

progressive metal magazine

edge of time

issue #12

Psychotic Waltz


The story of **Vauxdvihl** and
Where Echoes End
Dominion Records
- progressive metal label

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editorial

with focus on the Bad side...

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playlists

strange taste, huh?

Giedrius Slivinskas (GS)

1. Tragedy Divine "Visions Of Power"
2. The Gathering "Nighttime Birds"
3. Psychotic Waltz all
4. Lethal "The Arrival" (demo 87)
5. Darkstar "Marching Into Oblivion"
6. Fates Warning "Perfect Symmetry"/"A Pleasant Shade Of Grey"
7. Helstar "Nosteratu"
8. Anomaly "Anomaly"
9. Strapping Young Lad "City"
10. Seven Signs "Silence Of A Wish"

Audrius Ožalas (AO)

1. Tiamat "A Deeper Kind Of Slumber"
2. Lacrimosa "Stille"
3. Death In June all
4. The Gathering "Nighttime Birds"
5. Arcana "Cantar de Procenza"
6. Emperor "Anthems To The Welkin At Dusk"
7. In The Woods "Omnia"
8. Darkstar "Marching Into Oblivion"
9. Ordo Equilibrium "The Triumph of Light..."
10. Dismember "Death Metal"

Sigita Vėlyvis (SV)

1. Fates Warning "A Pleasant Shade Of Grey"
2. Tribe After Tribe "Pearls Before Swine"
3. Whiplash "Sit, Stand, Kneel, Pray"
4. Divine Regale "Ocean Mind"
5. Jethro Tull "Benefit"/"Aqualung"
6. Threshold "Extinct Instinct"
7. Bozzio Levin Stevens "Black Light Syndrome"
8. Dub War "Pain"
9. Neurosis "Through Silver In Blood"
10. Spastic Ink "Ink Complete"

Gregorio Martin (GM)

1. Eternity X "The Edge"
2. Savatage "Sirens"/"Dungeons Are Calling"
3. Symphony X "The Damnation Game"/"The Divine Wings Of Tragedy"
4. Marta Sebestyen "The Best Of Marta Sebestyen"
5. Kiss "Unplugged"/"Double Platinum"
6. Astrud Gilberto "The Silver Collection"
7. Ivanhoe "Polarized"
8. Stratovarius "Visions"/"Fourth Dimension"
9. Apocrypha all
10. Ozzy Osbourne "Diary Of A Madman"



previous issues.

#7, 8, 9, 10, and 11 are available for \$2 each. get all five for \$5! It's a real BARGAIN!!! These issues contain interviews with many bands you always wanted to see in a magazine.

In the last issue's editorial, I was talking how good it was that metal scene was so diverse then. I still think almost the same way now, but my emotions calmed down a bit.

Let's consider progressive metal (which is a priority genre in "Edge Of Time"). Sterile music and mechanical technicality can pretty easy become emotionless and we witness that. Yes, there are lots of new prog metal bands, but do we get more diversity from it? 'Dream Theater copycats' is a pretty old topic... But the problem is even not here. For instance, Lemur Voice's main influence is Dream Theater, but it doesn't decrease the value of their "Insights" album much. Many of us are not against hearing good copies, or, let's just say, good bands of THE STYLE. It's more frustrating, that a raising interest in progressive metal let average bands to get signed and release average records. Such average records cannot be named 'good copies'. It's even more pathetic, when young bands cry they can't get a record deal. As someone said, if

you don't have a deal, it means you are not good enough yet. (There may be exceptions, but they are rare.) Of course, for a prog metal band, it's far more difficult to get signed than for a mainstream band, but it's naive to believe that the matter will change. Great bands sooner or later get signed. I have listened to a handful of old demo tapes from 1986 and 1991 and was amazed by the high songwriting and technical skills of those bands. Some of them got signed, others did not. Many bands today put their products too early in the run.

I talked about 'goodness'. But we can't forget IDENTITY. I don't know any other genre that would have had an elite with 3 well-known and respectful bands and there would be no competitive bands which would get close to or even surpass them. The prog metal elite consists of Dream Theater, Fates Warning, and Queensryche and it seems to stay the same forever. Does anyone dare to name a prog-metal band better than any of these 3? OK, "Awake" and "Hear In The Now Frontier" received much criticism and, perhaps, aren't that great, but the best albums of these bands remain undefeated. Personally, I think the best attempts to get into 'the elite' were Vauxdvihl's "To Dimension Logic" and, partially, Shadow Gallery's "Carved In Stone". Besides, I would add Psychotic Waltz to 'Big Three' but they aren't exactly a progressive metal band. You may say there are other great albums. I agree. But most of them still lack identity. We have a lot of 'good' albums, but there is a significant lack of 'great' albums.

Forgive my mumbling and this pretentious beginning. How there would be, first of all, it's really great that, at least, there is what to criticize. Just take a look at the quantity of reviews in a heavy/power/progressive-metal section... It's bigger than ever. It's difficult to evaluate others creative talent, but who can say we don't have a right to do that? We do not smash, we stimulate. In the end, if there were no press, most of people wouldn't even know about an existence of one or another band. If everything would be described without subjective evaluation 'good' or 'worse', people would buy CDs almost blindly and become disappointed. Our purpose is to *guide* you through different music. [To tell the truth, nobody have blamed us for a criticism yet. Why defending then?...]

Ending on a higher note, notice that bigger labels begin to sign progressive/power metal bands. Metal Blade (again), Century Media, and even Nuclear Blast have their 'melodic-metal' bands now. I don't even talk about Black Mark and Massacre who always have had a lot of power metal artists under their rooster. There are a lot of new labels springing out, the concurrence is getting bigger, and, well, hopefully we will have a chance to hear more bands that are DIFFERENT.

Support the movement in an ACTIVE way!

[CS]

various comments

thanks, small
font, complaints,
future, etc.

acknowledgments. heavy thanks to everybody involved in one or another way: those who helped with printing and scanning, particularly, SB & SS double-typing team for extreme patience and goodwill.

contents. bigger than ever. lots of fresh blood: Anomaly, Where Echoes End, Eternity X, Spiral Architect, Tritonus, Sensorium, etc., etc. lots of reviews on prog metal.

layout. streamlined and plain in places, in comparison with a couple of older issues. done quite in a rush. good, interesting, and innovative layout demands lots of time and resources...

space. everything is PACKED. I was striving to achieve a total weight less than 100g. it had to fit into 36 pages but I failed... damn postage rates...

text. font is small. besides, we have faced some printing problems, so please forgive if something looks not that good. hopefully, everything is readable.

future. oh, yeah.

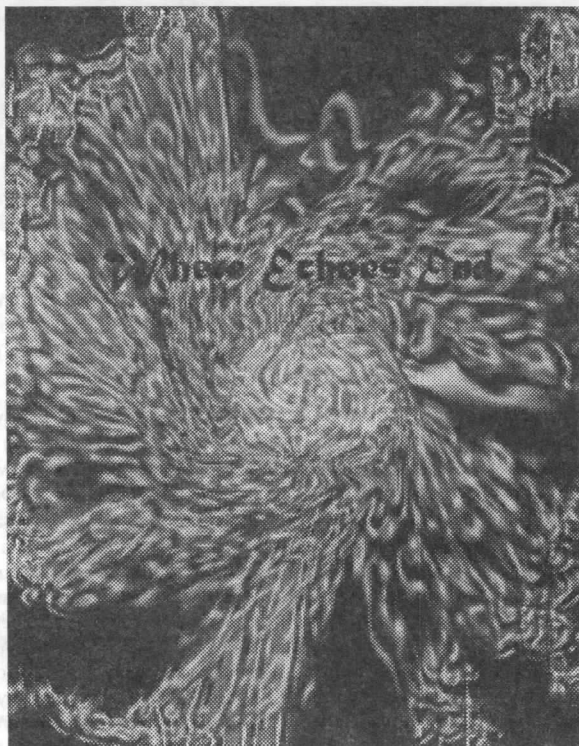
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Edge Of Time #12
DP034
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Where Echoes End

The Feeling of Vauxdvihl expressed in a new way

Interview by Giedrius Slivinskas



"To Dimension Logic" was one of the most prominent progressive metal albums. Its authors, the band named Vauxdvihl, are from a distant land Australia. The CD was released back in 1995 by Advent Records and gradually achieved a 'great-album' status. The band always was a slightly mystic one. In a couple of interviews that I have read, they were giving hazy answers and it was hard to get what it is all about, i.e., when to expect a new album, has the style actually changed, etc. There was a 3-songs demo released in 1996, which surprised many because of more industrial approach.

I tried to clear the things up and talked to Paul Read (a.k.a. Paulpot), the original member of Vauxdvihl who did not participate in the recording of "To Dimension Logic", and Eddie Katz, the former bass player. Both of them have founded a new band called Where Echoes End which, stylistically, is very different from Vauxdvihl. Yet, they claim, that emotionally they are not that far away... "Next Weeks Miracle" is the title of their first demo.

According to their words, only Fab Gallen (guitars/vocals) and Chris Delov (drums) from "To Dimension Logic" line-up are the members of current Vauxdvihl. The paths of Vauxdvihl and Where Echoes End go in different directions and lead to different places...

I don't know if I am allowed to relate Vauxdvihl and Where Echoes End but I can't skip that... So, WHAT did happen after "To Dimension Logic"?!

Paulpot: After "To Dimension Logic" nothing happened. Band members changed and then settled on a line-up for a while. Music was still being written and various music types were being absorbed. Vauxdvihl is a slow moving beast, sloth-like at times. In the last few years, only one or two rehearsals took place with a full line-up. A demo was recorded and then VV sat back for a while to see the reaction. A new CD is not far off. I'm not sure if it's a full CD or a half a dozen songs, but I am in no position to say now as I have limited contact with the Vauxdvihl guys.

It's probably more correct to say that you stopped playing progressive metal and began to play ambient, instead of saying 'you changed the style'. WHAT were the REASONS?

Paulpot: The new music may have ambient elements to it, but it's still dark with lashings of atmosphere. The majority of people that have heard the demo tell us that it is very disturbing. The feeling of VV may still be there but it is being expressed in a new way. Progressive metal is quite limiting in some ways to the point where some progressive music has that sound about it and you know it's progressive. We don't believe that it's changing or being progressive to keep going the same route. It's more progressive to change and grow musically, that's the meaning of progressive, to progress, don't hold back. Where Echoes End may go heavier than VV yet, it's just not evident on the demo.

Eddie: I found being in a progressive band very limiting musically. Progressive music in Australia is stagnant and has been for years, no one seems to be doing anything innovative, and innovation is exactly what a progressive band should be striving to achieve. To innovate and progress, that's what it's all about. Being the bass player in Vauxdvihl was the most frustrating time as a musician for me because of the limits placed on me by other members of the band. With Where Echoes End, there are no limits, we decide on a direction and a concept and we work towards those goals. To put it bluntly, I've never been happier personally or musically and that's something I never found in Vauxdvihl!

Can you run deeply through the whole history of Vauxdvihl and Where Echoes End? When did Where Echoes End born?

Paulpot: VV is like a pimp and then we're the whore's. Once upon a time, Eddie, Paul and Fab, wrote music and for a long time could not find a singer or drummer. As time passed, drummers went through and Chris was the man. A singer then came along who sounded remarkably like Midnight (Crimson Glory). We rehearsed for a year and did a few gigs then exploded. Eddie, Paul and Chris joined up with Fred (guitarist) and rehearsed a different style of music all together, then that split, too. Eventually Chris went back with Fab and then Fred joined in. A demo was recorded... Eddie came back down that VV road again and shazam!

"To Dimension Logic" was recorded. After its release, Eddie was out again. Fred's then out. Paul back in. Demo '96 done. Started work on a CD in 1997. Paul out again. And now Fab and Chris are VV. (They may have alias's now due to the VV factor!)

Then a healthy new baby weighing in at around 170 kilos was born in late May '97. We named it Where Echoes End. It was not a difficult birth as we have been together musically on and off for about 10 years.

Have Vauxdvihl had any recordings besides "To Dimension Logic"? I have heard that there were more than 10 songs ready back in 1996? Were they prog metal?

Paulpot: Only one VV CD has been released up to this stage. In 1996, there were probably 17 songs ready to go. Quite a few were acoustic, quite a few were heavy with an industrial feel and even some underground techno sounds. A few sections may have had a progressive feel due to Chris' drumming. These songs were extremely diverse. VV may put out a folk album one day, who knows?

There was a 3-songs demo somewhere at the end of 1996 still under the name of Vauxdvihl. Can you talk more about it?

Paulpot: The three-tracks demo was recorded with the Fab, Chris and Paul line-up and these three songs may end up on the new VV recordings I would assume, but I never like to assume because as Benny Hill put it, "It makes an ASS out of U and ME". The three songs show a change in direction, they were more direct and shorter. The unessential things were cut out, but, at the same time, there were more electronic sounds included.

What the other three guys from "To Dimension Logic" are doing now?

Paulpot: "The Dimension Logic" line-up was Fab, Chris, Eddie and Fred. Stacey Handchild was not a member of the band and I bailed out before the CD was recorded. Fred has been studying music at college and I've heard he has recorded a fusion CD. Fab and Chris are still VV. So that leaves Eddie with Where Echoes End.

Is "Next Weeks Miracle" the only release of Where Echoes End so far?

Eddie: "Next Weeks Miracle" is our first but certainly not our last release. The 6 songs on the tape represent a cross section of the material we have written over the past 3 months. When we recorded the demo we chose songs that varied from one another to give the listener a better idea of the new direction we have taken.

In the near future, we will be recording a full-length CD which should contain as many as 22 songs, most of which are nearing completion. We are extremely excited about the new material which contains music influences ranging from Celtic and Classical to the more progressive styles of music with a dark atmospheric feel. The CD will run in chapter form through 22 stages and 5 chapters. We also have some revolutionary ideas for packaging and art work for the CD which we are developing with a talented young photographer named Charles Prochazka.

Paulpot: It's true.

Was it difficult to be a progressive metal band in a country like Australia? Can you mention some other good Australian bands of similar style?

Paulpot: It was extremely difficult to be

"I don't think either of us will be working with Vauxdvihl in the near future or the distant future. Our first priority will always be Where Echoes End and I hope we will always look to the future not the past and continue to progress, we are extremely happy with the new material and I don't think we will ever go back to the way we were, it's time to move on."

anything but a straight out rock band in Australia. If it's not a cover band or something people can listen to without thinking about it, then the market in Australia is a tough one. We tend to wait

Vauxdvihl "To Dimension Logic"

(Advent Records, 1994)

Frederic Leduc (guitars and mandolin), Fab Callen (guitars), Chris Delov (drums), Edward Katz (bass and keyboards), Stacy Handchild (vocals)

1. the weapon
2. to dimension logic
3. questions or misanthropy
4. separate ends
5. comedy of errors
6. philosophia mosaica
7. in search of forever
8. minus absence

for the rest of the world to give a trend the nod, and then a year down the track Australia follows. I'd like to mention some other bands of similar style to VV, but I don't hang out in those circles anymore and therefore I don't know of any...
Eddie: People don't care....they don't understand it....they don't want to understand it....and they just don't get it. Progressive music is just too much for the average Australian to handle. It's a different culture here and we are a minority which makes things pretty difficult.

"To Dimension Logic" was VERY WELL achieved by progressive metal fans all over the world. Still, sales-wise it does not have big figures, right? What reasons of that do you see? Distribution was more or less decent, wasn't it? What role your geographical location has played?

Paulpot: The sales were good considering that the majoring was sold due to word of

war, culture.....the list goes on.

Where Echoes End is a vehicle for expressing our opinions. It allows us to put forward our ideas (musically and mentally) and receive feedback from people all over the world. I have read a lot of books over the past 3 years on topics ranging from Physics, Evolution, Science, Mind, Mysticism, Astronomy and I incorporate what I learn with the music I write.

In the future, Where Echoes End may tackle subject like The paradox of quantum physics or Naked singularities or The big bang theory or The theory of relativity, we may look at Mind and Consciousness or Fuzzy logic and its infinite shades of gray. Who knows where this journey will lead us.

Paulpot: What it is, Bro! The big band theory, that's the one where Glen Miller and Tommy Dorsey come back to life via the magic of the stretched pantihose, cotton wool and 3 very small coat hangers. The science confederation will soon proclaim the Big Band Theory as the answer to all of the big Questions and a few tiny problems will be put to rest also, e.g., why does only one sock disappear in the washing machine?

Would this project be possible without a philosophical background (some of which is stated on the tape cover and on the press kit)?

Eddie: Where Echoes End revolves around a philosophical background. The views expressed on "Next Weeks Miracle" are our own and I think we will always express an opinion with our music. As I mentioned above, the forthcoming CD will revolve around a concept which looks at life and the problems we face as a result of being too numerous, too

establish a sense of self, and from the self the ego is born. Most of the worlds problems that exist today are caused by this ego driven monster we call man, eliminate the ego and you solve the problems.

Paulpot: The world would be a terrific place without man-kind !

Did your landmate Black Lung influence Where Echoes End in one or another way?

Paulpot: I've only heard Black Lung briefly and, in fact, I went to see Black Lung live a few months ago and I left before the end. They have no influence on us.

Is it difficult to promote Where Echoes End? It's not progressive metal, and therefore you have to strike to the different areas... Different record companies, different distributors,

like Where Echoes End, it's that simple.

It's time to change, nothing stays the same and I hope that fans of Vauxdvihl continue to mature and grow as much as we have over the past few years. Just look at this as the beginning of a long quest that could take you anywhere.

Paulpot: And you don't need a compass or map.

Will you consider the appearance of vocals in Where Echoes End? Who did spoken parts in "Next Weeks Miracle", are they samples of some movies or what?

Eddie: We are considering vocals but it would be minimal at this point. I think the sample we have chosen express everything we wanted them to and we're having so much fun working this way that it looks like we may continue without vocals, but you never know. When we work with samples, we take small parts

The Story of Vauxdvihl and Where Echoes End

different audience, etc.

Eddie: I think, it's difficult to promote anything truly original and experimental, having said that I also think we may appeal to a broad range of listeners. The response we've received in Australia has been extremely positive, everyone, who has heard the tape, has commented on how original it sounds and most of these people are listeners of progressive metal. So it's fantastic.

I think, if you can detach yourself from what we did in Vauxdvihl and listen with a clear and open mind you will be

Where Echoes End "Next Weeks Miracle" demo (June/1997)

All songs written and arranged by Eddie Katz and Paul Read.

1. ripples on a stagnant pond
2. terra incognita (beyond the reach of science)
3. syndication: part II
4. opinions divided
5. only in war
6. i tell the truth even when I lie

rewarded. I'm a listener of progressive music but my taste in music has matured and grown to the point where I can appreciate a whole range of different styles and I think it shows in the music we are writing.

Paulpot: yeah.

"Next Weeks Miracle" has probably got very controversial reactions...

Eddie: Some of the sampling is quite disturbing and intense which some listeners may find a bit controversial. The samples we have chosen for the songs are very important, they make the song come alive and gives the music a strange ambient atmosphere. With each song, we try to put forth a view or a certain mood and the samples help to achieve that goal. When you deal with issues such as religion and politics you are bound to get some negative reactions from some people.

Paulpot: that's correct, negatoria.

What can you say to disappointed fans that were waiting for something in the vein of "To Dimension Logic"?

Eddie: It's time to progress, I consider listeners of progressive metal to be some of the most musically open minded people around, all that we ask is that you let us guide you on a journey to uncharted territory, to places you thought you would never explore.

If you liked "To Dimension Logic", you must be musically open minded. And if you are musically open minded you will

from a range of sources and arrange them in such a way that the song tells a story, so there are lots of fragmented sections combined to make a coherent and cohesive whole. Basically, we use anything that interests us or fits with the concept or theme, anything that can help put forward our views.

Paulpot: Indeed.

Who is Helen?

Paulpot: Helen is my girlfriend and personal secretary. Helen put the VV web page up and took care of e-mail correspondence. She is also helping with Where Echoes End.

What will you do now? Is the question of Vauxdvihl reformation in the original line-up excluded? Has "Next Week Miracles" been mailed to many record labels/magazines?

Eddie: At the moment, we're working on building a following and just letting people know what's going on. In the next 2 months, we hope to put the finishing touches to the last of the songs we have written and then go into the studio. We recently had a meeting with the sound engineer we will be working with in the studio and everything seems to be running along smoothly.

I don't think either of us will be working with Vauxdvihl in the near future or the distant future. Our first priority will always be Where Echoes End, and I hope we will always look to the future not the past and continue to progress, we are extremely happy with the new material and I don't think we will ever go back to the way we were, its time to move on.

Paulpot: "Next Weeks Miracle" has made its way to you first and now it's going all around the globe, we are not too interested in pushing it in Australia.



["Next Weeks Miracle" can be obtained for \$4 (cheque or money order) from Where Echoes End, 48 Wilma ave, Mulgrave 3170, VIC, Australia]

[paulpot@labyrinth.net.au or echoes@labyrinth.net.au]

[http://www.labyrinth.net.au/~echoes]

"I have no idea how the distribution was but I can say that we received a lot of emails asking where they could get the CD as it was extremely hard to find, nobody could purchase the thing without going through huge dramas."

mouth. The management was dodgy and within the band some of us only got told selective things, so we never really knew exactly what was going on. It is truly amazing that "To Dimension Logic" did nothing at all considering all the positive feedback.

I have no idea how the distribution was but I can say that we received a lot of emails asking where they could get the CD as it was extremely hard to find, nobody could purchase the thing without going through huge dramas. I could go on about this question for ever but it would turn ugly..... people seem to enjoy ripping others off.....ect.....what the fuc..... bastar.....d.....s...

Eddie: Demographics play a major role. We are so far away from where the action is that most bands just die or fade away in a cesspool of pub gigs. Its also very easy to get ripped off, and because we are so far away people take advantage of you. You can't deal face to face with anyone because of the distance.

← Where Echoes End

Present the concept of Where Echoes End.

Eddie: Where Echoes End is a unique blend of ambient sonic textures, distressing sampling, dark mysterious moods, and themes with strong melodic hooks throughout which draw the listener into a panorama of sound. "Next Weeks Miracle" is just a small portion of a much larger work which addresses issues ranging from religion, science, psychology,

greedy, and too mobile. Greed is one of the major factors which drives the human race and could cause its down fall. Everybody wants something... more money, more power, more respect, more children, more sex, more land, more food and some of us will stop at nothing to get what we want. Next Weeks Miracle and the forthcoming CD will uncover what people want and how they go about getting it. It will show how the group or superorganism rather than the individual is what really matters in the quest for the things we want.

Paulpot: And so say all of us.

Can you give some explanations behind the phrase "we have met the enemy, and he is us"?

Eddie: We Have Met The Enemy, And He Is Us ... sums up the entire concept in one simple phrase. It basically shows how we are our own worst enemy. We go to war in the name of religion, we kill for the right to speak, we stand by idly and watch as Rwanda moves from hunger to holocaust, we commit unspeakable acts for illusions we believe in, murder, muggings, robberies and rape, where will it end.

The greatest flaw in mans consciousness is our perception of time. When the human species became aware of the passage of time everything began to change, possibly for the worse. Awareness of time means awareness of death, and awareness of death means that you can foresee your own mortality. From this awareness, we

Keith Sudano
(Eternity X)

Formerly known simply as Eternity, this American band changed their name to Eternity X in October of 1996. As I progressively got to know them better, I realized I was in front of something very special, and not common in the music scene. I had the chance of interviewing Eternity X vocalist and "alma mater" Keith Sudano during the first half of the month of August, just a few months after their last "child", as he once referred to their monumental release "The Edge", was born. As you will be able to read, all the process until this record was finally completed has much to do with a labor.

Hello Keith, how are you doing?
Ohhhh, pretty good my friend. I'm all revved up here ready to answer questions... bring em on!

What have you and the band been doing lately?

Lately we have been concentrating on stage show, touring and CD sales. We like to keep involved as much as possible in the business end of things. We're just getting ready for some great things to happen. A lot of advertising and sending samplers is also part of our everyday lives too.

Oh yes, I understand. I should say I am not familiar with any band who has a more direct and warm contact with their base of fans as Eternity X has. This also can be applied to the tons of samples you freely distribute, right? So, are you preparing something special for the forthcoming shows supporting The Edge?
HmMMM, I think more special than anyone realizes. Lets just say it will be FUN!

What can you tell about a possible tour around Europe?

We were asked to do shows in Germany on October 4th but we had to decline for certain reasons. We are going anyway to enjoy the Oktoberfest with some people at our record company and some fans of ours who invited us. The true European tour starts in Germany in March 1998. Whew! Now the Europeans will have to listen to Jims horrible jokes in Person!

Oooh, are they that bad? I have to admit his inputs on the Eternity X newsletter seemed to me quite funny and for moments even brilliant. Last one I remember now, was when he mentioned Zeek [bassist] left the priesthood after hearing The Confession song.

Yeah, I do have to admit that Jims humor comes out in mysterious ways! Sometimes he doesn't even know it and with a certain look he can have me rolling on the floor.

Reviewing some biographical notes about yourself and the way you

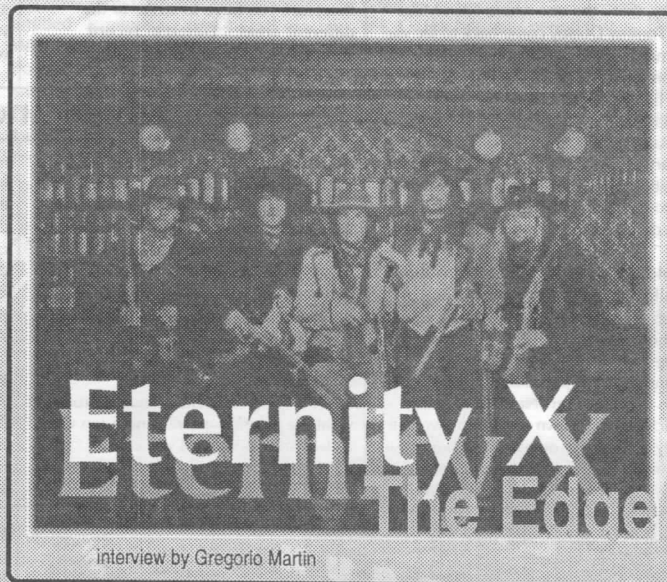
seriously decided to become a singer, I found that moment as a really nice one. Can you tell Edge of Time readers about that chapter in detail please?

Singing is the only true musical way I have ever been able to express myself. I was very down about the present situation at the time and no one believed that I could become the singer I wanted to be. I remember driving in my car at a particularly depressing time in my life and hearing this guy on an unlabeled tape I put in sing his ass off. I was moved beyond words I was listening to bands like Queen, U2, Boston, and Bon Jovi at the time and this guy changed my whole way of looking at vocals and music. The song was Breaking The

walls and struck emotions was gone. It was a sad day for me when I heard Promised Land. By the time the new CD came out I was already too disappointed to listen. I have since then thought and it was worse than I thought. I am saddened by that whole Queensryche thing, I truly am.

Which other vocalists or bands you remember had a hand on developing your own style somehow?

Freddie Mercury from Queen, Dennis DeYoung from Styx, Peter Gabriel, James LaBrie from Dream Theater. To be honest I try to find a singer's strong points. They don't have to be technically great but they do have to make you feel



interview by Gregorio Martin

Silence and the man of course was the great Geoff Tate. The song itself fit my mood so accurately and the voice was perfect. I said That's the way I want to go. In my opinion, Geoff Tate on that album Operation Mindcrime is the best singer of all time. I went in my own direction but he taught me that you can still be technical and have feel too, it was a perfect mix. I was on the road to becoming the singer I am today.

Could we say then Geoff Tate is your favourite vocalist in the metal genre?
Now or then? I feel that back then he certainly was. I think Empire was also a fantastic album and nobody could cut it like Mr. Tate! Yes I have a soft spot for his vocals, I will forever no matter which way they go. I will always remember that day in my car.

I understand it perfectly. I wonder if you ever had the chance of meeting Geoff in person, and comment to him this passage Keith.

Yes I had the chance and I blew it! It was during the Empire tour and I got sick! I will not get over that until we do eventually meet. Hopefully on the same stage.

Did you have a chance to listen to the last Queensryche album? I don't know if it's a problem of smoking too much as some rumours say, but his performance on Hear on the Now Frontier was not as notable as in the past, just in my opinion.

Unfortunately I must agree. I also think the same way about Promised Land. The great singer that once shattered

I also share your opinion about this. As I mentioned in the review, perhaps since Jon Oliva, who in my personal opinion is one of the most emotional singers in the history of the metal genre, I was not as impressed about this aspect you mentioned before: A vocal performance that made me feel. What do you think about this vocalist in question Keith?

Many people right away see the Savatage connection in our music. I never really knew about them until I kept hearing their name. I listened to them and thought they were wonderful. Jon Oliva is raspy but he kicks your ass. I like that stuff and it's exactly what I meant.

After all, like it or not, Alanis makes you feel (some hate the way she makes them feel) no matter how you see her. In my opinion, she is a good singer because she captures you. She is very strange to progressive listeners and I understand how they feel but the woman captures the hearts of many people of all genres. I think that makes a great singer. Can they make you feel what they are feeling? Are they believable? Is their voice pleasant? These are all individual questions that we must all individually answer. I look for that from a singer who influences me in any way.

Good reasoning, yes. I am one of those who also enjoyed her last album, if sometimes not strictly for musical reasons, there was something along that Jagged Little Pill which made me connect to it, and was her

vocals. Talking about Alanis we can find on The Edge a (I don't know if sarcastic) reference to her famous

You Oughta Know / Ironic tunes... The track I mean is

Rejection, perhaps one of the most aggressive and original ones of the whole album I'd say. What can you tell about this?

I thought it would be funny and very true at the same time to write a song representing the male point of view to those songs of hers. Rejection is about the guys point of view (in extreme situations) when a girl is a nag. It's really a song answering her song You oughta know. She is so passionate in that song about the girls point of view in a relationship break up. I have been on the other end and I wanted to get that across. She talks about how the guy just left her for an older woman. I talk about how the girl was a whining baby who made my life miserable so I had to leave her for another woman, it's nuts!

On The Edge CD booklet, we can read Keith Sudano lead, backing vocals, multiple personalities. It's something that drew my attention at the beginning, and I couldn't understand it too well, you know. But after listening your work in the album thoroughly, in my opinion that definition couldn't be more in tune. You show indeed lots of shades and vocal variations: whispers, narrated parts... Did you personally decide to include that for describing your role in the album?

Yes and no. I was the one who suggested the title but only after people were telling me that we had to put something more than just vocals. The song The Edge Of Madness has 6 separate personalities fighting to come out of Iman. It's kind of like my crazy diary that song. We all have different moods and these people are the epitome of those moods. I became what everyone understands least of all the sides of themselves they hide away and keep tight control over.

How would you describe your performance on this album separately and in relation to some of Eternity X



previous releases?

In my opinion, it is the finest work I have personally done. I closed my eyes and I became the song I was singing at the time. I could care less about technical things at the time. Fortunately, I am at the point where I can afford not to worry about technical things while

feeling a song in the studio and it comes out right. On the first 2 Eps, I was a young singer, I had the problems of any young singer. I was worried too much about being on key than having a great song. Zodiac was done with all technical stuff in mind. I did the whole album in 4 days. Now this is a great feat for a 48 minute album as anyone can attest to but it is, by no means, a proper thing to do. The fact that I proved I

could do it did nothing for the album...in fact it suffered for it.

Mind Games is my dark CD vocally speaking. I was more aggressive and it was the first CD I began to use different voicings and technique to get across moods. I think that album went very well. Of course, The Edge is my favorite vocal work. I did things that are controversial but I did them none the less. The very high vocal in The Looking Glass is me with no effects. I have gotten a 50/50 response on it, both sides feel just as strongly about their position. But that's another story. Let's just say I am very, very happy with The Edge.

Well, it's a fact, your performance is phenomenal on it. I was also a bit confused at the beginning about the passage you mention from The Looking Glass. It somehow might sound a bit too-high-pitched, but I supposed the intention was perhaps just adding another different shade to that part of the theme, with no further stylistic pretences... did you consider to use some choral section for that part, may I ask? We considered many things at that point. I just heard from our record company that the ONLY negative comment they have gotten on this whole 74 minute CD was that 30 second part! It's amazing! I felt it was like an opera at that point.

It was originally supposed to be sung in Italian but we settled on English with illegible pronunciation. People in the rock genre are shocked by that part and I most likely can say with confidence most of them hate opera! I was using a very, very high falsetto and it takes getting used to. I posed the question whether to change it on our web site and the overwhelming majority voted to KEEP it. I was shocked! You always hear the negative comments louder than the positive ones. In this case, the positive was the majority vote.

Could be said that musically The Edge is your most brilliant work to the date as a whole band?

We have been hearing that for months now. People sometimes cannot believe we are the same band. The addition of Jamie Mazur our keyboard player truly made a huge difference. The man knows how to set a mood and keep you there. I think everyone out did themselves on this CD. I am very proud of them all.

The addition of Jamie Mazur on keyboards has been a very good choice, in my opinion. If I'm not wrong, this was his first experience doing a recording of this entity, right? Don't you think that, keeping that in mind, his work at The Edge could even be judged as more outstanding? The result has surprised me very positively, really.

Yes it was his first true record recording. As I stated above, I believe the answer to the second question is also yes. I know, it is largely due to Jamie that we did what we have done here. It is also a desire to pull the best out from everyone.

I see. Indeed, maybe after this release Eternity X will have the nice responsibility of releasing albums on par with this work. I mean, we could say The Edge is for the moment the pinnacle of your career at all levels... what do you think about this eventual

pressure?

This question is a no brainer. No. No pressure at all. We have always gotten better and outdid our previous works and we will do it again and again. There is no arrogance intended here, it's just that we have the key to ourselves, we know what makes us climb higher. This was not all just stumbled upon, I suppose I would be afraid if it was. What I am trying to say is we have a plan. The next CD is already being thought about.

For an album like The Edge, so colossal in many aspects, I bet the recording, pre-production and other stages should had been a bit exhausting mentally. Were there any significant moments during the development of this project you'd like to highlight as most significant ones?

Wow! There are sooo many. We fought, we argued, we laughed, we cried, we were silent. This CD brought emotions from us that we had no idea were there. In producing an album like this, you have to make a plan, your plan rarely works so you have to be willing to alter the plan. Pre-production was about 1 whole year with detailed click tracks and 12 hour practice days. I could get into a whole book about how we practice. If anyone of your readers were to walk into one of our practices they would be saying "what the Hell are these guys doing!"

It explains it all I think... May I ask you which place you chose for spending your holidays or for resting after this intense experience?

The American Southwest! This year I am taking a month out west and then we are off to Germany for the Oktoberfest. After that it's all work. I love music!

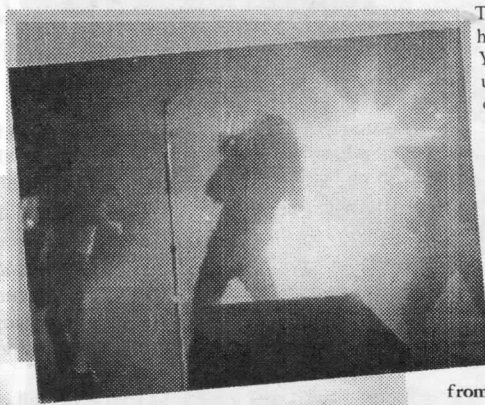
Could you explain the concepts behind The Edge album and when did these ideas started taking shape in your mind?

The Edge is about people who have been on the edge of life. I think all of us will get there. Some of us already have been there. It is when you are at your lowest point and then you drop even lower. It is about being on The Edge. The crazy things people do when they are faced with the non caring of sanity. How many of you had thoughts about life being worth it? You didn't care if you lived or died, you were there for the moment. I can directly relate it to being drunk with no liquor. You see the world but you don't feel it through the numbed state your mind is in, you have reached The Edge.

Interesting... was during the album recording process a moment you thought you could have gotten too immersed in trying to describe that mood? Or in other words, a moment you thought you really could have surpassed or reached that edge. Not really. These are all songs of places I have already been. If you were to experience The Edge in real life all at once you would be doomed. It took years to compile the experiences on that CD, that is why so many people can relate to it.

I understand. I can't help you asking about one track which particularly impressed me, for the emotive and meaningful story behind it. I'm talking about The Confession. Taking place inside a church, I also think the feeling which the Carmina Burana chants excerpt, or the trigger and footsteps sound effects give to it was also a good choice. It made it look like a real time elapsed song indeed.

I have always had a struggle with organized religion. I realize I am treading on soft ground here. To me, the man in the story seems like the epitome of a person who is on the edge. He is faced with a dilemma. Here is a man who has always respected the cross and the hierarchy of the priesthood. He taught his 12 year old daughter to be the



same way, without question to respect all religious personnel. You have in this story a priest who raped and killed his daughter and this man now is on the warpath. His common sense turns off as it might with all of us and he now is going around killing all priests. To this man, the edge was someone raping and killing his daughter. I have to be honest, if I were him, I most likely would do the same thing if someone even raped my daughter and didn't even kill her. I could reach the edge if someone in my family or band is taken, it is human nature.

Was the cover concept you suggested Gary Smith (angels + devils pulling two string tied to the ankles of a naked man who rests on the globe) trying to express the natural balance between those opposite states of mind, attitudes, etc where The Edge could be situated?

Yes, you are absolutely right.

By the way, is this artist the same Gary Smith who did such great works with Savatage covers (Gutter Ballet, Edge Of Thorns) for instance? His signature on The Edge cover is not the same, that's why I was curious... No it's a different Gary Smith. All I can say is that this Gary Smith is one of the most intense, spiritual, supportive, great men I have ever met.

Most Eternity X members live in the proximity of New Jersey area, is that right?

Yes, we all live in this state that is all too close to New Jersey. We have been lucky about that.

Do you keep a regular contact with any bands in particular, from the NJ state area or not?

Some of the Angular/Musea bands we do. Other than that, not really. I have

personal friendships with some people from some of the bigger name bands but we have a mutual understanding. I don't use them for popularity or press and they won't for me when I'm in that position. Sometimes I would love to tell everyone their comments but I restrain myself.

Just as you wish. But only one further question about this aspect Keith: Eternity X is a band which gives a big importance to keeping a direct correspondence with their fans. Sending abundant free samplers worldwide, asking to fans their opinions about different topics which can then be used as reference when it's time to take some decisions, etc. Also as you mentioned before, you prefer to keep involved in the business end of things...

This all seems so natural to me. I do have faith. I have faith in our fans. You have to be in my position to understand. It's not just like every other band where they have fans who LOVE them. The ETX fan is different. The music makes them different and the personality portrays that. You have to hear their comments to truly grasp this concept. They don't all say the same thing, they all share the same soul.

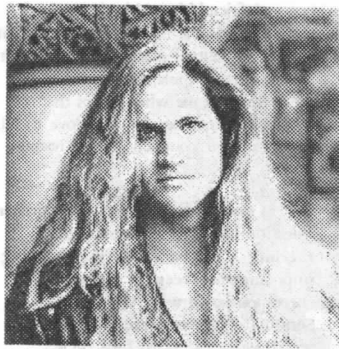
Without mentioning any bands names, which are some of those opinions you received from your music mates in regards to the personal vision Eternity X has about these approaches towards the fans, business and so on?

They think we are biting off more than we can chew. Also I have heard members of 2 known bands comment about how great what we are doing is and still go and alienate the people who support them. Damn! I am a fan! I know what it's like to be dissed. I know what it's like to have a hero or icon and be totally stomped on! It is human nature to believe in a hero and a star, or role model. I am no different. When I find they don't give a damn about people or me for that matter, I am never the same. I understand they cannot speak to me everyday or maybe even once... or can they? Are they so damn far removed from their careers that they have no idea who their supporters are? This is where I separate things. To me, the ETX fan is not a customer, he is part of the band. All I can say is that we have accomplished more than most other bands already, we have made true friends all around the globe. It is strange having someone see you as bigger than life and then seeing their reaction when you call them or write to them like a friend. Managers that we have had thought this idea was terrible. They felt that the air of mystery and looking up to a band was what the fans really wanted. Oh well, what can I say? It's not like we are dropping a level, we are just bringing everyone else up. After all, they put us there, why shouldn't they be there, too?

Not big deal... thanks for your interest in putting this interview and best of luck promoting this great great album.

I thank you and your readers for giving me the opportunity to take this interview, it's been fun! Have a great day...see you all on The Edge!

[<http://www.eternity-x.com>]



The 3 songs pre-production tape was under your name and the CD is coming out under the name of Anomaly. What is the reason?

OK. Anomaly really started out as "my solo project", a bunch of instrumental stuff with sequenced drums and Sean Malone playing bass. As the tunes began to evolve, I realized how much better they would sound with real drums, and Malone suggested getting Sean Reinert to do the session. When I wrote "Ensnared", I realized that it had the potential to be so much more. It was a vocal tune. Jim Dorian and I were in another band at the time which wasn't really going that well, and I bounced "Ensnared" off of him and he really dug it. When Reinert put the drums down for it he really blew everyone away, and when we mixed everything with Malone and Dorian's stuff it sounded killer. (I re-did all the guitars and we re-mixed it a few weeks ago and it sounds twice as good now, by the way) It was at that moment I realized I wanted to do what ended up becoming Anomaly instead of a bunch of instrumental stuff. To answer the question about the name of the tape: Jim Dorian and I had just split from our old band and hadn't yet decided on a title for the new project, and we were in a big hurry to get the pre-release stuff out into peoples' hands, and I was basically funding everything out of pocket at that point, so we used my name. The full CD is really a band project, so we're using a band name.

Why such a name as Anomaly? Does it fit to the music?

Well, an anomaly is something abnormal, something out of the ordinary. I think that sums up our material. Although our stuff is kind of radio-friendly and even commercial in parts, it's offset by some truly amazing and inspired playing and some weird stuff as well. Some of the chord structures we use are rarely seen in popular music. We never try to be different just for the sake of being different, however. We'll only be different if we can be different and better, to refine and improve and emphasize the really cool parts of a section.

All three tracks on the tape are very different. How can you describe the rest 6 from the CD?

Well, the CD has six vocal tunes and two instrumentals. We were going to do a cover of Led Zeppelin's "The Rain Song" with a real string quartet but we had to leave it out this time due to budgetary considerations. It'll be on the next CD. Each of the tunes is unique in its own way, but they fit together as an album very well. I can see why the three song pre-release confused a lot of people because it's truly three of the most extreme songs off the record: prog rock, metal, ballad, and hyper-chops

bridge the gap between technicality and accessibility

Interview by Giedrius Slivinskas

Anomaly at first may seem a strange name for an accessible technical metal band. However it was a decision of the guitarist Jim Studnicki and the singer Jim Dorian. They wanted to make progressive technical rock/metal music that would be listenable and radio-friendly. In the first half of 1997, the 3-songs pre-release tape "The Second Day" was mailed all around the globe to get the name heard and in order to get a record deal. In July '97, the CD was recorded at the Morrisound Studio with the help of the bass player Sean Malone and the drummer Sean Reinert, who both are former members of Cynic, the technical metal band #1.

Tampa is not that influential to the overall metal scene today but there are talented musicians over there that have new ideas and a will and potential to compose interesting music. Anomaly is an example. Jim Studnicki answered my questions about his band, Tampa scene, and technical metal in general.

instrumental. The CD is more balanced.

Aren't you afraid that people can call the ballad "The Second Day" a cheesy one...?

The focus is not on the playing in that song. It's on Jim's voice singing a beautiful melody. It's a solid and well-thought out piece of work. The lyrics are not cheesy. It's not about some guy pining over some chick. It's about a soldier willing to die for what he believed in. There's no "oh baby baby" or any other tired cliches at all. My only regret with that one is not having Reinert play full drums on it. It would've been much more dynamic. If anyone thinks we're wusses when they hear that one, they'll be proven wrong by the song right after it, "The Art of War"...

How long have you been around as a musician? Why did you choose to start a new band?

Well, I've been playing guitar for about nine or ten years now, and I've been recording for about half of that time, mostly my own stuff that no one but me will ever hear. Jim and I started Anomaly because people stopped making the kind of music we wanted to hear, and we don't think we're the only ones with that opinion. We also had a tremendous chance to work with some amazing players and we couldn't pass that one up.

How did you get along with both Seans, the former members of Cynic? With Ralph Santolla?

I'd known Sean Malone for about two years before Jim and I started Anomaly. Him and I actually used to live in

Maryland about a half mile from each other but never met until we moved down to Florida. Strange. He is a great guy and a monstrously talented bass player who "hears" a lot of things differently than most other people. I'd say Sean Reinert is the closest example of a true genius I've ever met. He's got this incredible sense of dynamics coupled with mind-boggling chops. It's ridiculous. He also has a great sense of what his parts will sound like when everything else is done, even if I just give him a skeleton of a song to work with. He never overplays. It has been my utmost privilege to work with those guys, and I'm excited about recording and playing

"We never try to be different just for the sake of being different, however. We'll only be different if we can be different and better, to refine and improve and emphasize the really cool parts of a section."

with them in the future, Ralph is a buddy of mine. We lend equipment to each other and party together from time to time. He's another freak. He's the most under-rated guitar player I know. I think of Ralph as a cross between Yngwie and Eric Johnson - great chops with an amazing sense of melody. He's got this Flying V that is the shit.

Can you tell any names of record companies/distributors involved in manufacturing and distributing the Anomaly CD?

I really don't think I should mention any labels until we finalize our deal(s), but let's just say that there are several medium-sized companies that are pretty

interested in us. We're at the point where we're discussing advance money and percentages.

Who will handle the promotion? Do you feel you are able to handle it yourself?

Hopefully, our label will help us with that, but I want to keep complete control of our web site. It has helped us out a great deal.

What do you think of purely technical music, e.g., Spastic Ink of Ron Jarzombek (ex-Watchtower)? Does it have a demand and an audience? It looks like that mainly musicians listen to technical metal...

It varies. I can't listen to an hour of it straight. I need melody, first and foremost. From a player's perspective, some of it blows me away. There are things on the Cynic record (the end of "Uroboric Forms", for example) which set new standards in technical proficiency, and which truly amaze me, but won't do anything for your average listener. One of the main things we want to do with Anomaly is bridge that gap - to keep pushing the technical envelope while still keeping it commercially viable. And I think we've got the people to pull it off.

Have you heard the solo album of Sean Malone? If so, give your opinion...

I have indeed. I'm a big fan of weird fusiony stuff anyway, and it was cool to hear. Sean and I are both Tribal Tech fans and I think you can hear some of that in his playing and writing, even when he did the two bass solos on the Anomaly CD. He's a big Willis fan and I think Scott Henderson has a tremendous sense of melody and the best ear I've ever seen. Sean does a lot of looping stuff on the record, both of percussion and other

parts. One of my favorite parts is at the end of one of the songs where he creates this mind-bending texture with his stick and a Lexicon JamMan. It was also cool to hear Reinert doing straight-out jazz stuff. A good disc.

Is it difficult for you to find a balance between technicality and accessibility?

Yes. It is the ultimate challenge to make progressive music sell while still keeping it progressive. That is our main goal with Anomaly.

What is your opinion, does radio-friendliness necessarily imply sterile and synthetic songs?

I think that sometimes bands get trapped

into always following a formulaic style of writing and re-hashing stuff that's been done to death. It happened in the late '80s/early '90s with rock and roll and it's happening now with alternative stuff, thank God. I think our songs are radio-friendly but I definitely wouldn't call them sterile or synthetic. One of the important keys to writing a commercial song and keeping it interesting is to have a solid understanding of dynamics. Always keep the listener on their toes, but never sacrifice the song for the sake of "originality."

What do you think about accusations



"There are things on the Cynic record (the end of 'Uroboric Forms', for example) which set new standards in technical proficiency, and which truly amaze me, but won't do anything for your average listener. One of the main things we want to do with Anomaly is bridge that gap - to keep pushing the technical envelope while still keeping it commercially viable. And I think we've got the people to pull it off."

of 'selling out'? Do you think the bands do actually like their new songs that look 'commercial' to many fans? Can you comment on latest albums of Queensryche and Metallica?

Metallica sold out. They should have changed their name - they changed their look, their logo, their sound, their audience and everything else, but they kept the name because they knew a Metallica record would be an automatic multi-platinum hit. They simply followed the alternative trend for the big money. It's blatantly obvious and it stinks of Hollywood lawyers and managers and label people. They discarded their old market for a larger, more profitable one. I still think Hetfield is an amazingly talented guy, and underneath the cutesy haircuts and lame piercings the old warmaster is ready to plunder evermore, but the band (in terms of music but not necessarily money) has seen its finest hour. Queensryche is a different story. They haven't made such a drastic change, and a lot of their stuff still sounds like Queensryche. Remember, too, how hard it would be to follow up two records like "Mindcrime" and "Empire". I thought "Promised Land" was a good disc but where the record suffered was with the lack of quality

hooks. The new one isn't quite my cup of tea but it's head and shoulders beyond the shit that the "rock" radio stations play here in the USA...

What do you think about Fates Warning, Dream Theater, Cynic, Watchtower?

They're all very good. Call me biased but Cynic is my favorite. :) It was truly a life-changing album for me. And I *hated* it at first - the production, the vocals, the writing, everything. It is definitely an acquired taste. But once I listened to it enough and I really started to understand the magnitude of what was happening

name it. If you want to learn how to write good songs you should listen to any of that stuff. I don't know if I can give you my top five favorite discs of all time, but Cynic's "Focus" is up there, Zeppelin's "Houses of the Holy", "Van Halen I" and of course "Fair Warning" and "1984", Pantera's "Vulgar Display of Power", Saigon Kick's "Water", Vain's "Passion and Warfare", Ozzy's "Diary of a Madman", Hendrix' "Electric Ladyland", Steve Morse's "Coast to Coast", Queensryche's "Empire", Alice in Chains' "Dirt" - the only alternative band that I like... the list goes on and on...

How do you think, will Anomaly find a place in the current diverse scene of metal? It seems that there are empty spots for technical metal and, particularly, for technical-accessible metal...

I think people that like musicians that can play well but also appreciate good songs will be into us. One of the problems I have with bands like Dream Theater is that the songwriting sometimes takes a back seat to the performances. I personally don't care how many minutes of music someone can squeeze onto a single CD or how many guitar/keyboard unison lines there are or how many 20 minute+ opuses we can write. How good are the songs? Do I feel anything when I hear them? *That's what's really important*, and, not coincidentally, that's what sells records. If I'm not feeling anything I might as well be listening to dance music or No Doubt or some other cheesy shit. If anything, it should be the other way around. Songwriting should always come before performances. That's why people will remember Queensryche long after DT is gone.

Do you have any vision how Anomaly will (or should) sound in the future?

I think Anomaly will continue to expand on what this debut CD accomplishes. We will emphasize what worked and refine it and continue to be as creative as we can. We've got an amazing base of talent and there's literally no limit to what we can do. I'd like to get to the point where we're a modern-day Led Zeppelin - not in terms of sounding similar to Zeppelin but in terms of the mindset and the way we write. With Zeppelin, they were able to write amazing pieces of music, each a brilliant gem of songwriting (some of which were brutal as hell for their time, by the way) while integrating incredible performances into their recordings. People bitch about Jimmy Page all the time. I think the guy is a genius. Anyone that doubts his playing can listen to the live version of "Stairway to Heaven" on "The Song Remains the Same" and go jump off a cliff. I know he probably re-did that solo in the studio and punched, or whatever, but who gives a shit? Everybody punches today anyway, and anyone who says they don't is either stupid or a liar. The point is that he knew how to *write*. That's what important. And until people in the progressive rock/metal arena understand that good songwriting sells, it will always be a niche market by musicians for musicians. We hope to make Anomaly into a project that truly bridges that gap between technicality and accessibility.

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What other bands do you like? Your top-5 of favorite records.

I'm a huge classic rock fan - Zeppelin, Hendrix, Pink Floyd, The Doors, you

album preview

Leger De Main

Chris Rodler

"The title of the new Leger de Main CD is 'Second First Impression' alluding to the fact that this record is a re-introduction to the music of LDM. Certainly the music here is a bit different than the first record with more strident moments laced with many sections of chaos and dissonance. This music is complex for sure but retains the melodic tradition in the vocal melodies of Melissa Blair. This release is all over the place as far as textures and moods go with many of the lengthy arrangements going through several dynamic changes before finally settling on a resolution point. Many people are noticing a collision of influences that might include King Crimson, Dream Theater, Marillion, and Fates Warning with that of Sarah McLachlan or Tori Amos when adding the vocals. There are five tracks spanning the 50 minutes total music on Second First Impression. "Silent Monster" is an instrumental track which travels several roads including very melodic and memorable passages to absolute musical abandon. Instrumentally we've covered all of the bases on this track. Tracks like "Some Shall Search" and "The Story" have more of an emphasis on mixing great vocal lines with alternate sections of instrumental breaks. A lot of ensemble interaction makes interesting listening for discerning prog fanatics in these selections. In the song, "Do Whispers Die?" Melissa's vocals and Kevin Hultberg's fretless bass work come to the front and provide plenty of tasty melodic work. On another note, the CDs cover artwork is very eye catching and is an original piece by Don Harris. It has a very futuristic and dark feel to it just as we feel the CD's music does. Very appropriate we feel. A perfect match. The release date is scheduled for September 1997 on PMM and should be available through the same distribution points as before." [E-mail: lenrod@aol.com][Progressive Music Management, 6802 Helena Drive Erie, PA 16510, USA]

Leviathan

L. R. Skeen

"Well to start off, let me tell you that we will be releasing the next one on our own label, Corrosive Records. It seems that we couldn't work out a happy medium with Century Media Records and have decided to go our own way. But that's another story. We will begin recording at Colorado Sound Studios on Aug 14th, with Jim Morris once again at the production helm. After completing bass and drums, we will then fly out with Jim to Morrisound Studios (Florida) and complete the rest of the album there, including guitars, vocals, mixing and mastering over the next three weeks. And with a little luck, the album will be available before Christmas. As far as the material is concerned, I can only tell you that it is more of everything that we have ever been. And we have expanded our horizons even further. Look for an album that is more progressive, dynamic, heavier... but I'm not even scraping the surface. There will probably be more musical styles on this CD than songs (and the album will be WELL over an hour. Maybe over 70 min?)

It's kind of strange because even though my songs feature a little more straight forward music, the lyrics have taken on a more complex structure. John's material seems to be the opposite, featuring easier lyrical progressions, but more complex music than ever. One of his songs is 12 min. long ("Turning Up Broken") and it is just phenomenal. One part is totally Middle Eastern sounding and will leave you fucking breathless. I have one tune on the album ("King Of The Highlanders") that has a very scottish feel to it at the end, with violins and horns.

I guess I can't really describe the album very well because every song is COMPLETELY different than the next. So progressive fans better be ready for an extremely diverse album. I think it will take you to places you have never been. This album is our statement to the music industry. We know that only a few people might buy it, but at least we know that we never sold out or gave up our integrity for someone else. This will be our 4th CD and we have never compromised ourselves or our music just to sell albums."

[E-mail: leviathan6@juno.com][Corrosive Records, P.O. Box 1215, Littleton, CO 80160, USA]

album preview

Mayadome

Teddy Moeller

Since the release of "Paranormal Activity" we've been dedicated to write new material (since we never got to tour at all) and to write lyrics that fit the mood of the songs more properly. Also we had to ask Björn to leave the band in April, mainly because he didn't fit the band but also due to all the bad critique he got. The new singer is 21 year old wonderkid Bassel Elharbi. He's been in local bands and released an album back in '92 with a band called Fatal Smile. Everything is working out great with him and we'll start recording the new Mayadome CD "Near Life Experience" in the middle of August.



Regarding the music, the minor differences are that we've tried to write more cool choruses and more whacky stuff. It's also a bit more gloomy this time... 7 songs, "round an hour of music with the shortest song being 5:30 and the longest 12:45. The titles of the songs are: "Restorepair", "Scent Of Lilac", "Angina Closing In", "Near Life Experience", "Pride Painted Grey", "Able To Feel", and "No Words". We will record it at home as usual and see the talents of Danne Bergstrand once again.

[E-mail: mayadome@swipnet.se] c/o Teddy Moeller, Grammunkhaga, 75597 Uppsala, Sweden]

Timothy Pure

Andre Neitzel

"The new Timothy Pure album is a concept album. It's called "Blood of the Berry". It is being released on our Isosceles Records. Expect a more diverse melodic and tonal sound. One big difference is due to two new members we have in the band. Zed (guitarist) and Chris Wallace (Drums/Percussion) both have added technically and creatively a great deal of energy to the group. With the addition of organ, piano, African and Middle-Eastern percussion, occasional female vocals (Johnnie Hooper), and of course Matt singing lead, the sound is much more developed.

As I mentioned "Blood of the Berry" is a concept album. This story is just a "twisted little love story." It deals with a tragic, lonely figure and his attempt to reconcile a failed love/obsession. In an attempt to punctuate the grayness of the theme, I tried to create a somewhat sympathetic character - almost elegant, yet flawed. He must possess the object of his fixation. She is what sustains him. She is his only connection with the outside world. But alas, she is not aware of his intentions, nor is he... quite. As the two become knotted, strength turns to vulnerability and dependence turns to desperation.

In September, Timothy Pure begins its first European tour. On Friday September 12, the guys will play a show with Grey Lady Down at The Orange in London. On Saturday September 13, they play at Herringthorpe Leisure

Center in Rotherham, UK. This is a showcase sponsored by the Classic Rock Society. On Saturday September 21, Timothy Pure will play at the German Progressive Rock Festival in Bruchsal, at the Sporthalle. Additional shows may be added in Holland."

[E-mail: isosrec@mindspring.com] Isosceles Records, 2480-4 Briarcliff Road #186, Atlanta, Georgia 30329, USA]

Treasure Land

Jonas Hoernqvist

The new songs me and my brother has written to this CD is almost like the first one, they're a bit more neoclassical and faster. The progressive parts are still there to, but the overall sound is more metal. I don't know yet where we will record the CD, we have talked about Germany but nothing is set yet. Modern Music will release this one, too. The singer we need is a very diverse singer, he gotta be able to sing in all ranges. My personal favorite singers are Mark Boals, Carl Albert, Ronnie J Dio.

progressive melodic

power
progressive
speed
hard n'heavy
prog rock



ALTERED VISION

Fantasia

Underground Symphony

Listening to this CD, I had an impression as if Jamiroquai had returned with the guitar-oriented new album. But it's as clear as a day that Altered Vision from Italy can't get hold of the 'space

cowboy', their progressive/jazzrock is too monotonous and unripe for that. The singer could improve the pronunciation of English words. Apart from that, three points are deserved. (SV) [Alt. Vision, Via Primo Ferraro, 5 - 31020 Liedolo di S.Zenone, Treviso, Italy]

3



ANGRA

Freedom Call EP
Lucretia/LMP

When an outfit from a country like Brazil becomes one of the most popular melodic metal bands in the world, that implies that they have extraordinary talent. It is a real truth in the case of Angra. Both

their full length CDs "Angels Cry" and "Holy Land" are different, but both are classics. "Freedom Call" does not break any new ground and does not overshadow the glory of those two albums. In spite of that, it gives another delightful 30 minutes for the fans. EP includes a 'new' song "Freedom Call", which didn't get into "Holy Land", two 1992 demo tracks, Judas Priest "Painkiller" cover, the orchestrated version of "Stand Away" from "Angels Cry", and the edited version of "Deep Blue" from "Holy Land". The songs are not that much symphonic/classical-influenced as "Holy Land", neither that much speed metal, but as far as melodic metal goes, they certainly fulfill all relevant criteria.

(GS)

[angra@ax.apc.org] [http://www.ibase.org.br/~annunciata/]

4

ANGRA

Holy Live EP
Lucretia/LMP

France is, without a doubt, the country where this popular Brazilian melodic metal act has received a warmest response. Here's the reflection of it in the form of a 35 minutes-long live EP. It compiles 2 songs from their 1993 album "Angels Cry" ("Carry On", "Unfinished Allegro") and 4 songs from their latest full-length release "Holy Land" ("Crossing", "Nothing to Say", "Carolina IV", and "J.I.T.O." -will the mystery be solved someday in regards to this acronym?). The reason for releasing only a 6 tracks EP was, on their own words, that the rest of the material registered at this Parisian show had not the required sound quality. Mixed and recorded by Charlie Bauerfeind as usual, total guaranty for a top notch and clear production, here's a brief but intense collection of samples of what Angra shows are like. (GM)

ANGRA

Reaching Horizons [demo-reissue 1997]
Lucretia/LMP

Satisfying numerous fans petitions who demanded a re-edition of their 1992 legendary (and nowadays almost collectors item) "Reaching Horizons - Demo tape", now it has become a reality. Everyone is able to hear those original tracks with a much better sound quality, on CD format. Apart from the five tracks included in the official demo tape, this release includes a version of "Carry On" with alternate chorus and two previously unreleased songs. Those are "Don't Despair", an average cut, and a pretty interesting speed version of Kate Bush's classic "Wuthering Heights", which will probably surprise whoever takes the cover finally pressed on "Angels Cry" as a reference. (GM)

ANOMALY

Anomaly
Advance tape

You might have not heard this name but you surely have heard Cynic. Here is the story: Anomaly is the band of Jim Studnicki (guitar) and Jim Dorian (vocals) and they recorded their debut album in July '97 at Morrisound Studios with Scott Burns and Jim Morris. Besides, bass and drums parts were performed by, respectively, Sean Malone and Sean Reinert (both ex-Cynic). As you can easily imagine, we get a sort of technical stuff here. Even more interesting, Anomaly actually create accessible and radio-friendly (!) prog rock/metal.

Self-titled CD consists of 6 songs and 2 instrumentals which all are composed and performed in a very delicate way. It is opened by a brilliant progressive rock/metal song "Ensnared". It's not difficult to get into it from the first listen, but, what's more delightful, with each next listen you discover new subtleties on it. The same fits to the rest of the songs which are quite diverse: from the ballad "The Second Day" (that could really get airplay, no hard stuff here) to heavier "Do You Believe?" (kill me, but I notice similarities to Ozzy Osbourne in choruses) and the heaviest "The Art Of War".

What is fascinating, too, there are no clichés at all. It can be called prog rock/metal but it is, by no means, ordinary. The moral of the story is: many prog bands complain that it is hard to get heard because their music is too complex. But everyone knows Rush and Yes, who write real songs. Anomaly's debut is a very good effort of accessible progressive. (GS)

[Anomaly, Jim Studnicki, 13808 Lazy Oak Drive, Tampa, FL 33613, USA] [studnicki@soleil.acomp.usf.edu] [http://groucho.bsn.usf.edu/~studnick/anomaly.htm]

4 1/2

ATTACK

The Secret Place
Iceland/LMP

Fans of Helloween and Accept should take notice of this band because "The Secret Place" is a treat for them. If the outset of the CD isn't very impressive, so, at the end, we find to delicacies: the instrumental "Tsoukara" and the amazing "Warrior". This is already the 7th album of Attack. Founded in 1984, the band broke up after three more or less successful albums. In 1988, the mastermind Ricky van Helden revived the band, so Attack continues its existence so far and maybe the future releases will bring them more recognition than up to now. (SV)

[Attack, PO Box 2026, 32220 Buende/Westl., Germany]

3 3/4

AVALON

Mystic Places
Omega/LMP

Two years ago, I'd call it excellent. Today, when there are really a lot of prog metal bands, we look more critically. Avalon majestic choruses are borrowed from epic heavy metal; clear refrains and occasionally complex parts display a good middle between heavy/



power metal and progressive. The first two tracks, "I'm Falling" and "Passion For Glory", are very captivative and they are the definite highlights of the album. The others vary from 'quite good' to 'a bit plain'. (GS)

[Omega Records, Soldauer Str. 8, 81927 Muenchen, Germany] [avalon-omega@t-online.de] [http://home.t-online.de/home/avalon-omega/avalon.htm]

3 3/4

BIG HEAT

Grand Ominous Dreams
LMP

Surprise, this material was recorded on a 4-track multitracker and then pressed on CD. In addition to good sound quality, Big Heat (now Stigmata) musically are not bad at all, too. One minute they remind me of Savatage, the next of Dio or Morgana Lefay. A very interesting mixture, although I think it's not easy to listen to 70 minutes' length CDs. For the future, I should advise them: less material, more quality. Potential is available. (SV)

[Stigmata, PO Box o.O., A. Schweizerstr. 2/1/28, 4600 Wels, Austria]

3 3/4

BOZZIO LEVIN STEVENS

Black Light Syndrome
Magna Carta

Basically, this album was recorded in four days by three well-known musicians who had never played together before! They went in the studio, dealt with a typical set-up and equipment problems, sat down, rolled tape, and just played. It was



CARISMA

1825

Self-released

This melodic metal band from Denmark has shown a considerable amount of talent with "1825", delivering excellent songs like "Marriage Of Convenience", "Lean On", or "Closing Rhyme" but it'd be a bit unfair to highlight just those as the whole album is really impressive and solid. Lyrically, "1825" is a conceptual album, and one of the biggest and most positive surprises I had in a long time. The vocalist's clear voice is very pleasant and might remind of Geoff Tate on some mellowest tracks. Great arrangements and the impeccable production make this album an excellent choice for progressive metal listeners fond of songs which make a special emphasis on the melodic side. I highly recommend this album. (GM)

[Carisma, Mysundegade 18, ST 1668, Copenhagen V, Denmark]

[carisma@cybernet.dk]

4 1/2

Psyco Drama is a band I've always felt a special sympathy for since I first got to listen their debut album about two years ago. And that's basically why, when I heard they were giving the final touch to their second studio album, I decided to get in touch again with their frontman Corey Brown.

Psyco Drama formed in Colorado, US in 1993. Prior to that, Corey Brown and MacKenzie Kerr (drums) had been involved with a group from 1988 to 1993. Bart Barlettano (guitars, vocals) and Hercules J. Castro (guitars, piano, vocals) had been involved with that band at one time or another and when that group crumbled, Corey, MacKenzie and Hercules were still standing. The three decided to move forward and brought Bart's talent back to the group and picked up a talented bass player (Brian Dail) from a band that rehearsed right next door to them. "Don't think that they will ever forgive us for that" comments vocalist Corey Brown.

In 1995, Psyco Drama put out their first demo, selling more than 3000 copies of it and also that year their first full length release hit the store shelves.

This year 1997, "Bent" was announced to make its appearance. From the advance songs I had the chance to listen, I should say they basically gave me the same good vibrations as "The Illusion" album did. The new material is more aggressive but vocals are still melodic though.

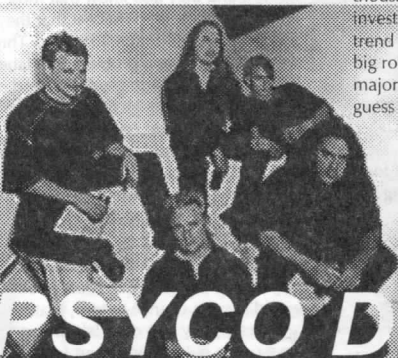
What you're going to read is the result of something close to a conversation we put through the Internet. And as anecdote I just mention it took us from late May to the mid August to complete it all.

Psyco Past, Present & Future

Which moments would you like to highlight from your career or which ones do you think have been the major accomplishments throughout this "year 1993 to the present" period? We believe that playing Foundations Forum was a rewarding experience as well as our first shot at good exposure! Getting our album distributed throughout the world and doing interviews and meeting many different and exciting people is a great accomplishment as well! Recording our latest project with Juan Croucier in California! We have had many experiences that have been a positive effect on the band, but it grows and continues forward every day.

You've opened for varied bands like Savatage, Warrant among others. What are some of your best memories about these acts and who would you like to tour with if you had the chance? Is there a particular band PD members admire commonly?

Being an opening act you really don't get the chance to meet many of the guys in the headline act, more often you meet their stage manager who usually is not interested or concerned about the opening act. All of the bands that we have jammed with are great live and musically. The guys in Great White and Warrant were probably the most supportive of all the groups. Psyco Drama would tour with just about any great band. Our tastes go from Van



Halen to Queensryche!

What personal goals do you try to achieve through your music?

We simply try to deliver a true musical creation to our listeners. Often, here in the states, bands try to play whatever is selling at the time. As you know, here in the USA trends come and go like the seasons. We play music because it is in our soul and in our blood. Music to us is an addiction and you can't recreate any other way or in any other form! We simply play from the gut, and if it stops selling and we lose our popularity I guess then it will be time to retire.

Struggling

Are you satisfied with the promotion you received in the past and you're having at the present?

This is a tough question to answer as we really didn't know what to expect on the first album. I guess that we received pretty good support for a first effort. We did over a dozen interviews in Europe and Japan. The album hit #1 on ZRO radio in Belgium and we had decent album sales. DCA recordings supported us incredibly well in the USA and continues to do so! We only wished that we had the chance to tour and support "The Illusion". As for the new release, we are optimistic about the support we will receive from Massacre in Europe. We are looking for a way to come over to Europe and support the album there where our fan base is the strongest. Only time will tell though.

How would you qualify the importance of the promotion made directly by the fans, through word of tape, distributing flyers or newsletters, calling to radio stations asking for your songs, etc?

Any form of promotion is vital to a band, any band. You would be surprised, but flyers and word of mouth is how we have managed to become so popular. We rely heavily on fanzines and magazines, web pages and on-line chat, as well as good old fashioned promo mailings. You can never have too much coverage or exposure, any news is good news for your band because people are reading about you!

A few months ago, you signed a deal with a US distributor, something really positive for your large underground base of fans in the States... why is so difficult to entice labels there for bands of your talent while in most parts of Europe is not as rare, is the pressure of mainstream media such as MTV still very strong?

Here in the states, it is very difficult to get a major label's attention until you have proven that you can sell several thousand copies and are a valuable investment to them. USA is fad and trend oriented, MTV does still play a very big role in creating superstars as well as major magazines like "Rolling Stones". I guess that fans of music in Europe and

half as talented writers and performers, as Fates! Fates Warning truly deserve more credit.

Knowing Psyco Drama

Which is the usual process when composing, do you rehearse the new material that comes up all together since the beginnings or do you prefer to work more separately like, for instance, Fates Warning do using mail?

Since we all live in close proximity, we rehearse together three to four times a week. Someone shows up with a song idea and we all begin to work with it, if it is still alive by the end of the week we have a song that everyone approves of, if not it is back to the drawing board. I usually write the lyrics after the song is written, I think it is easier for me to feel the mood that the music creates and write lyrics that fit that delivery.

Apart from music, are you interested on other forms of art, cultural events, associations of any kind, etc?

We are all regular guys, we have families and homes, we vote and get involved with our community. We really don't have a lot of spare time to enjoy other forms of art or culture, we are usually working on stuff for the band.

Are there any political or economical events which concern you especially at the moment? For instance, how do you see the inner violence present in US society, young people gangs, etc. and its reflection on some kinds of music, bands like Biohazard or Body Count to name a few...

We believe that every country has it's own problems with violence and chaos, it seems that America is the most heavily watched though. We have gang violence and racial uprisings and differences of opinions and it is all very negative. This country has so much to offer for the honest and hard working, and fortunately there are no civil wars tearing this country in two. Social events effect every living thing, bands can use this to their advantage and write about it, we choose not to glorify the negatives in life as it is done way too much as it is.

The new album

Tell us something about the new album Corey: How went the recording process, the selection of the producer and the like...

The new album "Bent" went very smooth for us, we tried very hard to be prepared for the studio and working with a new producer. We came across Juan Croucier when we began to look for a producer that was willing to work within our budget. We were concerned that if we stayed with the same producer Tom Gregor, who by the way did an outstanding job on "The Illusion", we would have another album with a similar sound. Juan was very willing to work with us after hearing our material and after an initial meeting with him we felt very comfortable about working with him. As for the album we recorded, edited, mixed and arranged 9 songs in about 12 days, very quick for any band. Every day we would spend up to 10 hours in the studio. Juan was very selective and didn't let anything go

Japan are more open to different styles as well as more supportive and loyal to the groups that they like, where as here in the states, the media suggests who and what you should like and, if you stray, your friends think that you are lame!

Progressive Panorama

Are you in touch with other bands from Massacre? And in general, with other metal bands from the US, or the Colorado area, etc like Quiet Room?

We are not in touch with any Massacre bands as most are in Europe and it is quite costly to contact them, here in Colorado we are in contact with Jag



Panzer, members of Titan Force, The Quiet Room and Leviathan. We are planning some shows with some of those groups now as a matter of fact.

For instance latest Fates Warning album was released under this German label in Europe... did you have the chance of listening to it already? How do you like this band in particular?

I have the new Fates, personally I think that Fates Warning is a band that has not received the attention that they rightfully deserve! I have been a fan since the late 80's and they have always managed to amaze me! Their newest album is very different and has to grow on you and it does! It is sad to think that some of the bands that are popular today are only

without his approval, which was tough at times but really well worth it!

Talking about "Bent", do you think there will be less comparisons made between Psycro Drama and bands like Queensryche, Dream Theater or Fates Warning... I mean, do you think that with this album you've polished or perfected even more your own sound and style?

We hope that we have delivered an album that will stand on its own without comparisons to Queensryche, Dream Theater, or Fates Warning. Don't get me wrong, being compared to those bands is an extreme compliment, but at the same time we lose our own identity. The new album "Bent" is very raw, and lacks all of the fancy studio effects that are typical for a progressive band. We were trying to create something new and fresh. The song writing is just a bit different than "The Illusion". Rhythms are more aggressive and straight forward and the lyrical content a bit more serious. Musically, we have matured and have fine tuned our style, while there will always be comparisons, we believe this new album will have its own identity!

Being "Bent" more powerful and straight sounding in general, probably some fans would be wondering if this will mean to sacrifice some of the distinctive features of PD, well arranged melodies and hooks, haunting refrains, etc... how would you explain this step in your career to them?

As we get older, our tastes and interests tend to change. With "Bent", we wanted to deliver a whole new style of musical content without completely changing Psycro Drama. If we released another album that sounded exactly like "The Illusion", then that album would lose its identity and be compared with and considered as "The Illusion" part 2. On "Bent", there are still many trademark sounds of Psycro Drama such as

melodies, hooks, and refrains, but it has been accelerated to the next level. Our fans will not be let down by the latest effort and of our test market, everyone is giving a positive reaction and is very excited about "Bent".

Lyrics on "The Illusion" album were quite profound and elaborated, will the lyrics still play an important role on your next albums?

Lyrics will always play a significant role in our music, and "Bent" is no exception. These songs cover topics from politics, fear, anger, changes in life and the appreciation of friends and your surroundings. The songs still contain elaborate melodies, chorus lines that hook you and meaningful subjects.

Have you any immediate plans for beginning a new tour promoting "Bent"?

There are no immediate plans for touring on a grand scale. We will get our feet wet with small tours in the states and will have to wait and see if album sales are solid enough for Massacre to get us over in Europe.

Maybe it's time to open doors for this underground genres, not to remain behind the curtains and trying to capture more audience by non standard retail channels, yet with lots of possibilities, like it somehow happens on the Internet currently...

What is your input about all this?
The internet is an excellent source for promotion, although we haven't experienced a significant increase in sales due to on-line activities. The internet is a quick and simple way to communicate with our fans as well as magazines, radio programs and other forms of media. I can return an e-mail letter in one day as opposed to a week or more with conventional mail. I believe that it is still too early to tell whether or not the internet will play a big role in the success of bands and their music, but it can't

hurt to put one more piece of promotional power in one's arsenal!

How would you describe from your point of view the way is basically structured the music business and the opportunities that a metal band of your style and musical convictions has to prosper in general?

We have struggled severely with our style of music in this business. There are so many bands out there, the record labels know it and they also know that most bands are so eager to make it that they will do whatever it takes to do so. This willingness creates a problem, the label begins to take advantage of the band, gives them just enough to keep them interested but never really gives that band 100%. It's unfair when you think that most bands are giving 100% and only receiving 25% from their label as far as support and promotion.

We have had a good relationship with our labels, they have treated us with respect and supported us, but we also would like the chance to tour, that requires money that most labels don't have or are not willing to part with. We can only base our experience and opinions on a first album release. It's very possible that with each release we will gain a little more support financially, giving us the opportunity to tour and support the album.

This style, labeled as progressive power metal, does not seem to offer success on a super star level, but we are not in this style of music simply because of fame, we are in it because we enjoy the music and the fans that support it.

What's your opinion about extreme forms of metal, ranging from Death/Black metal to Christian metal?

I have never been into black/death metal, so it's not fair to say I don't like it, I just don't get into that style of music, and, on the other end of the spectrum, the same applies, although I have listened to a few metal Christian bands

that rocked like Barren Cross, Sacred Warrior, and Bloodgood.

I suppose you listen to other types of music apart from metal, don't you?

We all listen to every imaginable style. Hercules composes music in the style of Yanni, or Enya. Brian is into Funk and Jazz and rhythm and blues, Bart is into Country music MacKenzie is into all styles of music but mostly classic metal bands like TNT, and innovative bands like Nine Inch Nails, and I listen and enjoy all of the above!

Which is an essential aspect that has to be present in an album to make you think it was a worthwhile investment? Is it more a matter of emotions, technique, honesty behind the music... or a combination of the whole maybe?

If the music is good and the performer is sincere then it is a hit as far as I am concerned. We all listen to other styles of music to escape our style at times. When you write it, play it every other night, record it, write about it and listen to it over and over, you need an escape or it becomes too much to handle!

Do you follow any new bands? Which are the latest CDs you remember having bought?

I listen mostly to Fates, but I have recently bought and listen to Tad Morose, Nevermore, Lethal, Clockwork, and looking for more every day.

Best of luck for you and the band with this new album, Corey and thanks very much from Edge of Time magazine.

P.S. After being able to complete this interview, I seriously started to believe in miracles and other paranormal activity <g>.

[Psycro Drama, PO Box 62313, Colorado Springs, CO 80962-2312, USA] [psycrodrama@aol.com]

like a jam session in the studio. But the result is astonishing: seven eventful instrumentals that are great fun. No wonder, these musicians are the masters of their instruments. Recommended for King Crimson and progressive/guitar rock fans. (SV)

[bozziomgmt@aol.com]

4

CIVIC MONSTER **Civic Monster EP** **Self-released**

Traditional hard rock/heavy metal without any digressions. The production is OK, and the vocals are not bad at all. In "Colours", the singer even reminded me of Naked Sun, although with this band Civic Monster have nothing in common. Final result: three points on account of the sound quality. (SV)

[15DM, Frank Bornkessel, Stedinger Str. 94, 26135 Oldenburg, Germany]

3

CLOCKWORK **Search EP** **Self-released**

Such newcomers as Clockwork refresh the scene. Clockwork blend several musical streams like prog rock/metal and alternative rock (no grunge!), put the main focus on melody and are quite light music-wise, sound-wise, and sometimes lyrics-wise. Songs are long (up to 8 minutes) and each of them contains calm acoustic parts, what sometimes does not work well. Nevertheless, it's a very minor detail, that is completely compensated by straight, non-hackneyed, and fascinating melodies. If I were a reviewer of "Metal



Hammer", I would point out to the EP name and wrote something like "they are searching for their style"; and it would be wrong - Clockwork are on their chosen way already! Expect for a full-length album of innovative prog metal sometime in 1997/1998. (GS)

[S8, Clockwork, 219 Canford Dr., Broomall, PA 19008, USA] [sf96d6z4@post.drexel.edu] [http://www.nettli.fr/~japi/]

3 3/4

CONCEPTION **Flow** **Modern Music**

With their 4th album, the famous Norwegian act seems to have chosen a pretty different approach to the progressive/power metal they delivered in "Parallel Minds" or "In Your Multitude" albums. This is something obvious, particularly on the guitar sound. More in the vein of mainstream metal, this album shows a few interesting songs with feeling, namely "Gethsemane", "Cry", or "A Virtual Lovestory" where Khan vocals are still one of the best points. But, more often, it's just the music which

is not at the same level. The high use of filters on the choruses and electronic effects have given the album an orientation which left me a bit cold as mere listener. To get an idea, try to think about what "Promised Land" album meant in regards to Queensryche and add some drops of recent White Zombie/Depeche Mode or even U2 materials. (GM)

3 1/2

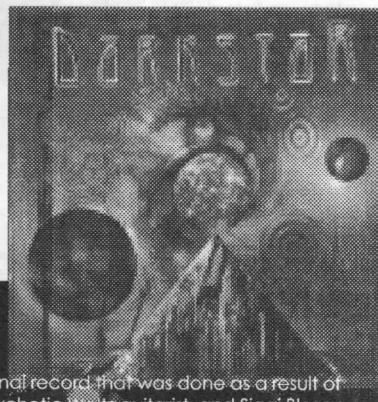
DARKSTAR **Marching Into Oblivion** **Institute Of Art**

Very coherent, dark, and emotional record that was done as a result of joint effort from Dan Rock, the Psychotic Waltz guitarist, and Siggie Blasey known from End Amen and Crash Museum. Like Buddy Lackey in his solo album, Dan Rock came to a slightly different thing than Psychotic Waltz music. "Marching Into Oblivion" contains spoken vocals parts but, in general, it is an instrumental album. Musically, it reminds of End Amen and "Sleeping Dogs" instrumental from the Psychotic Waltz debut album. It's very original and, at the same time, very listenable and melodic. At first sight, songs seem to be more suitable for listening to them alone in an obscure atmosphere but later it appears that it would be possible to make a spectacular live show as well. Yet, since Dan and Siggie have different bands, it is hardly realistic at the moment.

The highlights are the monumental "Confusion On A Grand Scale" with impressive story (one of the tracks where spoken voice is dominant), the J.M. Jare-in-metal track "Darkstar", the Psychotic Waltz-style composition "Out There", and "Alien Christ". All songs are diverse enough but carry the similar mood which makes the whole album very impressive. Don't hesitate at this time, get it fast! (GS)

[S15, PO Box 710332, Santee, CA 92071, USA] [oceanpurple@aol.com]

4 1/2





DIVINE REGALE
Ocean Mind
Metal Blade

After a long time, Metal Blade records have signed a progressive metal band. Another sign of The Revival. Divine Regale already had a good reputation in the underground after their "Horizons" demo-CD released back in 1994. Three years have not passed in vain. "Ocean Mind" is an elaborate album of song-oriented progressive metal.

The opener title track is a highlight of the album and a trademark of Divine Regale: multi-layered vocals, catchy melodies, and rich instrumentation. The band is not afraid of stepping aside the prog-metal frame and incorporate some elements of alternative rock and metal in their music, but Queensryche and Fates Warning look to be their main guides. The next three songs strongly resemble to rockier songs of Queensryche.

The ballad "Leaves" is a true gem with its memorable melody lines that do not leave your mind. The same goes to the next heavier track "Horizon" that is already known from the demo-CD. "Cry To Heaven", familiar from "Metal Massacre XII" compilation, and "Underworld", another track from "Horizons" demo-CD, are the heaviest songs on "Ocean Mind". The band is talented. "Ocean Mind" is a fine album by all aspects. But next time we will demand for more. Will the last track title ("Forever Changing Winds") serve as a metaphor considering Divine Regale's future releases? (GS)

[Divine Regale, P.O. Box 1960, Dover, NH 03821-1960, USA] (<http://pubpages.unh.edu/~reyancik/index.htm>)
4 1/4



ELDRITCH
Headquake
Inside Out/LMP

The first listen was like a nightmare. I liked "Seeds Of Rage", the debut album of this Italian progressive metal band, but it is hard for me to absorb "Headquake". It seems that they are not capable to write good and catchy melodies anymore. The only "Lord Of An Empty Places" reminds of the majestic "Colors", "Cage Of Sins", and "The Deaf And The Blind" from the debut album.

When emotions calm down, we see that actually Eldritch just turned into a heavier direction. Even the ballad "Sometimes In Winter" is kind of heavy. The music still has many different turns, and the musicianship is irreproachable. But there are some parts which do not go well in one song, and the songwriting lack hooks which were clearer on "Seeds Of Rage". Yes, the hooks were 'hidden' on "Seeds..." and I can't get rid of the feeling that they are even better

'hidden' on "Headquake". But, how many listens are needed to discover them then? For "Seeds Of Rage", 3 was enough. For "Headquake", twice as much is not.

After all, it's still interesting album. Eldritch have their distinct cell. Nevertheless, "Headquake", even if it has some moments, remains in the shadow of "Seeds Of Rage". (GS)
3 3/4

FAVOURITE SON
Beating The Bell
Inline

Moving somewhere between Sieges Even's "A Sense Of Change" and another German band Noom, Favourite Son hadn't a good hand in the metal market but their debut CD is anything but bad. The group swim in calm, acoustic waters, but their strong points are the dramatic instrumental eruptions such as in "Judgement Hour" or "In Deepest Rage". They can build on them in the future. Unfortunately, their label went bankrupt, so now they are looking for a new one. (SV)

[30DM, Favourite Son, Rik Bernshausen, Mozartstr. 10, 57339 Endtebrueck, Germany]
3 1/2

HAMMERFALL
Glory To The Brave
Nuclear Blast

Hammerfall found the courage to do this and their debut CD is done in the veins of Manowar, Iron Maiden, Helloween and presents so-called 'true metal'. In other words, speed/heavy metal with powerful ballads "I Believe" and "Glory To The Brave", plus, Warlord's "Child of the Damned" cover version. I'm really not so enthusiastic about the rising trend of power/heavy metal again that brings many mediocre bands, but Hammerfall are very professional and powerful one. I'd dare to state that this CD is one of the most successful albums of heroic epic heavy metal in 1997. Of course, we can say that there are many elements of Manowar, beginning from the CD cover and lyrics dealing with warriors fighting for the name of heavy metal, and going to a bombastic manner of playing. Nevertheless, these

are the rules of the game and we all know them. Nuclear Blast have released their first 'true metal' album and promise to give more. (AO)
4 1/4

HARD ATTACK
Why EP
Self-released

In respect of the sound quality, German Hard Attack do not shine. On the other hand, they have a few things to offer on this EP: from heavy metal to pop and progressive rock. In my opinion, the songs are maybe too long. 3-4 minutes length tracks would fit them more. Next time, Hard Attack could take it into account. (SV)

[20DM, Christian Jungbluth, Rheinstrasse 39, 46395 Bocholt, Germany]
2 3/4

HEAVEN'S CRY
Food For A Thought Substitute
Hypnotic

The debut album of this Canadian team arrives with unanimously good reviews in various prestigious music publications. No wonder. It's not usual to find an album with this obvious sound freshness and originality. Imagine a cross of some metalized King's X (check "Out of Me", "Wings") with Voivod and Damn The Machine tidbits, and add some impeccable chorus lines a la Extreme.

Strange, you may say. Well, the result is a very interesting collection of not orthodox technical metal compositions of great beauty. Sensational tempo changes and instrumental fills, a correct use of vocal effects, and powerful melodies abound on this album. The singer, sometimes ("Your God's Crime", "Gaia's Judgement"...) could remind of Dave



ETERNITY X
The Edge
Angular

Fifth release from this self-described progressive "Universal" Rock HR/HM band, and first one which is distributed under a stable label contract. The truth is, we're talking about a fantastic 74 minutes-long piece of music, from the first to the last note. Taking as reference their previous album "Mind Games", Eternity X have enhanced dramatically in terms of musicianship. I consider the superb work at the keyboards by Et-X new member Jamie Mazur as one of the main factors. In my opinion,

musically, "The Edge" has almost all a lover of technical metal aims at. This album hides a countless collection of colorful melodic moments and lyrical passages perfectly tied together, which will transport the listener to atmospheres of all kind. This is a perfect album to take recreation of, listen to carefully, and enjoy each single cut. Developing a complex conceptual theme, the incredible title track was divided into 4 parts, strategically placed in the album. Other songs as "Fly Away", "A Day In Verse", "The Confession" (what an great story is told on this one), or "Baptized By Fire" could make you remind of bands as Shadow Gallery or some of the best Savatage epic releases. And, in fact, since Jon Oliva's most outstanding contributions to Savatage I can't recall a vocal performance which has impressed me as much emotionally as Keith Sudano's on this one. Showing a great versatility as an avant-garde metal band, I'd say they have put out something which crosses over the boundaries or standard paces of what art made music is. A total masterpiece, check it out. (GM)

[Eternity X, P.O. Box 38 Cliffwood, NJ 07721-0038 USA] [Viper2@Eternity-X.com] (<http://www.eternity-x.com>)
5

Mustaine raspy vocals, but overall his voice is really pleasant and effective. Meaningful lyrics and a very potent bassline, also deserve a mention. In my opinion, a few elements from this album could set some parameters for future modern progressive metal releases. (GM)

[Heaven's Cry Society, P.O. Box 626, NDG Montreal, Quebec, Canada H4A 3R1]
4 1/2

HEAVEN'S GATE
Planet E.
SPV/LMP

Evaluating a traditional German metal album, always the crucial moment is whether songs are catchy or not. It's hard to give a one word answer in the case of "Planet E.". With this album, Heaven's Gate do not jump higher than Helloween. Of course, it's not required and fans should be happy hearing another good album of melodic joyful

heavy metal. Keep in mind, it's traditional. Highlights include the 9-minutes epic speed metal anthem "Noah's Dream", the fast traditional heavy metal songs "Terminated World" and "Planet Earth", and the eastern influenced "Black Religion". There are some average, some below-average tracks, too. Lisa Dalbello and Sparks covers are out of place. (GS)

[Heaven's Gate Fan Club, P.O. Box 60 25 04, 22235 Hamburg, Germany]
3 1/2

HEXENHAUS
Dejavoodoo
Black Mark

Although the influences of Hexenhaus come probably from other bands, I can't overhear Yngwie Malmsteen, Threshold, and King Diamond here. That's all right. With a solid production in the rear, the band feels fine in these waters. The combination of progressive guitars and atmospheric keyboards come to fruition: "Nocturnal Rites" or "From The Cradle To The Grave" are the best examples for it. I hope they will finally make a breakthrough with this CD. (SV)

[Hexenhaus, S. Beckman, Centralv. 9, S-171 44 Solna, Sweden]
4

HOUSE OF SPIRITS
Turn Of The Tide
Gun

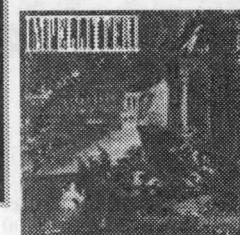
1994 was the year when this German team released their debut album. With the reputed drummer Joerg Michael (Running Wild, Stratovarius) on its lineup, House of Spirits put out a disc which will totally satisfy fans of Queensryche "Rage for Order" era, Crimson Glory, and other acts in this kind of vein. Songs like "The Eye of the Storm", "Close to the Edge", or "Keep Me from Dreaming", just to name a few, have part of that classic straight metal of the 80's feel. This is noticed on the vocal lines (mix of Geoff Tate/Shadow Gallery vocalist with more power) and on guitars work, aside of any superfluous technical virtuosity. Solid and quite interesting album. (GM)

[House Of Spirits, P.O. Box 1729, D-58407, Witten, Germany]
4

HYDROTOXIN
Oceans
Crystal Entertainment/LMP

This CD by a German group reminds me a bit of Italian progressive metal bands. A similar exotic, almost meditative CD-booklet, gentle, a bit naive singer, long and sentimental tracks. Dream Theater probably are examples for them. Not bad, but no great shakes, too. (SV)

3 1/2



IMPELLITTERI
Screaming Symphony
Victor

What a 'clock bomb' this fine album is! Non-stopping heavy metal with memorable refrains which, in my case, have made me remind of masters on this area like the 70's legendary band Boston... Yes, it might sound strange, but choruses like those on "Walk Away", "Countdown to the Revolution", or "Kingdom Of Light" have a similar captivating melodic feel. The vocalist Rob Rock really connects perfectly with the spirit of this electric release, where the fantastic guitar work is one of the most significant highlights. With the exception of an instrumental track, preamble for "Rats Race", all songs may have an almost identical 'intro - chorus -

bridge" structure, hardly surpassing 4 minutes, etc., but the CD does not get monotonous or boring. So, what's the "miracle" for that when nothing is particularly adventurous, original, or odd? Just mindblowing melodic METAL with capital letters presented flawlessly at a quite pure state. (GM)

[http://www.rapture.net/impellitter/] 4 1/4



IVANHOE
Symbols of Time
Music Is Intelligence/WMMs

This German band's second release shows us some really interesting songwriting abilities and progressive metal at its finest. Here you may find a good combination of heaviness, melody, and brilliant time changes. The keyboards are a strong point in this album and add a great feeling and the right atmosphere to songs like "Vibrations" or the title track. Vocalist Andy B. Franck seems sometimes to sing too high, and tends to slur his voice a little when hitting the highest notes, but overall, he does a very good job on this album. Several songs stand out, like the beautiful ballad "By A Feeling" (backing female vocals), "Wide Open", or "Silent Ceremony" (original and catchy

percussion intro with a Brazilian flavour here!). Very good production for a highly enjoyable album. (GM)

4 1/4

IVANHOE
Polarized

Music Is Intelligence/WMMs

Follow-up to their acclaimed "Symbols of Time" album, the new outing of this German band lands with expectations set obviously quite high. "Polarized" is a carefully-planned work which delivers pretty much the same amalgam of sounds which made them popular among prog metal listeners. Creativity and imagination in the arrangements and rhythmic changes are again one of their fortes. No reason for an update on this aspect. And that, as far as I'm concerned, can only be a good thing. Tracks like "Hollow", "Loneliness", "Glass on Skin", or the ballad "When I'm Old" remind us of some of the best facets of current modern progressive metal. Experimenting with some different feels, part of this album is a bit less straight sounding and more obscure than earlier material, but, overall, it leaves the same pleasant aftertaste. (GM)

4

ROB JOHNSON
Guitarchitecture
Self-released

Fans of Vai, McAlpine, or Petrucci should check out the CD by this guitarist and add his albums to their collections. Rob Johnson has established an international fan base as a result of releasing several instrumental guitar albums. His guitar work is highlighted by intense technique, chugging 7 string riffs, and great



FATES WARNING
A Pleasant Shade Of Gray
Massacre/Metal Blade

Extraordinary. Enlisting the immense creative talent of Jim Matheos (feat. all songwriting/lyrics/guitars on this album), the usual awesome vocals by Roy Adler and powerful drums dispatched by Mark Zonder, and recruiting Joey Vera (ex-Armored Saint) on the bass and highly reputed keyboardist Kevin Moore, the final result is a progressive metal album of the highest quality.

Complex, dense, deep, emotional, original... this album concept is really revolutionary as on its 53 minutes develops a single song, indexed on twelve parts (nice detail to make the listening more accessible). Perhaps one of the most appealing aspects is that all parts are so wisely crafted, so well-connected lyrically, that it's difficult to highlight a particular moment: it shows many colorful passages which haunt the listener attention and, on the other hand, gives a feel of being in front of an unique piece of music... Musically, it is probably the most diverse and experimental album Fates Warning have released since "Perfect Symmetry", to say the least. The addition of Kevin Moore definitely brings some fresh air with his superb atmospheric keyboards, arrangements and also sound effects of hypnotic nature; the use of filters on vocals is probably higher than ever, percussion is really innovative at some stages, and, especially, Jim Matheos signature on the mesmerizing guitars is always present along this incredibly pleasant shade of gray... (GM)

[http://www.goodnet.com/~mkizer/tw/tw.htm] 4 3/4



stratovarius

Interview with Timo Kotipelto, Stratovarius vocalist.
Questions by Gregorio Martin.

Nice to talk to you Timo, how's life going there in Helsinki at the moment?

Very good! The summer's been very hot (I think the hottest summer of the century). So, I've enjoyed the weather, done some sports, spent some holiday, and, at the moment, I'm preparing myself for the tour.

Sounds good indeed... see what has happened this summer for instance in Central Europe: It was very sad to see those terrible floods pushing thousands of people out from their homelands, don't you think?

Yeah, I've seen the news. If this hasn't got anything to do with the thinning ozone layer or other human activity then it might be just a coincident, I'm just wondering. It's like a complete turn around in weather, I mean it was raining snow when we were supposed to play in Grenada and a very warm day in Finland...

Could you tell us a little in more detail about how you prepare yourself for a tour like this forthcoming one which will cross Europe?

I have done more singing lately, you know that the vocal cords are muscles like any other muscles and have to be trained. I've also done a lot of sports (gym, mountain biking with Jari) and Jari and I even bought rollerskates so that we could do some sports during the tour.

Months after the release of Visions, are you satisfied with the response it has accomplished worldwide?

Yes I am. Actually, a little bit surprised with the good response and sale figures. We've on the charts in many countries (we are still on the charts in Finland after almost 4 months! And it's close to going gold here!).

Excellent news. I heard you were even 4th on the official TOP 40 list in Finland, isn't it? That's remarkable yes...

We are still wondering how it is possibly... But it seems that metal is coming back, at least in Finland!

When an album as Episode receives so positive reviews and comments at all levels, perhaps part of Stratovarius fans could have thought it would be difficult to maintain such a quality level on the new album. Do you think this was somehow present in your minds when you started working on

Visions?

In a way, yes. We were so pleased with Episode that we thought how can we make a better one? but I think it was quite easy because we had very good new songs and did a lot of touring. So, the band is a lot of tighter after all the gigs we did. I think Visions is even better than Episode!

Don't you think it's a difficult task to stay coherent with one's career or musical path and trying to keep at the same time innovative, not sounding redundant, etc? In which direction will Stratovarius try to progress on the next years?

The next album will (surprisingly...) be Stratovarius style of album. When we start to make the next album, we don't actually think what kind of an album it should be. We just make songs and record them and afterwards we might think okay, it's heavier, lighter, faster or slower. We don't think what sells and what not. I think, with the last two albums, we have found our own style and we are going to stay loyal to that style. Of course, it's very hard if you think about it too much.

Yes, that's what I was mostly trying to express. After those two albums you just mentioned, of a grand solidness and with their own personality, perhaps a dilemma like will the new one sound somehow repetitive in relation to them? could appear... but anyway, if this formula is working so well for Stratovarius I also tend to think that way: Better staying loyal to that style than giving an eventual blind step.

I agree! We have some some sad examples around...

Talking again about Episode, it included a 40 piece male/female choir plus a string orchestra of 20 players. On Visions, there is not this kind of complex choir/orchestral arrangements. Did you have any particular reason for that or it simply came up this way randomly?

Basically, the songs didn't need any big choirs of orchestras. That's why we didn't use any. It's always what the song needs. We don't use choirs just because it looks cool to print on the sleeve we did this and this. Maybe for the next album, we will use them again, maybe not.

The budget for recording Visions was still higher than for Episode, is

that correct?

Actually, it was less or the same, not more.

I remember Timo Tolkki told me one of his personal aspirations was composing something with a more direct approach to those choral/orchestrated musical areas. For instance, he commented to me how much he enjoyed Therion's Theli album because of its perfection on this subject. What's your opinion about all this?

I don't know about him, but our music is kind of a symphonic so there is a chance to do some orchestrated things. But, again, there is no need to fit in an orchestra if the song does not need it.

If I'm not wrong, Jrg and Jens usually spend most part of the year outside Finland, in Dortmund and New York respectively. Does this somehow affect to the band when trying to keep a regular contact, especially in the early stages of preparing a new album, pre-production, etc., or you use normal means for communicating or exchanging materials by mail or whatever?

Of course, it is harder than for some other bands. But these guys are the best possible musicians for us, so it's the only way. It's true that we don't rehearse much. Only a week before the recordings and a couple of days before the tours. But we don't need so much rehearsing because we have played the songs while doing the albums and we don't need so much of a personal rehearsing.

When we start making the new album, we send a drum machine demo to Jrg and Jens and then we make a real demo with the guys. Just before the recordings start, we rehearse some days with Jrg and that's about it.

Would you agree if I'd say that, with Visions, Stratovarius have achieved to sound more cohesionated than ever as a whole band?
I would and I will.

I personally think that particularly Jens' contribution on this last album has been more exceptional and notable than ever. Being as he is, one of the top keyboardists in the scene, without a doubt, do you think his integration in the band bringing new ideas has increased in relation to Episode? You are right. When we started doing songs for Episode, we didn't know who would play the drums or the keyboards for the album. Then we got Jrg and Jens. But, for Visions, we knew it would be the same guys so we let them do more of their own things. And, we also mixed the keyboards a little bit more on the top.

Talking about yourself as a vocalist, which singers of any genre you remember that helped you at the beginning of your career to polish your own style?

I think there's some good singers like Ronnie James Dio, Geoff Tate, Bruce Dickinson, and David Coverdale. I favor singer with a clean voice and good sense of melody. As performers, Ronnie and Bruce are brilliant.

Before joining Stratovarius in Fourth Dimension album, what kind of musical activities or bands you were

involved with?

I had a local band back in the central Finland where I was born. The music was a little bit heavier than Stratovarius but melodic with high pitch vocals.

Apart from being a professional musician, have you worked in other kind of stable jobs before?

Not really, I've been working some time in a local radio, but that's about it.

I see. Talking about this, correct me if I'm wrong, but in Finland there's only one metal radio show broadcasted for all the nation, the one edited by Klaus Fleming. Could this fact give even more relevance to your long presence on charts there?

It's true. Metalliliitto is the only real metal show here! Klaus is a very nice guy and has been supporting us a lot! There is actually another metal show which is mainly meant for Swedish speakers living in Finland. But

Metalliliitto (Metalunion) is the BEST! One Finnish music show in television called Jyrki has shown our videos maybe two times, but that's about it. Radios still don't play our music because they've got their fucking playlists!

Stratovarius official Fan Club,

Legions of the Twilight World, has an intense activity and also contributes in great part to promote Stratovarius worldwide, keeping in touch with people who perhaps have had not the chance of seeing Stratovarius on stage yet or with Stratovarius newcomers for example. Have you noticed this bigger and bigger response in terms of popularity I just mentioned?

Yes I have. We have more and more fans joining in! We don't want to make money with our fanclub that's why we try to keep the annual fee as low as possible (20\$). Our fanclub members can join the lottery and the lucky winners can meet the band during the tour. If it's possible, we always try to talk with our fans, but sometime it's so busy schedule that it's quite hard.

What comes to your mind when you hear the name of Sibelius?
A very good Finnish composer. The song Finlandia is superb!

And when you hear the name of Maarit?

A typical Finnish name for a girl. What else?

Gotcha! Timo! hat about Maarit Hurmerinta the famous Finnish singer!

I actually thought that you might think about her but was not sure! Yes, she's very good. It's strange that you know about her, she's not so popular.

How do you personally see the European metal panorama nowadays?
It's been down a few years but hopefully it's coming back! At least, we are doing better year by year. It's still very hard because there's so many lousy techno bands around and the media is supporting that kind of music.

Do you have any other artistic interest apart from the strictly musical? Painting, literature, etc...

Well, I read a lot of history books and some sci-fi books.

I see. Now that you mention historic books, did you give a hand to document the passages about Nostradamus prophecies from Visions perhaps?

Actually not I read it after Timo wrote the lyrics. Right now, I'm into Roman history.

Well, thanks a lot for your interest Timo. All the best.

Thanks Martin, all the best to your readers and our fans! See you on tour!

See you on tour, sure! By the way Timo, when will we see you taking part on that tango singing contest? Maybe next year! Just kidding. Maybe I will sing the songs one octave higher and with a lot more volume!

Thank you very much to Terhi Keskitalo for her undying support and all her help in putting this interview. I dedicated it to her. La coca cola con bomba de terra sempre Terhi.

[timkotip@netlife.fi]

phrasing. Rob also participates in the project called Saddleback Shark (see review).
[\$12(USA), \$16(World), Rob Johnson, 2801 Millrace Drive, Columbus, Ohio 43207-4621, USA]
3 3/4

KAMELOT

Dominion

Modern Music

American Kamelot aim to blend all what is good from Iron Maiden, Crimson Glory, and German power metal. How many times were we cheated when somebody had delivered synthetic power/prog with uncontrolled high-pitched vocals? Luckily, Kamelot present solid power metal and equalize the balance. Mark Vanderbilt is one of the better mid-range singers but the songs do not rely on him much, the teamwork is a key here. "Dominion" is a mature album, and, in spite of a couple of vague moments ("Sin"), holds listeners' attention from the beginning to the end. I have heard that the singer left the band and Jim Dorian from Anomaly helped them on tour. (GS)
[Kamelot, PO Box 270172, Tampa, FL 33688, USA]
[kamelot@total-internet-tech.com] [http://www.total-internet-tech.com/DHEMGT/kamelot.htm]
4

JAMIE LA RITZ

Fire In The Sky

Crystal Rock/SVP

Jamie La Ritz has toured and recorded with renowned acts including Black Oak Arkansas, Bryan Adams, Fiona, Crack The Sky, etc. He is the guitarist with the ability to play blues, funk, and rock n'roll. "Fire In The Sky" is his second release and includes 10 instrumentals that will appeal to all guitar music fans. (SV)
3 1/2

LAST TURION

Seduction Overdose

Angular

When the introductory title track starts with some electronic-like drum beats and even a subtle rap scratchin' one could wonder on what definite direction this album will flow. Last Turion's work is indeed a very varied release and transmits quite different sensations along its course. It tries to cope many elements from modern progressive rock/melodic rock genres and what current fusion tendencies are, expressing at the same time their personal sound identity. They fulfill this on most parts. A couple of commercial tracks ("Watch Out!", "Between the Lines") probably lack of the presence and musical intensity the well-constructed title track or "Autumn Scream" have. Vocalist stylistically sings somewhat similar to Damian Wilson from

Threshold/Michael Sweet (ex-Stryper), and could sound a bit forced on the highest notes. He shows his best on the beautiful acoustic track "Innocent Murder", the piano song "Undiscovered Heart", or on the mentioned "Autumn Scream", where echo effects create a pretty original atmosphere. Cult band in Germany, Last Turion shows a bright present. For fans of neo-progressive rock, not looking for an accused heaviness. (GS)

[Last Turion, Hilgenboomstr. 3, D-45884 Geisenkirchen, Germany]
3 1/2

LOVE MACHINE

The Nite

Pick Up

Pure heavy metal is the thing that some of you are searching for again. Love Machine do not surpass Iron Maiden or Judas Priest and they are more "commercial". Nevertheless, they deliver some enjoyable songs as the powerful opener "Running Faster", the first single "Angels In Town", and, perhaps, "We Are The Fire" with "fire/desire" rhyme in the refrain (one fanzine editor was complaining a lot about this rhyme, ha ha... though even Fates Warning used it once...). Yes, there are cliches on "The Nite" but it's a long time we haven't heard these cliches. Love Machine members mastered them very well.

That's why I can stand even some of the sweet ballads of the album: "In The Night" and "Let Me Go" are basically OK. If you counted, I have mentioned 5 songs as 'good'. It's not a bad percentage of decent material... (GS)
[Love Machine, Via S. Francesco 40/D, 20020 Ceriano, Leghetto (MI), Italy] [md1454@mcclink.it] [http://www.eletrodata.com/lovmachine]
3 1/2

MAGELLAN

A Strange Traffic Of Dreams

Fernao

It's not that Magellan from Magna Carta Records, it's completely another band from other dimensions. They exist for about 20 years and already have 27 releases including this. No need to tell you that it was very strange to receive a promotional package from a band like this. This tape album offers a soft prog rock with some The Beatles type the 70's rock influences. It begins with mild and soft prog/atmospheric rock tracks, which emotionally are a bit similar to Julee Cruise (Twin Peaks rules!), but later there appear some more old-rock/some-funk/some-blues type songs. Still the flavor is mild. If you know what the term "elevator prog rock" means, you should get an idea. (GS)

[Magellan, PO Box 600267, Saint Paul, Minnesota 55106, USA] [mgellan@aol.com] [http://members.aol.com/mgellan/index.html]
3

MANITOU

Entrance

BMG

"Entrance" is the first Norwegian progressive metal album, released back in 1995 by the band, which doesn't exist anymore. It is a decent record in the veins of "Awaken The Guardian"/"No Exit" era Fates Warning. Manitou are not imitators - all songs stand on their own. Since the majority of them are slow or mid-tempo, the whole feel is similar to Candlemass. The most memorable tracks are "Coven (Autumn Falls)" and "The Forlorn". Now the singer Oeyvind is in the new Norwegian prog metal hope Spiral Architect. (GS)
3 3/4

MASI

The Watcher

SPV/LMP

Alex Masi is a guitar virtuoso from USA, who have been releasing albums since 1984. Guitars shine everywhere on his new one, but material is song-oriented, contains vocals, and should appeal not only to guitar-music maniacs but to melodic hard n'heavy fans, too. Nevertheless, when you have 13 songs and around 70 minutes of music on one album, almost always there are some



LETHAL
Poison Seed
Massacre/DCA

The album got very different reviews. And what to expect, when a style changes almost dramatically. The band's name was in minds of all prog metal fans as the name of the band that was never defeated. They released the great demo "Arrival" (1987) and the classical power/prog metal album "Programmed" (1990), that probably haven't got any bad comments.

And what? "Poison Seed" was released 6 years later (well, there was the "Your Favorite God" EP put out back in 1995) and virtually has very little to do with "Programmed". Far more, it is easy to glue a word "grunge" to it. Remember the latest Queensryche album trial on Perpetual Motion web-board?

On one hand, it's a pity that "Poison Seed" is another Lethal. I really wonder how did they dare to compose a track "Watch Me Feed", which is very close to Alice In Chains. Not because Alice In Chains would be a bad band (and they are not), but because the track is very very close, especially with respect to vocals. Apart from that, the album itself is quite good, containing "Down" and "Your Favorite God" that slightly recall the early days, some lyrical atmospheric tracks "Born", "Poison Seed" (which reminds of Queensryche's "Silent Lucidity"), and "Now", the good in-between cut "Walking Wounded" and the beautiful somewhat XIX-age-feel ending composition "Odd Shaped Pearl". In the album, one can find very good moments, but there are some only average parts as well.

If there were no "Programmed" album, less people would notice "Poison Seed". It took me awhile to get into this album. If they were another band, I would not care much, but in this case I did. And I am glad I did. It's not exactly progressive metal, it's more modern rock/metal, but... there is nothing to be afraid of. The band, however, split up. Probably we will see some members in some other bands. (GS)

4

fillers. "The Watcher" is not an exception. When the energetic and fast title track is precious, "Front Range Thunder" is simply boring. "Ave Maria" is fine, would decorate any Marty Friedman album, while "Real Time" is pale. (GS)
[Masi, PO Box 931328, Los Angeles, CA 90093, USA] [MasiMuzic@aol.com]
3 1/2

MAYADOME
Paranormal Activity
Shrapnel

Sweden's Mayadome consists of experienced players, even if "Paranormal Activity" is only their debut album. The band started in the early 90's under the name Mellow Poetry, released several demo tapes and the EP that finally landed a record deal. Album's crystal-clear production is reminiscent to Dream Theater's "Images And Words", the playing is at the top level, the singer has a decent mid-range voice, and the only shortage is average vocal lines. In spite of that, it is a recommended album for technical progressive (big emphasis on both words!) metal fans. The new album should be out at the end of 1997. With the new singer - who has been described as a mix of Geoff Tate and James LaBrie - and with a little more work put in the lyrics, it could enter the progressive metal hall of fame, where Dream Theater, Fates Warning,

Psychotic Waltz, Vauxdvihl, and Shadow Gallery comfortably reside. (GS)
[Mayadome, c/o Teddy Moeller, Graamunkhaga, 75597 Uppsala, Sweden]
[mayadome@swipnet.se] [http://home2.swipnet.se/~w-21565/]
3 3/4

METROPOLIS
Unsure Destination
TMI

Somehow it sounds monotonous. Metropolis should be classified as a boring progressive rock band with groaning vocals and lyrical acoustic guitars. If we append the stereotyped cover, my impression of Metropolis is tedious. Unimaginative. (SV)
[TMI Records, PO Box 18225, Greensboro, NC 27419, USA]
2 3/4

NOCTURNAL RITES
In A Time Of Blood And Fire
Megarock

Straight metal band from Scandinavia that could be described as a cross between old Helloween-Iron Maiden and Blind Guardian. This album has not a moment of rest, and shows some good songwriting abilities, being plenty of epic choruses and speedy riffs combined with a very effective bottomline. Classic metal style release, don't expect to find here progressive elements, this is a bulletted album! (GM)
3 3/4

POWERS COURT
Powers Court
Self-released

This American band has a lot in common with old heavy/power metal and their debut album can be considered as another sign of the second life of heavy metal. What is unique about Powers Court, is the exceptional voice of female singer Danie Powers and the unusual, thick, pounding sound. The music does not spark with technical tricks, is very straightforward, dark, and relatively minimalistic. It's a pure thing and for its purity it may not appeal to everybody (particularly to prog-metal fans who look for multi-layered songs). Personally for me, the record becomes better and better on its way from the beginning to the very end. The last three tracks - "The Master Plan", "Deceiver" and "Season of the Witch" - are probably the best ones. (GS)

[Powers Court, c/o Danie Powers, PO Box 2441, St. Louis, MO 63114, USA] [powers@igateway.net]
[http://www.angelfire.com/ct/powersct]
3 1/4

PSYCO DRAMA
Bent
Massacre

It can be concluded simply and by everyone: Psycho Drama's second album has a more aggressive and raw edge in comparison with the debut "The Illusion". Vocals are still melodic, and it gives an interesting feeling because, with Phil Anselmo performing them, the material probably would be ascribed to "American aggressive metal". Strangely, even if what I liked about their first album is the clearly melodic songs, I can't say I am disappointed with "Bent". It's good that it's different. In places, it recalls the flowing tunes of "The Illusion" (on songs "No Return" and "Quiet Sky"), but aggressive chopped rock/metal riffs are dominant. A coherent, modern, and compact album. (GS)
[Psyco Drama, PO Box 62313, Colorado Springs, CO 80962-2312, USA] [psycodrama@aol.com]
4

THE QUIET ROOM
Introspect
Dominion

Colorado's The Quiet Room have been around for several years, and prog metal hackers should be familiar with their 5- songs promo CD released in 1995. They play progressive metal, so let's get it straight from the start: are they another Fates Warning-inspired band or do they have their own identity? I wouldn't call them unique; in respect to stylistics, "Introspect" falls between Fates Warning's "Perfect Symmetry" and

"Parallels", significantly closer to the first. There are traces of Dream Theater, too, and overall the songs truly reflect what is meant by the term "traditional progressive metal". On the other hand, we still do not have that much confidently performed progressive metal, so why not to have one more band in a "fine-bands list"? Musicians of The Quiet Room are skilled, and the songs are technically and creatively rich. There are no weak spots. "Introspect" may require additional listens but will hook a progressive metal fan. If you are not one of them, better try before you buy. (GS)
4

RATTLEBONE
Rattlebone EP
Self-released

Rattlebone from New Jersey have already opened for bands like Dokken, Yngwie Malmsteen, King's X, Slash's Snakepit, etc. Their debut EP contains various influences: from traditional hard n'heavy to psychedelic and glam rock. The opener "Walking Timebomb" is made in veins of Jane's Addiction and Last Crack, for me, it's the best track of the CD. Afterwards, they get hooked on commercial refrains, and it's not my cup of tea. At this point, I call to my mind Circus Of Power, a good example, where soft melodies and sharp, addicted riffs don't go together. In spite of this, "Rattlebone" is a sound piece of work. (SV)
[Rattlebone, PO Box 340, Woodbridge, NJ 07095, USA] [DreamMgt@aol.com]
3 1/2



SYMPHONY X
The Divine Wings Of Tragedy
Inside Out

This US technical metal band third and latest effort shows a great songwriting, a good musicianship all around and some unique sounding songs. There are excellent tracks like "Sea Of Lies" or "Of Sins And Shadows" which would fit into the category of technical heavy metal a la Stratovarius with a progressive touch on keyboards, while others like the "The Witching Hour" and "Out Of The Ashes" have a pretty deep neoclassical feel that might remind the listener a bit of Yngwie Malmsteen, particularly on the chorus lines. The 'magnus opus' of this album is a twenty minutes-long impressive track which gives title to the CD, featuring great choir arrangements and superb instrumental guitar parts plenty of variation. Russell Allen vocals are very solid, with a really wide range. He is capable of singing with a strong sense of melody and clarity on memorable songs as "The Accolade" (my personal favourite) or in the beautiful "Candlelight Fantasia" (close to Savatage's Zak Stevens sometimes), and of sounding rawer and much more aggressive on tracks like "Pharaoh" or "The Eyes Of Medusa", for instance. Highly recommended for lovers of technical metal, very polished and elaborated works. (GM)
4 3/4

SADDLEBACK SHARK
The Killing System
Aftershock

Saddleback Shark is a four piece band from USA featuring the guitarist Rob Johnson (see review). Their music could be described as modern metal of the 90's influenced by Pantera, Machine Head, or Biohazard. I believe they are good musicians but it's a pity that they stick fast in the same rhythms and monotony. This is a big problem that I have with this album that undoubtedly is just an average performance. (SV) [This review should be in another section but it isn't. - GS]
[12(USA), 16(World), Rob Johnson, 2801 Millrace Drive, Columbus, Ohio 43207-4621, USA]
3

SANVOISEN
Soul Seasons
Modern Music

Who has dared to say the glorious metal days were over? With this solid album, Sanvoisen shine as a really consolidated band. Killer tracks like "Mindwars" or "Against The Fears" coexist perfectly with the two ballads included here. Well constructed songs, potent guitar riffs, and incredibly catchy choruses make "Soul Seasons" a very enjoyable album. Recommended for a broad metal audience, ranging from R.J. Dio fans to classic Fates Warning/Queensryche fans. A very good production backup this 42 minutes-long release. (GM)
4

SARCOFAGUS
Envoy Of Death/Cycle Of Life [re-releases]
Mellotron

I wonder what status this Finnish band have had in their native country in the 80's. These two re-releases (both vinyls came out in 1980), in spite of the recording quality, contain some really cool tracks. Especially "Envoy Of Death" (listen to the track "Wheels Of Destruction") appeal to me because of its peculiar atmosphere. Recommended for old rock and traditional heavy metal fans. (SV)
[Mellotron Records, Via Marconi, 4 - 20095 Cusano M., Italy]
3 1/4 and 3

SAVIOR SERVANT
Savior Servant
Dominion

It's very strange that this album appears on the small young label. I imagine, major companies could capitalize on it if they offer the band a good promotion. There is no lack of 'hitsingles' here - for example, "Reflections", "Inner Sage" or "Crazy Again". In short, Alice In Chains meets Guns N'Roses. Maybe I am wrong, but listen to it yourselves. My favorites are "Trippin'" and "Rest Our Souls". (SV)
[Savior Servant, 242 Merrill Ave., Staten Island, NY 10314, USA] [ewmail@webspan.net]
3 1/2

SCANNER
Ball of the Damned
Massacre

Described in the CD sticker as "Orchestral Power Metal", this label could sound a bit pompous after listening to the album more in depth. Orchestral arrangements do not abound as a matter of fact, but are really sporadic. The fourth effort of Scanner consists basically on a good load of fantastic power metal songs with fastness, aggressive guitars, and high-pitched vocals, solid melody lines and choruses in the best tradition of German metal. A great cover of Queen's 80s classic "Innuendo" ends the disc with a touch of class. As an anecdote, it features Ralph Schepers (ex-Gamma Ray vocalist) on "Puppets on a String", actually one of the best tracks from this good album. (GM)
[Galactos Entertainment, Martin Sosna, Hollandstr. 21 44866 Bochum Germany] [http://www.amicrosys.com/scanner]
4 1/4

SEA OF DREAMS

Dawn Of Time

Self-released

It's not really usual to make a debut with a 72 minutes-long CD unless you think you have some really interesting material needed to be presented. There's a patently huge effort behind this album in pursue of an own sound, which is something remarkable. Nevertheless, in this case, I see a slight unbalance in favour of a bit tasteless compositions, being tracks such as the thrilling "Pain", "Point Of No Return", "Legends", or the title track the best examples of originality. Try to portrait the early Fates Warning combined with Halloween of the Kai Hansen era, some good keyboard arrangements, complex odd time signatures and numerous and original time changes, and you'll have a global idea about this fine Norwegian band.

(GM)

[Sea Of Dreams, c/o Berit Are, Blaklokkevegen 1, 4350 Naerboe, Norway] [E-mail: hkvalbel@sn.no]

[Web page: <http://home.sn.no/~hkvalbel/>]

3 3/4

SEVEN SIGNS

Silence Of A Wish

Crystal Entertainment/LMP

Cool band from Holland. Seven Signs is like a continuation arising from the early Fates Warning. Especially, the singer intonates his parts just like John Arch, although the whole band keep up with him, too, and there isn't any wonder that the tracks "Infinity" or "At The Foot Of The Rainbow" are the real power metal hymns. Fans of Queensryche, Lethal, Hades, and, of course, Fates Warning will not be mistaken choosing this one. (SV)

4

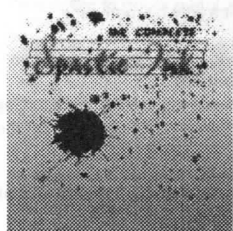
SKYCLAD

The Answer Machine?

Massacre

Skyclad belong to the most productive bands on the planet. The interesting thing about it is that, with every new album, their sound become less heavy but the quality still survives. If they should more often use a flute, they probably should be the new Jethro Tull. Compared to the predecessors, however, "The Answer Machine?" offers the listener some novelties, for example, "The Thread Of Evermore" has an oriental bent and ranks among the great tracks like "Building A Ruin" and "Isle Of Jura". If we look at this release objectively, "The Answer Machine?", without a doubt, is a big album, though (for my taste) it could be more varied. (SV)

4 1/4



SPASTIC INK

Ink Complete

Dream Circle

I believe many of you know Ron Jarzombek from the legendary techno thrash band Watchtower. "Ink Complete" is the long-awaited comeback album by this guitarist and it contains probably the most complex instrumental tracks I've ever heard. If you like very convoluted music, this one is for you. The question is whether this CD is accessible to a wider audience. For me, it's one of the best instrumental releases in 1997. (SV)

[\$15(USA), \$17(World), Spastic Ink, PO Box 34772, San Antonio, TX 78265-4772, USA]

[ronjarz@ix.netcom.com]

4

Spellbound

brief presentation of the new album

by Sigitas Velyvis (vocals)

"Decide Yourself" is probably the most intensive track we have ever written. Not without a reason, in the beginning, I wanted to entitle it "Kingdom Of The Mighty Intension". The song contains a long introduction, many tempo and strain changes, acoustic guitar solos at the end. It's one of my favourites.

"Target", lyrically, is about the mania of pursue and vengeance. Completely contradictory text. Musically, it's pretty harmonic track that stylistically could be assigned to progressive metal.

"Run... Run... Against The Sun" is a calm ballad with a rising finale. A friend of our drummer recorded some percussion here so now it has a slight exotic touch.

"The Map Of Frozen Star" is again very varied, intensive track with many breaks, tempo changes, psychedelic parts. Lyrics are not very digestible, full of despair and fight between optimism and pessimism.

"The Flare (Anchorets Circles)" starts quietly but then develops into rebellious, driving rhythm. It's pretty simple, melody-oriented song.

"Breath" is an intelligent track with a philosophic touch. It contains cool refrain with two vocals. Very thoughtful composition.

"Distortions" is an eventful song with political lyrics, a combination of progressive and psychedelic metal. We are proud of guitar riffs that really turned out well here!

"Nesting-Box For Devils" - a humorous song about the man who can't escape from the devil's snare. Cheerful track, acoustic and heavy parts by turns, piano at the end.

Further, we have the instrumental that still has no name. Atmospheric, elated song, reminds me a bit of going by air.

"The Unidrome Expert" - complex, heavy piece, probably the most brutal song by Spellbound. Lyrically, it's about old people that don't allow today's youth to show its worth, because they are afraid of being out of work.



SPELLBOUND

advance tape '97

The new songs of Lithuanian Spellbound are difficult to categorize. Try to imagine, what can happen when band members like diverse heavy music from Psychotic Waltz, Mekong Delta to The Tea Party and Mindfunk, and, in addition, have their own vision what they want to play. The sadly melancholic spirit of "Loving For The Origin" (demo '95) is still present but now it is shaped into a slightly heavier and, occasionally, more weird form. There is a significant distance from Spellbound and progressive metal as such, though the elements are still here. You dive into these songs gradually. First, you may be captured by the melancholy of melodic "The Map Of Frozen Star", the catchy arrogance of "The Flare", and the driving energy of "Decide Yourself". Then by the easy flow of "Breath", the waving heavy calm of "Run... Run... Against The Sun", and the dramatic instrumental. Or by the intricate "The Unidrome Expert". Or the other way around.... err.... nevermind. It's diverse and colorful metal album. Like the story with many different threads leading to the same point. (GS)

[Spellbound, Sigitas Velyvis, PO Box 471, 2007 Vilnius, Lithuania] [rokasv@usa.net]

4 1/4

STRATOVARIUS

Visions

Modern Music

Following the path traced on "Fourth Dimension" and "Episode" albums, the world famous Finnish metal outfit released this semi-conceptual album taking Nostradamus prophecies as a thematic charge. The strip was set high after an album such as "Episode", which harvested rave reviews and good comments worldwide. With "Visions", they get to that level and, in some aspects, may improve it. Musically, it has less choral arrangements, and it shows the same heaviness, good melodies and 'neoclassical-speed-metal' feel. However, on this one, keyboards maestro Jens Johansson assumes more protagonism. Some medieval-like organ parts prove to be a very effective counterpoint to Talkki soloing acts, and give songs such as "Black Diamond" or "Legions" (great track) a more polished feel. The rest of the album is solid and flows intense without valleys. Perhaps the exception is "Paradise", a tune which doesn't seem to be 100% coherent with what current Stratovarius sound identity is. Towards the end of the CD, we find one of the best moments with the

beautiful ballad "Coming Home" and the epic 10 minutes long title track. If you enjoyed "Episode" album, this new one won't let you down at all. (GM)

[Stratovarius Fan Club, P.O. Box 145, 00531 Helsinki, Finland] [strato@netlife.fi] [<http://www.netlife.fi/stratovarius>]

4 1/2

SUPERIOR



Behind

Modern Music/LMP

On this debut album, this German progressive metal band shows some good potential and a pronounced Dream Theater feel. Personally, I see a tendency on "Behind" towards commercial choruses/simple rocking metallic guitar riffs (for instance, "Dial 911"); and some arrangements could be judged as superfluous or a bit pretentious, as they might turn down the intensity of the album at several stages... Some appealing aspects on this album could be the potent guitars, the ambient created by the keyboard/acoustic arrangements on songs like "Why", "Escape From Reality", "Nades", or "Tomorrow's Eve" and Michael Tangermann correct and consistent vocals. After a successful tour through Europe last year, Superior is one the European prog metal bands with a brightest future. (GM)

[Superior, c/o Michael Tangermann, Dresdner Str. 12, 66955 Pirmasens, Germany] [basmer@med-rz.uni-sb.de] [<http://gala.owi.de/~fine/superior.html>]

3 3/4

SYMPHONY X

The Damnation Game

Inside Out

With this album released back in 1995, Symphony-X started to reveal the colossal musical potential they possessed. One of the best characteristics about this band is the incredible songwriting ability to compose very well-arranged songs with

memorable melody lines and refrains of great beauty. Compared to their latest release, also reviewed in this issue, "The Damnation Game" offers the same clean sound and excellent musicianship. Michael Romeo's guitars are, without a doubt, the driving force for most songs, giving a well-conceived heaviness and aggressiveness. Assemblance with a mix between a progressive Malmsteen, Kansas, latest Savatage, and Dream Theater could be made to describe this very good album. Russell Allen harmonic vocals are simply brilliant. Lyrics, with high poetical content, is also an aspect which has to be remarked. Cuts such as "The Edge Of Forever", "The Haunting", "Winter's Dream", or "Whispers" make one thinking about Symphony X as one of the metal bands with a highest quality and some of the most colorful power melodic music which can be found nowadays. (GM)

[Symphony X, 357 Bordentown Ave., South Amboy, NJ 08879, USA] [<http://www.fortunecity.com/timpan/wellerville/3/guybrush.html>]

4 1/2

TAMAS

Blue Syndicate

Crystal Rock/SPV

The Hungarian guitarist Tamas Szekers is a well-known person among the famous guitar masters of the world. His most important influences include J. S. Bach, Yngwie Malmsteen, Tony McAlpine, and Eddie Van Halen. There are six instrumentals and seven tracks with vocals on "Blue Syndicate" that keep the listener in a good mood and more or less demonstrate Tamas' ability. Ideal case for auto-roads. (SV)

3 3/4

THOUGHTSPHERE

Grailkeeper's Gate

Self-released

Don't deny, many German metal bands play what is popular and follow the trends. Thoughtsphere is a pleasant exception, that was already evident in their last year's demo "Emerald". 3 songs from it along with 5 new ones form "Grailkeeper's Gate" album, which can be labeled as 'original melodic metal'. Thoughtsphere are modern and quite unusual, thus, it's hard to distinguish their influences. Structurewise, they are far more complex than the average melodic heavy metal band but the listenability does not suffer. A cool album. (GS)

[25DW/\$17, Andreas Lohse, Torgauer Str. 8, 40231 Duesseldorf, Germany]

4

Dominion Records

Dominion Records are one of a few American Indie progressive metal labels that already have got some recognition worldwide. The most known label bands are Mercury Rising and The Quiet Room. I tried to elicit the label's chemistry in more depth and talked to Mr. Ron Kulakowski...

interview by Gedrius Slivinskas

Was it difficult to start from scratch? How has it all begun? Tell us the history of Dominion Records.

Believe it or not, I was actually coerced into starting this label by a good friend (Matt Dagastino/Hammerhead 'Zine). In the early 90's, I was playing guitar in a local metal band and Matt was one of the most supportive of what we were doing. When we had put together our demo and were getting ready to send it out, he helped refine it and added quite a few new contacts. Over the years, our lists grew, and he thought I should start a label to help out the band, plus help out some of the other bands that we had come in contact with. Everytime I saw him after that point, he would always antagonise me. So, I did have to start from scratch back in 1994, just after the "Tomorrow The World" compilation came out, when I crashed the outdated system I was using by inputting too much data. It was a nightmare, I lost everything in a two seconds long puff of smoke.

Do you work alone? How much time do you spend on it, do you have any side-jobs?

The image of a large company gains respect quickly, so I do my best to present that image. Most don't believe it, but yes, I run the whole thing solo. There are things I will contract out to other people though. And there are times when friends help out a bit. At one point, I did have a full employee handling radio promotion, but he has since left to finish up his law degree. On average, I spend about 40-60 hours a week just to keep things together, and about 60-80 hours a week when I take a vacation from my other job as a billing agent for the state. Although it can be a bit trying at times, the job pays well and provides many benefits (pension, medical/dental, time off).

Dominion Records do not release many albums. Why? Do you think about expanding your label and signing more bands?

Well, there are many different reasons. One of the main problems is lack of National distribution. We have recently joined up with The Conquest Music Group (a group of six record companies) to address that very problem. We have about 40 something products in our catalog at the moment, of all different styles of music (Jazz, Industrial, Metal, Rock, Rap, Progressive, Dance). Distributors want quantity, which is extremely hard for smaller independent labels... especially those that strive for quality over quantity. Another is that I am promoting a form of music that does not generate money the way it used to. Rap, Alternative, Dance are doing extremely well, so the spotlight and attention are focused there. Extremely high sales is the bottom line. If a band does less than 500000 copies there is a real good chance they will be dropped. This way most Americans look toward Europe, because quality is most important.

Who do distribute your albums in USA and Japan? As far as I know, in Europe different labels licence different albums, for instance, The Quiet Room album is distributed by Underground Symphony in Italy, Mercury Rising are on Noise...

For the US, we use a lot of different types of distributors (retail, mailorder, exporting). Some of them (in no particular order): USA One Stop, Azra Int'l, Century Media, Dream Disc, Molten Metal, Sentinel Steel, Laser's Edge... As for overseas, we try to licence the albums to better promote artists. In order to do an effective job in one region it takes a great deal of work and is very time consuming. Things change very quickly in this business that it requires constant attention. Yes, Mercury Rising are licensed to Noise/Modern Music for Europe and Japan. The Quiet Room is licensed to Underground Symphony/99th Floor for Italy, and is currently being by several companies for Europe and Japan. We are also working on deals for our other artists.

How long does it take from when a contract is signed and when an album comes out?

Usually 3-6 months. It depends on the project, and if the band is supplying anything (art, recording, etc.)

Who does design CD covers and ads?

Armond De La Bruere is the man behind the curtain. He



Mercury Rising



handles all the art related work. I usually give him ideas and he runs with them. He's a very well rounded professional artist who can tackle any job in any medium from computer art to freehand painting/drawing. He's created magazines, ads, album covers, and fine art.

Dominion Records releases:
V/A "Tomorrow The World"
Mercury Rising "Upon Deaf Ears"
Tanelorn "The Other Side"
Undertow "Alone In The Crowd"
The Quiet Room "Introspect"
Savior Servant "Savior Servant"

Do you offer other merchandise (T-shirts, posters, etc.) besides CDs?

No, unfortunately we do not at this time. We do have posters, but they are for retail promotion only.

Do you sign mainly American bands? Is location of a band significant?

It is getting very difficult to distinguish a band's origin these days. We'll consider any artist so long as the work is unique and marketable. Origin usually does not play a part.

Is it difficult to find good bands to release nowadays? How do you search for them? For instance, how did you get acquainted with Savior Servant and The Quiet Room? From press, from friends, or perhaps you received their promo packs directly?

Usually several people will refer us to the same artist before we really start looking into how they are making an impact on the scene. But we do listen to all tapes that are sent, so if there's something that moves us about it, we will either seek to work with the band or refer it to someone else to try to help the band out. The Quiet Room happened to start out that way. From the very first listen, we started working with them, and forwarded their material to several people. We started to seek licensing first, then, when everything started to fall into place, we decided to release it for the states. For Savior Servant, it was a bit different. The bass player that I worked with in Tanelorn (Eric Weingartner), gave me a call and mentioned that he was playing in a new band and mentioned that I should come see them perform. There was only about 150 people there, but the band's music and conviction won everyone over in a matter of minutes. I proposed a deal right away, but the band wanted to write more material and give it a little bit more time.



The Quiet Room

Why should a band sign to you, instead of putting out a self-released record so they have complete control of promotion and distribution?

A lot of bands do not have the time, resources, and experience. If a band is handling too many things outside of writing, recording, and performing, one aspect or another inevitably will suffer.

What about tours? Is it possible for a progressive metal band to gather a decent audience in American clubs? Do you organize some gigs for your bands?

The American progressive rock and metal scene is growing, but not quite enough to guarantee large enough audiences to keep the booking agents and clubs happy. Prog fest, on the other hand, have been doing extremely well, so I think things are moving in the right direction. Sometimes we'll try to organize some shows for the bands, but for the most part we leave that up to the management and the booking agents, and we handle all of the cross promoting. We'll call the stations and contact magazines.

You play in Tanelorn and recently Progressive Arts Music released your EP. Are there any plans for future records?

Unfortunately no. The band has not been together for quite some time. The EP was actually an advance for the labels, but word got back that it is being bootlegged in Brazil, so we decided to put it together and release it. Progressive Arts, whom I have been in touch with for quite a while, mentioned that they were starting a progressive label and were interested in licensing it. I thought that it would be a good idea since it is very hard to be objectionable when you are marketing your own music.

How are Mercury Rising doing with "Upon Deaf Ears"? When can we expect a new album from them?

Mercury Rising is still doing very well. Although I don't have the latest update, I know that the album sold 3000 copies in the first two weeks in Europe. As for US, a few

thousand to date and still growing. New album material is currently being written, so a new stuff will probably be out before the end of the year.

What was the story with Vauxvhl? "To Dimension Logic" got very nice reviews and responses everywhere, though you were complaining that they weren't selling that good, isn't it strange?

"To Dimension Logic" is a great album, unfortunately we started carrying long after it was released. I think that lack of significant sales can be attributed to the its mass availability through mailorder companies, and the high price of importing from Australia.

Present The Quiet Room and their new album. What place will they take in the Dominion roster?

I am really excited about getting this album out to everyone - musicianship is incredible. Once people have a chance to listen to this band, I am sure they will agree that there will be many great works in the coming years. So far, the initial response has been very favorable, but much depends on how the album does.

What other releases are planned for 1997/1998? Have you got any new bands?

The next release will more that likely be the follow up to "Upon Deaf Ears". There are several bands that we are interested in, but nothing is confirmed at the moment.

Do you send many promos? What kind of promotion do you do in general? Can you name the most successful promotion (ad, review, whatever) that perhaps lead to some successful offer or something similar?

At the moment, I can not think of one particular ad or review that was "the" contributing factor for something successful. Success, from what I've learned thus far, is usually the result of several things happening simultaneously and is always a building process. When we actually promote an artist, we are actually planning a building strategy. Every release is unique from the other, so each is handled differently. There are several thousand contacts that are reviewed before the actual send out. The list is usually refined to the best contacts for that particular style. Everything is handled in the same manner as a major label, but on a much smaller scale. A typical send out would be between 250-1000 pieces aimed at fanzines, magazines, radio, retail, etc.

Do you read all reviews and interviews with your bands that come across?

All reviews and interviews are read, then xeroxed and sent out to the bands. We are pretty good about that.

What key issues can you mention about starting and running a record label? Do initial finances play a big role?

There is no question that finances play a big role. Running a label is very expensive, and it takes a lot of perseverance to keep things running smoothly. Having a good start-up fund or access to funds will definitely make the journey towards success more pleasant, but the fact is money is not a substitute for hard work. Success, as mentioned earlier, is usually the result of building and planning. If you are willing to put a 200% effort into something you believe in, and learn from the mistakes that sometimes happen, success is within reach of everyone.

Are you happy with the current position of Dominion Records? The future plans.

Yes and No. In a little over two years, I have managed to get the label name known around the world in every country and sales are continually growing. For that I am pleased. However, I don't think I will be completely happy 'till there is solid distribution for every record in every country on a consistent basis. Future plans... to keep growing and open an office in Europe, or merge with another label which I have great respect for. All the Best.

[Dominion Records, PO Box 286, Colonia, NJ 07067][DominionRK@aol.com][http://www.dominionrecords.com]

THRESHOLD

Extinct Instinct

Giant Electric Pea/Avalanche

Threshold six member line-up offers a dense instrumentation, in which the guitar work really outstands. The style of this release could be described as a technical progressive metal with a very solid musicianship. On a few occasions, too standard backup vocals in the choruses might sacrifice a little the melodic feel, as it happens on tracks like "The Whispering" or "Part Of The Chaos". The 'opus' and best song of "Extinct Instinct" is the 10 minutes-long "Eat The Unicorn", which develops some good tempo changes and highly original vocal melodies by the effective vocalist Damian Wilson. It's a track that hunts the listener attention since the very first moment. However, this is one of the typical albums that has to grow inside the listener progressively... Recommended, check it out. (GM) [http://www.uni-mainz.de/~kasper/Threshold.html]

4

CARL A. TIDEMANN

Stylistic Changes EP

Tritone/Voices of Wonder

Carl A. Tidemann is a member of Norwegian prog metal band Tritonus and a

skillful guitar player who, first of all, tries to compose melodic tracks. This album is short (22 min), but eclectic opus of technical and melodic guitar music. Each of the 7 tracks is different, would it be bombastic "Warriors of Tritonia", experimental funky "Trouble Spot", neo-classical speedy "Ten Years Too Late", or calm "For You". The EP is probably hard to find outside of Norway, since it was not actively promoted. Now, as Carl says, expect a debut CD from Tritonus, and, as I can add, maybe for another brilliant (hopefully full-length) album from Carl himself. (GS)

[c/o Carl A. Tidemann, Vaarveien 10b, 1182 Oslo, Norway]

4

TILES

Dream Circle/LMP

Gene Simmons of Kiss calls their music "an unique style... kind of a new wave-sounding Rush". Tiles from Detroit will appeal not only to Rush, but also to Enchant and Styx fans, if only because of an excellent singer Paul Rarick. Tiles' songwriting and ability to play is of a high standard, just listen to "Analysis Paralysis" or "Token Pledge". The only shortcomings are poor arrangements, in consequence, some parts sound too 'empty'. Apart

album of the issue



TRAGEDY DIVINE

Visions Of Power

T&T/Modern Music

When was the last time when Edge Of Time had praised an album performed in a traditional style? I do not recall. We always have been looking for something more or less 'twisted'. Yes, there were 'good' reviews of traditional-styles' bands, but not 'great' reviews. This one will be.

Tragedy Divine are a fantastic power metal band!! They are heavy, intelligent, powerful, dark, and melodic. A big merit to that is the expressive, strong, and diverse voice of Gerrit Phillip Mutz, who has been compared to Buddy Lackey and Warrel Dane. Sometimes ("Seize Control", "Tyrant Shadows"), the music really sounds a bit like "A Social Grace"-times Psychotic Waltz would do a straightforward power metal. Though, for those of you, who are afraid of complex material, don't get scared because Tragedy Divine can be understood and loved from the very first listen. Like the glorious "Refuge Denied" album of Sanctuary: you like it from the very beginning but after each listen a different track or melody sticks to your mind. "Die In My Dreams" and "Visions Of Power" are one of the best power metal songs ever.

In general, "Visions Of Power" is a versatile album, having its intensive moments, calm downs (the slower track "I Married A Witch", the nice ballad "Bleeding Crystal Tears") but always do not allowing to distract listener's attention. Four tracks were taken from their "Apostles Of Deceit" demo and they are all nice. But what rejoices, some of the new tracks are even better. This lets us think that Tragedy Divine have not reached their creative peak yet. For now, get "Visions Of Power". Not because without it your metal collection wouldn't be complete. Get it because it will bring you many pleasant moments. (GS)

[Tragedy Divine, PO Box 41, 71227 Erdmannhausen, Germany]

5

from that, everything is flawless and worth 3 3/4 points. (SV)

[Tiles, PO Box 75, Trenton, Michigan 48183, USA]

3 3/4

TIME MACHINE

Shades Of Time EP

Lucretia/LMP

This EP contains 6 previously unreleased Time Machine songs that will not be included in their forthcoming new album. "Act II: Gallileo" (1995) already have represented Time Machine as one of the best Italian progressive metal bands. "Shades Of Time" features a new singer and is an ambitious effort aiming to put more sensitivity and drama into prog metal, to deliver an opposite to pale and faceless music that is filling the scene. After hearing "Silent Revolution" and "1000 Rainy Nights", it's evident that there is a bigger focus on songs than on "Gallileo". It's nice. But what a fucking fashion is to put covers on EPs? In 9 cases from 10, they are simple fillers. So is "Heaven And Hell" (Black Sabbath) here. (GS)

4 1/4

TREASURE LAND

Questions

T&T/Modern Music

Sweden's Treasure Land got a deal just after the release of their "The Gift" demo in 1996 and it was not a big surprise, since their handling of instruments is irreproachable. Complex, yet listenable neo-classical guitar instrumental parts are

obviously one of the priorities in the band's menu, as well as very memorable refrains. (Occasionally the repetitive words in refrains, perhaps due to the high-pitched singer, make an opposite effect, but luckily this is characteristic only to one or two songs.) "Questions" mix the traditional heavy/speed metal with challenging neo-classical progressive parts, but both these things are like two separate entities in the album. Probably the next album will show a slightly better integration of them. By now, enjoy cool prog/speed tracks like "The Gift", "The Miracle" and "Let The Rain".

(GS)

[treasure.land@mailbox.swipnet.se] [http://145.89.78.151/~martijn/Treasure/] 3 3/4

WYZARDS

The Final Catastrophe

Mandrake Root/Laser's Edge

This band was formed already in 1979, and the majority of this CD came into being between 1980 and 1982, so, many tracks had waited nearly seventeen years to be recorded. Inspired by bands like Rush, Kiss, or Ted Nugent, the Wyzards have created their own variation what the real heavy rock should sound like. I have to say, it's a successful version. The long epic songs "Phantoms-Lizards" or "All Of The World" perfectly co-operate with shorter tracks like "One Wizard". This album is a gift for all old/progressive rock fans. (SV)

[Mandrake Root, PO Box 2450, Cherry Hill, NJ 08034-0199, USA] [lasercd@aol.com]

4

Psychotic Waltz are from San Diego (USA) and, as one press sheet cleverly states, are "a dark blend of progressive heavy music with bizarre vocal melodies".

I don't know if their "A Social Grace" (1989/Subsonic/Rising Sun) is my personal best album of all times but it is surely the one that impressed me most. For that time, it was unbelievable to hear such a unique piece of great psychotic twisted progressive technical metal. The album brings the visions like a grotesque hall with crying and laughing jokers, insidious-face man behind a roulette table, weird-dressed dreamers, prophets, and a slowly-walking ghost of death. The spinning play consists of 13 songs and lasts for more than one hour. Five songs were taken from two demos. "Spiral Tower" was known already from the first one released in 1986 (under name of Aslan). "And The Devil Cried", "Halo Of Thorns", "Successor", and "I Of The Storm" all were from Demo '88. In spite of great reviews in fanzines and magazines, "A Social Grace" at first was released by the band's own Subsonic Records label. Only a bit later, German Rising Sun Productions licensed the record.

"Great reviews, huh?" How about this: "This tape [Demo '88] is



want to play music". Thank Nobody-Knows-Who, Psychotic Waltz still are capable of exciting a wide range of emotions. Riff rock a la AC/DC sucks pretty much.

In 1995, Dan together with Siggi Blasey (Crash Museum) did "Marching Into Oblivion" album under the title of Darkstar. It was

Psychotic Waltz

into the everlasting sonic stream....

article by Giedrius Slivinskas

pure quality, both in terms of music and overall production. They play progressive power metal and this demo is the best I've heard since Secrecy's "Like Burning One's Boats". Psychotic Waltz have produced a tape with four great and catchy songs, while remaining original and technical. (...) This is a very impressive demo tape and just has to get the band a deal. If not, the record companies are definitely total idiots!" [Erik Sontum, "Metal Glory" #4, 1990]

Release of the next album was delayed because Dan Rock (the guitarist) had an accident and could not play for more than one year. According to Dan's words, "Doctors said I would never play again, I cast a spell of disbelief on them, and 9 months later I started to play again!!!" "Into The Everflow" (1992/Dream Circle) is the darkest album of Psychotic Waltz. Probably external conditions caused songs to be quiet obscure? Dan agrees: "Yes, it's pretty dark. But a lot of our music is. Strangely, it makes me happy to write sad music. At that time, we were all going through some heavy stuff, relationships, finances, future..." The album was very rich emotionally and contained several true gem tracks like the title one, "Hangin' On A String", "Ashes", and "Butterfly". It can be listened as a whole one drama of gloomy eccentric psychedelic progressive metal.



In 1994, the change again. "Mosquito" (1994/Bulletproof) groove was not exactly what everyone have been waiting for from Psychotic Waltz. If we take all Psychotic Waltz albums in pairs, the difference between "Into The Everflow" and "Mosquito" is the most evident. "Well, people change, that was a time when we changed, too. A lot of people like that album [Mosquito] the least, but I meet a lot of people who love it, and live it seems to go over very well." Live shows became significant. If the first two albums - in general sense - suit more for listens by a single person in a separate place, "Mosquito" tracks often become highlights of the concerts. It does not contradict, however, and "Mosquito" sounds good in a small apartment between four walls, too. On the other hand, in their live set, Psychotic Waltz include some older cuts from the first two albums including "And The Devil Cried", "Another Prophet Song", "Spiral Tower", "Only In A Dream" [from "A Social Grace"] and "Into The Everflow", "Freakshow", "Ashes", "Out Of Mind" [from "Into The Everflow"]

Actually, I was a bit shocked when I had read Norm Leggio's words in one of the interviews, where he said "We wanted go back to our childhood and play riff rock, the type of rock that makes a kid

instrumental music. Buddy also put out a solo album "A Strange Mind Of Buddy Lackey" back in 1993. Besides, Dan and Norm did End Amen "Your Last Orizon" album in 1992 (out on Institute Of Art). Does it mean, they have ideas that do not fit into Psychotic Waltz frame? "Well, I guess so. My solo album (Darkstar) to me was very special, I always wanted to do something like that. It's all dark symphonic cyber metal space instrumental, couldn't really ask Buddy to not sing on a whole PW album just to make me happy, could I? So I did this. If anyone's interested in getting it you can send \$15 (US) to our PO Box. And I'll love you like a brother!" It looks like Buddy is planning another solo album. The second Darkstar record should come out next year, too. "New Darkstar? Songs so far are of a similar vein as the last, spacey, very melodic, yet fresh in its own way, must be heard. Will be recorded partly in San Diego this time, and partly in Germany. Institute of Art will release it again, and it will probably feature Norm and Phil of PW on the rhythm section!". Everyone is pretty busy.

"Bleeding" (1996/Bulletproof) gives another punch of modern metal with a focus on songs. It was released by Bulletproof, the same label which put out "Mosquito". Is there a tight relationship between the band and the label, how often do they communicate? Does promotional work is totally handled by the record company? "We are OK, hard to say how tight. We've met them all a few times on tour in Europe, really cool people, haven't ripped us off! Most promo is handled by them, or our tour manager." According to the contract, there will be three more albums on Bulletproof.

"If you haven't heard of this band yet, do yourself a big favor and expand your musical horizons. (...) This release takes the band into a more groovin' metal mode. They're the makers of psychedelic power metal. This album should really be huge through the incredible songwriting and musical talents the band offers." [Keith Menser, "Ballbuster" #3, 1997]

"Bleeding" is a collection of solid power metal that will definitely appeal to most fans of the genre. If you're in Europe, I'm sure you already know all about Psychotic Waltz but power metal fans in the U.S. should buy this and find out what all of the hype is about. (...) [Adam Saunder, "The Progress Report" #2, 1996]

"(...) Psychotic Waltz write simple but delicate songs that may include power metal rhythms, ethereal acoustic guitars and keyboards, and even Sabbath-like slow-motion riffs. I enjoy the high vocals, though the occasional industrial filtering becomes grating. Lyrically, Psychotic Waltz probe a realm of a vague spirituality and psychological darkness that is constantly perplexing. More consistent with the slow tempos and sad moods of doom metal than the manic technicality of progressive metal, I highly recommend "Bleeding" as a fresh and inspirational album from 1996." [Thomas Kollnot, "Kollnot Music" #4, 1997]

m e d i e y

Track "Faded" from "Bleeding" was composed nearly at the last moment. Were there any other songs from other three albums, which were created at the last minute or just have an interesting story of appearance?

Not really, we pretty much had it all down when we went in, "Drift" had a few changes, too.

Do you have any leftover songs? Does all material you wrote get pressed on CDs?

A couple that never made it to disc, because they sucked. Most gets pressed.

Is it a coincidence that all 6ths songs on your first three albums are ballads? (I'm talking about "I Remember", "Hangin' On A String" and "All the Voices".) Who usually is responsible for the order of songs in a PW album?

Ha ha ha!!! You are not the first to notice that, however, we didn't plan it. We all suggest arrangement.

What Psychotic Waltz songs... you dislike?

I like 'em all!!

...sound better on CD than live?

"Another Prophet Song", lots of vocal harmonies.

...are the most difficult to play/sing?

Difficult to play?... "Butterfly", but we do it, lots of weird time changes.

...in your opinion, are the best lyrically/musically?

Best lyrics to me would be... "Haze One" reminds me of our glorious days together on the road in Europe (that's what it's about). Best music... Hmmm, well, for brutal grooving I'd say "Morbidity". That song seems to get the crowd off the most, but musically I really like "Drift", "Locust", "Ashes", "Darkness", "Halo of Thorns", "...and "Into the Everflow", that solo is always a highlight for my evenings enjoyment.

Have you any video-clips?

Yes, we have! "Faded" was released as a video in Europe a few months ago. Got aired on VIVA.

You mention Jethro Tull and Black Sabbath as your influences, but these bands are more from hard rock genre. Who has inspired you to play heavy metal music and what are your favorite current metal bands?

It was really Sabbath for most of us. Ozzy's solo with Randy Rhoads really gave me goosebumps! I like a lot of different music, right now I'm listening to Notorious B.I.G!! Depeche Mode made it's way onto my favorite band list, this might sound strange to a lot of people, that's OK (remember our name). I used to think they sucked, but listen to the CD "Songs of Faith & Devotion" really great & DARK stuff! Type O Negative I've liked for years, Korn is beyond intense!!! Also I REALLY love Henry Mancini's work - you know...the

Pink Panther theme, Creature From the Black Lagoon, Moon River. Danny Elfman is a genius, and the soundtrack for "Das Boat" by Klaus Doldinger is one of my all time favorites, we're gonna do a cover version of the final track on Darkstar 2 (hopefully).

Did I mention The Beatles??? All time best band in the universe, we are all unworthy!!! No, really, a lot of people don't like 'em because they never heard the really good stuff, Abby Road!! Sgt. Pepper, Magical Mystery Tour, (we covered "I Am the Walrus") & parts of the White Album, some older stuff is really cool too, those boys could write, I miss Jonny.

What do you think about modern metal styles? For instance, gothic metal?

I like a lot of music, it's all good, some doesn't appeal to me as much as others, that's OK, but I like a lot of the Gothic music, not too fond of the death grunts though.

Have you and other band members any hobbies outside musical world?

Phil is actually into film, wants to be a director. Norm owns a record store, I like to do active things, used to climb a lot, parachute, rappel, (rope dropping off bridges!!). Until I fell about 13 meters & broke my body REALLY bad. Now I'm a lot safer, my wrist and knee still have metal in them, my eyes were bleeding, they thought I was gonna die. This was back in 1991, I'm a lot better now, I like to Boogie Board in the ocean, jet/snow ski, experience new things. Buddy & Steve, I'm not too sure of, drinkin' & smokin' & they work a lot.

Who is the most punctual person in the band (who shows in time at the rehearsals, etc.)? Who is always late?

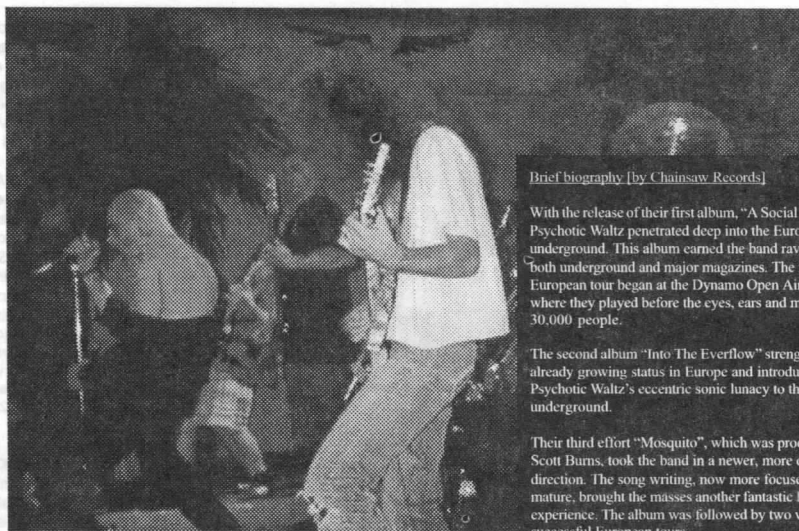
Punctual would be me, don't know why, always been that way, hate it when people say 3 when they REALLY meant 4!! AARRGGHHH!!! Late would be Buddy, same, he's been that way since I've known him (since 9th grade).

A couple of questions on the philosophical side. Was the world better hundred years ago?

How the hell should I know? I wasn't there. But I can tell you this, they didn't have indoor plumbing or e-mail or CDs or ...pollution, holes in the Ozone, chemical wars, then again they had black plagues (aids) ultra violent wars, (racism) some things don't change too much it seems.

What is your opinion: should a man search for the truth or should he/she wait until the truth comes to him/her? Do you believe in the meaning of the stars and in the fate?

I think everyone has their own path, what works for you might not be good for me. I don't disbelieve it, but I don't spend too much time worrying about it. I think its kind of like a TV guide, you can use it to see what's on, or you can flip through the channels yourself & live it!!



Brief biography [by Chainsaw Records]

With the release of their first album, "A Social Grace", Psychotic Waltz penetrated deep into the European underground. This album earned the band rave reviews in both underground and major magazines. The first European tour began at the Dynamo Open Air Festival where they played before the eyes, ears and minds of over 30,000 people.

The second album "Into The Everflow" strengthened their already growing status in Europe and introduced Psychotic Waltz's eccentric sonic lunacy to the Japanese underground.

Their third effort "Mosquito", which was produced by Scott Burns, took the band in a newer, more defined direction. The song writing, now more focused and mature, brought the masses another fantastic listening experience. The album was followed by two very successful European tours.

The most recent release "Bleeding" proves to be their best work yet. With a more mature approach to the songwriting and years of studio savvy, "Bleeding" is sparking interest worldwide. The album was recorded in the summer of 1996 and produced by the band and Norwood C Barber II. Psychotic Waltz supported the record with two European tours, in 1996 and in 1997, correspondingly.

[Blue Meanie Records, 916 Broadway, El Cajon, CA 92020, phone (619) 442-5034, fax (619) 442-2694]
[Psychotic Waltz, P.O.Box 710332, Santee, CA 92071, USA]

[Psychotic Waltz/Darkstar e-mail: OceanPurpl@aol.com]
[Visit Psychotic Waltz, Darkstar web sites at <http://members.com/NoChainsaw/>]

More than 10 years of musical career, 4 full-length albums. Dan Rock is one of the members from the original line-up and I asked him when he was the most enthusiastic after the album release? "Probably the first and the latest ones. "A Social Grace" because it was the beginning, and "Bleeding" because it was recent and we REALLY like it a lot."

Psychotic Waltz usually are decently evaluated by press. Perhaps sometimes real power/progressive metal critics find their music too 'crazy and psychotic' but, overall, they get good marks. Have they any bad reviews? "Yes we have!!! England seems to hate us! Bloody tea drinkin' homo fags! (just kidding) I get fan mail from some people there, too." Oh, right. I have read a review of "A Social Grace" and "Into The Everflow" re-releases in "Terrorizer" and they gave them respectively 2 1/2 and 3 from possible 5. Well, no comments... at least, it was the first progressive metal review in that magazine.

Let's see, what Ian Glasper of "Terrorizer" has to say: "Grandiose it may be, and those vocals could sure grate on the nerves after a night on the pop, but the guitar work is awesome, layers of luscious arpeggio, and songs like "Tiny Streams", with its slithering syncopation, are downright eerie." ["Terrorizer" #43, June '97]



Are all Psychotic Waltz albums complete creations standing on their own, or does Dan consider them more as the stages of their musical development? Dan is confused: "HmMMM? I think that everything changes, people, places, things, styles, likes, dislikes, albums... so it's a progression. "Yeah, it seems he prefers to let the music do the talking instead of overloading us with an avalanche of explanations how this or that was done and what it was meant by it.

It has become a tradition for Psychotic Waltz to tour Europe every summer. There were Mosquito Tour Part I & II and Bleeding Tour Part I & II. Shows usually take part in Germany, Denmark, Austria, Holland, Belgium, Italy, and sometimes Spain. What does prevent from visiting more countries? "Money. This tour[Bleeding II, Summer'97] also took us to Budapest! Also, Switzerland. We always hope for more countries, I love traveling & meeting people." What were the impressions of Bleeding Tour Part II? "It ROCKED!!! Budapest was the best. They treated us very well, 600 screaming fans & they all seemed to know the lyrics!"

Now for the big news. Buddy Lackey and newly recruited guitarist Steve Cox (who played in Bleeding Tour Part II but did not participate in the recording of any album) quit the band. Dan, Phil, and Norm plan to continue. There are rumours that members of Lethal (who broke-up) will replace them.

If it is possible to imagine Tom Mallicoat singing in a place of Buddy, it's a bit more difficult to imagine Psychotic Waltz without Buddy's intriguing poetry. Buddy, together with Jim Matheos of Fates Warning, are top-lyricists of metal scene. Many consider him an essential member of the band,



and he is a really charismatic personality. "What to expect now?", asks a flustered fan. Dan Rock assures: "Don't despair, more music will come".

We know countless cases, how it was tough for the bands to find suitable replacements for their singers. Even if a new singer is good, it's hard for the band to avoid unnecessary efforts to sound like they sounded before with the old-good singer, who was loved by everyone. There is no need to think of any examples, just take Iron Maiden. Frequently such efforts sound pathetic. Psychotic Waltz, however, have a chance. Their fans are tolerant and probably will give that chance to the band and purchase the next album. Besides, Lethal fans also should be very interested. It can become nearly a 'win-win' situation. All everyone wants is the new Psychotic Waltz album not to be a shadow of the old albums we know and love.

There are ideas for new songs. In fact, I have heard one track ["Meditation"] on Bleeding Tour Part II already. If somebody asks me to describe it, I get into difficulties. Something more psychedelic perhaps, still in the vein of "Bleeding". I have heard it only once, in the end. When I asked Dan to describe the new stuff, it was even more difficult for him. "Hmmm, that's kind of hard, can you describe a color?? I don't think fans will be disappointed."

Will there be any changes in Psychotic Waltz music in future? "We'll have to wait & see, if so, I sure hope they're for the better!"



- "A Social Grace" (1990)
1. And the Devil Cried
 2. Halo of Thorns
 3. Another Prophet Song
 4. Successor
 5. In This Place
 6. I Remember
 7. Sleeping Dogs
 8. I of the Storm
 9. A Psychotic Waltz
 10. Only in a Dream
 11. Spiral Tower
 12. Strange
 13. Nothing



- "Into The Everflow" (1992)
1. Ashes
 2. Out of Mind
 3. Tiny Streams
 4. Into The Everflow
 5. Little People
 6. Hanging on a String
 7. Freakshow
 8. Butterfly



- "Mosquito" (1994)
1. Mosquito
 2. Lovestone Blind
 3. Haze One
 4. Shattered Sky
 5. Cold
 6. All The Voices
 7. Dancing in the Ashes
 8. Only Time
 9. Locked Down
 10. Mindsong



- "Bleeding" (1996)
1. Faded
 2. Locust
 3. Morbid
 4. Bleeding
 5. Need
 6. Drift
 7. Northern Lights
 8. Sleep
 9. My Grave
 10. Skeleton
 11. Freedom?

extreme

today or in the past
METAL

thrash
doom
death
grind
black
hardcore
gothicmetal
industrialmetal
gothenburgmetal

ABHORRENT

Rage
Self-released

Cynically, Abhorrent are a softer version of Sepultura. Getting more into depth, one can notice their real love for pure thrash metal and their ability to create songs which are energetic. As we are forced to say frequently, the album is not very diverse and there is nothing out of ordinary. Just speed/thrash metal done with a will and with a skill. (GS)

[Abhorrent, 214 B 504, Brasília, DF, 70293-020, Brazil] [marcus@cdsid.com.br]
3 1/4

AETURNUS

Beyond The Wondering Moon
Hammerheart

Prepare yourself for another assault from Norway: this time it's dark metal with folk music influences and black metal structures. The recording line-up features members of Gorgoroth and Satyricon/Gehenna, so the quality is guaranteed. And it's all right when it goes about perfect melodies and folk sounds, but death vocals personally for me do not fit. A screaming black metal singer would make this music sound colder and push the music itself more upfront. In spite of that, the band creates a really dark and mystic atmosphere. (AO)

[Aeturnus, Ares, PO Box 189, 3062 Bones, Norway]
3 3/4

AM I BLOOD

Am I Blood
Nuclear Blast

Maybe I am not right, but I think that playing the old-Metallica style stuff is a bit of out-of-date thing. And here we have a Finnish Metallica where Janne Kerminen's voice clearly brings to mind James Hetfield. They call their style an "old school speed thrash power metal" and maybe it is OK for those who like to headbang listening to "Master of Puppets", and who are still searching for new Metallicas when the real one turned into shit. I don't say that Am I Blood play bad - they know their job but when you hear cannons and only cannons, it sucks, doesn't it? (AO)

3

ARCKANUM

Kostogher
Necropolis

The second CD of this Swedish band still presents raw, primitive, and dark black metal, described by the band themselves as "musically primitive, raw, medieval, grieved and trollish music". This one-man band concentrates more on mood and feelings than on musical innovations. The album is rich in its atmospheres and ritualistic by nature. Nevertheless, after listening to it for more than hour, it becomes boring due to its monotony. By the way, the third album will follow already this year, and the fourth "Faunaz Samgang" is scheduled, too. The most productive black metal band or what? (AO)

3 1/2

ART OF BUTCHERY

My Pleasure Is Your Pain EP
Lard

This puts us back to the year 1993, when bands like Avulsed and Broken Hope had

Opeth

"...mysterious and epic,
pleasant coldness..."

by Giedrius Slivinskas

Opeth probably was the first band, labeled as extreme progressive metal. There is some truth in the description. Last year's "Morningrise" album is different from all the other black death metal. First, it is difficult to absorb for a usual black death metal fan due to long and complex songs. Second, "Morningrise" contains elements of the 70's progressive rock.

Opeth started in 1993 and shortly were signed by Lee Barret's Candlelight Records. "Orchid" came out in 1995 and faced already then mistrustful metal fans, press, and media. Nobody knew the band's name before because there were no demos, nothing, just some rehearsal tapes. "Orchid" did quite well, and Opeth became a priority band on Candlelight. The guitarist Peter Lundgren speaks: "That is true. I think 'Orchid' was received well which made it natural for Candlelight to promote 'Morningrise' a bit more. I think they will promote the third album even more, and I know that we will do another European tour, and it would be absolutely fantastic to play in Lithuania! The record deal is for three albums, and after that we will see. We've had a few offers from other labels, and we will choose the most advantageous to us."

Peter together with the band's leader Mikael Åkerfeldt (vocals/guitars) are the main creative kernel, and they are responsible for brilliant twin guitar riffs we hear in Opeth albums. "Orchid" and "Morningrise" were recorded at Dan Swano's Unisound Recordings. "The recording of 'Orchid' was the first studio appearance that we ever did, so we aimed to do our best but it was a bit tricky for us since we hadn't been in a studio before. Dan Swano, the engineer, helped us out a lot though. For the second album, we knew what to expect and we also had a perfectly clear picture of what the sound was going to be like. That made it easier for us. We were more experienced and that made it easier to focus on the songs alone," says Peter. How about that unachievable '100% perfection'? Were there any shortages on "Morningrise", could something have been done differently? "Not really, I'm quite satisfied with the album as a whole. Of course, there are some minor mistakes here and there, but I am pleased with it."

After hearing "Morningrise", it was not difficult to understand that Opeth members listen to a lot more than extreme metal... From where do their non-metal influence derive? "Since we're influenced by a lot of different music, those parts come naturally. I

listen a lot to bands like Dead Can Dance, Red House Painters, and the old Cure stuff, and both Mike and I are really into the 70's and I think that listening to other kinds of music helps you to progress your own music."

"Morningrise" was exceptional with its song lengths, too. Only 5 tracks make a 66-minutes long record... Will they ever write shorter songs? "That depends on what you mean with 'short'. We will never write a three-minute song

but some of our new songs are only eight minutes long... But they are still reflecting the Opeth sound even though the material is a bit faster and heavy." So, the new material is ready? "Yes. As I mentioned, it's faster and heavier, more brutal and more evil, but still it will sound Opeth, of course. I'm really looking forward to record the new album, it will be an absolute killer! It will be recorded in autumn of 1997." Since Dan Swano is not running the studio anymore, Opeth are forced to search for a new place to record their new album. "It's a pity because we're really pleased with Dan's work on our two albums." Fredman studios in Gothenburg is a possible choice for the third album.

How does Peter present Opeth music to friends who are not familiar with metal at all? "If they're not into metal at all, I play some acoustic part first and after that some part where Mike sings 'normally'. The last thing I play is the parts with his death-metal voice which is the parts my friends and family had the most trouble with. They like it now, though!"

When he listens to other bands, is he sometimes tempted to use one or another riff/melodic line? "Not really. It's more like inspiration to hear good music and sometimes you might wish that you wrote that particular song yourself but that's how far it goes. We don't ever steal riffs or melodies from other bands."

Let's wait for the third Opeth work. There is still room for improvement, of course. Now, for Opeth, 'progressive' means 'difficult to get into'. So is "Morningrise". To be progressive and listenable is a challenge. Opeth say, they do not strive to be 'easy-listenable' but... The practice shows that many progressive bands after their first externally-complex albums start to compose more streamlined songs. It conflicts a bit with Peter's words that their new material is "faster and heavier" what means, that we can also witness a Dark Tranquillity-type loyalty to the extreme. It's difficult to guess, there is no point in doing that either. We just want to assure ourselves that Opeth will surprise us in the future. Peter confirms: "Yes, we will definitely do that, but if I told you how, it wouldn't be a surprise, would it?"

[Opeth, c/o Peter Lundgren, Skebo-kvarnsvaagen 35, 12433 Bandhagen, Sweden]

a wide recognition. There are fans of brutal death/grind today as well, and this EP is exclusively for them. It does not bring any surprises lyrically and musically (except the relatively-soft last track) but firmly keeps to the standards. (GS)

2 3/4

BALTAK

Macedonian Darkness And Evil
Battlegod

This looks like a low-budget black metal CD. Since, originally, black metal was not meant to have big budgets, it's OK. Conceptually, the record is related to Alexander The Great. Musically, their motto is 'the faster and the more extreme imply the better'. Not very original, but true enough. Approved (GS)

[Battlegod Productions, PO Box 532, Kingsgrove, NSW 2208, Australia]
3

BROKEN HOPE

Loathing
Metal Blade

Chicago death metallers put out their fourth record and do change nothing. It's still the same brutal grinding death metal. The singer roars with his heart, the guitar player tries to find the most brutal sound ever, the drummer works like he would be burning in hell. Everything should be all right, but it is not. The final sound misses something that makes Napalm Death sound heavy and brutal all the time, no matter whether they change their style or not. Broken Hope just try to do these cannons. Perhaps they are good live, but it makes me yawn when listening to the CD. (AO)

2 3/4

CEMETARY

Last Confessions
Black Mark

When Cemetery, formerly known as a doom/death band, released a melodic atmospheric metal album "Black Vanilly" back in 1994, it was not a very common turn but it received good responses. However, its successor "Sundown" was perceptibly more average and didn't shine among many other gothic metal releases. "Last Confessions" is the Cemetery's 'good-bye' album, in that we can't find any new worths either. Yes, "Forever" perhaps is a new level of driving rock n'rolling 'ex-death' metal, "Caress The Damned" and "Fields Of Fire" are good remembrances of "Black Vanilly", but all the other tracks including Cathedral-influenced "1213 Transgalaction" are sometimes even too simple and in general lack sparkling moments. So, now Cemetery is gone, viva Sundown? (GS)

3 1/2

CORPORAL PUNISHMENT



CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

Stonefield Of A Lifetime
Black Mark

Regularly, one or another band with sentiments to doom metal, pops up. Corporal Punishment are kind of up-to-date and some of the tracks (like "Wrong Side") are even more hardcore/metal than doom. Vocals vary from clean to doomy to Paradise Lost-like softly screaming and, lyrically, this album deals with known topics of emptiness and isolation. They won't get a Grammy award for originality but they, at least, know where they are heading to and have an immunity to current trends. (GS)

3 1/2



AMORPHIS

My Kantele EP

Relapse/Nuclear Blast

With this EP, Amorphis step aside from "Elegy" to even more the 70's psychedelic progressive rock oriented areas. Besides the title track already known from "Elegy", this EP contains 2 new songs and 2 covers (of Hawkwind and Kingston Wall). The new track "The Brother-Slayer" is a good example of melodic space rock where their clean-voice singer displays his full capabilities. Both covers sound nice, too. To make it clear: Paradise Lost went down, Pyogenesis went down completely, and Amorphis did not. Still, I wonder what will be the next: "Amorphis Unplugged" album or an "Elegy"-style new record? The band says, the latter will come true. (GS)

4 1/4

CRACK UP

From The Ground

Nuclear Blast

Not much time passed since their debut "Blood Is Life", and Crack Up return with another album, now on Nuclear Blast. They remained true to the real death/thrash metal. Since "From The Ground" has no ultra-brutal guitars and the singer screams instead of growling, the music is not that far from thrash. On the other hand, the overall thinking and structure are similar to death metal. However, comparing "From The Ground" and the previous album, there is no big improvement with respect to building their own identity. (GS)

[crackup@aol.com] [http://members.aol.com/crackup]
3 1/2

CREMATORY

Awake

Nuclear Blast

Crematory, the Germans-beloved band, are productive but not very innovative. "Awake" is a combination of what is hot in today's gothic metal. Everything about them is average: the vocals, the songwriting, and the playing. Lake Of Tears are capable of making far more catchier tunes. Crematory now are really worse than their new label-mates Evereve, and are no better than Darkseed. (GS)

3 1/4

CROWN OF THORNS

Eternal Death

Black Sun

"War" and "speed" are probably the most suitable words to describe the second album of Swedish black/death metal band Crown Of Thorns. Listening to the album, one cannot overlook similarities to Gothenburg-style, just Crown Of Thorns are more dark and more evil. They fall short in being a bit monotonous

through the whole way. Apart from that, cool. (GS)

[Crown Of Thorns, Box 6045, 46106 Trailhatten, Sweden]
3 3/4

DARKSEED

Spellcraft

Nuclear Blast

Many consider them as the wagon-jumpers. Their style exactly meets the requirements of current trends: melodic 'gothic' metal with aggressive vocals. Actually, there is no gothic in it and therefore they sound a bit superficial but some melodies are not bad. (GS)

3 1/4

DIRGE

Hazing Rituals

A.Y.J.

The Canadian hardcore. I mean, New York hardcore transformed to Canada. Already the second album of these angry guys shows us a musical field where NY HC meets grindcore. Nothing new and shocking, every second band in the world plays black metal or hardcore. For me, however, "Hazing Rituals" was one of the best hardcore records to come out lately: professional, technical, angry, and good. All nature lovers should check the last track of this 17-song CD. (AO)

[Dirge, c/o R.F.S., 108 Woodbine Downs Blvd., Unit 7, Etobicoke, Ontario, M9W 5S9, Canada]
3 1/2

DISMEMBER

Misanthropic EP

Nuclear Blast

Death Metal is back, and this EP precedes the new full-length album of Disember. They deliver the same old good Swedish 'old school' death metal which is melodic (maybe the best riffs I have heard this year), strong, brutal, just brilliant for a fan. The best tracks are "Misanthropic" and "Afterimage" but all of them are more or less at the same high level. Besides, here we find Autopsy's cover "Pagan Saviour". The recording quality at Sunlight is more than good. I haven't got reproaches to Disember. (AO)

4

DISMEMBER

Death Metal

Nuclear Blast

Yes, it IS death metal. Now Disember means the same for death metal as Slayer does for thrash. Too many bands trying to reach various trade-offs lately make you long for a really EXTREME thing. And here you get it: Disember are extreme, technical, melodic, fast, and brutal. Are you 'true' enough to take it? (GS)

4 1/2

ESOTERIC

The Pernicious Enigma

Aesthetic Death

Following the successful "Epistemological Despondency" album, this double CD continues Esoteric's dark conceptual music at the same high level. It's a very diverse album and one of the most many-sided discs I've heard lately. All in all, it's doom, but growing to death, gothic, ambient and other dark styles. The atmosphere is highly psychotic and not easy-cacheable. The group doesn't try to hide the fact that their music is drug-influenced, so for me it's very hard to feel in these atmospheres, but the ones who like extremely different and strange moods must dig it. (AO)

[Aesthetic Death, Silwood, Pershore Road, Eickington, Worcestershire, WR10 3AP, England]
3 1/2

ETERNAL SOLSTICE

Eternal Solstice

Displeased

Damn, this is shallow death metal from Holland. Some of the stuff was even created in 1990. It's old-school typical American death metal with grunts instead of vocals. Very average. (GS)

2

FLOTSAM AND JETSAM

High

Metal Blade

With the sixth output, Flotsam And Jetsam return to their former label Metal Blade. Some months ago, the band promised that "High" would sound like a cross between "Doomsday For The Deceiver" and the last album "Drift". It's hard to say whether it has happened because the new CD has a modern production (Bill Mefoy) and that sets it apart from the first three albums. There are some really good songs on "High" like "Lucky Day" or "Everything" and that's what matters most. It's metal so fuck off! (SV)

3 3/4



FORTSH

Winterfrost

M.O.S.

This band from Switzerland plays the style for which Norwegians are famous. It's angry, fast, not very melodic but very dark black metal. It's all right, when this style has something meaningful and, maybe, even something innovative, but, in this case, it seems that they play black metal just for its sake. You can't even distinguish one song from another. And why do the guitars sound so bad... Is this a CD or what? (AO)

[M.O.S. Records, Altenbach 24, 9490 Vaduz, Lichtenstein]
2 3/4

FORTE

Destructive

Massacre

No album without changes. Forte's third release is different from the first two albums "Stranger Than Fiction" and "Division". Heavier and tighter than ever sound now is closer to Grip Inc. or the last Anthrax CD, in short, modern 90's metal. Production doesn't shine, and the mix could be better, so, I think, it's not the best Forte's album, though some cool tracks are available here. (SV)

3 1/2

FREDERIK THORENDAL'S SPECIAL DEFECTS

Sol Nigir Within

Nuclear Blast

Frederik Thorendal, the guitarist of successful Swedish band Meshuggah, has released his solo album with some help from other known musicians such as Morgan Agren, Jonas Knutson, Mats Oeberg. This CD is not easy-listenable, that's a fact. It contains only one 44 minutes-long song. Of course, I appreciate a musician's wish not to destroy the concept of the music by dividing it into parts but, let's ask, who does listen to albums from the beginning to the end every time? Thus, it happens that the first part of the record is listened

more than the second one, though the latter is better for me. Anyway, it's a truly beautiful, progressive, clever, and original creation (can be compared with Pestilence "Spheres" and Atheist "Elements"). The rhythm of Meshuggah is felt everywhere. It's kind of jazz-fusion-death-rock-classics-and... I could go on forever. There is no one style, it's rather a psychotic mix of everything. As I understand, this record is highly influenced by Tibetan Buddhism and other Eastern ways of thinking. It seems that Mr. Frederik is a clever man and he writes an intelligent and interesting music. (AO)

4

GHOSTORM

Black Box

Lard Records

The second full-length of this well known band from Lithuania, recorded again at Unisound Records. The producer Dan Swano even sang one song on the CD. This time, music changed to a more technical side and, even if it basically

remains death metal, it has elements of other metal and non-metal styles. The musicians let themselves to play everything they want and the final mix is a complex music ranging from quiet moods to brutal death; melody and heaviness go hand in hand here. Also, I must mention that Ghostorm have one of the best bass players in the metal-world and there is a bass instrumental "Daughter" in this disc. This is a CD for fans of technical music. (AO)

DECEASED

Fearless Undead Machines

Relapse

Well, 'true metal' and a 'fight against trends' approach are becoming trends themselves these days, but Deceased cannot be charged for it since they are among the initiators. They never were a typical death metal. "Fearless Undead Machines" is not either. Band's influences range from the early Celtic Frost to Iron Maiden (it's not a lie!). In comparison with their older stuff, the music has become more melodic, indeed, but vocals aren't that melodic. If you are after melodic extreme metal, Deceased are not the first band to pick up. Instead, they offer aggressive metal that also can be labeled as zombie metal. They claim they were inspired by "Night Of The Living Dead" movie during the creation of this album and it is visible. To add more intrigue, they should remove all band photos. Then you would be free to think they look similar to the lads on the CD cover. In conclusion, Deceased are a honest band. More than that, they play quality extreme metal that deserves attention of extreme metal fans. (GS)

[Deceased, 5953 N. 10th Street, Arlington, VA 22205, USA]
4

remains death metal, it has elements of other metal and non-metal styles. The musicians let themselves to play everything they want and the final mix is a complex music ranging from quiet moods to brutal death; melody and heaviness go hand in hand here. Also, I must mention that Ghostorm have one of the best bass players in the metal-world and there is a bass instrumental "Daughter" in this disc. This is a CD for fans of technical music. (AO)

3 3/4

THE GREAT KAT

Guitar Goddess EP

TPR

The eccentric guitar goddess strikes back again with a 4-track mini-release: 2 usual songs (average) along with hyper fast Rossini's "The Barber of Seville" and Sarasate's Gypsy Violin Waltz (better). It's OK, but will we ever hear something like the classical "Beethoven On Speed" (first of all, in the aspect of

Called "a self-torturers sweet nightmare" this four piece band for me is like an embodiment of three known groups: Solitude Aeternus, Candlemass, and Paradise Lost. With its interesting mixture of doom/gothic and peculiar vocals of Mariana Holmberg, Left Hand Solution have found their niche in the world of heavy and dark music. The best evidence of it is their last CD "Fevered"... Erik Barthold reveals all... [SV]



Interview by Audrius Ožalas

Left Hand Solution

And their bitter fever...

You were formed in 1992. How many original members are left in the band to this date?

The best thing is to take it all from the very beginning. In 1992, three guys started a band and named it Left Hand Solution. They were Jocke Mardstam (guitar), Jorgen Fahlberg (vocals and bass) and Liljan Liljekvist (drums). After a while, Jorgen realised that he wanted to concentrate on the vocals in the band. Peter Selin entered to handle the bass. With this line-up, they continued for about a year. But then, in 1993, Jorgen left the band. They started to search for a new singer and came up with the idea to try a female. They found Kicki Højertz and right after her I replaced Liljan. About two weeks after I had joined LHS, we entered the studio to record two songs for the compilation CD *Metal North*. In 1994, we released *Shadowdance* with this line-up. But then Kicki moved to another town, 400 kilometres from Sundsvall, to finish her studies. In early 1995, Mariana Holmberg joined us to replace Kicki. In summer '96, we recorded our latest effort, the CD *Fevered*. So as you can see, our past as a band is pretty complicated. And to make it a bit more confusing, our guitarist Jocke Mardstam decided to quit some time ago. Recently we started to rehearse with a guy called Janne Wiklund. Well, I hope you get something out of this.

Have you released any demos before putting those 2 songs on the compilation CD *Metal North*?

There was a demo called *Dwell* which was released in 1992 with male vocals. After the release of *Metal North*, we made the demo *Falling* with Kicki on vocals in 1994. In 1995, we made a demo with Mariana called *The Wounds of Bitterness*. The first demo *Dwell* is totally and utterly unavailable anywhere these days. There are still some copies left of *Falling* (\$4) and *The Wound*. (\$5) if anyone is interested. Can be ordered from me or Massproduktion.

Then you've got a deal with Massproduktion. Has the appearance of two your songs on the compilation influenced your contract with Massproduktion? For how many CDs do you have the deal?

We got some good response from our appearance on *Metal North*. Partly because of that, Massproduktion wanted to release a CD with us. We have signed for one CD at a time only.

Shadowdance was released in 1994. Did it become a breakthrough for you? Did you play many gigs? Why it was only a mini-CD: for financial reasons or maybe you haven't got enough stuff for the full-length?

We made lots of gigs in our local district before Kicki left us. With the *Falling* demo, we got good response from countries outside Sweden and with *Shadowdance* we got even more. Massproduktion was very small label at that time, so there wasn't enough money to finance a full-length production for Left Hand Solution. And besides, we were the first metal release on their label, so they wanted to see how the whole thing would work out.

Three years have passed after the release *Shadowdance*. Why did it take so much time to get the new album ready?

At first, we had to find a fitting replacer for Kicki. When we found Mariana, we had to rehearse both old and new stuff with her. There was only two years between the recordings of *Shadowdance* and *Fevered*, but in between we made a demo with Mariana.

Has the coming of Mariana strongly changed the structure of the group and the musical orientation?

No, I don't think so. We had been heading for this kind of sound for quite some time. But maybe Mariana's voice made us to get to where we wanted.

Your CD *Fevered* was produced by well-known producer Thomas Hedqvist. Did he influence the recording, i.e., did he say I think you should play it here this way and so on? Or were decisions made solely by you?

Well, sometimes he said so. But if we didn't like what he was telling, we didn't do it that way. Most things worked out pretty well with him. We had some differences on a few points from time to time, but what the hell.

For me, *Fevered* is kind of conceptual album (musically, not lyrically). Do you agree? Did you want to create one flowing atmosphere? Only the last song jumps out from the context, I think it wasn't necessary to put it on the album.

We wanted a certain kind of atmosphere on the album. There might be some similarities in sound between the songs, but together with each own's lyric I think all songs speak for themselves. The last song *Scarred* was a slower one in the beginning, but in the end it turned out this way. Our bass player really freaks out on some aggressive punk/hardcore bands, and I think you'll realise that with this song.

Almost all the songs are created by you. Does it mean that other musicians usually don't take part in creating songs? What do Left Hand Solution create first: music or words? Yes, the songs on *Fevered* were mainly written by me. The rest of the band didn't take part in the songwriting process on these songs. Once I had finished them, we played them like they were. This doesn't necessarily mean that I will write everything myself in the future. After Mariana joined us, it just happened that I wrote more songs that the rest of the members. From time to time, the lyrics comes first but usually I make the music first, and I know Peter does it that way too.

Now you are distributed by Nuclear Blast. What kind of deal is it?

For now, we have a licensee deal with them. It'll probably be like that when we want to release our next album as well.

Doom metal with female vocals is getting extremely popular nowadays. Which band, in your opinion, has started this female-sung doom metal? What do you think about The Gathering, has female singer helped them?

I don't know. I haven't been listening to this kind of doom metal very much. I've just been writing songs that maybe can be placed under the genre. I don't know how The Gathering was, when someone told me we sounded a bit like them. My inspiration doesn't come from the same music style as the one we play. There are

lots of great bands with female vocals that don't play doom.

Do you try to have as many underground contacts as you can? Do you do lots of promotion by yourselves or just leave it to Massproduktion and Nuclear Blast? Since we got the deal with Nuclear Blast, they've been doing most of the promotion. But we still have many underground contacts in the band. Massproduktion is also doing a great job in this scene.

Sweden is known for its alcohol and taxes politics. What is your opinion about it - is it hard to get drunk in Sweden? Do you have other jobs besides music?

It's not that hard to get drunk, but expensive. Especially in the pubs. So this means that when I'm broke and have a hangover, I study music at a music-school.

Bands, books, movies which influence you most? Could you say that all people in the band are interested in mostly the same things?

I listen to many different kinds of music. Some of my favourite bands are Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds, Tool, Cranes, The Doors, and Sisters of Mercy. But right now I listen much to jazz. Favourite books are ones by William S. Burroughs, Fjodor Dostojewskij, Samuel Beckett, and *The Nausea* by Jean Paul Sartre, and loads more. We all have different tastes for music in the band. Some shit here and there ties us together. Peter listens, as I mentioned earlier, more to faster stuff. He likes Type O Negative a lot. Our new guitarist Janne listens to most metal stuff. Mariana likes Nick Cave and other cool stuff.

Something for the end?

Thanks for taking time to read the interview. Elvis is the king!

[Left Hand Solution, c/o Erik Barthold, Uppsala. 9, 857 31 Sundsvall, Sweden]

album length)? This EP lasts only for 8 minutes... I understand it's cyberspeed but... What regards the image (once again), it may look offensive but, as The Kat argued in one of her interviews, "who is worse: me or drugged-out Kurt Cobain-suicidal influence?". Be sure to check out the Great Kat CD-Rom "Digital Beethoven On Speed" which is something really interesting... (GS)
[Thomas Public Relations, 775 Park Ave., Suite #222, Huntington, NY 11743, USA]
[greatkat@greatkat.com] [http://www.greatkat.com]

GRYN 16 Stitches EP Heavy Eleven

A 5-track EP, following the band's debut album "Capital Punishment". All in all, it's hard to label Gryn's style since they have many influences. The biggest of them is Pantera. But "Self-Hate" is done in a manner of Smashing Pumpkins, musicians have their own sound and do not blindly follow the hardcore fashion. (AO)
[Heavy Eleven Productions, PO Box 574, Hays, Kansas 67601, USA]
3 1/4

GWAR Carnival Of Chaos Metal Blade

The new Gwar release basically doesn't differ from the last one. The same image and musical cocktail made from punk/hardcore/metal/avantgarde. Any innovations are absent, but such band like Gwar doesn't worry about that. With humor and light-heartedness, they construct simple songs and (in this way) keep the listeners in the mood. All right. (SV)
3 1/2

HARUM The Creation Self-released

It has not much to do with the thrash metal revival, since this Portuguese band have been playing thrash from 1989, and, for more, "Creation" was released at the end of 1995 when there was no any talk about the return of thrash metal. The album delivers a decently played but low-creativity music according to all the standards. It's rough, mainly mid-tempo, and dull. (GS)
[Harum, Urbanizacão Montirinko, Rua 4n 2 r/c D, 8000 Faro, Portugal]
2

INCANTATION The Forsaken Mourning Of Angelic Anguish EP Repulse

Many have probably forgot what a term 'death/grind' does mean. American Incantation are here to refresh your memory and blast a condensed 20-minute mayhem of growling-vocals, downtuned-guitars, and grinding drums. They believe in it but they still do the very same thing they were doing 5 years ago. Anyway, if you think that Cannibal Corpse and Suffocation kick ass, this EP will fit to your taste. (GS)
[Incantation, PO Box 609311, Cleveland, OH 44109, USA] [ln666@aol.com]
3

INTESTINE BAALISM An Anatomy Of The Beast Repulse

The debut album of a death metal band from... Japan. Maybe their origin is the most interesting factor, since their music is brutal, traditional death metal without any surprises. Repulse still release mainly those bands which fit into this category (well, there are some exceptions). The next record for a real deaththier. (AO)
3

JAWW Southbound Traibol

It seems to me that the biggest part of the Canadian groups that come out lately play Pantera/Biohazard stuff. Jaww find themselves in more rapish Biohazard oriented NY-hardcore. "Southbound" is their debut CD that

demonstrate nothing totally new (what new things can be found in this style?), it's an aggressive music with lyrics about pain and personality. The result is good for a hardcore fan. (AO)
[Jaww, c/o Doug McLarty, 1576 Queen St.W., Toronto, Ont., M6R 1A6, Canada]
3 1/4

KOMAHAWK Slow EP Crossroads

The German Crossroads label does not look after 'any' bands. Professionalism and talent are the conditions for a cooperation. After Iron Age, we deal with another German band called Komahawk that devoted itself to metal/hardcore/punk. As the CD has a good, clean sound, the songs come over dynamically and powerful. The band has already supported Sacred Reich and Skrew on their European tour. We know that the most hardcore bands live are better by far than on their records. Good! (SV)
[Crossroads, Holzmuehlenstrasse 84-86, 22041 Hamburg, Germany]
3 1/2

LACRIMAS PROFUNDERE La Naissance D'Un Reve Witchhunt

If it was the year 1993, I'd give 5 points to this album without a thinking. Then gothic death metal wasn't a big trend contrary to our days. In their second album, Lacrimas Profundere play a nostalgic, melancholic, and very sad romantic-doom-gothic with growling vocals. Yes, they keep to the standards put up by My Dying Bride and Anathema. Lacrimas Profundere use a flute, a violin, female vocals, keyboards, i.e., all the compulsory elements of so called trendy doom metal. The only thing that gets me nervous is the growling voice but we have to acknowledge that now many doom metal bands have clean-voice singers. In spite of that doom is outplayed, the band play really professionally and are one the better ones inside the frame of this style. (AO)
3 3/4

LACRIMOSA Stille Hall of Sermon

Without a doubt, one of the most impressive albums of 1997. I've been waiting for this kind of album all the time after the release of Therion's "Theli". Although, stylistically, it isn't in the same musical field, both bands perfectly managed to combine metal, classical music, gothic, and orchestral pompastics. Lacrimosa go further than Therion, "Stille" is done in an orchestral manner with moods going from strain to silence, from triumph to fall. Each of eight songs is a different story and you even don't have to understand the language (6 songs are sung in German) - music speaks for itself. Lacrimosa cooperated with Barmbelor Symphonic Orchestra, the Rosenberg Ensemble, and German Lunhewitz Singers, so perfect ideas could found a professional performance. Musically, the group took classical and orchestral music cannons and put rock and metal music on it combined with philosophical ideas in lyrics. The best piece of music I've heard Lacrimosa to do. (AO)
[Hall of Sermon, CM-4310 Rheinfelden, Switzerland]
4 3/4

LEFT HAND SOLUTION Fevered Nuclear Blast

The first full-length album of this Sweden's band shows gothic doom at its best being depressive, sad, and melancholic. The timbre of Mariana Holmberg is original and her voice is really strong, what singles out Left Hand Solution from all the other bands of similar clan. All the album is musically conceptual, only the last track "Scarred" falls out of this dramatic one monolith. Left Hand Solution haven't reached the level of The Gathering yet, but the beginning is surely done. (AO)
4 1/4

MASTER DAMNED So Blind Marrakech

Varied thrash/hardcore from Italy. Unfortunately, the album suffers from a bad sound quality, especially the guitars could have been produced better. Interested persons - who are into Megadeth or Pantera - can check this one out. (SV)
[Marrakech Music, Via Luosi, 112-41100 Modena, Italy]
3

MEGADETH Cryptic Writings Capital

And Dave Mustaine & Co. strike back. Going downhill in relation to "Countdown to Extinction" and the brilliant "Youthanasia" albums, this release could be considered as an apparent try of offering something unusually fresh for an established band as Megadeth is. Well, the fact is several of these 12 tracks lack almost totally of originality and intensity for my personal taste. Melody lines sometimes even could make one remind of Foo Fighters, NOFX, or other acts in that style. Keeping in mind their status in the scene, they sure can allow themselves this sort of incursions in mainstream ambients, and it could be even a respectable choice from the musician's point of view. But, as a mere consumer, I wouldn't recommend this album unless one's not worried of seeing a guitarist of Marty Friedman's talent firing monochord and pretty tasteless hard rockish riffs on the 90% of this, in my opinion, really average album. Tracks with some magic are "A Secret Place" (oriental touch), "Trust" (catchy tune a la "Symphony of Destruction"), and the solid "She-Wolf". Being involved Megadeth this is one worth checking out if you've got the cash I suppose, but there are definitely more important albums to buy at the moment. (GM)
[http://fanasyum.com/megadeth]
2 3/4

NIGHT IN GALES Towards The Twilight Nuclear Blast

I doubt if it is even possible to mention this album without adding the words 'Gothenburg' or 'Dark Tranquillity' to it. For those, who look further than a traditional Gothenburg-style melodic, extreme, and fast death metal, this Night In Gales album may be a disappointment because it is not a big step forward in comparison with their debut EP "Sylphike". "Towards The Twilight", however, present the accomplished standards that were not confidently performed that many times before. This album is just in time. If it was released a year later, it probably would be hardly tolerated. (GS)
3 3/4



DIMMU BORGIR Enthroned Darkness Triumphant Nuclear Blast

Dimmu Borgir should be one of the first choices for people who are afraid of black metal but want to know it closer. That does not mean, of course, that Dimmu Borgir do not appeal to true black metal fans. Their last year's melancholic and sad "Stormblast" album was very well appreciated and landed a deal with Nuclear Blast. "Enthroned..." is a bit more lively (!) and powerful. Keyboards being the leading force, Dimmu Borgir's music is even more accessible than aggressive Gothenburg metal, yet vocals are harsh and uncompromised. Dimmu Borgir, however, are the masters of extreme harmony. The album contains 11 metal symphonies hailing the dark and the majesty and it is highly recommended for obscure extreme metal fans and all others who are in sympathy with them. Perhaps we will be forced to invent a label 'pop black metal' in the near future. Everything leads towards that... (GS)
4 1/2

ODDMONGERS Qualms... / "Lifegiver" + "Dreams" MCD Furia Records/Media 7

French Oddmongers refresh the stagnated thrash metal scene. Their second album is quite different from usual clichés. There are pleasant non-metal parts here and there; the vocalist sings in a wide range (no monotonous rough vocals!); the songs are diverse: some stick close to hardcore ("Dreamtime") while others are more melodic ("Spark Of A Dying Conscience"). All in all, it's one of the exceptions when you get perceptibly more than an average piece of thrash metal. Two new tracks, having more clean vocals, go further in building the own face of Oddmongers. Oddmongers make a similar thing for thrash metal as Life Of Agony have done with hardcore in their "River Runs Red" album. (GS)
[Oddmongers, c/o Joel Grevost, 4 rue de l'Isère, 38000 Grenoble, France]
4

OPHTHALMIA To Elishia Necropolis

Even for die-hard fans of Ophthalmia, this CD is not so interesting and, for me, it is simply a shitty one. "To Elishia" is a collection of the old demo material, rare rehearsal tracks, and the like; all this stuff is of such bad quality that you begin to think of the bands that are still worse than Ophthalmia... and you can't find many. If you are in the scene for 7 years and then release such a shit, it seems that the wish was to earn money by the name because such music is not worth for a demo nowadays. Well... unless you are a black metal fan who likes 'bad-sound-bad-quality' black... (AO)
1

extreme

today or in the past

METAL

thrash
doom
death
grind
black
hardcore
gothicmetal
industrialmetal
gothenburgmetal

PAGAN LORN

Black Wedding
Self-released

Pagan Lorn have got some innovative ideas and deliver a slightly-experimental atmospheric death metal. They have a full-time keyboard player and he puts some weird parts in each song. In result, their death metal is enriched by everything what is dark, beginning from Twin Peaks and ending with Type O Negative. Basically, it's OK but occasionally a bit amateurish. Probably the first extreme metal band from Luxembourg? (GS)

[20DM, Jang Linster Productions, 17 rue de Luxembourg, L-5752 Frisange, Luxembourg]
[Pagan Lorn, c/o Jos Kirps, 26 rue de la Montee, L-3321 Berchem, Luxembourg]
3 1/4

PAIN

Pain

Nuclear Blast

And now, for something completely different... Peter Taagtgren's (Hypocrisy) solo album is a punch of industrial metal. Peter masters the techniques of computer-based metal well enough and creates convincing tracks where energy outbursts clash with apocalyptic vision. Perhaps the vocals could have been stronger. (GS)

4

PROBOSCIS

Stalemate
Diehard

That's what I call original hardcore. Proboscis play so-called 'free-style' hardcore/metal, taking all possible ways how to play Biohazard, Meshuggah, Pantera developed style. I am happy to hear funk, jazz and other influences. The result is a heavy and aggressive music which is interesting and crazy. Straight-hardcore fans won't like this record but this is not for them. (AO)

[Proboscis, c/o Magnus Liljedahl, St Goeransg 153/718, 11251 Stockholm, Sweden]
3 3/4

SARTINAS

Sartinas EP

Shadows of Michelangelo
A 4-song demo CD of the group from Sweden. And we all know what to expect, right? Melodic death metal in the veins of In Flames is a fashion and Sartinas follow it. The band plays standardically, the rhythm section isn't very strong, but the final view is standable. Anyway, nothing new, another group that belongs to 'not bad, not very good' category. (AO)

[Shadows Of Michelangelo Productions, P.O.Box 12787, Gainesville, Florida 32604, USA]
3

SATURNUS

Paradise Belongs To You
Euphonious

First of all, I must say a couple of words about the layout of this disc cover: it's the best example how a CD should look like. The pictures by acknowledged photographer Peter Brandes give surrealistic and untouchable feeling leading you to the music. The music, most of all, reminds of My Dying Bride "Turn Loose The Swans". Other bands to be compared with are Death In June and Current 93. "Paradise Belongs To You" is a debut CD and surprises by its professionalism. Even if there is an obvious influence of My Dying Bride, this is one of the best ways how this band must be followed. All these melancholic, sad, depressive gothic/doom songs begin and end with birds singing, so it is kind of a concept which displays the album as one whole creation. Music for sad hearts. (AO)

4

SATYRICON

Megiddo EP
Nuclear Blast

This EP shocked me when I listened to it for the first time, to say at least. 4 songs present so many musical feelings that you can only say that Satyricon, after their 6 years of playing, are among leaders of the genre. Prepare for the unique opener "The Dawn of a New Age", where the musical form changes from noise/industrial to pure gothic, black, and hell knows what. The absolute highlight is the atmospheric black metal track "Night of Divine Power". The cover of Motorhead's "Orgasmatron" is a surprise. I have no more questions. Let's wait for the forthcoming full-length album. (AO)

4 1/4



LAKE OF TEARS

Crimson Cosmos
Black Mark

Since the very beginning, these Swedes have not been hiding their credo, which is that the secret of success lies in simplicity and melody. In "Crimson Cosmos", their 3rd album, the band pushes their music even further to rock. They have got rid of all that influences (their debut album was compared to Tiamat's "Clouds", their second album to the recent Paradise Lost) and refined the new concept of "pop metal", which is, of course, far away, of what Poison and Bon Jovi have been up to. And, yes, I want to listen to the tracks like "Boogie Boogie", "Cosmic Weed", "Devil's Dinner", and "Lady Rosebud" together with all that British pop the radio plays in the group room E2-105 at Aalborg university! (GS)

4 1/4

SEPTIC FLESH

Ophidian Wheel
Holy

The most atmospheric release of these warriors from Greece. Clear voices in places change the growling ones, female vocals added, catchy melodies, keyboards... are these guys a gothic/doom band now? The brutality comes up in some places, but the feeling of Paradise Lost is evident, too. All in all, it is the disc of changes: opera replaces death metal, gothic rock - atmospheric metal. Maybe the most interesting album of Septic Flesh. (AO)

4

IN THE WOODS...

Omnio

Misanthropy

"Omnio" is a proof that the most excellent musicians do not necessarily create the most excellent albums. In The Woods... put emotions before the performance and this serves only for good. "Omnio"'s flowing sad beauty resembles to The Gathering, just here we have both male and female singers. Epic song structures bring to mind Opeth. Those, who have heard In The Woods... debut album "Heart Of The Ages", should be warned that there are no black metal type vocals anymore. In The Woods... of today perfectly corresponds the description 'atmospheric metal'. "Omnio" is a grandiose and sincere album. And deep. I still have to listen more to it to discover all the majesty. (GS)

4 1/4

SIX FEET UNDER

Warpath

Metal Blade

In the second full-length, Six Feet Under deliver rocking death metal. Chris Barnes' vocals are almost comprehensive, most of the songs are mid-tempo and heavy, everything else is at a good level, too. But some passion is missing, and, as far as extreme metal is concerned, Disember, Entombed, Slayer, Strapping Young Lad, Konkra all do a bit better. (GS)

3 1/2

SONIC TERRA

Nail The Gods EP

Self-released

Swedish underground band's attempt of heavy industrial. Distorted guitars and voice, all that machinery thing. In my eyes, they are not inferior to all those similar bands that receive airplay. The only matter is whether you like this style, and how much of novelties do you require. (GS)

[Sonic Terra, F. Sigurdson, Fleninge 436, 26035 Odakra, Sweden]
3

SPAPS

Life Lost In Living EP

Self-released

A new Swedish band gives a 4-song portion of competently-performed thrash metal. A reference point can be Sacred Reich, circa year 1990. Spaps have a potential but, as newcomers, they have to impress from the first listen to catch an attention. This is not exactly what they do. Nevertheless, repeating what I said, they are competent. To get higher, a brighter identity is required. (GS)

[Spaps, Patrik Magnusson, Fiskaregatan 51, 392 31 Kalmars, Sweden] [pamag@algonet.se] [http://www.algonet.se/~pamag]
3

TARTAROS

The Grand Psychotic Castle EP

Necropolis

Tartaros rise from Norway. If you foresee another Emperor-clan follower, you are right... Charmand Grimloch, the head of Tartaros, even contributed to Emperor for their live appearances. This 4 tracks EP gives us symphonic-atmospheric metal with good keyboards. They are not the most original and the most impressive band to come out from Norway and, maybe, the latest Emperor is 100% better than this EP, but for the blackers who are after all this

standard black with a good production, "... Castle" is the best companion for dark-nights-sessions. (AO)
3 3/4

Therion

A'Arab Zaraq Lucid Dreaming **Nuclear Blast**

Ten years of Therion, and for this reason Christofer Johnsson and Co. have released an unordinary album. Musically, it reminds of the brilliant "Theell" but all the concept has changed. First of all, there are 7 tracks that form a soundtrack for the Swedish art movie "The Golden Embrace" and they all are symphonic/classical music, i.e., far from metal. Also,

there are some covers like "Children Of The Damned" (Iron Maiden), "Here Comes The Tears" (Judas Priest), "Fly On The Rainbow" (Scorpions), and "Under Jolly Roger" (Running Wild) and they don't fit much to the atmosphere of the whole album... Anyway, you must remember that it is not a regular Therion album. Instead, we have efforts to represent Therion in some other way and therefore you are forced to switch from one style (mood) to another. It wasn't like this on "Theell". Anyway, Therion are still at the top. If there was no "Theell", I wouldn't be so capitious, but now I can say that "A 'Arab..." is a good album. Perhaps not so strong musically and conceptually as "Theell". (AO)

4

TRANSCENDENCE

Eternal Stream

Gaia Disk

Gothic metal with female vocals isn't any sensation or quality sign today. It's obvious that not every fan of this music expects from a band only a crystal-clear female voice and dark, romantic music. Transcendence offer us nothing but this, adding some elements of thrash. The final result is an average product with an average sound. Enough said. (SV)

[Transcendence, c/o Phillip Coupal, 33 ch. des lles Yale, St. Eustache, QC, J7P 5N5, Canada]
3

UNLORD

Schwarzwald

Displeased

North Europe and brutal devilish black metal go hand in hand. "Schwarzwald" is a very aggressive, fast, and decently-played piece of extreme metal. That's it. (GS)

3 1/4

USURPER

Threshold Of The Usurper EP

Necropolis

This is really straightforward. Inspired by the old dark bands such as Celtic Frost and Bathory, Usurper continues to sow the demon seed of evil metal. Some call it primitive but many others praise their harshness and extremity. However, you can easily see that Usurper take it deeply and seriously unlike some 'black metal' bands do. (GS)

3 1/2

V/A

A Black Mark Tribute

Black Mark
Black Mark have released an album where almost all known Black Mark bands have made their covers of well-known pop-rock-metal-jungle songs of Prodigy, The Beatles, Sex Pistols, Autopsy, The Police, Nazareth, Savatage, etc. This tribute album has proved once more that even playing a cover of a shitty song you can get a highlight. This happened, when Corporal Punishment took the song of Pet Shop Boys "It's A Sin". [Hey, you are calling "It's A Sin" a shitty song when performed by Pet Shop Boys?! - GS] The result is driving and powerful gothic metal. Next to Bathory's performed "Ace of Spades", it's the best track on the CD. Also, we can mention Morgana Lefay with non-traditionally played Kiss' "Parasite". I can conclude saying that this is one of the best tribute albums of this year, due to its colorfulness and wish not to be bounded by one style. (AO)



V/A

Awakening: Females In Extreme Music

Dwell
Somehow many understand that this compilation states that there is a difference between extreme music made by males and by females. But who has said that it is so? There are no such statements on CD cover whatsoever. In fact, "Awakening" just features extreme bands with female members, period. The idea of making such record can be considered as not a better one than that of making a compilation of bands which, say, consist of 3 members. However, "Awakening" is still not worse than any compilation of artists of some label. Yes, perhaps they [Dwell Records] could arrange a better line-up, i.e., pick up the bands where females are main composers of the music. In "Awakening", probably the best track is performed by Gehenna where, ironically, the female keyboard player plays the least important role. In general, it is a compilation of rough black metal and rough death metal. Sadly, but new names (Thor's Hammer, Noothgrush, November Grief) look very pale musically. On the positive side, there are known-good bands like the aforementioned Gehenna, Deathwitch, and Witches. (GS)

V/A

Beauty In Darkness Vol.2

Nuclear Blast
Oh, gothic metal again? Cool. Evereve, Therion, Dimmu Borgir (authors of the first black metal ballad ever?), Theatre Of Tragedy, In Flames, Sentenced, My Dying Bride, ... All known, all good. A 17-song compilation of today's prominent extreme romantics. (GS)

The combination, that the Canadians HEMLOCK create on their self-released debut "Exordium", is not everyday music. Gothic meets progressive - the mixture is not new but it also doesn't occur often. In my review, I mentioned their high ability to play, and this is a big merit of the CD. HEMLOCK know how to change moods and atmospheres within the songs in time. We spoke to vocalist/guitarist Jim Ross...

The Fathoms of HEMLOCK

Interview by Sigitas Velyvis

Canada's scene has always been a riddle for me. I don't know many bands from Canada, but this low quantity is transformed into high quality (Rush, Voivod, The Tea Party). What do you think about it?

Canada has always been a smaller market internationally but the artists usually seem to have their own distinct style - talent. I'm not sure, if we feel we have to prove ourselves more so than other countries, but we certainly put a lot of our emotion into what we do.

"Exordium" came out in 1994. How many copies have you sold worldwide so far? Do you think that the European market is more favorable to Hemlock?

The total sales of the album didn't go very high at all - a good portion were in our own country. We had a very difficult time getting contacts over seas but, when they finally starting shipping to Europe, it wasn't so much huge sales but the interest and support was incredible. The European market seems far better for music of this nature as opposed to the more common flavor of the North American market.

What about the cover of this CD? Is this a simple picture or has it a deeper meaning?

The cover was actually designed by two different artists so, of course, each have their own personal meanings, but, as a whole, there's no one concept for the cover. We leave that to the individuals own interpretations.

Have you heard anything about the European bands Skyclad or My Dying Bride

I've heard of My Dying Bride but I'm afraid I've never had a chance to hear their music.

"Seventh Odyssey" has an ancient touch, it revives the feeling of the medieval culture. Do you agree with it? Are you interested in old-time, ancient cultures?

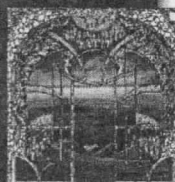
I'm fascinated by many different cultures and civilizations so I'm sure this rubs off onto a lot of the music. "Seventh Odyssey" always seemed to have a bit of a Baroque feel at times.

Your debut has many elements of the progressive music, too. What does the word "progressive" mean to you?

I think anything that dares to be adventurous and not stick to a particular rule or formula can classify as progressive. Having a sense of individuality and being confident with it. Wanting to move forward in new and exciting directions.

Is it difficult to perform your music on stage? Some of you play more than one instrument on the CD...

We tried to record the album with very little overdubs and extras



Exordium

that weren't already in the songs.

Therefore, when the material is played, it would contain all the elements that were on the album.

If you should have enough money to do a video-clip for any song, how should it look like?

We started a video a few years back but never completed it. The song was a 15 minute instrumental and the video was a combination of live footage, outdoors

scenery and symbolic imagery. We never really talked about video for the album other than an idea using animation of the front cover to create a fantasy world that the video would enter and explore.

You said that all members of HEMLOCK were equal in the band and there were no dictators among you. Don't you think that some bands need this dictator and can't exist without him? Sometimes those bands are very good...

You're very right about that and sometimes it's necessary to have someone in complete control. Although John and I founded the group and wrote all the music along with many other duties, we tried to keep a certain equality with the other members. Sometimes this works, other times it doesn't.

What is your band doing now? Tell me about your future plans.

Unfortunately we disbanded about a 1,5 year ago but we haven't ruled out the possibility of working together in the future. Meanwhile John is working on his own stuff and I'm working on stuff and have been playing with Jay Davidson (ex-Hemlock drummer and a bass player).

[Jim Ross, 180 Greendale Cresc., Saint John, New Brunswick, E2M 4L6, Canada]

V/A

Death... Is Just The Beginning IV

Nuclear Blast
A double CD of Nuclear Blast presents a big part of underground (occasionally, overground) elite. This time, the first disc displays more atmospheric, melodic, and gothic bands such as Amorphis, In Flames, Crematory, Dreadful Shadows, Evereve, Left Hand Solution, etc. The second part consists of more brutal performers, namely death metal and black metal, and the featured bands are Brutality, Kataklysm, Monstrosity, Dimmu Borgir, Satyricon, Dissection, Hypocrisy, etc. Personally I liked the first disc more. Concluding, I can say that this compilation is the best bible of modern metal, and if you want to look for new bands, you may find them here. (AO)

V/A

"Israheller"

Heller

Finally, I can hold in my hands a compilation with groups from Israel. There isn't so much information about the underground scene in this land, but the Israeli scene is growing rapidly. So, this perfectly done CD can become a very good introduction to the music of Israel. 13 songs on this album present both well-known and deep-underground band. Here, we have famous Salem, Orphaned Land, growing groups like Beltrayer or Mercenary, and absolutely unknown names. Stylistically, it changes from doom to black and hardcore, so, at the end of the album, you can have a total view of the scene. (AO)
[Heller Productions, 200115 Amirim, Upper Galilee, Israel]

VITAMIN F

Nobody Cares EP

Self-released
It's not easily digestible what Vitamin F present on this EP. The first track "Troubled In Spirit" takes after Prong, Corrosion Of Conformity, and old Soundgarden. Dismal, slightly psychedelic metal that sometimes can be delightful. Don't forget to read the lyrics, they are really good. I think we will hear about this band soon. (SV)
[Vitamin F, PO Box 8873, New Fairfield, CT 06812, USA] [vitamin@aol.com]
3 1/2

WHIPLASH

Sit, Stand, Kneel, Prey

Massacre
Perfect symbiosis from Megadeth and Corrosion Of Conformity. The new CD by this thrash legend of the 80's will convince those who love such albums like "Countdown To Extinction" or "Deliverance". Warren Condit is a big improvement for the band, his expressive voice and songwriting teamwork with Tony Portaro make the longplayer a real treat. "Hitlist", "Jane Doe", and the title track are three highlights of this record. Outstanding. (SV)
4 1/4

WITHERING SURFACE

Scarlet Silhouettes

Euphonious
Together with Saturnus, Withering Surface are one of a few Danish bands that break stereotypes how a Danish heavy band should sound like. Indeed, instead of hardcore/death metal, here we get atmospheric and romantic music. Withering Surface contain a slight dose of erotics in their lyrics and image, and this is one of their merits definitely since musically they are not much better than the majority. "Scarlet Silhouettes" is a bit less aggressive than a typical Gothenburg death metal album but still fast, melodic, and with sharply screaming vocals. Perhaps heavy-metal influences are clearer than in other albums of similar kind, and this gives more diversity to Withering Surface. (Applauses). (GS)
3 3/4

WITHIN TEMPTATION

Enter

DSFA

Romantic doom metal is not a forgotten genre today. Within Temptation not only pleasantly recall the days when the bands like Theatre Of Tragedy have started, but look fresh in 1997. They are not strictly dedicated to doom metal (which is the dominating component of their music) and also incorporate elements of gothic and darkwave. The female singer, who performs the majority of vocal parts, has a very nice voice, similar to the current The Gathering singer. (GS)
4



Many of you might already know Spiral Architect, the progressive technical metal band from Norway. When I was in Oslo, I could not miss the opportunity to visit them at their rehearsal place. There was quite a lot what to ask, because the band is kind of conspired.

The members of Spiral Architect have been active in Norwegian metal scene for quite a long time. If you are really interested, you may apply to the contributor Erik Sontum, who, probably, will provide you with some relevant details about that, including the style of Anesthesia, the former band of some current Spiral Architect members.

Spiral Architect from the very beginning (1993, the year when they started rehearsing) were strongly focused on the technical side of the music ignoring the trends of 'easy-listenable' progressive metal back in 1993 - 1995. And actually it may be a key to success, because this year shows that the technical metal is back and growing. It is enough to look at the latest Fates Warning album.

SPIRAL ARCHITECT

the time bomb from Norway

Interview by Giedrius Slivinskas

In 1995, Spiral Architect released two songs from "A Gathering..." compilation CD (of 8 Norwegian progressive metal bands) as a demo. The demo looks very strong and it is very surprising that the band doesn't have an album out yet.

What is (was?) characteristic to Spiral Architect is that they slowly write new songs. Or, at least, they don't play their new songs to the public. Up till now, the only possible thing to access is those two songs from "A Gathering...". According to the Scream magazine, they also recorded two other songs at the end of 1996, but since the band members are almost silent about that, it means they were not 100% satisfied with the result. They really can be called perfectionists. When you ask the musicians why does it take so long to compose songs, they say that one of the reasons is that they found a vocalist only at the end of 1996. Their new (and the first) singer Oeyvind Haegeland is known for his work with Manitou, another Norwegian progressive metal band, which released their debut album "Entrance" in 1995 and then split-up. Those two songs from "A Gathering" were recorded with a session singer... Well, yes... let's see how did the interview turn out...

interview itself, the beginning...

How was your concert in Kristiansand?

"Great, we've got good reviews. People told that it was good. They were drunk anyway..."

How many songs did you play?
"Nine."

You have nine songs?!!

"Well, we played some covers like Fates Warning "Anarchy Divine", Watchtower "Mayday In Kiev", Dream Theater "Fortune In Lies". We also played one old Manitou song. It was actually our first concert."

What other bands did play? What are they like?

"Clairvoy and Poetry Of Dreams. Clairvoy is more like Savatage, old Fates Warning, very concept/fairytale..."

So, not counting the two songs from "A Gathering..." it seems that you have three new ones...

"Yes, but we have a couple of new songs as well, which aren't completely finished yet."

When do you hope to record the new album?

"Hopefully autumn. Perhaps we will record some songs in a couple of

months. At least for our own sake. If they sound good, maybe we will release another demo."

Do you want to record some songs for promotion again, instead of doing the whole album?

"Yeah, we rather release a demo and wait for some good offers. We want to fill the market with our music."

singers

Was Manitou the first Norwegian progressive metal band to release a CD?
Oeyvind looks confused. However, others are nodding, saying 'yes'.

Why did Manitou split-up?

Oeyvind: "We lived in another town, the drummer lived in Oslo and he also played in another band. It was hard to rehearse. I also think he got tired of playing..."

What's about the singer, who did vocals on those two songs from "A Gathering..."? Leif Knashaug... Is he doing anything now?

"No. Actually, he is studying in Oslo, but he is more a session singer. Usually all his bands are rock n'roll. He is very good, but he is not into our style. It was a bit hard, because we had to explain him everything what to do."

[Favorite singers] Oeyvind: "John Arch..., Ray Alder... [others: come on, FW haven't had more singers!...] Buddy Lackey. My first idol was Vince Neil." [ooo' key...]

record labels: is progressive metal ignored? how about technical metal? record deal?

What do you think about progressive metal?

"It's growing. Yet too many Dream Theater wannabes. Just like black metal thing. Perhaps the record companies are guilty when they sign non-original bands. There are a lot of prog metal bands, that record companies do not dare to sign, because they are not commercial."

Some names?

"Spastic Ink, for instance. The instrumental band of Ron Jarzombek from Watchtower. They are really amazing. They had a hard time getting a record deal. Two years of struggling. In the end, Dream Circle will release their album. We mailed around 50 tapes to record companies and only got two replies. Others, who contacted us, read reviews or by other means heard about us. First, people have to hear the name. It was one of the main reasons that only a few record companies replied. The first thing we did was that we sent 50 tapes to record companies and

nothing to any magazine. Suddenly record companies get a tape of some band, whose name they hear for the first time. You have to go all the way through the underground, get exposure in magazines."

How many tapes have you sent? Have you got any bad reviews?

"Around 80-90. We got only great reviews and there was one not bad, but an 'OK' review. But that magazine wrote shit about the albums that had got good reviews anywhere else, and it praised the bands that no one likes. Anyway, you have to expect everything. There are several new reviews, which we will put on our web page..."

You don't update that page much...

"We are working on a completely new web page. He [the singer] has been with us for about half a year and he is still not on our web page. It's about time, ha. We were negotiating with record companies. You know, you feel something is going to happen, you just wait and... suddenly the half of a year is passed. Negotiations with record labels take a long time. Waiting for replies and things like that. Now we are negotiating with 4-5 companies..."

How about those different kinds of prog metal? Watchtower and similar technical prog metal bands split-up in 1990 or so...

"Yes, but you are talking more about thrash scene. It was a time when thrash in general was fading away. But there were technical metal bands like Cynic, Coroner."

You are going to a more complex side of progressive metal, right?

"Yeah. Or maybe something in-between. We want to do a technical metal, but with melodies/arrangements."

opinions about the great ones...

Favorite albums of Fates Warning?

"Awaken The Guardian", "Perfect Symmetry", "No Exit"... We all like similar bands, similar albums, similar songs, but we like different things on



these songs or albums."

What's about the new Fates Warning album? Can you describe it? [The interview was made when Massacre Records were mailing promotional copies and the album was not in the stores. The drummer Asgeir already had a copy, since he is one of the Scream magazine staff]

"Guitars are more powerful, more distortion. Some parts are the most technical they ever done."

Dream Theater?

"The first album is the best. 'Awake' sucks. First, it's too long..."

[good death metal] Death, Morbid Angel...

[good black metal] Satyricon, Dissection...

"Everyone asks us about black metal, but we don't really



care. Black metal is the only thing people know from Norway. And also they know A-ha. Black metal bands have cool image, they look great in the magazines. Perhaps we will also wear corpsepaints..."

"We have, what it's called, a common denominator. We all like good progressive metal bands and then everyone likes different styles."

their songs

Did you want to make the similar music in the beginning?

"I think, we are always 5 years ahead of what we want to play. What we are playing today is what we wanted to play back when we started. What we want to play now, we will play after 5 years. We always struggle to get maximum and always want to play the things we can't play yet. When we manage to play it, we have to find something else we cannot play. That takes a lot of time. We have tapes with ideas, you know. I listened to them just a couple of days ago. There were really some great ideas, but we can't use them, because it is 5 years too late."

So, when do you have a result like "Fountainhead" song, for instance, are you satisfied with it?
"It depends on whom you ask in the band. At a time it was made, it was a great song."

Will you put it on CD then?

"Yeah. We have to put it. But if you ask the same question about 'Purpose', no. It was made from really old things. It was made about a time when we tried to play like Crimson Glory, Queensryche. It is too commercial... No, not too commercial, but it's not us anymore. The problem was that we never had a singer, so it took a long time to get the music ready. You have to make a song, and when in the end you make it, you don't know how it actually will turn out with vocals. When we got the singer, things worked really fast."

Should we wait for the album this year?

"Maybe a demo. There won't be an album this year, perhaps in the early 1998. We will be recording the album this year."

You hope to have a complete set of songs soon, don't you?

"We are working on some new songs. We have all the ideas, just we have to arrange them and to rehearse with vocals."

[Spiral Architect, Chr. Krohgsgr. 30, N-0186 Oslo, Norway]
[asgeir.mickelson@myres.no]
[http://www.gi.no/Spiral]

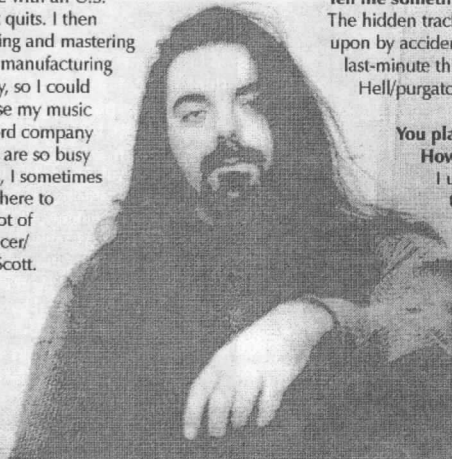
Self-released CDs often are notable for an average production and unripe songs. This does not suit the Canadian Noisefloor and their debut album "Negative Superman/Decade Of Anger..." that completely convinced me: gloomy, dark music which covers influences from Tool, Soundgarden to NIN and Black Sabbath. Besides, we have to do here with very interesting lyrics that spread an intelligent, nearly philosophic touch over the whole album. John Ball - Noisefloor's main figure - who plays almost all instruments on this CD, agreed to answer some questions...

The first question isn't very original but somebody must know your band's history. How did everything start?

The history is quite simple as it's not so much a band (although I do have a band in place). I played in a touring band called Michelin Slave and traveled all through the U.S. and Canada for about 7 years and recorded an album with them that got released but after a hard battle with an U.S. label we called it quits. I then opened a recording and mastering studio and a CD manufacturing service eventually, so I could record and release my music without any record company politics. Now we are so busy with other bands, I sometimes have to go elsewhere to record! I owe a lot of that to my producer/engineer Darcy-Scott.

What does the word Noisefloor mean to you?

Noisefloor is a technical term which rates the



Noisefloor

Grow, develop yourself...

Interview by Sigita Velyvis

level of background noise in a studio or sound system. I also loved the way it fit my music.

Although this is a self-produced CD, it has a very good sound. How much time and money have you spent on recording the CD? Was it difficult to record it?

As I said earlier, I own my own studio so the costs are low except for engineer fees and tape costs but the time it takes is really long and stressful at times, but so is anything you care about. I'm currently finishing the new CD "Deaf God" and pretty exhausted.

The atmosphere of the album is gloomy, just like the cover and lyrics. Were you annoyed or kind of despairing, as you wrote the songs? Is it a conceptual CD?

Everything I write is dark and gloomy even though I'm not. I guess if I write songs about things that trouble me, I get them out of my system. The songs I write are almost always from experience, a lot comes from the death of my father and our discussions in his final year. So, I suppose, it is sort of a concept.

Who is "the negative superman"?

NEGATIVE SUPERMAN is a man who was in a terrible electrical accident and lost both of his arms. When he woke in the hospital, his wife told him she couldn't live with this and took his children and disappeared. This sent him over the edge, he walks the streets screaming about the end of the world with no arms, just hooks and wearing a red cape (thus NEGATIVE SUPERMAN). He shows up at my studio late at night sometimes to give me tapes of his preaching (sometimes I don't answer the door!)

In my review, I mentioned the influence of the Expressionism. Do you agree with it? Are you interested in art and its history?

Yes, I love expressionism! And I agree with your mention of it. My father was an artist, so I was always involved with art and my wife and I travel as much as we can to take in art and history.

"Negative Superman..." has many outstanding tracks but my favorite is "Red". What can you say about this song? Will you use more exotic instruments in the future?

"Red" is one of my favorites as well. I like to combine exotic sounds with industrial tones. On the new CD, I use the sitar again with piano and some strings. I hope you'll like that too.

Do you like industrial music? There are some industrial elements on the CD and I think it's great that they are not top priority...

I am influenced by industrial music a lot. I love the intensity but I also like feel and melody, I try to get away with the best of both worlds.

Tell me something about the hidden bonus track.

The hidden track was an old demo that Darcy and I fell upon by accident while we were mastering. It was a last-minute thing. It's about a dream I had about a Hell/purgatory place. Sort of strange, eh?

You play almost all instruments on this CD.

How will you perform the songs on stage?

I use a group of very close friends to play the music live, they are all seasoned vets and great guys. Steve Blundon, John Pacheco, Dan Bohemier, Mike Stoneman and, the guy who produced the last CD, Paul Lauzon.

Have you already had any offers from any labels? What are press comments on

"Negative Superman..."?

The response from the disc has been encouraging. The press has been very supportive especially in your part of the world. There is talk of a release from a few labels. I think M.I.S. label in Denmark (Michael Bergman) will have copies to sell in your area or I can be reached by e-mail, phone, or letter. My managers are very good M.A.E (Mike Ellis & Paul Maich 519-752-3330). They can set anyone up with info or distribution.

What bands have made a big impression on you lately?

The bands I like are all different. From Ministry and NIN to The Beatles. Too many influences to mention.

Canada has a small but very interesting, innovative metal scene. What do you think about it? Do you like to live in this country?

Canada is great, in all my travels I have never seen a place with so much music and talent. I see so many good bands in my studio and from M.A.E management I can't even count them all. Canada is a good country to live in we are looked after very well.

Future plans...

My future plans are simple: to keep recording discs and satisfying myself and the people who like my music. As I mentioned I am currently finishing off a new release "Deaf God".

[Noisefloor, 139 Market Street, Brantford, Ontario, N3T 2Z9, Canada]
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Interview by Audrius Ozalas

A combination of gothic and metal makes a positive influence since both scenes get new inspirations which change a stagnant understanding of music. Sensorium is one of the gothic bands that take heaviness of metal and they are one of the most promising newcomers. Two Sensorium members, Simon and Paul, have been playing in Nefilim, and the third one, Bob, is also known in gothic/industrial scene. The debut album "Jahazralah" was released by Resurrection Records...



When Sensorium was formed? Have you recorded any demo, how did you get the deal with Resurrection?
Sensorium was formed in mid 1996. We wrote a few songs, made a demo and took it to Resurrection who we thought would be interested in our music. They were, so we agreed a deal with them.

Two of Sensorium members play in Nefilim: how do you manage to conciliate playing in both of these bands? Does it mean that Sensorium is just like a side project? And, by the way, what do Nefilim do at this time?
Playing in both bands is not a problem as the Nefilim have no current plans. Sensorium is our main project and, unlike the Nefilim, we control our schedule so if anything comes up we can usually work around it.

Listening to your debut album I feel different influences, from gothic to metal and even electronic. It's not pure gothic as it used to be in, to say, the Sisters era. Do you try to escape from the usual gothic rock routine and to perform something personal? To which audience do you orientate your music?

We certainly have varied influences from ambient to hardcore. We try to write music that we would listen to ourselves. Although we wouldn't call ourselves a goth band, we've certainly used some of best aspects of that music - dark, atmospheric themes and strong melodies. We're trying to recapture and reinvent some of that feel that a lot of "live" bands used to have. We're using real drums, which, unlike a lot of the flat sounding machine or backing track type bands around now, have a rawness and dynamic quality which keeps the excitement level up. Our music is aimed at the kind of audience that likes to go to gigs and have a good time.

What does the word "Jahazralah" mean? Do you have a lyrical and philosophical conception behind this album?
Jahazralah is the Belief in life here and after... Our songs have similar themes and lyrical content but this is due to our interests and experiences, not any underlying philosophical concept.

I think, most of the journalists will mention that two of three members are from well-known Nefilim and will compare you to this band. Do you feel that you have something totally different from Nefilim?
Sensorium is a completely separate band from the Nefilim. Obviously, as both bands use some of the same creative forces, so inevitably there may be some similarities. We feel there's an integrity in our music... We're not likely to start writing happy pop songs! Journalists will undoubtedly make their own conclusions about us, but we know we have our identity. It's up to those who listen to our music as to whether we have something to offer them.

I think, for the band to sound the most powerful and good, all the members must have similar standpoints. You came from different fields (Paul, as I know, have been playing in The Varukers): do all of you have the same influences? Maybe one wants to create more metal, another one more gothic sounds...?

As a band, we all have similar musical backgrounds and influences, generally our tastes in music are the same. Obviously we each have our own ideas to bring to the songwriting process but we usually find we're pulling in the same direction. There is a general group consensus as to the Sensorium sound.

Do you feel that gothic music is progressing or regressing in these years? Your favorite UK/World bands? Don't you think that gothic became more popular again because of metal groups putting gothic into their music (for instance, Paradise Lost). Do you like this so-called 'gothic metal'?
A lot of current gothic music is pretty uninspiring. The use of the goth tag with bands like Paradise Lost, Marilyn Manson, etc. is good for stirring-up interest in a scene which had become fairly stagnant. Although some die-hard goths don't like it, things have to move on and develop. Bringing goth and darker sounding music to a wider audience can only be good thing (especially for us!).

The so-called goth metal bands are OK, although we don't really listen to them much and we wouldn't class Sensorium as one. We tend to listen to some of the older bands - Sisters, Souixie, Fields of the Nephilim, etc., along with the newer 'industrial' type bands - Ministry, NIN, Cubanate, etc.

Sven from Dreadful Shadows said that gothic scene, divided earlier into two parts (electronic and guitar) came together again in Germany. How about UK? Do you feel a very big difference (like some others do) between UK and continental gothic?

The UK goth scene seems to be very insular with not much variation in the bands. The European scene seems to be more interesting with more going for it. We're trying to live things up here in the UK and feel we have something to offer the European scene.

Do you feel that gothic scene consists of mainly European market and it's extremely hard to enter the American one? Would you like to tour in USA?

Goth is intrinsically European. There does however seem to be a growing acceptance and some opening of markets further field. Certainly with the Nefilim CDs were turning up in Australia, Japan and South Africa, all having their own goth scene. There's also a growing scene in the USA, it's just a question of time before things really take off. We would certainly like to play in all these places but so far Germany is showing the most interest and is our main market.

Let's look to the future, if Sensorium becomes a really big band, would you agree to leave all other musical projects/groups (including Nefilim) and to concentrate yourself only on this one?

Sensorium is already our main project. And as we said earlier, we control its activities, so it's unlikely any conflicting situations will arise.

Well, what do you think about:

- a) Motorhead
- b) McDonalds
- c) Kafka
- d) Buddhism?

We don't agree on these answers so here are our individual replies:
Simon: a) classic band, b) Shit, c) Too Deep, d) Just Another Stupid Religion;

Paul: a) great band, b) great food, c) who? d) veggy food and books;
Bob: a) tasty, b) Mmmm, c) Yummy, d) Scrummy.

This is the end. Have you got any final comments?
Thanks to everyone for their interest and support of Sensorium. We hope to see you all in the autumn.

[Sensorium, P.O. Box 12999, London NW5 1WP, UK]

CANTERRO

Solo EP

Mega Fant Musik

Probably it was sent to Edge Of Time by mistake. Still we review everything we get. Canterro is a singer from Austria and it is his 4 songs EP. So far, so good. But the music is a pure pop/rock. Well, I don't have big problems with that but some of the readers probably do. Songs are soft, melodic, and enjoyable as a relaxing pop music can be. Lyrics do not have a big message either. Still, Canterro has a good voice and we wish him all the best in the future. If someday he will think of singing in a progressive metal band, he might be even interviewed... (GS)
[c/o Kanduth "Canterro" Bernhard, Postfach 155, A-9560 Feldkirchen, Austria] [canterro@aon.at] [http://www.canterro.com]

3 1/2

rock REVIEWS alternative

GALACTIC COWBOYS

The Horse That Bud Bought

Metal Blade

The fourth longplayer of Galactic Cowboys is, of course, better than the most products of the metal scene but the fact is that it's the weakest one in the career of this band. The intricate playfulness of the first two albums is absent, so "The Horse..." is like a soft "Machine Fish" version with numerous excursions into fields of alternative rock. Actually, it's a shame because there are 'only' three highlights on the CD: "Evil Twin", "Ribbon", and the great "Trip On Love". We were used to get more of them in the past. (SV)

3 3/4

MUNG

Mung

Airgoat Records

They are pretty much a do-it-yourself band. The CD is a collection of 14 heavy punk songs. Some of the tunes should be quite enjoyable for punk-lovin' dudes but, overall, they are a bit amateurish and lack a drive and a power. In spite of that, as a club band they can do quite well. Not to forget, they are politically incorrect. (GS)
[Mung, 2261 Market #142, San Francisco, CA 94114, USA]
[http://www.cyonla.org/bands/mung]

2 1/2

PLAN E

E For Your Eyes EP/E For Your Ears EP

E Records

Absolutely schizo-psychedelic stuff. Strange melodies and vanguard decisions make me feel like I don't understand these short small CDs (one of them lasts for 10 minutes, another one - 15) that contain industrial, dance rhythms, classical piano, metal, and punk. If you like Pink Floyd or if you like Nefilim, you may find your style here anyway. The idea was to mix everything, so if you don't like the music that can't stand in one place, don't touch these EPs. I like a diversity, but I think I haven't caught the main mood still. (AO)
[E Records, P.O. Box 50, 90351, Oulu, Finland] [E-mail: Jani.Lehtosaari@mail.suomi.net]

3 1/2

QUORTHON

When Our Day Is Through EP

Black Mark

Already the title of this 4 songs EP says that this CD can be a total crap. Well, the truth is not so brutal but anyway three of the songs are real pop-rock

with hints into Oasis and Bon Jovi. Just radio-hits suitable to listen to when driving a car or when thinking about nothing. The lyrics are about nothing, too. You won't believe that this guy, who started all black metal, now sings 'baby' and delivers melodic, simple, and banal songs. In any case, it's much better than Pyogenesis on "Unpop". Strange, the last song of this EP reminds of the older stuff of Bathory. However, if we forget about Quorthon's past and look at this CD from the middle-of-the-road fan viewpoint, it is even not bad. (AO)
3 1/2

SEASICK PIRATES

The Return Of The Helicopterman Nuclear Blast

I really don't think that this CD is for our readers. Seasick Pirates play that trendy Green Day, Offspring stuff combined with the influences of old-punky The Ramones and others. It's just funny, jolly music for teenagers. The playing is quite good, the band has its image and all this may be OK for MTV but not for the underground. Sucks.
2 1/2

THOUGHT INDUSTRY

Black Umbrella Metal Blade

The fourth album of this group surprises with the straightest, the most accessible, and, at the same time, the most completed music. Still the same good sense of humor, good lyrics, but... hey, guys, have you become one of those grunge-freaks? Personally for me, this CD is more Alice In Chains than something else. Anyway, if you still aren't bored to listen to all these post-grunge groups, try this one. And if you think that Pyogenesis' "Unpop" was a good album, Thought Industry may become "godz" for you. These guys are kicking the alternative scene but not metal, really.
(AO)
3 1/2

ARCANUM

The Spoken Scream 2Surreal Music Ltd.

This is a follower to the 5-song EP, released a couple of years ago. Depeche Mode, Erasure, and Duran Duran can serve as a reference list and this should give you a primary idea how Arcanum do sound like. Arcanum do not focus on making fast hits and slow things down. It's romantic, slightly melancholic pop music with a couple of highlights, e.g., "Rhythm Is A Sadist". Well, still more effort is needed if you want to catch an attention of people who listen to popular radio stations and watch MTV. (GS)
[Arcanum, 3191 Davis Road, Marietta, GA 30062, USA] [FJSchieber@aol.com] [http://www.mindspring.com/~arcanum]
3

AUTOMATIC

History Svenska Energy Rekords

This band was formed in 1988 and, in the beginning, played the Skinny Puppy-Influenced music. Times change, and the last album of Automatic gives us synth-pop in the veins of the early Depeche Mode and Erasure. At the start, it's straight, melodic, simple, and stupid in texts pop music you hear everyday. Nevertheless, it's made professionally, and Erasure fans will dig it. Later things change to the worse side and I can't stand lyrics about remote control. I'll better listen to Depeche. (AO)
3

BORN FOR BLISS

Flowing With The Flue Deathwish

The debut album of this Dutch band presents a quite straight and simple (in a non-negative sense) song-performing manner with some exceptions, e.g., "Arabia" with, naturally, Arabian influences that was already released as a single before. The music is dedicated for clubs, dancing, and surely not for

dark and gloomy gothic fans. It's just pop-electro-wave with some hints into the goth field. Diversity is the main quality I missed in this album, and also vocals are not too expressive. Anyway, we must remember that two members of Born For Bliss came from a really cult-band Clan Of Xymox, so the professionalism is guaranteed. (AO)
3 1/2

ELECTRIC HELLFIRE CLUB

Calling Dr. Luv Cleopatra

Following the successful "Kiss The Goat" album, this devilish band has released an album dedicated to the memory of band's earlier keyboard player Shane Lassen who was killed in a car accident last year. The new anti-christian album is the most melodic and the most diverse work of the band. Just compare angry electronics on "Circuit Breaker" to the more poppy "Hellflower", or to the danceable "He Who Holds The Lightning Rod". Also, Electrics have got two surprises for you - the cover of Kiss' "Calling Dr. Luv" (not a very good one... well, I am not a fan of Kiss anyway) and the retro track "Very Groovy Boots" that is played in the veins of the 60's, cool! Perhaps it's not the most metallic track on the album, but it's my personal favorite. With this album, Electric Hellfire Club pushed their style boundaries even further. A must for hard-electronic music fan. (AO)
4 1/4

MACHINE Sound Wars Energy

In May-June 1997, there was an art exhibition inspired by "Star Wars" in Malmoe, and this soundtrack was a part of it. I, as never being a die-hard fan of this movie, take this CD exceptionally basing the opinion only on music. Musically, it's a diverse album going from techno/rave/electro to soft cosmic ambient and dance rhythms. I think that this soundtrack could be a good piece when driving a car or working by a computer. Cool, unpretentious background album and all the "Star Wars" crazies will enjoy the cover version of "Death Vader's Theme". (AO)
3 1/2

THE SAINTS OF EDEN

The Other Side

Metech

Cian Houchin (Neflim) makes dark EBM. Parallels can be drawn with faster/danceable Leatherstrip tracks. One or two songs really can be well-accepted in some darkwave/Industrial club. Having on CD 8 straight danceable songs (with a dark edge though). It gets a bit monotonous. If you like the style, this shouldn't frighten you though.
(GS)

[Metech Recordings, PO Box 132, Bedford MK40 3ZJ, UK]
3 1/2

V/A

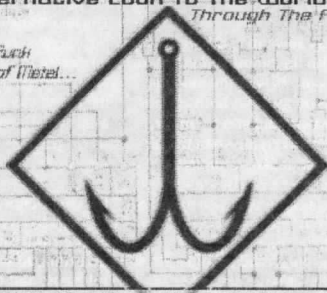
Barrel Of The Sons Svenska Energy Rekords

These 10 tracks are covers of the latest Depeche Mode album songs. First of all, the latest record of Depeche Mode is not their best one and most of the bands that tried to do covers made those songs even poppier. Each of the band have their own vision of Depeche Mode creation, so there is not one mood as it could be found on original. Anyway, some groups (as Sombre View that did "Freestate") managed to make the

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The Saints Of Eden

tracks even more attractive. Most of the bands are not so well-known and most of them play synth-pop. (AO)

V/A

Strange Love Deathwish

Even if there is written, it's a "gothic, romantic, industrial, electro" compilation, it's extremely hard to find any industrial or even gothic elements here. It's more pop/electro, dedicated for dancefloors and radio stations. 18 songs of total timing 80 minutes show mainstream music featuring even one project of well-known Vince Clark called Chinese Detectives. Born For Bliss and The Dreamside are the best on this compilation but even these two bands are dancefloor-oriented and I wouldn't listen to them in other surroundings. It's just music for your foot, or, being straight, for the fans of Depeche Mode ("Speak And Spell" era) and Erasure. (AO)

OTHER LITHUANIAN MUSIC



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MUSIC TAPES**

P.O. BOX 2315, VILNIUS 2300, LITHUANIA
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Earlier you played in Archon Satani. Why did this band split-up and what ideas, musical concepts you later transformed to Ordo Equilibrio? Do you see Ordo Equilibrio as a prolongation of Archon Satani or just as an absolutely new way of musical thinking concept?

Ordo Equilibrio originated as the direct result of a fall out that transpired midst me and Mikael Stavstrand as part of Archon Satani in May of 1993, as I decided to resign my participation due to several insignificant inconsistencies pertaining to the bands current status and continuing progress.

The aesthetic and musical ideals of Ordo Equilibrio, and the ambition to create an individually distinct style of folk industrialism, had always been my individual ambition. Even during my participation in Archon Satani, but it was not until after my departure that I decided to utilize them in the form of Ordo Equilibrio.

Ordo Equilibrio was formed in 1993 and the debut album appeared two years later. Why did it take so long to create the CD? How have you got a deal with Cold Meat Industry?

We required approximately two years to accomplish our debut working "Reaping the fallen, The first harvest" whereas I experienced a need to utilize my and Chelsea's ideas sufficiently, and conclusively accomplish a working that we could

For me, the second CD is kind of composed of two parts: one is more similar to the debut album and other is more neo-folk with acoustic guitars as leading instruments. Do you think that this album is such a dualistic one, i.e., there is no such one and a whole musical conception as it was on the first CD?

The variation pertaining to our musical expression is basically founded on the fact that I personally incorporate a multitude of ideas and impressions which can not solely be canalized as merely one form of music. I further see no need, nor any good in limiting myself into composing solely one dimensional music, when I experience the possibility to create it three- or four-dimensionally. I conclusively believe that all the music as part of Ordo Equilibrio is possible to collect under the individual banner of Ordo Equilibrio, as everything we create is the natural and invariable continuation of our previous workings.

The influences of neo-folk are evident in "The Triumph of Light....". Do you maintain relations with World Serpent band? Opinion about Death in June, Fire & Ice?

Lesleyaux de la Princesse and The Moon Lay Hidden Beneath a Cloud are dear friends of ours, but besides Eric, Albin, and Elisabeth, we have no permanent relations to any further World Serpent bands. Death in June has accomplished a variety of great workings over the years, but Fire & Ice, on the other hand,

are not equally good on record, but rather, according to my opinion, much better live.

Are you completely satisfied with being on Karmanik label? Can the label influence your creation - I mean, to say in what direction go (or not to go)?

As Roger Karmanik and Cold Meat Industry allows us to exercise the creative freedom I feel it necessary, conclusively lets us follow our individual aesthetic ambitions and create whatever we desire, and is just a representative of Ordo Equilibrio, I feel satisfied as being part of CMI.

On the cover of the second album, we see Jesus without head everywhere. Whose idea was to do this thing and what is the idea behind these pictures printed on the cover?

The idea to the beheaded figures of Jesus was something that Roger and we accomplished and decided on mutually. You could, if completely lacking a sense of humor, observe the headless Christs as a symbol of the faith's ignorance. Or optionally regard them as what they are intended to symbolize. My sincere belief in that Christ desperately could use some head.

I've heard about your video production. Can you tell me more about it?

The accomplishment so far is primarily an altered collection of various fetish clips from a variety of different movies, aesthetically modified to suit our concept and create the atmosphere we wish to emanate. This material will over time be simultaneously complemented and replaced with additional material that we intend to accomplish with the help of the Swedish video artist Fetish 23. The new forthcoming material will basically incorporate photographic sequences in relation to the aesthetics ideals and appreciations of Ordo Equilibrio. An official full-length video release is likely to be available at some point in the future, but it seems pointless to estimate the time of its release.

Do you identify yourself as a man who belongs to a concrete religion or have you created your own understanding of life according to some other thoughts, religions, and beliefs?

I see no constructive reason in identifying myself as part of a specific religion or ideology. My primary understanding of the



ARCANA
Lizabel
Cold Meat
A 3-song CD-single limited to 3000 copies only marked the coming of the second Arcana album. This single contains one exclusive track and two from the new disc. All three are chef-d'oeuvre and have left me waiting for the full length. (AO)
4

ARCANA
Cantar de Procenza
Cold Meat Industry
It's a continuation of what was achieved on the debut "Dark Age Of Reason" and a confirmation that Arcana are one of the better bands in the dark music scene. This Swedish duo are kings of romantic medieval obscure music. There are quite a lot of vocals in "Cantar de Procenza", what shows that an ambient-style band can have songs, too. If you really want to discover the beauty.... (GS)
4 1/2

CHIVA
Oracle Morte EP
Witchhunt
The guitar and piano player from Swiss band Sadness has released a 4-song 30 minutes EP which stays in parallel to his main band both in mood and in musical-structure aspects. The best comparison coming to my mind is Mordor, another band from Switzerland. The same dark, psychotic atmosphere entering the halls where the insanity triumphs. It's really one of the most dark and insane albums of this year. Musically, it sounds like a soundtrack to a weird horror movie. Again, the musical structure reminds of Mordor: avantgarde, sounds, strange vocals go hand in hand. The only shortage is the timing of the CD - at a time when you begin to feel that you are finally into these soundscapes, the album ends. (AO)
4

DARK REALITY
Oh Precious Haze Prevade The Pain
Witchhunt
The second album of this band goes more and more into the fields of art rock and it has nothing common with metal of any other kind of heavy music any longer. Anyway, I really enjoy every listen to this CD because it offers an absolutely non-trendy music, and it contains elements of Pink Floyd, dark wave, classical music, and (most of all) medieval feelings. The sounds of woodwinds are very fresh in my CD player and I am pretty sure I haven't heard such a style quite often earlier. The good thing is that the original singer left the band, thus all growling vocals are gone. The bad thing is that much of lyrics are in German. Anyway, if you want to hear something you don't expect to come out from Witchhunt, try this one. (AO)
4

DEUTSCH NEPAL
Compendiol...time stop!...and world ending
Cold Meat Industry
Deutsch Nepal took another direction, and this album - still being a nihilistic product of emptiness - is more industrial

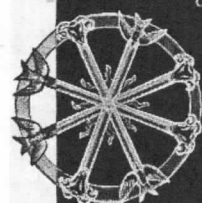
and the most aggressive their work since 1992, the year since the project started. Instead of dark ambient with ritualistic approach, Deutsch Nepal now deliver soundscapes that bring a sense of horror and dimness. Distorted voices (that were not important in Deutsch Nepal's music earlier) now are apocalyptic signs here and "The Phlegethon Fish" with contribution of The Moon Lay Hidden Beneath A Cloud form an absolutely new vision of the band. I agree that earlier their music was more accessible and maybe even darker but now it is more diverse, and, I think, this album can mark their new aggressive stage. (AO)
4 1/4

DIABOLIQUE
Wedding The Grotesque
Black Sun
Swedish Diabolique (ex- Liers in Wait) released their debut album. First of all, what a nice cover painted by Kristian Wahlén (who earlier worked with Bathory, Tiamat, etc.). Music is of hard rock and The Sisters Of Mercy. In places it recalls the mood of newer Tiamat. The tempo is slow, and the band doesn't go out from the way, so it can become monotonous for someone as the singer sings in one manner all the album. But, for me, it's good, especially the lyrics about sadness and depression. It's the album of autumn mood. (AO)
4

DREAM INTO DUST
No Man's Land EP
Chthonic Streams
After releasing a promise-bringing tape "Hope For Nothing" and 2-song EP on Misanthropy Records, December changed their name to Dream Into Dust and with their new MCD drastically changed the style. There is no more rock music, all four songs are based on various sounds and industrial rhythms. Classical elements, noise structures, folkish acoustic guitars, and all the mix are covered by dark mood of loss and pessimism. Lyrics (as earlier) are nihilistic and depressive, so it's one of the darkest pieces of music. The CD is not easy accessible, many instruments (especially percussion) are used in non-traditional way, so it takes time to catch the main flow of this experimentation. The forthcoming CD on Misanthropy must be a masterpiece. (AO)
[Chthonic Streams, PO Box 7003, New York, NY 10116-7003, USA] [chthonic@brainlink.com] [http://www.brainlink.com/~chthonic]
4

ENDURA
Great God Pan
Effenblut/Misanthropy
One of the best dark ambient artists finally released their album originally recorded in the winter of 1993/94. Rhythmic baroque symphonic ambient as earlier, with the diversity as it always was with Endura. This band can be dark and apocalyptic on "Alpha-Wolf", quiet and depressively gothic on "Dark Face of Eve", and angry on "The Battle of Endura". The sound is very deep and vocals for one song were recorded in a cathedral. This recording lasted for 3 years, but now we can say that Endura really is "at the cutting edge of burgeoning dark ambient movement". Maybe it isn't as shocking as Arcana, but innovations are visible, too. (AO)
4

ILDFROST
Natanæel
Cold Meat Industry
"Natanæel" is a bit more than an average dark ambient album. But mainly because it asks a listener to think: there is a philosophical story on the CD cover. Musically, it's either medieval tunes or spoken vocals parts with scanty accompaniments. (GS)
[c/o Magne Storvik, Bentebrugata 16AA, 0476 Oslo, Norway]
3 1/2



Ordo Equilibrio

Interview by Audrius Ozalas

conceive as representative and altogether satisfactory.

Roger Karmanik and Cold Meat Industry decided after partaking in Mikael Stavstrand's following solo material of Archon Satani, that he rather appreciated the newly arisen musical and aesthetic inclination of Ordo Equilibrio, than that of the new Archon Satani without my participation. Which conclusively resolved in the situation that I remained at CMI together with Chelsea as Ordo Equilibrio, unlike Mikael and Archon Satani who were rejected.

How were the responses and the releasing of "Reaping the fallen, The first harvest"? Don't you think that already the fact that you are on Cold Meat Industry means that you will get a recognition? I mean, people buy a CD because it's out on Cold Meat even not knowing so much about the band?

"Reaping the fallen, The first harvest" has, up until today, sold approximately 4000 copies, which is an altogether satisfying result in combination with the exceptional criticism it has received. Being part of CMI naturally supports our sales and the interest pertaining to our music. But is not that always the situation, regardless of which band and record label you relate to? Whether it is World Serpent, NER, Relapse, or so forth.

I believe that people who are genuinely interested and appreciates the sound of any specific record label are equally interested in everything that relates to that specific label. And with an equal measure of enthusiasm buy each release from that record label. Even occasionally, without knowing anything about particular bands, and so forth.

The second CD was absolutely different for me - beginning with the mood and going to the way of expression. Maybe the mood is more diverse. Do you feel that both albums are totally different and did you try to do this purposely trying to create something new or it just has happened naturally?

I personally do not conceive "The Triumph of Light...." as absolutely different in comparison to "Reaping the fallen". They are two different workings, and therefore they may sound partially different. Options and circumstances change and evolve, that is the inevitable consequence of life in constant motion and therefore they might differ in complexion.

ORDO EQUILIBRIO

The Triumph Of Light... And Thy Thirteen Shadows Of Love Cold Meat Industry

Some say, it's worse than the debut of this Swedish band but, for me, it is just a whole highlight and much more diverse album than the previous one. Of course, we don't find here such one and entire atmosphere, the album is divided into two parts: the first one is ambient, apocalyptic, very dark (most of blackers look like children compared to these tracks), and another one is neo-folk, with acoustic guitars, melodies a la Death In June, Sol Invictus, and other grands of the genre. Well, perhaps because of neo-folk I am raving that much about this album... Anyway, it's one of examples, when a band makes a very big progress comparing its two records. The cover is very original, lyrics are good... but why are song titles so long? (AO)

4 3/4

LOVE LIKE BLOOD

Taste Of Damocles EP demo CD-single

Love Like Blood have not split-up like some people used to talk in past months, and this 3-song demo CD-single is a wish to show the goth-world that the band still exists and the new album must be out sometime at the end of this year. It will be recorded with musicians from Amorphis, Silke Bischoff, and other bands. The new songs show that Love Like Blood haven't lost their big potential and are still as strong as they used to be in the past. The same dark, melodic, gothic, classical rock that allows Love Like Blood to remain in the elite. After their album, there will be more what to talk about. This single is only for promotion. (AO)

4

SCOTT MOSHER

Ambient Earth Autumn Twilight

As an opposition to nowadays widely-spread dark ambient sounds, this CD brings soft and sweet ambient, reminding of Vangelis, J.M. Jarre, and other cosmic ambient creators. Though I prefer more dark side of the style, this 74-minutes cosmic journey is quite inspiring and non-monotonous as most of works in this genre. This is a colorful CD, much better than Scott Mosher's first cassette

"Monuments Of Chaos". Jarre-influenced melodies go together with tribal rhythms ("Where The River Runs Black"), there are some rock-influenced tracks, trance atmospheres. Although "Ambient Earth" is a good ambient work, it's still not at that high level as Kitaro, Jarre, and other composers are. (AO)

[Autumn Twilight Music, 2 Miller Ct., Miller Place, NY 11764, USA]
3 1/2

SENSORIUM

Jahazralah Resurrection

The most convincing fact about this band from the UK is that two of its members are the current members of Neffilim. You know what to expect, namely, good dark, gloomy, and strong gothic/metal. The song "Jahazralah" has metal guitars, a powerful sound, and industrial electronics, and, I think, it perfectly characterizes the whole CD. Sensorium have taken the concept of the old Sisters and Fields Of The Nephilim and, also, put in live guitars and the driving feeling that never leaves you when listening to, for instance, Dreadful Shadows. Maybe Sensorium isn't so melodic and so catchy, but their album has something like the concept with various songs: from a quiet depression to an angry assault. It promises a good future to the undying gothic style. (AO)

...THE SOIL BLEEDS BLACK
The Kingdom & Its Fey
Cruel Moon International
One of the best underground acts which perform medieval music. ...The Soil Bleeds Black offer medieval music in its quite authentic sense, i.e., they don't mix it with metal, gothic or something else. For me, it was like watching a movie about

medieval times. The excellent package makes this album a must for folk music fans. The second CD "March Of The Infidels" is out on Draenor Productions. (AO)

4

STEVE ROACH/VIDNA OBMANA Cavern Of Sirens Projekt

Already these two names promise a great work. Steve Roach, with his 20 years career and over 30 releases, is one of the most influential tribal ambient innovators, and Vidna Obmana is also known as a composer who presents the most interesting space ambient. "Cavern Of Sirens" prolong the cooperation between these two composers developed earlier on "The Spiritual Bonding" and "Well Of Souls" albums. These five compositions present ambient based on trance percussion and, in general, are difficult to categorize. Most of all, it's a trance ritual music, quite monotonous, and listener-time demanding. Its inner harmony is hidden and not easily touchable. Don't listen to it in a background because you won't understand the world of this music! Dive into it and find yourself among these rhythm structures (a rhythm is very important on this album). I don't think that this CD is for a big audience as it has not that nostalgic space character of ambient. The next combined project is in the works. (AO)

4 1/4

V/A

Call On The Dark Vol. 1 Deathwish

The sampler compiled by York Eysel (Love Like Blood) features recent and past bands of gothic, darkwave, and romantic music. Here, well-known groups like Fields Of The Nephilim, Love Like Blood go hand in hand with new hopes such as Darc Entries and Dreadful Shadows. Besides, here we find other well-known gothic artists such as Das Ich, London After Midnight, Girls Under Glass, Silke Bischoff, and others. The music quality is different: some of the bands are worse, some better, and it seems to me that not the best tracks of the bands were chosen. Why a compilation then? If it aimed to present a goth-scene as a diverse one, it's alright because all songs are different, but if it aimed to show the best side of each band, then it failed to do it a bit. Anyway, here are 15 songs of pure gothic, not mixed with metal and not to be taken for gothic/metal "Beauty In Darkness". (AO)

VIDNA OBMANA

Twilight Of Perception Projekt

In this CD, Belgian composer put his pieces of music which are previously unreleased or were contributions to international samplers. Compared to his recent release "The River Of Appearance", "Twilight..." is less conceptual and presents much more diverse stuff, ranging from silent and meditative ambient to traditional Turkey-music inspired "Traditional Spirit" and a perfect abstraction in "Primary". So, if you are searching for a one-mood conceptual ambient record, this CD is not for you. "Twilight..." is extremely diverse and presents various sides of one of the most outstanding modern ambient creators. A must for each fan of classical ambient. (AO)

4 1/4

world is basically constructed in relation to my individual experiences and observations, but inevitably tainted and inspired by the observation of other thinkers, such as Nietzsche, Crowley, La Vey and Marquis de Sade, just to mention but a few. That is basically an invariable outcome of being alive and spiritually thriving.

The criticism of Christianity is evident.

What thoughts (philosophical or maybe even political) you can oppose to it? Does a fight against Christianity for you include physical actions (a la burning churches)?

I do not pursue any direct fight against Christianity, and neither do I tell anyone what to do. That is not something I am necessarily interested in. I basically try to portray things the way I perceive them, and from there it is up to each and everyone who conceive and comprehend with the essence of our workings to decide what is justified to do.

Christianity opposes human nature and does not acknowledge the basic principals that govern our existence. It is constructed in circumference to a desperate wish for human change. The wish that man was not as and whom it is, and that other principals governed the human procession rather than those of all living species. Therefore it does not possess the capability of providing the human procession with the basic ideals it needs for it's continuance and existential evolution.

Christianity is therefore merely a literal and philosophical hypothesis such as all national workings relating to the absolute and invariable betterment of human nature. It incorporates and utilizes a completely inhumane, and existentially crucial practice in absolute opposition to nature's natural procession of Creation, Destruction, and Renewal, as it disbands the sacred force of Destruction. Invariably concluding in the inevitable destruction of mankind, and possibly the planet itself, which otherwise, ceaselessly would survive, evolve, and adapt. I do neither acknowledge Jesus as the son of god, or such as a religious martyr. He is merely such as Christianity, the invariable reflection of himself, a fictional hypothesis of others men's wishes that someone should have existed in the above mentioned term. As a role model for generations to come. He is the fictional and partially genuine documentation of others philosophers wishes for a man capable of changing their current cultural, religious, and sociological situation.

Should not the bible be observed with an equal measure of skepticism and disbelief such as all other fictional and historical documentations currently are, and formerly have been. I rather observe the new testament as merely a fictional documentation seeking to pass on the glorified myths of a truly less significant character of those times, perhaps a rebel wishing to overthrow the Romans, or perhaps a less important, but cherished religious leader in an actually existing coven at that specific time, but not such as the alleged holy figure he has come to represent.

No records or documentations have up until today been found from that specific time and age, besides the new testament itself, that points to the existence of a man by the name of Jesus from Nazareth.

No approved scriptures, besides the holy scripture of the appointed faith itself, acknowledge either his birth or his crucifixion. And up until the point a documentation does, I see no reason not to question and distrust the existence of the so-called Jesus Christ as well as the overall truth and fidelity of these specific documents.

Regarding so-called physical activity, I can not truly relate to the activity of burning churches, and neither with the primary magnitude of sentiments included as part of the Black Metal scene. The people who commit these acts of arson do not seem to be aware of the repercussions that upsurge as a result of their actions, and I believe in conclusion that they are but an inclination of inverted Christianity. Thriving on motivations that basically consist out of no objective or reason, but rather destruction for the mere sake of destruction. But without supporting, nor condemning the acts of arson committed in Norway and other parts of Scandinavia, I can comprehend with the one of the motives why they have been committed.

Do you reckon yourself to a kind of people who do not live according to social rules? What does mean for you not to live according to the social rules? Is it easy to live in such a way in Sweden?

I try to live according to my rules, my ideals and my conceptions, to the extent that it is possible. But, of course, the society and the system try to regulate and control the existence of every capable and individually motivated individual that tries to do so. Basically, since every individual with the ambition to live apart from the regulations of the system, to which he/she is supposed to belong, serves as a threat to the system itself and its further continuance, as they may kindly the ambition, and influence others to live according to their individual ambitions rather than those of the system.

Which in a more extensive perspective would prove devastating for the continuance of the system and it's entire function. As it would prove that a certain magnitude of competent and ingenious people are capable to provide for themselves, without the instigated support of the state, and which conclusively would bring about the upsurge of a new world order.

Have you ever played live? If no, how do you imagine your live performance?

We have up until now performed live on six different occasions. Thrice in Germany, once in the Czech Republic, and twice in Sweden. Performing live we try to present an act that counts in relation to the philosophical and aesthetic ideals of the formation, and in conclusion I am quite satisfied with what we have managed to accomplish so far. But as we are still investigating the possibilities and disadvantages in regard to performing live, our performance will most certainly evolve into something invariably more representative and effective as we proceed.

Your favorite writers, painters, musicians.

The last good movie you have seen?

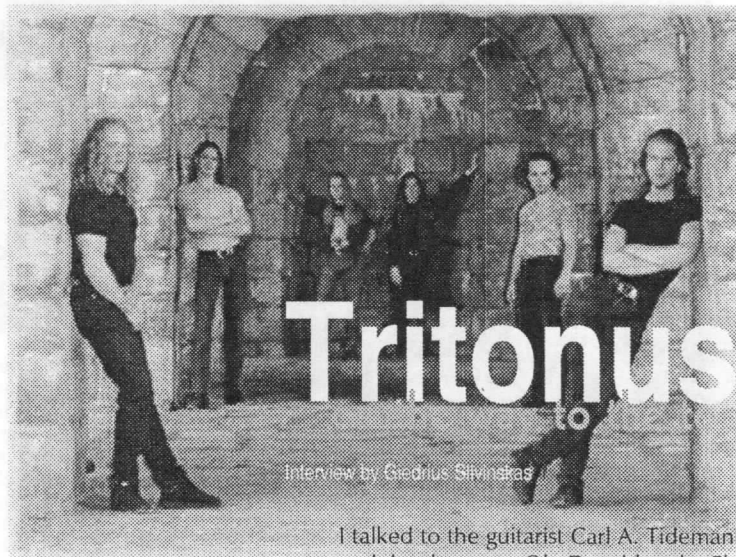
Favorite Films, Directors, Literature, Authors, and Painters that I personally tend to appreciate are in brief: David Lynch and most of the things he has managed to accomplish, besides Dune, which although was quite terrible. Dario Argento and Terrence at the Opera, for instance, for being a tremendously beautiful orgy in justified and truly aesthetic sadism and murder. Andrew Blake and Michael Ninn. Basically, since they tend to produce partially interesting and aesthetically appealing fetish pornography in relation to my and Chelsea's personal and sexual appreciations. Salvador Dali for being a truly fantastic painter. H.R. Giger and his workings for being fantastic portrayals of the profound and obscure. And, finally, H.P. Lovecraft and the Cthulhu myths for being a great collection of stories, by a truly fantastic author.

Last news, future plans and final words, as always...

We have recently initiated the creation of a third full length working, which is estimated for release on the summer solstice 1998, with a complimentary limited release on the winter solstice that same year. We are also planning the release of a limited 10" split together with the French band Les Joyaux de la Princesse. As this working most certainly will be released apart from Cold Meat Industry, it will probably be slightly more difficult to get hold of, unless one is willing to put an effort into the search. There will also, unless my anticipations are completely incorrect, follow some live performances in Germany and Sweden, and perhaps even in other parts of Europe. And perhaps also in the US, if we can find the time and the money to spare.

And some final words. Sex is a truly imparting exercise. Unconditionally linked with the process of procreation and renewal, in combination with an infinite magnitude of pleasures. Beautiful, delightful, and necessary, not something foul, perverted and shameful, which tends to be the residing apprehension of today. "A good orgasm certainly confers an equal measure of energy to any variety of ritual sacrifice". And to finally state our dear friend of "No Festival of Light", "Within the pleasures of the flesh, rests the Salvation of the human spirit".

Continue the Search.



Tritonus

Interview by Gedrius Silvintas

So.... What are the big news in Norway?

Carl: In progressive metal scene? Nothing.

Black metal?

Carl: In black metal scene... I think nothing interesting.

Ole: Nothing interesting for us. There are a lot of new black metal bands coming out, but they all sound pretty much the same. And pretty much the same people are playing in all these bands.

Carl: For prog metal, there are two or three bands, which have record plans. That's ourselves, Spiral Architect, Trivial Act.

Ole: And some other bands as well...

BEGINNING

[Up till now, Tritonus only has a relatively-old demo tape "Shadowland", which was released back in 1994. One year later, they recorded two songs that appeared on "A Gathering..." compilation CD with 8 Norwegian progressive metal bands. And now, they are almost ready to record their debut CD...]

We can talk about the very beginning. How did you start as a band?

Carl: We started with the first Tritonus line-up in, I think, 1990. Then it was just myself and the lead singer from the current line-up and some other people. And we played for about a year...

What kind of music?

Actually, at that time, we were playing very much Queensryche. Not very technical, but very epic and deep. With the same singer, it was growing in that direction. And then I wanted to form a new band. But rather than forming a new band I had to join to the existing one. That's where I met the another guitar player and the previous bass player. And we had a lot of problems with people quitting and changing in the line-up. You know, it's hard and long way to find right musicians. Actually, we did "Shadowland" and then we recruited Ole for drums and he is with the band since then. After that, everything started to work OK. But unfortunately the bass player left the band and then the keyboard player left the band. Just recently we found replacements.

What were your original intentions regarding the music?

Carl: I have always been very dedicated to the technical metal music.

I talked to the guitarist Carl A. Tidemann and the drummer Ole Devold at the Elm Street Rock Cafe is Oslo, where according to their words, lots of black metal people hang out. There indeed were several serious and dark-looking persons with painted-faces near cups of coffee at the time we were talking...

Watchtower kind of thing?

Carl: Yes, I was actually listening to Watchtower's "Control And Resistance" in the car on my way here. And, you know, finding the grown up musicians with that kind of interest today is not very easy, so we were lucky to find him [Ole] for the drums and the other guitar player, who are very dedicated to that. And we found a new 19 years old bass player and a 18 years old keyboard player.

What was the first prog metal band you ever heard?

Carl: I think it was the first Dream Theater album.

Ole: I think it was the first progressive metal band in general. They combined what before was known as progressive rock with metal, like a cross between Rush and Metallica. I think "When Dream And Day Unite" was the first album I could call progressive metal.

Carl: I think that goes pretty much to all of us. Also for the singer, who turned on the idea of doing that thing at the party, when somebody got that album as a gift. He was all night sitting and listening to it and "aahhh... we HAVE to do something like this".

How did you get on that "A Gathering..." compilation CD?

Carl: We were asked by Scream magazine. We just went to the studio and did a couple of songs that we would have to record anyway. They have been the only two songs we had ready and which have not been previously recorded.

Aren't they on "Shadowland"? I have to admit, I haven't heard the compilation...

Carl: No. It's kind of hard to get a copy of compilations. I don't even have one of myself. I forgot all my solos and everything. I haven't heard them for a long time...

Progressive Metal TODAY

We can distinguish between two kinds of prog: Dream Theater, recent Fates Warning albums (not counting the last one), that tend to be more accessible, listenable and then Watchtower is kind of heavy to absorb. What do you think about this and what are your intentions in Tritonus?

Carl: Well, our intention is to write good songs. Period. And if that means we have to put some technical stuff in order to make that song good, we will do it. If we don't have to do it in another one, we'll skip it. There is music which is only technical like some other bands, as for example Watchtower and ...

Ole: Watchtower and Atheist. Those kind of bands are very technical, but the songs seem to fall apart.

Carl: We are very dedicated to strong melody lines, and, you know, good arrangements of the songs.

Personally I am a big fan of Fates Warning and I can't say

"Inside Out" has an easy access. It's easy to listen for a person, that is already into progressive, but it's mellow, dramatic and sensitively expressive, that will never be an easy access for the overall public.

Have you heard the new Queensryche album?

Carl: It sucks. It seems alright, but it sucks. They went grunge.

Ole: I have a problem with saying 'it sucks'...

Carl: Yeah, me too. But I've heard it. It sucks. No doubt about that.

What prog metal bands in Norway do have albums out? Only Manitu and Conception?

Carl: Yeah, Manitu. Conception, if you call it prog metal. Sea of Dreams also have an album out. It's more Helloween type of thing. It's supposed to be good.

What albums have you heard recently?

Carl: I don't think I bought an album recently. I think the last one I heard was Angra "Holy Land", which was OK. And then Shadow Gallery. I have been listening a lot to the latest Shadow Gallery ("Carved in Stone"), which is OK, but they are falling at that stage (like many other bands), that melodies are too weak and the singer is too weak. I mean his voice is not at all good enough for the rest of the band.

You think the melodies are too weak?!

Carl: Yes. They have a couple of songs that are very good. Actually the weakest part is the arrangements. Sometimes the songs are falling apart because of very strange changes. But they have a very good guitarist and the drummer sounds very good. Good musicians and they have a killer recording studio.

Are you interested in other styles?

Carl: Sure. He [Ole] was playing disco last night...

Ole: Yeah, I was playing in a disco band, ha ha.

Carl: We listen to a lot of other musical styles.

Ole: We have funk influences, jazz influences, classical influences. And that's the beauty of progressive metal that you can use it. You can do whatever you want.

Studios, rehearsal space, concerts and... the new album

How about the studios in Oslo?

Ole: There are lots of recording studios. Expensive, of course. But there is one studio in Oslo, called Panzer, that is rather inexpensive. That is where Manitu mixed their album. Excellent studio and excellent sound engineer. Carl: It's the only good studio in Norway for metal. My solo album was made there. But it was made only from 40 hours.

How much do they charge for one hour?

Carl: 360NOK, but since we know the engineer, we probably get a little bit cheaper.

Is it difficult to have a space for rehearsals?

Carl: Yeah. We used to be in the building near this place, which was full of bands. But now we actually are rehearsing at his place.

Ole: Down in the basement. We are a basement band...

How about concerts?

Carl: We have about one a year, ha ha. Well, if we play one concert in Oslo, probably every fan from Norway will come to see it. And then if we play next week, no one will come back to see the same set. That's the problem. The market is very very small in Norway. You have to be in Germany, in Japan or whatever. We have to play black metal to be cool here.

That's a good quote... So, what's about the new Tritonus album?

Ole: It probably, no it WILL be recorded in Panzer studio.



The reason we are waiting so long with recording of the album is that we want to make everything very good. Not like many others, which are almost good. A lot of them are very good musicians, but they need to spend more time on the songs. We want to make an album that goes its way up to the best. Both playing, songwriting and recording. There's no reason for us to do it 70%, we need to do it 100%, otherwise we won't do it."



We have to play black metal to be cool here.

How many new songs do you have?

Ole: One, two, three... It's gonna be nine.

Carl: Five or six new songs. And the previously recorded songs will be rearranged.

Are they from "Shadowland"?

Carl: No, only one from "Shadowland" ["Ten Thousand Years"] and the two from "A Gathering...". Some of the material on "Shadowland" is very old.

Will people notice a big difference between the new songs and the old ones?

Carl: Oh, yeah, we think so.

Ole: It's still Tritonus anyway.

Carl: I think we have been able to make new songs exactly in our own style which is very important.

"Shadowland"

How many copies of "Shadowland" have you mailed out? How many for promotional purposes?

Carl: In general, it's about 800. For promotion is about 130... I don't know. A lot.

Have you had any experience to whom to write, which magazines would be interested, etc.?

Carl: I've gained a lot of experience, but at that time being, we haven't had a lot of experience, no. But since I am working with marketing and promotion in my job as well, it was natural for me to do it. Of course, if we release a new album and things will go OK, we will need a manager. I could spend my time practicing instead of writing the letters...

Well, you can make a template...

Carl: Yes, we did that. But everybody is writing back, you have to answer otherwise you won't do a good job.

What was the first and the most memorable response about "Shadowland"?

Carl: It was probably when US record company wrote back and said "We wanna make a picture disc with your group, because you have a cool logo". It was the first thing we've heard. "We want to make a limited edition picture disc". Well, that's a strange way to introduce a new band to the market. I asked what's about a CD. But they didn't want to do a CD, because they were like a small record label. Besides that, the best response was the meeting with Noise in Germany.

What kind of meeting it was?

Carl: It was a meeting with Antje Lange from Noise and Modern Music regarding whether they are interested in doing our record. In which they were...

Ole: She was.

Carl: Yes, she was. But she wanted to change everything. She was interested, but wanted the songs to be 4 minutes long...

Ole: Less complex...

Carl: A little quicker guitars... They want too much the same.

I also thought that Noise might be interested in your music. They are releasing quite a few power/prog metal records this year. They wanted to make you a heavy/power metal band...

Carl: I think they made a big mistake when they did Watchtower. It was not commercially successful and I don't think they want to deal with complex music. Rather they prefer ordinary German metal bands. They release a lot of crappy recordings. Very bad, poor sound quality songs... Though I am not saying that we won't get in touch with them again. We are going to record our album and if they will want to do it, it's OK.

Now they took Mercury Rising for distribution, which certainly are not crappy power metal.

Carl: Yeah, I read reviews. Everybody is talking about how good it is.

Are there any chances to release an album on Norwegian company?

Carl: Probably not.

The biggest one is Voices of Wonder, right?

Ole: It's the biggest independent label. I don't think they want to sign us. Carl: Voices of Wonder? No... And I don't wanna be on Voices of Wonder.

Carl's solo album "Stylistic Changes"

How about your solo album? What is the story behind it?

Carl: I played guitar for 8 years and I have been practicing a lot. And the problem was that I was dedicated to the musical style Tritonus is doing and also dedicated to the good songs. That's why I could not play solos all the time. But I still had a feeling of doing that. I have always been inspired by Steve Vai, Yngwie Malmsteen and all these players. Well, the 80's are over. But I can give a try.

Have you heard a solo album of Jim Matheos?

Carl: Yeah, it's OK. It's nothing more than OK, because he is not a really good guitar player. He is a very good songwriter, and, you know, he is very good in arranging the songs. But as far as solo playing goes, he is not so good.

More about prog metal...

What's about prog metal in general? It's growing...

Carl: Yeah, we see that. There are a lot of new bands coming out. The reason we are waiting so long with recording of the album is that we want to make

everything very good. Not like many others, which are almost good. A lot of them are very good musicians, but they need to spend more time on songs. We want to make an album that goes its way up to the best. Both playing, songwriting and recording. There's no reason for us to do it 70%, we need to do it 100%, otherwise we won't do it.

There are statements that many copy Dream Theater...

Carl: Lots of new bands do copy...

How do you think, do they intentionally try to copy?

Carl: I think they are a bit narrow-minded on what they listen to. Probably. I don't think it's intentional.

They want to play a style like this...

Carl: Yeah, a style like this and they listen



a lot to one kind of bands. It's very hard to avoid influences.

Ole: People say that Tritonus is a Dream Theater copy. We don't think that.

Carl: But our previous keyboard player was a Kevin Moore copy...

And again THE ALBUM and some not directly to the music related details

So when do you plan to go into the studio? Is it scheduled?

Ole: It's not scheduled. Hopefully in autumn.

Carl: Before I start to build my house. I won't have time to play... Oh, I will have time to play anyway, because I won't build it myself.

Do you try to develop some concept themes in your lyrics? Or do they just complement the music?

Carl: Not really concept.

Ole: Good lyrics, that say something. There's no grand plans behind it.

Carl: Previously we didn't spend much time on the lyrics. We will be taking that part a lot more serious doing the album. The situation with our singer is that he almost never rehearses with us. He is writing melody lines at his place and he also have been doing the lyrics all by himself for awhile. And I think, in the album, all will do some writing. It has to be some thing that we all agree on. Sometimes the lyrics are too much from one person mind. The other persons in the band don't relate to it. I think it's not

good.

What's about a CD cover? Do you have in mind what you will use?

Ole: Not really.

Carl: Everybody is thinking their own thing and we have to sit together for this point.

Ole: But we concentrate on the playing first.

Carl: It's not gonna be a typical heavy metal band cover with a band picture on it. We want to be a 90's band, which plays progressive metal. Not like everybody else. Something different.

Medley

"Operation Mindcrime" and "Empire" are the best from Queensryche. Fates Warning? "Perfect Symmetry" and "Parallels".

I don't like the stuff with John Arch. Dream Theater's "Awake"?... you know, it's hard to make a record following up a big one. "Images and Words" is like the bible. You can't write the bible twice. Iron Maiden, Crimson Glory "Transcendence", Helloween are cool from traditional metal.

hobbies: working out. 50% of the band work out on a regular basis living in the most expensive country: sucks. though salaries are high, not mine. of course, if you make \$2 per hour, it's expensive, you have to work 10 years to buy food. theoretical physics: Ole is the smart guy in the band rock clubs: you are in one, dude. "Lusa" as well.

EpiLOGUE

What kind of last questions do you expect?

Carl: I don't know. I think you pretty much covered everything. How often do we practice? We rehearse twice a week as a band and everybody is practicing as much as he has time. Hopefully...

Do you check it?

Ole: You have to practice by yourself, because we are always pushing the limits of what is technically possible to play. Carl: There is an instrumental, which we are going to record for the album. First time we played it, it didn't sound very well. But you know, everyone is pushing the limits, so now it's OK. Ole: Very complex.

Can we really count on the recording of the album in this autumn?

Carl: Probably we will start in autumn. Hopefully. We said that last year. But then we lost our bass player and it took 4 months to find the new one. And then our keyboard player started bumbling: "oh, I don't like this anymore..." Ole: "I am going to play techno." Carl: And then we had to find out the new keyboard player. Ole: We will teach them the new songs and we are going to do a recording. Carl: Watch out, here we come... ha ha.

We went out from the cafe. Some guys in sportswear were just about coming in. "Black Metal people?" "Hm... yes..."

[c/o Carl A. Tidemann, Vaarveien 10b., 1182 Oslo, Norway]
[o.a.devold@fys.uio.no]
[http://home.sn.no/~raholmen/tritonus.html]

How did you get involved in music? What was the first, the label or the music?

Both my brother and I have been involved in music for a very long time. I believe our involvement in composing music began when we were at the age of twelve and had received our first guitars. Mine being a six string, Mark's being a four string. Our previous interests stemmed from our indulgences into early hard rock such as Bon Jovi, Poison, Cinderella, etc... from there our deep interests in music began. Our involvement with the underground scene has been quite active. We have been involved with it in many ways for about seven/eight years now, and our label began roughly two and half to three years ago. So the music most certainly came prior to the organization of our label/promotional agency (Dark Age Productions).

When was ...The Soil Bleeds Black created? What was the initial idea (philosophical and musical)? Why namely folk, not any other type of music?

...The Soil Bleeds Black was conceived at about the same time as our label...roughly three years ago, if I recall correctly. Initially, the music was of a dark atmospheric nature. We had been experimenting with ambience and metal before the trend of bands like Arcturus and Emperor hit the scene with their majestic atmospheres... I am speaking of a time when bands like The Gathering and Pyogenesis were just emerging with their unique use of keyboards in metal. This is the path ...The Soil Bleeds Black took for a short time. The music became a form of phantasy-metal, into which emerged a pure sound of absolute medieval music. In this regard, we dropped the entire metal expression all together and simply left that genre to our other projects, hence pursuing a sound of pure medieval expression. Philosophically, the intention behind our work has always been the same...the name of our band thus presenting an encrypted message regarding an ancient Druidic legend about the last dragon. However, I shall state that since our emergence as a purely medieval-based outfit, we have sought more into the expression of middle age customs and ideas, encompassing a variety of aspects such as history, art, religion, and education in the Dark Age.

Your MC "Because The World Is So Untrue..." was recorded for Dark Age where you are working right now. Were you at Dark Age at a time when "Because..." was released? Have other labels showed an interest in your band? How many MCs have you sold? Yes, we were a part of Dark Age Productions prior to our second release, "Because the world is so untrue, I go my way so full of rue." Bard from Cernunnos' Woods operates the northern tower of Dark Age Productions whilst I operate the eastern tower, and we both work hard together to promote the underground American scene of dark experimental music. All of our releases are extremely limited, and are often very difficult for most to find, but it is necessary for us to release our products in small amounts for numerous reasons. We released two items on Dark Age Productions, a cassette single, and a cassette album, both of which are

included on "The Kingdom & its Fey". We never really attained any label interest due to our releases, as both items were limited only to 100 pieces alone, and both have been sold out for a while now. The only label we sent our material to was Cold Meat Industry, and to our great fortune, Roger Karmanik took an interest and created Cruel Moon International for our American chain of bands.

Later you were signed by Cruel Moon International, the side label of Cold Meat Industry. How did it happen? Isn't it strange for you that Cruel Moon have started releasing three records of American bands?

As mentioned above, we forwarded our first release on Dark Age Productions, entitled "Summoning the Dragons of Wyth" (cassette single), and Roger immediately took an interest in working with us. I do not think it is too strange for CMI to have released three American bands. Cold Meat Industry is specifically for Scandinavian bands, though Roger

This is an interesting question. I would say that we utilize the idea of medieval music as a means to pronounce our innovations and creative ideals. If we match authentic and traditional medieval music structure, it is by chance alone. The music has always tended to emanate from us naturally, and we feel we are very capable of realizing our ideas and conceptions through this theme. Instrumentally speaking, we use primarily synthetic means to construct our sounds, though recently we have been experimenting with more traditional sounds/instruments and other effects.

Why medieval times? Is it the historical period you are most interested in? Why?

Yes, it is the historical period that intrigues us the most. The Dark Age never fails to court the fancy of the curious mind! It is for this reason that this particular time in history provides a deep and rich source for drawing many inspirations and ideas. Mystery is such an

obtuse edges of alchemical tract and notation. So our own ideas do work themselves into the music on a most definitive level. As for my being American, I cannot say whether I am proud of it or not. I do not necessarily pay much attention to the land upon which I dwell, I simply take advantage of my opportunities as an American, which are many I believe. Though I cannot say it is something I would derive pride from. As for the material society, that is something I am not caught up within. I am very rarely trapped up in the confines of modern media. The only use of the television is to watch educational programming which stimulates the mind, not meaningless drivel such as talk shows and other mundane characteristics of most media/materialism. On the other hand, America is still very rich in it's culture. Specifically for me, as I live in an area where there are many excellent historical sites. America is unique in it's own historical message and path, something most people do not look into.

Is ...The Soil Bleeds Black the only band you are playing in? Does it take a lot of time to create the music? Do you rehearse or does everything happen in a spontaneous way?

My brother and I both play together in a few separate side projects, together and individually. So there are a variety of project we work on as the need arises for us to express ourselves in various ways. We do not rehearse our music, as it is all done in a spontaneous fashion, as you suggested. As composers, we will spend a number of hours writing a piece and recording it the very same day...there is little practice involved (save for the moments prior to recording segments, etc). For ...The Soil Bleeds Black, some songs may take either a long or short time to record...it all depends upon the complexity of the track and/or how inspired we are at the time. On occasion, some songs will be written on and off for a number of days, at other times an entire track may be completed in a few hours. On the other hand, metal-based songs usually take an entire day to write, organize, and compose...though the results are often interesting to hear.

Let's talk about Dark Age Productions. How were you involved into this, what are your duties on the label?

My involvement with Dark Age Productions began when my previous label, Seventh Key Creations, dissolved to merge into the operation (dark age) that Bard of Cernunnos' Woods was working on. With our merge, we have been able to accomplish a great deal over the past two years, having released many American bands that would have otherwise remained completely unknown. We have also had the opportunity to explore some European projects as well, i.e., Valor, No Festival of Light, et al. My duties regarding Dark Age are the production of music cassettes in a unique presentation. We are known for our obscure packaging and limited quantities of items, and thus we have originated a very small cult following, and we hope to maintain this as time persists. We are very pleased with what we have accomplished thus far. Running Dark Age is a very tedious and time consuming chore, but it is well worth it in the end!

Most bands of Dark Age are ambient/folk. Does a band playing another kind of music have chances to get their

...The Soil Bleeds Black

interview by Audrius Ozalas



...The Soil Bleeds Black are one of the best medieval music explorers to come out lately. Their new album "Kingdom & Its Fey" was released by Cruel Moon International, the sub-label of Cold Meat Industry. Mike Riddick, a member of ...The Soil Bleeds Black and Dark Age Productions, answered my questions.

created Cruel Moon separately as a means to release bands from other countries...much like his side label Death Factory. Roger has also done an excellent job promoting our Dark Age Productions, as he is our main European distributor and has also signed four of our bands to Cruel Moon (...The Soil Bleeds Black, Proscriptor, Cernunnos' Woods, and Equitant).

How many songs from the mentioned tape are on "The Kingdom & Its Fey" CD? Have you make any changes to them?

All twelve tracks from "Because the world is so untrue..." appear on "The Kingdom & its Fey" as well as the two tracks that are included on "Summoning the Dragons of Wyth." As for changes, there are a few slight alterations in the mix-downs, but they are very subtle and I wonder if anyone shall notice? Haha. There really are very few differences, since the material from "Because the world..." makes up half of "The Kingdom & its Fey". We feel it all flows rather nicely together.

Your creation is described as 'medieval music.' Do you try to play an authentic medieval music or just use it like a foundation on which you can realize your own musical ideas?

essential part of human existence, and the Dark Age never fails with its abundance of magic and mystique. The art of this time was explorational, vivid, and unique to it's culture. The rise of intellectualism among the elite philosophers of the time was admirable, and the feat of human limits was expressed in battle and virtue. The age provides a fountainhead for all forms of anthropological ideas and contemplation's, and it is for this reason that we indulge ourselves deeply into creating and communicating medieval themes and concepts.

What do you want to say with your music? What are your beliefs and philosophy? Is it easy for you to live in America, the country that has destroyed its old culture and build nothing but material world? Do you feel yourself being American and are you proud of it?

With our music we wish to speak of that which the medieval age represents. The extremes of human emotion. Within this realm, you may visit the emotions of love, pride, defeat, victory, pain, foolishness, intellect, artistry, etc. There is a plethora of vitality in this circumference. In regards to my own personal philosophical ideas, I am capable of expressing them subtly through the

material released by your label? What is the most important for you: band's philosophical or musical orientation? Who in Dark Age is responsible for choosing and signing bands?

Yes, it is correct that we primarily focus on ambient and folk related bands (particularly of an electronic nature), though we do consider all varieties of sounds. We are however, often limited to bands of a dark experimental nature, as I doubt you would find us releasing hip hop or techno music! A few metal bands have desired to work with us, though we have never released a metal related product. I believe Bard from the Northern Tower shall be establishing Defender Records which shall feature metal-based bands of a dark and experimental/folk nature...so we shall see what comes of that in due time. As for a band's philosophical and musical orientation, I must state that both are very important to us. Both Bard and I each choose the bands we wish to work with, and oft times we are both in contact already with the same band, and as a result we both work hard to promote the acts we work with. Skill and substance are our prime focus. Both pour forth musical skill and emotion. This is what we look for in a band.

Which underground movement (in your opinion) is more powerful - in Europe or in America? Where are folkore and dark ambient more popular?

By all means, I would suggest Europe as the strong point for both of these statements. Europe has produced so many wonderful and rich explorative ambient/folk bands that the list is innumerable! As a natural result, the underground movement is very popular there as well. We do have our strong points in America with Projekt Records, Tess Records, and Solielmoon/StaalplaatAmerica, but they are only two out of the many labels that spawn from the European market like Hyperium, StaalplaatEurope, Cold Meat Industry, Dorobo, Extreme, World Serpent, et al! Not too mention the many other smaller independent labels from Europe who produce obscure and great music!

What are the best bands/projects of Dark Age? In general?

In regards to attention, I would state that Cernunnos' Woods, Equitant, Proscriptor, and ...The Soil Bleeds Black have received the most attention out of Dark Age, although some of our more recent bands like Akkharu and Akrabu have been receiving good attention recently. We pretty much stick with a select few bands who we plan to work with in the future...these are: Profane Grace, Raven's Bane, Akkharu, Akrabu, Cernunnos' Woods, Proscriptor, and Nythra. You may expect releases from all of these bands in the future, as they have chosen to stay with us for quite a while.

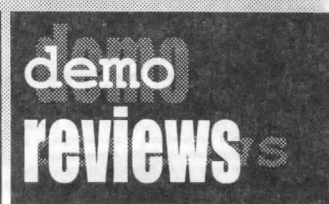
Returning to "The Kingdom & Its Fey", I think it could be a quite cool soundtrack. Don't you think about a visual realization of your music?

Yes, we have often felt that our music would be very fitting for a medieval oriented film. Draenor Productions, who shall be releasing our second and third albums, has offered us a possible video release...so when the time arrives to create this, it shall be very interesting I believe! We shall see...

What are the future plans for Dark Age and The Soil Bleeds Black?

In regards to Dark Age Productions, we wish to carry on the work we have begun and hope that our name becomes more widespread in the future, in order to offer many interested people some obscurely delightful bands from our American scene! ...The Soil Bleeds Black shall continue for a long time as well. Our second album, "March of the Infidels" is now out on Draenor Productions (Napalm Records Europe), and you may find our third album from them as well (both shall be released in Digipak format and on PictureDisc LP). Our fourth album shall arrive on Cruel Moon International once again with a lengthy CD and Gatefold DLP! You may also expect numerous exclusive compilation tracks to appear in many places, as well as possible split 7"s on a few labels. If anyone is interested in more information regarding any of our endeavours, please feel free to contact any of the addresses below! Thank you Audrius for offering me the space to express my thoughts, and many regards to the readers as well for indulging these words! Until next time... (the blood of many a valiant knight shall be avenged!)

[Riddick brothers/Dark Age Productions (Eastern tower), 604 Third Street, Herndon, VA 20170, USA][riddick@erols.com]
[Cruel Moon International, Box 1881, 561 17 Ljokoping, Sweden][karmanik@hem.pasvagen.se]
[Draenor Productions, Vorderberger Str. 20, A-8790 Eisenegg, Austria][napalm@computerhaus.at]
[Dark Age Productions (northern tower) Bard Algot Eriboas (Cernunnos' Woods), PO Box 175, Chaska, MN 55318, USA][BardAlgot@aol.com]



AFTERLIFE "Afterlife"

The group exists since 1993, but only now has released its debut cassette. Musicians find their influences in prog-rock, and the spirit of Rush flows in each song. Afterlife don't go very far and don't try to find something very new, so the result isn't very fresh, even the oldies Rush now sound more fresh. Anyway, this is their debut and it's a small-budget output, so we don't have to make a final verdict yet. In the frames of the style, it's a listenable product and the professionalism of musicians is evident. (AO)
[Ayres Rock Management, 6655 Whinston Avenue, Suite 103, North Hollywood, California, 91606 USA]

AVALANCH "Avalanch"

After meeting some of these guys at an Angra show in Spain, and listening to this demo consisting of 5 songs, I tend to agree with them: Their style has not too many connections with the traditional metal/hard rock you can find in this country. Overall, there's a dominant German metal feel a la Gamma Ray with a few subtle technical-proggy elements, solid keyboards, vocals with a correct melodic sense, and, on most occasions, well-constructed choruses at the background. The strong points can be found on tracks like "La Llama Eterna" and the commercial tune "Juego Cruel". The rest of the demo is considerably more archetypical. (GM)
[Juan Lozano Valledor, c/ Dr. Fleming, 3 - 1º 22690 Lugo de Lanera Asturias, Spain]

BEHIND THE CURTAIN "Creation"

Denmark seems to be quite a few miles after Sweden and Norway when progressive metal is concerned. Behind The Curtain from Aalborg can be considered as one of a few Danish newcomers in the prog scene, since the music from their "Creation" demo perfectly fits to the genre. The musicians and the singer appear to be strongly influenced by Psychotic Waltz, "Into The Everflow" album in particular. Songs are done in a poetic, occasionally psychotic, and always flowing way. Nice ideas, yet performance is not so tight. The new effort should be interesting. (GS)
[Nordic Rock Booking, Samsøgade 20 st., 9000 Aalborg, Denmark] [mogens@kom.auc.dk]

CARNIFEX "Oceans of Marble"

One more band from Estonia which plays quality music. This time, strong and aggressive death metal. Carnifex offer you heavy but, at the same time, melodic death. This tape contains 3 songs and the first two are examples of modern melodic death, while the third, "Noisebound", is a mix of different moods and styles. The sense of other metal styles is felt here quite clearly. (AO)
[Carnifex, Kaiko Haavandi, P.O.Box 9722, Tallinn, EE 0090, Estonia] [draconic@netexpress.ee]

DIOXOID "Building The Totality"

There aren't so many artists here in Lithuania who perform this Jarre-influenced light and clear ambient (well, Donatas Bielkauskas is one of the most known in underground), so expectations weren't so high. Anyway, "Building The Totality" presents quite a finished work with own ideas and cosmic-ambient music. Of course, it's a long way to Jarre or Vangelis and even to D. Bielkauskas. The sound quality isn't very good, so, in times, it seems like all the music is built up from separate pieces and the whole result isn't so strong. But the group has its musical ideas and, in future, they can make a more professional work. (AO)
[Fiasko Zone, Donatas Misiunas, Taikos 52-10, 4910 Utena, Lithuania]



GOOSEFLESH "The Wrath"/"Glow"

A confident aggressive metal. Influences: Pantera, Entombed, Machine Head, old Metallica. They are really better than many signed bands of this style. Particularly, "The Glow" demo is a real punch. Thumbs up. (GS)
["Wrath" \$6, "Glow" \$3/\$5DM, Gooseflesh, Magasinigatan 15, 46130 Trollhättan, Sweden] [timebomb@algonet.se] [http://www.algonet.se/~timebomb]

HAIMAD "The Horned Moon"

Good atmospheric black metal from Sweden. Nothing is shocking here, as it's one of the most popular styles nowadays. Novelties are met quite rarely in it. Haimad just play good but usual atmospheric black. Maybe vocals could be better, but it doesn't disturb me. (AO)
[Haimad, c/o Saurin, Lundbavagen 37, 857 41 Sundsvall, Sweden]

HENCEFORTH "The Last Day"

A 3-track demo tape was the first material released by this 5 member line-up based in Sao Paulo. And keeping in mind it was their initial effort, I'd say it's a really decent melodic prog rock demo. Though tasks as the production work still hide some imperfections, there are a few interesting details (flute arrangements on the catchy "Runaway", female vocalist speech interlude on the title track) which show a positive ambition on this aspect. "Leave" is a well-arranged song which goes 'in crescendo' developing some good speedy guitar riffs. Parallels with bands like early Queensryche/Angra or Marillion could be easily established. In fact, vocalist Daniel Matos and guitarist Hugo Mariutti are brothers of Andre Matos and Luis Mariutti respectively, singer and bassist on Angra. Andre himself gives a hand doing some backup vocals on one track, and his style evidently influenced most parts of the demo. The band expects to put out their first full-length album soon. (GM)
[Henceforth, PO BOX 04764-060 Jardim Marajoara, Sao Paulo - SP, Brazil]

HORSEMEAT "Meet The Meat"

Horsemeat call their music the mixture of thrash, punk, rap, death, progressive, and power metal. I detected only punk/hardcore. Funny, often boring songs come from the speakers and pass by. Amateurish. (SV)
[MFOTM, 2 Miller Court, Miller Place, NY 11764, USA]

KEVIN HUFNAGEL "While I Wait"

Kevin Hufnagel is a talented guitarist, who already have played in several underground bands. "While I Wait" is his first solo effort and consists of 3 acoustic guitar tracks. The title track is the only one, which is more focused on dynamic/technical guitar playing. The other two, "Before Sleep" being the most remarkable, are more of atmospheric ambient mood. Seeing Fates Warning, My Bloody Valentine, This Mortal Coil in Kevin's influence list, it's not a surprise. A fine demo tape. (GS)
[\$3 (USA)/\$4(World), Kevin Hufnagel, 15238 Cedar Knoll Ct., Dumfries, VA 22026, USA] [gdbluue@erols.com]

INDIVIDUALITY TWISTED "It"

This demo was recorded live in group's rehearsal place, so the sound is rather bad, but the music didn't approve this bad first opinion. Really, it's not one sided and goes from death to black, traditional thrash, and grunge (?). Vocals vary from clear singing to growling... It would be interesting to hear the music of this group recorded in a normal way, you know these rehearsal tapes... I wish they enter a normal studio as soon as possible. (AO)
[Dominion Entertainment, PO Box 819, Colfax, NC 27235-0819]

LOVECRAFT "Las Sagradas Escrituras"

Taking its musical roots on bands like classic Iron Maiden or Judas Priest, Lovecraft's 2nd demo hides some melodies and compositions which can satisfy lovers of that cannon, like "Los Falsos Profetas" with a nice combination of bass lines and keyboard fills. On the other hand, on cuts like "En Busca del Destino" or "La Doncella" the vocals sound rougher and it's harder to get into them. After recruiting back their original drummer, they're working on a new material and have received a warm response on the clubs circuit of Buenos Aires. (GM)
[Lovecraft, Tacuari 1609 Piso 3B, Buenos Aires 1139, Argentina] [Alejandro_Sarco@epson.com.ar] [http://www.geocities.com/SunsetStrip/6167]

MISOPSYCHIA "Advance Trax For With Suppression"

An advance tape by a Lithuanian noise/grind band, probably the most known (together with Orak Climax) group of this style in our country. Misopsychia mastermind Donatas Abrutis is a big supporter of all kinds of extreme and innovative music, he participates in various noise and avantgarde music projects, so don't hesitate to contact him. (SV)
[Donatas Abrutis, Skapo 8-11, 2001 Vilnius, Lithuania]

SCOTT MOSHER "Monuments of Chaos"

As I've heard this output at the same time when "Ambient Earth", the later CD of S. Mosher, I can compare both these releases. This one is much more simple and the sound is not as complete as on the second one. But both these releases have the common mood and, if you like J.M. Jarre, you will like this, not so commercialised version of ambient. (AO)

MYTHOPOEIA "Haarmonia in Microcosmos"

Torturing death/doom from Czech Republic. It's their first demo tape, though the music is quite professional and interesting. It reminds of early Anathema and My Dying Bride - the same sad doom metal with growling vocals and dreary solos. The style is old-fashioned, but anyway it's always good to hear a professional output. (AO)
[Mythopoeia, c/o Pavel Kusniarik, Blatenska 12, 30702 Plzen, Czech Republic]

ONA "The Self-Immolation Rite"

I even don't know if it's a musical work. It seems to me that for Ona, the music is only one of ways for a materialisation of dark satanic rituals. As it touches the spheres of esoteric, nobody will explain this for me. Musically, it's dark ritualistic ambient, diverse and interesting. This cassette comes with a booklet of satanic ideas. (AO)
[Satancesphere Recordings, Unit #149, 346 Grandstaff Dr. Auburn, IN 46706, USA]

PIK "Mysterious Stones"

Avantgarde doom metal from Germany. Reminds me of Trouble, Non-Fiction, and the last Hades release "Exist To Resist". It takes time to get used to vocals but this shortage is smothered by cool instrumental parts such as in the title track. (SV)
[15DM, Heinrich Beck, Dietrich-Bonnhoefen-Str. 17, 34132 Kassel, Germany]

PROSECUTOR "They Alive"

Gee... A Lithuanian power/prog metal band and a good one! Everything is well-balanced here: technically does not overshine good songs, vocals are decent (no annoying high pitches), keyboards add liveliness yet are not too visible and do not soften the sound. Prosecutor hit between melodic heavy/power metal and progressive metal, not relying too much on one of them. Everything is fine as far as the music goes. These two songs "Blind Warrior" and "Devilish Speed", if properly promoted, should get good-to-great reviews, and consequently, perhaps some label interests. (GS)
[Ankdrius Apus Productions, c/o Ignas Urbonas, PO Box 2230, 3000 Kaunas, Lithuania]

RESURRECTURIS "Corpses"

Resurrecturis from Fermo (Italy) have devoted themselves to brutal thrash/death. Thank goodness, they have a way with understandable songs. Especially, lead guitar parts improve the general impression, so, I think, the prospects are good as Resurrecturis belong to the better representatives of this genre. (SV)
[Carlo Strappa, Via Medaglia D'oro 73, 63023 Fermo (AP), Italy]

RHAPSODY "Eternal Glory"

This Italian band is a new hope of melodic symphonic speed metal and "Eternal Glory" was their first product that had drawn the attention of LMP's mastermind Mr. Limb Schnoor, the manager of Helloween between 1983 and 1988. Rhapsody are the first band to get a CD released by Limb Music Products (until that, LMP only took care of promotion, management, and publishing). It certainly proves that Rhapsody are high above the ordinary. "Eternal Glory" is a 7-song demo tape that soon will be demanded by every melodic metal fan. It's not 100% polished, but "Walls Of Jericho" of Helloween was not such either. Rhapsody combined Angra, old Helloween, Gamma Ray into a nice thing and the debut album (October'97) should bring them a big success. (GS)





Prosecutor are not novices in the scene, but I bet their name is new for power/progressive metal fans. The recent demo "They Alive" consists of two fine songs done in a melodic style and it should certainly give them some recognition. The band exists since 1992, but, in the beginning, they played kind of a mixture of thrash, death, and doom metal ("From Despair To Unknown...") demo was released in 1994) and, after several drastic line-up changes, decided to turn into a progressive metal genre. I talked to the guitarist and the main songwriter Meras.

Is the current line-up stable? Do all the members think in the similar way about Prosecutor's music and goals?
Is it stable? I can't tell you because life of a musicians isn't 'stable'. Life gives conditions, for instance, the drummer can play any style. The singer is also here and there. When you need food, you play with anybody... Well, nevermind. It's important that we all are together. When there is a need, we rehearse, play live. Our goal is one - to fill the market with our music, ha! We need to find a balance between musicians and listeners. What will be next? All will depend, how long will we pull the carriage.

Are you satisfied with those 2 songs you have recorded? Do they represent you in 100%?
Of course, we are satisfied, ha! Where have you seen a demo with 2 songs and a color cover? As for performance, let others do talking. It's a pity that the studios are expensive. That's why we haven't recorded everything. We planned to record 4 songs and an intro. But money rule us... I guess, in future, we will re-record the demo, maybe even put out a cassette. I can't say about '100%'. Now Prosecutor are searching for a firm foundation. One year ago, I could darely say: "These two songs 100% reflect the face of Prosecutor!".



Earlier Prosecutor played something in a thrash/death/doom style. When and why did the style change?
Everything started when our views had begun to separate. It just happened that the fate of Prosecutor had got in my hands. The line-up and style changed about 1995.

Keyboards play an important role. How there will be in future?
Yes, keyboards mean a lot to our music. They give energy, space, etc. It's a pity that due to changing life conditions, one of us had to leave the band. But, not forever, I am sure. Hopefully, after a year, we all will play together again. Only then we will be able to decide what is true Prosecutor. Now we are playing a bit differently. Besides, we can play to different listeners, because we have many different songs.

What criteria, in your opinion, do make a song 'good'?
First of all, a positive mood. Being more precise, it's sad (melody), but good, spacy. Technical performance, naturally, adds to the music. Our music doesn't wish any bad to anyone, doesn't have its standpoint to religions. In a word, we are in the middle, we are neutral.

Doesn't it seem to you that you should do more promotion...?
Oh yeah! Thank you for this interview, by the way. Our manager Ignas takes care of advertising, etc. I'd really wish that Lithuanians would support Lithuanian metal bands. There is what to listen to. I don't say, our style is new, no, but it's new in Lithuania. So, take and listen!

Are you strongly interested in progressive metal music? What do you listen to?
No doubt, there must be a startpoint. For me, the best band is Dream Theater. Others listen to diverse music. Of course, I am interested in guitaric music. I like Steve Vai, Nuno Bettencourt (Extreme), John Petrucci, Mekong Delta.

Do you have new songs? Describe them.
As I mentioned, we have many different songs. Our program's length is 70 minutes + 90 minutes of covers! It's not that much, perhaps. The new tracks are not that similar to the demo, but the music is heavy, well-performed, well-sung. Well, we play softer than Syndrome Of Chaos (thrashcore band from their hometown - GS), but our music is more technical and melodic. The style - from hard to thrash metal. Thanks!

[Demo is available for 8Lt (Lithuania), \$6 (World)]
[Prosecutor, PO Box 2230, 3000 Kaunas, Lithuania]

a d v a n c e t a p e

MINDCAGE

2 tracks from "Encapsulation" CD (self-released)

They probably should stand together with Divine Regale - both bands play a new breed of so-called 'accessible progressive metal'. Mindcage blend the intricacy and the listenability in the similar vein as Fates Warning did in "Parallels" and "Inside Out". The songs have clear and memorable refrains but are not primitive. Hm... well, yes, "No More", the second track, is clearly Fates Warning-influenced. (GS)
[for free, Mindcage, PO Box 5141, Novato, CA 94948-5141, USA] [mindcage@mindcage.com] [http://www.mindcage.com]

NEW EDEN

2 tracks from "Through The Make Believe" CD (Sentinel Steel Music)

New Eden are the second American band after Gothic Knights that caught the attention of Denis Gulbey, the editor of highly-reputed Sentinel Steel magazine. Some band members are known from Steel Prophet and Secret Wisdom, but, overall, it's a new band. After hearing the 5-song promo tape, Denis immediately took them for his label. New Eden represent speed/power metal in the best traditions of Helstar and Sanctuary. They are heavy, melodic, and fairly technical. They sound very fresh and energizing, and, in this aspect, surpass weary thrash metal bands that aim to raise on the wave. Currently, they got a new singer whose name is James Rivera, formerly of Helstar, one of the finest prog/power/speed metal bands of the 90's. The next record should be a bomb! (GS)
[Dan DeLucie, 615 S Marguerita Ave., Alhambra, CA 91801, USA] [nether@ix.netcom.com]

RHAPSODY

2 tracks from "Legendary Tales" CD (LMP)

If their 1995 year demo "Eternal Glory" contained a small bit of 'greenness', these two songs (an intro and a song, in fact) shine with a truly matured brilliant elegance. Rhapsody play classical-influenced melodic speed metal. Many wanted Angra to sound like this on "Holy Land". Rhapsody reflect the better sides of Helloween/Gamma Ray (glorious speed metal majesty), the aforementioned Angra (classical elements), and Blind Guardian (powerful choruses). They have a potential to reach the same what was reached by Stratovarius and Angra. Melodic metal fans cannot miss the album! (GS)



SATAN'S GOD "The Future Hell Destroyed"

For open-minded persons only. As it is noise in its pure nature. Musically, quite minimalistic. Not so many instruments were used and, in places, it gets boring to listen to these soundscapes based on the same ideas. Personally, I always liked to listen to variations with sounds, so it's OK for me, but I won't recommend this tape for a person who would like to know what does the grind/noise style means. It's really not the best piece of this music. For sick persons only, I can add. (AO)
[Mudball Records, P.O. Box 1054, Salem, OH 44460, USA]

STRADION "Impulsive Reincarnation"

I wonder if there still are the bands that completely ignore changing times. The answer is yes, you can still find this old speed/trash, sounding so old-fashioned, reminding of the old Slayer with the input of Venom and other bands of this generation. I understand, the nostalgia is a driving force, but Venom, Celtic Frost, Slayer, Sodom were in time while Stradion are late. The demo is for those, who think that the best times of metal were in the past. (AO)
[PO Box 1505, Cahokia, IL 62206, USA]

SUN'N'STEEL "First To Try"

Sun'N'Steel from Schaffhausen (Germany) play melodic hardrock in veins of Pretty Maids or Victory. The name comes from Iron Maiden album "Piece Of Mind", musical influences - from bands of the 80's. Not bad, though I miss good melodies and the drive here and there. (SV)
[Sun'N'Steel, Walter Schutz, Hauentalstr. 161, 8200 Schaffhausen, Germany]

TALISPHERE "Talisphere"

Sometimes it's refreshing to hear new bands playing old styles. Talisphere will remind you of the late 80's power/progressive metal. The songs are quite streamlined and do not contain complex 'hard-to-get-into' parts. On the other hand, many current power/prog bands sound a bit cheesy, while Talisphere are true representatives of the genre. If you have loved Texas power/prog scene, don't overlook this band. An interesting detail is that Chris Cronk, who is responsible for high-pitched vocals on this 3-song tape, was selected to replace John Arch of Fates Warning back in 1986, but by some reasons he didn't. (GS)
[S4, Talisphere, PO Box 692021, San Antonio, TX 78269, USA]

THARAPHITA "Kui Varjud Polevad"

A 4-song demo of probably the best band I've heard to come out from Estonia. The first 3 songs are of atmospheric black metal, cold as winter forests and angry as northern winds. For me, it was strange to discover this music, since I almost was not familiar with Estonian underground before. Tharaphita have a good singer and a good playing concept. "Tagasi Pimedasse Metsa" is the best track. The last track "Demon's Night" is done in the old black metal way (influences of Celtic Frost and Bathory) and, to tell the truth, has nothing common with the rest of the demo. In a good studio, Tharaphita could make a very good opus. (AO)
[Tharaphita, c/o Ants Lill, Piira 23-1, Rakvere, EE 2100, Estonia]

UNHOLY DEATH demo'94/ live'97

The tape I've got consists of two parts. The first one is an old demo tape released 3 years ago - these were the days when the brutality ruled and Unholy Death made their input to this uncompromising style, too: brutal sounding, strong riffs, growls from hell, and... Cannibal Corpse fans must be satisfied. Well, maybe this isn't so much up-to-date nowadays, and a live stuff is a live stuff: anarchy, brutality, noise which should be heard in the concert but not on tape. (AO)
[Unholy Death, Tim Schicht, 421 Ball Street, Ortonville, MI 48462 USA]

VERUM "Feuersturm"

Industrial trash/death or Ministry meets Kreator. It's the first demo of these guys and it is visible because the final sound needs more power and the drum-machine could be mixed in another way. Also, the vocals are a bit monotonous and all the lyrics are in German, so it's hard to understand a conception which is important factor here. But the music has a touch of melody and "Feuersturm" track is good enough. (AO)
[Verum, Michael Kirchner, Veilchenweg 5, 50999 Köln, Germany]

WALPURGIS NIGHT "A Witches Sabbath"

Walpurgis Night is a trio from USA, and they play old-style metal with some hints into doom. Their main disadvantage is the lack of harmony. It is the case, when more effort is needed both in the aspects of songwriting and performance. Perhaps the demo was released too early. (GS)
[S5, Walpurgis Night, PO Box 237, Cherry Valley, MA 01611, USA]

WITHOUT GRIEF "Forever Closed"

This young band surprises with professionalism, very good sound and production for the demo. As many Swedish bands, this 5-piece outfit plays melodic death metal in the veins of Dark Tranquillity. It's done very well, and it impressed, among others, Serious Entertainment who signed them for 2 albums. (AO)
[Without Grief, c/o Jonas Granvik, Vallmansgatan 7b, 79131 Falun, Sweden]

WHERE ECHOES END

"Next Weeks Miracle"
Two former members of Australian progressive metal act Vauxdvihl have formed another type of band and changed their musical form of self-expression in 180-degrees angle. They argue that it's still the same feel in Where Echoes End music as in Vauxdvihl one, but try to persuade a die-hard prog metal fan... In fact, this music is for open minds only. Tracks are quite different but mainly fall into atmospheric ambient category with occasional digressions to experimental/noise areas. There are no usual vocals but lots of vocal samples instead. I really do like a dark edge in keyboards-driven "Terra Incognita" and "Opinions Divided", and dramatic contrasts in "Only In War". The debut CD is in the works. (GS)
[S4, Where Echoes End, 48 Wilma Ave, Mulgrave, Melbourne 3170, Australia]





Divine Regale

interview by Sigitas Vėlyvis

Divine Regale from USA hit the scene in 1994 with

Horizons demo-CD that received positive reactions from all over the world. Progressive metal fans anxiously waited for the new album. It took quite a long time to prepare it, and only in the summer of 1997 Ocean Mind came out. The band signed to Metal Blade Records, what, on one hand, it's surprising because this label haven't had new prog metal bands for a long time. On the other hand, it was not that difficult to foresee because Cry To Heaven track was included in Metal Blade's Metal Massacre XII compilation. Well, how will Metal Blade treat prog metal bands in future depends on the sales of Ocean Mind but, at the moment, the label promises that they will deliver more such music. The singer Dwight Hill answered our questions.

What are responses to the new album? Are you satisfied with it?

Yeah, I'd say, we are pretty happy with the responses so far. The reviews have been very positive and sales are picking up.

What do you think about metal press? Don't you think that recently they praise average albums? People read raving reviews, buy these albums and become disappointed... It is good that magazines support new bands, but shouldn't they be more critical?

Reviews are simply opinions from individuals with their own tastes (hopefully). You can choose to either agree or disagree with them. Your opinion is no better or worse than theirs, as long as it's yours. Music is a fashion and, in a lot of cases, as we get older, or maybe get tired of the same thing, our tastes grow or change. As far as being disappointed by an album you read a review about, find out who wrote it and don't listen to them next time. And as far as being more critical, perhaps these magazines see potential in these new bands. Maybe not what they are, but what they could be. Your question leaves much to be discussed. It's not so black and white.

For me, the new tracks like Ocean Mind and No Part Of This sound more attractive and interesting than the still-good Horizon and

Underworld. Will you continue this evolution in the future?

I don't see why we wouldn't continue to grow and mature. As people and musicians, that's really what you hear between these songs. As we grow or change, so will the music. Hopefully, our audience will evolve with us.

What influence exerted the producer Jim Lightman upon your songs?

Don't you think that sometimes almost everything is at the mercy of the producer during the recording? Most importantly, I think he helped us focus on our parts, our own and each others. To be more prepared before we actually record. In our case, we pretty much had free rein of our songs. Not too many restraints.

What people (in No Part Of This) are you talking about?

Commercialism, bandwagoners (basically). Trend followers purely to fit in or capitalize on it.

There is a power/progressive metal rise nowadays, the style gets a lot of attention in metal press. Aren't you afraid that power metal will become a trend?

No, I don't care much if it does or not. We play what we play because we love it. We wouldn't change the way we write because of its popularity.

What do you think, where trends do come from? Is the media (press, TV) the one to blame? Or maybe it is related to a psychology of people - they feel better integrated in the mass movement, they don't think, don't search?

Trends come from the need for something new, the next thing. The media, in every facet, is certainly included, be it reporting or promoting it.

In my opinion, the best years of heavy music were between 1991 and 1993. There were no trends (except grunge), bands experimented, searched for new musical forms of self-expression. Record companies released their albums, because they didn't know what would become fashionable. In 1994, there appeared Pantera, Biohazard and the scene became not so diverse. There are various musical streams, perhaps many of them, but there are not so much experimenting. What do you think about it?

I think, there are bands that are trying new things. Keep in mind, though, the music industry has had difficulty in retail. Unfortunately, this directly affects the pushing and signing of new bands and, also, retards recording budgets. As far as we're concerned, we will certainly continue to seek out new directions.

Don't you think that the most power/progressive bands have drummed into their heads that progressive metal more or less is what Queensryche, Fates Warning, and Dream Theater play? It seems to me that they convulsively imitate these well-known bands. It's like an obsession that you

can't get rid off...

Well, I think, due to their successes, they are certainly focal bands in this style of music. I would hope that other bands would take examples from them, in that they have grown and matured from when they first started, but to develop their own niche in progressive metal. The comparison, I'm not sure, you'll get rid of.

What albums have impressed you a lot recently?

A Pleasant Shade Of Grey by Fates Warning and the new Tool album.

What is your opinion about the new CD of Queensryche?

I'm a big fan of Queensryche but I haven't been able to listen to it as much as I'd like. I like it, but I can't say it blew me away like Mindcrime or Empire. Again, I haven't had much chance with it.

Which affirmation will you give a preference to:

- a) Bands say that they will stay true to their style
- b) Bands say that they will stay honest to themselves?

I respect someone more for staying true to themselves and not be restricted to any one style.

What do you think about this interview?

I think you definitely have your own opinions (laugh). I think you have some interesting questions, but it's hard to discuss them on paper.

Some last words...

Thanks for taking an interest in us. And thanks for the support!

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