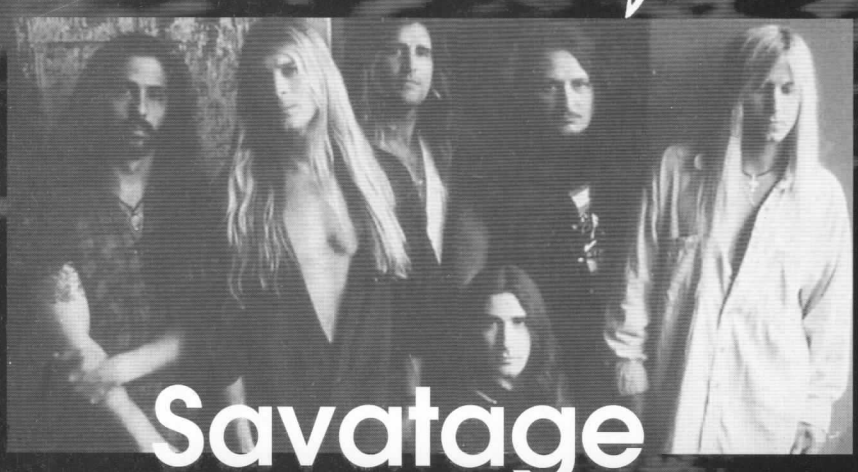


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EDGE OF TIME

#13

Ultimate Guide to Progressive Metal and more



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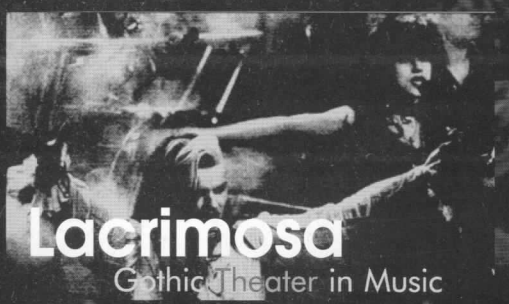
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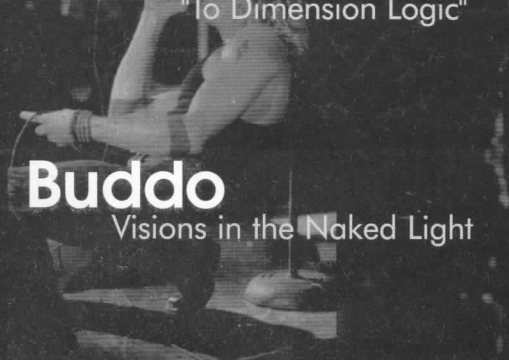
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Behind the scenes of
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Visions in the Naked Light

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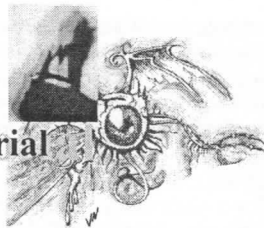
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editorial



One year passed since the last issue of "Edge of Time" and it is time to cover what happened in our camp and in progressive metal scene.

Starting with more personal matters, this issue seems to have the toughest line-up of contributors, which got significantly internationalized with writers coming from Lithuania, Denmark, Spain, The Netherlands, and Switzerland. I am really happy about it because with the amount of material we have ambitions to cover, it would be impossible to handle all the writing and technical tasks by one or two people.

You may notice the monstrous volume of this issue. The key reason is that we simply do not have enough time and resources to publish this magazine on a regular and relatively-short basis, such as, e.g., three months. Having one issue a year, we want to cover everything that happened during that year in progressive and related metal scenes. Naturally, some reviewed releases are a little bit old, but we believe we covered enough of the current ones as well. Seeing the amount of reviews, the magazine may seem more as a reference guide, not as a regular publication. We will be happy if you will use it for such purposes, but we tried to put some human touch to the writing and not to be utterly boring giving automatic classifications.

To bridge the gap between "Edge of Time" issues, you may regularly visit the web site, which is the place where all news and updates are announced first. A big haze covers the release date of the next printed issue, but one is clear: we cannot guarantee that all material sent to us will be reviewed (which was the case up to now). For example, some of the material that does not fit well into our main scope (which is progressive metal and related) may be omitted.

Let us switch to the Scene. The amount of progressive metal bands now is in order of magnitude bigger than a couple of years ago. The main concerns are (first) that we, fans of it, would not get bored with stereotyped bands, and (second) that the genre would not close in its own shell with a limited amount of fans. Many argue where did Dream Theater fall with their "Falling into Infinity", and it is a question whether we can criticize them for stepping aside from the "Images and Words" direction. I personally think that it would be nice if "Falling into Infinity" would gain a large number of new fans (although this is not likely to happen, since the album was not well promoted by the big media), because Dream Theater (unlike Queensryche) pull after themselves a chain of other progressive metal bands, with Fates Warning in the first place. If you do not agree, how would you explain Dream Theater's selection of Vanden Plas, a pure "Images and Words"-style band, as a support act for their tour? They could have easily got along with some potentially breaking-out "rock" band.

playlists

Giedrius Slivinskas (GS)

1. Arcturus "La Masquerade Infernale"
2. Mayfair "Fastest Trip to the Cyber-Town"
3. Monster Magnet "Dopes to Infinity"
4. Heather Nova "Oyster"
5. Saigon Kick "Devil in the Details"
6. Behind The Curtain "Till Birth Do Us Part"
7. Heaven's Cry "Food for Thought Substitute"
8. Dream Theater "Falling into Infinity"
9. Seer's Tear "Precious"
10. Mercury Rising "Building Rome"

Audrius Ozalas (AO)

1. Death In June "But, What Ends When..."
2. Beyond Dawn "Revelry"
3. Current 93 *all I heard*
4. The Moon Lay Hidden Beneath The Cloud "A Smell of Blood but Victory"
5. The Tea Party "Transmission"
6. Ordo Equilibrum "Conquest, Love ..."
7. Raison d'etre "In Sadness, Silence and Solitude"
8. Mayfair "Fastest Trip to the Cyber-Town"
9. Arcturus "La Masquerade Infernale"
10. Monumentum "In Absentia Christi"

Sigitas Velyvis (SV)

1. *All bands featuring Buddo*
2. The Tea Party "Transmission"
3. Thorne "Iago"
4. Spock's Beard *all*
5. Spiritual Beggars "Mantra III"
6. Stoenhaven "Outside the Sphere"
7. Dub War "Wrongside of Beautiful"
8. The Black Symphony "Breathe"
9. Seer's Tear "Precious"
10. Atomic Opera "Penguin Dust"

Christian Rademaker (CR)

1. Ozone Quartet "Fresh Blood"
2. Covenant "Nexus Polaris"
3. Dimmu Borgir "Enthroned Darkness Triumphant"
4. Death *Dynamo Open Air '98 live tape*
5. Torman Maxt "Just Talking About..."
6. Cradle of Filth "Cruelty and the Beast"
7. Gone "Weakness Within Living Memory"
8. Sadist "Crust"
9. Motorpsycho "Trust Us"
10. Afterlife "Afterlife"

Gregorio Martin (GM)

1. Tori Amos "From the Choirgirl Hotel"/ "Under the Pink"/ "Little Earthquakes"
2. Dead Can Dance "A Passage in Time"
3. Symphony X "Twilight in Olympus"
4. Fates Warning "A Pleasant Shade of Gray"
5. Ken Ziner "Timescape"
6. Artension "Into the Eye of the Storm"
7. Boston "Boston"
8. Magnitude Nine "Chaos to Control"
9. Theatre of Tragedy "Aegis"
10. Athena "A New Religion?"

Alban Schmid (AS)

1. Symphony X "Twilight in Olympus"
2. Rhapsody "Legendary Tales"
3. Trivial Act "Mindscape"
4. The Quiet Room "Introspect"
5. Tragedy Divine "Visions of Power"
6. Thieron "Vovin"
7. Artension "Phoenix Rising"
8. Marty Friedman "Introduction"
9. Treasure Land "Questions"
10. Helstar "Nosferatu"

Perhaps "Falling into Infinity" is commercial, and it was written thinking about the commercial appeal. But let us make a point: if you do not think how your music sounds to others and do not want to expand your horizons, you are destined to be appreciated by a very limited esoteric circle of listeners. I do not talk about compromising the artistic integrity, I just suggest to open minds, take inspirations from outside, and consider the accessibility, instead of solely depending on Dream Theater or Fates Warning achievements. (Ironically, "open-mindedness" is a term often used persuading "outside" people to listen to progressive metal.) Only this way the circle of listeners can get wider. Yes, theoretically there is a danger that progressive metal will become very popular, and then, having in mind how corporate the musical business is, it will not end well. But I do not believe this will happen, so some small steps would not do any harm. To close in our own shell and play (listen to) the music that almost no one else understands is pretentious and not exactly smart. For example, there are so many progressive metal releases that I do not want to put on to the "outside" people, because they would get a "wrong" impression about the genre. Why do you think "Images and Words" was sold in more than half of a million copies? Because it was damn excellent. Many current releases are not. It is encouraging to see some new bands moving the bricks and popping up with truly original releases possessing qualities that can be showcased, but the majority prefers to stay in the house, which may soon need serious repairs. "Images and Words"-formula, especially when it is realized in 90% or less, makes our house older and less reliable.

What is also *not that cool* is that bigger independent metal record labels play the safe game, and even if they have started to consider progressive and melodic metal bands, they stick to the bands clearly following the footsteps of bigger ones, be it Dream Theater, Helloween, or (now) Rhapsody and Hammerfall. Or they attempt to ease their work acquiring known names: either re-united old bands or new bands that already have self-released CDs, a certain reputation, and a decent fan basis. It can be justified, because record labels want to release what sells. On one hand, it is good that a "barrier of contract" is still not easy to pass by. On the other hand, it is frustrating to see how the labels try the familiar ground and rarely sign original and interesting performers. This way, having the "barrier", we get plenty of average releases that eventually end up in bargain bins, and, what is more important, we lose releases capable of shakes and changes.

Considering globally, the situation is quite good though. In 1997 and 1998, except the pathetic Queensryche's "Hear in the Now Frontier", other famous acts delivered solid releases, e.g., Fates Warning continued to carry the pure progressive metal spirit with "A Pleasant Shade of Grey", Symphony X finally consolidated as neo-classical/symphonic leaders of the genre with their two albums, "Divine Wings of Tragedy" and "Twilight in Olympus". Then, a good horde of lesser known bands (The Black Symphony, Heaven's Cry, Seer's Tear to name just a few) came up with solid and interesting releases, and that is where the potential resides and what will prevent the genre from the stagnation. *There is* a movement in the scene, and we write about it.

Giedrius Slivinskas



In 1997, there were rumors that the third WatchTower album "Mathematics" could actually be released, and, in fact, Ron Jarzombek, ex-WatchTower, now Spastic Ink guitarist had clear intentions to do that. However, the revival project fell apart due to the lack of interest from Doug Keyser and Rick Colaluca, the two other old members of WatchTower, who were busy with their families, work, and a side-project Retarded Elf. It seems like Ron is the only one who is still dedicated to technical metal music and Spastic Ink project will not fade away, even if after the release of the debut album "Ink Complete", Ron's brother Bobby left for Riot. Moreover, the second album "Ink Compatible" is in the works and it will have vocals performed by Jason McMaster, the first WatchTower singer who did vocals on the cult debut "Energetic Disassembly" (1985). Sean Malone (ex-Cynic) will do bass parts. It looks like there is plenty what to talk with Ron both about the present and the past...

Don't Say it's 'Only Complex', Please!

[by Giedrius Slivinskas]



How did you get into technical metal music? What influence did thrash metal have?

When I was a kid just learning to play guitar, I was really into Kiss. My brothers and I had a band together and I think we covered over 20 Kiss songs. When Bobby picked up a copy of Rush's "2112", everything changed. The whole "concept" thing was just awesome. We discovered cool time signature changes, and began writing our own tunes. We were putting together 8 minute songs with measures of 11/8, 7/4 and such. Later came Yes and then UK. I didn't listen to any thrash bands at all.

Before joining WatchTower, you played with Slayer (known as San Antonio Slayer) which released a posthumous LP called "Go For The Throat". The musical style has often been compared to Mercyful Fate. How do you look back to that period and how much influence did you have on the songwriting because there are only a few songs that show some of your style (the instrumental "TL022" and "Ancient Swords").

Yeah, I was just the lead guitarist in S. A. Slayer. The band was formed by Don Van Stavern and Bob Catlin, so they wrote most of the tunes. I was a pretty straight-laced guy into more of the techno stuff, while the other guys were into death heavy metal. I thought all the spandex and leather stuff was kind of stupid. The only member of the band who was into the Satan trip was vocalist Steve Cooper, who wrote all of the lyrics. It was funny how we would put a song together, make a cassette copy for Steve, and he would come back with all these Satanic lyrics. The song "Ancient Swords" that I wrote was a techno metal song, but when Cooper got a hold of it, the first lines were "Arise, from the black of hell you shall arise, and with all the creatures of hell at our side, and in the name of Satan himself!" It was like "Steve, what the hell did you do to my song!!!!???"

It is very peculiar that both you and your brother Bobby played with vocalist Steve Cooper in two different bands (Slayer and Juggernaut). What's the story behind behind Juggernaut and whatever happened to Steve Cooper?

Well, Steve was the most popular metal

singer in San Antonio for quite a while. Juggernaut was formed by Bob Catlin a few years after Slayer split up. I'm not sure why he left the band after their first record "Baptism Under Fire". I don't think Steve ever did a gig with Juggernaut. The album "Trouble Within" was more of a studio album. I haven't talked to Steve in a quite a while, not really sure what he's been up to. I don't think he's doing the band thing anymore...

Was WatchTower exactly the most suitable band for you when you joined them in 1987? How much did you like "Energetic Disassembly", their debut album?

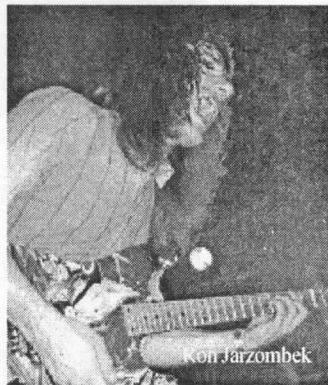
I wasn't comfortable in WatchTower for about two years, musically and personally. I always felt like an outsider. Billy White was WatchTower's guitarist, and I felt out of place trying to fill his shoes. Actually, when I was first asked to audition for Tower, I turned it down, because I couldn't imagine WatchTower without Billy. I don't think I was comfortable with the band until Jason left and we found a replacement, because then I wasn't the new guy. When Alan joined Tower, it seemed like a new band. I personally liked the old line-up better, with Billy and Jason, they just had great chemistry. The line up that appeared on "Control" was very strong, but the original line-up was the shit, mostly since they had grown up together musically.

"Energetic Disassembly" is a classic, killer album. They're all playing their asses off, nobody's holding back. The first time I saw WatchTower live, I flipped, just brilliant. They had so much energy, character up to their eyeballs.

Why did Jason McMaster leave? Did he like the music of Dangerous Toys more?

Jason didn't want to leave Tower, technically. He just had the chance to make records, videos and tour like a fucking madman. He was courted with the money and administration of major recording and management contracts.

WatchTower was moving very slow, and a major opportunity arose for Jason and he took it. It was something that he wanted to do his whole life. I was really pissed when he left because he was the guy who called me up and asked me to join Tower. When he left it was like he got me into a situation with him, but then took off himself. And it was hard enough for me to envision WatchTower without Billy, but without Jason!!!!? What's the point of even continuing? I think when Billy left the band, it hit Jason the hardest, because WatchTower was his life. He always did everything he could for the band, and I just made matters worse by hesitating to join, and so



uncertainty fell over the band. Jason started gigging with a few bands on the side, and was receiving offers to audition for bands such as Pantera and Dark Angel.

Why was Alan Tecchio selected as a replacement and why did he quit after "Control and Resistance"?

Jason actually did quite a bit helping find a vocalist for Tower. He was friends with Alan and he encouraged him to move to Texas and take the Tower gig. Alan was a great frontman, very charismatic. We first heard a tape of Alan when he was in Hades. A few fans knew that we had been looking for a vocalist when Jason left, and Alan's name came

up a few times. I somewhat liked his voice when he sang in a mid-high range, but his lower range didn't do a thing for me. When we were putting vocals down on "Control", we ended up using a lot of Jason's melodies that were in a naturally high range for Jason, but when Alan sang the pitches, it sounded forced. I have received a few letters from Tower fans who heard that Alan quit because we wanted him to sing even higher than what he did on "Control"! I don't know where the hell that came from. The bottom line is that the songs that Alan sang on, already had melodies lines and Jason voice was in a higher range. I think Alan left WatchTower because musically, it seemed that he was looking for something more straight ahead. His personality also clashed with the rest of the band's, but it was nothing too drastic. It also appeared that he just wanted to go back home, maybe a little homesick, I'm not sure. He did leave at a good time because a month or so after he left, I went in for my first hand surgery, and Tower was at a standstill for quite a while.

You have been mentioning different directions in which WatchTower were heading to in 1992. Can you be more specific, in which way did you want to go and what were Rick's and Doug's wills?

I didn't understand what was happening musically with the band. Everything just started getting so watered down. None of the parts were challenging or too interesting. I kept hearing lines like "It might not be difficult to play, but it's a good song". Yeah, well so is "Old McDonald had a farm" but it doesn't belong on a WatchTower album. We had a few songs that somewhat picked up where "Control" left off, but overall, the songs were very weak. When we first started writing after recording "Control", there were tons of concepts being throw around, album cover ideas, hidden messages in songs, and then for some reason, everything just got so average. We were just writing songs. No direction, no aggression or attitude, just tune after tune. What was really

frustrating for me was that I had just totally recovered from being unable to play (4 surgeries on my left hand) for over two years, and we were writing bubble gum pop garbage. I first thought that Rick and Doug were giving me a break because my hand was so wasted, but when my hand finally recovered and I was very capable of playing some scary shit, nothing changed. We just continued writing bland songs.



High-pitched vocals and too twisted music usually are mentioned as two main reasons why progressive technical metal is hard to get into. "Control and Resistance" has both these elements. Spastic Ink's debut has got no vocals, but Jason is going to sing on the second one. Are any compromises towards accessibility possible in future?

I just recently heard a tape of Jason's new band Godzilla Motor Company, and he is doing all sorts of shit. He still can do all the high shit, but he's got a lot of power in his voice. He's does a mean Gene Simmons, and that's pretty low. Some really cool harmony stuff, too. He has so much control of his voice. I think he learned quite a bit from the years he's been in Dangerous Toys. It's different than what he did on "Energetic". It's hard for me to tell Jason to try to write lower melodies, because I love his highs. I'm interested to hear what Ink's going to sound like. As far as the music calming down because there are vocals, that won't happen. It's very true that a band with vocals will appeal to more people than an instrumental album, but I couldn't write "Ink Compatible" without words. I have a strong concept in my head, and there needs to be lyrics.



Do you like high-pitched vocals?

Well, the band that had the most influence on my musical life was Rush, and so I grew up worshipping Geddy Lee. His voice was just naturally high, and it wasn't some blatant attempt at hitting high notes. A lot of the metal bands of the 80's had vocalists that would sing in a normal range and then for some reason would start shrieking. I always liked the aggression that was in Geddy's voice. The vocals that I really don't care for is all the low barking.

"Control and Resistance" was probably the most successful techno thrash album, many consider it a classical release... Do you think that Noise Records expected even better

sales or were they satisfied?

I would imagine that Noise was disappointed that our seven album deal with them turned into one album. We still don't know how many copies of "Control" were sold. Some figures indicate somewhere between 40,000 and 50,000, but who knows. All I know is that we didn't make a dime from any record sales.

Can you recommend any old technical metal releases? Perhaps you don't listen to such music much now, but how it was back then, in 1987 - 1990, when record companies signed bands like Hades, Sieges Even, Toxik, Coroner...?

I was never in touch with any of the technical metal bands. I had heard of Sieges Even because we received letters from Tower fans saying that there is some band ripping off your songs.

Isn't it strange that you were the mostly motivated one to put out the third WatchTower album? You were not original member of the band; at what point did you realize that WatchTower really meant a lot to you? Who was the driving kernel of the band in 1987, when you joined?

More than anything, I just wanted to have something to show for all the writing that was done over the few years after "Control". I'll always remember driving to Austin for rehearsals with a splint on my left hand, doing my best to play Tower songs with two fingers, because my ring finger and pinky were fucked up. We have over 11 songs written, but I don't really care for the "new" musical direction. I wanted to write at least two more progressive songs, and drop some of the other songs, but it didn't happen. Rick and Doug couldn't find time to work on tunes in between work and family. I really thought the third album "Mathematics" was going to happen.

WatchTower "meant a lot to me" immediately when I joined the band in 1987. Jason was doing all of the PR for the band, setting up shows, answering fan mail, and Rick, Doug and I were trying to write new songs. I guess everybody was pulling their own weight.

Do you have hopes that technical progressive music can have a wider recognition giving it more promotion or is it destined to be praised only by a certain circle of people?

Yeah, I'm waiting for that to come around, but chances are that we are all dreaming. When Dream Theater released the video for "Pull Me Under", it was on MTV's medium rotation. I was hoping that a progressive wave was coming around, but nothing really happened, which was unfortunate.

Can you give example of a band that does not express technically but appeals to you? Is there any pop bands that you would consider at least tolerable?

Sure, there are a lot of artists that write great songs that are simple. A melody might just weave it's way through a really cool chord progression, or a groove might get your head banging. And then there are some songs that just sound cool. "Heart Shaped Box" by Nirvana (believe it or not) I think is a song that just rocks. I use it for teaching students all the time. If a beginner student practices, that can play that after a month of lessons. The Beatles wrote



WatchTower: excerpts from old interviews

Metal Warriors #3

[1986, even before Billy White's departure]

What was the reason to form a metal band?

Doug Keyser: We didn't originally plan on starting a metal band, we more or less evolved into one. Our early songs were not as fast as our songs are now, because we were really influenced heavily by Rush. After a while, we just sort of started playing all our songs faster without really realizing it. It was natural step for us to take. I think that we've started to develop a new style of "speed music".

You are playing a very exceptional style of metal. How would you describe it?

Doug Keyser: Probably the most apt description was used in an article in "Metal Forces" a while back, they called us "Rush meets Metallica". I think that sums it up rather well. I suppose if you wanted to label it, you could call it "jazz metal" or "thrash fusion".

Gray Matter Vol.1, April 1987

[just after Ron joined the band]

Explain the reasons behind Billy White's leaving the band...

Rick Colaluca: His hair was too tall [total uproar!]

Ron Jarzombek: He just wanted to play a more calm style of music.

Jason McMaster: He didn't want to support the underground. He wanted to make money with a different and easier way than we do. He's into a more visual, make-up image, or whatever.

Rick Colaluca: That what was inside of him.

Can you expect people in general to be able to appreciate the complexity of your music? Do you think the WatchTower concept will gain a very large number of followers?

Rick Colaluca: If we do gain a large number of followers, it won't be because people are understanding our music. It'll be because it's the hip thing, I guess. If we can just get enough promotion behind us, that's what will do it.

Jason McMaster: We want people to like how different our music is, but we don't see the masses saying to one another: "Wow, did you hear that five and two thirds count in the bridge of that song?" A lot of people do like us because we're different, but it's hard to see tons of thousands into such a different thing so quickly.

Rick Colaluca: What we hope to do is build on our present following and eventually have a large following such as Rush does now. They were before their time, and I think that WatchTower can relate to that, like how they evolved from a cult band into a massive hit. But, at the same time, they included their original audience.

Ron Jarzombek: Like "2112" and stuff like that... he ne was or is doing stuff like that.

Jason McMaster: Metallica really started a lot, too.

Ron Jarzombek: Judas Priest "Sad Wings of Destiny", it's so different.

Jason McMaster: Bands like Metallica and Rush are getting better all the time. It's so important to progress.

Any last comments, political, or otherwise?

Ron Jarzombek: No.

Doug Keyser: What kind of question is that?

Jason McMaster: Everybody should eat disconboobulated pig feces with labotomized fish eyes.

Eldritch Assemblage #1, 1990

[October '89, just before the release of "Control"]

There seems to be a bit of controversy between so-called critics, when a new LP of the Mike Varney school arrives, it's always raining positive adjectives, like "Mr. X is a new guitar god". How would you define a great guitarist? Would you agree with me, if I said that the best guitarists are the ones that are able to incite primal emotins, like joy and anger instead of being able to play as many notes per second as possible?

Ron Jarzombek: Yeah, that guitar god stuff is stupid. I know they're all technically perfect and shit, but it gold old and now ancient. All you guys out there still doing the Yngwie rip-off shit, it's already been done. Go listen to Holdsworth, Vai, or Satriani. If you can't play faster than Mr. Gilbert or have some imagination, stay home. I think a great guitarist should have feel,

WatchTower: excerpts from old interviews (cont.)

speed, and creativity. I rely on one and leave the others out. Of course, your timing is important. Sometimes, if you don't have enough speed, you can't get out a certain emotion! Such as a climb building to a climax. I hate when people accuse others of 'you don't have feel', just because they themselves don't have speed.

All the years, apart from working with WatchTower, you had various other side projects like "Happy Kitties" and "PHHHP!", wasn't playing in WatchTower fulfilling you enough as a musician, or did you have so much time or energy left that you needed to do these projects?

Ron Jarzombek: Most of the solo stuff wouldn't fit in with WatchTower, or I brought some ideas to Rick and Doug, and they didn't like them, or there are too many guitar parts and couldn't be duplicated live. "Happy Kitties" was done after Slayer and before Tower, so I had time to kill, and wanted to be part of a project/band, working with other people.

Metal Warriors #7, 1990

[September '89, three months after Alan joined]

After Jason left Tower, you searched for a new vocalist, how did you find Mike Soliz then?

Doug Keyser: Well, it took us quite a while to find Mike Soliz and, at that time, we felt he fits in perfectly, we did a recording called "Dangerous Toy" for the "Doomsday News Vol. 2" compilation on Noise Records. He was actually the first person who came over to auditions, we have been good friends for years and years, and the first time he came over, he did really good, but it was still so early on in this search. We were getting so many tapes from a bunch of people and we thought we go ahead and find out who else was gonna send us tapes. He ended up setting the standard everyone was judged and after a few months Mike came back over and did even better the second time around and we asked him to join. Jason really wanted us to get Mike, when he left the band, he was really up on Mike becoming our new singer....

What is the reason that Mike left?

Doug Keyser: Well, we decided that we should replace Mike a few months ago because he was not really working as hard as we needed someone to work in the band. When we originally got him, we thought that he would be a little bit more enthusiastic than he ended up being, so a few months ago we just came to the conclusion that he was not gonna work out and we started to secretly look for someone else and we knew it was gonna be really tough, we were really fortunate to hook up with Alan, now it works out the best....

Alan, why have Hades split up?

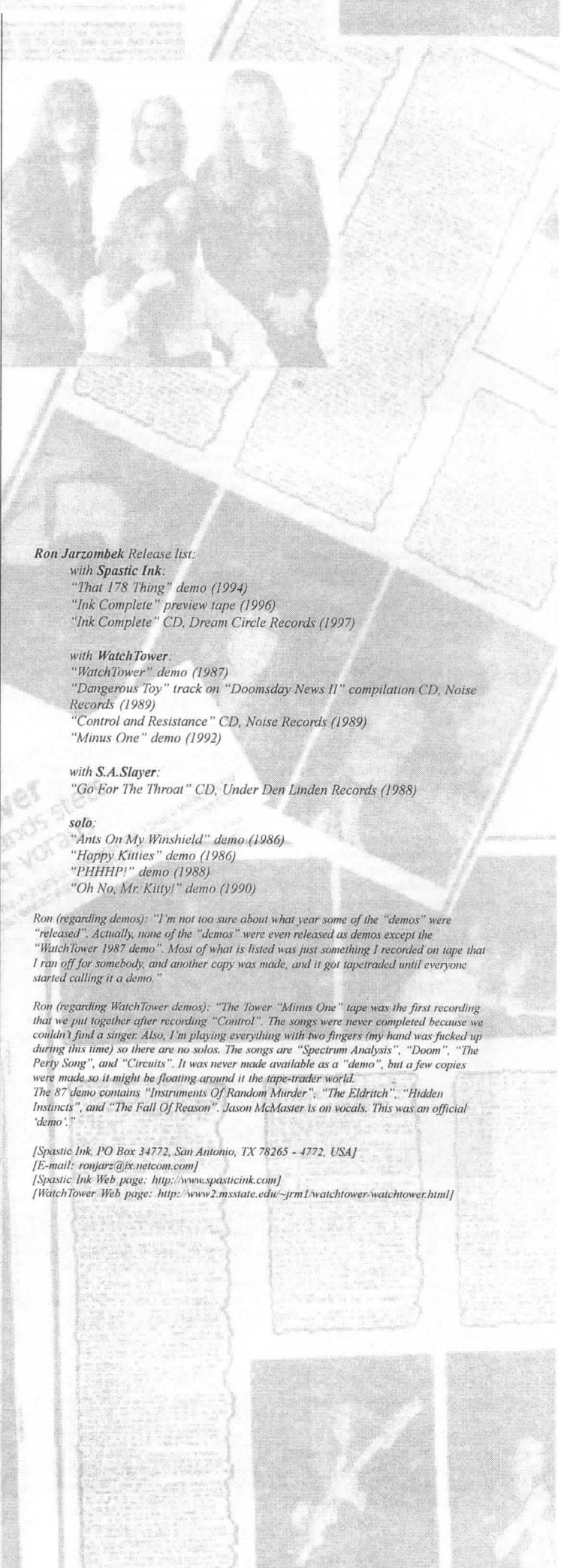
Alan Tecchio: There was a multitude of reasons, I know the European press already got some reasons from Dan Lorenzo doing some interviews, basically there were different interests in the band musically, there were a lot of personal problems between various members, it wasn't just between Dan and Jimmy, it wasn't just between me and Tom, and it wasn't just between anyone else, mostly personal reasons and WatchTower did know me before we did the European tour with Hades. It was in the back of my mind and as the tour went, it just became clear to me that I have to make a change, that's it.

Alan, do you have any hard feelings that Hades split? Do you know what other members are doing at the moment?

Alan Tecchio: No, there are no hard feelings at all. Nobody of them is playing together. Ed (Führman, g.) is keeping the name Hades, and Ed is doing to get all new members in the band, Dan (Lorenzo, g.) I believe is doing some side project stuff, I don't know if he continues, because he had a tough time touring, he didn't get enough sleep at night, he's a very late sleeper and that's the problem. Jimmy (Schulman, b.) tried out for Nevermore and the Ramones, ad they both didn't work out, he's trying out for Soundgarden right now as they need a bass player and he really likes them a lot. I wish him the best, I'm friends with Jimmy and Tom (Coombs, d.), I'm in distance with Dan and I wish Ed the best with the new Hades, that's basically where I stand with all of 'em.

How long did you negotiate with CBS? Why didn't the deal happen, as it's major and Noise isn't...

Doug Keyser: Well, we were talking with CBS for a while, it wasn't actually with CBS directly, we were going through a production company and the rumor got out that we already had signed and everyone was writing saying "I've heard you signed with CBS, when will the record be out...", we never did sign with them. The contract that we were given from the production company was one of the worst contracts the bad was ever been offered, so we had to say no and, at that time, we even had no singer anyway, so we didn't



Ron Jarzombek Release list:

with **Spastic Ink:**

- "That 178 Thing" demo (1994)
- "Ink Complete" preview tape (1996)
- "Ink Complete" CD, Dream Circle Records (1997)

with **WatchTower:**

- "WatchTower" demo (1987)
- "Dangerous Toy" track on "Doomsday News II" compilation CD, Noise Records (1989)
- "Control and Resistance" CD, Noise Records (1989)
- "Minus One" demo (1992)

with **S.A.Slayer:**

- "Go For The Throat" CD, Under Den Linden Records (1988)

solo:

- "Ants On My Windshield" demo (1986)
- "Happy Kitties" demo (1986)
- "PHHHP!" demo (1988)
- "Oh No, Mr. Kitty!" demo (1990)

Ron (regarding demos): "I'm not too sure about what year some of the 'demos' were 'released'. Actually, none of the 'demos' were even released as demos except the 'WatchTower 1987 demo'. Most of what is listed was just something I recorded on tape that I ran off for somebody, and another copy was made, and it got tapetraded until everyone started calling it a demo."

Ron (regarding WatchTower demos): "The Tower 'Minus One' tape was the first recording that we put together after recording 'Control'. The songs were never completed because we couldn't find a singer. Also, I'm playing everything with two fingers (my hand was fucked up during this time) so there are no solos. The songs are "Spectrum Analysis", "Doom", "The Party Song", and "Circuits". It was never made available as a "demo", but a few copies were made so it might be floating around in the tape-trader world. The 87 demo contains "Instruments Of Random Murder", "The Eldritch", "Hidden Instincts", and "The Fall Of Reason". Jason McMaster is on vocals. This was an official 'demo'."

[Spastic Ink, PO Box 34772, San Antonio, TX 78265 - 4772, USA]

[E-mail: ronjarz@ix.netcom.com]

[Spastic Ink Web page: <http://www.spasticink.com>]

[WatchTower Web page: <http://www2.msstate.edu/~jrm1/watchtower/watchtower.html>]

amazing songs that seem very simple. A few favorites of mine are "I Am The Walrus", "Eleanor Rigby", "Mr. Kite", and "Something". Beatles songs are great for theoretical analysis. Trevor Rabin's solo album "Can't Look Away" is probably one of my top 10 albums ever. The musicianship is top notch, the production is mint, and the songs are very "pop" sounding (although there is an instrumental song "Sludge" that is pretty wild). I also like listening to James Taylor songs. No crazy time signature changes or syncopated rhythmic patterns, just great songs with great melodies and cool chord progressions.

What do you like in Pantera music?
I just think Dimebag is cool, he writes some killer tunes. Very mean, aggressive, powerful shit.

What do you think of the Rush tribute "Working Man"? Which song would you have covered given the opportunity and with which line-up apart from yourself on guitar?

Chris (Leibundgut) called me up and informed me that Mike Varney was putting together a Rush tribute album. Varney actually had called him up about getting a few suggestions regarding singers, and Chris mentioned Jason (McMaster) and in the same breath brought up the idea of either a WatchTower reunion for a song or having Spastic Ink do an instrumental, but, by that time, most of the basic tracks (including guitars) had already been cut. I was thinking about what tune Ink would have covered for the album, and I thought it would have been wild to do a combination of "2112 Overture" and "YYZ", but play them simultaneously, calling it "2Y1Y1Z2". If you put the two songs side by side, the "storylines" are very similar. I wanted to go back and forth and back and forth between the songs. I even mapped out the whole thing! As far as what do I think of the Rush tribute album. Well, some of the players do turn in nice performances, but overall, it sounds like a rush job (no pun intended).

Do you like spontaneous albums where skilled musicians get together, jam for a couple of days in the studio, and the material is used for a CD?

Dream Theater is doing a lot of that. I just picked up a copy of "Liquid Tension Experiment" with Mike Portnoy and John Petrucci. Some cool stuff happening. They put everything together in a week! I don't really care for all of the "jamming" on instrumental albums. I am into the writing of the songs, not just the soloing. It's cool to be spontaneous, but I want to hear some organization, structure and discipline.

Do you like to polish songs? How long usually does it take to have a song ready?

Well, of course I try to get the song sounding as good as I can. I took 4 track recordings from "Ink Complete" and did my best to make them CD quality. "Ink Compatible" will be recorded on ADATs. Sean has an ADAT, and we'll be mailing tapes back and forth from Florida to Texas. As far as writing goes, I usually work on a few songs at the same time, so if I get stuck, I can move on to another song. I'm somewhere near the halfway point with the music for "Ink Compatible", and want to get it completed and released by the end of

1998.

Which review of "Ink Complete" did you like the most?

Just about all of the reviews that I have read have been very supportive, thanks to some people with very open minds. I don't have a "favorite" review, but some lines that I like are: "this album is not for people with weak nerves", "despite the overblown technique there are highly enjoyable melodies as well", "every drum-beat, every guitar note and every bass-tone thoroughly put in it's place, not a tenth of a second too late or too early", "continuously shredding through 11 amazing songs", and "bustin' through the limits with wicked time changes, radical musical instrument abuse".

Can you compare "Ink Compatible" with "Ink Complete" musically?

Yeah, I always whip out "Ink Complete" and cue up "Data Race" and "Mosquito", just to see what I'm up against. I just feel that whatever I write should be better than my previous work. Although sometimes a song will dictate how it should be written, and making it more progressive or complicated isn't always what's best. "Ink Complete" is a collection of songs with various concepts going in all musical directions. Some heavy stuff, some progressive stuff, classical, a cartoon score, while "Ink Compatible" is based on a strict theme - computers. Musically, it will be more focused. And if anyone is wondering, the music will not take a back seat to the vocals.

About vocals on "Ink Compatible"... Will it be possible to view the album as a continuation of WatchTower?

When WatchTower was trying to get together to finish up "Mathematics" a few months ago, I wrote a few tunes that were supposed to be in new Tower songs. They were a bit "Ink" sounding, because they were challenging and required precision. It was a bit of a stretch for a Tower song, but I wanted to hear what it would sound like with Rick and Doug. We never got to the point to try the tunes out, so I'm using 3 or 4 of the tunes for the "internet" song. Even though Tower and Ink are "progressive" bands, they are miles apart musically, to me anyways. WatchTower was always bring in a tune and see what the others do with it. Ink tunes have carefully thought out parts that interact with the other parts. Jason never had the slightest problem working out any timing with Tower songs, and so I have no doubt that he will heavily contribute to the sound of the next Ink record.

Most people know you from Spastic Ink and WatchTower but even before and during your WatchTower days you were already making instrumental demos like "PHHHP!" and "Happy Kitties". How would you compare these to Spastic Ink? How has your style changed during these years?

Some of the songs on "PHHHP!" are my all-time favorites. Right when Bobby and I first started Ink, he suggested doing "Kill The White Noise" and another solo song I did called "This Nice Blonde". (I don't think anybody's ever heard that one). I kind of thought about it, but wanted to do all new material. I was working on another solo tape but it got cut short because WatchTower took off to Germany to record "Control". My hand started screwing up during the recording

WatchTower:

excerpts from old interviews (cont.)

want to sign anything without us being a fourpiece band, so it ended up falling through. Noise International isn't a major label, that's true, but Noise does have a pressing and distribution deal with CBS in the USA, which is equal to the advantages of signing a major. The problem with the CBS contract would have been, as I mentioned it before, that we would have had to sign a contract with the production company, and this contract was a joke. We would have gotten completely ripped off and also, on the other hand, if we had signed with CBS, we would have been one of the low bands in their priority list. When you compare it, we wouldn't have got the attention that we are going to get from Noise. Noise is really turned out to be a great label to sign with, they treat us really well and they give us what we want...

Now I'll go back a little bit to the history of Tower, you released "Energetic..." on Zombo Records, who has the rights on that?
Doug Keyser: Zombo Records was owned by WatchTower, that was the label we started to put out "Energetic..." and we had no distribution connections and really no money, so the distribution was really poor, as everybody knows who's trying to find it in Europe.

So how many copies did you sell?

Doug Keyser: "Energetic..." sold about 4500 to 5000 copies, a lot of that was through mail order, thanks to everybody again who wrote us and ordered it from us. It was a little hectic there for a while, but we really couldn't find too much distribution on it, I know people who have written back to me saying they found the record selling for \$30 (!!!), so it was too bad it came out that way, but we haven't had any money to distribute it properly...

Billy now is a member of the new Dokken line-up, do you think that's a wise decision? Dokken without either Don or George is no Dokken in my opinion! Do you think the music Dokken play is the right one for Billy?

Doug Keyser: Yeah, right now Billy is playing in the new band with Don Dokken. It's a two-guitarist band now, John Norum, the old Europe guitarist is the second axeman. Billy seems to be happy with the way things come along, but I'm not really sure when they plan to release anything. I think they went through some contract hassles right now, last I heard. Well, about the choice, I think it's a good choice for Billy, doing a whole lot other things now. He player with a local band in Austin, but he got the chance and he took. Now lot's of people are gonna hear his playing, a lot more than ever heard him on WatchTower so whatever happens with Dokken or not, whether they hit big or not, lots of people are gonna know about Billy now, and he's said in the music industry to be good...

Metal Warriors #7, 1990

[interview with Jason McMaster, when he joined Dangerous Toys]
I think I read in an interview with the other guys of WatchTower, they said it's just commercial rock, normal rock, but when I heard the tape, I was very surprised and liked it a lot, it's not that simple.

Jason McMaster: No, it's not that bad, no, there's so much influence, I mean we listen to all kinds of music, I mean we're influenced from Prince to Motorhead! All of us listen to different kinds of music, I wouldn't really call Dangerous Toys like a blues-based rock band, sorta Guns n' Roses. But we have that taste, you know what I mean. The taste of Motorhead or Sex Pistols in there, that taste of... you can even go as far as to say Poison, because these guys have been through that, they've been through the Glamscene, totally different scene that I'm used to. They've been through the whole bullshit, I cannot stand them. But yeah, the influence is in this band, you're right, it's not just regular hardrock, it's not an Aerosmith-copy band. Yes, they upset with me, I heard about the same interview you mentioned that Ronnie was a bit upset. They're upset that I'm out here and they are still working 9 to 5 jobs. I'm not making fun of them, by no means, I love these guys. Ronnie is upset the most, cause he's been in the band two years and I was six years! He's just mad, see Ronnie has had a chance to be in Helstar and he has had a chance to be in Agent Steel...

Metal Glory #5, 1990

[October '90, after departure of Alan Tecchio]
Do you have any idea of how many copies have been sold of your "Control and Resistance" album?

Doug Keyser: That's a hard question to answer. One of the problems we have with our label is that they to this date have not sent us any royalty statements. They are over a year behind now. We haven't seen any sales figures, but from I can gather from distributors, I know that it sold around 35000 to 40000 copies a couple of months after it had been released. I really have no idea how many copies have been sold after that.

Billy wrote a lot of material when he was in the band. Has the band changed a lot as a result of him leaving?

Doug Keyser: It is true that me and Billy wrote the stuff for "Energetic Disassembly" and about half of "Control and Resistance". But if you listen to the songs that were written after Ron joined the band, like "Mayday is Kiev"... I think those songs continue quite well in the WatchTower tradition. They are a little different, but I think they have the same philosophy towards music.



Jason McMurter

get with the program. And then there is always a possibility that I'll get a call or email from Terry Bozzio or Bill Bruford and they'll want to play on "Ink Compatible" for free (ha ha!). What really bothers me that I don't understand Bobby's decision to drop Ink and do what he was doing five years ago. I mean, it sucks that he isn't with Ink, but I would totally understand it if he left for Trevor Rabin, Steve Vai, Chick Corea, or any artist that lets him show what he's capable of. Seriously, what is he going to play with Riot that he hasn't already done on previous albums. Bobby came up with so much of the music for "Ink Complete". He's a great writer as well as a player. I guess he's doing it for the same reason I give guitar lessons. It's just a paycheck.

You are interested in making music for movies, cartoons, computer games. Do these entertainment forms give additional freedom to you as a musician?

Oh yeah. With a "band" instrumentation you're limited to guitar, bass, and drums (and maybe keyboards). With movie/cartoon scores, the possibilities are endless. There will be a little bit of orchestral scoring on "Ink Compatible", mostly atmospheric intros, setting up the songs. I'm thinking about releasing a CD after I'm done with "Ink Compatible" that will have some songs with all scoring, and some songs with progressive metal mixed in with orchestral instruments, but it will not be a "Spastic Ink" record.

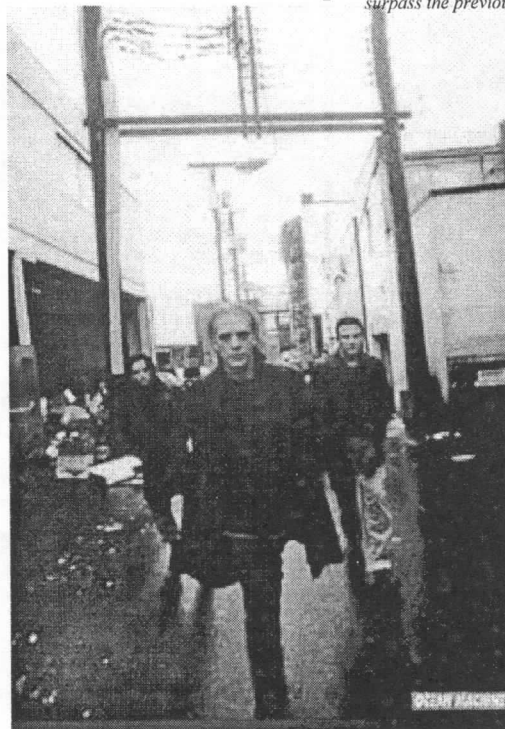
Name 5 web sites that you visit regularly.

Well, I have to check my web page builder @ www.spasticink.com to keep the Ink site happening. There are a few sports sites that I dial in @ dallascowboys.com, cnn.com and www.espn.com. Steve Vai's site @ www.vai.com is very cool.

Bobby is with Riot again. Who is better, he or a computer?

Brilliant question! Let's see... Well, Bobby's timing is impeccable, maybe just a notch below a computer. Writing songs with Bobby was great, but it had a few drawbacks that you don't have with a computer. A computer won't argue with you over the arrangement of a song, but if you want feedback, it doesn't give you shit. A computer will play a part exactly as you write it, but it can't write anything on its own... kind of like a few musicians I know. A computer won't change a part because it wants to and it doesn't fit the song. Kind of like... anyways.

The major drag about writing drum parts on computer is that I have to input every single note with a mouse, the duration, velocity, and try to achieve a good feel. It's a bite in the ass. I'm trying to make the drum parts sound as realistic as possible. With Bobby, I just said "Give me a 9/8 normal time groove with accents on the 2 and a half, and the 5", and it was like... presto, a fuckin' killer beat. Just what I was looking for. I wrote some of the drum parts for "Ink Complete" on drum machine, and then gave Bobby what I wrote, and he spiced it up, and did what he wanted with it, and 95% of the time, it was what I was looking for. I'm spending quite a bit of time on the drum parts, and am doing great, but I'm not knocking myself out because Bobby might come around and



Devin Townsend

Strapping Young Lad
the enviable creativity
Ocean Machine
Infinity
[by Giedrius Slivinskas]

Devin Townsend is known for his singing in "Sex & Religion" album of Steve Vai, for playing heavy rock with The Wildhearts, and investigating unexplored extreme metal and industrial areas with Strapping Young Lad. Last year brought his new project Ocean Machine, which is much more calm than SYL, yet heavy and moody. And while many fans still haven't heard Ocean Machine, Devin is already into another project called Infinity... Knowing that Devin is only 25, it's hard to believe the amount of music he already has done. And it does not seem that he will run out of ideas anytime soon...



What is your priority number one today? It looks like Strapping Young Lad went even to the third plan, you have Ocean Machine, you have Infinity...

My number one priority at the moment is finishing Infinity. I have no plans past that at the moment.

Can you describe the music of Infinity? Do you want to express something that does not fit into the frame of neither SYL nor Ocean Machine?

It is true music. Orchestrated, yet heavier than anything I've done. The opposite of black metal, it has a very 'white' feel. It sounds like platinum. It truly has weight. Combine Ocean Machine with SYL and add more music and you have an idea.

How about the third album of Strapping Young Lad? In one interview you said that those people who didn't like the debut, would hate the second one. Does this remain valid, i.e., there will be no compromises in the third one?

The reason I have so many projects is so I can keep the integrity of each style without feeling restricted. I will only do another SYL record when I feel I can surpass the previous one.

And again, somewhere you said that you would not feel the similar kind of anger to continue doing Strapping Young Lad in future? How are you able to look at it from the perspective, I mean, how are you sure you won't want to compose such kind of music? Slayer are doing this for ages...

Again, I will only do another SYL record when I feel it inside me to do so. It is a way to purge demons, and the idea behind being a productive human being is to keep the demons at bay, not to invite them to tea. I hope to not do another SYL record for a while, but things can always change, so I have to keep my eyes open.

When did you feel a need for a project like Ocean Machine? Was it difficult to make it a reality? How is it to market such music these days when major labels aren't interested in heavy music at all and big indie metal companies try to stick to the tried formulas?

I take music from my surroundings. I hear it in the city, the water, the mountains...everything. All you have to do is listen and the music is there to be put to tape. I started my own label to be able to fulfill my dreams, and I pay no mind to what my business limitations are perceived to be. I make enough money to live, and I will continue to write what I want to hear.

Do you spend a lot of time thinking about how to market your releases? Or do you mainly concentrate on doing music?

I mainly concentrate on doing music, but the idea behind the creation of musical ideas is a whole artistic statement.

The layout and vision behind the visuals is extremely important to me as well, as it sets the tone that I want to portray. As far as marketing...I haven't got a clue.

Would you agree that a band with good music and interesting image is twice as much interesting as a band with good music but no image?

No, I would say one and a half times as good. But remember, an image doesn't have to be visual, it can be the statement that they're trying to make, and if the statement is really important, than the music can become negligible. Statements can influence many, but music within a certain genre usually only appeals to that market.

You participated in a numerous amount of projects. Have you always had a strong motivation for that?

How do you think, how long you will have a motivation to continue as a musician?

I will always think in musical terms, but as far as using that to an affluent end, it depends. I have many other plans for my life, and I'll go where it takes me.

Are you afraid of a creative crisis? Have you ever felt creatively exhausted?

The way I work is this, I blow myself out for each record. I literally slice off a piece my soul and commit it to record. This lets me move on to the next level. After I have recorded the music, I feel nothing until the reservoir fills up again.

How is your voice after all those different styles of singing? Have you faced any difficulties?

I never knew how to really control my voice from the beginning, so I had an advantage of not knowing any limitations. Now, I'm beginning to explore new possibilities and that will hopefully solve any problems I have had.

What current singers do you like?

I like Dalbello (I think that's how you spell her name) and Björk.

You were involved in all kinds of projects, but I noticed that you haven't been doing gothic. Why is that?

Honestly, because I know nothing about it. I'm not a very gothic guy...I like nature. I like food. I like feeling good. Feeling miserable is just a pain in the ass. Why would I want to be involved in a sub-culture based on it? Is it even based on it? I know that little about it.

How much time do you spend at home, how much on tours? Is your wife tolerant?

I spend half my time at home (in the studio) and half on tour. My wife is as tolerant as someone married to me can be.

What do you think, is it possible to divide mental stages of a musician to (1) extreme wish to be a rock star, (2) disappointment because of difficulties to break through, (3) excitement of the first deal, (4) enjoyment to play for bigger audiences, (5) frustration because of a routine, etc. Given that, where would you place yourself today?

A healthy 5 with a sprinkle of 2 for the egos sake.

It's an old story, but how did Steve Vai notice you? Did you know anyone personally at Relativity at that time?

I sent a tape to Relativity records that their A&R guy passed on to Steve who was looking for a singer at the time. I knew no one at Relativity at the time, it was an unsolicited tape.

What kind of music did you want to play when you were a teenager?

Something that sounded like a cross between Stravinsky, Jane's Addiction, Judas Priest, Metallica, King's X, Frank Zappa, Grötus, and whatever else was neat at the time.

Being a musician, you often meet with different business people, and since all kinds of contacts are



"No Sleep Til Bedtime" is the title of Strapping Young Lad's recent live album

important, you have to be kind to each of them. How often do you want to say 'fuck off' in such cases and how often do you say that?

I just leave. If someone is an asshole, I'd rather not speak to them at all as opposed to kissing their ass. I'm no fun to talk to if I don't want to speak so I usually don't have a problem getting my point across. If I do...I just leave. It not worth the breath to say 'Fuck off' to someone that needs it said to them. They fuck themselves off for you.

On the Ocean Machine web site, there is a Metal Hammer article about you and it's about everything except music. Do you more enjoy talking about music, not about music, both?

I enjoy life, and music is just the obvious outcome of living. I talk about what is asked.

Somewhere you expressed that you don't feel too comfortable when your name is printed everywhere, for instance, "Devin did some screams on this song". Actually, I am doing this interview mainly because it will be cool to write Devin Townsend and SYL/Ocean Machine on the cover. Just kidding, of course...

I think I have a good name. It's balanced.

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THROUGH THE SHADOWS OF WHAT SOME CALL LIFE... WUTHERING HEIGHTS



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Internet: <http://www.intromental.com/wuthering>

The famous Portuguese outfit visited Spanish soil as part of their European promotour. After getting rid of their gloomy black metal label, the band had been recruited by their Spanish distributors, Mastertrax, in order to support the new album "Sin/Pecado". This, quite innovative in terms of sound, record was released all around Europe in February. After this brief visit to Spain, their promotour would go on in France, Germany, and Scandinavian countries, giving shows at some stages. Those would be good tests in order to see how Moonspell audience responded to the new material included in their live repertoire.

Thanks to Susana, part of Mastertrax staff, we could meet the band for some hours during their second day of staying in Madrid, proving them to be very accessible and easy to talk with people. We have tried to compile on the following lines some aspects of their visit to Spain and the chat we held with three of the band members: Sergio Crestana (bassist), Ricardo Amorim (guitarist), and Fernando Ribeiro (vocalist). "Alma Mater" is the title of one of their most well-known songs, and considering the length of Fernando's answers and how thoughtful and meaningful his explanations sometimes are, he is sort of band's "alma mater" during the routine (and logical) promotional tasks. The rest of the band preferred to remain more in a background position. "We're professionals, you know...", that's what Fernando, showing a deep smile, once commented to Susana and the two German people that constituted their whole crew in Madrid, while he changed his leather jacket for a suit, minutes before their acoustic mini gig was going to take place. He showed a big amount of professionalism, indeed, but do you think those subtle subliminal details have their importance in order to positively impress the audience or something?

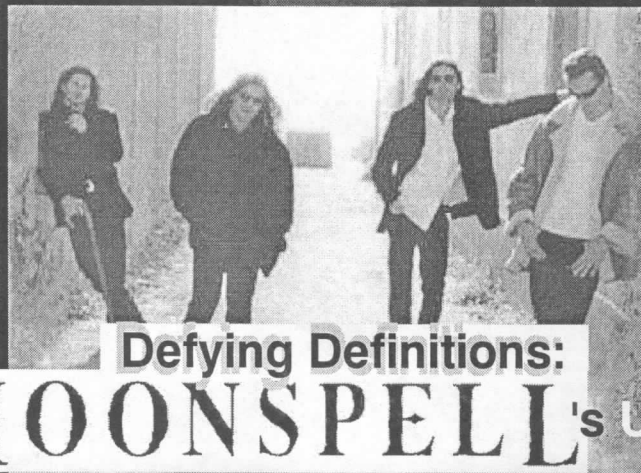
Trip, Romans, and Bridges

The trip had begun for them in Lisbon, when, carrying some basic equipment, they were conducted by a small van all the way straight to Madrid, the other big capital city of the Iberian Peninsula (said this hoping people from Andorra won't get mad). Fortunately, the road communications between Lisbon and the rest of Spanish cities have been improved within the last years so this doesn't imply many hours. If one pauses to think about it, this is an important point speaking merely in economical terms. Just some time ago, we could see how the longest bridge in Europe was opened in Lisbon, with all sort of honors and pomposity behind. As it happens in most countries, the whole spectacle was perhaps a bit bought up by the central government, trying to communicate a new motif of national pride to Portuguese people. That's, up to a limit, something normal and understandable: in the days of Roman empire, circus had a similar distracting effect in order to absorb problems or extinguish social unrest. OK, nowadays, the way I see it, Roman circus takes the shape of big events like that one regarding the bridge opening, monumental expositions which budget limits lay on a bottomless sack (keep on reading in order to know band's frontman opinion about this controversial subject), or other "alienating" elements such as

national soccer leagues, crap content-sensationalist TV, and a long etcetera. But back to the road map topic, this is the REAL bridge which connects Portugal with the rest of Europe is related to that web of highways we mentioned earlier. So, really good to see this aspect is progressing, and the pedestrian paths, more proper for transportation on donkeys, are now a part of history for Lusitania and Hispania citizens. But wasn't this a music fanzine?

Spanish Promo Days

Well, a few hours after arriving to Madrid, the band fulfilled all the promotional promises of their agenda: first, they were led to Radio 3, a national FM station devoted to various types of music, where they were interviewed. This way, they were able to tell their impressions regarding "Sin/Pecado" to a broad audience. Rushing up from here to there all the time, as we were told later, they managed to get to Canal 7 (local



Defying Definitions: MOONSPELL's Ultimate Sin

TV) studios to do more promotion, and that was about it concerning their first day in Madrid. The day after, Moonspell troop attended a centric music megastore called FNAC (French capital company) which "FNAC Forum" hall would serve us as a meeting point. Around 13:30, the band members arrived together with Susana from Mastertrax, and after talking to the usual Mr. Impediment Gonzalez (security man) and explaining how everything was arranged, etc., everybody walked into this little hall, and technicians could do their work installing a few stage lights and the electric equipment. According to Mastertrax staff own words, for their first time ever, Moonspell were going to perform some acoustic material live "unplugged set" this is soMTimVs called. As an anecdote, during the rehearsal, Fernando stepped over a Brazilian percussion instrument, called "Palo de Chuvia" (spelled something like that as far as I remember), which stands for "Stick of Rain". When one shakes it, the sound it emits is somehow similar to the sound of the falling rain, hence the curious name. Well, the thing is the peculiar instrument got broken by one side and all the little beach stones and shells that it contained spread over the stage... so it couldn't be used during the show as it was meant to be, and we helped Fernando giving him a sheet of paper in order to collect all that valuable stuff ("We will repair it," he said, when I thought he was possibly already looking for a litter bin). Around half an hour later, in front of a small audience of 50-60 fans approximately,

the Portuguese guys performed 7 songs: "Opium" (twice), "Awake", and "Ruin and Misery" from "Irreligious". "Mute", "The Hanged Man", "Abysmo" from "Sin", plus a cover song I don't recall. Here's the result of the interview which comes from two different settings: first we talked to Sergio and Fernando before they did some brief soundcheck for the acoustic show, until the sound which started to come out of the hall speakers made it impossible to keep on talking. Right after the show, we talked to Ricardo, the band's guitar player.

Interview Part 1

Comfortably sat at the back of the FNAC Forum this is what we talked about...

Earlier you were saying that Moonspell were not much respected in Portugal... did the situation change? If so when?

Fernando: *Well, when we started, we were (and we are) very different band*

from all the others, not only musically, but especially in mentality, in investing to our music and being, ehm... We were very serious believers of our own music, we were often criticized as arrogants, and our own people were trying to use our effort, our... (I'd say) courage, of being a Portuguese band that is playing a kind of European music. In my opinion, as well as anyone from Spain, or Germany, or England... So, we were often criticized, and other people had bad feelings about us. And I think that with the growing international profile that we have, people started respecting us more, and I do think that we are a bit more respected when it comes to the audience... we have a great and large following in Portugal, but when it comes to the press, and when it comes to... [pauses to think] certain more national "white press"... I don't think that the credibility they give us is up to our status right now.

So, you hope to grow more as a band... at all levels in general...

Fernando: *Definitely, yeah. I mean, yeah, in what depends on us, I think that we do whatever we can, and whatever we must do to be big in Portugal, because it's very important for us, it's our own country and it feels very bad when you are cheered in every country except for yours. It's a more... psychological thing. But, I think, with the new album, I do hope that all the people working with us can contribute that we can get bigger and more serious in Portugal.*

Talking about Portugal more in depth: In this year 1998, Lisboa is...
Fernando: *Yes, "Expo"...*

... "Universal Expo", that's right. it will take place in Lisboa. How would you describe "the state of art", culture and music scene in Portugal? And in Europe in general? Is it a bit stalled or stagnated in some ways in your opinion?

Fernando [after big pause]: *Well, honestly it depends on the wave, because I think that the state of art and all the culture that I see, in music, literature... It's more like time to reviving the stuff, there's a lot of this "kitsch" cult right now, within the bands and within a lot of writers and stuff like that and for me, I mean: I do not concern very much if the thing is actual or not because there are things "naif" in the 80's, or in the 70's, or in the 60s. There are more actual than things "naif" in the 90's, you know. That's why I never really understand what's the relation between time and culture, I think they are sometimes "pacing" together, sometimes going against each other, sometimes things have nothing to do with each other. When it comes to Expo, and maybe Sergio will speak later about this, I do think that it's "not in Portugal", and "not in the government from Portugal". Expo is not a cultural thing, it's a "show-off from Portugal", definitely, it's a financial... ehm, disaster... And I do think that*

Yes... And sorry to interrupt you: here, in 1992, Expo...

Fernando: *Yeah, in Seville, as well... Yes, I think it might be interesting and everything, but I think that there are more, much more ways how to invest this money in culturality, in Europe and in Portugal especially! Than making this "megalomaniac", you know, this "bright" exhibition. In a very small country that has a lot of difficulties to impose its own culture even in its own country.*

I understand.

Fernando: *You know, that's why I'm maybe one of the few persons that is not enthusiastic about Expo at all, in Portugal. But there are different opinions I think.*

And, Sergio, what do you think about this?

Sergio: *I think Fernando has said almost everything about it. It's just one... it's like a phenomenon: in the first place, it creates lots of jobs and everybody has work, and then it's over and nobody knows what's going to happen to the people there. Well, if it was an exposition that would be the whole year or, I don't know, they can explore the place later... so would be good.*

...promotion for Portugal...

Fernando: *Yeah, in my opinion, it's more "showing off". Sergio: I think it's for tourists: just for increasing the tourists number.*



Yes, a bit "montagem" [Portuguese for "a fake assembly"]

Fernando: Yeah, it makes no sense... Together, everything in one place: it's like a big "cultural supermarket". Like Pryca [Spanish stores] talking at huge scale.

Aha. Talking a bit about music...

Fernando: Yeah...! [Laughs]

"Irreligious" was different from "Wolfheart"...

Fernando: Yes [nodding]

...and "Sin" is, in my opinion, quite different than "Irreligious", as well. However, would it be possible to create "Sin" without your black metal past or some references in that direction?

Fernando [after a big pause]: No, I wouldn't call it, really, black metal. Not because I don't feel comfortable with this. I always thought and I always said that it's a too short label to contain us. Because we were always trying to export something different. But definitely, I don't... I read it: "Sin would not be created without something that Moonspell adds since the beginning", which is the taste for dark atmospheres, which is the taste for more visual music. Of course, sometimes people do it, as well as we would. Like in "Wolfheart" or "Irreligious", but I think "Sin" is a completely different story, because we were much more mature, and especially, the secret of this album is that we knew what we wanted to do. And I think that the past is really important, especially because you learn a lot, and you learn what to repeat and what not to repeat. And I think that's the main role of the album, because I think that there's a lot of bands that create or that re-invent the style of their first album. It was not the case with Moonspell, and it's not maybe the case right now, but I think we have a much more private sound now. We are that kind of band that evolves and creates differences.

I tend to agree with you...

Fernando: Yeah, maybe "Sin" will be the album that will be more similar to the next album, because I think we got somewhere.

I have read in your web page that you will include some juggling numbers during your gigs. Have you other entertaining numbers in mind?

Fernando: Well, it's for special occasions... Because, unfortunately our status is varying from country to country. So, in certain countries we can take a bigger production.

Like Germany...

Fernando: Yeah, Germany, Portugal... Maybe some gigs, festivals. But in other countries we have to be simple. The juggling and all these special effects, we will have them in our "Lusi" Party, in Portugal.

Very cheap tickets by the way. I read somewhere they were extremely cheap.

Fernando: Yeah, but Portuguese people still think that's expensive! [Laughs] I mean, it's on the Lisbon Coliseum, and all the tickets there are 40, 50 pesetas. [Pauses] No, no, no...!

You mean 4000, 5000?

Fernando: Yeah, that's it: 4000 or 5000. And this time it's only 1000, 1200 pesetas.

Sergio: The idea is to get everybody there.

Fernando: Yeah, because it's a relieved party. It's like more relaxed show: it's a very visual show because I think that all branches of art are not separated, we have to think in a more operative way, in a more, let's say, wide perspective. Because everyone is "fucking heads" to each other. [Laughs]

[Note: That mentioned show at Coliseum theatre became a big success for the band: The 3000 tickets got sold out weeks before, and they were given a silver album there]

Yes, in my opinion, one of the most appealing aspects about Moonspell is that "opening" of minds you commented. It's obvious that as a band you are progressing with each album, not repeating yourselves and exploring new fields. OK, going on with that, "Irreligious" had a very big success and good evaluations. It certainly will be difficult for "Sin" to surpass



"Irreligious". Do you think that "Sin" is better, if so why, in which aspects? What's your point of view?

Fernando: Nah, I think it's definitely better in any way. Because I think that when we do the album, the only pressure we had is not to talk the reviews, because there's a lot of... I think "Irreligious" had a especially very good "timing": everyone was waiting for this album, like people into the gothic metal scene, they were waiting for an album like this. And that's why we had good reviews. "Sin" is a much more open-musical album, the lyrics are way better... Everything is better, musically and lyrically. And so far, the reviews have been excellent, because people don't think that we gave a step backwards or did "Irreligious - Part II".

No, not the case indeed...

Fernando: Because we don't like, I mean, we invest in our music and in our image. And when you invest, you take a risk. And I think that's the only "salt" you have in music. Otherwise, if you go on doing the same things and fighting against your possibilities to do better, and fighting against your own pressure of doing better, I think that it's worthless to go on. And we are not so obsessed in this way about the band that we wanted to go on, even if we don't have any more new or interesting to give to people. That's it for me, it doesn't work, at least, in my head. So I think that the first and the most important goal of "Sin" is completely achieved: for us it's a better album, it's different album, but it's a better album than "Irreligious"

musically and lyrically, and that's our goal. The rest is a big question mark, but so far we have got excellent reviews everywhere.

Perhaps, I don't know if you agree with me, "Sin" can reach a broader potential audience, in some aspects it's a more accessible album, though it takes time to absorb all its contents, as it is, I think, one of those albums that grows and grows.

Fernando: Yeah, I think that it has some songs that are really catchy, and people like at the first, but as an album it's very complex. And you have to listen to it a lot of times, especially because of the "line up" off the album, it's not really an easy album. But there's two things here: people forget that bands do evolve, but they never talk about the audience evolving as well. It would not be possible for us to sell records and to have people in our shows if there was not a change on the mentality of people, not only that do music, but that listen to the music.

And I think that's very good, and that's why people like bands that are not those supposed "pure" metal bands and "true" metal bands: they like Paradise Lost, and they like Moonspell, they like Marilyn Manson...

...Tiamat...

Fernando: Tiamat... Because, they are, maybe somewhat modern, and they came into music listening to this kind of bands, so they follow the bands, you know. People that listen to metal for a longer time, they have maybe little bit more difficulty to accept this, but there's a lot of people that can like Angra and then are crazy about Moonspell, as well. And that's fine, I think that's very positive.

Sergio, though you weren't personally involved in the "Irreligious" project, which do you think have been the major changes for Moonspell comparing it to "Sin"? I mean, seeing it as a person who was behind the fence by the time that album was put out, and now as a part of Moonspell. Sergio: Well, I think, in "Sin", all the songs were more "musical". Like the influence has changed a little bit, composers start to listen to other kind of music, modern music. You can see and you can feel there's more melodies in the album. So there was a compromise within music really trying to do something more melodic, musical...

We mentioned the band Tiamat earlier in this conversation. Don't you think that it is possible to draw parallels along Moonspell and Tiamat. Not

because of music, but because of a CHANGE. Tiamat were pretty much death metal in the beginning, then had a transition period and now are rooted more in psychedelic rock area.

Fernando: Yeah, I mean I feel comfortable with these parallels, people do often compare us not to Tiamat but especially to Paradise Lost, maybe because our music is more rock than Tiamat, you know, regular rock. I think it's definitely legible when you draw a parallel between the evolution of these bands, because we've showed up in the time with "Jan Geich", Tiamat started the band at a very early age as well as Paradise Lost, and I see this like the growing of a human being: you have a juvenile period, or you try to be very rough and very radical, and then you just worn out to do the things with more elegance, and I think Tiamat is a great example of that, because it's [referring to the last one] a very difficult album but personally I like it. It's a change on a very courageous level, I like that in a band, definitely.

I read you studied philosophy for becoming a teacher for a long time...

Fernando: Yes [Laughs]

[Background music starts to get pretty loud...]

Do you plan to teach someday or how do you think philosophy should be taught?

Fernando: Well, I mean, definitely my child dream was not to be a musician. We say in Portugal "I just ended up in a parachute here": We started the band and then: grew, grew, grew... And I had to quit studying and the University...

Ah, you quitted?

Fernando: Yes, I had to because I had no time: today I'm in Madrid, next week I'll be in Sweden, so I have no time to study at University, but I study on my own. And I had like these little cabinets, of explaining philosophy, you know private teacher. I had it for two or... [Background music becomes extremely loud] ...Uh, we go on later...

Interview Part 2

Took place after the show when they were packing up things. Guitarist Ricardo answered some more questions...

Have you ever felt a routine being a musician? For how long will you have enthusiasm to continue?

Ricardo: Well, basically what happens is when you start a band, and things are going OK for you, and you do your first tour, you know, you feel a huge enthusiasm for everything, and you do it with your heart, with pleasure. And you know, we still do it, with heart, with pleasure, but somehow it became a routine, you know. We've tried to be more professional as well, so this is like you have to live that enthusiasm as a professionalism as well. So, somehow it's a routine, but I hope this routine can still continue for a long long time, if you know what I mean. [Laughs]

When did you feel that you are becoming one of the Century Media high-priority bands?

Ricardo: Well, I was not in the band at the moment, but what can I say is that the guys at work in the band were really happy, because you know, Century Media had that time, and they still do

have bands that they were like main influences on Moonspell. So it's pretty... it's like kind of "dream label".

The Gathering, a great band, for instance...

Ricardo: Yes, mostly Samael and Tiamat. Sentenced as well. So as far as I know they did a hell of a party, that's why they were really probably happy! [Laughs]

Earlier Fernando mentioned you were responsible for all the writing process of the music from this new album. And he said movie soundtracks became a main influence in this task of composing. Is it really your main influence?

Ricardo: Eh... well, it's really a VERY BIG influence because somehow we tend to do soundtrack at our music. That's what they call us already a lot of times. And Fernando is the kind of person who listens to a lot of soundtracks. I listen to a couple of them as well. Pedro as well. And I like "The Crow" soundtrack, and "Last Temptation of Christ" by Peter Gabriel, and "Dracula"... There's a lot of them that we really like. And somehow the kind of orchestration that we put in our music, somehow it starts to sound like a... like a soundtrack! [Laughs]

OK. Are there any bands (in your opinion) that changed their style solely due to commercial purposes?

Ricardo: Hmm, I can't... hmhm we might talk about "those" versus "they did it or not", because somehow we changed our music, because we're always changing something, but still on the Moonspell charisma. And we don't do it for commercial purposes: we just do it because we want to do it. Listening to so many different influences that makes you feel something different. So I cannot talk about those bands. Probably, hopefully, they've been as honest as us... [Pause] we are, at the moment.

How did you get to Moonspell? Where were you playing before?

Ricardo: Well, I was playing in a very small demo band which I don't know what happened to, was called "Paranormal Waltz"

In Portugal...

Ricardo: Yeah, in Portugal... was like that, atmospheric kind of metal. And well, I have been a neighbour of Pedro and Fernando for a long time, you know, like years. And then, you know, they knew me already, they knew I can play guitar. So, when they kicked out one of the guitar players, they just invited me to replace it, and, of course, I accepted the offer.

When did you join the band exactly?

Ricardo: I joined the band in the summer of 1995, the 13th of June. [Laughs]

Which are the tracks from "Sin" you're more satisfied with, as a creator of them.

Ricardo: Well, I'm very satisfied with most of the tracks, but probably there's this one called "Magdalene", which is probably the strongest music we ever did because it has as well a lot of musicality going on, and it's really material. You know, I can never believe that I'd have reached writing a song like that, not me, you know: the band.

Talking to you as the current guitarist of Moonspell, and being the driving

force along with Pedro behind composition tasks, I'd like to comment you something: in my opinion there's a crucial change in "Sin" in what regards the guitar sound.

Ricardo: Aha.

And also there is a more wide use of samples and looping structures. Do you think that electronic music is a tool, a field that gives you more possibilities sometimes?

Ricardo: Yeah, it gives you WAY more possibilities, you know. We're not attached to something in particular. So, why those grooves and the loops? Well, maybe because we wanted to put groove in the songs, so we used loops. It really works. Samples, guitars... Well, they can get you atmosphere, and they can get you that original sound that somehow you cannot produce just by playing. So we sampled the thing, and we put different "delay queues", we did a lot of mixing. And that's how we get these weird sounds going on, and I'm quite satisfied with that, and we tend to use it more and more. So we try to get everything out of everything.

OK, that's that I think... Just wanted to comment you this music news I read at a newspaper some months ago. Do you know Brian Enno?

Ricardo: Brian Enno? The guy who works together with U2?

Yeah, techno precursor as well. Talking a bit more about the electronic music topic, there was explained a new technique he developed called "generative music" which allows the listener to have different music each time a piece is played: a computer manages the whole process. What do you think about this possibility: listening to a song with new shades even after a thousand listenings just by changing some internal parameters, etc?

Ricardo: Well, it's... it's the first time I listen to this, first time I'm aware of this...

It drew my attention when I read it...

Ricardo: Listening to something that...? Well, there's two possibilities I think: first, you listen to the music, and you like a lot the music, but you know that the next time is not going to sound the same. Well, you might miss it. The other thing is that, everytime that you listen to your music, you would listen like if it was the last time, so you'd have to pull some fun, and enjoy as possible, because you're not going to hear it anymore. [Laughs] It's really odd for me to talk about this, I never knew about this. [Laughs]

Yes, it's something curious, isn't it? Well, finally, can you tell what are your expectations as an active member of Moonspell?

Ricardo: I just look for we can play more and more. And to do promotours. To go further in our expectations. I hope we will get warmer and warmer receptions in Spain, and, basically, I just hope we can get along to get us pretty well, you know growing up as musicians and as human beings as well.



SUNBLAZE

When Progressive Metal and Classical Music Unite

[by Christian Rademaker]

Sunblaze is the closest that a band can come to shifting its musical personality between progressive metal and classical music. Descriptions given to them such as a "progressive metal orchestra" are thus very appropriate. The roots of Sunblaze can be found in several bands from the Kaiserslautern/Rammstein area in Germany. Keyboard-player Jorg Enke and vocalist Matthias Pfaff were previously in the progressive metal band Dividing Horizons. Dividing Horizons released an independent CD in 1994 entitled "Seizure" but split up after musical differences a while later. The CD was only released in a limited edition of 1000 pieces and is becoming a potential collectors item. Guitarist Martin Enke (Jorg's older brother) previously played for The End of Music which also released the CD "Wait for Ages" a couple of years ago. Bassplayer Michel Kalifa played live all over Germany in a few punk/crossover bands. Michel was also in The End of Music just before they split up (some of the members of The End of Music are now in the band Murder She Wrote, Jorg and Michel can also be heard playing a few solos on their new CD). The nucleus of what was later to be known as Sunblaze was formed by Jorg, Martin, Michel, and drummer Jochen Donauer. Just before the release of the CD, Jochen left Sunblaze to concentrate his activities on Dark (a gothic metal band that released the CDs "End less Dreams of Sadness" and "Seduction"). Vocalist Matthias initially participated as a guest singer on the CD but has since become a permanent member. The debut CD "Illuminating Heights" was released at the end of 1997. The musical capabilities are showcased on the two songs "Sunblaze"(14:09) and "Distant Reaches" (10:06). As mentioned earlier, the songs border on progressive metal/rock and classical music. This can be heard in the



Michel Kalifa: "When in the front row fans suddenly start jumping then something must be wrong with our music."

long instrumental sections as well as the complex build-up of the songs. The moods change from megalomaniacal orchestrations with numerous instruments to delicate vocals supported by a piano. The incorporation of classical instruments such as the violin and flute in the music are really innovative. Another addition is a seven-piece choir during the song "Sunblaze". These elements lend an unusual touch and special warmth to the music. A slightly negative point are the vocal melodies which are sometimes strained. The reason is that Matthias Pfaff didn't contribute the vocal melodies to the music. Since the release of the CD, the violinist Elisabeth Ramirez has been become a permanent member of the band and Roland Weimer has taken over the drumming activities. Roland was the drum teacher of the previous member.

I contacted Jorg about doing an interview and I drove the 500 kilometres to Kaiserslautern in typical weather (rain with a slight chance of sun). The interview took place during a heavy metal night in a pub in a small town near Kaiserslautern (an example of the music that was played during the interview: Iron Maiden, Death, Spock's Beard). It was conducted in German so some of the exact answers and intentions may have been lost in the translation. The threesome Jorg Enke (JE), Martin Enke (ME), and Michel Kalifa (MK) were interviewed. Several topics were discussed such as their debut CD "Illuminating Heights", modifying existing art to suit their own format, fear of technology, classical instruments and progressive metal, the power of record labels when playing live and the rules of classical music.

How has the "Illuminating Heights" CD been received?

JE: The CD has sold very well. The first pressing of the CD is sold out. Originally we ordered 1000 units but, after an initial faulty pressing, we ended up receiving only 840. We have now ordered a second pressing of 1000 units. The CD has received very favourable reviews, about everyone has said that the music is very good and unique. The only negative comments concerns the length of the CD, 25 minutes is too short. Currently, we're very busy working on a full length CD.

In which ways have you been selling the CD?

JE: Predominantly, mail order companies in Germany, the USA, Japan, and France have been selling the CD. Another possibility is to buy the CD through Sunblaze homepage on the Internet. Some mail order companies have sold a lot of the copies without any advertising. It's been getting around by word of mouth. The only CD stores that are selling it are in our home town Kaiserslautern. We brought the CDs to the stores ourselves but thus far we haven't been to other cities. The first people to buy the CDs were the ones who were already familiar with my previous band Dividing Horizons. Then new buyers had to be introduced to Sunblaze through the Internet and reviews in magazines. About five CDs are now sold every week, mostly through the homepage. About 200 people visit our homepage every week. Sometimes I wonder where they all come from.

The artwork and packaging on the CD are very beautiful. Could you tell us something about the origins of the artwork on the CD? Do you expect problems with the copyrights?

ME: The artwork is a combination of design drawings that our singer Matthias Pfaff has been doing for this study and elements of a painting by Albert Belasco. He's an English artist that we all admire very much. My mother knows a bit about art, and I stumbled on the painting whilst looking through a catalogue. The painting is entitled "Demeter" and is one of the fine paintings that Belasco has done. Actually, we're not allowed to copy the painting outright, so we had to give it our interpretation. We've been informed that we won't get into trouble with the copyright, because we scaled the dimensions of the painting and combined it with Matthias' work.

JE: Thus far, the artist has not seen our interpretation of his artwork. I would gladly like to show it to him but maybe he would not like it.

What is the relation between the artwork and the title of the CD?

JE: It does not have much to do with the title of the CD, but it has a lot to do with the two songs that are on the CD. The lyrical topic of one of the songs is based on the beauty of nature.

MK: Perhaps I should explain the whole concept of the CD. The initial idea of the CD was to present an outtake of our total musical set. It therefore only lasts 25 minutes. The total musical set should be about one to one and a half hour. At this point, we only have 45 minutes though. At first, we only wanted to present the 25

minutes to record labels and not really sell it on a large scale. But the layout of the CD was so exceptional that we decided to sell it to the public as well. The whole musical set revolves around the theme of the earth. The music on the current is an acoustical outtake of the CD. The music does not show the extremes of Sunblaze, the other songs are in the same style. The cover artwork is also part of the whole theme. In the artwork, you can see the flowers, the leaves, and the sun with the colors yellow and blue. The painting fits very well with this theme.

I find the lyrics to the song "Distant Reaches" a bit contradictory. Is it about technology or the fear of technology?

JE: The topic of the song is "technology" and the fear of technology. However, we do not condemn technology, because we use it ourselves for the music, the recordings, the Internet. The lyrics should, however, contain several warnings. But Martin can explain this better since he wrote the lyrics.

ME: It should be concluded that there is no turning back from the current state of technology. Furthermore, nobody wants to turn back. The question then is: where does it lead to? Why can't we stop at a certain point and say that this is enough. In reality, it doesn't work that way, everything keeps on going faster and further. There's a personal fear that we might run over the top in the end and there is no way back.

Do you have a specific fear of technology?

ME: No, not really. Although I do fear that people don't think about technology that much. People use a telephone card without considering the fact that a lot of technology is behind it. Previously, a coin was used to operate a telephone, now a card with a computer chip needs to be used. It is actually a nice and comfortable system but it also causes a lot of unnecessary waste.

"Big brother is watching" is becoming more and more evident.

ME: The surveillance facilities are becoming even better. It is very uncomfortable to know that everything is being watched. For example, with a push of a button all your life's achievements or criminal activities are listed. Another example is that when once my car was missing, I went to the local police station and the computer showed that it was towed away. The officer could tell me the exact position where my car was standing including date and time it was put there.

The music on "Illuminating Heights" is part of a larger concept. How far are you currently with the whole concept? Some of the songs have already been written in 1996. It seems to me that you take quite a while to write new songs.

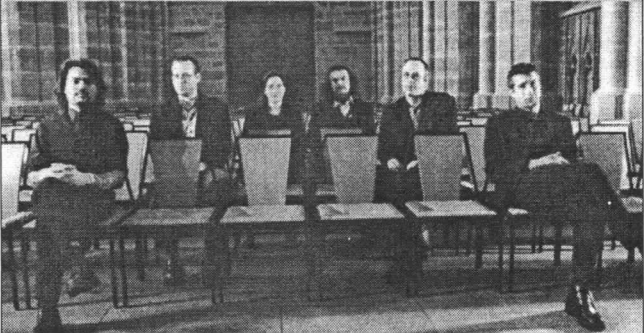
MK: We have about 45 minutes of music with the drums, guitars, bass, keyboards, and vocals. We're now busy incorporating violins, clarinets, cellos, and a choir into the music. We estimate that by Christmas 1998 we'll have about an hour of music with all instruments. We'll then also be ready to play live. We now have about three or four songs that haven't been released

yet.

JE: The main reason is that the pre-production of the current CD put us back about a year. We kept on trying new equipment, the bass and guitar parts were recorded three times. We tried to improve our sound every time. MK: We have learned a lot through the recordings. The CD is not bad, but the next CD will be much better. On the next CD, we'll certainly use acoustic drums instead of the electronic drums we used on this CD.

How are you going to implement the other classical instruments into the music? You can't practice with them, can you?

MK: The guest violinist on the debut CD is now a permanent member of the band and she practices with us. She also writes the music for the other orchestral instruments to paper. The musicians will then receive the partitions and they'll be able to play it. They don't need to practice for months



to play with us. In the symphony orchestra, they're used to practising a few times and then playing it live. Everyone plays from paper.

Won't there be a problem that there are too many instruments?

MK: No I don't think so, a symphony orchestra has 60 musicians and that works as well. One thing is for sure, on the next CD there will be more musicians.

JE: The current choir is 6 people and on the next CD there will definitely be more singers.

How will you perform the music live?

MK: That depends on the record label that finances the music. We're working together with several symphony musicians who are willing to take part in our live performances. The problem is that no record label will pay for such a show. In a tour bus there are 17 seats. Seats are needed for a mixer, one or two roadies, a person handling the merchandise, our band, and then there are only a few places left for the orchestra. The end goal is to tour the theatres in Germany with a symphony orchestra. However I don't know if there is a market for such music. I think young people like to have fun and jump around. I would like all halls to be all-seaters. When in the front row fans suddenly start jumping then something must be wrong with our music. ME: When I like a band then I just like to stand around and listen to the music. I sometimes get agitated when the audience claps their hands or the dancing and go-pogoing is too violent. When I was young, I also went to see an Iron Maiden show and was

headbanging all night. At the end of the show, someone told me that it was exciting when the mascot Eddie came but I hadn't even seen it. I didn't consciously experience the concert and I promised myself that I would enjoy the next show. That's why I understand the people that do the same.

JE: The band that we are often compared to is Rage when the symphony aspect is considered. The reason is that they also have a symphonic orchestra with them on tour. I went to a Rage concert last year and the audience was jumping around and people were stagediving even though there was an orchestra on the stage. That is not our goal and that is why I think we have little in common with Rage.

What is the role of a record label when a band like Sunblaze wants to play live?

MK: Without a record label, it is almost impossible to play live. If we rent a

place to play then at most 30 people will show up. The only chance to play live is as an opener for a bigger band. The power of the record labels is quite large. For example, when you are friends with a popular band that wants to take you as a supporting act for their tour, then the record label won't go along with it because they want a band with a record label that can pay money to tour with them. For a two week tour, they'll have to pay 50000-100000 DM support in order to be able to play. We can't pay such amounts of money. The record label of the headlining act doesn't care who the front band is and is only interested in getting a support that attracts a large audience and has the money for the support slot. I've had the same experience as a guest bass-player for the band Dark. They were on a European tour together with Therion and a few others and, as a young band with a limited fan base, they had to pay to be able to be on the tour.

Your music is an interaction of the different members of Sunblaze, while the lyrics for each song are from one individual person. How are your songs written?

ME: It is not really so that one person has written all the lyrics to a song. When another person has an idea for the lyrics it doesn't imply that those ideas can't be used. Jorg has also participated in the lyrics for which I've received the writing credits.

MK: Jorg and Martin are responsible for the lyrics. However, there is an allocation of responsibilities in the band. He or she does what he or she does best. For example, Jorg and Martin often have the best ideas for the

hard-boiled

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keyboards, guitar, vocal, and harmonic parts and lyrics. The drummer and I have the most ideas for the complex transitions between parts and breaks. The violinist is responsible for the whole orchestra. The songs are often written as follows: either Jorg or Martin have made a vocal or keyboard melody at home and play it to us in the rehearsal room, or the drummer and I have made a middle part and we listen to it together. We decide what fits with that part. The songs are roughly expanded during rehearsals but only the lengths, the tones, the rhythms, and the harmonies. At home, the song is fine-tuned and the notes are transcribed. When the individual parts are introduced to the band we don't know yet how long the song will be: 4 minutes 30 or twelve minutes. We work on a song until we reach the point that we can say that it is finished.

I find it hard to believe that in your music there is actually a time when you are completely satisfied, that a song is really finished.

JE: Yes, there is a point when we are totally satisfied with a song. But we have high demands for our own songs and are not satisfied with the music as early as maybe some other band.

MK: It is possible that a song that has been written in 1996 of which the notes are all transcribed, is still modified when the recording starts. When I've had the time to distance myself from the song, I'm not afraid to change several bass parts with new melodies when I'm inspired to play a better melody.

Let's change the topic. Novels are much more popular in terms of sales than a book with short poems. On the other hand, albums with short songs

are more popular than concept albums. Isn't this contradictory? Why can people in general take the time to read a book for a few hours and not take the effort to listen to a whole concept album?

JE: It depends on the musical direction. Metal music isn't sold as much as pop, hip hop, or dance. That type of music is played on the radio and needs a certain length for it to be played. The music is tailor-made for the listeners. It is held simple using the ABAB structure while such music sells.

MK: 90% of the music listeners don't think about music and don't want to think about music. They're at peace with the fact that such music can just be enjoyed.

How did your violinist Elisabeth become involved in the music? Her musical background is most probably a lot different than yours.

MK: She was a colleague at work and I met her by chance a couple of years ago. Her background is classical music. I played her some progressive music and although it wasn't her type of music, she respected the work and level of complexity. Now she also listens to Dream Theater for example. From then on, I asked her to play with us and since then she's become as enthusiastic as we are. Through her we've become acquainted with a lot of classical musicians. Her father is an opera singer and he might have a guest appearance on our next CD.

ME: The classical musicians can degrade us easily with their knowledge of notes and music theory. At first, I thought they would despise us for our lack of knowledge and the fact that we don't

transcribe our music. But that wasn't the case, they enjoy playing with us and we enjoy playing with such professionalists.

JE: When classical music theory is applied to our music, our songs do not have a very good build-up. I'm currently following theory lessons and I played our music to my teacher. He wasn't very impressed because according to the rules of classical music it wasn't very good. There are rules how to combine a violin and a guitar in a song with which we didn't comply. Another example is that different sections of a choir that differ an octave or a fifth are not allowed to sing the same melody. This sounds terrible to a teacher although it is done often in modern music and might not sound bad to the ears of an average listener.

That might imply that the more you know concerning music theory, the less you can enjoy it.

ME: That's true. When you know too much and it contradicts the rules, then it takes something away from your enjoyment whilst listening to music. I've heard from classical musicians who've become too encompassed in the theory for them to enjoy the music. In the past, several composers have consciously broken the rules and they've then been severely criticised, Beethoven for example. Subsequently, several rules had to be changed.

MK: Beethoven has said that a rule is only valid until he decided it needed to be changed.

[E-mail: sunblaze@iname.co]

After the release of "Stille", you spent quite a long time on the road. How was this tour, tell us more about it. Which concert was the highlight in this trip? How big audience did usually attend your gigs?

The last tour was absolutely smashing, all worked out better than we hoped. We had really a good combination of bands, as we were on the road with Darkseed, Secret Discovery, and The Gallery. We were also visiting some new places where we haven't been playing earlier like Prague and Paris, which both were great, Prague wasn't so full, but it was fun to play there. We always love to make longer tours, as you have the feeling of being in a totally different world, and you have a chance to forget the normal daily life for that time and just enjoy playing music.

The highlight of that tour, in my opinion, was the last concert with all the support bands in Karlsruhe. We really loved to play with the bands and became friends with many of the musicians, and, at this gig, we were like a big family having fun together, the other musicians were coming on stage during the last Lacrimosa songs and were also playing parts (as good as they knew the songs) and it was just crazy and unforgettable. On that tour, we had approximately 500 people at each gig. The amount varied quite much, but mostly we had really good amounts of people coming to see us.

Now Hall Of Sermon has released your live album. Why did you decide to release a live disc, not, for example, "the best of"? You haven't got your "the best of" disc so far either. How would you compare playing live and in the studio?



[by Audrius Ozalas]

Those who say that Lacrimosa are the most successful gothic rock band of the 90's are only partly correct, because their classification as a gothic rock band is questionable. Their latest studio album "Stille", which was recorded with orchestra and various choirs, has combined metal, gothic, and classical music. Listening to this group, I always have an impression of standing in a theatre where emotions play their game and strangely involve a listener to take part. The latest double live album of Lacrimosa has summarized what they have done to this day, which are five studio albums, one live album, three singles, two videos; in other words, already more than enough for the history. We talked to Anne Nurmi trying to know more how Lacrimosa live now, after eight years of the existence.

It was more like an answer to many, many requests from the fans, who had been wishing for a live album; many people had heard that we sound pretty different live than on studio albums, and, as we are not doing concerts so often, just a small part of the fans had a chance to hear us live and therefore we wanted to give a present directly for the fans, as we noticed that the need for a live album was so huge. We also personally wanted to release a live album, as we love the stage feeling and the live versions of the songs; sometimes the songs get a different meaning for us as they get alive through the audience. We are really intensive live though, and, if the audience is also not passive, the concerts can turn into something really unique, which you can also hear on the "Live" album; these moments with the emotions really happened just once as the music lives and develops all the time further. Performing live is much more intensive and creative for us, as in the studio you have to concentrate on playing 100% right and, at the same time, you have to be able to put the emotions in your playing. Live, you can be yourself and present the deepest feelings you personally get from the music while performing. Especially some songs go so close to our hearts, as we are always telling things about our personal lives that it's nearly unbearable to sing them because of the emotions it wakes in us.

For me, "Stille" was really a big surprise for being so orchestral and classical. You have co-operated with the orchestra and the choirs. How did you manage to get out this

situation when performing live, you can't have them on stage, can you?

We want our songs to go live as good as possible. We re-arranged some of them to make them work live. In some cases, we skipped some long instrumental parts or replaced orchestral instruments by a guitar or changed some parts completely. To get the same bombastic sound live, we also use backing tapes in the songs that we don't wish to change too much like "Schakal" or "Stolzes Herz". Bringing a whole orchestra is not possible in most of concert places, so that's the less stressy choice.

Talking more about the recording process, could you describe how it was done? Did these people not from your group only follow your ideas or maybe also add something new? Was it expensive to have all those people? The recording process always follows a certain order: first we come to the studio with a disc, where the finished composed songs are saved, then we check that everything stays the same when transforming the computer data information to the computer the studio uses, and then we invite the musicians to the studio. The musicians are 90% playing exactly what we have already composed, but as we ourselves are not, for example, guitar players, they sometimes can bring their own ideas or play things in a way which is a bit easier for the players. But no musician has it easy with us, we are very critical. Nevertheless, we are open minded to listen to the ideas the musicians have, and if they are good, we use them. For example, our drummer AC is very creative and he sometimes brings very funny things in his playing. We wouldn't like to talk about the studio costs as that's not a theme. Sure, to record the bombastic orchestral stuff and choir parts is not cheap, but when we have a vision of how the music should sound, we want to reach our aim and not to first think, oh boy, how much does it cost! For music, we are willing to sacrifice a lot, if the result is a good sounding album, to which we can listen to without any problems after many years.

Is "Stille" for you the very best album, as many critics say now? Could you name it as the highlight of all your creation and the natural product of progression? It is surely the best album technically and maybe also musically so far, and it's, at the moment, also the closest album to our hearts, as it's also the latest studio album, but from time to time our favorite album changes. At the moment, my favorite album is our new "Live" album, as it's bringing all those great live moments back into my memory again. We always try our best to bring out the best quality of music we are able to create and "Stille" is the best album we were able to do that time.

Many also say that "Stille" is stylistically and lyrically a return to your earlier creation. How could you comment this? What did cause this return to your roots? We are going through time cycles which often repeat. When we were composing "Stille" material, we were feeling very close to the times like Tilo was going through on "Einsamkeit" album: this despair, longing, and also hope to see the light at the end of the tunnel was comparable to those feelings like on "Einsamkeit" or "Angst". I guess these roots are so strong, that they will be jumping up once in a while in the future as well.

"Stille" happens to be a concept album. Can you describe its lyrical conception? Is it meant to be a prolongation of "Inferno"? Already the names "Stille" and "Inferno" have different tempers... Actually, our albums are always continuing, it's like the last song of the previous album is connected to the first song on the new album, and so it's with "Inferno" and

"Stille". We don't like to analyze the lyrics, as it's much more interesting to hear what the listeners find from the lyrics themselves. We already heard stories, how some of the lyrics were helping people out of some impossible looking situations, which is great for us to hear! The basic idea that is maybe concentrated in the lyrics is to follow your dreams and, if you fall, to find the power to stand up and continue from the bottom again.

The classical influence on your creation is evident. Do you often listen to classical music and who are your favorite composers?

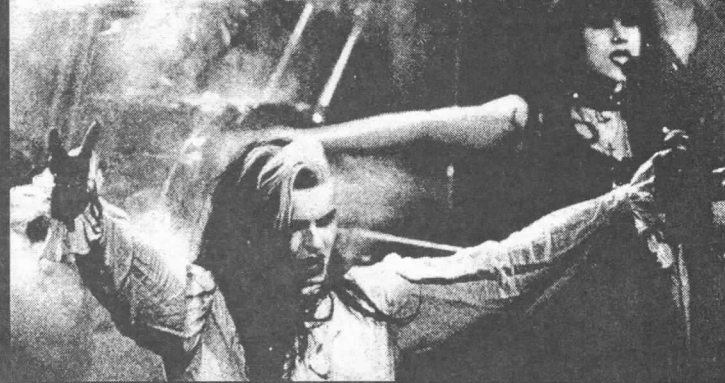
Yes, it's true we really do listen to classical music quite often. As probably everyone already knows, our favorite composer is Mozart and then we listen to Bach, Krieger, Vivaldi, and stuff like that. We are also listening to a lot of operas and musicals like "Phantom of the Opera" or "Cats" and stuff like that.

Symphonic music is more and more incorporated into the modern (especially heavier) music. What albums were this can be detected do impress you most? It's really a numerous amount of bands that nowadays combine classical influences and heavier sounds together. Some better, some worse. I don't actually have a favorite band that would be doing the orchestral stuff really great, but I like the mixture as long as the classical arrangement is supporting the songs and, if the final result is transparent, it is a pleasure to listen to songs like that. For example, I like stuff that Rage does.

Nowadays Lacrimosa seem to combine elements from various musical worlds, be it metal, gothic, or symphonic music. To which scene do you reckon yourselves most of all? I know, it is hard to put yourselves in one frame, but always there is a concrete audience to which the production is more or less dedicated. Now you have success even in the mainstream charts, do you still pay attention to the underground scene?

What, we are successful also in the mainstream scene also, I didn't know it! No, honestly that far we aren't yet. We are still a pretty small underground band with humble thoughts and reasonable future plans. Our aim is not to become the number one band in the world, we love doing our music and are really happy to reach a certain level like with our "Live" album now, where we can also open doors over this limiting category thinking to people who maybe before didn't find anything from our music, but now started to get interested through the live versions of the songs. We are also very happy that we have reached a lot of listeners from the metal scene, we really love when, in concerts, the metal people are behaving like they feel, singing along, dancing, or clapping their hands. Sometimes the gothic people are a bit too shy or narrow minded (nothing against gothic-styled people, we are also a part of them), that they don't dare to be in concerts like they would like to, after all most of them want to still be "cool" to not to lose their image. That we don't wish to support, as then the band on stage is feeling like the music would be going inside in one ear and coming out again from the other ear. We want to make the concerts with the audience as they always influence our feelings on stage.

The main language for your music is German. Why? Aren't you afraid that it can narrow your possible audience a bit? Does it mean that your main audience is German-speaking countries? Is it possible



for you to enter the US market? Have you ever toured there?

Everyone, after all, is able to express himself best with his mother tongue. It's not always easy to talk about your inner feelings (what we do with our lyrics) and Tilo can express himself best in his mother tongue German. I have been writing my lyrics in English and not in Finnish, which is my mother tongue. Of course, the fact that most of the songs are sang in German is limiting the listeners and therefore we have the biggest fan base in the German-speaking area. But like we discovered at the gig we did in Mexico in May, it principally doesn't matter in which language the lyrics are sang. The people anyway have the booklets of the CDs where the lyrics are translated, and, since also the German lyrics are printed in booklets, they had learned to sing along also in German, which was a fantastic feeling in Mexico. The music is strong enough to break any language barriers! We haven't been touring anywhere in USA, just this single gig in Mexico, but we get fanmail from USA all the time, so it's just a question



of time, when we go to visit them!

Do you take a supporting act when going on tour? Whom you were touring with and who decides which band goes with you? What are your fave bands now?

We like to take supporting bands when we tour, latest tour we were doing was with Secret Discovery, Darkseed, and The Gallery, which was a great combination. Tilo and I mostly discuss together with our tour agency All Access (Hamburg) about the choice of the bands which would come into question for a support for us. Of course, we always choose only the bands that we also like and that more or less fit together. We have a lot of favorite bands, but to name a few: Atriosis, Atrocity, The Gathering, Secret Discovery, Bauhaus, Tiamat, and so on, the list would be endless if I would name them all.

The group has a strong erotic image. Do you feel that your group has a big erotic

potential or maybe it was chosen to attract attention?

We prefer to keep our look so that the audience has something to watch on stage. Nothing is more boring and disgusting than to see bands playing on stage wearing clothes they wear everyday. Blue jeans and white T-shirts we don't even own, so we prefer to show our inner selves with our style to the people, like with our outfits which is always a part of us. We don't plan the style, that's been developing throughout the years and if people find it erotic, that's fine. We have nothing against that, but we are not going to perform on a sex happening or something like that because of our image. We are what we feel.

Who has created your logo and the picture it goes with? What does it symbolize? For me it has a theatrical aspect.

The clown was created by Tilo and it's presenting the music in a more concrete way, something to see. As you can't touch music, the clown expresses the feelings the music is presenting, to see the laughter behind the tears, and to imagine what is behind the mask. The clown also shows the conflict we sometimes have with ourselves. It's also inspired by Charlie Chaplin movies, which are very close in the atmosphere to Lacrimosa's music.

What is the meaning of "Copycat" and at whom it is directed?

"Copycat" is written to a person who hurt us in a very cruel way, it's a song where we were letting out the aggressions to be able to continue, to find the way to happiness and self-trust again.

You have visited many countries on tour. Which of them have left the biggest impression and where you wouldn't like to play live?

We haven't been touring yet in that many countries, that we could say which is the best place ever. Lately, we had the best concert in Mexico, also the country is amazing with all the ancient Aztec ruins and monumental old buildings, but we also love to play like in Belgium and Germany, just as long as the people are open hearted and let themselves go to concerts, we love each country. But I wouldn't like to play live in any country which is permanently suffering from war time, like all the religious wars in Israel, Iraq, Iran, and so on. That's madness of the people.

What are your future plans? When the new disc will be out? And are you preparing to do it in a more different way than "Stille"?

We are composing new material and plan to go to the studio to record them. The new album is planned to come out sometime in 1999, let's see how quick we are in the studio. The new material is actually not directly comparable to "Stille" album material, since we as persons have been developing, so has the music with us. At the moment, I can only confess that it will be quite a big surprise for many fans...

VAUXDVIHL

[by Giedrius Slivinskas]

Can you run through what was happening after the release of "To Dimension Logic"?

After the release of "To Dimension Logic", our first album, in 1994, the band had already started to plan a second album. Our first took 12 days to record but came to an abrupt halt when we ran out of money and favor with our engineer, Doug Saunders. The whole band in the end was kicked out of the mixing room, apart from yours truly, who seemed to get along with Doug just fine. It was a very trying experience, and I think the guys felt a little bit cheated in the end.

In came Mr. Jason Kells with a little bit of money and big ideas, offering to help the band as a friend at his own risk and expense, whilst we were on our knees begging with open hands. It was the biggest mistake we ever made and one which left some band members still to this day very angry in a dangerous kind of way (if you know what I mean).

The album was finished and a promotional trip to Japan a couple months later followed, where we met with retailers, distributors, and the odd record label gained an eventual licensing distribution deal with Zero Corporation.

A deal we signed with a label who definitely lacked the same communication skills Jason Kells was desperately in need of. It was something that was very evident even in that early period; along with the fact that Jason knew the album had a distinct and original sound he could capitalise on. It sounds familiar, doesn't it?

There was a 3-song demo in 1996, right? What songs were on it?

The 96 demo saw the exit of Jason Kells because of his notorious lack of communication skills. But we gained the professional attitude of a very talented producer and friend, Mark Rachele. The demo contained three songs which still to this day were recorded with an intensity that is ahead of its time. The response was very positive and we gained many new and excited fans of our music.

"Alienation", "Plots (True or False) are a Necessary Thing?", and "Isis/Pekt" were the songs on the demo.

"Alienation" was renamed and appears on the new release, "VOG" as "For the Son Has Gone to Hell"; the other two will be released on an album. The first album was still being exploited by Jason Kells at that period, and we never had any control of the product, as Jason had all the pressings that he had paid for in his possession and still blames the band for ripping so called Vauxdvihl fans off. Unfortunately, you, Vauxdvihl fans, were

"To Dimension Logic", the debut album of Australian band Vauxdvihl, was highly evaluated by many, and, for example, the undersigned thinks that it gets among the best progressive metal albums ever. However, this album was followed by a lot controversy and misunderstandings since its release in 1995. We heard about all kinds of unbelievable and unexplainable style changes and break ups, the crisis with the management. There were no releases except the 3-song demo which came out in 1996 and which was difficult to get hold of. I have read several impressions of some puzzled reviewers, and it was hard to understand what kind of music was recorded on the demo.

News about more constructive events reached us in 1997, when two ex-members (bass player Eddie Katz and guitarist Paul Read) announced the birth of Where Echoes End (see interview in Edge of Time #12), a new project which explores musical areas totally different than progressive metal. At that time, there was still nothing known about the future of

Vauxdvihl. Things started to move more smoothly along in the beginning of 1998, and Paul e-mailed me saying that two remaining Vauxdvihl members, guitarist/vocalist Fab Gallen and drummer Chris Delov, decided to continue and were going to release a new EP "VOG". After some time, I received a copy of it (see review), and it appeared to be really different stylistically from "To Dimension Logic". Not a big surprise because we knew it would be different. I had plenty questions to Vauxdvihl and contacted them for an interview. Fab and Chris kindly agreed to answer some myths and rumors about the band.

conned just as easily as the band was.

Just a word of advice, 'bootleggers' are everywhere, and they don't give a shit about music. They only care about lining their pockets with money, off the back of the talented musicians who create and inspire. As far as the band is concerned, the first album was just an expensive bootleg.

So, cherish it. Jason Kells certainly did, especially the 1,000 copies he had pressed without the band knowing. Thanks 'Friend'.

Then bass player Eddie and guitarist Paul formed Where Echoes End. Do you like their music? It isn't something that you personally wanted to go for?

Actually Paul Read from Where Echoes End played and was in the band for a second time at the time of recording the 96 demo. I originally formed Vauxdvihl with Paul and Eddie going back to early 92, so it wasn't surprising to hear that they were working together, they've always been great friends and we all bump into each other at the occasional, traditional Australian Barbeque.

For those of you who don't know, the "Barbee", as we call it, is an occasion where Australians get together to share laughs, consume vast amounts of alcohol, and cook numerous portions of meat over an open fire. Some extremely memorable nights, I tell you! The Advent of Where Echoes End! Well, let me start by saying that I hope the echoes never end! Their debut album is definitely layered in its composition, and Eddie's strengths have always been his attention to detail. Paul's writing on the album came at a later stage, but seems to fit the overall picture quite inconspicuously. I don't think it is something that would evolve in our songwriting, but I do think it is a very strong debut that has some extremely powerful moments. I definitely think that it will be the first of many echoes! Good luck guys!

Why did guitarist Frederic leave, what is he doing now?

Quite simply, the guy was a bit of an enigma, although a very talented and intense musician. His contribution to "To Dimension Logic" was important, but from day one we were travelling on a different path, both creatively and personally. In the end, it became a bit of tug of war, and we definitely had some pretty heated and intense discussions on the direction the band was going to take. He left to pursue his passion, jazz fusion and only last year put out his first album. Also, he contributed some ideas in "For the Son Has Gone to Hell" on "VOG", our new release.

We don't really see him anymore but

wish him all the best.

Stacy Handchild, the singer on "To Dimension Logic", was never a real member of Vauxdvihl. Why? Did you ever try to get him in? When and why did you ways separate? Are you in contact with him now?

Stacy's contribution on the album was purely as a guest performer, and he never had any intentions of joining the band, although we asked him on a couple of occasions to join. He did the Australian production of "Jesus Christ Superstar", and it was shortly after the Australian tour that I approached him to sing on the album. Vocally, he made the album what it is, a powerful and melodic experience that we all thought was extremely well executed, considering the trying times and circumstances. I still see him socially, and we remain good friends to this day, and from what he tells me, he is working on a project which is more inspired by the doom-laden rock of Black Sabbath.

From the "To Dimension Logic" line-up, only you and Chris are left. Is it because you are the most dedicated to Vauxdvihl?

Well, it seems as though now we have the perfect formula, as far as what works for us as individuals and musicians. Chris and I are Vauxdvihl in every sense of the word, we work and pay for our recordings, write and choose material which best represents us at the time; TIME being a very powerful force in regards to emotion and mood. We are both very comfortable with the situation as it stands, because we've met a lot of talented musicians in the last couple of years who are a lot more appreciative of where we are coming from as a creative force and are willing to collaborate without getting too intense about their input.

We are control freaks when it comes to what we do, but it's only because we have a clear vision of what we want Vauxdvihl to achieve. Chris and I came to that realization a while ago now, and I don't think anything is going to change there. Long Live truly independent Music!

Considering songwriting and playing, would you characterize 1996, 1997, and 1998 as difficult years? There were line-up changes, perhaps it was hard to rehearse; there was a crisis between the management...

1996, 1997 were definitely difficult years for us. I went on an emotional rollercoaster ride with my father falling ill to Cancer. It almost finished and killed my creative urge and definitely changed

my perspective on the world and life in general. Add being unemployed for one and a half years to the equation, with no real financial income or egoistical drive; it was very difficult to pursue my most consuming passion. I became very cold and isolated and thoroughly alienated a lot of people from my life.

Chris was one of those people; so considering that the only real time we spent together as musicians and friends was in a recording studio several weekends a year over the space of two years, our friendship and understanding of our endeavour definitely unified and strengthened our love for music. A lot of demons were exorcised on this record and the music and words are testimony to that. This album is dedicated to the memory of my Father, my idol and hero. RIP. Give 'em hell!

Jason Kells, your ex-manager, says that the band didn't take care of orders, people were sending money and weren't receiving the product... How can you comment on this?

The answer to your question, which for intensive purposes is scaled down considerably, is that to everyone out there who believed the lies and bullshit; and made an honest dollar to pay for "To Dimension Logic", we completely and utterly sympathise because still to this day we haven't made a cent from our music. It was a mistake to ever get involved with a supposed friend. But we definitely learnt an important lesson from all of this, and that is: in the world of Capitalism you have no friends. To quote Malcolm X, "The first song is dedicated to you... Sargeant Schlong. Go Fuck Yourself you parasite!!!".

Having in mind that you burned out with your management in the past, what do you plan to do? Control everything yourselves, or hire a new manager?

Vauxdvihl control everything from the recording process to the sale and distribution of our music. "VOG" is released on our own label, Vorpt which is an avenue for future releases whether it be our own music or other interested parties. Any interested parties (lovers of weird music or creators of weird music) will have to deal through the band and label directly.

Vauxdvihl slugs, and buyers must pay up front for a product. With legal representation secured, the band advises that bulk orders will be legally binding and legitimate and only processed upon telegraphic transfer of up to front cost (freight inclusive) into Vauxdvihl bank

account. Upon confirmation of payment, the buyer(s) shall expect a two week waiting period for the product. All payment of stock is negotiable and will be handled in US dollars!

"To Dimension Logic" was released in Japan by Zero. Do you have any clue about the sales in Japan comparing to the sales in Europe and in USA?

Last time I had any communication with Zero, we had told Jason Kells he was no longer involved. Seeing he was withholding information about sales anyway, I took it upon myself to ring Zero up and ask them personally. This was the only information or communication the band had ever had with them in two years.

After reducing one of their German managers to tears, I found out eventually that we'd sold close to 2,000 copies as well as exporting stock to Sweden. Our contract with Zero expired August, 1998, but this doesn't stop us from exporting. We'd sold 2,000 copies in Germany on last report and 500 in the US, about 400 here in Australia. The band are looking at selling about 6,000 copies with this release, and are very confident that if the people who bought the first album open their minds and close their eyes to the music, the band will reach an unstoppable position as far as the release of future Vauxdvihl albums. The Cause of Neglect is here and it's going to pursue its path with or without your help. BELIEVE!

Dominion Records and some mailorder companies stock "To Dimension Logic" in USA, but isn't it strange that no one in Europe licensed the album, when many agreed that the record was very good?

The reason nobody in Europe has been able to get a hold of the record, apart from the German label, Art of Music, is that, I think, the language barrier for Jason was a little too hard to cope with. He always felt more comfortable with his American counterparts. It seems strange though, because there was always more of an interest in Europe even going as far back as our first demo. The response from Europe still to this day is inspiring. It has definitely kept us going, creatively as Vauxdvihl. Maybe it has something to do with our ancestry being European, me being of Italian descent and Chris being Macedonian. Eddie was of German descent, Frederic of French, Stacy, English, and Paul, Scottish. The European connection, I think!

After several difficult years, the new CD is finally out. How do you feel about this?

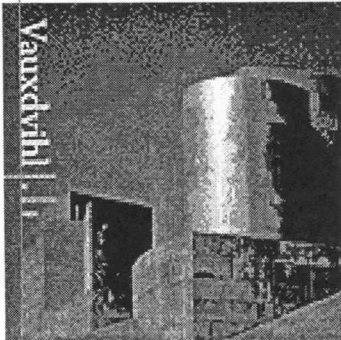
We feel at this stage that we are going to have a pretty good year as far as reaching people's minds and souls throughout the world. The music on "VOG" is not only eclectic but very passionate in its innate form. Hopefully, the prog heads who bought the first album will go out and buy this or at least fax us to tell us they can't relate to it. I must say it is a very personal release and I wouldn't blame the hesitation.

I think it's an album we needed to make to approach the next stage of writing. Music is personal to us and there is no greater pleasure than to get a letter or fax from the other side of the world saying that someone feels the way we do, and relates to our experiences. We feel

we have established our own style and identity, and that to us is gratifying, it keeps us alive.

How would you present the new Vauxdvihl to both old and new fans and people that haven't heard about the band yet?

Vauxdvihl is about never writing the same song twice. It's about mood and dynamics and, most importantly, emotion. The new release will lose the close minded progressive fans! It doesn't



contain any of the cliché high-pitched vocals synonymous with the progressive metal genre (although I still think Stacy was far and away one of the best and most diverse singers of that style, tonally he delivered his vocals in a very laid-back fashion not unlike Bowie or Ian Gillan, and for that reason the album hasn't dated in a vocal context). Too many albums of that genre are absolutely ridiculous and embarrassing to listen to these days. You can so easily hear the cock rock mentality of the vocalist come through which, in our opinion, cheapens and makes the music unoriginal.

We now write songs that are simpler in nature, but evoke more mood and visual imagery. The visual escape in the songs is very much still there, but to be blatantly honest, we couldn't give a shit what people think of the new release. We write music for our own personal pleasure and emotional release, it's an innate form of expression for us, honestly can't be described. It's like mocking Abstract Art (Expressionism) because you can't relate to it. Maybe 'IT' doesn't relate to you... so be 'it'!!!

Vauxdvihl is pure Anarchy; independent, free, impulsive, emotional, and naive. There are no rules for us, except the rules of the satirist, the law unto us where we clearly define ourselves as being musical cartoonists, expressing some of the same views as Annibale Carracci (1560-1609) who said: "Is not the caricaturist's task exactly the same as the classical artist's? Both see the lasting truth beneath the surface of mere outward appearance. Both try to help nature to accomplish its plan. The one may strive to visualise the perfect form and to realise it in his work, the other to grasp the perfect deformity, and thus reveal the very essence of a personality. A good caricature, like every work of art, is more true to life than really itself." We hope you understand our deformity!

Why did the style change? You felt that you wanted to create different music than that of "To Dimension Logic" or was it because "To Dimension Logic" music does not really appeal to the masses?

Why does time (sometimes) change people? Why are some folk slaves to money? Why do the comfortable and

secure live a life of nostalgia? Why do some of us feel comfortable in recognizable clicks?

We changed as people over the last four years, therefore our style of writing has changed and evolved. Mass appeal to us is not important, but it comes so be it. We are very realistic people and can see the bullshit a mile away. To strive to be ourselves, whether it be too abstract or diverse, is our only endeavour. There aren't enough innovators in this world, but, unfortunately, there will always be the sheep that feels comfortable in the flock, following all their lives. There is no need to wait any longer, the slug has finally arrived, and it's about to suck the wound completely dry... but most importantly, it's about to inspire and awaken the sub-conscious of its followers.

What lessons have you learned from the debut album concerning recording, production, promotion, etc.

That total creative control for a band is a paramount to its identity. Look at the Floyds, Zeppelins, Sabbaths, and Beatles of yesteryear, that was musical integrity and variety. They are the bands that are still inspiring music today and still remain timeless. Forget the Prodigy's, Spice Girls, and Oasis of this world. They're all marketing experiments that have brainwashed the ignorant majority with massmedia hype. Hype is fake and empty, it's an illusion which fades into oblivion just like a cloud before one's eyes. Hopefully, this music fan of once before is still here with us, and has learnt to decipher between original talent and second rate recycled shit!!! Recording, production, and promotion are a secondary issue for an independent band with very little funds like us. Belief is our weapon, but, as for the above bands and their ilk, all they needed to do was share a line of coke with the right person, or spread the old legs open for a ride to fame and fortune. Fair enough if Suede were the biggest band in the world, that we could handle and respect, but it's obvious that the people at the top like mindless puppets they can play with. I say bring on Punch and Judy and let them start fucking... to the Funeral Party!

Was the new CD recorded at the same place as "To Dimension Logic"?

No, it was recorded 200 meters from the sound of crashing waves, hailing winds, and brilliant red sunsets. A place where you contemplate the passing of time and space; a place where you realize how infinite and minute our existence on this earth is. A place where you make the most of Time. All made possible by Mr. Mark Rachelle, producer, engineer, and friend. Remember the name, for we shall never forget his passion and energy and love from the most powerful force in the world... MUSIC!

"To Dimension Logic" belongs to the past, but how do you look at this album today? Many consider it one of the best prog metal albums ever...

We look at "To Dimension Logic" as a first dimension somewhat, the first outing. We have let go of its hand and are now walking freely, at peace with ourselves and proud of our first footsteps. Its melody and power have a place in our hearts forever, for it is Our Melody and Power, and soon not only you will have experienced it, but a new

breed of listeners with the same hearts as ours. The lovers of music shall return to take us into the future! Long live Punch and Judy!!!

Were there any releases before "To Dimension Logic"? Any demos?

No!!! Sorry, but I'm sure we could organize something. Maybe Jason Kells could cook something up for you. After all, he is running the OFFICIAL VAUXDVIVHL WEB PAGE, and, on last glance, he was even selling Penis Enlargement Kits. I think you can even purchase your very own officially "Forged" Metallica Damaged Inc. Poster. Be quick, grand sale, grand sale... be quick!!! While law suits are pending!

Who played on the new CD besides you and Chris? Are there any tracks off the 3-song demo '96 on it?

Paul Read (Where Echoes End) played the backing track and co-wrote "Prognosis: Poor Me Syndrome". Mark van Nooten, a cello player, played some bastardized and disharmonic stuff on "Prognosis" and "For the Son Has Gone to Hell". Evan Harris plugged his bass into a keyboard for a couple of songs. The only song off the 96 demo on the release is "For the Son Has Gone to Hell" which before was titled "Alienation".

Do you have to be in some special mood to create songs? Do the new songs represent some different states of mind, different time periods?

I think I've also covered this question, TIME being the operative word. Time, Time, Time.

Are there plans for Vauxdvihl to play live?

There is absolutely no interest here in Australia, but we are writing an album worth of material which is more geared at less production from a live sense, so as we could travel over to Europe and do the Gypsy thing. It is going to happen sometime very soon with or without help of other interested parties. Europe is definitely our market and I hope one day to base Vauxdvihl there for good. One year and a half ago, we were auditioning guitar players for the band. A fellow named Nick Tounge applied for the spot, but we'd chosen someone who'd done the whole GIT thing in the US. Anyway, Nick and I became very good friends and whenever he'd get the opportunity, he would ask how things were going with the chosen Nick Jobsen, I'd say fine, but I knew things weren't working with Nick Jobsen. Nick Tounge loved Vauxdvihl and wanted to join desperately but couldn't wait any longer, so he sold all his material possessions except his guitar and enrolled into a course at GIT in the USA. He was there for six months and wrote on a regular basis, but I wasn't surprised when he told me he met Steve Vai's manager and was asked to do an internship on the whole G3 American and Australian Tour as Steve Vai's and Mike Kenneley's guitar tech. Eventually, it lead to him playing keyboards and third guitar live on stage every night for a whole year. He made a lot of wise friends and gained a wealth of experience showing that belief and attitude are two very powerful things.

Some think that "let the music do the

talking" is right, others say that the presentation is also very important. What can you say from your experience?

I'd definitely say the music is the most important element of a release, but marketing being what it is today, especially considering that there is such an evident lack of original talent around, it seems that it is only marketing that is relied upon in regards to selling music. The only thing apart from the music that we spend money on is in the presentation of the band, the package in which the music is encased. We can't afford to market the record nor do we want to.

We prefer the record to establish itself through word of mouth, a much more inspiring thing for the musician/artist to come to terms with.

Have you been following the latest happenings in the metal scene?

Heavy metal oriented music has spanned a good 35-40 years and somehow I don't think it's going to end, but bands like Machine Head, Soulfly, Biohazard, Fear

Factory, and Korn offer nothing but one-dimensional boring songwriting which comes across as being pretentiously heavy. The Heavy Guitar Riff can be such a copped out in the wrong hands. As far as song oriented heavy rock/metal is concerned, it is dead for me. No one will ever replace bands like Led Zeppelin, Black Sabbath, Scorpions, Venom, Celtic Frost, Voivod, Destruction, Ronnie James Dio, Slayer, Queensryche, early Savatage, Bathory, Possessed, Mercyful Fate, Iron Maiden, Rainbow, Blue Oyster Cult, Van Halen, Alice Cooper, Motorhead, early Metallica and Megadeth. Coroner, Sea Hafs, Accept, Psychotic Waltz, Death Angel, Kiss, Aerosmith, Thin Lizzy, Deep Purple, Napalm Death, Carcass... they are all the originators and have created their own niche in heavy rock/metal history. The rest are followers and even though, offer shades of originality, never seem to shake off their influences, most being their above-mentioned favorite bands.

I just don't understand how you can put out an album that represents you as a

person and show so little emotion, other than pure aggression. That's where heavy music's at right now. I personally think these guys listen too much to Front Line Assembly, the music's so anal and repressed.

The one thing with these American bands I just don't understand is where the aggression comes from. They all sit there with their clothing endorsements, all clones of one another, and obviously get pissed off because the range of clothing wasn't black enough. Sorry, I forgot the clothes make the man!

Other than occasionally hearing the crap that's coming out, myself or Chris don't really keep informed with what is happening in the metal scene overseas. We are so far away from the rest of the world that most touring bands leave Australia off the touring schedule, so even a good band is hard to catch. We just saw Ozzy Osbourne for the first time a couple of months ago, so you figure it out, the guy's only been around for 30 years and his name is 'Ozzy', a word we're all familiar with down here. We are listening to bands like The Young

Gods, David Bowie, Monster Magnet, early Jethro Tull, The Pixies, Joy Division, Laibach, The Smiths, The Cure, Swans, Depeche Mode, Bruckner, Neubauten, Diamanda Galas, Harold Budd, David Sylvian and Robert Fripp, early Roxy Music, Cypress Hill to the latest Goa-trance and slow dance.

The new album may not apply to some of the old fans, so, in this aspect, you will have to build a new base and it may not be easy. Do you look optimistically at the future of Vauxdvihl?

The slug known as Vauxdvihl has moved slowly up until... now. Its speed has hastened, but only until it reaches the site of decay, the cause of neglect. On its arrival, it will return to its sluggish ways, consult the advice of the Threeheaded Lovechild and then proceed to slowly suck... the wound completely... dry!

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How are the things? Is "Penguin Dust" going well?

I am running out of my first batch of "Penguin Dust". It is likely that a label will be taking over manufacturing and distribution. At least I have my fingers crossed. It's too strong of an album to be left unheard.

The new album turned out more song-oriented, the songs have simpler structures. Did you want to write such a stuff earlier? For my taste, "For Madmen Only" was more varied and more complex...

"Penguin Dust" was written and recorded by myself for the most part, so I didn't have endless jam sessions with a band to experiment with the arrangements. Thus, the songs are more to the point. No room for boredom.

Why have other members left the band (except for Poindexter)? Weren't they satisfied with the new material?

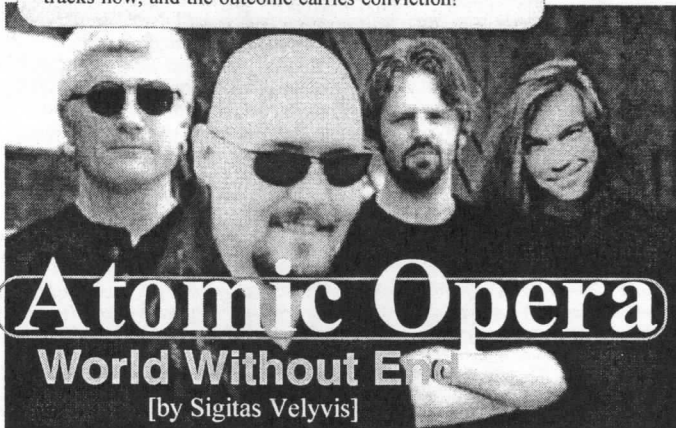
It had nothing to do with material. The songs were written after they left. Jonathan & Jonas got married and got real jobs... kids and benefits. Mark has quit since the CD came out for similar personal reasons. It is not easy to stay committed to being in a band. I have a new, wonderful band of players who are anxious to tour (Europe!) and make more records. They make guest appearances on "Penguin Dust" and now have joined the band.

"Feverdream" was recorded in 1991. Why didn't you use this song for the previous album? I read in the band's bio that you had recorded a great bunch of tracks through years? Weren't they good enough to be pressed on the CD?

It is a different song called "Feverdream". The songs are good, but they are old songs. I should release them as an album by themselves. I write too many songs. I guess that is a good problem, but I always love the more recent stuff the most. I may call this new release "Alpha & Oranges".

I noticed one thing: after King's X, Galactic

Frank Hart and Atomic Opera are back with the new CD. "Penguin Dust" is the title of the second album, and if you liked the previous release "For Madmen Only", you will love their new output, too. Some members have left this excellent band, so "Penguin Dust" is almost a kind of Frank's solo record. That's why you will not find a song of "New Dreams" calibre on it, Frank Hart prefers shorter, groovier and simpler tracks now, and the outcome carries conviction!



Cowboys, and Atomic Opera had separated from Sam Taylor, their music changed in one or another way. Do you agree with that? I think, Sam Taylor gave the bands a specific touch, and on top of that he was a good arranger...

He is talented, and he adds whatever he adds. Yes, when things change they are not the same. Once things are not the same, it is not healthy to wish they were. King's X's best album is "Dogman" in my opinion (no Sam) and Galactic's best album is "The Horse That Bud Bought" (no Taylor).

Do the steady comparisons to King's X and Galactic Cowboys annoy you?

Probably not as much as it would annoy those who compare me to them if they knew the way it makes them look to me (un-educated). Besides that, I am honored to be in such good company. (They could be comparing me to Hanson)

Can you tell me something about lyrics to each song of "Penguin Dust"?

Yes. But, if I thought I could improve the way they say what they are saying... I would have written them differently. So I won't.

How do these commentaries and quotations after each lyrics come into being? How do you choose them?

I make them up to help people further understand what the song is about. And it gives me something to say in concert when My guitar goes out of tune.

You wrote the lyrics to "For Madmen Only" together with Allison Smythe. Will she be involved in your future records?

I will record more songs that are either based on her poems, or that she helped me to rewrite. I don't believe I need that service any longer. (and neither does she)

As I know, you studied literature. What experiences did you gain during those years? Do they help you while you are writing lyrics? Everything helps me while I am writing lyrics. I considered forgetting everything that I learned in college before I wrote my songs... but, I realized that would be silly.

What bands and artists can you mention as your biggest influences?

William Ackerman, Tom Waits, Vivaldi, and The Spice Girls. (I learn as much from bad music as I do from good)

Where did you discover this typical part singing for the first time? Some people compare it with Beatles, but I think its origin is somewhere else... Handel & Crosby, Stills, & Nash. Bulgarian woman's choirs are cool, too.

Atomic Opera has always attracted attention of Christian music press and fans. Some of them call Atomic Opera a Christian band. Can you identify with this? To my mind, it's a very tight description. I believe Jesus is who He says he is.

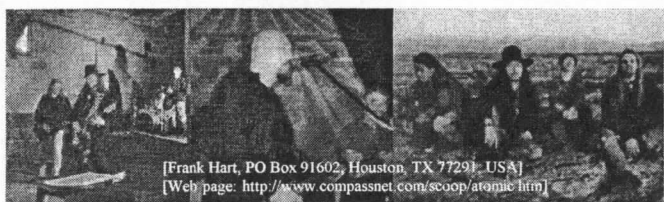
I'm not interested in helping Christians to further the tiny subculture of music that is basically mediocre propaganda. We are not the rated G, Walt Disney version of some non-religious band. I am not sure what you mean.

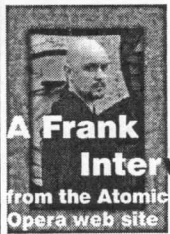
I read "Frank Interview" in your web page, it's funny. Do you like such crazy interviews?

It is certainly more interesting to do the unexpected than to do the expected.

Some words in conclusion...

I hope to sit and do a proper interview with you sometime at a nice restaurant in Lithuania, while waiting to perform for your massive music living fans.





**A Frank
Interview**
from the Atomic
Opera web site

I managed to interview Frank Hart while he was in West Texas visiting family. I have heard stories about others who have spoke with Frank concerning his work, his faith, and his hopes so I was not sure how the event would go. Over all, I found the rumors of his intense psychosis greatly exaggerated. He was kind, warm, and open to discussing any topic that I brought up. Being Frank myself probably helped me ask the right questions.

Q. It has been nearly three years since "For Madmen Only," Atomic Opera's first album was released on the (now defunct) Collision Arts Record label. Are you disappointed that the first record didn't sell a million copies and make you rich?

A. Are you new at this?
Q. Yes. The new CD, "Penguin Dust," sounds a little different than the first one. The big distorted wall of guitars that seems to dominate "Madmen" is moved further back in the mix, while the bass guitar and kick are much more central. Is this a deliberate change, or does it just reflect the fact that Jonathan Marshall did not play on the record and Sam Taylor did not produce?
A. ... uh, it sounded (gurgle) better this way ... less wilde ... more groovy.

Q. O ... K... I understand that you played all the guitars, bass, cello, and sang lead vocals as well as produced "Penguin Dust," do you believe that this enabled you to make a record that is more true to how you envisioned Atomic Opera to sound? In other words ... did having complete control allow you to make the record that you wanted to make?

A. You are new to this.
Q. When Jonathan Marshall and Jonas Velasco quit the band, after the record deal was no more, how did it make you feel?

A. Would you mind if I turned on a fan? ahhhh. You know, I've noticed something ... once, when I was a child, I managed to eat too many boiled eggs at Easter ... it's

easy to tell when you have eaten too many boiled eggs.

Q. ?

Q. As well as producing the album, you also wrote most of the songs. Would you mind if we discussed the meaning of some of the songs?

A. Would you mind giving me your Visa account number?

Q. How did it come to be that Kemper Crabb joined AO? He was a big rock star when I was in high school, and the leader of ArkAngel. His solo album, "The Vigil" was one of my favorite records.

A. It's bad enough when people have two first names ... like John Thomas, or Fred Carey ... but Kemper has two NOT names. Kemper is not a name, and Crabb is not a name ... doesn't this bother anyone?

Q. I can hear some really whacked-out effected mandolin, alot of it sounding like guitar or keyboards on the new record. Are you able to reproduce these sounds live.

A. I'm sure people lay awake at night worried about these things ... I just hope you don't go into journalism for a living.

Q. While the background vocals are not as heavy this time, I get the sense that they are more intregal ... less opulent.

A. Opulent? I didn't know we even knew how to spell that.

Q. Well, it seems that the background vocals are doing some very interesting things. Did you and Kemper sing together, and then double each part? Did you use a Focusrite mic pre, and layer three to four parts on most of the songs? Did you do the tracks in your dinning room?

A. Sounds like you've got it all figured out there, tough guy.
Q. I read in a Japanese fanzine that the reason you decided to put WaterGrave on the record is because you liked the song so much as a young teen.

A. What fanzine was that?

Q. It also said that you wanted to include an obviously Christian song on the record to help narrow minded youth pastors to be able to understand that AO was safe for their kids to listen to.

A. AO is not safe for anyone to listen to. Thinking is not safe. The wisest man who ever lived was dangerously unhappy.

Q. It's good to hear you play bass again. I remember when you were the bass player for Love In Grey, have you ever considered playing bass live for AO?

A. ... too clever for hacks like you ... wouldn't ... understand.

Q. You weren't raised in a religious home, yet at the age of twelve you converted to Christianity and decided to study to become a minister. How did you get from seminary to writing and performing rock music?

A. Let's just say that I believe Jesus is who he said he was.

Q. Now that "Penguin Dust" is finally finished you want to get it out to as many people as possible, do a music video or two, secure the best distribution deal you can find, possibly tour, and then begin work on another album?

A. That was not a question, it was definitely a statement. Even if you did put a cute little question mark at the end of it.
Q. So you recorded the entire CD at your home in Houston with Ryan Birsinger helping you engineer, and then mixed with Ryan and Alan Doss at the Galactic Cowboys "Ranch On Mars" studio? Haven't you been friends with Alan for about 14 years?

A. Ask me about the drums.
Q. Well ... is it true that Mark Poindexter, the original drummer for AO, played on all the tracks and is still in the band?

A. Do you get the idea that all the questions contain the answers, and the answers are only here for comic relief?

Q. Hey, that makes me more important than you then, doesn't it?
A. Don't push it.

Q. You have also been very busy producing other bands records, and doing the artwork for several projects, as well as several music videos: Ty Tabor, Wily Gurus, Toy Subs, Flowerpot, Moriah, Jeffrey Alan Wade, Maston Thomas Walker, and others ... Do you get as much satisfaction from this type of work as you do from your own?

A. That's it, I'm not answering any more of your questions ... good bye!

Q. Is there anything you would like to add to this ... anything you would like to mention that I neglected to bring up?

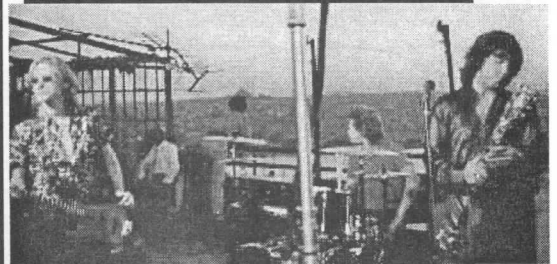
A.

"Through the group's many incarnations, we have always believed in what we are doing, and we do it all for selfish intentions, for ourselves first and foremost. If your music is going to mean anything, then it should matter to yourself first. If more artist's took this approach, the world would be a more interesting place." (Stuart Chatwood/The Tea Party)

the tea party

thought provoking
moving

[by Sigitas Velyvis]



"Transmission" is the title of the new inspired blunder by one of my favorites The Tea Party. I think, the Canadians haven't disappointed their fans yet, even if the last album "The Edges of Twilight" was far better. The band still enjoys the psychic imbalance and embodies it in enormous emotional charges - songs. It's not an entertainment rock/metal that people listen for relaxing or raising their spirits, it's rather a kind of art that staggers and touches you on the raw.

"Thought provoking moving, heavy music" , so Stuart Chatwood, the bass player, answers to my question about the band's style. An apt description, though somewhat too narrow. I think, The Tea Party's songs always give rise to various pictures, images, and emotions in the mind of the listener. For example, "Fire in the Head" musically associates itself with the end of the world, "Correspondences" or "A Certain Slant of Light" drive the listener to despair and, at the same time, raise his hopes, "Pulse" or "Drawing down the Moon" sometimes even provoke to smash the CD-player. "I think we've achieved our job in provoking emotion of that sort. It is an artists duty to act as a social mirror and force people to think about things that they don't normally think. The Tea Party are always in a state of change, and imbalance, so that is the only writing mood that is known."

OK, and what about those steady comparisons to The Doors and Led Zeppelin? I suppose, the band should be annoyed about them. "Of course, the band is annoyed. Anytime a critic uses comparison instead of one more suitable descriptive element, the band feels cheated." It's interesting, I have read many interviews with The Tea Party, but there was nothing about their influences (except oriental music). I always wondered whether they preferred bands and artists from sixties and seventies or rather modern acts. "Beatles, Joy Division, Velvet Underground, The Jam, Echo & The Bunnymen, Massive Attack, The Cure, Bjork, Tricky, Hendrix, Soundgarden." Hm, I can't make head or tail of these bands (except the last two), they are simply too feeble for my taste, and, generally speaking, I can't detect those influences in Tea Party's songs, save perhaps Hendrix-like guitar tunes in "Turn the Lamp Down Low" or "Walk With Me". The oriental touch, for example in some of Soundgarden songs, has been an important part of the band since the very beginning, I

the tea party (cont.)



Saz was used at the beginning of 'Temptation'. Samples for 'Transmission' came from a Lebanese funeral march, mixed with sherpa hollering." It means, The Tea Party again try out something new and don't fall back on the means used in "The Edges of Twilight"; and the outcome is excellent, I think, the new CD anew contains many incredible tracks like "Gyroscope" or "Pulse" (my favorite). Only the experimental "Aftermath" for my taste is not so impressive. "After the sonic assault, they knew it needed a

are the things in Europe? "Germany was a good country for the group before their management split in early 1996. After this, the plan was to scale back touring in Europe. There is a great demand for the group in Holland and Sweden at the moment, but until something happens in the States, don't expect to see the band in Europe."

Tea Party consists of three members. It's hard to imagine, how they perform their songs (very rich in arrangements) live. "The band has a complex show, that is pulled off by using every limb on every member's body. e.g. bass pedals, drum pads." That's it. The fact is that the band is successful not only because of their genial albums but also the great live shows and intensive touring. I mentioned the word "successful", but Stuart is quite not sure whether it fits the band. "Tea Party were successful when they began to output music, that is the only test an artistic entity must pass. When the band ceases, that's when success is no longer with us. The band has always and will always make music for themselves first and foremost, and we prefer to self

produce our records." Eugene Zamyatin (Sp.), Carl Jung, Nietzsche were the people that lyrically made a big impression on Tea Party. I think, Jung's investigation of subconsciousness or Nietzsche's nihilism definitely find the place in the band's lyrics just like an ancient touch which is explained by Stuart as "self awareness". But which way are the new songs going? "The new material is more melodic, a reflection of the group. Six new tracks have been demo'ed." So, nothing about the lyrics. But I think, those, who have access to internet, can read all the news in the official Tea Party web page (see address below), but don't forget that "the band prefers people that don't surrender to the net, and still believe in personal experience".

[E-mail: teaparty@teaparty.com]
[Web page: http://www.teaparty.com]

don't know any other rock or metal bands that have used such a huge number of exotic instruments like Tea Party in "The Edges of Twilight". Everything was done so effective, not exaggerated, and the mix of Ed Stasium was incredible, so I don't think that anyone would dare to repeat this achievement. "Transmission" also has this oriental background, though in the form of samples from various old records of the Middle East music. "The

come down, chill out tune. If you think of the song in that context, then it absolutely makes sense."

Let's change the subject. Intellectual music has always had a small number of listeners. I wonder, how it has happened that The Tea Party have the platinum-status in Canada and Australia? "These are the only countries that the band has toured in the real sense of the word. We sell records by playing live." And how

All reviews tend to be fair. They are still slightly subjective, of course. Evaluation marks are between 1 and 5 and the 'corruption' rate is no more than 1/4 per album, so you can believe what you see. All albums which get more than 4 have really some magic inside. All those who get between 3 and 4 are good, but choose carefully between them. There are many good albums around, there are noticeably less great ones...

5 - Exceptional. Brilliant performance, diversity, and confidently-expressed strong emotions... very special.

4 3/4 - Almost exceptional.

4 1/2 - Excellent. Both confidence and innovations are present. Almost no weak spots and a clear identity.

4 1/4 - Between solid and excellent. There is some magic inside.

4 - Solid. Competently performed. May be not truly identical.

3 3/4 - Good. Fine ideas and skilled playing. The whole result may not be equally well-balanced.

3 1/2 - Decent. Well-performed, but not too peculiar. Or innovations are not polished enough.

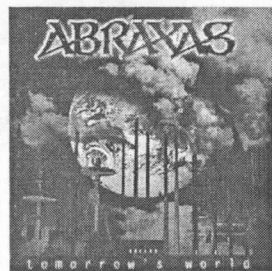
3 1/4 - Slightly higher than average. Some sparks can be noticed.

3 - Average. Fans of the style may like it, but it does not outshine among tremendous amount of music coming out every day.

2 - Non-challenging. Lacks confidence and skill to be among average.

1 - Absolute crap which should be avoided.

progressive
power metal
hard n'heavy
psychedelic
prog rock



ABRAXAS
Tomorrow's World
LMP

Abraxas play speed/heavy metal. Of course, non-compromise speed metal a la "Walls of Jericho" is something more of a past, so Abraxas sometimes slow down, but, in general, "Tomorrow's World" contains fast, mood-lifting, and melodic songs. Perhaps it lacks those spectacular refrains that Kai Hansen & Co. always knew how to create (in Helloween, and later in Gamma Ray), but some songs are successful ("Dreamer's Island", "Euphoria") indeed. And it's even better that the actual impact comes after subsequent listens. While the major part of the album contains quite playful material more in the traditional German metal vein, "The Liaison" and three bonus tracks from the old 1990/91 demos remind of intelligent, melodic (but not in-your-face melodic) glorious power metal of long time ago disbanded Secrecy. (GS) 4

AFTERLIFE
Afterlife
self-released

In the last issue, Audrius has already reviewed the demo by this distinctly Rush-influenced band. The debut CD contains all 5 songs from the tape and four new tracks that, for my taste, are more ripe. An interesting opener "The Native Elements" and "Mosaic of Scars" own something from Led Zeppelin and could even reach Robert Plant's fans, while "Falling Apart" or "August" trill in the best old-Rush style. Little drawbacks

are dry arrangements and somewhat preprogrammed patterns of songs. Dramatic, spontaneous moments (like in "Counterparts" or "A Farewell To Kings" albums) are absent, so Afterlife's musicians somehow seem to be chained by the songs that they have created themselves. Anyway, this is quite an impressive debut that could find its listeners among those who like, for example, the second Tiles album or own many Rush records in their collections. (SV) \$13 (USA), \$14 (rest of the world). Afterlife, 9953 Langdon Avenue, Mission Hills, CA 91345, USA [Ayres Rock Management, 6655 Wilkinson Avenue, Suite 103, North Hollywood, CA 91606, USA] 3/3/4

ANESTHESIA
The State of Being Unable to Feel Pain

Under Siege Records/Semaphore/LMP Anesthesia contain two ex-members of Gamma Ray (bassist Jan Rubach and drummer Thomas Nack), but only die-hard fans of Gamma Ray will accept the music they deliver now. They hooked up with singer Schraubach from a punk band, two guitarists, and recorded a piece of more aggressive music. Schraubach proves that he has a strong voice with a sense of melody and overall contributes a lot to modern powerful metal recorded on "The State...". A positive aspect is that Anesthesia, while being non-direct and quite many-sided, do not sacrifice their integrity. The power is expressed in an intelligent way, it comes out naturally and without artificial pushes. (GS) [Anesthesia, PO Box 602504, 22235 Hamburg, Germany] 3/3/4

ANGEL DUST
Border of Reality
Century Media Records
It's pleasant for me to find discs like this from time to time. The veteran act from Germany has delivered a really powerful release, where an astonishing and very consistent guitar work stands out. Try to imagine a combination of bands like Running Wild, Blind Guardian, or Hammerfall with the orientation and polished feel of heavy songs like Savatage's "Taunting Cobras". German power metal identity signs are latent, but, globally, the richness behind most of the compositions, and facts like a solid "internationally" oriented production, are what makes "Angel Dust" album shine with an own personality. That's why it is

considerably more than a regular release of this style. This is a good load of direct and contudent melodic power metal. It doesn't take much effort to cross the border and start enjoying this really good album. (GM) 4 1/4

ANNON VIN
A New Gate
Zardoz Music
"A New Gate" is the debut full-length CD of German trio Annon Vin (after their EP "Higher Spheres" released a couple of years ago). Stylistically, the music is extremely hard to describe. It relies primarily on a rhythm-orientated groove with the bass playing appealing leads and the Voi-Vod-ish guitar chords only sporadically contributing its highlights. The music is not overly complex and the songs rarely go over the 5-minute mark but the rhythm shifts and diverse instrumentation makes it tantalising to the ears. One of the interesting aspects is the multiple mid-range voice harmonies giving the music a hint of old Yes. Considerable thought has been put into the lyrics with topics ranging from socio-political (negative views of Germans of foreigners after the optimism of the fall of the Berlin wall) to philosophical themes. Although the highlights are most definitely in the first 5 songs, and the cover of the Styx song "Mr Roboto" is a bit out of place, the honest charm of the CD should make it appealing to technical prog metal fans. (CR) [Annon Vin, Rhythmusik, am Worth 15a, 63631 Lauterbach, Germany, 06641-63559] 4

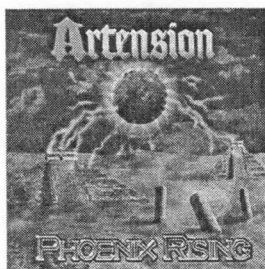
ANVIL
Absolutely No Alternative
Massacre Records
Anvil's last release "Plugged in Permanent" was a very good piece of heavy music. I don't know, of course titles like "Absolutely No Alternative" oppose and deny the trend but they automatically set a new one. For this reason, I felt no confidence in this CD as I put it on, and my apprehension was confirmed. The album consists of short, speed songs with "witty", vulgar lyrics; to cut a long story short, Moforhead send their regards. Everything would be in place if not this monotony that rules over the whole album. Thank goodness, at least the sound is tolerable otherwise I could entirely "sink" this release (joke). (SV) 3 1/4

ARCH RIVAL
Third Degree Burns
B. O. Records

Even looking with a magnifying glass, it is clear that Arch Rival do not manage to avoid sounding archaic. "Third Degree Burns" is an average album of typical hard n'heavy cliches. The singer and the musicianship are decent, but riffs and arrangements mainly seem to be re-used for the n-th time. Rare steps aside include the experimental track "Drowning in Pain" and are even worse than the standard yet competent tracks like "Heaven's Kiss" and the ballad "Enter The Dragon". In fact, the beginning of the album is not that bad, but all those AC/DC, Guns n'Roses, or Whitesnake style cuts in the second half spoil the impression. (GS)
[B. O. Records, Heubackerstrasse 23, 73529 Bettringen, Germany]
3

ARKHE
Arkhe

Underground Symphony
There have been several Italian progressive metal bands these last few years that have primarily been inspired by Dream Theater. At first glance, Arkhe comes across as the near-perfect Dream Theater clone ("Images and Words" era) with their debut album. This is especially caused by the vocals, long songs and even the obligatory piano-driven song before the 14 minute epic "Le Voyant de Salon". The difference is that Arkhe are primarily keyboard oriented not unlike Cairo. Apart from the lack of originality, the additional problem is that some of the songs are overlong and lack distinct highlights and intensity. Lyrically the songs have a tendency to be philosophical. With their sophomore release Arkhe needs to divert into a more original direction in order to reach more recognition. (CR)
[Underground Symphony, PO Box 39, 15060 Basaluzzo (Alessandria), Italy]
[Arkhe, Lorenzo Milani, via Campiglio 41, 21040 Oggiona a. Stefano (VA), Italy]
3 3/4

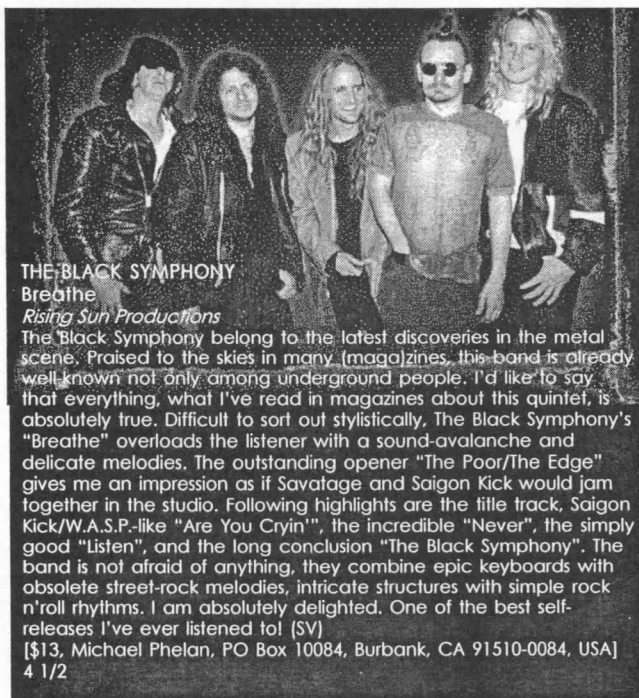


ARTENSION
Phoenix Rising
Shrapnel Records

Artension's second release is a powerful progressive metal album mixing seventies themes a la Rainbow with a nineties sound. The band is lead by the virtuoso keyboard player Vitalij Kuprij, which gives the music a weird an unusual drive and is really a seldom configuration for a metal band. Indeed, the Ukrainian is the prominent figure, his melodies and solos soar above the rhythm section. This doesn't mean that the other band members are mere second choices: the singer displays a clear and mighty voice, with a broad range, reminiscent of Jeff Scott Soto and Graham Bonnet. The guitar on this album is rather a background instrument and its main function seems to be to add a metal depth and dimension to the sound. The CD ends with a solely instrumental track featuring only Vitalij Kuprij at the piano, which contain some interesting classical variations. (AS)
3 3/4

ASKA
Nine Tongues
self-released

Hm, opener "The Stalker" drones from the loudspeakers in the best Judas Priest or Iron Maiden style. Aska from



THE BLACK SYMPHONY
Breathe
Rising Sun Productions

The Black Symphony belong to the latest discoveries in the metal scene. Praised to the skies in many magazines, this band is already well-known not only among underground people. I'd like to say that everything, what I've read in magazines about this quintet, is absolutely true. Difficult to sort out stylistically, The Black Symphony's "Breathe" overloads the listener with a sound-avalanche and delicate melodies. The outstanding opener "The Poor/The Edge" gives me an impression as if Savatage and Saigon Kick would jam together in the studio. Following highlights are the title track, Saigon Kick/W.A.S.P.-like "Are You Cryin'", the incredible "Never", the simply good "Listen", and the long conclusion "The Black Symphony". The band is not afraid of anything, they combine epic keyboards with obsolete street-rock melodies, intricate structures with simple rock n'roll rhythms. I am absolutely delighted. One of the best self-releases I've ever listened to! (SV)
[\$13, Michael Phelan, PO Box 10084, Burbank, CA 91510-0084, USA]
4 1/2

Texas espouse US-metal with influences of Manowar, Kiss, AC/DC, or above-mentioned bands. Heavy riffs and typical heavy metal vocals are the trademarks of this band. "Blood of the Wolf" and "The Dream" are very effective, well-balanced tracks with some impressive moments. The weak spot are unmotivated jumps into rock n'roll and glam rock fields (like in "Little Sister") that simply don't stand by Aska. If we leave this out, "Nine Tongues" is a higher-than-average heavy metal album. (SV)
[\$15, Aska, PO Box 181144, Arlington, TX 76096-1144, USA]
3 3/4

ATOMIC OPERA
Penguin Dust
self-released

Their debut "For Madmen Only" was one of those albums that turned very often in my CD-player. Much water has flowed under the bridges, Atomic Opera were dropped by the label, the rhythm guitarist and the bassist left the band, so the mastermind Frank Hart decided to do the second album as an own-label release. In comparison with the debut, "Penguin Dust" is more groovy, song-oriented album. The typical part singing, of course, is not missing. Beautiful tracks like "Stop the Rain", "Thirst", "Freakshow" are available, too. Even Faith No More elements are here ("Fade"). In short, a completely successful album, far better than Galactic Cowboys' last release or King's X' "Ear Candy", although Atomic Opera's relationship to both bands continues to be. (SV)
[\$15, Atomic Opera, Frank Hart, PO Box 91602, Houston, TX 77291, USA]
4 1/4

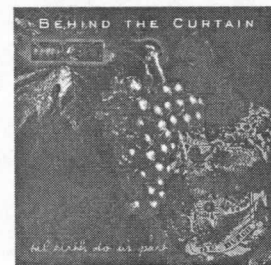
AZTEC JADE
Frame of Mind
Capital Music Group

New York based Aztec Jade's second release could be described as "modern figurative melodic rock" with a progressive touch at song structures. Rich in musical hues and containing a whole spectrum of memorable catchy refrains, "Frame of Mind" is, overall, a very listenable and really pleasant work. Sporadically, some parts might sound a bit forced, particularly the rhythm section, and could remind of bands such as Altira. But what predominates is an intelligent use of instrumental transitions, this way, making vocal melodies to play a main role along the album. Songs such as "Atlantis", "Requiem", "The Calling", or

"Desperate Land" shine by themselves, are well structured, and show how, sometimes, (talking about track lengths), what is concise and good at the same time can turn out to be twice as good. Summing up, you'll find in this record a nice bunch of attractive, accessible, and straightforward progressive rock compositions: there's nothing new in what they present, but everything's showcased with a good taste and careful proportions. (GM)
4

BATES MOTEL
Tales of Ordinary Madness
self-released

As I understand, this is a solo band of Master Bates who sang in Annihilator once upon a time. No wonder that Jeff Waters himself has produced this album and the sound is convincing. Musically and lyrically, Bates Motel have nothing common with Annihilator, it's rather retro rock in veins of early Alice Cooper. Similar atmosphere was in Voivod's "Angel Rat", but Bates Motel don't like to experiment too much. They work with simpler structures and have in their repertoire some hit-suspicious songs, for example, "Killing Me", "Sky-Blue Water", or "1000 Wasps". I have no idea what target audience these Canadians could appeal to, but open-minded people could try this one. (SV)
[\$10, Bates Motel, 8625 Osler, Box 101, Vancouver BC, V6P 4E6, Canada]
3 3/4



BEHIND THE CURTAIN
Till Birth Do Us Part
preview copy; to be released on Laser's Edge/Sensory

Behind The Curtain worked seriously after the release of their demo "Creation" last year, and, with the help of Intromental Management, are about to let progressive metal fans know about their country Denmark. Why not, the album, noticeably following the path of Psychotic Waltz's "Into the

Everflow", is one of the bright stars into today's becoming a bit grey progressive metal sky. "Into the Everflow" style wasn't really explored before, and therefore it's not exhausted. Compared with Psychotic Waltz, Behind The Curtain are a bit more different though, mainly due to the extensive use of keyboards, which are not used for 'lightness' purposes, as, e.g., some "Images & Words"-inspired Italian bands do. Nostalgic and lyrical-mood-pierced music leaves a pleasant aftertaste due to its sincerity, deepness, and diversity. (GS)
[Intromental Management, Groenjordskollegiet 2520, Groenjordsvej, DK-2300, Copenhagen S, Denmark]
[Behind The Curtain, Kasper Molin, Vendsysselgade 7, 3th, 9000 Aalborg, Denmark]

BLIND GUARDIAN
Nightfall in Middle-Earth
Virgin

Keeping faithful to an own style and progressing at the same time as a band is something difficult to achieve. Sometimes it can constitute that sort of eternal question: coherence versus innovation, which path to follow? OK. Keeping that in mind, let's follow the blind for a second. During this pleasure trip across the Middle-Earth dominions, what the bright power metallers from Hamburg propose us goes on with their tradition: well-known fondness for imaginary medieval worlds, ensembled "battle hymns"-styled choruses, and bards' folklore inspired tunes. Beautifully balanced, the result is a work of epic dimensions (22 tracks counting 11 narrated parts/interludes used as segues between themes) which develops a plot based on J.R.R. Tolkien's posthumous work "The Simarillion" (1977). Despite of the implicit difficulties that facing a project of this magnitude involves, they've successfully managed to impregnate the whole album with a dark, intense atmosphere. Additionally, the lyrical description results to be a very accurate recreation of those scenarios and the mythologic characters, immersing a listener in different moods as the album progresses. Great melodies and emotional harmonic vocal lines ooze on all sides of this disc. Believe me if I tell you the album has surprised me quite positively. I perhaps was one of those who thought Blind Guardian's sound could be quite stagnated, and, following this reasoning, that the band could be somehow living from the credits harvested in the past. They certainly have proved me the opposite with this colorful album. Definitely an enjoyable selection. (GM)
4 1/4

BREAKING SILENCE
Second Calling demo-CD
self-released

Greeks Breaking Silence remind of Queensryche's "Operation Mindcrime" and not only because their name most likely is derived from the magnificent song "Breaking The Silence" from that album. Breaking Silence belong to the blend of so-called commercial traditional progressive metal - an ironically strange term because progressive metal rarely has been successful commercially. George Paharidis' voice is high-pitched, above in the mix, and maybe lacks some weight here and there, but does not fall in the category of voices that are hard to absorb even for die-hard proggers. Being 100% progressive metal, Breaking Silence kind of limits themselves in terms of audience they could appeal to, but it is also more secure to strike to one audience and hit it, instead of targeting music to different audiences and reaching none. The band is promising. "Second Calling" could well be the first recording of Queensryche or Crimson Glory. There is also a CD-ROM part with the first demo, photos, and some internet stuff. (GS)
[16DM/\$9 Breaking Silence, Pontou 101, 55132 Thessaloniki, Greece]
3 1/2

reading zero

Observe the Actual

[by Giedrius Slivinskas]



Nearly by storm Reading Zero came into the progressive metal world with their latest release "The Actual". The name Visionary (their old moniker) was popping up around for many years, some of the prog hackers even heard their demos, but it looks that Reading Zero are towards achieving a lot more. "The Actual" offers guitar-driven melodic and powerful progressive metal in the best traditions of the style. Judging from Christopher Roy's (guitar/vocals) answers, it doesn't seem that they tend to deviate to from their current direction.

What releases have you had as Visionary? Tell us the story from the beginning.

We have been together for 7 years and known each other for even more. We all grew up in the same city in New Hampshire. Chris Pellerin and Russ Pellerin are brothers and have been playing together obviously much longer than 7 years, and, I think, that plays a big part of the Reading Zero sound. Reading Zero started out under the moniker of Visionary from 1991 - 1997. We gained notoriety overseas, under that name, with many great reviews, distribution of demos, recording contract offers, and interviews worldwide. Musically, we all have different influences, but we all like the more challenging, heavier bands that you can listen to over and over and each time hear something different. We have a unique writing style, in that every member plays guitar and writes lyrics, so that we have unlimited material to pick from and individual input in the end result - the song. We also write so that each instrument is doing its own thing in most cases, this makes it more fun to play and more exciting to the listener. We like to push the envelope, whether that be musically or lyrically.

Visionary released demos called "Visionary" in 1991, "Shadows" in 1993, "Strategy" in the later part of 1994. The first two had our original singer, Jon Clough. After some reviews that didn't favor Jon's singing style, he moved on to play a different style of music. Our 3rd demo had a singer named CJ, it just wasn't working out for the band as a whole. We parted ways after a show that we did with Savatage in 1995. I believe it was in 1995, that we decided that I should just take over the vocal duties. The new CD is my vocal debut.

Why did you change the name? Was it because of several other bands with the same name?

There is a couple of reasons that we had changed the name. One of the main reasons is the fact that since 1990 we had to ask many bands to change their name. This was not an easy thing for me to do. Here is this band that is trying to build a reputation in their area under

this name, and I have to call them and tell them they have to change it - I hated having to do that. Then we were feeling that the name Visionary sounded a bit dated and started thinking of new names. Our sound had changed extensively since our inception and we did feel we needed a new name for what we had become. We needed a name that left the musical door open. This is what Reading Zero has become: it's a new attitude, a new sound, and defies any one set definition.

When were the songs for "The Actual" created? Which ones are the oldest, which ones are the newest?

The most popular songs seem to be the new ones. Although everyone that has reviewed it, have picked different songs as their favorites. I think that's a great sign of writing a strong album. "The Actual", "Dimensions", "Mirage", "Midsummer Daydream", and "Amongst The Clouds" are the newest songs and have never been released on any official demo. The oldest song is "And Never To Return", it was one of the first songs that we had written together as a band. The rest sort of fell in between but had appeared in different forms on earlier demos.

If you wouldn't mind announcing it to the public, which German label was the one you signed an agreement for a CD release with and then didn't pay the advance in time?

Actually, the label was good about letting us out of our contract and I don't really want to drag it out. The reality was that we were a week away of going into the studio when we found that they hadn't

paid the previous bands studio bills. We decided that it was time to contact them and asked to be let out of the contract. We loved being in the studio making all the decisions!

Was it difficult in those years without an album (until "The Actual" was released)? I mean, there were many rising prog metal bands, you knew that you had also what to show, but you were virtually unknown at that time? Was it difficult to wait for your time?

It has been hard for us, at times, to watch the scene grow without getting to play a role in it. The truth of it is that we've been together and writing over 7 years and will continue to do so with or without label support. We have stayed true to ourselves musically, and are being respected by many for that reason. Reviewers that tries to pinpoint our sound all agree that they can only describe it as Reading Zero, this was important factor to us. We have an original sound, that is ours and we plan to keep it that way. We could have easily been signed if we wanted to jump onto the musical handwagon and play what was popular, but we could never be as proud as we are. "The Actual" is all of us and we were involved in every aspect of this CD from the music, to the graphics, to the production. This is pure Reading Zero, and in paying our dues over the years hopefully people will hear a more mature band on this debut.

"Heavy, Oder Was?!" wrote a review of "The Actual" already at the end of 1997, but the CD was officially released only in the Spring of 1998, how did it happen?

We were told that the editor of "Heavy, Oder Was?!" was a big supporter of this style of music and that he would especially be into what we were doing. I sent him a copy of the rough mixes of the CD and he loved it. He has wrote, called, and told many about us, we are very lucky to have such support in the media. Dellef has really taken a liking to us and he likes the fact that we are original sounding. We are really glad that critics have taken the time to listen to our music and have written about the depth of the material, it is these reviews that have brought our name to the public. The European press has been much more supportive than the United States so far, and we appreciate all the new friends we make along the way.

"The Actual" offers a top-class prog metal and it's strange to see it coming as a self-release. Haven't you got any acceptable offers from companies? Would you sign a simple offer with a company that would not pay recording costs, but would offer a good distribution and would promise royalties?

Thank you, we always appreciate hearing good things about the band. We would need a label that understands that we write powerful progressive music and would not try to change us. We like being a part of every decision that is made with our name on it and they would have to understand that as well. We will only release material that we felt was the best that we could. At this point, it would probably need to be on a label that can lend tour support. We have done this entire CD without any help from a label and are doing quite well. A label would have to offer us something that we can't do ourselves. We would love to hit the

road with a more well-known band and get recognized through our live shows. The critics that have seen us live have given us rave reviews. We want to be able to show that side of Reading Zero to our fans in all the different countries. We pride ourselves on being a live band, but we need the financial support to do this on a grand scale. We would like to find a label that could get us onto the larger festivals that happen around the world so that we can reach more fans, as well as just touring all the countries that we are available in, as well as back our music with complete enthusiasm.

There are quite a lot of vocal effects on "The Actual". Why did you use them, to obtain a diversity?

Vocal effects for me is added for enhancement of certain moods. It is like you are painting a picture and then you are given more colors to create. I like to conjure up different images in your mind when listening to the lyrics. We want Reading Zero to be a total attack on the senses. The voice is an instrument as well, and why wouldn't you color it?

How much do you practice as a vocalist? Did you take any lessons?

I never had any lessons. I practice when playing out, rehearsals, and on my own. I recorded the vocals as they are done live. My natural voice is what you hear - whether or not that you like it is up to you. I have a different approach to how I phrase things and hopefully it translates well to the fans. I've always been a fan of higher singing as well as more aggressive vocals, so there may be many different influences that shine through every once in a while. I try to approach each song with its own mood and match the lyrics and how it's sung to that emotion.

Some bands stay similar all the way, while others are very different on each album. In which way Reading Zero will go?

I think it's important to remember your roots and stay loyal to what your original intention was. We really offer different songs on an album, rather than an album of different songs. If you listen to each song on the CD, none of them sound like another and that is also part of what makes Reading Zero stand out. We are considered progressive, power metal, some say it's just Heavy Metal, we haven't carried one label yet and I don't think we ever will. A lot of times that bands change are because labels have made them change, that is why we didn't sign a deal yet. We want full artistic control of our sound. We want our fans to see and hear Reading Zero on every release that we have, not what someone else wants them to hear. I think that we have a signature sound that you will recognize always in Reading Zero's music!

Now it's popular to say that no progressive metal band can surpass Dream Theater, Fates Warning, or Queensryche. However, if a certain band plays something different than these bands, they are not compared to them then; when they play something in the style of these bands, people say that it's cool, but it was already done. What is your opinion about this?

If someone makes a comment that we sound just like anyone then I know that they have not really listened to the CD. It's like saying that Metallica and

Anthrax sound the same, because its the same "Style". It would have been easy for us to do what others have done, but we strive to be different. We don't want to be any one of those other bands, although we share a common audience. A lot of the reviews for "The Actual" have complimented us on our original sound and that is very important to us. Everyone in Reading Zero has a wide variety of influences which helps create originality in our music. In most cases, originality equals longevity and we plan on being around for a long time. Our goal is not to surpass any bands' popularity, but to write the way that we write and be able to live off our music and tour so that we can bring it to others. It's really that simple.

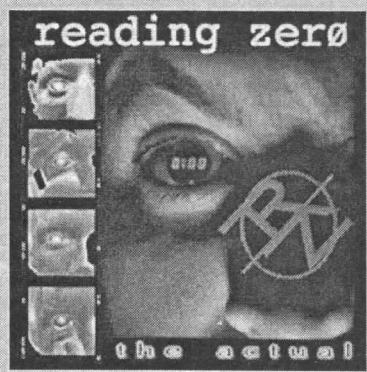
Some bands, e.g., Angra, incorporate elements of their native folk music into their songs. What is your view to that?
I think your culture plays a part in your music whether you realize it or not. People are always changing with their surroundings and music is no different. I don't know what native influences or otherwise that anyone can hear in what we do, but it is what it is. We are from an area not far from where Fates Warning and Dream Theater were born so maybe there is some sort of sound that comes out of that culture that I'm unaware of. I'll let you be the judge.

What do you think about bands with a strong image (Marilyn Manson, W.A.S.P., some black metal bands like Cradle of Filth, Dimmu Borgir). Is it something Reading Zero can go for in future? Sure, the music is more important, but a good image usually adds some value... Perhaps you tend to make a less challenging/offensive image with your presentation in the CD booklet, with your lyrics?
It's safe to say that you will never see Reading Zero wearing makeup or anything of that nature. I think that we have many other things to offer. I think that if you like the music, and the lyrics make you really think, than what else do you really need. We will shock with our music and not an image. If we have an image, then it will be ours, just like our music. If you want me to have an image, then I'm an "Everyday Chameleon", I'm everyone, and you will never know who is 'me'.

Some bands put out very good debut albums, but then their follow-ups aren't that good. Perhaps they get more mature, but sometimes a youthful enthusiasm and energetic sparks are missing. What do you think? How about Reading Zero?
We have been writing the best material of our lives lately, it is everything that this CD is and more. Like I said, the songs that hit our fans first are the newest ones. That is also the advantage to having been together for so long - we know that we have a well of ideas to tap into. We are just beginning on this journey. Youthful Enthusiasm will continue to drive us, no matter how old we may get and we are much too young to worry about that... plus worrying only gives you gray hair.

What were your experiences in production, mastering areas from doing "The Actual"?
Actually recording this CD was one of the most rewarding experiences of my

life and I'm sure the others would say the same. Many don't realize after hearing it that we spent about 1/10th the time in the studio as a normal signed band would. Then we sit back and make sure you get that Live sound. Russ (Pellerin), our drummer, is amazing, and all the drums were recorded in one day. Chris (Pellerin) recorded all his leads and rhythms in one day as well. It is really because we know what we want before we enter and we just blast it out of our systems. We just played like we always do, and our hearts are into it. We wanted the drums and guitars to be huge. The keyboards are really there just for atmospheric purposes and then the bass and vocals were done and we mixed it. We only used 24 tracks instead of 36 or 48. The mastering was done by Henk at 9West, he was one of the people who



invented the CD in the late 70's. We felt it appropriate to have him do it and I sat in with him and watched the whole process. It was a learning experience and I know that the next album will sound even better because of it.

What promotional activities are you doing? Naturally, you are probably sending out many promos to companies and fanzines, but on where do you focus more on record companies, mail-order services, or publications? Or perhaps on spreading your name in Internet?
Most of our work has been done through the Internet and through distributors, but we have some great publicists and friends helping us out. We are fortunate to have met many people over the years who really liked what we were doing and are helping us out now. You can see our reviews all over the web and we post these reviews on our web site whenever they come out. If a fan wants to lend a hand and spread the word that Reading Zero is out there then please be my guest. We are trying now to figure out a way to repay the fans that have helped us get our name out thus far, but either way those who help will be rewarded in some special way by us.

Do you notice any differences in how record labels, promotional agencies, managers look at prog metal bands going from 1990 until today?
Not a big change yet, but I think that, as this genre grows and more people latch onto it, it will be only a matter of time before everyone wants a piece of it.

How is Florida as a place for Reading Zero?
Well, it hasn't won any awards from us. The weather is beautiful, but the band was robbed when we first moved here in October of 1997. We are hoping to make a big impact when things start moving

full force. There are also some other great bands from Florida that we hope to hook up with to play out with.

How about different effects in the music, a use of synths, computers? Will Reading Zero remain a guitar-based band?
Always, Always, Always!!! Keyboards are more for atmosphere in our music. We are riff and guitar-based and that is one piece of the puzzle that will never change. It is the riffs, hooks, and choruses that draw you in, then you can get into the lyrical side of us.

Do you think the music will be important after, say, 100 years? Will it be more industrialized with a big use of computers, etc.? Perhaps a guitar will have the status of an old instrument, like the status a cello has now...?
Not in my house, the guitar is a major component. Music has been and will always be important. It is music that calms the savage beast and we all have a beast that needs to be calmed. Music may develop into more industrial or modern electronic sounds, but that would only be a reflection of how the world is going. I think that progressive music is more organic and people that listen to it seem to care more about natural sounds like the guitar. What you hear is what we want you to hear which is music in its purest form. If you have it, then I hope you listen deeply because there is a lot of different things happening there. If you don't have it... Why?... Ha, ha.

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[E-mail: readingzero@mindspring.com]
[Web page: http://www.readingzero.com]

CHROMA KEY
Dead Air for Radios
Massacre Records/Fight Evil Records
I think many of you have been wondering what Kevin Moore was doing after he left Dream Theater in 1994. And now we know for sure, as we can hold the album of his new group, Chroma Key, which, besides Kevin Moore, consists of guitarist Jason Anderson, bassist Joey Vera, and drummer Mark Zonder; both of the latter are known for their playing in Fates Warning. Without a doubt, me like many of you could expect progressive metal in the veins of Dream Theater or Fates Warning, but the result smashes all these expectations up. These 9 songs remind of Peter Gabriel, Pink Floyd, and most of all David Bowie. The influence of David Bowie is evident from the beginning to the end, and the most interesting is that all periods of David Bowie's creation are reflected here, beginning with standard rock and ending with electronic experiments. The psychedelic mood of Roger Waters solo albums is transformed here too, but with a darker approach. So, more or less it's the album to be put rather into the section of "rock" than "metal". The album's temper is quiet enough, and "Colorblind" or "Mouse" are examples of psychedelic rock of the 70's mixed with electronic experiments: many samples, an electronic flow, and this legendary keyboards playing of Kevin Moore put over. It seems that Kevin has tried to absorb as many influences as he could and to combine into one whole; he has succeeded in doing that, and my own opinion is that the only shortage here is that his voice could be more expressive in places. (AO)
[\$15 (USA), \$17 (elsewhere), Fight Evil Records, PO Box 55758, Valencia, CA 91385-0758, USA]
4 1/2

CIPHER
Cipher
self-released
Take Soundgarden, the first CD of Eleven Pictures, and Ugly Kid Joe and you will get an approximate picture what Cipher is. I can't find anything earth-shattering in this CD. The songs are more or less OK, but any outstanding moments are absent. For me, the best track is "Low". More variety should put a new light on the matter. I cannot think of anything else to say on that. (SV)
[Cipher, PO Box 569, Hatboro, PA 19040, USA]
3 1/4

CONQUEST
Rage
Scream Productions
It seems that recent years are fruitful for real metal bands from the States, which started to try get more recognition than encouraging responses from local press and audience. Questone are not rookies, and, in "Rage", they give a 35-minute blast of pure heavy/power/trash metal crossing different stylistics of aggression, explored by different generations from the middle 80's to the middle 90's, from Judas Priest to Machine Head. The album is well-done, belongs more to the raw n'rough side (vocalists sings in the style similar to Chuck Billy from Testament), and should appeal to directly riff-based metal fans. (GS)
[\$12 (USA), \$13 (elsewhere), Scream Productions, 6054 Odell St. Louis, MO 63139, USA]
3 1/2

DESTINY
The Undiscovered Country
Gothenburg Noiseworks
Destiny from Sweden aren't the newcomers. Formed in 1982, they already have three critically acclaimed albums out there. After the 8 years break they return with the new record that probably will appeal to all Savatage and Metal Church fans. There are also some Black Sabbath elements in their music, but priority program is the traditional power metal with good melodies and powerful riffing. The clean sound helps us to form a solid, professional impression about this band. I wish the CD would be more varied, but, generally speaking, it's a nice piece of qualitative power metal. (SV)
[Iris Bernotat, Focusion Promotion and Marketing, Postfach 31, 73062 UHINGEN, Germany]
4



DIGITAL RUIN
Listen
Siegen Records
What if Vauxdvihl runaways Paulpot and Eddie would have started to play real prog metal instead of diving into ambient style sounds? Or sci-fi new age/prog performers New York's Braindance would do more hit-to-the-nail progressive power metal? Or "A Pleasant Shade Of Grey" would be heavily sci-fictionized? The result could be quite similar to what Providence's (USA) Digital Ruin offer in their debut album "Listen".
Digital Ruin do not look like newcomers and they are not. Their history goes as far backwards as to 1988; 10 years is a damn long time to make an album. Let's just hope that it will give the band recognition they deserve. In the album,



LABYRINTH
Return to Heaven Denied
Metal Blade Records
Italy's Labyrinth already have EP "Piece of Time" and full-length album "No Limits" out, which gained them a moderate success, and we only can hope that Metal Blade will promote their new album as good as it's necessary. Particularly because it's damn good, it's one of the best melodic power/speed metal records to come around lately. Subtle, a little bit reminiscent to Kamelot-style but even more neat, this record captures with its elegance and slightly-minor grace. It's rather original too, possessing some elements of Helloween, some of Yngwie Malmsteen, but bringing its own flavor. An interesting detail is that band members use American names. Some of you may know that the previous singer of Labyrinth was Fabio Leone (now in Rhapsody) and he was then called Joe Terry. (GS)
[Labyrinth, Magnani Carlo Andrea, Via Caroli 51, 54100 Massa, Italy]
4 1/4

instead of showing off technical abilities, Digital Ruin concentrate on building different atmosphere layers. The songs do not follow usual verse-bridge-refrain-then-again scheme, are filled with vocal samples, and put into wrapping atmospheric keyboard-created ambience. Relatively low-tuned haunting sounds along with heavy and powerful riffs and strong voice of Matt Pacheco (who reaches tones not miles away from those of James LaBrie or Ray Alder) is already enough to envision an apocalyptic picture; once you add mysterious lyrics, it does not become lighter. "X Files" people could use some of this. (GS)
[Digital Ruin, PO Box 363, North Kingston, RI 02852, USA]
4

DOMINE
Champion Eternal
Dragonheart
Quality classic heavy metal a la old Fates Warning/Iron Maiden/Lethal reaches a very high level with the debut album of this Italian outfit. The way I see it, with a bit better production and mixing, "Champion Eternal" could become a must-have album for the followers of that style. However, sometimes an excessively abrasive guitar sound and the shrieking vocals manage to saturate the album. Of course, this is a personal remark: musically it's undeniable that the effort behind the disc is monumental, and makes it a very interesting choice. It reminds me on some aspects of ambitious projects such as "Dawn of Time", the eruption album of Norwegian band Sea Of Dreams. What you can find along its 60 minutes, are numerous moments of rhythm changes, heavy guitar crunchy riffs taking a starring role, and a vocalist who, as I mentioned before, hits very high notes, in the tradition of John Arch/Dickinson/
4

early Geoff Tate. At lyrical level, fantasy themes inspired by Tolkien and medieval-epic topics are the driving force. Narrated parts have a proper place, too. And perhaps this offered the band a good excuse for qualifying an oddly structured title track and "Army of the Dead" song as "suites in V and VII parts" respectively. Ambitiousness indexing songs can get epic measures sometimes. (GM)
3 3/4

DREAMSCAPE
Trance-Like State
Rising Sun Productions
While Dreamscape are not 100% perfect and do not overpass Fates Warning or Dream Theater in songwriting and musicianship, they certainly deliver their own message. Separate elements may be reminiscent of some known bands, but these Germans get credits for an attempt to create emotional and own progressive metal, where the feeling is placed before the technique. On the other hand, they are more complex than, say, Psycho Drama. Some melodies are very nice and, in general, as for the debut, it is almost remarkable. There is a ground to think that "almost" will be erased with the next album. (GS)
[Gunter Bartl, Freischutzstr. 17, 81927 Munich, Germany]
3 3/4

DREAMTHEATER
Falling into Infinity
EastWest
After two years of silence and some tumultuous chapters with their record company before being able to enter the studio, arrives the new and long awaited Dream Theater disc. Stylistically, perhaps the opening track title "New Millennium" should be taken as a premonition for what this album offers afterwards. In relation to their classic releases "Awake" and particularly "Images and Words", there is an abrupt change judging the commercial orientation behind some tracks such as "You Not Me", "Just Let Me Breathe", or "Burning My Soul". And though being commercial is not necessarily a synonym of bad product, as the Edge of Time editor once commented to me, globally I glimpse two definite lines along this album: on one hand it comes the referred change in terms of sound. At a production level, due to Kevin Shirley's (Foreigner, Aerosmith) efforts, Dream Theater might have won a point in accessibility. Cuts like "Take Away My Pain" (hasn't it a Michael Kiske's solo album pretty deep feel for moments?) or "Hollow Years" could fit perfectly for most radio formulas, surpassing other possible FM-friendly ballads like "The Silent Man" from "Awake" album in this aspect. Also connected with this, I'd throw the following question to the air: "Could any prog metal listener have imagined years ago that a popular hit-maker as Desmond Child would someday cooperate with the banners of a style supposedly rooted away of commercial trends?". On the other hand, "Falling into Infinity" contains a collection of intricate tracks, ironically, with some instrumental passages perhaps more complex and obscure than ever. "Trial of Tears", "Peruvian Skies", or "Lines in the Sand" (where King's X vocalist appearance doing background vocals shows is really apt) bring some good melodies, intense progressions, and colorful interludes. Maybe it's just a matter of seeing the bottle half-empty or half-full, but, with a reputed band of this awesome creative potential involved, I somehow expected something in a more coherent musical direction. That might be why I am not too enthusiastic about this release personally: are they going upstairs or downstairs? Can't say. (GM)
4

LEVIATHAN
Scoring the Chapters
Corrosive Records
Leviathan have always had patience and ambitions. How else to explain their slow but convincing movement upwards with absolute ignorance of 'come-and-go' quick trends. A two-year old "Riddles, Questions, Poetry & Outrage" album already indicated that something interesting might come out. And hopes are fulfilled, because "Scoring the Chapters", the fourth release of this American band, is a truly monumental progressive metal album. Lasting 72 minutes, it smartly manipulates with different threads of band's spiritual and technical properties. Romantic, melancholic, diverse, and powerful music of Leviathan does not have clear analogues and flow smoothly. Haunting, softly beautiful keyboards go outright well with sensitive voice of Jeff Ward, powerful guitars of John Lutzow and Ron Skeen, and accurate rhythm section. The sound is excellent. Stylistically, this album is within frames of progressive metal, but it is difficult to pigeonhole it more specifically. And there is no reason to mark any favorite tracks because they are different at different moments of time. Just do not dare to overlook a little diamond, a short 2-minute song "Apologies Wanting to Make Good". Bombastic this review may sound, but be sure you have been told about one of the best recent progressive metal releases. (GS)
[\$13.5 (USA), \$15 (elsewhere), Corrosive Records, PO Box 1215, Littleton, CO 80160, USA]
4 1/2



EDGUJ
Vain Glory Opera
AFM Records
Edguy is another fine example of how sometimes tenacity can become a key for harvesting recognition and an honor place among most promising European power metal acts. After a debut album "Kingdom of Madness" which went almost unnoticed, this young power metal band from Germany has displayed solid credentials. I'd say they only need some additional time for polishing a more personal style: faculties are there. I'll start by saying that my references about Edguy's new album were really positive and obviously that set expectations pretty high. Perhaps that influenced why after analyzing album contents, I personally tend to see several "cliches" looping along it. Talking about the music, "VGO" offers a bunch of well-arranged songs ("Until We Rise Again", "How Many Miles"), with memorable refrains and good choruses, but as I pointed out before, they're certainly not a parade of imagination. For me some examples of the mentioned "revisits" are the title track, with a keyboard intro incredibly similar to that disco-friendly Stratovarius "Galaxies" song from "4th Dimension" album, or tracks such as "Fairytale" and "Walk on Fighting" (guitar riff reminds me a lot of "Strange Reality" cut by Savatage on "Streets" album). Well, I wouldn't like to sound too meticulous making those remarks, because it perhaps would be a bit unfair: I know the album as a whole will please (and is pleasing) many followers of European power metal. It includes contributions of famous guest musicians such as Hansi Kersch (Blind Guardian) and Timo Tolkki (Stratovarius), who also completed mixing tasks. (GM)
3 1/2

EMPTY TREMOR
Apocolokyntosis
Rising Sun Productions
Speaking of Italian progressive metal, many agree that most of it is not very original. Empty Tremor offer more than your initial expectations might be. "Apocolokyntosis" is a light progressive metal album reminiscent of Dream Theater's two first records. In general, if light prog metal is performed without passion and feeling, it forces you grit the teeth, but if performers put all their hearts in it, you don't have prejudices and are open for warmth to absorb you, it's a completely other case.
4



Empty Tremor are towards achieving that, a big merit of the whole team with Mr. Melancholia, singer Giovanni de Luigi, in the front. The balance of speed, melody, softness, and technicality is fairly good. This record may let you down in the morning, but acts calming and thought-provoking when the day is over. (GS)
[Empty Tremor, PO Box 21, Alfonsine 48011, Ravenna, Italy]
3 3/4

EVERGREY
The Dark Discovery
Gothenburg Noiseworks
To hear a Gothenburg-based band playing in the style that has nothing in common with In Flames or At The Gates becomes almost the same rarity as to hear a Florida non-death metal band some years ago. Evergrey play power metal with progressive metal touch. The main influence I find is Iron Maiden, and Evergrey don't hide their liking of heavy metal legends. But while offering quite traditional in form power metal, this disc also owns elements of such groups as Queensryche and Dream Theater, and I'm happy that this band refused to have those pompous elements of German power metal bands. At the same time, I'm not sure if they can become very big in Japan. "The Dark Discovery" songs leave an impression as it was a concept album, and the lyrics have a common theme. Anyway, starting with powerful "Blackened Dawn", later this album has its weak places, for example, "For Every Tear that Falls", which is too poppy compared to the whole feel. But fans of melodic traditional metal mixed with novelties of progressive bands must dig this album, which is said to become the power metal sensation of the year. We'll see. (AO)
[Gothenburg Noiseworks, PO Box 129, S-401 22 Gothenburg, Sweden]
4

EVERON

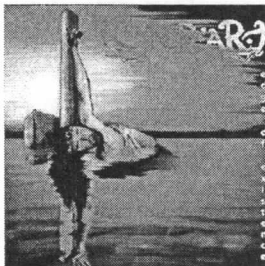
Venus
Mascot Records
 I've never been a fan of prog-rock, but it seems that there are exceptions even in this scene. Take, for example, Spock's Beard... or Everon. It takes some time to get used to "Venus", but later it grows on a listener at top speed. The outstanding keyboards arrangements lend the album almost a meditative, spacious touch, beautiful melodies like in "Restless Heart" or "Not For Sale" bore their way into my brains and don't want to leave them for days. The highlight is prepared for the end: "Until The Day Breaks" is a gloomy atmospheric track that shuffles back and forth between Depeche Mode and Dream Theater. This is the third release of Everon. Check out their previous albums "Paradoxes" and "Flood". (SV)
 [Everon, Postlagernd Anrath, 47877 Willich, Germany]
 4 1/4

EXCELSIS

Anduin the River
self-released
 Excelsis from Switzerland must try their luck with the labels because their first self-released CD is really a good piece of power metal. Nice epic tracks in veins of Blind Guardian/Heaven's Gate dominate on this longplayer together with a slightly medieval Scottish touch. Even Skyclad or Manowar fans could be charmed with a track like "Princess of the Trees". Only the sound is somewhat weak, for my taste, it contains too many deep tones (which can be removed, for example, by remastering). In spite of that, I can't find any holes in this eventful and well-packaged product, so take your pens, write to the address below and ask for the price. (SV)
 [Stefan Ruef, PO Box 163, 3245 Koppigen, Switzerland]
 3 3/4

EXCITER

The Dark Command
Osmose Productions
 It's high time for reunions. I should not be surprised if soon we would watch more "living dead" bands arising from their graves. Presentiment of favorable conditions for making money seems to obsess even the biggest pessimists. I have nothing against the true heavy metal and its revival, but this exhibition is already getting on my nerves. Exciter's "The Dark Command" is quite a good release but also not any sensation. The songs are alike and sometimes lacking in ideas. Titles like "Aggressor", "Assassins in Rage", or "Screams from the Gallows" not necessarily speak for the quality of songs. Like in case of Anvil, let's stick to 3 1/4, 'cause somehow these releases are so similar... (SV)
 3 1/4



EYEFEAR

Edge of Existence
self-released
 After the success of Vaudvahl [hm... ask Paul of now Where Echoes End what he thinks of Vaudvahl's success. - Ed.], the European interest in the Australian scene has become quite big. Eyefear's debut is a very interesting power metal album that could appeal to Metal Church fans or people who like "To Dimension Logic". Just singer Jason Smart, who doesn't need to hide behind such a celebrity like Mike Howe,

pleads for the quality of this album. "Of Blind Faith", "Necromancer", or "Spellbound" are very pleasant, well thought-out power metal compositions. However, the highlight is a breathtaking "Reflection Faded" larded with celestial keyboards and sparkling drums. A nice CD-booklet and lyrics emphasize the fact that Eyefear are keen on dealing with deeper questions of life. An individual, a bit spiritual album by this Australian newcomer. (SV)
 [20 Australian Dollars, Carly Stock, PO Box 60, Market Street, Melbourne, 8007 Australia]
 4 1/4

GEMINI

Out For Blood
Nightmare Records
 This album has two types of songs. A strong point are early-Queensyche influenced tracks like "Crime to Bare", "No Soldier Returns", or "Out For Blood". A weak point are several average songs in glam rock style. Taking into consideration the fact that this album was released in 1992, "Out For Blood" is a respectable product, which is the second in the band's career. Later, singer Lance King (by the way, Nightmare record label boss) formed project The King's Machine (CD "A State of Mind"), drummer Brian Reidinger showed a predilection for heavier sounds in White Fear Chain (see review). In 1997, the third Gemini album with the new line-up was released and, as the Nightmarea boss says, it's very heavy. (SV)
 [\$16, Nightmare Records, 7751 Greenwood Dr., St. Paul, Minnesota 55112, USA]
 3 1/2

GNOSIS

Tribal Metal demo-CD
self-released
 This group calls themselves "a tribal metal band", but this tribal influence isn't so clear. The music is more traditional melodic heavy metal with some HC influences, and only instrumentals "Four Corners" and "Greenwind" give a better impression with wind instruments used in them. If they were used in the other songs, they could be more interesting. But the band have a vision about their own style, so the future is promising. (AO)
 [Gnosis, PO Box 860017, Ridgewood, NY 11386-0017, USA]
 3

HANKER

The Dead Ringer
self-released
 Hanker are sharp-edged and rough, thus, should be ascribed to power metal. Yes, Canada has its own true metal bands, though, in a contrast to many original or even weird bands (like Voivod, Noisefloor, Heaven's Cry), Hanker are quite predictable. They have been compared to Jag Panzer and their power metal is actually POWER metal, faithful to the roots and indirectly blaming cheesy so-called power metal bands that we hear nowadays. singer did a good job ranking Hanker among those heavy/thrash bands with expressive and diverse vocals, which is rarely the case when we have in mind 'rough' metal. Hanker stick to the cannons, but put their own uneven yet quite tasteful touch. (GS)
 [Hanker managment, 22 rue Assomption, C.P. 178, Beaupre (Quebec), G0A 1E0, Canada]
 3 1/4

HEADSTONE

Wings of Eternity
Noise Records
 Due to the current trends, major indie labels aren't that selective about heavy metal bands. T&T division of Noise Records decided to release the second album of Headstone from Germany, the band that feels the melody and is capable of great things. Therefore it's a bit sad that this album, in

general, lacks depth, and is headbanging-oriented. Headstone pull of some great melodic tracks like "All for One", "Whisper", "Belovers of Fidelity" (some Depressive Age elements here!), but Manowar-like "Wings of Eternity", "Ready to Go" are way too demonstrative and cliché. (GS)
 3 1/2

HOLLOW

Modern Cathedral
Nuclear Blast Records
 For their first output, this new power/prog metal outfit from Finland has taken some of the best ingredients of high-profiled bands like early Queensyche or Crimson Glory and, paraphrasing the album title, the result has turned out to be a quite brightly polished monument. More or less, the disc is characterized by fine, heavy, melodic guitars. A more recent band with which they could also bare a comparison to in terms of sound would be House of Spirits (good group, unfortunately already extinct). Facts are that Hollow certainly manage to land on high ground with most of the powerful musical passages who pierce the 12 stained glass windows of their solid cathedral. During "Trademark" song, and surprisingly perhaps in relation to the rest of the album, some Superior overtones come to the surface, especially at the time when mid-tempo parts flourish. Series of good hooks and catchy refrains make songs such as "Can You Hear Me" outstand (kind of cuts which leave one humming mentally the chorus lines); "In Your Arms" reminded me of Psycho Drama's first work, and themes as "Speak to Me" could perfectly fit musically on glorious power metal albums like Conception's "Parallel Minds", for example. As a bottomline: basically Hollow's shaft of music flows in the form of a "compendium" of those acts' styles. It'll be interesting if in the future they'd manage to include a bit of movement away from those sound templates in pursue of a more personal hallmark maybe. (GM)
 4



ICED EARTH

Something Wicked This Way Comes
Century Media Records
 Starting to work with popular American comics authors, Florida's power metal veterans got a new breath and also a bigger support from their record label. 1996's "The Dark Saga" was shortly followed by a double disc "Days of Purgatory", which contained re-done old songs from 1986 to 1994, and there was no a big break before the release of this album. "Something Wicked This Way Comes" is similar to "The Dark Saga" and contains some openly melodic and slightly melancholic power metal songs as well as some power/thrash groovy songs more a la Metallica 91. Listening to tracks like "Consequences", you have to admit that Iced Earth have mastered the technique of a good song, but some of those groovier tracks sound a little too direct and one-dimensional. The nice trilogy at the end serves as a compensation and, overall, the album is solid. (GS)
 4

IMPROVISION

Improvisation EP and Daysdream promo-CD
self-released
 These Norwegians bring a reviewer into a tricky situation: it is difficult to say



MAYFAIR

Fastest Trip to Cyber-Town
King Pest Records
 Each time Mayfair release a new album, their style changes in an unexpected way. From progressive metal on "Behind" it turned to psychedelic rock on "Die Flucht", and "Fastest Trip to Cyber-Town", their third CD, left me dazzled for a long time. There is no more one concrete style in this music. Already after hearing a three-song advance tape, I was expecting something out of all frames, but the reality seems to be even more surprising. Lyrically, this CD tells a fictitious strange story which takes place in a fictitious town. And musically, it is a cross between prog rock, psychedelic music, jazz, funk, tribal, and maybe something else. Maybe the most multi-styled disc I have heard this year. Almost all people who listened to this album give different resemblances, the range varies from Suede to Rush. The supervision of Stuart Bruce (Duran Duran, Frankie Goes To Hollywood) had impact on the music, now it almost doesn't have anything common with metal, but maybe that's only for good, because now we hear a much more developed music. Perhaps there is no one entire mood, but do we need it? Besides, I don't think that all fans of traditional metal will be disappointed - all in all, the main basis is psychedelic rock with various other musical elements laid on it. We can even meet industrial sounds and effects never ever used before by Mayfair. Mario's voice became even more professional. My favorite tracks are "Trip", "Waterproof", and "I Never Stripped in Public", but this album must be listened in a whole. (AO)
 [Mayfair, Mottnerstr. 66, A-6820 Fastanz, Austria]
 4 3/4

whether they are a prog rock band or a prog metal band. I would think that they come from a prog rock background, judging from their music and image in the first CD. The debut presents a melding of prog rock/metal with psychedelic rock. Songs are slow or mid-paced, hardly predictable and even trippy. Though the track "My Trousers", in spite of all its irony, does not seem to fit well. "Daysdream" features two new songs, which are darker. Different elements are better tied together contributing to the whole atmosphere. One note is that if the first album may seem a little weird to a prog metal listener, the second one should fulfil his/her expectations. (GS)
 [Improvisation, Dylan R. Hopkin, Morteruds Gt. 24, N-2300 Hamar, Norway]
 3 and 3 1/2

Lately I see many new prog/power bands arising from the U.S.: Cauldron Born, Jacob's Dream, Digital Ruin, Beyond Reality, Visionary, etc. It's like a new wave of American prog metal. Whereas many of these bands sound too whining and too bombastic for me, Soundscape from Danbury (CT) combine modern elements with the 70's influences in the intelligent way, it's as if hippies would play prog metal. Their first CD "Discovery" (see review) belongs to the most interesting releases of this genre. But that's not all. Soundscape's lead singer/keyboardist Thorne has released two solo albums and both of them are rock operas! The first one, "America The Beautiful", came out in 1995 and was a double CD which contained 2 hours of great music and a large number of vocal performances. If this mammoth-work sounded still not thought through enough, the new opus "Iago", adapted from Shakespeare's "Othello", is a real banger in questions of a rock opera: dynamic, emotional, and a bit crazy! Although Thorne was very busy with recording the new albums (for example, the new Soundscape CD), he agreed to answer some questions for "Edge Of Time".



THORNE The Shapeshifter Man [by Sigitas Velyvis]

What made you to do solo albums? All members of Soundscape took part in recording the rock operas. Don't they approve of using your songs for Soundscape releases?

Well, this whole thing sort of began with my first solo album, the rock opera "America the Beautiful". It was during the recording of that album that Todd and Scott joined me to create Soundscape. In fact, we decided to form a band and named ourselves Soundscape just prior to the release of that album. Soon afterward, we collaboratively wrote and recorded "Discovery" which had a distinctly different sound than my solo stuff - it was more of a true Soundscape record and less of a pure Thorne record. I think it's important that there remain a distinction between the two, because they are different. It has never been a question of whether or not the band approves of my songs or not. It's been more about creative direction. Soundscape never really set out to be a rock opera band, that was my gig. And they've helped me explore it.

Tell me something about the predecessor "America the Beautiful". It had a very interesting concept, something like Queensryche's "Operation Mindcrime"?
Not like "Operation Mindcrime" at all really. That is a concept album, perhaps one of the greatest ever recorded, but "America the Beautiful" is a rock opera, straight and true. It was written for the stage, with 9 characters, multiple choruses, and a full orchestra. And it's a real drama in the playscript sense, so that it deviates from the conventional rock and roll/metal format and ventures into real opera. I was inspired by "Jesus Christ Superstar" to fuse together the opera format with heavy music. Essentially, it was an experiment. Experimenting is something I do a lot of. I'm not really into regurgitating what's already going on around me. What's the point? At the time I was in college studying 19th century opera and I was intrigued by the idea of writing a metal opera.

Why did you choose "Othello" as the subject for this album?
I wanted to do a dark, dark album. And I wanted it to be a rock opera again. When I was in college, I read several of Shakespeare's plays, and Othello was my favorite. So very dark and evil. The character Iago is as evil as they come, and I was excited at the prospect of interpreting this character in my own twisted way through music. And it also allowed me to continue composing for other singers / characters, which I really enjoy.

Don't you think that, for example, Savatage's "Streets" was a good conceptual album, but it had nothing in common with a rock opera at all?
Actually, I haven't heard "Streets" if you can believe it! And we've done several concerts with Savatage. Don't tell them! But I do know that there are many so-called rock operas out there that aren't really rock operas. To me a rock opera requires a large cast of singers and a grandiose arrangement, like classic opera. In "America the Beautiful" I even composed with recitative in the true style of classic opera, where much of the dialogue was sung back and forth between the characters. I didn't do this with "Iago" because I think most people don't understand it and get annoyed. They really just want a 4 minute song to get their rocks off, which is OK too. So I took that approach with Iago in an effort to draw more people into my work.

What makes a distinction between concept albums and rock operas? How does the writing process differ?
Well, let's take for example "Iago" and "Discovery". When I wrote "Iago", the point of the words and the drama was the most important thing, and the music was arranged to support the development of the plot and drama. But when we wrote "Discovery", the music was the priority, and the lyrics were written afterward, interweaved with the song structure as another melody rather than the defining element. "Discovery" won't be acted out on a stage with people trying to figure out

what's going on, therefore the vocal melodies don't need to be so dramatic.

Can you name some rock operas that are really worth listening to?
"Jesus Christ Superstar". Both recorded versions are excellent. "Tommy" is OK, but again, not really a rock opera with Roger doing all the vocals. Someone just turned me on to "Ayreon: The Final Experiment". It's cool. I like it.

King Diamond had very good concept albums like "Abigail" and "Them". What do you think of his stories?
I love King Diamond! His music and his stories have been a profound influence in the development of my musical career ever since I first heard "Melissa". He is a unique and creative guy with a strong vision, no one can deny that. And I love his voice.

How did you contact the singers that perform Othello, Cassio, and Desdemona's parts?
Desdemona was easy - she's my wife! Angela is a major talent, both with her singing and her vocal producing in the studio. She's got a great ear for what works and what doesn't. Othello was performed by the same guy who did JFK on "America" and I had met him through Angela when she was at the Manhattan School of Music in New York. Cassio was sung by Rob Jackson, who sings locally where I live. I've known him since I was in Sacred Oath. He's a great talent as well, and a pleasure to work with.

All vocals on "Iago" astonishingly were recorded and mixed with very little use of effects (delays, reverb, even compression). Was it so planned or was it the result of a low budget release?
Ha! You're the first person to remark on that. Yes it's true, we didn't even use compression on the vocals. The objective of the production of "Iago" was to create a captivating story through the vocal performances, from the performer - not the effects rack; to arrange the music to fit the voice, not try and squeeze the voice in here and there wherever it fit in or sounded cool, or spruce up a weak vocal performance with a big delay or something. Of course we used reverb though.
As far as our budget, we make use of what we have. What more can we do? When your resources are limited, you'd better make sure you can get the job done without depending on technological miracles!

Anthony Mills seems to be influenced by R&B or soul singers.
Yeah, Anthony is actually on tour with Harry Belafonte right now. When we met him he was studying classical opera but his main gig is R&B and spirituals. He is a major talent and I feel honored to have worked with him. He had absolutely no qualms about doing the prog metal thing. He's pretty open-minded.

What are your favorite tracks on "Iago?"
Oh, that's a tough one. I love them all, seriously. It depends on what kind of mood I'm in, I guess. I love "I Am The Law", and "Desdemona". And "Rain Rain" is so beautiful. "Murder" is one of the finest pieces of instrumental music I've ever written. They're all my favorite in their own way. They're all so different, you know, that it's hard to compare them as one being better than the other. What are yours?



Soundscape

Hm, "Desdemona", "Rain Rain", or "Evil" to name a few. Do you agree that "Iago" could appeal to fans of various styles of music? I think even Gothic fans could be delighted with songs like "Rain Rain" or "Willow".
Oh yes, I agree. That's what I'm trying to do with my solo albums, is bridge these "gaps" that sort of isolate listeners into these preconceived music cultures: metal, hardcore, pop, R&B, top 40, prog, hard rock. I mean, good music is good music. I'm a human being. I'm not angry all of the time. Or sad all of the time. Yes, I'm very much a metal head when it comes right down to it, but I sort of resent how metal has ousted most emotions and hung on to anger and hate and sadness. That came about in the eighties when bands like Slayer came around and made us all think that tougher and heavier was better and everyone joined the race for the biggest balls. Insecurity breeds itself. "Rain Rain" and "Willow" are such great songs. A lot of people will never listen to them because a woman sings them, and they can't relate. That's such a shame. There are things in this world that are better expressed by a woman. These people are missing out on a lot. But I get letters from all different kinds of people that love it all, from "Willow" to "Lies". And I hope that I can open some eyes and shrink some of the gaps, knock down some of the walls that people build around themselves.
I think you're right though. At least, I hope so, or I'm some kind of freaked out schizophrenic! I mean I DO write all this stuff. And I like it.

What about the staging of "Iago?" Have you thought about that?
Well of course! That's why I write the stuff! But it hasn't happened yet. Staging a rock opera is expensive, and the right opportunity hasn't come along yet. I hope that it eventually does. For both of my rock operas. It requires many elements coming together at once: talent, venue, location, management, and MONEY, plus many other things. But wherever and whenever the opportunity arises you can be sure I'll be there to grab it!



What is Angel Thorne Music? How do you finance your records?

Angel Thorne Music is our (Angela and myself) production company and record label. We've got a recording studio as well, which makes it a lot easier to make records. When I got out of college, I reflected back on all that I had been through with Sacred Oath and Mercenary Records, and I decided to form this company with my wife. Now we retain the rights on my music, we make the decisions on how it will be recorded and promoted. The big sacrifice is that we have such limited funding it's difficult to get noticed. But I want to be noticed for my music, not my ads. If it's going to happen, it'll happen, I suppose. The whole thing has sort of grown into a monster that lives and breathes of its own will now, which is great, except that it works me like a goddamn slave! We're doing three records this year, which is a lot considering I'm engineering, producing and performing multiple instruments on each of them. Then I oversee design, manufacturing, distribution, promotion, etc. It's crazy. We finance our records with the money we make from selling them, with a healthy dose of our personal incomes thrown in for good measure.

Have you had any offers from other labels? Do you want to continue releasing albums on your own label?

Yes, and yes. We have had offers from other labels, but nothing that was worth signing. I've been down that road before with Mercenary Records. I'm not happy when my fate is in some disinterested executive's hands who couldn't give two shits about me or the integrity of my music. I'll continue to build Angel Thorne Music and eventually we'll be in a position to license albums to larger record companies. That is my objective. Not to give it all away for nothing, but to remain in control, creatively, and contractually. It won't happen overnight, but we're a hell of a lot closer than we were three years ago. We're already doing licensing deals with other companies and I'm sure it's the way we want to go in the future.

Tell me about the Powermad festival. I heard it turned out a flop (few people, few bands).

Powermad was great! We really enjoyed it, and I thought it was very successful. People don't understand what's going on in this country right now. The scene is dead. DEAD. People don't come out. Shows are poorly attended. The clubs aren't paying bands squat. It's very difficult to play shows, even in your own hometown! So to organize a festival with bands from all over the country and actually have most of them show up is a big success. And the turn out was good. There were a lot of people there that had never even heard of us and I hope they'll never forget us. We'd do it again, for sure.

Don't you think that classic operas would sound far better if not this determined singing style?

No way! That's like saying that metal would sound better if singers would just yodel through it instead. Operatic singing is part of the culture and should be preserved. Listen to Pavarotti. You're going to ask that guy to do it differently? He's the king.

[Angel Thorne Music Co.LLC, P.O.Box 1244, Danbury, CT 06813, USA]

[E-mail: thorne@angelthorne.com]

[Web page: <http://www.angelthorne.com>]

INBREED

Back to the Underground and Consenting Goat

Midwest Records

Listening to both records of Inbreed, you visualize old and little stubborn bike-rockers, who stick to 'real' metal. It's their choice, but are we obliged to like yet another release of this kind? "Back to the Underground" presents very back-to-the-roots metal, which possesses rock n'rolling drive and that's about all, except country parody "Pure Country" and instrumental "Too Far South".

While "Back to the Underground" is tolerable, the follow-up, 28 minutes long "Consenting Goat" sounds rather shallow due to thrash elements, a sharper edge, and even more one-dimensional music. I imagine that some of it may go well in a live situation, but I don't think Inbreed, as of now, are destined to more than gaining some credit in their local area, which is Texas, USA. (GS)

[Inbreed, Bryan Smith, 150 San Jose Salado, TX 76551, USA]
3 1/4 and 3

IN THE NAME

In the Name

Rising Sun Productions

The debut release of the Canadian quartet In the Name is ambivalent. This is caused by the combination of newer songs treading the fine line between Damn The Machine/Psychoic Waltz type ballads (vocalist Fabien

Madeleine reminds of Buddy Lackey), more restraint Riverdogs acoustic type ballads, and older 80's style progressive power metal epics songs (written under the previous guise of Kingsbane).

Actually the latter type are listed as bonus songs on the European release. With my preference actually going out to the latter with the prototype progressive metal ballad

"Dreamscape". The newer material shows highlights in the heavy and atmospheric "Dusk" but also includes a superfluous acoustic ballad like "Shame". This is a very promising and diverse release and recommended to fans of keyboard-less prog metal. (CR)

[In the Name, 2898 Lakeshore Blvd. W., PO Box 44, Etobicoke, Ontario M8V 1J2, Canada]
4

JUD

Intermission

Nois-O-Lution

Who would have thought it. Ex-Damn The Machine singer/guitarist Dave Clemmons makes himself heard with the new band called Jud. Certainly, "Intermission" has nothing common with Damn The Machine, but contains

extremely good acoustic compositions in the best Rolling Stones/Led Zeppelin manner. "Buffalo" or "Deadosphere" could easily take their place among songs of Tribe After Tribe's debut. Although this album was made in two days (!), it's not a rush job but very pleasant, slightly melancholic album for calm hours. Just listen to beautiful tracks "Sucking the Life out of Me" or "Shot in the Park". By the way, this is a second CD by Dave & Co., check out their debut "Something Better" that was released on the same Nois-O-Lution label in 1996. (SV)

[Jud, PO Box 2205, Venice, CA 90294, USA]

4

KAMELOT

Siege Perilous

Noise Records

The third outing by Florida's melodic heavy/power metal band again displays a solid teamwork and moderate power. Khan, ex-Conception singer, performed all vocals and added a gentle touch to an already tangible Kamelot's music. "Siege Perilous", clearly ascribable to melodic metal category, does not follow traces of any established bands (like many do in this genre, e.g., Hammerfall, Nocturnal Rites). On the other hand, Kamelot still slightly suffer from some repetitiveness and the lack of keeping the same magnificence in all the songs. These words shouldn't, of course, prevent melodic metal fans from listening to very captivative tracks like "Millennium", "Where I Reign", and "Parting Visions". (GS)

[KOTR, PO Box 270 172, Tampa, FL 33688, USA]
3 3/4

KAREN KENEDY

Inside My Head EP

self-released

Karen Kennedy is one of the rare ladies-singers who is really into heavy metal/hard rock and admires bands like Queensryche, Iron Maiden, Judas Priest, or Black Sabbath. This EP has a very nice atmosphere of the 80's and contains well thought-out and not forced compositions. "Fine Line" and "Sunlight in Shadow" are the best ones on this record. "Set Me Free", for example, reminds me of the good early Iron Maiden. There aren't average songs on this EP, so check this one out! Karen is a very talented singer and I wish her all the best for the future. (SV)

[Karen Kennedy, P.O.Box 15914, Colorado Springs, CO, 80935, USA]

4

KEN ZINER

Timescape

Leviathan Records/LMP

LMP diversified their roster with a neo-classical symphonic progressive metal band, and they chose not a bad one. Ken Ziner, originally formed by guitar-virtuoso Jarno Keskinen from Finland, deliver pleasant to the ear melodic metal music which may seem a bit sterile though. Those who seek strongly innovative bands (or an exact opposite of 'cheesy') would pass on "Timescape", but this album is merely for those who are keen on bands following the path explored by Symphony X and the like. (GS)

3 3/4

KING DIAMOND

Voodoo

Massacre Records

There is no need to present the absolute horror master. You can love or hate King Diamond music, but who can blame his for stepping from his original path? The 8th album of King Diamond shows him returning to his glorious days. To tell the truth, the last two his records left nothing but disappointment to me. Both "The Spider's Lullabye" and "The Graveyard" were just weak prolongators of his earlier cult albums, their music and concept (especially of "The Graveyard") weren't worth King Diamond's name.

After these years of disappointment, I can say that "Voodoo" again is the master work of King Diamond. Yes, everything as earlier, King Diamond seems to be a true believer of his style, but this time the music is filled with good melodies. Andy LaRocca feeds us with his traditionally beautiful solos that have already become a trademark of King Diamond sound. The conception is better organized this time as well. Of course, traditional lyrical King's peculiarities remain, and I can assure you that if you think you have never liked his music, you won't like it this time either, even if it's well done. And even if "Voodoo" can be considered as the return to the glorious past, it doesn't blow away neither "Them" nor "Abigail" or "The Eye", which is still the best King Diamond's album for me. (AO)

4

VITALIJ KUPRIJ

High Definition

Shrapnel Records

Vitalij Kuprij's first solo album is a typical neo-classical metal album reminiscent of the virtuoso releases of the end of the eighties. It reminds a lot of Tony MacAlpine and Joey Tafolla, being solely instrumental and mixing in alternate fashion keyboard and guitar solos. It is as if we were cast back ten years ago! Greg Howe, as a shred master at the guitar, displays his usual speed on the fretwork, but his solos lack real melodies and imaginative themes. And this is also the main drawback of the whole album, which is more or less a compound filled with endless solos played at light speed. Only recommended for those musicians (and maybe others) among you who are really hooked on virtuosity. (AS)

3 1/2

LAS CRUCES

S.O.L.

Brainticket Records

Las Cruces from San Antonio have devoted themselves to pure doom metal in veins of early Black Sabbath. Of course, it is nothing new but their music comes over very naturally which I cannot say about every band of this style. A voluminous organ by Mark A. Zamarron adds a special touch to the album, although I should advise him to pay more attention to good melodies because sometimes I have an impression that he just shouts but does not sing. Okay, it is a matter of taste as someone can take pleasure in that. Basically, "S.O.L." is a higher-than-average doom metal album. As an explanation for that listen to "Sophia" or "Jed's White Owl". (SV)

[\$15 (USA), \$17 (elsewhere), Brainticket Records, PO Box 122048, Arlington, TX 76012, USA] [Las Cruces, Mark Zamarron, 9107 Buda, San Antonio, TX 78224, USA]
3 1/2

LAST CHAPTER

The Living Waters

Brainticket Records

The fact that Rob Lowe from Solitude Aeternus acts as a special guest singer on this CD should be to Last Chapter's advantage. But let us not draw a conclusion from it. This band got a prescription for doom metal, that would mean slow rhythms plus heavy riffs plus Rob Lowe himself. Sounds promising but in reality "The Living Waters" is just an ordinary average doom release. If the first track ("H Sequence/Thorn of Creation") is all right, so the following songs sink into the quag of monotony. A few interesting excursions into progressive, atmospheric fields ("The Living Waters" and "A Warning Never Heard") cannot save this album, either. Even the great Rob Lowe looks deplorably in this project. It is a pity. Last Chapter could squeeze more out of this affair. (SV)

[\$15 (USA), \$17 (elsewhere), Brainticket Records, PO Box 122048, Arlington, TX 76012, USA] [Last Chapter headquarters, PO Box 487, Arlington, TX 76004-0487, USA]
3 1/4



BEHIND THE CURTAIN

Dreamers of a Way

[by Giedrius Slivinskas]

Living in Aalborg for more than one year, I slowly have been trying to learn more about Denmark's underground metal scene, but, as it could have been expected, the main feeling was that nothing was really happening here. Several years ago, the only heavy names heard from Denmark were Konkhra, Ill Disposed, Furious Trauma, i.e., aggressive metal bands. Some of them are respected in the world scene, but, overall, Denmark haven't been keeping up with its neighbors Sweden and Norway, if metal is concerned. I can't say that the matters are about to change, but, at least, there are indications of a faster movement. Aalborg-based progressive metal band Behind The Curtain are a part of this. Living in the same city where you can hardly collect 100 people that like progressive metal, it would have been weird not to get in touch with them. I was familiar with their material beforehand. Demo "Creation" was promising, bringing strong resemblances to my all-time favorites Psychotic Waltz. Later, I received their preview CD with non-mixed tracks of the forthcoming album, and these were the songs to blow me away. I went to their rehearsal. They rehearse in some kind of big and severe building, which, as keyboard player Morten Pedersen informed me, is a hundred-year old. The company that owes the house wants to destroy it, but since the weather around is quite polluted, there is no big interest in the area. Behind The Curtain rent the place and they will receive a warning six months before the house will actually be demolished. And it eventually will, sometime in the forthcoming 10 years. Meanwhile, the specific atmosphere and the polluted weather seem to work just fine for the band. Behind The Curtain consist of six

members and all of them participated in the interview. I started straight away pointing out similarities to Psychotic Waltz and the talk went on about their favorite bands. Sure, they like Psychotic Waltz, and singer Jonas Froberg is probably the biggest fan. Not a surprise, since Buddy Lackey's singing manner seems to be the one he adores the most. He first grabbed "Edge of Time" I brought, opening the pages that contained an interview with Psychotic Waltz. His favorite album is "A Social Grace". However, the rest of his collection placed in the rehearsal room does not have much in common with metal and mainly contains names like U2. Keyboard player Morten admitted that he likes Dream Theater and Symphony X but said that in general the band members listen to "all kinds of music". They also said that it's not easy to get hold of rare and obscure progressive metal records in Aalborg. For example, Jonas had to wait 6 months for a Psychotic Waltz CD and then paid 200 Danish Kroner (about \$30) for it. There are, however, a couple of big music stores in Aalborg, which have relatively big sections of more mainstream metal. The first release of Behind The Curtain was demo "Creation", which came out in February of 1997. After that, Morten Pedersen, the keyboard player, joined the band, and it was the beginning of the next stage. Everyone seems to be pretty excited about this addition, saying that keyboards really improved the sound of the old songs, making them more elaborate and complete. Keyboards added a whole new dimension for ways how to align ideas for new songs, and, in a way, lightened the task of guitarists Lars Jelsbak and Signar Petersen. Morten also sings backing vocals, guitarist Lars and drummer Brian Rasmussen can sing as well, which

makes it possible to compose "really cool" vocal melodies in their songs. Morten stressed that it's also very important to transfer all vocal harmonies into a live situation. "If songs have them when you play live, it's like 'wow!'. The audience gets impressed."

After the release of "Creation", the band didn't take care much of the promotion, just mailed several copies to Danish record labels, which apparently were not interested in something both heavy and melodic. In general, my feeling was that the musicians didn't really want to work on promotion much themselves, therefore

Namely, melodic, heavy, and powerful metal with a lot of diversity and emotions. The album is titled "Till Birth Do Us Part" and should be out on American record label Laser's Edge/Sensory.

Lyrics are mainly personal, but everyone can try to put him-/herself into a situation of a lyrical subject and find patterns. Singer Jonas is the main lyricist ("all are love songs anyway"), but others write some lyrics as well. Bass player Kasper

it was an important step, when they were contacted by Claus Jensen, one of the writers of biggest Danish metal magazine "Metalized". This happened in the summer of 1997. Getting tired of the blankness in Denmark's metal scene, Claus wanted to act because he thought that with the right push some Danish bands could do well in the world metal scene, and he had an idea of creating a management company that would promote bands and help them to get more exposure in press, as well as would find suitable record companies. The company was titled Intromental Management, it started to function at the end of 1997 and now manages up to ten Danish bands. Behind The Curtain signed a deal with them and together with Wuthering Heights (symphonic and epic power/speed metal) are the two that have main priorities at the moment. The band is really happy about Claus and his knowledge of the scene. "He knows 15 labels where it's really worth to send material. From like two hundred."

Another good feature is that he knows how to sell things. Behind The Curtain started to record songs for their debut album in March 1997 at Aabenraa studios in Denmark. The studio was selected because producer Jacob Hansen (Invoker, Without Grief) was working there. Claus arranged the recording with him, and the band got a discount. In March, they finished the main part of the recording except the intro and the outro. In July, these were recorded, and the whole album was mixed. In March, Behind The Curtain won a contest of bands in Denmark and got an invitation to play at Midtfyns Festival '98, together with Prodigy, Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds, and Anouk. Of course, the band got the smallest stage, but this still was a big achievement, because they were selected from 80 bands that participated in that contest. What really surprised me that a metal band (not a pop/rock one!) won. The band didn't know judges, I asked that. "Fields of Despair", "Illusory", "Artificial Trance", and "I Lost My Sense of Passion" from the demo were re-recorded for the CD. In addition, the band recorded "Dreaming of a Way" (which appeared on compilation album "Extremity Rising Vol.3"), "I Believe", "Till Birth Do Us Part", and "A Breeze". The working titles of the latter two were "Snap I" and "Snap II", and these are the ones indicating band's future direction.



Molin wrote "Artificial Trance", which is about a drug addict, who blames the outside world, screams he does not need luxury, but he goes down constantly without noticing it. In 1997 and 1998, the band was playing a lot in Aalborg and now they want to get further. North Jutland (part of Denmark where Aalborg is located) is cut off from everywhere else and it's difficult to get out. In Aalborg, about 100-150 people come to metal shows. There was a big metal festival in November of 1997 with In Flames as headliners, and local Danish bands, including Behind The Curtain. 150 people arrived. Entombed were playing a little earlier, 80 came to see them. The numbers are not big, and Morten comments that "Danish people were always into rock music". Another reason for the low attendance may be high ticket prices; for instance, for Entombed one had to pay 130DKK (about \$20). At their gigs, Behind The Curtain try to keep prices low, like 20DKK, which is almost nothing for Denmark. Their main concern as of now is to get heard. I became curious how many records do actually Denmark's biggest metal act, Konkhra sell and got an answer that the number may be around 3,000. Which is not a helluva lot for a country having five million inhabitants. At the moment, Claus is working on arranging some gigs with Symphony X and Arena at the end of 1998. Also, there is a plan to do a tour in Scandinavia with Time Machine and Empty Tremor. Things are moving pretty smoothly along, with the Midtfyns Festival, the new CD, the management, and (hopefully) live shows. Band's main goal is to compose unique music, which is delivered in an own way and which "would not disappear into the everflow."



Behind The Curtain, Kasper Molin, Vendsysselgade 7, 3th, 9000 Aalborg, Denmark
Intromental Management, c/o Claus Jensen, Grobnarskollegiesvej 2, 2320, Groenbordsvej,
2300 Copenhagen S, Denmark | Web page: <http://www.intromental.com>

LIQUID TENSION EXPERIMENT
 Liquid Tension Experiment
Magna Carta Records
 The "Liquid Tension Experiment" is a purely instrumental album featuring two famous musicians from Dream Theater, John Petrucci, and Mike Portnoy, among others. Stylistically, it stands somewhere between prog rock and fusion jazz, with strong blues influences, what is clearly perceptible by the rhythm, which is groovy, not crunchy. As it is expected with this kind of musicians, this album displays some incredible playing. However, being more or less the result of aggregated jam sessions, it lacks the depth and the complexity of more mature albums, with the exception of some tracks. Most compositions are built on a traditional blues structure, with a lot of jamming and lengthy solos, culminating in an experimental 28 minutes piece. The closest counterparts of this album are some experimental songs of the Chick Corea electric band, Frank Gambale, Eric Marienthal, and John Patitucci. (AS)
 4

MACHINERY
 Reconstruction
6 Cylinder
 For a long time I haven't heard such a fresh traditional heavy metal album! Machinery from Stratford, CT masterly blend the influences from Iron Maiden, Judas Priest, or early Metallica. "Reconstruction" is simply bursting with good ideas: aggressive riffs and nice melodic refrains, this is the real heavy metal! Listen to "Scum" or "Blind" (with a Fates Warning touch) and you won't be disappointed. The CD-booklet reminds me a bit of bands like Nuclear Assault, no wonder, Machinery's lyrics go the similar but slightly different way and are worth your attention. Very recommended for heavy metal and thrash fans. (SV)
 [Machinery, P.O.Box 826, Stratford, CT 06497, USA]
 4

MADSWORD
 Evolution
Underground Symphony
 The first listen gives a bit loose impression. The debut CD of Italian prog-metallers Madsword contains 5 long and complex tracks, and it is not that easy to absorb what is actually going on. Songs may seem not very cohesive and even chaotic for untrained ears. References include the first very techno-thrash oriented Sieges Even album, traditional prog metal with keyboards like the first Dream Theater album, and standard prog rock. To attract a wider audience, the songwriting definitely should be streamlined, but for technical metal freaks (read: trained ears) "Evolution" is a possible choice. Having in mind that there is not much technical metal around. Ending on a usual note, why the hell did they put "Ytsejam" cover??! It simply means 6 minutes less original material. The most of those who acquire "Evolution", have "When Dream And Day Unite" in their collections. (GS)
 3



MAGELLAN
 Test of Wills
Magna Carta Records
 What an intensive album! I imagine, fans of epic or bombastic prog/power will press the stop button of their CD

players after 2-3 songs. This CD is rather for people who like innovative music with unexpected, spontaneous curves. Magellan's third(?) release breaks all standards of progressive metal, and with such an easiness and cheek that the listener gets a frightened feeling right at the outset. I had similar experiences only once, listening to the genial Leger De Main debut. Magellan connect modern prog metal with influences from King Crimson, Jethro Tull, and Yes. A very bizarre mixture, but successful. If you don't trust me, listen to the title track, "Walk Fast, Look Worried", or "Jacko". This trio has participated in Pink Floyd, Yes, Jethro Tull and Genesis tribute albums, and I think that's saying a lot. (SV)
 4 1/4



MAGIC 7
 Magic 7 EP
self-released
 I wrote in my review to White Fear Chain's "Visceral Life" that Buddo, their singer, had a new band called Magic 7. Some days ago I got a letter and this CD from him. He told me that this band has already broken up, too. This EP is the only one record done by Magic 7. Compared to W.F.C. or Last Crack, it's lighter, more balanced and sprays a feeling similar to several Led Zeppelin's songs. Featuring some ex-Last Crack members, "Magic 7" again contains many great riffs and, however, outstanding melody-hooklines by Buddo himself. For instance, "Forgiveness", "Natural Progression", or "Drowning In A Dream". No wonder. Which album with Buddo was just an average product? (SV)
 [\$10, Magic 7, Paul Schluter, 405 East Washinton Ave, Madison, WI, 53703 USA]
 4 1/2



MAGNITUDE NINE
 Chaos to Control
Inside Out Music
 Psyc Drama's singer Corey Brown, Artension's bass player, and American guitarist Rob Johnson joined forces, which resulted into a fine heavy/power metal album with some progressive and neo-classical speed metal elements. Unlike some usual neo-classical power/prog material, "Chaos to Control" has heaviness and groove through the whole record. The poignant voice of Corey and Malmsteen-like shredding of Rob are sparkling everywhere; it's moving, highly melodic, and busy record with speedy classics like "After Tomorrow", Fates Warning-like mellow "Y2K", pretty ballad "Into the Sun". "Keeper of your Soul" is also a very pleasant track with all the ingredients mentioned above. Occasionally, the album turns into not so distinctive tracks ("End of Time"), but overall is very natural and not restrained. (GS)
 [\$12 (USA), \$15 (elsewhere), Rob Johnson, 809 Cherydale Avenue, Columbus, 43207 Ohio, USA]
 4

MANTICORE
 Dead End Solution EP
Nordic Metal
 Denmark is starting to catch up with the new wave of traditional metal; Manticore are probably one of the first bands of this kind from this country. This EP is a normal start, offering 5 pure heavy/speed/power compositions without many additional twists. The singer has a good mid-range voice, the band tends to heavy, melodic, and speedy sort of material. Picked up by Intramental Management, Manticore are on their way to bigger things. This CD doesn't have anything spectacular, but shows that the potential is available. (GS)
 [Intramental Management, Groenjordskollegiet 2520, Groenjordsvej, DK-2300, Copenhagen S, Denmark] [Manticore, Lars F. Larsen, Gl. Koegevej 274C st. th., 2650 Hvidoevre, Denmark]
 3 1/2

MAYADOME
 Near Life Experience
Preview tape
 We have received a preview tape with 4 1/2 songs from the forthcoming Mayadome album. The band acquired a new singer who can hit higher notes than the old one known from the debut "Paranormal Activity", and this is probably the biggest difference because musicwise "Near Life Experience" continues the light technical prog metal direction of its predecessor. I am tempted to comment that the new singer sounds a bit superficial in places, but, overall, now we can say that Mayadome have polished their specific brightly melancholic mood (Imagine softer and thinner "Images And Words" of Dream Theater) still remaining truly metal. If the style sounds fine to you, go after it and be prepared for some additional listens before the actual joy comes. (GS)
 [Mayadome, c/o Teddy Moller, Gramonkehoga, 75597 Uppsala, Sweden]
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MEMENTO MORI
 Songs for the Apocalypse Vol. IV
Black Mark Productions
 "Morturim te salutem" was what Roman gladiators used to shout at Caesar, before entering in combat. Well, I am prone to bow in a similar way, in front of such a killer album as this. I think it is significant to comment how Memento Mori have gone a big step further in what regards improving the technical side of their music. They sound more progressive in the structures and, in general, compositions show a fantastic equilibrium of power and doom/dark metal styles. Since the first listenings, it's possible to notice immediately how a special energy is emitted on all sides right from tracks like "Burned By Light", "The Things You See", or "Under My Blackened Sky". Vocalist Messiah Marcolin's extraordinary performance has much to do with this connection. Straight trash metal reminiscent riff-o-ramas become an incessant element along the album, and make one think of acts in the vein of Nevermore, for example. Recommended. (GM)
 4 1/2

MERCURY RISING
 Building Rome
Dominion Records/Noise Records
 This album is really well prepared, from the title and thoughtful philosophically-edged lyrics to harmonic and mildly heavy music. The second album of this American band is very dynamic in the sense that it contains really many parts without heavy guitars and very smooth transitions; the listener gets puzzled how a calm atmospheric music part suddenly transforms into a pure metal. Comparing with the debut "Upon Deaf Ears", "Building Rome" is less power metal and more progressive metal. A unique heir of Iron Maiden's



LEGER DE MAIN
 Second First Impression
Progressive Music Management
 With their sophomore release, Leger de Main can actually attract different audiences. Many progressive metal bands are stuck within the genre and their creations usually make happier only an esoteric circle of die-hard fans, making frown the others. There is a right amount of everything in the album. We hear a technical intricacy ("Silent Monster" instrumental), vocal hooks, the whole spectre of emotions ranging through all the scale from bright to dark. And the emotions scale is much better filled when musicians handle their instruments well and possess excellent writing skills. Addicted to technical music, Leger de Main are still very accessible. For prog-rock/metal addicts, for... hm, the audience of the most popular radio station in your area. Well, for the latter, some songs should be shortened, but necessary catchy vocal melodies are present, courtesy of Mellisa Blair, one of a few ladies in the prog world. I don't mind if Oasis are on the radio. They are catchy. But catchy and thought-provoking is BETTER. That's why I listen to Leger de Main instead of radio. To quote "Changes with the Day", "Different days lead to different meanings/Yet the words all sound the same". Each time listening to Leger de Main you come up with new thoughts and emotions. (GS)
 [\$12, Progressive Music Management, PO Box 18083, Jacksonville, FL 32229-0083]
 4 1/2



"Powerlove", "Somewhere in Time", "Seventh Son", and Fates Warning's "No Exit" and "Perfect Symmetry", sounding rather different than its predecessors. As I always tend to wonder, how "outside people" will look at this album, in this case, I have to add that the voice of Clarence Osborne may seem tiny in places, but it's controlled and once you are over 'the using to it' phase, you are into it. Overall, a very gentle, melodic, powerful, and diligent album. I honestly think so. (GS)
 [\$15, Dominion Records, PO Box 70, Skillman, NJ 08558-0070, USA]
 4 1/2

Preliminaries and Spanish Panorama Reality

Savatage. Since quite a long time, the legendary band from Florida has been one of my personal favorite acts in the metal genre. As it usually happens when one reserves a soft spot for a band in particular, the quality of their music and other personal reasons were what has been bringing me along these years so many enjoyable moments. Still does, each time when they gift us a new release, as it occurred with the superb last one, "The Wake of Magellan".

But, ironically, I had never had a chance of seeing them performing live. Sure, they've come to Europe dozens of times by now, but living in Spain has substantially more cons than pros concerning metal shows: it's very common here to become excluded of tours of this nature. Sometimes the cause is the conservative attitude of local show promoters. Other times, the lack of proper venues to play at. And also (why not to admit it), a little amount of general disinterest. Therefore Jon Oliva's words during "Edge of Thorns" promo tours sound a little bit strange: "Yeah, we'll visit the usual countries in Europe this time: Germany, Spain, France, Italy...". Well, the real truth was that approximately 15 years after releasing their first recording under the concept of Savatage, the famous Mountain King man and the rest of Sava-crew, had decided to set sail for the ocean.

Crossing the Atlantic with favorable winds, they actually were going to play in Spain for the FIRST time in their long career. Did it help this time the fact that the plot of their last album develops in a recondite seashore of Spain? I don't know. Since I got news concerning this novel visit, and the rumors got real, touchable dates were announced, etc., I obviously moved quickly in order to find out how to book a ticket and not miss this good chance. They were going to play here in Spain three days at the least. One of them was scheduled to take place right in my city, Madrid. But you know how personal interests and stinky economical affairs are sometimes the driving force, right? The result was that Madrid show was cancelled. The official reason: because UFO were about to play there on the same day. "Wow, what an influence," you might be thinking sarcastically. Indeed, I have to agree with you. But, for instance, when it happens that a famous local radio *primma dona* (I mean, a journalist) has shares invested in the venue UFO were going to play at... From then on, I think that every successful attempt of bringing an alternative to those people's lucrative conceived plans would get into history. Matters like that obliged me and other fans from the capital of Spain to consider other options. And, after a few phone calls, I decided to see their show in Valencia (city located at the east coast of Spain). By no means I wanted to miss the wake of this tour.

Contacting Edel

OK. I will tell you now a little how it became possible for a nobody in the world of written music publications (hm,

I'm talking about myself) would get an access to a band like Savatage. Somehow I thought this could be interesting. Or it could also prove how for achieving something, it's more a question of mere audacity than possessing solid references. [Note: if you're solely interested in the part about Savatage, you can skip this part without problems.] So, it started like: "Which is Savatage's record company?" Edel. "Means to find out their office phone number?" Sure, a friend had given me some time ago a sort of short Savatage biography written by Edel staff. Next step was finding it. I tried to contact a person from Edel company promotional department here in

Savatage would decide to play like 20 or 30 songs as encore? OK, let's get real for a second. I had to get that bus back to Madrid.

The book "Live!" (remember the airplane crash at the Andes mountains in the 70's that Disney adapted to cinema a few years ago?) served me as company during that 4 1/2-hour trip. Not surprisingly, the more we approached the east region, the better the weather was getting. I had a couple of hours of time margin before calling Araceli from Edel, so I could take things in a relaxed way and enjoy the sunny day. I knew the city beforehand, had been there several times, but really had no idea where that so

Savatage



How the Will of a Band Can Sometimes Move an Ocean

[by Gregorio Martin]

Madrid in order to know if it would be possible to have a few minutes for chatting with somebody close to the band. "Edge of Time" is a magazine's name this woman from Edel was not familiar with at all: the first real surprise for me (just kidding). Anyway, what I realized after this short conversation was that it seemed this could work. I was given a phone number of Edel office in Barcelona - they appeared to be the ones who would cover the promotional tasks in that show at Valencia. Araceli Mora. That would be the person from Edel Barcelona I had to ask for. And frankly, she appeared to be a very receptive and really nice person since the beginning. Talked to her the same week the gig was taking place, got her mobile number, and farewellled with a "let's meet there at the venue around 5pm, okay?". Done.

Mr. Oliva, The Dallas Cowboys, and a Dish of Nuts

A mild cloudy Sunday morning spreaded over Madrid. I didn't have much time to take a look at transportation timetables, instead, I just tried to rush up early that morning in direction to the city centre. There, I had to look for a right (and affordable) bus who would take me to Valencia, around 400 Km distance. If possible, I wanted to return here after the show, so it was pretty good news to find out at the station that I could get a bus back home at 1:00 am. But what if

called "Arena" club was situated. As you sure know, taxi drivers are used to be a useful reference when one's in a foreign place.

So, this way, I found out which two public buses I had to take and got myself in front of that "Arena" building made of the reddish bricks almost in the blink of an eye. It didn't look at all as a place which would give space to a show like that one, but there were 4 or 5 hours before the doors would open. Not a single metal soul was marauding around there in search of autographs, photographs, or something like that. For one moment, I even started to wonder that the show could have been cancelled, postponed, or similar. In fact, it was more than a week since I had last talked to the event organizers. But no. Just as I approached the back entrance of the venue, I saw roofs of two typical big tour buses. And, just a few steps further, I came across with three or four people who were playing American football using a miniature oval plastic ball. From the distance, one of them looked like guitarist Al Pitrelli. My trip hadn't been in vain, there would be a Savatage show that night indeed.

So, I sat down there, read some more pages from the novel under that mediterranean sun and enjoyed the soft breeze. Then, at my right, a fenced-in door opened, and a big long haired man smoking a cigarette, appeared asking the ball in play. Would you say that Jon Oliva has good abilities as a quarterback? Well, I'd say he passed that football ball

with a pretty decent style! Yes, it was Mr. Oliva right there two feet in front of me. I left my things aside, approached him, we shook hands and, clearing out my intentions concerning the interview and stuff just as a sign of respect, we started to talk there for a while. I told him how I left Madrid that same morning. We talked about that area of Spain they were treading on at the moment, about some local customs... These kind of things that, I guess, become rather usual topics each time one's visiting a new city. We farewellled just before he got inside the venue enclosure with the rest of the crew members who were playing football, and I went on with my reading. Or at least, I tried.

Some time later, I gave a phone call to the woman from Edel company, as we had agreed to. The operator voice told her mobile was not activated. I left her a short message "Hi, I'm here" and got back to the rear part of the "Arena". I saw then a guy who was crossing the fence. Thinking he could be part of the tour personnel, I asked him if he had heard about anybody from Edel staff present inside there (actually that young man was the keyboardist of Vanderhof, the opener band, as I realized later). He couldn't tell me with precision, thanked him anyway, but just a few minutes after that, Jon Oliva in person opened that fence and asked me if I was the one who was going to make an interview. So he had been told about it previously, I guess. "Come on in, bro". And yes, I was in. Some white plastic chairs were stuck to the wall there. A couple of garden-like tables were also placed near in sight. Vocalist Zack Stevens and other people happened to be sat under a shading zone, enjoying a dish full of nuts. Good amount of calories for the show, right?

Jon first introduced me to their tour manager, to whom I commented my intentions concerning the interview, and could not say much more, as I started taking out of my handbag the tape recorder and sheets of paper with my questions. Just before that, I realized there were being closed some NFL bets down there: "Dallas Cowboys will win tonight, you'll see." Jon was telling to someone. Illiterate as I am in what concerns NFL, I preferred to remain mute about that. Didn't want to make wagers' value rise or fall with my comments either, of course! Anyway, leaving sport anecdotes apart, I can tell you with posteriority that it personally constituted a real pleasure to converse for a while with an artist of this magnitude. And, enough talking, here you are, the result of this chat.

First of all, I wonder if you have already had some time to taste Valencia's most famous meal, Paella? Not yet... [looking to Johnny Lee Middleton] "We're going to eat it tonight, right?" Paella, oh yeah.

So, during this short tour in Europe - a longer one, as far as I know, will take place next year in February, right? Yeah, February - March. We'll come back for a long time, 6-8 weeks. We're looking forward to it, we're really having a good time, you know.

I see. It's nice to finally be in Spain, because we got a lot of mail from Spain, so...

...in the Legions Fan Club you mean? Many Legion Fans here, yeah.

While this tour goes on with its course, I wonder if you still have had a chance of doing some tourism through any of these European cities you're crossing. I mean, if you are interested in their architecture, forms of art...

A little bit, a little bit. Yeah, I mean we saw... like Pamplona. It was VERY beautiful.

Ah, Pamplona! Was it yesterday perhaps when you played there? Oh, I think it was yesterday. Yeah, yesterday or the day before, we had the day-off and we walked all to the beautiful castles, the ruins, and the stuff.

Have you heard about "Saint Fermin"? You know there are... The bull run? Yeah!

The bull run, right, each 17th of July people from all over the world get there and... just invade Pamplona, yeah.

"Invade", that's the right word because it's a city with perhaps 400,000 inhabitants normally and in those days it raises to 1,000,000 people or so. Oh yeah, raises a lot, I've seen it on television

Great. So, how do you face each time you go on a new tour? Specially when you go overseas, personally, how do you motivate yourself? Oh, it's the people motivate us. You know, that's all the motivation we need, we just love to play, you know. It's just that we feel very... [pauses] PRIVILEGED to come across the other side of the world to play our music. It's something a lot of people just dream of, and for us it's a reality. It's something that, you know, it means a lot to us.

Yes, I understand. Talking a little about the music, two years ago you released a very intense and emotional album, and, if you remember, almost at the same time "Dead Winter Dead" was put out, the conflict at the Balcanes started to quieten down. Do you have something to comment about this curiosity?

[Kidding tone] Maybe we got something to do with it, I don't know but... We ran into a lot of American soldiers that were serving here in Europe, and it's from them we were told they would listen to our record while they were out, you know, on the campaigns, which is very intense. So yeah, I mean that's a very emotional record. It worked out really well for us, it did very well, and, we'll see, you know, how everything goes from this. This new record's being received very very well also, so... One roll.

Yeah, it's fantastic. Do you like it?

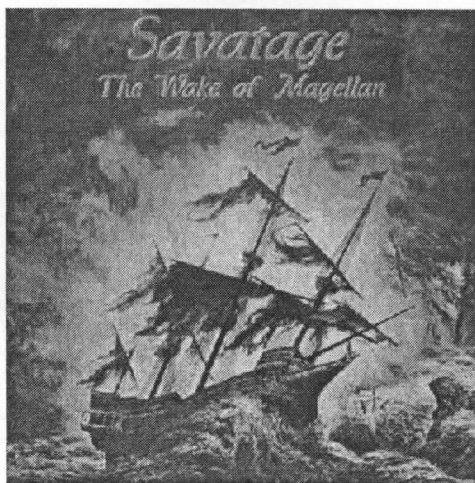
Yes, of course I do. [Showing him Edge of Time #12 issue] I wrote the review which hasn't been published yet, how I think...

Cool... [Holding the issue with one hand and reading the mag title with solemn-like voice:] ...the Edge of Time...

As I was saying, I gave the album a 5 out of 5 mark and, in my opinion, it's simply awesome.

Well, thank you very much. [Heading to Johnny Lee Middleton] "Another perfect score! Here he goes, it's great: he gave our record a 5 out of 5." [Johnny approaches and says "thanks, is it on this one?"] Gracias... "Nope, it's going to be in the next one."

The way I see it, there's somehow a similarity in the story line with the "Streets" album concept, there's also a sort of "doomed" character in an extreme situation, that's something that I wrote for instance. I also think that perhaps since the "Streets" album, the new record is maybe the most solid release, in my opinion... That's MY favourite record, so yeah, I keep for this release a soft spot in my heart. That might be that a lot of it was written around my life, and what I was



going through at that time. I'm kind of D.T. character.

Oh yeah. I know yes. Everyone seems to know that, which bothers me! [Laughs]

Well, something that touches me quite deeply about that period... Do you mind if I...? No, no... you can step just wherever you want, I'm fine.

OK, about that period, you know, after "Streets" for instance, there was a time when you were not too immersed in the band: doing other projects, and...

Yeah, yeah. That was a tough period for me, because I had to make a decision at that time: what professionally would be the right thing for me to do at that time. You know: I've been on the road for Savatage for years and years. I was just so burnt out I needed that, I mean, I needed a break. I needed to do something different, and I needed to write, you know, I was writing all these songs and I was like getting frustrated, because I was writing all this material that wasn't getting used then, it were... This wasn't Savatage, so the story feeling was not...

Yeah, may I ask you something about this you've just mentioned? Sure.

I know, for instance, you had been producing and it's something I really don't have much information about... Yeah, I mean, I've done a few things, but nothing, I haven't done any... The only thing I have produced outside of Savatage that got released was the

Doctor Butcher. I've done a lot of demos for bands, but to try to get them to the next step, because I really don't have time to sit and produce a full record because that would take a couple of months of time and I just don't really have it. But I'm going with the band for over, you know, two or three days and produce a four or five-song demo to help them try to get a record contract.

Hm, that's interesting. Yeah, that's kind of what I do with that, because if somebody was to get something good and I had the time, I would love to do it. You know, but it's hard because Savatage takes most of my time [asks for a "hand-made" cigarette: "Give me one of those..."] Savatage takes a lot of my time, you know, it's turning into a 24 hour a day thing. [Lights the cigarette]

24 hour occupation, yeah. What I was going to say before about "Streets" and that period which somehow touched me inside, was that with this album, as you mentioned, in a way you

Actually, I guess, the official pronunciation is MaGELLan, but I could be wrong, it could be MAGellan.

So, I would say this new album is not as instrumentally oriented. Hmm, no no: it's more guitar.

...more "in your face" album, direct... Yeah. We wanted this record to be a little bit more aggressive, and have a little bit featured more the singing talents, you know, some more the back up singing. Because we were really having a good time doing that, you know. And so when you get on something you like doing, you want to try that, you want to try to see its peak, you know. And we kinda tend to do that: we get on something that we like, we try to like, you know, take it to the MAX as we say in America. Push it to the limit.

Yeah, to the limit. Do you consider yourself a perfectionist person in the music field? Hmm, I'm probably not. I wouldn't say so, I'd say Paul is a perfectionist.

I see. As you mentioned the complex



recorded the story of your life and fulfilled as an artist, as a musician like something close to the acme of your career: recording your own story, your own life...

Yeah, I mean that "Streets" character is about as close to my life as you can get. It's probably as close to my life story as I want to get for a while also! [Laughs] You know, because I've been always like "Well, that's all about you, isn't it?" Oh my god, basically if you LOOK at it and you LISTEN to it, that's kind of the vibe that you get it in from it, so...

So, back to "Dead Winter Dead", measuring only vocal tracks, I think it's the shortest running time album of Savatage. Is it? Really? Wow! [Grins]

Yes, but, in "The Wake of Magellan"... By the way, how is "Magellan" pronounced? MaGELLan [emphasizing the second syllable]

I see. I tend to pronounce it MaGellan, I don't know why. Everyone slows it "MagellAAAn", "MaGELLan"...

In Spanish it would be "Magallanes". "Malallanes". OK

Yes.

chorus-lines, I read for instance how guitarist Al Pitrelli said that once one of the most difficult parts for him when performing in Savatage was singing on key!

Oh yeah, oh, it's too easy to see while we go tuned when we sing all these back up vocals, it's like you're praying.

...the so called "five point harmonic counterpoint": when each member sings a different part of the back up vocals. That should be a bit difficult to perform on stage with perfection, I can imagine.

You watch it tonight, you let me know how it sounded.

So, I read also that around 40/50 musical ideas served as basis for the new album? Yeah.

Hm, those materials that don't get pressed... Well, it's material that we save and when we're going to do next record, we pick, we will listen back and say "Oh, this was good..." But you use a little bit of this, and keep that down. But choose a little bit of that, you know. We get swifi so much material that we never have to sort it for songs, so...

Yeah, for instance there was a rumor among fans that "Streets" could be re-

Savatage (cont.)

released with all the original tracks, including those which were not finally published, and that the intention would be to edit it as double CD set.

Yeah, there was a talk about that. You know, that's something that the record companies are TOTALLY in control of, and it would really give you probably a better idea talking to the people from Edel about what plans they have for Savatage releases, because they deal with that strictly, and I have nothing to do with that. I'd just say: "Give me money!" [Laughs]
[Tour managers comes asking Jon if he knows what they're going to play that night. Jon answers he knows and fills in a page that tour manager brings, saying they're playing the whole set. "We'll discuss it later, after the interview" Jon says. "Un momento" someone replies. - "Uno momento", what that's mean? - One moment. - "Uno momento"... How would you say "in a little bit", "in a little while"? - "Dentro de poco"... "Dentro de poco" - I got it. - Or "pronto". - "Pronto". "Pronto" means "quick", right? - Exactly. (End of Spanish lessons for now)]

So, I would like to talk a little about Paul O'Neill [producer] if you don't mind...

OK, sure, let's talk about Paul.

Paul developed the plot, the story of this album. Put it all the verse parts, included in the booklet, which by the way is great.

Yeah, he did it great. You know, Paul IS AMAZING with that. You know, I discussed the concept with him, and basically how we do it is we just talk about what we're going to make the album about, and then, he says: "Okay, will you start working on music? I start working on the story, okay?" And that's basically what he does. And then we just keep connecting with each other every day and say: "What did you do last night?" "Well, that's what it got done last night". And I play it for him, what I did. And he'll show me what he wrote out. Make changes to each other's things. So, we do it together but, he's the primary lyricist and I'm the primary music guy.

I wanted to comment you about this lyrics aspect. Sometimes reading them it seems one's in front of something closer to what pure poetry or a piece of literature is. I mean, there are ideas with a great symbolism behind, and passages of an extreme beauty along this album.

I think he did a magnificent job with it. I really do. I just hope more people get to hear it and read it, because it REALLY is a good work, you know. He did a wonderful job, it's very nice, too.

The "Streets" album was based on one of his books.

Well, it's based on one of his books, but we turned the character into kind of ME: I was kind of the CHARACTER. And some real life incidences that happened to me were added to it. Like "Tonight He Grins Again", it's a song written

completely about me and I wrote all the lyrics for that song. We did that: I inserted my ideas into his original thinking. That's why it's based on a book, because it was his original idea of this rock guy that was mad and they turned the rock guy into me. I became the rock guy. Unfortunately! [Laughs] Living it with that in pursuit.

Now that I have the chance of hearing your voice for the first time, I wonder if the opening vocal track where D.T. Jesus is at the streets... The talking?

Is that...? That's me!

That's you, yeah...!

[Imitating D.T. Jesus' voice at that scene] "Hey, hey... you got a quarter? got a quarter?" I was doing a person out of this friend of ours: his name is Dana, and we wanted the voice, that I was... I was like: "I talk at a perfect voice!" [Laughs]

[Me trying to imitate D.T. Jesus voice] "You got nothin'...? that's OK man, that's OK..." [Imitating again D.T. Jesus voice at that scene] "Hey, hey... you got a quarter? hey... hey, he-e-ey, hey, I aw... hey, come on now..."

"I'm no boomer of nothin' like that..." "...I'm no boomer of nothin'..." [Laughs] Yeah, that was me!

Who made the vocal intro of "Got a Complaint in the system"?

Me. [Sings making the same voice] "Got a complaint in the system."

Cool. But that's got some effect, right? You liked that?

Yeah I did.

Good! [Raising his voice] One guy here's sure up, and showing how really a song is, is doing it!

Ehm... Thank you. [Just in case] About "Transiberian Orchestra", may we talk a little? Sure! We can talk about whatever you want.

Thanks. Well, I heard the instrumental song "Christmas Eve (Sarajevo 12/24)" got some airplay on your country's adult contemporary formatted radios. Huge airplay, huge.

Even, I think the album has reached gold status there in the US. Yeah.

Do you think this fact could help to get new fans for Savatage as a band, newcomers, or to get more repercussion in some way?

Well, [reflexive pause] I think people who got the Transiberian thing and looked at it and realized, said: "It's a lot of the Savatage people INVOLVED in it". I mean, we did the Transiberian thing originally for a... a different vehicle

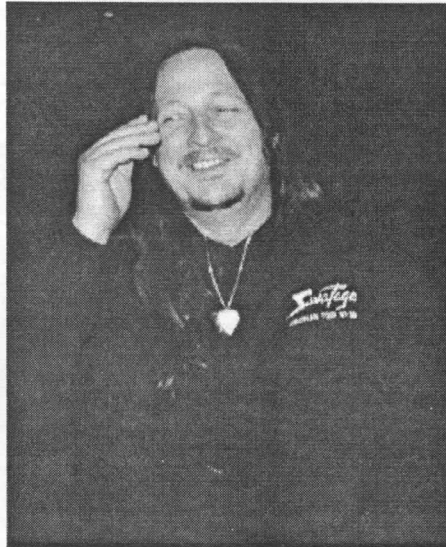
for Paul and mine songs. To get out in America, without having the problem of having a "heavy metal band" label on it. Because we, Paul and I, write songs, so many different songs that aren't heavy metal at all, but just to do them all under Savatage, a lot of the radios in America they look at "Savatage" and they go "Oh, we can't play Savatage: that's heavy metal!"

Yeah, just for the name.

You know, so we got to think of something. So we said; we had this great idea and said: "Why don't we just put this name together, called Transiberian Orchestra? And then, we can use as many musicians from wherever we want, whether they'd be rock musicians, heavy metal musicians..."

...no restrictions, no restrictions...

No restrictions. And it's done great, it's gold record now, you know. I got a gold



record for it, so...

Let me tell you that here in Spain for instance it's not very easy to find this album.

Yeah, it's hard I think. You got to get it through import, right? I think that will change.

Let's talk a bit about "Romanov", the other of your projects.

That's our musical, yeah. That is in production right now, with a "Under Paced" Theatrical Agency out of New York. They did a... [Talking to Johnny Lee Middleton, who's sat on a near bench: "Johnny, what they did on "Under Paced"? - "Jacon hide", "Man in the opera"...] "Jacon hide"... Yeah, they're big Broadway musicals, and it's a production company, and they bought the rights to art the thing upon I did, called "Romanov". And they're in production with that right now, and they're gonna try to have it that before the end of 1998, so...

But the idea started long time ago, right?

Oh yes! We started writing that right after the band went on the Edge of Thorns tour. As a matter of fact, one of the reasons why I didn't go on that tour with them was because I was in New York writing for that. And it was one of my, you know, things that I had to do, I signed the contract, to do it. I had no

choice, I had to leave the band for a year. And then when my brother died, obviously, that changed everything. So then I was like: "Well, I have to go back full-time." So that changed. Because, if Chris wouldn't have died, I'd probably would have stayed in the position I was in, which was writing and working with them on studio, and writing at the end of the touring, and this way I could do these other things. So, I'm finding that, with my brother not being around it's a lot harder for me, because I have... I have like no free time at all. It's like if I'm not with Savatage, I'm with Paul in New York working on either "Transiberian" or "Romanov", you know. So it's like as if I'm always working on something. It gets a little frustrating, and sometimes [with louder voice] I get a little bit cranky because it's like no one really understands that. Savatage alone for me is almost a year around thing. And then trying to put too other projects in at the same time. It's really hard.

It can be dangerous...

Yeah, dangerous for... the sanity! [Deep laughs]

[Laughs] For the mind indeed.

It's a blackout! That's great garb, that's all we need, right! [More Laughs]

I wanted to show you, about "Romanov", some pictures and an article I got from a famous magazine here in Spain last weekend...

[Picking the stuff] Oh, yeah, yeah.

Have you heard about this 20th Century Fox production?

"Anastasia" is called. Tells the story of the last days of Romanov dynasty, it's a big studio project. Do you think it could mean a good push?

That'll be a good push for "Romanov", sure. Yeah, I've heard about that, that's cool. Yes, let me see this. [Pauses to take a look at the pics. Sun rays above us become suddenly much stronger.] Oh, this weather is... [Laughs] stupid, man!! I am just loving this, this is beautiful!

Well, this place, and in general the region close to the Mediterranean sea, are really warm.

It's just gorgeous, it's gorgeous.

As I told you before at the entrance, I have a house close to Valencia, here on the coast. One's really lucky to find this weather in months like this. I love to come here.

I bet you do man!! [Deep laughs] If I had a house here I wouldn't mind to come here and hang out too! [Talking to Johnny: "Hey, he's got a house here!"] Well, where's your house bro? We'll write down your house.

Whenever

OK. We will hang out at your house, sit in there on the beach with all the women, and all the...

[Laughs] Oh yes.

...no shirts right? No tops?

Topless, topless.

Oh hooo! [Claps his hands. Talking to Johnny: "He's got it right on a topless beach man"]

There're no problems in that aspect at beaches. You can swim naked if you want to.

[Laughs] "No problems". Cool. I'd love

this country.
[Johnny Lee Middleton approaches, saying he had seen some of that at Valencia city beach from the bus. "Really?" says Jon. "There's not gonna be any chicks out there now."]

What regards that beach Johnny is talking, here in the city, I don't know where it's located from this place, but shouldn't be far. The region I was talking about is about 100 Kms from here.

And girls... no shirts. It's just... Naked or just no tops?

No tops, yes. Taking sun.
"Taking sun," huh you gotta love it! [Laughs] Anyway, sorry! [Laughs] We got a little off-track there for a minute! I got wood. I started to get wood! [Deep laughs]

[Deep laughs]
[Crazy laughs] Ooooh, I'd love this country!

I was interested in knowing about Doctor Butcher, if you and Chris Caffery were planning to release something new or not.
We were planning it for two years. And everytime is like it's the first time to try to do it. We fucking run into problems with say, the Savatage's busy, or I'm busy, and we have to put that aside. Because that is a lot of fun, we had a great time doing it, but it's a secondary project for us. For me first. Because Savatage is number one, and we have to give our time to that. You know, we're gonna do another one, we have one written, called "The Good, the Bad, and the Butchered".

Yeah, I think I read the title sometime ago.
And we're ready to do it. And we're gonna try to do it this summer, when we get done touring with Savatage. We're gonna try to run in and do it all over like a month period down in Florida.

I hope it turns out to be a good one like the film the title's based on. That old Sergio Leone's Film with Clint Eastwood. Was filmed here in the south of Spain, by the way.
Sure. I like that title. I think it works. [Yosune, a girl from the Spanish promoters staff (Bizz Company) comes here and we salute each other. We had met in a few shows earlier, Angra and Stratovarius to be precise, so it was a nice surprise to see her there for a third time. I explained Jon why we knew each other and the old Sanyo tape recorder went on working.]

I'd like to talk about Steve "Wacholz".
[Pronouncing it right] Wacholz.

Wacholz, sorry.
Psychotcholz, OK. [Johnny laughs at the background after hearing this]

The former drummer, he was one of the band's founding members, and decided to leave Savatage some years ago, we all heard about that. Okay, I'd like to know a little if you're still in touch with him on a more or less regular basis, or what were some of the reasons for his departure, etc.
Well, I mean, I saw him... I see him once in a while, when I'm not, you know, working which isn't that often. So, I don't really see him now much. I see him

maybe once or twice a year. And, as far as I know, he's teaching drums.

In Florida?
In Florida, yeah. That's last what I've heard. I mean, you know, to Steve... my brother's death effected Steve a great deal. I think that was a lot of the problems we had. You know, we kept going to tours together and Steve kept living, right? [Ironic laugh] Quiet kept aside, decided not to go just two weeks before the tour was ready to start. Which started a little bit... you know.

I see. I'd like to add something related to what you said, concerning Criss' death. I and many other Savatage fans think it's really remarkable how you overvent such a big loss as a band. Carrying on and releasing very solid albums, one after another. And best of all, his presence on your stage performances, as far as I've had the



chance to see on live videos, bootlegs or whatever, is still very noticeable. There are references to him constantly.
Yeah, we do that every night.

Audiences really win over that feeling shouting his name, things like that, I mean. I saw for instance your last show in Milano, at Rainbow club...
Oh God! That was terrible! That was one of our worst shows of all time. We almost died at that place. [Shouting to Johnny] "He was at the last Milan show".

No, no: I just watched the tape of that show.
Oh you watched the tape? Oh, oh. [Jesus, from what I watched that seemed to be quite a good one! Perhaps he was complaining about the extreme heat at that small venue or something?]

Tonight will be my first Savatage show, indeed.
Oh this is your first Sava...? Oh, you're Sava-virgen. I hope you have a good time tonight! You come and watch soundcheck if you want.

Thank you very much.
Yeah, no problem man. Where were we?

Ehm...
I like doing interviews like this! I hope you don't mind, if I decide taking my time!

Oh no, for me it's perfect.
You know. Okay.

I would like to talk a bit more about

this last album, how the composing process went?
Yeah. Well, actually Al, Criss, Johnny... Everyone helped out writing on this album. It was really nice, because, I think it had a little bit of fresh ideas. It took a lot of pressure off me, right. [Laughs] Because, it's like, you know, it's tough. Like "Dead Winter Dead": Paul and I basically wrote that ourselves up in New York. This was better because I got... See, Caffery's more a heavy metal type of guitar player, Al is more a free-flow player...

More bluesy.
Bluesy, yeah. Al is definitely "Mister Blues". Al is "Mister Blues" all the way! [Al passes by smiling and salutes us like a sergeant listening to those words] Caffery is more the heavy metal, you know, ehm...

More in the line of Doctor Butcher.

The "Butcher" thing, right.
I liked it: that guitar style counterpoint in the album.
But I mean, everyone pictured and bring out some ideas. You know, Johnny worked up to one song. I worked with Johnny down in Florida.

Aha. There's one song on this album that gives composition credits to Johnny.
Yeah. "The Wake of Magellan".

Right. Excellent song by the way. Okay, changing the subject a little bit, I'd like to talk now for while about vocalist Zack Stevens. Would you like to talk about him?
Sure!

In my opinion, there's an interesting dual feeling, I'd say, among Savatage base of fans: first we could say it comes a group of old loyal fans who have followed you since Avatar days and the early 80's albums ("Dungeons", "Sirens"...). Those, probably are stylistically more fond of this period with you performing as a frontman, etc.
Yeah, right, right.

And on the other hand, there's also a legion of fans or newcomers who got into the band since the eruption of Zack as new vocalist on "Edge of Thorns" and subsequent albums. I think it's a rich contrast. How do you see this, analyzing the response you've had, etc?

Well. The thing is, see, Savatage is a two-part story. You had Savatage up to "Streets", which was heavy rock, it featured me and my brother. It featured my brother's guitar playing as the primary instrument. Orchestration were there, but they were still not as prevalent as they're today. That was one band. When he passed away, I realized that that band would never be that band again without me and him doing what we were doing together. To me, I could not stand upon stage and be the frontman, and sing "She's in Love", and "Skull Session", and "Hounds" with anybody but him. And I won't.

I understand. I understand you perfectly.
I pay tribute to it. We pay tribute to the old band in the set. You know, we do the standards. You know, we do "Sirens", we do "Mountain King", we do "Gutter Ballet"... I do that as a duet with Zack, to sing it shouldered. I do "Believe" and "Heal my Soul" as a dedication to Criss during the show tonight. You know, and we sing all the back-ups together. And it's just people gotta realize that this is a different band, it's a different band.

Different orientation.
It's a different hall, different scene. Because now, the vocals, the fact that we have Zack and my voice now working together, now we figured out on the last couple of albums, we feel like a new band now. Because we feel we only have two albums out with this line-up. And now we're looking at the two lead singers idea. You know, we're going to take this further. So, on this album we took a little further than on the last one, and on the next one we'll take it a little more further.

I think what you're mentioning Jon is very interesting. I'm sure many of the band fans will like to see that on the next albums: to combine the two different vocal styles, like you currently do performing "Gutter Ballet" song.
That's exactly what we're gonna do.

It would be great I think.
Yeah, I think so, I think it's a good idea. We've already talked about it, and we're planning to do it for the next record so... That's exciting. So, you have that to look forward to on the next Savatage records: duets.

Good. Zack also stated when he was joining Savatage how he obviously had to, somehow, adapt his vocal style to the repertoire of the band.
I try to keep him away from that stuff. But, you know, we have to play some... [Big pause] You know, I can't sing at all anymore, so... I can only sing certain songs.

Why? Why not?
Cos... you know. Cos, the damage I've done to my voice over the twenty years.

Well Jon, for instance talking again about that Milano show, I heard you singing "Gutter Ballet" and I think it's the same...
Those parts are easy to sing. You know, that's the thing: those parts of that song are easy to sing, that's why I sing them: I can sing them. They're in my... Think, but a lot of Savatage, I was... Never had singing muscles. So I never learnt how to taut them like... breath right. I just

Savatage (cont.)

damaged, shitted out of my throat and fuck it. And you know, Zack breathes the right way. That's why he can handle, I can't get a bit... [Laughs]

And which do you think have been most important contributions Zack Stevens made? What kind of things you see Savatage could have improved at the present? Melodical feel?

Ah... Yeah, it's just that his style fits the type of music we're writing. It's that melodic theatrical type of voice that he has, that works really well, with the style, with what we're doing right now. And when we come across songs that don't fit in his style, I'll do them.

Like "Paragons"..."Paragons", "Another Way"...

Are you playing that song tonight, "Paragons", by the way?
No.

So, let's go a little back in time, is that okay?
Yeah, sure.

Talking about "Gutter Ballet" album, the way I see it, the band has been stepping forward since that record was released. And I think, in some way, that album in question set a "before" and an "after", for Savatage, if you get what I mean.

It was one standing. Right, yeah. That was kind of, that was the turning point album yeah. That was where we definitely do we're on to something and we started taking it, from that point on. Excuse me one second please. [Has a look at a sheet of paper somebody from the crew hands to him.]

OK. I wanted to comment this cutting with you. This was on last Friday's newspaper here and it drew my attention. It deals about Brian Enno, an important musician...

Oh yeah... [Glances at the newspaper clipping while guitars already start to sound at soundcheck behind us]

And it says he's promoting a new electronic technique that makes the songs to sound different each time they're reproduced.
Aha.

I wanted to discuss that with you. I suppose you compose all your music the classic way, with piano, guitar, etc. Here, by computer means, setting some parameters, the listener can experience new shades on every song when it sounds.

Oh yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah! I've heard about that, yeah, yeah, that's cool!

It could be translated as "re-generated" music or something like that...
Wow.

What do you think about this?
Well, I don't know if I'd like that. That's kind of... I mean, I would love to do that with like all old Beatles records man!

[Laughs]
[Laughs] That'd be so cool! Wow! Being able to like mix Lennon and McCartney together? Oooh, come on, no! I don't know. You brother, I have to check that one day for myself and see. I don't know what to think about that actually. I don't think it's good.

Aha.
Music's like a painting. You know, that'd be like someone who, say, goes and buys a painting and then you gonna paint over, you know. You're buying music: it's art. If you're buying art, you should buy the art, because it's the artist's, that you're buying. If you want to do it yourself, then you just do it yourself!
[Laughs] Don't fuck up my record!

Don't touch it and leave it as is!
[Laughs]
Don't touch it and spit... a million dollars! [Laughs]
[Yosune comes up again to ask us if we're done with the interview or not. Other guys from "Kerrang" and a local radio station are waiting their turn. "Just a couple of minutes more" will be enough we both agree.]

Okay, I wanted to pass for reviewing a curious fact. Here in Europe your record company Edel is smaller than in the US, where it's Atlantic.
Yeah. Atlantic in America and Sony in Japan.

Anyway, I wonder what's your opinion regarding the delay that this last release have had in the States? Any reason?

Well, they didn't want to release it until January '98 there because they got other things and we can't tour until springtime. So it's like stupid, first keep doing records, release them at the same time, but the time you get done touring Europe you get so popular in Europe that it's taking up a lot of our time. You know, the record company, Atlantic, watched the tour. Five weeks, just after six weeks after you have the record out, they want you out on the road. So it's like, the only way we could do that was to release it in January, and tour in April in America.

Just to finish, and I thank you very very much, for all this time...
No, thank you.

Cos it's being much more than what I expected.
Well, there's no prob.

Would you like just to comment briefly five or six words or what you'd think it's convenient about your albums?
Sure!

What comes to your mind when I say you "Dungeons are Calling"?
Ehm... Just learning.

"Sirens".
Getting a little better.

"Power of the Night"
My first big record, that's our first real record, that we did with like a real producer.

"Fight for the Rock".
Mislead nightmare. [Laughs]

[Laughs] Okay. "Hall of the Mountain King".
One of our best heavy metal records.

I agree with that. Even it was on "Hit Parader" for many years.
Many, many, yeah. That one standed very good, yeah.

As one of the best heavy metal albums in history, yeah. And, talking just a little about "Hall of the Mountain King", recently it was digitally remastered. This and the other old albums, including bonus tracks, etc.
Yeah.

I used to think about the original compact disc: "What a pity that this disc couldn't sound a little bit better!"
Yeah. They sound now a lot better.

"Gutter Ballet"?
The turning point.

"Streets".
The peak.

I agree. "Edge of Thorns".
Best guitar album. Criss' best guitar playing goes on that album.

Aha, you think so?
Yeah.

"Handful of Rain".
A good album, but done under incredible amounts of pressure and sadness, everything. That was a very tough, tough year. Very difficult. Well, I still think some brilliant songs come from that record: "Chance", "Handful of Rain"... I like "Staring to the Sun". I mean a lot of great songs.

Alex Skolnick did a great job on that one.
Yeah, he did.

And also on that album you recorded the drums right?
Yeah, I played drums.

Although, on the album and promotional photographs you didn't appear.
No, "who's me?" [Laughs].

Any reasons why you didn't want to be present on those photos?
I couldn't be, I was out of contracts. It was on the contract. Contract, yeah.

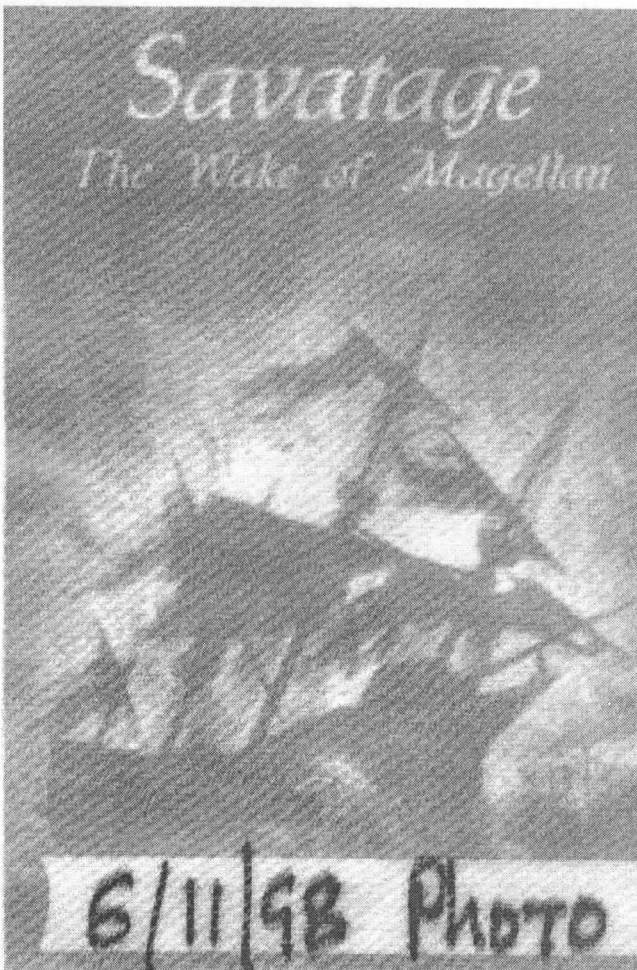
"Dead Winter Dead".
The breaking point in Europe. That was our breaking point in Europe with that record.

Do you reckon how many shows you gave in Germany, for instance, supporting "Dead Winter Dead"?
Oh God, I have no idea! I couldn't remember. A lot, a lot.

Okay. And finally, what would you like to say in order to summarize your last release, "The Wake of Magellan"?
The new beginning.

The new beginning, I see. Any particular song you like a bit more than others from that album?
On "Wake of Magellan" my favourite songs are "The Wake of Magellan" and "The Hourglass". Which we will play tonight. Okay?

Thank you very much.
[So, we took a photo here and everything finished that way. "Okay Gary, make sure this guy gets stickers for the soundcheck... NEXT!" [Laughs]]



melodic
progressive
power metal
hard n'heavy
psychedelic
prog rock

MIND MASQUE

Mind Masque
Pogo Pop
Mind Masque in their debut album deliver heavy/speed metal evolving into Dream Theater's "When Dream and Day Unite" territory. The music is more light than strict, mainly due to gentle vocals and keyboards that have a lot of freedom and are used extensively, probably because the keyboard player is one of the main songwriters. These Germans are not innovators, but they are not impostors either. The tracks are a bit too extended (6 out of 7 last longer than 7 minutes), sometimes repetitious ("Rain in Utopia"), but the band flies in the nice ballad "What is the World" and the well-balanced song "The Day of Understanding". Not essential, but an enjoyable release. (GS)
[Mind Masque, Am Konigshof 15, 49124 Georgsmarienhutte, Germany]
3 1/2

RICK MONROE

Legends Diner
Divorce Records
This is something for melodic rock/blues fans. I should call this radio-friendly music, there is also a Top 40 hit ("Day By Day") on this CD. Rick Monroe is a very good guitarist and talented singer, but his entertainment rock is probably not my cup of tea. I'm quite sure, fans of such music will love this album. "Legends Diner" is an ideal case for highways or superficial parties with banal conversations. (SV)
[Divorce Records, 7080 Hollywood Blvd., Ste. 312, Hollywood, CA 90028, USA]
3 1/2

NARNIA

Awakening
Nuclear Blast Records
Here we have an interesting debut album of this promising hard rock/melodic rock Swedish act. Headed by Caarl Johan Grimmark on guitars (cover of "Young Guitar" magazine in Japan being only 19 years old), "Awakening" compositions are in the old Malmsteen/Rainbow tradition. Grimmark is flanked by a vocalist who performs in my opinion following more what AOR genre standards are, not bringing much character. All that, together with some solid choruses and the use of keyboards, give the product a touch a la Nation or John Norum solo works. It's not an exceptional album for its originality (pretty much the opposite considering tracks like "Touch from You"), but globally, it won't let down fans of guitar instrumental oriented material, showing an impeccable execution in this aspect. (GM)
3

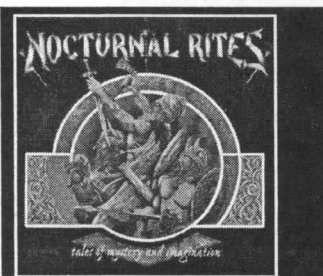
NATT & TAKE

Sementparadis
self-released
Hard rock with some trips into prog-rock field and with Norwegian vocals may not sound too friendly or intriguing, but, even if you do not understand a word, melodies of the first two tracks flow very naturally and are captivating. The other songs are not at the same level and a bit thin sounding vocals may distract, but, in general, these Norwegians have got a spark of liveness and do not fall much into synthetic prog-rock instrumentalisms. I am not sure about the current status of the band. (GS)
[Natt & Take, PO Box 7029, 4602 Vestheiene, Kristiansand, Norway]
3 1/4

NEW EDEN

Through the Make Believe
Sentinel Steel Records
New Eden is a band that is not afraid to turn to the metal of the eighties for inspiration. The debut release boasts power metal with speed metal influences: tight dual guitar-riffing, high-pitched clear vocals, and lots of double-bass drumming. My complaint is that although the musical delivery is solid, the songs could use more diversity. The standout songs that do show this diversity are the ballad "Now That You Have Gone" and the closer "Empty Man". In general, the quest for originality is not a priority, clearly drawing on the latter Helstar and Oliver Magnum for inspiration. Although their class is not reached yet, the effort should not be overlooked particularly

because the former Steel Prophet guitarist Horacio Colmanares returns in style. Horacio has certainly improved productionwise these last few years, providing a much more powerful and clear production than the Steel Prophet CDs. Latest news concerning New Eden is that the line-up has parted ways with Horacio Colmanares and vocalist Victor Vaca. New additions are Perry Grayson and ex-Helstar vocalist James Rivera. This line-up has also changed their monicker to Destiny's End and a debut CD entitled "Breathe Deep the Dark" should be out on Metal Blade. The music is described as intense melodic speed metal. Horacio Colmanares continues with the name New Eden. Judging by the songwriting credits, he will have no problem continuing in the vein of "Through the Make Believe". The next New Eden album titled "Obscure Master Plan" should be out on Nuclear Blast. (CR)
[\$12 (USA), \$15 (rest of the world), Sentinel Steel Records, PO Box 123, Rockaway, NJ 07866, USA] [Destiny's End, PO Box 1048, South Pasadena, CA 91030-1048, USA]
3 3/4



NOCTURNAL RITES
Tales of Mystery and Imagination
Century Media Records
If the debut disc of this Swedish act already harvested good comments among power metal fans, this album possibly will yet surprise whoever thinks it could be stylistically a mere continuation of the mentioned "In A Time of Blood and Fire" (reviewed in Edge of Time #12). That'd be an easy option perhaps. However, having chosen a more melodic orientation at creative level, the ancient furious collection of riffs, and accented nasal vocals have been wisely combined now with some very good arrangements, a better modulation of the vocals (for me the major surprise of this album), and not as accelerated rhythm section. The flavor for classic metal sound is still present on tracks like "Change the World", "The Vision", or "Eye of the Demon" mostly at the guitars. But without a doubt, they've modernized and matured notably as musicians (a new guitarist has been recruited and added a new shade of technicality), winning a point in versatility. Lovers of powerful metal, alternating German-metal choruses with classic melodies a la Riot, Gamma Ray, Helloween, or Iron Maiden will enjoy this album for sure. Thanks to a better support from their new record company, this release should exalt Nocturnal Rites as one of the top bands in the current power metal scene. (GM)
4 1/4

NO INNER LIMITS
The Planet's Pulse
Upcoming Artists
In this age of power/prog domination, you can easily forget what real POWER metal should sound like. German No Inner Limits, like a few other bands, are eager to remind you that, first of all, power metal should be strict and firm. Their power metal isn't really traditional, rather modern, and should please both heavy and melodic power metal fans. Piercing melodic vocals, blasting heavy and tasteful riffs, and tight rhythm section are trademarks of "The Planet's Pulse", which is the band's debut full-length release, following a mini-CD "Balance". In general, their music brings to mind Hexenhaus and Nevermore (No

Inner Limits are a little bit less heavy and a little bit more melodic), as well as Sanctuary circa 1990. The lyrics deal with so-called "actual problems" - I don't know whether you mind that or you don't - but No Inner Limits are consistent about that and compose such lyrics because they think it's the most relevant topic and not because they couldn't think of anything else. Overall, "The Planet's Pulse" is one of the better heavy, melodic, and intense power metal albums. I don't add the word "progressive" because it's a bit overused, but No Inner Limits should appeal to progressive metal fans as well. (GS)
[28DM, No Inner Limits, Tommy Hartung, Frankenstr. 82, 46446 Emmerich, Germany]
4

NOWHERE

Promo-CD 1998
self-released
I don't know how many Whitesnake/Van Halen copies romp around in Europe (especially in the Eastern part). Nowhere from Italy is not an exception, either. They are very good musicians, there is no doubt, but this pseudo hard rock sounds somewhat awkwardly. Add on the weak sound and you can get a poor impression of this CD. Thank goodness there are a couple of better songs here, for example, "Temptation" or a nice ballad "She Bell(e)ves". (SV)
[Emanuele Gentile, C.P.57, 96013 Carlentini (SR), Italy]
3

OPPOSITE EARTH

Headspace
Inside Out Music/Progressive Arts Records
Florida's Opposite Earth have gained recognition in European and American underground scenes after their two demo-EPs "Omed" and "Visuals". "Headspace", the debut album, firmly states that they go their own path, where groovy psychedelic modern metal almost overshadows progressive metal roots. It is not common to see bands with inspirations from both progressive genre and good grunge (Soundgarden "Badmotorfinger", 1991) or psychedelic rock/metal (Tool). Add trippy Eastern motifs, groovy catchiness and you are about to get the complete picture. The record is very well balanced and gives a pleasant experience. The target audience for such music is very wide, the only task is to reach it. (GS)
[Separate Entity Management, Timothy P. Bennett, Northern Trust Bank Building, South Tower, Suite 200, 100 Second Avenue South, St. Petersburg, FL 33701, USA]
4 1/4

OZZY OSBOURNE

The Ozzman Cometh
Sony
Legendary acts have been often squeezed till the very last drop by their respective record companies, in the form of tasteless compilations, many times cheating fans and taking advantage of contract holes... Jimi Hendrix has been for years the most scandalous example. Well, what we have here is definitely not in that direction. This is a quite detailed double disc set, which along 12 tracks, tries to review (not an easy task) some of the most significant moments of Ozzman's solo career. Besides, there's a unavoidable look at the past: 4 early Black Sabbath cuts, which come from Ozzy's personal recording arsenal, are included. A second disc with multimedia contents completes this nice work. Significantly more than the typical greatest hits album. (GM)

PAIN OF SALVATION

Entropia
Avalon
"Entropia" is an extremely ambitious debut release from the Swedish Pain of Salvation. Musically, they mix a lot of influences ranging from Mr. Bungle (jazzy parts intermixed with thrash), King's X (especially due to the vocal harmonies) to prog rock. The confusing and intriguing aspect is that these influences are often incorporated in the same song. Individually, the music contains numerous exceptional displays of technicality and melodic beauty. However more often than needed, this

gift of musical virtuosity is not transformed into memorable songs with an actual structure. Over the top technical releases by the likes of Sieges Even and WatchTower manage to combine intense musicianship and complex song structures because they stay with the same musical style within a song. In Pain Of Salvations' case I think combining diversity in style in combination with complex and long songs doesn't always work out. This results in an album that is overflowing with ideas and not enough focus. Lyrically, it is supposedly a concept album although I've not managed to determine the exact theme. I can imagine listeners worshipping this album but after frequent listens I've not managed to grasp the concept of "Entropia". (CR)
3 3/4

ANDREW PERSI

82 = 12 - 12
self-released
This release of Australian guitarist/composer Andrew Persi is 100% instrumental. It's a guitar album, but not similar at all to the Shrapnel-type albums, since it more resembles to the oldies Frank Zappa and Jimi Hendrix. The music is very experimental: it contains some ambient parts, destroyed blues "Blues for Alfi", and many dynamic, energetic, and driving guitar tracks with the wilderness similar to the jazz music. "Earth Calling Mars" may be too 'off the wall' and unclear for a not so dedicated listener, but the drives of "Mad Cow Square Dance", "Swing Those Sandals Daddy On!", and "To Tune or Not To Tune" should capture ears of many. Perhaps the vocals would add some more movement. By the way, Andrew Persi co-wrote one song for the recent Vauxdvihl EP. (GS)
[Andrew Persi, PO Box 344, Northcote, VIC 3070, Australia]
3 1/2

PRIME TIME

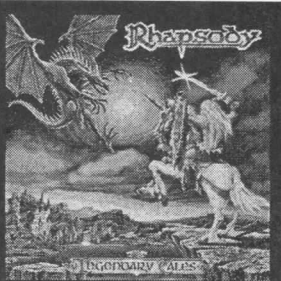
The Unknown
Rising Sun Productions
It is not rare nowadays to jump on a release featuring some musicians already known for their work with other bands. Prime Time exactly belongs. Featuring ex-Elegy singer Eduard Hovinga, Roy Hunt and Narita members, they do not astonish but deliver decent melodic keyboard-driven metal. Stylistically, the songs manoeuvre around Elegy-sort metal (Prime Time are less complex though), but occasional digressions include Guns n' Roses-like hard rocking cut "Lovers Lane", progressive metal-like "Secrecy", and (!) John Arch-era Fates Warning resembling darker "The Unknown". (GS)
3 1/2

RAGE

XIII
Gun
Continuing the path traced with their "Lingua Mortis" album (1996), the famous power metal act from Germany has tried to combine again classical music elements with a style which now is closer to modern hard rock and mainstream bands like Metallica/Megadeth ("Sign of Heaven", "Days of December", "In Vain (I Won't Go Down)"). The way I see it, in aim to acquire more straight forwardness in the compositions, the presence of Prague Symphonic Orchestra has come on 90% of the album to a subtle, secondary dimension. So don't get confused by CD's stickers: globally, "XIII" has a quite accused commercial orientation. And what is the most important of all, stylistically, in my opinion, sometimes it seems as if they didn't know in which waters they're swimming, if you get what I mean. Rolling Stones' "Paint it Black" cover is for me just another sign of that. (GM)
3 1/4

RHAPSODY
 Legendary Tales
 LMP

Numerous reviews of this Italian band demos noted the high potential. Limb Schnoor, the first manager of Helloween, noticed Rhapsody after their first demo "Land of Immortals" and probably back then thought of them as suitable candidates for the first release on his company Limb Music Products. Yet, there was no rush. "Eternal Glory" tape was released to get more buzz in the metal underground. Only a couple of years later the debut CD came out...



The majority of "Legendary Tales" songs originally appeared on "Eternal Glory", but there is some new material. Fear not, slightly changed and re-recorded old songs brought Rhapsody into a whole new level. Another difference is that vocals are performed by ex-Labyrinth singer Fabio Leone.

Stylistically, it is epic symphonic speed metal with classical and medieval music influences. Done in a marvellous and mature way. Rhapsody are very tight and focused: there are no songs falling out of context, all of them are equally majestic and well-connected lyrically, dealing with fairytales/ancient times themes and bringing a positive message. The band brilliantly continues epic classical music influenced speed metal, also explored by Angra, and epic speed metal, cultivated by Blind Guardian.

The songwriters Luca Turilli (guitar) and Alex Staropoli (keyboards) nearly work miracles, perfectly combining the elegance of melodic epic speed metal with classical interludes performed by cello or by guitar. Not a single thing is wrong in this album. Moreover, everything is great. (GS)

5

READING ZERO

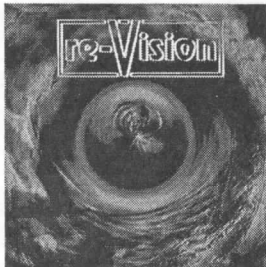
The Actual
 self-released
 Reading Zero's debut album offers melodic, powerful, and delightful progressive metal in the best traditions of 'commercial' songs of Queensryche and Fates Warning. If there ever would be a progressive metal radio station, it would play Queensryche, House of Spirits, Psycho Drama (off "The Illusion"), Fates Warning (off "Parallels"), and Reading Zero all day long, and angry Spastic Ink fans would request more real progressive music.... But to call Reading Zero a usual derivative would be a big understatement. The band has what to be proud of, namely, heavy and catchy riffs, good harmonies, the strong voice of Chris Roy, and well-balanced songs.

The album starts sort of vaguely and the opener has an ill-promising groove in the refrain, but the matter soon changes to the better side. If the second track "Amongst the Clouds" contains a long instrumental section, from "A Different Climb", the next one, we hear clear, direct, and dynamically moving refrain-focused songs with neat arrangements. The album reaches its peak in the two ending tracks "True to Form" and "Never to Return". The singer should receive a honorable mention for a shriek "Here I stand on my own and never to return" alone. Summarizing, Reading Zero possess passion and energy that cannot be observed too often and they do not lose captivation for any single moment. (GS)

[\$15, Christopher Roy, PO Box 1025, Delray Bch., FL 33447, USA]
 4 1/2

RE-VISION

re-Vision
 self-released
 Among many German metal bands, there are quite a few that are not afraid of trying out new things, and, as you may guess, re-Vision are one of those. Their debut full-length CD contains a 43-minute meltdown of emotional dark power metal and psychedelic metal. Spiritually, they (maybe) are inspired by Psychotic Waltz, but stylistically they are different: the music is more sluggish and deliberately powerful. There is a distinct romantic feel in vocal melodies, and the songs are moody and philosophical, bringing a listener to the state of



"determined depression with a strength inside". The hooks are captivative enough and the band seems to find their voice. Note a very affordable price for a normal-length CD. (GS)
 [DM15, Definitely Metal Music, c/o Christoph Lucker, Hochstrasse 103, D-45731 Waltrop, Germany]
 4

RH FACTOR

RH Factor
 Progressive Music Management
 A collaborative effort of Rodler brothers (Leger de Main) and singer Kevin Holtberg resulted in an utterly intricate prog rock/metal music album. The band prioritizes precision, perfect forms, and quality music. Perhaps prog metal listeners won't find enough heaviness here, but for those into a superb technicality, adventurous, and, at the same time, melodic and listenable music, RH Factor is a compulsory stop to get off. Stylistically, the music is close to Anomaly's debut album, but far more adventurous. RH Factor should also appeal to Leger de Main fans, especially those who think that Leger's second album was too mellow. (GS)
 [Progressive Music Management, PO Box 18083, Jacksonville, FL 32229-0083]
 4 1/4

PATRICK RONDAT

Amphibia
 LMP
 Patrick Rondat, the guitar player of Jean Michel Jarre, was already popular in France and Japan. Limb Music Products decided to release his third album recorded in 1996 and introduce this player to a bigger audience. On "Amphibia", we hear instrumental rock/metal music not only for guitar album maniacs, but also for a so-called usual listener. Patrick joined J. M. Jarre's group

in 1992, and the subsequent years probably influenced him to take into account manipulation of atmospheres and ambiances in music instead of solely focusing on shredding with a guitar. The differences can be seen comparing "Amphibia" material with two live bonus tracks taken from Patrick's first two albums. A specific attention-requiring tracks are Patrick's interpretation of Vivaldi's work ("Vivaldi Tribute") and a heavy version of J. M. Jarre's "Equinoxe IV". (GS)
 4

SACRED STEEL

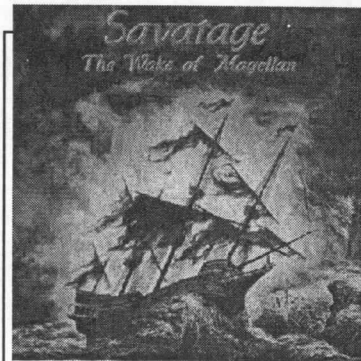
Reborn in Steel
 Metal Blade Records
 Need I say I was sceptic? Sacred Steel line-up includes two ex-Tragedy Divine members, singer Gerrit Mutz and guitarist Jorg Knittel. For me, Tragedy Divine's "Visions of Power" was quite straightforward, but extremely catchy melodic power metal with some progressive metal touches. It is not totally clear why did Tragedy Divine split-up: whether because Noise Records did not support the record or because Gerrit and Jorg were unsatisfied by the still present complexity element in the Tragedy Divine music.
 This time, "Reborn in Steel" is far from having anything progressive. It's simplistic and standard heavy metal with obligatory "steel and sword"-type lyrics. You have to be very confident in what you do to deliver such record because even a slight uncertainty or doubt may put you in a pathetic role. Sacred Steel are pretty much confident and look exceptionally passionate and energetic with their true-metal riffs and poignant voice of Gerrit.
 You want a comparison with Hammerfall? Okay, Sacred Steel are a bit heavier, more straight (!), though not sacrificing the melodic extent. Both bands are true heavy metal, just Sacred Steel are several months late and most likely won't get such a big push from their record company. The CD cover sucks, Metal Blade sometimes really fucks up with that (Fates Warning "Night on Brocken", Divine Regale "Ocean Mind"). (GS)
 [Fancub and Information, Andreas Preisig, Gotzental 16, 75417 Muhlack, Germany]
 3 1/2

SAVIOUR MACHINE

Legend Part II
 Massacre Records
 This is the promised second part of the trilogy. Saviour Machine have finally deviated from the subject "metal" and immersed in gothic rock with orchestral arrangements. This decision has stolen some variety from the band and I'm quite not sure whether Saviour Machine will compose one day such killer tracks like "Carnival Of Souls", "Killer", or "Enter The Idol". The Part II of "Legend" is again a conceptual work, and the listener must not forget this and should pay attention to the lyrics, otherwise this CD will perhaps be a problem for someone since it is not particularly easy to listen to. "Legend Part II" needs time and sometimes it's OK. (SV)
 4 1/4

SAVIOUR MACHINE

Legend Part II
 Massacre Records
 As far as I remember from my old church-ocolyte days (just kidding), the most enigmatic and difficult to interpret chapter from the holy book was the one which covered the apocalypse. Here, Saviour Machine strike back with an extensive and comprehensive second part of their trilogy, concerning this biblical chapter. If, what the Christian band pretended, was to recreate during the 80 minutes some of those "riddles without questions" present on the Apocalypse scriptures, then they, without a doubt, certainly have achieved the same convincing, (i.e., confusing), effect. From that point



SAVATAGE
 The Wake of Magellan
 Edel

One of the teams with the highest dose of creativity and songwriting savoir faire - the tandem formed by producer Paul O'Neill and Savatage co-founder Jon Oliva - gifts us another superb conceptual release. Based on two real life events, "The Wake of Magellan" ties both dramatic chapters along a story of great beauty at a lyrical level. Musically, it could be considered (in my opinion) as their most solid work since "Streets. A Rock Opera" in all aspects. A parallelism with it can also be traced if we think about how a "doomed" main character in an extreme situation guides us through his life, while all the songs of the album and the dramatic plot develop. This one is not as instrumentally-oriented as "Dead Winter Dead" was. Even so, the effect of the symphonic parts is simply perfect when describing the action which is taken place. Also, an important point is the band sounds more cohesive than ever (it is the second successive album with guitar master Al Pitrelli and Jeff Plate behind the drum set) resulting in impressive tracks such as "Turns to Me", "Anymore", "Underture", "The Hourglass", the title track or the 2 great cuts with Jon "Mountain King" Oliva performing lead vocals. For me, this is one of the best releases in the recent years and it has left me a very deep, pleasant, and almost everlasting wake. (GM)
 5

of view, "Legend Part III" is an impeccable and well-laid project, and you will be able to listen to dark atmospheric symphonic music taken to its maximum expression. However, I honestly think that, unless one is very interested in theology doing any kind of religious research or is simply a deep religious devout, listening to this album in depth, could even disturb one mentally. It's not a matter of being the music "more or less complex". The problem I see is how the huge load of narrated parts (obviously, direct references to the correspondent biblical verses) summed to the additional vocal effects and choral parts have created a very dense, and difficult to absorb and chew, product. I wouldn't like to deny the inherent value that lays behind of a project as "Legend", super-ambitious taken as a set. Not my intention. But I tend to only recommend it on the, more or less, exotic cases listed above, or for reasons of a mere personal curiosity. Finally, allow me to not evaluate an album like this. An alibi? Well, better wait until the trilogy is completed by the end of this millenium (as it's scheduled). Amen. (GM)

LEVIATHAN

Deeply Breathing Long Chapters

[by Giedrius Slivinskas]



While in recent years many promising progressive metal newcomers with interesting and, to some extent, successful albums generated positive buzz and raised interest in the genre, progressive metal still does not have many established acts. Don't get though an impression that besides Dream Theater, Fates Warning, and Queensryche there were no progressive metal bands before 1993. They were, some of them still exist, and some of them still haven't shown their best.

One example is Colorado-based Leviathan, which started in 1989. Their first EP and album received contradictory evaluations, yet with the second full-length, the band was picked by Century Media, a label that was not particularly interested in investing resources into an obscure genre like progressive metal. This certainly means something, but the record, being a quality piece of progressive metal, was somewhat tolerantly accepted and faded away because of the lack of decent exposure. The collaboration with Century Media did not work out too well, and Leviathan decided they were strong enough to move on their own.

After "Scoring The Chapters", the Leviathan's third child containing 15 elaborate tracks, skeptics can lower their voices because it can be boldly said that this is one of the best recent progressive metal releases.

From the very beginning, Leviathan were developing their own stylistics mixing subtle mellowness with gentle power and achieving unique results. Let's see how guitarist Ron Skeen explains all this...

You and John Lutzow (the other guitarist) did the most of the songwriting for the new album, "Scoring The Chapters". Can you be considered as a core of the band? Who is Sharp?

Without a doubt, but each person contributes in his own way and helps to make up the bands identity. Billy Sharp is a long time friend of mine that I enjoy writing stuff with. He's a great poet and I often arrange his poems to my music. He's not a musician or anything, but he's an incredible lyricist. John (Lutzow) is incredible, too, but he finds it easier to arrange (music) to his own lyrics than I do. We have co-wrote a few songs but I mostly work with Billy's lyrics and my own as well.

15 songs is a lot. Well, 6 of them are short 1-2 minute tracks, but anyway, were you thinking of throwing out some and compressing the album? Or do you think that the more good music is on the CD, the better? Perhaps a versatility is the key?

Versatility? Absolutely! We really wanted to show everyone what we were capable of on our own. I feel that it is even better than "Riddles". We never wanted to compress the album, we actually figured that people would really feel that they were getting their money's worth this way and we also figured that this would really help with the Japanese market. They don't want anything without a few bonus tracks on it! Most of the well produced albums with this much music are coming from major labels (Metallica, Queensryche, Dream Theater). We felt this would be quite a statement coming from an independent.

Which song from the new album is the most suitable to represent Leviathan? (Pick one, if possible)

Very difficult question... and I'm sure that each member would give you a different answer. In the traditional sense, I would have to say "Paying The Toll". In the modern Leviathan sense, I would have to say "Turning Up Broken". Each of these songs display the variety of style and flexibility within this band. They are also the perfect examples of how John and I differ in writing and arranging styles.

There are many powerful and heavy moments in your music, but they cannot be labeled as aggressive. I can hardly imagine you playing aggressive music. Can you?

Maybe not in the lyrical sense, but you probably haven't seen us live have you? Aggressiveness is our middle name.

I feel that aggressive lyrics often limit a band and it's easy to get caught up in it. It's like "I'm pissed off at the world", now let's make a whole album about it.

I already commented to you that my impression was that the second half of the album is more accessible

at first glance. Does it raise any thoughts to you?

Not really, some of the songs take longer to absorb, even for me but I like it better that way. Sometimes the songs that take the longest to absorb, take the longest to burn out on you. Just listen to all the "fast food" you hear on the radio. Quick to catch onto you and quick to the trash can. That stuff has the depth of a greeting card.

Describe how you create songs.

For me, I usually put together several pieces of music and combine it to create an entire song. I then screen dozens of lyrics to find the right feel and arrangement. I have to be somewhat flexible both lyrically and musically to make it all work but it eventually comes together. Sometimes lyrics will set for 10 years until the right musical feel comes around. I try to never force lyrics into the music and that's why I think I've maintained a certain level in my writing.

For John, he often writes in a much different style. He will write his lyrics and then compose the music around them. He's really a musical genius. I will hear something and think "what the hell is this?", but I know that until I hear the completed product, I haven't heard anything yet. And he always comes through with a wonderful finished product.

What was Jim Morris' input during the production and mixing process? How do you get along with him?

We get along great with him and have worked with him on all 4 of our albums.

Mainly, he just tried to oversee the album's production and make sure that we were on the right track (so to speak). In mixing, he will get our opinions and take over from there. He has a phenomenal ear in the mixing room. He has a lot of faith in us and he is letting us tackle the production chores more and more with each album. He knows when to kick our ass and he knows when to give us room to do our own thing. He's great and he's one of the biggest reasons we enjoy recording so much. Jim's really taught us a lot over the years. I can't say enough good things about him. He's not just a great producer/engineer, but more importantly, he's wonderful person.

Why weren't keyboards, drums, and bass tracks recorded in Morrisound?

We wanted to have the sequencing and click tracks done before we left to Florida to save time and avoid any disasters there. The reason the bass and drum tracks were done here is because it was a bad time for Trevor to leave town as he was leaving for California in a few days with his family and it didn't make any sense to fly him to Florida for one or two days. So we flew in Tom Morris to do the drums tracks at Colorado Sound and decided to lay the bass tracks while we were at it.

Trevor got most of his stuff on the first take and that freed up plenty of time to do the bass with Derek.

How did it happen that Jim Morris did some vocals on the chorus of "Turning Up Broken"?

Jim's got a really good voice and he's also got "perfect pitch". Sometimes when we worked on vocal harmony parts, he would sing the part he wanted from us and on "Turning Up", we just said "hey Jim, get out here and do this one with us!"

How did you come up with an idea to ask Travis Smith to do artwork for the CD cover? Many relate Travis work to Psychotic Waltz, yet he took a bit different approach designing the cover of your album. Did you give him the music to listen to beforehand?

When John and I seen the "Bleeding" cover, we were just blown away. We knew that he was the guy for our next cover. We didn't have a recording for him of the new music but he was very familiar with Leviathan. I told him the titles of the songs and he went from there. He is really something and I can't thank him enough for helping us out on short notice.

Let's take a trip into Leviathan history. The self-titled 5 song CD was your first release, does it bring nostalgic memories to you now?

Yes it does. Hearing Tom Braden's vocals and Ty's drums really bring back "the good old days" but I don't really miss those guys much. That album was also a great learning experience in the studio for me and John. Jim (Morris) kicked our ass back then and really helped us to learn what is really important in the studio.

What could you say about "Deepest Secrets Beneath"? Was it released on Rock The Nation? The Iron Fortress album was released on Hellion Records, different label for every album - why is that?

Rock The Nation picked up "Deepest" on a licensing deal after we had finished the album. Real bad move on our part but we thought that this was the next step. I later did a side project for RTN called "Iron Fortress" but they never released it. Hellion Records really loved the album and released it in Europe. They did a nice job and were really good to me.

When did Century Media approach you regarding the release of "Riddles, Questions, Poetry & Outrage"? Was the album already recorded then?

Yes, after we recorded "Riddles", Century Media came along and basically picked up the album from there. After a year with them we decided we were probably better off on our own label, Corrosive Records.

Why did you leave Century Media? They didn't

promote you well, but the distribution was good. Do you feel you can control everything yourselves and do better?

We had really high expectations with Century Media and it wasn't fair to expect them to make us a priority. After all, we don't sell 100,000 CDs like some of their other bands. We probably will never have the distribution that CMR could give us, but we won't have to blame someone else for lack of making us a priority either. Certainly we have full control now but it is also a big job to take over promotion and distribution at this level now. Fortunately, we have a really good Managing Director for our label who helps keep the business together for us.

When did you realize that you could go on with Corrosive Records? What was the idea behind the creation of this label in the beginning? Do you think of releasing bands not directly related to Leviathan? I think that we found out we were capable of operating our own label when we released our first CD in '92. We were really forced into the business just trying to establish our first release on a higher level. The music business has been a real learning experience every since and I've taken in as much information as I could along the way. I'm still learning but the more I learn, the easier things get along the way. I certainly would like to be established enough that we can help bands to get started financially and managing them in the business aspect. Our label is already helping out some other bands with distribution.

What record companies (if any) are, in your opinion, the best ones for a progressive metal band? Or do you think that every company has their priority artists and the other artists they don't care that much for?

I can't really criticize other record labels, because all I know is from my own experiences. I've talked to some bands who have been treated well by their labels despite of their sales, but that is rare. It will almost always be the case... the more you sell for a company, the better you will be treated. If we had sold 50-100,000 for Century Media, I'm sure that we would still be with them. Our albums sales would justify them going out of their way to make us happy. It only makes sense. I wouldn't be surprised to see Dream Theater dropped from their label soon. As big as Dream Theater is in the progressive world, they are small time for the major labels. Right now, I feel that they would probably be better off to find a good independent that they can feel comfortable with. There is so much pressure when they are in trying maintain their musical integrity and trying to keep up high sales volumes.

I think that Fates Warning is in a better position, in that

respect. I don't think that Metal Blade has ever put big demands on Fates Warning as far as sales are concerned... in turn the band is able to get completely absorbed within their own music.

In your whole career as a musician, where there any moments when you felt down thinking that the music you create has a limited appeal?

Absolutely, the last 6 years I have felt that way. It does bring me down, but it is also this style of music that makes me the happiest inside. Our music has always been a question of our integrity. I have no doubt that we could have had some commercial success had we traveled that path, but I would rather be able to look at myself in the mirror.

And in general, what do you think, are there limitations for the progressive metal scene (possibilities to break through, audience, etc.)? If so, what kind of limitations?

As we all know, there are some benefits to this style as well. Because progressive metal has never really been popular, then it will never really burn out either. That is the joy of underground music. And although it is unlikely, there is always the possibility of having a song that can break through. Stratovarius managed to break through to a commercial audience in Korea with one video ("Forever") and sold 150,000 copies of their CD there.

Leviathan are quite popular in Japan. Have you ever got a chance to fly over there? What do you think is special about fans from there, it looks like there is an oasis for melodic metal...

We've never got a chance to tour Japan. We were hoping to get some support with a licensing deal there but we haven't had any luck. Which is kind of weird considering that our previous albums entered the top 10 on the Japanese import charts. The fans in Japan don't seem to pay attention to the "fast food" that most American kids do. It seems that the major labels have almost total control over what the kids buy. They know that if they play something on the radio or MTV enough, the kids will buy it. Metal is still very big in Japan and we would love to visit there someday.

At one point or another, many long-existing progressive metal bands (for example, Fates Warning, Dream Theater) tried to write more accessible and shorter tunes. Do you think it can happen with Leviathan?

I don't know. I think we've gotten about as accessible as we're going to get. There is still enough variety and accessibility in our songs to have a chance at radio play, but it's not something that we have to think about. Sometimes our stuff turns out long and sometimes it's short, but we never have gone into a song looking for a hit. It's just not our focus.

If you'd had to represent progressive metal to a person who does not have a clue about the genre, what song or album would you choose?

Probably something off of the "Parallels" album by Fates Warning. It is so easily accessible and well produced that one couldn't help but enjoy it. It is lyrically passionate and meaningful. Of course, early Queensryche and Dream Theater also come to mind.

Do you buy CDs? How do you get interested in one or another band? Do you have to hear praises from some authoritative source? What description would intrigue you?

I don't get really get out to buy CDs much anymore. John will often turn me onto a good band and give me a CD to check out. He turned me onto a lot of different bands. If someone tells me that a band has really great songwriting, I will be more interested in checking it out than say if I hear that they had a shredding guitar player. Solo's only go so far with me. I love strong songwriting, that's what makes a group. Can they grab you from inside? That's my question.

I think that "Scoring The Chapters" will grab you from inside. Check it out.

Leviathan release list:

- "Leviathan" EP (1991)
- "Deepest Secrets Beneath" CD, Rock The Nation (1993)
- "Riddles, Questions, Poetry & Outrage" CD, Century Media Records (1996)
- "Scoring The Chapters" CD, Corrosive Records (1997)

[Corrosive Records, PO Box 1215 Littleton, CO 80160, USA]
[E-mail: leviathan6@juno.com]
[Web page: <http://home.mho.net/leviathan>]

LEVIATHAN

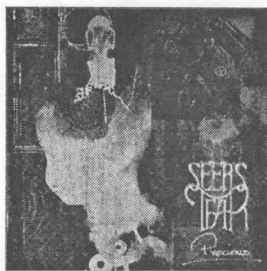
Scoring the Chapters

SEASONS OF THE WOLF

Seasons of the Wolf self-released
The debut album of Seasons Of The Wolf can be ascribed to hard rock genre, but there are distinct signs of band's flexibility. Some current hard rock bands are destined to go nowhere because they are stuck in their own shell; these Americans are not afraid of incorporating some new elements deriving from doom, NWOBHM ("October Moon" and "Long Cold Winter"), and gothic (overall dark atmosphere created by keyboards) styles. Inspirations of Deep Purple and Black Sabbath are also visible. Riffs are very important to this kind of music, and they are well-done and rocking in most cases here. (GS)
[Seasons of the Wolf, PO Box 339, LBK, FL 34228, USA]
3 1/2

SEER'S TEAR

Precious
Goldtrack Records
This band has already played in our country and thus excited my curiosity. "Precious" is their first CD after two successful demos, and it offers us not the music that we are used to hear from England, their



native country. Seer's Tear combine early Psychotic Waltz and Fates Warning with doom influences. The outcome is really something quite special, and progressive fans must not pass this work. Just listen to the excellent "A Gathering Of Separate Ways" or Jethro Tull-ish "Pressures". Mark Stojasavljevic has a great voice at his disposal and reminds me sometimes of Ray Alder or Buddy Lackey. An impressive start for this English act! (SV)
[Seer's Tear, Mark Stojasavljevic, 26 Lower Edge Road, Rastrick, Brighouse, W.Yorks HD6 3LD, England] [Goldtrack Records, P.O.Box 37062, 28080 Madrid, Spain]
4 1/4

SEVENTH AVENUE

Southgate
Treasure Hunt Records
Seventh Avenue is the name of German heavy metal band, which remained in the shadow since its formation in 1989. Who knows, perhaps their third album "Southgate" will grant them a bigger popularity, because their metal is both professionally and honestly performed. It's not really original and mainly follows Teutonic heavy/speed metal traditions, taking inspirations from bands like Helloween and Running Wild. (GS)
[Treasure Hunt Records, In der Marpe 13, D-45525 Hattingen, Germany]
3 1/2

SIEGES EVEN

Uneven
Under Siege Records/Semaphore
The first time when an album of this band does not differ significantly from its predecessor. Through their long career (the roots lie in 1985), Sieges Even have been playing speed metal, techno thrash, prog rock, and metal. "Uneven" is clearly a metal album, though, like in the previous album "Sophisticated", funk and jazz inspirations are visible. Lyrics are full of irony and this penetrates into the music bringing an eclectic impression. The

only band to compare Sieges Even with is Voivod, and not because their music would be similar, but because of the same challenging approach towards creating the own thing. Both bands are damn good at that. Some die-hard melodic/prog metal fans have problems with all kinds digressions from the norm, but, hopefully, there are still enough of those who listen with open ears. (GS)
4

SILENT LUCIDITY

Positive as Sound
WMMMS
Interesting progressive metal band from Germany. To call them a typical progressive metal band would not be fair, because together with traditional progressive metal, their music is also influenced by power metal and art rock of the 70's. It can be compared to Sieges Even on their "A Sense Of Change" album which also presented non-typical art-prog-rock/metal. Songs of "Positive as Sound" last for 7-10 minutes, and they are composed from different parts with different styles and moods. Traditional elements of German progressive are visible too, but I don't like them too much here. They use trombone and mandoline, so the final view is promising and leaves me waiting

for their new disc which should be out sometime soon. (AO)
[WMMS, Peter Wustmann, Zollstrasse 6, D-37154 Northeim, Germany] [Silent Lucidity, c/o Jens-Christoph Maurer, Wengensteinsteige 42, D-71088 Holzgelingen, Germany]

4

SOLITUDE AETURNUS

Adagio

Massacre Records

Solitude Aeternus are on the German label Massacre now. I think, it will help them to change some things in Europe, but the situation in USA will remain the same. The 5th album again is as good as their predecessors, but doesn't contain any novelties, either. It's just a good doom metal album, better than many others. I think, my fondness of slow, dark music has never been big, so I'd rather listen to "faster" hippie doom albums like Kyuss or the new Spiritual Beggars CD. Solitude Aeternus are simply too slow for me. Anyway, "Adagio" is a gift for all fans of this genre, and I think, nobody will be disappointed about this new album. (SV)

4



SOUL CAGES

Moments

Massacre Records

Soul Cages is the first band since Sieges Even's sophomore release "Steps" to send shivers down my spine in terms of emotional brilliance in combination with musical complexity. "Moments" is Soul Cages' second release after their untitled debut. Productionwise it is more polished and mature. Although it was recorded in 1995 and released in 1996, it seems to have been overlooked by many. "Moments" excels in combining melodic metal with complex song structures with unbelievable emotions. The closest comparison would be Sieges Even's "A Sense of Change" with the addition of more layers of guitars and warmth. One moment, the musicians seem to move in different directions showing their virtuosity in a natural manner and then meeting each other at a heart-warming melodic crossing. Vocalist/guitarist Thorsten Staroske has a warm and full voice and there are a lot of dual vocal melodies with the female backing vocalist. The German pronunciation gives the music an additional charm while keyboards are only used sporadically to provide an emotional atmosphere. I can see Soul Cages being able to exploit their talents for a concept album or for a documentary on the mating rituals of dolphins. (CR)
[Soul Cages, c/o J. Nitschke, Klosterweg 16, 58791 Werdohl, Germany]

4 1/2

SOUNDSCAPE

Discovery

Angel Thorne Music

This is a conceptual album by American prog music hope Soundscape (see also Thorne reviews & interview). It's hard to describe the music of this band as it differs from usual prog acts in using original structures and 70's influences in the songs. The material is supplied with fine details and is build up slowly, without a hurry. Some people could miss dynamics in several songs, but I think it's a matter of taste. For my taste, "Discovery" is a well thought-out work with some highlights like the trilogy "A Christmas Carol" or King's X-like

"Between The Sun And The Moon". I must emphasize Soundscape's musical ability, their arrangements are great! And don't forget Thorne's voice which is easy recognizable among thousands... (SV)

[\$15, Angel Thorne Music Company, PO Box 1244, Danbury, CT 06813-1244, USA] 4 1/4

SPIRITUAL BEGGARS

Mantra III

Music For Nations

This is definitely one of the best psychedelic hippie rock releases I've ever heard. After somewhat average predecessors Spiritual Beggars return with the album that simply blows you away. There's such a power on this record! "Mantra III" is as brilliant as Kyuss "Sky Valley" or Monster Magnet "Dopes To Infinity", but different. It combines heavy psychedelic tunes with massive boogie grooves. Just listen to magnificent tracks like "Monster Astronauts", "Euphoria", "Lack of Prozac", or "Sad Queen Boogie". I really didn't expect of Spiritual Beggars anything like that. The psychedelic highlight of this issue! (SV)

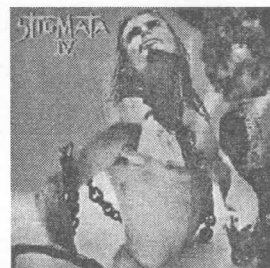
[Spiritual Beggars, P.O.Box 9080, 300 09 Halmstad, Sweden (send 2 IRC's)] 4 3/4

STEEL PROPHET

Into the Void

Art Of Music

American Steel Prophet may be a familiar name to many since they are around for a long time. For those who are new in the game, I can say that they have three releases out. "The Goddess Principle" and "Continuum" EP were records of 'old-wave' heavy/progressive/speed metal in the veins of early Iron Maiden, early Fates Warning, and Helstar. "Into The Void" still contains the shield of mystery characteristic to such style, but the early Iron Maiden resemblances (from "Iron Maiden" to "Powerslave" albums) overshadows other inspirations. Looosing a slight bit of originality, Steel Prophet sound more energetic and tonic. Besides, they shoot another hair by being honest to guitar-driven metal in contrast to nowadays widespread keyboard-driven metal. "Into The Void" is a good combination of heaviness and melody. (GS)
[Stephen Kachinsky, 7525 Haskell Ave Apt 109, Van Nuys, CA 91406, USA] 4 1/4



STIGMATA IV

Solum Mente Infirmis

Noise Records

Many would probably at first would tend to ascribe Stigmata to the middle-class, but it would not be quite right, because the second album of this band (the debut was released under the name Big Heat) displays fresh and intriguing heavy metal, a challenge to the representatives of the (over?)filled underground heavy music scene. Some similarities to Savatage or Kamelot can be detected, but Stigmata's modern metal is distinct. And I feel that the emphasis here should be on the word 'modern' - Stigmata do not resemble to many tired bands worshipping the 80's

THE TEA PARTY

Transmission

EMI Records

Their last output "The Edges Of Twilight" was probably the best album of the 90's for me, and I'm almost sure that not any band will "set up this record" till the next century, except maybe The Tea Party themselves. The new release again is a killer-album with emotional, mighty tracks: a wide range from dramatic, passionate hymns to heart-rending ballads. This time, the Canadians have made use of electronic sounds to put a new light on the matter, and these elements get on very well with the Oriental background, typical of The Tea Party. The parallels to The Doors or Led Zeppelin come to light not so clear as in two previous albums, however, Robert Plant's flair appears in songs like "Alarum" or "Army Ants". The best tracks are the heavier compositions: "Gyroscope", "Transmission", or "Pulse". Although this CD doesn't come up to the inaccessible "The Edges Of Twilight", less than five points would be here an incredible cheek! (SV)

5

metal. Two of nine songs are very long, "Sacred Man" runs 13 minutes, "The Fool" - 10, but they are not boring. This means, doesn't it? (GS)

[Stigmata Management, Stefan Hathinger, Dragonerstrasse 22, 4600 Wels, Austria]

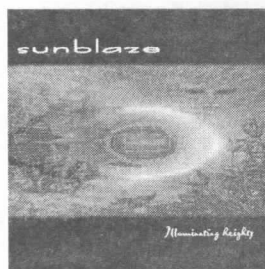
4

STOENHAVEN

Outside the Sphere

self-released

"Why can't you be like the rest of us?", so the voice at the beginning of this CD. That's exactly what you would ask Stoenhaven from Madison, 'cause their debut is far from the description "ordinary album". To tell the truth, I haven't heard such an intellectual and uncommercial stuff for a long time. The band present us very bizarre mixture of Psychotic Waltz, Coroner, Black Sabbath and something else. I think, the fans of innovative sounds will love "Outside the Sphere", 'cause there are not many CDs of such a calibre. It's admirable, how masterly this trio writes these complex tracks. The examples would be "Glow of Conformity", "Blinded", "The Protectorate", or "Mr. Candyman", to name a few. Unfortunately, the band has already broken up, but I think you can still purchase this masterpiece. It's worth it! (SV)
[Rock Talent, 808 Schultz Place, Madison, WI 53716, USA] 4 1/2



SUNBLAZE

Illuminating Heights EP

self-released

Ready for serious soul thrills? Elegant and atmospheric progressive metal inspired by classical music should really cause some. Ambitious, you may say, but it is true: Sunblaze pull it off.

"Illuminating Heights" is a 25 minutes record with 2 songs by a new German band formed on the ashes of Dividing Horizons. Die-harders may remember Dividing Horizons CD

"Seizure", independently released several years ago. After that, views of the band members on future musical directions began to differ and it unavoidably led to the split. While some wanted to continue doing progressive kind of music, others preferred to switch on the "modern" hip-hop metal trend. Thus, two of them cut their hair and formed Sunblaze, others founded System\\Eyes. In spite of the lower average hair length, Sunblaze is the one, which is not a hip-hop metal band.

As this record shows, Sunblaze wanted to do more than repeating what Queensryche and Fates Warning have already achieved. The five-piece metal kernel of the band invited a whole orchestral support group, consisting of violin, clarinet & sax, and flute players together with some additional female singers to realize musical ideas they had. Undeniably, they came up with the musical record which is both unique and consistent. It is still very much progressive metal, but it is more close to The Gathering than to Fates Warning. Or more distant from Fates Warning than from The Gathering if some smart reader feels a will to shout that the latter band does not use violin and does not have much classical music influences either. "Illuminating Heights" invites you to a flight through time, universe, and mind. Lyrics comply with music extremely well ("Hurricane I ask you for a dance..."). Sunblaze, having a permanent singer (one of the two original members from Dividing Horizons) and even some female singers support, do not overuse vocals. They do not overuse anything. That is why I take this record to listen for one more time again and again... (GS)

4 1/2

TILES

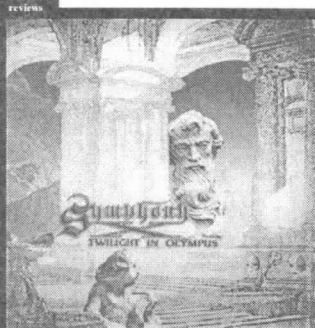
Fence the Clear

Inside Out Music/LMP

Perhaps we still cannot announce a birth of the new Rush, but Tiles progressive hard rock is nearly as effective as that of the famous Canadians. The second Tiles album does not contain major differences comparing it with the debut. Paul Rarick's bright and expressive voice is a definite highlight which adds necessary liveliness and sincerity quite skilled yet sometimes quite unpretentious and even dry musicianship. A very sincere and pleasant album. (GS)

[Standing Pavement Entertainment, P.O. Box 75, Trenton, MI 48183 USA]

4



SYMPHONY X
Twilight in Olympus
Inside Out Music

Following the path explored in their 3 previous albums, Symphony X ventures further in their own unique definition of neo-classical (speed) metal. With their previous release "Divine Wings of Tragedy", the standard was set extremely high, so doing at least as good was a thorny task. Symphony X fulfilled it brilliantly, even if the style underwent some slight shifts. Their music is still dominated by the powerful hacked and syncopated riffs of Romeo, but their purely neo-classical melodies have been partially replaced by more progressive tunes. The band also abandoned the frequent use of choirs of the previous albums, losing by the way the medieval features. All the musicians still display as amazing skills as ever, but their incredible virtuosity is never vain or boring. On the overall, one can say that "Twilight in Olympus" doesn't possess the genius of "Divine Wings of Tragedy", yet it is still a masterpiece of the genre. (AS)
 4 3/4

SYMPHONY X
Twilight in Olympus
Inside Out Music

This New Jersey based fantasy band has become album after album probably the best expound of technical melodic progressive power music in the metal panorama. "Metal of the 90's" I read somewhere. Well, I certainly can't see where the peak for this band is. Considering what an extraordinary album "The Divine Wings of Tragedy" was and the big exposure it provided them, that might have meant a pretty difficult unit of measure to surpass. Also, since then, the band had to change drummer Jason Rullo, a substantial part of their sound, and finally were pushed by record company deadlines in order to put out the album we are reviewing here. Those facts could have effected their music, but no; this album brings again the same stellar metal, while the music is rich, dense, and colorful just the way it used to be. They even sound a bit more progressive sometimes (caused possibly because of writing lyrics before the music?). The truth is, Kansas influences blossom widely (check the great 70's progressive rock feel Michael Pinella added to keyboards on songs like "Through the Looking Glass" or "Orion - The Hunter"). Talking about songs structure, some forms seem to me to be a bit closer to "The Damnation Game" 1995 album, not so complex as on "TDWoT"; guitar and keyboard solos "Intertwining" is more visible and constantly reference along songs like "Smoke and Mirrors", "In the Dragon's Den", or "Church of the Machine" core. Apart from that detail, the contrast between classical rooted melodic music and more powerful metal passages, a bright hallmark of Symphony X style, travels all through this album as well. Everything is conducted again by a greatly inspired Russell Allen on the vocals, more versatile than ever in my opinion. Summing up, prog metal releases of the quality and perfection of "Twilight in Olympus" do not abound in a one year exercise. (GM)
 4 3/4

TIMOTHY PURE
Blood of the Berry
Isosceles Records

The second Timothy Pure's album is much more conceptual and musically more developed than the previous one. If the debut showed a more rocky and complex side of prog-rock, this disc shows more silent and melancholic nature of music. If the debut could fit to the taste of a fan of Marillion or Rush, "Blood of Berry" owes much from Pink Floyd (especially the opening track) or Genesis. Well, not all the disc has this quiet mood - it contains tribal rhythms, and the structure of such songs as "Where Mercy Ends" is nervous and complex. Anyway, other songs as "The Afterglow" or romantic keyboards-based "Ornament" have left the biggest impression on me. I can recommend this album to fans of more traditional and colorful prog rock. (AO)
 [Isosceles Records, 2480-4 Briarcliff Road, NE, Suite 186, Atlanta, GA 30329, USA]
 4

TREASURE LAND
Gateway
Noise Records

Even if the new singer of Treasure Land looks like he had just time travelled from the late 80's where he was singing in a glam rock band, this Swedish quintet did not went sleaze in their second album. On the other hand, those who have been waiting for even more shreds in a neo-classical speed metal way will also be proved wrong: Treasure Land did not change their style, just became more coherent, and, at the same time, more diverse and dynamic. Some songs can be compared to the older Yngwie Malmsteen material (until "Eclipse" album), mainly due to similar vocal arrangements. The opener "King of All Kings" may seem little bewildering for speed metal purists due to its unexpected tempo changes, but tracks like "Heaven" and "Liar" should slake their thirst. The album highlights are "Where Tomorrow Will Remain", which represents the band at its best, and the neat ballad "Rendez-Vouz". In conclusion, a recommended record for light-color melodic metal fans. (GS)
 [Verus Music, Johan Uddgren, Kamnarsvagen 13 A:204, 22646 Lund, Sweden]
 4

TRIBE OF GYPSIES
Tribe of Gypsies
JVC

This CD is very much in demand especially in Europe because it's a Japan import. I don't understand why there is not any label here that would license it for European fans. This band has already the new EP out there which also has got positive responses from press. Tribe Of Gypsies play hard rock with African/Mexican music elements. I would call them the heavier variation on Santana. This CD works up some enthusiasm for the listeners, it's almost radio-friendly and doesn't make great demands on you. Recommended. (SV)
 4

TRIVIAL ACT
Mindscape

FaceFront Records/Voices of Wonder
 Strangely, Trivial Act cannot be compared to exactly one particular band, but the best description of their style is undeniably pure progressive metal. The music is pretty neat and not stereotyped. Songs are quite continued each being longer than 5 minutes, but different parts are tied together quite smoothly, even if may require additional listens. For a progressive metal fan, this band popped out of nowhere unless he or she has heard "Gathering..." compilation with 8 Norwegian progressive metal bands. Still, Trivial Act are above the majority and surely will please those who look after warm and energetic progressive metal. Speaking

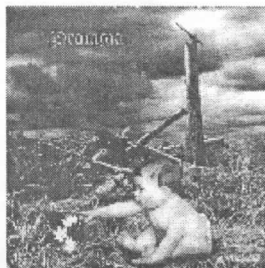
in popular terms, the degree of 'commercialism' is between Watchtower and the New Dream Theater, i.e., nearly perfect for enthusiasts of traditional prog metal. (GS)
 4

TY TABOR
Moonflower Lane
Inside Out Music

"After seventeen years it was very cool to play and write songs that were just for me", says Ty Tabor from King's X and offers us his first solo album. It doesn't mean that he is no more in King's X, no, he just wanted to record some songs that he created for himself. "Moonflower Lane" is the album that has all those features typical of King's X and some of songs would go very well with "Faith, Hope, Love" CD. I think, the people, who love that bright and sunny release, will like Ty Tabor's debut, too. "Moonflower Lane" is more Beatles than any King's X record! Featuring three members of Galactic Cowboys and Frank Hart from Atomic Opera on cello. Recommended. (SV)
 4 1/4

V/A

A Call to Irons - A Tribute to Iron Maiden
Dwell Records
 I still remember Celtic Frost tribute released by Dwell Records. It seems that the boss of this label loves tribute albums. A Call To Irons contains the covers of songs from the first five albums of Iron Maiden. The most successful version is Steel Prophet's "Ides Of March/Purgatory" which is also available on their CD "Into The Void". Variations of "Genghis Khan" by Angelcorpse, "Hallowed Be Thy Name" by Solitude Aeternus, and "Remember Tomorrow" by Opeth are interesting, too, but Opera IX "Rime Of The Ancient Mariner", Morgion's "To Tame A Land", and Evoken's "Strange World" are somewhat weak. Generally speaking, this compilation is far better and more interesting than the Celtic Frost tribute. But you know, these are two different bands with fans with different tastes. (SV)
 [Dwell Records, P.O.Box 39439, Los Angeles, CA 90039, USA]
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VALLEY'S EVE
Prodigia
Miez Recordings

Valley's Eve together with Sanvoisen or Superior are the promising newcomers in Germany in questions of heavy metal with progressive elements. The grandiose opener "Escape" is probably one of the best power metal tracks I've ever heard. I think, only Metal Church had the songs of such a calibre. The fact of the matter is that the singer R.D. Liapakis has a very good voice, and the band doesn't need those stupid bombastic choir singing in refrains. With this in mind, "Prodigia" offers 70 minutes of high-quality music. Good work! (SV)
 [Michael Mueller, PO Box 1617, 87686 Memmingen, Germany]
 4 1/4

VANDEN PLAS
The God Thing
Inside Out Music/LMP

While stylistically to a large extent still recalling Dream Theater's "Images And Words", Vanden Plas second album is actually a good piece of traditional progressive metal. Music is lightweight, slightly melancholic, obscure, and, in addition, very tastefully composed. This minimizes (if not destroys) the fuzzy first impression about long songs and overall lack of shining moments. Don't listen to bad words about this band (though now it looks like good opinions

become a majority), especially if you are not obsessed by the mania of "originality" and want to hear more than 4-5 bands belonging to the prog metal hall of fame. (GS)
 3 3/4

VENDETTA

Vendetta
self-released

It requires some cerebral effort to absorb all the ideas expounded here. The album is a journey of musical discovery, and really enjoyable for fans of quality prog metal with a fusion/experimental touch. The album contains plenty of instrumental interludes letting their progressive rock influences flow during them. Yes or Rush just to name two, light their way at many of those passages. But it's on extraordinary songs like "Deceit", "Fear of Fate", or the title track where they show all their potential and a more accused Dream Theater/jazzy feel at the structures. Something appealing from this band is how they manage to combine very wisely classical references and instrumental virtuosism in their right measure, not drowning the melodies. Another interesting point is the classy feel that vocalist Sam McGee adds to the music. Mostly when hitting the highest notes, he sounds pretty much like Ozzy Osbourne from old Black Sabbath days (!), with some undertones a la Blaze Bailey (Iron Maiden)/Charlie Dominici (ex-Dream Theater). Quite surreal parallels traced yes, I have to admit it, but Vendetta's music certainly refuses a conventional description. I highly recommend this disc. Another plus is the booklet design, which goes on par with the excellent musicianship. Definitely a band to follow. (GM)
 [Vendetta, P.O. Box 2291, Montebello, CA90460, USA]
 4 1/2

VIGILANTE
Chaos-Pilgrimage
self-released

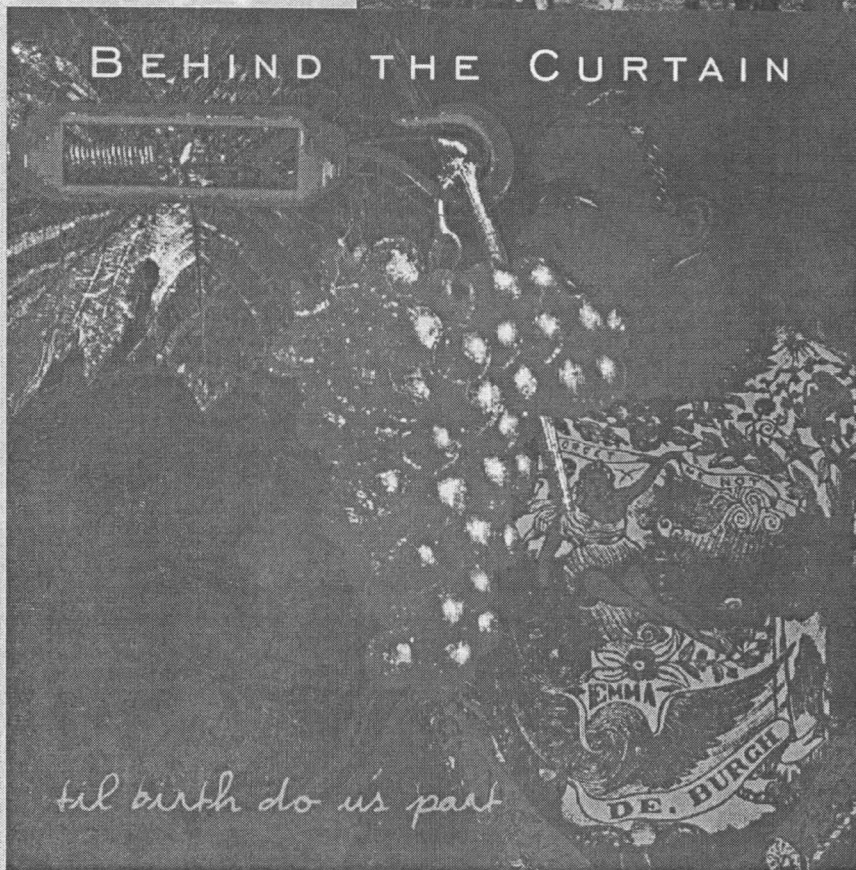
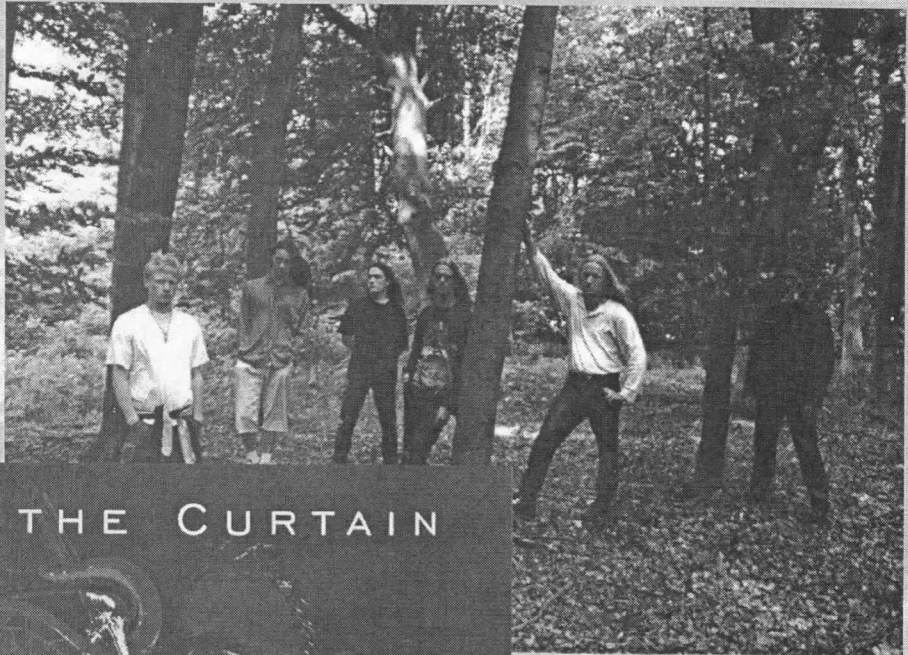
I've always had a low opinion of Japan metal scene, but it seems that this Vigilante's self release will force me to change my views. I simply didn't expect such a prog-masterpiece from the Japanese. Right from the start they strike with the incredible title-track moving somewhere between Fates Warning and Sanctuary. The guitar work and vocal lines in "Holy Prose" are, for example, very similar to Psychotic Waltz. The voice of Hideaki Niwa (ex-Hidden) surprisingly reminds me of Soundscape's Thorne here and there. Just weak and exaggerated ballad "Imprisoned" is a dead loss. All in all, "Chaos-Pilgrimage" is a convincing performance. (SV)
 [\$20, Vigilante Inc., #104 Wingkuden 2-22-30 Niikura, Wako-shi, Saitama 351-0115, Japan]
 4 1/2

VISIBLE TOUCH
Forgotten Land EP
Meander Records

On one hand, Kiss are the guiding light for German Visible Touch, but on the other one, the band does not have 'let's rock, it's cool' attitude, are heavier, more subtle and melancholic. This 4-song EP offers a blend of hard rock and heavy metal where keyboards are nearly as important as guitars. "Love Gun", a Kiss cover, is the only straightforward track. The performance and musical thoughts are at good level, the style is not really overused these days, at the same time not deviating much from what is called melodic metal. While generally music may seem a bit passive, refrains do stand out. Considering the emotional aspect, even if the melancholy dominates, the optimism wins over. (GS)
 [Visible Touch/Mind Masque, Nils Middelhaue, Huttelweg 3a, 33719 Bielefeld, Germany]
 3 3/4

I CLOSE MY EYES AND SADNESS DISAPPEARS...

BEHIND THE CURTAIN



BEHIND THE CURTAIN
"TIL BIRTH DO US APART"

WORLDWIDE RELEASE: FALL 1998

This is the future of progressive metal, showcased by a Danish band, who since 1994 have been a part of a very limited underground. Now, with the debut release "Til Death Do Us Part", their music is so matured, that they have become one of the most refreshing bands on the European progressive/techno-metal scene.

The sound of Behind The Curtain is complex and avantgarde, yet they have exactly what it takes in energy and catchyness to make it big-time.

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Symphony Xtory

Coming out from New Jersey, the original hometown of current members of the stars' system as Bruce Springsteen or Jon Bon Jo-vi, since their beginnings, this band certainly has reflected a deep taste for touching melodies, full of Baroque inspiration, and has made a wide use of the classical models we briefly passed review before. But let's put the terminology aside for a second. At present time, after four studio albums, Symphony X have reached a place on the hall of fame of technical melodic music. They have been pushed to that honour position by, what primarily represents the most important state of opinion, which is the anonymous legion of progressive/power metal genre fans. Word of tape, message boards, and mailing lists have much to do here.

Their debut album ("Symphony X", 1994) had brought them some local recognition already. That phenomenon took place mainly in Japan, a very solid market where bands like Royal Hunt, Angra, Stratovarius oriented the first steps of their careers. A few months before Symphony X album hit the stores, guitarist Michael Romeo, band's founder and mastermind, had released there a brilliant instrumental solo record "The Dark Chapter", which promptly made many people decide to follow his track as musician. This authentic virtuoso of the guitar instrument started playing with serious dedication around the age of 14. Obviously gifted with innate talent, despite of commencing at that somehow considerable age, Michael Romeo became selected among other young musicians of the US at national contests, which tried to promote new promising values at the music field. As it usually happens, trying to be a mean to express all his creative potential, Symphony X commenced its run: together with Jason Rullo on the drums, Michael Pinella at the keyboards, Thomas Miller at the bass guitar, and Rod Tyler at the vocals. Once established, Symphony X worked hard on their next follow up, "The Damnation Game" (1995). An album which is marked essentially for one significant fact: Russell Allen joined the band as a frontman. Since then, the quality of their music has been increasing on giant steps. "The Divine Wings of Tragedy" (1997) supposed their final consecration as a mature band and, in my opinion, has to be considered as one of the best prog metal releases of all times. A superb effort globally. The obvious question was: "What we can expect after this?". Surely awaited with a great expectation, "Twilight in Olympus" made its apparition this year. After overcoming a few difficult moments at some of its stages (explained in more detail later along the interview that follows), the album should not defraud any fan. Perhaps it simply happens that, when musical products are polished so impeccably as in the Symphony X case, a coherence of style and ideas can mean the master key towards success. Here you are a transcription of the phone conversation we held with Symphony X keyboardist, Michael Pinella. It took place days before "Twilight in Olympus" was officially released, at the headquarters of their Spanish distributors, Mastertrax. Let's comment as curiosity, that the whole thing started with me running through Madrid streets a la Carl Lewis, trying to locate the building of offices in question, and arriving with a delay of 15 minutes.

Symphony X

Perpetual Musical Twilight

[by Gregorio Martin]



A Condensed Time Frame

I don't add anything new by pointing out how making use of classical music sources in the hard rock/heavy metal genres has become a basic reference for innumerable bands since many years ago. Time before, starting in the late 60's, ambitious rock operas, and the fondness for including orchestral and symphonic elements had begun to spread rapidly. Well-known examples of this process can be historic line-ups such as Deep Purple, Rainbow, Black Sabbath, progressive/symphonic rock acts as Yes, Kansas, ELP, Rush, and a long long etcetera. Also at this stage of the play, some legendary characters should be named, ranging from the forerunners like Ritchie Blackmore or John Lord to Yngwie J. Malmsteen. A person who, thanks to his famous "Rising Force" project, became sort of banner of the so called neoclassical-metal movement back in the early 80's. So, it was along these decades, where a successive proliferation of instrumental virtuosity basically started taking shape in those types of popular music. Getting closer to our days, hyper-technical guitar players began to cope magazine covers and turned into respected idols. Sometimes, why not to admit it, a substantial amount of those fake visionary maestros were worshiped in an exacerbated way, more proper of the times when court soprano Farinelli "il castrato" was the boss, back in the XVIII century. Thus, at that rate, copycats unavoidably blossomed, saturating for moments that peculiar scene. However, in parallel to that, more or less tumultuous, fashion, a true search for the richness of the referred classical sources made possible to experiment in depth with them, and adapt some of those materials to hard rock/heavy metal roots with an outstanding result. Metal genre was endowed this way with more dimensions, more accused and well conceived complexity, and subsequent subgenres were created. Progressive melodic metal with neoclassical influences is the one which interests us here up to this point.

Call it "X"

Therefore, once the frame is set, let's talk a little about Symphony X. The name expresses it all I think. The whole philosophy behind this type of music. You can name it the way you want. You can inquire into which their sources and influences are. You can concentrate on analyzing the players, their vast technique, the presentation, etc. But what really remains there at the end is a true Symphony of sounds difficult to catalogize with precision. A "whole". A continuum of music which simply manages to move one beyond words: Music with power. Music with feeling streams. Music made with the sensibility of an artist, in one word. That's why I see the "X" variable tag can constitute a quite appropriate definition for describing the intentions of this band: there's *per se* no need to be accurate describing what lies behind Symphony X music. The same way that painting is in general much more profound than public auctions sales at Sotheby's, or other kind of quantifications, the same occurs with colorful music of this kind. Hues, contrasts, shades, tonalities... The glossary of terms becomes even approximate. It's far from being an exact science. And it's then, when the listener's own perception of the work and one's subjective impressions come to a primary ground.

First of all, many congratulations for your new album.
Thank you.

It's always really pleasant to listen to an album like "Twilight in Olympus", with so many shades, and so rich musically. As one song from "Twilight in Olympus" says it's like a "dream within a dream" album. The result has been excellent.
Thank you very much.

So Michael, talking a bit about the influences in your music, which classical composers, progressive rock bands or other sources like neoclassical music might have been an inspiration for you and for the band?

OK, my personal influences: I've always had a classical background. Hm... Chopin, Bach, Beethoven, Mozart. And a lot of the big progressive bands of the 70's like Yes, U.K....

Kansas?

Yeah. Kansas, Boston, Wishbone Ash...

And the rest of the band members, do you think they basically also share your influences?

Yeah, pretty much. I know, Mike [Michael Romeo, guitars] does. Quite the same influences.

Where would you place Symphony X music in today's music field?

Where would I place it?

Yeah, how do you see your music in today's music field. For instance how would you describe it to a newcomer or a person who hasn't yet approached your music. Or, in other words, what style is it in your opinion? You know, "labels" are sometimes unavoidable. I guess it's progressive, it's lyrical, melodic, and it has some metal. I guess,

progressive melodic metal if one has to put a label on it.

You named previously some composers from baroque period as your personal influences. How do you feel when comparisons between Yngwie Malmsteen music and yours are traced? With Yngwie? Ha. Well, maybe he's got a lot of baroque influences. Like the Bach stuff and Vivaldi. And we do also, but we have more of a range of classical influences. Yngwie is more like contemporary stuff, from the 19th century and over 20th century. You know, Orloff, Stravinsky and, you know, more melodious stuff as influences. Yngwie's kinda inspired from baroque. Bach and Vivaldi and Corelli and that kind of stuff. I mean, if you're hearing a band and they're playing a baroque style, then it's gonna sound like... Anyone's gonna say: "It sounds like Yngwie", because he kinda...

Opened the style?

Yeah, pretty much. You know, the pioneer.

I see. Well, something obvious in your music is the aim for perfection on areas such as arrangements or choruses. It's easy to see there's a huge effort at a creative level on most of your compositions in that aspect.

Aha.

Despite of your influences, which are present there of course, you try to include innovations, etc. Well, what can you tell?

Oh, we try to make each album better. I mean, first in the beginning we had... [big pause] a lot of pressure because our Japanese label, they're very... they push you sometimes. And I mean, we did the first album, we'd only knew each other about four months for the record of the first album. So we didn't have an identity yet: everybody's background and influences spoke coming out. Then, well, we wanted to get back into studio right away and give them another album. I mean, with "The Damnation Game" it was little better, the production. And we were even offered a tour after that, but we changed singers and by the time we found a new singer and everything fitted on the band, we already had a deadline to do the 3rd album. So we did the 3rd album, and the same kind of thing happened with the tour after that: we had problems with the drummer, we substituted drummers, and by the time we find a new drummer it was already July. And they wanted the 4th album in September. So they gave us two months, basically, to finish it and it was like... [pause to think] it was madly. But from each album to album we try to improve on. In arranging songs, and everything.

Aha, you mentioned just now the departure of Jason Rullo at drums. Right.

What is the official reason why he left the band during the recording process? Well, it was kind of a mutual thing. It is the same as if he was a little bit fed up with it. You know, it's hard when "one's not into it other than enjoying himself". And, you know it was as if he wanted to do something else. Great drummer, I mean.

Yes, of course. No hard feelings then between Jason Rullo and the rest of band members? Ah, we're still friends. Yeah, yeah, everything's fine with that.

In my opinion, the new member Michael Welling completed an efficient and very competent work behind the drum set. Yes, very good.

However, in my humble opinion, some of the fusion and blending, with jazz rhythm structures for instance, that Rullo added...
Right.

...is missing on this new album. So, apart from delaying or postponing this last release, how do you think this replacement could somehow affect? What do you think about this?

Yes. Well, Tom is more aggressive drummer. It's funny, he should play that because he's actually... He went to School of Jazz, okay? University for 4 or 5 years. For Jazz. But I think deep down he's a real metal drummer, you know. Because I've been knowing Tom for about 12 years and I haven't seen him until we called him and put him in July, but I did know him from... I went to school with him, I grew up in the same town. So it's kind of funny that we contacted him, he was the only drummer that I could think of. And Mike and Tom Miller also knew him. They'd seen him play before, you know, when metal was kind of big in the US. He used to do a lot of rock clubs. So, we kinda needed this guy. So we tracked him down. But, I think he's more an aggressive drummer.

I see, that's correct I think. You mentioned before about your Japanese label and the pressure you have had to undergo, right?
Yes.

One question related to that. Something which is sort of dilemma personally in my head and sure on other people's head too: from your point of view, what do you think is special on Japanese mentality that makes them so fond of listening to quality melodic hard rock, progressive, or technical metal? I think they definitely like the technical side of it. I even know this side myself playing classical piano. Was the same I lived. They really strive for the technical side of it. I guess that'd be really what they're impressed by: it's the technique, you know. Because they like the real fast stuff, like the double bass and all, they're really into that. So, as far as the melodic side, we take that into consideration when we write, not to make in a melody so complicated, and rhythm so complicated that people can't listen to the music. I think we have a mixture because of everybody's influences and backgrounds. So it's nicely mixed. Nice. It's well balanced for everyone.

Talking again about musical backgrounds and theoretical studies, you've had the chance of working with reputed orchestra directors such as Zubin Mehta.
Say that again?

Zu-bin Me-ha [hell difficult for me to pronounce Israeli names correctly]
Oh yes, yes, yes. Well that was in school. Because, the school was about ten minutes from New York, and one of the professors that taught violin at the college was the principal violinist in the New York Philharmonic and he'd been there for years and years. So, he brought Zubin Mehta and assisting also Philip Ruckelshaus over for workshops. And we did a performance. So that was very cool.

Aha. Well, instrumental virtuosity is also something inherent, inner to your music. All members in Symphony X might be considered by separate like masters of their respective instruments I suppose. So, do you think sometimes it could be a bit difficult to combine all ideas to fit into a song in a way that all of you are satisfied with it?
Hm... Sometimes! [laughs] I mean,

specially with "Twilight in Olympus". 90% of the lyrics were written first. So it's been a little bit different approach to writing. Right, for us, it was like: we had an idea, we had a lyric, we had a picture. Was like painting a picture almost! You know, making the music to fit the lyrics, to meet the ideas that we saw.

I see. Tell us a bit more about your composing process.
Well, I mean, Michael writes most of the music. And then, Tom Miller [Bass] and Russ [Russell Allen, vocals] write also the lyrics. And I mean: we all go back and forth. But then, after all the arranging on that, on the songs, when they're pretty much written and all get together, you know, maybe we want to change one part. So there're always little things that maybe we're not satisfied with. But, you know, because back and forth is how we operate, until we'll all satisfied.

Talking about "Twilight in Olympus", I personally see it could bear some stronger resemblances in relation to "The Damnation Game" album than for instance compared to "The Divine Wings Of Tragedy".
Right.

As an example, for me "The Divine Wings of Tragedy" was like more structured, we could find somehow more technicality behind it, more choral, and orchestrated parts, etc. If you take tracks like "The Accolade" or the album title track that feeling was there.
Right.

Here for instance, the "Dragon's Den" song sounds quite similar to songs like "Edge of Forever" from "The Damnation Game", in some ways. What's your opinion about this?
Yeah. I could agree with that. A lot of it has to do with the fact that we first looked for the lyrics. I guess when you try to write the piano part, or the counterpart, you really don't have the lyrics in mind. And it could be more structured that way. But when you're writing from a lyric first, you have to fit the lyric so, it kinda has to have more progressive sound. You know what I mean?

Yes, yes.
Not as structured.

Okay, I wanted to ask you about the relationship with Eric Rachel and Steve Evetts as producers.
Aha.

There's a continuity in those producing tasks which I thought it might be important for Symphony X, am I right?
Aha.

Is that then important for the band, like if it had grew a mutual understanding or special confidence on studio after these four albums?
Well. They don't have any importance on the music, on the writing. We've known them for a long time. Eric is into the more progressive feel like bands like King Crimson, Pink Floyd and that kind of stuff. And Steve is more into the metal. So there's a nice mix between them. And it's a very comfortable atmosphere for us to work on, because they know what we want. We've just been even friends for years now, so that's why we use them.

Well, I think there's an European tour coming soon.
Yes.

How would you describe Symphony X performances on stage.

[Answering very rapidly] Oh they're gonna be great! [Laughs]

[Laughs]
Because... I'll tell you why. [Laughs]

Yes tell me.
Because of the lot of pressure we had over the past four years, and the fact we've never been able to play. We have four years of built up energy, you know?

Yes, I think I understand perfectly what you mean.
Waiting to come out. I mean, I was asked this question a lot: "Can you play the music and..." - "Yes, we can play the music, that's not the prob" and...

Then it's sure going to be magic!
[Laughs] The music is an easy part to us. The energy is gonna come out, so... I think it's gonna be good!

I wanted to ask you that because, personally, I never read a single review of a Symphony X show.
Aha. There hadn't been any show!
[Laughs]

I was curious, yes.
Yeah, we've been too busy. As if we couldn't afford. But, I mean, we've been on the studio basically for the past four years. Album after album. So, "time out". Now is as we kinda put our foot out: "Let's gonna stop".

Aha. And Michael, focusing specifically on your playing in "Twilight on Olympus", you've added quite complex parts on the keyboards, like several double lines and stuff. On live performances are you able to transport all that feeling from the album?
Oh yes.

No use of samplers, no...?
No, no. I have too much to worry about. I'd get in big trouble with the samplers. I've this kind of musical sequencer, yeah. I have too much to worry about.

I see.
We take that into consideration too when we write. We try not to write so many things, you know. Kind of keyboard parts, and tough parts so that it's impossible to reproduce.

Could you give us a brief description, just a review of what you think each album was important for you. What they represented.
Okay. What's the whole importance behind each is a lot. Hm, okay. The first one?

Yeah, your debut disc, "Symphony X". We hate that album. [Laughs] It stinks.

[Laughs]
It's not fair but, it's like I've said before, we hit this door and we didn't know well yet where we were going for, really. We actually consider that a demo.

I see.
And with the second one, what's important, we got Russell in the band, that was a big step for us. As far as sound, you know, we had a much better singer than our first singer. So that was very important. I "The Divine Wings of Tragedy" I think it all really came together under the violin. We kinda found our direction musically, and we were all working together very well by then. And everybody had import, then, into the band. And then, for "Twilight in Olympus"... [pauses] We've a little disappointment.

A disappointment?

There was supposed to be another song, called "Twilight in Olympus", the title track. That was what I did mean with the album "Twilight in Olympus" but...

What happened?
We were in the studio, and really had about half of the song written. And we wanted to finish it really badly, coming out to be a really good song. It was the longest song.

Kind of opus song like the title track of the previous album?
Right, it was, yes. Well, maybe not that long, but a little longer.

Aha. That's interesting.
And, we had a week left to go, and our Japanese label would not give us any more time to finish it.

What's your Japanese company, JVC? No, Zero Corporation. They wouldn't give us the time to finish it, so we didn't want to rush it.

That's a real pity I think.
Right. Just to get it, but we didn't want to rush it. So we decided to leave it off and put it in the next album, or I don't know where it'll get again. But it was a shame. It would have made it more complete for us, more balanced.

Well, it's still 52 minutes long which is... Yes, we're happy with the stuff we've done. And we had enough songs written. But I mean, for us, personally would have been a little more complete.

Yeah, I understand.
So, that's about that.

After such a masterpiece as "The Divine Wings of Tragedy" is, which harvested so excellent reviews and comments among fans, which personal goals you think you still have to achieve through your music? Do you see any possible ways or fields you have in mind to explore for innovating?
I think there's a little bit exchange. Out of the side of the band lots change. I mean we're not going to do dance music or anything, but we're always exploring the other mean, sure. Maybe. I'm not sure, really. I can't say. It's not like... You can't say: "Let's do this", you know.

The sitar parts on "Lady of the snow" song are a novelty for example I think.
Right.

Was sitar instrument present on previous albums? I think it was not, right?
Yes, that song... Hm, see: it was written from an old Japanese folk tale. And it's different tonalities, in instruments, to create that atmosphere of old Japan. You know, a way to bring the Japanese chaos, from tonalities.

In my opinion, talking about "Twilight in Olympus" album, Russell vocals are even more versatile, more varied than ever. How does he feel he about this, do you think he would agree it's one of his most complete vocal performances?
Hum, I know he's very happy with his performance. But I don't think the subject is he'd been more bright. You mean "more brilliant"?

Nope, I mean it's more varied. Shows more tonalities out of his voice than ever before possibly.
Ah, more varied? Oh yes. And that's something that he's good at: he can vary his voice. He can sing very soft and he can also bell very loudly. And there is more of that on the sound. Much more as his

background coming out, you know?

Aha. I wanted to ask you, when Rod Tyler left, how was the casting process till finding such an amazing singer as Russell?

Oh. Kind of funny because Rod actually introduced us to Russell.

Really?

Yeah. A couple of months before that we were in New York city, it was Friday and I think we were at a clothing store. And Russell was there and Rod introduced us. So when we had that problems with Rod, you know, then the bass player, went to check out Russell sing with his own band at a club. And it was great, with that band. Till then, we gave him a CD and talked to him. And then Russ came down and he liked the stuff. And that's how he got into the band.

I think Thomas Miller and Russell are the members of the band who are more in command writing the lyrics, right? Yes.

Lyrics in Symphony X have always had a deep poetical content, metaphors abound, lines dealing with fantasy. Right.

Onirical places, world of dreams, medieval times even. Aha.

Is there any source that could serve them as inspiration. Any author, literature genre, or historical period? Well, okay. Not really any historical period. Tom is into mythology and classical literature, and folklore. It can be from many periods. I don't know, our "Church of the Machine" is a futuristic

song, but still fantasy. And Russ is into that stuff too. Russell [big pause] is into... He likes the medieval stuff. Actually, he wrote about himself being a knight. Works in a place called the medieval times. It's supposed to take place in medieval Spain. In a, it's like a big arena, and he's a knight: he rides a horse and he fights. It has jaws and... So, he's into that stuff. But, overall, I don't think we look for any specific time period. You know, it could be anytime.

Aha, anytime. Anytime.

Talking about your field, which other keyboardists you admire? From any other bands of the progressive metal genre... You know Kevin Moore ex-Dream Theater or Shadow Gallery's perhaps? Kevin Moore is very good. Jens Johanson.

Currently in Stratovarius. Very good, excellent. And a very nice guy, too.

I heard he's quite funny character, yeah. Yes! [Laughs] A character. Hm, Eric Gibson from the U.K., Keith Anderson, of course. Let's see... I guess you'll be a bit blank. [Laughs]

No problem. [Laughs] Besides I am being told here our time to talk has almost expired so. [Laughs] Okay.

So, just to finish, which other interests apart from music you or the rest of band members have? What do you do when you have some spare time for relaxing or enjoying?

Ask for spare time and that could be "kid like". [Laughs] Hm, both Michael and I have a wife and a daughter, you know, so that takes about all the time. Like babysit doing for the babe. So, we really don't do many things except music! [Laughs] When not writing together with the band, I'm usually at home, practising, "crashing" at bone of my classical repertoire, or something like that. You know, I take time for the wife, for the kid, so...

Which was the last album or band you heard which caused you a very positive impression because of its quality, originality, or any other reason? Last band? Any band? Oh... The last album I heard... [pause]

Not necessarily any metal band, or metal album. Wait. It wasn't a metal band, I mean. Hm... [Pause] It's a classical CD: Robert Schumann, pioneer... As come out in playing: Mary Piria, great pianist. Playing excellent minor sonata. I loved it. And I can't ever find the CD in the US and came here [Germany] and here it is.

To close this interview, I wanted to ask you if you had ever heard of a progressive metal band from New Jersey called Eternity X. I've heard of them.

Aha, and what do you think about this band in question? For me their latest album was impressive. I don't know who... I never heard the music. Actually I saw them on the Internet. That's where I saw them. Not heard their music or anything.

Aha. So Michael, is it possible to reach you via the Internet?

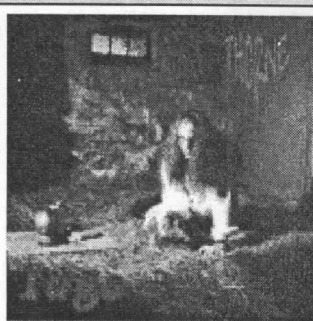
Not me, Michael Romeo has...

E-mail address? I think so.

I tell you this because a musicologist from Finland asked me if there were any transcriptions of your music. More people could be interested in knowing this. There are no transcriptions. That's something we're gonna work on.

Well, thank you very much for your time. It's been a pleasure talking to you. I hope to see you soon touring here in Spain. Okay.

Good luck on this forthcoming European tour and with the new album. Thank you.



THORNE lago

Angel Thorne Music
Thorne is the lead singer/keyboardist/guitarist of American progressive band called Soundscape which has already released their debut "Discovery" in 1997 (see review). "lago" is a second solo-release by this musician (the first album "America the Beautiful", 1995) and it's a rock opera... Hm, in the beginning I feared I would have to do here with another pathetic conceptual work with bleating singing that flutters in bombastic spaces. But I couldn't be more wrong! "lago", adapted from Shakespeare's "Othello", has more in common with a rock opera than many other "rock operas" I've ever heard. If the start of this CD isn't very impressive, so later on mega-tracks like "Desdemona", "In the Night", "Beggars Can't Be Choosers", or "Info Forever" let me suspect "lago" of being a high-carat album! With each rush through, it grew on me and even at first somewhat obtuse tracks like "Reputation" or "I Am The Law" finally found their place in this 68 minutes length work, which (besides Thorne and all Soundscape members) featured three singers. Listening to this masterpiece, I even can forgive slightly chaotic mix. Without further ado, I just urge you to buy this album. Go and see for yourself! (SV) [\$15, Angel Thorne Music Company, PO Box 1244, Danbury, CT 06813-1244, USA] 4 3/4

THORNE America the Beautiful DoCD Angel Thorne Music
This is the first solo-work by Thorne. It's a rock opera on a double CD. Compared to a new excellent output "lago", "America the Beautiful" sounds a bit archaic and rough, but laudable for the first attempt. The singers, that took part in "lago", were involved in this double album, too. The whole panoply of voices! I would like to see this rock opera on stage, I think it would be a great spectacle to see all those characters performing their parts by turns accompanied by Soundscape musicians. Although this overlong creation doesn't come up to "lago", it must be rewarded with 4 fat points. (SV) [\$19, Angel Thorne Music Company, PO Box 1244, Danbury, CT 06813-1244, USA] 4

melodic progressive power metal hard n'heavy psychedelic prog rock

WICKED ANGEL
Heads Will Roll
Raven Music Group/Noise Records
Even if the second album of this American outfit is a pure heavy metal release, it does not sound irritatingly hackneyed. Sure, some metallic leather-edged attributes exist, but honesty and creativity can be detected. The style is rough, stern, and very uncompromising: keyboards to Wicked Angel seem to be as alien as a cat. Even the ballads (there are two of them) are 100% masculine. The songs have got melody, enough seriousness, good mid-range vocals, and some heavy rock'n'rollisms. (GS)
[Death Dealer Productions, 5282 Redwood Road, Columbus, OH 43229, USA]
3 1/2

WINTER ROSE
Winter Rose
Inside Out Music
No, really... As the band name prompts, they tried their hands at making pop metal (glam rock or whatever you call it) back in the late 80's. The result is good, catchy, and, at the same time, blatantly standard music. The fact that vocals were performed by Dream Theater's James LaBrie (Winter Rose is his old band) adds some value to this otherwise not very interesting hard rock and soft metal hybrid. It is quite funny to hear James singing lines like "love can stand the test of time forever". Hm... not bad. Prog metal fans would have a heart attack if these words and images would were on the new Dream Theater album... In spite of the worn-out style, Winter Rose music is decently done. A plus for die-hard LaBrie fans to purchase this release is a free bonus progressive metal compilation with 6 Inside Out artists. (GS)
3

WITHOUT WARNING
Step Beyond
Inside Out Music
Great. Once again a progressive album with the voice that is not squeaky but

rough and voluminous. But that's not all. Without Warning don't belong to the bands that day and night study Dream Theater songs and then look like martyrs convulsively trying to copy them. What I like, is this outstanding atmosphere of tracks like "More", "Gracefully", or "Step Beyond", the listener is enthralled by it imperceptibly. You simply can feel big self-reliance coming from each musician. This is already the third album, their first two CDs were released only in Japan and received much praise from many local magazines. If you like a mix of Savatage, Leviathan, and Dream Theater, this one is for you. Produced by Alex Perialas! (SV)
4 1/4

WIZARD
Battle of Metal
BOW Records
It's great that melodic metal is back, but it's stubborn to repeat things. Like Wizard do in "Battles of Metal", where we hear pure cliché heavy metal with relevant lyrics about swords and warriors. They don't want to be too melodic like Helloween, and can be described as rougher Manowar or Running Wild. I have been a fan of Manowar years ago (their 1984-1988 albums), but somehow I don't want to continue visionary battles. It's just my personal opinion as of today. (GS)
[BOW Records, Crispinustrasse 5, 46399 Bocholt, Germany]
3

WHITE FEAR CHAIN
Visceral Life
Nightmare Records
Ok, White Fear Chain is a band featuring ex-Last Crack singer Buddo, and that says it all. After a couple of listenings, I must admit that Buddo is a man who has a way with each sort of metal or rock. Last Crack anno'91 played wrapped up, sometimes quite complicate hard rock whereas White Fear Chain work with simpler, almost Black Sabbath-like riffs and are heavier than the above-mentioned band. In terms of lyrics, Buddo is still inaccessible. As I see it, dramatic

tracks like "Roaches in the Lamplight Screaming", "V", "Slave Become King", or "Headstone" are more far-reaching than "Burning Time" material, although the whole album does not come up to Last Crack's second release. The fact of the matter is that White Fear Chain's music would look some pale without Buddo's accents, and "Visceral Life" has its desired effect only if the listener concentrates on music and lyrics equally. Anyway, for me, it's another great "sign of life" by Buddo. If I'm not mistaken, now he has his own band Magic 7. (SV)
[§16, Nightmare Records, 7751 Greenwood Dr., St. Paul, Minnesota 55112, USA] [I.T.G. Music, White Fear Chain, 625 Second Avenue South, Suite #520, Minneapolis, MN 55402, USA]
4 1/2

WUTHERING HEIGHTS
Within
demo-CD, to be released on Laser's Edge/Sensory
This band from Denmark had to travel paths of the cross to get their music heard. This album was recorded in 1997 and supposed to be released on Prophecy Productions, which changed their mind at the last minute. Musically, "Within" delivers melodic guitar-oriented symphonic power/speed metal and the only thing holding them back is a rather dull sound on this demo CD. Therefore we can say that the flop with its releasing in 1997 only served for good, because the band is about to re-record this album, with Kristian Andren (Tad Morose/Memento Mori) performing vocals, and then release it on Laser's Edge. The songwriting ideas are quite fresh, even if reminding a bit of Angra. (GS)
[Intramental Management, Groenjordskollegiet 2520, Groenjordsvej, DK-2300, Copenhagen S, Denmark]

ZEITGEIST

The Eyes of Time
self-released

Zeitgeist from California describe themselves as a band influenced by Iron Maiden, Queensryche, Dream Theater, or Rush. I think they have almost nothing common with these bands, unfortunately. I'd rather discover parallels with acts like Kansas or Styx. There is no accounting for tastes but a band with such influences could sound a lot heavier. I have nothing against part singing, but its dominance lend Zeitgeist unnecessary nuances. I believe, the band has talent and wish to create far better products. "The Eyes of Time" is a promising base for future releases. (SV)

[Zeitgeist, 2251 Hillside Court, Walnut Creek, CA 94596, USA]
3/1/2

ZEN

Gaze into the Light
WMMMS

The debut album of Zen is a well-prepared endeavour to make "Images & Words" Part Two. Indeed, these Italians seem to have studied Dream Theater songs in detail, and, while not surpassing their heroes, succeeded in making a keyboard-driven light prog metal album for those who love "Images and Words", like "Awake", and hate "Falling into Infinity". Zen are not 100%-developed image-wise (the CD cover is really important), slip sometimes to a side (out of place squeaky vocals at the end of "Divine"), but they achieve that crystal sound of "Images and Words" and pretty melodies. A surprising similarity of voices and singing manners of Zen's singer Andrea Polidoro and Dream Theater's James LaBrie should also be mentioned. (GS)

[WMMMS, Peter Wustmann, Zollstrasse 6, D-37154 Northeim, Germany] [Zen, Via Tiberio 2, 04011 Aprilia (LT), Italy]

4

DYNAMO

Open Air 1998

Article by Sigitas Velyvis, who attended the concert together with Jovita and Rolas

I think Dynamo Open Air has always been the biggest metal event in Europe. There are some festivals in Germany like Wacken Open Air or With Full Force, but the selection of bands there is somewhat one-sided, for example, this year Wacken Open Air presented almost exclusively heavy/power and death/thrash groups. Dynamo stays varied and eventful. This year there were special stages for 4-5 bands of similar style: "The Black Stage", "Space Jam", "Power Pack", "The Factory". Of course there was also the main stage with big bands, "The Gallery" with various promising new and already known acts, and "Skatefest", dedicated to hardcore. For various reasons we arrived only in the Saturday evening, so we missed some great bands like Transport League, The Black Symphony, Masters Of Reality, or Fates Warning. As we entered the territory of the festival, Soulfly were playing Sepultura's "Roots Bloody Roots" on the main stage, and Emperor were raging on "The Black Stage", followed later by Immortal. As I'm not a huge fan of black metal, I don't worry about the missed bands like Covenant or Bewitched. We decided to go for a walk through the big territory of festival, 'cause we didn't want to see Defones on the main stage, you know, it's very boring stuff. The headliner of the main stage on Saturday were Rammstein from Germany, a very famous band in their home country. I was not familiar with their stuff before, but their performance on stage was cool. Not much acting, but many light effects and other means that have nothing to do with music. Rammstein's music would fit every discotheque (I'm quite sure, their songs are played there), it has a good drive, commercial refrains, etc. It's no wonder that their both last albums "Herzeleid" and "Sehnsucht" are so popular. In the meantime, we moved back to the camp site to see what was going on at the "Factory" stage. The package contained four bands here: Misery Loves Co., Think About Mutation, Junkie XL, and Strapping Young Lad. Due to the lack of

time, we missed both first bands, so it was high time for Junkie XL, the band featuring ex-Urban Dance Squad singer. I hadn't heard any songs of them before, but I liked their gig. Junkie XL play an interesting mixture of metal, funk, and dance/electronic elements. Their singer has a very variable organ which goes with varied, attractive music of the band. I think the audience was satisfied with their show. The headliner of the "Factory" were Strapping Young Lad. This band is really an overwhelming wall of sound. Featuring the mighty Gene Hoglan on drums, they offered a brilliant live performance. At the beginning, they fought with serious sound problems, and you know, the band like S.Y.L. actually needs a very clean and balanced sound on the stage, otherwise their songs metamorphose into chaos. Fortunately, they solved this problem later, so we could enjoy the gig to the end. S.Y.L.'s program consisted of songs from both albums, but actually it focused on their latest output "City".

Sunday. The main stage was the first to start in the morning. [Hed]Pe from USA played a good, but not astonishing gig. They have a cool singer, but their stage performance is somewhat desperate. No wonder, it was their first concert in Europe. The music could be described as metal meets funk/rap meets hardcore. This description also fits the next American band Incubus, but I liked them a lot better. The voice of their frontman reminded me of Mike Patton and Benji from Dub War. Their stage acting was better, too. I think, it's a very promising band from USA. In the meantime, I ran to the camp site where Orange Goblin opened for the "Space Jam" stage. It was their first gig outside their home country England. I felt that they lacked live experience, but I liked their material very much, it's very close to Kyuss and Trouble. Check out their album "Frequencies from Planet Ten", it must be good. Sheavy from Canada offered somewhat motionless gig, except perhaps their singer, who reminded me a bit of Ozzy Osbourne. In the meantime, Dimmu Borgir were playing on the main stage. Their gig was a lot of smoke and blood, not much acting. The band played many tracks from

"Enthroned Darkness Triumphant" and some material from their previous works. Kreator entered the Dynamo stage for the first time. I enjoyed just 3-4 songs by them and went back to "Space Jam" to see the "psychedelic trip" by Spiritual Beggars. All I can say

about their concert, it's grandiose! The band offered a very intensive, professional show, a lot of moving, acting, improvisating, great drive! Everybody was happy. They concentrated upon the songs from their latest masterpiece "Mantra III": "Monster Astronauts", "Sad Queen Boogie", "Lack of Prozac", etc. In my opinion, the best band on the "Space Jam". Cathedral played also very good set, but since I was not a fan of their albums, I went to the metal market at the camp site. After that I returned to the main stage and saw Life Of Agony on it. They have a new vocalist from Ugly Kid Joe now, so today their show is a mixture of hardcore and rock'n'roll/glam rock images. Life Of Agony played the stuff from the last two albums as well as "This Time" and "Through and Through" from the first one. Death entered the main stage with a new line up. In addition to the old material, we could also listen to a couple of songs from their forthcoming album which would be released by Nuclear Blast this year. I think, Death's music is not suitable for Open-Airs, their technical-experienced songs simply dissolved in the big space. Iced Earth were the second band on the "Power Pack" stage (after Tom Angelripper). In comparison to their somewhat average albums (except the first one, I know, it's just my own opinion!), Iced Earth live is a killer! But after several songs, I had to run back to the main stage to see Pantera. I haven't seen them live before, and it sounds strange, but I think, their show was disappointing. Their exaggerated self-confidence on the stage, this unmotivated euphoria got soon on my nerves, so even the good songs, for example, from "Vulgar Display of Power" or "Cowboys from Hell" albums came somewhat stupid over. Unfortunately, at that moment we had to leave the territory of the festival, 'cause we were afraid of missing our train to Amsterdam, so we couldn't be treated to some "Power Pack" performances like Saxon, Stratovarius, or Helloween. On the next day, we flew to Vilnius with the thought to come back next year. See ya in 1999!

extreme metal and related

REVIEWS

thrash, death, doom, atmospheric, black, grind, hardcore, industrial-metal

ABDUNOR

Whispers in Nameless Forms EP
Voices of Wonder

This is a debut EP of Danish black metal band, and it contains three long, epic, and varying songs. In spite of the dynamics, the musicianship, melodies, and vocals are not much higher than the standard. Abdunor have their vision and ideas, and to accuse them of trend-following wouldn't be fair.

However, it will be tough to come through the surface, having such amounts of black metal bands today and sometimes not so well-wishing attitude to them... Abdunor's advantage is that in Denmark they are one of the best in this genre. (GS) [Intromental Management, Groenjordskollegiet 2520, Groenjordsvvej, DK-2300, Copenhagen S, Denmark] 3/1/2

ABRAMELIN

Abramelin
Repulse Records

"And what happens to a bad child, dad?" "He is shut in a room and has to listen to Abramelin all day long". And it may not be very exciting because in the debut full-length of the Australian death metal legend (which already has one 7"EP and one MCD released earlier) we hear average old-school death. Not very original, thus, there will be no sin to pass this record without noticing it. The only really shocking song is a Dead Can Dance cover, respect! (AO)

[Abramelin, c/o Simon Dower, PO Box 434, Richmond 3121, Victoria, Australia] 3

AGORAPHOBIC NOSEBLEED

Honky Reduction EP
Relapse Records

18 minutes, 26 songs, which style could it belong to? You got it right, the new album of American grind/noise band! Noise is noise everywhere, so this guitar grinding terrorism doesn't leave me neither good nor bad impressions. No impressions at all, to be exact. But there are lyrics in the booklet, not a frequent case for grind bands. (AO) [Agoraphobic Nosebleed, 6161 Edsall Rd. #1002, Alexandria, VA 22304, USA] 3

ALTAR

Provoke
Displeased Records

Third and the most successful album of these Dutch guys. We could expect such a turn after "Ego Art" album, which already changed their direction introduced in the debut "Youth Against

Christ" that remains the most brutal Altar's disc to this day. "Provoke" presents quite melodic death metal mixed with hardcore. In places, I can't recognize these brutal dudes from Dynamo Open Air '96, where they played brutal but boring enough music. Here we find an interesting mix of old-school death metal, modern sound, Swedish melodic metal, and groovy rhythms. Only vocals could be improved, they don't add much color to the disc. By the way, Accept's "Fast as a Shark" almost lost its original sound. (AO) [Displeased Records, Ronde Tocht 7d, NL-1507 CC Zaandam, The Netherlands] 3/3/4

AMON AMARTH

Once Sent From the Golden Hall
Metal Blade Records

Amon Amarth cut just like Dark Tranquillity. Occasionally, black metal inspirations are visible, but, overall, Amon Amarth do not deviate from the norm. The album just contains a cascade of melodic guitar riffs around which everything else is built. Sometimes enjoyable, sometimes boring. It certainly will not get among the most memorable albums of 1998, but, being far from a weak effort, it should give pleasant moments to a Gothenburg-style fan. (GS) 3/3/4

ANCIENTS REBIRTH

Damned Hell's Arrival EP
Necropolis Records

Knowing that "Ancestors Rebirth will soon rule in Hell" (according to the promo sheet), it would not be safe to write a bad review. Nevertheless, nothing too good cannot be said about this second release of blackers from Sweden. Venom-type image, traditional fast "hate-hate" black metal dominate on this EP and only the cover of Kreator's "Flag of Hate" left a good impression. (AO) 3/1/4

...AND OCEANS

The Dynamic Gallery of Thoughts
Season of Mist

I think this is my first black metal CD review. Fortunately, this Finnish band doesn't belong to the category of bands that just pull wry faces and play endless monotonous songs. Certainly...And Oceans tracks aren't short either, but, at least, they are varied and supplied with nice melodies. Especially, keyboards (for example, cosmic sounds in "Mikrobotic Fields") lend the album a special appeal. Songs are written in four languages: Finnish, Swedish, English, and French. Good idea, but not so useful for a black metal band which singers mostly articulate words not particularly clear. "Je Te Connais Beau Masque" and "Ur Aldrig Saga Och

ANCIENT

Mad Grandiose Bloodfiends
Metal Blade Records

1997 was good for black metal. Times when Count Grishnack of Burzum kept the immortal black throne will hardly return, because now much stronger competitors approached with their new not-purely-black-metal albums: Emperor with "Anthems to the Welkin at Dusk", In The Woods with "Omnia", Dimmu Borgir with "Enthroned Darkness Triumphant", Arcturus with "Le Masquerade Infernale", and some others. I would add Ancient's "Mad Grandiose Bloodfiends", too.

Perhaps it doesn't jump that high (some other publications kind of slagged this release) but it is a hell lot more than your average black metal album. After two standard albums of the style, this Norwegian/American outfit diversified their 'fast yet melodic' (have I seen this term somewhere before? In thousands of mailorder catalogs maybe...) with mid-paced rocking madness. And explored the grotesque, a genre that mixes very well with black metal. It is too drastic to say that this album is a cross of black metal and rock, but, for the time being, the direction the band goes in leads towards that. Kaiaphas, the singer, practises more spoken-singing manner; the female singer adds a necessary erotic measure. The album extends beyond 67 minutes, is well-varied and recommended as an open-minded black metal release. (GS) 4/1/4



"Sang" are probably the best tracks of this successful CD. Very recommended not only for black metal fans. (SV) [...And Oceans, Puritie 12, 68600 Pietarsaari, Finland] 3 3/4

ANGELCORPSE

Exterminate
Osmose Productions
Brutal speed/death stuff is in at Osmose label. This longplayer was recorded at Morrisound studio but strangely enough it has such a terrible sound... I think exactly this release could send into raptures many brutalto fanatics. Some death metal riffs, Carcass grind-attacks, or black metal screechings, and their cocktail is ready-to-serve. For normal metal freaks, it's an insufferable album, but for fans of violent sounds - probably recommended. (SV) 3

ANOREXIA NERVOSA

Exile
Season of Mist
Strange music, kind of electronically sounding hardcore with turns into gothic metal. All the mood and music is nervous (see the band title), dark, and psychotic. It's all right with vocals which change from the cold-sounding Trom-/Mordor-like to the Brutal Truth-type one or the depressive My Dying Bride-ish one. But it's not all right with the melodies which are a bit too banal and not able to leave any sign in memory. And maybe there is too much of these ambient electro sounds which do not help to keep the right balance. (AO) [Season of Mist, 24 rue Brandis, 13005 Marseille, France] 3 1/4

ARCKANUM

Kampen
Necropolis Records
Black metal became a style of mediocrities and it gets harder and harder to review releases of this kind. Arckanum do not shine with originality and play pure, a bit melodic black metal with some folk elements and with ancient Swedish lyrics. "Kampen" continues where its predecessor, "Kostogher", left, but it doesn't get much further. (AO) 3

AVULSED

Cybergore
Repulse Records
I could expect this from many bands,

but not from Avulsed. These guys have made 10 techno-remixes of their previous album "Eminence In Putrescence". Cyber-death metal! The idea is really cool, but the result isn't so excellent. Yes, techno beats and cyber-sounds mixed with brutal death metal sound innovative, but finally it seems that only the rhythm was drastically changed, and the main structure was left almost the same. Anyway, dance-rhythms on "Sweet Bakalao Tomy" or "Hash-Perversions" abolish this idea, and I'd dare to say that this is the best piece of music Avulsed have managed to do. Though not all the songs here are at the same high level, they sound fresh. By the way, the CD-ROM part contains a video-clip plus 40 screens with information, which makes "Cybergore" a really worthy product. And the future? The next album is going to be in the same old brutal death metal way. (AO) 4

BESEECH

...From a Bleeding Heart
Metal Blade Records
The debut album of this Swedish gothic metal band will please those who miss early Paradise Lost. Beseech have more classical metal touch though, especially the guitar playing has something common with NWOBHM bands, but basically it stands in a place where doom metal meets gothic-oriented metal. The strongest point of this band is their singer who has a really emotional and expressive voice. Traditional instruments are supplemented by violin; female vocals are used. The band managed to make some outstanding tracks as "In Her Arms", "Rainbowman", and "...From a Bleeding Heart" which fit to the taste of those who adore Sundown, Cemetary, or Crematory. Beseech aren't inferior to any of these groups. (AO) [Beseech, Box 963, 501 10 Boraas, Sweden] 3 3/4

BETHLEHEM

Sardonischer Untergang Im Zeichen Irreligiöser Darbietung
Red Stream Records
Bizarre stuff. The label calls their music dark metal. I'd describe Bethlehem's music as theatrical gothic/black/atmospheric/avantgarde. In some places these Germans remind me of the early Bathory, Venom, and Celtic Frost on their "Into The Pandemonium"

CD. Slightly wrapped up and sick. In any case, it's far better than listening to old school death, hardcore, or grind/noise bands. If you like bands that play dark avantgarde stuff, then try this one. (SV) 3 3/4

BEWITCHED

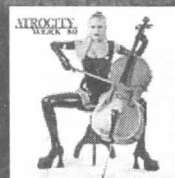
Pentagram Prayer
Osmose Productions
The music of goats, pentagrams, axes, and Satan himself. A funny thing to say the least. On their second CD, Bewitched don't go further than the old-wave heavy/speed metal introduced in their debut. Purest traditions, and I feel that 1985 never went away. The lyrics deal with hell, crosses, and blood. The music reminds of Venom, Destruction, and Motorhead, but... I will rather listen to these bands, which did it at the right moment. And now, for me, Bewitched just play a worthless game with nostalgies and memories. (AO) 2

THE BLOODCULT

Night's Plutonian Shore
Unisound Records
Keyboards-based two men group tries to express emotions of sadness, nihilism, and depression. And they almost manage to do that mixing elements of Type O Negative, Sadness, and other darker gothic/doom bands. Plus they add a big dose of traditional gothic rock. So if you always wanted Anathema to be much more torturing, The Bloodcult can become the right thing for you. The main difference is the fact that The Bloodcult use guitars and bass not so intense, so keyboards become the leading instrument. But as I understand, the main thing for these guys was to create dark mood and not to show all their musical abilities. So it is really good piece of music in gothic art metal section. The lyrics on these 7 songs are based on vampire legends, necrophiliac fantasies, murders with dark sexuality, and necrocrophagia. (AO) 3 3/4

BLOOD DUSTER

STR8 Outta Northcote
Relapse Records
The attitude of these guys is "fuck off everything", and the album turned out to be one of the craziest and funniest albums. Already the front



ATROCITY

Werk 80
Massacre Records
It should be commercially the most successful Massacre record for years! Well, we all know that cover albums fulfill high hopes in most cases, and when a band with such a big name as Atrocity makes covers of songs from the 80's, it's difficult not to achieve success. With the help of Theatre of Tragedy's female singer, Atrocity did some stunning covers such as "Shout", "The Great Commandment", "Send Me and Angel", or "Tainted Love". They serve well even at regular dancefloors. Some covers such as "Der Mussolini" or "Let's Dance" are not so successful, and this is the reason I cannot give the album 5 out of 5. It could be noticed that the more Atrocity show their hardcore nature, the less successful the cover turns to be, but it is my subjective position. Anyway, I support this erotic image of the album. (AO) 4 1/4

cover of "offending" genitals indicates what to expect. And here we go, lyrics against McDonalds, hippies, musical business, disco, etc. Cool! The music is called "100% grinding death rock", in other words, it is a cross between Entombed, AC/DC-type riffs, grinding parts, and hell knows what more. 21 song, 42 minutes of groovy music to drive you into a good, funky mood. Blood Duster succeeded one more time. (AO) [Blood Duster, Jason P.C., PO Box 1109 North Fitzroy, Victoria, Australia] 4

BLOODTHORN

In the Shadow of Your Black Wings
Season of Mist
Doom-ish black metal. Not so aggressive and angry, it offers female vocals and lots of melodies instead. Good atmospheres, keyboards, melancholic loneliness, and this romantic winter feeling... Not the right words to describe a black metal band, isn't it? But they fit exactly to Bloodthorn. It has been a long time since black metal was born, so now perhaps it's time to have the first romantic black metal band. Or is it becoming a trend, too? (AO) [Season of Mist, 24 rue Brandis, 13005 Marseille, France] 3 3/4

BROKEN EDGE

Cold Lies
self-released
Pantera or Sepultura freaks can risk their ears on French Broken Edge. It's not bad at all and worth trying in any case. Originality is out of question but with some industrial Prong-like elements and acoustic insertions their songs are not faceless. At least dynamics are well shared among songs, though stirring ideas are absent. There's enough time to improve all by the next release. (SV) [Thierry Marquez, Rue General Broissia, 25290 Scey-Maisieres, France] 3 1/4



ARCTURUS

La Masquerade Infernale
Misanthropy Records/Music For Nations

Yes, excellent! At least a black metal related release which can be granted with such epithets as 'fabulous' and 'unbelievable'. With their second album, Arcturus (consisting, among others, of members of Ulver, Borknagar, Mayhem, and Ved Buens Ende) shocked the slowly-changing black metal world. Theatrical, symphonic, and grotesque metal with strings and operatic vocals and insanely beautiful harmonies is the thing that has not exactly been done before. "Theii" by Therion was an excellent symphonic metal release; "Le Masquerade Infernale" is four times weirder, twisted, and controversial. Listening to this record, I realize how much metal evolved since the late 80's, when there was a limited set of restricted metal genres. Arcturus built an enchanting monolith of everything from traditional metal, black metal, and gothic to classical music. "Master of Disguise" and "The Chaos Path" are two 'to-die-for' songs, but the rest are outstanding, too. Welcome to the carnival of dark and light... (GS) 5

STEEL PROPHET

The Tale Never Told

[by Giedrius Slivinskas]

Steel Prophet are one of the few bands that survived and managed to continue through all the years difficult for metal. They started back in 1984, did not have an album until 1995, but never compromised themselves. Of course, if you compare "Inner Ascendance" demo and last year's "Into the Void" album, there is a huge difference, but the music remains original and refreshing. There was a huge amount of progressive/power metal bands in 1988-1990, but you can count on one hand's fingers how many of them still are alive today. If you take a look at fanzines "Metal Glory" or "Eldritch Assemblage" which existed at that time, 95% of groups about which they wrote called it quits. Therefore it was interesting to interview Steve Kachinsky, the guitarist, the main songwriter and the leading force of Steel Prophet. A quite cynical and, at first glance, incredulous personality. To add a retro touch to the story, I have also used the article published in the dusty "Eldritch Assemblage" #2 in 1990. The excellent interview was then conducted by Christian Rademaker.

Steel Prophet were around in the shadow all the time: during thrash metal rising, during death metal breakthrough, during grunge mania... The first my question was what main difference Steve could point out about being in a metal band today and 10 years ago. "In 1987 metal (all the different types) was a huge money making music for the labels, the clubs, the auditoriums and the magazines. Even MTV had to accept it to a point. Today it is all but gone from all media, except in the most underground forms."

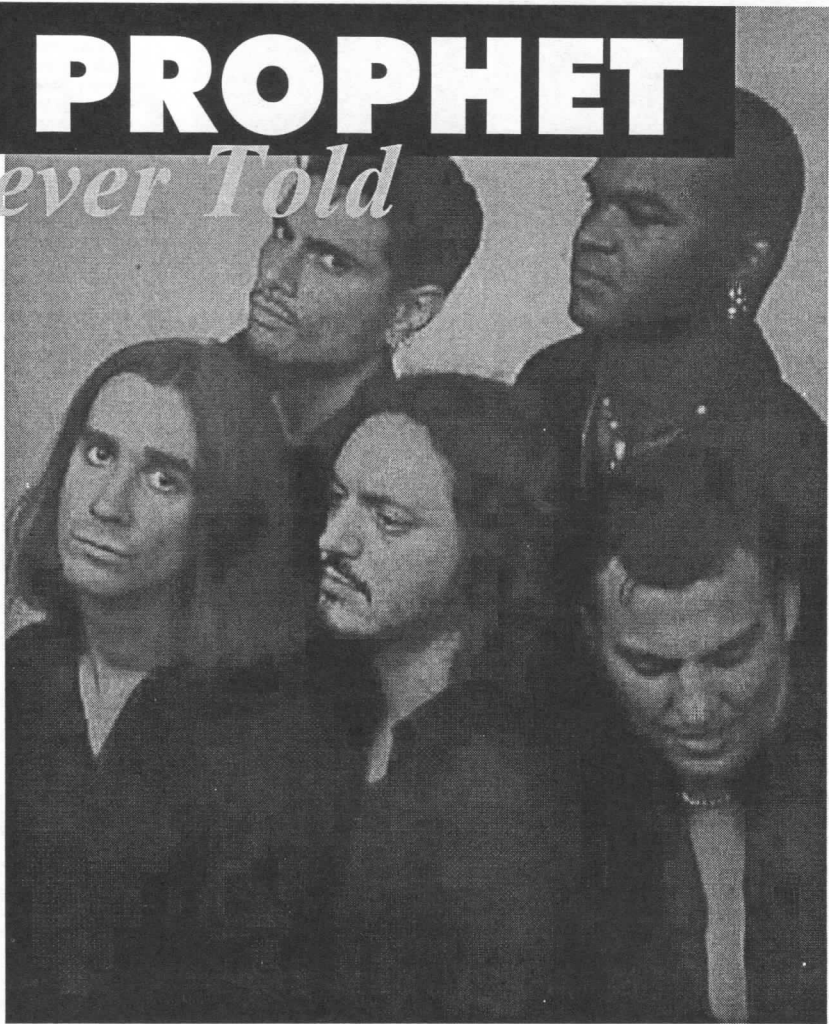
Well, I remember the main difference between video top 20 countdowns of European and American MTV in the late 80's/early 90's. Namely, in the American one, all pop metal like Warrant, Cinderella, Winger, Steelheart, Firehouse, Poison held high positions. In fact, I was told that even today, when people in the states hear that a person listens to metal music, they think of Warrant and Poison and consider it as old news. "Yeah, that is really so," agrees Steve. "Even when thrash was popular, and you had Metallica and Slayer, people's first thoughts would be Cinderella, Motley Crue, Poison, etc. Because that was what the mainstream media exposed as metal music. They liked to hype the more sex oriented bands, because, of course, sex sells more than intellectual music."

The Early Days

Steel Prophet first came into a real play with "Visions of Force" demo in 1988. Year later, the highly-acclaimed "Inner Ascendance" followed. The music was relatively hard to digest and somewhat different from what the majority was doing. The main influences were Iron Maiden and Fates Warning, just Steel Prophet twisted them around and presented from a different angle. Steve speaks about Fates Warning: "I first heard them in 1983, just before Jim joined the band, I auditioned for Steve Zimmerman and Vic Arduini as a possible vocalist. They were doing Iron Maiden, Judas Priest, and Accept covers. I sang, then played the guitar and they were much more impressed with my guitar playing! Later I heard "Night on Brocken" and was very impressed, because in Connecticut it was very difficult to find a vocalist the caliber of John Arch. I was a writer for a local magazine at the time, and I arranged to do one of their first interviews. Later I was always invited to rehearsals and things. By the time they demo'd the "Spectre", I was completely into them. Jim Matheos has become a lifelong friend. With Steel Prophet, I did everything the way they did it at first, because they were a successful example. The musical influences Jim and I shared at the time were identical, so the ideas of what he wanted to do and what I wanted to do were very similar. His musical ideas did have a large effect on me at the time, but mostly our discussions of music, such as the use of dissonance and consonance, are what influenced me. As the years went by, we both stopped listening to metal for a couple years and concentrated on prog rock. Eventually Fates moved in that direction, instead I steered Steel Prophet in a more metal direction."

Talking about progressive metal of today, Steve prefers traditional metal to it. "At one time progressive metal (as it was called) was much heavier than a lot of today's bands. The emphasis was on METAL and the thing that made it 'progressive' was the complexity of the arrangements. That said, I would say I preferred progressive metal then, but now I prefer what is called 'traditional' more. I've also noticed the categories of thrash, speed metal, power metal are used incorrectly in my opinion by many fans today."

How to define these terms correctly then? "Well, mostly I disagree with Stratovarius, Gamma Ray, Anggra, and some others as being classified as power metal. I think they really are like Helloween and to me Helloween defined speed metal. I think the prog metal phrase is used to describe a lot of stuff that is really more melodic metal. The term 'power metal' was first used by Metallica to describe what they would classify



their music as when "Ride the Lightning" came out. If you are familiar with that, it is very powerful! Also the first two Savatage releases sound like 'power metal' to me. I originally used the phrase 'progressive power metal' to describe Steel Prophet's sound in 1988 when we did the "Inner Ascendance" demo tape. At the time we sounded a lot like Fates Warning's "Spectre Within" and "Awaken the Guardian" period. I was the first person to use that phrase to my knowledge! Thrash to me would describe the first Exodus, Slayer, and Vio-Lence discs."

Extensive usage of keyboards in today's metal apparently is a related issue... "I like any extra instruments you can use to fatten up the texture and harmony of music, in metal though, everyone knows it's guitar based, so you should never go to the point where the aggression of the guitar is lost."

Which good bands from the late 80's left unnoticed or, at least, haven't become as big as they could? "I think Vio-Lence and Forbidden are the first two to come to mind." Steel Prophet have been playing with a lot of known bands. Which of them were the most talented? "Probably Fates Warning is the most talented. As guitarists go, I don't think Frank or Jim are technically brilliant, they're not like Malmsteen, or that type of thing, but as far as arrangements go, and putting a lot into the songwriting, Fates are brilliant. Also having a drummer like Zonder in the band puts them in a higher league. Many of the unknown bands we have played with were much more talented technically speaking than the well known bands!"

"The Goddess Principle"

"The Goddess Principle" was the first album of Steel Prophet. As Steve wrote in the liner notes of "Into the Void", his and Rick's (Mythiasin, the singer) concept of the album was to be a thrash metal version of "Queen 2" meets "A Night at the Opera". It was released in 1995, but it could come out much earlier, given that Foundation 2000 label would keep their promises and paid the advance. "I really like our first release a lot", continues Steve, "because we were trying to prove how tricky, complex, heavy, aggressive, and intricate we could be. Rick used his high range much more, just to show off, because a lot of singers couldn't produce that much power in the upper ranges. Our "Inner Ascendance" demo before that was the same type of thing. Also my guitar playing was faster and more technical."

[from "Eldritch Assemblage" interview]

Christian Rademaker: In relation to many bands situated in the Los Angeles area the term 'pay to play' often shows up. What is actually meant with the term 'Pay to play'?

Steve: "Pay to play" is a situation where the promoter for a show gets bands to play a show and he asks the band to sell tickets to a show. It varies but say for example a promoter wants you to play the Roxy and he says: "Well, you guys can play this gig if you promise to sell 100 tickets at 8 dollars a piece". So that means the band



has to sell these 100 tickets, they're in debt for 800 dollars and they have to guarantee that they'll sell the tickets. Or instead of being able to give the leftover tickets back, they can't do that. They have to put up the money and buy the tickets themselves if they can't sell them."

Christian Rademaker: What are your views on it and has it affected Steel Prophet in any form?

Steve: "My view on it is that the promoters are lazy and they're not promoters in the true sense of the word, they're not going out there to take out the ads themselves, putting out the flyers, getting the buzz on the street and making that show a success on their own. They're getting the band to promote the show. These bands have to take these tickets and have to go to their friends and ask them to buy the tickets for the show. What they're doing is turning the band into a sub-promoter or a sub-contractor and these bands are being forced to sell the tickets to the show. If you won't do that, you can't play the show. They're not going to ask you to do that if you're a big enough band because they know you're going to draw a big audience. It's their way of guaranteeing that the show is going to be a success. This has affected us when we first started out. Since we didn't have any name or reputation, we were forced to take some shows like this and to sell the tickets, which fortunately we did. At first it was hard, you were just selling tickets to your friends because nobody knows you. After a while people want to buy the tickets because they know you're a good band and the tickets are always cheaper than what they cost at the door. After a while if the band is big enough they can start turning this ticket sale into a profitable venture. We're at the point where at most of the venues that we prefer playing, we're not confronted with that. If we choose to play venues out of what we usually do, a promoter might ask us to do that. Sometimes we will choose to do it because we want to build up our following in these other places, but sometimes we just won't do it because we don't feel we have to add that extra worry to our whole schedule, it puts an extra strain on the band."

What is meant by the title "The Goddess Principle"? It is quite memorable and sticks to mind. "The goddess principle is just a phrase to explain the duality of human nature each of us, both men and women have traits that are masculine and feminine. Usually art is associated as a feminine characteristic, math is associated with masculine. Uniting the two natures as a whole is what is meant by "The Goddess Principle".

The album release was heavily delayed. Steve is strict speaking about people who run record companies. It's evident that those people want music that is marketable, but to which extent do they count other issues? "[They are] Mostly assholes and yes, men in the business is my impression, but I'm generally cynical, and don't trust people until they've earned my trust. The really cool guys who really understand the artists and respect originality tend not to last very long, or they tend to not sell a lot of records or get very big."

Another topic is that too many bands want to get signed too early. Shouldn't they concentrate on improving playing and getting the name around first? "Bands really have to be good and have something special, before they get concerned with record deals. Building a solid reputation among the underground never hurts either. When you can listen objectively to your own music and truly think you would buy that release, you are probably on your way."

The "Goddess Principle" was followed by "Continuum" EP. "By the second release, I had become more aware of other forms of music, and I consciously tried to forge my own style based more or less on Ornette Coleman's 'Harmolodic' concept. By our last release ["Into The Void" - ed.] you can hear this style in "Passage Thru Time", there is a 'lead' guitar which winds it's way through the entire song in key, but with little or no relation to the rhythm or main melody of Rick's vocals. Also the songwriting is toned down, because most fans didn't register what we wanted to do anyway, so our music was mainly appreciated by other musicians, and extremely knowledgeable fans (and there are not many of them!)."

[from "Eldritch Assemblage" interview]

Christian Rademaker: The song "Technocricide" deals with the subject of the influence which the advancement of technology has had on society. Being a

"former" engineering student at the Eindhoven University of Technology thus being especially confronted with technology, this subject is close to line of interest and concern. Let me fill you in very briefly on my point of view: technology has been a useful tool for mankind to expand it's boundaries of knowledge. The introduction of assemblylines for example has made the production process faster and safer. But technology has also provided us with countereffects (in the case of the previous example a rise in unemployment), the devastating effect on nature in the shape of pollution being the most prolific. But the main problem is that we're trapped in a vicious circle: we need the aid of newer technology to solve the problems caused by the former technology. What are your views on this matter?

Steve: "I think our uninformed use of technology is what's caused us so many problems now. From the industrial age on upward we've just developed things and not thought of the consequences of each thing. This has to do with the spiritual thing I was talking about, the effect that every little thing we do has on everything else. It's the cause and effect principle, every action has an equal and opposite reaction and we've really not been understanding that very well. I think solar energy and other technologies that are non-polluting are what's going to be needed in the future. To clean up the mess? I really don't know about that. First of all we have to stop our polluting technologies, we have to come up with ways to nullify the past thing, to neutralize what we've done so far. I'm not too sure if that's possible though. Right now we've definitely come so far to a point where there's really no turning back. People don't want to give up their comforts, electricity created with fossile fuels but we're going to have to invent something new to clean it up. Or are people just going to accept the fact that we are destroying our world and not care?"

Christian Rademaker: Do you foresee a technocratic state (where the advancement of technology is fully autonomic and influences society from one side and not vice versa) in the future?

Steve: "I think what's going to happen is that the people who own the means of producing the technologies are going to be the rulers of the world. It doesn't matter who owns the deposits of gold or who has the paper money because technology is what you need. Whoever owns the technology will have the power and that's what I mean by a technocratic state. He who owns the technology rules because everybody else has to come to you get that technology which people just don't want to do without."

"Into The Void"

"Into The Void", the second full-length album, was more of a change. It's less complex and more direct sounding. Besides, "Into The Void" looks like it is more inspired by the early Iron Maiden than the other releases. Why did it happen? "All the other releases were Maiden inspired also, but the arrangements were inspired by things like "Rime of the Ancient Mariner" in complexity although not in length. With "Into the Void", we just gave up on being so tricky, and so I think it seems a lot more like Maiden, because the songs have a simpler structure. It really seems like we just went back to our roots. Sabbath, of course was a major root influence, even the first Dio disc, you know what I mean?"

In relation to that, I remembered a review of "The Goddess Principle" in Sentinel Steel, where Denis wrote that refrains were nice, but used only once in a song. Was it something what was taken into account? "I agree, we used them once a song, but I believed that was enough! Out of laziness, we use them more often now, that's one of the reasons I consider us more of a power metal band, instead of a prog metal band now."

[from "Eldritch Assemblage" interview]

Christian Rademaker: A very important asset of Steel Prophet's music is in my opinion the natural flow of the song. Adjacent musical pieces fit together perfectly like a puzzle. Could you tell us a bit how Steel Prophet's songs are composed?

Steve: "When I compose a song I already know, before I start the actual process of working the song out, what I want out of the song. Most of the time I know the arrangement in my head prior to actually working out the riffs and the pieces so when it actually does come together it's pretty much like according to the imaginary blue print that I already had. That's how my songs are composed, sometimes there's already an idea for the lyrics too and I'll know what kind of mood I want to create because I know what the lyrics are going to be about as well. Jon Paget, our other guitar player, composes songs differently. He sits down and plays out riffs and comes up with some cool sounding riffs and he then strings them together to form a complete song. I very rarely do work that way. Sometimes if I have a left over riff from a song that somehow didn't fit into the arrangement I'll take it and put it into another song at a later date."

Christian Rademaker: You and Jon Paget play a lot of melody leads, what do you see as the advantages and disadvantages of harmony leads as opposed to regular one-guitar solo?

Steve: "Well, the advantage of playing a harmony lead is that the overall sound of a harmony is much sweeter than just one guitar playing by itself. The disadvantage is that you can't improvise a harmony lead, you're locked into that pattern that you work out. And if you're feeling particularly happy on a certain night you can't really go out and add onto it and expect the other guitarist to add on in the same way, so that's the disadvantage of a harmony and advantage."

The recording process was tough. Vince (Du Juan Dennis, the bass player) left in the middle to tour with Prong. Rick had to go into a drug rehab program to be clean enough to record the songs, but still the whole verse and chorus were cut from "Death of Innocence" song because Rick "was too messed up on drugs to sing". Perhaps it is going to a point when Rick's addiction to drugs will have too negative impact on his singing? "Rick has always given us problems with drugs, we just never said anything public about it until now. For almost nine years we have had this problem with him, but he has always come through in the end. I'm just so sick of it. I don't care to keep it a secret anymore. He is a great singer though in my opinion, and I have no desire to replace him. He is a big part of our signature 'sound'."

Besides, there were disagreements between Steve and Jason Anderson, the producer. "I was coming from an underground, intense, arty, loose direction and he was coming from a shrapnel, guitar hero kind of thing, and his idea of intense underground metal was Queensryche's "Operation Mindcrime". "

And if that wasn't enough, Vince was shot in the chest the day after the album was mixed. "A couple guys tried to break into his place and rape his wife, they were

unaware Vince was asleep in the bedroom, when he woke to the noise he ran out and one of the guys shot him, then they fled. They were caught a few weeks later, and Vince had to testify in court against them. They had success in raping quite a few other women until then, but nobody had been shot until Vince." The injury apparently was not very hard and Vince survived.

In spite of all the difficulties, "Into the Void" came out as a straight to the point record. Some old songs were redone because "most of them are not well known to any of our fans, and they were good. If you have a great song, even if it's old, why not use it?"

You can hear Bernie Versye's (Agent Steel) guitar playing on the song "Hate 2". Besides, a cover of Iron Maiden's "Purgatory/Ides of March" was included. The strange question popped to my mind, namely, what are Steve's least favorite Maiden songs. "I adored Iron Maiden from "Killers" until "Powerslave", picking my least favorite songs is not easy, because I tend to concentrate on my favorites! I guess "Sanctuary" is one, "Another Life", "Prodigal Son", "The Number of the Beast", "Loser Words", and "Back in the Village" are the ones that come to mind, almost everything else, while maybe not a favorite, is at least tolerable. "Somewhere in Time" I remember having some good stuff, but by the next release I didn't even get it because the Maiden formula became too boring to me. I still love Maiden though!". Since "Into The Void" and "The Goddess Principle" are very different, it becomes interesting how the new songs sound like? "Our newest songs are faster, and more crushing sounding than "Into the Void". Early Metal Church, Trouble, Metallica and Agent Steel are more in evidence than the Maiden sound of "Into the Void". To reference your review it is less 'tonic', in that way it is more like "The Goddess Principle". " In addition, Steve assures that the new record will be heavier and more technical, like "The Goddess Principle". This means that "Into The Void" was a slight excursion aside.

Epilogue

[from "Eldritch Assemblage" interview]

Christian Rademaker: How do you envisage the music of the future to be like, will there be a shift to more instruments based on technological advancement and more abstract creations in terms of songwriting?

Steve: "The music of the future? From my own point of view I think a lot of people will be able to compose on computers thereby having an enormous array of sounds at their disposal and without having to exactly write the scores out for a bunch of instruments and then having to go through the tedious process of learning the piece and having all the different musicians learn the piece and going through it that way. They'll be able to program the various parts in up to like a hundred or two hundred parts and I think it might be very good for composers. I know I've experimented with it just a little bit, writing a few symphonic pieces and I find it very satisfying to do it right then and there and see the finished result right away. As far as more instruments, that's part of it. Having the computer sample an instrument and having more instruments at your disposal. A thing that I think might be possible in the future or something to look at, is dividing our tones into more pieces, like for example a G note to a G sharp. If you divided that half step into three parts and maybe having G1, G2 and G3 and then G sharp and having the G sharp dividing into three, four or five pieces. That could expand the creative scope of music to a different level, such as in the very old days before they developed the even tempered scale. I think there was a certain more harmonic possibility there because people weren't locked into this very dogmatic way of producing music, so called 'in tune'. I think that could be something that would be possible, I know I've been interested in it and I've tried a few experiments with it. As far as more abstract creations, I think there's always been very abstract composers. I don't think it has anything to do with the period of time but the individual. Sometimes you have very abstract individuals that just have a very different vision which has nothing to do with their predecessors or anything that's going to go after them. Abstraction has nothing to do with the future or the past. It's just the individual I think."

It seems that you look sceptically to many things. Is it a result of all those years of struggling and dealing with hypocrites in musical business? "Yes. I don't particularly like to mix with music 'business' people. I find the majority of them phony, and I prefer people who are genuine in my life. In our early days we were schoozed by an A&R guy from Capitol records, who I never liked, but our management made us cooperate with him. Eventually at a meeting at the Capitol records building, I told him what I really thought of him (with a few four letter words thrown in!). Needless to say, we received no deal! I have had similar problems with Brian Slagel of Metal Blade records."

You often add the word 'early' talking about the bands you like. Are there really no any bands playing amazing stuff in these days? "I don't really like many new bands because I'm not much of a Dream Theater fan, and it seems to me most bands really try to emulate them and Fates Warning. I do like "A Pleasant Shade" of Fates a lot. Jim has been planning this one long piece for years. It's excellent. I like the new Mazzy Star, Mercury Rising, Tragedy Divine (I met a couple of the guys in Germany last year at the Heavy Oder Was festival, and Geritt, the singer, said he really likes Steel Prophet a lot), Veni Domine is cool, I like Solitude Aeternus, Cathedral, Hammerfall, Symphony X. There are more, but I can't think of them."

How much of Steel Prophet is in your daily life? "A couple hours a day at least. At most, when writing, rehearsing, or recording it can be considerably more. I am mostly an electronic engineering technician though and a father to my daughter Christine. Music is my main love though, and someday I hope to make it my primary living."

In such time, when there are many bands around, do you sometimes think about including this or that thing in the music to look different than the rest, or do you prefer just to play what naturally comes out? "If something is too overused and popular I purposely will go out of my way to avoid it. I hate cliches, and if it seems we can incorporate something brand new, I will definitely consider it, mainly though, it's just what comes out. When it comes down to it though, in my heart, I wish I would be known as an innovator, instead of an imitator, but it's not easy!"

That was it. Go and listen to your records of Steel Prophet. Don't have any? Then put on "The Spectre Within" or "Awaken the Guardian" and you will realize how do we miss such kind of music these days...

The Tale Never Told II: The Tale Will be Told!

The year 1998 brought a second breathing to the band. The contract with Nuclear Blast Records is signed and the new album is scheduled for the end of 1998.

How did it happen that after all these years you finally signed with one of the biggest indie metal companies? Would you like to say thanks to Hammerfall?

"Well, the long story is: Andy Siry is one of Nuclear Blast's A&R guys. Andy used to have a tape label/distribution called Master Records back in the late eighties and early nineties. He was selling tons of our "Inner Ascendance" demos, as were a few other tape distributors. We even had Andy come down to a rehearsal when he was on holiday here in the states one year, as a matter of fact, he even wanted to go to our main artist at the time to have our logo air brushed on the back of his leather jacket! You could say he was a big fan. He was with Massacre Records for a while after that, and then wound up at Nuclear Blast. Just by chance, I heard he was there, and I contacted him by email, just to look up an old friend. When I received an answer back, he mentioned he hoped maybe in the future we could do business again. Since we were a little disappointed in Art of Music at the time because of their distribution problems with Semaphore, we sought release from our contract. They were very cool about it and released us with no problem, even though we were their best selling act. "As for Hammerfall, I'd love to say thanks to them! One, for writing that killer CD, and two, I think, if they hadn't done so well, Nuclear Blast would probably not be considering power prog bands."

Do you think that the more straightforward approach in "Into the Void" helped you to get his deal?

"I don't really know. I know Andy liked that CD a lot, but he also liked our older stuff. The boss of NB, Markus heard only three of our new songs that aren't released, and ok'd the deal. The new songs are a little more complex than "Into the Void". Our reviews in Germany for "Into the Void" were excellent however, and probably didn't hurt our chances any. Honestly though, I just think Andy wanted to sign us, because he thinks we can be successful given the right push. He has asked us to write a couple songs in the Hammerfall vein however, meaning speedy and melodic. The music is already done though, but I do believe there are some speedy melodic parts in there, not to mention doom, death, and other influences."

Reunions of bands like Agent Steel probably give you a second push? Do you sometimes begin to feel proud you didn't split up in the difficult years?

"Actually, I can't believe we finally are on a large label. I thought I was doing this strictly because I love music, but now there is a chance to spread our music so much further than it has ever gone, so yes, I'm really glad we stuck with it."

There is a 5-song mini concept on the new CD. Can you tell more about it? Why not the whole album is based on Bradbury's book?

"Well, the book is set in the future, in a society that has outlawed books because they think books only make people unhappy by giving them unrealistic dreams. Eventually, one of the firemen (the guys who actually burn the books) steals a book he should burn, but instead reads it. He comes to realize his society and culture is not what he wants, and eventually he is found out, and must flee to escape the death that comes to traitors."

"The whole thing is a bit reminiscent of "2112" by Rush. It asks you to question your philosophy on life, government, society, and culture. It's our first try at adapting a fictitious story. I hope it will be successful. The reason the whole CD is not based on the book is because other songs were previously written, and also I'm not comfortable with the idea of having an entire CD based on one whole idea yet."

The new CD is titled "Prophecy Upon Us". There was a song with such name in "The Goddess Principle", how does it relate?

"Actually, the new disc may be called "Strange Hallucinations" instead. If we went with the previous title, it would have just been in the tradition of Zeppelin, where they had songs like "Houses of the Holy" that were on "Physical Graffiti" instead of "Houses of the Holy". All songs on the new disc describe very nightmarish things."

How will your new album look like when compared to the three previous releases?

The Japanese pressing will contain six tracks of "Inner Ascendance", will you use the old recording?

The production should be top notch, because Joe Floyd of Warrior is engineering it. He worked on Bruce Dickinson's "Accident of Birth", and that sounded great to me. We will cover Fates Warning's "Apparition" and Jim Matheos has said he will play on it. Bernie Versye from Agent Steel will play a lead on it. Horacio from New Eden was supposed to contribute a song, but I'm not sure if he will now. It is really a combination of "Into the Void" and "The Goddess Principle", to me anyway. It is less Maidenish than the last one. There was a lot of guitar synth on the last one that wasn't mixed right, but this time everything should be audible. The bonus tracks are the original recordings.

Steel Prophet release list:

- "The Final Rebellion" demo (1983)
- "Revelations" demo (1984)
- "Prophecies of Destiny" demo (1986)
- "Visions of Force" demo (1988)
- "Inner Ascendance" demo (1989)
- "Inner Ascendance"/"Shadow Thief" (Jag Panzer) split bootleg CD, Reborn Classics (1992)
- "The Goddess Principle" CD, Art of Music (1995)
- "Continuum" EP, Art of Music (1996)
- "Into the Void (Hallucinogenic Conception)" CD, Art of Music (1997)

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BEYOND DAWN

Revelry
Misanthropy Records
 The conception of Misanthropy to release various-style playing groups, but only the ones of the highest quality, was confirmed once again. This time, we have a band with a style that wasn't met on Misanthropy releases earlier. With their second full-length (following "Pity Love"). Beyond Dawn finally stepped out from the fields of metal music. Metal influences still can be detected (My Dying Bride-like "Breathe the Jackal"), but, most of all, the music reminds of Swans, one of the greatest bands of all times. Also, a total dark depression of The Cure '80-'82 era is evident. But Beyond Dawn aren't a cheap copy of them, they managed to make their own vision of dark music, and the sound of trombone plays one of the main distinguishing roles here, as well as the drum machine put-in backing the real drums. Sad, emotional melodies pass one another complemented by expressive lyrics ("Three Steps for the Chameleon" even reminds of murder love songs by Nick Cave) and melancholic singing. Norway still has what to show, and Beyond Dawn are one of the best new bands to come out from this country. (AO)



BRUTAL TRUTH

Sounds of the Animal Kingdom
Relapse Records
 It's time to say *aaarrgh...* Brutal Truth were always convincing with their extreme metal, but this time they lifted it even higher. "Sounds of the Animal Kingdom" could be a perfect soundtrack for a wild horror movie, for a mass slaughter, and for other events like that. This is FAR from being primitive, Brutal Truth are musically and lyrically wise and creative. This record isn't actually a pure death/grind album, the band reacts to fresh breezes in the scene and feels no stylistical boundaries, thus punk and hardcore are also among components that form the massive sonic mayhem. "Sounds of the Animal Kingdom" definitely stands out together with other prominent aggressive and extreme metal releases of 1997, such as "Death Metal" of Dismember and "City" of Strapping Young Lad. (GS)

melodic, and surely commercially-oriented music: angry melody-based black metal is mixed with doomy keyboards and slow parts. And that's not bad at all, just the opposite, because the album is easily listenable and really is capable of attracting attention of people who don't like black metal. It's not as well-packed musically as, for example, Dimmu Borgir and, taking the technical aspects, does not equal to Emperor. Besides, their image has nothing common with black metal, so after all it looks like they were building a bridge between genres. (AO)

CHILDREN OF BODOM

Something Wild
Nuclear Blast Records
 Finnish band in the vein of acts like Dimmu Borgir; the music of Children of Bodom contains plenty of nicely thoughtful beats and breaks. Incessant double-bass drums and very technical guitar parts make this record quite enjoyable if one's fond of bands in the style of In Flames or Dark Tranquillity. If you like that mixture of styles between black metal voicing and accelerated classic metal solos as background at some stages, this one is a good choice. (GM)

COMMUN' CORRECT

One Scene Unity
Good Life Recordings
 The debut album of a side project of Rick from 25 To Life. The Do-It-Yourself attitude is evident in the CD booklet, and the music is a cross between NY HC, oi, and punk. Not too interesting and worse than 25 To Life. Is it the music or the attitude more important? It seems to me that there wasn't much effort to make the music really professional, I have heard lots of group that sound almost exactly like Commun' Correct. (AO)

CONGRESS

Angry with the Sun
Good Life Recordings
 Congress are said to be one of the most important groups in the world's HC scene. With this album, they show that they are well worth this compliment. "Angry with the Sun" is a multi-colored album with the elements deriving from traditional punk, NY HC, metal, and even electronic music. Basically, it remains strong and angry hardcore. One of the most interesting things is that lyrics of this album are directed at consumerism, corruption, and, not traditionally for HC, at Satanism ("Religion is unnecessary and stands in

the way of individual development and freedom"). There are lots of explanations about the lyrics, so there is no fear you will misinterpret them. (AO)
 [Good Life Recordings, P.O.Box 114, 8500 Kortrijk, Belgium]

COWERS

Searching For Paradise EP and 2-track CD
self-released
 Dave Mustaine himself has listened to Cowers and was surprisingly impressed by the quality of their songs. No wonder, this French band really reminds me of Megadeth, actually of their last outputs. The only difference is that Cowers add some hardcore elements to their sound. The songs on their EP are easy structured whereas the new 2 track CD leaves better and more solid impression. Good start for this French newcomer. (SV)
 [Franck Senecal, 25 rue Chapsal, 94340 Joinville Le Pont, France]



CRADLE OF FILTH

Cruelty and the Beast
Music For Nations
 Another release of one of the most influential band in black metal genre. This time, they didn't make a big advent, and, thus, were overtaken by challenging newer bands like Arcturus and Dimmu Borgir. Not to say there were such requirements; Cradle of Filth are still around the top of the genre with their fast and melodic metal, good riffs, sometimes annoyingly screeching, but generally quite diverse vocals, and voluptuous female singings. Lyrically and image-wise, Cradle of Filth are top-notch, musically, I cannot say that all songs are equally excellent, but nonetheless, the release is worth of your attention. Note that for non-black metal audience, Arcturus and Dimmu Borgir may seem more accessible. (GS)

CROWN OF AUTUMN

The Treasures Arcane
Elnor Productions
 Look what happens when a band with foundations laying in Iron Maiden/NWOBHM style wants to play popular and melodic black metal, adding medieval touches, too. The first impression is better than the second one. At first glance, everything seems to be all right: romantic acoustic guitars, medieval melodies, old heavy metal oriented guitar solos, and the energy of black metal. All this popular scheme. But later, figuring out that these passages begin to repeat each other, you begin to search for authentic traits and end up with a conclusion that there are not many of them. Anyway, the band started in 1995, so the whole future is ahead. (AO)
 [Elnor Productions, via Teulie 7, 20123 Milano, Italy] [Crown of Autumn, Res. Fontanile 511, 20090 Segrate, Milano, Italy]

DATURA

Alisone
Cranium Music
 Stoner-rock band Datura releases its first album and clearly stands on the foundations of Grand Funk Railroad, Black Sabbath, and all the generation of stoner-rock groups of the 70's. You can think of Cathedral or Acrimony, too, but Datura don't reach the level of these two bands. It's more traditional fuzz rock with cosmic/hippy lyrics, and if you like both these things, Datura can fit to your taste. (AO)
 [Cranium, PO Box 10-309, Te Rapa, Hamilton, New Zealand]

DAWN

Slaughtersun (Crown of the Triarchy)
Necropolis Records
 Finally, a black metal album which is a credit to this musical and "image cultivating" movement. "Slaughtersun..." is not the children's game but serious and professional album with good songwriting skills and opulent arrangements. Though the length of songs is overlong, the material is not boring because these guys have brains and know how to compose real black metal bangers. It's no use to pick-up some highlights, there is not any dead loss on this CD. For a long time I haven't heard such an interesting black metal work. Respect. (SV)
 [Necropolis Records, PO Box 14815, Fremont, CA 94539-4815, USA]

DEEDS OF FLESH

Inbreeding the Anthropophagy
Repulse Records
 Their debut "Trading Pieces" has already established them as one of the most brutal bands in the world. Haven't heard this disc but judging from this one, this band really doesn't see any reason why to add a bit of melody or harmony. Just ultra-brutal, ultra-death, ultra-no-compromising stuff. I think fans of this style will like this disc as there are no steps into another styles. (AO)

DEMONIC

The Empire of Agony
Necropolis Records
 Another one from series of Norwegian black metal products that fulfilled the scene during last years and I dare to state that namely average albums like this one made black metal a trendy and dull style to play nowadays. Demonic offer aggressive and fast black metal with some symphonic and melodic places and a good production. Overall, the second full-length of these anti-christians is neither good nor bad. (AO)

DELLAMORTE

Uglier and More Disgusting
Osmose Productions
 Hardcore, grind, and heavy rock n'roll can go well together, and Sweden's Dellamorte show that a band doesn't have to consist of virtuoso players to accomplish that. Death metal stays only in the second plan. "Uglier and More Disgusting", while not surpassing Misfits or Motorhead, is actually better than you may think at first. Of course, if you look for something intelligent (or intelligently-delivered), you will spitter. (GS)

DISFEAR

Everyday Slaughter
Osmose Productions
 More dirty, heavy, deathy, yet rock n'rollish rolls from Osmose: Disfear coil

CALLENISH CIRCLE

Escape EP
Polar Bear Records
 After their debut album "Drift of Empathy" (Hammerheart Records) two years ago, this group established a good name in the underground. Now they offer 4 new songs which are in that same old style, but this time everything is more polished. It's still the same nostalgic and romantic death/doom but maybe less deathish than before; it seems that Callenish Circle are going in the same progression path that Paradise Lost travelled some years ago. And both bands have much in common - both of them play melodic, catchy, and atmospheric music, just Dutch doomers have begun to do that a bit later. But not so many bands have left in that doom/death train, so if you like The Gathering's "Always" album and if you are longing for those times, Callenish Circle are here for you. (AO)
 [Polar Bear Records, PO Box 2198, 2301 CD Leiden, The Netherlands] [Callenish Circle, Patrick Savelkoul, R.d. Beerrenbroecklaan 28, 6123 AC Holtum-Born, The Netherlands]

CATAMENIA

Halls of Frozen North
Massacre Records
 A debut album by a Finnish atmospheric metal band containing catchy,

the drive of punk, hardcore, and metal taking lyrical topics evolving around negative sides of life exclusively. "Everyday Slaughter", the second album of this Swedish band, is a 26 minutes length opus of unoriginal, not very catchy, but dirty and rough extreme metal. I certainly do pass. (GS) 2 3/4

DRACONIS
Overlords of the Greying Dawn
Dark Realm Records
Very ordinary black metal. I have heard much better products. Draconis use the means that were used by black metal bands thousand times before. 3-4 years ago it would be OK, but today there are so many bands of this genre that Draconis virtually have not a chance. (SV)
[Dark Realm Records, PO Box 5051, Downey, CA 90241, USA] 2 3/4

DRAWN
Drawn EP
self-financed
The style of this Norwegian band is not squeezable into one word, it's a cross between gothic, doom, and a bit of psychedelic rock. Sometimes you catch yourself thinking about VoIVod, sometimes about In the Woods... The production is not very clear, but this is the debut release which leaves me intrigued and willing to hear a prolongation of "This is My Day" track. (AO)
[Drawn, Per Kristian Stoveland, Klipperveien 72, 4624 Kristiansand, Norway] 3 3/4



DREAMS OF SANITY
Komodia
Nuclear Blast Records/Hall of Sermon
"Komodia" was based on the divine comedy by Dante Alighieri, originally called "Comedia". The influence of this poem is evident not only in group's lyrics, but also in music - "Komodia" has this theatrical, poetic emotional world which is mainly created by perfect, emotional singing of two female singers, Sandra Schleret and Martina Hambaeker. Their voices create beautiful, nostalgic mood which is supported by five more musicians; their playing combines new influences from metal world, gothic doom, the 70's rock, and classical music. Dreams of Sanity can be compared to The Gathering, they use more different styles and emotions. Therefore the closer comparison would be the latest album of Lacrimosa; both Dreams of Sanity and Lacrimosa explore so many musical fields, and both of them manage to create this feeling of watching a play in a theater. The best track on "Komodia" is the epic monument "Komodia III". The debut of this Austrian band leaves me intrigued. (AO) 4 1/4

DYMAXION
Awakened by Reality
Fortunate Records
Dymaxion combine hardcore with influences by Testament and Metallica. "Awakened by Reality" isn't a sensation, but it has one merit: three different singers. This point lives up this album, and we know there's almost always a lack of variety in albums of hardcore bands. Dymaxion luckily have solve this

problem. Congratulations! (SV)
[Dymaxion, PO Box 213, Wadsworth, Ohio 44262, USA] 3 1/2

EBONY TEARS
Tortura Insomniae
Black Sun Records
Knowing that Ebony Tears are from Sweden and that they are signed to Black Sun Records, even without a good flair you can say that this smells of Gothenburg. And how could you be wrong, "Tortura Insomniae", the Ebony Tears debut album, has lots of common with all prominent Gothenburg melodic death metal bands. Luckily, they have some playfulness (similar to In Flames "The Jester Race") and avoid sounding strictly according to the script. Some things missing are a tighter interplay between guitars and violin and truly thoughtful high-level lyrics. To be coherent and to be original is challenging, but Ebony Tears are on the right way. (GS)
[Ebony Tears, Johnny Wranning, Stramalivagen 4, S-16873 Bromma, Sweden] 3 3/4

ENCHANTED
Daylights Wing Collides EP
Edged Circle Productions
Two songs from the forthcoming full-length to be released on Century Media. I am almost sure that this band is going to have a big success, as their music applies to all the standards of commercial Swedish death metal/melodic black metal. There is nothing to add, haunting melodies, the fury of black metal, and screaming vocals could become an answer to In Flames and other grands of the style. The only thing left is a good promotion, and it already has begun. (AO)
[Edged Circle Productions, Nausthaugen, N-5676 Baldersheim, Norway] 3 3/4

ENCLAVE
Artificial Hell EP
Non Human Muzik
Heavy industrial is a pretty suitable form to express hatred towards hypocrisy in the current world. The formula may be used too much, and the hatred is not always real. In Enclave's case, they are quite honest in what they do (they do heavy industrial rock) and have their moments in the mid-paced opener "Artificial Hell" and the faster "Human Inc." For such kind of music, the passion should flow over the edges, and this is a component on which Enclave should concentrate on, along with improving their technical arsenal. This record is pretty extreme, too. (GS)
[Silva, 144 South Third Street #606, San Jose, CA 95112, USA] 3

EXMORTEM
Dejected in Obscurity
Euphonious Records
Exmortem from Denmark exist since 1992. Right from the start they played brutal death metal and haven't changed their direction so far. Who knows, maybe this is the right decision for people who are 100% into this. There is an old-school death metal feeling on this second CD and here you can find 9 violent tracks in veins of Decide or Morbid Angel. Unfortunately, there is no-one among "Edge of Time" writers who would like brutal death and give them more points. I believe, other magazines will be more generous. (SV)
[Euphonious Records, Skt.Jorgens Alle 7, o.g., 1615 Kbh.V., Denmark] 3

FORLORN
Forlorn EP
Head Not Found
The debut EP of these Norwegian vikings is a good start. All five songs of the album are based on Scandinavian folklore, both musically and lyrically. First of all, Bathory comes to mind, maybe



EMPEROR
Anthems to the Welkin at Dusk
Candlelight Records
From all those current highlights under the black metal mark ("Omnio", "La Masquerade Infernale", "Mad Grandiose Bloodfiends"), "Anthems to the Welkin at Dusk" is the only one that retained the original fury and aggression of black metal. From the very first riffs in the opener, you have to acknowledge that Emperor progressed a lot through past years from their debut full-length "In the Nightside Eclipse". The music of the new album is dark, fast, and ultimately extreme, but also containing melody pearls hidden under devastating avalanche of guitars, keyboards, and drums. But we are not that weak yet to listen to "old-good" hits of the 80's exclusively, aren't we? Let's enjoy the well-done Extreme music! (GS) 4 1/2

because of a strong epic feeling, but Forlorn are more folklore-like and perhaps more pompous (taking a non-negative sense of the word). The glorious old times, ancient lands, and pride of vikings absorb listener's mind. The full-length of this studio-only band is going to continue the tale... (AO) 4 1/4

GARDENS OF GEHENNA
Mortem Saluta
Shiver Records
This is a German band on a Belgian label. Gardens Of Gehenna play a mixture of Doom/Death/Gothic, I would say, a really worn-out music and as they don't carry out an experiment on new things, they look very pale with such a sluggish material. Especially the vocals are weak, but the music doesn't shine either. Das Ich have made the remix of the track "Nebelmond" but it doesn't rescue this CD from boredom. (SV)
[Shiver Records, Hans de Wynngaert, Bossepleinstraat 6, 3128 Baal, Belgium] 2 3/4

THE GATHERING
Nighttime Birds
Century Media Records
It is only the second Gathering album with Anneke performing vocals, but it is more than clear that her voice has become the band's first trademark. "Nighttime Birds" together with In The Woods... "Omnio" are one of the better atmospheric metal albums in 1997. While Norwegians In The Woods... took a more experimenting avantgarde approach, Dutches The Gathering remained true to their more equally balanced brightly sad compositions first introduced in their 1995 year album "Mandyllion". It is a big question whether "Mandyllion" was surpassed by "Nighttime Birds". Opener "On Most Surfaces", the title track, and singles "The May Song" and "Kevin's Telescope" stand for 'yes', but the overall similar approach goes for 'no'. How there would be, "Nighttime Birds" is more a repeat than a continuation. But a repeat of a very nice album is not a bad thing either. (GS) 4 1/4

GEHENNAH
Decibel Rebel
Osmose Productions
Taking this album seriously one can end his review with questions like "Is it the deadlock of metal?". "Do we finally have the most stupid band in the world?". But I can't judge this CD seriously. "Hardrocker" (their previous album) music and especially its booklet stay too fresh in my mind. And here these street-blackers go back to their glorious past with stories about beer-drinking, fighting against disco-hairs, laying under tables... It's funny after all, but still stupid. It's sad there was no booklet in the promo version of the CD that I have, but I am sure it contains pictures of chains, leather, axes, and other heavy-metal attributes. The guys have a strong image, at least. Musically, it remains the same black n'rock n'roll, Motorhead and Venom... "666, Drunks & Rock n'Roll". (AO) 3 1/2

THE GREAT KAT
The Great Kat Live at the Expo of the Extreme VHS and Dominatrix VHS
Thomas Public Relations
We all know what to expect from eccentric guitar player The Great Kat and what her videos can be about. These two are done in the same "The Great Kat is God" way, featuring blood, leather, chains, and The Great Kat above all with her slaves. And as I remember from the old days, the schema was almost the same. That's her image and I'm sure she won't change it. So, if you like videos with a little bit of blood, a little bit of erotica, a little bit of chains, you may enjoy "Kat Live at Expo" and "Dominatrix". And I agree that her playing is good; about the image... it's another talk. (AO)
[Thomas Public Relations, Inc., 775 Park Ave., Suite #222, Huntington, NY 11743, USA]



HAGGARD
And Thou Shall Trust the Seer...
Serenades Records
The absolute must-get for all those who enjoy metal mixed with classical and medieval music. Death metal here is only one factor among others: metal parts interfere into a mixture where classic, folk, medieval music dominates. 16 players took part in this recording, so authentic feelings can't be denied. Earlier I supported Dark Reality as a great band in this style, but Haggard managed to go further and their album shows a much bigger variety. But, in my opinion, death metal parts often destroy the harmony in their music. Actually, Dark Reality also have had these elements in their debut and have thrown them away on their second album. It's the first album of Haggard (after debut MCD "Progressive"), so I hope they will see this mistake and will try to incorporate modern influences more carefully. But this is my only reproach and I agree with the thinking that Haggard are one of the most innovative acts to come from Germany. (AO)
[Serenades Records, Vorstadt 114, 73529 Schwabisch Gmund, Germany] 4 1/4

Your debut album "Food for Thought Substitute" was released in Europe over a year ago. What is the current state of affairs concerning Heaven's Cry, new songs, and possible second album?

We are now in the creation process for the next album. We have a couple of new songs and a lot of good ideas based on jamming sessions. The band is growing and going really well these days, better than ever even if the business situation is hard to take, we are working hard and itching to pack up our gear and play.

"Food for Thought Substitute" has mainly received positive criticisms. However, most music journalists base their record reviews on a few listens while your music needs frequent listens and close consideration of the lyrics. How do you regard positive and negative criticisms concerning your music?

It's true that what we are doing is kind of hard to get after a first listen, but I believe that if you give it a few, it connects to you for a long time. Almost all the reviews have been more than generous, even though it's a first

They wanted to put our demo out instead, and record a couple more songs to fill up the space. There was no way we would've let an unfinished product represent us and that was not the deal we had with them anyway. Our manager was furious, and let me say that we were too! After a while, we understood that this was their plan from the beginning. I guess they didn't expect we would get that much of a good response from magazines and fans alike, but it was already too late. The relation with them aggravated and has been totally corrupted since.

In what way can a band like Heaven's Cry have any influence on the marketing and sales aspect of a CD? The only way a band like us can grow, as far as to getting known is concerned, is to go on tour forever! Our problem is, we won't get any tour support from our record company and the tour costs are way out of our budget. It's sad because we are definitely a live band, and I think a lot of the people that support us would have been happy to see that the music is a lot better to

Montreal. I was living near the rehearsal place. I am not polyvalent enough with that instrument to say I mastered it. That was interesting to be on the other side (rhythm section) for the first time.

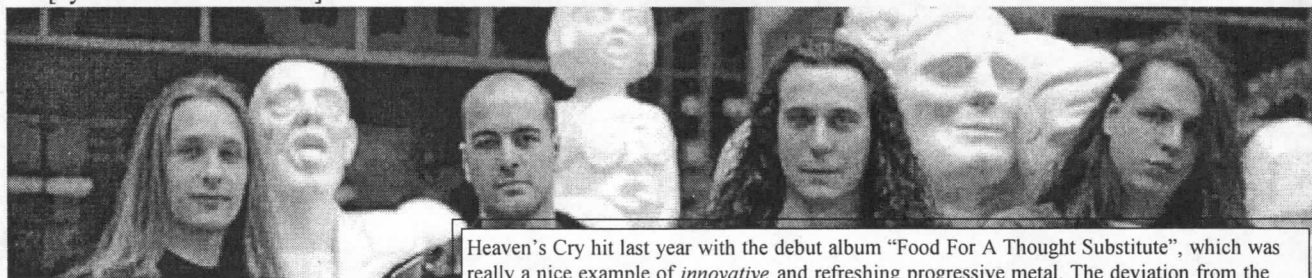
You live in or near Montreal, Quebec which is in the French part of Canada. A couple of years ago, the quest for an independent French-Canadian country was very much in the news. What is the current status between the French and the English in Canada?

Hm, this one is harsh! It is probably near the same right now. I can understand both points, but I cannot really judge the situation since I believe that the international culture is growing fast and I perceive myself as a human being, not a part of anything else. In my opinion, "Your God's Crime" pretty well explained our position. All I could say is that it is lived peacefully by both two parts. This is not a crisis or the beginning of a cultural war as medias in general have presented it. In Quebec, particularly in Montreal, a lot of people get to speak

HEAVEN'S CRY

Endeavours Leading to Tangible Forms

[by Christian Rademaker]



album. We've received a lot of support from rock magazines. We were all amazed by the accuracy of some reviewers in the way they described the album and the band. We are grateful for all the good vibes that we have encountered since the album came out. It gives us strength to surpass all the problems we have, and may encounter with the business side of music. As for those who didn't like "Food for Thought", we hope to be able to reach them with the next records. (Detlef Dengler from the "Heavy, oder was" magazine in Germany gave us a chance to have a little bit of attention in Europe and we are forever grateful.)

The Japanese version of "Food for Thought Substitute" has two additional bonus tracks. Which songs are they and what is the purpose of putting additional tracks on this version. In this way, the buyers of the European and North-American versions aren't in the position of hearing these songs unless they decide to buy the expensive Japanese import.

The Japanese record company (Teichiku records) invested a lot of money just to get the licence of the album. Our label took that money to produce it and if they wouldn't have been there, we would not have this album in hand now. They wanted bonus tracks so it could help them recover their money, so we decided to take two songs off the sampler demo we did as a promotional tool only. The songs are "Feel the Fire" and "A Single Century". We wrote those two a couple of years ago and we thought they sounded a little bit out of time, that's why we didn't put them on "Food for Thought". "Gaia's Judgement", "Cruel Disguise", and "The Alchemist" were also on the demo, but we recorded them again for the album.

You've mentioned in other interviews that you've been having a lot of problems with your record company Hypnotic Records. More often than not, bands have problems with their record companies, especially if their music is difficult to market. What are the specific problems that you have with the record company?

Let's say that we have absolutely no relationship with them since we recorded the album. The problems started right in the middle of the recording session.

Heaven's Cry hit last year with the debut album "Food For A Thought Substitute", which was really a nice example of innovative and refreshing progressive metal. The deviation from the norm is not too big or scary but their style is unique, well-thought, and consistent. Heaven's Cry are considered as one of the best rookies in 1997, and, well, in my personal opinion, the album is among top 3 of that year.

listen to live. A band needs that connection with the audience to have another viewpoint of what they're doing. It shouldn't be too long before we do. It just has to make sense and doing it now would be fatal for us, it would be compromising the next record for a tour. (If we woe too much money, we could not stay alive for too long!)

Pierre, you were a member of VoiVod after the departure of bass-player Blacky a couple of years ago. What do you remember of this period and how have these experiences helped you in Heaven's Cry?

I never left Heaven's Cry. The guys needed a bass player so they decided to take someone around here. They've seen me play for years in bars and clubs, they asked me to join so it would help my own band. The story changed after a while, so I got off the boat. I loved the experience, but I would've never let go of my own dreams, my life. That was also a bit strange, because I am a singer/guitarist not a bass player. I learned a lot during that period. I was dreaming of the time when I'd be able to do it all with my band. I don't think it helped us that much considering that we are not doing the same kind of music. People don't usually make the connection anyway. I respect those guys to the highest degree though. It probably helped us getting credibility and to be recognized as a band.

You've played bass in VoiVod and you're currently playing guitar in Heaven's Cry. Essentially, a bass guitar is regarded as a rhythm instrument, while a guitar is considered to be an instrument that determines the melody of a song. In what way is the way you play bass different than your style of guitar playing?

The bass lines in Voivod are close to guitar lines. I could not consider myself as a "real" bass player. The first time I really played bass was in Voivod. They needed someone that could play with a pick and that could master an overdrive kind of sound. A guitar player was a good choice and I guess they chose me because they've seen me live a couple of times around

both languages at the same time! It is kind of funny. Let's say that Quebecers are influenced by the American culture and by the French people (France), so we are a little bit like a door between the two worlds.

Your native language is French but you adopt English lyrics in the songs. The Canadian band Oblivion recorded a song with French lyrics "Biomechanique" for one of their albums. This was done to profit for a governmental subsidy to promote the native French tongue in music. Have you ever considered singing in French, what are the advantages and disadvantages?

Well, we didn't really think about it yet, but it is a possibility that we will do a French song only for French countries though. I guess that could be respectful towards the French culture, but we would probably have to make one in Spanish and then Japanese, it would never end! That would be too cool to translate an album in all languages! Very expensive though?

English is globally considered to be the definitive language for singing. Do you find it difficult to express your views in a language different than your native tongue?

Not really. I've always been writing lyrics in English. The way I write lyrics is totally different from, for example, doing an interview. You get inspired by stimuli like music or a concept and really express what's on your mind without compromising. We wanted to express our views internationally so the choice was clear. Doing interviews is really interesting for me. I need to focus on being clear with what I say and it's a good challenge!

The CD cover is very intriguing. In my view, it depicts an asteroid heading for a city. The city lies in the centre of a valley with several illuminated roads going towards in it radial direction. The asteroid has 17 sharply pointed stalactites at the bottom. This would suggest that the asteroid is navigated by an intelligent life form and that the course of the

asteroid to the city can be either hostile or friendly. However, the relation of the cover with the album title draws a complete blank. What did you try to portray with the CD cover and what is the relation to the album title?

Let's say that whatever you can read into it can fit with our paradoxical vision of the world we live in. The songs are also, but in a verbal form. There's thousands of ways to perceive it, just pick up one that fit with your own vision. That was the intent behind the cover.

The general concept of "Food for Thought Substitute" would imply that you are interested in science fiction. What science fiction books and films are you especially keen on?

Hm, "Mars Attacks" and "Godzilla"!!! No, seriously, it's true that we have always been interested in sci-fi. I never thought of the album that way though, but it's good if you saw our interest through it. Sci-fi is a reflection of what future could be, good or not, it's still about future. Some people choose not to believe in a future for the human kind and I cannot relate to that. It just doesn't help us grow. I am not saying that there won't be a total change in the world though. Even though religions took off a little bit, some people still believe in some sort of apocalypse. It is a concept that belongs to some religions. The same thing happens at the end of all centuries, now it's the millennium coming so, I guess the apocalypse will be worst! What was the question again? Oh yeah, I really liked "Dune" (the books, of course), "Star Wars", "Star Trek" ("The Next Generation" only though), "The Dark Crystal", and tons of others.

The design of the booklet was made by Phil Dakin. He's the former bassplayer/vocalist for the band DBC who released two highly underrated albums in the late eighties ("Dead Brain Cells" and "Universe"). What ever happened to DBC and what are the current members up to?

Phil is a good friend of ours. He stayed in Montreal for a long time, that's how we met him. This guy is from another world, but he understands exactly what the band is about! We were pleased to see that the cover of the album totally reflected our music. Phil is still

making music but, DBC is not around anymore. He doesn't have a band right now, but maybe he will soon, who knows. We wanna work with this guy again!

In the CD booklet, you ask the people to join Amnesty. In my opinion, the individual organisations are efficient in pin-pointing governments which have abused the individual's rights, but their power is restricted to public lobbying. How do you see their role in the world at the moment? Are you active in their organisation?

We are not really active, but we thought that we should encourage all organizations that are out for a change, specially if they are a help to protect human rights. We need to shout loud in the circus so the "general psychosis" ends one day. A bit idealistic, close to utopia, but it makes the difference when you start to think that way.

Metal bands often put cover songs on albums to generate additional interest from reviewers or to pay homage to one of their favourite acts. Knowing your interest in fellow Canadians Rush, which song of theirs would you consider covering and why? Wow, that would be hard to choose. I am gonna mention some different titles: "Natural Science", "Cygnus X1", "Anthem", "2112", "Xanadu", "Jacob's Ladder".

Progressive music is usually appreciated by individuals with an interest in complex music in terms of song build-up, arrangements, and lyrical content. The music you're playing and the lyrical content of the songs would suggest an above-average intelligence. What type of education have you followed? What type of daytime jobs do the members of Heaven's Cry have?

Hehehe, thanks, it's flattering! I think, we all had a good education and we all are interested in tons of subjects. I don't know about above-average intelligence, but certainly above-average opportunities (compared to millions of others). Curiosity is to me an important engine of intelligence. We all work in transitory jobs so that we can concentrate our efforts in the band which is our main project. We hope that one day we'll be able to



live on our music.

What goals have you set yourselves as musicians? Is it realistic that you'll be able to earn an income from your music to support yourselves?

Yes, I think that if we work hard enough and don't make compromises with the songwriting. Our goal is helping to find and develop the next step in music, the next approach, so that we all realize and admire the countless new possibilities. Imagine a world where no one even dares to imagine that all has already been tried, said, or done. We know we are far from our goal but...

Pierre, I want to thank you for the interview and I wish you all the best for the future. Do you have any final words for our readers?

I hope you won't get tired of "Food for Thought" before we put out the second album! Take care everyone, and have faith in progressive music!

[Heaven's Cry Society, P.O. Box 626, NDG Montreal, Quebec, Canada H4A 3R1] [E-mail: jfvin@total.net] [Web page: <http://www.turing.toronto.edu/%7Evtzr/HeavensCry/>]



HA LELA
Pabudimas

Eldethorn Records/Neat Metal
Finally one of the most successful Lithuanian folk/black metal bands has released its debut CD. Folk metal isn't such a big novelty neither in all the world nor in Lithuania (Zpoan Vtenez's debut album on Dangus Productions was the best release of this style in Lithuania until this day), but rarely we can find such hypnotic and atmospheric albums as "Pabudimas". That's not strange, because this album has been in the works for quite a long time. Almost all melodies here are taken from Lithuanian folklore, and this folklore input takes a quite authentic view in places. Various national instruments were used, so we can darely say that the music is really folk-inspired, as the national inheritance is used more than in many other black albums. The black metal based on these folk tunes is melodic, dreary, and

atmospheric; lyrics pay a tribute to majestic past times. One of the most interesting folk/black metal albums to come out from the Baltic area ever. (AO)
4 1/2

HEAVENWOOD
Swallow
Massacre Records

The second album of Portuguese gothic-metal performers. Think of Crematory, Cemetary, and Paradise Lost crossed together and you will get an idea of what Heavenwood have on their menu. Though the melodies are catchy enough, and though guitar solos are memorable, some things are missing. First of all, the vocals of Ernesto Guerra are of this 'heard-somewhere-before' type and the final music is a bit too sweet, even more sweet than Crematory. This sometimes leads (like in the case of "Soulister") into a bit banal songs. However, I don't deny that songs like "Luna" possess the best qualities of gothic metal. Here, we also find guest appearances of Kai Hansen from Gamma Ray and Liv Kristine from Theatre of Tragedy. In conclusion, it's commercially well-arranged album, but, as all commercially well-arranged albums, it doesn't go too far. (AO)
3 3/4

IMPALED NAZARENE
Rapture
Osmose Productions

I've never been a fan of Impaled Nazarene, but I know there are many fans of this band all over the world. The band has already released a great bunch of albums, and the new one is called "Rapture" and contains fast, simple songs that swing from speed metal and punk to black influences. I think this album won't disappoint the

fans of the band, although for others Impaled Nazarene's music is a pure matter of taste. (SV)
3 1/4

IMPERIAL
Aux Crepuscules
Osmose Productions

The French Imperial are inspired by Living Death, Sodom (first album), Protector, and other similar speed/thrash legends. However hard I try to find something interesting in such releases, you know, it's the same thing every time: monotonous, humdrum, trite. They should need such an image like Gehennah to attract attention of fans. (SV)
2 1/2

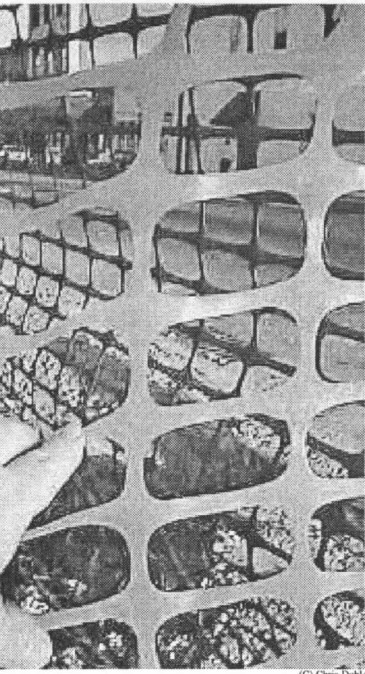
IMPIOUS
Evilized
Black Sun Records

The main fact about this album is the name of the producer, which is Tomas Skogsberg. All the work was done at the legendary Sunlight Studios. Also you must have in mind that Impious come from Sweden. These facts are enough to sketch the whole picture - Impious have got this sound of Dismember and Entombed, and Gothenburg-metal style has made its impact also. "Evilized" offers fast and melodic death/thrash with some black influences and this powerful stream you can always identify Dismember by. But Impious are more melodic, with many rhythm and melody changes, and sound more diverse than Dismember. However, I agree that they don't reach the top Dismember did with their brilliant "Death Metal" album. As for a debut, "Evilized" is a worthy product, and Impious can be named as one of the hottest new death metal bands from Sweden. (AO)
4



THE HAUNTED
The Haunted
Earache Records

The Haunted's undoubted destiny is success. Already the fact that this group was formed by the core of now split-up At The Gates means something, and, in addition, the band was completed with ex-Mary Beats Jane vocalist Peter Dolving and Seance's Jensen. The debut album of this grand group justified high expectations; for a long time, we haven't heard such power-giving album as this one. Based on traditions of old Slayer, this album also travels among more modern styles, e.g., Pantera are one of the obvious influences. Anyway, the main characteristics here are similar to those of Slayer's "Reign in Blood" and "Hell Awaits" albums: the same classical speedy and brutal sounding, the angry manner of singing. Unlike many current retro-thrash albums, "The Haunted" has a fresh sound and energy, tracks like "Hate Song" are the best proof. Fans of At The Gates, however, might be disappointed when getting next to nothing of the At The Gates legacy. The lyrics deal with pain, hate to society, destruction... real metal, as I understand it. (AO)
4 1/2



(C) Chris Dubie

WHITE FEAR CHAIN

Live the Visceral Life!

[by Sigitas Velyvis]

Three years ago, I received from Mas Optica (great band) guitarist Paul Finley a tape with three songs of White Fear Chain, the band featuring my favorite singer Buddo (ex-Last Crack), three ex-Realm members, and drummer Brian Reidinger (ex-Gemini). Those 3 songs are also on their impressive self-released debut CD "Visceral Life" plus 8 new tracks! Some people compare the band with Last Crack, no wonder, Buddo's voice will always associate itself with the unforgettable "Burning Time" CD (see interview with Buddo himself!). However, in my opinion, White Fear Chain is an independent, original band that takes a lot from the 70's music and adds modern heavy tunes to the final product. Brian Reidinger agreed to answer several questions for "Edge Of Time".

conventional wisdom, expectation, and tradition. Ask questions, seek truth, live YOUR life! I suppose Buddo would say: "Live the Visceral life!".

Who is that guy Troy Stetina who plays solo guitar in "Shotgun Mouth"?
Troy Stetina was a friend of the band's, who also writes guitar instructional books for Hal Leonard Publishing, kind of an 80's shredder type dude.

Takis Kinis has left the band, are you going to look for a new guitarist or will you continue as a four-piece band?
When Takis left, we tried several other players, but none played with his authority and confidence. We also spent our time jamming as a four-piece band, and, much to our surprise, discovered that we actually preferred the sound of W.F.C. as a single guitar band. On the "Visceral Life" CD, "Roaches in the Lamplight Screaming", "Slave Become King", and "Headstones" were all recorded as a four-piece band; to give you an idea of the sound. We were all sorry to see Takis go, but his departure offered us a new way to be.

Tell me anything about the development of White Fear Chain? How did you contact Buddo and other members?

White Fear Chain was assembled by the surviving members of Realm: Paul, Takis, and Steve. They approached me while I was on the road with Gemini; invited me to come and play some REAL music. Buddo was contacted shortly thereafter, at which time, Buddo and I both moved to Milwaukee to begin the process of putting a band together.

What do you think about Last Crack's "Burning Time" and both Realm albums?

"Burning Time" is a classic album, PERIOD! It should have sold 10 million copies, but the really fucked up, greedy, self serving, capitalist, American record industry, and mindless, shallow, self aggrandizing, sons of bitches that operate it dropped the ball BIG TIME, oh gee, imagine that! Realm's work, while less commercially accessible, set the standard for the entire thrash culture, amazing work.

Suddenly I've seen your CDs on the lists of many European mailorders. Do you get many letters from Europe? How many CDs have you sold up to now worldwide?
We get a few letters. I have no idea how many CDs we've sold to date.

Have you got any offers from labels?
No.

Some years before you played in Gemini (see review). What induced you to play heavier music? In my opinion, Gemini was nothing but an ordinary hard rock band with some prog elements.

White Fear Chain, in my opinion, isn't "heavier" than Gemini. White Fear Chain was a serious PROFESSIONAL band, Gemini was a loose collection of very average players (minus myself, I hope!) and wannabe cock rockers. Highly UNinspiring.

Tell me your opinion about Buddo's lyrics and his personality. Is it hard to work out the songs with him?

A true artist, one in a million. Buddo CAN be difficult to work with. But as I got to know him as my fellow man, those difficulties faded and were replaced by

Your songs move in mid-tempo range. Are you going to write some faster songs?
We've always just written music that we'd like to listen to, never gave much thought to faster or slower tempos.

INCANTATION
DiaboliConquest
Relapse Records
Death metal legends have released their new proclamation of war against everything that is clean and holy. "DiaboliConquest" is traditional death metal with its traditional scheme, technically well-executed, and brutal from the beginning to the end. Incantation apparently won't ever lose their old way of playing. If you like their previous albums, you should like this one, too, except maybe 17-minute epic "Unto Infinite Twilight", which is a bit... hm... boring. (AO)
[Incantation, PO Box 609311, Cleveland, OH 44109, USA]
3 1/2

INFAMY
The Blood Shall Flow
Repulse Records
Boring brutal death in the style of Immolation. According to the info, Infamy are formed from the members of such "legendary" acts like Brainstorm, Entety, and Preacher. Unfortunately, I haven't heard about them. It doesn't matter which ex-members play in this band. The fact is that they offer us very boring stuff on this CD. (SV)
2

INFERNO
Downtown Hades
Osmose Productions
The second full-length of these speed metal propagators. It's interesting to remember a long-gone youth with Exciter and Venom, but, judging according to today's standards, it's an average album. Song titles are "In Bed with Satan", "Rot in Hell", "Bulldozer", "Metal Attack", and the like, the music perfectly corresponds. (AO)
2 3/4

INVERTED
There Can Be Only One
Shiver Records
Again an old school death metal act that drops statements in the CD-booklet about rip-offs, true death metallers etc. It looks as if the records of such bands are exclusively brutal masterpieces. But you know, there's no such thing. "There Can Be Only One" is simply an average death metal album even if the members of Inverted will be annoyed about these words. Probably the band sounds live far better but this CD is not convincing. (SV)
[Shiver Records, Hans de Wyngaert, Bossepleinstraat 6, 3128 Baal, Belgium]
2 3/4

"Visceral Life" was recorded within nearly 3 years. Haven't you had any problems with respect to the sound and mixing? What songs came into being first?

Sounds improved as the recording progressed. "Daily into Darkness" was one of the first songs written and was, therefore, one of the first to be recorded; along with "El Caballero" and "Before You Go".

I have listened to another version of "El Caballero Diablo". There are a cry out by Buddo and some noise heard at the end of the song. Why have you removed it from the record?

It was mistakenly removed during final mixdown, OOPS! (save your copy)

How does your songwriting process look like? Music first and then the lyrics and vocal lines?

Buddo would sift through our riffs and arrangements and request "adjustments" to help facilitate how he was going to express himself. Paul and/or I generally wrote the music, everybody arranged. Buddo wrote 98% of the lyrics (I penned two lines... try to guess which two).

Tell me about your influences and favorite bands.
Way too many to list. Sorry!



genuine, mutual respect. He is one of the great storytellers of modern music.

For how long must we wait for the new album?
You may wish to contact GOD on this one!

I heard many rumors about Buddo, for example, that he left White Fear Chain and formed Mind Ox which broke up after some months, that he formed a new band, Magic 7...

Everybody was very tired and frustrated by the record industries arrogance and seeming indifference. Mind Ox was a brief venture for him. Magic 7 lasted longer, but it too has dissolved.

Do you think that intellectual and demanding music has a small circle of fans?
Yes, because people don't want to think, they'd rather drink beer, dance a little, have sex whenever possible, sleep it off, and go to work the next day.

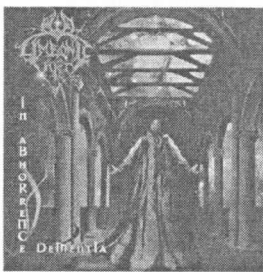
Your favorite tracks on "Visceral Life".
"Roaches in the Lamplight Screaming" and "Before You Go".

Tell me something about the CD cover. What associations and feelings does it provoke for you?

If you look closely at the flames, you'll begin to see faces, all different sizes, shapes angles, expressions... very startling. This phenomenon was completely unplanned. Anyway, for me, the cover, more or less, seems to represent the oppressive nature of humanity and every individual's need (and responsibility) fight against

Some words in conclusion...
White Fear Chain was a rare and special collection of five top flight musicians and, more importantly, good people. I think the music we created was a cut above the swill churned out by so many useless bands and money grubbing record companies. That is why I spent my own money to produce this CD, because I believe that it deserved an audience. I hope that those who can find it, find the same sense of integrity that we infused into every note we created... ENJOY!!

[I.T.G. Music, White Fear Chain, 625 Second Avenue South, Suite #520, Minneapolis, MN 55402, USA]
[E-mail: bolinski@earthlink.net]
[Web page: http://wfc.fsmedia.com/]



LIMBONIC ART
In Abhorrence Dementia
Nocturnal Art Productions
 Orchestral atmospheric black metal. It means that the orchestrations aren't laid in the background, they often form the main musical theme. It seems like the orchestral melodies were performed first (at least, the impression is this) and black metal was arranged later. Folk melodies are visible, too, so after all we hear melodic, bombastic, and interesting black metal, a bit theatrical, in the veins of Acturus. (AO) [Nocturnal Art Productions, PO Box 4, 3671 Notodden, Norway] 4

LOUD PIPES
The Down Hill Blues
Osmose Productions
 And let's rock now! Here, all atmosphere-layers, melodies, and other moody things disappear: Loud Pipes play a mixture of HC, punk, and modern metal. Aggression and brutality (note, it's not death metal) rule here and, to tell the truth, usually I don't listen to this kind of music at home, but I imagine this to be very suitable at a so-called "alternative club". You got that right punk! (Well, it's the title of one of their songs.) (AO) 3 3/4

MANEGARM
Nordstjarnans Tidsalder
Displeased Records
 Something for black metal fans. Reminds me a bit of acts like In Flames. Not particularly original and stirring, but not bad either. I'm afraid I have nothing more to say about this release. It's easy listenable product without any great demands. (SV) [Displeased Records, Ronde Tocht 7d, NL-1507 CC Zaandam, The Netherlands] 3 1/2

MARDUK
Nightwing
Osmose Productions
 Marduk are one of the most known black metal acts. I think, fans of this band have waited for this release impatiently. I must confess, at the beginning I had some run-up difficulties with this CD as the first 4-5 songs are not so impressive like the second part of the album. I imagine, the fans of this style will enjoy the whole longplayer, but since I'm not a big black metal follower, I will probably not. All in all, "Nightwing" again has become an interesting affair that perhaps won't sink in the sea of black metal releases. (SV) 3 1/2

MASS PSYCHOSIS
Necroporno
Still Dead Productions
 The second release of death maniacs from USA. A traditionality is guaranteed, i.e., death metal with grinding parts in the veins of the early 90's bands. Mass Psychosis exist since 1988, so they had enough time to acquire technical skills and make the music professional, but my question is, do the frames of the style are wide enough for these guys? Haven't some things changed since the year of 1990? I believe there are many maniacs that still like this grinding brutal death, they will surely dig this disc. The CD cover layout is perfect, and gore lyrics and pictures to dark instincts are included. (AO)

[Mass Psychosis, PO Box 267, Keyport, NJ 07735, USA] [Still Dead Productions, Julius Polczynski, 03-933 Warsaw, UL Obrencov 2A, Poland] 3 1/2

MAYHEM
Wolf Lair's Abyss EP
Misanthropy Records
 The re-birth of one of the biggest black metal bands ever has been met with such enthusiasm it was hard to imagine. Consequently, everything Mayhem could release probably would have been meant to become a new cult. So, I tried to be a bit sceptical, but... these 4 new songs on MCD have blown away all my scepticism. It seems Mayhem absolutely are worth of their name nowadays, maybe even more than in their past. Each of these tracks displays angry, fast and brutal black metal. The sound is very powerful, and I just can't imagine a band in nowadays' black scene which could compare to Mayhem. Of course, many of bands went towards more folkish and melodic black sounding, and, after Burzum's departure to almost non-metal fields, there aren't left so many big bands in traditional, fast black metal style. Thanks to Mayhem, we finally got one. (AO) 4 1/4

MELTED
Melted EP
Nordic Metal
 A 20-minute EP of a Danish band is probably destined to oblivion, but for them it may serve as a jumping point. All 5 songs are of aggressive, chopped riff metal nature, which can be cool when Pantera and Machine Head are cool, but which is not very interesting musically. Personally, I tend to like the really heavy moving parts, but the vocals are a notch below the average, and too many stops and breaks reduce the drive, making the songs passively sluggish. Maybe it's just their songwriting manner. Anyway, too little originality here, and, if you aren't walking down the streets wearing Pantera shorts, you can pass away... (GS) 3 1/4

MENTAL HOME
Vale
The End Records/Nuclear Blast Records
 The End Records is a new labels from USA and it seems that they first invested into ex-USSR extreme metal bands. Debut albums of Russian Mental Home and Ukrainian Nokturnal Mortum are among first releases of this label and it does not promise a bad start. Mental Home have already built a good

LACUNA COIL
Lacuna Coil EP
Century Media Records
 Here we have a 6-song mini-CD from a very promising Italian sixtette. Being accurate, Lacuna Coil are more a reality than a promise, and I think once their first full-length album is out, they should become one of Century Media label priorities. This band has an undeniable talent and shows an impeccable taste for combining female and male vocal counterpoints successfully. Cristina, the vocalist, does a great work on songs like "No Need to Explain" (simply excellent) and do not drown the melodies, nor the music lines, in pursue of her personal brilliance. Her voice sometimes reminds me of Crystis Hynde's (Pretenders), perhaps with a better melodic sense. The result is a perfect integration, which goes on par with the catchy guitar riffs and not effectist percussion elements. Keep an eye on them. (GM) 4 1/2

MOONSPELL
Sin/Pecado
Century Media Records
 With the follow up to their acclaimed "irreligious" full-length album, the Portuguese act have created their most introspective, mature, and personal work to date. "Sin" is, in my opinion, a substantial step upwards in their career. Personally, I think it's the type of album that for its characteristics will dog them for the whole of their career, and I'd say it will also serve them as a starting point for the new direction they have chosen, stylistically closer to bands in the vein of Depeche Mode, The Mission, or Propaganda. You could call it a rebirth or a metamorphosis. "Unconventional" is a word that may fit well in order to describe the sensation this album brings during the first listenings. However, generally speaking, "Sin" is an album packed with more melodic weight than their previous release. Electronic effects, arrangements, and the use of samplers play a carefully planned dominant role here and manage to endow songs like "Mute" a special mystique. On the other hand, it looks as if they had tried to balance the album including some catchy refrains and forwardness on themes such as "2econd Skin" (already pressed in the EP preceding this album), "The Hanged Man", or "Eurotica". Waldemar Sorychta (The Gathering, Tiamat) completed all production tasks. The result is an album with an own sound, more controversial or not, but quite fresh, and where Moonspell try to expand their horizons and develop further as far as I see it. (GM) 4



reputation in underground circles and "Vale" is actually their second tape album, songs for which were created back in 1995. Obvious influences include Tiamat's "Clouds" and (to a smaller extent) Paradise Lost's "Gothic" and it would be correct to label "Vale" as an atmospheric doom/death metal album. The sound is mild yet heavy, the vocals are growling but not irritating, and the overall waving-tempo songs are pleasant to listen to. No earthshakes, but a noteworthy debut. The new album "Black Art" should swing more. (GS) [The End Records, 556 S. Fair Oaks Ave #101-111, Pasadena, CA 91105, USA] 3 3/4

MINDCOLLAPSE
Lifeless EP
Dark Past Productions
 Aggressive Swedish death/thrash. I have an impression, I've heard such riffs and vocals hundred times before. The musicians have complete command of their instruments, but the only thing that they don't have in their heads is fresh ideas. I think, this mini-CD will disappear in the flood of other products of this genre. (SV) [Dark Past Productions, P.O.Box 2082, 291 02 Kristianstad, Sweden] 3

MINDROT
Soul
Relapse Records
 Mindrot started in 1989 as a vicious crust/grind act, and the latest album shows their progress, especially in developing their new style. "Soul" presents a mixture of hardcore, gothic, doom, and death metal. You may be curious how Mindrot can manage to combine My Dying Bride, Pyogenesis, and Pantera in one place, but it's a fact, they do it. Such songs as "Incandescence" are sad and romantic. "Despair" has an epic mood, at the same time, when the dominant sense on "Nothing" is hatress. Listening to this album, I feel group's wish to find their way and they are on the way. The next album, I think, will be less eclectic. (AO) 4

MORNING AGAIN/25 TA LIFE
split 7" CDS
Good Life Recordings
 Only three songs on this split CD. Quite known in the HC scene, Morning Again and NYC's 25 Ta Life, which made the breakthrough last year, present their hardcore, which, to tell the truth,

doesn't impress me much. Morning Again's playing is more powerful and has more drive inside, but only one song is of theirs. 25 Ta Life may please those supporting the straight-edge attitude and fast hardcore. (AO) 3

MORTICIAN
Zombie Apocalypse
Relapse Records
 It's very strange why such a label like Relapse releases such a bullshit. Mortician play brutal death/grind with Cannibal Corpse vocals. Between the songs you can hear noise, typical of horror films. Even if this album isn't serious, I don't enjoy it. And I don't think that the others will do. (SV) 2

NAPALM DEATH
Bootlegged in Japan
Earache Records
 The band decided to release this album after hearing anonymous bootleg tapes of the 96 Tokyo show. These recordings seemed to present Napalm Death at their most intense and riotous way, so after all we have a really worthy live-document from one of the most historical death metal bands ever. In this album, we hear 24 tracks from nearly all periods of Napalm Death, beginning with grinding tracks from "Scum" to cult tracks like "Suffer the Children" and going to more recent songs from "Diatribes"; all in all, tracks from 8 albums are put here. And Napalm Death live is Napalm Death live: always without compromises, all songs are much more grinding and brutal. As there aren't so many chances to hear live albums of theirs, it's a real must-get for all Napalm maniacs. (AO) 4

NECROPHAGIA
Season of the Dead
Red Stream Records
 As I understand, this album was released nearly 10 years ago. Red Stream label decided to re-release this archaic cult-album (among old school speed/thrash fans) and plans the new CD by Necrophagia this year. "Season of the Dead" obviously was influenced by bands like Slayer, Kreator, or Sodom. An old-fashioned music, but it's popular today. I haven't heard of this band before, but there must be people out there who are fans of Necrophagia. It's an album for them. (SV) [Red Stream Records, PO Box 342, Camp Hill, PA 17001-0342, USA] 3 1/4

Dream Theater

DREAM THEATER

American Blues Influences [by Gregorio Martin]

Images and Words' Heritage... Falling Into Where?

As you sure know by now, the latest Dream Theater's record, "Falling into Infinity", was put out under a great general expectation. Several months prior to the official release, sound samples had started to navigate on the Internet. A few shows in the US were also used as a showcase for the new material. Hearing the variation in style from one track to another, it seemed that the record would be more accused than ever. It looked, since the beginning, as if the band had been searching a more eclectic approach to writing. Words like "accessibility", "mainstream", "radio friendly", "sold out", or even "trendy" started to circulate in the form of different states of opinion among fans. The fact is, though the signs of glorious prog metal past will persist as long as their career lasts, for several of their followers, Dream Theater have mutated into a band which holds a quite different orientation nowadays. Having expanded their potential audience and being in some aspects broader in outlook, records as "Falling into Infinity" could be interpreted as a way of their escaping from the deep legacy that "Images and Words" album created in the scene (and still creates each time a newcomer gets into this band). But, after all, the variety is what makes the music appealing, one just has to accept this sort of decisions and try to judge the product as it's presented, without many prejudices. What happens is, many times, like in the Dream Theater's case, prejudices can subtly flourish, subliminally inferred by the bright past we talk about.

Europe from East to West

As an anteroom for the completion of "Falling into Infinity", East West Records company was pointed out as the main responsible entity for all the adverse vicissitudes and subsequent delays the band had to surmount before entering the studio and start working in proper conditions. However, as soon as the album in question is released, or a

tour is planned and their money comes into the play, that same label can adopt a fatherly patronage role. "Two skins under the same wolf", you could say, but I guess it should be just another hidden golden rule of this "ethically exemplary" business, right? When Dream Theater promo tour in Europe became a reality, I decided to get in touch with Dro, the Spanish delegation of East West Records, and had the chance of meeting the band in their first visit to Madrid. They would be playing in Spain for three dates to be precise. Let me tell you first that about three years ago, when they were immersed on the overseas promotion of their "Awake" album, a few shows had been scheduled here as well. Obviously, with Fates Warning sharing stage, the menu itself constituted something hard to refuse. Well, what happened was those gigs never saw the light. Tickets had been already printed, even had been selling pretty well and, in fact, it was possible to see names of Spanish cities, included at the back of the typical "Awaking the world - European tour" T-shirts. But, at the very last moment, the tempting offer turned into an empty can of beans. Cancelled: an evident disillusion and a full stop.

Mrs. Green, Bill, and the Scorpions Socks

Monday morning, Madrid city awakes painted in light gray. I had to meet a person named July Green from East West Records around noon, at the small cafeteria of Convencion Hotel. British punctuality is not always a must, so a couple of coffees and a few glances at the newspaper did the rest until she showed up. A good looking and nice young woman, she started telling me they had just arrived a few hours ago from a music festival that had taken place the night before in Granada, a city located at the south of Spain. After the usual

introductions, we carried some peanuts, a couple of cokes, and a coffee towards a set of small tables. Near there, I could see how band's keyboardist Derek Sherinian was in the middle of a promotional interview with some acquaintances of mine from "La Coctelera" fanzine. So, more time to wait. But not a big deal. Comfortably installed there at a sofa, July introduced me to Bill, Dream Theater's tour manager. Veteran man from Scotland, in his mid-fifties I'd say, explained us how he also had toured in the past with bands like Iron Maiden or the Scorpions. And, if I remember well,

other pop artists (as a matter of fact, Bruce Dickinson sang with her also). He then went on talking excellences about a Cuban self-taught pianist named Rubén González, who had worked with the famous guitarist Ry Corder in sort of a magic jam session, which got pressed on the album that he had come across once, right at Ry's studio. Interesting. I said I'd try to remember that name just in case. Latin music, Tori Amos' forthcoming tour (the artist also enrolled on East-West Records list), flamenco, folklore, Spanish culture, employment situation, minimum wage figures in Spain as compared to Great Britain were some of the things we had time to talk about, during this, overall, really pleasant conversation. Some minutes later, July Green finally introduced me to Derek Sherinian. Well, at first sight, this guy may look as if he had escaped from a 70's disco or "Saturday Night Fever" movie. At least, he should be really fond of that postmodern look, considering the huge sun glasses, gaudy shirt, and golden chains hung down his neck. The Spice Girl chandal trousers maybe didn't fit on that 70's template, but okay, they also contributed to creating a wisely conceived sloppy rock star appearance. Anyway, leaving aside those minor fashion details, in the following lines you can read how the chat we had with Mr. Sherinian went. Before meeting Derek, Bill kindly went upstairs to check if James Labrie or John Petrucci were available to join the interview. However, according to his own words, the solely noise which came out of a still inert James was closer to a snore than to anything else on this earth. We'd talk to Derek then, no problems. But frankly, as our conversation progressed, I started noticing that several of the topics I thought could be interesting to discuss with a Dream

Theater member, were not applicable to this setting. Will some of his answers surprise part of you the same way it happened to me? Keep on reading.

Well, if you want, we can start talking about something a bit different from your current occupation. Tell us a little about your experience playing with Kiss.

Oh, okay, okay. Eric Singer, the drummer, and I played in Alice Cooper together and Eric was hired to play with Kiss. They needed an onstage keyboard player, so they called me and I did four months in America with Kiss on the "Revenge" tour and it was very cool. Got into watch how Gene Simmons operates.

The whole set of lights, tricks, and other paraphernalia is quite far from what Dream Theater bring, right?

Yeahhh!

Could we talk a little about how the yesterday's show at Esparrago Rock Festival in Granada went?

[Eating some peanuts] Our first time playing in Spanish soil. The crowd was great, very receptive. We're looking forward to playing our headline set tonight. [Chewing] In Madrid.



thin black socks with the Scorpions' red logo were indeed what he was wearing! Bill continued his speech mentioning how he had been already in Spain too many many times to count them all. "I should have been 30 or 40 times earlier here, in Madrid, but I still didn't have an opportunity to visit the city properly!", he commented. We talked a little about Spanish soprano Montserrat Caballé, whom he had met before in the US ("An incredible person"), her contributions with Freddy Mercury on "Barcelona" song, and with

Perhaps you've been told about how two years ago, on the "Awake" tour, Dream Theater were going to play here with Fates Warning and, at the very last moment, it was all cancelled. I heard something about that.

I think the club will be packed with people avert to finally see Dream Theater performing live.

I see. Anyway I mean, I was here after the facts, so I really don't know what the truth is.

I was told just some moments ago by your tour manager that it was a problem related to agents and dates which were not well planned and stuff. Probably. That wouldn't be the first time.

Yesterday in Granada, did you have a chance to visit the famous building of Al Alhambra palace.

Oh, we saw it. The driver passed it. The big castle?

Yes.

I heard it's amazing! I wish I had the chance to go and see it.

You didn't have much time.

No, no time. "No tiempo". [Laughs]

[Laughs] You learnt some Spanish?

[With a perfect pronunciation] "Un poquito". [= a little bit] [More laughs]

Okay. After this tour in Madrid you soon will go to Paris to do a big show. You'll play with bands like Vanden Plas from Germany and Angra from Brazil.

Yes, that's right.

How was the experience of playing in Brazil last year?

Oh, that was incredible! Great! The fans were very passionate, very much like the fans yesterday in Spain and Italy. It's the same tilt.

And what do you think about this band in particular, the Brazilian Angra?

I really don't know anything about them.

Ah really, do you?

Never heard them. I don't know anything about them.

Aha, I had seen some pictures of James with Andre Matos, Angra's singer, taken there in Brazil, so I thought you perhaps had met them. Okay, talking a bit about your music, according to rumors, "Metropolis Part II" will be on the next album. That's correct.

Well, it was said that you wanted to release it as an EP, because the producer or your label could be against including such a long song. No, we'll be able to put that. We'll be able.

So it's definitely in your plans for the next album?

Yes.

Any connections with "Part I" you'd like to tell?

Just little pieces that are like intertwined.

I see.

Intertwined. A bit like themes, but it's very very progressive. Any people that think that we've got more mellow and more commercial with "Falling into

Infinity", when they hear Metropolis II will be...

Surprised?

Yeah.

I wanted to talk a bit about some of your side projects, there are a lot of them.

Aha.

For instance, there's Liquid Tension Experiment with Portnoy and Petrucci.

Yes. Actually hm... the main project that we only really want to talk about is a side project with John Myung, Rod Morgenstein on drums, and Ty Tabor

that's the best album of the 90's.

[Curious: I was told later he had stated the same thing to the guys who previously interviewed him.]

Really?

I loved it!

Could you explain a little why?

It has power. I listen to it and it's...

[Looking to the ceiling and opening his arms like doing a gesture of embrace] ...POWER! And that's what I like.

Don't you think there's perhaps also a big part of this band Marilyn Manson, which is made by marketing, got to with a carefully studied image: the

that, if you try to leave aside for a moment your status as a band member, what would be your impression about "Images & Words" disc? Perhaps it's a bit difficult question.

When I first heard it, I can tell you exactly what I thought then. I thought that the musicianship was incredible. That the musicianship was incredible. I thought the songs, the songwriting structures, weren't smooth. I think that the songwriting was very obfuscated. It wasn't smooth. I connect it: it was obvious that the musicianship was incredible, but that's the way the songs were done, there were not enough American blues influences.

Aha.

It was very European. Too European sounding I think. And I like America. I like the rock and roll, Van Halen...

It's something curious now that you mention Van Halen, and I'll tell you why: for some fans, your addition to the band's own sound at the creative level sometimes made Dream Theater to sound more like a band such as Van Halen. What do you think, did you hear that before?

Aha. Yes, I think it's great! It's spirit. I try to put spirit into the band: all rock and roll, presentations...

Could we talk a little about the problems you had to undergo with your label, before being able to enter the studio for recording the last album? You probably heard that some fans even organized a sort of petition to let you enter the studio trying to push East West Records. Some people, on the other hand, think the label could instigate a change in the sound, more forwardness.

I don't think so, really, because with Dream Theater, the label, whether they like us or not, they know that we have a fan base of about half a million people that will buy the records. And that's a tough attempt to make billions of dollars. So they'd like to keep some songs radio friendly. So they pretty much take to Dream Theater and say: "okay, do what you can do". And they said about "Falling Into Infinity": "This is the record that we want to make".

Talking about that eternal question of virtuosity versus accessibility, there're more styles present in that album going in different directions and a lot



from King's X. You got it?

You mean this is the most serious project?

Oh yeah, it's a serious project. We're all very excited about this, and will hopefully make money and even go on tour.

Talking about releases, LaBrie's old band Winter Rose album was released here in Europe. Some people find it strange that it's pure hard rock with the glam rock feel. How does James feel about this in case you know?

Yes. [Doing a "Pufffff..." heavy breathing] Well, it's as "it is what it is", you know. I never played in progressive bands before, you know. I was playing in Alice and Kiss. They're not progressive at all. So, everyone's got different backgrounds.

I wonder if you have had a chance to listen to any preview tape of the debut Chroma Key album of Kevin Moore, band's previous keyboardist?

No, I didn't hear any of this, I don't know.

I see. And what do you think of Kevin Moore's contribution on the latest Fates Warning album?

I don't, I don't like... [Laughs] I don't listen to Fates Warning, so I don't know anything about it.

What kind of music do you usually dig?

I really... I LOVED the new Marilyn Manson album.

Marilyn Manson?

Yeah, "Antichrist Superstar". I think

decadence in society message and so forth, the status of the US society, etc. I liked that, too. [Eating more peanuts] They're like the whole image: I like the sound, I like the whole... thing.

So you're personally fond of industrial music?

Hm, not really! I like really Nine Inch Nails. I like Marilyn Manson. I guess this is kind of rest. [Laughs] I like what he does, I like the sounds, it's fresh.

Experimental?

Experimental. It's fun. It's very cool.

I see. It's not the first time that I hear opinions like yours in the progressive field.

I really will be honest with you, I really

"It was obvious that the musicianship was incredible, but that's the way the songs were done, there were not enough American blues influences."

don't like a lot of noise.

I appreciate that you're honest in this aspect.

Yeah, I mean, like this all bands: Angra...

I see, very technical...

...Symphony X... I mean in some way all these people are spinning off Dream Theater. Yeah, everybody listens to it. I will be honest with you: if I was not in Dream Theater, I don't even know if I'd be a fan of them. That's weird! [Laughs]

That's pretty interesting I think.

Yeah, I don't know if I was into it.

Okay, talking more in depth about

less instrumental parts. Do you think "Falling into Infinity" is an album with which you might have won a point in accessibility?

Oh, we did. Because, first of all, there's a new member, who is on and brought totally other influences. And another thing is that the band is five years older. We're gonna write different things.

Do you know if your band mates are still in touch with the former vocalist Charlie Dominici?

Hm, I don't think so.

Aha. Well I didn't know beforehand I was going to talk to you, I will be honest with you at this, so I had



prepared these questions like more oriented to the rest of band members who have been for more years in the band.

Nah, that's okay, that's okay.

During this tour, maybe you have been composing or getting new ideas when rehearsing?

Yeah, like we've been writing in the band? Yeah, yeah. We have actually.

So, how about about the new songs? Can you point out any songs from "Falling Into Infinity" that would be the most close to the new material?
Hm. I can't. It's too hard.

Too hard to compare to...?
Yes, it's different.

As I said before, for a part of Dream Theater fans, the last album was a bit more generic in terms of sound. Compositions such as "Hollow Years" or, especially, "You Not Me", could seem good attempts targeted at Top 40. Some of your songs are better and no less accessible than some usual pop songs we hear on radio or see on TV everyday. Are you happy with the coverage you have been given in MTV and other mainstream stations in the US for instance?

No, we're definitely not. You got to leave or... First of all, America right now isn't playing any hard rock music, let alone progressive hard rock so, it's this rotund.

I personally think there's still a barrier present there for supporting anything with the "heavy music" label on. The fact that songs such as "Take Away My Pain" are very commercial, did it help somewhat?
Nope, we did write them hoping that it would, but it didn't.

So, were you possibly thinking about that when you were writing the album? ["That's a good one Greg, ha ha!" - Ed.]
[Pause] Hm, I mean. Do you think that...? Look: every band... I know fans that like the idea of the band staying very creative, too stuck or whatever, but we want to be HUGE! You know, we want to play at big stadiums, we want to...

...explode.
We want to EXPLODE man! What's every band's feel?

Talking about this, I wanted to comment you the opinion of an unknown musician who plays drums on a semi progressive metal band. I found this reading the Dream Theater mailing list yesterday night. "About writing music", this guy said "to sell more records, well, isn't that the point of being on a label? To sell records!!!!? You think bands get signed because of the talent? Fuck, no! It's all about how many records the company thinks they'll sell! It sucks, but it's true. And it's not 'selling out' to want to sell more records, it's common logic".
Yeah!!!

"And unless you realize that, you're gonna hate 'Falling into Infinity'". He then went on talking about "Falling

into Infinity", saying that, keeping that in mind, "it's a damn good album". He wrote how he "had learnt a lot drumwise from it", etc. Well, I think this is an interesting point of view. Do you think it's necessary to listen to "Falling into Infinity" with that fresh perspective?

Listening to EVERY music should be with fresh perspective. Everyone stayed [Pause] pinpointing that their first album they heard was "Images and Words", that they want EVERYTHING to sound like "Images and Words". For any band that you'd like, if you hear one album and that's the way you measure, that's what your expectations are. That's not really fair, is it? That's like if you had a girlfriend when you were 16 years old and she was great at bed, something just incredible. And then, every girl that you meet for the rest of your life, has to measure up till this: [Doing a sign with one hand on his chest] "Oh, but she didn't do this... like old Betsy Dockin when I was 16!" So, you know what I mean? [Laughs]

Yes. [Laughs] I guess it's a valid comparison.
That's not fair man! [More laughs] You got to treat each thing... FRESH.

Aha.
But I'm guilty of it too, I got to be honest. I was a huge Van Halen fan. With David Lee Roth. And when he left and they got Sammy Hagar, I was like... [Putting a face of disapproval]

Yeah, it happened the same to me.
I was like: I didn't want to listen to it! And now with the new guy, I'm even like: I don't want to hear it! Because I have...

Sort of prejudices, yeah. So you listened to the new stuff with Gary Cherone already.
Yeah, I don't like it. I really don't like it.

I see. They certainly don't sound the same as with David Lee Roth anymore.
You know. Oh, and now there's people who listen to Dream Theater now, who favored "Images and Words" and say "Oh, I don't like the way Derek plays or his influence in the band, I used to liked Kevin's". And then now there's people who just got into Dream Theater for the



first time, after "Falling into Infinity", and they go back and they listen to the old Dream Theater: "I don't like the style, it's too European, it's textures... I like this NEW sound". So, you know what I mean? You CAN'T PLEASE everybody.

That's right.
I wish you could, but I don't think there's anyone that pleases everybody.

And I think, from the musician's point of view, it's better to try stay aside of that when composing: not think "how to please most people possible".

To please yourself, yes. You got to please yourself. It's what the artist's feel is: and that's why people love Dream Theater, because Dream Theater has always done what they thought. And the audience sees that sincerity, and I think they appreciate it and buy the album. So we feel the songs we are writing after "Falling into Infinity" will become better songs.

LaBrie's voice has evolved in these last 3 three full-length studio albums. His addition to the band in "Images and Words" set a 'before' and an 'after' for Dream Theater in mine and in many fans' minds. A big step. Definitely!

On "Falling Into Infinity" album, the texture of his voice has continued with a not as powerful line as in "Images and Words", for instance.
Right.

For some fans, there's a stagnation in this aspect, in the sense of not



exploding all his vocal range. Would you agree on that? Or, for you, an attempt to sing as in "Images and Words" on a new album, and not to experience different vocal treatments, would be the REAL stagnation?
I don't think it's better: "I'd like him to sing up to that height, opera shit". It's like 80's: it's over.

And about vocal treatments, by electronic means, samplers, or whatever?
Hm, you know: sometimes. But I don't like that: I just don't like all the high-screaming vocals.

Yes, but you know James voice has a pretty wide range, and lately sometimes he seems to keep on singing on a more comfortable line instead of using all his vocal capabilities. Even used to do opera coaching.
That's great: I used to do classical studies, too, but you don't see me playing Bach! [Laughs] Do you know what I mean? It's not rock and roll.

Now that you mention it, tell us a bit about your theoretical studies and the background.
I studied classical, jazz. Five years at Berklee. Berklee College of Music.

I see. Same as Petrucci, Myung...?
Earlier though, a year earlier.

I didn't know that. How did you like the working with Desmond Child on "You Not Me" song?
I didn't work with him. And I really just played. John Petrucci wrote with him.

We talked earlier about Ty Tabor.
Yeah, what about it?

Apart from Ty who's immersed in the

project, the other member of King's X, Doug, worked with you adding background vocals on "Lines in the Sand" song. Tell us about this contribution.
Oh, Doug is GREAT! He came in with his vocals. Incredible. Very very fresh.

He added a bluesy soul shade to it. I personally liked that part.
Yeah, the result was very cool.

What do you think of the Internet?
I think it's great. I love the Internet. I think that e-mail was the best invent of the world. I love it.

Do you use it a lot then?
Yes, e-mail, I do. In fact my address in case anyone wants to write me is dsherman@aol.com.

So you use it for a correspondence with other musicians or...
Yeah, I mean: I use it for business mainly.

I see. By the way, the "Del Fulvio Monks" who appeared mentioned inside "Falling into Infinity" booklet, who are those "Del Fulvio Monks"?
"Del Fulvio Monks" did all the background vocals.

Who are they?
"Del Fulvio Monks" are me, Mike, and John Petrucci.

Which songs...?
Pretty much all the album. Most of... All over the record.

I see. It said "Del Fulvio Monks appear courtesy of..."
"...McGuiver records" [Laughs]

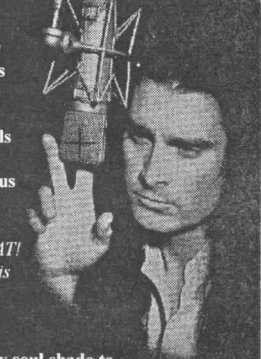
Like the serial?
Yeah. [Laughs]
[From here on I just ran out of questions that I thought could be suitable to Derek, because as you can probably judge from his answers, he was quite unexpressive and a bit distant to prog metal genre topics]

Okay. So I'd like to know what's the stuff you're more comfortable with playing on stage?
I can play, I play ANYTHING. I love the funk style. That's my favorite, funk style music. [Pause] Definitely.

Do you like the fusion parts, improvisations...?
Yes, absolutely.

This band gives you a lot of possibilities in that aspect, don't you think?
Yes!
[James LaBrie passes by with dishevelled puffed hair showing he has just got up from bed. Utters crow-like scream "Oh! Creeeeeeek!!!" at Derek and salutes: "How're you doin'?"]

Could we talk a



little now what part of Europe you've been so far?

Oh, we've been a lot in Germany, Scandinavia, Italy, France...

What part of the US you come from?
L.A.

Aha. I think it's quite different from a city like this and this culture.

Oh yes! And faster. "Muy rápido".
[Laughs]

So, as LA born and raised citizen, what does it mean for you personally to visit and get mixed with people of different cultures during these tours. How do you handle it?

Oh this is great! We love travelling and meeting different people, and seeing the different cultures. That's what makes our job exciting, and not just going to...

Routine?

Exactly. Yeah, it's great, we love it.

I have no more questions so, if you want we could talk...

[Standing up like his ass was on fire] Thank you! You're coming tonight? We'll see you then!

Okay, thank you Derek.

Getting out of the 70's: Thrash Metal Kings and Cuban Cigars

So, here our chat with Derek Sherinian was completed. In a while, James LaBrie finished his first promotional interview in the morning and joined the band's tour manager, Bill, and me, having a coke. As I said at the beginning of the article, the band had landed that same morning to Madrid from Granada, where they played in a 2-day festival called "Esparrago Rock". To let you get an idea of its orientation, Iggy Pop and Faith No More were the headliners on each respective day of the multitudinous event. Dream Theater played there for about one hour at a not very reasonable time, 5pm approximately. Anyway, the reaction from the crowd was positive, as some people close to the band would state later.

Well, the point is, when James came, we just had to laugh at what the top selling Spanish newspaper, "El Pais", had published after the first day of the festival. In relation to Dream Theater's forthcoming performance, the journalist had written the following: "(...) Today will be the turn of Dream Theater, former kings of trash metal". Wow. *Former kings of trash metal*, yeah sure. A quite incredible description, huh? It was funny to read something like that, as you can imagine, so we agreed that I would fax that press note to them someday if possible.

We then went on talking. While I tried to remember the names of some good local flamenco guitarists, other than Paco "de Lukia", Bill referred to Paco de Lucia. A cult personality; Bill seemed to be very interested in knowing more in depth about this genre of music, and new possible promising talents. I told him that the material in question wouldn't be too hard to find at some big music stores of the city. In fact, that same evening, the band was going to sign albums at one of those popular megastores, called "Madrid Rock". Days later, I was told that much more people than expected attended this happening, and the event resulted to be pretty chaotic and tiring for the organizers.

Once our cokes and peanuts supplies extinguished, Bill and James decided to go for a walk through the hotel nearby streets and search for a big shopping center. Bill said he was fond of quality Cuban cigars. I

will tell you that tobacco, in general, is really affordable in Madrid compared to other European cities like, say, London. I wrote them the translation for a tobacconist's shop ("estanco") on a piece of paper, and we farewelled outside the hotel, as we left on opposite directions. I went towards the closest subway station, they to a La Habana delegation. We would meet that night at the venue. Bill had kindly given me a preference for getting an after-show pass. So, before leaving the hotel, I asked July Green about it, and was given two of those laminated "Meet & Greet" passes. One for me, and a second one for my friend Monica, who together with me would attend to the show. Without planning it much, everything that morning had definitely gone on a swing.

Personal Experience of the Show

Job duties at Canon lasted that day from 16:00 to 20:00, just as usual. Later, taking my tie out, I rushed towards a centric McDonalds which would serve Monica and me as a meeting point. This way, while she took command behind the steering wheel, I searched on a road map for the proper highway exit, and we finally got to "Sala Canciller" venue after 30-35 minutes or so. It was not easy to find the place, but we managed, what the hell. Rows of people were entering already, so we wouldn't be in time for that "Meet & Greet" July Green had talked about, as it seemed. Anyway, as we passed the control at the entrance (no problems for getting our camera inside, by the way), we were told that the event had been postponed till after the show.

Walking downstairs, we could hear how the show openers, Ruddess & Morgenstein, were finishing their performance. Crowd was clapping with enthusiasm. A pity we missed it, because I was told seeing these two veteran musicians (only keyboards and drums present on stage) was quite a spectacle. When Dream Theater's turn came, they developed a very complete and intense set list, during nearly two hours. Instrumental transitions from song to song became a constant, especially at the time they faced themes like "A Change of Seasons" as encore. A really potent show. After the gig, we waited there for people to come out of the "Canci", until only a couple of dozens of fans, invited from various local radio contests, fanclubs, etc. remained. The stage was being unmounted quite rapidly, as Barcelona would be the next stop of their tour journey in less than 24 hours. July Green then appeared, looking a bit nervous for having so many people there waiting for the band. Since that moment, Monica and me preferred to stay at a more background position, and went to sit down somewhere a bit apart from that bustle, where we could stay more relaxed, interfering as little as possible.

A few minutes later, tour manager Bill showed up and we shook hands saluting again. He asked if I had been finally given passes and kindly filled my friend's name in a special sticker in case she was not added in any list. A very nice person, as you can see. When I left the hotel that morning, I had the following idea: getting some cigars (affordable ones for my pocket, of course) for this man, as sort of a little present. From the job I previously called Monica and asked her if she could go to a normal tobacconist she might know, buy there a small box, and we would pay it together. She thought it was a good idea, too, and that's what we did. Bill, in fact, commented on how he and James hadn't found any good cigars at the shopping center they went to. "The cigars had not been kept dry in a proper place", he said, sounding pretty much like an expert "tobacco gourmet". Therefore, this became all a surprise for him, and he thanked us warmly when Monica handed him that little box from the

Dominican Republic. Smelling the stuff, Bill solemnly concluded: "This is GOOD material". It was easy to read in his smile he was really happy about it. Our pleasure. July Green then joined us and we talked there for some more time about Spanish wines and things like that. Meanwhile, a few band members (James, Mike) started to come out from the backstage area in order to meet the fans. Well, the opening act for Dream Theater on this tour was, as I said before, a project of an original conception, headed by Rod Morgenstein (drums) and Jordan Rudess (keyboards), both ex-Dixie Dregs members. What happened then was, Bill asked us a little favour: to explain a crew member of Ruddess & Morgenstein the way to get out from there by car to a certain place where they were lodged. Sure. So, Bill called this Japanese man, named Kosaku, and we tried to describe him which, from our point of view, was the best way to get to the highway. However, after some talking with him, we realized that the place where their hotel was located was actually very close to the place we used to hang out at weekends: sort of a disco called "El Plantio", which we knew quite well.

Therefore, we suggested him: "What if you'd follow our car?". He said: "Great!". And that was it: no need to look at road map books anymore. For the moment. We then took some photos with Derek Sherinian and John Petrucci. Together with Satriani, Petrucci represented the paradigm of a guitar idol for Monica, so she couldn't hide all that admiration, bringing out pretty much excitement when we asked him to pose for a second. Kosaku then came again, and introduced us to Rod and Jordan. Faces which I honestly hadn't seen before. Well, I barely remembered Rod, who played drums on Winger years ago, but nothing else. There, at this point, we could talk for awhile to smiling Mr. Morgenstein. A nice character. He told me his opinion about the tribute that Dream Theater somehow had paid the Dixie Dregs on "A Change of Seasons" EP, saying "it was quite an honor". And it surprised me a little the fact that, a musician of his long trajectory, answered in so humble way. He then went on telling us the crazy experience of arriving to the club: more than two hours were spent for a distance of 20 Kms from their hotel. Rod mentioned how, as time of the beginning of the show was coming close, they finally had to ask help at a police station to get here. Even their cab driver didn't know the right path! Quite incredible. Anyway, we soon left apart that sad anecdote and spent some funny moments when Rod commented he had taken some Spanish lessons at school. Suddenly he started to speak very quickly the typical academic phrases like: "Hola amigo! Como estas? Muy bien. Todo y todo." etc., etc. We burst out in laughs because of his

records, thanking her for everything, and we left towards our cars, flanked by Kosaku and the two musicians. Once outside the venue, we came across with Derek, so we stopped briefly and said goodbye, while the space man from the 70's was penetrating into their tour bus. Monica's car was a bit far from the club, so they waited for us at one traffic sign. We then went back to that place and Kosaku's car followed us for the next half an hour or so.

As a funny anecdote, I will finally tell you something that happened because we were totally unexpert about how to get out of that place, let's say, "efficiently". We sure knew the highway number we had to take, but the problem was getting it in the right direction: in a way that we wouldn't have to make extra kilometers. Now we had some responsibility behind with Kosaku, Rod, and Jordan. What happened was, as our car was going inside a roundabout, just after leaving "Sala Canciller" venue, we expected to take a bypass towards the airport, because that had been the direction we had come from earlier. But then, in the middle of this process, I glimpsed a different sign from the airport's which clearly reported: "N-VI", which was the right road for us. So, as we were inside the roundabout already, we had to do like a SECOND turn a la Mr. Bean, in order to get that unforeseen exit (I don't know why, but Mr. Bean in his Mini Cooper, doing the stupid superfluous circle we were doing, was the only person who came to my mind).

We laughed trying to imagine what Kosaku and company could be thinking behind us in their car, after that "confident" maneuver. Well, anyway, we finally managed to get the N-VI bypass, and we went on, not much convinced at first, with our path. After those moments of uncertainty, we finally left the strange land, and the scenery commenced to be familiar. We took the right exit and just let the car go its way as if we were heading to the pub in question, on a usual weekend's night. We couldn't fail now! And, yes indeed, we got there.

Their hotel was close to that place, so we parked the car aside the lane. I got out of it and said Kosaku this was "La Florida" zone they were looking for. Smiling openly from the car, they nodded saying they did know how to get to their hotel from there. "Hey, this was a good drive, huh?", Rod mentioned. Well, I tried to explain him how we had just surrounded the city center, instead of crossing it. In fact, I think we, unintentionally but, successfully at the end, ended up choosing the best and quickest path. "Hey man, you saved us! We NEVER would have managed to get here safe!". Afterwards, Monica and I told them, how just some meters ahead from where we were standing, there was the club, of which we were sort of regular customers. "That should have been our inspiration to find the right

"For any band that you'd like, if you hear one album and that's the way you measure, that's what your expectations are. That's not really fair, is it?"

spontaneous performance. Then I would reply: "OK, that was lesson one Rod. Now lesson two: what's your name?", Como te llamas?". And he would answer: "Me... llamo... RODRIGO!" (Equivalent name for Rod in Spain). "OK. End of lesson two. Now lesson three...", and so forth. He had told us before how it was kind of frustrating for him to be in a foreign country, and not being able to talk fluently and express freely. But actually, I think Rod's mimic gestures and this explosive loquacity could be more than enough to communicate. Not only here - anywhere on this planet! Simply hilarious.

Kosaku then called us: a time to leave. We said bye to Petrucci, who was at our back ("You're the burning guitar man!", Rod told him). I hugged Lucy Green from East West

way". We all laughed there. Rod then showed us the place they had lunch at that day. Sort of "Magic Lobster" post was perfectly visible. Wow.

And we didn't talk for much more. The night was cold. They gave us their CD as a present, we took a photo with them there as a souvenir, and then they signed our tickets. Later at the Seven Eleven store we stopped for a coffee, I could read a "Thank you so much" written on it. We farewelled these people with a quite pleasant feeling behind. It was around 2:30 am already, and guardian dogs from a chalet situated inches from our car started barking not very friendly. We skipped any eventual running-away-from-dobermann-jaws chapter and left this place without thinking much. Intense enough day it had been.

extreme metal and related

thrash, death, doom, atmospheric, black, grind,
hardcore, industrial-metal

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Nifelheim
Necropolis Records
Tyrant, Demon, and Hellbutcher are the names of three guys who present the second album of theirs. They play old-wave black metal in the veins of Venom and Destruction mixed with speed metal and, as the label says, with strong Brazilian influence. The latter statement is doubtful enough, and I can ensure that nothing that wasn't found in the music in 1985 is present here. No innovative ideas, no modern flirting with other styles. The renewal of the 80's is going at a full pace. (AO) 2 3/4

NILE

Amongst the Catacomb of Nephren-Ku
Relapse Records
It's commonly used to hear various ethnic interludes in black metal, gothic, or other genres, but death metal remained to be conservative enough in this aspect. But South Carolina's Nile incorporate a lot of ancient Sumerian philosophy and Egyptian music. Technical and brutal death metal is supported by these folk melodies and Eastern motifs, and it makes me wonder, perhaps death metal has begun to move from its steady and dead position. This album will surely please all fans of brutal music. Nile haven't lost their heaviness or brutality due to the outside influences. I am glad to see an innovative and young band to join the brutal Relapse family. (AO) 3 3/4



NOKTURNAL MORTUM

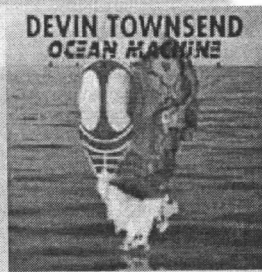
Goat Horns
The End Records
Concerning Nokturnal Mortum from Ukraine, The End Records chose the same strategy as for Mental Home. Namely, to release an old album first, and after several months, put out a new one. "Goat Horns" was released in 1996 on tape and most of Baltic/Ex-USSR dark metal fans should be familiar with it. Anyway, even if released in 1996 this album would make a bigger effect, it is still interesting nowadays being superior than average black metal products. Yes, the style is melodic black metal, and some distinct features are the extensive use of keyboards (Nokturnal Mortum have two keyboard players) and folk music elements giving some playfulness. No banalisms though. (GS)
[Nokturnal Mortum, PO Box 8622, Kharkov, 310144 Ukraine] 4

OBLIVEON

Whimsical Uproar EP
Red Stream Records
Three songs, originally recorded in 1987, now are finally available on CD. I think the fact that more than ten years have passed certainly reflects in the music, which is retro thrash in the veins of Kreator and Sodom. These three songs sound like one of the mentioned bands would record their tracks in an underground studio. However, this

OCEAN MACHINE

Biomech
HevyDevy Records/USG
The restless Devin Townsend, once a singer in "Sex & Religion" album of Steve Vai, once a member of The Wildhearts, now the mastermind of Strapping Young Lad, has founded yet another project. This time again he delivers different music. Ocean Machine reflects Devin's wide musical taste: here you may find the rocking drive of U2 and some recent MTV-featured bands, the mellow heaviness of The Gathering, and the richness of sound that is characteristic to ambient style. The music is certainly too obscure and weird for MTV, but too light for Strapping Young Lad maniacs. Therefore some difficulties with a target audience may be predicted, but, at the same time, Ocean Machine can be appreciated by many. In general, it is melodic rock/metal music, unique in its ambient-style wrapping shield and a big variety of sounds and effects used. Devin sings in normal mild, occasionally aggressive, mid-range to high voice which fits well to, in general, multidimensional music. The band name perfectly match the music. (GS)
[\$15 (USA), \$18 (elsewhere), HevyDevy Records, PO Box 44116, Burnaby, BC, V5B 4Y2, Canada] 4



release is dedicated to those who are looking for this rare release of this Canadian band or feel a nostalgia to thrash metal, leather and chains. Musically, it's worth of an attention only from a historical point of view. (AO) 3

ONE KING DOWN/SPIRIT OF YOUTH split EP

Good Life Recordings
Two hardcore bands on one CD. The first one comes from USA and offers us two tracks in the best straight edge style. Spirit Of Youth is (according to info) Belgium's oldest hardcore band. Their songs are varied and come bright over so I like this band more than One King Down. Recommended for fans of the style but not particularly advisable for "Edge Of Time" makers and readers. (SV)
[Good Life Recordings, PO Box 114, 8500 Kortrijk, Belgium] [One King Down, 45 109th Street, Troy, NY 12182, USA] [Spirit Of Youth, Papieringerstraat 28, 8954 Westouter, Belgium] 3 and 3 1/4

OPERA IX

Sacro Culto
Shiver Records
After their debut full-length "The Call of the Wood" in 1995 which was sold in more than 5,000 copies, Opera IX got a cult-status. After three years, Opera IX make another step, which is a logical prolongation of their debut. While the main structure remains almost the same, 6 songs on "Sacro Culto" are played much more professionally and the sound is much clearer. Maybe this time songs have got a bit epic character (only one of them lasts less than 10 minutes). The basic style you can attribute the new Opera IX to is black metal, all the riffs here are made in the traditional black metal manner, but symphonic atmospheres are added and songs like "The Naked and the Dance" also contain folk melodies. And the main thing here is highly expressive voice of Cadavaria, combining both the beauty and the energy, she shouts, cries, and sings. I'd dare to say that Opera IX would be almost nothing without her. So, "Sacro Culto" is a clear step forward, but anyway the feeling is that they could do better and that their potential is bigger than they have expressed with this album. (AO) 4

OXIPLEGATZ

Sidereal Journey
Season of Mist
It's the third Oxiplegatz release and the man behind this group is

Alf Svensson, who has written most of the music for The Grotosque and At The Gates early albums. This disc is one of the most interesting concept albums I've heard in months. 33 short but meaningful tracks take you through various musical and emotional worlds. The depression and the happiness go hand in hand here, and what's to speak about musical styles, they vary from gothic, doom, electronic, progressive, black, art rock, and much more. Almost each new piece in this disc presents another style. In one place, the music can be alike In The Woods, in another similar to The Gathering or At The Gates. A great variety of instruments was used here, too. All this makes this album nearly perfect, but it can be absorbed best when listening to it from the very beginning to the very end, because regardless of various styles, "Sidereal Journey" carries one main atmosphere. (AO)
[Seasons of Mist, 24 rue Brandis, 13005 Marseille, France] 4 1/4

PARAGON OF BEAUTY

The Spring
Prophecy Productions
Today, when most of doom metal bands moved to another styles and we almost don't have pure music of this style with traditional structure and good-old elements not mixed with gothic rock, it's good to find an exception like this. Paragon of Beauty's music is in the veins of Solitude Aeternus and other grands of emotional, romantic doom metal. They have also incorporated new things, e.g., some black metal influences may be detected. As always in such style, the vocals are quite significant, and here Paragon of Beauty really makes a profit because their singer has a very theatrical and expressive voice. For a debut, it's a really good album. (AO)
[Prophecy Productions, Postfach 1469, 54504 Wittlich, Germany] [Paragon of Beauty, Tati Seibert, Kroemerstr. 75, 66578 Schifflweiler, Germany] 4

RACIAL ABUSE

What Mirrors Conceal EP
Good Life Recordings
A 6-song CD of Austrian band, which was formed only in 1995, but already has three CDs in their history and

established a good name in the HC scene. As almost all hardcore bands, this one also deals with the politics and social problems. More precisely, this time the topics are letter-bombs that nazis are sending to Austria and laziness of the police. Those in the hardcore scene who also care about the music should also like this EP, because it offers strong and powerful music in the veins of Liar and similar acts. I haven't heard their previous CDs, but it is said that the band is going towards heavier direction. (AO)
[Racial Abuse, Tauss Bergen 606, 7534 Olbendorf, Austria] 3 1/2

RAGNAROK

Arising Realm
Head Not Found
Well, this one isn't original either, I agree, but how well it's done! One of the best pieces of straight and aggressive black metal. Though having some folk melodies and the atmospheric feeling, this is a non-compromise music. I guess this should satisfy all blackers who like "true" black metal, as an opposite to a more melodic branch of this style. Anyway, Ragnarok are one of the bands that lets their art rage to go out. (AO) 4 1/4

RAISM

Aesthetic Terrorism
Osmose Productions
Some years ago, Diabolos Rising established themselves as one of the most interesting groups in dark/electro metal field. The time has changed, as the name of this band, and "Aesthetic Terrorism" brings us the new chapter of electronic apocalypse. This time, Raism mixed even more different styles, including danceable dancefloor rhythms, industrial music, and metal. Opener "Survival of the Fittest Scum" presents fast and heavy industrial, the second track, "Survival of the Fittest Scum" is almost traditional jungle you heard in discos some years ago, while the third track, "Aesthetic Terrorism" is much more metallic. And so the diversity continues throughout. Some tracks on this album will please techno fans, and such songs as "Negative" should appeal to atmospheric metal fans. (AO) 4

REINCARNATION

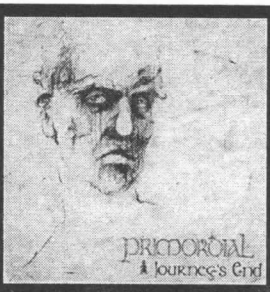
Void
Repulse Records
"Europe is becoming too melodic, but Reincarnation are going the opposite way!", claims the presentation sheet, and we know what to expect. Yes, brutal death metal, this time of the American way. All brutality is a bit weakened by the poor production. No novelties, just an answer to Pyrexia. (AO) 3

THE ROCKING DILDOS

Horny Hit Parade
Osmose Productions
Punk rock from France. According to the info, The Rocking Dildos are the breath of fresh air in today's politically correct boring society. I think we heard that a thousand times but never believed in. "Horny Hit Parade" contains 20 songs, is well-produced, and has a resemblance to Tankard's "Chemical Invasion". Since I am not a punk, I can't add anything more to this. (SV) 3

ROTTEN SOUND

Under Pressure
Repulse Records
Those angry kids from Finland really kick asses! Crust/grindcore at its fastest, most aggressive way. 22 songs of pure hate, kicking, shouting, beating, etc. Straight



PRIMORDIAL
Journey's End
Misanthropy Records
 Misanthropy seems to take over the other-label bands that already have successful albums. After releasing the excellent album of ex-Candlelight's Beyond Dawn, they put out the second album of Primordial, who released their debut "Imrama" on Cacophonous. Both these bands have a common component that can be described as the dark nature; one of the songs of "Journey's End" is even called "Dark Song". And, as in the case of Beyond Dawn, this album doesn't fall into one narrow style. It opens with almost atmospheric/black song "Graven Idol", but then continues with "Dark Song", which shows another face of Primordial, namely, ethnic influences, acoustic guitar-driven melodies, and a sad romanticism. The ethnic touch remains on all the subsequent tracks as well, and reaches its peak in "On Aisteur Deirneach". Maybe there are not many bands to compare Primordial with, but (current) In The Woods... is surely one of the names you can think of. Stylistically, Primordial are also influenced by black metal ("Bitter Harvest") and My Dying Bride type of sad metal. (AO)
 4 1/4

and powerful, it's namely for you if you want something giving more energy than traditional brutal death. Well, in the second half of the album guys begin to repeat themselves, but at least the first 10 songs are okay. (AO)
 3 1/2

ROTTING HEAD
Backwardness
Shockwave Records
 If you play death/grind metal, you have to spread such hate and anger that listener wouldn't have any doubts about that afterwards. Otherwise you end up being shallow and boring propagator of one of the most outplayed subgenres of metal. The debut album of Polish Rotting Head falls in between. It still doesn't have the passion of Dismember, Brutal Truth, Vader, or Strapping Young Lad, but delivers a solid punch of not-that-low-tuned but damn brutal metal of death. Parental advisory: recommended for extreme metal kids only. (GS)
 [\$20, Shockwave Records, Res. Medicis, Bat A-No. 20, 2 Impasse J.Gabin, 31700 Blagnac, France]
 3

SACRILEGE
The Fifth Season
Black Sun Records
 These days, when you hear that one more band from Sweden recorded their album in Fredman studios, Gothenburg, your heart probably does not begin to beat faster. Black Sun Records do their best to overflow the scene with Gothenburg-style melodic death metal bands, Sacrilege are one of them. Their

second album "The Fifth Season" is tight, focused, enough brutal and enough melodic, but the conclusion is that the band is a bit late: In Flames, At The Gates, Dark Tranquillity did this before. OF COURSE, the famous point "I love Helloween and I want many bands like Helloween!" is valid, so fans of the style should be happy with "The Fifth Season". On the other hand, all those now considered Gothenburg scene leaders have some albums that, if released today, wouldn't be considered very original. But they managed to push style boundaries further in their later works. Let's see where Sacrilege will take it next time. (GS)
 [Sacrilege, c/o Daniel Dinsdale, Backstigen 2, S-43494 Vallda, Sweden]
 3 1/2

SADNESS
Evangelion EP
Mystic Production
 This new EP contains 4 new songs and 3 re-mastered tracks. The new songs have almost nothing common with the earlier stuff of this Swiss band, they show Sadness to become the most rocky in their history, and, at the same time, the most theatrical. "Mr. Faust" is almost a performance-type song with influences of Misanthropy, horror theatre, gothic rock, but it stands far away from their almost legendary debut album. The ones who still hope to hear the prolongation of the debut should be finally disappointed, because sad romantic metal is gone and replaced by theatrical metal. Well, examples like Arcturus show that it can be successful, but Sadness haven't reached this level here. I doubt if it will be ever done, because it was said that the new material will differ quite much from this EP. (AO)
 [Mystic Production, Ul. Okuska 8, 32-043 Skala, Poland]
 3 3/4

SAMAEL
Exodus EP
Century Media Records
 "Exodus" presents typical Samael material: mid-tempo catchy and loud atmospheric metal with good riffs and keyboards. Techno/industrial approach becomes visible, e.g., in "From Malkuth to Kether". "Winter Solstice" is probably the most memorable track, built around an eerie and beautiful keyboard melody. "Exodus" gracefully bridges the gap between "Passage" and the forthcoming Samael album, slaking the thirst of Samael fans, who should also consider getting Xytras in their hands (see review). (GS)
 3 3/4

SANZIA
You Whirl Within It
Dark Past Productions
 It's another band on Dark Past Productions, and it leaves a much better impression than Mindcollapse (see review). Sanzia from Sweden play an interesting mixture of power and thrash, and this album contains some really pleasant moments, for example, in tracks like "Haunted" or "Words". The vocals are melodic, a bit rough, and remind me of Warrel Dane (Sanctuary/ Nevermore) or Blitz from Overkill. Solid guitar work and tight rhythm section make this album an interesting experience, although the highlights are absent. (SV)
 [Dark Past Productions, P.O.Box 2082, 291 02 Kristianstad, Sweden]
 3 1/2

SEA OF TRANQUILLITY/PAX MORTIS
Dead of Winter/Defiant split
Cursed
 The brutality rules. Both bands play professional, brutal death metal and... why not? If you aren't bored with traditional death metal, you can bravely try them both. Pax Mortis even include some elements of doom metal, clear voices, and keyboards - a step forward. Unfortunately, I can't say the

same about Sea Of Tranquillity, but both bands surely aren't the worst in the scene. (AO)
 [Cursed, P.O.Box 302, Elkhart, IN 46515-0302, USA]
 3 1/2



SKEPTICISM
Ethere EP
Red Stream Records
 After the successful debut "Stormcrowfleet", Skepticism go even further into the fields of depression and sadness. This 3-track EP offers you so-called "funeral doom", which is a combination of primitive doom, ambient-scapes, and melancholic vibrations. Maybe this is the most torturing piece of melancholy to enter the new year. No hope, no light, no place to hide, no thoughts about the better end. Just nothing. Monotonous, rhythmic sounds erase everything and there is nothing left. Wait for the full-length album "Lead and Aether" for a total self-isolation. (AO)
 4 1/4

SOILENT GREEN
A String Of Lies EP
Relapse Records
 Relapse has far better releases. I don't know what does this label need such bands as Soilent Green for? I'm quiet not sure whether this band will sell many records. There are thousands of brutal death/grind/noise acts out there. Even if Soilent Green scatter riffs a la Crowbar here and there, it doesn't help either. I don't know why such bands very often release EPs? To earn money or maybe to shorten time till the next EP? (SV)
 2

SOULGRIND
Whitsongs
Icarus
 One thing you cannot blame this album for is the lack of diversity. Soulgrind mix black, folk, doom, traditional heavy

metal, gothic, and more. One song differs from another so much that you almost think that you listen to different bands. "Whitsongs" is based on poems written by Eino Leino, which deal with dark emotions of northern life. All this album is aimed to be a kind of realization of these feelings. To make the long story short, it's emotional folk metal with orchestral arrangements and often-used female vocals. But don't be surprised if an unexpected traditional heavy/doom track breaks in... Who can decide whether it's good or bad, but for me such breaks sometimes destroy the mood created by the previous tracks and sound a little bit unmotivated. For black metal fans, "Whitsongs" may seem not angry enough and lacking power, but, emotionally, it's much more diverse than the most of black metal albums. Anyway, I miss the main point and have got a feeling of an album composed of different fragments. (AO)
 [Soulgrind, Kytosuontie 8,C35, 00300 Helsinki, Finland]
 3 1/4

STAHLTRAGER
Demo-CD 97
self-released
 A four-song demo CD, only for fans of traditional German thrash metal, i.e., Sodom, Kreator, etc. Very old-school like, and these guys don't hide the fact that they are orientated to the old-riffing sound, it just makes me wonder why the stagnation is so common these days. All the schemes, riffs, the manner of playing song themes, everything seems like the world has stopped evolving in 1989. The vocals slightly remind of the modern hardcore style, but the forthcoming album "Thorax" will present their new singer, which, as I understand, sings in the old thrashy way. (AO)
 [Stahltraeger, Weinbergstr. 18, 42553 Velbert, Germany]
 3 1/4

SWORDMASTER
Deathraider EP
Osmose Productions
 When buying this disc on CD, you get it as a 5-song MCD, while the LP version contains 7 songs. I have a MCD and I can describe the music as thrash/death metal with black metal influences. Mainly inspired by Kreator and Sodom. The guitar solos remind me of heavy/speed masters, as well as of Gothenburg scene. Swordmaster also included a cover of Roky Erickson And The Aliens "Stand for the Fire Demon", performed in melodic black metal way. Rock n'rollish rhythms make it easy to listen to this album, and I imagine it should be good live. (AO)
 3 3/4

THEATRE OF TRAGEDY
Aegis
Massacre Records
 The long-awaited third album by the Norwegian masters of gothic metal is certainly full of sensibility, feeling, and soul: "Aegis", during its 8 tracks, gifts the listener a countless succession of great soundscapes, making again good use of Liv Kristine exceptional vocal talent. On songs such as "Venus" or "Siren", her voice even meanders into a world of folk/celt influences, sometimes reminding me of great performers of that style like the same Loreena McKenitt. A frequent use of subtle background guitars and special programming effects give the album an original edge, a blend of the emotion present in, for instance, that superb Darkstar instrumental disc with some Southern Death Cult sonic charge. Other tracks like "Loerle", "Bacchante", or the first single "Cassandra", are examples of how the band attacks a piece with many kinds of different textures, cleverly emphasizing melodies with the vocal female/male duet. Imagination behind the music and the Gothic imagery at its presentation are only a part of what Theatre of Tragedy offer. Your turn to discover and wholly experience it. (GM)
 4 3/4



How did you get in touch with Goldtrack?

I sent our demos to Lucky at Repulse Records not knowing that they dealt only with extreme metal, and at the time, I was writing to Antonio from a band called Tempter who knows Lucky and his girlfriend Noelia personally. I'd told Antonio we were going into the studio to record a self-financed album. He wrote back to tell me Lucky and Noelia had plans to start their own label so they could choose bands they liked from different styles of metal. He told me that they were interested in hearing our new material as they had liked the previous demos.

When they heard out the album, we more or less went straight into negotiations with them. We had a couple of interests at this time, but Goldtrack was by far the best offer. They are really working hard for us and we are pleased with the way things are moving. With us signing to a new label, we are pushed into the foreground. If we had signed to a major label and there wasn't big sales immediately, you kind of get forgotten because they put their money into the big sellers. So it's better to start this way, we will grow as the label grows and vice versa.

Your music sounds like a mixture of progressive, power, and doom metal. What bands had an influence on Seer's Tear?

It's a combination of a lot of things because each member of the band listens to different styles of music and yet there's also bands that we all like. For instance, we all listen to Psychotic Waltz, Rush, Jethro Tull, Frank Zappa, David Bowie, Fates Warning, Black Sabbath, early Iron Maiden, and Yes. Individually, Richard Hartley and I are the ones who listen to the more modern metal, i.e., Coal Chamber, Fear Factory, C.O.C., although Richard Hartley is a bit of a stoner doom head, Fu Manchu, Kyuss, and that type of thing. It's Seer's Tear what kind of introduced him to progressive music which he's now getting into.

Carl was introduced to progressive rock through Richard Beaumont and myself. Before he met us, he was, and still is, listening to bands like Free, Led Zeppelin, Deep Purple, Jimi Hendrix, Motorhead, and Judas Priest. Now he's much more open minded and this has improved his bass playing no end. Simon, I think, gives us an edge because he doesn't take that much influence from heavy metal, apart from being a big Iron Maiden, Kiss, and Ozzy fan. He listens to The Beatles (a lot), Prince, Jimi Hendrix, folk music, rhythm & blues, and a lot of soul music, even pop music like Blur and Pulp.

Richard Beaumont is the jazz man. He's the one that taught us all about music against the grain. He listens to Chic Corea, Dave Weckl, Yes, ELP, Rush, Frank Zappa, Asia, Billy Cobham, and King Crimson. Through the 80's, he went through a period of death metal/hardcore, i.e., Slayer, Cryptic Slaughter, and Macabre. These were all bands that had good drummers and, more recently, I have introduced him to the likes of Fates Warning and Psychotic Waltz. To be honest, I don't think anyone knows what he does for easy listening! Actually, I think it's classical music.

I myself am the one into the modern progressive stuff, Fates Warning, Psychotic Waltz, Conception, Lethal,

Digital Ruin, Auditory Imagery, Divine Regale, Queensryche, Rush, WatchTower, and Tool. Through the 80's, I was completely heavy metal mad. Anything that had harmonious heavy guitar I was into it, Sword, Armoured Saint, Savatage, King Diamond, everything from Black Sabbath to Tesla to Slayer to Guns n'Roses to Anacrusis. I still love that stuff but I'm a lot more open minded, being a singer, I like to listen to more singers now, i.e., Sinead O'Connor, Des'ree, Seal, Steve Bolsamo, Elvis Presley, Simon & Garfunkel, and June Tabor.

Richard Beaumont has introduced me to

band?

Yes, England doesn't go hand in hand with our style of music at all. You have to go back to the 70's for the term progressive to be acceptable in this country.

This is because people here listen to whatever is pushed down their throats, whatever's trendy in other words. Bands coming out here are the same; they just jump on the bandwagon. That would be easy for us to do but there's no satisfaction from writing that stuff. We're not in it for the quick buck. We'd love to make money from it and be able to give up the day jobs, but we don't purposely

line up. We're into what we are doing and I think it would be tough to replace any member of the band as of now, but, like I say, we're happy doing what we do now. I can't see it changing line-up wise.

I am not familiar with your demos. How many songs from these two tapes did you use for your album? Was it complicated to make the right choice?
We used just "A Chronicle of a Destiny" from the demos because it was a song we'd always liked and it fitted with the concept. We wrote the new part on the end (Tense Past) and it became very fitting to the album.

SEER'S TEAR

A Gathering of Separate Styles

[by Sigita Velyvis]

The combination "prog rock - UK" is a usual thing, but what about prog metal? I can't remember any good band of this style from England. As Seer's Tear visited Lithuania and played live here, I couldn't catch on straightaway what a cool band it was. Some months ago I got the promo copy of their debut CD "Precious" from Goldtrack Records. Suddenly I realized that it was one of the best prog metal releases in 1998 so far.

Formed in August 1993 by Mark Stojsavljevic (vocals, ex-Solstice) and Richard Beaumont (drums), as time went on, they recorded 2 demos which tended towards doom metal. Later on they got rid of those elements partially. It was March 1997, as Seer's Tear entered Academy studios in Dewsbury for 3 weeks and recorded their debut "Precious" which was later released by Spanish label Goldtrack. It's high time for a conversation with singer Mark Stojsavljevic.



the likes of jazz and fusion. I also listen to things like Jah Wobble, Talk Talk, Peter Gabriel, Tears for Fears, and Talking Heads.

So you see, there's a lot to take things from. We'd like to think we don't have any boundaries. Of course, we'll always be considered a heavy metal band because we have a tuned down distorted guitar sound, but all the aforementioned bands and music styles will not be ruled out. I think we'll become even more diverse on future recordings. We are still maturing and progressing as a band, and what we're trying to do is capture something totally weird, yet, catchy. A sound, not underground but not commercially viable either, just a sound that is fresh and unique as Seer's Tear. Each member has their own influences and the music that they like and there's music that we all like collectively. I suppose we kind of throw it all in the rehearsal room pot, so to speak, mix it up, and the end product is Seer's Tear. A diverse form of prog rock/metal.

England and progressive metal are two incompatible things. Didn't you feel like outsiders in this land? Isn't it hard for Seer's Tear to stick together as a

set out to write music for money, that's a game of luck and, at the end of the day, if you start on a bandwagon, you'll die with it, too. We're in it to enjoy trying to create a unique sound and maybe one day we will become pioneers of a sound that will create a bandwagon of its own. Then England will have to come to us. At present though, there's not enough money in the promotions of progressive music to push it down the throats of people, or sheep should I say, in England, so it stays underground. So yeah, we feel like we are on our own, but we earn a lot of respect from bands in England for doing the things we do, and we know there's an audience in the rest of the world. So it doesn't bother us as for staying together. The whole thing of experimenting with music and bringing the best out of each individual member of the band and knowing we have a potential keeps us together. Knowing our capabilities tells us it's so early a stage for the band, there's so much ground to explore musically, it would be a sin to let a member go or to leave the band. We did go through line-up changes early on, and that was effectively because of our style, but I think we've found form in our present

Richard Beaumont wanted to record "Answer Me" and I was really pleased with the lyrics on "A Brave Seasons End" but apart from "A Chronicle of a Destiny", the music on the demos isn't up to the standard we're playing now. We play "A Brave Seasons End" live, but when we have enough material, we'll dump everything from the demos except "A Chronicle of a Destiny".

The length of the CD is 36 minutes. Couldn't you record 1-2 songs more?

We self financed the album recording and didn't have a big enough budget. The song "A Brave Seasons End" nearly went on it, but we didn't risk it because of the time our money bought. We struggled to record 36 minutes on our time we had. We didn't get to do everything we planned. Next time will be better and hopefully a bigger budget and longer album?

Because the album is a little short, there is talk of recording a few songs for a kind of single/EP in the Autumn to bridge the gap to the second album. There will be one new song and two new versions of "Ghosts". One will be an experiment. We are going to lift everything off the drums and turn it into a dance/industrial song. The other will be the same with newer vocals and a remix. Then we are going to cover a Yes song, either "Release" or "Don't Kill the Whale". It's all an experiment musically for us that we think people into Seer's Tear would like to hear. It will also prove that we can push down the barriers. We want to record the second album in the summer of 1999 and for people who thought the first album was too short, this will be a stop gap. It's going to be around October, but, at the moment, we are toying with the idea. Nothing's concrete yet.

Are your demos still available?

Not really, no. We don't have any of the original sleeves left, and we don't want to spend money into them. We can do a combined format with a black and white sleeve, but it's hardly recommended. We want to press on with promotions for the album. If people do want them, they can write for more info at my address, and I can make copies, but they are not good examples of where Seer's Tear is at in 1998. They have helped us at the time and were good back then, but we've stopped promoting them.

Tell me about the lyrics to each song.

OK, how much room have we got left? Well, "Precious" is a concept album. It's about asking yourself 'what is precious to you?' and 'how are you precious to others?' A lot of it possibly exploits where I was at the time of writing the lyrics. A lot of it is from experience and personal, but when I look at it, it's general and I would say just about anybody can relate to them, be it on a much larger or smaller scale.

It looks at grim reality, but the outcome is a totally positive one. First, I'll take you through how the artwork fits in.

If you look at the front sleeve, it's like one big nightmare. It's death, it's dark, but there's a window and the logo represents a window to which it takes you into the booklet that goes through metamorphic stages representing indecision, life, dreams, day and night, death, and, in the end, it finishes on life in its most simplistic form, a flower.

With the reverse logo emphasizing on the side of the window, but what leaves a choice? What is precious to you, life or death, happiness or sadness, dark or light.

Now, if we take each song individually, you see how it all ties in.

"Prelude". This is about where we live. Is not the Earth precious enough that we should protect it? I called it "Prelude" because it's first and foremost!

"A Gathering of Separate Ways" is completely about indecision on whatever scale or whatever you prefer to link it to. Do I or don't I, concerning ambitions, loved ones, jobs, sports, money and risk, even to the extreme, life or death. It says a lot about our band's position, stable-wise at the time, when I first wrote the song, not as heavy, but then as we were about to record the album, no other lyrics came as relevant for that time. It was an intense time for the band. Do we have enough money, do we not? Do we record the album or do we wait? Can we trust each other afterwards? Will we get signed, will we not? And in all honesty our personal indecision was, do we split the band? The answer to that after Lithuania and finally getting the CD out was no way. We've only just begun!

"The Second Man on the Sun" is the fool that follows the fool. Who's the one more foolish? We wrote this from a drugs angle, but it doesn't have to be related purely a drugs thing. It's about someone seeing their idols die of drugs, yet they continue to do it themselves. The reason for the title? If they sent a spaceship to the Sun with someone in it, they'd perish. Yet, if they tried it again, some daft git would get in it!

"1:13 am". Track 4 is a segue which is supposed to represent a nightmare. I chose 1:13 am because uncannily I have woken up at that time so many times I have lost count. Anyway, it lead into "Pressures", which is everybody's

everyday from the alarm clock call.

"Pressures" is personal, but again I'm sure people will relate to it. It's about how I had an ambition and people were constantly putting me down, telling me I was wasting my time with the band, and, at that time, I had no job. So they said I was no good to man nor beast. There was friction every time I opened my mouth, people telling me I was wrong at all. For living proof take the existential. "Ghosts" was written lyrically, while we were in the studio. Again, it's about Precious ambition. We felt in the past we hadn't got things right and just prior to going into the studio I had this crazy dream which was so ironic, beyond



belief.

It was a windy day and all the other members of the band and my ex-girlfriend were stood in the back garden where I used to live. They sent me inside and the next thing I'm chasing this ghost around the room. When I finished the lyrics, I looked at them and thought 'wow'. I can't really call it anything else. The irony is I wanted to erase memories of recordings I wasn't happy with in the past. This recording will exercise the ghosts haunting me. The scary thing is, in my dream, I never actually caught the ghost and no, I wasn't entirely happy with my performance. But it's a vast improvement.

From someone else's point of view, it's about breaking out! Doing what you want to do, trying to fulfil ambitions. "A Chronicle of Destiny" is about soul searching. Part 1 is a sort of make believe somebody being able to look into their dreams and see their future, and, to an extent, see whether it's worth living. In a way, a controlled *deja vu*. I was going to call the second half "The Worth", because it deals with the true or non-fiction side saying despite the turmoil, there's a lot of upside. I thought of the past tense, tense past thing as; out with the old, in with the new live for today. What done is done. Life's precious and the good outweighs the bad, and if it doesn't, then ask yourself why not. Sort it out, there's a good time to be had. So what's precious to me? People I can trust? Trust is priceless.

"Pressures" remind me a bit of the 70's bands, for example Jethro Tull.

How did this song come into being?

Somehow, it differs from the rest.

As a matter of fact, this song went under the working title 'The Tull Song', before I'd put lyrics to it. We actually set out to do a song that was Jethro Tull influenced intentionally. I think it means a lot to the album and Seer's Tear because I don't think it's all out of place. It prevents us from being pigeon holed or tagged. It adds another dimension. When we write songs, we try not to do something twice as it could easily get boring. As I was saying before about handwagons, if you write in one style, you will get categorized and that way, when the trend goes down, you sink with it. For example,

time of our lives. We were treat well and we enjoyed meeting the people of Lithuania.

I didn't get my Vilnius FC football shirt though; I collect football shirts of towns or cities we visit with the band as mementoes. So we're going to have to come back and play there again. I hope we have as good a time as last time and see everyone down at the gig again. We'll definitely play better next time. We'll make sure we are fully rehearsed for next time. I think we made good impression, but we know in ourselves we can play better.

On the CD I missed the song that was the last played at the festival. Do you remember, what song it was and why didn't you use it for the CD?

The song must have been "A Brave Seasons End" from our second demo, because it is the only song we play live that is not on our CD. If we decide to re-record a song from the past, this would be the one. It's very tempting because people do tell us it's a good song and at gigs it is a crowd pleaser, but for us it says too much about early days when people considered us a doom metal band and we are trying to escape from that. We still listen to a lot of doom metal, but Seer's Tear is not a doom band anymore. We want to explore new territory and doing things we've already done is not the way to go forward. Maybe when we are satisfied we've progressed far enough musically, that we need a breather, we'll slip it in to cool things down or maybe one day we'll record it as a B-side or we could use it as kind of our Iron Maiden's "Sanctuary" and always play it live.

Who knows? It is a hard one to drop and it very nearly did go on the CD. We are considering it for the EP, it depends on the budget and how it would fit in. If it sounds old in comparison, we won't record in. It is on the demos, if you'd like to hear it. Apart from that, who knows? We'll have to wait and see.

What land shows the particular interest in your music? I imagine it could be Germany or Holland?

We are just starting to get a response now, the CDs have only just gone out to the distributors, so it's too early to tell, but Greece seems to be the one that's latching on to it. I'd had quite a few flyers for zines from there, and it seems that Greece was picking up on the prog metal scene. So I asked Goldtrack to target Greece. It wasn't, at first, one of their priorities, but now I think it's paying off as we're getting a good response from there. We have good distribution in Germany which we're really pleased about because it is potentially the biggest heavy metal audience, but it's too early to tell because they are only just receiving as we speak.

How is it in England, which is famous for the birth of heavy metal in the past, and which doesn't support this music at all today?

About 1990, when heavy metal had a little dip in form, along came a band called Nirvana. England never really recovered. The press and media certainly didn't but hey, what goes around comes around. When that scene tires itself out, something will be waiting. Maybe it will be the new NWOBHM. The press got a little mixed up with indie after Nirvana and opened the door to a flood of bands

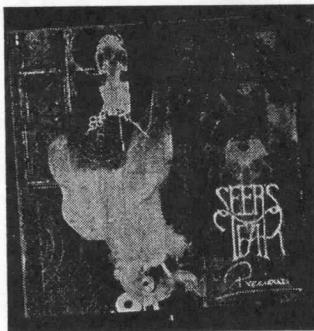
copying the Seattle thing, saying they had heavy metal roots when it suited them. Then they got mixed up and the gap got bridged. When you take an album like "Ten" by Pearl Jam, it's purely a rock album, no doubt about it, but because they followed Nirvana out of Seattle, they said it was indie rock. It became a tug of war with the press and record buying public and, at that time, there wasn't a heavy metal band strong enough to drag the indie fans our way. So in order for magazines to survive they had to say, well it's all rock music anyway, so we'll feature what's selling. Then labels jump on the bandwagon, too, and that's where the money is, so they dictate the whole thing by their adverts and like. I was saying about people here picking up on whatever's pushed down their throats, the more they're told something's good, the more they believe it, then with money coming out of different scenes, the harder it is for that scene to get recognized. People here are victims of fashion and admittedly the pressure is quite great at the moment. We're one of the only metal bands with long hair here, apart from the black metal scene, everyone has cut their hair off. It does get quite tempting but again, as I was saying, we'll always be a heavy metal band because of our sound, and, yes, because of the way we look. We're happy the way we are though and that means we're happy to wait.

What do you dislike in today's heavy scene?

Ha ha! That's quite a difficult question. I like most things about it. I would say the worst impact has been scissors! Ha ha! No, seriously, I don't really care for skateboards and woolly hats! The fact that 15 years ago certain magazines in England would have considered a sin to feature such bands as Madness, but now it's a rock mag, it's OK to feature Mighty Mighty Bosstones? How can ska feature under the same category as heavy metal. I don't want to limit heavy metal as a genre especially being in such a band like Seer's Tear that wants to break down the walls, but personally I don't like ska, punk pop, or funk, and this will not be ground we'll cover. Ironically, black metal has become a saviour because it's kept alive an extremity that was rapidly disappearing. With Metallica kind of holding the middle ground, the whole genre is quite broad at present which is good! But for me, Mighty Mighty Bosstones and Green Day is too left wing, it's got to be heavy man. I think I'll stop at Korn and Nine Inch Nails before you breach the gap and it's not heavy metal anymore. Yeah, I listen to other styles of music, but they've got their own magazines, so we should initially have ours! We do have a lot of influences, but if I want to read about folk, pop, or ska, I'd expect to buy that particular style of music magazine. Now that magazines are calling themselves rock, it covers too much an area, and, like I said before, it's where the money is at, so you don't get to read about underground heavy metal bands in the major press anymore. This is a shame. That's one thing I don't like about it, the press selling out.

Some members of the band, as I understand, aren't of English origin. Are they or their parents emigrants? Richard Beamont's mum is Austrian and my father is Yugoslavian. I think my dad and his brother were refugees and my granddad came later to find them. I think

it's something like 45 years ago. I don't know the full tale, I never really asked. All I know is my dad lost his mum when he was 3, which is pretty heavy shit, that along with the politics of it all. I just sort of avoid the subject. Obviously, I get asked all the time where is it from, and, do I get bored of writing something so long. Ha ha, but it has never affected me racially. I'm English and very very patriotically proud. People in my home town don't even look at me as anything else. In fact, they see me as someone who's putting Brighouse (my hometown) and Rastrick back on the map. They're very proud of me and want me to do well. So it never really comes into the equation. I don't really think about it too much and



I don't think Rich does either. At the end of the day, we're born in England and are proud English citizens that have absolutely no prejudice. One of the reasons we started the band, if not the reason we started it, was to travel the world and meet people of different origins and experience different cultures. Like I was saying before, when we came to Lithuania, we had the times of our lives. We've tasted it now and we want more. It is one of the things that makes it worthwhile. We are going one day hopefully to visit your country, wherever you are, and it will be without prejudice. We'd hate to think people are put off by the origin of someone's name. Richard's mother came over to England to work. I don't know the full tale either.

What do you think of Psychotic Waltz split-up?

The end of the world is nigh, no; I was pretty devastated when I heard the news. It's weird knowing there will not be another album from them. "Bleeding" is one of my all-time favorite albums. It's the epitome of prog rock from the streets. Technically brilliant progressive music played with a dirty underground sound with plenty of catchy hooks. They have a very subtle and unique sound. They will be sorely missed. I hope each members starts new projects.

The name of the band sounds interesting. What gave you that idea? Originally, the name's concept was fairly thin, but, as I wrote more and more lyrics, it became more and more apparent. At first, we just decided it was not to be just one word concerning graveyards and I sort of came out with Seer's Tear, more for the ring to it. Well, it's a clairvoyant shedding a tear for what he's foreseen, because, at the end of the day, reality can be pretty grim. There's death, disease, poverty, war, murder, and all the rest of it. Sometimes you think to yourself, man, look at the way we treat each other and where we live. So it's the fact we all know we are

not going to live in perfect harmony and that death comes to us all. A saddening thought, A Seer's Tear. Anyway, as time went by, I thought to myself maybe it's a little too grim and a negative thing wasn't what I wanted to project. So I linked it with my lyrics that, like I was saying before, have a very positive message. So now the whole concept and the reason for Seer's Tear is: it's you, it's me, it's everyone, knowing that life can be a bitch but, this isn't no rehearsal man. So try to make the most of it. Strive and win, and be happy as you can.

Some words in conclusion...

I'd like to thank you, *Sigatas* and *Edge of Time* magazine for getting me the interview I wanted. Your magazine caters for my taste in music. It's cool a works. To your readers: check out the debut CD "Precious" for a trip through dark progressive dimensions with positive attitudes. We will be touring the whole of Europe, so watch out for dates. Look out for our web site for info, or write to us. Cheers, keep it heavy, keep it prog!!! SEER.

[Seers Tear, Mark Stojsavljevic, 26 Lower Edge Road, Rastrick, Brighouse, West Yorkshire HD6 3LD, England] [Goldtrack Records, P.O.Box 37062, 28080 Madrid, Spain, Fax +341 669 40 45] [Web page: <http://www.arrakis.es/~goldtrack/>]

TENEBRARUM

Divine War
Voodoo Records
This band comes from Colombia. At first, I expected brutal death/thrash stuff but later was surprised by Tenebrarum's style. It's gothic/doom with some death influences. You even can discover parallels to Skyklad and My Dying Bride. I like the tracks "Spiritual" and "Nocturno" with this melodic and clear voice. There are also weaker songs with dominant growling vocals. All in all, a solid work for a Colombian band. Check out the CD-ROM track at the beginning. [SV] [Voodoo Records, David Rivera, A.A. 96005, Medellin, Colombia] 3 1/2

THEORY IN PRACTICE

Third Eye Function
Pulverised Records
Describing Theory In Practice, you can hardly avoid mentioning Atheist. Nothing else to do, Atheist were one of the selected few real techno death metal bands that got a reasonable recognition. When some other bands try to focus on technicality and slight jazzy digressions, they immediately get compared to them. Not to say that comparison is wrong, members of Swedish Theory In Practice obviously have listened to Atheist albums. Besides, "Third Eye Function" has a hardly-describable cosmic-scientific-dark flavor (hint: Nocturnus) and it tastes good. To complete the whole picture, it can be added that the singer does not go anywhere further than complying normal death metal standards, but it is not a big drawback, especially for extreme metal fans. [GS] 3 3/4

THERION

Vovin
Nuclear Blast Records
The symphonic metal orchestra from Sweden, lead by maestro Christofer Johnson, lost a good deal of aggression in this album in comparison with its predecessor "Theil". And this should not be a surprising remark: with the age, many do calm down. Even if growling metal vocals are replaced by female vocals and choirs, Therion still offer excellent, mainly mid-tempo, melodic metal with nice harmonies, but "Theil" fans may get little puzzled. Anyway, Mr.

Johnson doesn't compose utterly complex textures and tries keep everything song-oriented and accessible. The mood is mainly sombre and romantic with rare rays of light, shining through "Mne of Aluqah" and "The Wild Hunt", a speed metal track featuring Ralf Scheepers (ex-Gamma Ray, now Primal Fear) on vocals. Just when in "Theil" several songs did stand out, "Vovin" is more balanced. [GS] 4 1/4

THERION

Vovin
Nuclear Blast Records
"Vovin" is Therion's third album which explores a unique blend of metal and classical music, and it is the one that went the furthest in this direction. The result is a weird mix of a string orchestra with metal riffs, the vocals being dominated by a choir ranging from bass (male) to soprano (female). The beautiful harmonies are as usual with this band mostly gloomy and fell, woven with a superb sense of melody by Therion's leading soul Christofer Johnson. Those who are familiar with album "Theil" will notice slight changes: the driving role of the guitar riffs has been strongly reduced and the remnant harsh vocals have completely vanished, resulting in a music which is less heavy and closer to totally classical music than ever. [AS] 4 3/4

THY PRIMORDIAL

Where Only the Seasons Mark the Paths of Time

Pulverised Records

This should appeal mainly to black metal hearts. Thy Primordial (Sweden) play uncompromising bestial dark and heavy music with catchy riffs but monotonous and almost croaky vocals. It is a big doubt whether the singer took his duties seriously and professionally; it looks like the only requirement for him was to sing in a 'black metal style'. Apart from that, music itself is from average to quite captivative. [GS] 3 1/4

TODAY IS THE DAY

Temple of the Morning Star
Relapse

The fourth album of these "Tennessee rock sculptors" is the most suitable for schizophrenic persons: if you want to be obsessed by this disc, you must divide your personality into two parts: a serial-killer one and a melancholic & romantic one. Both are revealed with this music. Starting with melancholic and almost gothic "Temple of the Morning Star", the album later develops into a real fury and hatred on "Blindspot" or "High as the Sky". The scheme does not change later on too; noise, rock structures and psychedelia are diluted one with another. Besides, the highly dark lyrics could be described as chants to the devil outside and inside man's psychic world... You are broken by all those extremities here. [AO] 4

TOTENMOND

Vaeterchen Frost EP
Massacre Records
The portrayed Totenmond members in the CD-booklet remind me of the faces in our native criminology: gloomy, morbid, and evil. This description fits also their mini-CD influenced by Sodom, Crowbar, and several hardcore acts. I'm not familiar with their previous album "Lichtbringer", but these 6 new songs are nothing but waste of time. The question is how they've sold over 12000 "Lichtbringer" copies in Germany. But it's certainly due to Massacre promotion activities... [SV] 2 3/4

TSATHOGGUA

Tians Cunt Whip
Osmose Productions
A mix of speed metal, black metal, and a lesser-dose of death metal. The final product is sort of average: anti-christian lyrics with philosophical approach and outplayed music. [AO] 2 3/4

TWIN OBSCENITY

Where the *Light Touches None*
Head Not Found/Voices of Wonder
 Traditional well-performed black metal from Norway with different vocals, atmospheric melodies, and, of course, heathen beliefs. It's rather professional for a debut album (the band had three demos in the past), and if originality is not the main criteria, black metal fans should adore this release. (AO)
 3 1/2

V/A

A Tribute to Sepultura
Black Sun Records
 To tell the truth, I have expected more. Listening to covers of such groups as Sepultura, you can always find something interesting and new, especially when the groups that make covers have something to show and play more matured stuff from Sepultura collection. And here we have a collection of bands, many of which are mediocre and somehow chose songs that aren't so central in Sepultura's creation; I missed many classical songs. After all, it seems that this tribute is a bit undergroundish. Highlights for me are Impious with "Inner Self" and The Crown with "Arise". (AO)

V/A

Frozen Dawn III
Frozen Dawn
 This compilation contains songs of 7 brutal bands: Dragheda, Violent Fury, and Shredded Corpse play death/grind stuff, Exceed and Vials Of Wrath celebrate brutal hardcore, Goliath scatter industrial elements and combine them with punk influences. Seminal Death are particularly fond of noise/grind. If you want more, then contact the label for parts I and II. (SV)
 [Frozen Dawn Records, David Sroczyński, 809 Towering Oaks, Jacksonville, AR 72076, USA]

V/A

The Good Life Vol. 2
Good Life Recordings
 This "budget label sampler" is dedicated to present and promote young bands of Good Life, such as Length of Time, Shorebreak, or Driven, and to present once more famous bands such as Liar, Spirit of Youth, or Morning Again. All in all, it contains 18 songs, five of

which were previously unreleased. Publishing quality of this CD is really good, the booklet contains lyrics, photos, and all the relevant information: this CD can serve as the best introduction to the nowadays HC scene. (AO)
 [Good Life Recordings, P.O.Box 114, 8500 Kortrijk, Belgium]

V/A

Metal Sessions Vol. 1
Booster Productions
 This is a compilation of new promising French bands (except the Belgian No Compromise). Most of them are stuck in demo-stage, but several acts have already the CDs out there. I haven't found here any stunning surprises, but the songs of some bands are really not bad, for example, Syren's Call, Blowback, or Umbilicus Mundis. If you purchase this compilation, you can find the addresses and info about each band in the CD booklet. Support the French bands, they are worth it. (SV)
 [Booster Productions, 37 Rue Du 2 Septembre, 59148 Fines-Les-Rachas, France]

V/A

Statements of Intent
Wicked World
 One of the best underground metal compilations you can find. It features an all-star cast with Dark Tranquillity, Dimmu Borgir, In Flames, and Emperor, which are all names that speak for themselves. Most of you probably also are familiar with Katalonia, Thy Serpent, Naglfar, Opeith, and Arch Enemy, which are synonyms of the quality and the professionalism. Along with these big names, here we find new signings of Wicked World such as Gandalf and The Elysian Fields which seem to shake metal world quite soon. The dominating style is black/Gothenburg/atmospheric metal, and only Deranged falls out from the context. 16 tracks, 78 minutes of quality music. My personal favorites are Emperor, Katatonia, and Naglfar. (AO)

V/A

Until the End of Time
The End Records
 A good foretaste to what The End Records is about. Most of the six bands presented on this compilation stylistically are close to a slightly-forgotten atmospheric death metal genre, i.e., they make no compromises on the metal integrity, but, at the same time, value melodic and romantic components. And while there are no ground-breaking discoveries, all bands

have more or less distinct identities. My personal choices after listening to this sampler would be the second album of Mental Home and both albums of Ukraina's Nokturnal Mortum (these bands have two tracks each on this compilation). Though Scipitured, Epoch of Unlight, Odes of Ecstasy, and Scholomance are also the names to watch out for. (GS)
 [The End Records, 556 S. Fair Oaks Ave #101-111, Pasadena, CA 91105, USA]

VARATHRON

Genesis Of Apocryphal Desire
Cursed
 All I can say about this release, it's terrible. The question is how they have managed to release this rehearsal stuff on an U.S. label. Especially the first two songs are very "impressive", I can't call them songs on the whole. The rest is more or less listenable but no less boring. Who needs such CDs? The only explanation for the release can be that this band is known in black metal circles and have released several decent albums already. (SV)
 [Cursed, P.O.Box 302, Elkhart, IN 46515-0302, USA]

XYTRAS

Passage
Century Media Records
 Xy, Samael keyboardist masterminds this project, delivering an orchestral version of what was the band's latest album. Overall I think "Passage" could become a pretty interesting and, perhaps, slightly shocking at first, as it consists basically of a metal work interpreted from a pure classical side. Also, the evident profusion of piano parts could seem beforehand a bit boring, dull, or not appealing enough to, say, the average metal listener. However, in my opinion, it's the nature inherent to this album and, especially, an excellent musicianship behind, is what gives it richness and makes it attractive. Some atmospheric synthesizers and the previously mentioned prominent classic piano serve as a basis and a guideline for the whole album, there're no vocals nor many effects. Actually, the way I see it, there's no need for them: "Passage" is

overall a work finished with a touch of "sobriety"; melodies converge to their simplest form, achieving sometimes ("Regen", "Des Engels Untergang", "Mondhaut") to create a half majestic-hypnotical and haunting ambient. Other parts sound more sequential or linearly performed and may lack that intensity. As I said, keep in mind this is conceptually an unusual product; musically it's more a contemporary classical genre release than anything and therefore a sample of what a "sit down and enjoy" album is. Finally, another way to describe it could be as an album passed through a "soundtrack filter", if you get what I mean with this. Labels apart, "Passage" can perfectly be on the level with famous works in that style like the one Michael Nyman did for Jane Campion's "The Piano" film. Worth a deep listen if one's fond of classical/piano instrumental oriented works. (GM)
 4 1/2

ZYKLON X

Tod Und Leben
Thrashback Records
 Traditional thrash with German lyrics. Not earth-shattering, but still interesting, especially for German fans (because of the lyrics). Musically, it reminds me of Sodom: brutal thrash with several acoustic inserts. Zyklon X were born from the rest of prog/power band Lost Century, it seems that they have wiped the past out of their memory and devoted themselves to heavier sounds. Once again I must say that I desire more variety from this style and sometimes Zyklon X "satisfy my wish" ("Gesegnetes Land" or "Wiederkehr") ... but sometimes not. Definitely, this CD will find its listeners, but their number, I think, will be small. (SV)
 [30DM/\$15, Thrashback Records, Rudi Goerg, Witzelstr. 66, 40225 Duesseldorf, Germany]
 3 1/4

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Antoinette

misanthropy records

aesthetic fascism, it pays off...

[by Audrius Ozalas]

Tiziana Stupia, the founder of Misanthropy Records, talks about the company's chemistry in more detail. Some of the current bands on the roster include Burzum, In The Woods..., Arcturus, Beyond Dawn; the label gained a good reputation in the underground in the last couple of years, so you may really want to find out about the inside...

Let's start from the question of which, I think, you are already sick now: how Misanthropy Records was created? How many people work in the company right now and is it the main job for all of them?

Misanthropy Records was founded in the autumn of 1993. Basically I started the label to release the record "Hvis Lyset Tar Oss" by Burzum. It's quite a long story, but I try to sum it up. In August 1993, Varg Vikernes of the band Burzum killed the guitarist of the band Mayhem, Euronymous. Due to this happening, Vikernes went to jail, and nobody wanted to release his records anymore. As I like Burzum a lot, I thought it was a shame that such great music should be ignored and forgotten just because of what Vikernes did, and I tried to get Burzum a deal with various record labels. Nobody was interested at that time, and it was not until a person from Italy, who runs a label too, said to me "if it is so important to you that these Burzum albums are released, why don't you do it yourself?". And in fact, why didn't I? So I simply contacted Vikernes' mother and told her that I wanted to release the next Burzum album. I started some correspondence via fax and letter with him, and he seemed to like the idea of me releasing his music, so I made up a contract. We agreed on the terms and that was it. Burzum were signed in late 1993, "Hvis Lyset Tar Oss", my first release, came out in early 1994.

Initially I had planned to do Misanthropy as a hobby, a one-off, because I didn't think that many people would buy this Burzum album. But suddenly everything became really big, this whole black metal genre became very trendy, we sold tons of records, so I decided to continue. Currently, there is 4-5 people working at Misanthropy Records, including myself. We have Ms. Antoinette Flynn, responsible for a variety of tasks including supervising stock and mailorder, customer service, and more. Mr. Brian Taube, our new press officer, Mr. Stephen O'Malley, our American graphic designer, and Mr. Aiden Kenny, who works part-time for our mailorder and shipping department. Yes, of course, Misanthropy has been my main job for more than 4 years now. For

all of us (besides Aiden) it is!

Who does choose which bands to sign? What are the main qualities the band must possess? It seems to me that the inner feeling of the music plays the main role, as, for example, Mayhem and Beyond Dawn have no common structural elements; to say the least, they represent two musical worlds. But do you see them both meet philosophical and aesthetic ideals of Misanthropy Records?

I choose the bands for signing. The main qualities for choosing the bands? Well, most importantly I have to like their music, they have to be special and unique, and their music must mean something to me. Besides, I also have to respect the people in the band as individuals, they have to have a certain level of intelligence and common sense. They should also be good, original musicians and have a concept I can identify with. So, yes, it's not too easy to get signed to Misanthropy because I am very hard to please, and I usually 'fry' the bands for weeks before making a final decision to sign them. You are correct, the inner feeling of the music is very important to me. To take your examples, Beyond Dawn and Mayhem, I find that both of them absolutely meet our philosophical and aesthetic ideals, although they are worlds apart. But this just goes to show that I am a person with a very diverse taste, I can appreciate a variety of styles, moods, etc., just like there are always many elements and extremes that make out the character of a person. There's never just black and white.

How would you describe the ideals of Misanthropy, as of a label. Maybe you could choose one song or one album that most

properly would present them?

Ideals... there are so many, and there are none. If you are talking about my personal ideals (which, of course, flow into the company, as I own it), there are things like pride, honesty, honour, good taste, attention to detail, art, individuality, diversity, non-conformity, extremity, melancholy, thoughtfulness, an ability to look deeper than what meets the eye, thousands of things really.

I would also call myself an 'aesthetic fascist', which reflects in the packaging of our releases, I believe.

I couldn't really just name one song or album which presents these ideals most completely. But if I absolutely had to, then maybe it would be Ved Buens Ende's "Written in Waters".

Distribution is the main problem of underground labels. Do you feel you have enough-developed distribution system? Do you have distributors in USA? Do you pay much attention to the mailorder, is it worth of further developing or the bigger quantity is sold through the shops?

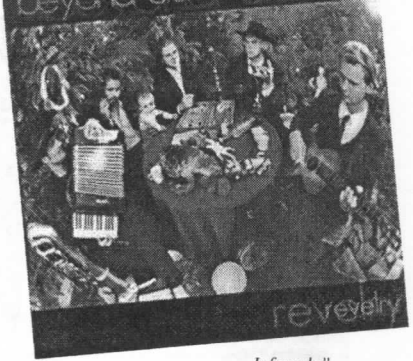
Our distribution system, still far from perfect, is constantly growing and always going to bigger levels. Especially this year, 1998, has so far been excellent for us. Through the MIDEM music business convention in France in January, we gained very big distribution in Germany, Portugal, Greece, Israel, Malaysia, and a few other countries. At the moment, we are distributed and represented quite well in most countries. Yes, we have a very good distributor in the USA, Dutch East India in New York. They do an excellent job for us, I am more than happy with them. Next spring, I am also hoping to open up an American office in New York, so we can manufacture and market our releases domestically over there.

Mailorder is very important for our business, and through the Internet this kind of business is getting bigger and bigger. Still, I place just as much emphasis on the shops, because people are more tempted to buy a record they see in the shops because they can buy it instantly and it's easier!

You have founded two new sublabels, Elfenblut and Heroine, why? Do you find them stepping outside the musical world of Misanthropy? Heroine's Babylon Whores were distributed by Music For Nations; did you do the promotional work and MFN only distributed or...

It's quite simple. Misanthropy is the main label, which concentrates mainly on extreme metal. Elfenblut is anything which doesn't really fit on Misanthropy: industrial, folk, classical, ambient, etc. Heroine was only founded for Babylon Whores really, as they didn't fit on either label! Heroine is our death rock label, ha!

MFN... they licensed two titles from us, Babylon Whores "Cold Heaven" and Arcturus "La Masquerade



Infernale

They did all the promotion, marketing, and distribution. They even manufactured the records. Unfortunately, this did not work out at all, and so there will be no further collaborations with them in the future.

How long does it take to release an album? Could you briefly describe the path each album has to travel?

It varies really. Some albums you can release very fast, it always depends on how hard the band works. Some albums you can release within two months, other take six months to realize.

Usually, once you decide to sign a band, you send them a contract which they sign. Then you send them to a studio, where they record an album. Upon completion of this, the album gets mastered, we receive the master tape and hopefully some artwork instructions. We then design the package for the record, send the artwork to the band for approval, and meanwhile we will have manufactured promo CDs, which we send out to press and distributors 4-6 weeks prior to the release date. After that, we send the CD to the manufacturing plant and that's it really. Then we just have to do our best to sell the records! Due to the promo CDs, the distributors will have placed pre-orders with us through interest they have gained from the shops, and then we will know roughly how many CDs to print. Once the release date approaches, we ship out the CDs to our distributors, and they start selling them. Quite a long way to go, eh?

Misanthropy don't release many albums, but all of the released ones are different and unique. Do you practice a so-called "priority promotion"? Or do you treat all the bands the same?

Talking about the promotion, some bands accuse their labels for being not honest with them. I mean, a label takes care of the promotional information without asking a band about it; and sometimes it turns to the absolutely opposite way the band wanted to be represented. How important are band's wishes in this process on your label?

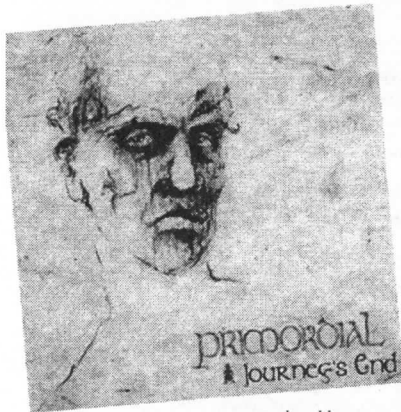
You can't really treat all the bands the same. If I have a low budget Elfenblut release which, I know, will only sell 1,000 CDs, such as



Tiermes, I can't advertise and promote it as much as I would Mayhem. It just doesn't make financial sense. We try and promote all of our bands as much as we can, but obviously every release has a budget according to the sales expectations of a certain band. The band's input is quite important. We try to send everything to our bands for approval before we print it or send it to anyone. Obviously, sometimes there is no time to wait for such approval, but nobody really complained so far. We always try to be in line with the band's concept and to enhance it even. Sometimes a label has more experience than the band, though. Especially young bands can come up with really silly ideas where you just have to advise them to do things differently.

Do you sometimes try to direct a band in one or another direction, or do you leave a 100% creative freedom?

For a start, musically, we leave the bands 100% artistic freedom. There is no point signing



a band because you like them, and then trying to change them. Luckily, so far I've never been disappointed.

What concerns the artwork and marketing, we do try and guide them, simply because we are more experienced in this matter. Of course, if a band comes up with absolutely perfect artwork, I'll be really happy because we won't have to change anything. But Stephen, our designer, usually adds some final magical touches to these things.

I know, it's kind of a business secret, but can you tell what Misanthropy albums are the most successful commercially and how many copies were sold? And what quantity of units must be sold for an album to pay off? The albums which sold the most to this date are all Burzum albums, the best sellers being "Filosofem" and "Hvis Lyset Tar Oss". Both sold more than 20,000 units each. Mayhem's "Wolf's Lair Abyss" and In The Woods' "HEart Of The Ages" sold well too, alongside Arcturus' "Aspera Hiems Symfonia". If you can make your initial costs back (studio cost, artwork cost, marketing etc) and make a profit, then that's good. These costs are different for each band, so it's hard to say when this point is reached. Nowadays it's quite good for an underground band to sell around 5,000 copies.

Which albums did surpass your expectations? For example, it seems that Babylon Whores were met with a big enthusiasm by the press... Babylon Whores... well! They had very good press, but the sales were so bad, it

is a catastrophe! Nobody expected this... it's a mystery to me, ask MFN how this happened.

What really surpassed all my expectations in sales was Burzum "Hvis Lyset Tar Oss", our first release, simply because I had no idea Burzum would kick off like that.

You still keep releasing vinyls. Is it your personal nostalgia? Which country has the biggest vinyl market now?

We actually don't do so much vinyl anymore these days, only for our bigger bands, such as Mayhem, Burzum, and Arcturus. It's my personal nostalgia really, I'm a sucker for vinyl. But in the recent past, I have become a bit frustrated about this, because the quality keeps getting worse, they don't sell very well at all, and they are hellish expensive.

I would say that England and Greece are probably the biggest vinyl markets.

The debut full-length of Monumentum was and still is one of the most excellent albums released by your label. What is this band doing now? Isn't it difficult to promote a record that doesn't exactly fit to your usual audience? Monumentum step aside from metal...

Monumentum are back in action. I must say that there have been some personal problems in the past between me and Roberto of Monumentum, which almost resulted in the band leaving the label, but luckily we resolved the problems and everything is okay again. They have just recorded a new song for our forthcoming compilation CD called "The Colour Of Compassion", and are working on their next studio album.

It was not too hard to promote this album, you can promote anything if you believe in it enough.

Burzum was like a trade mark of your label in the beginning. What is the situation with his creation now, will we ever hear a new Burzum release? I heard you have had some problems with Burzum T-shirts... Do you have problems contacting him in prison? And do you like the last Burzum album?

I have no idea what will happen to Burzum in the future. It's obviously not easy for him to do anything, being in prison. Only time will tell. Yes, we had some problems with Burzum shirts, but we weren't too bothered about that. People will always find something to whine about.

I have no problems contacting Varg in prison, we are in contact via mail a lot, and I go to visit him once a year. I must admit I did not like "Daudi Balders" as much as the previous records, but it's good nevertheless.

By the way, what is your opinion about black metal nowadays?

I haven't got much of an opinion, as I am not interested enough. Black Metal has become a stale trend a long time ago, with a ridiculous image, a wealth of shitty bands and zillions of worthless records.

In the Woods..., as it seems, are changing their musical direction. Do you support this and when will we hear their new full-length album?

I don't think that In The Woods... have completely changed their musical

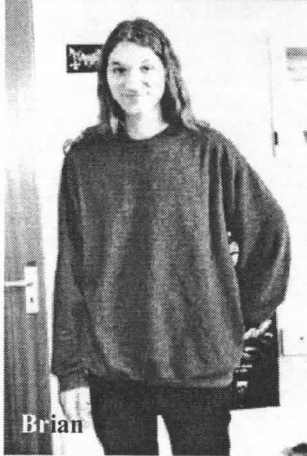
direction. They only progressed, which is natural. I can see the evolution from "HEart Of The Ages" to "Omnio", and I love both albums. Of course, I support the band's progression. They will record their third album throughout the summer, and it will either come out at the end of this year or early 1999.

One of your newer releases is Beyond Dawn. How did you sign them? Earlier they were releasing albums on some quite authoritative labels...

I have always liked Beyond Dawn very much, in fact, I offered them a deal after their MCD on Adipocere, but by then they had already signed with Candlelight. The band was looking for a new deal after "Pity Love", and sent me advance tracks from "Revelry". These tracks said more than a thousand words - I offered them a deal immediately.



Tiziana



Brian



Aiden

How many demos do you receive each day? Do you listen to all of them, and do young beginners have any chance to be signed?

Ugh! We receive about 10 demos each day, and, unfortunately, most of them are really bad. I try and listen to at least a few minutes of each demo, but it can get very tiring, and I find it insulting what people send us sometimes. I mean, are they deaf?

It is very rare that we sign a band from a demo. It's a one in a million chance, simply because demo bands are often just not good enough.

Which albums released by other labels you would like to have on Misanthropy? What are your favorite bands right now and what underground labels do you respect most of all?

My favourite groups right now? Of course, all bands on Misanthropy and Elfenblut, and then some all-time favourites are Laibach, Diamanda Galas, Paradise Lost, Portishead, Depeche Mode, Joy Division, The Moon Lay Hidden Beneath A Cloud, Ain Soph, Neurosis, The Jesus And Mary Chain, Devil Doll, Life Of Agony, and a lot more.

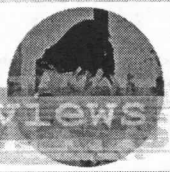
This is probably a bad time to ask me, currently I listen to a lot of pop music, ha!

The underground labels I respect most are obscure labels like LOKI Foundation, Cthulhu, Cold Spring, and then, of course, there's Mute Records! Not exactly underground but great! I'm pretty happy with the records we have released, but I wouldn't say no to having released the following 3 albums: Paradise Lost "One Second", Portishead "Dummy", and Laibach "Macbeth" (or any Laibach album really!).

Can you remember any funny situation related to your work in Misanthropy?

Oh sure, there's lots of really funny things. Unfortunately, most of them are total insider jokes and just wouldn't be funny if I wrote them down! The funniest thing which happened last year though was a festival I attended in Finland. I was getting drunk with Antti Litmanen of Babylon Whores, and we were sitting outside a venue where Impaled Nazarene were due to play. We were quite bored, so we started harrassing some innocent Finnish boys who were sitting near us. They were all wearing Misanthropy merchandise (Burzum, Mayhem shirts, etc.), and, of course, they did not know who we were. We told them that we were Norwegians and called Oskar and Lena, and that we were two Mayhem groupies from Oslo. We told them all kinds of fantastic stories (lies!) about the Norwegian black metal scene, I mean, really grotesque things which I couldn't even repeat here because it would get me into trouble! These idiots believed everything we told them, and they got really angry at us for destroying their little myths... the situation got so out of hand later in the evening that some right-wing skinheads (Burzum fans!) wanted to kill us! It was really one hilarious evening.

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[Fax: 0044 1473 827 388]
[E-mail: amazon@misanthr.demon.co.uk]



APHRODISIAC

Nonsense Chamber
Eifenblut/Misanthropy Records
"Noise which tends towards music" is the description of Aphrodisiac, and I can't find a better one. Musicians, who are also performing in bands such as Ved Buens Ende, Doeshelmsgard, and Fleurety, made this mind-project possible. As musicians say, "Aphrodisiac can be seen as an indication of the decline of our civilization", and I agree that with this album the goal is reached. This postmodern art was created using various TV samples, soundscapes, unexpected musical invasions, and dark atmospheres. This CD probably can't be listened too often because of its schizophrenic and driving-insane nature, but every time I listen to it, I am deeply impressed... By what? Maybe by the emptiness and, at the same time, by everything. (AO)
4 1/4

BLEEDING LIKE MINE

In the Eyes of Lovelost
Palace of Worms

I think Palace of Worms month by month are going to give a strong alternative to Projekt Records, and Bleeding Like Mine could be the main weapon in the battle. All the concept, sound, and emotions remind of these ethereal-Projekt-gothic masterpieces of Love Spiral Downwards, and especially Black Tape For A Blue Girl. Maybe Bleeding Like Mine is not as depressive as the latter one; they have chose the melancholic stillness, and the main character of this album is quite, silent, and deep indefinite sadness with some colors of light. Musically, here we find all the best traditions of ethereal gothic male/female duets, beautiful romantic melodies, and dark keyboard sounds supported by the foundation of bass and guitars. Who said there are no more ethereal gothic discoveries? Let emotions possess you... (AO)
[Palace of Worms, Via Bronzetti 19-22053 Lecco, Italy]
4 3/4

BIG ELECTRIC CAT

Eyesh
Cleopatra Records
I think there's no need to present this famous gothic band from Australia. Their previous studio recordings already have got a cult status and tours with Switchblade Symphony and Christian Death have only gave a quick rising on the goth/darkwave circuit. Two years passed, and now we have the new release made in the best traditions of darkwave. Big Electric Cat don't go further into the unexplored areas, they just offer traditional, a bit sad (but more romantic), melodic, electronic darkwave/gothic rock. If the groups like Love Like Blood could be considered as representatives of the more rocky side of gothic/darkwave, Big Electric Cat are one of the best examples of the more poppy side. (AO)
4

BLISS

Bliss
Massacre Records
Well, for me, instead of being "a heavy Depeche Mode", as the band describes themselves, they are similar to more melodic and not so dark The Sisters of Mercy or more guitar-based The Mission. The producer Gerhard Magin (Theatre of Tragedy, Crematory) did his work right and some metallic tunes that remind of Crematory are here, too, as well as eroticism. Overall, these English newcomers don't derive much from well-verified gothic traditions. However, I feel that the new Love Like Blood blows this CD away. (AO)
4

THE BREATH OF LIFE

Sweet Party
Hall of Sermon
The famous Belgian quartet released their fourth full-length studio album and made a lot of trouble for reviewers wanting to categorize everything. I will not bother you with my reasonings, it's enough to say that this band plays atmospheric, guitar-based, emotional music with excessive singing of Isabelle Dekeyser, who can be compared to Tori Amos, PJ Harvey, and other pop artists, yet she sings in a more melancholic and depressive way. The music overall is too soft for gothic rock and too alternative for radio-friendly music shelf, but the album is highly various and sounds like Love Spiral Downwards on "Sweet", like Tori Amos on "Fly", or like gothic rock on "Their Xanadu". Maybe it could be heavier for me, but fans of emotional music will like it. (AO)
[Hall of Sermon, PO Box 749, CH-4310 Rheinfelden, Switzerland]
4

BRIGHTER DEATH NOW

Greatest Death
Cold Meat Industry
This "electronic necronomicon" known as Great Death has got its another chapter. Listeners of earlier Great Death were able to vote for their favorite

tracks of this creation, and here we finally have "Greatest Death" which serves as an ultimate Brighter Death Now collection and is the best way to introduce you to the dark world of the Brightest Death ever. For those who have never heard any creation of R. Karmanik (who stands behind this name), I can say that it's death industrial music at its darkest way. It's sort of a mix of the darkness of Lustmord, the idea of musical death by In Slaughter Natives, and the industrial pressure of Deutsch Nepal. This album is more intense than most of dark industrial clan's groups, and makes many of them look like happy and positive guys. Here, the darkness is felt even physically, which I can't reach when listening to Lustmord. And it's clear why - after existing in the front line of death industrial for so many years, Brighter Death Now hasn't change its position. It's an album a death maniac should keep by his loaded gun. (AO)
4 1/4

BYTET/VIOLET BLACK ORCHID

split EP
KSM Records
A 3-song split CD of electronic/gothic/ambient bands. Both play a cross between EBM, ambient passages, and gothic dark rhythms. Maybe Bytet are more catchy and better organized rhythmically, and Violet Black Orchid are more dreamy with sexual emotions, but both bands show they aren't newcomers in the electronic underground scene. On the other hand, one or two songs aren't enough to conclude about a band. (AO)
[KSM Records, 2305 Vista Court, Coquitlam, BC V3J 6W2, Canada]
3 3/4

CANISTER

Blame
Sanction Music
A bit more heavy version of Joy Division - this style could be called a cross between dark wave, post punk, and gothic. In songs like "One Word", Canister become more silent but the ones like "Light" are made in a more aggressive/straight style, where vocals become more violent and to me it ruins everything. I like Canister in places where they hide their aggression with more monotonous and cold rhythms and remind of the more depressive era of The Cure. The closing track "Ice" is the best example of this - its sound is perfectly caught-up from The Cure and polished giving it the cold mood of Joy Division. It's sad that not the whole disc manages to keep this dark, nihilistic atmosphere. (AO)
[Sanction, 9 Brookdale Rd, Arlington, MA 02174-3023, USA]
3 1/4

CHORONZON

Magog Agoy
Nocturnal Art Productions
P. Emerson Williams, already known in the underground scene for his various projects, released an album, which was hard to anticipate. Earlier, I've heard his gothic project Veil Of Thorns, which goes in the best traditions of Bauhaus; here, P. E. Williams does everything alone again, but the style is absolutely different and can be described as a mix of gothic, black, industrial, ambient music. It has a strong impact of horror music and films, somehow I can relate it to my favorite horror group Morthem Vlade Art. Choronzon isn't so diverse as this band, but its music is much more powerful and angry, mainly because of the great use of industrial background and elements of black metal. "Magog Agoy" also has this, not common to black metal, psychedelic touch. The info sheet explains that Choronzon, besides occult and ritual practice, was also influenced by LSD visions. So, now you know that you can expect the unexpected. (AO)
[Nocturnal Art Productions, PO Box 4, 3671 Notodden, Norway]
4

CYBELE

Brightly Blackhearted
Voices of Wonder
A 5-girl gothic unit, is it an answer to Spice Girls? I'm joking, of course, because deep and dark music of Cybele aren't comparable to sweet and cheap Spices. The only group to which Cybele are comparable to is Siouxiie And The Banshees (in their earlier period). Anyway, this debut album doesn't fall into one category: starting with the melancholic "Deferation", it transforms into the rockish "Imaginative Winds" and even finds some folk influences on "In My Veins". But, all in all, the most common mood of the whole album is melancholia and depression; it's really not the most appropriate music to start the working day with. Musically, it's not a very rich creation; the songs are mostly based on some chords and melodies, with the driving force of Lene's strong voice and sad lyrics. The most sad girls' group in the world? (AO)
4 1/4

DARKSTYLE

Black Crystals
Some Place Else
A couple of chords is not enough for a good album. These two Finns didn't get it and recorded five instrumentals that somehow passed the listener and moreover bored him to tears. According to info, Darkstyle are unique and cannot be compared to anything else. OK, but it stands for nothing, if they play this run-of-the-mill gothic/darkwave stuff. I know far better bands of this genre and I'm not sure whether the fans should be interested in this release. (SV)
[Darkstyle, P.O.Box 732, 20101 Turku,

Finland] [Some Place Else, Box 685, 20101 Turku, Finland]
2 1/2

DEI SIX

Act One: Sacrifice CDS
Cyberware Productions
The debut maxi of Dei Six, another project of Tim V, who is also known for his act Shade Factory, and earlier cooperation with famous Two Witches. This CD starts with a schizophrenic and very strange electro maniacism on "Torture". The second track jumps into an alternative dance rhythm, followed by more jungle "Torture" version. "Adrenaline" again is more dancefloor-type music, and your Prodigy-fan friend can like this song. All in all, the CD is dedicated to all electro fans who like a bit more alternative edge of this style. The debut album is in the works. (AO)
[Cyberware Productions, PO Box 623, 33101 Tampere, Finland]
3 1/2

EN NIHIL

Death Keeps
Red Stream Records
Such words as "ritual ambient" don't carry any specific meaning any longer, as we have so many "ritual ambient" groups, and sometimes I lose all my hopes to hear something original in this field. En Nihil are quite traditional, too, they deliver dark ambient with tribal approach. The opening track "Final Bliss (Edit)" can't leave you any sense of light or happiness, it's an absolute darkness and denial of everything. Later, the track grows into a tribal rhythm, the monotonous drumming brings a psychotic mood which is later destroyed by the subsequent tracks that are done in the best manner of Lustmord: unusual frightening sounds, flowing ambience, and a sense of the absolute nothingness and nihilism. The mood is even darker than that of Lustmord, and I used to call Lustmord one of the darkest musical outings ever. Sometimes a seemingly traditional product can have a deeper meaning than its predecessors. (AO)
4 1/4

EXCESSION

Jong & Huga EP
Resurrection Records
This duet was formed only in 1997 and we already have their debut 5-song EP. Yasmin's good ethereal voice could let us expect another Projekt-followers, but electronics which are a lot used (sometimes too much) make this music almost danceable and, if guitars would be used a bit more, it could be an example of traditional gothic rock. Now we get a non-traditional mix of Love Spirals Downwards (mood, but not the music), Siouxiie And The Banshees, and the traditional gothic elite. Good ideas, but could be presented in a more professional way. Anyway, this is only the debut. The Stooges' "I Wanna Be Your Dog" cover sounds powerfully. (AO)
[Excession, PO Box 10164, London NW6 7WG, England]
3 3/4

EYESIGHT

Shield of Leaves
Icarus
What is common about this project and black metal group Sabaath? Absolutely nothing except the fact that Zethyoz is known for playing angry black metal in Sabaath. He has released a solo album as Eyesight, which is far from metal, and generally doesn't fall into any of categories. It's just dreamy acoustic guitar music with the assistance of piano, flute, and clear, soft voice. If you can remember one of romantic love scenes from films, the music which was playing in the background exactly corresponds to the mood of Eyesight. Romantic, melancholic pop/rock music with no pretensions at all. Even highly conservative chief of the radio station where I work would say that it's listenable music. Well, it's not a

compliment, but if you are really (I say really) in a romantic mood, you maybe can try this album. Personally, I would rather listen to romantic ethereal gothic groups. (AO)
[Icarus, PO Box 1593, 1000 Correo Central, Buenos Aires, Argentina]
[Eyesight, Zethyaz, Juan Manuel Ramirez, Santiago 1021, Asuncion, Paraguay]
3 1/4

FALLING JANUS

*My Shallow Thin Shallow
Nevermore/Seraph*

A very strange and very hard-listenable record, this is not the music that radio DJs would like to play in their morning shows. Started with quiet and almost meditative atmospheres, with the second track (there are 5 in total), this album goes in totally schizophrenic soundscapes with psychedelic screams and slightly Sonic Youth-inspired music. On "Linear", it's again silent, sometimes develops to ethereal stylistics, but these aren't easy-listenable either. The overall mood is nervous enough and the closing track dwells with insanity. It's extremely performed avantgarde, if you think the music must have a straight structure, stay away from this record. (AO)
[Seraph, PO Box 13110, Chicago, Illinois 60613-3110, USA]
3 1/2

GARDEN OF DREAMS

*The Seraphim's Desire EP
Seraph*

30 minutes of journey in space. Spiritual, romantic, ethereal music in the veins of Cocteau Twins, Black Tape For A Blue Girl, Lycia; it seems that aesthetic and musical ideals of Seraph and Project Records coincide too often to be a coincidence. Garden Of Dreams is the slowest and the most dreamy Seraph's group. Five long, melodic songs find their best description on the cover of this mini-album: "A motionless dance through an ethereal Dream world..." An ethereal music fan will like this CD, but I wouldn't recommend it for beginners, since, e.g., Love Spirals Downwards are at a much higher level. Garden Of Dreams still haven't their own musical space, but the forthcoming album, I believe, will be much more diverse. (AO)
3 1/2

GENERATOR 9

Defiance

Polar Bear Records

This band from the Netherlands is the right choice for those who adore novelties, especially related to electronic music. Generator 9 find their roots in electronic music of the late decade, i.e., strange electro rhythms, psychedelic atmosphere, and the songs of Nine Inch Nails and Marilyn Manson. All this forms a clear vision of the last generation - you can imagine what to expect here. Dance music, metal, hardcore, jungle, funky, tribal - nothing is missed. It sounds like the carnival of the end of the world. Though the main style is schizo industrial, I'm leaving the listener to decide which style it belongs to. Listen to it open-mindedly. (AO)
[Polar Bear Records, PO Box 2198, 2301 CD Leiden, The Netherlands]
4

GRASS HARP

Meadow Glow

Moonbean Records

A mixture of gothic and psychedelic rock is a rare phenomenon in today's scene, first of all, because the representatives of these styles have different comprehensions about the music. Grass Harp don't see it the same way. Influenced by Fields Of The Nephilim or Mission, as time went on, they slipped psychedelic moments into the songs, and look, it worked! The second longplayer "Meadow Glow", supplied with a nice digi-pack, has something for a fan of every musical

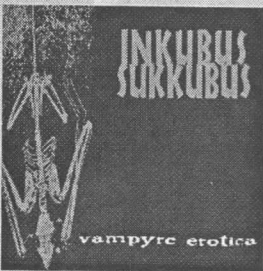
direction: be that pop, rock, gothic, psychedelic, heavy metal, or acoustic stuff. Check out the dynamic "Haunted", Monster Magnet/Hawkwind-ish "Redefinition", or the overlong "Silver Haze". Well done. (SV)
[Moonbean Records, Friedrich-Wilhelm-Str.26, 38100 Braunschweig, Germany]
4

IN ESSENCE

New Invention

Essential Music/Seraph

The beginning of "New Invention" brings a thought about Love Spirals Downwards and Cocteau Twins (Trish McCoy has really something in common with Bel Canto), but later on the music becomes more and more rocky and songs like "Invention" are almost gothic rock with ethereal vocals. The silence and beauty of "Imagine You" takes again to where the shooting stars die... Pure charm and romance. "A Different Eden" is again almost danceable, and the album is ended by "Loved One", offering interesting rhythm decisions and a good work of the guitarist. All 10 tracks are quite various and separate works. If you like the products of Projekt Records, In Essence can become your next discovery. (AO)
4 1/4



INKUBUS SUKKUBUS

Vampyre Erotica

Resurrection Records

The fourth regular studio album of English pagan rock band has a title with bigger commercial value than all its predecessors, but I don't see speculations since Inkubus Sukkubus have always been true to their views. But let us not dive into that, because the music is more important. The first remark on the latter is that the musical chemistry of Tony McCormick (guitar) and Candia (vocals) remains effective, but it does not surprise anymore. I will always have sentimental feelings towards their spontaneous fresh debut "Beladonna & Aconite", and as time passes, my doubts, that they will release a record surpassing it, increase. Meanwhile, "Vampyre Erotica" offers danceable rock music with pagan lyrics, minor tones and minor vocal lines. "Danse Vampyr" track with its ethereal approach is the only novelty comparing with the previous albums. Brightly dark Candia's voice still shines but wonderful refrains characteristic to the past almost have gone. Perhaps only "Hail the Holly King" and the title track resemble the early magic. Stringed instruments are also used, as in the predecessor album "Heartbeat of the Earth", adding a more mellow dimension. Inkubus Sukkubus change only very little. Some may be tolerant to it, others not, but the truth is that, if we distinguish between underground dark music and more "pop" gothic, Inkubus Sukkubus remain one of the better performers of the latter. (GS)
[£13(UK), £15(elsewhere), Pagan Fire Muzick, 18 Russel Street, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, GL51 9HE, UK]
3 3/4

KRANKHEIT DER JUGEND

Schnittstellen

Soundbuster

One of the best pieces of avantgarde rock I've heard for months. This band was formed in 1991 and until now has

played about 220 concerts, 30 festivals, and released 2 EPs, 5 MCs, and one LP. Now we hold in hands their debut CD. As with all experimental music, it's difficult to describe it in one word. Most of all, it reminds of the best works of Relatives Menschlein, partly because both bands form their music on sensitive and melancholically-spoken German-singing vocals, and this sense of romanticism can rarely be found in experimental rock. Musically, it's hardly-understandable textures, because they are laid one on another, so after all the common view disappears. But don't be afraid, this isn't that piece of avantgarde music, which is hardly-listenable. The whole album floats like one-mood wave and, after the end, you are left in a good balanced state. (AO)
[c/o Jan & Tim Siebert, Hauptstr. 75, 74206 Bad Wimpfen, Germany]
4 1/4



HAGALAZ' RUNEDANCE

The Winds that Sang of Midgard's Fate

Elfenblut/Misanthropy Records

Earlier Andrea M. Haugen was known for her participation in magical duo Aghast. After their stunning album "Hexerei Im Zwielicht der Finsternis", Aghast, broke up, and Andrea has continued her creation as Hagalaz' Runedance. Already the first 7" EP "When the Trees Were Silenced" marked a slightly different direction when comparing it with Aghast, two songs on this vinyl presented traditional folk music with such instruments as mouth-harp and shamanic drums. The most exciting fact about these songs was beautiful Andrea's voice. After two years of preparation for the debut album, finally we have 10 pagan folk songs. The way chosen for the 7" EP has been continued here, too: traditional, shamanic music with lyrics based on glorious past times. This folk music is played in a much more traditional way than all this neo-folk wave with Death In June, Sol Invictus, or Current 93. The structure of songs, mood and emotions are caught from the old folk songs, modern influences here seem to be next to nothing. This album is dedicated to all fans of pure folk music and to all those who feel they are pagans at heart. (AO)
4 1/2

LACKADAISY

Still Life

Ambivalent Records/Seraph

A bit darker version of Cranberries, in other words, minimalistic, psychedelic, and melancholic pop music. Three listens to this CD still don't leave any too positive reactions. I can't understand this music and don't know if it's my or band's problem. If it's pop music, it's too sleepy and minimalistic, if it's more alternative-edged, it's too sweet and lucky. Somehow, I can't find the inner harmony within the music, but I give 3 points for my the possibility of my non-understanding of this style and for interesting surrealistic lyrics. (AO)
3

LACRIMOSA

Live

Hall of Sermon

Finally, after five studio albums, three singles, and 2 VHS's, one of the most extravagant gothic groups in the world released their double live album presenting songs performed on "Stille" tour. First of all, one evident fact is that the studio recordings of Lacrimosa can't be compared to the live versions of their songs. It's because of one simple reason: the band cooperates with an orchestra and various choirs, and the bombastic and majestic atmosphere created in studio rooms by no way can be re-performed on stage due to technical reasons. Anyway, 17 songs presented on this album give another view of this band: spontaneous, live playing, full of energy and power. Lacrimosa managed to make their songs sound a little bit different than on the albums, but interesting. We can find tracks from all their albums, starting with the first, and ending with "Stille", so "Live" serves as a good overview of band's history. (AO)
4 1/2

THE LAST DAYS OF JESUS

Arma Christi

Alice in...

The Last Days of Jesus is a band from Slovakia and the east-European origin should already give some indication of the musical diversity of this CD. The music on "Arma Christi" primarily combines gothic rock with Italian prog rock influences and metal elements. In general, the song structures are complex in the sense that a lot of musical parts are integrated the songs which have an average length of 5 minutes. A song like "Earthy Voice" of the music reminds me of a soundtrack accompanying a ride through a cheap house of horrors at an amusement fair. While "Dark Side of My Mind" combines staccato drumming, heavy riffing, and a church organ-like keyboards to give the music an orchestral and gothic atmosphere. On the other hand, "Der

Trug" switches between typical German-style melodic speed metal and Sisters of Mercy-like gothic rock. The common denominator throughout the songs are the medium-pitched vocals which have more resemblance with a narrative talking style than actual singing. The musicianship is extremely diverse with especially the complex drumming and haunting keyboard carpets standing out. The musical level differs a bit through the disc therefore not warranting total ecstasy, but "Arma Christi" is highly recommended to adventurous listeners. (CR)
[Poor M., Haanova 22, 85104 Bratislava, Slovakia] [Alice in..., Wetzlarer Strasse 9, D-35630 Ehringhausen, Germany]
4 1/2

LOVELIKE BLOOD

Love Like Blood EP

Hall of Sermon

As I understand, this EP was meant to please all the fans waiting for the full-length. Well, it contains only two tracks that have nothing in common with the subsequent full-length album. Killing Joke's cover "Love Like Blood" is a tribute to the song that gave the name to the band. As in the past, this time Love Like Blood again managed to make a good cover. Acoustic "Tomorrow" is also released only on this EP. "Kill the Snake" was changed to "Snakekiller" on the full-length album

ORDO EQUILIBRIO
 Conquest, Love & Self Perseverance
Cold Meat Industry

Since 1993, this group stands as one of the greatest acts to come from Swedish industrial/neo-folk scene. Already the first album of this duo showed dark ambience done in a downright apocalyptic way, but the second one was a step in a bit another direction - this time more acoustic elements were added and the influence of such artists as Death In June became more evident. With this third album, Ordo Equilibrio continues to go the same path which we know from their second album, and the style could be best described as apocalyptic folk with industrial background. But if the second album could be divided into two parts, one more industrial/ambient and another being apocalyptic folk, this time these boundaries are torn apart and this disc is much more one-whole than "Triumph of Light..." album. Especially dark industrial background unites all 13 songs on this disc, and even if not all the songs have the same stylistical character, atmosphere is almost entire. On this album, we find even more various instruments used but, as a whole album, it's much more industrial than the previous one. The band managed to combine these various elements in a more sensitive way. And some more differences from their earlier album are that duo plays in a more monotonous/ritualic way (this disc maybe isn't so melodic as the previous one) and the lyrics became much more straight, clearer metaphors are used. The main thing is that this album is surely the darkest one this group has created. The highlights are "Man Always Forgets" and the title track. Let's celebrate walking in the dark fields where the world goes to sleep. (AO)
 [Cold Meat Industry, PO Box 1881, 58117 Linköping, Sweden] [Ordo Equilibrio, PO Box 497, 11479 Stockholm, Sweden]
 4 3/4

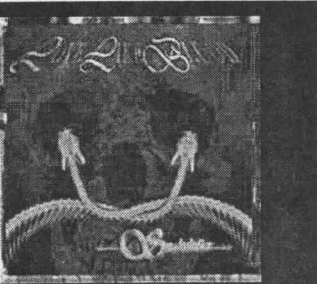
and was recorded a bit differently. The two remaining tracks appeared on the full-length, which leaves this EP solely for die-hard Love Like Blood fans. (AO)
 3 3/4

MANTRA
 Painted Red
Resurrection Records
 Already known for the participation on Cleopatra Records' "Goth's Undead" compilation, these red-music propagators finally released their debut album. The band explores various musical ideas, coming from orchestral arrangements to typical indie sound or traditional gothic motifs. First of all, I must say that it's not an easy-listening record, as most of the songs contain a specific dose of depression and turn for self-isolation. The voice of Yuone Neve is nervous and easy goes for hysterical tones. Well, not all of the album is dark

and gloomy, and the songs like "Held so High" could become radio hits due to their similarity to Bjork and similar artists. Anyway, these are only rare exceptions in this world of dark, red-painted music. (AO)
 [Resurrection Records, 228 Camden High Street, London, NW1 8GS, UK]
 [Mantra, 18 Mount Pleasant, Hazel Grove, Stockport, Cheshire, SK7 4DS, UK]
 4

MARA'S TORMENT
 Dreams Like Mine
self-released
 I even don't know how to call this style - it's instrumental electronic music that obviously isn't dark ambient and isn't relaxing music in veins of Vangelis or J. M. Jarre. Maybe it's a watershed between these styles. No more instruments were presented here, no vocals, so "Dreams Like Mine" is dedicated only to those who adore electronic music and aren't disturbed by the lack of novelties. It's surely not an album hiding a deep meaning within, it's more a background music. (AO)
 [2 Manning Ave 1, Toronto, ON M6J 2K4, Canada]
 3 1/4

MORTHEN VLADE ART
 Herbo Dou Diable
COH Records
 After a demo-tape trilogy, now we have a chance to listen to the debut album of these French horror masters. As King Diamond horror stories are, in my opinion, a bit funny today, I've been longing for a REAL horror music and now I know the band that can create a really terrifying and insane atmosphere. The music varies from one song to another: the album begins with two orchestral/ambient tracks and "Beyond Sorrow" brings gothic stylistics. The female vocals on "Salem" carries a listener to silent (but horrible) gothic/orchestral fields and "Barbaric Breath" again reminds of Bauhaus. "The Unnameable" shocks with theatrical avantgarde music and "Closer to Me" is almost Marilyn Manson in horror style (well, Marilyn Manson isn't the happiest band either). All this one-hour dreadful journey ends with the triumph on "Dor Mee An-Finale". The second album must be out this winter. If you are searching for a true horror, don't miss it, but remember that you've been warned! (AO)
 [COH Records, 78550 Domaine de Bazainville, France]



LOVE LIKE BLOOD
 Snakekiller
Hall of Sermon
 As I expected, the new Love Like Blood album turned out to be one of the best gothic releases in 1998. This band showed once more that they are the strongest and the least repeating-themselves group from the older generation of gothic artists. This album was recorded together with musicians from Gorefest, Amorphis, Lacrimosa, etc. and was produced by Peter Taagtgren (Dimmu Borgir, Edge of Sanity, Hypocrisy). Love Like Blood got more metallic, e.g., guitar riffs are more familiar to a heavy metal listener than to a gothic rock fan. It's not traditional gothic rock, but namely this style forms the basis, even if there is a wide spectrum of other influences. The songs are heavy, melodic, and dark with quite depressive lyrics. My personal favorites are "Pale Sky", "Phrases", and "Ylene". (AO)
 4 1/2

4 3/4
ORIFICE
 Golly Woggle
Phoenix Productions
 Very strange and psychotic mood here. It's almost insane and schizophrenic: while the music is based on ethereal and indie styles, the mood comes from an absolutely different area. You can't relax while listening to this disc. Many different influences can be detected in this album, and the feeling that the music has been heard somewhere before never leaves me. But all these influences are presented in more a "pseudo" way - be it Tori Amos, Sonic Youth, or even Cocteau Twins, all these performers are framed in a minimalistic and psychotic way. Kelly Kreep's voice is the best trademark of Orifice. If you are looking for a new way of already tasted music, try this band but remember that this won't be an easy listen. (AO)
 [Phoenix Productions, 411A Highland Ave. 342, Somerville, MA 02144, USA]
 3 1/2

PUISSANCE
 Back in Control
Cold Meat Industry
 I think the most interesting thing about this group is their standpoint and concept of music. Visions of Armageddon, a total destruction of the whole planet... The story was begun with "Let us Lead" album, and here it is continued in a more professional and involving way. Industrial orchestral music is played on a bit bombastic and triumphal note, as though the final human death would lead to the salvation. And concept apocalyptic lyrics support this opinion - a blind genocide is thought as the only way. Sometimes this neo-classical music transforms into something romantic and beautiful, but it quickly changes to strict thunder and war marches. The impression of Armageddon is revealed in a majestic way. (AO)
 4 1/4

RACHAEL'S SURRENDER
 Within the Tears of Winter
Seraph
 A very poetic, sad, melancholic, and romantic album. Every darkwave fan will find clear influences of Depeche Mode, Lycia, Clan of XmoX, and the ones like these. The programming in the veins of older romantics is presented together with the sound and sad melancholia of Projekt-clan. The only thing that disturbs this clear and perfectly performed music is the male vocals, which aren't expressive enough, and, I think that female ethereal vocals would fit better to this music and bring more emotions, which now sometimes aren't developed to the end. (AO)
 3 3/4



RUNES ORDER
 Waiting Forever (Memories Remain)
Palace of Worms
 Two years of silence, and now we have the 4th album of one of the best dark-electro performers from Italy. Together with Kirilan Camera, they are my favorites in Italy's electronic scene. The new album can surprise everyone with its multi-coloredness of moods and musical decisions. Depressive dark electronic music on "Solitude" is changed with dancefloorish "The Razorblade-Winter", later with ambient passages on

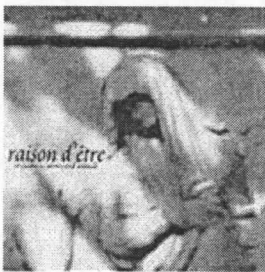
"Blackage" or psychedelic melodies on "Sickness of Beauty". Beautifully arranged melodies change the slow flowing, the mood varies from nostalgic ("Waiting Forever") to threatening ("The Last Delight"), or quiet and romantic ("Endless"). Maybe the term "dark electronics" isn't too suitable as not everything is dark in here, but tracks like "Solitude" (my favorite) are real masterpieces of gloomy electronic music. Frozen Autumn vocalist also contributed to this album and fans of Runes Order will find the new marital version of their cult song "Through the Years". (AO)
 [Runes Order, Claudio Dondo, via Borzoli 103 A, 16161 Rinaldo Genova, Italy]
 [Palace of Worms, Via Bronzetti 19-22053 Lecco, Italy]
 4 1/2

SABOT
 Unsetting
Phoenix Productions
 Very colorful and rich in emotions music. It's a harmonic avantgarde on the edge of ethereal feelings. Sabot never break into where music is becoming hardly listenable, they drive your emotions in a quite silent and meditative way. In places, they let their emotions explode, and the situation becomes uncontrollable, but later they return to their dark and silent world. The professionalism is evident here, this band could bravely join the Projekt family. They are very hard to describe, because they charm you with something you can't catch very easy. But once you are over it, you can fly into a world filled with sentiments and hardly understandable nostalgia. (AO)
 4 1/4

THE SHADOW DANCE
 Temple CDS
Cyberware Productions
 The first and quite successful maxi with 4 songs of the band from Helsinki. Well, at the beginning their sound was too synthetic to me, and their ethereal/gothic couldn't be compared to the grands of this style. But the third track, "Last Train" presented fast electro gothic followed by a bit poppy but well-arranged "Angelic". These two songs left a better impression, and, after several listens, I accepted all 4 songs: female ethereal vocals fit the keyboards well, although to me the band sounds best when they do more dancefloor. (AO)
 3 3/4

SLOGUN
 The Pleasures of Death
Death Factory/Cold Meat Industry
 After a long silence, Death Factory, a sublabel of Cold Meat Industry, awakes all the maniacs with "The Pleasures of Death", an extreme piece of maniac noise power industrial electronics. Joh Balistrieri, the man behind the band, calls it true crime electronics and there is a reason why - this album deals with a serial-murder theme and its musical realization clearly shows what the talking goes about. Electronics here sound noisy and intense with maniac voices behind. This creation must be listened with all volume until your brains give up. (AO)
 [Slogun, John Balistrieri, 7521-19 Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11214, USA]
 4

...THE SOIL BLEEDS BLACK
 March of the Infidels
Draenor Productions
 There is no need to present this group to all fans of medieval music. With their debut album on Cold Meat Industry, they have established themselves as one of the best performers of medieval music crossed with modern influences. These another 16 songs take you to another chapter of the same style and the same atmosphere. As the debut album, this one serves as a music to a film about medieval times, this time, it is maybe more soundtrack-like. Highly recommendable for all pure folk



RAISON D'ETRE

In Sadness, Silence and Solitude
Cold Meat Industry

I even don't try to hide the fact that Raison d'Etre is my most appreciated project from all respectful Cold Meat family. And with each of his albums, Peter Andersson steps further and further into reflections of man's inner world. This music can be taken as a religion, philosophy, way of meditation or another deep understanding, but it's not for a simple listening or a relaxation. Nor it is possible. The latest release of Raison d'Etre is the darkest and the most difficult to access, that's for sure. The beginning of "Reflecting in Shadows" does not even show the traditional Raisonish sounds and only later we recognize the chants and ambient passages that made the name for this project. It's hard to say if this album is better than the previous ones because each of the four releases presents a separate musical world. The fact is that this album was the best one to close ambient year of 1997. (AO)

5

enthusiasts. (AO)

[...The Soil Bleeds Black, Riddick Brothers, 604 Third Street, Herndon, VA 20170, USA] [Draenor Productions, Max, Vorderberger Str. 20, A-8790 Eisenarz, Austria]

4 1/4

SPINDLESHANKS

Spindle Shanks
Phoenix Productions

All fans of Black Tape For A Blue Girl, Love Spirals Downwards and Cocteau Twins must listen to this disc. This duo work in the same gothic/ethereal/ambient direction, but look to it from more depressive and dark side. If Love Spirals Downwards can leave good, romantic and beautiful atmosphere, this band refuses these feelings and lead to sadness, so after all I can't even attribute this band to the same musical category. All this music is mainly based on expressive and beautiful Jeanne's Fahey's voice and she manages to express wide range of emotions, so if you always liked Lycia but missed their darker side and adored PJ Harvey but wanted her to be more alternative, Spindle Shanks can help you there. (AO)

[Spindle Shanks, PO Box 8833, Cranston, RA 02920, USA]

4

STAY FRIGHTENED

Still

Palace of Worms

Without any doubt, it was one of the most (if not the most) romantic and still works in the ethereal/ambient world of 1997. The debut album of this one-man group is mainly instrumental, and when vocals came in first, I almost trembled. At the beginning, they didn't fit my taste but later they started to look quite suitable to the music. Anyway, this music is much more based on

instrumentals than the most of the ethereal music, and piano playing is really sensitive and beautiful. Absolute highlights are "Windblown Luminaries" and "And There On Wish Will Die". The music for the most romantic souls... (AO) [Stay Frightened, Conrad L. Dickey, 13811 13th Drive S.E. #L Mill Creek, WA 98012, USA]

4 1/4

STIFF MINERS

Vox Celestia

TBA Records/Voices of Wonder

Following their debut "Giselle" on Cleopatra Records, this Russian band released their second full-length. The first impression was that it is another album of Laibach. After some listenings, the real world of Stiff Miners appears with all colors. Yes, all the structure is very similar to symphonic, orchestral, industrial music of Laibach. Especially the first tracks on the album. Later, you begin to discover the roots of futurism, constructivism brought together with the traditions of industrial music. Lyrics, written in Latin, German, and English (but not in Russian) focus on a mythological hero, the sentry of time and universe, who is safeguarding the peace of mankind and constantly is struggling with visible and invisible enemies. Pompous, war-like marches follow this concept and make this album to sound fresh and absolutely non-traditional in electronic/orchestral/indus scene. (AO)

4 1/4

TERMINAL CHOICE

Navigator

Cyberware Productions

"In the Shadow of Death" album released in 1996 showed that Terminal Choice can get big in industrial/electronic European world. It showed a great diversity of gothic, dance, industrial, and ambient music. The diversity can't be missed in "Navigator" either, but the new album is a bit more conceptual. It's the darkest and the most angry Terminal Choice album to date, you can decide it already after looking at the song titles: "House of Evil", "The Eternal Evil", "Victim of Life". The lyrics support this opinion - no hope or light can be seen. Musically, it's melodic electronic music with the industrial approach that strongly reminds of Leatherstrip, but Terminal Choice are maybe more negative. They aren't one-dimensional though, in places they take a listener to a crazy dancing fury, later to a slower horror-electro or to ambient. A promising album. (AO)

4 1/4

V/A

The Darkest Hour

Cleopatra Records

The new generation covers our father's generation. Such darkwave/industrial acts as Rosetta Stone, Psychic TV, Leatherstrip, Alien Sex Fiend, or Die Krupps made their own vision of such past-years stars as The Beatles, Beach Boys, Pink Floyd, Hawkwind, or Joy Division. As always on compilations, songs of different levels are included, but those like Type O Negative's version of "Paranoid" (Black Sabbath) or Die Krupps version of legendary Joy Division's "Isolation" shine with the real beauty and sensitiveness. After listening to all 14 songs, you may discover that there was some good stuff done in the past. (AO)

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V/A

Down Under Ground Vol. 2

T.O.R.N. Productions

The second compilation presenting Australian underground scene. Day by day, I discover Australia to have lots of interesting groups in various styles, and compilations like this one help to make a better view on who's who in Under Ground. This time, "Down Under Ground" compilation is more conceptual than the first one, which

was like a collection of everything you can find in the Australian underground scene. Here in "Vol.2", we have 16 songs and almost all of them are played in EBM, electro-gothic, industrial styles with a few exceptions of guitar-based bands. Not all of the bands are perfect, but this is characteristic to many compilation albums. Groups like Novakill, Closed World, Assumption, or Troll have left me intrigued. (AO) [T.O.R.N. Productions, Stephen Harris, PO Box 103, Macarthur Square, NSW 2560, Australia]

V/A

Heilige Tod (A Tribute to Death

In June)

Palace of Worms

I can't hide my own admiration to Death In June, and I think that Douglas P. in years created so many perfect songs that could make a number of tribute albums, not only this one. But that's the only one I know. Most gratifying facts about this tribute are that here are collected groups playing various styles. These groups have tried to make their own visions of Death In June's songs; the selected songs present various periods of Death In June. The best tracks here are Deutsch Nepal's "Heilige Tod", Eld's "Death of the West", and Runes Order's "Last Farewell"; all of them are not made in the same way, they are played in a different manner. A bit disappointing was the cover of "Little Black Angel", which was one of the best examples of the cooperation between Douglas P. and Tibet. But anyway, it isn't such a big minus. (AO)

-



V/A

Vampire Themes

Cleopatra Records

1997 was pivotal year for all the fans of vampire movies. It was not only the 75th anniversary of the first "true" vampire movie "Nosferatu", but, coincidentally, the 150th anniversary of Bram Stokers birth and the 100th anniversary of "Dracula". So, it was not surprising that Cleopatra released a compilation where various gothic/electro bands play tribute to some vampire films. Besides the stars such as Bauhaus ("Bela Lugosi's Dead"), The Damned ("Testify"), or LeatherStrip ("Vampire Hunter"), here we have other more or less known gothic-scene artists like The Electric Hellfire Club, Nosferatu, Big Electric Cat to name a few. All in all, the album turned to be one of the best conceptual compilations I have ever heard. Stylistically, it offers dark gothic rock, covers of soundtracks, hard electronics, and gothic orchestral music. Bauhaus (as always), Nosferatu, and Ex-Voto have left the best impression, but other tracks aren't much worse. A must-have for a horror-movie watcher. (AO)

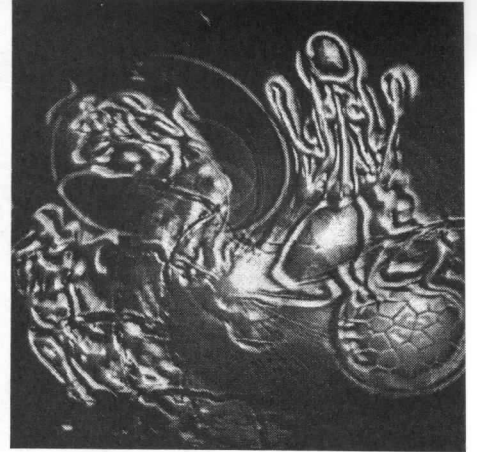
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VAUXDVIHL

VOG

Voyt

If you have heard a small fraction of all rumors floating around this Australian band, you won't be surprised that their new music is



very different from progressive metal presented in their debut album "To Dimension Logic". The change is of similar scale to what Kevin Moore did switching from Dream Theater to Chroma Key. "VOG" contains five songs which are quite eclectic, e.g., opener "Prognosis: Poor Me Syndrome" is a slow electro/industrial song, "Assassination" and "For the Son Has Gone to Hell" are atmospheric slow dance songs reminding in places of the intro of "To Dimension Logic" album (and closest to the old Vauxdvihl stylistics), while "Funeral Party" is fast, quite traditional EBM. All metal is gone, but the atmosphere is kept. It's a bit difficult to separate their main direction, but it should be clearer after the full-length album, which is in the works. (GS)

[Vauxdvihl, 107B Plenty Rd., Preston, 3072 Melbourne, Victoria, Australia]

4

WARCHILD

Confessions EP

self-released

A strange enough record. This CD offers you some instrumentals with spoken performance, it's something like "An American Prayer" by The Doors but different. The music is somewhat gloomy, dark and sometimes bright, the lyrics - philosophical and a bit religious. All has been written, composed and played by a man called Warchild together with some guest musicians. It's hard to value such albums but 3 1/2, I think, would be an optimum. (SV) [Warchild, P.O.Box 63, Chapel Hill, Tennessee 37034, USA]

3 1/2

WITH SIRENS ENTRANCED

Epilogue

Seraph

Very promising young group released their debut album, where we find dark ambience, quiet and very atmospheric songs. Parallels to Lycia come to my mind, but With Sirens Entranced perform even more romantic and silent music. Very clear and hypnotic atmospheres, the band knows the standards well and manages to create a sensitive mood. It seems that ethereal music scene is quite rich, and groups like this one can replace Lycia one day. OK, Lycia's new album, I believe, will be more diverse and more interesting, as "Epilogue" lacks diversity in places, but With Sirens Entranced can be considered as one of the most promising ethereal newcomers. (AO)

4



Love Like Blood

The Goth Legends Return With a New Snakebite

[by Audrius Ozalas]

Three years of silence in the camp of Love Like Blood, one of the most known and still existing goth bands in Europe, was met with rumours and talks about a possible split-up. Last year, celebrating their 10th anniversary, brothers Eysels collected their compilation titled "Swordlilies the Decade of Love Like Blood" and also put out their new CDS "Taste of Damocles". But for the band that was so productive earlier, it wasn't very impressive, and the rumours even strengthened with talks about changes in their line-up. Only year 1998 shed some light into these matters. The new "Love Like Blood" EP was soon followed by absolutely amazing new album "Snakekiller", which I would dare to call one of the hottest goth releases of the year. The line-up, consisting now only of two brothers Eysels, has been completed with musicians from such groups as Lacrimosa, Gorefest, and Amorphis. The fifth studio album seems to begin the new era of Love Like Blood. An interview with singer and lyricist York Eysel follows.

In 1996, we done nothing within the band, this was a break which we needed at that time. Last year Gunnar and I decided to write new songs without new members or guitar players and to look for a new record company. In 1997, we recorded it in three different studios, the pre-production around Stuttgart, a part of the EP in Hamburg, and rest of the both albums in Sweden. It was too late in November to release the EP earlier, the most companies need three months to get everything well prepared.

After all, you decided to remain only two "true" members in Love Like Blood. What did cause this? We were tired of replacing band members, so we decided to work with session musicians during the recording sessions and for the live shows.

Now let's take a look at your new album, which, as it seems, is going to be one of the main gothic albums this year. You have chosen the Abyss studio, why? Till now it was more known as a metal studio, weren't you afraid that Peter would look at your album from a different standpoint than it was supposed to be? Are you completely satisfied with his work?

We were searching for a different studio this time, in another country with a different flair, atmosphere, and surroundings, instead of recording again in Hamburg like we did all the years before. The Abyss studio was perfect, in the middle of nowhere, by a small lake in the countryside of Sweden. Peter Tagtgren was a metal producer till the last year and he was very interested to work with us to make something different, he gave us this powerfull and bombastic sound. We are very satisfied with his production and we were never afraid that something would go wrong, because we were sitting beside him the whole time and produced the whole album with him together.

There are so many guest members present on the

album... Did you choose all of them by yourselves? Lacrimosa, Gorefest, or Amorphis are of absolutely different musical worlds. Did you try, by choosing this great variety of musicians, to make a very diverse album? And how did this influence your final product? Did you tell them how and what to play from the beginning to the end or maybe they had some performing freedom and, for example, influenced how a certain song had changed from its starting idea to the final result?

Yes, we have chosen them all by ourselves and it was no question what different kind of background they had, because we knew that they were great and professional musicians and the songs were all finished, so there was

never a danger that something would get too much influenced by some guest musician. When you hear all the songs, you will notice that all fit very well together with just small differences in the kind of playing the instruments. Only the version "Kill The Snake" sounds very different and also "Tomorrow" on the EP, because of the guitar of Esa from Amorphis, but also because they were not produced by Peter and they were recorded in a different studio in Hamburg. But we did not tell anybody that ideas from their side were not allowed, we are open minded for all ideas, because all the little creative things during the recording session are sometimes very interesting and helpfull, and they do not change the whole song.

Do you feel a very big difference between this album and your previous recordings? For me it sounds more influenced by metal. What are your favorite performers in the heavy scene?

We don't think that this album is heavier than others before, if you put out some songs from the new album and compare them with some others, like "Fallacious World" or "Hide" or "Siberian Pandemonium", you will see that there were always some 'heavier' songs. The difference is more in the sound of the new album, the production of the guitars and bass is more powerfull, which seems very heavy to some people; others are saying that they are really happy that we don't sound like gothic metal. In the heavy scene, we have or had two very interesting examples in mixing the elements of gothic and metal, which are Type O Negative and Paradise Lost.

If talking about the scene... What do you think about the gothic scene these days? Many people blame it for being more and more conservative and stagnant with no more great discoveries. Do you agree with that and which are your favorite gothic artists?

It is almost true that there were only new acts in that scene which replayed the sound of the eighties, and the elder bands did almost nothing in the direction of innovations or splitted up. Only The Mission risked a try in changing their style, but without success, and then they also splitted up. Only they have brought fresh air into that scene and maybe we also can add ourselves to the bands which tried to develop themselves successfully at the end of this year.

Well, let's get back to your new album.

"Snakekiller" is dedicated to the Israelite population. Why? Could you explain it more?

The explanation is the song. The dedication is just included to say that this song is not about the bad world or for a political change somewhere, but to express that we feel with those people that lost somebody by such stupid and senseless actions.

What's your main lyrical inspiration? What do you try to reveal by writing them? All in all, they seem to have a dark character. Are you such a dark person in your daily life, too?

I am not a very dark person except my clothes maybe, but I love the dark atmosphere and the lyrics help to create this on our album, too. Darkness is just a question of style and feeling. The inspiration is also a feeling or an emotion, things that crossed your mind, heart, or soul once in your life.

What's the history of "Ylene"? It isn't written by Love Like Blood, as I understand.

That's right, this song is written by Frank Weyzig from Born For Bliss. Gunnar asked him if he would like to write a song for us and he did it, and we liked it, so we took it.

Of course, all the songs on your new album are very intimate to you, but maybe some of them are your favorite ones? Which song will be the opening one on your shows?

None of our new albums, the opening song will be the first song of the "Odyssee" album, "Feedback". From "Snakekiller" we will play the first four songs and the last one live, because they are our favorites.

"Snakekiller" is released by Hall Of Sermon. Why did you leave Rebel Records and were there other offers besides Hall Of Sermon? For how many albums have you signed to this label and what do you



You have released a new EP as well as the new album almost in a row. Why the EP was released before the album came out? Was it kind of a promotional release announcing about the new album or maybe there were some other reasons? First it was planned to release just a single, then the label decided to make a special release for our 10th anniversary and put 5 different songs on it instead of remixes or versions.

Well, let's look back to the past. You were silent for about three years. What were you doing all that time? For the band being so productive in the past, it was really a long silence...

think about your new labelmates? Your opinion about Lacrimosa's "Stille"?

The reason why we left Rebel Records was that our contract ended and we didn't want to sign a new one there. For sure, we had different offers from other labels, but we found that only Hall Of Sermon were really interested in us. I am not sure how many albums we have in our contract, I would have to look into it again. About the band Lacrimosa, I can't tell you anything. I don't know that band good enough.

- Could you name your personal top-7 of the best gothic albums ever?
1. Love Like Blood "Snakekiller"
 2. Love Like Blood "Love Like Blood" EP
 3. Love Like Blood "Flags Of Revolution"
 4. Love Like Blood "An Irony Of Fate"
 5. Love Like Blood "Odyssee"
 6. Love Like Blood "Ecstasy"
 7. Love Like Blood "Sinister Dawn"

What is your line-up for concerts? Almost all shows are set for Germany. In which countries, besides Germany, do you usually have the biggest audience? Which countries form the biggest gothic market nowadays?

The live line up is: Yorck Eysel (vocals), Gunnar Eysel (bass), Alex Sauer (drums), Timo Deininger (lead guitar), Lotte Forst (rhythm guitar).

Yes, the tour is mainly in Germany and only some few shows in other countries, like Austria, Belgium, or Poland. The biggest scene is still in Germany, like it always was I think. For the shows in other countries, it really depends on what and where you play, there were also a lot of festivals, which you can't compare to solo shows, but we had good shows in Paris or Warszawa, for example.

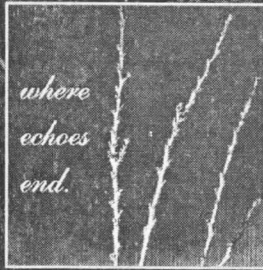
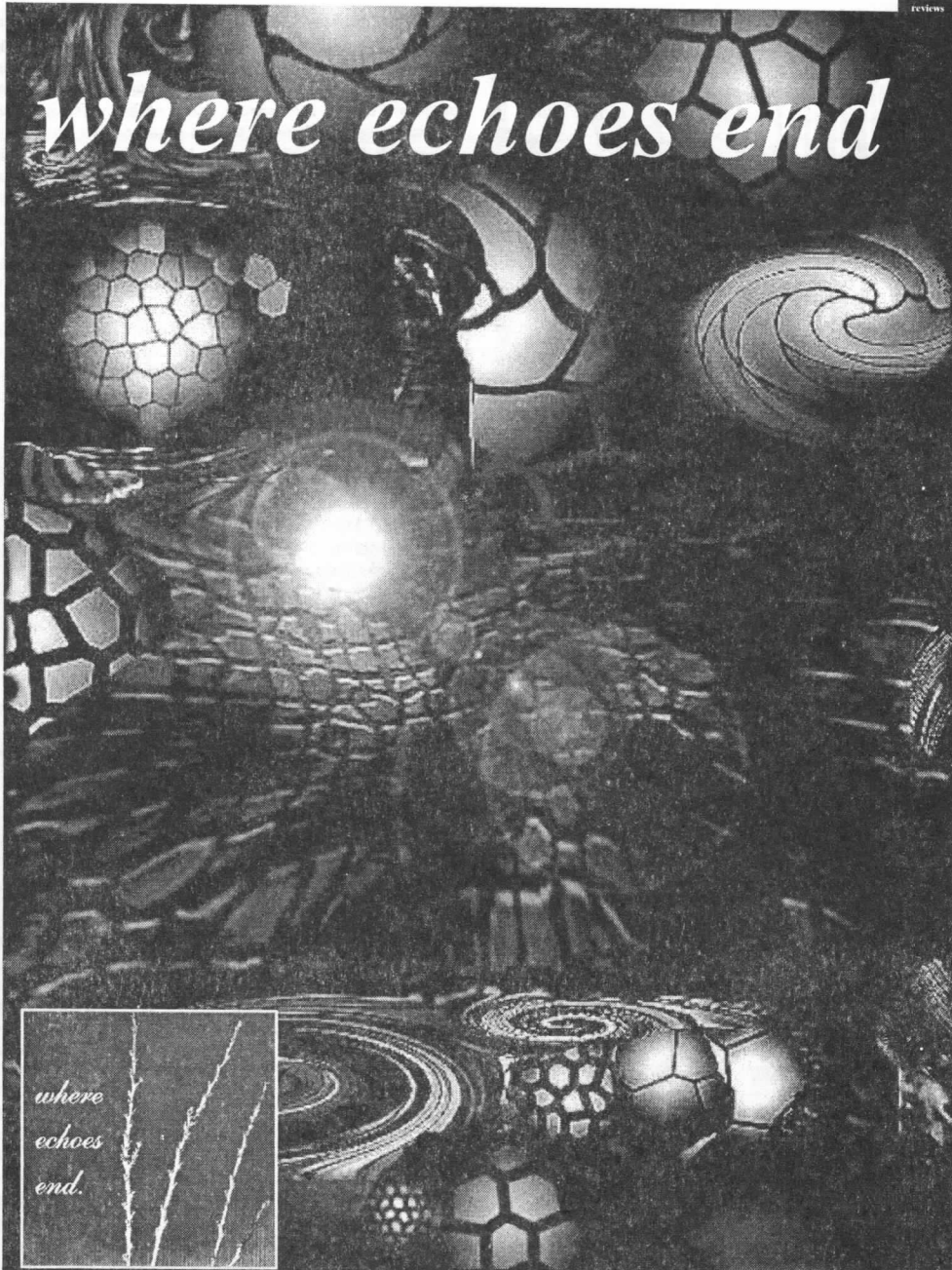
Your final words and what can we expect from you in the nearest future? We never have been in your country yet and it would be a pleasure to play also there in near future!

- Love Like Blood release list:
- "Sinister Dawn" MLP, Deathwish Office (1989)
 - "Flags of Revolution" CD/LP, Deathwish Office (1990)
 - "Ecstasy" MCD, Deathwish Office (1991)
 - "Kiss and Tell" CDS/12", Rebel Records (1992)
 - "An Irony of Fate" CD/LP/PD, Rebel Records (1992)
 - "Ecstasy and Sinister Dawn" CD (re-release), Rebel Records (1992)
 - "Flags of Revolution" CD, Rebel Records (1992)
 - "Demimondes" CDS, Rebel Records (1992)
 - "Flood of Love" CDS, Rebel Records (1993)
 - "Stromy Visions" CDS, Rebel Records (1993)
 - "Heroes" Shape 7", Musical Tragedies (1993)
 - "Odyssee" CD/LP, Rebel Records (1994)
 - "Exposure" CD, Rebel Records (1995)
 - "Taste of Damocles" CDS, Focusion (1997)
 - "Swordlilies The Decade of Love Like Blood" CD, Oblivion (1997)
 - "Love Like Blood E.P." MCD, Hall of Sermon (1998)
 - "Snakekiller" CD, Hall Of Sermon (1998)

Line-up:
Yorck Eysel, vocals, lyrics
Gunnar Eysel, bass, music

Additional musicians on "Snakekiller":
AC (Lacrimosa), drums
Ed Warby (Gorefest), drums
Alex Sauer (Cam Project), drums
Esa Holopainen (Amorphis), guitars
Frank Schuer (Silke Bischoff), guitars
Lars Johannsson (Big Target), guitars
Susan D'Avillo (Moonchild), vocals

where echoes end



WHERE ECHOES END By the Pricking of my Thumb Beaks Ahoy

Records like this unite fans of different genres. Of course, there will be some who will reject this album because it's not progressive metal, and both Where Echoes End members (Eddie Katz and Paul Read) played in ex-progressive metal band Vauxdvihl. But there will be others who haven't really looked into dark atmospheric, ambient, or electronic music before and, with this release, will discover it. It's difficult to predict how many people from outside of Vauxdvihl scope will be attracted, but potentially the album can be accepted by a wide range of people, from those who adore Cold Meat Industry releases to electro-freaks loving Fifth Colvmn Records stuff. Overall, the sound of "By the Pricking of my Thumb" is quite unique.

At first, it seems that there is not much music in it. In a sense that not many easy melodies exist. But hooks slowly come, if you are open for them. The band gives some philosophical background for each of the five parts (the total running length is 72 minutes), and this is more than enough for a well-wishing listener to start construct visions in his/her mind and dive into the soundtrack of thoughts Where Echoes End supply. Stylistically, this album mainly would fall into ambient or dark-atmospheric music categories. The music is mainly based on keyboards, synths, and samples; is quite intense, which means that one wouldn't like to scare your customers playing it on phone while they are waiting until you take a call. To add more intrigue, I could add descriptions of some songs. "Inventor of the Invisible World" is 'a little bit' nightmarish version of Enigma, "Opinions Divided" is a haunting atmospheric track telling a story about Sigmund Freud, "Terra Incognita" is quite dramatic with its story about the existence of God, "Syndication I: Prologue" is ambient with soul/techno style female vocals (in general, the songs do not contain vocals, but there are lots of spoken samples). Quoting Eddie Katz, don't search in this release for what's not in it. Accept it as it is. And you'll be glad. (GS)

P.S. According to Paul Read's words, the next Where Echoes End album will be more song-oriented, songs will have a more visible structure. There will be singing (most likely of Stacy Handchild, who performed vocals on Vauxdvihl's "To Dimension Logic") and more guitars.

[£16, Where Echoes End, 20 Becket Ave, East Bentleigh, 3165, VIC, Australia]

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There are still musicians in the worldwide musical community that are able to create their own unique niche in the crowded world of musical genres. Greyhaven are such a musical outfit that showcased a progressive metal/ambient hybrid on their first instrumental demo/CD back in 1997. The progressive metal aspect can be traced back to the unconventional song structures and heavy riffing while the ambient aspect is caused by the atmospheric, moody, and haunting themes of the synthesizer. Greyhaven were formed in December of 1996, when writing sessions between the two guitarists Nate Howard and Ethan J. Matthews, coupled with jam sessions with drummer Nick Cipriano became more serious and inspiring. At that time, Cipriano was already playing drums in the local metal band Malhavoc (not to be confused with the Canadian band that released the CD "Premeditated Murder" in the early nineties) but his focus was then switched to Greyhaven. After a couple of months searching for additional musicians (bass player and vocalist), it became obvious (through posting adds) that Greyhaven had little chance of finding anyone else in their local areas (Eugene, Oregon) that would be interested or able to play in Greyhaven. At that point in time, Matthews made the decision to switch to synthesizer (he had played piano during his childhood) to fill out Greyhaven's sound. The synthesizer has taken over the bass parts as is used to give a new depth to the sound that guitars can't deliver. In the middle of 1997, as a trio, the aforementioned instrumental debut demo/EP was recorded. It features the epic "Vessel" (21:10) and "Downfall" (6:21). The individual parts of the music are so interesting that the vocal aspect is not missed. In my opinion. Although the music does lack some focus here and there, the musical depth and variety easily keeps the attention focused. In the beginning of 1998, Greyhaven's line-up was finally completed when vocalist Brian Francis was added to the musical concept. Greyhaven are currently recording songs for the debut CD in the Dak Studios. The upcoming album primarily contains new material of which some titles are: "Saga", "The End Of The First Age Of Nothing", "Greyhaven", "Cold Night by the Fortress", "Mirror my Eyes (Moria-Downs)", and "Lying in Shadows". However, at the time of writing, nothing specific concerning the title and possible releases date was known.

In order to gain some more knowledge of the individuals behind Greyhaven, an interview was conducted. The interview was done with Ethan J. Matthews (EJM) and Nate Howard (NH).



GREYHAVEN

Strangers in a Strange Land

[by Christian Rademaker]

Since the release of the demo, Greyhaven have acquired a vocalist. How do you foresee the impact and influence of the vocalist on the music? How does the fact that he doesn't come from your area influence his long term involvement on new songs?

NH: Our current plan is to get the album recorded and mixed including vocals. Then we will shop it around and hopefully find a label that is willing to master and release it in its completed form.

EJM: We have done a lot of stuff through the mail and will continue that hopefully. We are basically recording the songs right now and then in June he will come to Eugene and record all the vocals that he has been demoing down in California. This through the mail stuff is working out much better than I thought it would. Of course, if major attention comes to the band we will all be working/living together in the same city.

What are the possibilities of releasing a CD independently? What are the requirements, apart from the obvious financial aspect, that are needed for such a venture? In what way is it important for artists to be knowledgeable of business aspects?

NH: One possibility is to get a mail order deal of some kind, but then our album will still be unmastered and unavailable in music stores. An independent release is "possible" but hardly feasible for us at this moment, especially because we are going to be attending separate schools this fall.

EJM: I am starting to get educated on this more and more. We want a firm deal that allows us to pursue proper distribution. After all, if we are going to do another record we need funds to do it. As far as I can see, we cannot afford to put out independent stuff. There are those little things you know: like how is Brian going to afford the plane ticket to New York? If we aren't making a sizable amount of money off something it practically prevents us from going much further.

You mentioned that you're going to be attending separate schools this fall. What are you going to study and how will this influence the future of Greyhaven?

NH: Well, Ethan and I will be attending Berklee in

Boston this fall and will be studying whatever interests us the first few semesters. As for the future of Greyhaven, well, unless we get a good label that will promote and distribute the album properly, we will put Greyhaven on hold and spend time doing as much self-promotion as we can.

EJM: I'm mostly looking into the areas of music synthesis, film scoring, and production. I've always felt that I have a great deal of talent in the arranging dept. I think I'd actually do really well producing 'pop' albums because of my sensibility in this area. For Greyhaven and any other projects that I delve into, I can greatly use in-depth knowledge of synthesis and engineering. I am going to Berklee because it's an excellent school for these subjects. Most guitarists go there for other reasons. I am NOT going there to study guitar.

You're currently situated in Oregon which could be viewed as a musical solitary solitude. In what way is the isolation from the trend determining cities an advantage and in what way is it a disadvantage?

NH: Trends have only been an issue when we can't get gigs because of them, and in a small single-minded city like Eugene, there aren't enough venue options.

EJM: Well, as a small town I like Eugene a lot and think we're going to miss some parts of it. We have a few friends here and there that will come to our shows - and even if they don't totally like it or 'get it' they are really cool people and respect what we're doing. We have no real fan base in Eugene or surrounding areas - but we never really intended to. We get out and play once in a while and we don't let it bother us.

We are in our 'own little world'. Needless to say - we don't fit in socially with the people either. I suppose it just makes Greyhaven a little bit mysterious... but that's cool I suppose.

Ethan, you switched from guitar to keyboards during the evolution of Greyhaven. How does the fact that you are capable of playing multiple instruments effect the songwriting. Do you think that it is important for musicians to be able to play multiple instruments?

EJM: In this band - yes. Nate plays, writes with keyboards as well as guitar. Brian plays guitar, keys, and bass as well as his singing. We are band that is VERY into technology. We are trying for the most modern sound possible and will go to great lengths to achieve it. We have a lot of complex 'orchestration' that has to be just right. In a way, we are what I would call "sound

designers". In fact, this recording we're working on now may get so complex that we will not be able to pull off every aspect of it live. Presenting Greyhaven live is a formidable task. We have like five times (at least) more equipment than pretty much any band in town and the sound guys just shake their heads. They don't understand why we need all this stuff with just 3 (now 4) guys.

Your earlier songs were instrumentals due to the lack of a vocalist and featured original names such as "Mirror my Eyes" and "Vessel". How do you come about thinking of such names? Is the music written and then the concept of the song developed or is it an iterative process?

EJM: The names usually come later. For the most part for "Vessel" it was like: what the hell IS this song? What title sounds appropriate? What do the lyrics say? I also have to say that not everything has a direct, explicable meaning.

The music of Greyhaven relies very much on atmosphere. Such an atmosphere conjures up different types of images. Strange as it may seem, the Philip Glass soundtrack to the documentary Anima Mundi comes to mind as a similar example of images supporting music. However, the structure of a song often determines the accessibility and appreciation of a song. Therefore songs by artists such as Greyhaven can not be appreciated immediately due to the lack of apparent structure? Your comments?

NH: I believe that once the structure of our songs is realized, they can be much more interesting and enjoyable.

EJM: I don't know about lack of structure... In my eyes the music has a lot of it. We are actually trying to create a "structure" in the listener's mind. We do have song structures per say... "Saga" for instance is: intro, pre-verse, verse, pre-chorus, verse 2, pre-chorus 2, chorus, bridge, guitar solo, verse 3, pre-chorus 3, outro. Many of the musical themes are repeated and will sound even more cohesive with vocals over them. There is some stuff that's a lot sketchier... Now, to the average "pop" music listener that ("Saga") is still a complicated structure - but it's there. Think of structure for Greyhaven in terms of where the music takes you... that is the best structure.

The use of drugs to enhance one's sporting efforts is illegal. On the other hand the use of drugs such as LSD in the 60s by bands such as the Beatles have often led to an artist's most prolific work and is often accepted as such. Have you or would you ever use drugs in any shape or form in order to enhance your creativity?

NH: Ah yes! More controversy! Seriously, though, I feel that anyone who is truly an "artist" in their own medium should not need to use drugs in order to create beauty (or darkness).

EJM: I know the other guys are VERY against drug use of any kind. I don't condone it, but I also don't put value judgments on those who wish to use - for musical creativity purposes or not. It is true many modern artists have used drugs and had great results in the creativity dept. You can't really deny that. I have never written anything while under the influence of any drug. I'm not saying I never would, or that I don't at all, but I never put any conscious effort into that area. Most of my ideas are simply 'stumbled' upon while experimenting with sounds or just noodling. I can see drug use and Greyhaven music working very well together! I could see why one might think that we use, but we really don't.

In which other musical projects are the band members active and how is the music related to Greyhaven?

NH: I know I do a small musical project every now and then (usually for school), but I'm not currently involved with anything right now other than Greyhaven.

EJM: Nick also plays in a metal band. That's about it as far as other formal projects right now. I do a lot of more electronic stuff on the side, some of which will be used in Greyhaven and some of which say put toward a 'promotional' CD for myself in the next couple of years. Again, I like the idea of doing soundtracks of different media (movie, CD ROM, etc.). For Greyhaven, I'd like to continue doing the direction we are hinting at with the newer tracks, which is a vast combination of rock/metal, electronic, ambient, etc., etc.

The moniker "Greyhaven" is derived from the Tolkien classic "The Lord of the Rings". Are you particularly interested in science fiction/fantasy?

NH: I'm the only one in the band that has actually read anything related to Tolkien ("Lord of the Rings", "The Silmarillion", etc.) I do have an affinity for such things and I feel that it can reflect in the writing that we do.

EJM: The name fits the music - all I can say.

Often classic science fiction novels are adapted for the visual medium (television, movie screen). To my knowledge, not many novels or stories have been converted to music. Taking into consideration your interest in these themes and the fact that your music does not need to make compromises to the regular chorus-verse format, do you envisage Greyhaven putting music to a novel?

NH: I've been interested in doing several different conceptual pieces based on works of literature and film. Maybe someday I will complete them all. (yeah... right)

EJM: I personally am very interested in movie soundtracks. I could see Greyhaven doing a full soundtrack together in the future...

In the past, the songs of numerous metal bands have been used for movies, usually horror flicks or teen movies. However not many bands have been approached to write musical scores. I remember reading that VoiVod would have liked to have made the music to David Lynch's "Eraserhead". What type of movie soundtracks are you interested in and which movie would you have liked to write the music for?

EJM: VoiVod is cool. They would be a great band for that sort of thing. I would like to work in the sci-fi, fantasy domain I guess. I'm more interested in electronic scores rather than orchestral. I really dig stuff like Tangerine Dream's "Legend" soundtrack. For Greyhaven, we are a young band and there's still a lot to do before we get involved in major alternate projects. We are still barely testing the waters of what I believe we are capable of in the future. If we could sit down and do nothing but write music for a year, then spend 6 months in production and recording of an album the end result would be absolutely crazy! With the amount of time we spend now on production we already get a ton of stuff done.

Concentrating only on this music would yield some amazing results. If the band can get to this point within the next few years or so, afterward I would look into some other things like soundtracks, etc.

In recent years, the emphasis of (commercial) music has shifted from the music sec to the combination of music and images. The most explicit example are videoclips. Another example is the increasing use of combining music and images in a CD ROM format. This could

actually be interpreted as a form of multimedia. How do you view this concept for a band such as Greyhaven?

NH: Well, if we had a budget for such a project, I'm sure we could pull together and excellent multimedia accompaniment for our upcoming album. However, our funds are currently limited.

EJM: Well, I used to hate videoclips (MTV), because they distort one's own interpretation of a song, but now I think Greyhaven could greatly benefit from a well-done music video (maybe not financially). As far as the CD-ROM thing, I don't know. It's certainly a bigger possibility for us.

Like a lot of new bands, you have a homepage on the Internet. How important is a homepage in order to reach potential listeners to your music?

EJM: OK. To be perfectly honest, without the Internet, we would not be nearly as known as we are. It has been the catalyst to get the word out. The concept of building a 'regional' following and then building from there is very alien to us. The music scene in Eugene and the rest of Oregon is pretty dry and the chances of us ever catching on around here are very slim. I think the Internet helps give us the recognition that we deserve. It is also a great way to get in touch with magazines/fanzines and the like. It opens us up to practically limitless promotional tools. It also helps us improve our perception of what we are doing. When you find people around the world that really dig what your doing it makes doing it a lot more rewarding and fruitful.

"Misuse of the Internet" is becoming an increasingly hot topic in debates. An example has been the recent trial of a PhD student for allegedly sexually abusing a woman he met through an Internet chat box. Voices are being raised to install Internet censors. What are your views on this subject?

NH: I think that it's the responsibility of the individual to understand that there are surfers on the web who are looking to cause trouble. Even if software was written to regulate what is said and done, I'm sure the "bad guys" would find a way around it.

EJM: Well, the Internet is the Internet and no ones going to change that! It's a wide open medium and stuff like what you mentioned will happen again and again. I think underground musical forms have gained a bit more recognition because of the Internet. It's healthy in a way... but I think the market is going to be overrun with too many bands and not enough fans.

The new developments in technology make it increasingly easy and affordable to manufacture CDs with the aid of a CR-recorder or CD-writer. This definitely has an influence on potential bootleggers: CDs of major labels acts can now be copied with digital quality for a fraction of the price. Another development is the downloading of music through the Internet: CDs need not be purchased in a shop but can be downloaded for a certain financial contribution to the artist thereby bypassing the retailers. How do you see the future of music recordings develop?

EJM: I personally think that shit sucks! I mean, we use a CDR-W to record demos and back-up soundfiles. Nothing wrong with that. I personally like to go to a store and just buy the damn music! I guess I'm a Neanderthal! I also think it does bands a disservice when people copy albums for each other. Also, look at the price of most painting prints (equivalent to a copy of an album from a master me thinks). They still cost more than music. I would go as far as to say that music is dirt cheap. Perhaps this has something to do with the commercialization of music. People can buy it cheaply and even copy it for someone after that. Of course, all the money goes to the label(s) anyway. Kind of reduces the value of 'art', doesn't it?

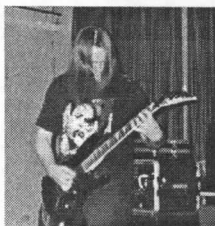
NH: We have just begun delving into the CD-R world and are finding it VERY useful. Not only in releasing CD's of our demo, but keeping our hard drive full of free space for our current album project. I've also noticed that some digital-multitrack machines (namely the Roland VS series) have CD-R add-ons that can be purchased. I think that it's becoming an excellent trend for the home studio.

In relation to the previous question: how would you define art? What is the relation between the price consumers pay for art and the degree in which it is perceived as art?

EJM: Art to me is individual expression of any sort that you can document. Music is somehow less than art to a lot of people. That is partially due to the way the music industry works. Some artists don't want to call what they do 'art' because they feel it lumps them into some sort of category in society. That's not how I define it or look at it. Some musicians think that being called an 'artist' will make them look like a snob or something (at least where I'm from). Not so in my book. Somehow classical music art is put on a pedestal in our society, and for the most part it should be. This does send the message that other music (music especially) is less than that. I also feel that saying something is 'art' does not put a value judgment on it. It simply states that it is individual expression and creativity. This may not jive well with other people's definitions, but people that know me would agree that I don't 'jive' very well in the first place!

Finally, the demo CD is still available and is highly recommendable because the full version of the brilliant epic "Vessel" will not be on the forthcoming release. The CD costs \$5 US (includes postage) in the USA. International orders will cost more (\$7 US should do). The money can be sent in the form of a check, money order, or cash (U.S. only) to the band address.

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Buddo

Visions in the Naked Light

[by Sigitas Velyvis]

Does anybody remember Last Crack? In my opinion, their second album "Burning Time" was one of the best releases of the 90's. Since then there were many rumors that their singer and poet Buddo had new projects, but nobody could give me more information on the bands. All that I had was a couple of albums and demos featuring Buddo on vocals. I stumbled on the fact, that, for example, White Fear Chain consisted of Buddo, three ex-Realm members and ex-Gemini drummer, and Magic 7 was almost the Last Crack reunion... I've always been a big Buddo fan, so one day I decided to contact him and to find out what was actually going on. I send him a great bunch of questions concerning Last Crack, White Fear Chain, Mind Ox, Magic 7, and Buddo himself, and some weeks later I got the cassette with the answers and some of his latest solo-demos on it. Unfortunately, some of the interview didn't record. Anyway, I hope you will appreciate my work, especially Last Crack and Buddo fans should be pleased with the answers by the former philosophy student. Check out each and every band featuring Buddo, they all are different and great!

When did you begin to sing? Did you take singing lessons or are you some kind of self-taught person?

Earliest, that I can recall, I was singing Peter Penn, the album that my mother bought for me, and, I guess, she says I'm singing constantly. I never took any lessons, I actually wanted to be a guitar player for a while. I bought a paper that headed drums when I was in the 6th grade. I was playing drums for a band, we had a lead singer, and his name was Speedo. He was a really good train-singer, but didn't have any kind of substance, and he used always complain on me about how I sounded when I sang. He always tried to teach me vibrato and vocal control. Actually, I learned a lot from him, and I also realized that I had a lot more to say than he did, so I decided to get off from behind the drums then and that's when I started practicing hardcore.

What have you learnt during the philosophy studies? Were they useful?

I think, philosophy and studying philosophy has always been something that I've done on my own. The studying

has definitely influenced everything that I've written since then. Although I know that there was different philosophy and psychology used before I went to school for it. I just graduated with the degree in English now, so just being exposed to a wide range of different authors and styles and techniques in writing. For this new material, that I wanna be writing, I'm kind of struggling with it right now, I'm not so happy with straight plots, I'd much rather go with the way words sound and poetry.

When and how did you contact other members of Last Crack?

I was dropped out of the school for the second time, I was majoring philosophy at that time, and I went down to Austin, Texas, 'cause there were a lot of good bands coming out of Austin, and it had a real high reputation as a music city. I auditioned in Austin 20 times a week, you know, jam with different people. Every night I came from work and packed my little car up with the drums or guitar, my little PA system. It seemed to be a lot of heavy metal down there. There were always some bands that wanted a heavy metal singer, and I just ignored them all. I was more in REM, Psychedelic Furs and that kind of stuff at that time, and I wasn't interested in doing any Ted Nugent or anything. After I moved back from Austin, I put all the gear at my parents house and decided not to touch it for a while. I was kind of burned down on it. But after two months I thought, what the hell, let's go into something for fun and then I put an ad into a local music store "Good&Loud", and that's when I got a call from the band that had eventually turned out to be Last Crack. I auditioned with them, and you know, they were good. I was 4 years older than those guys, I just basically did it for fun for myself without really thinking about any precautions. And then success suddenly found us...

"Sinister Funkhouse #17" was still a bit rough album but it was distinguished for the energy and enthusiasm that drove it forward. How do you estimate this CD now? What can you say about this cover-photo?

Yeah, that was a totally raw album. I was a fan of Fear, Black Flag and Axe at that time, so I thought what would be like to unify the power of the hardcore singer with heavy metal music? That's "Sinister Funkhouse". I sang the whole album in 9 hours. It was very low budget recording, and everything was done quickly. Our engineer had problems putting stuff on the tape. I mean, the tones are brutal, it's a very brutal album, but it's got energy. I hadn't listened to it for a long time, it's funny, because my dad always keeps it in his truck, I think, he likes the picture (laughing). I borrowed the truck to visit my folks in Montego, this was right after I had broken up from Magic 7, and I listened to this cassette, and shelter came on! I was getting the biggest kick out of it, because there was shit loaded energy on that album! I even know that it is kind of cheesy, it was very dated. And you could tell us that we were trying do way too much, I mean, the guitar solos were flying over every verse, Don and Paul were like playing over each other, that nobody could do enough or something. It's like a Hot-dog contest. But it was good for what it was, it's got energy, and I think, I like it more the older I get. Talking about the photo, I must say that there was a lack of communication between myself and the band, I was coming from a different perspective, I think, more a hardcore thing. Those guys wanted to be like a heavy metal band, you know, heavy metal was huge then. they had their idea on like heavy metal success, I mean, Paul was a huge Van Halen fan, so I really didn't discuss a lot of things. I did what I did and then didn't tell them why. Well, I just knew we had a photo shoot coming up, and they had no idea what would it look like. I had some image in my head, actually something that was violent and free. After the band photos were done, I asked just to set this stuff up in the studio, I asked everybody else to leave. I wish it would have been done better, because it looks like a bad hotel room shot. I was looking forward to see the shots, and I got a call from Monty Conner from Roadrunner, he said: "Hey, Buddo, we've got the pictures here from the photo shoot, they look great, so I

wanna go with this one for the album cover." I said: "Well, which one is it?" He described it, and I said: "What does it look like? I haven't even seen it yet." He said: "Oh, looks great. We've got a deadline, of course you know, and we have to make the decision now, after than look for something else. Let's go with it." That's how it happened. I don't know if it was a wise choice. I mean, why would you buy the CD with the nude guy on it? It was hard choice, but it was done. I think, I like the second album "Burning Time" cover a lot better. It is more artistic, and the photograph is better.

Is that true, that other Last Crack members at that time were influenced by hard rock bands whereas you preferred to heavier music? By the way, what were your favorites then?

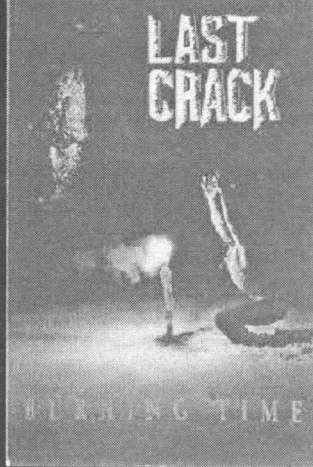
Phil was into the oldest crazy underground heavy metal bands like Wild Dogs, serious double bass drum super chunk stuff. Paul was a kind of a mainstream heavy metal guy and loved Van Halen. Of course, they all loved Metallica. Don liked heavier stuff but he had strong roots from the sixties, Jimi Hendrix was his idol. I was really into underground Austin scene, because there were really great bands there, the avantgarde stuff that you never gonna hear on radio: Glass Eye, Zeitgeist, True Believers, Poison 13. I think, you couldn't find any stuff now, it's been about ten years ago, it's all indie stuff.

"Burning Time" was probably the most "successful" album in your life. Did you enjoy those times: interviews, interest from press and fans?

That was definitely the most... popular work to date. You know, the members of Last Crack have differed on various things since the beginning. The people picked up on the chemistry that we had, and there was a lot of tension. I think, we had interest from major labels, but they just didn't see the unity, so they didn't want to take any risks.

When I was younger I wanted to be a rock star. I pretty much devoted myself to it, but I couldn't realize that there was a lot of unhappiness in my life. I





definitely thought that I was with a different group, you know, this always excuses to make, and as I quit, I met with Doug Keogh, the general manager in New York, and he still believed in me. I told him: "If I had more Phil's personality, I wouldn't have as many problems with it." I like my own personal freedoms, I like independence, but I don't like the fuckin' compete for art, and you have to, if you are going to be in the bussiness. If you gonna work with fellow musicians, there is a competition, somebody else to make the decisions. Then it comes down to the power thing: who's gonna make what decisions? Who's got the bigger ego? Who's gonna cope with this call? I think, all "Burning Time" experiences were good, as far as like being commercial, in the industry, but it was also an extremely unhappy time emotionally. It never stopped. It had a way of taking over everything. No more diversity, no more dynamics, just Last Crack.

I saw the "Energy Mind" video, I liked it. There was also a promo video (about 15 minutes) to "Burning Time". What can you say about it and is it still available?

Roadrunner still has a small warehouse, where they keep all the stuff they ever worked with. I think, they have tapes of that video, both videos, but I haven't talked to them for a long time. I don't know if they sell it. I guess that there is some way to get Last Crack's stuff over the internet, it's an European address but I don't know what it is. "Energy Mind" video was cool. We used the director from London, the communication wasn't so good there, he didn't know the story and he didn't explained the whole concept, he just put the images together that really have nothing to do with the storyline and music. We got the final edit of that video and it didn't worked. Roadrunner flew me out to New York, where I worked with one camera-man and one make-up girl for 4-5 hours, and that was all the stuff on that video, it's me, without the shirt, with black jeans, and a couple of images like the man in red, burning the money, set off with the kind of day-glow atmosphere, that the director was going for in that video.

I saw the tour-dates in European magazines in 1991. Have you done the European tour?

Yeah, we did. I flew over there, went to Paris for 24 hours, went to Germany for 3-4 days, and then I got London for 2 days, and that was all for interviews. I came home, stayed there about two and

half weeks and then we all were there and played Germany, just about every big city in Germany. We played London, Brussels, that was cool. It was good experience, those guys in Europe treated us like royalty: great food, great hospitality, the best juices that come over across.

Why did you leave the band?

I left the band because of inability to unify. That's the big way, I couldn't really feel unified with the band. The reasons are a few: #1 would be taste in music, #2 - perspectives on life, perspectives on how to present the band, perspectives on how to write the songs, #3 - I was on the one end of spectrum, and our drummer Phil was on the other one. He was a big party'er and I wasn't. Phil's aggressive, extravert personality and his tension for drugs really bothered me, in a deep way. And I tolerated it as much as I could, but when you're in a band, it influences everything. The other complex was that I was married at that time and had my wife on tour with me, we were living this like married life in the back of the van and on the bus. The other guys were partying, and especially Phil was like the "jack" and "the lord of flies", it grew more and more, I knew, this would screw up somewhere, and I didn't want to be a part of it, so I quit. Phil got to White Zombie, which is up now, they have two platinum records out there. However, his spiritual and emotional soul became shittier, with all this money, fame and stardom, he got totally in crack and cocaine. As he went up commercially, he went down emotionally and spiritually. He kicked out the band, stole a bunch of stuff and was about to get to jail next month. What are you gonna do? A band is a marriage.

Have you listened to their last CD "Runheadstartscreaming"? If yes, how did you like Shawn Anthony Brown vocals?

It was a tough time, I remember I was playin' with Voice Sparks which eventually evolved into Mind Ox, I went to Last Crack concert to see those guys play, and I was totally blown away by Paul, Don and the band. Those guys had such a sound together! Their stuff was a heavy groove, to tell you the truth, I didn't like Shawn right away, but I don't know, it's all just taste, preference. They seemed happy and they were tight. I know Shawn as a person, he's a cool guy, but I didn't see this fire, something that could take me above what I see in a person. Some people, you know, when you meet them, you don't know what they do, and they get on stage and blow you away.

How did you contact White Fear Chain musicians? Is this just a project for you or are you a member of the band?

Last Crack broke-up in 1991, I contacted an old friend of mine who lived in Austin, and he moved to Madison. We started working together. We eventually evolved it into a band called Voice Sparks. That's how I met another guitarist and the drummer from Mind Ox. Jeff, who came from Austin, was playing bass then. He decided to go back, he left. Then I got an offer from Realm. They let me living in their house, everything was really cool. I went through the divorce then, I was staying with the guitar player and his wife, and we were practicing in the basement. It was a real band for

approximately a year. The CD came out after we had broken-up. You know, I still talk with these guys, and they still invite me to do some tracks, I get material, 2 songs every three months. It's a kind of project now. I like the CD, it sounds great live, but I also like to listen to it.

Mind Ox was probably the band that was you all over: gloomy, abstract, emotional. I was blown away as I heard such tracks like "Tethered" and "J.H.Pendarvis".

Definitely, Mind Ox is my favorite band, I listen to that demo-CD four times a week. The chemistry in the band was just right! Everything was balanced, we could understand each other musically. We went out to L.A. and did that four song demo in Eldorado studio, that's where we did "Burning Time". Brian Carlstrom is just amazing, he was Last Crack engineer, and he recorded everything on Mind Ox demo. We were there for a week and half, and it was just a great experience. We listened to this demo all the way back. Everytime as we listened to it, it was something else, everybody's performance was good, and the mix fuckin' ruled, that was definitely my favourite band. But our drummer, you know, he just freaked out. It was just too real for him, it was too much. He got really frightened. He decided that it wasn't for him. He didn't want to be uprooted. You know, fear. I read a book long time ago about the music bussiness. On the way up, what gets you, is fear. On the way down, what gets you, is greed.

Magic 7's songs are somewhat brighter and calmer, not so rebellious as, for example, the material of Last Crack or White Fear Chain. What songs do you like more, the gloomy dramatic or the bright calm ones?

Interesting question, Sigitas. I definitely like the gloomy, but powerful ones. Being bright with a lot of clarity is cool, but I feel more home with slight tension of depression (laughing).

Your favourite tracks.

Definitely, "J.H.Pendarvis". "The Whale" fuckin' rules! "The Whale" is an epic.

As you've already mentioned, you have suffered another band break-up (Magic 7). Were all people (you worked with) persons that didn't understand what do you wanted from

them or were there any other conflicts between you and other musicians? What band was nearest to your heart? Last Crack was a breach in general understanding. With Mind Ox, there was a loss of the drummer, otherwise we would have kept going. White Fear Chain was just a fast fire, burned out fast. As far as Magic 7 goes, so I was going to leave town. White Fear Chain broke-up, Last Crack were trying to get together, this was like Phil would come back and had kicked White Zombie. I wanted to get out of Madison, go somewhere. But Pablo said: "Before you go, give me a chance." We started to do something again, we started working. I went back to school, and for the past two years I finished my degree in English. Magic 7 slowly gained in success here locally. We had some interest from major labels, but nobody was buying it, nobody has taken it, we put our CD at ourselves, we did all merchandising. What brought that band to kind of a close, was a few different factors, first of all, the band was missing something, some kind of fire, passion. People are telling me that there are three things to break the band: ego, sex, and drugs. OK, Last Crack was drugs, Magic 7 break-up had to do with ego and sex. I'm 33 years old now, so I thought: "Pick up the acoustic guitar, write some damn songs and play them out." But as far as to find a totally democratic band, I'm just totally not into it right now. I'm doing a lot more focusing.

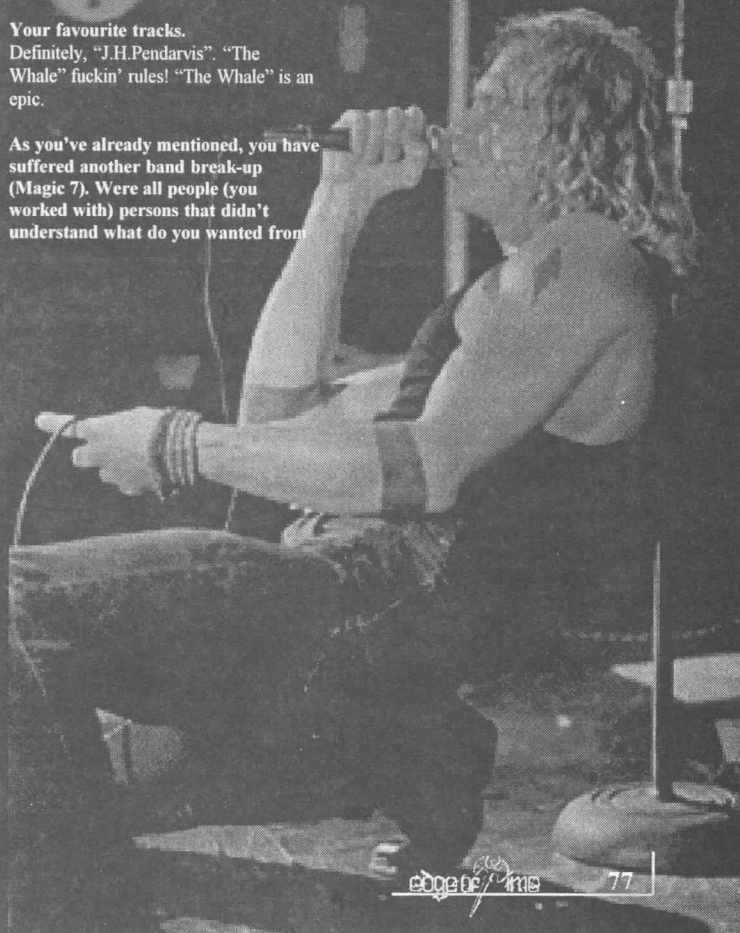
Records featuring Buddo:

Last Crack "Sinister Funkhouse#17" (Roadracer Records)
Last Crack "Burning Time" (Roadrunner Records)
Mind Ox demo (4 songs)
White Fear Chain "Visceral Life" (self released)
Magic 7 "Magic 7" mini-CD (self released)

Write to Buddo:

Buddo, 1017 E Gorham, Madison, WI 53703, USA

(see also reviews and White Fear Chain interview)



Bitter Year of Psychotic Waltz and Darkstar

[by Giedrius Slivinskas]

The last "Edge of Time" issue contained an extensive story about Psychotic Waltz, but the events that happened right after band's European Tour 1997 forced me to get back to the psychotic matters again. Steve Cox, newly recruited guitarist left Psychotic Waltz after the tour, in September, and, right after that, singer Buddy Lackey, the voice of which was one of the definitive trademarks of Psychotic Waltz, quit, too. While everything turned to a better side when original guitarist Brian McAlpine agreed to do records, Steve Cox agreed to go on tours, and the only missing link was a singer, Norm Leggio (the drummer) didn't want to wait and joined Teabag, the new band of Steve, because he wanted to do some heavier music. All this left the only original member, guitarist Dan Rock in the band, and he decided to concentrate on Darkstar, his project with German friend Siggie Blasey (one of the owners of Institute of Art Records and the founder of band Crash Museum).

Psychotic Waltz: the Tension and the Release

Was it only after European Tour 1997 when dark clouds started to gather above Psychotic Waltz? Who did leave first, Buddy or Steve? Were the reasons more musical or personal?

DR: The final straw, I believe, came down to a personal taste in music and personal limits to dealing with bullshit. Steve was the first to quit, his reason? He told Norm that he couldn't stand being in a band with an arrogant asshole like Buddy anymore. Seriously! That's what he said, so he quit.

Norm and I were still in Germany when we heard this, he was staying with his girl, and I was working on Darkstar with Siggie. It really bummed me out, cuz I've known Steve for years, and we got along really great, I admire his playing, and his humor is kick ass! But okay, he was, after all, a replacement for Brian. We could find another... Then Norm called Buddy to say hi, and Buddy told him he quit cuz he couldn't stand the new music Steve was writing for the band. He was also still pissed at me cuz I was so critical in the studio on his parts.

This also bummed me out, I was critical on EVERYONE'S parts, especially my own. Scott Burns actually insisted that I analyze all our parts to make sure we

weren't doing anything stupid or overlooking any fucked-up notes. Scott has a very good ear, and would ask me, "Dan, why does Buddy's part sound so bad right there? Grab yer guitar and tell me please..."

So, I'd figure out his melody over our chords and there ya go, resolving to a half step from your root chord is what is known among the pros as... "fucked". So, I'd make a suggestion, and he'd get pissed at me, he said "You're forcing your crayon on my drawing". And then Scott would say, "But Buddy, your drawing has a really shitty color in it!"

Does it mean that the atmosphere during the recording of "Bleeding" was more tense than during the recordings of the other albums?

DR: Uuuuuuummmm... well, does the fact that Scott Burns walked out of the session during Buddy's parts answer that?

Were there any new completed Psychotic Waltz songs composed after "Bleeding"? If so, will you (or Buddy) use some of them for the solo projects?

DR: Yes, we had a few songs done. Three we actually played on tour. I think I'll do mine with my next Darkstar project, Steve took his two with him to his new band with Norm, Teabag. And Buddy

never really kicked any new ones down yet, I think he was waiting to use them all on another solo record.

How would you describe those new songs by Steve, were they too heavy for Buddy?

DR: Well, Buddy is really wanting to go in a very mellow direction, I think it's partly cuz screaming like he did was getting hard on his voice, I mean, the guy BELTED it out like a madman, it was an awesome experience being part of this band's collective incredible talent. Also, tastes do change over time, he seeks enlightenment elsewhere.

Have you auditioned any singers after the departure of Buddy? (There was a talk about Tom Mallicoat from Lethal.) When Brian agreed to play in the studio and Steve agreed to do live shows, the only missing component was a singer. What pushed then to the split?

DR: No, I don't know how that rumor got started. Tom was never auditioned, it was talked about, but never went any further. Brian did agree to do the next record, and Steve did say he'd do a tour, but since we never found a singer, Norm got impatient, and jumped ship. Norm, Phil [bass player, - Ed.], and I were gonna try to do my Darkstar project live while we looked for a singer, but Norm wasn't into it, he wanted to do more heavy stuff, so he quit. Now him and Steve have started a new band, heavy thrash stuff.

After the departure of Buddy, did you try to think about the singers that could fit the band? Buddy has a pretty unique voice, were you afraid you couldn't find anyone? When did you give up trying to find one, right after Norm said he wanted to quit?

DR: You are correct, Buddy does have a unique voice, but we did hope to find another unique voice and go on... Black Sabbath did it a few times. However, when Norm quit, it was just silly to go on.

What is Phil doing now?

"Many times I've thought to myself, if it's completely over, that's OK, I'm ready to live my life without being in a band, or making CDs, or touring. It was one helluva fun ride, but now it's over, time to move on into another dimension of life. And then I think, damn... how sad, cuz I love it so much... gotta go on..."

DR: Phil is concentrating on his film career at the moment. He's doing really well at it, too. We still hope to jam together some day on Darkstar Two, and we hang out now and then.

What is the current occupation of Brian? Is he doing some sort of a musical project, if so, of which kind?

DR: Brian is raising his kid about an hour from here up in the mountains. He does still work on music at home, but I

don't really know what he plans to do with it. We ARE definitely gonna get together and write a solo for the next Darkstar together, perhaps in the vein of the "Everflow" solo. I would really enjoy that, I think a lot of Psychotic Waltz fans will, too.

Do you know anything about advances of the Buddy's new solo album? Do you have any clue what musical direction does he try to pursue?

DR: Well, I heard a few tracks when we were on tour, but nothing since then. He's pursued a much mellow approach than what we did, mellow than Darkstar, more like... hm... Jethro Tull on sedatives.

How did your relationship with Bulletproof go over the years? Perhaps it wasn't too bad since you could do tours, but the promotion wasn't big at all, was it?

DR: Well, Bulletproof did support us a lot with the recording contract, and I really enjoyed working with those people, they were cool. The promo COULD have been better, but I appreciate all they did for us. However, they didn't have anything to do with the tours. That was a Belgian named Johan. He did all our tours the last few years, I love that guy...ummm...not in a gay way.

Are there any differences in sales among the four Psychotic Waltz albums? Which one is the most successful in that aspect?

DR: Well, "A Social Grace" has been around the longest, so perhaps that's why it has the most sales... but they are all pretty close.

Looking back at all four albums, which one gave you the biggest push (in the sense of gaining new audience)? If I'd say that the debut one, would you agree?

DR: Yes, I'd agree, it's the one that started it all, the rest did gain more and more fans, but that one... man it happened quick.

I don't think there are songwriting

credits on the last Psychotic Waltz albums, did you all work together? Which Psychotic Waltz song, that you initiated or you wrote, now you like the most?

DR: Well, that was kind of my instance. Since the beginning, I always wanted the song credits to be just "Psychotic Waltz". Since it IS a group effort, not one of our songs would have been the way it was on the CDs without input from the rest of the guys, therefore, we ALL wrote them.

This was one of Buddy's sore spots with me, as a lot of people know, he's a bit of a megalomaniac, and insisted on full credit for his contributions, even when he didn't write all of it, it pissed me off that someone could be so... such a glory hunter.

Anyway my faves are "Drift", for melodicness, "Morbid", for heaviness - it



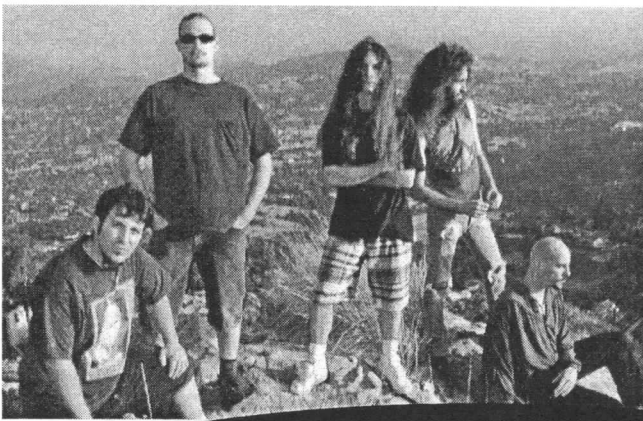
Dan Rock

Buddy Lackey

Steve Cox

Phil Cuttino

Norm Leggio



"The way I see it, we were in a hurry last time, but now we have a little more time to plan it out. We have a better background now. It will still be epic dark deep atmospheric material, some that should allow a few vocal tracks."

Earlier you had Psychotic Waltz and Darkstar things going in parallel. How were you deciding which material should go with Darkstar? Was it the one that didn't get an approval by other Psychotic Waltz members; or maybe you wrote some stuff knowing in advance that it wouldn't fit in for Psychotic Waltz? There is a couple of tracks on "Marching" that might go well on a Psychotic Waltz recording...
 DR: A lot of people say that, it makes sense, since I wrote both contributions. I guess the way those songs came to be on Darkstar was just that time period. The other stuff was already written, I was at Siggis when we wrote some of it, I was in my bedroom working specifically on other parts of it, cuz I knew it was gonna be cool.

After the break up of Psychotic Waltz, have you received any offers to participate in other projects? Do you feel a need for it, or do you think you will be able to realize yourself 100% in Darkstar?
 DR: Actually, no, I haven't had offers from other major bands, but I haven't actually set out to try either. With Darkstar Two, I will realize a lot of new music, 100%? Hard to say... But for now, it's the best thing I can do with myself. To be honest, the break up of Psychotic Waltz really has left a bad taste in my brain about the whole industry/band thing. Many times I've thought to myself, if it's completely over, that's OK, I'm ready to live my life without being in a band, or making CDs, or touring. It was one helluva fun ride, but now it's over, time to move on into another dimension of life. And then I think, damn... how sad, cuz I love it so much... gotta go on...

Did you have many ambitions and ideas where Psychotic Waltz could go in future?
 DR: Like I said before... it really bummed me out. It still does. I'm a sentimental Pisces freak, when I see things that remind me of happier moments of the past, it makes me sad that they will be no more. I feel this way about my ex-wife, my love for her is still intense after 1-1/2 years divorced. And I'll probably feel that way for a long time, about her, and the band. When I drive by the airport, I think, "How sad to never fly on a plane with her or my bro's again". When I listen to

our CDs, I wonder "What would the next one have been like?". When I look at old pictures, that's the worst, that really bums me out. I know I should look at them and be happy for the great times I had with her, and my band, and perhaps sometimes I do, but still, there is always the underlying sadness.

Darkstar: From Oblivion to the Second Epic

[Some questions were passed to Sigg Blasey, his answers start with SB.]

Will there be vocals on the second Darkstar album?

DR: I have a friend in Germany in a band called Pantokrator, I really love his voice, very warm and melodic, actually sounds English. I'm hoping that he can sing on one or two tracks, but it's gonna be tough to work it out...

SB: The way I see it, we were in a hurry last time, but now we have a little more time to plan it out. We have a better background now. It will still be epic dark deep atmospheric material, some that should allow a few vocal tracks.

There were some really heavy songs on "Marching into Oblivion", but there were also some tracks more in the vein of Jean Michelle Jarre. Will both components be present in future recordings?

DR: I have no idea who you're talking about! But I have some very heavy, and some spacey, and some mellow ideas for Darkstar Two, Sigg has some really cool melodic things and trippy-ass samples, I hope it all comes together.

SB: I agree that I can see some influence from Jean Michelle Jarre, but I don't steal any idea of such composers, it just comes naturally.

Can you pick one song from "Marching into Oblivion" that represents Darkstar best? And one song that would give the best hint how the second Darkstar album will sound?

DR: I would say the title track and the project name ("Darkstar" and "Marching into Oblivion" - Ed.). I love both those songs the best. They are the product of Sigg and me and lots of coffee and green tea working together to make a unique and heavy melodic sound.

SB: The best song for me is "Darkstar", because we wrote it together. I think "Darkstar" is a glimpse of the future tracks because one song we already have almost finished is in that same vein, and it is very cool.

Tell me how do you compose Darkstar songs? What does come first, a powerful riff, a sample from some interesting movie, a keyboard line...?
 DR: Well, I guess it's different each time. Sometimes it just starts with a guitar riff. Sometimes it's a keyboard line... I don't think I ever started a song with just a sample though, Sigg might have, but perhaps I'll try it someday now... you'll get full credit of course!

something up on the keyboards. It was weird how quick it came, just flowed out, then we sat and worked on guitar ideas, I took it into a mini studio with lotsa coffee, and came out with some really cool work I'll always be proud of.

Will you work with Travis Smith again for Darkstar Two?

DR: I hope so, I love Trav, he's a damn cool guy, and his art to me is amazing. Actually thinking though, perhaps him and Mike Clift will team up and make it spectacular...?

What does prevent Darkstar from playing live? Different geographical locations, different time schedules, or just simply the lack of finances?

DR: Well, I would LOVE to perform Darkstar live. It's something I've mentioned to Sigg MANY times. I don't think it's money that holds it back or geographical locations...

SB: If one of the Darkstar productions has enough success that it is necessary, it will be realized.

I think the coolest songs on the CD actually were written by me and Sigg together. The title track, "Marching Into Oblivion" was actually the same sampling and sequence line he used on End Amen, another project of his I did some guest solos on back in 1991. I just re-wrote the guitar and bass work that went over it and made it a completely different song!
 In fact, he wants the guitarist from that project, Uwe, to do a guest track on our next disc. That would be cool, Uwe is a great guy and an amazing musician. The other favorite song of mine was "Darkstar". Sigg had this song going, but he didn't like the chorus at all, too poppy. I agreed, and sat down and made

Does it frighten you that for Darkstar you not only need to write and record the music, but also think of and do the promotion? Psychotic Waltz have had a certain label back up...

DR: Well, Sigg's label Institute of Art actually does the promo, unfortunately, it's not as HUGE as I wish it would be, but we're on a low budget. As far as the states go, I do it myself, with a little help from Century Media.

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demo reviews

APRAXIA "Hymns of Dark Forests"

(Legion Productions)
Pagan movement is becoming stronger and stronger in former USSR countries, and now I'm writing my first review of a pagan band from Belarus. As we can expect, this MC presents us black metal with folk influences. These influences aren't such big as, for example, in creations of Tharaphita from Estonia or Ha Leia from Lithuania. The basic style is fast, brutal black metal with some death metal influences, and here we also find some folk melodies which seem to be included more by chance. Anyway, fans of death-like black metal can like this tape even if the musicianship still needs to be improved. I don't understand why only 3 songs out of 8 are sung in their native language. Personally, I think that folk/black metal sounds best and most interesting when it is sung in a native language. (AO) [Legion Productions, P.O.Box 68, Minsk 220035, Belarus]

BIOTECH "Pains"

Biotech from Czech Republic play brutal death metal. The songs somehow are played out in a very monotonous tone. The only thing that I like is the professional layout of the MC-booklet. They planned to play here in Lithuania, but somehow they didn't. True death metal fans should write the band and ask for this cassette, which is well-produced, at least. (SV) [5DM + postage, Jana Vondrakova, u.Kovtunu, Zemedelska 18, 61300, Brno, Czech Republic]

BLUMP "Completion Septenary"

This Swedish band started as punk rockers but then decided to play atmospheric heavy metal. In some places, Blump remind me of Amorphis in their EP "My Kantele". It's really interesting stuff, not any convulsive pseudo gothic/doom that we are used to hear very often today. With a good label in the rear, the odds will be in their favour. If Blump will not break-up, I think we will hear about this band soon. This well-produced 6 track tape is available from the address below. (SV) [Mattias Frisk, Jarnvagsgatan 3, 59634 Skanninge, Sweden]

CARPE NOCTEM "Shadows of the Past"

One way to describe Carpe Noctem music is to point out at Paradise Lost "Draconian Times" and tell to replace gothic with heavy metal. "Shadows Of The Past" is basically heavy metal, but guitar riffs remind of that characteristic Paradise Lost feature. The main point which distances Carpe Noctem from gothic metal is Ben Woyak's voice, which is more into the old heavy metal days. Songs have a bit sad and slightly resignating touch which puts the band at the opposite side of heavy metal camp in comparison with, e.g., Hammerfall. In spite of that, melodic heavy/power metal fans should enjoy the music. (GS) [see Waiting for Dawn review]

CRYPTHOWL promo '97

Only one song and one instrumental here, so it is hard to form a clear vision of this Russian band. Oupire, the leader of this project, calls it atmospheric horror metal, which means the combination of orchestral, symphonic

music with well-expressed melodies and fury of back metal (though Oupire doesn't have satanic or pagan ideologies). All this perfectly done mix is ornamented with female vocals and traditional melodies. Judging from this one song, it sounds very promising. (AO) [Cryptowl, P.O.Box 340, Kaluga-02, 248002, Russia]

DAMIEN STEELE demo (Progressive Music Management)

Listening to the music of this demo (recorded in 1991, being promoted now), I almost can trace influences of this American band. First, they were captured by intelligent melodic metal of Iron Maiden, then discovered Queensryche and Crimson Glory, and later Fates Warning. Yes, I could be wrong, but this path is the best way to illustrate the music of this demo, and it doesn't mean traditional progressive metal, I don't know what this genre is then. Damien Steele belong to a so-called commercial blend of the style and are song-oriented (as an opposite to being instrumental-oriented). No weak spots, and even if it does not reveal any novelties, it's very enjoyable to recall the times when some of us discovered progressive metal. And it's also interesting how the subsequent years changed creative minds of these musicians; the band is active now and eager to present their new material. (GS)

[\$5, Progressive Music Management, c/o Chris Rodler, 6802 Helena Drive, Erie, PA 16510, USA]



DREAM INTO DUST "A Prison for Oneself"

These two songs are inspired by British TV-series "The Prisoner", which, to tell the truth, I haven't had an opportunity to watch. Anyway, the mood of this vinyl could bravely fit to surrealistic films of David Lynch, and both songs present even darker side of Dream Into Dust (compared to their "No Man's Land" EP). The monument of sounds and ethnic instruments form a frightening and insane atmosphere, which finds its visions in the subconsciousness. String bells perform in such a rhythmic manner that they could almost turn one into a trance. I don't know which themes were taken from the series, and do they correspond to the real atmosphere in the series, but if they are close enough, "The Prisoner" must be one of the most depressive films. (AO) [\$6 (USA)/\$8 (world), Chthonic Streams, PO Box 7003, New York, NY 10116-7003, USA]

ERICH ZANN "Erich Zann"

Formed in 1992, Erich Zann from the States have already two demos out there. Recently the band has remastered and repackaged both releases onto one cassette. The style of Erich Zann is a heavy metal form that we used to hear in the 80's. The songs are varied, unaffected, some melodies remind me of the latest Metallica releases. The best song is

"All I Need". Probably one of the most professional demos in this issue. (SV)

[\$6, Brent Miller, P.O.Box 1074, Rockland, Maine 04841, USA]

ETERNAL DEFORMITY promo '96

Formed in 1993, this Polish band has already "fortified" in the metal underground of their native country, and it's quite possible that they will succeed in exciting the curiosity of foreign labels. Good times for melodic gothic/doom metal are not over, and since Eternal Deformity don't belong to the worse category of this genre, they can set their hopes on a contract. This promo tape contains only 3 tracks of good and well-arranged gothic/doom, but it's enough to see the potential that is behind the band. (SV) [Wojciech Zawilinski, ul.Polna 2D, 39-200 Debica, Poland]

FIARRO demo

Good power/melodic/speed stuff from San Antonio. If you remember Talisphere, so the break up of this band led to this promising group which was influenced by heavy metal acts like Iron Maiden or progressive music like Fates Warning. This demo contains three well-produced tracks with cool vocals by Vikk Real and pleasant guitar work. It makes a very professional impression on me, so we probably can hope for a CD soon. Their bassist played in Las Cruces once. (SV) [\$4, John Fiarro, 6710 Greencastle, San Antonio, TX 78242, USA]

GOOSEFLESH 3rd demo

The first two Gooseflesh demos were reviewed in the last "Edge Of Time" issue. I think the band is getting better from tape to tape, the new one is a very good piece of modern metal in veins of Pantera, C.O.C., or Stuck Mojo. Their music is very heavy, but always contains nice melodies in refrains. The band promises a full-length CD soon. Looking forward to hear it. (SV) [\$6, 10DM, SEK 40, Roadkill A.D., Magasinsgatan 15, 461 30, Trollhattan, Sweden]

GREYHAVEN demo '97

Listening to the music like this, you are not afraid of the future of progressive metal. Instead of tracing the paths of Queensryche and Fates Warning, these young Americans took a different approach. This 2-song demo tape with total time being 28 minutes contains dark instrumental music which derives from metal, but also owes light keyboard themes to Jean Michelle Jarre. Greyhaven stylistically are similar to Dan Rock's Darkstar project, though no copying can be detected. Some moments are simply nice and overall musical framework is quite cohesive. At the moment, they are looking for a singer. Properly used vocals would add another dimension to already many-sided music, and I am really looking forward hearing new tracks. (GS) [E-mail: greyhavn@aol.com]

HATE ETERNAL promo '97/ALAS "Engulfed in Grief"

Here are two bands featuring guitarist and vocalist Erik Rutan. Hate Eternal play brutal death metal and do it not bad. Though I'm not a fan of this style, I like the dynamics and the power of the songs. It's not an obtuse death metal. The demo by Alas is a very interesting and original mixture of heavy death/thrash riffs and clear, melodic female vocals. Surprisingly, it's not another doom/gothic product, though elements of these styles are available. Especially the first two tracks "Surmounting the Masses" and "Quest of Serenity" are very impressive. If they succeed in releasing a CD with the good sound, they probably will have many fans, especially in Europe. (SV) [Hate Eternal, Erik Rutan, PO Box. 21922,

Tampa, Florida 33622-1922, USA] [Alas, PO Box 2178, Land O'Lakes, FL 34639-2178, USA]

HATRED demo

Once again a brutal death metal demo. According to their letter, here are some tracks from the upcoming CD "The Offering". Somewhat chaotic and confused material with hardly perceptible structures. Only for true death metal fans. (SV) [Hatred, P.O.Box 10264, Alexandria, VA 22310, USA]

INDUSTRIAL EDEN demo

This 3-song demo was recorded in 1995 and probably doesn't represent the band as of today. In the demo, we hear a cross between prog rock with good revealed melodies, power metal, and some hints into hardcore. Though the final result lacks main conception and the feeling of music being constructed from different points comes to mind, the band seems to have prospects. And the singer has a great voice, really. With a better production, clearer sounds, and more updated songs it could excite a curiosity of all melodic metal fans. (AO) [Industrial Eden, PO Box 102552, Denver, CO 80250, USA]

JANE DOE "Neckpunishment"

Aggressive sharp thrash metal is the style of the 3rd demo of Finland's Jane Doe. All 4 songs have the same mid-paced rhythm and express the same rawness. The sound is quite firesome and the vocals on "Aggression" is annoying, thus, the impact is loose and misses the target. Anyway, the hope dies last and Jane Doe still can achieve a status of a decent CD-level aggressive thrash metal band. But today they are drowning in the sea of faceless. (GS) [Jane Doe, Tierpintie 6 A 10, 14200 Turunki, Finland]

NECROPOLIS RISING "The Everlasting"

I'm surprised at the fact that we still receive so many death/grind demos and CDs. This is one more piece. It has some intricate techno thrash moments, nevertheless, is grey like other tapes of this genre. If you are deather/grinder, so write to the address below. (SV) [Necropolis Rising, 1128 Gleason Circle, East Rochester, NY 14445, USA]

ONE LAST SIN demo

Brutal death/hardcore from Fishkill (great name!). They will release a 7" in France and Japan soon. Yes, EPs and singles are in at brutal bands. But who will buy them? It's a complete mystery to me. (SV) [Joel Sheveck, 37 Weston Ave., Fishkill, NY 12524, USA]

PIEVOS "Pasilikus Su Vienatve"

(Nova 96 Records)
Romantic acoustic folk music is presented on the debut tape album of Pievos from Lithuania. Sad, melancholic lyrics sung in Lithuanian by group's gifted female singer create a poetic mood and gives me associations with autumn. I can almost hear falling leaves... Especially the first track gives me a strong emotional pulse, that's because the singer can express almost all emotions through her voice. The music here isn't very complicated, and the scheme is all the same: acoustic guitars, violins, and voice, that's simple and that's the canon of those so called bard's songs. So, I have no claims about the quality of this music and it's one of these albums I like to listen when I'm in romantic mood. (AO) [\$5, Nova 96 Records, PO Box 982, 2300 Vilnius, Lithuania]

PIK "Mankind the Unsuccessful Experiment"

This band is progressing indeed. The new tape of PIK shows that they have finally reached the style that they wanted to play and became good at. This style could be named as gothic/

doom/heavy metal - a lot of influences, but no blind copying. PIK create melodic atmospheric music, and vocals of H. D. Beck is a strong point; his singing is expressive and even in places where musicians play not so well (something kind of Metallica riffs), his voice provides an interesting touch to the music. (AO) [PIK, c/o Heinrich Damian Beck, Mattenberg Str.57, 34132 Kassel, Germany]

PORNOPHANS "Seasoned With Love"
The music of this Finnish act is more serious than their name. On their new promo tape, we hear a guitar-driven rock music with some psychedelia. The front singer is a very sexy female which certainly contributes to the band's image. To introduce them to a Top-40 audience, some edges would have to be rounded, but, overall, it's not too underground and obscure. (GS) [Jytt Valkeinen, Savkonovajaven 20, 20250 Aabo, Finland]

SATAN'S GOD "Metropolis 2000"
Is it an answer to Pulp's "Disco 2000"?

Hm, the style is not much similar to that of the Brit-pop idols. Here, we find noise, sounds, variations, just as in the earlier product for sick minds. This time this guy wrote conceptual explanations about each of the 'songs' (be sure, they are not your normal songs), so it is more interesting to listen, and sometimes I wonder how all these compositions could be created solely with bass guitar! Everyone of you who is a half-mad should check out the noise opera "Golden Kale of Rayziac". Maybe the cover of the demo is not so innovative as the previous one, but the music marches on. And is it music? The post-modern society has no answers. (AO) [33, PO Box 23215, Helleville, IL 62223, USA]

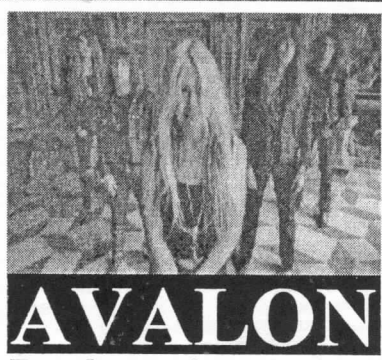
SHANE "Worlds Within Worlds"
(Intromental Management)
Danish/British quartet Shane have a 3-song demo and let me disagree with Intromental Management's description of them as a semi-progressive heavy metal. While Intromental Management are sometimes surprisingly objective in

their press sheets, in Shane's case, they certainly exaggerated. "Worlds Within Worlds" is actually a heavy/rock release, which has chances to get big with the right push from the media. I'd rather think of Foo Fighters and Silverchair than of Fates Warning or Queensryche. Classifications aside, the last track is really good and reserves a mention. (GS) [\$7/10DM, Intromental Management, Groenjordskollegiet 2520, Groenjordsvej, DK-2300, Copenhagen S, Denmark]

SIDER "Labyrinth"
Look, the Bulgarians can also play cool music! First of all, this demo is distinguished for its length (67 minutes), it's the whole album on tape. Sider from Pleven offer us progressive thrash in the best Hades/Fates Warning manner with some Dream Theater elements. Musically and technically, they are in no way inferior to Western colleagues. I can just advise them to improve a little bit the singing which is so important for

this kind of band. I think Sider have a future ahead, and I warmly recommend this tape to every progressive freak. (SV) [\$6, Sider, Emil Ivanov Marinov, PO Box 1319, 5800 Pleven, Bulgaria]

SIELA "Taves Man Reikejo" (Nova 96 Records)
Dangus Productions has established a sublabel for a bit softer music. This album of the most known Lithuanian darkwave/gothic band from Utena was recorded acoustically and must please fans of a bit softer darkwave. Almost all songs were taken from other Siela's albums, and it is interesting to find their more silent, romantic acoustic guitars based unplugged versions. Well, to me this band always sounded best when playing in electric, powerful way, and their electric version of songs are still much better but it's my personal opinion after all. Also here are some tracks (as the title one) which were never released before. (AO) [\$5, Nova 96 Records, PO Box 982, 2300 Vilnius, Lithuania]



AVALON

Dethroning the Kings

[by Giedrius Slivinskas]

Germany today has a reputation of a country that produced a big quantity of bands, but only few truly original ones. And no, I won't claim that Avalon get among those "few". Their second opus "Mystic Places" is a pretty neat album of melodic heavy/power metal with hints into progressive territory, which can be evaluated from good to excellent depending on your tastes, but which doesn't really break a new ground. Still, the music does not have clear analogues, has the diversity and has hooks, the band has ambitions, so why not to take a deeper look into band's point of view regarding their music and German scene in general.

First of all, band's guitarist Sebastian Eder clarifies the situation with labels involved in producing, manufacturing, and promoting "Mystic Places": "We have built up our own record company, which is called Omega Records. We are dealing worldwide by ourselves and therefore we have different distributors in all the countries. So we have a distributor for Germany, one for France, one for Spain, etc. And, we have a publisher: it's Limb Music Publishing. For us, it was very important to work and to be independent, not to be dependent on one company. It's more successful - we have a lot of work with the management but it's worth of it! In our history, we have had bad experiences with record companies and different labels."

Well, Mr. Limb Schnoor from Limb Music Publishing is quite picky selecting

the bands to work with.... "After our tour in the USA and the recordings of the debut CD "Why Now" in 1994, we sent a lot of promo copies to the music business, to labels, promotion agencies, managers, etc. One after to Limb, he enjoyed our music and we signed a publishing deal. With his help we got a small record deal with Inside Out Music and lots of tips and good advises. Then we could make the release of the "Why Now" album. Unfortunately, the cooperation with Inside Out didn't work very well - the album was only released in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. Limb was and still is very important for us. He has very good connections to the business around the world, he has a great experience and he knows what's going on ...! And, he is also a very nice guy who wants only the best for the band!"

Does Omega Records plan to deal with any other bands except Avalon? "Yes, first I only wanted to make experience with the promotion and the work for a band in this business. Each country has its own specials, and you have to build up good connections worldwide. But now I am looking for some more bands, I think we did a good job with Avalon. Bands who are interested can send me the promotion stuff."

There is an impressive amount of metal bands in Germany, but, when the quality counts, it seems that there are many trend followers... "Yes, you are totally right! In Germany we have a lot of metal bands, but the most of bands are changing their style each four years. When crossover is trendy they play crossover and grunge, when prog metal is popular they play prog metal. I think in Germany we only have a few good bands who are playing their own music style, maybe Gamma Ray, Blind Guardian, Scorpions."

How do German metal bands get the audience? Is it difficult to get shows in clubs? "Yes, definitely! In Germany we don't have a big club scene - we only have a few good clubs and many big halls for the famous bands. But for a newcomer, it's almost impossible to play for getting experience and getting fans. And another problem is, when you are not well known you have no chance to play anywhere. That is a very big

problem in Germany. Therefore we decided to go to foreign countries, so for example to Canada and the USA. In the first two years, we played a one-week tour in Canada-Montreal and a five-week tour in California/USA. The business over there is much more professional than here in Europe, we played more than 10 shows in all the famous clubs like the Whisky A Go Go, the Coconut Teaszer, the Marquee, etc. - all in Los Angeles. It was great over there. We learned a lot of the music business, we learned how to present a band in foreign countries, we learned to work independently without any help and last but not least we learned to make parties ...!"

When asked about metal clubs, radios, people in their area, Sebastian admits that "during the last five or six years the melodic metal was not so popular. We had lots of pop bands, rap bands and since two years we have the techno music. Terrible...! Therefore we don't have much rock clubs, rock radio stations, and the rock audience. But I think the business is just changing back to more traditional rock and heavy metal. I hope that the new releases from bands like Savatage, Dream Theater, and Whitesnake will give an impulse to more rock music."

Hm... maybe. Is it my impression or is Savatage's "Wake of Magellan" being promoted much more than their last two couple of albums "Handful of Rain" and "Dead Winter Dead"? Avalon have firm roots in rock and traditional metal, but their music is quite modern. How the band was accepted during the tour with Uriah Heep? How did they get that support slot? "It was during our last vocal recordings for the "Mystic Places" album when we got a call from the Uriah Heep tour management. They asked us if we want to go on tour with them, but the problem was that we only had 6 days for the preparation. It was a very short-term gig! But we did it. We postponed the studio and went on tour with this legendary band. And it was worth touring with them. The guys from Heep are very nice, and they helped us a lot. And the audience accepted us very good. We played 14 very successful shows in Germany! That was a great experience."

What is your ideal musical style? I mean, what qualities or emotions do you try to achieve with your music? "We want to

spread positive music and a positive feeling. It's also important to play melodic music with some nice hooklines which you can remember already after hearing one time. We want to grant the audience a funny and relaxed one hour during a concert or hearing the CD. I hope that we achieved it with our CD."

When the topic turned into the popular discussion about whether it is better to stay the same or similar and keep the fans satisfied or whether to be innovative, Sebastian argued for the latter: "I think it's important to grow with a band and to hear a development of the music. There is nothing more boring than a band which sounds always the same. I think you can hear the difference between the "Why Now" album and the "Mystic Places" album - the last one is more professional, the sound is much better, and the band and the songs are more ripe."

"I like Dream Theater, Savatage and Royal Hunt. Those bands are terrific! But I think it's dangerous to copy those bands when you hear it too often. Therefore I prefer to listen to instrumental music from the guitar greats like Joe Satriani, Tony Mc Alpine, Robben Ford, Steve Rey Vaughan, etc. They give me the biggest impressions and influences. Each band member has own favourites; Many, our singer, was impressed by bands like Queen, Dio, Queensryche, while Petra is listening to more funky sound, and Jens is listening to Saga, Yes, etc. If you mix all those influences you get a good and interesting style."

I should also mention that the bass player of Avalon is female (Petra Hasselkuss), not a frequent case in the metal scene, but Sebastian enthusiastically ensures that "Petra is an amazing and incredible bass player! The most male bass players can take bass lessons from her. Believe in me, it's a big prejudice that girls cannot play an instrument. Listen to the CD and come to our live concerts, we can persuade you." No doubts about that.

[Omega Records, Soldauer Str. 8, D-81927 Muenchen, Germany] [Tel. +49 (0)89 930 15 99, Fax. +49 (0)89 930 54 64] [E-mail: avalon-omega@t-online.de] [Web page: http://home.t-online.de/home/avalon-omega]

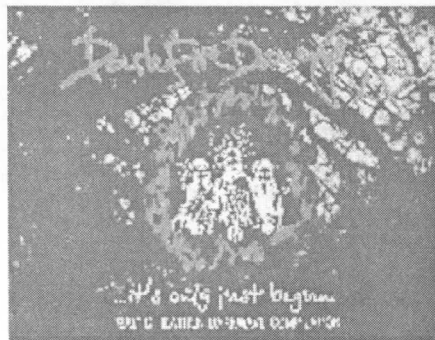
THORNLAD "Ravage"
 3 songs here are devoted to those who still enjoy thrash/death metal and support such mollos as "Thrash till death". Keeping in mind the fact that this style is so out-played, a new band must create something original or be completely convincing to shock the world nowadays. Thornclad don't do this, so all three tracks remind of Sepultura most of all with some new HC influences felt. Traditionally, not good, not bad. It would be much more interesting to hear something more innovative. (AO)
 [Viktor Klint, Bergsattersv.13, 59062 Lingham, Sweden]

THRYMHEYM "Remains"
 Hm, what is this? Black metal from Italy? Where did they record this? Even rehearsal tapes have better sound. The only tune that I hear on this tape is the noise which reminds me of the harvester's motor or the sounds coming from the man's ashole. Simply unbelievable. Pure shits! (SV)
 [Thrymheym, Fabrizio Vallo, Via Cuorgne 48, 10081 Castellamonte (TO), Italy]

TRAIL OF TEARS "When Silence Cries"
 Norwegians Trail Of Tears play a cross between heavy metal, gothic metal, and atmospheric doom/death. While not astonishingly new, it's still interesting. The band's music is softer than the most of doom/death roster, has dual male/female vocals, and, in general, reminds of their countrymates Theatre Of Tragedy when they started. It's not technically awesome and the singers aren't top notch, but melodies are catchy and the band, while still having to work to achieve the class of In The Woods and Theatre Of Tragedy, shows promise. They all start with melodic straightforward riffs, distinct parts in the songs and they all end with either plain gothic rock or with something experimental... (GS)

[\$7 + IRC, Trail of Tears, Ronny Thorsen, Raadyrveien 21, 4700 Vennesla, Norway]

V/A "Dark Fire Dancing III" double-tape (Dangus Productions)
 The third volume of this compilation presents 25 tracks of the best pagan artists from the Baltic states. Earlier this compilation contained only groups from Lithuania, but this time dark bands from Latvia and Estonia were included, so this compilation was widened to a double tape and, all in all, contains 2,5 hours of dark creations. The first part entitled "Sword" is dedicated to more extreme genres, and black metal prevails here. My personal favorites



are Zpoan Vtenz, Tharaphita, and Ha Lela. Some tracks maybe aren't of such a high level as the groups named above, and, for example, an early track of Pocolus is interesting only for collectors. The second part, "Amulet" presents more silent, ambient side of pagan creation.

Here we find dark wave, neo-folk, ambient, experimental bands, and such groups as Laume, Girnu Giesmes, Wejdas offer what's worth to look for in this field. So, if you want to get familiar with the Baltic scene, it is one of the best chances to do that; some of the music sounds really original and interesting in the world context as well! (AO)
 [special package, \$10, Dangus Productions, PO Box 982, 2300 Vilnius, Lithuania]

VIMANA RIDE "Third Migration"
 This demo cassette is a pleasant surprise for me. Up to now I have not reviewed many demos (most of them were average), but this is maybe the first time when I like what I hear. Listening to these six songs I can draw parallels to Mayfair and Mindfunk. But this definition is simply too narrow for Vimana Ride's wrapped up psychedelic rock. It's obvious that songs like "Melt" or "Postnatal Hell" are ready for being pressed on a CD. The absolute highlight is "Feel the Wind Blow". I must confess I'm ashamed of not knowing the band which plays the original of this cover-version. The only drawback are a bit lacking in variety vocal effects that pester the listener. Vimana Ride have already signed a treaty with a label that will release their first CD. (SV)
 [Vimana Ride, Michael Schafer, In der Hohl 2, 56291 Thoerlingen, Germany]

highlights
Damien Steele
Dream Into Dust
Erich Zann
Fiarro
Gooseflesh
Sider
V/A "Dark Fire Dancing III"
Vimana Ride

WAITING FOR DAWN "Shadowbox"
 This is a new promo tape of Waiting For Dawn, who were previously known as Carpe Noctem and changed the name due to legal issues. There are two songs: "Shadowbox" (a new one) and "This Day" (taken from Carpe Noctem demo (see review)). The main difference between them is that the new one is heavier, more powerful, and, overall, shows the band in a more self-confident form. It contains female backing vocals and stylistically falls near heavy/doom metal with shades into gothic and atmospheric metal. The debut album is in the works. (GS)
 [\$2, Waiting for Dawn, Ben Woyak, 667 Fair St., Wesy Bend, WI 53090, USA]

WIDOW "Will We Ever Know"
 It's hard to describe what kind of music these Swedes play. I'd call this stuff heavy metal with psychedelic parts here and there. Simple hard rock riffs are also present, just like melancholy of a band like Tool. The sound of this demo comes close to a rehearsal tape. Have they recorded it in the studio or in a cellar? Anyway, all in all, it's quite an audible tape with some interesting moments. I hope their next products will have better production. (SV)
 [Johan Reinholdz, Horbyvagen 32, 243 34 Hoor, Sweden]

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