy lyrics full of grammatical errors, and poor vocalists in the 70s and artificial melodies, fantasy lyrics about elves in forests and the lack of originality in the 90s. Evil Wings have released three quality albums thus far: "Evil Wings," "Brightleaf," and "Colors of the World." The fact that they have not been given that much exposure in the past meant that it was time to do an interview with Evil Wings' main man Franco Giuffreda. I decided to use the interview to trace back the past roots of Evil Wings and then move toward the present and future. My thanks go out to Claudio and Simone of Adrenaline Records for the translation.

THE PAST...

Evil Wings first descended down to Earth musically with the release of their first demo tape, "Shadeless Mountain" in 1989. The line-up at that time consisted of Franco Giuffreda (vocals & guitars), Giovanni Bellisio (bass), and Sandro Corti (drums). In March 1992, keyboard player Carlo Guidotti joins the band and the second demo tape "Behind the Sky" is subsequently released. In 1993, some line-up changes occur and Walter Rivolta (drums & percussion) and Joseph Ierace (keyboards) replace Sandro Corti and Carlo Guidotti. The latter would however remain an important figure in the Evil Wings concept, being responsible for the majority of the lyrics on later releases. Joseph Ierace was then replaced by Rick Ostidich and it was with this line-up that the debut CD "Evil Wings" was released by the Italian label Underground Symphony in July 1994. The record showed an amalgam of progressive rock and metal, something like a cross between 70s Lucifer's Friend and 90s Dream Theater. The song writing was very mature and Evil Wings showed that they could mesmerize with long and progressive epics such as "Behind the Sky" and "Enigma" yet hit an emotional chord with "Fairies" and "Mistress of the Seven Seas." It's there that we pick up the interview with Franco Giuffreda.

Your name Evil Wings is quite peculiar for your type of music in my opinion. The opening song of your

debut CD is called "Evil Wings" and in the song it mentions "Wings of Fantasy" and "Evil of Reality." This would imply that when you have wings you can escape from evil. It's a sort of escapism: using your fantasy to escape from the horrors of reality. What is the philosophical background for choosing the name "Evil Wings"?

Well, it's true actually. Evil Wings was born because of the need to escape from the rotten everyday life we had around us at the time. It was also a reaction to the music that was performed around us. It's the perfect fusion of two very intense words like "evil" that mirrors the hard and heavy side of our sound and the softer "wings" that show the dreamy side and the obvious links to the progressive influences. There are no other hidden meanings, really.

How important is it for you to be able to dream, to use your imagination or fantasy?

When you compose music like Evil Wings does, the fantasy ingredient is vital. Imagination and dreams play always a massive role in whatever I do anyway and even more when my music is concerned. You can touch limits that no one can reach. My main goal is always to keep out of trends (this is Evil Wings' goal as well of course) whatever they are. My dreams help me in this effort and I thank them for being there all the time. I don't know how I would create without them inspiring me.

Could you describe in more details the underlying lyrical concept behind your debut album "Evil Wings"?

Well, the story line, which the lyrics and the music of "Evil Wings" were written around, was more in the nature of a fantasy world, to put it mildly. The whole of the prog movement adored words like grandiose and epic and, being young and immature, we kind of got influenced by it. It's openly different now as you can see. Some of the lyrics on "Colors of the new World" are about my own different experiences in life. In fact, songs like "20th of May," "Away," and "Flowers" talk about true events that happened to me, while "Searching" and "The Secret" paint a different picture. They are definitely more rooted in my inner self-discovery and therefore are very personal to me.

The influence of 70s prog is evident on the debut album, which led me to discuss Franco's influences. You were born in 1970 and probably started listening to music in the 80s but your

main influences are bands from of the 70s. Isn't it a pity that you could only discover bands like Kansas after they had their moment of glory?

Yes, I do regret somehow the fact that I could not enjoy the artists that I was going to love later on when they were at the top of their fame. I would also add other names to the list like Pink Floyd, King Crimson, Yes, and ELP. Never mind, I can enjoy their art through my CD collection anytime I wish. I wish I had been born twenty years earlier though.

You are a big fan of music that was made in the 70s. What do you consider to be the big difference of the 70s (progressive) music and the current music?

I believe in the 70s musicians were really willing to discover new horizons and take pleasure off it at the same time. They liked the risks involved. This is what I liked about those bands. Progressive, to me, doesn't necessarily mean being technical and epic at all costs. I see being prog-like being able to take risks trying to invent the new musical language. I can't and I don't feel this pleasure present in today's music scene in its totality not only in the prog sector. I hate musical categorizations anyway. Maybe with just a few exceptions, money rules everything and the author's message is not a main priority anymore. What is progressive today? I don't know. I can ask you in return: who really does take risks and really tries to propose something unique in music today? No one, and the very few artists that do are certainly not driving a Ferrari as far as I know. Creativity doesn't pay any more.

The second album "Brightleaf" was also released on Underground Symphony in the summer of 1996. The band's sound was moving towards a more hard rocking style while maintaining its progressive roots. My next question was to find out how Franco looked back on "Evil Wings" and "Brightleaf."

I'm very proud of both of them. All my records are equally important to me. I look at them and listen to a different Franco. They are milestones. Every release is basically myself and my feelings during that period in time, so they are all valuable to me. Furthermore, "Brightleaf" is also the most personal record I've ever done and I still think it deserved a completely different treatment by that record company. I always liked to think of "Brightleaf" as the "Tales from Topographic Ocean" [classic Yes album -CR] of Evil Wings. I do think so, believe me. Am I the only one? I hope not.

Keyboard player Rick Ostidich left Evil Wings after "Brightleaf." What is he doing now musically?

I actually lost contact with Rick lately. I don't honestly know what he's up to at the moment both in life and music. But I'm sure we'll be on the phone soon so hopefully next time you ask I'll be able to tell you something more about him. Sorry!

THE PRESENT...

The first two Evil Wings albums were released on the Italian label Underground Symphony but in 1998, Evil Wings switched to the newly-formed Italian label Adrenaline Records. Why did you move to Adrenaline Records for the third album?

First of all, we were not happy at all with the way the band was (not) promoted and "believed in." We believe in our music 100% and we cannot stand interference from strangers who don't. The guys of Adrenaline Records showed enthusiasm from the start and they are always doing their best for the band. This interview and many more looming show the "belief" that the label has in Evil Wings. We are really happy now. If we could only sell a few more copies, we would definitely feel even better, don't you think?

[Before the release of the new album "Colors of the New World", Evil Wings contributed the song "A Fortune In Lies" to the Dream Theater tribute entitled "Voices". This led me to the next question.]

Tribute CDs are very common nowadays and it gives bands/musicians an opportunity to pay homage to their influences. You contributed the song "A Fortune in Lies" off the Dream Theater debut album "When Dream and Day Unite." This is an interesting choice because you have been making music almost as long as they have so they are not really an influence.

Furthermore your rendition of the song is very close to the original. Why did you choose this song because and what is the added value if you're staying so close to the original?

I understand your point of view but I can honestly affirm that "When Dream and Day Unite" was one of the major turning points of my musical life in the last 15 years. I much respect and love that album and I wanted to pay my dues to the masters by not changing too much from the original on purpose. Unfortunately, "When Dream and Day unite" didn't get the attention and the success it massively deserved, maybe because of the "rough" production. For me it's still absolutely the best art ever conceived by Dream Theater. Mind you, I like the other albums too, but the first is up there with the Gods.

[In March 1999, Evil Wings finally enters the studio to record their third release, "Colors of the New World." Presented in a beautiful packaging (a much appreciated trademark of Adrenaline Records), it shows a slightly different sound. The progressive tendencies are still there but different influences surface (from the Beatles to the Police). The multi-dimensional approach creates an honorable yet slightly musical endeavour at times (the inclusion of the song "Stageline" is superfluous in my opinion). The focus is more on melody and accessible song structures than on technical complexity. Although it may bring a frown to fans of the old Evil Wings style, the band should be applauded for trying

something new and fresh in my opinion. The new musical direction was the next subject of discussion.]

On "Evil Wings" and "Brightleaf," the musical style could be described as a hybrid of 70s progressive rock and 90s progressive metal. However, there was a big musical transition from "Brightleaf" to "Colors of the New World" (much bigger than from "Evil Wings" to "Brightleaf"). What is the cause of this?

I see, I would mention the fact that the time space was much longer between "Brightleaf" and "Colors of the New World" than between the "Evil Wings" and "Brightleaf": four years instead of two. So we were different first of all, maturer, more grown up, more in touch with what the world around us has to offer. So the initial style has slightly moved according to our progression in personal lives. On top of all this, we really wanted to "re-invent" our sound once again on "Colors of the New World," and I think we've achieved that without forgetting the heritages of our past. They will always be there, somehow. You'll have to wait and see but I think the next album will surprise a lot of people, again.

What happened to the Evil Wings logo that was visible on both the "Evil Wings" and "Brightleaf" CD covers?

I'm glad you spotted that. We believed the whole image of "Colors of the New World" was slightly different than that of the past, so we decided to drop the logo as well because itself was smelling of old. It might only be a temporary replacement, you know? Or maybe it will change again on the fourth opus.

An usual aspect of your lyrics in the past and especially on "Colors of the New World" is that they are written by Carlo Guidotti. What is his specific role with Evil Wings. What can he transform lyrically that you are not able to do?

Without any doubt, Carlo's contributions are hugely important within the Evil Wings growth. His knowledge of the English language is surely better than mine but, most of all, he owns that fantastic ability to translate my music into words and concepts that fit in perfectly. On the other hand, 90% of our compositions are primary mad lyrics on which I create the sounds. We complement each other very well.

So the lyrics written first and the music is then added?

Well, I think I've already replied to that with my previous answer. Mainly it's him first than the music but then again this might change again on the new CD. I told you... it's going to be a little (but not drastic) departure from "Colors of the new World." Even at Adrenaline Records they were a bit surprised but they are intelligent and therefore welcome with open arms any slight

changes in musical directions. They love us.

On all three Evil Wings albums, there have been short songs (2-4 minutes) and longer epics (10-16 minutes). This shows your diversity and musical creativity. I think that the shorter songs are more spontaneous, less planned while the opposite holds true for the longer songs. How different is the song writing approach for short versus longer songs? With which style do you feel more comfortable?

I feel great doing both styles, there isn't a favorite one actually. The song writing for the longer songs has to be thought out properly in order not to bore the listener stiff. The complexity of the arrangements is purposely intense. If it's long, it has to be very interesting and stimulating otherwise the effect is lost. The short ones, on the other hand, are easy because once you've found the riff, the song rarely swings and twirls but keeps mainly the same pattern all along. Although Evil Wings spend exactly the same amount of time in building and arranging both type of songs. Even a short track must have a message and space for song writing freedom. I love playing as much as I like composing so, long or short, it does not make any difference at all.

The song "Starship" reminds me very much of the Beatles with the sitar-type sounds. Were the Beatles an inspiration for that song?

I love The Beatles. I really do. I loved the Sgt Pepper period mostly. You've perfectly captured the essence of the song. The feeling of "Starship" lies firmly in the Beatles heart, the very same heart that fulfills the basic notions of the whole CD anyway.

The short song "Stageline" is a very strange song and sounds like a scratchy gramophone record. It also seems out of place of the album. What was your reason for including it?

Oh my god, that was only a joke to tell



you the truth, just a lovely joke. Nonetheless it was a finger shown to all the bands that take themselves too seriously all the time. We wanted to say: "Hey, man, relax, join the fun..." Don't forget though that the lyrics of "Stageline" introduce the listener to a visual "pact" between a human and a little devil with a satanic nature, I would say.

Progressive music often takes itself very serious. Your inclusion of "Stageline" would imply a certain sense of humor. How important is humor in your music or daily life?

It's so important that I would even call it indispensable. Let's not forget we are only musicians after all and so many horrible things are happening around us all the time. I can't imagine what the world is going to be like in 20 years, but my son will have to face his problems in 2020 adopting my year 2000 teachings. Would that be good enough for him? Will I be good enough for him? Our sense of humor often needs to rise in a more prominent position, and we certainly don't have any problem with that. Lots of bands take themselves too seriously and therefore lose their spontaneity. We never want to lose it and never will. We are friends first and then artists. We've got to enjoy what we do otherwise there's no point in playing, is there?

You already mentioned your son. The song "20th of May" is about your son. How has your life changed since you've become a father?

I would probably need 3 pages of your magazine in order to list all the benefits and problems my son Matteo has brought with his birth, countless. But the benefits are the most. All my priorities have radically changed due to him. I really feel and understand better and better my role as a father but it's not an easy job. He's in my thoughts 24 hours a day, everything else comes after him. To experience his growth and his learning is the most exciting think that has ever happened to me. I see my future in him.

My favorite song is "Searching," could you tell me what the inspiration for that song was? I hear some Rush/The Police influences especially in the guitars.

I really appreciate it that you love "Searching." It's a very passionate song full of suffering and regrets evoked by a not so distant past. The music mainly "describes" the personal journey and the fights within your inner self while the final words paint the picture perfectly. Men will always find a shelter, even in their own soul if needed. Or in the arms of a woman... maybe.

On the new album, you've adopted a

very colorful image in terms of clothing. It somewhat reminds me of the late 60s/early 70s. Is that a type of clothing that you wear all the time or is it primarily a stage costume?

I always liked the psychedelic image of the 60s. Let's say that I don't go round shopping dressed like a clown but neither is my wardrobe full of only black stuff. It's something in between, I think. My favorite piece of clothing is the violet velvet baggy trousers. I rarely go out without them. I've got them on now, of course. Colors mean hope to me while black is the void, no future.

One of your ambitions is to play the lute. As far as I know, the lute is an instrument that was typically played by musicians like minstrels in the Middle Ages. Are you interested in other string instruments from that period?

Yeah, you're surely talking about that insert at the end of "The Script". Well, I'm not really into this "Middle-Age" sound at all, lots of artists are adopting it as a "new" path to follow. It's becoming a new trend in itself. Evil Wings avoids trends, remember? I actually bought that lute when I had a holiday in Egypt. I would say therefore that the actual feel that I intended to show through "The Script" is more of a "oriental" nature than a "middle-age" one. I enjoyed it though but still I can't see myself playing other type of strings in the near future. But then again, you never know. I did it before also in "Starship" when the sitar sound-like was there to remember George Harrison and The Beatles. So I might come up with something similar but weird at the same time. Time will tell. But the next record is going to be a challenge. As I said, there's still half a foot in the past while the rest is going to shake a few friends off their chairs, the Adrenaline Records crew included.

THE FUTURE...

The latest news is that your long time bass player Giovanni Bell has left the band on friendly terms. He was present on all of the Evil Wings albums and had a very distinct style of bass playing. Who is the new bass player and what is his musical background?

It was impossible - and we never intended to - to try to find a bass player similar in style to Giovanni's. Simply because such person does not exist. Giovanni's feeling was unique. The new boy Ricky Zanardo is great technically while his background mainly lies within the rock community. This can only be a great move for Evil Wings as we definitely welcome fresh ideas to evolve our music and



the results of Ricky joining us will become even clearer on our next release. We feel as Evil Wings are once again restarting music wise.

You already mentioned that your new songs will be different than "Colors of the New World," could you describe the new songs. When can we expect a new album?

Right now it's difficult to foresee the way the next record is going to sound like. We still keep on dismantling and reassembling tracks while adding bits and pieces here and there. The general feel during rehearsal is the that of a band that's going to face another vital challenge, another turning point. If you don't take risks, as I said before, you can't call yourself progressive, right? So, in this sense, it will be a possibly bear a prog feel in it and it should be out before Christmas 2000 definitely. Hope we'll have another chance to talk about it again sometimes around the release date.

Your type of music is quite different than the current Italian power/prog metal bands. What is your relation to other Italian bands and how do you fit into the Italian scene?

To tell you the truth we do feel like a drop in the ocean music wise, but we always felt it that way somehow through the years. We don't fit (and we don't want to) in the Italian power/prog scene because we basically don't fit in any scene at all. We never did. That's why it's always been awkward to promote our music. If you try to be too different, critics are not able to categorize the band and consequently the reviews are cold and meaningless. If on the contrary you merely follow or are just inspired by what's trendy, you'll be tagged as a "second choice" and treated with the usual sarcasm and irony. Is there a way to break this circle? Although we are associates with quite a few Italian bands, we don't actually hang out with them and we are not particularly interested in their careers. They leave us alone, we leave them alone. Live and let live, right?

You play guitar and you are also the lead vocalist. How difficult is it to combine both things when you are playing live?

Woah! You've touched the hot dilemma I've been fighting since I started playing. I've been trying all my life to unite my voice and my instrument as a sole performing tool. Sometimes the guitarist in bands is concentrated too much to play his licks and, on the other hand, the vocalist has his eyes closed to capture those vocals. It's fairly difficult to be perfect at both at the same time. I try my best but I'm sure I can always improve. The best recognition I could receive one day is if someone was going to declare that Franco Giuffreda can be considered the Jimmy Hendrix of the prog genre. I would agree 100% to it. And I'd buy a huge drink to that someone. It would be the best compliment of all.

I would like to thank you for the interview, are there any closing statement that you would like to make?

First of all I'd like to thank you on the band's behalf for the chance of this great exposure in "Edge of Time," such an important outlet for the prog world. Clearly we're honored to be featured in your pages. We hope to have soon a drink and a chat with our foreign fans out there who've supported us since the ages through good and bad times. Of course, to all you readers out there: we wish you well, please take care of yourself and of each other. And if you think one day of purchasing "Colors of the New World," well.. please do, you won't be disappointed. Until the next CD is out, then we'll hopefully speak again... ciao!!!

<http://www.adrenaline.it>



OBSCURE
Obscure
self-released

Looking at the bleak gray-black cover and baroque logo, I first expected a mournful doom-death band. Instead, it turned out to be somewhat dark progressive metal/rock. The music is moderately complex metal with some interesting bass lines, the 70s style organ work, doomy (though often times upbeat) guitar work, and some nice instrumental embellishments. Sometimes the songs get a bit hard-rocking (at which point my mind tends to turn out), but the music is mostly subdued, relaxing, and subtle. It's not the pompous fare that passes for prog metal nowadays, which is a nice consideration for the discerning listener. The chief weakness rests in the vocal department. James Calabrese's voice is uneven and lacks the all-important confidence; his voice is low and emotional, but often falls apart and simply becomes noisy braying. The production (which super-imposes his voice over the subdued music) simply makes things worse. But this is a self-release, and there is a good deal of potential here. But only time will tell. (JS)
[Obscure, PO Box 43014, Phoenix, AZ 85080-3014, USA] [obscore@ivorygate.com] [<http://www.ivorygate.com/obscure/>]
3

OCTOBER 31**Meet Thy Maker****Metal Blade Records**

King Fowley's (Deceased) heavy metal band represents true metal in the mid-80s style, with some references to, e.g., Iron Maiden and Armored Saint ("Just an Illusion"). Musically and ideologically, it is an alternative to more 'cheesy' Hammerfall-like true metal, and what results is that October 31 are more stern and have less elegant but more masculine melodies. What bugs me about this release is that, after several first listens, song "Power and Glory" struck my mind as the best one, and then I found out that it was a Saxon cover (okay, I am not that familiar with Saxon). And this means that October 31 are happy to keep true 80s metal style going but do not have big ambitions to bring it to higher levels, composing decent but not great songs. (GS)

3 3/4 [AO 3 1/2]

PATRIARCH**Deity EP**

Output Music It's so pleasant when an old underground band that you've almost forgotten strikes again. Belgian Patriarch was formed back in 1983 and is one of the oldest Belgian metal bands existing to this date. Only in 1991, they released their first album "Prophecy" on Shark Records, and two years later "World Within Worlds" appeared. Both these albums were performed in progressive metal direction with clear influences of Fates Warning and Sanctuary and gained them a good reputation among proggies, and the band even managed to get interviewed by "Edge of Time":) Since then, there was a long silence, and only now a mini-CD with 4 new songs is out. During this time, three new members joined the group, but luckily the singer Erik Rinkes is still in, as his singing, reminding a bit of Sanctuary, helps the band to get this psychotic prog character. Guitarist Freddy Mylemans is also at the helm of Patriarch, so the band doesn't go far away from the music we've heard on their previous albums. It is progressive metal a la Fates Warning mixed with Savatage and Sanctuary influences. But, with this album, Patriarch bring some novelties, best seen on the second track "How Far," which introduces some elements of modern aggro metal and more brutal singing. For me, it seems strange to hear these influences incorporated into progressive/power metal. But the third track "Enigma" again puts everything into places - it is melodic prog metal with a slight touch of power metal. I know, many will call it a bit old-fashioned and naive, as their playing really is based on old standards, but for me it serves as a well-performed nostalgic document. (AO)
[<http://www.listen.to/patriarch>] [<http://www.codemusic.org>]
3 3/4

PLATYPUS
Ice Cycles*InsideOut Music*

Platypus' debut "When Pus Comes To Shove" was a good release, but speaking about all projects of Dream Theater musicians, it wasn't a sensation. The same goes for the new CD, and I come away again with mixed impressions. As its predecessor, "Ice Cycles" shuttles back and forth between simply structured hard rock songs and progressive tracks. I think, the biggest shortcoming of the album is the fact that those simply structured

tracks contain not enough drive and catchiness, and the progressive songs are not progressive enough to impress the listener. Even the epic "Partial to the Bean" comes over a bit pale, and only the instrumental "25" convinces me completely. But since we are talking here about very professional and experienced musicians, so let's stick to the same note as it was in the review to their debut. (SV)

3 3/4 [GM 4]

**POVERTY'S NO CRIME****Slave to the Mind***InsideOut Music/LMP*

This one is a pleasant surprise: confident heavy/semiprog metal with a warm melodic feel, reminding what a slower Kamelot mixed with some Dream Theater (not the style, but the qualities like crystal-clear melodies) may sound like. "The Senses Go Blind" start with a riff like "Awake"-era Dream Theater, a part of the refrain of "Wind and Light" reminds of Savatage; but Poverty's overall approach to songs is more straightforward. This is not a bad thing though. The band concentrates on melodies, does not experiment, and this CD is purely for fans of good heavy songs. Dissecting the release song by song, one can notice that "Access Denied" and "Electronic Eyes" stand out, but the album is so well balanced that you don't come to this conclusion very quickly. Recommended. (GS)

[<http://www.adl.com/povertysnc>]

4

POWER CRUE**Stay Heavy***self-released*

Power Crue come from Athens, Greece and exist since 1988. This is their second self-release, and it offers us traditional heavy/speed metal with high vocals. It's obvious that "Stay Heavy" is a very nice album with satisfactory production and interesting songs. I really didn't expect this from a band from Greece. I don't know what status they have in their homeland, but their material is stronger than most of the newcomer stuff I get from the Western Europe or USA. Power Crue are very professional musicians, their ability to play and write good songs is evident. The only weak spot is the slightly unassured voice of Podopoulos George. Apart from that, it's a very promising band from the capital of Greece. (SV)

[Power Crue, P.P. Germanou 15, N.

Philadelphia, 14342 Athens, Greece]

3 3/4

POWER SYMPHONY**Lightbringer***Pavement Music*

It's difficult not to be skeptical when you review another power metal album, but a few recent albums in this style show that sometimes this skepticism doesn't justify itself. Italian Power Symphony play progressive heavy/power metal, which initially sounds traditional and perhaps not very challenging, but when you delve deeper, you notice nice harmonies, well-constructed songs, and captivating vocal lines performed by Michela D'Orlando. While atmospheric/darker metal as well as progressive metal has notable bands fronted by female vocals, power metal is a bit behind in this respect, so Power Symphony have good chances to be one of the first quality acts to take the slot. Note that "Lightbringer" is not heavy/power metal a la Sonata Arctica or Stratovarius; its songs are more varying in mood and rhythm. All in all, a solid record. (GS)

4

QUEENSRYCHE**Q2K***Atlantic Records*

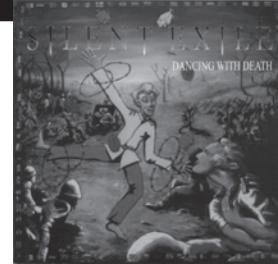
I tried not to draw rushed conclusions, but the more I listen to this album, the lousier it sounds. Queensryche were known for their capabilities to modern and push the envelope. Almost any prog-

SILENT EXILE
Dancing with Death
self-released

Out of the unlikely place of Montreal, Canada comes the definitive symphonic progressive release for the year 2000. Formed in 1996, "Dancing with Death" is the debut release of this Canadian five-piece consisting of Chriss J.Y. (vocals), Fabrice Blanchet (guitars), Cedric Rioux (keyboards), Sylvain Gagnon (bass) and Denis Ainsley (drums). Musically Silent Exile can safely be categorized as progressive metal with a majestic and orchestral approach. The progressiveness of the music shows itself in the complexity of the song structures and arrangements. Although Silent Exile is not the pinnacle of originality, it is amazing how mature this release is for an independent recording. Au contraire to others in the same musical vein, the sound is very heavy and the neo-classical influences are minimal. Prime example of Silent Exile's prowess is the magnificent 8 minute "Stratosphere" which starts off balladesque (with a guitar melody akin to Duran Duran's "Save a Prayer") before an unforgettable bridge sets the song in a higher gear in terms of rhythm and ending in a dynamic interplay with complex time signatures. The musicianship and symbiosis between the musicians is staggering, and it is not often that the virtuous guitar and keyboard playing are an equal match to each other. Another revelation is vocalist Chriss J.Y. whose voice has matured a lot since he sang on the very much-underrated Chromatic Shades album "Maze of Desolation" back in 1996. This is a very exciting and essential release! [It can no longer be a coincidence that the start of the new millennium has already brought forth three excellent non-American debut albums by bands starting with the letter "S"]? (CR)

[Silent Exile, C.P. 76, Ste-Julie, Quebec, Canada J3E 1X5] [<http://www.silentexile.com>]

4 1/2



CD is not exactly done in Korn or Static X style, but it's a rather successful attempt to bring more aggression to progressive metal and to bridge the gap between the two, seemingly very distant worlds. The current face of The Quiet Room is a big merit of new singer Pete Jewell who gives a diverse and strong performance in a powerful mid-range. Divine Regale have tried to explore 'modern' progressive metal in "Ocean Mind," but The Quiet Room's "Reconceive" is tighter and more consistent. (GS)
[<http://www.thequietroom.com>]

4 [AO 4]

RED GIANT**Ultra-Magnetic Glowing Sound***MIA/Tee Pee Records*

US three piece Red Giant play space/psychedelic rock that I'm sure would lend itself well to getting stoned. The band seems heavily indebted to Black Sabbath and Hawkwind, and play hard rock comparable to the music of Monster Magnet, though with a bit more heaviness and a slightly more experimental approach. The songs are rooted in the music of the late 60s and early 70s, with vocals playing a somewhat minor role compared to that of the extended psychedelic jams. For a three piece, the band creates a thorough wall of sound; the music is thick and heavy and surprisingly tight and controlled. The music could use a bit more in the originality department, but what it does it does well. Fans of grade A stoner rock or 70s space rock could really appreciate this music and I highly recommend it them. I don't think however, that the band transcends the genre's limitations. At least not yet. (JS)

3 1/2 [AO 3 3/4, SV 3 1/4]

CRISTIAN RIGON**Fatal Guitar EP***self-released*

Cristian Rigon is a guitarist from Brasil, as I understand, he's the disciple of another Brasil guitarist Marcos De Ros (see review in #14). There are 4 instrumentals on this mini-CD. What I like, is the fact, that Christian's guitar doesn't push its way forward to the front, but leaves also space for other instruments. It's good, because the rhythm section has something to say, too. This CD contains many classical music elements as well as progressive parts. Cristian is a very talented guitarist, and I think we'll hear about him soon. (SV)

[Cristian Rigon, Rua Pinheiro Machado, nr. 2967, Sao Pelegrino 95020-172 Caxias Do Sul, RS Brasil] [viegas@asinfo.com.br]

3 3/4

RIVER OF CHANGE**Where Reality Cannot Enter***B.O. Records*

With each month, Italy offers us at least one good prog/power metal product. River Of Change is another promising band that plays the mixture of classical metal and progressive music. "Where Reality Cannot Enter" is a varied album, you can find here fast power metal tracks as well as more complex compositions in veins of well-known prog metal gods. Shame, the production is a bit weak, and it's strange because the album was produced and engineered by experienced people. River Of Change's debut is a solid work, but it's lacking something, maybe some final touch... (SV)

3 1/2



SPIRAL ARCHITECT A Sceptic's Universe

Sensory

A long time in waiting, the new millennium is appropriately opened with the debut of the Norwegian five-piece Spiral Architect. Instrumentally, Spiral Architect are heirs to the technical progressive metal throne of Watchtower and Sieges Even ("Life Cycle" era) combined with the vocal weirdness of Psychotic Waltz. For the initiated, this implies extremely talented musicians playing extremely complex songs with countless breaks and rhythm shifts and intelligent lyrics. At the end the 80s, this type of music was considered "over the top" by the masses, but a dedicated few worshipped these musical explorers. They considered this "Rush on acid" to be the perfect musical drug to challenge both the intellect and the heart. Now, in the year 2000, Spiral Architect fill the musical void left by the demise of their peers. Eight songs and a short instrumental (featuring Sean Malone on Chapman Stick) are the building blocks of "A Sceptic's Universe." Sceptics might argue that one regular Spiral Architect composition contains enough ideas for five regular songs and that there is a lack of focus or direction. The problem with this argument is that the songs have the rare quality of combining extreme musicianship with memorable parts. Individual analysis and judgement of the songs is therefore pointless and futile. The only criticism that might be made is in regard to the short running time (after so many years, I would've expected more songs). I have never given a 5 out of 5 rating because, in my opinion, the perfect album does not exist, although some have come close. Definitely not opium for the masses but close to the perfect musical challenge to the fortunate few. It is frightening to imagine where Spiral Architect will go from here. (CR) 4 3/4 [AS 5, GS 5]

RUNAWAY TOTEM

Andromeda

Musea Records

Runaway Totem from Italy exist since 1988. "Andromeda" is their third work to date, I haven't listened to their previous albums, but this one presents us very original music that would satisfy the needs of prog fans as well as of gothic/pagan music lovers. The five mid-tempo tracks join the King Crimson-ish rhythms, mysterious keyboards and Christian Vander inspired vocals. Another prog band Point Of Ares tried to combine similar elements in their music, but Runaway Totem's variant is a lot better. Their songs are simply infectious, if you don't trust me, listen to "Tempus Fugiens?" or "Kadman Neso." The lyrics are sung in Italian, and that lends the album the additional magic. An unique record by this talented Italian band. (SV) [Musea, 138 Rue De Vallieries, 57070 Metz, France] [<http://www.runawaytotem.com>] [<http://www.musearecords.com>] 4 1/4

SACRED STEEL

Bloodlust

Metal Blade Records

For some strange reason, I have some sympathy for Sacred Steel, perhaps it's because they used to be part of Tragedy Divine or because vocalist Muntz brings back fond memories of Agent Steel vocalist John Cyrus. Sacred Steel have been riding on the true metal trend in Germany from the very beginning, a couple of months after the Hammerfall hype. They are, in fact, much more appreciable because they don't hide their influences and aren't one of the many 80s bands that are (mostly unsuccessfully) trying to rekindle their past glory. "Bloodlust" is

SPIRAL ARCHITECT A Sceptic's Universe

Sensory

Getting into raptures; there are no other words to describe this revelation. I usually don't write emotion driven reviews, but this time I just can't refrain from. "A Sceptic's Universe" is simply a musical genius & perfection. It's the acme, the apex of technical metal. I have been waiting for this kind of music (and for this CD announced since 1998) for years. Now the quest is over. No metal release will probably ever surpass it in terms of technicality, except maybe another Spiral Architect album. More analytically, what do we have? An extremely challenging kind of metal, featuring breakneck rhythm patterns which seem like "hovering" above the tempo, because most of the time you feel uncomfortable to correlate the two. The song structure is, of course, very intricate/uneven, but the complexity notwithstanding, the listener never really gets an impression of fuzziness or cluttering. On the contrary, it's rather mastered chaos. Needless to say that all players are really outstanding: two incredible guitarists, a top-notch drummer, and an excellent singer, my personal favorite being the amazing bass player. How does "A Sceptic's Universe" sound like? The sound is heavy, except on fusion parts. What most stands out compared to other progressive metal bands is undoubtedly the bass, which almost dominates the musical foreground and features a typical jazz approach, i.e. the bass is not accompanying the guitars, but creates totally autonomous lines. Highly impressive! Important to remark: The singer is - contrary to other technical metal vocals - very melodic and "clean" (no shrieks or cookie monster vox here). Similar bands? One could maybe draw parallels with Spastic Ink, but I think that Spiral Architect is much more manifold: it incorporates a lot of fusion jazz influences, unveiling an unique blend. No true fan of progressive or technical metal can afford to miss this album. It would be heresy and blasphemy!!! (AS) [<http://www.spiralarchitect.com>] 5 [CR 4 3/4, GS 5]

their third album, and it contains the regular components: a mix between heavy metal and speed metal, galloping riffs, catchy choruses which create an anthem-like feel, and a power-laden production. "Bloodlust" is supported by a "steel and sword"-type lyrical concept story which also incorporates songs from the two previous albums. This shows that Sacred Steel have put some extra thought into this album, but I wonder how long they can go on in this style without repeating themselves too much so that it becomes annoying? A competent release without frills, and perhaps it's time for a live album. (CR) [<http://www.angelfire.com/hisacredsteel/>] 3 3/4 [AO 3 3/4, GS 3 3/4]

SCENES

A New Beginning EP

self-released

Scenes is a German prog metal band featuring ex-Dreamscape singer Hubi Meisel. These four songs were recorded to become known by metal fans worldwide and to get a deal. What can I say? I can't see any big difference between Dreamscape and Scenes musically as well as in respect of vocals. Maybe Scenes' songs are a bit more dreamy and relaxed. All in all, it's quite a good start for Hubi & Co, I think, they have good prospects to get a deal. Listen to "Mysterious Bird" or "Away." (SV)

[12DM incl. postage, Hubi Meisel, Enhuberstr. 8, 80333 Muenden, Germany] [<http://www.scenes.istcool.de>] [prog_rock_scenes@gmx.de] 3 3/4

SEASONS OF THE WOLF

Lost in Hell

Adrenaline Records

True and pure, this album is a living 'reproach' to bands like Steel Attack and Domine, pointing out that metal should be firm, strong, melodic, but without cheese. Songs are melodic in non-German way, and a certain mystical aureole recalls Black Sabbath. It's hard n'heavy with a focus on powerful guitar riffs, poignant mid 80s style vocals, and powerful atmospheric keyboards (used sparingly). All songs are very (too much?) mid-paced, which makes an hour of this album last longer for everyone except

fans of true, pure, good hard n'heavy. Bikers would like this one, too. (GS)

3 3/4

SFUMATO

Demo CD 1999

self-released

Sfumato's debut self release was recorded with a pretty old Tascam 8 track recorder, but I think, the sound quality is satisfactory. The material is not bad at all, the songs move somewhere between Rush and Enchant, they are vested with interesting arrangements and good instrumental parts. The atmosphere of some tracks remind me a bit of prog/fusion gods Leger De Main. If not a bit poor production, songs like "Wrong!," the instrumental "Take 2," or the epic "Paranon" would be real prog rock/meta pearls. Sfumato definitely belong to the best prog newcomers from Germany. Keep an eye on them. (SV)

[18DM/10\$ incl. postage, Sven Schmidt, Jaegerstrasse 1, 64397 Modautal, Germany] [<http://www.sfumato.de>] [sven@sfumato.de] 4

DEREK SHERINIAN

Planet X

Magna Carta Records

It looks like Dream Theater showed Derek the wonders of the progressive world, even though their only album including Derek was considered their most commercial. It's now clear and confirmed that it wasn't Derek's "fault" but this doesn't imply that "Planet X" is a great album. In fact, it's pretty heavy to listen to, because it contains pure intensive instrumentals with lots of movement and not many distinguishable melodies. Therefore the project sounds like an exhibition of virtuosity. With all due respect to Derek's playing, this is an album for instrumental die-hards only. (GS)

3 1/4 [SV 3 3/4]

SHYLOCK

Can't Let U Go

Black Arrow Production

Shylock move somewhere between melodic AOR and glam rock. "Can't Let U Go" sounds a bit out-of-date, but well done for this kind of music. The best song for me is the title-track with a superb refrain. The rest is good, but it's not necessarily to my taste. Fans of the genre will enjoy this album, others will probably skip it. (SV)

3 1/2

SLAUTER XSTROYES

Free the Beast

Monster Records

Apart from the superfluous reunions of 80s metal bands that are seeking their old glory, there is also the reunion of a cult band Slauter Xstroyes. Slauter Xstroyes gained recognition among insiders by releasing the critically acclaimed "Winterkill". However, they never managed to emerge from obscurity due to lack of proper management and unavailability of their LP. "Free the Beast" is a collection of material that was recorded in 1987 and was planned to be on the second album. In addition to this material, several outtakes from 1981-1987 are included as well. This results in a very noteworthy release which breathes nostalgia, back to the days of the mid 80s when keyboards were 'not done', but powerful vocalists with an evil sneer, scorching solos and virtuous bass work tantalized the metal fan. The production quality varies but it definitely has that mid 80s sound. The songwriting is consistent, showing hints of Iron Maiden, Mercyful Fate, and Hallows Eve. Many bands have been trying to emulate the feel of the 80s but an original vintage wine matures with age and can never be replaced with a synthetic import. (CR) 4 1/4

SLAUTER XSTROYES

Winterkill

Monster Records

The record label Monster Records once again makes a mark by releasing an old metal classic on CD for the first time. The vinyl version of "Winterkill" was originally released in a very limited quantity on vinyl back in 1985. Copies were mainly sold at live shows but somehow a few copies made it to the European mainland. The lack of publicity, off the wall band name and powerful music created a mysterious aura around Slauter Xstroyes. Now, almost fifteen years later, a CD version is available with an extra track (a remix of the title song). Although the heavy metal as performed by Slauter Xstroyes is over fifteen years old it doesn't sound outdated. In fact, this release breathes the atmosphere of heavy metal in the early and mid-80s just before glam rock appeared on the scene. Combining the European metal of

the early 80s with the typical epic and power of US metal, the Slauter Xstroyes trademarks are definitely present: the powerful (with an evil grin) vocals of John Stewart, the riffing of Paul Kratzky, the bass playing of Brent Sullivan (in the best Steve Harris tradition), and the competent drumming of Dave Bonow. Stand-out tracks are the uptempo "Winterkill," "The Stage" (dealing with the interesting concept of stage-fright), and the epic "City of Sirtel." A classic in all meanings of the word... (CR)

4 1/4

STUART SMITH

Heaven and Earth

Frontiers Records

I would call this a hard rock stars project. The guitarist Stuart Smith assembled a huge number of famous rock musicians for this record; I've counted 29, including Joe Lynn Turner, Glenn Hughes, Richie Sambora, Carmine Appice, etc. It goes without saying that the outcome is highest-rate. Fifteen hymns of traditional hard rock/blues with lots of guitar solos, emotional vocal parts, and positive atmosphere. There are, in fact, three cover-versions on the CD, including Deep Purple's "When a Blind Man Cries". My favorites are the opener "Don't Keep Me Waiting", the medieval "Shadow of the Tyburn Tree", the bluesy "When the Blues Catch Up With You" and the inflaming "Memories". Probably the hard rock release of 1999! (SV)

[<http://www.stuartsmith.com>] 4 1/4

SONATA ARCTICA

Ecliptica

Spinfarm

If five or ten years ago one was longing for speed metal albums that would have actually had more than 60% of fast songs, the situation has radically changed in the last couple of years. Sonata Arctica concentrate on melodic uptempo speed metal, and they will certainly uplift the mood of many. Inspired by Helloween and Stratovarius, this young Finnish band shows that they are good students and displays a number of catchy songs, "Fullmoon" being the best example. Sure, "Ecliptica" comes from the 'cheesy' school of happy melodic speed metal, but it's very well-done, except maybe a little lousy ballads. Anyway, albums of such quality are ominous signs to Stratovarius. (GS)

4

SORE PLEXUS

Haptephobia

self-released

This German four-some of weirdos return with their full-length follow-up to their 1997 debut MCD "Visual Agnosia". Both lyrically and musically, the Sore Plexus sound is unmistakable. Reviewers are already having or will have a hard time pin pointing their musical style. Strangely, in a sense they remind me a lot of the Finnish psychedelic metal band Flounder with touches of Mekong Delta and Mr Bungle. The range of weird song titles ("Semper Aliquid Haeret", "Flyger my Chung") are also reflected by the lyrics. This release has a lot to offer and requires multiple listens to properly absorb due to the lack of immediate melodies. A point of criticism that needs to be made is the lack of focus at times, often too many ideas/musical styles are included (the short ska song "Microburst" is totally out of place); sometimes less is more. Nevertheless, a very noteworthy release for anyone looking for something progressive without the compulsory keyboards. (CR)

[Sore Plexus, Dirk Nowak, Somborner Str. 89, 44894 Bochum, Germany] [<http://www.soreplexus.com>] 4 [GS 3 3/4]

SPEED

Powertrip Pigs

Massacre Records

The title of album would indicate stoner rock, but Canada's Speed has a couple of tricks up their sleeves. The first half of the album is primarily hardcore with the usual heavy grooves, bass drum dominated rhythm section and requisite shouted/snarled vocals. Then the listener is hit with a ballad complete with clean guitar tones and appropriately sung (mid range with a slight whine) vocals - this song gets fairly heavy but maintains its ballad format throughout. After that track, things get more melodic and loose. The vocals, provided by Aaron Randall, become increasingly more harmonic, and the music itself becomes much more rock and metal oriented (traditional, thrash metal that is). The second half of the album is a hit-and-miss affair, with stoner rock

(except here we're dealing with the harder drug varieties), conventional hardrock and thrash attacks. The overall album is spotty and uneven, but features proficient musicianship and a formidable production. To me it's tedious and boring, but I'm sure it will appeal to many - especially fans of hard driving metal/rock and proudly mean spirited hardcore. I'll pass. (JS) 3

STEEL PROPHET

Messiah

Nuclear Blast Records

"Messiah" is the follow-up to last year's "Dark Hallucinations" and it shows that Steel Prophet have maintained their hybrid of power speed and progressive metal. Gone are the days when they played badly produced but musically excellent progressive power metal. At that time the trademark of Steel Prophet used to be their ability to combine different rhythms in longer complex epics. However these different facets of their sound are not so much incorporated into a single song anymore. There are the full-out speed metal assaults "Dawn of Man" and "Goddess Arise" but also more balladesque songs such as "Mysteries of Iniquity" and "Earth and Sky" (where keyboards are added for more texture). In that sense "Messiah" seems to be tailor-made for the German market. Compared to the previous album, the songs have now become more one-dimensional. The extremely powerful production and up-front mixing of the instruments enables the typical Steel Prophet twin guitar melodic power metal approach but the galloping riffs with the obvious Iron Maiden influences now seem more akin to the likes of Helloween than Fates Warning. This is not to say that the quality isn't there, it certainly is. With the backing of Nuclear Blast, Steel Prophet have evolved into a consistent and reliable unit but I miss some of the magic of the early days. (CR) 4 [GS 4 1/4]

STRATOVARIUS

Infinite

Nuclear Blast Records

Globally, the well-known power metallers present on their first release on Nuclear Blast a product of higher category and overall quality than their most recent material "Destiny." I don't know exactly if that should constitute by itself a huge merit, but in any case what counts here is how there's a visible effort in doing things better. A more progressive musical approach is obvious in cuts like the title song or "Mother Gaia," which leave a general good impression. On the other hand, there's room again for a bunch of "happy metal" and simpler type of songs, bannered by "Millenium" or "Hunting High and Low" (first single); something which inevitably made me throw the "Didn't I hear this before?" question on a few occasions. The production and mixing of the CD are as polished and neat as usually (just perhaps the final track, "Celestial Dream" might end a little bit abruptly), so I would say it will satisfy their wide base of loyal fans. (GM) 3 3/4 [AS 4, CR 3 3/4, GS 4]

The TEA PARTY

TRIPtich

EMI Music

The Tea Party are unable to disappoint their fans. Their new output "TRIPtich" again has become a masterpiece of modern rock music. Not as depressed as in "Transmission," right from the start they strike with a superb dynamic rock piece "Touch" and the magic "Underground." Further we have The Tea Party at its best: the catchy "Heaven Coming Down" (probably the highlight of the CD), the atmospheric Daniel Lanois cover "The Messenger," heavier pearls "Samsara" and "A Slight Attack," the nostalgic "Taking Me Away" or "Chimera" and the brilliant "Gone" with the string arrangements. It seems the band's music has acquired lighter and more positive tones, even if the depressive point is still present in the lyrics. Certainly their second album, "The Edges of Twilight" remains the unattainable ideal, but it's obvious that The Tea Party are still in "very good shape," and for me, "TRIPtich" is a timeless piece of modern rock that grows on you with each rush through. My best respects! (SV) 5 [AO 4 1/2, GS 4 1/4]

THROES OF SANITY

The Upheaval

Preserved Moose

"The Upheaval" is the debut of US based Throes of Sanity and a fine album overall.

The music is essentially power metal with clear thrash and progressive tendencies. While the playing lacks a good deal of originality, the band very nearly makes up for it with ample skill and immediately apparent prowess. The singer Scott King has a very traditional heavy metal voice, often high pitched and dripping with venom and grit. Occasionally, King sounds a good deal like Geddy Lee in "Caress of Steel" era Rush. The music is centered on mid tempos but frequently embraces upbeat thrashy speeds and the overall music is jaunty, melodic and moves like a well oiled machine. A noteworthy addition to the band is bassist Phil Tsai; his work is clearly in the progressive vein, always audible and absolutely vital to the band's rhythm kick. If Throes of Sanity's music suffers from one thing, it is a lack of real originality. Everything from the Maidenish pick-ups, to the requisite "dopey love song" remind the listener of the band's influences and tend to distract from the band's own sound. If the band would develop a sound more fresh and individual, and stopped delivering their quota of metal clichés, they would be a formidable band indeed. (JS) [http://home.earthlink.net/~mswall/] [mswall@earthlink.net] 3 3/4

TIME CURVE SYMMETRY

Vagrants EP

self-released

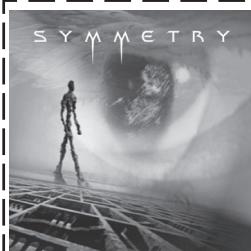
This is probably one of the few times that a progressive metal band from France is featured in "Edge of Time." Time Curve Symmetry describes their music as a combination of the technical complexity, melodic power of Symphony X and vocal extravaganza of Faith No More. To a certain extent I can find myself in that description: Time Curve Symmetry aim to combine symphonic metal with funk influences. This not exactly an endeavour without risks because no other band has pulled this off successfully (it also proved an unscalable obstacle for the highly acclaimed Pain of Salvation in my opinion). This independent release with an extremely professional packaging has a running time of just under 28 minutes and features four songs with three short instrumental intermezzos. After a short intro giving the scientific explanation behind the band name Time Curve Symmetry, the first song "Shadows of Freemen" starts off the CD in the regular Dream Theater fashion. At times reminding me of the way the Italian band Arkhe approached the Dream Theater sound with funk/rap influences in the vocal department. However, the song never really seems to take off. It is once that Time Curve Symmetry move away from the treaded paths of symphonic metal that the music becomes more interesting. This is evident in "Of Dreams and Nightmares" in which a brilliant Arabic piece is integrated but, on the other hand, also includes an out of place funk part and gruff vocals. The song writing skills are mature and "Vagrants" has some good and well-arranged songs but the real spark of brilliance to make the songs unique and stand out amongst the multitude of releases is missing. The main weaknesses lie in the vocal department, vocalist David Scheurer does not have the range or individuality for the gruff vocals. Furthermore the band doesn't make enough of their twin-guitar approach. Although Time Curve Symmetry have not quite perfected their own particular style as yet, this is a promising debut from a young band. (CR) [60 French Francs, Time Curve Symmetry c/o Karen Goldsticker, 43 Rue des Sculpteurs, 93240 Stains, France] [http://tcs.free.fr] 3 3/4

TRANSATLANTIC

SMPTE

InsideOut Music

Another project by a Dream Theater musician, and a really good one, I would say. TransAtlantic consists of Mike Portnoy, Spock's Beard mastermind Neal Morse, The Flower Kings guitarist Roine Stolt and Marillion bassist Pete Trewavas. As you see, it has become something like an all-star-of-prog-music band. No wonder, "SMPTE" is a very strong progressive rock album, probably one of the best in this sector recently. It's true that TransAtlantic remind me a bit of early Spock's Beard, and not only because of Neal Morse's voice, but it's evident that other members of this project bring in their own



SYMMETRY

Watching the Unseen

HP Music

The first time the Dutch band Symmetry made an impact on me was when I was taken aback by their live show at Prog Power 1999. Subsequent listens to their mini-CD "To Divinity" built on that enthusiasm. The following long trip to the other side of the country to see them live for a second time was worth it and, from that time on, I was waiting in anticipation of their full-length debut CD. Finally, "Watching the Unseen" is thrust into the world unknowing of its destiny. The nine songs with a running time of approximately an hour are thrust onto the listener's ears with a vibrant and live sounding production. It is evident that Symmetry have built on their style of mid-tempo twin-guitar power metal and given it more variation in dynamics as well as emotional depth. This is evident in the more uptempo "Mission" and "The Circle" which are deceptive in their initial straightforward appearance before showing their true guise with complex instrumental middle parts. The more emotional side of Symmetry is shown in the semi-ballads "Letters" and "In Your World." While the Edgar Allan Poe-inspired "Land Evermore" adds more dynamics and has the typical Symmetry style bridge and chorus giving the song a real anthem-like character. The stand-out track "Chaos of Birth" starts out tranquil before moving into an exquisite melody bridge and brilliant chorus (this song is already worth the purchase of this CD). Erik Masselink's voice is still a revelation. Influenced more by Bruce Dickinson and Eric Adams than LaBrie or Alder, he adds that powerful, slightly raspy dynamic touch to the competent performance of the other musicians. New bass-player Bas Hoebink adds an extra touch with some neat fills and slapping. It can be concluded that Symmetry have developed a talent for writing anthem-like songs in which (almost) each song has that additional something special, be it a technical Sieges Even-like part or a spinechilling balladesque part. Although there's still room for future improvement, it's been along time since I was genuinely excited about hearing a CD. (CR)

[Rob.Knol@flexovit.com] [http://www.interstroom.nl/~symmetry/] 4 1/2

ideas and visions and thus point the way to the future. The album shows diverse influences from Yes, King Crimson, Pink Floyd, Genesis, Jethro Tull, or Beatles. The central track is the 30 minutes length "All of the Above," for which the band has produced nearly 25 parts. Another highlight is a bit obscure Procol Harum cover-version "In Held (Twas) In." Generally speaking, "SMPTE" is the first candidate for the best prog rock release in 2000. Very impressive. (SV) 4 1/2 [GM 4 1/4]

TRIANGLE

Square the Circle

Zizania Entertainment Group

With this arithmetic-based band name and CD title, this Dutch four-piece present themselves to the world (although it must be mentioned that there is also an American band called Triangle that released a CD called "Shine" back in 1992). After their formation in 1993, Triangle released two demo CDs before joining the roster of the Dutch label Zizania. Musically, Triangle is classified as symphonic rock with the predestined pluses and minuses of the genre. As with most symphonic rock bands, the musicianship is great and the structure and length of the songs (four songs over the ten minutes limit) leave enough room to explore various emotions and themes. However, in my opinion, this room is not properly used as the long instrumental parts seem to meander aimlessly without reaching a certain goal.

Furthermore, the somewhat emotionless vocals of Martijn Paaschens and the sombre, melancholic, and tragic atmosphere do not help much either in gaining a certain emotional focus. The climaxes that the music could've reached with the injection of a metallic edge leave me tantalized. In terms of packaging (the CD booklet is outstanding) and a running time close to 66 minutes, this release certainly provides value for money. Fans of symphonic rock should definitely check this out, whereas metal-oriented listeners should be considerate. (CR) [http://www.dprp.vuurwerk.nl/bands/triangle] [triangle@zizania.com]

3 3/4

LUCA TURILLI

King of the Nordic Twilight

LMP

The debut solo project of Rhapsody's lead guitarist and main composer, "King of Nordic Twilight" offers no surprises, but offers instead great musicianship and expertly arranged neo-classical power metal. The music is up-tempo, dexterous and intricate, and not entirely unlike Rhapsody. There are differences though. The music found on this album is more stripped down, direct and immediate than that found on the ongoing Rhapsody saga. The vocalist Olaf Hayer has a mid ranged voice, one that adequately conveys the heroic fantasy elements presented in the lyrics. Though his voice doesn't have the most range in the scene, it more than delivers in the bombastic choruses that populate (plague?) the music. As always, Luca's guitar leads are dazzling, dramatic and almost mechanically intricate. Luca's playing is what really pushes the music along - his guitar lines are usually worth half the price of the albums he appears on. The keyboard work is more than adequate, the usual strings do their part as well as can be expected, the orchestration is well thought out, and the choirs and solo sopranos deliver in full. This really is a stellar album; its only real problem is that it fully meets the listener's expectations while never transcending them with originality or artistic experimentation. It is what it is, but unfortunately not much else. (JS) 4 1/2 [AS 4 1/4, GM 4 1/4, GS 4 1/4, SV 4]

TYRANT EYES

Book of Souls

B.O. Records

Not bad. German heavy/power newcomers make great strides. Tyrant Eyes come with their debut and show how to play this music. With the good production in the rear, they convincingly strike with strong tracks like "Dark Side of the Moon" or "Land of Death." Musically, it's nothing new, but the quality is available. Alexander Raimund belongs to the best singers of the genre in Germany, congratulations. Although not all songs are outstanding, "Book of Souls" is more than solid work. Four fat points. (SV) 4

UNIFIED PAST

From the Splintered Present Surfaces...

Atomik Records

Unified Past (UP) is the band formed around ex-Labyrinth (not the Italian but the Long Island, USA) member Steve Speilman. One immediate remark though is that they'll have to look out with using the abbreviation UP because there's another band (Unleashed Power) using this as well. "From the Splintered Present Surfaces" is band's first release, whose sound reminds me a lot of two other progressive rock bands Trytan and Little Green Men. These three bands all build on a definite Rush influence to create something original. But whereas Trytan adds that lyrical Christian touch with a more hard rock approach and Little Green Men add some old-Van Halen licks, UP incorporate neo-prog influences with some hard-edged guitarwork and variable symphonies. These symphonies range from uptempo organ sounds to a 70s prog style a la Keith Emerson or Rick Wakeman to some hints of new wave as well. The ten songs (with a running time of approximately 53 minutes) give a good indication of the quality of songwriting. With above average musicianship and vocals (courtesy of keyboard-player Vinny Krivacsy) that remind me of the Trytan vocalist and hints of Geddy Lee, a certain level of potential is expected. This potential is fulfilled by the stand-out tracks "Tree House" which is a soulful ballad, with mellow guitars, virtuous bass-work and layers of keys and "Dream of Love" which combines Signals-era Rush with a rockier and uplifting beat. However, there are some fillers as well, notably the uneventful "Internal Affairs" and "Silent Partner" (with some cliche lyrics). A good release although slightly unbalanced with enough potential for fans of aforementioned bands though. (CR) [The Unified Past, PO Box 273, Medford, NY 11763-1849, USA] [http://www.unifiedpast.com] 3 3/4



[by Giedrius Slivinskas and Christian Rademaker]

Since both me and Christian went to participate at ProgPower 1999 festival, it was our duty to make this presence as fruitful as possible. Therefore, instead of hanging around Tilburg with beers on

out to the shops anyhow, still, when we released the first one, there were not many prog metal bands out there, and now there's like ten million... So, even if the new album is so fuckin' much better than the first one, we're not gonna sell 10,000, I don't think so. But hey, I get free drinks! [laughs]

MAYADOME

If Discovery Channel Overshadows Dream Theater

How did you get an offer to play at ProgPower? You were not on the initial bill...

I've been talking to Erik van Geel [one of the organizers of ProgPower - CR] for a year or so. And when one of the other bands could not play, he asked Mayadome. He was hoping to get us on the initial bill, as I've heard, but I'm not sure about that.

You are very dedicated since you are going to festivals like this by car. And especially since you went to play at Powermad in USA...

That was evil. It fucked up our wallets. [laughs]

Did you bring all your gear with you on your plane?

No, we sent it by UPS. That was expensive to say the least. 1200 dollars one way.

I heard you played other shows over there as well, how did that go?

Actually, we were supposed to do a mini tour, but when we came to the States, our manager was gone. Keith paid the tour manager some kind of money just to start the things up. No gigs, no money. We had 14 days there, and we had four gigs. One gig at a huge club in Baltimore, then we had Powermad after that, and then we talked to Keith about getting one more gig in Baltimore. A friend of ours from New York got a gig up there, so it was four gigs in 14 days. We had a lot of time, ha ha.

How many people were at Powermad?

I think between 650 and 800, something like that.

I heard that about 300 or 400...

Maybe 300 each day. Except Saturday, Saturday was fuckin' packed.

Your two CDs are out on two different labels. One on Shrapnel and the other one on Siegen Records. How would you compare promotion and distribution?

Shrapnel was a big, well-functioning label with distribution and no promotion at all. If you want to break into this competition in prog metal with all bands that are out there, you really need a tour support. We weren't getting anything from Shrapnel

the Sunday morning before the festival, we did some serious work. At a bar where all prog hackers gathered at 11am, we interviewed a Swedish progressive metal band Mayadome. All five of them; however, mostly drummer Teddy Moeller spoke. It was extremely loud in the bar and that became as clear as day when I sat down trying to decipher the transcript.

The band has already released two albums, and experienced both the greed of Mike Warney and the non-always-constructive enthusiasm of Keith Menser. The debut album "Paranormal Activity" was released on Shrapnel Records on 1997, got positive feedback, yet a certain part of those who listened complained that the singer didn't have the range needed for the music. A new singer was recruited in 1998, and the second album called "Near Life Experience" followed, released by Siegen Records. The band represents the lighter shade of progressive metal with extensive compositions, delicate riffing and vocal melodies. Differently from the debut, the second album does not bear any big resemblances to Dream Theater (except the style), yet the Dream Theater cross is difficult to rid off.

The most part of what is provided below was conducted at the mentioned bar, yet I have emailed a couple of additional questions to Teddy to round up the article. The interview doesn't contain anything about their next album, so I can just mention that it will be titled "Into the Great Big Nothing."

except free CDs. I've got every fuckin' release on Shrapnel. So, we decided to break with them. We dropped Shrapnel. [laughs] Then, in a kind of a big headed way I thought that getting a new label would be easy, because we had been on Shrapnel and after that our level was so much better. It was the second time. But nothing really came out of that. Year and a half after we've finished our album, Keith contacted us.

Have you sent many tapes to record labels?

You know how it is when you send tapes to labels. We sent hundreds of tapes to labels, and they were like "thanks, but fuck off"... [laughs] "We are not signing any new bands at the present time."

Your first CD was sold in about 10,000 copies, do you expect to achieve such a number with your second CD?

No, we aren't gonna sell 10,000 of this one, no way, I don't think so. If we get

What do you think about the Siegen Records web site?

It sucks. It's the ugliest fuckin' web site in the world.

Is there anything about Mayadome on it?

Yes, somewhere. Actually, he hired some guy to work on the website.

What about the dolphins on the CD cover? Where do they come from?

Actually, the lyrics of the title track explain everything. It's about a guy who dreams about drowning, and finds peace at the ocean floor. Finds a new life with the dolphins...

Where did you get such inspiration from?

My inspiration comes from Discovery channel, no doubt about that. I watch it all the fuckin' time. I see a lot of movies, I listen to a lot of strange music, so I got inspiration from all kinds of sources.

What kind of strange music are you talking about?

Like King Crimson, for example. I like everything by King Crimson except the latest, which I think is too chaotic.

Are you talking about "Thrakk"?

No, the previous one. Too chaotic. I need a little more structure.

You play a lot of guitar, right? In which band?

Yeah, and bass. Okay, I'll tell you everything. I play drums in Mayadome. I play guitar and sing in The Hidden. I play drums in F.K.U. I play bass and sing in Stochastic.

Stochastic is kind of technical metal or...?

Yeah, technical death metal. But we haven't rehearsed in a year or so. [laughs...]

It's still technical though?

Yeah. Very very technical. Extremely!

Have you ever seen Cynic live?

No.

CR: I have.

Shut up (laughs).

That was the Dynamo festival and the show was broadcasted by a Dutch radio.

Well, my drumming influences are mainly WatchTower and Cynic.

Have you tried to get in touch with the WatchTower drummer?

I have tried finding Rick Colaluca, but...

I think he is a cook at some restaurant as far as I know.

Yeah, and that fuckin' Retarded Elf shit. It sucks.

When we were at a shop yesterday, I came across by a CD by Billy White. I am wondering if it was really _that_ Billy White. He was singing and playing guitar.

Yeah, that's him.

Is it good?

I don't know, but it's him. Billy White trio, they have three CDs out.



So why you, for example, don't audition as drummer for Spastic Ink to get together with Ron Jarzombek?

I can't do that, I'm too shitty. [laughs] Ron Jarzombek is a fuckin' genius. Actually, a friend of mine, when he got such question, answered "no, no, no, Bob is gonna play on it."

You played (and sung?) in a doom metal band called Vivaldis Disciples back in the late 80s. Can you tell more about that?

Yeah, I played drums and sung in this band. We were basically a doom metal band with some thrash influences. I still like that tape. I think it's pretty good stuff, and we could have been signed to Active Records [a subsidiary label of Music for Nations at that time at that time which also had Mezzrow and Artch on their roster - CR] back then if I would've played my cards right.

How do you find time for music and family?

We're good friends and we hang out every weekend and stuff like that. Together. Family, well, I got it really good. I work at home, I'm with my family all the time. And we rehearse at my place. So, we all are like a big family. Even if we don't rehearse, other guys are there, so it's kind of cool.

What do you feel when people compare you to Dream Theater?

Well, it sounds like Dream Theater, doesn't it? Actually, I can see where does it come from, no doubt about that. We all like Dream Theater. But, if you listen to the new Dream Theater album, you hear Queen, Pink Floyd, Steve Vai. We're not copying Dream Theater, it's just the same style, that's all. Everybody is saying that we're Dream Theater clones and everything, but you can't find a riff that does sound like a Dream Theater riff.

You can't be 100% original and you can't be 100% clone. If it weren't Metallica and Rush, there wouldn't be Dream Theater.

And Fates Warning.

And in the beginning Fates Warning were considered Iron Maiden clones. Then they were Queensryche clones, and then suddenly became original.

Actually, a friend of mine said that he was always playing Dream Theater at his job, and his boss was always saying "huh huh, weird weird Rush, huh huh. Weird Rush."

What do you think about the latest Dream Theater?

It's a future classic. It's really a fuckin' good album, no doubt about that. Except for the cheesy stuff on it. I hate cheese. Ballads and what I call "protest music." [laughs]

On Perpetual Motion board you once said about an "eternal cross" that your band bears regarding Dream Theater referencing, and that you tried to change that but unsuccessfully. Can you elaborate? Were you thinking of making a 180 degrees shift in your style?

No way, it's OUR music. We didn't steal it, you know, I don't have a huge problem with it. It's better than to be compared with Bob Dylan. Still I feel a bit frustrated



when you've been working your ass off for weeks with a song, and then someone writes it off as a "DT clone". I just wanna kill them you know, or at least assault them with a flamethrower.

Our sources tell that you broke the Queensryche "Hear in the Now Frontier" CD after your first listen. Please explain yourself.

It's shit. The most worthless piece of fecal matter I've ever paid for. My point is, if Third Eye Blind or some other crappy band would've released it, I couldn't care less. But it's fucking Queensryche for gods sake. They're useless hasbeens now. Old and tired. I'd prefer them to be old and retired.

How about other bands in Uppsala? Sweden?

One band that is really really good is called F.K.U.

Tell me what's good about it.

The drummer is awesome. No, the drummer sucks. There's a lot of good bands in Sweden, like Pain of Salvation and Evergrey. These are two of my favorite bands.

How about melodic metal like Lion's Share?

No, no, no. I don't know.

It's melodic I think.

Too melodic.

Have you ever played in Stockholm? Or in Sweden for that matter?

In Uppsala, yes. Nowhere else.

How many people do show up?

Last time, the place could fit 200, and it was like 230, so it was pretty good. We haven't played anywhere else except Uppsala. We played Uppsala and US. We're going to play a gig in Stockholm next week.

What do you think about Gothenburg death metal?

I don't know. I think maybe it watered down a little. The last good album was by The Haunted. And I don't like any of the In Flames after "The Jester Race."

Dark Tranquillity?

Never heard their music. The best Gothenburg band ever is At The Gates. The last At The Gates album is one of the best albums ever released.

CR: Have you ever heard of a Swedish band called Mephisto? They had some demos in 1986 and 1987.

Never heard of them.

CR: I have their demos, they are brilliant, but then the band disappeared from the face of earth. Everytime I meet a Swedish guy, I ask about them.

The best thing in Sweden right now is all Dan Swanö stuff. Everything is good. Except for the second release of Nightingale. Unicorn is good. Have you guys heard of Odyssey?

No.

Woohoo!!

What's that?

I'd say it's death metal with a kind of atmospheric touch and Hammond organs.

CR: I hate Hammond organs.

Me too.

Last words.

Www dot mayadome dot com. If you don't have a computer, go buy one.

Influences:

Singer: Everything I hear. Yngwie Malmsteen, Conception's "Flow."

Keyboard player: Jens Johansson, Kevin Moore, Yngwie Malmsteen, and heavy metal from the 80s.

Bass player: Metal of the 80s/70s. Black Sabbath, Rainbow, Dio, Current? I love Evergrey, Covenant "Nexus Polaris."

Guitar player: I listen to more different music than traditional heavy metal or thrash. My influences are mainly jazz, Pink Floyd, guys like John Petrucci, Steve Vai. I like some rave music. If it wouldn't be for the progressive part, I wouldn't play metal at all. Playing is different, but I prefer to listen to something else.

Teddy ads: Don't let the interview end with this. Metal is what it's all about! Fred's a fucking cheesy bastard :) Metaaaaaaaahaaah for gods sake!!!!!!! Manowar rules!

Addition:

How would you evaluate your performance at ProgPower, and do you have any particular comments or suggestions to the festival organizers?

I sincerely think it's the best damn gig we've ever done. The audience was awesome, the organization was perfect, the food was good, the other bands were very cool, the beer in the fridge didn't last long, the fruitbasket was unnecessary, the hotel was good, Holland rules, the gin was strong.

And how did that Stockholm gig that you were supposed to play after ProgPower go?

Very good, it was a killer show. Not too many people there though. It was a Monday and it wasn't very well promoted and advertised so... We had Fifth Reason opening for us and they're so fucking cool. Crazy drunken bastards, all of them.

<http://www.mayadome.com>

V/A

Children of the Damned - a Tribute to Iron Maiden DoCD

Adrenaline Records

Several Iron Maiden tributes circle around, and this one differs from some of them in that most of the covering bands have clean vocals. The Maiden-material coverage is pretty good with some great classics like "22 Acacia Avenue" (a solid performance by Delusion), "Flight of Icarus" (Aska), and "The Prisoner" (Mesmerize); all sound very close to the originals. Gooseflesh did an interesting and well thought-out stoner rock/doom version of "Killers" which though doesn't go any further than being interesting and well thought-out; the original was very fresh and energetic, and so this song was meant to be (a conservative view of a fan, what can I do). "Where Eagles Dare" is an excellent choice (the song that inspired Fates Warning?), but Night Conquers Day make it very fuzzy, what you perhaps could have expected from the only black metal band on the compilation (the vocals are not screeching on this track though). Weird choices include "Bring Your Daughter to the Slaughter" (Realm) and "Futureal" (Innocent Exile). The latter band recovers in the second CD, where instead of their own song (as a matter of fact, they don't have any since they are an Iron Maiden tribute band), they deliver "Strange World." Disc Two shows the whole diverse spectre of the bands, many of which are about to release (or have released) their debut full-length albums: Delusion (Siegen Records, prog rock/metal), Seasons of the Wolf (Adrenaline Records, gothic/heavy metal), Mesmerize (Maiden/German-inspired metal from Italy), Gooseflesh (Nuclear Blast, Pantera-style riffing metal), Aska (Maiden/

Priest), Diphtheria (I had their demo '95, and this CD contains the best song off that demo, where have they been since then?!), Cessation of Life (aggressive rock/thrash), Moksha (Indian power/thrash), Realm (Australian psychedelic metal), Night Conquers Day (average sharp black metal), and Last Disciple (very Maidenish metal but not very solid). Aska, Gooseflesh, Delusion sound the best, Seasons of the Wolf are perhaps the most interesting stylistically. (GS)

V/A

Frog Pest Tree

Magna Carta Records

I noticed that many reviews of compilations in "Edge of Time" tend to become boring to write and read. Therefore I decided to make this one in "track-by-track" style and not to filter my personal preferences at all. Okay, let's get better.

Bozzio Levin Stevens. An opener instrumental telling that this CD is 'no shit.' Rocking main riff, but in 8 minutes and with a chapping rhythm (and even with a drum solo). 3 1/2

Shadow Gallery. "Tyranny" didn't astonish me in the same way "Carved in Stone" did, but after this I'd probably revise my conclusions. One of the best tracks in the compilation in warm and excellent prog metal style. 4 1/2

Explorers Club. "Import 3" track here, with the LaBrni cheese. (Kidding.) Prog rock/metal, but with these thin sounding prog rock choruses. 3 3/4

Cairo. Prog rock, whining vocals, a very synthetic sound. This reminds me that I have, once and for all, to find the definition of "elevator rock." 2 3/4

Attention Deficit. It'd be possible to play around with the band's name, but I'd just stick to saying that this is one of the most 'jam'-like tracks on the CD. Very hectic sounding as a composition. 3

Caliban. Sounds like country. And we trust in metal here... 3

Magellan. Thumbs up, a weirdly catchy melody line and a rock song. 4

Royal Hunt. After five tracks of prog rock, country, and instrumental music, neoclassical guitar shredding sounds exciting. "Tearing Down the World" sounds like a track from Malmsteen's "Rising Force." Melodic neoclassical speed metal. 4

Dali's Dilemma. Light prog metal without too much life except the start of the refrain. Known image and average song. Talk Dream Theater. 3 1/2

Tempest. Listening to this, I always remember some Scottish folk band on TV singing "and we drink and we drink and we drink until we die." Same here, a merry track. 4

Ice Age. Prog rock/metal, light, bright, crystallized and slightly synthetic. 3 3/4

Liquid Tension Experiment. "Freedom of Speech" luckily sounds like a built composition, not like a jam. Heavy, technical, and atmospheric. 4 (GS) 3 3/4

V/A

Lions and Fables, Verglas Music Sampler Vol. I / Dreams and Visions, Verglas Music Sampler Vol. II

Verglas Music/InsideOut Music

As the titles say, it's a two-CD prog rock compilation. It includes Arena (5 tracks), Shadowland (3 tracks), Strangers of a Train (2 tracks), The Urbane, Damian Wilson, Casino, Oliver Wakeman, C. Nolan & O. Wakeman, and Tracy Hitchings (one track each). Arena are clearly the best and most interesting band with very melodic, well-done, and intriguing warm compositions. Many other tracks are examples of clear melodic rock, with nice melodies but not so progressive music (The Urbane, Shadowland, Strangers of a Train). (GS)

V/A

Voices - a Tribute to Dream Theater DoCD

Adrenaline Records

It's a two CD set, where the first contains 9 Dream Theater covers, and the second one features an own song from each of the 9 covering bands. Speaking about the first, there's not much to say. The tribute proves what a great album "Images and Words" is and that the bands learned the songs well. The choices include almost entire "Images and Words" album, "You Not Me" and "Peruvian Skies" from "Falling into Infinity," and "A Fortune in Lies" from the debut. The other interesting fact is that "You Not Me" (Moon of Steel) and "Surrounded" (CMKY) are sung by females (and quite well). That's about all interesting observations, except for a personal fact that after hearing this tribute I realized that Vanden Plas' (who are not on this tribute) music, most of all, reminds of "Under the Glass Moon" song.

The second CD gives a better picture of the bands, most of which belong to the lighter shade of prog metal. Some are even more closer to prog rock than metal (Evil Wings, Accomplice, CMKY), some stylistically openly follow Dream Theater (Aztec Jade, Empty Tremor, Overlife, Eleventh Hour). Fifth Season stand out from the bunch with more Tool-like progressive hard rock, as well as Moon of Steel leave a good impression with female-fronted heavy atmospheric rock. (GS)

V/A

Through Different Eyes - a Tribute to Fates Warning

Planet Sarcasm

Usually I don't find tribute albums very entertaining, but this one I like a lot. I figure there are two main reasons. First, Fates Warning are one of my fave bands and their songs are not so overplayed as Dream Theater's, and second, there are no weak tracks on this tribute; the song selections and performance styles are quite diverse. After "Parallels" era tracks interchange with pre-"Awaken the Guardian" material ("Apparition," "Prelude to Ruin," "The Sorceress," "Fata Morgana"), but Matheos' ingenious harmonic sense is present everywhere; this is actually what keeps Fates Warning above all their rivals and followers. Three songs from "Inside Out" may come as a surprise, but they all confirm what a great album it was, even if its creation wasn't that well motivated. The dedication and passion of Steel Prophet, as well as the technical treatment and 14 black-metal seconds of Spiral Architect make "The Apparition" and "Prelude to Ruin" the highlights of this CD. However, all bands deserve a praise for their honest contributions to this album, whose quality reminds of the two Judas Priest tributes released by Century Media. The only remark is that the booklet is minimalistic and only of four pages. Anyways, get this album and smile. (GS)

[*Planet Sarcasm*, 570 Dunnsville Rd., Schenectady, NY 12306, USA]

[planetsarcasm@planetsarcasm.com] [<http://www.planetsarcasm.com>]

4 1/2

VIA

True Metal Triumphant

Sentinel Steel Records

Denis Gulbey decided to re-release some old school speed/power/thrash albums from the 80s. Here is the compilation of songs from these remastered and remixed releases. Onward, Gothic Knights, Legend Maker, Axemaster, Manilla Road and Sacred Oath present us here two songs each, four tracks belong to Attacker and one to Burning Starr. Most of the bands move in similar musical waters, somewhere between Iron Maiden, early Metal Church, Helloween, Riot, or Omen. Only Manilla Road sound a bit gloomier and more varied; for me, it's definitely the best band on this compilation. I think, these remastered/remixed album versions with various bonus tracks is the must for every true metal fan. Mags/fanzines/radio stations could write Denis Gulbey for a promo copy. For others, the price is mentioned below. (SV)

[[\\$4 US/\\$5 rest of the world](#), Denis Gulbey, PO Box 123, Rockaway, NJ 07866, USA]

VANDEN PLAS

Far off Grace

InsideOut Music

Vanden Plas' third album leaves me mitigated. I was expecting a major progressive performance, yet I was somewhat disappointed by the style change of "Far off Grace." Trying to appeal to broader audiences, the band has slightly drifted from the progressive path towards a more straightforward metal. Sure, "Far off Grace" is still a typical prog metal album, yet what made "The God Thing" so apart has vanished. The only song which reminds me somewhat of Vanden Plas' more progressive trends is "Fields of Hope", a track based on oriental harmonies. The new album is heavier, with a strong emphasis on crunchy, pounding riffs. So far, so good! The song structure follows a more standard pattern, with the usual first verse, second verse, chorus, solo, etc. structure on several songs. Keys are used on some songs in a manner resembling Eldritch's "El Nino." Kuntz' vocals are top-notch, and still among the best ones of the prog metal scene. However, the powerful emotion he displayed on songs like "Crown of Thorns" or "You Fly" is lacking. The main strength of the album is probably the combination of guitars and keyboards, artistically intertwined to build the overall picture; particularly Werno's piano parts, which are, as on the previous album, very present. Furthermore, the production is excellent, with a powerful drum sound, thick guitars, and crystal clear keys. Just the bass is somewhat cast in the background. Globally: heavier, crunchier but more straightforward than "The God Thing"; nevertheless an outstanding prog metal release. (AS)

[<http://www.vandenplas.de>]

4 1/4 [CR 4, GS 4, SV 3 3/4]



AGENT STEEL

Conspiring for the World Dominion

[by Christian Rademaker]

The mid 80s are considered by many to be the start of what was to become the domination of the global metal scene by the Americans. The new wave of British heavy metal (NWOBHM) had died down and a new flood of young aspiring Americans had just taken their first steps. Metallica were the pioneers with "Kill em all" and "Ride the Lightning" but they were closely followed by Slayer, Anthrax, and Megadeth. These were considered the big four: the premier league. This was primarily due to their commercial success although one could discuss their artistic creativity. After these four there was a horde of other aspiring bands who were often more interesting musically. Agent Steel was certainly one of them...

Formed by members from Sceptre and Abattoir, Agent Steel burst onto the scene "Skeptics Apocalypse" in 1985. Although they had already made a name for themselves in the underground, the impact was nevertheless devastating. The combination of high quality speed metal, John Cyriss' charismatic high pitched vocals and intriguing science fiction concept; "Skeptics Apocalypse" instantly became a classic among many (including myself). Agent Steel managed to extend their fan base with a successful European tour, which also included Anthrax and Over Kill. After the release of the mini LP "Mad Locust Rising" in 1986 with the Judas Priest cover of "The Ripper," it became quiet for a while and many rumors were spreading.

1987 saw the release "Unstoppable Force" and it was evident that the line-up changes had brought with them a new sound. Agent Steel had dropped their "Iron Maiden on 78 rpm" (before the time of CDs, regular vinyl records were played on a turn-table at 33 rpm) sound and had ventured more into mid tempo territory with significant Queensryche influences. On its own merit. The production was much better and it included some brilliant tracks such as the speed metal title track and the instrumental epic "The Day at Guyana," but it never reaches the heights of "Skeptics Apocalypse." From then on Agent Steel went down hill. Main man John Cyriss expanded his megalomaniacal antics by firing almost the entire band, relocating to Florida and taking a new line-up (amongst them James Murphy) for their last European tour together with Nuclear Assault. The tour was only semi-successful, and a while later Agent Steel disbanded. Ex-members re-emerged in other bands, most notably Juan Garcia with Evil Dead and Bernie Versailles collaborating with Fates Warning and Steel Prophet. The enigmatic John Cyriss abused his vocal talents in several small bands such as Pontius Prophet and then left the face of the Earth.

More than ten years later rumors of an Agent Steel reformation surface and the flickering flame becomes bigger when a demo starts circulating in the underground. Agent Steel had reformed as Agents of Steel without John Cyriss. The Century Media re-release of "Skeptics Apocalypse" is a perfect marketing ploy, which paves the way for the 90s Agent Steel. Finally in 1999, Candlelight Records releases the third Agent Steel opus "Omega Conspiracy." Guitar duo Juan Garcia, Bernie Versailles and drummer Chuck Profus from the "Unstoppable Force" line-up now form the nucleus of Agent Steel'99, which is completed by vocalist Bruce Hall and bass player Karl Medina. "Omega Conspiracy" actually sounds like a cross between "Unstoppable Force" and early Evil Dead. They've managed to update the 80s Agent Steel sound and create a diverse album. Starting off with two speed metal tracks "Destroy the Hush" and "Illuminate is Machine," the album further turns out as a nice combination of uptempo songs and balladesque parts. Concerning the lyrical aspect, the science fiction concept has been taken over by vocalist Bruce Hall who at times bears an uncanny resemblance to John Cyriss. Although "Omega Conspiracy" misses the magic of the first two classics, it is one of the more worthwhile come-backs of 1999.

Eager to find out more about Agent Steel'99, I did an interview with guitarist Juan Garcia. From my room in the attic I got his call.

Hi Juan, it's nice to finally hear from you. Where are you calling from? From Los Angeles, where are you at the moment?

I'm in Eindhoven in the Netherlands. You've been there before as well a long time ago.

Yes I remember, is the Dynamo club still open?

Yes it is but it has lost some of the magic since the 80s. But moving on to the late 90s: first of all congratulations with the new album!

Thank you very much.

I must say that I was a little sceptical at first.

Just like everybody else.

I first heard about your reformation a couple of years ago but weren't you called Agents of Steel at that time?

Yes, we were going to call it Agents of Steel in the beginning. We didn't want to call it Agent Steel at first because John Cyriss wasn't involved. But we thought about it and then decided for Agent Steel anyway. We had to find out who had the rights to the name but now me, Chuck Profus, and Bernie Versailles have the rights.

I always thought John Cyriss had the rights. Does anybody know where John is at the moment or has he really disappeared off the planet?

Nobody knows where he is, not even his closest friends.

Your reformation was before the Century Media reissue of "Skeptics Apocalypse." How were you involved with this reissue?

We weren't as involved, as we would have wanted to be. I dug up some old photos and wrote some liner notes. They put it together but we didn't have any final say. I didn't even know that there was going to be a live song on the CD. I don't know where they got that.

There is an intriguing picture of you guys standing in front of a flying saucer in the "Skeptics Apocalypse" booklet.

Yes that was taken in the Netherlands. It was taken by Metal Mike (the editor of a Dutch hard rock magazine at that time).

That building is called the "Evoluon" and it's actually about 200 meters away from where I work. It used to be a science museum, but now it's a conference centre.

Are there any concerts there?

No it's meant for executives and not for long-haired metal fans. You played here in Eindhoven in 1986 didn't you, right after "Skeptics Apocalypse" was released? Do you have any memories of that tour?

You mean the tour with Anthrax, Over Kill, and Agent Steel? Yes I remember that. John was getting nuts every night, screaming hollering at everybody and trying to get into fights. There was a lot of madness going on. As far as the live shows, they were excellent. We went over really well with the audience and they really got into it.

The new album "Omega Conspiracy" has just been released, and the first thing to notice is that the science fiction concept is still there. How far are you involved in this?

Well, I have always been into science fiction, but I have never expressed it as much as John Cyriss did. I love science fiction. I enjoy reading a lot of science fiction and I am really into "The X Files." When we reformed Agent Steel, I discussed the lyrical concept with our vocalist Bruce Hall. He wrote all the lyrics to the album and I am really impressed with them. There are lots of songs about war and death nowadays but Bruce did something new with the science fiction concept and brought it in a lot of fresh and interesting points.

Could you go into detail on some of the songs like "Fighting Backwards" for example? Where did the TV excerpt come from?

That TV excerpt is actually Rod Sterling from the old Twilight Zone television show. That was taken from an out of print video from 1971 called "The Outer Space Connection." Basically "Fighting Backwards" has a science fiction theme and it is about an alien race that has come to Earth to enslave the human race.

How much do you actually know of all the mysteries surrounding the Bermuda Triangle and Area 51?

I was born in Cuba, which is in the Bermuda Triangle. So I know it exists. John Cyriss was fascinated by the Bermuda Triangle at that time [rumors in the 80s also suggested that he relocated Agent Steel, after releasing "Unstoppable Force," to Florida to be closer to the Bermuda Triangle - CR]. Area 51 exists as well but it's just a nuclear testing site. Basically, the government tests experimental aircraft there but not UFOs. It is a place of pilgrimage where a lot of people come to watch the stars. There's also an area there called S4 where they test top secret aircraft. I think they are man-made and not extra-terrestrial, but I think the origin may be extra-terrestrial. It's nothing new really, when you think about it because they had UFOs in Germany back in World War II. I believe that UFOs exist, there have been too many sightings. I don't know why the government won't admit to it. They have to keep in under wraps for security reasons and I can understand that.

What is actually the Omega Conspiracy?

It is the conspiracy of the end meaning that "Alpha" is the first and "Omega" is the last. It's not a concept record although a lot of people think that. All the lyrics do tie together in a strange way. The Omega Conspiracy represents the shadow/cloaked secret societies that run, govern, and control our planet and race. It is about the Elite who conspires for world dominion. When in fact, Planet Earth is like a recycling centre. Great civilizations have existed in the past and they've destroyed themselves because they battled for power and control. The title of the new record also ties in with the new Millennium, so me and Bernie Versailles thought that it would be a great title for the new Agent Steel album.

The cover looks very interesting as well, it's quite different and really shows the science fiction concept. Who was responsible for the design?

A Canadian artist that I know called Dimitrios Patelis did the cover. He's done a lot of covers from tribute albums as well [the Iron Maiden tributes "A Call to Irons I and II," the Black Sabbath tribute "Hell Rules" for example - CR]. I like his artwork and his style of airbrush painting.

I really like the blue colors and it really catches your eye when you see in a record store. When you look at the album, there is a good variation of songs. You start off with two fast tracks to create a certain impact and the rest of the album is a nice mixture. Was this intentional?

At first I had the playing order different but Bernie Versailles didn't agree with it and he had different ideas. I am a team player so if someone comes up with a better idea I'm open to it. I listened to his ideas concerning the song order and I had to admit that it was good so we went with his proposal.

There's a mixture of songs on the album, some were written by you, some by Bernie Versailles, and some were jointly by you and Bernie Versailles. How would you compare your writing styles?

Basically, it starts off with a guitar riff and I then try and piece our riffs together. I connect his ideas to mine. Then Chuck gets involved, so it's guitars and drums, and we then find out what works. If it doesn't work, we start over again so the whole writing process takes quite a while. Sometimes I use a click track for the rhythm or Bernie Versailles will use a drum machine for a certain beat. So it's a collaboration of our ideas. Our styles are kind of compatible, he has a more melodic tone while I have a more harsh approach but we work well together.

Have you actually ever played in a band that only had one guitar player?

No but I have done some shows with only one guitar because the other guitar player was sick. I've always liked my metal with guitars like the old metal bands like Judas Priest and Iron Maiden with their twin guitar approach.

It's funny that you mention Iron Maiden because in the early days of Agent Steel, you were often referred to as Iron Maiden on 78 rpm. You've done covers of Black Sabbath ("Sweet Leaf") and Judas Priest for tribute albums but why didn't you play on any Iron Maiden tribute albums?

I don't know, I don't think the band was together at that time. If we had had the choice to do a cover, I would probably go for the more punk rock oriented songs like "Sanctuary" or something off "Killers" like "Murders in the Rue Morgue."

Going back to your musical history, you formed Evil Dead after leaving Agent Steel but what happened after that?

The reason why I formed Evil Dead was I wanted to be in a thrash metal band and I didn't like the musical direction in which Agent Steel was going at that time. I didn't want to be in a band where the singer's a psychopath, if you know what I mean. We did two albums on the German label SPV ("Annihilation of Civilization" and "The Underworld") but we couldn't get the albums licensed in the USA. We couldn't do any touring here and that's why the band split up. I then joined the Mexican band Terror for a while. We released an album called "Hijos de Los Cometas" in Mexico on Culebra/BMG Records. It had an Agent Steel type science fiction theme. The album is out of print now, by the way.

Terror was a metal band with Spanish lyrics and singing, we also used samples and keyboards kinda like Fear Factory and Ministry but in our own style which was similar to Evil Dead. The only real difference between Evil Dead and Terror is that the Terror vocals are sung mostly in Spanish. Also Jon Dette played drums on

half the album. He would've played on the whole Terror album but he left to join Testament and later on Slayer. We did very well down there in Mexico but the Mexican economy is a problem and the record company was very shady. I was therefore interested immediately when Bernie Versailles proposed the Agent Steel reunion.

Where did you find your vocalist Bruce Hall?

Well, Bernie Versailles knew Bruce while he was singing local band called Grinchfist, which played music in the Pantera-style. His vocal style resembled Phil Anselmo of Pantera at the time but we knew he was able to use his voice and hit the high notes that are required for the classic Agent Steel. The band was very popular and almost got signed. When that didn't happen, Bruce quit the music scene for a while. He was only singing at home until finally his wife told him that he should go out of the house and have some fun. He came down and auditioned for us and it went well from the beginning. We didn't want a John Cyriss clone (although one guy auditioned that sounded exactly like him), instead we wanted to start a new chapter in the Agent Steel history.

Was he a familiar with the old Agent Steel material?

He was familiar with the old material although I think he was more of an Iron Maiden fan. He knew of Agent Steel and really liked our music. Strangely enough, I believe that he actually met John Cyriss at a party once. Isn't that crazy?

So how did you end up with Candlelight Records because I thought that your music would fit better with Nuclear Blast or Century Media?

Well basically, like everybody else, they were very sceptical when the Agents of Steel reunion was happening without John Cyriss. We made a demo and we approached Nuclear Blast and Century Media with it. I must admit that the demo doesn't really represent Agent Steel as it is now so I understand their reluctance. We shopped the demo to Candlelight Records, and they were very enthusiastic and excited about the band. They had no doubts about using the name Agent Steel and they thought we were crazy for using the name before. Furthermore, I like the fact that they don't have that many bands on their roster so we get more attention from them. They're more a black/death metal label but it's kind of cool for us to help them grow.

I agree with you there, because you would have been one of the many bands with Nuclear Blast or Century Media. Isn't it also an advantage that you're on a European label as well?

Sure there's not much going on in the USA right now when metal is concerned. The heavy music that is popular here right now is Korn. There's a metal scene starting to grow here and there, but it can not be compared to Europe. I really don't care that much about the music scene here, we're focusing on Europe.

What are your plans for touring then?

We're going to hit the road on January 19th 2000 with Riot and Anvil. We have fifteen shows in a row starting in Paris and then going to the 013 in Tilburg, The Netherlands actually which is not too far from Eindhoven I believe. We're then going to Germany, Italy, Greece...

Do you have a chance to see something of Europe then?



I have no plans for retiring and I am not selling out either.

Getting back to your history, one of your old bands Abattoir has reformed as well. What's their status at the moment?

I talked to Mel Sanchez (bassist and founder of Abattoir), and Mark Caro (guitarist), now and then and I will help them out when they need me. I'm probably going to co-write a song with them but not in the immediate present time since most of my time is dedicated to Agent Steel and preparing for this tour with Riot and Anvil. I wish them the best of luck, but honestly I cannot get involved with Abattoir right now. I will guide them with the business end of things since we are friends once again, there's no more animosity between us the past is water under the bridge [in an old interview Juan Garcia was very upset about the fact that he was not given any writing credits for his work on the first Abattoir album "Vicious Attack - CR].

Would you have joined Abattoir if Agent Steel hadn't been reformed?

Most likely yes... but as you can see I cannot join because I need to focus on Agent Steel.

Let me ask you about something I read about one of my favorite instrumentalists of all time: "The Day at Guyana."

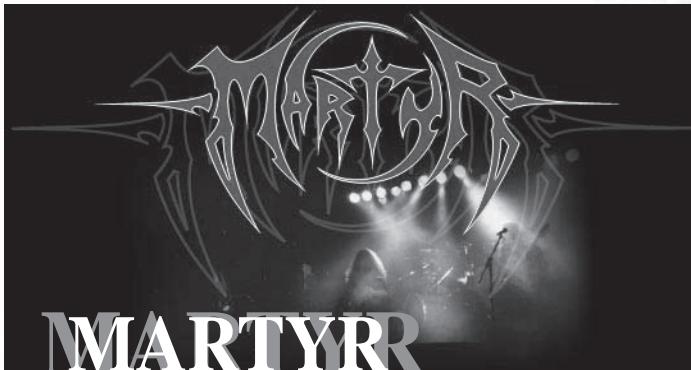
Me and Chuck are flattered that you really like that song.

The title is, of course, influenced by the mass suicide of the Jim Jones followers. Yes it is.

In an interview John Cyriss said that it took you months to write that song and that he needed to force you to finish it after such a long time.

No, that is not true at all! It took me and our drummer Chuck Profus six days to arrange and write that and I am not even kidding. We put it together in three days before we went to Tampa where we were going to record "Unstoppable Force." I wrote the guitar parts and then Chuck got there with his tape recorder to do the drum tracks. We actually finished writing "The Day at Guyana" at Morrisound Studios in Tampa, FL during pre-production with engineer Scott Burns. That was before Scott went on to producing "Arise" by Sepultura. We were actually one of the first metal bands he worked with. Of course Dan Johnson (Savatage) produced the "Unstoppable Force" but honestly the song was written arranged in less than a week. Disregard all the rumors that it took us months to put together. Those were lies by Mr. Cyriss!!! The song was actually inspired by the Iron Maiden instrumental "Genghis Khan" off the album "Killers" by Iron Maiden. I heard that song and I told the guys that we needed an instrumental. I am glad that you enjoy it, it is one of my favorite metal instrumentals of all time as well.

[With that true statement, the Agent Steel interview ends. Although a lot of reformations are based on cashing in on the true metal hype and 80s revival, I think Agent Steel have more honest motives for reforming. It must be said that Juan has an impressive writing career behind him and I wish him the best of luck in the future.]



MARTYRR

Not Without Hope

[by Christian Rademaker]

In my opinion, some of the more interesting and challenging music to emerge in the nineties has been from the technical death metal genre. The term “technical” implies the use of complex song structures, virtuous playing and inherent jazz influences. Initial exponents of the genre have been Atheist, Death, Pestilence, and Cynic. All of these are now defunct (Atheist, Pestilence, Cynic) or have gone on to a less intricate style (Death), leaving the void to be filled by other promising acts such as Red Tide and Martyr. Red Tide was featured in #14 and the spotlight is now on the Canadian four-piece Martyr.

Martyr first came to my attention after the release of their independent debut CD “Hopeless Hopes” in 1997. This CD showed Martyr’s capability in creating complex songs with mesmerizing hooks. The structures are intricate but the clean production makes it worthwhile to delve into small details. Musically they could be described as a cross between Death (Individual Thought Patterns-era) and fellow Canadians Obliveon (“From This Day Forward”-era).

The CD “Hopeless Hopes” was met with critical acclaim and since then Martyr’s music has been progressing. A new album titled “Warp Zone” is just out and this gave me enough incentive to arrange an interview with bassplayer and vocalist Francois Mongrain. The line-up furthermore consists of his brother Daniel Mongrain (lead & rhythm guitar, vocals), Pier-Luc Lampron (rhythm & lead guitar), and Patrice Hamelin (drums).

The monicker “Martyr” evokes images of martyrs that (supposedly) died for their religious beliefs in the Roman Colosseums. What were your reasons for choosing this name, and is there a possibility that your name will be related to Christian music?

The name “Martyr” was chosen to express the pain that we endure every day without giving up. We must hang on to our beliefs, principles and goals, even if sometimes everything may seem to be against us. Maybe the word “Martyr” is somehow related to Christianity but we don’t use it in this way. It’s more an image, a state of mind. We don’t talk much about religion in our songs. As a matter of fact, we don’t limit ourselves to one or two main subjects. We talk about anything that inspires or bothers us.

Is the name “Martyr” trademarked because there is a Christian metal band and there used to be a Dutch band in the 80s that released several albums under the name “Martyr” as

well?

Maybe, I don’t know. We didn’t know about these other bands when we decided to use this name a couple of years ago. It can hardly be changed, but if we don’t have any choice, a change would be very tiny.

Your music is extremely challenging to perform, primarily combining influences such as jazz and metal. Jazz music is often instrumental whereas metal music is almost always played in combination with vocals. Why did you start playing this type of music and why did you not choose to play instrumental jazz music for example?

When we were younger, my brother and I played classical piano. We started playing metal at the age of 12 or 14. Metal was a revelation! We knew it would be our main music style, due to the sounds, the freedom, the possibilities to say anything we wanted to say. Then we learned about jazz while we studied music in college. This is the



style they show you. It’s good to learn about the theory, but we rarely play jazz. Every music style, such as classical, baroque, middle-age, and asian for example, has its secrets and can be useful in metal. We must be open minded.

What is more important to you in the Martyr’s music, the technicality/progressiveness or the type of emotion that you want to evoke?

Technicality is only a tool. It’s not an obligation and it is NOT the goal in our music. Sometimes we do very basic riffs and it’s intense. Music is a way of expression and communication. It’s not to show how many licks and scales you’ve learned. But these tools have their utility and this opens possibilities. Each note is there for a reason.

You play a six-string bass. For a non-musician like myself, can you tell me what the advantages are? Have you ever considered playing the Chapman stick like a lot of bass players tend to do these last few years?

The advantages are that I can go lower than usual four-string bass. I use a lot of the bigger strings, it’s richer and effective in riffs that must be loud and heavy. I use the little string for melodic lines, chords and soloing. I use it less than the big one but it’s useful too. I’m intrigued by the Chapman stick. I’ve never tried one but if I had the chance, I’d like to try it. But I can’t say if I would learn it. Maybe, if I like the feel of this curious instrument.

A lot of worthwhile death metal bands are dismissed by the metal-listening general public, regardless of the beauty of the music, because of the extreme vocal style. Martyr’s music also combines technical, challenging music with non-melodic mid range vocals. In which way are you comfortable with your vocal style in relation to your type of music and what are you aiming for in the future?

I agree that the bridge is difficult to cross for people who don’t like extreme vocal style. But we don’t want to change, at least for now. Our very first demo tape was entirely done with melodic vocals, but it was not energetic enough. We kept this concept for some very short parts on the album “Hopeless Hopes”, but on the next album I don’t think we’ll use these kind of melodic vocals. It will be more aggressive than before.

You played on the semi-prestigious Milwaukee Metal Fest in 1998. How did this show come about without you having a recent musical product to promote?

We played early on the second day, but that was cool. I think there were 300 people. That was weird, people were starting to enter while we started to play, that was most motivating! Last summer, we decided not to go, and wait for next summer with the second album. We’ll try to have a better schedule!

You and your brother Daniel both play in several other blues and jazz bands such as the “Bleu Blues Band”. Do you think it is important to be able to play other musical styles and in other bands as well? How do these influence your musical creativity in Martyr?

It’s important if you want to be versatile. It’s a matter of choice. We play with other bands to pay for our food! Hehe! As I said, other styles are good resources to write music but I don’t think we’re inspired by blues music! There are too many different feelings, that I don’t like very much by the way! I hope very much that some day we’ll have the chance to put all our energy on Martyr.

You mentioned that playing music in blues bands pays for your food. Is that a full-time job or do you do other kinds of work as well? Are you interested in doing studio session work for other musicians?

Well, we don’t play more blues than other style though. It was just to say that we do other styles than metal (such as rock or jazz) as well, as projects on the side. It’s not a full time job either and they are not a priority. We have jobs or are still in school. We occasionally do studio for some local musicians, and it’s great, but personally I prefer to play metal.

You seem to be very much involved with your music. How important is music to you, what kind of role does it play in your life?

It’s a good way to express ourselves. There are things that can be said only with music. Without music, I don’t know how I would live with a sane mind. It’s very hard for me to explain what music brings me since music expresses many emotions that cannot be translated to words.

Your brother Daniel also plays guitar and sings in Martyr. What is it like to be in a band with your brother? Do you come from a particular musical family?



It's easier for some things as we know each others musical tastes, and we live at the same place so it is easy to take care of the band together. In the family, our mother sings and plays piano.

Within your songs, there is room built in for extensive bass and guitar soloing. These solos focus on melody in combination with technicality instead of neo-classical shredding and over the top Slayer-like solos. On the other hand, I don't really think that your music needs these solos because of their inherent complexity and rhythm shifts. What are your views about the function of solos within songs in general?

Solos are not necessary, but they add a lot of intense expression. In the song "Prototype" (off "Hopeless Hopes"), there is no solo, because the song simply doesn't need one. I think solos must tell something, not just show flashy technique, noise or shredding. Slayer-like solos are very cool because they express torment, and despite the fact that they aren't "technical solos", they brings us to some infernal worlds. So technical is not necessary to do good stuff. It's only a tool. I've seen musicians playing like typewriters. A lot of skill and theory, but no emotion or artistic spirit. If you can't use this tool, it's useless.

The song "Elementals" discusses the powers of nature and how insignificant mankind is compared to that. The song is remarkably actual in the sense that planet earth seems to be in the grip of tornadoes and earthquakes lately. Have you ever personally experienced "the power of the elements"?

It's true that since a few years, more and more natural disasters happen, and it's somehow frightening. In Quebec, 2 or 3 years ago, there was a horrible disaster: The water level of a river was too high and it devastated a city. That tells us that nobody is really safe from this.

This song was written by Daniel Mongrain and Stephane Belanger. Stephane Belanger is a member of Obliveon if I am not mistaken. How did this collaboration come about and what is the current status of Obliveon?

The Stephane Belanger who participated in the song is not the same Stephane that works with Obliveon. But we know him as well. We play occasionnally with Obliveon and they're great guys. By the way, the Gorguts singer will do some backing vocals on some new Martyr songs!

Your debut CD "Hopeless Hopes" was released independently. How has it been received and has there been any record label interest in Martyr since then?

The reaction is very good from metal fans and reviews in zines. But we lack promotion, promoting a CD by your self is very difficult. There has been some label interest but nothing really solid yet. We hope that some label will be interested in our music soon!

Could you tell me more about your second album? In which direction is

the new musical style?

There are 9 songs. Some titles are "Deserted Waters", "Warp Zone", "Carpe Diem", "Virtual Emotions", "The Fortune Teller". We keep the "technical" style but the songs flow better, and are more intense, as the drum parts are more elaborate. The songs are more personal, we've tried a lot of new sounds with the instruments. The songs are also generally shorter in length. We've learned a lot since our first album and I hope this will be for the best. The songs and lyrics have many involuntary links together. Without knowing it, we did a concept album!

On the website, you list a lot of different music bands, musicians and styles as favorites. Among these are Japanese & European antique to middle-aged traditional music. How did you become exposed to this type of music and what is that interests you in it?

These styles have so much to tell us! We must listen to these without prejudice. I think we've always been open to every kind of music. Of course, our studies helped us to discover classical, jazz and the likes, but I like the other styles by curiosity and interest. Personally, I like the quietness and melancholy of Japanese music, and the rustic sound of middle-aged music, some elements that is good for metal evolution, I believe.

Some of your other favorites are movie soundtrack composers such as John Williams and Danny Elfman. Both of these have their specific styles in which John Williams' work is closely related to the more commercial films for the mature public (Steven Spielberg, for example) whereas Danny Elfman is much darker and mysterious (often writing for Tim Burton and challenging horror movies). Are you interested in pursuing that type of musical direction giving you more creative freedom to delve into emotions and go beyond the 4-6 minute song format?

Maybe some day. For now, we don't plan on doing this. We like a lot these composers. They bring us to some fantastic and imaginary worlds. Music like this makes movies good.

I would be interested to know what type of movies interest you?

I like fantastic and very imaginative movies. Those that make you dream and go to imaginary worlds. My favorite movie is "Baron Munchausen" (a Terry Gilliam film).

The song "Non Conformis" is the imposition of standards by the people in power in order for us to become good role model citizens? I always thought Canada was a very liberal and peaceful country compared to the FBI and CIA regulated USA. In which way has the "big brother is watching you" syndrome become a part of your lives?

In Canada, there is a lot of censorship. And the government tells us that we have freedom of expression but it's not that true in reality. The media will not support anything that is not "politically correct". We don't feel oppressed, but we feel restrained in a hypocritical way.



To be someone, to make your way, you must follow the rules, the fashion, play music that is aired on commercial radio shows, etc. Here, teens are left on their own. They must create for themselves the activities they wanna take part in. There's nothing interesting besides that, unless you lower yourself to follow the pre-established rules to be "cool" and "have fun" (read to be "a follower" and "thinking you're having fun").

On a lighter note, contributing to a tribute CD seems to be the in-thing to do these past few years. Isn't it about time that the Canadian bands joined forces for a VoiVod tribute CD? Given the opportunity, to which tribute CD would you like to contribute and why?

That would be great! But sadly, Voivod in Quebec doesn't seem to have the recognition that they have outside of Quebec. I'd like very much to be on a tribute to Coroner. They were one of our very first sources of inspiration, especially with the song "Masked Jackal". We were captivated by their fast guitar and bass harmonies.

You are an avid practitioner of Shotokan karate. I am personally very fascinated by Shaolin kung fu. This is mainly caused by the abundance of excellent fighting scenes in a historical setting as shown in old Hong Kong kung fu movies.

What exactly is the difference between Shaolin and Shotokan kung fu and in which way are into the Buddhist philosophy?

Shaolin Kung Fu is much older than Shotokan karate. The karate founder studied a style derived from Shaolin Kung Fu, that is inspired on animal movements. But sadly due to time, stylistic subdivisions and tournaments,

karate lost a lot of its Chinese roots and now tends to be more a sport than a martial art. To compare them in a religious way, I can't tell you too much about that because I don't know much about Asian religions. I do know that Shintoism and Buddhism are mixed in Japanese beliefs, as well as Christianity. Coincidentally, I don't think this have a great impact. I sincerely think that traditional martial arts are very good to live in harmony and to know ourselves better.

Francois, I would like to thank you for the interview. Are there any closing comments you would like to make?

Thanks a lot for your questions. That was great. Keep up the good work, and to all metal fans, continue to support bands, go see shows and don't cut your hair! Maybe we'll play in Europe next year, hope to see you there! The latest news is that Daniel Mongrain joined Gorguts for an undetermined time. He'll take part of the recording of their next album. Nevertheless, Daniel is still with Martyr and this won't interfere in any case with our activities.

Before the press time, I received the new Martyr CD "Warp Zone." It features 9 songs with a length of 35 minutes. The typical Martyr sound has been perfected and streamlined and it should appeal to everyone interested in intelligent semi-technical death metal with a clean sound. This highly recommendable release is available for \$17.00 US/ \$20.00 Canada (in North America) or \$20.00 US (rest of the world). The website <http://pages.infinit.net/martyr/> has an on-line order form or you can write directly to Martyr, PO Box 832, Cap-de-la-madeleine (Quebec), Canada G8T 8Y7.





Psychotic Waltz

DB9D9

SAN DIEGO

Art of Mike Clift

Darkstar

Brian McAlpine

TEABAG

[by Giedrius Slivinskas]
[all illustrations by Mike Clift]

A database systems conference in San Diego was a great coincidence, because San Diego is the town which is famous for Psychotic Waltz. Psychotic Waltz, as everybody agrees, are one of the best progressive metal bands ever. Going there was a great coincidence number two - it was a perfect opportunity to hook up with the ex-members of Psychotic Waltz and do an exclusive interview. But when I started to think of possible questions, I realized that it was in fact quite a difficult task, given that there had already been a couple of Waltz interviews in the earlier issues of Edge of Time. So, I have decided to skip the regular interview part and just write a summary of my impressions. Thanks go out to Dan Rock who was extremely nice to guide me in a not-so-intricate but very spread-out city during the whole weekend.

Friday Afternoon

I called Dan Rock, and he said he would pick me up at 8.00pm. We went to his place; he lives in a nice area close to the ocean called Ocean Beach. Independent artist, painter, and tattoo master Mike Clift showed up, wearing military clothes and being in a lively mood. He informed about a show at some club with Iron Maiden and Van Halen tribute bands. We went there, paid 10 bucks for the entrance, and got into the club full of grown-up people in their late 20s and early 30s. The Maiden band was performing, and the singer was the only one having long hair, while business-look guitarists perfectly reflected the metal-aging syndrome. They did a good job though and offered a very nice selection of tunes, including "Where Eagles Dare" (the pre-history of progressive metal), "Run to the Hills," "Wasted Years" and maiden more. An okay to good performance; I felt a sudden urge to go and see real Iron Maiden live, grand scale.

Well, and I thought the Maiden-tribute band was decent. But the Van Halen tribute band was downright professional! A damn trip down memory lane, except the fact that my memory lane of Van Halen was pretty much blank. I've never been a fan of Van Halen nor have I heard their albums (a common case in Europe in general, I guess), and my only Van Halen experience was when we drove from Tucson to Grand Canyon with a Peruvian guy who had tapes of Ratt and Van Halen, and that was 50%

of the music that we got for 5 hours. Anyway, the band did a terrific job, and the singer was extremely good at stage, reminding of the confidence that stars like Axl Rose, etc. have. He has probably been in some glam rock band in the late 80s/early 90s. Dan Rock was extremely impressed with the guitar player ("I could never do such shit") and, overall, both him and Mike were very glad and excited.

Then we went to a Mexican drive-through, got some enchiladas and hot carrots (Dan), went to Dan's place and soon thereafter Mike gave me a ride to my hotel. It was 4 am anyways.

Whales (Saturday morning)

I woke up early on Saturday morning, feeling a headache but also a strange and firm will to go for a 3-hour whale-watching cruise. I did that and saw a few whales. Not much though, a spout was a common sight; and then if one saw a tail, that was real good, the top of what you can see. Good.

New Generation Tattoos & Body Piercing

1335 E. Broadway
El Cajon, CA 92021

Walk-ins Welcome or
Call for an Appointment

Crazy Mike, Artist
(619) 593-6989



State Licensed & Health Dept. Approved



Dan Rock
(ex-Psychotic Waltz)



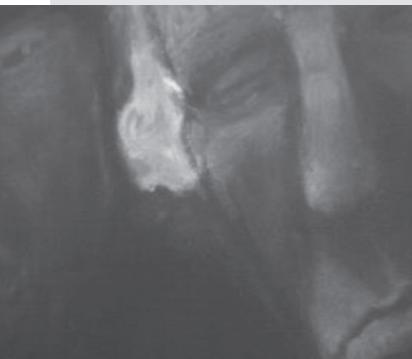
Dan Rock, memory dweller and Psychotic Waltz/Darkstar guitarist. Perhaps not as motivated for doing Darkstar as he was before, hasn't touched his guitar in a while, but things may change. Still longing for his wife. Main occupation - work on web design. Loves San Diego and doesn't want to move to LA even if he got an offer to do porn-film editing for \$20 an hour. Just loves San Diego, the ocean, and the rocks. Prefers to have money & glory now to being recognized after his lifetime, though agreed with me when I said that "no money and big impact" was better than "no money and no impact." Likes to live in memories; of his ex-wife, dad, and the band. Likes Korn and doesn't understand why it was cool to like them when they were a garage band and not cool to like them now. Likes grotesque metal/rap band Insane Clown Posse. Relates a lot to the lyrics of Stabbing Westward's "Darkest Days" album.



Untitled 3 1997 Oil on Linen, 2x3ft One of several paintings completed prior to the Europe trip. I was feeling totally oppressed and held down at the time I painted it. Originally titled "System", it is one of the last of several paintings I completed that summer, all of which have been sold. This one is in my living room...



"News" is a leftover Marktplatz drawings created in the snowy streets of Germany, when watercolors froze and I would get drunk with the street musicians... these are the only two I didn't sell. I created hundreds of little drawings like this that I painted in the cities I visited (had to eat somehow). In Marburg, I would cut up the paper and sketch the ideas assembly line style (any old thing that jumped in my head but "Tourist Freindly" and then I would gather the sketches and paint them in the town square and sell them for 5-20 marks, gilden, francs, or whatever (about 5 bucks or so, sometimes more) depending on the size and pity the buyer would take on me..... Entire "News" painting will be revealed in upcoming project.



Psychotic Waltz, again Speaking of Psychotic Waltz split-up, Dan mentioned that one of the fundamental problems occurred during the recording of "Bleeding" and after, and it was that they didn't really speak to each other. Singer Buddy was pissed off at Dan, Dan thought Buddy wasn't open to criticism during the "Bleeding" sessions, and it was obvious that he wasn't giving 100% to the band. ("A Social Grace" was the only album when everybody was clearly giving 100%). I commented that Buddy didn't sound as diverse on "Bleeding" as earlier, and Dan said that I should have heard some of the pre-demos they made. Song credits were another issue, Buddy had always wanted to be credited ("a singer with an ego, is it so hard to believe?"). Also, he wanted to save some material for his own solo album instead of giving it to the band.

"Locust" is a good example of what has initially been for his solo. An interesting detail about "Bleeding" was that what appeared to me as Buddy's scream on 7th second of the opener song "Faded" was actually Dan's guitar.

The band has actually started to make money with "Bleeding." They got a \$60,000 advance and while half of it went to the recording, the other part was distributed to the members. In addition, they made \$18,000 off the tour, giving a pretty good materialistic reason to continue and a small reward for all Rising Sun and Dream Circle rip-offs of the past. Dan said that Donal Passman's book "All You Need to Know about the Music Business" has helped him a lot in negotiating with industry people ("You get 10%, " "But the book says that it should be 12," "Okay, you get it"), so if you are in a band and have to deal with industry, getting this book would be a very good way to spend 20 or 30 bucks.

However, the band was just falling apart. New guitarist Steve Cox wanted to play early heavy stuff, like "And the Devil Cried," on live shows, while it

wasn't as easy for Buddy's voice as it was in the early 90s. Depending on how he felt each night, they were either doing it or not. In addition, Buddy wasn't much into the heavy style anymore.

Norm doesn't like Dan anymore, one of the reasons being the fact CDRs of the first Psychotic Waltz releases that are now available for sale on the band's web site. Phil doesn't play bass and concentrates on filming weddings and other nice events. Buddy lives in Austria with his wife, where, together with some like-minded musicians, he is preparing a solo album. Dan e-mailed Buddy to sort things out, and they came to peace agreeing that they should have listened to each other more and not excluding the possibility of a reunion.

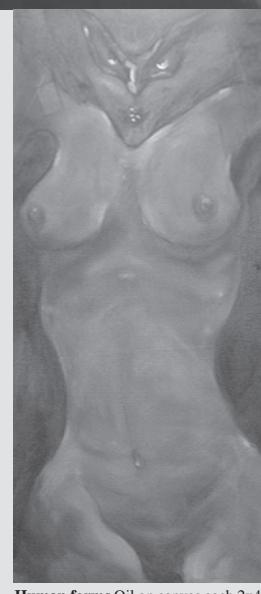
At the end, Dan stressed that Psychotic Waltz haven't broke up. He and Phil are still in the band, and they are "waiting till other guys come to their senses."

Brian McAlpin
(Sunday afternoon)

Ex-Psychotic Waltz guitarist. Lives in a house on a small street (which is called Boulevard though), has a wife, a daughter, and a home studio. Works on new music with Cubase software and his guitar (see reviewed demo). Wants to get Norm to do drums (Dan commented that Brian's programmed drums sound like drums programmed by a guitarist). Also did some porn video music (and was telling Dan how easy was to write it). We didn't stay for too long at his house, since we wanted to visit Norm and Blue Meannie Records. Mike wasn't very active and was apparently tired from Saturday's night of fetish and ecstasy, as well as from hunger reigning supreme in his stomach.

Norm Leggio, Blue Meannie, and Very Heavy Thing Called Teabag (Sunday afternoon/evening)

Norm worked for Blue Meannie Records shop and when the owner wanted to sell it, he bought it and now he pursues a metal life style. His band is called Teabag (where Steve Cox also plays), they have two demos, songs on mp3.com and prepare new material. The new stuff is more in the Meshuggah vein, as Norm says. He played one song when I was in the



Human forms Oil on canvas each 2x4 ft. This is an example of that series of 8 male and female forms.



store and when I commented that it was real heavy, he said he wanted to let the anger out in the last five years or so.

Remember Ward?

Ward is ex-Psychotic Waltz bass player. Now is in a band called DB9D9 which has samples on mp3.com. More electronic-style music, influenced by Laibach, Kraftwerk, and Nine Inch Nails.



Psychotic material in year 2000
Darkstar "Heart of Darkness" CD, Institute of Art Records
Psychotic Waltz "Dark Millennium" CD, Institute of Art Records
DB9D9, Ward's band (mp3.com)
Teabag, Norm and Steve's band (mp3.com)
Brian McAlpin's new material
Buddy Lackey's solo album
Phil's wedding flicks
www.psychoticwaltz.com
Mike Clift, kliftisch@aol.com
Blue Meannie Records, 916 Broadway, El Cajon, CA 92021, ph: (619) 442 5034,
bluemannie@cs.com

**"Voices -
A Tribute to DREAM THEATER"**
(ADR 9905/6)

CD 1: 9 great bands cover a song of
the Prog-Metal band #1

CD 2: the same 9 bands play one of
their original compositions.



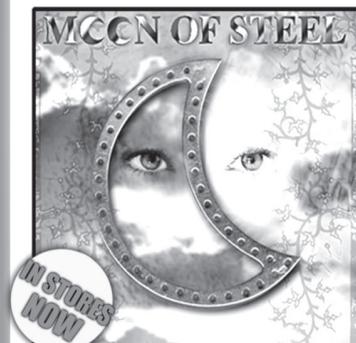
CD 1 Track Index:

1. "A Fortune In Lies" (EVIL WINGS)
2. "You Not Me" (MOON OF STEEL)
3. "Another Day" (AZTEC JADE)
4. "Pull Me Under" (ACCOMPlice)
5. "DT Medley" (EMPTY TREMOR)
6. "Metropolis Part I" (OVERLIFE)
7. "Peruvian Skies" (FIFTH SEASON)
8. "Surrounded" (CMKY)
9. "Learning To Live" (ELEVENTH HOUR)

WWW.ADRENALINE.IT

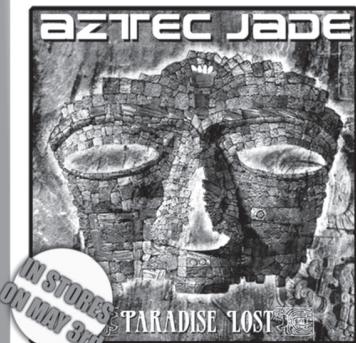
**MOON OF STEEL -
"Beyond The Edges"**
(ADR 9907)

Prime movers of the Italian Metal scene with the internationally highly acclaimed album "Passions", MOON OF STEEL are finally back to the scene. Original members Marco Vaccaro and Gianluca Oliveri (brain and heart of the first line-up) joined forces with Sarah, Oscar and Andrea and moved their sound to a very "classy" Prog-Metal. Here to stay!



**AZTEC JADE -
"Paradise Lost"** (ADR 0011)

Innovative and melodic progressive Metal combo from USA, AZTEC JADE are definitely the new driving forces in the next generation of Modern-Rock. "Paradise Lost" contains the combined works of the band's two previous efforts plus 1 brilliant unreleased studio Bonus track. Finally available in Europe, "Paradise Lost" is released as De-Luxe Digipack Set. Don't miss it!!!



ACCOMPlice - "Accomplice"
(ADR 0012)

Reissue of the widely acclaimed debut-album originally distributed in the USA only. 11 gems of extremely melodic Hard/Progressive Rock performed by 5 hugely talented musicians who have deservedly opened Live-shows for such megastars as King's X, Rush, Van Halen, M.S.G., Rainbow and Judas Priest. Featuring one previously unreleased studio bonus-track ("Crusader Soul") and re-packaged with new striking layout in a De-Luxe Digipack set.



TIMESCAPE - "Strange"
(ADR 0013)

Finally, the long awaited 2nd album! Injecting some fresh blood into the Progressive Rock/Metal galaxy, Timescape definitely proves that it's still possible to write complex music without losing the melodies, and compose lyrics about humanities versus the overabused dungeons and dragons topics. "Strange" is firmly holding the Prog/Art flame in their native Sweden while being deservedly ready to jump onto the international scene.



ADRENALINE Records: info@adrenaline.it

<http://www.adrenaline.it>

VIGILANTE**Edge of Time***Massacre Records*

Vigilante is the second band in 1999 (after Sharon) to release an album titled "Edge of Time." We should at least be happy that there are no bands called so... Vigilante hail from Japan and "Edge of Time" is their second album. Stylistically, it's melodic speed metal with progressive tendencies; references include early Fates Warning, Steel Prophet, Sanctuary, and Labyrinth. The vocals are high indeed, so I wouldn't play this album to people not familiar with progressive/power metal. However, a big merit is that this music, uncommonly to the genre, is not too predictable and has many rhythm and part changes. Good melodies are present, too. In addition, the CD cover is non-typical and well-done. (GS) [Vigilante Inc., #104 Wingkuden, 2-22-30, Niikura, Wako-shi, Saitama 351-0115, Japan] [vigilletter@aol.com] [<http://members.aol.com/vigilletter/>] 4 [GM 4 1/4]

VISION DIVINE**Vision Divine***Atreia Records*

You've got to produce a lot to earn a living by playing music! Based on this principle, Italian metal bands seem to multiply and always produce new siblings or avatars with the same musicians. The last tentative stems form Labyrinth and Rhapsody, who joined forces to create a "brand new" band called Vision Divine. Well, Vision Divine is actually Labyrinth with Fabio Leone on vocals... The outcome: Labyrinth of course, but with a better singer! (except that Fabio, as well as most Italian singers, still can't pronounce English correctly, what results systematically in "th" replaced by "z"...). Hence, expect the same recipes applied again and again: some neo-classical melodies, fast riffs, catchy tunes and choruses. Vertex: you are gratified by a "new" version of Europe's hit "The Final Countdown." Any other idea to recycle old stuff to boost sales? I'll rate it a little bit better than Labyrinth just because of Fabio's outstanding voice... (AS) 3 1/2 [GM 4 1/2]

OLIVER WAKEMAN**Heaven's Isle***Verglas Music/InsideOut Music*

Those lucky days... This is a CD of piano/ keyboards instrumentals that even national radio stations would love to play. Damn, I always thought that Psychotic Waltz's first album was the one to practice the waltz dance on, but "Puffin's Waltz" off "Heaven's Isle" shows how wrong I was (way too late since I danced my wedding waltz last year). Anyway, not to waste any of your valuable time, I just want to announce that I am going to give this CD to my mom, since she likes slightly sentimental piano instrumentals. No evaluation, of course. (GS) [<http://listen.to/oliverwakeman>]

WE**Livin' the Lore***Voices Of Wonder*

WE definitely are Norway's best psychedelic rock export. Their previous releases contained mostly mid-tempo atmospheric intelligent songs with good melodies. "Livin' the Lore" is heavier and more aggressive, it goes towards bands like Kyuss or Slo-Burn. Besides "usual" WE songs like "Shades We Wear," "Moanjam," or "This Day," you can find here modern groovy stoner rock pieces "Full Moon With a Label," "I&I," or "Livin' the Lore." Put Black Sabbath, Kyuss, and Led Zeppelin in one pot, and you'll get an approximate picture about this album. Good. (SV) [Nun Music/WE, PO Box 5268 Maj., 0303 Oslo, Norway] [nunmusic@online.no] [<http://www.we.org>] 4 1/4

WE**From the Spaceways EP***Drunken Maria Records*

This new EP is like a continuation of their great "Livin' the Lore" CD. "Flyin'" and "Boom Boom Apes" are the typical WE tracks with fine guitars and nice vocal lines. "Cherry Red" sounds like a cool mixture of T. Rex and Led Zeppelin. The final track "Family" is a bit funny, but goes well as a closing song of this successful EP. Let's wait for the next full-length CD on the new label. (SV) [Drunken.Maria@worldonline.nl] 4

JOOP WOLTERS**Workshop***self-released*

Thanks to modern technology, overly creative and enthusiastic musicians like Joop Wolters now have the possibilities to release their own music to CD. Joop Wolters of the Dutch progressive metal group Arabesque is such a person. "Workshop" is Joop's first solo release in every sense of the word: Joop plays all the instruments on this release assisted only in two songs by the Arabesque keyboardplayer Thijs Cuppen and Lemur Voice drummer Nathan van der Wouw. Musically, Joop's inherently heavier style is combined with influences of Allan Holdsworth and Joe Satriani to create a wide spectrum of songs. There is only minimal self-indulgence but some of the fusion-style songs like "Funk it up" and "Cross my Heart" are hard to stomach. On the other hand, most of the material contains multiple layers of guitars with a good sense of melody to create some great songs such as "Tibet" and "Syntology." (CR)

[\$10, Joop Wolters, Sabinistraat 23, 6004 JD, Weert, The Netherlands]
3 3/4

WOLVERINE**Fervent Dream***Zizania Entertainment Group*

The Swedish band Wolverine was one of the surprises at last year's Prog Power festival. With their enthusiastic and energetic stage performance, they were one of the day's highlights. These positive impressions are strengthened after hearing their debut mini-CD (clocking in at 32 minutes). Musically, Wolverine can be described as a cross between Fates Warning and Amorphis. This is showcased on the four songs "Whispers on the Wind," "Echoes," "More than Grief," "Again," and an outro "Last Words." Instrumentally they know how to incorporate long instrumental passages in their songs. In these passages the different influences (from prog rock to folk to Swedish-style death metal) are blended to create a mood not unlike that of Opeth. In "Echoes," an effective use of violins or keyboards is made to set a certain Fates Warning-type mood of gloom. "More than Grief" shows Wolverine's more progressive and aggressive side and features some brilliant drumming. One of the unique aspects of Wolverine is the combination of clear Ray Alder-type vocals (courtesy of bass-player Stefan Zell) and death grunts (courtesy of Marcus Losbjer). Although Wolverine have gathered a bit of criticism in the past for these grunts (which are a legacy from their days starting out as a death metal band), I personally think that they work quite well. A highly recommendable release... (CR)

[Wolverine@dprp.vuurwerk.nl] [<http://www.dprp.vuurwerk.nl/bands/wolverine>]

4 1/4 [GS 4]

**WUTHERING HEIGHTS****Within***Sensory*

The apparently perpetually extended delay for the debut album (it was recorded in August 1998 and was only released in November 1999) from this new Danish band was finally worth it: a new gem has been unveiled! Wuthering Heights can be defined as progressive speed metal, with many similarities to Blind Guardian and hints of Symphony X, even though they are less heavy. Hence, their music has some medieval features, yet not at all in the symphonic, operatic, or neo-classical style a la Rhapsody. The blend is rather a kind of troubadour/folklore metal, alternating fast passages with calmer parts. The melodies are excellent, very catchy but never cheesy. It's a kind of Rhapsody antithesis in the same sub-genre.

Additional instruments like flute and violin are also integrated, but with a perfect balance. One of the most interesting points to remark is the presence of progressive features, frequent time and rhythm changes, irregular song structures, which really give an added value to the music. Musicians are all outstanding, though the main driving force behind the band is clearly the guitarist Erik Ravn. The singer Kristian "Krilie" Andren is equally very talented, with powerful, mid-range vocals. No high-pitched singing a la Labrie, rather some parallels with Russell Allen. Ambience background sounds (howling wind, falling rain, etc.) are added to round up the overall concept, which narrates the story of a wanderer in the typical heroic fantasy style. The theme is besides emphasized by the old Norse runes (Wuthering Heights logo depicted by the runes "WH" in Futhark - the runic alphabet) and the eleven letters on the back cover (borrowed from Tolkien). The production is also flawless. The only disappointment: it's too short (the total time is only 47:37)! (AS)

[<http://www.intromental.com/wuthering/>]
4 3/4 [CR 3 3/4, GS 3 3/4, SV 3 1/2]

XANG**Destiny of a Dream***Galileo Records*

Xang have already received very good reviews in many mags. "Destiny of a Dream" has become a really strong prog rock instrumental album. Some songs are overlength, but this record doesn't bore you to tears. Skilful arrangements and relaxed atmosphere of the CD will afford pleasure to every prog rock fan. For me, the best track is "The Prediction" with a bit dramatic structure. Xang's release is a nice experience for admirers of the genre, but it has a slim chance outside the prog rock circle. (SV)

[<http://www.galileo-records.com/>]

[progpat@bluewin.ch]

4 [AO 3 3/4, GS 3 3/4]

XEN**84.000 Dharma Doors***InsideOut Music/Furious Skeleton*

This project features Enchant members, and the thin prog rock delivered could easily be on an Enchant album. Frankly, it's difficult to see a need for such a project, especially since songs sound like leftovers from "Break" (Enchant's third, and a pretty good album) sessions. "84.000 Dharma Doors" displays thin and light prog rock with some technical parts but, even at its best moments, sounds like a pale version of Rush. "Break" was way more expressive. (GS)

3 [CR 4, SV 3 1/2]

ZANISTER**Symphonica Millenia***Shark Records/Leviathan*

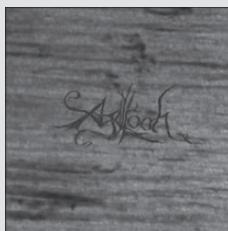
First of all, don't get wrong with the title: stylistically this is not any symphonic or ultra-arranged material (excluding a couple of neoclassical intro/outro parts).

Step some years back in time and try to imagine a cross between some of the best facets you could find on Metal Church, Vicious Rumors, or Savatage's "Sirens"/"Power of the Night" era music. Well, this could be one way to describe you this energetic-Red-Bull, non-stopping succession of crusher and splendid guitar riffs. Certainly, "Symphonica Millenia" is a fantastic, traditional US heavy metal release. Zanister is headed mainly by Michael Harris and well-known axeman David

T. Chastain on the lead guitars. The synergy they both show along this, nearly one hour of music, can be labeled as nothing but impressive; this team succeeds with honors in transmitting a high dose of spirited pure metal feel through their set of compositions. And it's also remarkable how, at the same time, the high predominance of this instrument does not imply any superfluous display of virtuosity, which might distract the listener from the basic points of the album: here, each song shines melodically by itself, and is effectively conducted by Brian Sarvela's vocals which fit perfectly with the orientation of this very powerful effort. In my opinion, we're in front of a killer and sensational metal band, and definitely one of the power metal records to be taken into consideration this year. (GM)

[<http://www.cld.me.de>]

4 1/2

thrash, death, black, doom, industrial metal**reviews****AGALLOCH****Pale Folklore***The End Records*

I'll say right from the start that "Pale Folklore" is a stunning piece of work, and a brilliant debut from the US based Agalloch. That said, I'll try to articulate in words the beauty expressed in this work. Agalloch plays a brand of metal closely related to the early work of Ulver, but manage to bring their own charm to the table. The music is full, darkly inspiring and surprisingly relaxed. The core of their sound is folky black metal (hence the Ulver comparison), chock full of vibrant tremolo riffing, wonderful acoustic breaks and melancholic segments not entirely unlike classic doom metal. They also present the listener with the occasional forays into more gothic terrain, which bring to mind the early work of Fields of Nephilim: nice rolling bass lines, clean guitar tones and somewhat "rocking" percussion. The vocals come in rasped and clean varieties: the rasped vocals are standard black metal fare (though perhaps more subtle), while the clean are mainly whispered or chanted. The only technical problem might be the occasional awkward transitions scattered throughout the album.

The music is very atmospheric. It can be cold and harrowing, but also warm and subtle. The acoustic breaks are very much in the traditional vein, breaking up segments of calculated unrest and providing emotional purpose. Jazz distortion is used here and there, to great effect. If you like early Ulver, this album is a must. But Agalloch is so much more than an Ulver clone - they've taken that classic sound, and added progressive, gothic and doom elements; perfectly infusing these separate elements and giving them new purpose and form. This album is an atmospheric work of art, and one that grows on you with time. The inclusion of an ambient track is also a wonderful surprise. (JS)

[joakenthroner@hotmail.com]

4 1/4

ABADDON INCARNATE**The Last Supper***Season of Mist*

Brutal death/grind from Ireland. The cover artwork is a bit cheap, but agrees with the title of the CD. I'm a bit confused, 'cause it's released on a good Season Of Mist label, and it's probably one of the worst products I've ever heard from this company. The sound quality of the CD is not bad, but the contents don't impress me at all. (SV)

2 [AO 2 3/4]

ADVERSAM**Animadverte***Scarlet*

Blasting, keyboard drenched, wall-of-sound black metal is a meal best served in small portions, but Adversam serves it well and only in the most high-class joints. Tremolo riffing married to atmospheric (albeit somewhat disjointed) keyboards and continuous blast beats, is a formula anyone listening to black metal is familiar with, but "Animadverte" represents it in its highest form. The music manages to be haunting and brutal at once, equal parts organic melody and white noise. The blasting does get tiring after a while and the production frequently betrays the music (the drums are right in the front, hiding otherwise good tremolo melodies), but Adversam knows their recipes, are acquainted with the spices to properly embellish the food, and provide a clean serving environment. Recommended for fans of the genre. Three and a half stars! Dine with a loved one. (JS)

3 1/2

AETERNUS
Shadows of Old
Hammerheart Records

The new album of Aeternus is maybe the biggest step from black metal to death metal genre in the history of Aeternus. Of course, earlier they were not a typical black metal band, because they have always had this death metal heaviness, but, on "Shadows of Old," only black metal riffing remains a typical element of their earlier style; we mostly hear death metal here. This mix of death and black isn't strange anyway, because we have such groups as Immortal and Angel Corpse performing in this style. Aeternus can be added to the list of successful examples of this (sub?)genre. If you still don't imagine what this disc is about, make a mind mix of Immortal, death metal growls, Morbid Angel/Bolt Thrower influence, and a bit chaotic black metal. This band really has class, and some fans already name them as one of the most perspective bands of the style. I'm not sure of this, but I'm almost sure that they are one of the most perspective bands in Hammerheart's family. (AO) 4

AFTERSHOCK
Through the Looking Glass
Goodlife Recordings

The album where such genres as hardcore, aggro metal, and progressive are mixed. It starts with atmospheric soundscapes which could be a prelude to anything but a hardcore album. But it is here, and so we are taken to a quite strange album. Later, the style becomes clearer with such songs as "Jabberwocky," where we meet aggressive hardcore with influences of such bands as Machine Head with maybe more straight playing. In places, Aftershock sound more metallic (many people compare them to Carcass), and Aftershock have something of "Heartwork" album, but Aftershock are really much more hardcorish), and it seems that this band doesn't want to stand in one place. The dose of progressive metal and electronics make this album sound not conventionally, and, overall, it is a good listening for the ones who want hardcore to be mixed with other styles. Maybe not the most energetic and powerful release in HC/metal crossroad, but surely one of the most multi-styled. Try it if you want something different. (AO) 3 3/4

ANACRUSIS
Manic Impressions re-release
Metal Blade Records

Anacrusis is one of the few "apart" thrash metal bands. Their sound and style is unique, and can be defined as a kind of progressive thrash. "Manic Impressions," their third album, is dominated by powerful, speed metal-like riffs, and the vocals of Kenn Nardi, the leader of the band, composing most songs, playing lead guitar and singing. Nardi's vocals range from clean singing to thrash cookie monster vox, with some shrieks on some parts. Anacrusis remind me of Coroner, yet with less virtuosity. The bass, very upfront in the mix, is a trademark of the band. (AS) [www.geocities.com/~cheffboy/index.html] 4 [AO 4, CR 4 1/4, GS 3 3/4, SV 4]

AGORAPHOBIC NOSEBLEED/CONVERGE
The Poacher Diaries split CD
Relapse Records

The grindcore propagandists Agoraphobic Nosebleed return with the new release, this time it's just a split CD with Boston's band Converge, as the full length album will follow later this year. Like with their predecessor "Honkey Reduction," they offer us uncompromising grind with some hardcore and noise. It sounds a bit strange maybe, but I like Converge's 6 tracks much better than Agoraphobic Nosebleed's 9 creations that are too ordinary for me. Bands of the genre could experiment more on their songs, because whenever I listen to a grind record, I hear the same well-tried, but worn-out combinations. (SV) 3 [AO 3 1/4]

AGRESSOR
Medieval Rites
Season of Mist

Founded back in 1986, Agressor for a long time was one of the most known French thrash/death metal bands. The 5th album of this group deserves attention not only from explorers of thrash/death origins, but also it is a worthy choice for a fan of modern thrash/death metal. Agressor, in contrast to many of their colleagues who started playing in the 80s and don't see a need to look with open eyes into the current metal genre, combine roots of the 80s thrash/death with recent influences such as atmospheric black metal and death metal sound of later days. Though mostly it is melodic and technical thrash metal reminding of the old times, death metal

ANACRUSIS
Screams and Whispers re-release
Metal Blade Records

The last album of Anacrusis before they disbanded can be considered as their culmination. Keyboards are added as an extra layer. Thus, the focus is on atmosphere building on several progressive songs, where keys are used to create a grim, gloomy mood. The whole record oozes a very dark ambience, with a lot of minor and dissonant chords. Melodies are excellent, punctuated by syncopated riffs cutting through the background and a powerful bass section. Nardi's singing is still raspy, but cleaner than on "Manic Impressions." (AS) 4 1/4 [AO 4, CR 4 1/4, GS 4 1/2]



crazy Australians, and, finally, they play the music which drives you. I'm not sure, but this is maybe one of the first very positive reviews that I write on a grind release. So maybe they are worth of it? (AO) [soulreaper@angelfire.com] 4

ANCIENT
The Halls of Eternity
Metal Blade Records

This album of Ancient may disappoint lots of fans who adored their highly atmospheric previous album "Mad Grandiose Blodfiends". Even the fans of their second disc "The Cainian Chronicle" now can blame Ancient for becoming more aggressive at the expense of atmospheres. The new album is surely the return to their aggressive roots and the mood we heard on "Svartalvheim" album. They decided to use more intense elements instead of going more symphonic, as we could have guessed following their musical progression. The grotesque feelings and the straight rocking elements of their previous album disappeared, making the group more one-styled.

This album, in contrast to their previous two works, can easily be put into black metal category. It is good for those who wanted Ancient to become more brutal, and this disc also has got the most powerful and clear production. Though heavier than ever, they haven't totally lost the melodic touch, and such songs as "The Heritage" will please fans of melodic black metal. The vocals also matured and became more traditionally blackish, not spoken as it was earlier. After some listens, the new face of Ancient becomes quite interesting, and such tracks as "I, Madman" or "The Halls of Eternity" may become group's classics one day. But obviously, for an atmospheric metal fan, it takes more time to get into this creation than into Ancient's previous albums. (AO) 4

Sculptured - "Apollo Ends"

The music is tightly executed and strangely accessible; the overall effect is artful, original and highly inventive music that somehow lends itself to casual listening... If you like truly progressive and challenging music, Sculptured is highly recommended. -- Edge Of Time



SCULPTURED
Apollo Ends

the end records
556 s. fair oaks ave #101-111
pasadena, ca 91105 usa
fax: 626-403-2848
www.theendrecords.com

ANDRAS
Quest of Deliverance

Last Episode

I don't know how many albums the people at Last Episode label have released last year. They continue this "giant enterprise" this year, too. I wonder, if everything pays off this way. Here we have another "cult" black metal band: Andras. Although "Quest of Deliverance" is already their third output, I'm quite not sure whether they have a strong status in German black metal underground. The contents of this CD also doesn't excite the fascination: average black metal and nothing else. Only "Klagelied" (the musical version of a legend from Erzgebirge) stands out, but that's all. In my opinion, there are simply too many ordinary BM releases lately. (SV)
2 1/2

ANGIZIA
Das Schachbrett des Trommelbuben

Zacharias

Napalm Records

This third release from Austrian art-metallers finds the band exploring some new terrain without losing focus on their traditional sound. Angizia play an unusual brand of metal, defined by piano leads, classical instrumentations and the occasional splashes into Just Plain Weird. This album marks the first effort since the band abandoned the black metal shriek in favor of clearer varieties. As always, the album features a whole array of different singing voices, the most prominent being a very expressive female soprano voice. Sometimes the voices harmonize, other times they don't. All of this is constructed over a traditional metal quartet, a piano, violins and even an accordion. The piano work is simply glorious, wonderfully developed, and very professional. It also leads the band, playing the role usually reserved for a guitar in a metal band. All of this somehow comes together, having the effect of a metal musical, complete with a full cast of characters and incidental music. Throw in some Parisian accordion work, minor polka influences, and you have a somewhat strange experience. Angizia is what you might end up with if Andrew Loydd Webber took an interest in metal. For daring ears only. (JS)
3 3/4

ANOREXIA NERVOSA
Sodomizing the Archangel EP

Osmose Productions

The previous album of this theatrical band was quite far away from black metal or even any other metal; it was closer to gothic wave with industrial elements. On this EP, we mostly hear symphonic black metal, and find influences of such acts as Emperor or Dimmu Borgir. Anorexia Nervosa also include classical music schemes and don't escape the shadow of their natives Misanthrope: just listen to "Blood & Latex Terrortech War," where Heidmar's voice gets into the dramatic manner we heard on Misanthrope songs. The mix is completed by adding some industrial technics, recalling their previous album "Exile".

This jump into a new style may seem too ambitious for someone, but I can bravely say that many "true black metal bands" don't sound so fresh and are more stagnant than Anorexia Nervosa. In fact, Anorexia Nervosa are more dramatic and theatrical than 90% of all black legion. Technically they know all the rules of orchestral black metal, their gothic image serves them well, and their connection to gothic/electronic style marks this group in black metal genre. The full-length follows, and we'll see if it is provocative enough. (AO)
4

ARKANGEL
Dead Man Walking

Good Life Recordings

Probably a piece of hardcore that many metalheads will also gladly put in their CD players. It is straight-to-your-face HC with clear metallic influences (especially riffing, you can notice some Slayer hints of their 1986-88 era). In fact, the structure of the songs owes more to metal than to HC, and in places it's only shouting, aggressive vocals what help to ascribe this album to the HC scene. I'm not sure if all of this album will please HC fans, but the ones who like such groups as Liar, Skycemefalling, or Poison The Well, can bravely try this one. Arkangel provide more hatred, their music is more aggressive, but sometimes we need something that just blows to your face. Arkangel do it right. (AO)
3 3/4

BORKNAGAR
Quintessence

Century Media Records

The former 'black metal all star' project has evolved into a regular band, which now can fight with Emperor for the throne. Band's fourth album "Quintessence" (strengthened by the presence of Spiral Architect and Solefald members) did not go into a softer direction compared to their most melodic effort to date "The Archaic Course," and just

has the right mixture of epic character, wise aggression, folk influences, and clean and harsh vocals. Additional merits include that Borknagar manage to compose epic black metal without song lengths exceeding 6 minutes, seamlessly integrate folk music elements (for example, in "The Ruins of Future"), and have songs that do actually differ from each other, without sacrificing the overall integrity. While a few tracks (for example, "Icon Dreams") remind of Arcturus, Borknagar have their own identity of atmospheric melodic black metal with rich textures and multi-layered vocals, as exemplified by tracks "The Presence is Ominous" and "Colossus." Another nice release of challenging black metal in 2000. (GS)
[http://www.borknagar.com]
4 1/4 [CR 4 1/4]

ART INFERNO
Abyssus Abyssum Invocat

Scarlet

Art Inferno is yet another symphonic black/death metal band in the vein of Cradle of Filth and Dimmu Borgir. Hailing from Italy, Art Inferno attempts to combine theatrical grandeur with blasting metal mayhem. While somewhat successful, I find that this album really doesn't grab the listener (in this case, me) or create anything truly viable. There is however, a good deal of obvious potential here. The music is centered on fast tempos, fairly complex death metal rhythm guitar and soaring layers of keyboard work. The drumming is top notch, with great blast beats and synchronized double bass rumbles. The production is somewhat muddy but adequate in its wall-of-sound approach. The keyboard work is the usual black metal fare: sweeping strings and chorus effects with ample use of piano and organ sounds. Choirs are employed here and there, with bombastic effect. But despite the album's bombast and fury, I find myself unable to really appreciate it. The whole symphonic black/death metal just grates on me and I really feel that I've heard it all before. But for those of you who can't get enough of Dimmu Borgirish grandeur-n-bombast, this album might be just the thing for you. (JS)
3 [GS 3 3/4]

ASHES TO ASHES

Shapes of Spirits

self-released

Ashes to Ashes hail from Norway and play a frostier brand of doom metal, with slight progressive tendencies. The music is dark and heavy, and yet warm and subtle - a contradiction that well illustrates the level of variation in the music. Songs are long, complex, varied and consistently emotional - wrought with a melancholic and tragic outlook. Many passages are laden in prog rock-esque grooves, while others are defined by aggressive (almost death metal) doom riffing. Metal gives way to extended piano solos, which in turn give way to organic, atmospheric new age. Somehow all of this comes together, forming an unbroken tapestry of sound. The weak link in the music is the keyboards - often they sound far too synthetic and disrupt the otherwise perfect harmony of the music. But this is a minor complaint in light of the great music that spews out of this record most of the time. The vocalist Kenneth Brastad really stands out in the music, with a powerful and deep voice and memorable vocal arrangements. His singing is what makes the good music great, and I thoroughly enjoy his voice. The music has an overall atmospheric effect not entirely unlike "Ominous" era in The Woods- dark and haunting. The production isn't the best (a bit cackling at times), but it serves the music well - sometimes you take what you get. What can



I say - I really like this band. They have clear potential and I can definitely see great things for them ahead. If you like your atmospheric doom metal darkly inspiring, you could do a lot worse than Ashes to Ashes. (JS)
[Ashes to Ashes, PO Box 2038, N-0505, Oslo, Norway] [atoa@atoa.net] [http://www.atoa.net]
4 1/4 [GS 3 3/4]

ATROX

Contentum

Season of Mist

Season of Mist have struck the proverbial gold with this Norwegian band Atrox, fitting perfectly within the innovative musical spectrum of the French label. "Contentum" is Atrox's second album after the debut "Mesmerized" was released on Head not Found in 1997. Atrox take a basic doom metal sound (akin to "Mandylion"-era The Gathering or midtempo Trouble) and combines it with the gothic elements of 3rd and the Mortal to create a unique aural and mind blowing spectrum. The band has successfully integrated various experimental parts and transgressed the conventional gothic metal sound with daring song structures and instrumentation. These do not deter from a predefined path and, luckily, Atrox do not succumb to the trend of using strings and symphonic overtones to define their sound. Although the mood is generally gloomy and dark, there are also moments of schizophrenia as well. This is especially evident when female vocalist Monica switches between an operatic version of The Gathering's Anneke and a crazed Kate Bush. The exquisite keyboards are used for mood setting and atmospheric overtones. Like Fountain of Tears, the music has a definite cinematic quality and, in my mind, conjures up a diverse set of images like that of a Vaudevillian fair in "Gather in Me No More," for example. With a perfect production and over 65 minutes of music, "Contentum" is a true piece of art. (CR)
4 1/2 [AO 4]

AVULSED

Stabwound Orgasm

Repulse Records

Avulsed have always tried to play death metal with a little bit nontraditional turn (just remember techno re-mixes on their "Cybergore" album), but it seemed that this band lacked a good production and technical skills. "Stabwound Orgasm" corrects their earlier deficiencies and is the best album of these Spanish death metal heroes. A clear production and a much more considered music make this album a serious happening in death metal world. Such songs as "Blessed by Gore" surprise with sudden rhythm changes, "Compulsive Hater" presents Avulsed being the most melodic in their history (if not growling vocals, we could even talk about a strange variation of the Gothenburg style), and other tracks like "Exorcismo Vaginal" again return us to earth, I mean to brutal death metal. Avulsed still remain the band which plays brutal death metal first of all, but their flirting with other styles makes this disc interesting not only for the fans of death metal. (AO)
4

BETRAY MY SECRETS

Betray My Secrets

Serenades Records

If you like gothic metal combined with exotic music influences and strong ethno touch, Betray My Secrets is the right choice for you. This disc was recorded during half of a year and has so much various side-influences added that it seems almost impossible to have all this in one place. So, what have we got here? Opera singers from Mailand, Dao-Poets, African singers, Chinese guitar

players, Sitar, tabla percussions, Indian bamboo flutes, Piccolo flutes from Nepal, Seruling flutes from Malaysia, Chinese sheet-metal percussions, ... enough? Plus remember that all this is only one side of Betray My Secrets. Another one is gothic metal with slight black metal influences (in vocal parts). For this metallic side, members of Darkseed and Megaherz are responsible. The result just fulfills high expectations. It is a mix of modern atmospheric metal and various ethno musical traditions, seems like Dead Can Dance with all their colors would have decided to play some metal and done it right. Such songs as "Shamanic Dream," "God And Me," or "Oh Great Spirit" introduce strong emotional power that we can hardly meet in music these days. What makes me the most enthusiastic is that the ethno character is revealed very authentically and you feel that this isn't cliché, it is real. Maybe in some places this ethno music is changed by metal too suddenly, and some songs do not really need brutal parts, but it doesn't change my opinion that it's really a very good album. (AO)
4 1/4 [SV 3 3/4]

BEWITCHED

At the Gates of Hell

Osmose Productions

The departure of Blacheim, who, in fact, was the leader of Bewitched, seems to have ruined this group. Regardless of the info-sheet, where the album is presented as "their strongest release to date," "At the Gates of Hell" presents just dull heavy metal with high ambitions and poor ideas. The new disc doesn't have any energy and nostalgic character of the two first Bewitched albums. That's true, these releases were a bit absurd to me, too, but at least black/speed was mixed with the retro feeling and "straight to your face" heavy metal style. Now, this heavy metal riffling a la 1985, stupid choruses don't work anymore, and a cover of Thor's "Let the Blood Run Red" doesn't save this album. Bewitched must find someone who would take Blacheim's creative position. (AO)
3 1/4

BLOODTHORN
Onwards into Battle

Season of Mist

The fans of epic black metal can bravely try this disc, as Bloodthorn on their second full-length explore all the necessary attributes of atmospheric/dark black metal. "Onwards into Battle" makes us remember that even sagacious black metal can be brutal enough. Though their long songs start with melancholic and quite slow black metal, later they can transform into fast and aggressive fury of black metal (even the elements of death metal can be noticed in some places). Of course, all the fans of atmospheric metal wait for their traditional so lovely pieces, and they get them here - this album is filled with melodic guitar solos, acoustic guitars, female vocals. In short, it's another example of how brutal music is revealed with the aspects of beauty. Nothing new, but it sounds good. (AO)
3 3/4

BLOODWORM

Transvalation

Lifestyle Records

Bloodworm's "7 single "Cold Dead Stare" stimulated my appetite, and here is the full-length. Featuring ex-Infernal Majesty vocalist Vince, "Transvalation" is a great mixture of aggression and melody. Bloodworm are really talented songwriters. Their outstanding show abilities (remember G.G. Allin - RIP) are already known in their homeland, but I think, the most important thing here is the fact that they compose ripe songs with cool lyrics. Do you want examples? Listen to the opener "Oh Yeah," the varied "Don't Talk to Me," "Bloody Red Speedball," or the mighty "Cold Dead Stare." This CD is a place where heavy metal, hardcore, and rock'n'roll celebrate. Check them out, Bloodworm really have that certain something! (SV)
[Lifestyle Records, 253 College St., Unit 110, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5T-1R5]
[lifestylerecords@yahoo.com] [http://www.infiniteweb.net/lri]
4 1/4

BLO.TORCH

Blo.Torch

Wicked World

What I like Blo.Torch for, is their melodic approach. On this album we can variate various styles; from death metal assaults to doom metal or even classical heavy metal influences, but all these sides of Blo.Torch have one similar aspect - this Dutch five-piece presents everything very melodically. In

times when extreme metal has got a more rhythmic nature, Blo.Torch put dominant melodic guitars solos to the forefront. Many listeners will probably find the influences of At The Gates here, and they will certainly be right, but I would also name the influences of traditional heavy metal with Iron Maiden as the most remarkable of them. Stylistically, this album delivers a mix of Gothenburg styled tracks (like on "Quatrains") with a more trashy turn, doomy tracks (like "King of Karnage"), heavy metallic "Seem to Be the Enemy" or psychedelic "Bloodstains." This album proves a good musicianship and songwriting, and I wonder which direction this group will go in the future. Now there are several stylistical doors opened for them. (AO) [<http://www.come.to/blo.torch>] 3 3/4

BRUTAL TRUTH **Goodbye Cruel World** DoCD *Relapse Records*

This double album of Brutal Truth reminds us that this group was and probably will always be the most interesting one in grindcore scene. This new collection offers various rare tracks, live recordings, cover versions, and other important material for a fan of grind. The first album presents a collection from Brutal Truth's live shows. There, the music sounds even more chaotic, brutal; dedicated to all "true" brutalers, as for others it may be too much of this intensity. The second album is much more interesting to me, here, we find lots of cover versions, lost tracks from limited edition albums, strange live-cuts. The group leads you to different experiences - from straight and brutal grindcore to clearly punk-influenced "Born to Die" or groovy "Cornucopia." It seems that this collection contains the most groovy songs in the entire Brutal Truth's history. Maybe not everything will please a regular listener of heavy music, but it's clear that these 56 songs is a perfect way for you to get into grindcore. Or, as they call it, mind-grind. (AO) 4

BURIAL **Mourning the Millennium** EP *self-released*

Burial offer us typical US death metal with all appropriate attributes. The production is all right, the musicianship also not bad, but the originality is absent as usual. These five tracks will attract attention of all Six Feet Under or Cannibal Corpse fans. Only for death metal freaks. (SV) [<http://www.angelfire.com/mar/BURIAL>] [BURIAL666@AOL.COM] 3 [AO 3]

CALLENISH CIRCLE **Graceful... yet Forbidding** *DSFA Records*

"Graceful... yet Forbidding" is the second album of Callenish Circle, a melodic death metal band hailing from the Netherlands. Callenish Circle play melodic death metal of the highest order, combining the Gothenburg sound with highly emotive doom metal and a slight dose of progressive songsmithing. "Graceful... yet Forbidding" features thick, tightly executed riffs, inventive guitar harmonies and brilliantly executed solos. Clean tone guitar work infused with leads brimming with distortion, creating a synthesis of sound that is as beautiful as it is aggressive. The drum work is highly active and the bass is always audible - the bassist even has a few solos. The songs usually alternate between typical melodic death metal and doom passages. The doomy segments are emotional and dark, creating a noticeable contrast in the often upbeat music. The band also employs a fairly high level of compositional complexity, with thematic elements and dynamic time signature and tempo changes - the music flows like a river, with each song moving in a somewhat unpredictable course. My one complaint is the overall lack of any real originality, but the complaint is a minor one and largely inconsequential. The music is so professional, tight and emotional, that such grievances are really unfounded. Melodic and progressive, Callenish Circle is extreme metal of the highest order. (JS) 4 1/2 [GS 3 3/4]

CENTINEX **Bloodhun EP** *Repulse Records*

Their previous album "Reborn Through Flames" was one of the best releases of

Repulse Records in 1998, but this mini-album marks an even better composed music and makes a claim for Centinex to become premiere band in Repulse's family. As earlier, these Swedes explore death metal in the veins of Entombed or Dismember. Centinex don't go far from these groups and concentrate on pure traditions of 90s Swedish death metal. It reminds me of their natives Dellamorte whose album "Home Sweet Hell" was one of the best examples of Entombed-influenced death metal. There are reasons for this, because Centinex now feature ex-Dellamorte guitarist and singer. The coming of the new vocalist improved group's music, as their previous singer's voice didn't address the needs of this brutal but catchy Swedish death metal. Now they've got the right line-up, technical possibilities and, of course, a potential fan-base of those who miss old Entombed. Centinex can take Entombed's place one day, and "Bloodhun" is the best Centinex release to this date. (AO) [<http://www.hem.passagen.se/davthvs/centinex>] [centinex@hotmail.com] 4 1/4

CEPHALIC CARNAGE **Conforming to Abnormality** *Headfucker Records*

The main inspiration of these guys is dope. And it's very strange, because they, instead of stoner metal or psychedelic rock, play pure death/grind. Leaving inspirations aside, we also find that this group delivers nothing new and just repeat old, traditional mixture of brutal death metal and chaotic grindcore. It seems that these guys have technical possibilities and know how to play ultra-fast and brutal music, but somehow the result is too chaotic and dull. It reminds me of schizoidic tracks by Exit 13, but the latter plays their music more mindfully. Anyway, Relapse Records have already picked this group up, so maybe they will create something more interesting in the future. (AO) [cepharn.juno.com] 2 3/4

CHAMBER SEVEN

Bacteria *Brain Tumor Records*

America is an inexhaustible land of bizarre and strange bands. Chamber Seven is another one. Their material consists of sick metal songs with a bit hysterical female vocals, acoustic guitar inserts and several industrial passages. It takes time to get used to this pretty chaotic stuff, but after several listenings, this band leaves a quite original impression. If you don't trust me, listen to "Cast The First Stone" or the ballad "Release (Raquel)." Fans of innovative industrial metal sounds should check out this one. (SV) [\$12 USA/\$14 World, Samuel Hernandez, 1055 W. Washington Ave. #4, Sunnyvale, CA 94086, USA] [<http://www.chamber7.com>] 3 3/4

COALESC

0:12 Revolution in Just Listening *Relapse Records*

The more I listen to this album, the more I like it. My first impression was like it was heavened hardcore, performed very technically, but too chaotic and complicated for my personal tastes. Later, I began to dig this album more and found that besides clear influences such as Today Is The Day or Neurosis and all this wave of new-school hardcore, these guys incorporate so many consonances of their own, that this group can hardly be compared to any other outfit in Relapse's rooster. So, first of all, I noticed that opening track "What Happens on the Road Always Comes Home" contains some very classic groovy places which blend into this strange hardcore very well. Then I noticed that "Burn Everything That Bears Our Name" is so psychedelic and twisted. It is like Brutal Truth in their improvisations, but not reaching grindcore. They've got the techniques and play their music free and open-mindedly. Only the ones like Neurosis earlier could do the same what Coalesce do on some of their new songs. And thus, little by little, this album became one of my very much appreciated in the extreme hardcore genre. Tracks like "While the Jackass Operation Spins its Wheels" or "Where the Hell is Rich Thorne These Days?" are highly recommended to the ones who like technical, strange, extreme, and psychedelic to the bones music. But only in the case you aren't afraid of a bit of chaos between genres. (AO) 4 1/4

CON ANIMA

The Book of Riddles *Scarlet*

Sensual gothic metal with strong symphonic overtones. Con Anima play a dark and subtle

brand of gothic metal defined by classic heavy metal leads, spare percussion, neoclassical piano, warm keyboard textures, and deep (as well as emotional) baritone vocals. The production is far from top notch, but the overall sound is brimming with warmth and depth. The production accentuates the music rather than altering it, and sounds almost live (perhaps it is). The music is catchy and simple, yet emotional and even adventurous in parts; the band freely explores more progressive terrain and higher levels of complexity. The vocalist sings in a low, sensuous voice, growling occasionally for effect more than anything else. Female vocals surface here and there, more as ornamentation than an integral element in the music. If you want sensual, dark and symphonic gothic metal, and can live with a primitive production, you cannot go wrong with "The Book of Riddles." (JS) 3 3/4

CORPSE VOMIT **Drowning in Puke** *Mighty Music*

It isn't strange that Corpse Vomit had some problems with their cover sleeve - it is one of the most pornographic covers I've seen in my life. So, those who dislike vulgarity and sexual sadism, better don't touch this. And what will you lose if you miss this release? In fact, nothing too meaningful. Corpse Vomit deliver old-school death metal, and comparisons with Autopsy suit here best. As we heard lots of groups playing in this manner, Corpse Vomit will please only the maniacs of this style. "Drowning in Puke" isn't very effective and nothing really special happens from its beginning to the end. Oh yes, I've forgotten to mention that all songs are enriched with pornographic intros. And the song titles include "Reeking Cunt" and "Maggots Eating My Dick." It seems that first of all it is dedicated to porno fans. (AO) 3

CRYPTIC CARNAGE

Retrospect 2000

Serenades Records

Cryptic Carnage could be named typical representatives of a gothic metal band with a clear German character. It seems that this group tries to escape these usual comparisons with Crematory, but they didn't manage to do that and from the beginning the end "Retrospect 2000" mainly sounds like a not so playful and catchily version of Crematory. The album starts with very energetic "Francis T." which promises fast and melodic gothic metal in the veins of the mentioned Crematory and Cemetery, but later the music slows down, and some songs like "Where the Clouds..." even seem to have very commercial nuances. The whole album doesn't manage to catch your attention, as soft gothic metal doesn't surprise anymore, especially when it's played with so many clichés. Only the cover version of Pink Floyd's "High Hopes" is something new, but besides this track, nothing very serious and promising can be found in this album. For fans of the style only. (AO) 3

CULTUS SANGUINE

The Sum of All Fears *Season of Mist*

The label "dark metal" doesn't give much information, because so you can call almost all bands which combine gothic and metal. But Cultus Sanguine also fit to this category very well. Many dark music fans already know them from debut album "Shadow's Blood" released by Candlelight or MCD "Cultus Sanguine" on Wounded Love. The most recent offering by Cultus Sanguine again gives dark and very suicidal music, which in terms of genres could be described as a mix of goth, black, and doom. While some tracks as "Dominatrix" present more metallic and aggressive side of the band with schizoidic, weird vocals, such songs as "Highest Depression" prove Cultus Sanguine to be melancholic and depressive, first of all. Here your brains and ears are bathed in waves of depressive, doomy solos, nihilistic, minimal keyboards and very emotional, in places going to hysterical tones, singing. In fact, the singing does almost half of work here, because instrumentations on some songs (like on "A Grave Upon Mankind") recorded with another type of vocals could be an example of dreamy goth/wave, but the singer makes all of this sound so depressing and torturing. It is a very good album if you like suicidal music, though evaluation of this disc basically depends on what was your mood before starting listening to it. (AO) 4 1/4

DAKRUA

Inner Wastelands *Scarlet*

The debut album of this Italian act is one of the best attempts in melodic sympho-dark metal, a style boosted up by Therion's "Theli."



BABYLON WHORES

King Fear

Necropolis Records

In six years of existence, this Finnish group has become one of the most innovative and respectable leaders of a so called death rock genre. Their first album "Cold Heaven" presented excellent, rocking, groovy death rock with strong sense of sarcasm in lyrics and philosophy of the band. This opus was followed by maybe not so playful, but much more atmospheric and psychedelic mini-album "Deggael." And now we've got a second full-length, which combines the elements of both these works: it is groovy, rocking, and psychedelic at the same time. Not to forget that Babylon Whores always had this perfect sense of melody which singer Ike Vil can express very well. "King Fear" seems to be the most considered album of these apocalyptic rock'n'roll propagators. The album starts with rocky "Errata Stigmata," the exceptional feature of this track is strange guitar riffs ala 70's. With this album, Babylon Whores decided to explore more classic rock elements, and now it isn't so easy to describe their style, as it was, for example, on "Cold Heaven." On some songs, like "Hand of Glory" or "Exit Eden," guys play rocky metal with groovy sense. Here you can find the elements of space rock integrated as well. But other tracks like "Veritas" reminds us of the EP, as they are more psychedelic, with darker approach. It's like Danzig would have decided to play more rocky music. The style of the album is twisting from seemingly straight groovy metal to clear melodic songs (like the last one), which prove that Babylon Whores are melodic, first of all. And also philosophical - the lyrics of this album again leave enough space for imagination and for proving something for yourself. (AO) 4 3/4 [JS 3/4]

Dakrúa's influences obviously include that album, as well as Theatre of Tragedy and Paradise Lost. The first highlight of "Inner Wastelands" is a very harmonic and well-shared singing duo of female singer Eva and male bass player. Songs are very bombastic, guitar-based (keyboards are present, too), and rely a lot on vocal melodies and singers themselves. Eva has a special operatic charm; the bass player represents a more familiar side of dark metal male singers, but complements Eva very well. A nice debut. (GS)

4 1/4 [AO 4]

DAS SCHEIT

...And Ice is Forming

self-released

Already the second full-length by Das Scheit, but are yet unsigned. Personally I think that many far worse bands are releasing their albums for record companies, while such bands as Das Scheit are still driven only by their enthusiasm. Maybe the problem with this group is their lack of originality. Nine new tracks prove that this group has reached a certain stage of musicianship when they can play more or less their own style, but side-influences are still too clear. Nine Inch Nails, Marilyn Manson, or White Zombie are the names in this case, and the group doesn't deny it. It's industrial metal with some gothic metal hints (like the track "The Box" which reminds me of Paradise Lost). Das Scheit display a wide spectre of industrialized metal - here we are faced with more melancholic songs as "Lonely Walk," rocky "Sometimes," or the samples-driven "Long Walk." If you don't need the originality first of all and wanna try underground version of Marilyn Manson's "Antichrist Superstar", listen to "...And Ice is Forming." (AO) [sascha.beckersloboda@planet-interkom.de] 3 1/4

[by Audrius Ozalas]

Last year the cult Helsinki death rock group Babylon Whores released its second full-length "King Fear", which many critics named one the best offerings of this style. And if a vaguely understood term death rock is a cross between groovy metal, dirty rock n'roll, the Elvis-from-Hell vocals, and metallic heaviness, then the apocalyptic Finnish guys suit this term very well.

In reality, "King Fear" just continues the path Babylon Whores walked with their successful debut album "Cold Heaven" released on the infamous Misanthropy Records. Perfect combination of groovy riffs, rocking rhythms, melodies and heaviness made everybody wonder whether to call this music rock, metal, or heavy rock n'roll. No one could decide on a tag, but "Terrorizer" has chosen "Cold Heaven" as the album of the month.

The next offering of Babylon Whores, mini album "Deggael" showed the band exploring a darker nature, and such words as "gothic" were added next to the adjectives "apocalyptic," "groovy," "damn melodic" that were used to describe their music before.

After the split-up of Misanthropy Records, Babylon Whores quickly sailed away to US and joined Necropolis Records' team. The new opus was released on this label. As always philosophical, as always melodic, as always rocking, as always heavy, and as always just damn good. The time has come to talk to these guys and to know what they think about the new disc and death rock as a style. Guitarist Antti speaks.

You've released a new album, "King Fear" not so long ago, how do you feel about it now, what are the responses?

Considering the fact that the recording sessions extended for a little longer than we aimed for (it's an unstable world), "King Fear" is actually starting to feel quite old already. It was a necessary step forward for us; a battle that had its casualties, but eventually culminated in the band coming together for better and perhaps us seeing more clearly what was the diamond core in what we do. The rest is up to having intuition at helm. The response from both the punters and the press could be described as encouraging for good music I like in general. But you know - what can you do but your own thing? It's more of an added bonus if somebody out there gets it as well.

Listening to this album and especially reading the lyrics, it seems that it is kind of a conceptual album. At least it has more clear connection between all the songs than it was before. Can you tell more about the concept of the album, and why namely "King Fear"?



BABYLON WHORES

Philosophical Death Rock or Elvis Rocking from Hell



The concept is there if you want to see it there. It would be damaging to the inner coherence you might find in the album if I was putting too much of my own interpretation forward, but certain themes are sort of keys (and others gates, you figure out what fits where.) Such themes are unification of bipolarities in death in order to transcend the dualistic mode of thinking, the myth of secret chiefs, crossroads, Bardo... I think one thing that cannot be stressed enough is that it came together by letting sway to it, and that's why it isn't going to be satisfactorily explained by the means of word combinations. Its anhelion is more telling than the actual shape, "King Fear" being the only possible name for such. I probably sound like a load of bullshit to vast majority of you reading this now, but gee... such is life. Just remember the words of Hassan-I-Sabbah. Blah blah blah...

When I listen to this album, I feel like it has more influences of classical rock/heavy metal (for example, some riffs already on the first song "Errata Stigmata" remind me of the older stuff). Do you agree that the music of the 70s is one of the main influences here? What other influences can you name as some kind of "fatal" for this album?

Excuse my miserable attempt at being a wisecrack, but I think direct influences would be "fatal" indeed for us. The genre we are vaguely attached to (rock'n'roll?) has what, a fifty year history now? I guess you can't help stumbling into a riff or two that's familiar from somewhere, but that much said, you are right at the seventies being much more dominant than... something else on the album. Nowadays I find so much music being devoid of a proud adventurous spirit, or, on the other hand, trying to outweird all and everything just for the sake of being weird, both of which I deem to be equally as sad. That's not new and existed in the seventies as well, but from our admittedly distant perspective it would seem the times were better for inspired people who were doing music with less of a pressure from the fans or themselves for the sake of mere form. Good music, of course, is timeless.

When I try to describe each album of yours, I think that the first album was more straight and rocky, the next EP much more atmospheric, and it seems that with this album you again return to a more rocking music. Actually it reminds me more of "Cold Heaven" than of "Deggael". Do you agree with this, and what was the main musical goal of "King Fear"? In which direction you feel you are going now?

"Deggael"'s a being born out of misery, chaos, and confusion. Perhaps that accounts for its gloomy (well, relatively so) mood. "Deggael" Anno 2000 e.v. would sound decidedly different in tone, I am sure. I actually prefer "Cold Heaven" myself, though I'd also be the first to admit it isn't that brilliant either. "King Fear" expands on what we did on both old releases... the main musical goal was to make good music, surprise, the other currents that crept on the CD came along as we worked on that. I want our music to be more hypnotic and strong in the future, but it's not entirely in my powers to affect that. We'll see... I am curious.

After the close-down of Misanthropy Records you were very quickly picked-up by Necropolis Records. Did you have any other proposals, and was the album already recorded when you've got the deal with Necropolis? By the way, most of Necropolis' bands play black metal, how does it feel to belong to almost a "pure" black metal label?

We had a few offers, even from labels with (then) bigger profiles, but decided to go with Necropolis who really put an effort at being upfront and generous. We are thankful for their good work so far. A big part of the album was already corroding the reels and infecting the computer by the time we got the deal, but they placed their trust on us based on a rough mix consisting of three songs. I've no problem with Necropolis Records' black metal reputation. Also it seems they're keen on expanding their horizons - and, on the other hand, I can't see us fitting 100% well in any particular roster. We must be a nightmare to market.

By the way, after the release of "Cold

Heaven," the press was very good. But people at Misanthropy said to me that the sales were really bad. How do you explain that, was it a fault of Music For Nations who distributed the album?

I don't care about pointing fingers. Probably MFN's lack of commitment was a part of it, as was us not touring abroad after the release. But let bygones be bygones. Distant past already, and I would feel absolutely lame going about thinking IF this and IF that...

Do you know the sales of both your previous recordings? Do you get profits from these albums? I'm very interested in your main occupation outside of music.

I guess I am not business minded enough to remember exact sales figures. Ike once said "too much for us to have sense to quit, too little to make a living"... I can only concur with that. Besides music, I work for extra cash... I've got a small black cat to feed and rents to pay, you know. But that's not something I'd put special priority on. I just live and try to grow as a human from the shit that you've to deal with daily and enjoy it while I can.

Your music is usually named as "death rock." Who came up with this name for the style, and what other groups would you name as "death rock" bands?

I cannot remember who of us said it aloud for the first time. We just decided it was the only reasonable name by the time we got around to do the "Cold Heaven" covers. I am not sure who I'd say could be linked to the term, but broadly speaking bands like Christian Death, Lords of the New Church, and Samhain do/did share some of that death rock vibe. Good company if not a happy family.

Are you completely satisfied with the first album? What songs would you re-work now? I think that many listeners don't get the idea of the last song...

Completely satisfied only in the sense that it got done, and, at the moment, I feel it is better to let it rest as it is and not indulge in unnecessary necrophilia. Curiously enough, now that you mention, one exception would be that last song, we've had an idea to continue working with its leitmotiv. If the listeners don't get the idea, they can go fuck themselves for all I care.

Before the recording of "Cold Heaven," you've already had two mini-albums and one 7 EP out. I think that not so many listeners had an opportunity to hear them. How does their music differ from the later albums?

The 7" & the CD-EPs were much less refined in their approach, sounding much too punk or plain rock to my ears. The vision was there from day one, I'd say (I came to the band just in time for EP II), but not the ability to put it across with enough focus... We're NOT virtuosos now by any means, but managing a tad better.



"Deggael" was a clear step forward to gothic rock. Does it mean at that moment you had changed your musical tastes a bit, or...? By the way, what does the name "Deggael" mean? I think the musical tastes have stayed the same, for I haven't really found anything new I'd be overly keen on in the past few years - the boring old geezer! I often heard about "Deggael" being gothic rock, but I'd rather think of the other ingredients being more subdued. "Deggael" is a deliberate malformation of "Deggial," a name for the one-eyed, one horned Antichrist of Mohammedan lore.

One song for the mini-album, from what I've heard, had to sound like Current 93. Which one? Does it often happen that you change the structure of the songs completely while recording them?

Not "had to" by any means! There was a struggle trying to find words for what we aimed for, and Current 93's great acoustic songs on the "Emblems" compilation seemed to reside in the same territory. The song was "Deggael: A Rat's God" and it turned out totally different from the initial idea. I care not to think for better or worse, all I know it's a creepy, nasty moment in our back catalogue. We can change all and everything in the studio, 75% of the guitars on the new album are improvised on the spot for example. Not to speak of the drums, no two takes were the same... apart from general structures. But that's not a rule of thumb for us. Happened so this time. Maybe the next time around we'll have everything so well planned somebody else can play the songs from note sheets, while we are spending our millions at the Bahama islands.

I think many journalists talk with you about occultism even more than about your music. So, what place does occultism take in writing music and creating lyrics? In places, it seems to me that even some occult doctrines are taken with a bit sarcastic viewpoint? Do you really practice magic, or is it just one of your interests?

Occult, literally 'hidden', well describes our writing process... it's soooo

mysterious. Well, seriously, I find it hard to precisely evaluate the amount of input from such a thing that our take is quite intuitive on in the first place. Sure we do take bits and pieces of the lore connected with occult with a pinch of salt and a healthy dose of sarcasm; as much as we do have reverence for the whole, in this Aeon it is often for the good to have little fun at the expense of the holy cows. Atu 0 The Fool, has more than meets the eye. I cannot speak on behalf of other members of the band here, but I practise the Arts (so it is also one of my "interests" like sex and breathing & c.), for it is my conviction that without earthing the currents in Malkuth by praxis you will find yourself against a wall one day - mere intellectualization of magic will guarantee you will always be circling around and about the core instead of knowing it. But well, I claim no high skills or grand grades. Enough said for now.

Well, one more question on this subject. Occultism, it seems, is one of the biggest trends in the world now. How do you think it influences the true value of the doctrines? Do you agree that our age is the age of trends and that almost everything you do now is already influenced by others, it seems that in post-modern society is extremely hard to live your own life. True value of any doctrine of any relevancy is not diluted by the commercial aspects which sadly overshadow the subject by their sheer mass. Actually, I visited a new age fair today, and couldn't but laugh at the banality of it all. Enlightenment is not for sale, but I suppose the fact people are so desperately seeking betterment of their lives by spiritual means, even those with not much substance is very telling of the times we live in. It is infinitely sad that people expect enlightenment to come in a nice standard package, with no shadowsides to deal with... I have an equal hatred for this materially centered, weak McDonald's-culture (sic) creating such people who've so much lost touch with themselves, but it is not much use to whine about it - it should be obvious. A better idea would be to do something about yourself and not being so goddamn concerned about fitting in with the latest fads, though that is not supposed to be sound like an excuse to let it go and be a generation X-sorta slacker either. I really don't think humankind is at any particular high point in history, progress is such a much- and misused word in the present context that I am about to vomit, but there are seeds sown that can grow into beautiful trees. So I am not pessimist, if that equals giving in to powers that be - which it need not.

What are your viewpoints on Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, Hindu? By the way, on the photo of your first album I see some books like "Satan...", "Prince of Darkness," "Lucifer..." Is Satanism also among your interests? What's your opinion about it?

The first part of your question would need a great deal of time to answer, a

luxury I don't have at the moment. All of the above have a huge variety of different streams in them, and it would be far too easy to lump them down simply as being bad or detrimental or 'old aeon'. I don't feel particularly attached to the esoteric sunday school Xtianity I am familiar with from my childhood, and to make sweeping judgments on the others I know less about would serve no purpose; as far as religions go in general, I can respect devotion but not illogical submission at a whim of some supposed deity or another.

I don't call myself a satanist, and am not much impressed by the mainstream Satanism; I can (and do) respect some individuals who've adopted that designation for themselves, but as for some Church of Satan-style materialistic hedonism promoted to (anti-)religion I frankly have no time for. To each his own, I guess. If you have to attach yourself to "satanism" because you cannot question it doesn't make you much of a satanist.

What are your favorite philosophers, writers, and musicians/groups? Reaching the level of which group would mean the top of what you can create?

Reaching the ultimate level Babylon Whores can is my sole aim with Babylon Whores! And what that might be is so far unbeknownst to me. As music goes, I have respect for the integrity of say Killing Joke or Paul Chain; writers and philosophers are much harder to evaluate, as I tend to like single works more than entire careers. The last book that I really enjoyed for the ideas it spawned was actually one of drawings by Austin Osman Spare. Every single line talked more than thousand words. Sheer unbridled genius.

In many interviews I read that Finnish metal scene is very big with many famous groups (Sentenced, Nightwish, Amorphis etc.), some of them are even in the national charts. Do you agree that metal is very popular in Finland? What Finnish groups do you consider as the best coming from your country?

Metal has always enjoyed a widespread appeal here... like Dio will never be forgotten in the backwoods! So, yes, metal is popular and perhaps even more so today than ten years ago. Our audience in Finland consists of lunatics, normal persons on their way to lunacy and a clan of black wearing weasels. Most of whom probably hate us. The best Finnish groups? An easy one, this: Timo Rautiainen and Trio Niskalaukaus piss on the rest from a height that makes even mentioning any other names seem ridiculous!

With what groups would you like to perform live most of all? Do you remember the gig here in Lithuania? We've no particular preferences for the groups we perform with. There should be some point to it, naturally. Mayhem & us has probably been the best combination so far.

In Lithuania, we had a hastily put together set, we're supposed to be a full front two guitar assault but Ewo

couldn't make it there. We just did not want to cancel the show in the face of such hindrances, and it was a great trip after all. Mega thanks for the hospitality of Sekla and Ugnius & co. and cheers to Skyforger and others we met! We sure would like to come back and do a real Babylon Whores gig now that the lineup is more solid. And preferably with more time to actually see your country.

If you had to choose four favorite songs of Babylon Whores, which ones would you choose? Give me eight, will ya? Well OK then... "To Behold the Suns Below," "Love Under Will," "King Fear: Song for the Damned," "Deviltry."

I've heard some explanations of the name of Babylon Whores, but let's talk about it once more. What do you actually mean with this name? An obvious biblical reference, with esoteric/antinomian overtones.

Your thoughts about:

a) Danzig.

The new one shows a nice return to form. Really liked the older ones, especially two first.

b) alcohol.

Haven't been drunk for at least six months now, I just can't be bothered now, for some reason.

Nice in moderation. Fave drinks - Jägermeister, Riga Black Balsam, and absinthe.

c)

Castaneda.

Influenced me when I was younger, set me and an old friend of my for quite a trip back in those days... still good stuff, I'd bet.

d) Blair Witch Project.

A disappointment.

e) psychedelic drugs.

Some of the oldest teachers of mankind.

OK, the interview goes to its end, so maybe you've got a question you always wanted journalists to ask you, but they never did. You can ask it now.

If these 22 questions corresponded with the 22 Tarot Trumps, which one would this question be? Nah, thanks for the enjoyable rant, good luck with the mag and throw a copy our way. Here's our official addresses: Babylon Whores, PL 225, 00531 Helsinki, Finland, <http://come.to/kingfear>, metatron@kolumbus.fi, and alitmanen@yahoo.com.





Borknagar

[by Giedrius Slivinskas]

Not everybody believed in the longevity of Borknagar in 1996, when the band was considered as a black metal all star project, featuring members of known black metal bands. However, the self-titled album (out on Malicious Records) was not their only release; it was swiftly followed by two albums on Century Media ("The Olden Domain" and "The Archaic Course"), and the band was recognized for their unique approach to epic atmospheric black metal. The fourth album "Quintessence" is their new statement, and it will probably bring them very close to the frontrunners of the genre. Borknagar have conquered many hearts by their consistent multidimensionality, and their newest album (strengthened by the presence of Spiral Architect and Solefald members) is again a well thought-out kaleidoscope of epic and dark metal, elegantly and originally integrating melodies into the by-nature aggressive style. I did a phone interview with band's guitarist Oystein G. Brun.

It took almost one month to record this album, and it's a long time. Was it the same with your previous albums?

No, with the previous albums we used between two and three weeks. So we had one extra week this time. And it was cool because we had enough time to think properly, we didn't have too much stress.

It didn't become boring after awhile?

Yeah, definitely it did. During the last week, we were quite fed up with the whole music... We lived in a house in forest, just besides the studio. There was nothing to do except from playing the play station. Of course, at the end, we were a little bit tired from the whole thing and each other. But that's normal I guess.

Even having one month for the album, the album is not very long, only 43 minutes...

Yes, I know, but we actually recorded two more songs, which are instrumentals. The album should have been about 60 minute long, but we didn't feel the instrumentals were good enough for the album, so we kind of dropped them. We will probably use the material next time.

All your albums are kind of short, is it your preference or do you always have just under 45 minutes of material?

I think 45 minutes is totally okay. I personally don't like too long albums, unless they are very good albums. If people think 45 minutes is too short, it's okay.

Can you name any long albums that you like?

Some of the Pink Floyd albums I think are brilliant. They base everything on atmospheric and moody stuff, but that is a different thing really. I think one of the best metal albums is Slayer's "Reign in Blood" which is just 30 minutes. And that's brilliant, I don't have a problem with it.

"Presence is Ominous" song off your new album was the first track that was put on the internet (as a full-song MP3 file). Why did you choose this song?

I don't know, we got a proposal to put a song on the internet to give people the first impression of the album. I think it was the right song to use. We were discussing as a band together with the record company, everybody basically had different opinions, so we just had to cut through, and we decided on this one.

What was the second candidate?

We were thinking of the first song also.

In the beginning, many people thought of Borknagar as an all-star black metal project, now probably not so many do so. Do you think it helped to the visibility of the band?

Definitely. We got record deals without doing any demos, we got press, other things. I remember when we were working on the first album, our bass player just called Malicious Records and said "hey, we want a record deal, we want so much money for each record, we want that kind of contract, blah blah" Okay, he said, "I'll just send it to you." So, it made things going. Still, I've always tried to avoid this "all star black metal project" tag. We've definitely developed into a band, and I would prefer being associated with a band.

How did you get a deal with Century Media then?

I don't remember exactly why, I just remember that Robert Kampf from Century Media called us one day late, in December of 1996. I think it was because we did some interviews in "Rock Hard," other magazines, the first album got very good criticism, 9.5 or 10 points in "Rock Hard," for example. I guess that had something to do with it.

Considering your previous albums, what positive and negative things can

you say about them?

I think all the albums are quite cool. I have a lot of nostalgic feelings for them, all the albums represent different times of my life. Of course, musically, I think we have progressed a lot, the new album is more maturely performed, we have better musicians. Still, I think the old albums carry something which is great. All the albums have some personality which I like. Of course, the production of the first album is not too good for nowadays. The two albums that we recorded at Woodhouse have an okay production, but Woodhouse is not that much into metal music, they are more into standard, conformed kind of music. We were kind of relieved to go to Abyss this time and to be able to work with people who have been into metal music and know what this is all about. We didn't use a lot of time to find the right guitar sound and stuff like that, we just did it and it was effective.

Talking about songs, what do you do differently now than on the previous album, "The Archaic Course"? Or is "Quintessence" simply a continuation?
"The Archaic Course" was in my eyes really epic and atmospheric. With each album, we try to progress; to be able to progress is one of the most important things for me as a musician. It was kind of natural to take a step into more brutal direction. It wouldn't actually suit us to be slower and more moody than on "The Archaic Course," so I think we took the right decision to make it more aggressive.

Who actually determines how much clean and harsh vocals do you have on an album, is it Simen?

Yes, it's Simen. He is doing all the vocal stuff, and he has a kind of total artistic feeling. We don't try to push anything on him. On this album, he did everything [for vocals] except a few things. He is free to do whatever he wants. I think he comes with superior ideas to what we are able to do. I think it's great. Some people complained that he used a little less clean vocals this time, but it was a quite natural consequence to be as aggressive as it is. The other aspect is that we do not want to use too much of his clean vocals. If we would have done the whole album with clean vocals, I think people would get a bit fed up or tired of this kind of vocals.

When you have an instrumental song, is it always obvious what kind of vocals will be used?

I think it comes quite natural for Simen, by instinct or something.

Is Borknagar Simen's main band now?

Yes, I think so. He is much more involved with this band, he is involved in vocal performance, he writes lyrics. Musically and in general he is closer to this band. With Dimmu Borgir, it's more about money, more based on fame and fortune. His main priority is Borknagar, at least he has said so.

Do you know what is happening with Arcturus? Have they split-up?

I don't know if they split-up or didn't split-up. I talked with Garm a few months ago, he said they were going to do one more album and that's it. I don't know when they are

going to record it or anything. Garm is more into alternative kind of music really. Also, he is running his record label, Jester Records, I think he is more busy with that. I don't know if he is working on music too much. I think they are working on a new Ulver CD, which is more ambient, drum n'bass, techno kind of music.

What do you think of Spiral Architect? [Asgeir Mickelson is the new drummer of Borknagar.]

It's not my cup of tea really. They are killer musicians, but for me it sounds a little, I don't know, it doesn't really make sense to my eyes, or my ears... But it's true that they are brilliant musicians, just it's not my cup of tea.

What about Solefald? [Lars A. Nedland plays synthesizers on "Quintessence"]
They are great, they have a lot of good ideas. Strange ideas. And I think they are brilliant. Especially from the songs that I like.

I have a couple of questions about your tour in United States [Borknagar played together with Emperor, Witchery, Peccatum, and a few other bands]. Did it come to your expectations?

Definitely. More. Often you hear about crappy tours in US, bad venues and stuff. For us, it was great and it was the best tour we've done so far. The venues were great, we played in New York in front of almost 500 people, we played in Los Angeles and San Francisco for, like, 1,000 people.

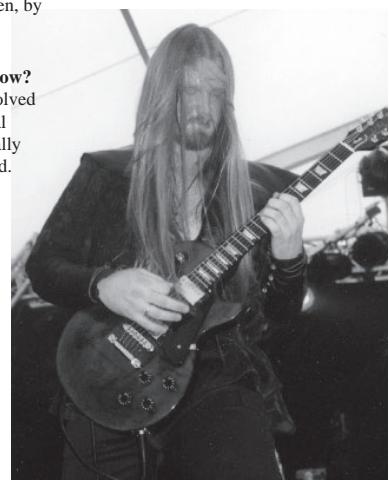
Were there any surprises during the tour? Were there any things that surprised you about United States?

I don't know, I was a little curious about the whole US thing, I wanted to go there since I was a little kid. It's definitely positive, we got a lot of days off and stuff. We went to see Niagara falls, Empire State Building in New York, Hollywood, a lot of things like that. I would never want to live there or something like that, but it was great to travel there.

It wasn't like you had a show each night, then you were sleeping in the bus...

We had a couple of times when we had to drive and play next day, but we had days off in between. After the New York gig, we had a day off, and we spent the whole day walking in the city of New York. When driving from A to B, there was always something famous on the way, so we just stopped and took a break for two hours or so.

If a band that you know would go to US and would ask you for advises, what





would you tell them?

To bring a cap and sunglasses. It's very hot, sometimes even 50 degrees. If they go in the summer, they have to make sure that they have sunscreen and stuff like that.

Have you ever considered releasing a live album?

Not really. We don't have any concrete plans. Maybe we'll do one more album and then do a live album. I don't think we've done enough shows to record a live album. We actually did some recordings in Los Angeles, and it was pretty good. If we one day get to record it, maybe we'll use them.

Are you comfortable with Century Media?

It's okay, I don't think it's better or worse than other labels around. Of course, we have some minor problems sometimes, some arguments or discussions. But overall they do a pretty good job.

What are sales of your albums?

I think "The Olden Domain" sold the most, 35,000 or something. "The Archaic Course" was sold in 20,000-25,000 copies. It was quite a long time since I saw the last statement. It's okay, but not that much really.

Many people in Norway participate in many musical projects, sometimes they do it for money, sometimes they just want to. What are your views to this, would you want to do a side project?

I have a dream of doing movie soundtrack music. It would be just acoustic music all the way. If I get a chance and time, I might do something.

If you take an average week, how much time do you spend on Borknagar?

I guess about 20 hours. Well, but now we are doing all this promotion, like today I am doing some interviews. I also do interviews by email. I work full-time also. So, it's like I am doing something all the time. It's cool though, but I'm getting tired also.

Can you take time off when you want to go on tour?

Yeah, yeah, no problem. I have a really cool boss, he thinks I am rock star [laughs]. When I need to travel away, I just fill an application form and that's it.

Black metal is very different today compared to what it was five years ago. Do you have any predictions where it will go in the next couple of years? I have no idea. [laughs]

But where will Borknagar go?

I think we will continue what we are doing. I don't think we'll do drum n'bass or stuff like that. I think people will be able to predict what we are doing on our next album. Still, we will progress somehow, also keeping to the roots.

DEAD SILENT SLUMBER

Entombed in the Midnight Hour

Hammerheart Records

Dead Silent Slumber is maybe the best release of Hammerheart Records in 1999. And we could have foreseen it, because the man who stands behind all this creation is Jens Ryden, famous for handling vocals in well-known Swedish band Naglfar. J. Ryden's background in Naglfar is evident here also - the style of Dead Silent Slumber can be described as a hybrid of catchy Gothenburg metal with industrial approach, gothic elements, and black metal. The first track "In the Glare of the Moon" is maybe the most memorable song on this album: very fresh, playful and very energetic Swedish black/death with a well-expressed melody. The second track owes something to Moonspell's "Wolfheart": atmospheric metal mixed with keyboard passages and black metal's brutality. Another comparison could be drawn to Samael's "Passage," especially from the last track "Lick the Wound." The fans of Samael who liked their previous album, but find the new one too melodic, can bravely try Dead Silent Slumber. Only the title track falls out of the context, because it was recorded with the help of a female singer and is the most gothic track in all album. The rest of "Entombed in the Midnight Hour" is a real joy for a fan of professionally played and catchy black/death. (AO)

4 1/4

mid-paced parts (except a little bit mid-paced "Festerling" or the more industrial "III"), and, all in all, is one of the best albums of fast death metal in 1999. (AO)

[<http://members.tripod.de/deranged>]

4 1/4

are playing. And probably are insane. And now it's too much of this to me. (AO)

3 3/4 [JS 4 1/2]

DIMMU BORGIR/OLD MAN'S CHILD

Split-CD

Hammerheart Records

This CD features two mini-albums of these now famous black metal bands which were recorded in 1996 and never were presented to a big audience. Now both bands sell 100,000 copies of their albums, and without a doubt are the leaders of the genre. In 1996, their music was more unpolished, raw, and not so symphonic. Looking from the viewpoint of today, then they were just growing bands, and both these EPs don't contain anything shocking (especially this could be said about Dimmu Borgir's EP). Just melodic black metal with symphonic places here and there. I think, the listener wouldn't take this release too seriously, if on the cover he'd see another names. But, who knows, maybe fans of more brutal black metal will enjoy this release and finally will be able to say that in the early days Dimmu Borgir were not a "purely commercial" outfit. But I think that I'll forget these songs quite quickly; luckily both groups made an unbelievable progress. (AO)

3

DIPNOI

Fkddd EP

self-released

This is the first EP by Brazilian band Dipnoi, and contains six tracks from their previous demo recordings. Their music is essentially a hybrid of eighties thrash, hardcore, punk and hard rock - with a slight emphasis on the eighties thrash. The songs are well structured with frequent punk grooves, acoustic interludes, and slightly experimental (almost progressive) passages. The vocals are snarled, yelled and are occasionally complemented (is that the word?) by James Hetfield like "Yeee-ee-ahhhhs." The vocals are not noteworthy, but are perfectly suited to the music. The thrash element is very straightforward and always has a punkish vibe. In this respect, the music is easily comparable to "Eye for an Eye" era Corrosion of Conformity, though much tighter - no drunken riffing or sloppy blues solos here. The production is flat, but nothing the volume knob and a slight adjustment of the equalizer can't fix. Pretty decent stuff. It would have sounded much better in the early eighties.

(JS)

[Dipnoi, PO Box 2313, 01060-970 Sao Paulo/SP, Brazil] [dipnoi@uol.com.br] [<http://www.geocities.com/sunsetstrip/studio/3016>]

3 1/2 [GS 3 1/4]

DISGUST

In Aeternum...

Shock Wave Records

Debut full-length by French Disgust is another portion of technical and brutal to the bones death metal. I'm not sure if there's a need to repeat the same words, because this band does everything according to the schemes of death metal classics. Most of all, it reminds of Cannibal Corpse with a little bit more technical approach. It's fast, brutal, technical, well-produced album. For people who are a bit outside of the genre it may be too standard, but for the fans of the style it's right what they need. So, as in most cases with standard death metal, it's the question whether you like this style or not. Personally, I think that this album is worth of attention.

(AO)

3 3/4

DEMENTOR

The Art of Blasphemy

Repulse Records

Grinding death metal from Slovakia, which can be interesting only to the true fans of the style. Yes, it's brutal, it's fast, it's aggressive, but it's also traditional to death, dull, and absolutely unoriginal. And when I see this cover with a bloody pope eating Christ's guts, I even don't have so much left to say. It's already the second album of this group, and during 11 years of existence Dementor could have had established something like a recognizable style of their own. Now they are far away from Deeds of Flesh Brutal Truth, and their atmospheric intros which later transform into brutal death metal simply get on nerves. It's a waste of time, better find the groups with their own minds. (AO)

2 1/4

DENIAL OF GOD

Klabautermanden EP

Hammerheart Records

Label info-sheet tells us that Denial Of God are the premier black metal band from Denmark. Seems that things are not improving in this country in the sector. Although I heard worse BM products, Denial Of God is only an average group playing such a kind of music. Without any imagination, they drive these worn-out riffs and these dozens of times heard squealings. Ordinary black metal, nothing special. (SV)

3 [AO 3 1/4]

DERANGED

III

Listenable Records

From the very first seconds of the first track "Ripped, Raped, Randomized," this album bursts with such intense death metal that we rarely meet even in these brutal music spheres. The third album is the fastest and the most heavy piece Deranged did so far. Of course, there are many groups trying to play their music with ultra-speed, but in most cases the music then becomes too chaotic. Deranged escape this mistake, and in this album everything seems to be in its place. The band manages not to loose technical death metal approach, has good solos and rhythm changes, but it also doesn't loose its very fast and very brutal side, providing a home for fans of Cannibal Corpse and Napalm Death. "III," from its beginning to the end, almost doesn't present slow or even

DEVILYN

Reborn in Pain

Listenable Records

The Morbid Angel plague still spreads on, and Devilyn from Poland are another example of how this classical band influences the new generation. Devilyn also own something from their country-mates Vader, so you know what you can expect. Yes, brutal and technical mid-tempo death metal, which doesn't surprise anybody these days. This second album of Devilyn doesn't stand out in this genre; it's very technical, brutal, but not innovative or very interesting. I don't say it's for the fans only, as the tracks like "Reborn in Pain" or "Final Truth" can satisfy each fan of heavy music, but it would be better if Devilyn would leave the Morbid Angel influences a bit aside in the future. (AO)

[<http://devilyn.black.art.pl>]

3 1/2

THE DILLINGER ESCAPE PLAN

Calculating Infinity

Relapse Records

Relapse Records serve as the home of maniacs, this release of The Dillinger Escape Plan finally proves that. What we get here is a totally insane cross between metal and new hardcore. Coalesce's new album can be compared to this group, but these guys play their music in a much more intense way, which, in its pressure, can even be compared to some grindcore releases. One factor which can't be denied, is the technical complexity of these 11 songs. Some tracks like "Jim Fear" even remind me of techno thrash style. But here everything is more brutal, more energetic, and... hardly bearable. I think that each fan of technical metal after first minutes of this album will say that he supports such technical music, but after some more songs he will probably say: "it is complex, it is interesting, but now it's too much of everything." Yeah, here we get hardcore, techno thrash, jazz, grind, fusion, crazy stuff, improvisations. These guys know what they

IMMORTAL

Damned in Black

Osmose Productions

The latest release by Immortal once again proves the high creative potential of this band; "At the Heart of the Winter" was one of the best brutal black metal albums in 1999, and this one can be marked out as the highlight of year 2000. In fact, nothing changed with this band too much, Immortal just continue to play the style they introduced already with the first albums, and "Damned in Black" resembles of their highly acclaimed "Battles in the North." This new release has more black metal elements than the previous album, and death metal influence is a little bit on the side. Basically, we again get very brutal, very aggressive, and very heavy black metal. Immortal seem to maintain their status as one of the heaviest black metal bands in the world. They aren't as fast as Dark Funeral and as complex as Emperor, but they are way more weighty. If someone is shocked by the new Mayhem album being, say, more atmospheric than brutal, in the case of Immortal, this surely is avoided. Seven new songs present classy technical black metal, seemingly blowing straight to your face, but very technical and classy at the same time. Osmose Productions think that this album will become their first release selling 100,000 copies, and it deserves it. (AO)

4 3/4



Fly Machine

No Longer Condemned

[by Christian Rademaker]

Fly Machine was formed from the final line-up of Confessor: a phoenix rising from the ashes. How did the line-up changes come about, and what was exactly the reason for changing the name from Confessor to Fly Machine?

SS: Ivan Colon was the first member to quit after the release of "Condemned" and our subsequent touring. The band's relationship with its label was tenuous at best, and as the two agreed mutually to part ways, Ivan opted to pursue higher education at Appalachian, 2 or 3 hours away. A few months later, he had been replaced by our current lead guitarist Chris Nolan and so began the process of teaching our material to someone new. This was something we were going to do several times over the next couple of years unfortunately. Our first show with Chris was in January of 1994 here in Raleigh. A week or so before the show, our singer, Scott, expressed his desire for it to be the band's final show. "Funk Dat!" was our collective response, so it became Scott's final show, and the beginning of what became a two-year search for a vocalist. We had two guys that we actually called "our singer" in those years and two others that attempted to fill the slot for a month or so before deciding it just was not for them. The entire process was quite taxing. Dave tried out in the Fall/Winter of 1996. Quickly it became apparent that he had his act together more so than the others and was quite a bit more unique in his approach, so he became our man. As for the name change, Confessor started to sound a bit too heavy metal and a bit too 80s. Our music was changing somewhat as well. We were adapting to two new writing styles and did not want people to expect to hear more Confessor. We also hoped that a name change might keep people from automatically lumping us in with the death metal scene which never really made sense to us. I once read a review that said basically that Confessor was "a terrible speed-metal band." No shit! Yeah, and "Reign in Blood" is the worst excuse for a rockabilly record I've ever heard!

There is a cover of the song "Hole in the Sky" (by the way also covered by Eidolon on their album "Zero Hour" a couple of years later) on the Earache tribute to Black Sabbath "Masters of Misery." That was recorded in January 1992 after "Condemned." Were there also other songs recorded during that session and what happened to other old Confessor songs?

SS: There are two Trouble covers that appear on the single version of "Condemned" which were recorded at the same time as "Hole In the Sky" but, other than that, you would have to find Confessor stuff through demo tape trading. Much of the material on the Fly Machine CD was

The origins of Fly Machine can be found in a band from North Carolina band called Confessor. Confessor gained recognition from the underground by releasing three demos in the late eighties and early nineties: "The Secret" (1987), "Uncontrolled" (1989), and "Collapse" (1990). At that time, Confessor's music could be described as midtempo and heavy technical doom metal: Trouble meets Watchtower. Confessor's music drew its life blood from the contrast between Scott Jeffreys' extremely high pitched vocals and the impenetrable wall of doomy guitar riffs erected by guitarists Graham Fry and Brian Shoaf supported by the accurate and seemingly incohesive rhythm section of Cary Rowell (bass) and Steve Shelton (drums). The subtitle on the back cover of "Collapse" said: "Without any hope there is no need for pain". This was an appropriate statement because Confessor, with their incomprehensible and erratic music, could perhaps be credited in managing to capture the feelings of a person on the brink of emotional suicide.

Confessor's obvious talent and originality combined with a following in the underground resulted in a deal with the English label Earache. The debut CD "Condemned" was released in 1991. At that stage, Graham Fry had been replaced by Ivan Colon. Confessor then appeared on the Gods of Grind tour with Entombed, Carcass, and Cathedral. This gave them the opportunity to tour Europe. This also resulted in three songs being featured on "The Gods of Grind" sampler CD: "Condemned," the Trouble covers "Last Judgement," and "Endtime" (these three songs have also been released separately on the 12" single version of "Condemned"). Reportedly, the demise of Confessor set in shortly after the European tour, and after that the band seemingly vanished from the face of the Earth.

Then in 1997 a band with name Fly Machine releases an untitled independent CD. Noteworthy about this release is that it features the rhythm section of Confessor that recorded "Condemned" (and as it turns out the last incarnations of Confessor). Musically, it is a natural progression from the typical Confessor sound towards a more accessible format, both in terms of vocals and well as songwriting.

Curious to learn about the events that caused the demise of Confessor and the forming of Fly Machine, I contacted Fly Machine for an interview. The following is an interview that I did with drummer Steve Shelton (SS) and Dave Dorsey (DD).

originally written before we changed the name, but was never performed live under the name Confessor.

Occasionally, an old Confessor part will be reworked to suit Fly Machine's vibe and we will whip a song out from time to time. Once we begin playing out more, we may have a surprise or two for the crowd. Many people never had a chance to see Confessor.

The monicker Fly Machine would imply an interest in aviation or a yearning to fly like the Wright brothers. Where did the name Fly Machine originate from?

SS: Personally, I always picture something more along the lines of a machine that spits out a steady stream of flies, or even more surreal, a dictator fly delivering a rousing

speech to throngs of overzealous fly supporters or watching his army of devoted fly minions parading by. Every once in a while, some totally new visual will come to me as yet another interpretation of Fly Machine.

DD: No one in Fly Machine is particularly religious, but the name (to me) represents a kind of spiritual search, spoken or unspoken, I think we've all decided to be involved in. I really believe in the name because it can have different personalities on so many levels, like we are trying to achieve when we perform. The imagery invoked never conjured turn of the century props, Spirit of St. Louis type metaphors. Move like falling... with hope? Speaking of imagery, the name comes from a strange trip I took with a few friends at a local club. While in the bar I realized much to my chagrin someone had slipped something in my drink. Needless to say, I felt a bit overextended in more than a few areas. That's when I ran into a friend who apparently had the same incident befall him. He was affected far different than I, began to ramble. His words started connecting into a chatter and his body language became increasingly jerky. Sort of like a fly, a fly that won't quit. Fly Machine.

Judging by your self-titled CD, Fly Machine's musical direction is stylistically quite similar to Confessor's: they're both in the doom metal vein with sudden rhythm changes. How would you describe the main differences between Fly Machine and Confessor?

SS: First, I suppose I should explain that the Fly Machine CD is really representative of the transition from Confessor to roughly one year ago. Over half the material was written while Confessor was searching for a singer. Dave had only been in the band for two or three months when we recorded the last four songs and Brian had just quit before we recorded the first four. In that regard, it is really more of a Confessor CD. As Fly Machine, we are still learning all of the things we are capable of creating. We have had the same line up for two and a half years now and are just now coming "into our own" as it were. Confessor fans will always be able to hear our roots in Fly Machine. As long as Cary and I are playing together, we would make any band sound like Confessor, plus Chris and Dave were both big Confessor fans, but with different members you write different things. Fly Machine is capable of going much farther and in many more directions than Confessor ever could! Ultimately, Confessor was a one dimensional band. Our music was undeniably metal and always involved mathematics at some point. "Dynamic Build" was a term lost completely on us back then, but what we did work and we had lots of fun. Now it takes more to hold our interest. Fly Machine's music is more diverse. Our songs don't have the same texture. Guitars are not always playing the same part, backing vocals have added some depth, and at times I concentrate on making a huge wall of noise instead of being as busy as I can. We are genuinely interested in creating something new. For me, there is no bigger compliment than a person clamoring for words to describe how our set just made them feel. As a member of Fly Machine, I get to see that reaction fairly often.

In the writing credits, the contribution of Brian Shoaf to the song is mentioned. Will he still be a contributing member in the future?

SS: Brian was, as I said, involved in the writing of nearly everything on the Fly Machine CD. He did not quit until roughly three months before we recorded the last batch of songs for that demo. The CD demo that we just finished is the first recording he has nothing to do with, and I cannot imagine him contributing anything inn the future. I tried to buy his guitar a few months ago. It just collects dust now.

As far as I know, former guitarist Graham Fry joined Ozone Quartet. Whatever happened to the original vocalist Scott Jeffreys and second guitarist Ivan



Colon?

SS: Graham, the band's original lead guitarist, quit right before we signed with Earache to join a progressive jazz band. Now they are called Ozone Quartet, but then they went by Cloud Nine. Again, you would have to find Cloud Nine stuff through tape trading [Ozone Quartet have gone on to release two worthwhile CDs: "Fresh Blood" and "Nocturne" - CR]. For the last two years or so, Graham has been in Leadfoot only. They specialize in a more "southern" approach to hard rock and also have two former members of Corrosion of Conformity. As for every other member that ever quit Confessor, one became a full-time roadie for years with major bands, two are going to school and one is married and working. None are pursuing music currently, nor can their names be found on other recordings (though Scott did sing one song on a Cloud Nine demo).

Your self-titled debut was released independently in 1997. What were the reasons for releasing the CD independently, wasn't there any label interest in Fly Machine?

SS: Actually, the CD was never released. It was only a demo, and we were not satisfied with it enough to send it out to labels. We did mail out a small handful, but never pushed it. We do have quite a few which can be obtained through our website or at our shows. But don't look for it in stores. Earlier this year we recorded again. This time we are very pleased with the results and are, as you read this, gathering our promo packs et al, to begin mailings for labels. This recording is not something we are selling yet, but that may not take too long to come about.

Could you elaborate on the lyrical content of some of the songs?

DD: Overall, the lyrics in all those songs seem to have come from common ground. Some have more moving colors, others only bear witness to where my thoughts were. I would like to say there was a positive underlying theme, but most of my best writing on that CD came from a darker place. So I guess it's appropriate those semi-related songs appeared together on that release. For a little more detail, I'll try running through song to song. With the intent of not making each one sound cliché. The first song on the CD, "Becoming," strives to explain the importance of keeping your motivation alive. Being content isn't always a good thing. Song two, "Call," has quite a few different possible angles to look from. What I was trying to convey was simply, to not let my inhibitions rule how I live. Next, "Take You On," with its less prosy and more poetic approach, lacks a decisive theme.

Attempting more to paint with words a feeling that I hope is a little different for each listener. In "Drowning," I tried to touch the theme that Ayn Rand seemingly tried her whole career to invoke; Anthem, The Fountainhead, Atlas Shrugged, etc. Her philosophy: Objectivism. If you've read her work you'd see the irony in my attempt. Number five, "Empty Circle," describes someone whose soul is running low. Or just someone who feels emotionally tortured. Taking us neatly into "Downsize." Paralleling "Empty" only expounding move in anger. "Mover," song number seven, at one time, was the name of the band previous to Fly Machine. I'm glad that didn't last. Judging lyrical content, I think the name itself nails it. Last on the CD, "Victimize," means to take the listener down "rows of cold shoulders and into my bluest skies." A negative jaunt down memory lane to a bad childhood. I think all these songs have good lyrics and I know I've tried to summarize as best I could the content. My advice to you though, forget everything I've said, listen to the words, filter them through yourself and come to your own conclusions. It'll become much more of a personal ride.

The rhythm section of Cary Rowells and Steve Shelton is characteristic for the Confessor/Fly Machine sound. They have now played together for so many years, how did this partnership come about and have they played other musical styles apart from metal?

SS: I never knew Cary before Confessor, or any of those guys for that matter. I knew who Scott and Graham were because we were in "rival" bands in high school. Once I

joined Confessor, he and I simply tried to sync bass lines up with what I was doing (the band was around for a year and a half before I came into the picture). Now we just try to enhance one another's ideas. He might have a great idea, I might have one - whatever works best for that particular song. As for the second part of your question: yes and no. We have never played in another band together, but not all of Fly Machine's stuff is metal to the bone. This band experiments a lot! We are all having loads of fun writing whatever we feel like and we have confidence in one another's ability to make each song as "big" as it can be.

It has been quite a while since your debut release. What are the plans for a second album?

SS: Like I mentioned earlier, we are just now gearing up to send stuff out to labels, so we will see what happens if it comes down to Fly Machine have to finance its own record, then so be it, this band will be heard one way or another. With a little luck, we will be able to garner some interest with this newest recording.

After the interview, I received a copy of the new Fly Machine demo CD. This demo features three new songs: "Big Down," "Gun in Me," and "Thrown." This shows Fly Machine as a more mature band that have built on the original Confessor sound and added some modern alternative guitar rock influences. This sounds ridiculous but I've listened to it so many times now but I can't seem to find a more accurate description of the new style. The new songs contain more variety in terms of rhythm but luckily the typical Confessor-style stop-start sequences and Trouble/Black Sabbath influences still shine through. Vocalist Dave Dorsey's vocals suit the music perfectly and the rhythm section still amazes me. Best song is the more uptempo semi-thrash oriented "Thrown" with some over the top drumming. I'm not sure about the availability of this demo CD because with this demo the band is soliciting label interest. With a bit of luck, if might just work but as we all know talent is not enough. The first demo CD (8 songs, 38 minutes) is still available for \$7 and Fly Machine can be contacted at: FLY MACHINE, Management, PO Box 10732, Raleigh, N.C. 27605, USA, www.flymachine.com, flymachine@hotmail.com.

DIVINE EMBRACE Tales of Avalon self-released

Hailing from the hometown of Edge of Time faves Sore Plexus, comes a different type of band by the name of Divine Embrace. On this debut CD, Divine Embrace delivers a convincing mix of 80s-style thrash and death metal, enhanced by a lyrical concept revolving around the mystical place of Avalon. Musically, the closest comparison I can think of is early Death but without the distinctive breaks and class. Although I can't really name any real highlights, the build-up of the album is competent and there is a nice mixture of songs with some short interludes. A negative point is that when the acceleration pedal is pushed down, the riffs have a tendency to become indistinguishable and they seem to miss that sense of individuality. The lyrical concept is original but the conversion of the epic story to lyrics is somewhat difficult to follow. This is mainly due to the frequent change in perspective: sometimes from the first person but then later in a narrative style. The fact that vocalist Stefan Hebes switches between clear (and somewhat hoarse) and raw vocals without clear relation to the lyrical perspective does not help in clarifying things. In conclusion, good but not spectacular. (CR)

[\$10, Stefan Hebes, Doppelstrasse 14, 44789 Bochum, Germany] [<http://www.divine-embrace.de>] [ceridwen@divine-embrace.de] 3/3

DRACONIS The Highest of All Dark Powers EP Greying Dawn Records

The new mini-album of Draconis follows the previous full-length "Overlords of the Greying Dawn." These new 4 songs don't leave me neither positive nor negative thoughts. The problem is that everything is very ordinary and dull. Draconis manoeuvre in the crossroad between black, death, and thrash metal. Mostly it is black metal, but solos and rhythms often remind of heavy metal bands. In fact, the singer's voice can be called the clearest mark of black metal, but, in my opinion, if Draconis want to reach something, Mike Pardi must improve his singing. Draconis' music isn't very melodic, isn't very brutal, isn't very emotional - it is lost in the eternal

"somewhere inbetween." After one hour, you'll forget about them. (AO)

2 1/2

DRAWN A New World? Prophecy Productions

Already after their first self-produced mini-album "Drawn," it was clear that this group wouldn't disappear unnoticed. Here they are again, presenting the first full-length, which takes Drawn to another level of experiments and pushes them to the first league of atmospheric metal bands. This album continues the style presented on the first mini-album: dirty, contrasting atmospheric metal, which means that they combine doom, progressive, gothic into one unity. Of course, everybody notices that their style reminds of the two latest discs by In The Woods... (especially "Strange in Stereo"). There are some reasons for this: the guitarist of In The Woods... Christer takes part in the creation of Drawn, and Jan-Kenneth from the same band also did some additional session vocals for "A New World?". All these musicians created a very contrasting collage which hardly can be found in metal genre nowadays. "Yours and Mine" is played with a strong dose of gothic; "So, I Can't Dance, OK!" starts as

psychedelia ala Pink Floyd but later develops into experimental doom metal; aggressive parts dominate on "World We Had"; and all other tracks differ one from another. It seems that hardly we can find such contrasting

tracks in the albums of In The Woods... And it seems that Drawn's music develops rapidly - we will hear from them in the future, I am sure about that. And for now, it's one of the best atmospheric metal's newcomers in 1999. (AO)

4 1/4 [GS 4]

DUNKELGRAFEN

Baphomet's Call

Last Episode

Dunkelgrafen are an outstanding band in Last Episode's family. In times when most of their bands play ultra-fast and raw black metal, this

EINHERJER Norwegian Native Art Native North Records

Two previous albums of Einherjer for Century Media ("Far Far North" and "Odin Owns Ye All") gained them a reputation of a band performing so called viking metal, where folk melodies are combined with battle hymns and aggressive black metal riffs. The new album was recorded at Los Angered Recordings with Andy LaRoque as a producer, and it is strange that the final sound quality isn't very clear. But maybe it was their goal to reach such a bit dirty and raw sounding. Musically, Einherjer just prove that they remain true to the viking metal style, but in their case black metal influences almost go away. Instead of them, we get songs which are more similar to Bathory, with added power metal-like melodic choruses. Einherjer's music is the one to which such descriptions as "hymnic," "glorious," or "proud" fit well (reminds of Manowar? maybe, but Einherjer play much more aggressively and without getting solely battle hymns character). The only thing which isn't so much developed as on many other viking metal albums, are folk melodies - Einherjer use more keyboards instead. Maybe this album hasn't reached the level of the ones like Ulver, but nevertheless "Norwegian Native Art" is a fine product for those seeking melodic viking metal. "Crimson Rain," "Howl Ravens Come," or "Regicide" are truly powerful hymns. (AO)

[<http://www.nativenorthern.com>]

4 [CR 4 1/4, GS 4]

group has got something more to offer. The album doesn't start very impressively, but later things change: besides traditionally fast and aggressive black metal, Dunkelgrafen add Celtic Frost-influenced sound, and such tracks as "Baphomet" are somewhat like a cross between modern black metal, heavy metal, and death metal. This group doesn't fear experiments, and some songs almost fall out from the black metal context. Some of them sound a bit old-fashioned, but I think that there are many black metal fans who adore the beginnings of the style a la years 1985-1987. Dunkelgrafen surely have this sense of naphthalene, but in their case it smells quite good. All lyrics are in German, and it seems that there are quite a lot bands in Germany that try to sing in their native language these days. This album is

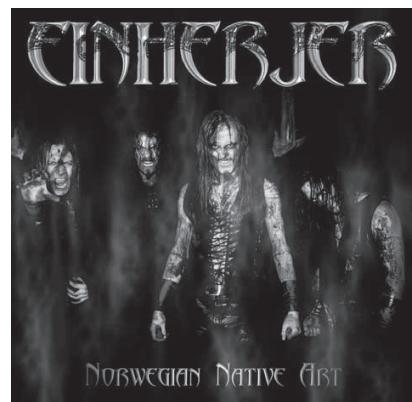
recommended to all the fans of retro black metal with the touch of other styles. (AO)

3 3/4

EARTHCORPSE The Taste of Sin Shiver Records

Hm, there are still bands that play the old school melodic doom/death. Earthcorpse twist somewhere between early Paradise Lost, early Cathedral, and (once more) early Anathema. The vocals go sometimes towards Venom. I think this band succeeded in reconstructing the spirit of this ever so popular music. The material sounds a bit too rough here and there, but I think the fans of the genre will enjoy this one. The old doom/death is still alive... (SV)

3 1/2 [AO 2 3/4]



NORWEGIAN NATIVE ART

Other songs are in a sort of death-rock style. The vocals are between death-metal and death-rock, but more "wet" than in gothic metal; a milder voice would fit the "Clouds" type of songs better. Godgory sound best in those places where riffs and melodies actually remind of Tiamat (or Crematory in Type II songs), but many parts (forming the majority in the second half of the CD) are predictable, non-intriguing, and with quite average melodies. And, consequently, they don't really "click." (GS)
 [Godgory, Matte Andersson, Hagagatan 14B, 65220 Karlstad, Sweden] [<http://home.bip.net/gory>] [gory@mail.bip.net]
 3 1/2

GODS TOWER

Ebony Birds

Prophecy Productions

Byelorussia's Gods Tower both surprise and amaze with their unique folk approach to doom/thrash/death metal. It sounds a bit provincial in places ("Blood"), but the diversity buys it over. The fact that this is a collection of Gods Tower songs from their old demos and two CDs ("The Eerie" and "The Turns") explains the eclecticism, which travels from early My Dying Bride kind of doom to death metal with hoarse, screamy vocals and riffs nice in their straightforwardness and naturalness. The album has slavonic folk/ethnic roots and gives a balance to modern technology-inspired metal. (GS)

4 [AO 4 1/4]

GOOSEFLESH

Chemical Garden

Digital Dimension

Sweden's Gooseflesh play fairly heavy metal and sound not entirely unlike a medley of Meshuggah and old school (groove orientated) Swedish death metal, with a hint of hardcore and grind. The best parts of the album are the Meshuggah inspired (syncopated and technical) songs, where the time changes are frequent and polyrhythms are employed. Unfortunately, most of the album is filled with mind numbing chug-a-thons that serve no purpose besides pummeling the listener with sheer power and distortion. While there's nothing inherently wrong with this approach, it does get tiresome rather quickly. The lack of melody also renders most of the music emotionless. Like Meshuggah, Gooseflesh aim to crush the listener and sacrifices good coherent songs (or pieces if you prefer) in the process. More originality could go along way with this band, considering their proficient and formidable musicianship. (JS)

3

GORGOROTH

Incipit Satan

Nuclear Blast

With "Incipit Satan," Norwegian black metallers Gorgoroth continue their grim musical crusade. Far less mindnumbingly brutal than previous works, the new album finds the band exploring somewhat more melodic and experimental terrain. This doesn't necessarily bode well though, as the band shows a good deal of uncertainty and immaturity when it comes to writing actual songs (rather than relentless black metal chaos). The listener is barraged with one pointless, meandering riff after another; transitions are sloppy, hooks are unhooky, the playing is mediocre, production is plodding, and the experimental bits are poorly implemented. Experimentation comes to us in the form of badly arranged techno and house music (is that possible?), and dirty industrial riffing. Throw in a couple of ill-conceived clean vocal lines and a dirty mix, and you end up with music either bordering on amateur-hour thrash-death, or really, really "true." Gorgoroth needs work. Hail. (JS)

2 1/2

GRAVEWORM

As the Angels Reach the Beauty

Serenades Records

Who nowadays would be surprised if I'd present a band playing a mixture of death, black, gothic, symphonic music, and folk music? Probably nobody. Maybe the preceding album of Graveworm, as the info-sheet says, has really been the CD of the year in Italy, but it's hardly believable that "As the Angels Reach the Beauty" could repeat such an achievement nowadays. For one simple reason - nowadays we've got hundreds of groups performing exactly the same mixture of various styles. What we find on this disc is the common jumping from beautiful and gentle keyboards passages to black metal, from then to symphonic parts and death growls. In short, if you want to find something from everything, it is right here. Listening to the albums stylistically similar to this one, the question of the balance between all these parts always becomes actual. In this case, musicians manage not to overload listener, and luckily the main flow of atmospheres is easy to grasp. So, the main question is whether you like symphonized brutal music or not. If yes, Graveworm is here dedicated for you. But the problem is that this style has already become a big trend today. (AO)

3 1/2

INTO ETERNITY

Into Eternity/4-song promo CDR

self-released

If you want to buy one self-released album, "Into Eternity" should be a serious candidate. The debut album of this Canadian band sounds like what would happen if Dark Tranquillity, Children of Bodom, or In Flames would try to follow the path of those ex-extreme bands like Anathema and In the Woods. Into Eternity do not delve into psychedelia or gothic rock though and display an extremely energetic feast of progressive speed death metal. There is not a whole lot of death metal here, but a few present groovy riffs and not very frequent growls are neatly incorporated into the music (there is not a sign of artificiality here, and the usage of death-metal vocals remind also of Lanfear's first song off "Zero Poems"). On the other hand, this album definitely doesn't follow the regular school of melodic speed metal either. Band's capability to radiate energy and emotions is similar to Faith No More, although Into Eternity are faster and definitely metal. The clean vocals are in upper mid-range and sound very pleasant to the ear. The music is not very technically challenging, but very interesting structurally, very energetic, whirling, and captivating, so I don't see a reason why one should pass on getting this album.

The band has also sent a CDR with 4 new songs, which continue in the similar style. The new songs accentuate death metal parts and there are more rhythmic changes, but the melodic elements are still present. (GS)
 [\$13 for "Into Eternity" CD, Into Eternity, Scott Krall, B-9 Glen Elm Tr. Cr., Regina, SK Canada, S4N 0M6] [intoeternity@sk.sympatico.ca] [<http://www.cableregina.com/users/intoeternity>]
 4 1/4



HAGGARD

Awaking the Centuries

Drakkar

The truly gigantic classical/folk/medieval/metal band Haggard returns with more quality listening for connoisseurs of truly ambitious music, if not particularly ambitious production jobs. For those of you unfamiliar with Haggard, they are a German band comprised of several musicians, including a traditional doom/death metal quartet, a series of singers, and a whole slew of woodwind, string, and keyboard players. This album also makes use of the New Moscow Radio Choir, a professional classical choir comprised of (you guessed it!) Russians. The music on this album is beautiful, complex, and ambitiously arranged. It is flawed, but that is expected of anything truly bold and conceptually trying. The album is short (just over thirty minutes) and the production is somewhat flawed (it's full and clear, but there are sound deficiencies and the guitar sound is wafer thin). But such minor complaints aside, this album is just a shade dimmer than brilliant and has moments of total sonic revelation. The music here is more baroque orientated than before, but retains its medieval influences. The baroque elements are very complex, with counterpoint, polyphony and intense instrumental interplay. Dark and emotional metal is well integrated, attacking the listener at calculated moments to increase the dramatic momentum of the music. The concept is ambitious, placing the listener in the sixteenth century in a narrative involving everyone's favorite premonitions man Nostradamus - there are even moments of film like spoken dialogue and open narration. This is a truly far-reaching record, and is for anyone who enjoys ambitious (though perhaps flawed) music. I just hope in the future (I can't foresee things like Nostradamus) that Haggard gets the production they truly deserve. (JS)

4 1/2

HATE ETERNAL

Conquering the World

Wicked World

It's another album of intense brutal death metal, which is played in typical Tampa death metal way mixed with some European influences. In fact, we heard lots of groups performing in this style, so we surely won't be shocked by any novelties. It's all right with their techniques, and the fans of the style, I suppose, will enjoy this release. Especially the ones who adored Suffocation and numerous followers of theirs. Some tracks like "Catacombs" or "Nailed to Obscurity" are enjoyable even to me, but most likely is that this album won't cross the borders of the genre's fan-base. (AO)

3

HIGHROAD NO.28

Obscure Madness EP

self-released

Australian band that plays a mixture of modern hardcore and metal. Highroad No.28 (whatever it means) is rather a solo project of certain Andrew Cantwell who is a main composer of all songs on this EP. These five tracks aren't bad, but don't mean a thing to me either. The material reminds me of early Prong but seems a bit amateurish. Average. (SV)
 [Andrew Cantwell, P.O. Box 502, Parramatta, NSW, Australia 2124]
 3

IMPERIAL

Malmort

Osmose Productions

The most attractive fact of "Malmort" is that all the lyrics are written in French, which is not used so often by thrash/speed bands. But with French language in their songs, the originality of Imperial ends. The music is a dirty mix of speed metal and rock'n'roll. Inputs of hardcore remind me of their label-mates Driller Killer, but in the case of the latter, the music is much more effective and has a sense. Imperial's speed/core doesn't leave any emotions, and I don't understand to which audience it is dedicated - to metal-fans or punk-heads. Very average music which may be effective only live. (AO)

2 1/2

IN FLAMES

Colony

Nuclear Blast

Right from the opening slide, you know "Colony" is an In Flames album. The first riff is catchy and heavy, soaringly melodic and crushingly powerful - in a few words, classic In Flames. This is the album's strength and its weakness. On one hand, In Flames deliver exactly what you'd expect with energy and conviction, on the other hand, their formula is fast becoming old. The music is centered on simple (that is traditional) song structures, extremely catchy hooks and pulverizing bombast. While songs are very straight forward, the riffs are addictive and attention grabbing; each one well thought out and infectious. To spice things up, In Flames have added slight electronic touches, some pseudo-industrial flavors and some fairly clean vocals to their traditional riff stew. The problem with the album is its lack of

innovation - In Flames is quickly becoming the death metal equivalent of power metal bands like Stratovarius and Running Wild; wildly catchy albums lacking substance and new direction. In Flames is beginning to sound stagnant and stagnation is the most dangerous foe of the artist. The album lacks the strength of In Flames' penultimate album "The Jester Race" or the folky charm of "Lunar Strain" - in this respect they're even more stripped down than before. The band will have to change their tried and tested formula, or risk alienating listeners who want something more in their metal. (JS)

4

INQUITY

Five Across the Eyes

Mighty Music

One of the oldest (in existence since 1989) and most respected Danish death metal groups released its second full-length, following two demo tapes, debut album "Serenadium," and MCD "The Hidden Lore." As I understand, it is a real joy for a fan of technical death metal. Inquity have got technics, interchanging melodies, and music performed in more old-school death metal way. It seems that this band wants to put all heavy styles into one unity, so grinding parts interchange with doomy riffs and mid-tempo death metal. This album is well-produced, well-played, so why not to listen to it? For me, it is maybe not the right piece of what I like, and I would prefer a little bit more atmospheric music (here, the technics overshadow that), but those who'd like to listen to a more varied Bolt Thrower, try this one. (AO)

4

INNER SHRINE

Fallen Beauty

Dragonheart Records

The first song "Sanguis Vitae" begins with melancholic acoustic guitars, and it seems that we will get romantic gothic music here. But it's like that only in the first minutes; later electric instruments break in and, in that moment, the style resembles to Dreams of Sanity: melodic gothic rock/meta with female vocals. Later, the music seems like divided into two parts, one consisting of more metallic songs (but this band has got more gothic and less metal compared to most gothic metal bands), and the other (like "Angelic Visions") consisting of acoustic-guitar driven songs with whispering male vocals. Personally, I prefer mild songs from this album, and it seems that eclecticism to a high degree has overfilled the goth scene, where it's almost impossible to find albums that would present more straight and stylistically clear romantic goth music. But it seems that Inner Shrine want to satisfy both sides - "Fallen Beauty" brings lots of good melancholic, romantic atmospheres, it also may satisfy fans of darkened and atmospheric metal. Maybe not a pearl of the style, but a quite good example of it. (AO)

3 3/4

HADES

The Downside

Metal Blade Records

"The Downside" finally shows that the third reunion was worth of doing it. If the results the previous Hades' albums "Exist to Resist" and "Savior Self" weren't very inspiring, the brand new release is maybe the most successful release after the first, now almost cult albums "Resisting Success" and "If at First You Don't Succeed." The new album is more diverse than its predecessor and combines the style of the first Hades albums and more psychedelic metal of Dan Lorenzo's Non Fiction. "The Downside" starts with the style which we most often associate Hades with - technical thrash/speed with high-pitched vocals of Alan Tecchio. It is maybe more aggressive than earlier, and such tracks as "Pay the Price" even resemble Testament's style on "Low." But such tracks as "Bitter" or "Align the Planets" will please fans of melodic thrash/speed; here Hades sound the same we are used to imagine them. Bigger changes come as the album comes into its second half. "Hail to the Thief" is more straight than the first tracks and is played in a catchier manner. The new ground of Hades comes into the light with "It's a Wonderful Lie," a psychedelic track played in the style which is more characteristic to Non Fiction: slow, twisting, psychedelic atmospheres are combined to technical thrash. Another three tracks are played in a quite similar, more doomish manner. Such songs as "Become Dust" or "Responsible" are very strange and surely will be considered as the new page in Hades' history. The last track "Ground Zero (reprise)" was recorded with Billy Milano and again is something new - here hardcore is mixed with thrash metal. All the tracks on this album are short and quite easily catchable. And the strongest point is that "The Downside" almost doesn't contain any weak or average tracks. Very good. (AO)

[<http://www.hadesusa.com>]

4 1/2 [GS 4 1/4]



KATATONIA

Tonight's Decision

Peaceville

This record is very resignating and breathes with pessimism. It's not rampage in its form, and is lightweight gothic metal or might even be presented as a metallic version of The Cure. Especially, "I am Nothing" and "In Death, a Song" have possessive melody lines, characteristic to rock songs, where the vocals and melodies are the decisive criteria. Katatonia do not avoid repetitiveness, and towards the end of the album, some songs show a bit lackluster writing ("Strained," "A Darkness Coming"). In spite of that, a quite smooth and classy performance and a sad sad record. (GS)

3 3/4 [AO 4 1/2, JS 3 3/4]



The COVENANT

Animatronic

Nuclear Blast Records

After a name change (for legal reasons it would seem) and a lineup change (the band is now a three piece), The Covenant returns to the world with their third album "Animatronic." Admittedly, I was somewhat apprehensive about this release, having heard some rather negative opinions regarding it, and moreover rumors that the band had gone in a Marilyn Manson direction. While not entirely won over by "Animatronic" (some of the songs are rather weak and inconsequential), I must admit a strong fondness for it. Marilyn Manson this isn't - in fact, if not for the rather stylized makeup and costumes the band now dons, the comparison would be totally unfounded. The songs on "Animatronic" are an eclectic combination of electronic music and the "space metal" style found on "Nexus Polaris." The music is cold, dark and militaristic, and yet challenging and aesthetically pleasing at the same time. Songs will move from metal bombast into industrial marches, into neoclassical terrain, and end with dance-floor techno (very futuristic sounding). The Covenant boldly appropriate music from a variety of genres, fusing it into their pre-existing format, creating a metal both futuristic and contemporary. The closest comparison would be Finnish rockers Waltari - some of the music sounds almost exactly like Waltari's more electronic experiments (the soprano singing over a techno beat and heavy guitar for example). In conclusion, "Animatronic" provides a fresh and entertaining experience without ever quite blowing the listener away. (JS)

4 [AO 4]

The KUNTAUT CULT

From the Pits...

Displeased Records

Even if this is the same death metal, bands on the Displeased label somehow differ from groups at Earache or Repulse. The Kuntaut Cult from the Netherlands surprise the fans of the genre with astonishingly dynamic and intense songs. The drums are really outstanding, what a tornado! The material is also not bad at all, but as I'm not a true death metaller, it becomes a drag towards the end. All in all, above-average work, and the interpretation of pop hit "Venus" is pretty interesting. (SV)

3 1/2 [AO 3]

LAB ANIMALS

Silent Weapons for Quiet Wars

Digital Dimension

Hailing from Detroit, MI (USA), Lab Animals play a vibrant brand of gothic industrial that emphasizes complexity and precision over harshness and crunch. The music is far more intense than pop-industrial icons NIN, but not nearly as heavy as classic Industrial Deathsters Dead World or Candiru. They have created a sound that is both energetic and dynamic, without ever quite lapsing into dreadfully slow or repetitive terrain. Lab Animals is a superb example of their genre at its best. The music varies greatly, alternating

between trudging Industrial drones and hectic techno tempos (great for raves) that speed along with infectious energy. The vocals come in two principle varieties: a clean (and somewhat harmonized) voice and a black metal like shriek, heavily processed and filled with venom. Finally, the songs are surprisingly catchy, and lend themselves well to driving at high speeds into a blazing desert sunset (I know, I've tried). Highly recommended to fans of the genre and anyone else with an open mind. (JS)

[<http://www.labanimals.com/>]

4 1/4

LACUNA COIL

Halflife EP

Century Media Records

If you wonder where lies the fun in releasing EPs, ask Lacuna Coil who puts out their second, following the debut full-length "In a Reverie." With "Halflife," Lacuna Coil move away from The Gathering and Paradise Lost references, and transcend into territories of busy and heavy atmospheric metal. The female vocals bear a slight oriental touch this time, and while the songs do not have immediate hook that a couple of "In a Reverie" tracks had, they are richer in texture. The new album is in the works, and, of course, as a victim of the new millennium with Jennifer Lopez and Grammies, I'll be looking forward not only to band's new music but also for promo pictures including the singer Cristina. (GS)

4

LEPROSY

Rey de las Bestias

Denver

"Rey de las Bestias" is the followup of last year's "Lloras Chiapas," and finds the band exploring some new terrain while remaining consistent with their traditional sound. Based in Mexico, Leprosy play brutal and intense thrash-influenced death metal. The music is heavy and prone to rhythmic grooves, with occasional splashes into Meshuggah-esque syncopation and crunch. Interestingly enough, the band will occasionally use classically inspired cello and violin work, bringing a Therion-like melodic element to the largely rhythmic music. The music is professional and tight, with a great production and solid overall performance; the neo-classicism is well integrated and surprisingly fitting. Lyrics are mainly in Spanish with some songs in well-written English; they deal primarily with progressive political themes (indigenous rights, etc.) and somewhat more standard death metal material - religion, violence and occult themes (all well handled and in good taste). Leprosy play intense death metal with focus and purpose, with a sprinkle of classical beauty. (JS)

3 1/2

MACABRE

Unabomber EP

Hammerheart Records

This year Macabre plan to present two new albums - "Dahmer" and "Murder Metal," so this mini-album serves as an appetizer only. I don't see a problem how two albums can be released in only one year. The music of Macabre doesn't need much work, special technical skills, and many ideas when creating it. I even think that four albums could be released in such a short time. These three new songs on "Unabomber" are just dull crossover metal with macabre lyrics and murderer image of the group. Take away the themes of serial killers, and you'll get just a simple mix of hardcore with thrash metal parts. Maybe it was intended to be horror metal, but to me it is more funny than frightening. I hope that the new albums will be performed more seriously, as now it is just waste of time. (AO)

2

MALEVOLENT CREATION

Manifestation

Pavement Music

"Manifestation" is a two CD set commemorating the rather long career of controversial death metallers Malevolent Creation. As a testament of their career, "Manifestation" is a surprisingly uniform collection of tracks (taken from all of their releases with a couple of live cuts), with a varying production quality. Their music is brutal, heavy, frequently fast, fairly simple (also fairly complex at times) American death metal. The songs are dark, apocalyptic, and often times washed over in doomer shades. Their sound isn't particularly melodic, but nor is it simply blast beat after blast beat. Overall this is a fine compilation and one that anyone interested in Malevolent Creation's career should check out. Admittedly, I'm not one for brutal American death metal (unless it's called Nile or Cryptopsy), but I did find myself rather enjoying this compilation quite a bit - it brought back my high school years and filled me with some weird strain of nostalgia. While I wouldn't recommend this to the metal crossover crowd, I can wholeheartedly recommend it to fans of the American death metal scene. Over and out. (JS)

3 3/4 [AO 3 3/4, GS 4]



KITTIE

Spit

Ng Records

What do you think when you hear that the group plays a cross between metal and hardcore and that the group consists only of females? Definitely not Space Girls. So, maybe L7 or Babes In Toyland? Yes, your guess was right, Kittie is another example of aggressive girls playing angry music. Don't compare them to the ones like Hole, 'cause Kittie's girls don't have that grunge element in their music, and the comparisons with L7 are only partially right because such classic albums of L7 as "Bricks are Heavy" are way more melodic and "commercial" than "Spit." The closest comparison is hardcore girls from Babes In Toyland. And even then, Kittie are more metallic and their playing has a much more massive sound. Such songs as "Choke" would sound as a real death/HC aggression, and only female vocals bring a softer sense (but Morgan Lander shouts, screams very aggressively in many places). Interesting singing decisions are made on perfect songs "Charlotte" and "Paperdoll," a techno rhythm suddenly breaks in on "Brashick"; it is good, and not only because it's not traditional for metal music female outfit. The music is very strong, energetic and manoeuvring between different heavy styles. A very strong debut album. (AO)

[<http://www.ngrecords.com/>] [<http://www.kittie.net/>]

[nick@ngrecords.com]

4 1/4

Lemay and shows that Martyr is also capable of carrying a mood-laden song. Compared to their debut, the compositions have been refined in every department and the songs are more compact and each of them has that definite hook.

Martyr can certainly stand their ground with the likes of Spiral Architect but don't have so much jazz influences showing through. However, the lessening aspect is still the one-dimensional vocal delivery of the Mongrain brothers. Producer (and Oblivione guitar player) Pierre Rémillard has encompassed "Warp Zone" in a very clean and crisp sound. The packaging and design of the CD are extremely professional and noteworthy are the added multimedia features (three short live video clips, two MP3 files of songs from "Hopeless Hopes" and photos). It may take multiple spins to fully understand the impact of "Warp Zone" but the investment is definitely worth it. Essential... (CR)

[<http://welcometo.martyr>]

4 1/2

MENTAL HOME

Upon the Shores of Inner Seas

Century Media Records/The End Records

The third CD of one of the most prominent Russian bands finally shows what they are truly capable of. While Mental Home were an atmospheric death/doom metal band in the beginning, their new album is a lot more than that. Even if the title would suit any doom/death metal album, musically, we hear structurally and stylistically rich blend of atmospheric metal with raucous yet clean mid-range vocals. Multifarious colors of the first track "Downstairs" bring to my mind Borknagar, while "Late to Revise" and "Eternal Moan" carry the catchiness of dark indie rock. Several songs remind of band's earlier days, but this 8-song, 37 minute long album is anything but boring. It's undeniably metal, not very harsh or aggressive, so it should be appreciated by both extreme metal and more melodic, softer metal fans. Nice work. (GS)

4

MEPHISTOPELES

Songs of the Desolate Ones

Last Episode

The second album of Mephistopheles will let them join the first league of German melodic black metal. At least, much has been done for this. Mephistopheles play black metal which may please very wide circles of listeners, e.g., on some songs even the singer of Blind Guardian joins Mephistopheles' team. Melodic black metal isn't any novelty these days, but Mephistopheles know how to present it attractively. A melodic intro which grows into fast blasts of black metal, then an interrupt, and we are surprised with good classic heavy metal solos, which lead to grand choruses, also sung by Blind Guardian's singer. All this is polished so well that such songs as "Kurgan Supremacy" or "Across Oceans of Time" almost leave no doubts that in some years Mephistopheles may become a band much respected in German market. They have got all characteristics for this: first of all, their background is based on heavy metal roots; second, only the most melodic part of black metal is used for Mephistopheles' creation, giving much attention to choruses and melodic solos. This album can be interesting even to fans of Helloween or Running Wild who want something of black metal which wouldn't go far away from their so loved heavy metal. (AO)

4

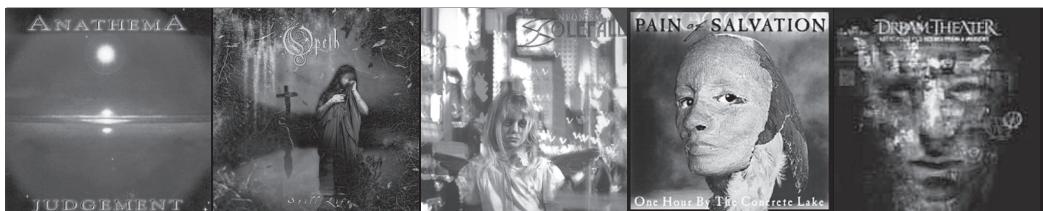
MID AUTUMN NIGHTS

And I Entitled It: A Dirge...

Euphonious Records

Wow, what a title of the album... This band should be a bunch of gloomy and romantic melancholics. The contents of the CD justifies my suspicion: slow, melodic, and dark music with black metal vocals. There are also some male/female choir parts here, but all in all, the album leaves pretty banal impression. The scale of the musicians was probably large, but the result leads nowhere. I've listened to better releases of this sort. (SV)

3 [AO 3]



Best Albums of 1999

Individual Top 10 Lists writers' poll

Audrius Ozalas

1. Tiamat "Skeleton Skeleton"
2. Anathema "Judgement"
3. Ataraxia "Lost Atlantis"
4. The Tea Party "Triptych"
5. Dream Into Dust "The World We..."
6. Lacrimosa "Elodia"
7. Nightwish "Oceanborn"
8. Babylon Whores "King Fear"
9. In The Woods... "Strange In Stereo"
10. Moonspell "Butterfly Effect"

Alban Schmid

1. Dream Theater "Scenes from a Memory"
2. Control Denied "The Fragile Art of..."
3. Pain of Salvation "One Hour by..."
4. Wuthering Heights "Within"
5. Vanden Plas "Far off Grace"
6. Vitalij Kuprij "VK3"
7. Liquid Tension Experiment "2"
8. Divided Multitude "Inner Self"
9. Dali's Dilemma "Manifesto For Futurism"
10. Kenziner "The Prophecies"

Christian Rademaker

1. Opeth "Still Life"
2. Anathema "Judgement"
3. Solefald "Neonism"
4. Lemur Voice "Divided"
5. Fountain of Tears "Fountain of Tears"
6. Emperor "IX Equilibrium"
7. Wolverine "Fervent Dream"
8. Dream Theater "Scenes from a Memory"
9. Control Denied "The Fragile Art of..."
10. Gordian Knot "Gordian Knot"

Giedrius Slivinskas

1. Behind The Curtain "Till Birth Do..."
2. Anathema "Judgement"
3. Nevermore "Dreaming Neon Black"
4. Opeth "Still Life"
5. Amorphis "Tuonela"
6. Dream Theater "Scenes from a Memory"
7. Solefald "Neonism"
8. Dark Tranquillity "Projector"
9. Pain of Salvation "One Hour by..."
10. Lacrimosa "Elodia"

Gregorio Martin

1. Dream Theater "Scenes from a Memory"
2. Nevermore "Dreaming Neon Black"
3. Spock's Beard "Day for Night"
4. Liquid Tension Experiment "2"
5. Johansson "The Last Viking"
6. Yngwie Malmsteen "Alchemy"
7. Luca Turilli "King of the Northern Twilight"
8. Rage "Ghosts"
9. Vitalij Kuprij "VK3"
10. DC Cooper "DC Cooper"

James Stone

1. Solefald "Neonism"
2. Ulver "Themes from William Blake"
3. Dark Tranquillity "Projector"
4. Opeth "Still Life"
5. Samael "Eternal"
6. Summoning "Stronghold"
7. Amorphis "Tuonela"
8. Nevermore "Dreaming Neon Black"
9. Children of Bodom "Hatebreeder"
10. Nightwish "Oceanborn"

Sigitas Velyvis

1. The Tea Party "Triptych"
2. Anathema "Judgement"
3. Pain Of Salvation "One Hour by..."
4. Spock's Beard "Day For Night"
5. Dream Theater "Scenes from a Memory"
6. Metal Church "Masterpeace"
7. The Atomic Bitchwax self-titled
8. Masters Of Reality "Welcome to..."
9. We "Livin' the Lore"
10. Lacrimosa "Elodia"

Best albums of 1999/writers' poll

	AO	AS	CR	GS	GM	JS	SV	top10	Avg
1 Anathema "Judgement"	5	4 3/4	5	4	4	4 3/4	5	4.64	
2 Opeth "Still Life"	4 1/4	4 3/4	4 3/4	4 1/2	4 1/2	4 3/4	4 1/2	4.66	
3 Solefald "Neonism"				4 1/2	4 1/2	4 3/4	4 1/2	4.56	
4 Pain of Salvation "One Hour By The Concrete Lake"	5	4	4 1/2			4 3/4	4 1/2	4.55	
5 Dream Theater "Scenes from a Memory"	4 1/4	4 3/4	4 1/4	4 1/2	4 3/4	4 1/4	4 1/2	4.53	
6 Tea Party "Triptych"	4 1/2			4 1/4			5	4 1/4	4.50
7 Nevermore "Dreaming Neon Black"	4	4	4 3/4	4 3/4	4 3/4	4 3/4	4	4 1/2	4.39
8 Control Denied "Fragile Art of Existence"	5	4 1/4	4			4 1/4	4	4 1/4	4.25
9 Lacrimosa "Elodia"	4 1/2			4 1/4			4 1/4	4	4.25
10 Nightwish "Oceanborn"	4 3/4	4	4 1/4			4 1/2	4	3 3/4	4.21
11 Behind the Curtain "Till Birth Do Us Part"	4 1/4	4	5			4	3 3/4	4.20	
12 Spock's Beard "Day for Night"	4 1/4	3 1/2		4 1/2		4 1/2	4	4 1/5	
13 Amorphis "Tuonela"	4	4	4 1/2	4 1/4	4 1/2	3 3/4	4	4.14	
14 Liquid Tension Experiment "2"	4 1/2	3 1/2	4	4 3/4		4	4	4.13	
15 Dark Tranquillity "Projector"	3 3/4	4	4 1/2			4 3/4	3 3/4	4	4.13
16 Luca Turilli "Kings of the Nordic Twilight"	4 1/4	4 1/4	4 1/4	4 1/2	4		3 1/2	4.13	
17 Empyrium "Where at Night the Wood Grouse Plays"	4 3/4	4	4		4 1/2		3 1/4	4.10	
18 Samael "Eternal"	4 1/2	3 1/2	4 1/4	3 3/4	4 3/4	4	3 3/4	4.07	
19 Tiamat "Skeleton Skeleton"	4 3/4	4		4			3 3/4	4.05	
20 In the Woods "Strange in Stereo"	4 3/4	3 1/2	4 1/4		4 1/4		3 1/2	4.05	
21 Gordian Knot "Gordian Knot"	4	4 1/2	4			4	3 1/2	4.00	
22 Vanden Plas "Far off Grace"	4 1/4	4				3 3/4	3 3/4	3.95	
23 Lemur Voice "Divided"		4 1/2	4			3 1/2	3 3/4	3.94	
24 Children of Bodom "Hatebreeder"		3 1/2	4			3 1/2	3 1/2	3.94	
25 Mercyful Fate "9"	4 1/4	4	4			4	3 1/4	3.90	
26 Nocturnus "Ethereal Tomb"	4 1/4	4	4			4	3 1/4	3.90	
27 Immortal "At the Heart of Winter"	4 1/2	4	4		3 3/4		3 1/4	3.90	
28 Rage "Ghosts"			4	4 1/4		3 3/4	3 1/2	3.88	
29 Agent Steel "Omega Conspiracy"		4 1/4	4			4	3 1/4	3.88	
30 Lanfear "Zero Poems"	4 1/2		4			3 3/4	3 1/4	3.88	
31 Wuthering Heights "Within"	4 3/4	3 1/2	3 3/4			3 1/2	3 3/4	3.85	
32 Steel Prophet "Dark Hallucinations"		4	4 1/4	4		3 3/4	3 1/4	3.85	
33 Katatonia "Tonight's Decision"	4 1/2	4	3 3/4			3 3/4	3 1/4	3.85	
34 Crimson Glory "Astronomica"	3 3/4	3 1/2	4 1/4			4 1/2	3 1/4	3.85	
35 Emperor "IX Equilibrium"	4	4 1/2	4		3 1/4	3 3/4	3 1/2	3.83	
36 Testament "Gathering"	4	4	4			3 3/4	3 1/4	3.83	
37 Metal Church "Masterpeace"		3 1/2		4	4 1/4	3 1/2	3 1/2	3.81	
38 Hades "Savior Self"		4	4			4	3 1/4	3.81	
39 Tiles "Presents of Mind"		4			4	4	3 1/4	3.81	
40 Symphorce "Truth to Promises"		3 1/2	4 1/4	4 1/4			3 1/4	3.81	

"top10" rating was computed according to individual top ten lists

MAYHEM Grand Declaration of War

Season of Mist

Mayhem are considered to be one of the forefathers of Norwegian black metal scene with the release of the "Deathcrush" demo in 1987. Their history has been marred by deaths (suicide of a band member and a murder) and controversy which has been discussed/condemned heavily by the music as well as non-music press. However, musically Mayhem have not been as proficient in terms of releases, with only the debut album "De Mysteriis Dom Sathanis" (1993) and the MCD "Wolf's Lair Abyss" (1997) to show for their long existence (not taking into account the live CD). This actually makes "Grand Declaration of War" the second Mayhem studio album and, as with earlier releases, it will raise some controversy. "Wolf's Lair Abyss" was part I of a trilogy and this album features parts II and III of the "Grand Declaration of War." Part II features five well-produced songs of powerful midtempo black metal with the obligatory blast beat but without keyboards. There's lots of army-style drum rolls and original riffing. The vocals are a combination of a narrative clear voice, black metal growls, and some propaganda style communication. Part III "IL Principe" consists of four parts and will certainly cause some controversy. Starting with a short intro, "A Bloodsword and a Colder Sun" contains an eerie electronic vibe and could've been part Skinny Puppy's "Rabies" album. "Crystallized Pain in Deconstruction" is more akin to progressive black metal with lots of weird sounds, robotic vocals, rhythm shifts, guitar parts flying all over the place. "Complete in Science of Agony" is a nine minute trip back to Black Sabbath, combining all the doom and gloom to create a horrific nightmare. Closer "To Daimonion" completes the circle and the initial Mayhem sound returns. It must be noted that after two silence-filled tracks there is also a hidden bonus track. If this is black metal for the new millennium then the world has a lot of unexpected things coming... (CR) 4 1/4

MITHOTYN Gathered Around the Oaken Table

Invasion Records

The third album released by Scandinavian viking metallers Mithotyn, "Gathered Around the Oaken Table" marks both a progression and a regression. Musically, the band is sharper, more folk-oriented than ever, and highly refined. The regression is mainly a production issue. Where the previous album "King of the Distant Forest" was a wall of sound and clarity, the new production is a bit more subdued and raw. Production issues aside, the new album represents a refinement of Mithotyn's sound. Solid viking metal with a wide array of folk melodies (provided with excellent dual guitar leads) played with the tempo and ferocity of a black metal band. Vocals are shrieked, bellowed, chanted and shouted-choruses are often sung in unison, with great gusto. With clear heavy metal and folk influences, Mithotyn has forged a sound with wide appeal in the extreme/power metal crossover crowd. This is excellent melodic viking/black metal, and highly recommended. (JS) 4

MUTANT

The Aeonic Majesty

Listenable Records

Mutant is a side project of Peter Lake and Henrik Ohlsson from weird technical death metal band Theory In Practice. The band stands quite far away from Theory In Practice's style and deliver music which is more suitable for black metal fan than for death metallers. Still, both musicians try to concentrate on technical, complex side of the style, and, in places, "The Aeonic Majesty" reminds a bit of multi-structured Emperor music, but in the case of Mutant we meet less orchestrations (here, they serve mostly for the background only). From the beginning to the end, this album surprises with its ultra-speed, the tempo slows down only on two more melodic songs "Premonitions Erupt" and "The Aeonic Majesty." Of course, many black metal play at extreme speed and aggression levels, but in this case the music is more technical and complex, and the background in Theory In Practice is evident. I think that this album

isn't dedicated to fans of melodic, symphonized metal, because it is more brutal, more "evil" and aggressive. And even if it is only a side-project of these musicians, it is a worthy one and stands above many other black/death metal bands. (AO) 4

MYRKSKOG

Deathmachine

Candlelight

Norwegian based Myrksgog play a fine mixture of brutal, technical death metal and atmospheric, symphonic black metal. The music is a crushing wall of sound, complemented with discordant guitar tones that float over the music like fog over the rush of a river. The beats are blistering fast, the riffing alternating between death metal grooves and black metal's tremolo, ambient wash. Atmosphere is employed strategically throughout the band's rare mid tempo forays, adding tension like the calm in the eye of a storm. A friend of mine described the music as a mixture of Morbid Angel and Emperor, with the ferocity and complex fervor of the former and the atmospheric bombast of the latter. I couldn't agree with him more. With a clear and all-encompassing production, the Myrksgog listening experience is like watching the rush of the ocean crash through a crumbling dike, flooding and destroying everything standing before it. Interestingly, the album features an extended drum n' bass/techno remix that actually manages to create an epic, symphonic atmosphere, and one that compels rather than annoys. This album is recommended to Emperor fans, as well as anyone else who enjoys an apocalyptic atmosphere married to tight, ferocious brutality. (JS) 4 1/4 [GS 4]

MYSTIC CIRCLE

Infernal Satanic Verses

Last Episode

Some call them posers of black metal, some blame them for sounding too German, some say that their lyrics and image based on

Satanism are simply childish. I agree that some of these statements aren't far from truth, but the music of the third album of Mystic Circle overcomes many black metallers. To say more, seven new songs present a perfect example of melodic black metal with a horror twist. Legendary producer Gerhard Magin, I believe, made a big input to this melodic and in some places even catchy (a bit strange to say this word about a Satanic black metal band) music. Here, we get plenty of tempo changes, keyboards passages, beautiful female singing (Sarah Jezebel Deva from Covenant is in charge), and some horror music elements reminding of earlier Ancient. Mystic Circle are so melodic that many more brutal blackers would gladly smash them down, but in any case, Mystic Circle are one of the most perspective melodic metal bands coming from Germany. (AO) 4 [SV 3 3/4]



THE EARLY YEARS

To start off with, could you first give a short introduction on who you are and what else relating to your personal situation that you are willing to share with us?

I'm Dennis from Monster Records, formerly King Klassic Records, a long time music enthusiast and active participant in the scene.

As far as I know, you've been actively involved in the music business for almost two decades now. It would be interesting to know something about your musical history. How did you get into music and how has your musical taste involved over the years?

Two decades!!!! Whoa! That sounds outrageous to me! I don't know what exactly drew me to music, but I've loved records ever since playing around with my parents' record collection as a young kid. They had stuff like Black Sabbath, War, Herbie Hancock, Elton John, and Traffic that I remember listening to. I guess that's where it really began. My favorite song was "Iron Man" from Sabbath and I was only like 8 years old. Later, I started my own record collection with Aerosmith, Kiss, Judas Priest, and Ted Nugent. I was a Kiss freak during the late 70s for sure! During the early 80s I met up with Phil Baker in Junior High School and we both started getting into the emerging metal scene and began listening to Riot, Iron Maiden, Saxon, and all those bands. When good metal started dying down and hair metal and death metal took over, I started looking elsewhere for music. I ended up getting back into 70s rock this time the obscure undiscovered local stuff in the form of rare collectable hard rock and psych records! Unearthing these lost gems was a lot of fun and led to the amassing of a gigantic record collection, which in turn, led to the selling of these types of records that I do today. I currently listen to a lot of different types of music, but I think my personal favorite is guitar driven 70s hard rock like old Scorpions, Priest, Thin Lizzy, and stuff like that.

A question that is often asked in interviews, but in your case it might bring up a few surprises, is: what are your all time favorite bands?

Some of my favorites are Thin Lizzy, Scorpions, Judas Priest, Black Sabbath, Pink Floyd, Uli Roth, Anvil Chorus, Winterhawk, Flower Travelling Band, Truth n Janey, Rush, Raven, Sade, Slaughter Xstroyes, Triana, Mercyful Fate, Barry White, Ufo, Hendrix, Led Zeppelin.

There is an on-going discussion between vinyl enthusiasts and CD lovers. The sound of a CD is supposed to be a lot harsher, colder, more synthetic than the warmer sound of vinyl. The nostalgic factor also plays a major part in the discussion of course. What is your stance in this discussion?

I think the sound factor has more to do with the original recording and mastering job than it does the actual medium. Some recordings sound phenomenal on compact disc and some sound horrible because the disc reveals all the limitations of the tape and/or the poor mastering or engineering job that was done. Vinyl records seem more substantial to me, though. Album cover art played a big part in giving you an image of the music and contributing to the grandness and feel of the recordings.



[by Christian Rademaker]

Before the time of the compact disc and downloadable MP3s, the most common way for an artist to get his or her music available to the public was through the vinyl LP. Vinyl carried a certain charm with it: you needed to really sit down for a listening session and you needed to flip sides after about twenty minutes. It must also be mentioned that because of its size - the regular size was a 12" record - it gave the artist the opportunity to present it with a larger sleeve for cover artwork than the small format of the CD. This charm has also been responsible for the nostalgia factor surrounding vinyl.

The stories about underground bands releasing independent LPs in limited quantities (often no more than 500) are legendary. Close friends of the band often bought these copies and only a few copies make it across the ocean where they soon obtained cult status. Tape copies started floating around and there have been quite a few bands that have reached cult-status even years after their demise. Some examples are Tyrant's Reign and Slaughter Xstroyes. It is, of course, inevitable that the prices of mint copies of the first pressing soon soar.

These past few years there have been quite a few (mostly independent) labels that have taken it upon them to release old classics for the first time on CD. This gives owners of the originals the chance to hear a virgin-like noise-free and crack-free version and to finally store the vinyl version in the safe. But what's more important is that it gives those curious about these, reputedly legendary, bands the chance to finally experience the rush and excitement.

Monster Records is a record label that has been responsible for the release of some classics from the heavier guitar-oriented genre. Although like a lot of labels, Monster Records mainly focus on rock and psychedelic, it is also the initiator of the release of two essential classics that should be in the collection of each "Edge of Time" readers: Slaughter Xstroyes "Winterkill" and Winterhawk "Revival." This was enough incentive for me to arrange an interview with one of the owners of Monster Records, Dennis Bergeron. The topics covered included his musical background, the fanzine he did with Phil Baker called "Midwest Militia," the record label King Klassics and his current activities with Monster Records and Rare Ass Records.

With compact discs the artwork is so small it barely plays a part in the packaging and with the advent of CD recorders anyone can make a CD. I like the legitimacy being pressed on vinyl seems to give to a project. CDs are like fancy cassettes! Nobody is making vinyl in their house! Except Ralph Kramden.

MONSTER RECORDS MIDWEST MILITIA

In the 80s you did a fanzine called Midwest Militia. That was a time when there was no sophisticated desktop publishing software, there was no Internet, everything had to be done by surface mail or telephone. This brought with it a lot of pioneer work. What were your reasons for making a fanzine and what was the focus of Midwest Militia?

In 1984, we started our own fanzine based on the fact that we loved reading fanzines

and wanted to voice our opinion about the bands that we thought tended to get overlooked. We were getting in touch with bands and other fanzines at the time and were really into the big penpal tape trading thing that was going. I remember I kept having problems finding a decent typewriter! Everything was pasted up then, in fact, I still do some paste up on the catalogue I make.

You often refer to "we" as in "I and Phil Baker." You seem to be like Siamese Twins, what is exactly your relation to Phil Baker?

Phil and I first met back in junior high school where we shared musical interests. Later, in high school, we collaborated on the "Midwest Militia" fanzine and became business partners on King Klassic and have remained business partners 'till this day. Our mutual taste and interest in music has kept our partnership alive for over 15 years now.

How many issues of "Midwest Militia" did you make and why did you stop doing it?

We made 3 issues of Midwest Militia. We had a 4th that was near completion, but was never finished. We got involved with King Klassic, going to college, and writing for other magazines, like "Aardschok America." I wish we would have at least finished the 4th issue.

What other notable fanzines were out there at that time which you were in contact with?

"Metal Forces," "Metal Mania," "Sledgehammer Press," "Suck City," "Enlightened Chaos," "Metal Rendezvous," "World Metal Report," "Subway," and many other tiny homemade zines.

What did you learn of the music business by doing a fanzine?

I didn't learn too much about the business really, but I did learn that there were a lot of good undiscovered groups out there! Getting demos in the mail was a lot of fun. However, come to think of it, we did have our first taste of the dog-eat-dog music business when Megaforce Records took out a full page back cover ad for issue 3 and after it was printed and done they just decided they weren't going to pay for it. Getting paid was a big issue in those days, especially for the bands.

You mentioned that you were receiving a lot of demos when you were doing Midwest Militia. Could you name some bands that really amazed you but never made it to vinyl?

Some of the demos I remember liking were from Nigro Mantia, Anger, Raider, Maelstrom, Krude Slit, Saintly Sinner, Anvil Chorus(of course!), Witchslayer, Mercenary, and I'm sure there's many more.

MONSTER RECORDS KING CLASSIC

To some of the readers, you are most probably known for running the King Classic label in the 80s. What were your reasons for starting this label? Was this a natural progression for you, from a listener to an active participant?

The label came about out of an idea to make a compilation record from bands featured in "Midwest Militia." The compilation never came to be, but we started King Klassic, ended "Midwest Militia" and signed a popular local band called Wrath and released our first album. Having a label took the whole idea of presenting the music we liked to another level. Instead of just writing about the bands, we would actually be delivering the music to the public. On the subject of delivering the music to the public, we also had a short 3 month stint as DJs for a heavy metal radio show at Northern Illinois University. It was part metal, part lunacy and it was a lot of fun, but we eventually were fired when we had a contest that whoever brought us down a FREE PIZZA could host the show while we ate it. All hell broke lose and we were fired the next day.

What was the full discography of LPs/CDs that King Classic released?

Wrath "Fit of Anger"
Bitches Sin "Invaders"
Oxenkiller "Monster of Steel"
Hellcats "Hellcats"
Genocide "Black Sanctuary"
Solitude Aeturnus "Into the Depths of Sorrow" (this was a USA only coop deal

with Roadrunner)

The Genocide disc "Black Sanctuary" seems to be the odd one out of the list because it was a Japanese band. The music was exceptional in my opinion, but the vocals and lyrics (verses in Japanese and choruses in English as I remember) were kind of peculiar. Could you tell us some more about how this release came about?

We received the demo from a guy named Metal Cat in Japan and it blew our minds! It was soooooo heavy and doomy and the guitarists killed. Metal Cat was acquainted with the band and introduced us. We signed them to the one album deal and put the record out. I love the record and I think the vocalist is awesome. He's a certified madman! My favorite part, though, is the two incredible guitar players and their inventive songwriting. It's a record I think a lot of people overlooked because everyone seems to have something against Japanese metal bands, which I don't understand at all, since most of them fucking rule!!!! The best part is that we have recently had contact with the band and may be releasing some new material from them!! I hope it happens.

What caused the demise of King Classic?

Since we never got paid a dime from our distributors Greenworld and Important we just couldn't go on. The only money we made was on the Solitude album, and that was from Roadrunner. We had to find a way to make a living so we resorted to selling bits of the record collection off.

Was there a time when you ever had the idea of opening your own record store?

Actually, a while back we were offered a storefront from our current landlord, but we declined. All the vinyl shops in this town have closed up or are on their way out, so we'd have to convert almost totally to CD's to make it fly. We already have our hands full doing the mailorder and the label, so this would have just made things more complicated.

Are there any plans for reissuing the left-over old King Classics releases on CD?

We have been talking about re-releasing the Genocide CD with newly recorded bonus cuts, but nothing is certain yet.

MONSTER RECORDS UNLEASHING THE MONSTER

A couple of years ago you started the label Monster Records and you've re-released several classics. What did you do in between the King Classic and Monster Records period?

Well, King Klassic ended in 1990 and Rare Ass Records started up in 1991 so for about a year we lived off our savings and took odd jobs. We had been working day jobs the whole time King Klassic was going on and we were trying to save money to move to Mexico or South East Asia. Obviously, that never happened and we just lived off that money for a year.

King Classic released new material of starting bands while Monster Records focuses on the re-release of classics from the 80s. Why this change in strategy?

There are several reasons for this. While doing Rare Ass Records mailorder we

were introduced to a whole new circle of record collectors and this whole scene of rare psychedelic reissue records. There were enough loyal supporters of this scene to support small quantity releases with a high retail price AND you could sell directly to them!! No distributor middle-men to screw you over. The distributors that did and do exist have been honest and even pay up front! As you can see, this actually made it possible to have a successful label. So, we decided to give it a shot. For the most part, I enjoy working with long retired musicians who have let go of that rock star attitude and are reasonable and pleasurable to deal with. One of the worst things about working with current acts is trying to deal with all their misconceptions about the music business, big egos, and rock-star attitudes. However, I am going to be working with a couple current acts, them being Winterhawk guitarist Jordan Macarus and Slaughter Xstroyes guitarist Paul Kratky.

The current list of releases on Monster Records:

- JPT SCARE BAND "Acid Acetate Excursion" LP (Monster 001)
- SORCERY "Sinister Soldiers" CD (Monster 002)
- AMULET Same CD (Monster 003)
- FULL MOON "Full Moon" LP (Monster 004)
- SLAUTER XSTROYES "Winter Kill" CD/LP (Monster 005)
- WINTERHAWK "Revival" CD (Monster 006)
- SLAUTER XSTROYES "Free the Beast" CD (Monster 007)
- JPT SCARE BAND "Rape of Titan's Sirens" LP (Monster 008)

Future releases include:

- NEGATIVE SPACE "Hard, Heavy, Mean & Evil" CD (Monster 009)
- MANILLA ROAD "Mark of the Beast" CD/LP (Monster 010)

Re-releasing old material probably brings up its specific problems. Some that I can think of are obtaining the rights from the original artists/record companies, tracking down the original masters, dealing with the issue of royalties. Could you share with us the problems you have had to overcome?
I haven't had too many problems contacting the groups for the Monster releases, none of the stuff was ever released by any kind of real label before so all the rights are easily obtainable from the band members. The worst thing that happens is that the band doesn't have the master anymore or it's deteriorated, and we have to create a master from a clean vinyl.

Some of your releases have bonus material that has previously been unreleased. Where do you find this material?

This material comes straight from the band members. I'm always asking for extra cuts and the bands that have extra material usually are happy to let me at it.

With your releases, you're filling in a niche in which there is a very specific demand. In terms of sales, how large are the quantities of the albums?

So far, nothing has been pressed in quantity over 1,000 copies. It's all still on a small scale, but I hope to change all that by the end of 2001.

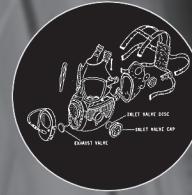
What has been the most successful record until now?

That would be either the Winterhawk "Revival" or the Slaughter Xstroyes "Free the Beast" discs. They are both hovering below 1000 sold. I know that sales on both of these great releases will steadily

MINDCAGE

encapsulation will occur on May 28, 2000

BE PREPARED.



www.mindcage.com

PERPETUAL MOTION

PERPETUAL MOTION MEDIA
PO BOX 5141
NOVATO, CA 94965, USA
415.331.3021

MINDCAGE@mindcage.com

THE END PREDICTION

I also think that what's going on is a great thing for music. It's taking some of the control out of the hands of record labels and giving back to the artists. However, I'm not a big fan of the current trends in music and I think it would be nice to see more genuinely gifted artists out there, rather than an overflow of stylish image based garbage.

The Internet has been very influential in bringing new music to potential listeners. E-commerce is becoming a hot item in that context. Which role does your web site play in your sales objective?

At the moment, anything that comes through the web site is considered a bonus. However, I think in the very near future the web site is going to help play a major role in introducing people to the label and all of our artists. Web site sales have steadily increased this year and I think they will continue to do so as long as I can keep the site up to date.

MONSTER RECORDS CLOSING COMMENTS

Do you have any finishing comments you would like to share with us?
I'd just like to thank you for conducting this interview and having an interest in my label and the music we are producing. I'm glad to be a part of the current scene, one that is very familiar and similar to the one from the early 80s. It's great to have it back! Support quality music! Uli Roth rules!

Monster Records, PO Box 460173, San Antonio, TX 78246-0173, USA
www.monsterrecords.com.



OLD MAN'S CHILD

Revelation 666 (The Curse of Damnation)
Century Media Records

Old Man's Child slowly but steadily pass claims about their place in the already cramped black metal hall of fame. "Revelation 666" is a black metal album in its best triple-six manner, tending, however, towards the more melodic side a la Dimmu Borgir, even if possessing some primordial Emperor moments. Melodic guitar and keyboard parts redeem the uniformly aggressive vocals, which wander in the classical screaming range without (a good point here) being annoying or pretentious. Cutting out the poetry, the album promises a nice 40-minute black-metal dance with your inner demons. (GS)

[<http://come.to/oldmanschild>]

4 [AO 4 1/2]

NECROPHAGIA

Black Blood Vomitatorium EP

Red Stream

The cult gore group (existing from 1984) returns with a new 4-track mini album. The fact that this group was banned in 31 countries is a rather natural thing than surprising news, because all their gore lyrics, pornographic layout, bloody cover and the image of Killjoy & Co. is shocking even in extraordinary metal scene. So, Necrophagia welcome all fans of horror movies and worshippers of brutality. And, of course, fans of uncompromising death metal. Compared to the style which this group played 15 years ago, now Necrophagia deliver a much more considered music. The sound is still dirty (it is band's trademark), and now these guys play an attractive mix of death metal, doom metal, grindcore, and inserts from horror movies. The first song "And You will Live in Sorrow" presents doomy riffs and the atmosphere quite similar to old Winter. These influences were evident also on their previous album. But all other tracks have almost nothing in common with this filtered with gore doom metal, they rather can be compared to Autopsy which blows to your face with sudden grinding attacks and that archaic sense of death metal. Though Necrophagia can't be called an old-fashioned death metal band, they try to concentrate more on death metal as it was before than on its modern face. And it sounds interesting. Sadly, only four tracks here, and their previous album "Holocausto De La Morte" still won't be surpassed by this mini-CD. (AO)

3/4

NIGHT CONQUERS DAY

Rebellion is the Art of Survival

Hammerheart Records

If the average length of songs varies around 12 minutes, these songs must contain something intriguing to keep the attention of listener. Night Conquers Day with their epic black metal can keep the attention of only very dedicated black metal fans. All seven songs are too one-dimensional, and already after the first 20 minutes of this album (total running time is around 73 minutes) I wish to escape from these monotonous black metal passages. Well, you can tolerate the first song, because Night Conquers Day really isn't the worst example of epic black metal. "The Perseverence of Ignorance" can also attract attention with its hints to Bathory sound. But later everything is just repeated, and I'm awoken only when the vocalist begins to sing in King Diamond vein. Maybe this album needs more listens, but I leave this for others. (AO)

3

NIGHT TO DIE

All Evil Crying EP

Repulse Records

Repulse Records in recent years have released some albums that hardly can be put into their brutal death metal category, just remember Golgotha or Gothic Sex. Night To Die is another name to be added to the club. Night To Die have elements of death metal, but their Spanish roots seem to change the main character of the three songs included. "The Storm is Coming" is obviously influenced by flamenco; ethnic elements can be found on the other two tracks, too. Night To Die try to improvise with keyboards sounds, they also owe something from Moonspell's more

metallic songs and standards of atmospheric metal. In fact, here we find so much diverse styles, that it may be too much for a brutal metal listener, but it is a discovery for a fan of atmospheric metal. However, having only three songs, it is still not clear which way the group will go in the future. But flamenco-influenced atmospheric metal would sound very good. (AO)
[souldevourer@ctv.es]
3 3/4

NOCTURNUS

Ethereal Tomb

Seasons of Mist

Nocturnus return after years of self-imposed scene exile. "Ethereal Tomb" begins right where the band left off, which is both its charm and its (nearly) fatal flaw. To summarize: semi-technical Floridian death metal with a fair amount of melody and occasional fusiony exploration. Nocturnus's claim to fame in the good old days of technical death metal was their use of keyboards (something of an anomaly at the time). The keys are still there, but in light of nearly a decade's worth of developments, they have lost their ability to inspire awe in even the most backwater of metalheads. The overall music is somewhat antiquated as well, but this is certainly not a bad thing. In fact, the album is really quite good - not quite stellar, but a nice addition to the genre. The riffing is intricate and rhythmically complex, with pulls and compelling chord progressions (the closest band would be Martyr), the bass work is fluid, the percussion is executed with precision, and the loose fusiony parts are simply awesome. The music does tend to get repetitive and the drum production leaves a lot to be desired (the snares sound like trash cans at times), but Nocturnus shows their stuff in all the important areas. I would have liked more wankery and variation in tempo, but overall the album is pretty solid. (JS)

[<http://www.nocturnus.com/>]

4 [AO 4 1/4, CR 4, GS 4]

NOTRE DAME

Vol1: Le Theatre Du Vampire/Nightmare Before Christmas

Osmose Productions

This new group starts very powerfully and already has two albums to offer for the beginning. I think that in quite a short time this group may become one of the best and interesting dark metal groups. To call them as dark metal is maybe a little bit incorrect, the description of horror/gothic/black metal with strong erotic touch maybe suit better. Already the concept and the line-up of this project make an intrigue. Notre Dame try to create something like a horror theater and the line-up consists of the mastermind Snowy Shaw (ex-King Diamond, Merciful Fate, Memento Mori, etc.), very sexy professional dancer Vampirella, who adds necessary erotic dose with her passionate voice, and finally sadistic twins Jean Pierre De Sade and Manneruin De Sade (who are relatives to this world's famous sadist). So, this crazy company is in one place, and what we've got? Really very atmospheric, terrifying, mystical metal. The first album presents more black metal elements combined with gothic music. It is very theatrical, multi-colored, so dark and exciting. "Nightmare Before Christmas" is even a step forwards; here we find many elements which are close to horror metal a la King Diamond, including bell sounds, vocal changes from frightening to the one strangely gothic or the one aggressive, and many styles like power metal, gothic rock, black metal. It is more melodic than the previous disc and more based on heavy metal roots. I don't know which one you will choose, but I recommend both of them, if you want to get really atmospheric music. (AO)

4 1/2

OBSIDIAN GATE

The Nightspectral Voyage

Skaldic Art Productions

The subtitle on the promo sheet stating "where Richard Wagner meets black metal" is an appropriate description of Obsidian Gate's debut CD. On "The Nightspectral Voyage", Obsidian Gate present an extremely bombastic black metal overture consisting of a short intro and five over-long songs ranging from 7 to 18 minutes in length. Stylistically, the aggression and chaos of older Emperor with the essential elements of black metal (unreadable logo, harsh vocals, and

superfluous over the top drumming) are combined with layers upon layers of extremely symphonic keyboards. The keyboards are the driving force of the songs and they convey a very cold and medieval atmosphere, at times reminding of Bal Sagoth. Although credits are scored for the lyrical concept, adventurous song structuring bordering on progressive, this does hamper the accessibility of the music: it's hard to distinguish between songs. After multiple listens, memorable parts crystallize within the compositions but, as a whole, the arrangements are too chaotic: the natural flow of the songs is missing. A band to watch out for in the future; but now Obsidian Gate tread an uncharted territory: too extreme for the average progressive metal audience and too progressive for the average extreme metal audience. (CR)

3 3/4 [GS 3 3/4]

OCTINOMOS

Welcome to My Planet

Hammerheart Records

F. Soderlund, who is responsible for all instruments and programming of Octinomos, is more known as a member of neoclassical industrial band Puissance. This time he decided to try black metal. To tell the truth, industrial music is a far better choice of Mr. Soderlund than this project. Octinomos is a very fast (one of the fastest groups I've heard while writing reviews for this issue) Swedish black metal outfit. Don't expect melodic solos, symphonic hymns or epic passages - the brutality of sound and the speed are the main factors. Octinomos sound as extremely fastened version of Marduk with a very raw sound (reminding of Dark Throne). I jump from one song to another, hoping to find something more outstanding, but it seems that this album, except some mid-tempo places, is done in the same way with no variations. After all it becomes monotonous. Maybe the fans of ultra-fast black will like it, but I will rather listen to Lord Belial, for example. (AO)

3

OLD FUNERAL

The Older Ones

Hammerheart Records

This release can be interesting for collectors of rare black/death metal releases, especially if one cares about the beginning of the style. Old Funeral was a name in underground once upon a time, and the fact that some known black metallers (such as Abbath from Immortal, Varg Vikernes from Burzum, or Jorn Tonsberg from Hades Almighty) were in the line-up of Old Funeral can also attract some attention. These facts are maybe even more interesting than the music itself, as here we deal with really underground sounding brutal death metal a la Morbid Angel mixed with influences of early black metal. The recording quality is far from perfect, the sound is raw and unpolished, but it doesn't surprise - after all, these songs were recorded in the early 90s. This album serves as a fill-in in someone's list of "history of underground." At least, no one dares to blame Old Funeral for playing cliche death metal, as then it was only the beginning... (AO)

3 1/4

PENUMBRA

Emanate

Serenades Records

Another group which tries to follow the footsteps of such groups like Therion, Lacrimosa, or Nightwish. Penumbra come from France and, in their music, combine the elements of gothic, black and death metal. But above all are synthesizer and classical music influences. This group can't allow themselves to have the budget of Lacrimosa, so don't expect so much orchestrated bombastic music as it was on Lacrimosa's "Elodia"; but Penumbra can bravely be compared to Dreams Of Sanity or Artrosis. Penumbra's influences also come from sensationally successful Haggard - the line-up of Penumbra consists of 12 musicians, so this lets the group to change their orchestrated music from one style to another, and singing tones from soprano to baritone. This group also allows themselves to integrate brutal parts more than all the above mentioned bands, and black metal parts on some songs even take the dominant place. Penumbra manage to combine these heavy parts with beautiful ethereal music so professionally, that it is strange that it's only the debut of French group. Now it's one of the most promising newcomers in symphonic metal genre, and I'm sure we will hear from them in the future. (AO)

4 1/4

PERNICKIOUS

Bloodlust

Firebreath 001 Records

Pernicious from the Netherlands romp around in the scene since 1994. It's their second album (the first one came in 1998), it offers us pure death metal without any additives. "Bloodlust" reminds me of the late 80s/early 90s death metal albums, it's a kind of old-school death, but well done, anyway. The sound-quality of the

CD is very good, that's maybe why the songs flow easy and shouldn't annoy even people who don't like that kind of music. "Bloodlust" is a bit out-of-date release, but fans of old-school death metal will definitely enjoy this one. (SV)

[Mark Knoop, Het Laar 1, 7608 EK Almelo, The Netherlands] [pernicious@freemail.nl]

3 1/2

PRIMORDIAL

The Burning Season EP

Hammerheart Records

The new mini-album of Primordial contains 4 tracks, and only one of them - the title song - is a new creation. However, already this one song makes this release worth of attention. "The Burning Season" shows this Irish band at its most atmospheric stage. While the guitar-riffing still carries the remembrance of Primordial's black metal past, the structure of the song and especially the singing remind of progressive/atmospheric groups such as In The Woods... or Drawn. Primordial seem to focus on instrumental parts more and more, and melancholic touch is more evident than before. Other three tracks are re-recorded demo songs, which are also re-worked to comply with the recent face of Primordial, more depressive than angry. The last track, "And the Sun Set on Life Forever" can even be compared to the style of the two latest releases by Anathema. The fans of emotional metal must check out this mini-album, and Primordial's next album seems to be a highlight of the genre. (AO)

4 1/4 [JS 3 3/4]

QUIET FLOWER

DNR EP

self-released

Quiet Flower from Italy play a kind of industrial/avantgarde rock, at least I have found such a description in my mind listening to this 3 track EP. It's hard to understand what philosophy lies behind this band, anyway, the songs spray slightly depressive and gloomy feeling. Industrial passages and distorted vocals are probably the trademarks of Quiet Flower. For lovers of abstract avantgarde music. (SV)

[Quiet Flower, via Borgatta, 7 15060 Castelletto d'Orba (AL), Italy] [quietflower@lycosmail.com]

3 1/2 [AO 3]

RAKOTH

Planeshift

Code 666

Rakoth are one of the best atmospheric metal groups coming from Russia, and "Planeshift" once again proves that even in economically very hard times people are still creative enough to release albums like this one. Rakoth play very atmospheric metal which could be described as a mix of Tiamat, In Flames, Katatonia, and even Lacrimosa. Even if Rakoth's playing is more brutal than all the above mentioned bands, this Russian group maintains the most clear characteristic of these bands - deep dark atmospheres. The atmospheres change one another very often, so you can't sit relaxed, as, for example, when listening to the new Anathema, where unexpected parts hardly cross your way. On "Planeshift," you can expect everything. While the dominating mood is emotional epic metal with clean vocals, such tracks as "Planeshift" make you awake from dark slumber, an up-tempo black metal with aggressive vocals break in. Personally for me, these brutal parts aren't as attractive as, for example, theatrical "Gothaur Aulendil" or "Mountain God." The album is filled with folk melodies, symphonic parts, changes in vocal styles, as well jumps from gothic to black, doom, power, or death metal. For this reason, this album isn't as accessible as Katatonia's "Tonight's Decision," but for melodic and, at the same time, technical metal fans Rakoth's release is maybe more interesting, as here we find more musical decisions. (AO)

[<http://code666.cjb.net>]

4

REBAELLIUN

Burn the Promised Land

Hammerheart Records

What a power! These guys will beat every death metal newcomer with this wall of sound. As I remember, only God Dethroned write such intense and brute songs. I'm sure, Rebaelliun from Belgium will become one of the strongest death metal bands in Europe, 'cause their incredible mixture of Slayer and Morbid Angel comes over very convincingly. The band was clever enough and decided not to draw out the CD, Slayer's "Reign In Blood" had a similar length, and I think, it justifies itself. Four fat points! (SV)

4 [AO 4]

RHYMES OF DESTRUCTION

A Sun Revolution

Shiver Records

If symphonic pagan metal means very average mid-paced black metal with some keyboards parts laid over the metallic background, then here we have symphonic pagan metal band from Belgium. In reality, it's another example of how bands try to copy each other with no imagination at all. Things begin to improve only when Rhymes Of Destruction leave their black metal aside (by the way, the singer must improve his voice, otherwise they won't reach anything). In some places, musicians allow themselves to change this average black metal to dreamy doom metal, when music becomes romantic and sentimental, and guitar solos become dreamy and melodic. Sadly this quite harmonic view is again changed by unnatural blasts. If the production was a little bit better, the final view could have been more tolerable, but now 3 points are given only for these doomy parts which promise something better from this group. (AO)

3

ROOT

The Book

Redblack Productions

I've heard about this band earlier, it was described as something like a cult act in the Czech underground. Now I hold their fifth album, and what I can say is that "The Book" really contains very atmospheric and strong dark metal. Already the artwork of this disc lets us expect something good, and we aren't disappointed. "The Book" presents very melodic, very extravagant, and very mystical music, where in one place such inspirations as Trom, King Diamond, or even such classics as Beethoven are united. I have no idea which label would suit best to "The Book," but here we deal with melodic solos of heavy metal, some black metal brutality, emotional doom metal, orchestrated passages, and lots lots more. Really, it is a very eclectic album to which the "dark metal" labels suits fine. Root base their music on melodies and strong vocals, which help a lot. I think that such songs as "Coradeu" or "Lykorian" will surprise even a biggest guru of esoteric, emotional music. It's evident that all these songs are very considered and that these musicians have a strong background. Atmospheric music hasn't reached its limits yet, and the albums like "The Book" prove it once again. (AO)

4 1/4

ROTTEN SOUND

Drain

Repulse Records

Rotten Sound's new release doesn't offer us anything new. The same mix of hardcore, crust/grind and death. It seems that previous album "Under Pressure" was even more interesting. 15 songs here somehow pass me. "Drain" isn't much fun. (SV)

3 [AO 3 1/4]

SACRIFICIAL

Erect:Eloquent:Extinct

Mighty Music Production

Old Danish group returns with its second full-length (the first one "Forever Entangled" was released in 1993). Ten years of playing made its work, as this album presents very technical and considered music. Stylistically it is a cross between thrash metal of the late 80s and modern metal influences. Read: Testament and Slayer meet Pantera and Korn. It reminds a lot of The Haunted's crossover between macho metal and technical & aggressive thrash, but Sacrificial care more about the technical side of their music, so they aren't as straightforward as The Haunted. However, the album starts with a burst of energy and straight riffs which must please even the fans of hardcore. As the album develops, we find the elements that I often miss in modern metal: solos and turns to a more technical metal side. Sacrificial aren't as one-sided as most of metal groups which try to explore hardcore influences in their music. And if you liked The Haunted, you simply must listen to this one. (AO)

4 1/4

SADIST

Lego

System Shock

Sadist return back with the fourth album and surprise us with some changes in their sound. First of all, the band has become more melodic and "modern," i.e., the success of the bands like Fear Factory or White/Rob Zombie also didn't go round Sadist. Of course, all trademarks of the typical band sound are still present, but, anyway, "Lego" is probably the most "commercial" release by these Italians. Shame, I don't have any songs titles on my promo copy, but I notice that the album gets better and better towards the end. Some

songs have a slight Megadeth ("Risk") or Waltari ("Space Avenue") touch. In my opinion, "Lego" is their most mature work to date. It's a pity that Sadist are no more as complex as in "Tribe," but, anyway, the new material is a great fun. (SV)

4

SARNATH

Life... Lies

Shiver Records

After their first album "Overshine," the Finnish Sarnath strike with the new output. "Life... Lies" shamelessly follows the path done by their compatriots Amorphis and Sentenced. The originality is out of question here, but the songs as such are not bad. With a good promotion, Sarnath could compete with the above-mentioned bands. It's true that they must improve their songwriting a bit, but the potential is available. Listen to "Losing Faith" or "Beneath the Surface." (SV)

3 3/4 [AO 3]



SENTENCED

Crimson

Century Media Records

Sentenced have found a format that they are comfortable with. Their sixth full-length studio album "Crimson" is similar to the two previous albums and delivers melodic atmospheric metal with a bit hoarse vocals. The previous album "Frozen" had some extremely good tracks ("Grave Sweet Grave" and "Mourn," for example), but also some less noticeable ones; "Crimson" is better balanced yet doesn't have such clear highlights. Anyway, it provides an enjoyable listen of easy-going extreme metal, with 4-5 minute-length songs and hummable-suitable melodies.

Instrumentally, there is not much going on anymore, but the vocal melodies are still top-notch. By the way, suicidal tones are not as visible as in "Frozen." (GS)

4 [AO 3 3/4]

SEPTIC FLESH

Revolution DNA

Holy Records

The newest Septic Flesh release in an ongoing discography, "Revolution DNA" is a well-played, well-arranged, well-produced, and professionally developed disappointment. Where previous Septic Flesh albums were subdued, subtle works of art draped in esoteric moods and mysterious atmospheres, the new album is comprised of fairly straightforward (albeit well-composed), riff intensive metal songs. One can still hear residual traces of the old Septic Flesh sound in the clean guitar tones and twisting, serpentine guitar leads, and the overall music is undeniably tied to the band's previous albums. However, the album has very little of the grace and hypnotic quality of previous releases. The music is heavy, well structured melodic death metal with ample clean guitar tones and well-arranged vocals (both clean and growled). The playing is impeccable, the songs are catchy, and the album does manage to create a unique atmosphere. But nothing on the album grabs me, or draws me in. Septic Flesh has always had two kinds of songs: the trance inducing, otherworldly works (that I preferred) and the catchy, kick-ass metal songs. The problem with the album is that the band has emphasized the latter at the expense of the former. Kick ass bands are a dime a dozen (cliche intended), but mysterious bands are few and far between. Septic Flesh have lost something with this album, something both concrete and intangible. (JS)

3 1/2

SHADOWS FALL

Of One Blood

Century Media Records

"Shadows Fall are about to change lives throughout the metal world" ... At least that's what the biography says. Perhaps some of

the members are high executives for a steel firm but, musically, Shadows Fall are certainly not innovative enough to cause a revolution. What their debut album "Of One Blood" gives us nine songs and an intro in the midtempo and uptempo style metal with elements from the Gothenburg death metal scene, Iron Maiden, and US hardcore. Shadows Fall manages to do this convincingly, the songs are well structured and, at times, quite catchy as well. The unusual aspect is the triple vocal delivery: a rough death style, a hardcore style, and a clean style. These come through very well in a production dominated by the distorted guitar sound (almost no bass is heard). Best song is "To Ashes" which shows a lot of variation from blast beats to a nice acoustical interlude and vocal duets. This is a competent release for a young band with hope for the future. Returning to the biography sheet, hopefully the over-brave statements like "Massachusetts' Shadows Fall are currently revolutionizing heavy metal rock music" won't do the band too much harm... (CR)

3 3/4 [AO 3, GS 3 3/4]

SHINING OF KLIFFOTH

Twilight of Sehemehah

Last Episode

Vow, what is this? I hear Russian text in some songs... Label info doesn't tell any words where this band comes from, just the note, that Shining Of Kliffoth is a main band of Black Messiah drummer Evgeniy. Okay, "Twilight of Sehemehah" has become quite a listenable black metal album with some interesting lyrical concepts written in four different languages and based on Dante's work or shamanic subjects. The production is a bit obscure, what is not necessarily the advantage of this CD. Even if the lyrical side of the songs sets them apart from other black metal bands, the music leaves a somewhat weak impression. The King Diamond cover "Welcome Home" doesn't collect credit points either. (SV)

3 1/4 [AO 3]

SHOCKWAVE

Dominicon

Good Life Recordings

Hardcore underground culture becomes wider and wider, that speaks not necessarily for the quality of this genre records, but, on the other hand, you can't completely ignore this movement. Shockwave's music is nothing new, but it's not worse than most of the bands from this sector. The production is OK, the songs rock, what else do you need? (SV)

3 1/2

SILENT STREAM OF GODLESS ELEGY

Behind the Shadows

M.A.B. Records/Redblack Productions

The wagon of My Dying Bride followers still moves on, and there are plenty of bands who



OPETH

Still Life

Peaceville

If there is a band nonsensitive to the whole world coming softer and more streamlined, then it's Opeth. With an average song length being 9 minutes, "Still Life" is just like another Opeth album of progressive dark/black/death/power metal with famous acoustic breaks. Maybe with a warmer appeal, because of the more frequent use of clean vocals (did I exaggerate in the first sentence then?). I really liked what Mike Akerfeldt once said, namely that he wanted to create music that he himself would want to listen many times. Right into the eye.

True, "Still Life" looks intelligent in the scary sense of the adjective (don't forget the 9 minute statistics), but grabs with first listens. My personal impression is that it flows better and is more melodic than, e.g., "Morningrise" (the second album) or even "My Arms Your Hearse" for that matter. You may find it difficult to distinguish between the songs because they all connect very well inside and with each other; but it's Opeth, so an epic 62-minute concept disc is what you get instead of a commercial album with songs. Extensive songs sound very natural, so a short Opeth song doesn't look like a possibility anytime soon. And, by the way, this album stands the test of time; I have tested. (GS)

4 3/4 [AO 4 1/4, CR 4 3/4, JS 4 3/4]

have jumped in; some of them did it quite successfully. This band from Czech Republic will surely please the fans of gloomy doom metal with a slight touch of death metal. Basically, this group has everything a solid doom metal band must have: technics, compulsory nowadays elements of folklore, non-traditional instruments (violincello, tambourine, flute), and a female singer creating ethereal mood. On the album, we have three cover versions of Dead Can Dance, so, in short, a fan of gloomy metal can hardly sit indifferent when listening to this record. Such songs as playful "Wizard" or twisted folk doom "Old Women's Dance" can be added to the encyclopedia of the best tracks in modern doom world. As always, nothing shocking here, but it's great to hear professionally played old things. (AO)

4

SIRIUS

Aeons of Magick

Nocturnal Art Productions

Here we deal again with symphonic black metal band, this time one coming from Portugal. To perform something outstanding in the scene of orchestrated black metal is almost impossible these days, and Sirius aren't very big exception. They play skillfully, but aren't very original. Seven songs on "Aeons of Magick" present black metal strongly filled with symphonic arrangements. Compared to other symphonic black metal groups, Sirius are maybe more "cosmic;" their keyboards passages don't deal with this barbaric sense a la Tarot. Their purpose here seems to bring more melodic senses. On most songs, keyboards play an essential role, but the structure of the songs doesn't go far away from the standards, namely angry, fast black metal. Some songs remind of the more melodic Emperor or their labelmates Limbonic Art, but Sirius definitely have much to do for the developing of their original sound. But it is only the debut album, and as such, it is already quite good. In the future, they may grow to something much bigger, at least the name of their label promises that they won't disappear unnoticed. (AO)

[http://www.deemon.com/nap]
3 3/4

SKEPTICISM

Aes EP

Red Stream Productions

Probably the best funeral doom group in the world released a mini-album which contains only one track, lasting 28 minutes. As always, it seems to become a classic of the style, but this time the release may surprise the fans of Skepticism. The first 10 minutes seem to bring some novelties to their style - earlier Skepticism delivered a monotonous and torturing monolith of sounds with almost non-changing rhythm. Here, musicians let themselves to change melodies and mood "quite" often, compared to the previous releases. Even some faster parts find their place here, and some other innovations also follow - Skepticism introduce a spoken word (we haven't heard it before in group's creation). As the album develops, the group returns to its more usual sound, namely monotonous, minimalistic doom, which is brutal and very slow at the same time. The album ends in a depressive and nihilistic mood, proving that in spite of some innovations, Skepticism remains on the same stylistic path. "Aes" is their most diverse album, and it also has the most innovative package to date. The fans of depressive music, don't miss it. (AO)

4 1/2

SKW

Techno-logical

Adrenaline Records

If one were to summarize Italy's SKW in a few sparse words, it would probably be hardcore influenced metal with a technical edge. Their music chugs, pulverizes and crushes with heavily syncopated stop-go riffs, flowing solos and churning drums and bass lines. The music is heavily indebted to the likes of Meshuggah and perhaps even "Chaos AD" era Sepultura, with frequently shouted vocal assaults and the aforementioned riffing. The music is often very technical, with ridiculous time changes and sudden mood swings. One second the music might be heavy and aggressive, the next flowing and subtle. The overall playing is deft and precise, with vocals alternating between screams, hardcore shouts, Hetfield-like singing, and Sepultura style snarls. The overall effect is somewhat jarring and ultra-aggressive, leaving the listener very little room or distance from the nonstop aural assault. Their debut is short (under 35 minutes), and features a rather unnecessary reworking of Metallica's classic "For Whom the Bell Tolls." But if hardcore influenced (and complex) metal is your thing, by all means check it out. (JS)

3 1/2



SCULPTURED
Apollo Ends

SCULPTURED

Apollo Ends

The End Records

Mastermind Don Anderson and his brainchild Sculptured are back with their second album "Apollo Ends." The follow-up to their debut "The Spear of the Lilly is Aureoled," "Apollo Ends" finds the band exploring some new terrain while maintaining and refining their established sound. The music is best described as progressive death metal with emphasis on the progressive element. A hybrid of jazz, Mariachi-esque trumpet braying and quirky (almost funky) metal, Sculptured's music is complex, playful, energetic, and almost immediately compelling. A good deal could be written about Anderson's guitar playing, which almost defines the overall effect of the music - his riffs are intricate and twisted, with convoluted chord progressions and almost absurd time changes. A good deal of his playing is eclectic and very nearly cartoonish (if you've heard Rush's "La Villa Strangiato," you'll know what I'm talking about). The trumpet and trombone work has a decidedly Latin flavor (again, Mariachi sounding), but provides occasional bursts of energetic soloing during the more jazzy interludes. Vocals are both growled and sung, the singing low and surprisingly soulful (a high pitched singer would be entirely inappropriate). The music is tightly executed and strangely accessible; the overall effect is artful, original and highly inventive music that somehow lends itself to casual listening. My favorite work is a ten minute conceptual instrumental entitled "Apollo Destroys, Apollo Creates": it begins with ambient noise, fizzles and is transformed into jaunty metal music, then finally lapses into a triple guitar harmony rich with depth and reverb. The piece alienates you with jarring noise then bathes you in warm harmonic textures. It is a sensual experience not entirely unlike sex, that being the highest recommendation I can give. If you like truly progressive and challenging music, Sculptured is highly recommended. (JS)

4 3/4

SLAUGHTER LORD

Thrash 'Til Death

Invictus Productions/Hammerheart Records

The album title says it all. The times of thrash metal return with authentic release of these times. Australian thrash metal group of the '80s with this release is presented to the masses, as the band haven't had an opportunity to do it back then: after releasing some rehearsal tapes and demos, playing live-shows, this band died in the underground. These nine songs are the collection of what's left in archives - the sound quality is, of course, bad, and the music itself can be evaluated only remembering that this stuff was recorded in 1986-1987. It mostly reminds of Kreator's "Pleasure to Kill" and early recordings of Sodom.

"Thrash 'Til Death" is surely a very nostalgic album for fans of German thrash metal, and it is far better listen to authentic releases of speed/thrash than to numerous groups copying this style today. (AO)

3 1/2

SOILWORK

The Chainheart Machine

Listenable Records

After the split-up of legendary At The Gates, there were some groups that tried to re-create such extremely energetic and melodic music, but most of them have failed. The second album of Sweden's Soilwork now can be compared to At The Gates' album "Slaughter of the Soul," both in the terms of professionalism and musicianship. And Soilwork don't fail. Of course, hardly we can speak about Soilwork without mentioning the name of At The Gates in every second sentence, but to me Soilwork is maybe the best followers of this group. They deliver very catchy, melodic black/death with the shouting vocals - yes, it's Gothenburg style, but listen how powerfully it is played.



Such songs as "Bulletbeast" or "The Chainheart Machine" can be called the classics of the style and can easily blow away the latest releases of In Flames or Sentenced. Soilwork also add some elements of other not so typical to Gothenburg styles - like, for example, the techno rhythm on the title song, or the 70s like riffing on "Millionflame," or a combination of heavy metal influences and Carcass on "Spirits of the Future Sun." In short, one of the best releases in Gothenburg style in recent months. (AO)

4 1/2 [SV 4]

STIGMATHIEST

It All Ends Today

Euphonious Records

This time the followers of Dimmu Borgir/Cradle of Filth come from the Netherlands. Maybe it would only be partially correct to call Stigmatheist "true" and blind followers of the above mentioned bands, because the Dutch group is more aggressive and less symphonic than Dimmu Borgir, for example. Especially that could be said about the vocals which are more raw than blackish and would suit a thrash-metal band better. That's the biggest shortage of the group, because the singing on "It All Ends Today" becomes too monotonous in many places. And all the music is more aggressive (even the parts reminding of death metal can be found here) and not so polished as in the case of Cradle of Filth. Keyboards play a big role on this album, but here they also don't reach the symphonic heights of Dimmu Borgir. It seems that Stigmatheist is oriented to those who are already tired of polished, clear releases of symphonic metal grandas. In this case Stigmatheist can serve you well, but if you are seeking for the quality of Dimmu Borgir, this album may disappoint you. (AO)

3 1/2

STITCH

Stitch

I And/1 Recordings

Stitch call their music heavy-aggro-tribal-groove. Whatever it means, I would call this simply modern hardcore. The songs as such are not bad, however, I can't agree with their info-sheet that speaks about "very distinct, original sound." Those guitar riffs were definitely used before by some bands, and these Latin music rhythms aren't a sensation today either. I'm sure, hardcore or modern metal fans will enjoy this album, the rest probably won't. The press people speak about their brilliant live shows. Hopefully it's true. (SV)

[Stitch, 920 W.Julian, San Jose, CA 95126, USA] [<http://www.stitchweb.com>]

3 1/2 [AO 3]

STORMLORD

Supreme Art of War

Last Episode

I feel another trend in Germany coming - black metal combined with epic hymns of power/heavy metal. Stormlord's label-mates Mephistopheles have already done this mix quite successfully. Stormlord can also be considered as a band which tries to make their black metal sound melodic by incorporating hymnal choruses. Some non-traditional instruments come to help, as well as keyboard passages and female vocals are added. It seems that all this combination must work, but in this case it simply sounds like a chaotic mix of everything. All stylistic parts seem to be non-coordinated one with another, something like an anarchy. It feels that Stormlord must improve their style a lot. (AO)

2 1/2 [CR 3 1/2]

TARTAROS

The Red Jewel

Necropolis Records

Tartaros is Charmand Girmloch, more known as "touring" keyboardist of Emperor. Already the previous mini-album "The Grand Psychotic Castle" gained attention as innovative psychedelic sympho black metal. Now we see that it was just a prelude to better things, as "The Red Jewel" surpasses the previous recording in all ways. With this disc, Charmand Girmloch explores the areas of most psychedelic and most terrifying black metal. The atmospheres change one another, sympho arrangements go in a twisted way making the music quite unstable, i.e., everything goes around and pulsates in psychotic mood. I could compare this to some bizarre symphonic tracks of Emperor, but Emperor still have more melodies, and their music is much more accessible. Here, we are at the edge where "symphonic" in no way means "melodic." In Tartaros way, it means "brutal" or "barbaric" as opposed to melodic sympho metal a la Dimmu Borgir. Sometimes it seems that the main goal disappears among these complex sympho structures, and it's quite hard to bear this extremely psychedelic mood, but I think that fans of brutal experiments with keyboards should adore this recording. (AO)

4 1/4

Such songs as "Bulletbeast" or "The Chainheart Machine" can be called the classics of the style and can easily blow away the latest releases of In Flames or Sentenced. Soilwork also add some elements of other not so typical to Gothenburg styles - like, for example, the techno rhythm on the title song, or the 70s like riffing on "Millionflame," or a combination of heavy metal influences and Carcass on "Spirits of the Future Sun." In short, one of the best releases in Gothenburg style in recent months. (AO)

4 1/2 [SV 4]

THERION

Deggial

Nuclear Blast Records

Therion return to the world with their new opus Deggial, their most developed and sophisticated work yet. Whatever awkwardness existed in their music before has been duly eliminated, and the listener is left with sensuous and expressive neo-classical metal, free and liberated from the cheese that plagues the genre and previous Therion albums. "Deggial" is a surprisingly heavy album, with ample heavy metal, thrash and death metal influences - the rhythm section is a great deal more powerful than that found on "Vovin," with a full, aggressive sound not seen since "Theli." Main songwriter and arranger Christofer Johnsson has continued to perfect his compositional skills and presents the listener with neo-classical music more fully realized and authentic than has previously been seen. Having eliminated sampling and programming in favor of authentic sounds, Therion sounds fuller, warmer, and more emotional than before. The almost exclusive use of choirs and strings (as well as wind instruments) in the neo-classical segments heightens the flavor and is professionally integrated into the metal in a way that seems seamless. The music is Romantic and serenely pastoral, escapist and otherworldly, and yet retains a metallic heaviness and aggression throughout. It contains a wonderful assortment of acoustic guitar riffs and arpeggios, all of which lend a folky (almost Latin in parts) atmosphere to the music, granting it even more depth and beauty than would be possible in purely Romantic and heavy metal terms. This is Therion's best album to date - it contains none of the awkward transitions, needless pomp or pretensions of their previous works. More metal and more classical than before, "Deggial" represents Therion at their most mature and developed stage yet. This is a truly excellent album. (JS)

5 [AO 4 1/4, AS 4 1/2]

TIAMAT

Skeleton Skeleton

Century Media Records

When Tiamat released "A Deeper Kind of Slumber," it seemed that it was the best album in their history, and that they could hardly create such a magic album in the future. Especially, when J. Edlund started speaking about his wills to experiment with electronic sounds (we heard some on "A Deeper Kind of Slumber"); it seemed like that was the last Tiamat album with metallic roots. Therefore "Skeleton Skeleton" may come as a surprise to some people - Tiamat haven't lost their metallic background, and we can't find pure electronic music on this new album (except "Diyala" and electronics-based "Lucy"). In fact, this album is much more rocky than the previous one and almost has lost the melancholic a la Pink Floyd mood that was so characteristic to "A Deeper Kind of Slumber." Another fact is that Tiamat became more gothic than ever before. If the previous album had an obvious influence of Pink Floyd, this disc can be compared to The Sisters Of Mercy or Fields Of The Nephilim. In places, it's even too much: just listen to "Brighter than the Sun," which sounds as a pure imitation of The Sisters Of Mercy track "Temple of Love." We also have other pure gothic rock tracks: "As Long As You Are Mine" fits perfectly to each solid goth dancefloor.

If we compare the mood of this album to the tracks from the previous one, "Cold Skin" comes the closest to the gothic nature of the new album. Some exceptions can be found, too, for example, melancholic "To Have and Have Not" or dark waltz "Best Friend Money Can Buy." But even these tracks are made in a more accessible (of course, some may use the word "commercial" instead) way, and the Rolling Stones cover "Sympathy for the Devil" will surely widen the band's audience.

We can bravely say that "Skeleton Skeleton" is the most straight Tiamat album to date. Some may blame them for this, but I'd say that even if they jumped to the pure metallic goth style, now they are one of greatest bands in this genre. The entire album pulsates with energy, and J. Edlund again proved himself as excellent songwriter. The album again is carefully prepared, so, except a bit copy-like "Brighter than the Sun," I haven't got many reproaches. I can't say that this album is better than "A Deeper Kind of Slumber," because the latter was more diverse and magic, therefore now they get 4 3/4 instead of 5. (AO)

4 3/4 [AO 4, GS 4]

SAMAEL

Eternal

Century Media Records

"Eternal" represents a continuation of the Samael experience. The album manages to be heavy, grinding, and organic all at once; equal parts metal, industrial and symphonic grandeur. Their music is deeply textured, with wonderfully intricate polyphony sailing on grinding (but often smooth) industrial and techno beats. The drum programming is top notch, with beats that are often syncopated and surprisingly ludic. The production is open and full, and while not entirely mind-blowing, offers the listener a perfectly lucid sound experience. The keyboard work varies greatly, some of its neo-classical in nature (with cascading piano work) and other parts often times Emperor-esque (chorus effects, etc.). Vocals are rasped, growled, sung, and buried in the mix, making them a component (rather than a driving force) in the music. The sound is bold, powerful and hypnotic, drawing the listener into an almost trance-like state. The music crawls under your skin, taking you by force and making you apart of its thunderous rapture. This album is highly recommended. (JS)

[<http://www.samael.com>]
4 3/4 [AO 4 1/2, GS 4 1/4, SV 4]

TOURNIQUET

Microscopic View of a Telescopic Realm

Metal Blade Records

Tourniquet are one of those bands that keep on releasing new material at a regular rate (this is already Tourniquet's seventh studio album) but seem to do this in relative obscurity although they are on Metal Blade. The only previous work of Tourniquet that I am familiar with is "Pathogenic Ocular Dissonance" from 1992. Although the line-up has changed dramatically since that time (from a five-piece with twin guitars to a trio), the typical Tourniquet sound is still intact courtesy of sole survivor drummer Ted Kirkpatrick. Tourniquet are probably one of the few bands that are capable of covering the range of metal speeds: from old-style doom passages a la Trouble, to a clean form of thrash metal a la Anthrax with some hyper-speed fret work. Although this has been Tourniquet's style for years, modern influences are setting in courtesy of guitar-player Aaron Guerra. This is not for the better in my opinion because his compositions are much less in quality than those of Kirkpatrick and I can personally do without the rap influences in the title-track. Lyrically they still consider serious themes combined with some of the most incomprehensible obscure song titles: for example "Esprinkled in Scarlet Horror" is Tourniquet's stance towards about how bands using gory images and two hundred beats per minute are wrongly judged in relation to giving glory to the Lord. With eleven songs and over 70 minutes of music it's feast for the fans, perhaps others should try it as well some time. (CR)

3 3/4 [AO 4, GS 4]

TRANSPORT LEAGUE

Satanic Panic

Pavement Music

While Misery Loves Co. fell to the shadows even if they still release albums, Swedish aggressive metal could potentially be brought upfront by Transport League. Transport League are not as heavy as their American counterparts Pantera or Static Arts, but are yet very groovy and with softer digressions to Faith No More and Rage Against The Machine. Clean vocals, replacing sometimes regular aggro-screams, sound very convincing on "Neckdrift" and "Shut to Drown," and the band has the diversity that, e.g., Pissing Razors lack. Not the most macho metal around, but a good compromise between melody, grooves, and aggression. (GS)

4

TULUS

Evil 1999

Hammerheart Records

The first song "Menneskefar" surprises with excellent, melodic black metal and promises "Evil 1999" - in spite of a banal album title - to be a very good and fresh black metal album. Sadly, the rest of the album doesn't surprise at all. The songs balance on the edge of Norsk black metal traditions and a bit more melodic black metal style. Some songs even get an epic



character (like "Draug"), and, all in all, the songs blend into one mass of cold black metal. This music was created in Norway, and the trademark is clear to death. There are some tracks (like "Salme" or "Kvitheim") which really comply with the highest standards of Norwegian black metal scene, so I think that it would have been a mini CD of all those songs, it would have been a powerful and excellent one. But instead we got a full-length with too many mediocre songs. Anyway, this CD promises that their next album, already the fourth in line, may surprise many fans. Keep your eyes opened. (AO)

3 1/2

VANITY

Enslaved

Euphorions Records

Vanity from Greece devoted themselves to well-tried melodic doom/death, and I think, they have no difficulty with that sort of thing. Okay, "Enslaved" isn't a sensational record, but the eight tracks and intro aren't bad at all. Stylistically, Vanity are somewhere between My Dying Bride and early Celestial Season. The band goes about it skillfully, so fans of the genre should enjoy this release, because there are not so many albums of this style recently. Nothing new, but good. (SV)

3 3/4 [AO 3 1/2]

V/A

Good Life Recordings-Eulogy Budget Sampler

Good Life Recordings/Eulogy Recordings

This compilation contains 24 bands, and it is a very good presentation of European/US hardcore scene, as both labels which present their bands here (Good Life Recordings and Eulogy Recordings) are authoritative among fans of a little bit more metallic HC. Personally I like the bands from Good Life more, as some of Eulogy's groups fall out of the context (like Forever And A Day or The China White). My faves on this sampler are Length Of Time, 25 Ta Life, Reveal, and Congress. But I think that a fan of HC will enjoy all the discs, because the bands featured on this CD are, without a doubt, one of the leaders in HC scene worldwide. Don't miss it if you wanna have promising bands of strong and colorful hardcore in one place. (AO)

[<http://www.eulogyrecordings.com>]

VESPERIAN SORROW

Beyond the Cursed Eclipse

Displeased Records

Black metal band from USA? It's not a frequent case. Dutch label Displeased presents us Vesperian Sorrow and their debut album which is not worse than most of European products. Although "Beyond..." isn't the highlight of 1999, it's quite a listenable product. The minus factor is the length of the songs that often exceeds 6-7 minutes. It's not so easy to listen to these "epic" creations, because, in general, there is not so much happening within the songs. Next time they could condense everything a bit... (SV)

3 1/4 [AO 3 1/2]

VIKING CROWN

Orthodox Steps of Ritual EP

Hammerheart Records

25 minutes of this chaotic black metal are dedicated to those black metallers who like underground black metal a years 1992-1995, where the sound quality wasn't important and the idea stood at the front. This album has this old truly underground atmosphere and clearly reminds of the first bad-quality recordings of Dark Throne or the early demo of Emperor. Actually, this album was recorded in 1994, and the main reason for releasing it now, I think, is that it was a solo-project of Anton Crowley who is Necrophagia's guitarist and Pantera's Phil Anselmo.

But big names don't change the true value of the music. Musically, this disc is very fast, very heavy, very chaotic, and very underground black metal. Its technical characteristics can hardly meet the standards of our days, so I recommend this album only if you really like very dirty-sounding black metal. The goal of bad production/no melodies/pure raw black metal is reached, but I think its time was some years ago. Now Viking Crown are preparing some new stuff together with Killjoy from Necrophagia, and there will be a lot of Eibon songs (project of them together with Fenriz, Blasphemer, and Satyr). Somehow I think that we'll get another portion of uncompromising old-wave black metal. (AO)

3

VOIVOD

VoiVod Lives

Century Media Records

After a time span of 16 years of recording in which 9 regular studio albums have seen the light, the live exploits of VoiVod have finally been immortalized on CD. Although VoiVod of late 90s was a bit disappointing, I still rank "Killing Technology" and "Dimension Hatross" as musical landmarks. At that time (late 80s), VoiVod had matured from their youthful and somewhat uncontrolled approach to thrash metal to a talented unit with recognizable songwriting talent and a unique lyrical approach. They grew from that to a more Pink Floyd oriented sci-fi metal and even managed to support Rush on a North-American tour at the time of "Nothing Face."

Like a lot of people, I have always had a soft spot for these Canadians who've seen their share of setbacks. However, to VoiVod fans, this live CD has turned out to be a big

disappointment. Instead of a double CD that accurately shows musical evolution of VoiVod in an energetic and vibrant live setting, we get a short CD (under 60 minutes) which is actually an amalgamation of two different shows (Dynamo Open Air and in CBGBs New York). As with most live albums, the song order leaves a lot to be desired for. We do get "Tribal Convictions" and "Ravenous Medicine" but the "Phobos," "The Outer Limits," or "Angel Rat" albums are totally neglected and instead we get five songs from "Negronat," which is certainly not VoiVod's pinnacle.

VoiVod should have carefully selected songs from their excellent compositional archive; what about "Order of the Blackguards," "This is not an Exercise," "Chaomongers," "Brainscan," "The Unknown Knows," "Astronomy Domine," "Clouds in my House," "The Prow," "Moonbeam Rider," "We are not Alone" ...? Now we get a seemingly random selection of songs, which furthermore seemed unbalanced in terms of the song order. Live albums are anthology marking a separate period in a band's history. It is extremely sad that this live CD is unworthy for such a noteworthy band. (CR)

[<http://www.vovod.com>]

3 3/4 [GS 3 1/4]

WINDS OF SIRIUS

Beyond all Temples and Myths

Season of Mist

The promo sheet mentions "file under gothic metal" and that is an appropriate description. However, Winds of Sirius let their French background shine through and doesn't rely on an abundant use of violins or female-fronted approach like their Norwegian counterparts do. Main man is vocalist, guitarist, and keyboard player Lord Vincent Sangdragon who has already released albums with Amaymon, Daemonium and Akhenaton. After a short intro, 6 songs (mostly in the 7-minute range) pass by in a predominantly midtempo pace. The guitars shows some Swedish influences and the keyboards are mainly used in a supportive role, adding some interesting orchestral touches. Lord Vincent Sangdragon's voice (with the aid of some vocal effects) reaches an ominous tone not unlike that of Peter Steele. Some clear vocals are used as well in a duet form but these are mixed very far in the background. Stand out track is the song "Alchemist/Layman Temptation" which incorporates a long ambient part. Worth investigating if gothic metal is your style. (CR)

[<http://heaven.infomaniak.ch/~akhen/wos/wosmenu.htm>]

4 [AO 3 1/4]

WITCHERY

Dead, Hot and Ready

Necropolis Records

Much has been said about this group and much, I believe, will be said in the future, as the new album of this surprisingly productive Swedish band is due to be released this year. The second full-length of Witchery shows that this band almost doesn't change its style - it's still technical, heavy and very powerful thrash metal with references to heavy metal roots and some modern death/black (the latter are not dominant at all). Maybe the new songs aren't so fast and breathtaking as on debut album "Restless & Dead," but the new album is more technical. Here, we get more solos, more complex music, and this makes "Dead, Hot and Ready" sound not as spontaneous and straightforward. Personally I prefer the fresher debut album, but in any case, the current album won't disappoint listeners since we again get the same massive bass of Sharlee D'Angelo, even more aggressive vocals by Toxine, and, of course, masterful riffing by Patrik Jensen, whose playing seems to become the trademark of Witchery. It is a paradise for fans of straight and powerful thrash metal, and the only doubts are whether the band ever repeat such a burst of energy reflected on their debut album. (AO)

WITHIN REACH

Fall from Grace

Bad Taste Records

The album title as well as the music won't win any originality awards. However, hardcore presented here should be accepted by all self-respected hardcoreheads who start the day with Sick Of It All. Sweden-based Within Reach incorporate into their hardcore-base some melodic death metal and even death



SOLEFALD

Neonism

Avantgarde Music

"Neonism" is the highly anticipated follow up of Solefald's 1997 debut, "The Linear Scaffold." "The Linear Scaffold" was an amazing work, fusing Norse black metal's intensity with prog rock's aesthetic complexity and experimental music's obsession with the fey. The work pushed the envelope in what is possible within the somewhat narrow confines of metal, and "Neonism" adequately continues that tradition, a work wholly infatuated with eclecticism and somewhat ironic pastiche. The album successfully combines extreme metal with progressive rock, drum n' bass, punk, gothic rock, and a whole slew of pop influences. The lyrics bear little resemblance to traditional black metal themes, but instead focus on the contemporary world with an clever eye for satire - the lyrics are a combination of pop culture kitsch and obscure academic references. The vocals come in both black/death metal varieties and some whatpoppy and heavily accented mid-range singing. The singing is wonderfully arranged with catchy choruses providing the listener with bizarre, satirical lyrics. In the song "CKII Chanel N°6" for example, there's a lyric "Survival of the fittest suites me fine, the truth as it was told to me by Calvin Klein." The music is eclectic and vibrantly entertaining, spanning the whole range of rock and metal in tight, perfectly executed songs. The high points are "Backpacka Baba" (a wild and bitingly satirical song) and "Third Person Plural", a song that immediately invokes the bygone days of English Prog Rock. If Solefald is the future of extreme metal, then we all have something to be truly grateful for. At the risk of sounding pretentious, I'll call this post-modern metal - a loaded term that suites this strange music fine. (JS)

4 3/4 [CR 4 1/2, GS 4 1/2]

rocky rhythms. This gives a good balance to the album, saving it from being one dimensional, even if shouting (and a bit low in the mix) vocals put the 100% hardcore stamp all over the place. A good release, power included. (GS)

[Within Reach, c/o Magnus Brolin, Kopmangatan 16, S-702 10 Orebro, Sweden]

3 3/4

YATTERING

Murder's Concept

Season of Mist

Something new from Season of Mist, a Polish death metal band aiming to follow the footsteps of their countrymen Vader. After releasing their debut CD "Human Pain" in 1998, Yattering switched over to the French Mediterranean. The more pleasant climate of their newfound home has not deterred Yattering from creating an extremely brutal death metal sound without any frills on this 10 song CD. The style of death metal is primarily influenced by that of Morbid Angel but never manages to reach that standard or class. The accomplished musicianship and songwriting is evident: the riffs and complexity is all over the place. However, it never really impacts the emotions of the listener due to the fact that there is a constant emphasis on high speed drumming and riffing. More variation in rhythm would certainly benefit accessibility and enjoyment. The vocals chords are abused in the usual death metal style but has no noteworthy identity or distinguishable aspect to them. In fact, it shows that this style of death metal has not progressed much since the early 90s. A competent release but doesn't have enough individuality to stand out amongst the crowd. (CR)

3 3/4 [AO 3 3/4]

Records labels

Adrenaline, Via F. Matteucci 25/27, Arcore 20043 (MI), Italy, www.adrenaline.it

Avantgarde Music, www.avantgardemusic.com

Bad Taste Records, Stora Södergatan 38, 22223 Lund, Sweden, www.badtasterecords.com

Black Arrow Production, Lintel 17, Osterholz-Scharmbeck 27711, Germany, www.black-arrow-music.de

Black Lotus Records, Komplex 72, 171 36, Himittos, Athens, Greece, www.blacklotusrecords.com

Black Sun Records, PO Box 129, S-401 22 Gothenburg, Sweden, www.dolores.se/blacksun

B.O. Records, 6. van Heek Crispinusstraat 5, 46399 Bocholt, Germany, www.candlelightrecords.co.uk

Century Media Records, 1453-a 14th Street #324, Santa Monica, CA 90404, USA, www.centurymedia.com

Cthonic Streams, PO Box 7003, New York NY 10116-7003, USA, www.cthonicsstreams.com

Cold Metal Industry, PO Box 1881, S-581 17, Linkoping, Sweden, www.coldmetal.se

Displeased Records, Ronde Tocht 7d, 1507 CC Zaandam, Holland, www.xs4all.nl/~displeas

DPSA Records, PO Box 5058, 4380 KB Vlaissingen, The Netherlands, www.dpsa.nl

DVS Records, c/o René Janssen, Vergelt 5A, 5991 RJ Baarlo, The Netherlands, www.dvrecords.com

Earache Records, Wicks World, PO Box 144, Nottingham NG346E, UK, www.earache.com

Eclipse, 23 Ward Avenue, Butler, NJ 07405, USA, www.eclipserecords.com

Eiba Records, Via Folli 5, 20134 Milano, Italy, www.eiba.it

Elegy Records, 71 Ackerman Ave, Suite 163, Clifton NJ 07011, USA, www.elegyrecords.com

Elevate Records, Via Antonio Silvani 79/85, 00139 Rome, Italy, www.pronet.it/9thflloor/elevate.htm

The End Records, 556 S. Fair Oaks 101-111, Pasadena, CA 91105, USA, www.thendrecords.com

Euphorions Records, Sankt Jørgens Alle 7, o.g., 1615 Copenhagen V, Denmark, www.vzw.euphorions

Famous Kitchen, Lachestr. 10, 74740 Adelsheim, Germany, www.korn-music.com

Focusion Management, PO Box 31, 73062 Uhingen, Germany, www.focusion.de

Frontiers Records, Via G.Gomaga 4, 80125, Napoli, Italy, www.frontiers.it

Goldtrack Records, PO Box 37 062, 28 080 Madrid, Spain

Good Life Recordings, PO Box 114, 8500 Kortridt, Belgium, www.goodliferecordings.com

Hall of Sorrow, PO Box 749, CH-4310 Rheinfelden, Switzerland, www.hallofsorrow.ch

Hammerhead Records, PO Box 277, 6300 AG Valkenburg, Holland, www.xs4all.nl/~hhr

Head Not Found, PO Box 447, 1701 Sarpsborg, Norway, www.vow.dk/headnotfound

Holy Records, BP 56, 77 263 La Ferte Sous Jouars Cdx, France

InsideOut Music, Kleiner Markt 10, 47513 Kleve, Germany, www.insideout.de

Institute of Art Records, Postbox 150 221, D-60062 Frankfurt, Germany

Invasion Records, PO Box 2119, 15707 Königs Wusterhausen, Germany

Instrumental Management, PO Box 1268, DK-2300 Copenhagen S., Denmark, www.intrumental.com

Laser's Edge/Sensory, PO Box 388, Voorhees, NJ 08043-0388, USA, www.lasercd.com

Last Episode, In der Vorstadt 114, 73529 Schweinfurt, Germany

Limb Music Products & Publishing, Postfach 60 25 20, 22235 Hamburg, Germany, www.limb-music.de

Lion Music, Stromsgården, 22410 Godby, Åland, Finland, www.lionmusic.fi

Listenable Records, BP 559, 621 11 Boulogne/MER, France, www.listenable.com

M.A.B. Records, www.mabrec.cz

Magna Carta Records, PMB 1820, 208 East 51st St, New York, NY 10022-6500 USA, www.zaks.com/magnacarta

Massacre Records, Raubekckstr. 10, 74232 Abstatt, Germany, www.massacre-records.com

Metal Age Productions, PO Box 42, 038 61 Vrutzky, Slovakia, metal.age@sknet.sk

Metal Blade Records, 2828 Cochran St, Suite 302, Simi Valley, CA 93065, USA, www.metalblade.com

MIA Records, 315 Church Street, 2nd Floor, New York, NY 10013, USA, www.mia-records.com

Middle Pillar, PO Box 555, New York, NY 10009, USA, www.middlepillar.com

Mighty Music, Vernlandsgade 74, 1 tv, 2300 Copenhagen S, Denmark, www.mightymusic.dk

Monster Records, PO Box 460173, San Antonio, TX 78246-0173, USA, www.monsterrecords.com

Noisecore, PO Box 11 02 26, 10832 Berlin, Germany, www.noisecorerecords.com

No Fashion Records, Industriavagen 1, 171 48 Solna, Sweden, come_to/nofashion

Nuclear Blast Records, Hauptstrasse 109, 73072 Düsseldorf, Germany, www.nuclearblast.de

Omcens Records, Soldauer Str. 8, D-81927 Muenchen, Germany, http://home.t-online.de/home/avalon-omega

Omoces Productions, BP 57, 62990 Beaumontville, France, members.tripod.com/~omoces

Palace of Worms, Via Bronzetti 19, 23900 Lecco, Italy,

Pavement Europe, Suite NR B 66, Nieuwezijds, Voorburgwal 86, 1012 SE Amsterdam, Holland, www.pavementmusic.com

Peaceville, 333 Latiner Street, London, W10 6RA, UK, www.peaceville.com

Prophecy Productions, Kurfürstenstrasse 5, 54492 Zeltingen-Rathen, Germany, www.prophecyproductions.de

R&B Records, Via Montebello 1, 20097 S. Donato Milanese, Milano, Italy, www.rnbrecords.com

Red Star Records, PO Box 342, Camp Hill, PA 17001-0342, USA, www.redstar.com

Relapse Records, PO Box 251, Millersville, PA 17551, USA, www.relapse.com

Repulse Records, PO Box 50562, 28080 Madrid, Spain, www.repulserecords.com

Resurrection Records, 228 Camden High Street, London NW18QS, England, www.resurrection-recs.demon.co.uk

Rising Sun Productions, Pulser Dam 4, 25560 Oldendorf, Germany, www.digital-design.de/rising-sun

Scarlet, Via Mattei 48, 20097 S. Donato Milanese, Milano, Italy, www.scarletkitten.it

Season of Mist, 24 Rue Brandis, 13005 Marseille, France, www.season-of-mist.com

Serenades Records, In der Vorstadt 114, 73529 Schwaibisch Gmünd, Germany

Serious Entertainment, Kongengade 84, 6700 Esbjerg, Denmark, www.seriousentertainment.dk

Shiver Records, Hans de Wyngert, Bossepleinstraat 6, B-3128 Baal, Belgium, www.shiverrecords.be

Shock Wave Records, res Medicis A20, 2, Impasse J.Gabin, 31700 Blagnac, France, www.shockwave-records.com

Siegen Records, PO Box 28452, Baltimore, MD 21234, USA, webnet.com/siegen

Skaldic Art Productions, Rosmarinatr. 30B, 40235 Dusseldorf, Germany, www.skaldic.artigmx.net

Spitfire Records, 101 Bay Avenue, Hicksville, NY 11801, USA, www.spitfirerecords.com

Solidarc, Box 50, 90251 Culz, Duisburg, Germany, www.solidarc.com

System Shock, Am Markt 1, 47229 Duisburg, Germany, www.kmg-music.de

Verglas Music, PO Box 19, Virginia Water Surrey, GU25 4AE, UK, www.verglas.com

World Serpent Distribution, Unit 7-1 Seager Buildings, Broomhill Road, London SE8 4HJ, UK, www.worldserpent.com

Ziania Entertainment Group, Oude Roemerdweg 111, 6049 AD Herten, The Netherlands, www.ziania.com

Deepest Symphony

In Association With

D-DAY RECORDS

Unleashes

Mephitic Cogitations

4 Tracks of uncompromised atmospheric Death Metal!

Available soon through D-Day Records at
www.ddaycd.cjb.net

Official website: www.deepestsymphony.cjb.net

E-mail: DeepestSymphony@webtv.net

eFax: 425-699-1082

Hear Music: www.mp3.com/DeepestSymphony

Merchandise: www.cafepress.com/dsymphony

Snail mail: 46 Jeffery Lane, Newark, Ohio 43055, USA



www.ddayrecords.cjb.net



www.adrenalinzine.com

Deepest Symphony Proudly Endorses
String Tech Guitar & Bass Strings

STRING TECH CO.

www.stringtech.com

HEAVYCORE

THE INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF HEAVYBANDS

www.heavycore.cjb.net

gothic, ambient, industrial reviews



Ataraxia

ARCANA

Isabel CDS

Cold Meat Industry

All releases by Arcana since their debut album "Dark Age of Reason" marked the progress of this highly talented duo. The second disc "Cantar de Procella" was a real surprise in all dark ethereal music scene, as hardly could we find such spiritual, such beautiful, and such meaningful music performed that year. The time has come for the next release, and now we can hold the brand new single which serves as an appetizer for the upcoming "...The Last Embrace" album. The same story as with the "Isabel" single, which served as the mouthwatering appetizer for "Cantar de Procella." "Isabel" is limited to 3000 copies and contains two tracks from the upcoming release and one song exclusively recorded for this single. I've expected that since last release Arcana would progress even more, and I was right. The new single starts with "Eclipse of the Soul" - atmospheric, orchestral song which leads to the most ethereal song on this record, "Love Eternal." Here we meet Arcana as we imagine it - beautiful, breathtaking singing by Ida and sensitive, romantic, dreamy but, at the same time, dark music. This ethereal song is followed by more complex "Hymn of Absolute Deceit." Here, the atmospheres are deeper, the music is more orchestral and proud, like Dead Can Dance with darker and more mystical turn. My first impression is that the new Arcana is maybe not as medieval as it was before, and that they seek for more different atmospheres, but it's only for good, as this beauty we've got here promises a very good third album of theirs. I bet it will be the best release of Arcana so far. And for "Isabel" - it's only 8 minutes of music, so it's your choice whether to wait for the full-length or check out this single. (AO)

4 1/4

ATARAXIA

Lost Atlantis

Cruel Moon Int'l

Francesca Nicoli is surely one of the best (if not the best) singer in all medieval/ethereal scene, and her participation in other projects (like the memorable Monumentum's album "In Absentia Christi") always has been a great experience. However, her own creation with Ataraxia is the most magic, hypnotic and powerful way of her voice's expression. Especially when the music is so balanced and conceptually finished like on this disc. I know, every time when you get something new created by Ataraxia, it seems that it's their best album, but this time I'm sure that "Lost Atlantis" is the best piece of music Ataraxia created to date. This album tells us a story about the lost civilization of Atlantis, its myths and signs - each song has its own concept, it seems that the album is like a nostalgic document for the lost time and space. Musically, it is maybe the most successful attempt to compose harmonic ethereal pagan opera. In some songs like "Mu-Land," the singing of Francesca Nicoli almost hits triumphant notes, other tracks like "Lost Atlantis" are sung in an opera manner, and "Fountains" convey more spatial feelings.

The entire album leaves an impression of growing emotionally; in places it is energetic, mostly melancholic and romantic, but it can't leave you indifferent. Compared to their previous work "Historiae", this album has less medieval music elements and is maybe the most spatial and cosmical disc. Such songs as "The Land of Sand of Gold of Ruin" have even slight allusions to new age music. Don't be afraid, Francesca still adds her magic shamanic whispers, Ataraxia haven't lost their characteristic traits, they just added something new, and that makes me say words like "fantastic" or "incredible". It is a must get, if your spirit is longing for disappearance in the world of dreams... (AO)

[pando@misterweb.it] [http://www.ataraxia.net]

5

BRIGHTER DEATH NOW

May All Be Dead

Cold Meat Industry

One of the world's most known death industrial bands again doesn't let us live in peace and harmony. Another portion of music and another attack on your brains and sanity. In fact, this album was released as double LP in 1998 and was sold at a very low price. Now it is re-released on CD with intro that is a re-recorded version of a track from the bonus single. I think no one needs explanations on what you can hear on this album - pounding noise walls, schizoid chaos of sounds, tapes loops, unexpected breaks of voices, power, power, power. It breaks everything on its way, it attacks you without mercy, well, it's death industrial, and "May All Be Dead" most clearly indicates what this style is about. Compared to previous albums of Brighter Death Now, this release presents maybe more different songs and the chaos seems a little bit more controlled. But it doesn't mean that here we deal with more compromises - no, it is just a little bit of another direction which some people already call as the way where punk had to evolve to. For me, it is more complex Brighter Death Now and another good portion of insanity. I think, each

death industrial fan has his own favorite album of Brighter Death Now (in my case it is "Innerwar"), and I think that this one will also have strong positions in industrial circles. (AO)

4

CHRISTIAN DEATH

The Bible

Candlelight Records

Christian Death are about rough guitaric indie rock with psychedelic tendencies, and pretentious and hysterical vocals. Gothic influences are visible, but the main feature of this album is that it doesn't follow the path where songs have nicely-arranged melodies. Christian Death have a degree of disharmony and distortion, therefore only so-called 'art' people are supposed to listen to this, as well as all young weirdos next door. Tracks have structure, and it's not exactly the avantgarde of psychedelia, therefore don't get too scared - if you feel a little bit tempted by this description, enter and feel this strangely colored elemental and trippy world of indie/alternative rock. "The Bible" is a compilation of Christian Death's rare and live tracks. (GS)

4

CURRENT 93

All Dotted Up Like Christ (Live in New York) DoCD *World Serpent*

This double CD contains live recordings of David Tibet and company in New York, 1996. Released as beautiful digi-pack, "All Dotted Up Like Christ" again proves the emotional strength of Current 93 (or Current Ninety Three now?) and shows that live performances of this band are something from the fields of magic. In most places, live recordings are more energetic than the songs recorded at studio, and, at the same time, these live tracks are more passionate and maybe even more sincere. To tell the truth, I've expected more noise installments here, so it was a surprise that here we've got almost no industrial sounds, and more acoustic music. Most songs are taken from such classic Current 93 albums as "Thunder Perfect Mind" and "Of Ruine And Some Blazing Starres," but also here we meet such nostalgic tracks as "Oh Coal Black Smith" from "Swastikas for Noddy." It's very difficult to pick my own favorites here, because all these tracks are among my very favorites of this group, though it's very energetic and powerful version of "Lucifer Over London" would be among the best tracks recorded on both these concerts. The sound quality on this double album is very good, and sometimes it may seem that this album was recorded in a studio, as all of these songs sound very clearly. Maybe the only disadvantage of "All Dotted Up Like Christ" is that many songs recorded on the first disc then are repeated on the second one, but if you like these songs, it won't be a disappointment. One more beautiful offering of Current 93 for your dreams and night thoughts. (AO)

4 1/4

ENDURA

Elder Signs DoCD

Red Stream Records

The cult dark ambient band Endura is the name that says a lot to everyone who enjoys releases of such labels as Cold Meat Industry or World Serpent. Their albums "Great God Pan," "Liber Leviathan," or the more recent "The Watcher" gained them a reputation of being one of the most innovative projects in industrial underground. But all this time while collecting the more recent discs by Endura, something was missing, namely the early recordings that have always been something like a mystery for many listeners. It was known that before choosing the name Endura, these guys were called Abraxas, and that under that name they released "Dreams of Dark Waters" CD. Shortly thereafter, already under the name Endura, the new disc "The Dark Is Light Enough" has also been completed. So, the period of 1994-1996 remained quite unknown for many.

Until now, because the new double album on Red Stream contains both these primal albums in one place, as well as some bonus rare recordings. Even without having listened to these discs before, it was almost clear that this double album, lasting 110 minutes would blow our minds. And it did. Well, the first disc "Dreams of Dark Waters" is dedicated only to the darkest minds who like Lustmord's experiments with sources of sounds and searches for natural sounds. Actually, this album of Endura (Abraxas) was recorded onto a digital audio tape during visits to local sites of power. Everything on this recording shows that these were the first experiments of Endura which didn't have symphonic arrangements nor complex structures. Just sounds, sounds, sounds, covering you, haunting you, killing you. I understand that for some people it will surely be "too much." And it really is raw, a bit primitive, and very dark. The second disc presents an absolutely different view. Here, we have so many dark music styles, that it sometimes seems unbelievable how they

could fit on one album. Tracks like "Never's Gift" or "When I Was Dead" seem like the darkened Dead Can Dance, "Listen to Wolves" is like magic incantation after which you fall into a deep trance, "No Silence Rite" is a shamanic rhythm around the fire, "The Fall of Amor" is a folky tale. Each new track is another surprise, another dark journey. Personally to me, "The Dark Is Light Enough" is far better than the first record of Endura, but anyway, this double CD is really worth of interest for all those involved into dark, magical music. (AO)

4 1/2

HAGALAZ' RUNEDANCE

Urd-That Which Was EP
Well of Urd

The previous album of Hagalaz' Runedance (which is the musical project of Andrea Haugen known for her participation in Agasth), "The Winds That Sang of Midgard's Faqte" was very well received neo-folk album, often described as one of the best examples of shamanic magical music transformed to our days. Not to forget the charming powerful vocals of Andrea which do almost half of work for Hagalaz' Runedance. Her 7" "When the Trees Were Silenced" was one of the best 7" for me that year, so you can imagine how I was waiting for the new release.

The new CD presents only two new tracks and they don't disappoint at all. The first song "Wake Skadi" reminds a lot of the same "When the Trees Were Silenced" with its shamanic drums, tribal rhythms, and the same magic voice. The second song shows Andrea performing maybe the most ambient song in Hagalaz' Runedance history. Synth arrangements flow in melancholic, dreamy mood and seem to transform you to another dimensions. Good. But after that... I think, no one has expected to hear techno/trance remixes of Hagalaz' Runedance songs. But here they are. "When the Trees Were Silenced," "Behold the Passionate Ways of Nature," and "When the Falcon Flies" are re-mixed in electronic, almost dance way. It is shocking, to say the least. Shamanic trance on a dancefloor. Well, leaving stereotypes aside, it is quite hard to take these remixes, because in my opinion, they could have been made much better. Only the remix of "When the Falcon Flies" (mixed by Trickster G. from Ulver/Arcturus and T. Ylwizaker) corresponds to the nature of Hagalaz' Runedance. It's my personal opinion, but electronic possibilities could have been explored better here. But anyway, to many it will be interesting to hear how pagan music can be transformed into experimental electronics. Is it the beginning of the new style? (AO)

4

JENNIFER HOPE

Winds of Tomorrow EP

Mystic Dreams Music

A 4-song mini album of Jennifer Hope is the first attempt of her to show her ethereal music to bigger audience. At least one song on this mini-album is worth of attention - "The Sky Is Blushing" (earlier featured on Cleopatra Records' "The Unquiet Grave" compilation). It is romantic ethereal/gothic with a clear influence of Lycia and Love Spirals Downwards. Maybe with a little bit softer sound and with an influence of New Age. Other tracks, especially "Angels Alone," prove that Jennifer Hope tries to create a more commercially oriented ethereal. What I miss here is a sense of magic which is so characteristic to Love Spirals Downwards, and the romanticism of Jennifer Hope is too "sweet" to me. It seems that she's only looking for her own path, so in places the music is too empty. I hope that in the future her music will have more own feelings inside. (AO)

[http://www.mysticdreamsmusic.com]

3

INKUBUS SUKKUBUS

Wild

Resurrection Records

I think each review of previous several albums of Inkubus Sukkubus in the pages of "Edge of Time" started like "still it isn't as good as their 'Belladonna and Aconite'." Now maybe it's time to stop this tradition, as the brand new release of this pagan rock band can bravely be compared to the first songs composed by Candia and Tony McCormack. This album is maybe the most diverse album of theirs released in recent years. "Wild" starts with a gloomier mood than we used to hear from Inkubus Sukkubus, and the first songs aren't as playful as the previous albums "Vampire Erotica" or "Heartbeat of the Earth" were. Dark pagan lyrics still carry a quite similar character as before, but the music seems to get a darker approach, and Candia's voice - more minor tones. But, as the album develops, you can notice some songs which can suit radio-shows and dancefloors. The ones like "Struwwelpeter," "Lord of the Flame," or "Reptile" have perfectly arranged melodies and can be called the standards of pop-gothic. And we cannot blame this group for not changing their main character of their music anymore; this album presents new faces of Inkubus Sukkubus: such as almost medieval "Aradia" or a very considered ballad "Lammas Song." It seems that this album is the most prepared disc in group's history and it can attract a very wide audience. The best album of Inkubus Sukkubus since "Belladonna and Aconite." (AO)

[http://www.inkubussukkubus.com]

4 1/2

The MACHINE IN THE GARDEN

One Winter's Night

Middle Pillar

This album can bravely be put on the shelf next to the best releases of Black Tape For A Blue Girl and Lycia (again the same comparisons when we talk about ethereal music, but what can we do - these are the grands...). Very romantic, dark and emotional, "One Winter's Night" will touch the soul of a fan of melancholic ethereal music. For sceptics I recommend to listen to such tracks as "Misere Mei" (one of the most beautiful ethereal/darkwave

tracks I've heard in a long time) or "Ex Oblivione." Tracks like these prove that ethereal music hasn't reached its dead-end and that there are groups which try to perform something of their own. The secret of The Machine In The Garden's musical magic lays in a very good musicianship - Roger Fraces' electronic passages leave all the emotional space needed for Summer Bowman's singing. And she does her work at its best. As the album goes on, the listener can even fall into some kind of sweet trance. All the songs don't wake you up from this musical slumber - the rhythm doesn't change here too often (except the more active "Control"), so you can enjoy deep, silent, and quiet music. Dark beauty and a new hope in ethereal scene. (AO)

4 1/2

The MIRROR REVEALS

Frames of Teknicolor

Middle Pillar

The latest offering by Middle Pillar is again a perfectly designed digi-pack, and again interesting emotional music. This record is maybe the most quiet album released on Middle Pillar so far, but it doesn't mean that here we deal with "soft" music. I would rather call "Frames of Teknicolor" a dark musical poetry or (stylistically) romantic ethereal in the veins of silent songs by Love Spirals Downwards. The Mirror Reveals is a project created by songwriter/lyricist James Babbo, later empowered with vocalist Kit Messick. Her beautiful, a bit cabaret-like singing manner helps to create a very interesting, the 30s like atmosphere that some people prefer to call "torch songs." The album starts with very quiet and minimalist "1939" based on some guitars, keyboards, and emotional vocals. The listener doesn't drown in complex structures, but this truly minimalist music express poetic emotions even better than many of more twisted ethereal songs. The true beauty is revealed on "Moebius Stripped." Maybe my comparison will be too drastic, but the atmosphere on some songs here remind of trip-happy Portishead. The Mirror Reveals is darker, but similarly dreamy and melancholic. "The Dreams of Teknicolor" expresses very positive and warm emotions, and it is a bit like a contrast to many dark albums, because this band manages to perform darkened atmosphere, but at the same time still gives good vibes. Maybe this group won't appeal to the ones who prefer really dark music, but those who enjoy non-banal romantic music will surely like it. Such highly emotional songs as "1939," "Moebius Stripped," or "The Undying Man" are highly recommended. (AO)

4

MORTIIS

The Stargate

Earache Records

Surely the best album of Mortiis. With "The Stargate," ex-Emperor member has reached the point where different backgrounds and styles meet. Ambient with bombastic elements on one hand and medieval on another are put into the clothes of ethereal music. Sarah Jezabel Deva's singing makes this strange mix sound dreamy and not so frightening as some previous Mortiis' discs; and acoustic guitars add melancholic folk tunes. Since we deal with Mortiis here, so we are also taken into his strange, bizarre world: printed lyrics help to understand the concept, but I am not sure if Mortiis' concept will be completely understood by anyone but Mortiis himself. All the tracks on this disc are interdependent, and "The Stargate" can be considered as a soundtrack. However, Mortiis doesn't return to the soundscapes-like monotonous character of his first releases, so this album is maybe the most diverse in all Mortiis' discography. Some may not accept the bombastic elements of this disc, but, at the contrary, some may adore them as having dramatic character of medieval films. This album is emotionally very rich and unique in its visionary power: listening to it you can feel yourself following a film scenario. I recommend this album even to those who didn't like the previous works of Mortiis, and it is a must-be in the collection of a dark medieval/ethereal music fan. My personal faves are "Across the World of Wonders" and "Passing by An Old and Raped Village." (AO)

4 1/2

MORTIIS

Foxtill A Harske

Earache Records

Originally released on Germany's Malicious Records, now the debut album of Mortiis is re-released by Earache Records. Those who like such works of Mortiis as "Arend som Gjorde Oppor" or brilliant new album "The Stargate," may be a little bit shocked by the atmosphere of Mortiis' starting album. Here, we get only two long tracks of extremely monotonous and dark soundscapes. No medieval/folk tunes or the bombastic character that are so characteristic to Mortiis' creation nowadays. Instead of this, we get a gloomy and a bit too much one-sided disc. The atmospheres don't change too often, and the listener may decide that nothing special really happens here. And it would probably be right; you must be a big fan of soundscapes/dark ambient to dig these two compositions. Dark ambient of this album hasn't got that terrifying Lustmord's nature sounds or the mystical raison d'être's approach. So, if you aren't familiar with Mortiis' creation, better try his more recent works. But who knows, those who like more monotonous music may enjoy this disc even more than, for example, "The Stargate." (AO)

[http://www.mortiis.com]

3 1/4



Inkubus Sukkubus

edge of time

71

[by Audrius Ozalas]

A Murder of Angels is an absolutely new project in dark ambient world. Its first album "While You Sleep" on Middle Pillar Presents last year surprised with the magically created flow of disturbing atmospheres. Strange samples, horror movies inserts, electronic sound walls involve the listener into a dark journey to the psyche. Maybe the style isn't new, but the way how it is performed just blows away much of what was performed within the frame of the genre.

The project has arisen from the dark minds of two very well known dark ambient explorers - Derek Rush (DR) (Dream Into Dust) and Bryin Dall (BD) (best known for his work with Loretta's Doll, 4th Sign of The Apocalypse, and his collaboration with Genesis P-Orridge). Both of them worked together under the name Of Unknown Origin, but this time - another story, another music.

How did both of you come up with the idea of A Murder Of Angels project? You worked together on some other projects, but what ideas couldn't be realized there for you to have considered a need for A Murder Of Angels?

DR: For me, it was more the opposite of what you're saying. The various projects we work on have a different focus. Dream Into Dust is my main band, and it often deals with specific subjects and has a variety of styles that creates a certain sound. Certainly dark ambient and neoclassical are touched upon in our other work, but A Murder Of Angels offered a chance to just concentrate on these aspects. This project does not have live vocals, guitars, drums, or anything loud or noisy. It's as much defined by what's left out as what's put in.

BD: I'm actually a fan of dark ambient. Some of it is great. Most of it is boring. I wanted to create something that I wanted to listen to in this genre. Since Derek is also a fan of the style, and we work so well together, it was a natural progression to do a project of it.

Usually dark ambient means one man behind everything (ideas, conception, etc.), but here you worked, as I understand on equal rights. How it is like working this way, and do you feel that you have had a little bit different backgrounds? I mean, one of you wanted more orchestrated, when the other - more ethereal sounding music...

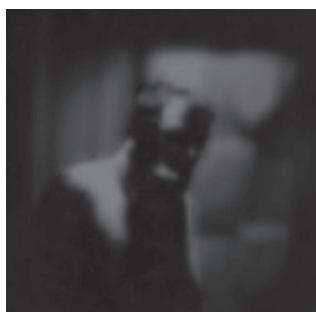
DR: Well, the excellent Yen PoxE is also a duo, and I believe Maeror Tri was more than one person. The working process was similar to our other side project Of Unknown Origin, but with a more defined style of what we were doing. I think most often I would come up with a wash of sound, a texture, or loop, and then Bryin would add some other element or counter-loop, and after that we keep switching off, adding tracks until we both find it interesting. We both have to agree on what's happening though. That's usually not a problem.

BD: I have 4th Sign of the Apocalypse which I do by myself. That's where I get to be the painter and create the entire thing. I also love working with people that I "click" with. Derek and I created Of Unknown Origin which is a noiz version of A Murder of Angels. It was nice to be able to make a "noizless" rendition of our work together. It was pure 50/50. It always is when we do something together. If you look at Of Unknown Origin, there's one song where I have one very minor part and



a murder of angels

sonic pilgrimage while you sleep



yet there's another song where Derek has one very minor part. We don't have egos that get in the way of working together. We both know when it's done.

How do you feel this album differs from your main projects Dream Into Dust and Loretta's Doll - both musically and conceptually?

DR: The only concept for A Murder of Angels was to create our version of a certain type of music. Everything comes from the subconscious. This is part of the freedom of working on these other projects because Dream Into Dust involves a lot of conceptual work and planning. For example, in Dream Into Dust I might use a sample because of its significance to a certain song, and record it under specific conditions to enhance the power behind it. With A Murder Of Angels we can start with any sound from any source, and not know what it may turn into. As long as we're pleased with the result, and it falls within the dark ambient framework.

BD: Now there's the rub. Loretta's Doll is a group effort of five, count 'em, five individuals. As I'm only 1/5th of that, it's bound to be completely different. You have a group of individuals with their own talents and ideas and it creates the band. Loretta's Doll is the only band that I am a member of. You have to realize that each of our musical tastes are different so the sound is very different. On the other hand, as Derek and I both play in Loretta's Doll, it's bound to have some of the same elements as far as attitude goes. With A Murder of Angels, however, we limited ourselves to synthesizers and samplers and we had a concept of what we wanted the CD to be from the original concept of the project!

As I understand, horror movies were the main inspiration of this project. Why? And how do you take this album yourselves, as a possible soundtrack for horror movie, as another release in dark ambient, or as something else?

DR: Actually, the horror movie aspect is something that has been assumed by others. There are a few sections that are intentionally "creepy," but it isn't a cheesy "trip through a haunted house" with sound effects.

BD: Yeah, as Derek said, the "horror movie" tag has been placed there by others. I consider it a soundtrack to a dream, more than a movie.

Well, a little bit more about horror movies. Can you name some of the best horror movies you've seen in your life, and the best soundtracks you've heard? Your comments on "Blair Witch Project."

DR: The first "Alien" movie is a favorite,



and I liked "The Dead Zone." I'm not a horror movie fan exactly, especially the shock/gore kind. Favorite horror soundtracks include Bram Stoker's "Dracula" and "The Omen." I heard too much about "The Blair Witch Project" to enjoy it, it was a decent idea though.

BD: "Blair Witch" - no comment. As far as other horror films, I've always been a fan of George Romero's "Dawn of the Dead." It's my favorite of that genre. I think that it's a very intelligent film that comments on Middle America, but I feel most people miss that aspect of it. If you're talking about "disturbing" movies, you can't beat David Lynch. I would LOVE to score a Lynch film or have him do a video for one of my pieces.

There are quite many samples on this disc. Can you say from what sources they are taken and how do you usually choose them? What position samples do take in music, what emotions can they express?

DR: A Murder of Angels is created only with synthesizers, samples, and lots of effects processing. So samples are important, but we try to warp them as much as possible. As far as emotions, I look at this music as a dark mirror. The demons you see are probably a reflection of the listener's mind.

BD: Samples were taken from everywhere. I'm a television addict and as I'm watching, I'm videotaping in the event that something "jumps out" at me. Then I take it and twist and strangle it and it becomes mine. Samples, as any other musical instrument, can evoke endless emotions.

Listening to A Murder Of Angels, I feel this cinematic-like touch. Was it one of your goals to create something like a soundtrack and maybe you've even had some kind of scenario in your minds? If yes, please tell a little bit more about it.

DR: Sometimes short scenarios come to mind, but so far there is no attempt at a clear story. Any story is unconscious, not linear, told through music and pacing in each song and across the whole album.

BD: I believe we were just scoring our lives and what was happening in them during the period it was recorded.

We've talked about musical concept so far. Is there any philosophical/psychological concept here also - why such a name for the project?

BD: Because we felt that the name invoked the image of the music. As simple as that.

DR: We were working on the music before the name came up. Bryin's great with titles and names, and that just fit the best.

Both of you have your own labels but

somehow decided to release this album on Middle Pillar. Why? And, by the way, what are the news for your own labels?

DR: We had played around with dark ambient before, and always intended to do something like A Murder of Angels, either separately or together, but circumstances proved it was the right time to bring it into being. As for my own label, Chthonic Streams has so far released the Dream Into Dust MCD "No man's Land," the 7"/CS "A Prison for Oneself," and the compilation "On the Brink of Infinity." It will continue with other special projects in the future. Working with different labels for different projects is interesting, it helps to make new contacts and experiences.

BD: Kevin Dunn approached me with the idea of doing a CD for his newly emerging label and, since he's a great friend, I agreed and asked Derek if he would be interested in joining me on the journey. As far as my label (The Order of the Suffering Clown), I'm releasing a project by The Sword Volcano Complex, the second 4th Sign of the Apocalypse CD, and a double CD compilation using the poetry from William Blake's "Songs of Innocence" and "Songs of Experience." I have some GREAT confirmed contributors for that.

As far as I can notice, in the world there is growing demand for dark music. I can't remember such a period in time when music had such big dark approach. What are the main reasons for this, in your opinion? Does it mean that the world again returns to its uncertain stage where nihilism again becomes more evident than before?

DR: "Dark" means different things to different people. I think this kind of aesthetic and philosophy has been around for a while, but in different forms. Also, in the past people were mostly not able to express such things without fear of being locked up. There may be an increase in dark music, but I can't see "the world" following it. A very few dark music bands may sell up to 2 million copies, but you can count them on one hand. Meanwhile the happy pop crap sells 5 to 10 million.

BD: I don't know if the interest is greater, but the access to it is incredible compared to how it was in the past. Now that the internet is here, anybody that had an interest in any genre of music can find like minds. People in the smallest of towns talking to others in the biggest of cities. It's like a cyber-community.

It seems like New York became quite big in dark music, at least I can judge from hearing so many projects and so much interesting music. Which place in the world, in your opinion, is the leading one in this style? (I understand that it is hard to describe it, but earlier World Serpent's group seemed to take an important role, now they aren't dominant anymore...)

DR: It's true there are a lot of dark bands in NYC, but we're all doing different things. I would say there is no one city or country that dominates dark music, there are musicians and labels around the world. It's one case where the internet and the "global village" idea works.

BD: There's a very small group of us that work together here in NYC. It's amazing how autonomous it is. Because of independent labels around the globe, we're getting to hear amazing works from everywhere. I'm not sure that it's concentrated in only one place. As far as World Serpent, I love 'em. David Gibson (one of the owners) has become a very close friend (along with his family) and I can't think of a label that I would rather be

associated with. They also allow their artists the freedom to be able to work with other labels such as Middle Pillar Presents.

Both of you have contributed to the live album of Current 93 recorded in USA. How did you come with the idea of this contribution, and have you played with them live or just did the studio work? Tell your opinion about Current 93.

DR: My only contribution was mixing the live "Christ and the Pale Queens Mighty in Sorrow," which had 3 members of Loretta's Doll playing on it. Since I was in the audience that night, I knew what it sounded like and I wanted to make sure that was captured. For some reason, only a small section of the song appears on the CD release, but what was used sounds good. I like most of Current 93's work.

BD: Tibet's a friend of mine.

Returning again to a Murder Of Angels, do you consider it as "project" only, or maybe you have any other plans with it for the future? And what are the plans for your main bands?

DR: We have one more album planned for Middle Pillar as A Murder of Angels. It will be called "Contractual Obligation." Just kidding. Dream Into Dust has been recording several compilation tracks, after that we're working on a new release. That will always be my main band.

BD: We'll definitely be doing more CDs as A Murder of Angels. Who knows, if we can get an extra dozen people to help us perform it, maybe you'll see it live some day. As far as Loretta's Doll, we have a new CD ("Silver Dusk") coming out this Spring on World Serpent. 4th Sign of the Apocalypse is putting out a CD ("Frolic of the Demons") which will also be available in a limited-edition box set ("A Box Full of Demons") with a full-length extra CD

A MURDER OF ANGELS While You Sleep Middle Pillar

Two men are behind this project, and both of them are very well known to all fans of dark ambient, neoclassical, experimental electronic styles, namely Derek Rush (mostly known for his band Dream Into Dust) and Bryn Dall (he creates in Loretta's Doll and many other projects). Their brand new project delivers the music which really won't disappoint the ones who adored their other projects. Here, we are once again pushed to dark waters of emotional electronic/ambient. When you turn "While You Sleep" up to the highest volume, you can feel the sounds covering you, sudden samples making their way to your psyche in a strangely easy way, and the flow of emotions totally controlling you. This album has its very own characteristics - somehow it creates a feeling as it was made as a soundtrack for some really terrifying film. This cinematic feeling can hardly be found in dark ambient. At least, it wasn't so evident before. And that's not strange - horror movies were one of the main inspirations while creating "While You Sleep." Musically, A Murder of Angels deliver electronic soundscapes with a slight orchestrated touch (but classical music doesn't play such a role as, for example, in Dream Into Dust's music) and sudden sampling. Nothing too shocking, we've heard these schemes so many times before in dark ambient; but here everything is done very carefully and bravely can serve as a soundtrack for your darkest visions. Strange and dark things happen while you sleep... (AO)

4 1/2

MZ.412 Nordik Battle Signs Cold Meat Industry

This album came as vinyl only at the end of 1998, so many fans of harsh industrial couldn't acquire a copy of this already classical piece of maniac electronic music. Luckily, the album with one extra track was re-released on CD. What we get here is a pure assault of black industrial based on terrifying samples, monotonous rhythms and sudden bursts of power electronics. I recommend "Der Kampf Gegen Weiter" as a starting point, it may be the most ritualistic track in this disc. Then we have some tracks like "Satan Jugend II: Global Konquering," which with the character of distortion can destroy the last cell of your safe brain, and, at the same time, must please the fans of Sutcliffe Jugend or Whitehouse. Another highly recommended track is "Alz-Konvergence of Life and Death" recorded together with Ordo Equilibrio - Tomas, as always, tells his story here, and the maniacs from MZ.412 support him by sampling, making noise attacks and distortion. This album is more varied than, for example, Slogun or Projekt Hat, and it is one of the most recommended harsh industrial albums from the Cold Meat Industry catalog. Are you maniacal enough? (AO)

4 1/4

("Left Over Demons") that will only be available in the box set.

With this recording, you've explored cinematic themes quite a lot. But what are your other main inspirations?

DR: In this case, the main inspiration was really just the music itself. We also always recorded very late at night, with an amber light, and the heat and humidity were constantly unbearable. We had no time to read or look at anything while doing the album, it was done from scratch in a month, which is fast for us.

BD: Derek basically said it all. We isolated ourselves in the studio in the middle of summer without air-conditioning and produced the CD.

Advantages and disadvantages of modern times are... (comments?). And how do you imagine playing your music in times when there were no computers and other modern means of creating music?

DR: Advantages: we have all the mistakes of the past to learn from. Disadvantages: we never learn. How would we create music without electronic equipment? I'm sure we'd find a way. Perhaps live performances in spaces with naturally echoing acoustics, using voices, found objects and odd instruments in a non-traditional manner.

BD: I would probably be stoned to death trying to create the music that was in my head in an older period of time.

Thanks for your answers and your last comments?

DR: The music is the message.

BD: I call it ambient.

<http://www.middlepillar.com/mpp/mpp998/>

NAZCA Biodegradable Eibon Records

The first track "Grapes" leaves no doubts about influences of this group: the melody and singing manner of Karstein Volle reminds of Nick Cave and especially his track "Red Right Hand." Later, the things change a bit, and the influences of groups like Joy Division or Swans come to light. Nazca deliver extremely dark and pessimistic goth rock with expressed melody, and so they can be ascribed to the gloomy goth scene, where melodies sometimes aren't the most important thing. That's the strength of Nazca. Another specific point of this group is the singing of K. Volle. When you get into the style, it seems that his theatrical singing manner suits to emotionally very strong "Biodegradable," but sometimes it seems that his voice isn't strong enough (compared, for example, to singers of Dreadful Shadows or Love Like Blood); at least, his voice isn't typical to goth scene. The music of this album combines the standards of goth rock; mostly it's dark wave, but also some post-modern electronic inserts are added. It is an interesting mix and the professionalism is guaranteed. In addition, here we have very strong and interesting depressive philosophical lyrics and a perfectly-designed digipack. Some tracks like "Grapes," "TV Prayer," or "Mommydead" can bravely become classics in this genre, so this album deserves to be high in goth-peoples shopping list. It is also recommended to those who seek deep emotions expressed. (AO)

[mailto:volee3@yahoo.com] [http://www.angelfire.com/va/nazcart]

4

ONE Walk the Mercy Mile Nightbreed Recordings

The representatives of electronic goth come from Australia (or, more correctly, the representative, because One is one man's project). Fans of traditional and more pop-oriented wave/goth will find here all main attributes of the style; those who aren't too much into this style may be disappointed, as here we don't find anything that goes beyond the standards. The album contains gloomy vocals and choruses, electronic rhythms that are a bit sharpened by guitars (but not too much) and, of course, depressive lyrics. One is more danceable than Love Like Blood and has very little in common with such goth rock grands as The Sisters Of Mercy. Already the first tracks like "Mercy Mile" or "In the End" prove that this disc is dedicated to playing at dancefloors. Some songs like "Temple of Your Soul" or "Dead Heart" present more heavy and gloomy goth, but the main atmosphere remains to be a softened version of what we get from most goth rock bands. Some songs as very catchy "Gods of Love" or the cover of classical "Shout" may become hits in goth-dancefloor, so if you aren't afraid of the word "pop" in the goth/wave world, try it. (AO)

[http://www.onemusic.com.au]

3 3/4

PARZIVAL Anathema Maranatha Euphonious Records

Parzival aren't a new band, this formation earlier was known under the monicker Stiff Miners. This band has released two successful albums: "Giselle" (on Cleopatra Records) and "Vox Celesta" (on Voices of Wonder's sub-label TBA Records). If the first record was a mix of bombastic military music and techno rhythms, the second album clearly was Stiff Miner's view to music through the glasses of Laibach. Now the name has changed, and the music has also changed a bit. While bombastic, war-like rhythms (yes, again reminding of Laibach) still take the dominant place here, Parzival decided to go to more avantgarde/theatrical fields. Military atmospheres create the basis for these nine songs, but strange classical inserts are laid on them. Dark atmospheres are more diverse than on the previous disc, and industrial music is almost left aside (except techno elements on songs like "Sacramentum" or "Vita Sacra," where industrial parts are still evident, but not so meaningful as before). Personally to me this album seems to be their most interesting offering to date. Maybe the ones who expected another follower of Laibach will be disappointed, but the ones seeking for more original creations, should like it. (AO)

4

SANCTUM New York City Bluster Cold Meat Industry

Definitely not exactly what many expected from Sanctum. This album was recorded at CBGB club in New York, and one of the main reasons why Sanctum here sounded a bit nontraditional is that the female part of the group (Lena and Marika) for some reasons couldn't come to USA for Sanctum shows, so the group has lost some of its ethereal side. This album sounds much more industrial than their debut disc "Lupus in Fabula," it seems that the group on stage decided to experiment with their earlier recordings, adding to them a more industrial/orchestral sound, and also they presented some new tracks from the upcoming release. What we can notice from the samples of their new work is that music is becoming darker and more industrial. Especially it is clear on the second track "Mindtwister," which is slowly crawling dark industrial. Here, orchestral sounds mean darker and more torturing music we usually hear from our speakers. This extremely dark track grows to more rhythmic "Decay" from their debut album. The style here almost reminds me of industrial metal. As the album develops, you can notice that almost each track is an example of different style. So, "Parca Pace - Part 1" is again slower dark ambient, "In Two Minds" - maybe the most ethereal track with sudden industrial attacks, "Sly Dog" - trance soundscapes, "Gift" - more symphonic track which reminds me a bit of Shirinjuku Thief, maybe not so terrifying and without such sense of conspiracy. This album is really worth of attention of all industrial maniacs, as it presents the quality side of this style with innovations, but still I like their debut album more. (AO)

[http://sanctum.coldmeat.se]

3 3/4

SCREAM SILENCE To Die For

Moontorm Records

I really won't say anything new with the words that Scream Silence most of all remind of Dreadful Shadows. The group doesn't deny this influence, even more - Thommy Heij who worked earlier with Dreadful Shadows did the mastering for "To Die For." The result we hear on this album is sensitive gothic rock bearing a romantic mood. It will not surprise the ones who heard Love Like Blood or Dreadful Shadows. Yes, nothing is very new, but it still sounds good. The songs are based on guitaristic gothic rock with a slight use of keyboards (but the electronics, in contrast to many goth bands of nowadays, don't play a leading role here, they are more laid down in the background) and very emotional singing of Hardy Fieting. Scream Silence's music is focused on melodies and is clearly more suitable to romantic evening in a candlelight than to a dancefloor. It is strange that the band which was formed only in 1998 already displays so good songwriting abilities; and even if it repeats what others have found earlier, it displays a very good collection of influences. (AO)

4

SPIRITUAL BATS Sacrament EP

Alchemisti Music

In the beginning, this 5-song CD seemed nothing very serious in conventional goth-rock scene. Not very catchy and not darker than usual gothic rock, but it didn't touch any deeper senses. To tell the truth, this album needs more listens to discover its value. First of all, it comes in a strange sense of ritualism. It isn't very clearly revealed, maybe it comes more from a feeling, not from the straight musical form. Second, keyboard passages in the background form a sense of horror and mystique. These both musical/non-musical elements appear as strategic input to their music and create an intrigue of some kind. If we speak about the main style of Spiritual Bats, it is cold goth rock, not very suitable to dancefloors; and seemingly negligent character of "Lost Souls" remind of not so punkish Bauhaus. These five songs are still not enough to make a clear view of what this group is really about, but I think that we will hear from them in the future; now they represent the mystic side of gothic rock. (AO)

[http://alchemistimusic.iuma.com]

3 3/4

TENHI Kuan Prophecy Productions

This disc won't be accepted by those who seek very diverse music. "Kuan" is a quite monotonous and melancholic album dedicated to all lovers of folk music. The best comparison I find to Tenhi's music is the latest album of Empyrium "Where at Night the Wood Grouse Plays." The same melancholy, sadness and romantic



OF THE WAND AND THE MOON

Nighttime Nighthymnes

Euphonious Records

I remember how I was inspired by Saturnus' song "Fall of Nakkid" from their debut album - influenced by Current 93 it was a strange and beautiful folk track in that doom metal album. Later the track "For Your Demons" again proved that this band has a potential for creating great acoustic music. Now it is, the solo album of Kim Larsen from Saturnus, "Nighttime Nighthymnes" in a month has become one of my personal faves in dark folk genre. This release has everything a fan of Current 93/Death In June/Sol Invictus may wish. It is dark, it is melancholic, it is pure art. During first listens "Nighttime Nighthymnes" reminded me of Death In June style on their "Kapo!" album: the same quiet acoustic guitar sound in the background, silent whispering voice, and that sense of magic. I think that K. Larsen was inspired by works of Death In June, but now I can also say that this project has its own sound, especially it is clear when listening to such highlights as beautiful "Sol Ek Sa" or emotional "Raven Chant." It is more quiet than most of dark folk releases, and thus at first listen it may seem that all the songs don't differ too much one from another. However, deeper you dive, more you find. Industrial sounds appear from nowhere (created by Hansen from Unveiled/Blades & Penance), flute and violin create a romantic atmosphere, and all this is covered by that specific guitar sound we meet in all dark folk albums. "Varg Old" bursts with the authentic folk power, and "Wintry Mantle" haunts with an indescribable melancholy. Some may say that K. Larsen doesn't have such capabilities as singer as David Tibet or Douglas P., but in my opinion, this whispering singing suits here very well. Of course, this project couldn't avoid the traditional attributes of dark folk as Norse mythology, runes, and philosophy of Anthony Crowley. But all in all, it is one of the best dark folk debuts in 1999. (AO)

4 3/4

feeling of loneliness. All the songs are sung in Finnish, and this album also has got many influences of Finnish folklore. Everything is authentically performed, just listen to "Etäisykien Taa" which dwells with old spirit and mystique. This group doesn't try to jump from one mood to another, they concentrate on melancholic folklore, and all the disc is like one big piece of music just divided into several parts. Only "Revontulet" changes atmosphere with the energy of leading acoustic guitar and violin. The last track also falls out of the main context, because it is performed mainly with piano and resembles to the latest album of Current 93. But, all in all, it is the right choice for a fan of extremely melancholic folklore. (AO)

4 [GS 3 1/2]

VIA

On the Brink of Infinity

Chthonic Streams

Chthonic Streams released a fine compilation for all dark minds. Somehow it resembles of the successful last years compilation "What is Eternal" released by Middle Pillar Presents - it is also limited to 1000 copies, also perfectly designed, carries quite a similar dark atmosphere, and shares some artists like Dream Into Dust, 4th Sign of the Apocalypse, Backworld, or T. Wakeford (of Sol Invictus) with his project. "On the Brink of Infinity" offers a wide selection of artists performing in neoclassical, dark folk, industrial areas. Some of more known artists, apart from above-mentioned, are Empyrium, Penitent's side project Arcane Art, The Soil Bleeds Black with their project 15 Delights of Dionysus. The good part about this compilation is that we hear artists creating seemingly very different atmospheres, enabling the listener to touch different aspects of dark music. The album starts with two more melancholic/folky tracks, Howden/Wakeford "Death's Head" (maybe the best track on this compilation, just how strange do sound the samples of "death's head" in the background) and Empyrium's neofolk "Die Schwane Im Schiff." Later, more and more we are taken into industrial/neoclassical fields which take their peak with Gruntsplatter and their noisy track "Age of the Homunculus." This bizarre carnival ends again more softly with (not so successful) dark folk of Backworld. Another merit is that all the tracks which appeared on this compilation are exclusive to this release. So, I can only repeat that each fan of dark music should grab this chapter of magic arts till it's not too late. As far as it goes for my personal faves, they are Howden/Wakeford, Empyrium, Anima in Fiamme, and 4th Sign of the Apocalypse. (AO)

-

LOOKING “BEYOND THE VEIL”

Your debut CD “Beyond the Veil” was released on the German label Shark Records in 1995. A label that wasn’t really known for your type of music then. How did you get in touch with them?

MvM: We sent around a lot of instrumental demos. Shark Records was one of three labels that sent us a contract. We then contacted Stichting Brabant Pop (a foundation that supports local musicians), they looked at the contracts and recommended that we sign with Shark Records.

I can’t remember now what the names of the other record labels were.

JW: There was a Dutch label involved I think.

MvM: Now I remember, it was In Line where the band Pygmalion had also signed a deal. In Line was a dangerous label because with them you had to finance your own recording and they would distribute it.

Were you actually part of the heavy metal world at that time because the CD shows a variety of styles?

MvM: In the period before the CD, we made a more rock-oriented demo called “Paragraph”. The metal songs on the CD come from that demo.

JW: We were looking for our own style at that time and we were still very young.

MvM: When we recorded the CD, I was 24 and the others were 22.

The cover of your “Beyond the Veil” is quite macabre.

MvM: If we would have let the artist have his way then it would have been even more extreme. The cover is kind of playful and I think our music was like that at that time. Not all songs of course though. Our bass player Barend Tromp knew a painter who liked to shock people. The three of us were kind of contradictory, in terms of music and personality and we wanted to see that back in the cover. On the one side there is birth and the other death. The painter actually went to a University to photograph a baby that was bottled in formaldehyde.

JW: There is also a second meaning to the cover and that is the lifeline, those are the books. The matter of relativity can also be seen in the baby skeleton because there are no predefined ages: life can be short or long.

That’s quite philosophical, have you thought this up in the course of these last few years?

JW: No, no, for me it’s always been like that.

MvM: We actually spent a whole evening discussing this with the whole band at the time.

What I have always wondered is how you came up with the titles to the instrumental songs?

JW: Thinking of titles for instrumental music is very difficult because you have no lyrical concept to go on.

MvM: We used a lot of input from books. I think “Beyond the Veil” is the title of a book.

JW: There are, of course, songs that you envision something when you write the song or it’s written in a time when you’re in a type of mood. It also happened that the song was already finished and it still desperately needed a title. We then just took anything we could find appropriate at that time.

MvM: For example, Barend had a dream once and then a song was called



arabesque Preparing for the High Jump

[by Christian Rademaker]

The Dutch band Arabesque may seem new to most readers but followers of the metal scene in the early nineties may already be aware of them. Formed back in 1989, Arabesque first made their mark with a debut instrumental CD on Shark Records called “Beyond the Veil” in 1995. The style on this CD could be described as instrumental hard rock with jazz and progressive rock elements. The line-up that recorded this CD consisted of Joop Wolters (guitars), Marc van Mierlo (drums) and Barend Tromp (bass).

With the addition of female vocalist Nicole de Serriere du Bizournet, Arabesque’s music evolved into more accessible form of guitar-oriented mid tempo power metal with elements of symphonic progressive metal. Early 1996, a demo entitled “Pathways to Ecstasy” was recorded which showcased four exceptional songs and included the epic “Captured.”

Barend Tromp left Arabesque in 1998 to concentrate on his other band Lemur Voice. Since then Arabesque have been busy incorporating the new members Frank de Groot (bass) and Thijs Cuppen (keyboards) into the line-up. Finally in 1999, a four song promo demo entitled “Naked” was released. This showcased the new-found diversity in their music. The progressiveness of the older songs has made room for an emphasis on a heavier sound. The versatility of the guitar-playing shifts from heavy Tad Morose style crunchy riffs to delicate picking and soloing. The drummer and bass player weave their complex rhythms around the keyboard melodies, and Nicole has a pleasant mid range voice. The music is diverse: from the energetic up tempo opener “Afraid to Fly” to the more relaxed “Heal me” to the brilliant “Naked” to the acoustic ballad “Artificial Reality”.

Although the demo is not as great as “Pathways to Ecstasy” in my opinion, it still warrants enough attention. On an extremely foggy Thursday evening in November I travelled to Weert, where I met up with Joop Wolters (JW), Marc van Mierlo (MvM), and Nicole de Serriere du Bizournet (NdSdB) with the intention to do an interview. As it turned out it was more akin to a walk down memory lane tracing back Arabesque’s history and relations with the musicians of other past and present bands from this part of the country such as Lemur Voice and Elysion.

“Dweezilbulb.”

JW: That song used to be called “Pizza Pepperoni” though because we often use food-related song titles. For example, we had a song that was named after the German word for British liquorice.

MvM: There was also a time when I had white cat and we named a song “White Cat”.

JW: Haha, the cat just walked in and we said to each other let’s call this song “White Cat”. Another song finished! As you can imagine, it works better when you have lyrics.

MvM: Do you know the novel “Gulliver’s Travel”? Well that’s also one of the songs on our CD, it’s an epic with a Dream Theater-esque intro and it’s really a journey.

I would expect a song that starts of hugely and suddenly declines.

JW: Well that’s a bit too literal translation of the book.

Have you ever heard how many copies of “Beyond the Veil” were sold?

MvM: They told us that we sold about 4000 copies.

JW: Our new bass player sees them around here and there, so they are still being supplied. I saw a copy in Brussel once and my parents have seen the CD in Hannover, Germany. The strange thing is that we have not really heard anything specific about it. Our enquiries are being kind of waved away.

MvM: That’s not really true because the owner Axel Thubeauville stays in contact with me. I sent him the last demo, and we actually recorded the “Pathways to Ecstasy” demo with him.

SHARKS SWIMMING IN THE POOL OF MUSICAL ECSTASY

I always thought that you did the “Pathways to Ecstasy” demo independently.

MvM: No, we went to Germany for a couple of days. I will never forget that. We went to get a crate of beer and we were so nervous that we were drunk after half a bottle of beer. We found out later that there wasn’t even alcohol in the beer.

Why wasn’t that demo pressed on CD?

JW: We don’t have the original DAT tape of that recording. He paid for the recording which makes him the owner of the recording. We have the copyright to the songs though because we wrote them. He gave us a regular tape copy though. We can’t make this into a proper CD without a loss of quality.

MvM: At that time, he thought that he could arrange something for us in Japan. But in Japan they thought our music was too progressive.

NdSdB: Furthermore, the combination of

this music with a female vocalist didn’t make it commercially interesting. They prefer a male vocalist with blond hair and blue eyes.

JW: They should have used my photo!

Shark Records is back in business isn’t it?

MvM: Yes, he sent me a CD a couple of weeks ago. He still thought that Arabesque was a great band and we were still one of the favorite bands that he ever signed. But he thinks that our music is too complex. The kind of music that he is interested in releasing is, for example, the new CD by a band called At Vance. This type of music is very well played but it’s exactly like Yngwie Malmsteen. He would really like us to do this type of music.

But you have no contractual obligations right?

MvM: Yes, we had a contract for one CD and an option for two more but that’s expired now. We had that arranged especially at that time. Axel Thubeauville has always been very honest with us and told us what he expected from us. He was very clear about which music he thought sold and which didn’t.

JW: We are musicians and we are able to change within certain limits. We have an identity as musicians and you can’t strain your self too much.

MvM: You can’t suddenly change your whole style. When he was in Weert, we discussed this with him. We told him that we couldn’t turn around 180 degrees. This is the music that we make and it could be possible that in the future we might grow in your direction a little more. We have started the verse-chorus structure a little more. Some of our older songs such as the 12-minute epic “Pathways to Ecstasy” were much less structured.

NEVER THROW AWAY YOUR OLD SHOES...

What actually happened to those old songs?

JW: Right after our old bass player Barend Tromp left, we started composing new songs with our new bass player Frank de Groot. Slowly but surely we’re also dusting the cobwebs from our older songs as well. We are playing two songs from the debut CD as well. The new guy has to grow into our old style and atmosphere.

If I compare the two latest demos then there is quite a difference.

JW: That’s right, especially in terms of structure and sound. The new songs are different as well and they are more a combination of both demos. It’s also the heaviest that we have done thus far but this works best for the current line-up of Arabesque. We started playing and we found out that this is our best style. I really feel that everyone feels comfortable, enjoys themselves and totally supports it. We have a lot of power and energy now. Power should not be confused with speed though, it’s more a question of force and pressure. These are more important than tempo or speed. The power is achieved by a particular style of playing. Marc, for example, has a very good groove in his drumming. All that subtle playing is great but it’s not his strongest point. The same holds for our new bass player. If you let people play something what’s against their nature then you’ll hear in their music and it will not have that feel or conviction.

Who is responsible for the lyrics?

MvM: That changes a lot. It used to be primarily Barend, Joop sometimes, then

Nicole for a while, and now it's Joop. NdSdB: I'm very bad at writing lyrics. Once in a while I get inspired and then I write two or three. Then I'm blank for a while and the process repeats itself. Of the songs on our latest CD, I wrote the lyrics to "Naked" and "Heal me". Both of these songs revolve around the same subject, things that I have experienced in the past. I always write about personal subjects. "Naked" is about how I am now able to open myself to other people, it's a long story but it really happened to me. Those songs are about the feelings I have at that time.

What about the plans for a new record contract, do you have enough material?

JW: We currently have enough material to fill a CD with 70 minutes of music. That's new material excluding the debut CD. We are actually working on a new and heavier version of an old song which was the title to our first demo "Pistache Express". It will also have Nicole's vocals on it. We have sent out a lot of promo CDs and it's a question of waiting.

MvM: I have heard some reactions. They are positive but most labels have problems with the commercial aspect of our music. Or actually lack thereof. Only some labels like Inside Out are specialized in our type of music. Perhaps the French label Musea as well but they are even more specialized in progressive rock and jazz rock. We have been discussing the aspect of releasing a CD independently this afternoon. There are however a lot aspects involved like distribution, marketing, mastering, booklet design that we are not good at in terms of organizing. Our problem is that we are all musicians and not promoters. We don't play live enough because we're not good at organizing these things. I want to make music and the hassle surrounding it doesn't appeal to me that much.

If that's your goal then why are you interested in making a CD at all?

JW: Our music needs to be heard. The new songs are amazing and I'm behind them 100%. It doesn't interest me if people can often listen to it or we play them live a hundred times. That is a very important motivation and if you have a group of people who share this... what else do you want.

MvM: Imagine that you're capable of playing your instrument and you like a particular song. If you discuss with the rest of the band and decide to cover this song for a live show. Then it's an unbelievable feeling when you play this song live on a stage. It's the ultimate kick when you can play a song of one of your favorite bands.

Which song are you talking about?

JW: "Under a Glass Moon" by Dream Theater.

NdSdB: It's real live song. If it's loud and out of tune it's good for us [laughs].

MvM: Fates Warning is another band that we could play a song from. I became acquainted with Fates Warning when "No Exit" was released. One of the great points of Fates Warning is that Ray Alder is able to put so much emotion in his voice.

I thought you would be more in awe of the drummer.

MvM: That goes without saying, he's the best of the whole band. He's Mark Zonder and I'm Mark with (the word Zonder means "without" in the Dutch language)! I've seen them live a couple of times and I thought they were great. On their last tour, they totally blew Dream Theater from the stage. Although their stage performance is static, it's the music that counts. Dream Theater is also very static on stage. When I



want to see people running on the stage I might as well go and see Exodus.

FROM INSTRUMENTALS TO VOCAL MELODIES

Nicole, how did you actually get involved with Arabesque?

NdSdB: Joop asked me to join Arabesque. He saw me playing in another band that was playing their own material as well but more in the pop vein. He asked me if I was interested in singing in another band and he told me a bit about the type of music. I tried and it worked out well.

So you came out of a totally different musical world?

NdSdB: Sort of, I was a total worshiper of Dream Theater though. It took me some time to get used to Arabesque's music because I had never done this type of music before.

By the way, where did your remarkable name actually originate from?

NdSdB: That is a riddle for me as well. I know that my grandmother had this name but that's about all I know.

MvM: That's actually the only reason we asked her to join the band because in every review of our music there's been a reference to Nicole's name [laughs]. What's in a name.

JW: It looks nice on the cover as well.

For this kind of music, there aren't that many female vocalists.

JW: That's true and that's why it's so great that we have Nicole.

In progressive metal there are almost always men.

MvM: Well, it's not as bad as you think. In that German band that was the support act for Dream Theater, there was a blonde female bass player. I can't remember the name of the band but it wasn't Vanden Plas.

There are only a few female vocalists in prog metal, bands that spring to mind are Arabesque, Fountain of Tears, Forever Times.

MvM: If you look at the music scene these last few years, there's been a lot of women making their mark. Like, for example, in the Netherlands The Gathering and Within Temptation and, in the rock scene, Skunk Anansie and Alanis Morissette.

But these last two bands were formed around these women.

MvM: Maybe from a marketing stand point. These last few years there's been a lot of women. Maybe it's perhaps because women have dared to step into the rock while in the past it used to be a man's

his feet and I thought wow this guy is in a hurry! When they started playing all those strands of hair were flying all over the place. That was also the first time I met Barend Tromp.

Were you playing bass at the time?

JW: Yes, they needed a bass player in the band I played with and I just did it. About fifteen months later, I was already playing with Nathan van der Wouw at that time, I suggested Barend that we should try something as well. That's how Arabesque started.

MvM: Barend was playing guitar at the time but he switched to bass.

JW: He didn't have the proper sound as a guitar player [laughs].

MvM: He was also playing a lot of classical guitar at the time, and he thought the bass was closer to that.

JW: That's true but he also had a really terrible guitar sound! It was a really nervous sound without any deep sounds.

MvM: Ha ha, he had a flying V from WW II. The unbelievable thing is that at his first live performance as a bass player, he plays a song by Al DiMeola! At that time we had been playing together as Arabesque for only two months. The song that we played was "Race with the Devil on a Spanish Highway".

JW: We thought that we could easily pull this off, oh man. But that was not as easy as we thought and we had to buy a lot of first aid kits. That was a very heavy and difficult song but we didn't know that at first. We heard the song and we thought that it could be done. But we grew from there, with our ups and downs.

MvM: I can remember that there was a festival in Budel where everyone could play. There were some guys building up the stage in the afternoon and we were rehearsing in the same building. Instead of doing their work, they came and listened to us all afternoon. They had a blues background and they were amazed at these little kids playing Al DiMeola. We were 17 or 18 at the time.

JW: That was stupid of us.

NdSdB: You should have started out with Status Quo!

Marc, how would you compare your style with that of Nathan van der Wouw or Lemur Voice?

MvM: Nathan is more subtle. In my case, a lot more feeling and power is required.

JW: Marc is a totally different drummer. I've been playing with both for a very long time and I don't think that you can compare them.

Your power is also evident during live shows although you are hidden behind your drum kit.

MvM: Don't worry they will hear me.

JW: And we feel him! After each set, I have to put on a new set of trousers because he's played my trousers to shreds with the wind that he produces. At first I thought someone had switched on the ventilator but then I found out it was Marc.

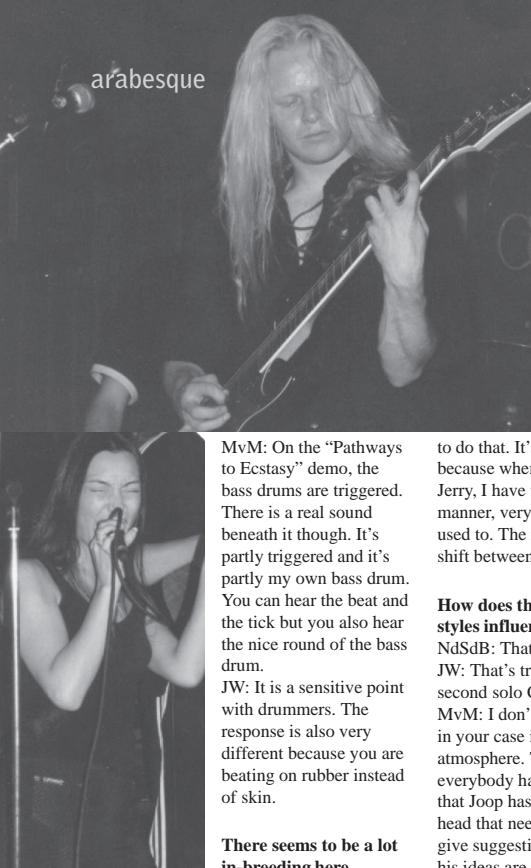
MvM: Music needs to be felt. I have never beaten a skin until a broke though. They have been worn through as such that there were minor pits.

JW: You have broken a lot of drumsticks though!

What are your views of electronic drums?

MvM: I hate them, there's no feeling inside them. The sound is very clinical.

Isn't it so that a lot of the drums on CDs are triggered so that the same sound is used regardless of the way the drums are hit.



MvM: On the "Pathways to Ecstasy" demo, the bass drums are triggered. There is a real sound beneath it though. It's partly triggered and it's partly my own bass drum. You can hear the beat and the tick but you also hear the nice round of the bass drum.

JW: It is a sensitive point with drummers. The response is also very different because you are beating on rubber instead of skin.

There seems to be a lot in-breeding here.

Because Joop, you have

been playing with Nathan van der Wouw for a long time as well. What other projects are you currently active in?

JW: I've been playing with Nathan for almost eleven years now. I now play with several guys that do session work for pop bands, I play in a pop band with Nicole once in a while. I have my own top 40 band, I play I Fussili Jerry with Gregoor van der Loo and Nathan van der Wouw of Lemur Voice, I play in Arabesque and I have my own solo work. In the past, I mainly focused on Arabesque and Elysion. I am very busy at the moment but I like to learn new things. I would like to quit my current job and work as a professional musician. You can make money as a session musician but it takes a lot of talent and effort.

Are you in the right part of the country for this type of work?

JW: For our type of music it is. For progressive music this is the place to be, there's nothing to be found in the northern part of the Netherlands. There are three progressive metal bands: Arabesque, Lemur Voice and D-Manual.

MvM: There are a lot of rock musicians here. Almost all the guitar players in top 40 bands have a heavy metal background. The people that live here have put a lot of effort into their music, learning about theory and so on. Take Joop for example, when Steve Vai's "Passion and Warfare" was released, he proposed to us that we play a song from this CD. As it turned out he had transcribed the whole CD and could already play it. A week later it was the same with Joe Satriani and Allan Holdsworth. He created his own style from all these influences.

JW: I also flunked school three times which helps as well. You have to make choices. My hair started to turn a brownish color and when I saw my list of grades I was so shocked that I turned blond again.

Joop, you have quite a history concerning your guitar playing. Marc says that you have a lot of power in your playing, where did that come from?

JW: I go bicycling every day [laughs]. I don't practice as much as I used to. There were years when I played guitar for 4-5

hours a day. I now have a job so it's bit more difficult but I try to make my hours. Where does my power come from? Well that's difficult to say. For me it works in a different manner. Because I want to do so many different things, I really listen to what I am doing. What I want to do has to be achieved. This happens by learning a lot of technique. For example, for a certain type of music, I want to have a particular sound and I need to practise to be able to do that. It's sometimes very difficult because when I play with Nathan in Fusilli Jerry, I have to play in a very restraint manner, very minimal. That takes getting used to. The most difficult thing is often to shift between styles.

How does the fact that you play different styles influence your creativity?

NdSdB: That's never a problem with Joop. JW: That's true, I'm also about to make a second solo CD.

MvM: I don't really agree with you because in your case it also depends on the atmosphere. There are moments when everybody has to shut up, then you know that Joop has 80 ideas floating around in his head that need to be structured. He'll then give suggestions about trying something and his ideas are really helpful then.

JW: I can produce music and lyrics on command. I have a lot of thoughts and I just write them down.

MvM: Our old bass player Barend Tromp had a totally different way of working. He writes and completes all of his material at home, weighing each note and trying different things. This worked very well together with Joop in the past.

JW: I prefer to write during rehearsals because then everyone is present and immediate feedback can be given. When we have new ideas we record the material otherwise the ideas may be lost. Although I don't really have trouble remembering things.

MvM: You have more problems with the order while I have more problems with the different pieces in a song.

When I compare your guitar playing on "Pathways to Ecstasy" and "Naked", then your playing is much heavier on "Naked".

JW: That's true, that was intentional. MvM: I think we are going in a heavier direction. When you now hear us play the old songs like "Inner Voice" off the "Pathways to Ecstasy" demo, then that sounds heavier as well. Partly because I did the grunts on the demo but now Frank and Joop are doing the grunts together. Frank is over 2 metres in length and width. He also has quite a belly which creates a lot of power. Joop, on the other hand, has a high voice and the combination sounds very interesting.

From that demo, I personally think that "Captured" is a brilliant song.

MvM: That song originated when we had the song "Inner Voice" and several longer songs. We are going to start with those older songs again now that Frank and Thijs are ready for them.

JW: We are going to rewrite some of the older songs. Make a proper song out of the different ideas.

Does that mean that you are rewriting your old songs?

MvM: There are so many great songs that it would be a waste to leave them behind. For example, the song "Pathway to Ecstasy" is a

song that used to last fifteen minutes. At a certain point, we thought it was too long and we reduced it to ten minutes. Now I think the song is like loose sand.

JW: You're right. At that time, we wanted to put all the ideas we had into the song.

MvM: We threw out of those songs when we were looking for a new and more compact style. The ideas are still very good so we need to restructure them. To avoid confusion it must be said that the songs that are on the CD will not be rewritten and will still be played live.

Arabesque remains a name to look out for, especially if they will manage to combine the more adventurous and progressive songwriting of "Pathways to Ecstasy" with the heaviness of "Naked". The "Naked" CD is available for \$9 and the band can be contacted at Arabesque, Joop Wolters, Sabinstraat 23, 6004 JD, Weert, The Netherlands.

another interview

Recently one of my favorite metal bands released a new album. Their previous work captured attention of many metal fans from all over the world, and I can assure that the new one will not disappoint either. I was lucky to get a chance to talk to the band's guitar player, who appeared to be very open minded and down-to-earth.

Hello! How do you feel about your new album?

I feel great! I am very happy with how this record turned out. The chemistry in the studio was great. We all had lots of ideas and I'm glad we got the best out of them. I can tell for sure that this album is the best thing we've ever done.

How would you compare the new album to your previous material? Some people think it's a bit different...

Yeah, it differs a bit, but it's still us. The new album just represents what we are at the moment. We are not the same as we were five years ago, the new album marks a natural progression. I hope our fans will like it. We worked really hard to create our own sound.

Tell me about the production.

Sure. The production is a lot better than on the previous releases. One of the reasons is that this time around we had a lot more experience about how things work in a studio. The things between us and the producer went very well, that guy rules! I still like our previous album a lot, but it was a bit under produced. The new one sounds really strong, heavy, yet melodic at the same time.

There are no song credits this time...

Yes, it was our decision. We all work as a band, if you know what I mean. We write together, everybody has his own input.

Tell me a little bit about the lyrics to your new album.

Sure. Our lyrics deal with different topics. This time around we tried to get everybody to write some lyrics. All songs reflect our perception of the world, yet they are free to listener's interpretation. I don't want to put a specific meaning to any of the songs, I'd like to leave the doors open.

I also know that you changed your bass player during the break between the albums...

Yes, and I have to tell you that our new bass player is a very cool guy, an old buddy of ours, and we are very happy with the change. The old bass player wanted to pursue a different direction. We don't have any ill feelings towards each other, and I think the change was the best for us, for him and for our new bass player.

What do you think about the current metal scene?

Well, I can't say I follow it much. I'd rather listen to old records of Judas Priest and Black Sabbath. I can't think of any current metal album I really like, now I am more into stuff like Tori Amos and Dead Can Dance. I also listen to jazz.

Do you think metal is coming back?

I don't know, man. Things are getting better, many new bands are coming out. The internet helps a lot in getting information around. I hope metal will return!

What do you think about black metal and other trends?

I don't really like it. I think that music should be more important than image, if you know what I mean. Those black metal bands seem to care about make ups first.

How is your local scene? Do you play any shows in your city?

The local scene is non-existing. There are maybe a few metal bands, but no places to play.

I always wanted to know how did you choose your band name, and now it's my first chance to ask...

Our drummer came up with it a couple of years ago before our debut album came out. We thought it sounded cool. It doesn't have any specific meaning really...

Where would you place your band stylistically then?

Good question. I don't think I can answer that, I don't want to put categories on our music. It's just us. I don't really like categories. If it comes down to terms, I would prefer to call us metal.

How was your new album received and how are the sales?

Well, we don't have any sales figures so far. All reviews have been uniformly positive. It seems that people like us and we are very happy with that.

Your music should be popular in Japan. What were responses from "the land of the rising sun"?

I know that Japan is a big market for such music. Unfortunately, our CD is not out there yet. Our record label tries to get a licensing deal for us over there, but nothing is certain yet. I hope we will have our CD released over there. We get some fan mail from Japanese metalheads.

Any responses from Australia, "the land down under"?

We have some fans over there, but we need a good distribution over there. Maybe our label will work something out.

How are the things going with your record label? Does it promote you well?

We're really satisfied with our record label so far. It's very nice to work with people who believe in our music. They leave us an absolute creative freedom. We would love to get some tour support from them, but we have to see how the album sells.

I am running out of questions here. Did I forget anything?

Not really. I think you covered pretty much all of it. I don't really know what to add. Come to our live shows, that's what it's all about!

Last words...

Thanks for the interest. Buy our album, you won't be disappointed!

I can only add that it was a very pleasant experience to talk to the guitar player. The only thing that wasn't brought up was the name of the band. Well, but does it matter?

[by Sigitas Velyvis]

Norway and psychedelic/stoner rock are hardly compatible subjects at first sight. However, in spite of black metal bands domination, there are some bands of other genres in this country. For example, WE, who have become a strong institution in Norway's scene in time. Especially their last outputs "Livin' the Lore" and "From the Spaceways" EP let me suspect WE of being one "Livin' the Lore" and "From the Spaceways" EP let me suspect WE of being one of the best rock bands from this part of Scandinavia. Our interlocutor was the singer Thomas Tallo Felberg.



Tell me the history of the band in short. What made you think of forming WE?

WE released our debut album in 1994 "In a Field of Moose" a self financed release. WE were soon picked up by the Norwegian label Voices Of Wonder. WE have now released three albums through VOW; "Violently Coloured Sneakers," "Wooferwheels," and "Livin' the Lore". Inbetween WE have done lots of touring in Europe and Scandinavia, the biggest so far was supporting Masters Of Reality throughout Europe last autumn. After this WE have released a 10 inch vinyl only through the Dutch label Drunken Maria, it's just come out and it's called "From the Spaceways." WE formed WE as an outlet for our creative ideas and because WE love to play rock'n'roll. All members in WE are songwriters, everything is a real team effort. WE love to play together.

You have already four albums out there, but WE still are almost unknown in many European countries or the USA. What do you think is the reason why? Were you satisfied with the work of your label Voices Of Wonder?

I think it's all a matter of timing, WE have gained many experiences on our way. The most important is to have a label that will work actively with the album and promote it properly. This is not done by itself. Voices Of Wonder is a small label and their resources are quite limited, WE have now finished our contract with VOW and are now looking at several bigger options for the next release.

As I understand, now you have signed a deal with Drunken Maria Records. What are your expectations from them? As I know, Holland is a great supporter of psychedelic music, and a small tour there or Dynamo festival, for example, would be very helpful for WE...

WE have toured in Holland on several occasions, that's how WE got in contact with Drunken Maria. The people at DM have been truly great, they are great music lovers and vinyl collectors. DM have really put effort into this 10 inch, the colour combination on the disc is just amazing. WE think this release will bring the name of WE out to even more people and also a nice release for the fans WE already have, it's a little stop on the way to show that WE are more ready to rock than ever. I think "From the Spaceways" is the closest yet WE have been to capture the energy of our liveshows down on tape, so next time WE really are gonna blow people's minds. So watch out WE have just started, WE is like an infant growing up to be a man and WE just started shave.

"Violently Coloured Sneakers" and "Wooferwheels" were more in veins of bands like Tribe After Tribe or Mind Funk, while the last output "Livin' the Lore" is heavier, faster, reminds me a bit of Kyuss or other modern psychedelic bands. How can you explain these changes in the music?

All the albums WE have made have been very different, that's because the influences of the band are very diverse. Also you get influenced by different things at different times. "Violently Coloured Sneakers" was our second album WE were very into jamming at that point and also to stretch things a bit out, but if you listen to the album you will find several short tightly-arranged songs which points towards the shorter songs on "Livin' The Lore": songs like "The Tribe," "Hangaroundsounds," "VCS," and "Good Afternoons." So in fact there are only three songs on this album that exceed 5 minutes.

On "Wooferwheels" WE reached our highpoint when it came to jamming, out of 9 songs only three songs are under 5 minutes, the rest is 7 minutes and longer. On "Wooferwheels" WE really tried to make a real floaty spacy jam album. Several songs such as "Chase Vampire" and "Im Dschungel Von Kraut" were pure jams made up as they went in the studio. The title track "Wooferwheels" is an early 9 minute version of songs like "Full Moon With A Label" and "Livin' The Lore," the titletrack on our latest. Because of a lot of touring before writing "Livin' The Lore" our focus was on songs and not so much on jamming. WE were now trying to mould the jams into structured songs, opposed to the more jammy approach that we used "Wooferwheels." Although one of WE's most trippy songs that runs for 9+ minutes "This Day" is one of the corner songs on "Livin' The Lore."

As WE have become better players the songs have evolved with that. WE listen to anything from Abba to Zappa, from Ravi to Marley, WE are always open to any new approach that may come up.

Tell me your opinion about each WE album. What do you like and what do you dislike in them?

Personally I have fond memories and warm feelings towards every album WE have done, obviously since I was there having the fun of recording it. But as I mentioned earlier, I feel WE still haven't fully captured the sound, feeling and rawness of WE live on record quite yet. WE've been close on several occasions though, at least in my book. "From The Spaceways" being the best example so far. As I've already explained the different moods of

each album I'll let that be my answer.

The titles of your CDs are a bit strange. What means, for example, "Wooferwheels" or this play on words "Livin' the Lore"? "In A Field Of Moose" or "Violently Coloured Sneakers" also sound a bit mysterious...

"Wooferwheels" means bass wheels. It's like your subwoofers on your speakers are wheels that can take you places; "Like some wheels cruising the right way Wooferwheels." "Livin' The Lore" is just a play on words, it sounds good it gives it a mysterious touch. For me it sort of means the traditions of rock'n'roll, the history, the mythology of it. "Violently Coloured Sneakers" and "In A Field Of Moose" means whatever you want it to mean, it's just a play on words.



You haven't printed the lyrics in previous works, only the "Livin' the Lore" CD-booklet contains them. How important are the lyrics for WE? On "V.C.S.," WE printed a history based on a few lines from every song to make a new meaning out of it. On "Wooferwheels," WE printed just the lyrics for our space anthem, the prog monument; "Stuks Of Khun De Prorok" which had several chapters and a written storyline. That lyric alone took up two pages in the booklet. With "Livin' The Lore," WE figured it was time to print all the lyrics and just let it out in the open, so people could make up their own minds.

By the way, which CD was your best-selling product?

WE's best selling album so far has been our latest "Livin' The Lore," just how many copies we sold, I really don't know. I just know WE have sold albums in most of the European countries and some in the USA. WE're not millionaires yet that's for sure.

Your new material, released as EP, sounds like a modern psychedelic heavy rock album. What do you think of this so-called "stoner-rock" movement recently?

The stoner movement was born out of the need of the press to always make up new labels to put on music. This music have always been around there's nothing new in heavy psychedelic rock music. It's more the packaging that changes, personally I am quite fed up with songs about cars, flames, and rattlesnakes. It's not that you have to sing about anything at all, just some of these "stoner stoner" bands are just so dull and predictable it makes me sick. One should always try to incorporate more than one setting in your music, so when you say it, they know you mean it.

Split CDs, EPs, 10's or 7's have become very popular today, especially among stoner rock bands. Don't you think that it's better to release full-length CDs instead of numerous vinyl EPs or split albums?

It's good to be able to release anything at all, for me the one is as valid as the other. It's just two sides of the same cause, to get the word out. A ten inch or a seven inch can be a good teaser of things to come, but a full album is of course the best, preferably on vinyl. Although you have to have it out on CD as well for the commercial availability. I don't hate CDs but I don't like them much either.

Your favorite bands, influences.

WE's influences are many, from early on WE listened much to bands like Led Zeppelin, Black Sabbath, AC/DC, Hendrix, Pink Floyd, Rush, Free, King Crimson, Yes, Genesis, Fishbone, Masters Of Reality, King's X, Faith No More, and the list could go on and on. Today while writing down this for you I have been listening to Jefferson Airplane: "After Bathing At Baxters," Sly & The Family Stone: "There's a Riot Goin' On," Arthur Brown's Kingdom Come: "Galactic Zoo Dossier" and Groundhogs: "Crosscut saw" all sixties/seventies albums but in very different styles and with very different moods. Cohesive variation, that's what WE is about, if you know what I mean.



What status do you have in Norway?

WE are quite well known in Norway, WE are not massively big but most people into rock music in Norway should have a knowledge of who WE are and what WE are about. WE have toured all over Norway several times and sold a few albums, you could call us upper underground I guess.

What do you think of Norway's black metal scene? I don't...

Are there any cool bands in Norway (not from black metal area), that you would like to mention?

There are many good bands in Norway right now, things have never looked better for Norwegian music as right now and that's a fact. If you see a Norwegian release in your record store check it out it might be worth it. That's all I'm gonna say...

I suppose, WE prefer live shows to studio work...

WE like to play both live and in the studio. Both have their assets, live is of course the most immediate and the most rewarding as you get an reaction as you perform. But studio can also be a very exciting way to work. Live though is where you measure a rock band's true qualities.

Some words in conclusion.

Thanks for the questions I did my best in answering them. Hope you'll get a bit wiser concerning WE and what WE have done so far.



darshan

Incense, a Chapman Stick, and an Inflatable Robber Doll Falling from the Sky...

[by Christian Rademaker]

Dutch band Darshan presents a slightly different musical to the pages of "Edge of Time." Darshan's brand of progressive music is more inspired by the likes of King Crimson and Ozric Tentacles vein than Dream Theater. The link to the regular musical content of these pages is provided by the fact that Lemur Voice bass-player Barend Tromp is one of the members. However, to make things even more incomprehensible, in Darshan he plays Chapman Stick and guitar.

Formed in 1996 by Barend Tromp (Chapman stick), Ron Claassen (bass), Sjack Peeters on drums and percussion, and Amber Baartman on vocals, the first musical legacy was the demo "Trapped in this Circle" back in 1998. Building on the positive reviews, an independent CD was released with the extraordinary title "Innersanctum of a Modernday Bughunter." On this CD, the wide range of influences is transformed into aggressive songs such as "Messed Up" to the joyful "UFO" and the spacey and danceable "Gummipuppen?".

For an interview with Ron Claasens (RC) and Barend Tromp (BT), I only had to travel to the other side of Eindhoven (a very short trip compared to what I did for several other interviews in this issue). Topics that were covered in the interview were the link between incense and the band name, the use of gas masks during live shows, the peculiar Chapman sticks, the free studio time that resulted in the CD, and, finally, inflatable rubber dolls.

A TOUCH OF INDIA

Where did the name Darshan actually come from?

BT: It's from a CD by David Sylvian and Robert Fripp. There's a song on it called Darshan. But it has several different meanings, it's a brand of incense and it is an actual Indian word.

RC: I actually bought some Darshan incense last week in a Chinese shop in the shopping centre here in Eindhoven. I think that Darshan are spiritual ceremonies in India.

Have you ever been to India?

RC: No I haven't.

BT: Sadly not although I would really like to go. The Indian culture appeals to me, the meditation and such. I listen to a lot of Indian music. I buy that from shops that specialize in world music. Actually, real Indian music is the music that is like the classical music for us. That music has been passed down from the generations and has probably existed for more than a thousand years. Our classical music has also existed since like the 1400s.

Can you hear these influences in your music?

BT: Sometimes, like in tonal scales.

RC: Don't worry, we have some metal influences as well like in "Messed Up" for example.

GAS MARKS

Where did the title of your CD come from?

RC: I'll show you, it's from a Ren & Stimpy comic (The Ren & Stimpy Show: Don't try this at home). The cartoons of Ren & Stimpy are brilliant. We just weren't able to find a suitable title. We had read through all our lyrics looking for some words to make an appropriate title. We didn't want to use one of the song titles because that was boring. So when we were in the studio, we had been looking through some comics, we came across this line from a comic and we thought it was kind of cool. We thought that people would certainly ask us what the hell the title meant. The title does not have any deeper meaning.

BT: There is a relation with the photo of the gas masks on the CD sleeve.

RC: I made a photograph of a gas mask. I then used some effects to create the cover of the CD.

BT: We use the gas masks during our live show. The first song that we play live is an instrumental called "Hiroshima" and during that song we use gas masks.

RC: We don't use the gas masks the rest of the show though because that's a bit difficult for our vocalist Amber (ha ha).

Is that your typical humor: gas masks, a set of cards, and a glass of wine?

RC: Most band photos are often so boring so we wanted something more humorous, something stupid.

BT: The photo was taken in the garden of our drummer Sjack near our rehearsal room.

CHAPMAN STICK INSTEAD OF A GUITAR

What is quite unusual, in my opinion, is the fact that you don't have a guitar player in your line-up. Was that intentional?

BT: Not really. Ron and I are good friends, we both play bass and we both listen to the same music. Ron and Sjack used to be in another band but they split up. At that time, I had also started playing Chapman stick so that gave us the opportunity to play together. The Chapman stick is used to kind of replace the guitar.

RC: Sjack and I were actually looking for a guitar player but when Barend came with this idea, we liked it and agreed to do it.

But you could also have a band with two bass players.

RC: That's true but in terms of melody, we would like to have some high strings as well, to do some fret work.

Could you tell what is so special about a Chapman stick. How does it work, is it a bass guitar with more strings?

BT: There are 6 guitar strings and 6 bass strings of which the output is separated. This enables you to play a guitar melodies and bass lines simultaneously. You can tap everything along the neck, although in Darshan I also use a plectrum for some guitar lines. In principle, you can play two parts separately. The original Chapman stick has this stick-like shape. Although nowadays there are also Chapman sticks with a body like a guitar, Trey Gunn plays one of those. There are also 8-string and 10-string models.

Chapman invented the Chapman stick but how long has it been used in music because the first time I heard from it was when Tony Levin of King Crimson played on it.

BT: The stick is from the end of the seventies. Tony Levin with Peter Gabriel has been the forerunner although there are quite a lot of Chapman stick players worldwide. Tony Levin primarily uses it as a bass instrument but other players use it as a guitar and bass.

Is it difficult to play compared to a guitar?

BT: The problem is that there are so many possibilities. It doesn't take long to get something worthwhile from it but you can approach it from so many different angles: as a bass, as a guitar or as a combination.

RC: I'm sticking to my bass guitar. I tried playing it, of course, but it's too difficult to play. I've always been a bass player and I prefer it to a regular guitar. The Chapman stick is a very cool instrument and it's great to play with a stick player. The ideal thing is that Barend can take over the bass lines, and this enables me to play on my keyboards. Not that I am such a good keyboard player but I really like to create spacey sounds. There are times when I really want to hear the stick bass because it has much more attack. This gives us additional opportunities, there are parts on the CD where this happens, for example like in "UFO." This is not possible with the guitar because then the whole bass lines disappear.

Does that mean that everything on the CD can be reproduced live?

BT: Almost everything. There are some vocal lines dubbed and some little frills here and there that won't be missed live.

SPACE... THE FINAL FRONTIER?

Talking about spacey sounds, is there a science fiction theme surrounding Darshan?

RC: Well, the biography suggests that doesn't it? I really like space music. I think that our sound is quite new and progressive and that's why it's associated with science fiction.

A song title like "UFO" would also suggest that.

BT: Amber wrote that song but it isn't about UFOs at all. It's about someone who's in the clouds and she feels like she's a UFO.

So the Star Trek-inspired captains' log biography is tongue in cheek or are you big Star Trek fans?

RC: Not really although I like Star Wars a lot. I do like science fiction films. Actually, we wanted a different kind of biography unlike regular biographies. In this way, it's more mysterious and humorous.

FREE STUDIO TIME

The debut CD has six songs on it and lasts less than 30 minutes. You have more songs than are on the CD, why did you specifically choose the songs that are on the CD?

BT: We have about 21 songs, and we put the newer songs on the CD.

RC: Actually, we had two weeks of free studio time. A friend that we knew was starting his own studio in Nijmegen. He wanted to experiment so he suggested that we come to his studio to record the album. We and our sound man know how to get the sound we wanted so we agreed to do it. Well, you can record ten songs in two weeks time but we decided to record these six songs because we wanted to do the recording in a relaxed way so we had enough room to experiment with different sounds.

BT: It was difficult to choose between the 20 that we had, but we had already recorded some on the demo so we didn't want to use those. Another thing is that we wanted songs that represented different styles.

RC: This is also expressed in the order of the songs, we wanted a lot of variation. For example, we always play the dance song "Gummipuppen" as the last song when we play live. We also wanted this song to be the last song on the CD because it gives our music a different dimension.

I know that Barend has a lot of studio experience with Lemur Voice but did you have any studio experience?

RC: I did a study in sound techniques, and I also mix several live bands like Form. With my previous band, I also recorded a demo. I don't have as much studio experience as a musician such as Barend.

Everyone in this area plays with everyone else. It's like a huge cobweb.

RC: That's true when someone goes out drinking with us, and he or she isn't part of the music scene then he or she will go crazy because eventually the discussions revolve around music.

Do you play in other bands as well?

RC: No, but I'm busy start a new band with the brother of our sound man, who's a guitar player. We're rehearsing together for the first time tomorrow and the music will probably in the jazz/funk corner. We'll see which other musicians we attract. That'll probably be more relaxed because Darshan is my priority.

Barend, for you Lemur Voice is the priority and Darshan comes in second place or am I wrong?

BT: Yes you're wrong. I used to be in Lemur Voice, Darshan, and Arabesque. That was too much so I stopped playing in Arabesque because stylistically they were comparable to Lemur Voice. Darshan and Lemur Voice are equally important for me. In Darshan, we rehearse once a week and each of us plays at home individually.

THE MISSING INGREDIENT OF INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

Your music is varied and in your music collection there are a lot of instrumental bands. Did you ever consider just being an instrumental group?

RC: I listen to a lot of instrumental music, but I also really like listening to a voice. Another point is that I find it more captivating to watch a band live when they have a vocalist. The visual aspect is much better. A voice can really add something to the music especially when you have beautiful lyrics as well. BT: You reach a larger audience when you have a vocalist. Most people aren't used to listening to instrumental music or watching an instrumental band play live.

Isn't most instrumental music still stuck in a niche?

RC: A lot of musicians listen to it but it doesn't appeal to

the general audience. Arabesque is a good example. In a live setting, they were very interesting for about an hour but after that time most people would really like hear vocals.

BT: It also depends on the type of instrumental music. Instrumental music that isn't focused on complexity but more on atmosphere like Ozric Tentacles doesn't have that problem. I prefer to listen to that for 1.5 hours than Yngwie Malmsteen that tends to get boring after 45 minutes.

When you started the concept of Darshan, did you specifically want a female vocalist?

RC: We thought it would fit the music really well, and I really like female vocals.

BT: I don't think we would easily be able to find a man that could sing that range of the vocal lines. I think it would then go more into a direction like Adrian Belew or David Sylvian but these vocalists can not be found.

RC: I did take us a more than a year before we found Amber. We had some female vocalists before but they never stayed longer than a few months. There were some with a lot of quality but our music in the end turned them off.

BT: I don't want to generalize but there aren't many women that listen to our kind of music.

RC: Our type of music was also very new for Amber but she's the type of person to try new things. She went with us to an Ozric Tentacles show and she just wants to be educated with music.

Where did you find her?

RC: We got her through an advertisement. We just hung up advertisements everywhere and she responded. It just clicked right away, not just musically but also personally. The four of us are on the same wavelength and that is very rare.

But you do need some conflicts in a band.

RC: Haha, we never have that. Everyone of us is enthusiastic about each other's ideas: whenever someone suggests that we compose a song in a certain style then the others just try and do it.

Are there any musical boundaries or limiting factors to your sound?

BT: Not really, we're open to everything and we'll try all different genres. That's the most interesting thing to do although you'll always end up with a certain sound within the band.

RC: It's always good to have a certain sound. We're able to go in any direction we'd like to go, fantasy is not a limiting factor.

What I do notice is that you're sticking pretty much to the 4-5 minute song format?

BT: That's true for this CD, but we also have longer songs over the 7-8 minute songs for example. Lately we've focused more in a song-type direction so the songs automatically become shorter.

RC: The songs don't have a predefined length, we just play and the atmosphere more or less determines the length. We're also busy with a song that is based on a machine sound and rhythm with a poem over it. That's about it although the song has a certain structure.

BT: We can do just about anything.

In which way are you restricted in Lemur Voice for example?

BT: Lemur Voice's music is usually put into one certain genre. I sometimes find that restrictive. Another point is that you have five musicians that each have a preference for certain things, that can also cause restrictions. I wouldn't really go further into it.

Well if I look at the music that Nathan listens to for example then that is much different than the music of Lemur Voice.

BT: For me it's also very different. I don't listen much to bands like Dream Theater or Fates Warning.

I find that strange somehow because I would



think that as a musician you would like to play your favorite music. That's not true in your case.

BT: That is indeed conflicting, and at times I have some difficulty with that. It just like that I have a great band with Lemur Voice and it has turned out to be that type of music. We are open to experiments with Lemur Voice although not everyone likes the same experiments. RC: That is much more visible on the new CD "Divided" than on the first one.

Wouldn't it be interesting to hook up with an experimental filer and do some music, your music would perfectly with that?

RC: That would be really good. We would be open to that. We do know some people that are busy in making films, and we have some plans for a video clip.

BT: I am very much interested in doing some film music. I am busy with that at home but you need the right connections.

Aren't you in the wrong part of the Netherlands for that or for your type of music?

BT: Perhaps in the west it's better. I think that in Amsterdam they're more receptive to our music than here.

RC: It's difficult for a band from the south to play there. Well, in general, it's difficult to play somewhere with original music. Thus far we haven't played live much. We started playing live over a year ago after we recorded our first demo. We've primarily played in bars in the Weert/Roermond area. It's difficult because you have to arrange everything yourself if you don't have a booker. Our problem is that we are extremely bad at organizing these things and we would really like someone to do it for us.

Are you lazy?

RC: We're not really lazy but we'd rather be making music than organizing shows. Whenever you send a demo or CD to a place where we can play, you then have to call back twenty times before you get any feedback. None of us has any commercial or business capacities.

BT: It's better that someone outside the band organizes these things otherwise you're trying to sell your own product.

RC: With a CD, it'll be easier to find a booker than with a demo. Our music is quite unusual and there'll certainly be enough people that can't do anything with our music. Then again we think that if you put enough effort into then you'll certainly to make something of it. For example,



reactions at our shows have often been very positive and encouraging.

LYRICAL DEMOCRACY

I notice that all of you write lyrics whereas it is often only one or two people per band.

BT: We all contribute about equally to the lyrics. I am not sure why that is. Everyone one of us is busy at home writing lyrics.

RC: When we started out, we didn't have a vocalist but we still started writing lyrics.

Why aren't the lyrics printed on the CD booklet?

BT: We're saving that for when we're going to release a full-length CD of ten songs or more. This time we didn't feel it was necessary although this doesn't mean the lyrics aren't worth reading.

Could you tell me what the songs are about then?

RC: Amber wrote "Messed up." To be honest, I don't exactly what it is about although she's told me.

BT: It's about someone who is completely messed up and has flipped. This is shown musically in the middle part of the song where it's very chaotic and different sounds come together.

What about "Computerize"?

RC: Sjack, who often writes lyrics with a sociocritical theme, wrote that. It's about how everyone lives according to a predefined scheme or plan. He's taken that to the extreme by describing a future world in which everyone has a chip implanted in his or her head. Their lives can then be

programmed. At the end there's also an inside joke: there's a computer voice that asks "Are you sure?". That's taken from a message that appears on the display of our sequencer when you want to save something. The voice goes on to say: "Press enter to continue" and we added "Or escape". This is then bivalent because it can mean the escape on the keyboard or the actual escape.

Do you think it's realistic that everyone will have a chip implant in the future?

RC: I don't think it so. It's an exaggeration about the fact that everyone walks around with a portable phone and needs to be reachable. I prefer to go back to the simple things without all the luxury, although we do need modern technology to create our music.

The third song is "Impotent Fury."

BT: I wrote that, and the title just about tells it all. It's about an anger that you're not able to show. It's about standing with your back against the wall due to all your problems. Although it's a personal subject, it's not about myself. There was a period when I tended to write very personal lyrics. At that time, it was a form of therapy but I'm now kind of stepping away from that. I also wrote "Fake World" after I saw a benefit program on television. In that show, money was collected for a good cause. The fact that people can sell their soul on television for their own personal benefit made a very fake impression on me.

All the benefits shows are just hypocritical because by giving money, people can buy off their guilty conscience.

BT: Well, I was actually implying the manner in which presenter of such a show brought the message across to the audience.

RC: It's also related to Live Aid back. Are these artists really playing because there is hunger or starvation in Ethiopia or is it because they can promote themselves on television so people will buy their CDs?

That means that you have a lot of different lyrical themes on the CD or is there any underlying concept?

RC: Not really because the lyrics can cover just about any topic, for example there are also songs about relationships as well. I wrote the lyrics to a song called "Imaginary Relaxation." That was about

when I smoked a bit, and I was completely gone. That was a cool experience so I decided to write about that. There are serious lyrics but also lyrics that make no sense at all.

INFLATABLE RUBBER DOLLS

"Gummipuppen?" is one of those strange songs both musically and lyrically.

RC: That song started when we were playing instrumentals and we didn't have a vocalist yet. The intro is from the movie "The Longest Day." It's a World War II movie about D-Day. In the movie, the British drop rubber inflatable dolls from airplanes to deceive the German army. There is a scene in the movie in which a German soldier says in astonishment: "Gummipuppen" [the German word for inflatable rubber doll -CR]. After seeing that movie a friend of mine kept on using that sentence over and over again during regular conversations. In the song, we used some excerpts from the movie and we let him say several things as well. We took him to the studio and let him talk for about half an hour and then used several samples from that and put effects over it. It's quite funny and fits with the instrumental music. It actually originated from a jam and it's quite spacey and danceable...

In an Ozric Tentacles-type of way and it's quite monotonous in terms of rhythm.

RC: Completely monotonous. The fact that the bass and drums do same thing over and over is functional for this song. The small clicks that you hear in the background are also taken from the movie. In the movie, the allied troops use these small mechanical frogs that make a clicking sound to identify themselves. For example, if someone makes a click-click sound and the one on the other side makes the same sound then you know that they're on your side. There's an instance when it goes wrong. This happens when an American soldier makes the click-click sound and a German soldier is just reloading his gun. This is an identical sound and the American gets subsequently shot dead. It's just these kinds of jokes that we incorporated into the songs. The song comes across very well live. Actually we wanted to put this song or "Hiroshima" as the instrumental on the CD. We thought two instrumentals would've been too much so in the end we took this song.

If you have such a studio try-out, you have the time to try things like this.

RC: We had planned in advance where we wanted to use which sample. We were a bit worried about the copyright of the samples. For example, the Fun Lovin' Criminals had a lot of legal problems with Quentin Tarantino when they used samples from "Pulp Fiction." He wanted a part of the profit because, in his opinion, he had co-written the song.

I think that was because the whole song revolved around those samples. I was told that you're allowed to use move samples if they are less than ten seconds. If you use more you may infringe copyright laws. You're using those samples in a fun type of way and they constitute only a small part of the song. So I guess you're safe. If you use a music fragment and create a dance version then you of course have to pay royalties to the copyright owner of the original. Do you actually play covers?

BT: We play three covers: "Larks in Tongue Aspic II" by King Crimson, "Intruder" by Peter Gabriel, and "Shadows in the Rain" by the Police. Those songs really fit our style but we play them in our own fashion.

Are there any other interesting things about "Gummipuppen"?

BT: We're going to make a dance version of "Gummipuppen" for a single. It's going to be a fully electronic version with only the Chapman stick as a real instrument.

RC: It'll be a shorter version with a real groovy drum computer sound. We also want to make a video clip to that song. A friend of mine has the possibilities to record a clip, he has a lot of professional equipment. I can also edit it at the place where I work. The friend of mine is always busy exploring different camera techniques and wants to go to the film academy. For him it's a good promotion. It'll probably be an absurd or humorous clip. It won't be a war-influenced clip because this doesn't really have anything to do with us. We want to include the clip as an mpeg file with the single. It'll then feature three songs: the original version, the dance version and the clip.

Darshan can be contacted at: Ron Claassen, Roeklaan 1, 5613 EG Eindhoven, The Netherlands. Or by visiting their homepage at www.darshanspace.com. The CD is still available for \$10.

GUR PRODUCTIONS
Presents
Winterhawk RTISTS
FREE TO LIVE
PLUS...
Kargon, Madras
Winterhawk ~ In Concert!
SAT. FEB. 25, 1978
at the Civic Center
"SOUTH'S GONNA DO IT AGAIN!" Showtime 7 PM ~ 1978

If I trace back my musical history, I must confess that I've never been much of a fan of 70s hard rock. Being exposed to music from the late 70s, I got my share of Kiss, AC/DC, Black Sabbath, Scorpions, Rainbow but the adrenaline really started flowing when the NWOBHM reached my musical shore with Iron Maiden as its prime exponent. The music was heavier and perhaps more rebellious and exciting than the cobweb image that I associated with the 70s hard rock.

The new millennium has started and for many, the past few months have been a time of reflection. I have done some reflecting myself: perhaps I should explore this empty suitcase in the musical luggage I carry with me. However, the threshold to finally explore 70s rock after more than two decades is a high one. The music is hard to find, expensive, and mostly on vinyl. This, in combination with the fact that there's so many new and exciting music coming out, makes the threshold to explore the music of the 70s indeed a high one. However, there is a jewel from this period that I have been able to covet for many years now: Winterhawk.

Around 1990 I was in contact with Ray Dorsey (of Enlightened Chaos at that time) and he sent me a tape copy of Winterhawk debut (and only) album "Revival." I was immediately blown away because it presented a breath of fresh air in the midst of the progressive metal and doom metal that I was listening to at that time. Almost ten years have gone by and the tape has gotten a lot of play in my stereo. I can certainly hum the guitar solos in "Period of Change" and "Free to Live" when they put a knife to my throat.

Almost ten years later, a miracle happens. The wonderful people at Monster Records finally release Winterhawk's "Revival" on CD. Dennis Bergeron of Monster Records was kind enough to send me a review copy and with the prospect of a new Winterhawk live album coming out soon, the time was right for a Winterhawk feature. I contacted Jordan Macarus for a short interview.



Winterhawk REMEMBERING "REVIVAL"

Before we commence with the interview, some information about the history of Winterhawk is in order. The following is a recount of the most relevant Winterhawk history (excerpts taken from the biography).

Winterhawk started in the spring of 1977 by drummer Rich Mezger, guitarists Jordan Macaruso and Dan Searight and bass player Doug Brown. However, Rich Mezger was soon replaced by Steve Tsokatos and with this line-up they performed live a lot and that resulted in a healthy cult following in the Chicago area. Dan Searight left and was replaced by Steve Brown, and the band concentrated on live appearances. One of the clubs that they played was the Aragon show the following year. The live recording of "Hammer and the Axe" that is on the CD reissue of "Revival" came from this appearance. Steve Brown then left the band to pursue a career as a commercial artist later that summer, and the band settled into a 3-piece unit. They played together as a 3 piece for about 2 more years, opening for acts like Jefferson Starship, Steppenwolf, Black Oak Arkansas, Budgie, and others. Eventually, the 3-piece version of Winterhawk blew up from the inside after personal and musical goals were beginning to go in different directions for Jordan and Doug. Jordan then decided to attend college with long-time friend Chris Mazur. It was there at Northern Illinois University that the brainchild that would become Winterhawk "Revival" was born. Jordan and Chris began thinking about the business of producing a record album. They listened to several live Winterhawk recordings, and made a list of potential songs. Doug Brown joined the project, and with Scott Benes on drums, the band rehearsed for 7 weekends with Chris understanding the second guitar parts, and then went into Dr. CAW Studios on December 17, 1981. Recording was completed by January 1, 1982. The record was released in 1982 on the band's own label. In an old interview in "Enlightened Chaos" #18, Jordan mentions that 2000 copies were printed and that of the first printing of 1000 copies about 30% was highly defective. It has achieved a formidable cult status among hard rock collectors and enthusiasts.

In the following years, Jordan formed various groups and played with many different musicians. In 1986, he recorded the songs "Elijah" and "Fallen Dinosaur" (available on the CD reissue of "Revival"). In 1992, he released the eclectic "Wind From The Sun" (cassette only), and in 1994 the live CD "Jordac - The Passage." Jordan's current performances range from solo acoustic to an intense six piece electric band. We're anxiously awaiting the release of his next record before the next millennium.

The classic "Revival" has been re-released on CD and is in the spotlight once again after all these years. Do you feel comfortable talking about a collection of songs that were written almost two decades ago. Is it a phantom that keeps haunting you? There was a long period when it was depressing to be reminded of Winterhawk, made me feel like a 'has been' or 'could've been'. But now it's kind of refreshing, that's probably because I'm living more like a musician now than ever.

Were you a rebellious person at the time of Winterhawk?

I was born rebellious, or at least with a chip on my shoulder. I stopped being rebellious for its own sake somewhere between age eight and forty, but what I still cannot do is believe that something is right just because it's popular or "widely accepted." We need to build on history; but, if we buy into too much historical dogma, and/or present-day marketing paradigms our lives can gravitate towards a very superficial existence. So there...

The record label Monster Records was responsible for the re-release of "Revival" on CD. How did this come about?

Dennis Bergeron and Phil Baker of Monster Records, Joe Romagnola, Ray Dorsey and several other Winterhawk Fans would mention it from time to time. Finally, my long-time partner, Chris Mazur, and I decided it was time. So we worked together with Dennis and Craig Williams to get it done.

How difficult was it to decide which additional songs would be on the CD? Did you have the masters still lying around or did you have to dig up some old boxes in the attic? It was not very difficult. "Fallen Dinosaur," "Elijah," and "Hammer and the Axe" were really the only viable 2 track masters "lying around." Craig still had to coordinate the "baking" of the 19 year old "Hammer and the Axe" master tape.

Are there plans to re-release other old Winterhawk material?

There are some possibilities: some old

tapes, etc. Actual plans would have to come after we finish the two records that are already under construction. The Winterhawk material is pretty technically challenging for players that didn't grow up with that stuff. I'd like to play some of it just for the fun of it.

As you said, you have two records already under construction. One is the live album due out soon. Could you tell us something more about that particular live show?

Actually it was supposed to be semi-live (recording the rhythm section together in a big room and overdubbing vocals, etc.). But instead, we recorded our last show, 12/10/99, to 16 track, and I've been immersed in the process of fixing and embellishing. It was a pretty good show, although, we had our share of technological gremlins to tame. We hope to finish this one soon. It was a one-hour show, with another song recorded during soundcheck. All seven players [that ever played in Winterhawk at one time or another -CR] were part of the show. The set list for that night: "Fire on the Runway," "Edward T. Drover," "Trial by Fire," "Homicide before Suicide," "Shenandoah," "Sacrifice," "The Stomp," "Intro," "Balancing Act," "The Passage," and "Wall of Fire" from the one-hour show and "Pointless War" from the soundcheck.

In the early days of Winterhawk, before the recording of "Revival," the band used to have a line-up with two guitarists (you and Dan Searight). Could you describe the differences between style of playing of Dan and yourself?

Dan was more "ethereal" than I was. He had a very flowing style. He only wrote one song with us, but it was a very cool 13 minute thing called "Passions of One."

Winterhawk's songs are renowned for their extensive guitar-soloing. They are challenging but also very memorable. What role is reserved for guitar solos in your songs?

Guitar solos, a virtual requirement in the Winterhawk days, haven't been required for the last 15 years. Since then many songs have no guitar solos, but if an instrumentally oriented song is written from the electric guitar, and there are many, then we're gonna feature it. The music that I choose to perform is always a function of the players I'm working with at the time.

If you consider the different songs on "Revival" then the mood of a song like "Can't See The Forest for the Trees" is very much different than "Free to Live." How many emotional sides were there to Winterhawk?

"Can't See The Forest..." was Doug's (Warren Brown's) song. It really helped his enthusiasm for "Revival" to record that back in 1982. Warren was/is a monster player of many instruments: guitar, piano, and drums as well as bass and vocals. There were many emotional and intellectual sides to Winterhawk. We incorporated a lot of drama into the shows. One bar manager called us the "American Genesis," largely due to a 15 minute story piece called "Day of the Machine" (what happens if we ever create artificial intelligence...). "Can't see the Forest" was sort of an encore for fun at the end of a night. Just a note: when we recorded "Revival," we rehearsed eight songs. The one that didn't come together was "There and Back Again" which would rank very high in the Classic Winterhawk Family Album, if there were such a thing.

So what would be the classic Winterhawk family album?

I would like to have recorded all the songs written during the Winterhawk years, 1977 through 1982. We were so focused back then that virtually all the songs that made it to the stage would have to be in the family album. In addition to several of the Revival tunes, some tunes from then that I'd like to play again would be: "Creatures of the Sea", "Bad Influence", "That's All I Can Tell You", and "The Toys Come Alive at Night." Perhaps the only non-band members that would have witnessed all the Winterhawk tunes(30 or so) would be a few crew members. Their opinion of what is "classic" might be more interesting than mine.

You mentioned that you rehearsed "There and Back Again" for "Revival" but did not record it. Did you aim to record the best songs you had at that moment, or did you want a certain balance between songs on the album?

"Revival" was an attempt at a balanced "greatest hits." Chris Mazur and I chose those 8 songs with balance and commercial potential in mind.

The vinyl version of "Revival" is a collector's item. What is the current price for it and have you heard any funny stories about how people found a copy for \$1 at a garage sale for example?

Vinyl copies go for around \$100. Yes, I've heard of several found at garage sales, swap meets and used record stores for a couple bucks.

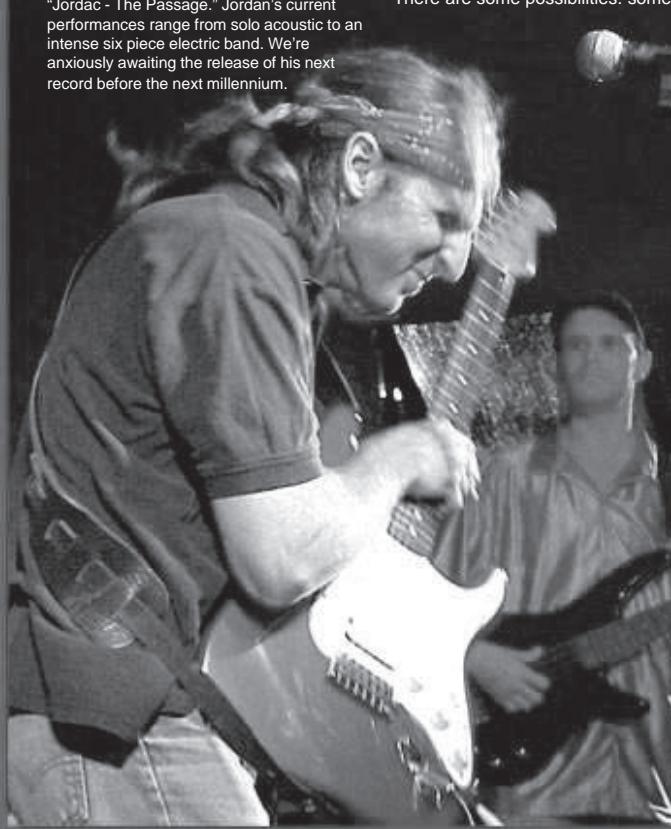
CURRENT MUSICAL PROJECTS

After "Revival," you spent some time surviving in the mountains. Has this "coming closer to nature" aspect made you a more complete person?

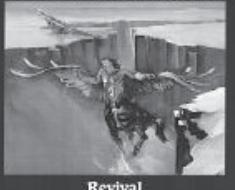
My first solo trip to the mountains was in 1983. The total collapse of Winterhawk left me disoriented and depressed. I wanted to strip myself of everything that made me. And that first night alone; freezing, 90 mph winds howling, thoughts of bears and mountain lions pawing outside my tent, tore away much of the psychological baggage I was carrying. The sun came up the next day and once again I was on my way, with the realization that so many of our material pursuits are pointless. My experiences in the "wild" places, raising Icy, the raccoon, and Natasha, the coyote, have helped me to feel more connected with the way of Earth, Sun, and Sky. I still spend many nights in the woods to maintain a perspective on this most bizarre lifetime. For the song "Elijah," I researched several Native American languages and initially the phrase, "soon the dark wind comes," was to be sung in a native tongue. Rather than a fascination with Native American culture, it is something that exists deep within my soul. I believe that if we look deep enough inside ourselves, we will all see through the eyes of an animal. It's where we came from; it's what we are.

In which musical projects are you active at the moment?

A little over two years ago I hooked up with Christine Tobias and restarted my musical career for the last time. I felt that to be able to create a niche I could survive in, I had to be able to cover any gig by myself. And we've accomplished that much. I've played a lot of gigs: solo, acoustic duets, trios, 6 piece acoustic gigs, you name it. I used eleven players on a festival gig last year, and I've opened for metal bands with nothing but



Winterhawk



Revival

an acoustic guitar. I've gotten my electric chops going again by filling in as a lead player in a few bar bands. A couple months in a row I played in 5 different bands. But the artist in me couldn't wait anymore. Now, Christine and I are in the midst of a solo record called "Coyote Heart" which is acoustic/electric and focuses on the 'sketches' when I'm playing all the foundation instruments. The heartbeat for this record is a giant Native American drum (Christine's Big Drum). Also, the 6 piece band that's been with me for the last 15 months is overdue to make a record. We're in the studio scheduling process at the moment. That'll be primarily electric, cover a lot of ground, and should include at least a few cuts Winterhawk fans will dig.

Your collaboration with Christine Tobias and your love for wild animals would imply that you have a fascination for the uncharted Americas and Native American culture. What fascinates you in that?
Christine Tobias is a phenomenal guitar tech. I've been trying to find good, affordable stratocasters to play. And they always have something funky goin' on. Before she worked on my last two, I broke as many as 6 strings in a night. Finally, I average less than one a night. And she built "The Big Drum," which is an instrument of such spirit that you don't play it, it plays you. There are a few people who consider me a drummer first, and a guitar player second.

Your writing style has evolved tremendously over the years. How would you describe your musical evolution over the years?

I have BOXES filled with cassettes of ideas and forgotten tunes from the last twenty years. It would take an archeologist twenty years to form an evolutionary construct of it. I'm not qualified, I guess I've just tried to become a complete musician/writer/performer, looked at life through the window of my experience, but I always come home to electric guitar.

You been active for so many years now, trying so many different things. Is there anything that you would still like to achieve?

Artistically, I'd like to make a record I thought was great. With a theatrical show that's better than the record. Personally, I'd like to somehow help homo-sapien harness intelligence; so we can all witness the Sun exploding, probably, more than 500 million years from now. Which would require an ecologically balanced existence. Which would feel normal to me.

You're probably in your late 30s, early 40s now. Have you settled into family life now, with a regular job? Does music still play an important role in your life?

Actually, I turned 40 at three months ago and my overall playing is the best it's ever been. I have an 8 year old son (Zachary) who lives with me 3 days a week. My lifestyle still borders on the insane; make most of my living as an

"Educational Mercenary" - substitute teaching and tutoring, primarily, high school kids in math and science. Music is still the heart of everything, for me, it is a direct pathway to the soul. It is that which allows me to keep a perspective on the rest of the world. Many events, strange and otherwise, have affected me over the years. Been married and divorced, raised a racoon and a wild coyote half-breed. The guitar and amp that I used on "Revival" were stolen in 1986. For many years I stayed abreast of the music business. I started working as a 'bouncer' for concerts back in 1978. Strange fate kept me working from that angle for over 17 years. I became a 'crowd management specialist' and manpower coordinator for a company with 500 part-time employees. In 1994, I headed a crew of 130 from Chicago responsible for the main stage area at Woodstock 1994. The liner notes on the "Passage" CD, cryptic as they may be, refer to our journey to and from Saugerties NY. A karmic endeavor including 2 of the 3 busses crashing on the way home, and us doing our own crisis work preparing 40 injured crew members for transportation to 6 different hospitals. There are many stories from those years. Another time, perhaps.

You've been active in the music business for more than two decades now. To me it seems that it has become more and more focused on money instead of artistic integrity. What are your views on this?

America's socio-economic path is one of 'runaway capitalism'. Those with enough buying power to control markets do so to enrich their positions. The majority of business people are entombed in their pursuit of another dollar. 'If you swallow enough of the greed pill it will consume you from the inside-out'. The music business is no different. Artists will always appeal to the spirit, the soul, the heart, sometimes just the pelvic region; package that in a catchy melody with a toe-tappin' rhythm and it's ready to be marketed. It's the marketing that is key to one's economic success/failure. And it's a very volatile, fast-moving market. No time for integrity. By an inadvertent avoidance of such success, God has spared me some level of internal corruption. I feel I can play hard for about 10 years, after that I don't know. But music and nature will always be the lenses I choose to see with...

Jordan, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for this interview and the music that you have given to us. Do you have any closing comments you would like to make?
Well, thank you, Christian, for the interview. I'm sure I've been a little vague as well as overly introspective at times. But... Closing comments? I think it's important to have mentors; people to admire and exchange counsel with. Seek them... Working as a stage hand, I was lucky enough once to see Frank Zappa rehearse. It was the greatest music lesson of my life. I think I wrote some of my best music shortly thereafter... Some of the best, however, is yet to come... Peace, Jordan.

The Winterhawk CD "Revival" can still be ordered from Monster Records, PO Box 460173, San Antonio, TX 78246-0173, USA or by visiting their website at www.monsterrecords.com.

Jordan Macarus can be contacted at PO Box 551, Hinsdale, IL 60521, USA or by visiting his website at www.planetjordan.com.

The Last Interview with Gar Samuelson /Fatal Opera/

[by Almut Sakai and Jeff]

Gar Samuelson, the original drummer for veteran heavy-metal band Megadeth, died at his home in Orange City, Fla., on July 14 at age 41. The cause of death was an undiagnosed liver ailment.

Samuelson was a member of Megadeth during their early days from 1983 to 1987. He appeared on the LPs "Killing Is My Business ... and Business Is Good" (1985) and "Peace Sells ... But Who's Buying?" (1986). He formed Fatal Opera later on and they released two excellent CDs "Fatal Opera" (1995) and "The Eleventh Hour" (1997). A memorial service was held July 31 at Lankford Chapel in Orange City. Fans were encouraged to send purple flowers, since purple was his favorite color.

This interview with Fatal Opera mastermind was done by their fan club leader Almut Sakai and a guy named Jeff shortly before the drummer's death. Rest In Peace, Gar...



Tell us about your creation "Guru Metal" - why that name?

So after all this torture you are going to make me think too! In Fatal Opera's early days of suffering, we were utilizing more Indian influences (see "Moving Underground"). Also Dave was getting more into his spiritual travels. I too was feeling quite earthy and wishing I had a sitar. We have always tried to send some type of positive message with our music, so when asked what we sounded like, we just said "Guru Metal," it kind of stuck and most of all it gives me a chance to wear flowered shirts and turbans and burn incense 24 hours a day!

Fatal Opera is often compared to Psychotic Waltz. What other strange descriptions or musical comparison did you have, if any?

Just the other day a promoter compared us to Britain's Hawkwind. He lent me a tape to give them a listen and I thought they sounded like Pink Floyd. Some people say we sound classic and I hate that. I can see the comparison in that we are very melodic but we are trying to do something new.

Are you basically enjoying the studio work or rather the live experience?

The studio can be a great source of gratification but also can be a source of total frustration. I'll take a good gig any day!

What is the hardest thing during a recording?

My Ding-a-Ling!

Fatal Opera as well as other "independent" bands have problems to find a decent U.S. deal because record companies only sign trendy things. Do you think that MTV in this aspect has a too big

influence on fans and manipulates them?

I have not watched MTV in years. As much as I would love to have a video on their show, I think from what I hear that it is a joke!



Both Fatal Opera albums reflect different atmospheres. What is the main difference between the two? What changed, what remained?

Besides the obvious, I could mill over this question forever and give you different answers every minute. Everything was different, time changes everything and I think the listener is better suited to answer this question... But one difference that just came to me is that the writing on the first album is more outward in that the songs are about things around us, war, politics, relationships, earth, and the second album is more inward in that we are looking into our own souls and our own personal feelings.

Could you tell us some of your messages that you want to bring across in your songs?

Let's see... "The truth shall save you. Religion is an inward thing. Be considerate to the lower levels of the food chain. Don't pee up stream, and always keep your spear sharp!"

Do moments exist when you feel creatively exhausted?

I have days and months when I feel creatively exhausted, but I feel in this business you must keep going. It's bad I think to struggle too hard on one thing. Move on if you can't get that last verse to that 10 year old unfinished song. Get out and you may find some inspiration.

There certainly must be dissensions during the songwriting - how do you come to terms with such situations?
We usually will play/learn any ideas that come up. If no one likes it we say so. What songs we pick up for the record or for our live performances are usually the best of the best and that would be tunes that we all agree are good for the Fatal Opera purpose.

Now we'll throw you some catchwords onto your head and let's see what comes to your mind:

a) Hendrix!

The great father of "Heavy Metal Falling". (The first time heavy metal was used in a musical context was in a Hendrix review.)

b) Innovation!

New, inventive.

c) Beatles!

My favorite Beatles is... George Martin.

d) Your goals...

To become a better person and musician and the rest will follow.

e) Fatal Opera!

This world. A vehicle riding the crest between nothingness and eternity.

Last but not least, what can we expect from a band in the future that is unpredictable anyway?

Like what is going on with the music business we seem to be in a type of "Limbotic Fog" that we can't escape. Wind will come soon and bring change!

[by Giedrius Slivinskas]

Saturday, 12.00. Gary Holtzman, the guitar player and the main man of American melodic power/progressive metal band Jacobs Dream is busy doing interviews on his sixth day at Metal Blade office in Germany, promoting band's self-titled debut album. "Edge of Time" also gets a call.

How many interviews you've done so far?
Ninety or something.

In Europe only? Wow!
Yeah, I've been really busy.

How about interviews in the United States?

I do a lot of phone interviews right from my house in United States.

Is it more than in Europe then or not?

To be honest, I'm not really sure. They are just a lot further apart. I probably do about ten or twenty interviews a week over there. But you know, they are like a couple of months apart.

Which office of Metal Blade do you work closer with, the European one or the American one, or both?

I work with both. I think that metal over here in Europe is a little stronger than in the US right now, so I deal with the European office a little bit more on the promotion side.

Let's talk about your music a little bit. Do you agree with your band's label, which usually is "power metal of the late 80s"?
Yeah, I agree with that. I think it's got a little turn of itself, but, yeah, I would say that it's about to beat all dead horses.

Regarding your influences, people mention Lethal, Queensryche, Iron Maiden, Crimson Glory...

To be totally honest with you, I am a big fan of Queensryche, but I haven't heard the other two bands until just recently. [Lethal and Crimson Glory] I wasn't actually familiar with their music until last week.

Oh, that's very surprising because Lethal is probably the band closest to your style...

Yeah, I've just been talking to the guy from Hades who sits across from me right now, I said to him that I had to get that CD before I go to US. Trying to get him to remind me so I get it before I leave. [laughs]

Is it Alan Tecchio from Hades? He is doing interviews as well?

Yeah, it's Alan. He is actually playing on the computer, he is not doing anything right now. [laughs]

We did an interview with Hades last year with Dan, so we thought that we can skip it this time. Okay, but the new album is very good actually.

Thank you.

How about Iron Maiden, do you feel them making an influence to your music or not?

I'd say no, I was never a huge Iron Maiden fan. It's not that I don't like them, I think they are an excellent, excellent band and I am absolutely humble to be compared to them. With Queensryche the same way, I was never a Queensryche fan, I can't really say that they are an influence, but I am grateful we are actually being compared to such good bands.

I was basically mentioning Iron Maiden just because the refrain of "Funnabulism" reminds me of their

"Powerslave" album.
Okay, that's cool.

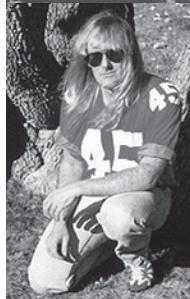
Your style was created in the 80s, what do you feel if people say that this is outdated?

Well, I don't know, I personally think that music should be pretty much timeless. Outdated? I'm not sure I even put that in my vocabulary. [laughs]

Do you consider yourself

JACOBS DREAM

Heavy and Bright but not Very White



as a Christian metal band?

No, I don't really have any problems being categorized as a white metal band. I think all the songs that we write are from the heart, and sometimes some of the religious returns come out. But I personally would not say that we are a Christian band, and in the States we would probably rejected as a Christian band.

Why is that?

Because we are not as religious as most Christian bands, and the Christian industry would probably have a problem with some of our lyrical content I believe.

Your promo papers say nothing about you being a

Christian band, but then I read some of your lyrics and got such an impression...

Yeah, as I said, we write a lot of stuff from the heart, and some of our beliefs do come out. But the Christian industry as I see it - I am not really familiar with it - would probably reject us because of our really strong reality check. Of our lyrical content.

So, what you're saying is that in Christian metal you really have to push your image up to the front?

Yeah, unfortunately, I think the art, or music, gets lost. And that's something definitely what Jacobs Dream is not about. We're totally into the art form of playing music and not into the image. As I said, I am not familiar with a lot of Christian acts, but it seems that if you aren't saying "Jesus" in every other line in your lyrics, you are kind of rejected.

I am not familiar with Christian metal at all, I am not even sure how many copies do those bands sell...

Yeah, I'm not really sure either. It's just from a little bit that I know I am passing a judgement really... [laughs]

Heavy metal is usually dark and pessimistic. Do you view Jacobs Dream this way or not?

We don't intend to be dark or pessimistic. It's just the opposite. We write songs about what we feel, about things that are going around us, more about the reality thing, so... I think that metal is just a musical style or a category, I wouldn't limit it to anything.

But it just happens that most of the metal bands are dark.

I would say that if you had put them into categories of light and dark, most would definitely fall into the dark area. I think it's probably just by coincidence, I am not really sure why.

You have a song called "Scape Goat" on your album, and it has very direct lyrics. Do you agree with that?

Yeah, it's extremely upfront. It's a very truthful song.

I agree with its idea, but it's being pushed very hard to the listener...

Yeah, we write a lot of songs by metaphor, just for the artistic feel of it, but that song is totally upfront. It really shows a lot of frustration that we have with the American culture. Yeah, I agree it's pretty in your face.

Do you plan to write some other songs like that, or do you plan to use more metaphoric-type of lyrics? Or both?

I can't say for sure because we don't really plan on doing either one, it's just comes out that way. I think our new album, which we are almost done with, does both. It's probably the same lyrical style.

So, nobody complained about the up-to-the-front lyrics?

No, I didn't have any complaints.

You mentioned a frustration with the American culture. Do you mean those shooting tragedies and then the blame being put on media, movies, and music?

Exactly, I think that Americans really need to point a finger at themselves. The way they take care of their children and blame outside influences like, as I mention in the song, music, movie, video games.

Are you a fan of music yourself? Are you interested in other bands and albums, or do you mainly care about your own band?

I am totally a music fanatic. I'm more of an old school kind of guy, I actually don't listen to tons of metal stuff. I am huge classical fan. And I think the things that I like to listen to musically are more technical type of styles, like Steve Vai, and classical stuff like Paganini. Yeah, I love music, I think that I probably eat and sleep it. I don't really listen to my own music that much; I spend a lot of time writing it but I don't really listen to our stuff.

Why, because you really know it very well?

Yeah, I am just overly familiar with it. Because, you know, you play in a band, you rehearse quite a bit, so hear the songs over and over again. I personally get a little bored with my own stuff. I get really excited about our newer stuff that I am writing, and I really dig playing that stuff. I like listening to [my own older music] for inspiration and making it better or whatever.

Rob Johnson played on one track on your album.

Yeah, Rob is a good friend of mine and he's a smokin' guitar player. That was my idea, I know him for 10 or so years. I wrote an instrumental and I thought that his style would be really coolest sounding in the few parts, so I kind of invited him.

Do you have any new material?

We are about 90-95% done with the next album as far as the writing goes.

Which songs from the current album would be most similar to the next album?

Well, I haven't actually thought about that... [laughs] Him, I don't know, I think that "Kinescope" is more on the veins on what we are doing now. It's really a mixture of something. The only thing that is more upfront my mind is that the new stuff a heavier, a little bit more aggressive musically.

That's good to hear, "Kinescope" is one of my favorites from the current album. Cool, I'm glad to hear it.

How many songs off the current album come from your demo CD that you released independently?

There is one song "Violent Truth" as a bonus track that was actually from the demo. We redid that only because the recording of the demo was so bad, I really wanted to see how it would sound with a good recording, and plus Metal Blade wanted to have a bonus track for whatever marketing reasons. There is that song and "Love and Sorrow" we redid, and all the other songs were written nine months prior we went to the studio.

What was the reason for having a bonus track?

I don't know, you have to ask Metal Blade. [laughs]

The press sheet I have tells that you sold about 3,000 of your demo CD, is that right?

Yeah, that's about right. We're still pressing them, so I kind of lost count. People are interested in buying those, so it's still going up. That would be right though and it's a total surprise, because I personally think it wasn't done very well. The only reason why we actually did it was to have a product, and it kind of blew up over here in Europe, and it was a great response.

Why do you think it wasn't done very well?

Well, we only spent 700 dollars on about 10 hours. [laughs] We didn't give it very much justice but it really was because of funds.

So, is it only the production, or did you also have in mind the songwriting?

No, actually I think the songwriting is really good. I think the lyrical content is pretty good, too. I always like the new stuff more, but if I go back I think as far as the songwriting goes, the music, it's good. It's just that the recording didn't give songs a very good justice.

How did Metal Blade approach you then?

What happened was that a guy by the name of Dennis Gulbev from Sentinel Steel somehow he got a hold of our CD. I'm not real clear on that story, but he really liked it and he ordered a few hundred of them, and Andreas [from Metal Blade] over here in Europe got a hold of one, he really liked it and pretty soon I had record labels calling my home which was totally surprising 'coz we didn't actually send any CDs to record labels. Metal Blade was one of those and that was pretty much how all this started. They were really enthusiastic, and they really came to think that metal style that we play would get marketable.

Do you play live?

Oh yeah, we are actually coming on a tour over here in Europe in April. With Armored Saint and Brainstorm.

Do you play in Ohio?

Yeah, we could probably play every night if we want to in Ohio. There's quite a few places to play there.

How many people would come to see you?

The biggest place around where I live is probably about 1,500 people, and the other place is about 300 to 500 people, and we have a whole bunch of smaller bars.

1,500 is probably difficult to fill.

Some bands have a hard time. You know, we are not playing there every night. [laughs] But if we play there maybe once a month, we can fill it up.

Your band was formed in 1994, when it was quite a difficult time for such style...

Err, I don't know about the time period, I know that I had a hard time finding musicians. We went through six or seven guitar players, a couple of bass players, a couple of drummers.

At that time nobody was signing such kind of bands.

I am not really sure, because I wasn't in the market to shop for labels.

Why did you form your own band?

It was pretty much just an art form. I really

wanted to form a band to write music, to put out a product for people to listen to. It was just a desire of mine. It really had nothing to do with marketing, money, or anything like that. It's just the drive that I have.

What do your friends and relatives say about your music?

They are really into it, they think that it's well thought-out, they think it's more intellectual than poppy music which is pretty permanent in the states. But they are really enthusiastic about that, I couldn't ask for more support from my family.

If you have any friends that are not into metal, what do they say?

People that have actually seen us play and that just come to see us play because they know us, they always say that they are not really into this style, but they enjoy watching us play. And that's pretty encouraging. Overall, friends are extremely supportive even if they are not into that style of music.

jacdream@aol.com, jacobs_dream@hotmail.com



[by Terhi Keskitalo]

It has been months since I talked to Timo Kotipelto last time, when we sat at one cafe in Helsinki and shared our future plans. After that, Stratovarius worked hard at studios and planned their forthcoming tour. Now the "technical" part of the work is done and the new album "Infinite" is out. The interview was conducted with singer Timo Kotipelto.

How has the new millennium started for Stratovarius?

It looks pretty good for us, actually, with the new label and with the new album. We're looking forward to this millennium, because it seems that the tour is going to be huge, at least what comes to advanced sales, it seems that we'll be playing in a lot bigger places everywhere. Of course, the tour will be longer and more beautiful. But it looks very good actually.

We could say that Stratovarius has achieved the success almost all around the world during the last few years. What do you think has been the key in your music that has made people to listen to it?

Hm, in the music it's probably the melodies, but what makes Stratovarius special if I compare our band to other similar bands, might be that there's three different nationalities in the band. Jens is living in New York but he's Swedish. Jörg is living in Dortmund, Germany and, of course, three Finnish in the band, so it makes the chemistry in the band. And, on the other hand, there's Timo TolKKI who's producer, and the guitar player and the main composer of the band and he's responsible for the songs that we recorded. Of course, also the musicianship in the band. There are so many elements in the whole package...

Stratovarius retrospective! Could you comment on:

The previous albums, including those where Timo TolKKI was singing?

They are beautiful [laughs]. I mean, the first one is like, well, it doesn't completely suck, but the sound is kind of terrible because the whole album was made in six days and that time the scene wasn't very good for Stratovarius. Then the next one is self-produced, and that was probably one of the most important albums for the band. With that album, we got the record deal in Japan and then when we got some popularity in Japan; we also got deals with the rest of the countries. The next album, "Dreamspace" is a very interesting album. To me it's very progressive. Some of the songs are excellent and some of the songs, well, I still don't know why they are on the album. Also that was the last album where Timo (TolKKI) was singing on. The next then ("Fourth Dimension"), it's the first on which I was singing. When I look back on this album, of course, I can sing better now than in those days. But it was a good album. We still play some songs when touring, like "Against the Wind," "Twilight Symphony," or "Distant Skies." Then again the next album, "Episode" was actually the album that made the Stratovarius sound, because then Jens and Jörg joined the band and we got like a totally different band, different sound, better production. It was recorded at Finnvox studios and Mikko Karmila was mixing the album. There are a couple of very very good songs on the album, like "Will the Sun Rise?"

And "Uncertainty"? [Which is my favorite Stratovarius song, composed by Timo Kotipelto.]

Oh yeah. [laughs] That's a bit different. And then comes the album called "Visions." I'll talk about the new album later, but on "Visions" there are a couple of the classic songs that we HAVE to play on tour, "Kiss of Judas" and "Black Diamond." With that album, we became more popular and we also toured in South America. And then comes "Destiny," which is for me a very sad and very depressive album. The reason for that is very simple: because the time we wrote those lyrics, we had a lot of difficulties in our private lives, so of course it affected the album. It was also the last album for Noise Records. I'd like to skip the compilation album, because I'm not a big fan of making money with fans. Or... Terhi, should I comment somehow this "Best Of" album or not?

We can concentrate on the other albums. Now tell me about the forthcoming album. I've heard a couple of clips which

were available in internet. They sounded very "Stratovariusish".

Yes, there's "Hunting High And Low" and "Millennium" clips available. Those are the most "Stratovariusish" songs on the album, but then there are songs which are even eight or nine minutes long, very very progressive! And there's like the real orchestra in a couple of songs. I think "Millennium" is the most typical song, but then in the last song there's only vocals, guitar, and a very big symphony orchestra on it. It's like a different song; it's not like a ballad, it's more like an outro. And also there's one song composed by Jens Johansson, "The Glory of the World." I think it's still a Stratovarius song although it's a bit different in the song structure, etc. He also made the vocal line. The other progressive song is called "Mother Gaia." Some people say it's the ballad of the album, but, on the other hand, it's not a ballad at all. Normal ballads are about women, but this one deals with planet earth. Some people find that there are influences from Queen; I think they mean the part where there's only the vocals and the piano. It's very progressive, you never know what comes next, like different parts. Very different songs. And one song is in MAJOR! I call it a "happy song," it's a typical Stratovarius song, but it's in major. "Surprisingly" they are in minor in general. And then there should be a bonus track in Europe. Timo composed it and I wrote the lyrics for that. And then there's the single and the video song called "Hunting High and Low."

Does it have something to do with the Norwegian band from 80s called A-ha?

No. Unfortunately not [laughs]. Everybody is asking me that A-ha question. It's completely different from that. It's about the ups and downs what you have in your normal life. The cover of this new album, by the way, is excellent. It's made by Derek Riggs, the guy who made all the Iron Maiden covers. I'm very very satisfied with the result, he did a good job with that. Timo made the basic sketch for the cover and Derek painted the rest. It looks amazing: there's like two different worlds. On the right side, there's like spiritual world and on the left side there's the material world. Between them, which divides these two worlds, there is the infinite side. There are dolphins jumping through the infinite side. It is like the human being. When it's born, he jumps from the spiritual side and the same thing backwards. When it dies it goes back to the spiritual side, to the other dimension. And we chose the dolphins because they represent purity and they are not nasty by nature. And when the human being is born, he is still without the bad habits. Then there is one coincidence: on the left, there's a bird which is circled with oil and, at the time we made this, we didn't know what happened in the coast of France, I mean that "nice oil leak" which is not actually very nice! That's basically the meaning of the cover. Of course, it's also describing the main song "Infinity," even though the album is called "Infinite." And your next question is probably "why it's not Infinity instead?". Would you ask that?

Why not, if you're ready to answer.

I'm always ready to talk. And especially now because it's not very often I can talk to you Terhi nowadays. [laughs]

It's so seldom, yes.

Anyways, we were supposed to name the album Infinity, too, but there's one guy called Devin Townsend (he used to play with Steve Vai). He named his album "Infinity" which Mr. Jens Johansson remembered while rehearsing, and then we

wanted to change the title, but not to change the meaning very much. There's only one alphabetic difference. So that's the story about the title.

Thank you. Now it's easier to understand the whole meaning! [laughs] Anyways, Timo, in Finland there are many famous metal bands at the moment. What is the role of Stratovarius in this group of bands? Do you feel your position somehow threatened?

No. I don't think there's any competition between the bands, at least there shouldn't be. I'm happy there are some Finnish bands that have made their breakthrough in the world. I just talked to some Finnish journalists last week. In their opinion, we kind of opened doors for young new bands. That's the case. And it's good if we can help Finnish bands, for example the brand new Finnish band Sonata Arctica tour with us. I can tell you that there are many bands that liked to tour with us, because of the success. It's nice to hear if we influenced the music of these bands, or we somehow helped them to get a deal or something.

How do you see Stratovarius in Scandinavian scene at the moment?

It's not big in Scandinavia, but it's only big in Finland. But I think it's getting better, at least in Sweden, and probably also in Norway and in Denmark. Jörg told me that the presales are very good in Sweden and in Denmark.

What about the international scene?

It's looking good, considering the forthcoming tour and also with this album. In France, some of the concerts have been sold out already. We got the new label deal in France, and actually the same guy that is promoting "smaller" metal bands like Iron Maiden will do the promotion there. Can't complain, actually. I was told that the only country where the sales won't go as high as they used to be is Japan.

Tell me something about the change of the record company. What kind of effect has it had in your lives?

At the moment it looks very very good. Our deal with Noise ended and we were free to choose the new one. Nuclear Blast was "knocking on our door," offering a deal. We ended up with Nuclear Blast because we saw what kind of promotion they do for their bands. They are very supportive.

How are those parallel projects going for you guys in the band, besides

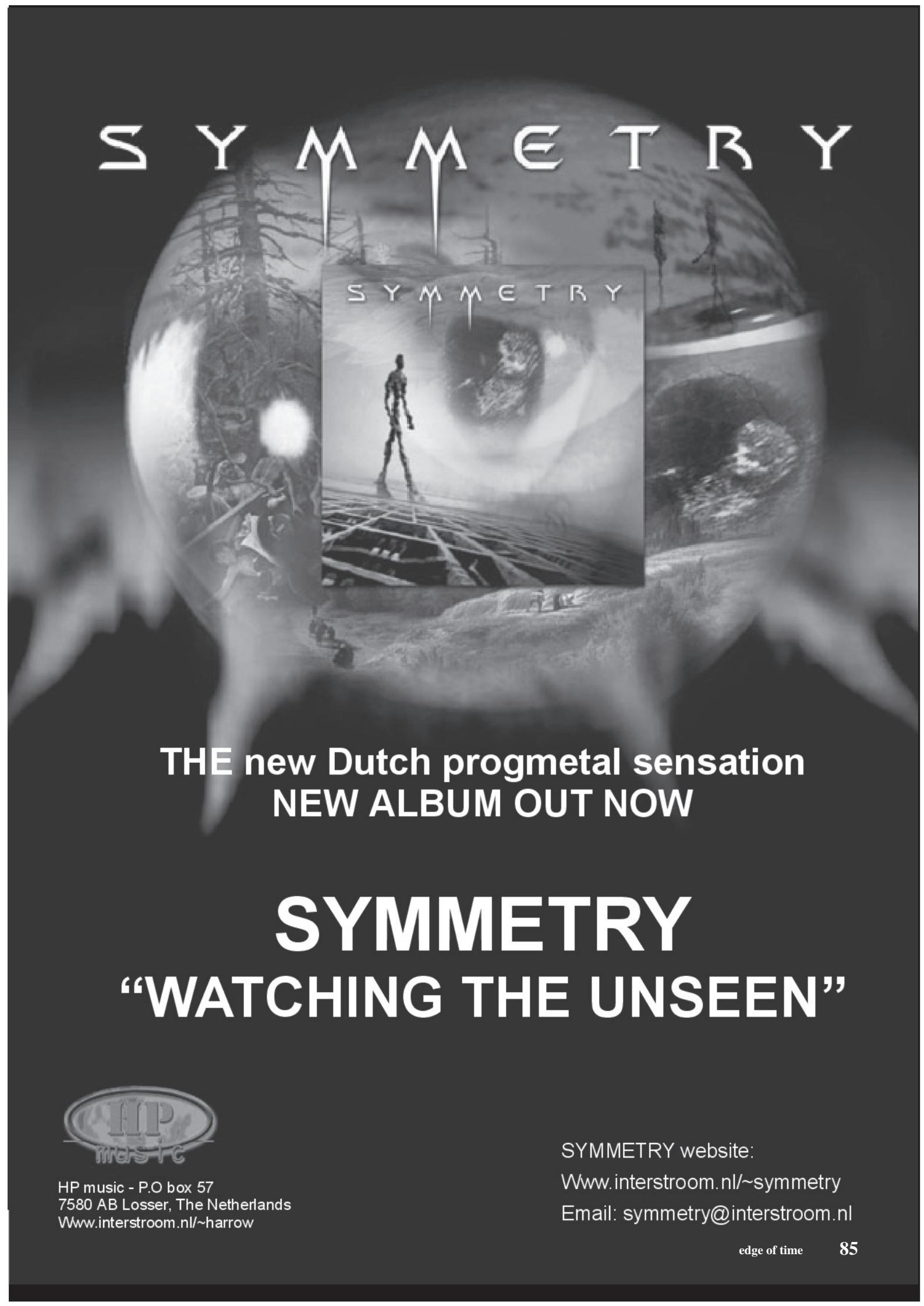
Stratovarius? At least Jens seems to be busy with his projects. Johansson brothers released last year, in my opinion, a very good album "Last Viking." Also he's been contributing to the last two Mastermind albums and seems to be a quite active member of the band.

We are probably all doing something, except Jari...

...who's biking and playing Playstation?

Exactly. Jörg is working for our management and booking agency, so he's very busy, taking care of the merchandise section, etc. Timo TolKKI has been composing and he's been producing this album. He is planning to do his solo album next year. I've been taking care of the company, which is taking care of Stratovarius: we have a company which is paying all the studio costs and flights, etcetera. So, I'm taking care of that paper shit. I have some plans about releasing my solo album, too, if I'll get the musicians I want, and if I can get the songs together. That would be like closer to the end of next year. Not during the spring 2001 yet.

SYMMETRY



SYMMETRY

THE new Dutch progmetal sensation
NEW ALBUM OUT NOW

SYMMETRY

“WATCHING THE UNSEEN”



HP music - P.O box 57
7580 AB Losser, The Netherlands
www.interstroom.nl/~harrow

SYMMETRY website:
www.interstroom.nl/~symmetry
Email: symmetry@interstroom.nl

demo reviews

7th MOON Promo'99

Emotional doom metal of this format is not usually expected from a warm-blooded Mediterranean country such as Spain. 7th Moon surprises us with this promo demo containing three songs, "The Eternal Flight," "I'm the King Again," and "Land of Rain." Musically, the influences of The Gathering, Theatre of Tragedy and Candlemass are more than evident, but the quality of the delivery and songwriting is very mature to dismiss any rip-off accusations. Especially, the brilliant song "I'm the King Again" shows that 7th Moon are capable of writing songs which bridge melodic doom metal with ethereal progressive song structures. The vocals of Sonia are exceptional, and she gives the music the emotional beauty with her celestial voice. However, the guttural voices do sometimes seem out of place. The debut CD "Alter Alma" will be released soon through the Danish label Serious Entertainment. If 7th Moon fulfills the potential as shown in "I'm the King Again," then "Alter Alma" could become something very. (CR) [7th Moon, P.O. Box 31, 08950 Esplugues de LL., Barcelona, Spain] [cartopap@ctv.es]

ABSENCE "Old"

It's a rare case when we get any promo stuff from Hungary. This Hungarian band plays a bit weird mixture of progressive, psychedelic sounds and Hungarian folklore. The opener "Old Black Song" is probably the best track on this 3-song demo. Here you can hear some vocal parts sung in Hungarian which remind me a bit of the Turkish parts by the band Pentagram. The singing of Peter Budai is pretty chaotic, I think the guy needs some practice. The musicianship looks better, but isn't very touching though. "Old" is quite a nice demo tape, but it seems that it's not impressive enough to draw attention of any labels. (SV) [Budai Peter, Sik Sandor u. 11, 2100 Godollo, Hungary] [absence@nexus.hu] [http://www.nexus.hu/absence]

ACTUAL TIME "Actual Time" demo

Actual Time is an instrumental trio consisting of Scott Andrews (guitar), Brad Derrick (drums), and Tom Snyder (bass) who have devoted their musical prowess to creating technical/progressive metal songs. Formed from the remains of the Charlottesville progressive thrash band Ataxia, this is their first musical exponent. Whereas most instrumental bands rely on an atmosphere (often induced by keyboards), memorable melodies or a sudden changes in rhythm to create a worthwhile listening experience, Actual Time show a distinct affinity for a theoretical and mathematical approach to their music. Although I am not sufficiently schooled in music theory to be able to completely appreciate the diverse polyrhythms and odd meters, I can appreciate the originality that has been put into the music. Although there are influences from other musical directions such as classical and jazz, the five compositions on this CD Demo are heavy enough (at times bordering on thrash) to appeal to fans of heavy progressive metal. It must be mentioned that Actual Time do not overly incorporate many jazz fusion parts into their compositions such as Cynic, Pestilence and Red Tide have done. For a CD Demo, the sound is acceptable, the guitar sound is very crunchy but the snare drum sound is a bit too thin. In terms of originality, a compliment needs to be made because I can not really compare Actual Time to other bands in the technical metal genre. However in my opinion, the addition of vocals would certainly benefit some of the songs. It would certainly enhance the accessibility factor (without distracting from the talented musicianship) of the music and can avoid possible musical numbness after twenty minutes. (CR) [actualtime@virginia.edu] [http://www.people.virginia.edu/~sha3u/time/]

CIRRHA NIVA "Enter the Future Exit" Parnassus Records

Cirrha Niva is a Dutch progressive metal band with a twist that has been releasing new material regularly over the last few years. After a mini-CD "The Mirror World Dimension" (1997) and a CD Demo "No More Psycho" (1998), they released the CD Demo "Enter the Future Exit" independently. Originally only meant for promotional purposes, the CD Demo consisting of the two epics "Vacuum" and "Sky Decay" (both in excess over nine minutes) was enhanced by adding two (shorter and more straightforward) live songs "The Dream" and "Redemption Denied" (also on their first mini-CD). On the debut mini-CD, Cirrha Niva were very convincing with a guitar-oriented progressive metal. At that time they sounded like a cross between Taramis and Solitude Aeternus musically with an interesting science fantasy lyrical concept. With some line-up changes, the musical direction also changed towards a more drawn-out epic style with a somewhat archaic sound. The twist in Cirrha Niva's prog metal is caused by the unusual song structures, the emphasis on combining various parts with different rhythms. New vocalist Arnold Kloek has a more dramatic voice and provides a nice contrast with the background vocals of female bass-player Liselotte Hegt. Although the music is more challenging musically, I personally think their earlier style had more charm and was more immediate than the newer work. It certainly needs multiple listens to completely appreciate its value. (CR) [Inge Steenhorst, Copemicuslaan 58, 5223 EK Den Bosch, The Netherlands] [http://CirrhaNiva.N1L.NET/]

DECEIVER "Crawl Through the Rubble"

This one is for brutal death freaks. Deceiver from USA offers us 6 uncompromising songs. The production is satisfactory, at least you can hear what's going on here. If you like recent releases of Cannibal Corpse, Incantation or Angelcorpse, try this one. Such brutal bands romp around probably only in the USA... (SV) [J.J. Michelitch, 1551 Saratoga Dr., Rio Rancho, NM 87124, USA] [http://members.xoom.com/deceiver] [deceiver69@juno.com]

ENSOPH "Les Confessions du Mat"

Something for fans of really dark and romantic music. Ensoph from Italy play atmospheric mixture of gothic, folk and metal. The band uses even such instruments as accordion or traverse-flute to lend those 3 songs on tape more originality and magic. According to info, there is a philosophical-esoteric concept behind this tape, and it definitely fits this melancholic and mystic atmosphere of songs. This cassette (about 30 minutes) will appeal to all fans of gothic and dark-avantgarde. Good. (SV) [55 Europe, 65 rest of the world, Fernando Reis, Rua Firmino Rebello 15, r/cb dto, 2780 Porto Salvo, Portugal] [teskio@spiro.fisica.unipd.it]

ETERNAL GLORY "March Into Battle"

The name of the band and this demo tells it all. Old school/heavy metal rules here. Everything would be OK, if not this slightly exaggerated pomp and unimaginative songwriting. No wonder, Eternal Glory exists only since January 99. You can feel the enthusiasm of the musicians, and you can't deny the lack of talent, either. For the first demo, it's OK, but nothing else. (SV) [10 DM/7\$ incl. postage, Gerd Pufier, Michaelisbergstr. 4, 74363 Eibensbach, Germany] [http://www.grunze.de]

EYEKON "Eyekon" demo

Eyekon is a progressive rock band from Stockholm, Sweden, and judging from this four song demo, they have a good deal of potential. Taking inspiration from the usual suspects (Dream Theater, Yes, Rush, and Fates Warning) and some less expected artists (Sting), Eyekon tends to stress the subtle and warm approach of songsmithing at the expense of in-your-face playing, ridiculously gratuitous solos and the needless heaviness plaguing so much progressive metal and neo-prog nowadays. The music is dominated by clean guitar tones (the sound frequently employed by Fates Warning and early Marillion), smooth bass and percussion interaction (with some nice syncopated off-beats), and warm, subtle keys. The second track actually begins with a Sting vibe - clean, emotive guitar lines and a heavily accented bass line with tight percussion. The music is never overtly heavy or noisy, but always "just right" - emotional and inviting. The vocalist Victor Takal could use some work (his voice is a little whiny and nasal), and I would like to see some lower, more hoarse vocal lines in the music, but his voice is far from from horrible - it just needs some work. Overall this is a fine demo, with a clean production, well written compositions and a warm, emotional atmosphere. I anticipate this band's next effort. (JS) [Eyekon, Victor Takala, Terrangvagen 77, 3 tr, 129 48 Hagersten, Sweden] [eyekon@mail.com] [http://www.listen.to/eyekon]

GALACTIC PULSE "Transcension through Dreams" demo

From the outskirts of Finland comes this promising instrumental progressive metal band.

Although the demo CD "Transcension through Dreams" is the first release under the guise of Galactic Pulse, they have actually been around since 1991. Known as Urolagnia at that time, they released several demos in which there was a shift in musical style from (brutal) death metal to melodic metal. Urolagnia changed their name to Galactic Pulse in the summer of 1999. This change of name also brought with it another change in musical direction: progressive metal. The people behind Galactic Pulse are Tommi Ronkonharju (guitars, bass), Jarmo Piikka (Drums & percussions), Markus Haimelin (keyboards). There are three instrumental songs on this demo CD "The Realization," "Between the Darkest Skies," and "Transcension Through Dreams." The song lengths ranging from 6-13 minutes give the listener a good impression what Galactic Pulse is capable of. The emphasis is not on technical musicianship but more on combining progressive song structures with mood and atmosphere. Actually, Galactic Pulse are at their best when they refrain from a potential verse-chorus structure but focus more of creating sound collages (as in "Transcension Through Dreams"). In fact, the songs on the demo remind me of a cross between a less ambient and polished version of Greyhaven and pre-Dream Theater Majesty. There is enough variation in the music to captivate the caring listener and to ensure that the vocals aren't missed. The sound is satisfactory (recorded on eight track digital recorder) but the packaging is non-existent. New material has been written and will be recorded soon, my expectations are high. (CR) [galacticpulse@hotmail.com] [http://www.saunalahita.fi/piikka/galacticpulse]

LITHIUM promo

Do you wonder what happened to Johnny Hagel, formerly on Tiamat and Sundown? Lithium is the answer - together with two other musicians Carl Nilsson (from Swedish industrial band Moth) and Patrik Hultin they've formed their industrial band Lithium. Now we can evaluate 3 new songs, which hardly have something in common with Tiamat or Sundown, contrary to many expectations. Here we get industrial music with futuristic turn and with melodies clearly revealed. On "Ugly Friend" we can

feel a slight touch of gothic, but mostly cold sounds of machines overwhelm other influences. First two songs remind me of melodic electronics by Terminal Choice, but Lithium care more about their melodic choruses and that the songs must "catch you". Still, three songs don't say to much, but in the future we can expect professional group of melodic industrial. (AO) [lithium_mail@yahoo.com]

LOWDOWN "In Twilight" demo/live CD

This trio from Aalborg, Denmark is getting a reputation of a very tight live act, and it's not a coincidence that I got their demo/live CD for a review. Lowdown were formed in 1994 and started as an Iron Maiden-inspired heavy metal group, but in recent years they geared up and now play an interesting blend of metal with tight and flowing songs containing nice melodies, catchy riffs, long instrumental parts, and slightly operatic vocals of guitarist Mikkel S. Pedersen (the brother of Behind The Curtains keyboard player Morten). The band mentions Fates Warning, Psychotic Waltz, and Iron Maiden as their influences, but the interesting thing is that these influences are not very visible in their music. Stylistically, Lowdown are somewhere between heavy, guitaric progressive, atmospheric, and (actual, not German) power metal. Three songs clock at 6 minutes, while two extend the 11th minute mark, but each song has a memorable theme, so the length is not a problem. Recently they won a big local contest (where pop/rock and similar mainstream bands also participated) and got some free studio time, so hopefully we will see an official release sometime soon. (GS) [Mikkel Sandager Pedersen, Eriksholmparken 178A, 9400 Norrsundby, Denmark] [lowdown@get2net.dk] [http://www.downweb.cjb.net]

BRIAN McALPINE demo

I am not sure if it's an official demo, but these two instrumental projects represent what ex-Psychotic Waltz guitarist Brian McAlpine is working on at the moment. The first track is heavy melodic guitar piece, a bit reminiscent to "Pleasures of the Flesh" of Psychotic Waltz "Dark Millennium" CD, yet more energetic and straightforward in fact, its style reminded me of how Archetype's mini CD sounded without vocals). The second track is out of different dimensions and is a dramatic orchestral instrumental, where its dark vision is the only visible connection to the metal genre. Both tracks show that Brian has a good ear on melodies and harmony, and his realizations sound well independently whether they are metal or not. Brian wants to release seven "Penetratalia" tracks (from "Dark Millennium" CD) together with the second track of this demo separately, so email or write him to know what's the status. (GS) [Brian McAlpine, 1204 N.Escondido Blvd.#B35, Escondido, CA 92026, USA] [FULLTONZ@aol.com]

MUTINY "Guilty As Charged" 2-track promo

Even if this CD contains only two songs, it's probably one of the best heavy/power records from Greece I've ever heard. The first song (9 minutes length) "The Cross-Bone Flag" sounds in the best Maiden manner, it's based on very good vocal lines and brilliant arrangements. The second track "Guilty As Charged" is a mid-tempo composition with strong old-school metal touch (in the positive sense). The refrain reminds me of Mercyful Fate a bit. This 2-track promo gives you an appetite for the full-length work. That's what I want to hear from all these "heavy metal revival" newcomers! (SV) [Agis Krimpenis, Platamon 12, 11147 Galatsi, Athens, Greece] [http://members.spree.com/mkefalakis/mutiny/] [mc95042@central.ntua.gr]

NORTHAUNT "The Ominous Silence"

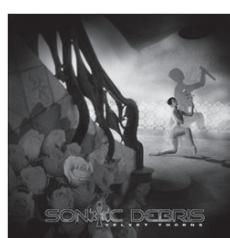
This demo contains 44 minutes of music, which would fit as a soundtrack to movies like "The Blair Witch Project." "The Ominous Silence" is an ambient release, where not much is happening. It's a very melancholic, threatening in places, piece of music. Luckily, it's silent but not very monotonous: bombastic melodies may seem similar, but it would have been worse if the whole disc would sound like "De sorte trae," which is really repetitive. A good release, but more action would be desired. (GS) [\$6, c/o Harleif Langas, Alme v. 6b, 7058 Jakobsl, Norway] [herleif@hotmail.com] [http://www.geocities.com/SoHo/Den/7966/]



RE-VISION "Whore Venus" promo EP

German band developed their style in intriguing ways since their self-titled debut. This 5-song CD, a prelude to their second full-length, strikes as gothic/psychedelic rock influenced mid-tempo metal, coming out as a strange cross between Bruce Dickinson's "Chemical Wedding" and, err... what do I know, Fields of Nephilim maybe (though if you'd listen to the heavy and busy "Inside Your Self," you would think I am out of mind with such definitions). "Whore Venus" is an example showing that dark and melodic doesn't imply predictable. The production is not sterile (guitars could have been heavier), but it's a preview CD only. The full-

length album (12 songs) should be out on B. Mind-Records. (GS) [10DM/\$6, Christoph Lucker, Hochstrasse 103, D-45731 Waltrop, Germany] [re-vision@t-online.de] [http://www.t-online.de/home/re-Vision/]



SONIC DEBRIS demo

From the cold Northern part of Europe comes this Norwegian five-piece called Sonic Debris. During the four years of their existence, they've managed to release three demos. Under scrutiny is their third untitled demo. The four songs and a short outro lasting under 20 minutes give a good impression of the range of their music. Although various progressive influences (King Crimson, Rush, and Mahavishnu Orchestra) are mentioned, the music as shown here is more akin to a hybrid between Saigon Kick, Faith No More, and English guitar rock. The songs are extremely well-played though with deviously progressive parts interwoven between the general accessible melody lines. A definite emphasis has been put on memorable vocal melodies, which create fresh songs that tend to keep buzzing in your head afterwards. A recommendable effort, worthy of prolongation towards a proper album. (CR) [sonicdebris@hotmail.com] [http://home.telia.no/sonicdebris]

TERCIA "Carnival" demo

Modern heavy music can almost always be classified into subgenres. Tercia describe their music as jazz metal. Anyone expecting music that combines jazz metal with fusion along the lines of Cynic would however be shocked. On this four song demo CD, the French group create an extremely unique sound which requires multiple listens to even slightly absorb the wealth of ideas encompassed in the songs "Greed King," "Carnival," "Suspended," and "Aces." The songs are all in the four-five range but there is no predefined standard build-up: imagine an abstract or surrealistic painting put to music. An angelic voice is interwoven into wonderful sounds of abrasive distorted guitars, minimalistic piano and Hammond organ sounds, and virtuous drumming to create mid-tempo soundscapes. For lack of better comparison, fellow countrymen Etron Fou Leloublon spring to mind, however a reference or comparison to any other band is absolutely futile. After 18 minutes, the demo ends just as abruptly as it started leaving an exhausted ear. For the distinguished few, a yearning remains for more but the mind and intellects needs to be present to savor the experience. If there was an "Edge of Time" award was given to the most progressive and outrageous release of this issue then the most likely candidate is without a doubt the French band Tercia. (CR) [Frederic Lievens, Apt 113, 18 Rue J.Jaures, 56000 Vannes, France] [http://tercia.gemm.com]

THOUGHT SPHERE "Shadow Weaver"

German Thought Sphere have been already reviewed in our mag a couple of times. The new demo shows a great improvement, especially in the instrumental area. Thought Sphere have become more complex and probably more psychedelic, what really suits the songs. The only problem would be Andreas Lohse's voice that somehow cannot adapt itself to these changes in the music and warbles in a well-tried power metal manner. If not this shortcoming, songs like "Tragic Kingdom" (No Doubt cover?) or "Everybody" would be very impressive pieces of progressive music. I hope the guys will pay attention to this until the new CD which will be out in the middle of 2000 through B. Mind Records. (SV) [\$4 incl. postage, Andreas Lohse, Torgauer Str. 8, 40231 Duesseldorf, Germany] [ThoughtLohse@aol.com] [Jen.Schaefer@t-online.de]

WHERE ECHOES END "My Sweet Grotesque" demo

Guitarist Paul Read (ex-Vaudvihrl) passed away, and the singer who was very much involved into the songwriting appeared not to be suitable to the music at all. It's just two misfortunes that touched Where Echoes End in 1999, yet the band has new material and is looking for a new singer. Eddie Katz has sent me 60 minutes (16 tracks) of instrumental demo material. Musically, it's pure electronic ambient, not as dark and heavily depressive as band's debut "By the Pricking of My Thumb," rather more visionary and crystal. A couple of more "commercial" tracks are not miles away from Jean Michelle Jarre. The music contains many subtle nuances and you have to play it loud. All instrumentals, as they are now (the vocals are planned), would suit very well to computer games or virtual reality presentations. It's actually quite difficult to imagine how vocals will fit, but we'll see. If they don't add guitars, it won't even distinctly be metal but in not only metal we trust. (GS) [2 Auravale Rd, Menzies Creek, 3159 VIC, Australia] [echoes@labyrinth.net.au] [http://www.labyrinth.net.au/~echoes]

6 panel fold out
poster by
Travis Smith!!!

Darkstar II

Heart of Darkness

Available Now!
Order Online!



**New CD by ex-Psychotic Waltz guitarist,
Dan Rock**

Journey into this darkened, ambient, sci-fi, metal soundscape.

Audio samples & ordering at www.psychoticwaltz.com

Also visit: members.aol.com/X1Darkstar

Mail Orders: PO Box 710332, San Diego, CA 92072 - USA

\$12.00 in U.S. - \$20.00 outside U.S.

"5.5 out of 6" - Metal Invader

EVIL WINGS

COLORS OF THE NEW WORLD

info@adrenalinel.it

<http://www.adrenalinel.it>



A MASTERPIECE of melodic Progressive Hard Rock.
It contains the amazing 18 minutes prog-metal
suite "The Secret" as well as the brand new hits
"Colors Of The New World" and "Away".



ADRENALINE RECORDS



ADRENALINE RECORDS