

No. 1
12/07



VANTGARDE metal

Magazine 2007

DØDHEIMSGARD
DOL AMMAD
KOROVAKILL
BETHLEHEM
FLEURETY
ANGIZIA
ABIGOR



MANES - KEKAL - BERGRAVEN - SATANOCHIO - THE AMENTA
GIRE - ANSUR - UMBAH - BRACHIALILLUMINATOR - ABSTRUSE
IMPURE DOMAIN - [D]EKADEN[Z] ...and many more...

*Weirdos and freaks,
scientists and philosophers,
libertines and mavericks of metal music!*

Half a year ago avantgarde-metal.com began to sprout its branches into the internet. Originally it was meant to be a little harbour for lovers of the metal sounds beyond the streamlines. But very soon it became obvious that we are not the only ones bored by the clichés and conventions of the metal scene.

Your interest in the weird sides of metal is stunning. More than 45.000 visitors show that the metal revolution has already begun! And so avant-garde-metal.com grew rapidly. In February 2007 we started with four people. Now the crew consists of 16 enthusiastic writers from all corners of the world. More than two hundred articles have been written to present you the most experimental and innovative sounds metal can provide.

So we thought that the time was ripe for a big Christmas present for you – the first print edition of avant-garde-metal.com. On 124 pages you can find all online interviews and reviews of the most important avant-garde metal albums of 2007. And you can find the results of your voting for the best albums of this year. Discover the hidden Treasures &

Never stop the Freak Show...

*Chrystof
23rd December 2007*



Index

Crew	2
About Avantgarde-Metal	4

Interviews

BETHLEHEM	5
DøDHEIMSGARD	12
ABIGOR	22
FLEURETY	31
KOROVAKILL	38
DOL AMMAD	44
ANGIZIA	51
MANES	60
SATANOCHIO	63
BERGRAVEN	67
KEKAL	69
THE AMENTA	74
IMPURE DOMAIN	78
[D]EKADEN[Z]	81
GIRE	84
ANSUR	88
UMBAH	92
BRACHIALILLUMINATOR	94
ABSTRUSE	98

Reviews

Retrospection 2007	102
Your Top Ten Albums	103
More new Releases	111
Hidden Treasures	118

Imprint	125
----------------	------------

THE CREW



Chrystof Niederwieser

Tyrolean Alps

Admiral of the Editorship



Bernd Grünwald

Vienna, Austria

Webmaster and Designer

- design with Eclipse New Media
- organizing concerts with KV Kaltenbach
- music with Sternenstaub



Katja Honeywine van de Barrel

Germany

PDF design and MySpace Mistress

Studies Environmental Science and Resource Management - writing for "The Grimoire of Exalted Deeds"

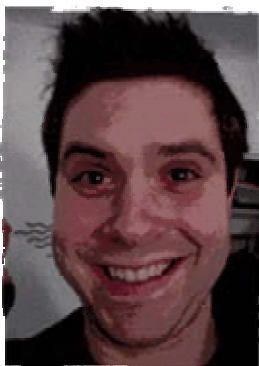


aVoid

the southern Swedish woods

reviews, stories and interviews

Bassist in Havok, Strange Calm and Infernal Hellfire, plus a few clandestine projects - studying English and Musicology



Olivier Côté

Montreal, Canada

reviews, stories and interviews

studying Philosophy - writing stories and essays

EROS - Live, learn and love - that's all there really is.



Jegger

Austria

interviews

Guitarplayer for Tristwood and Bearcht - writing a doctorate in German philology

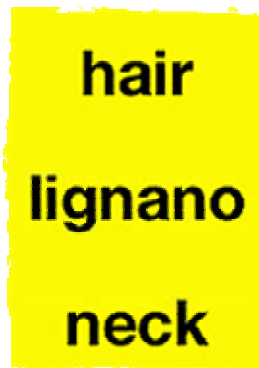


Jobst (in real-life realms known as Nofar)

Tel Aviv, Israel

reviews, stories and interviews

author at its first novel peak - writer and co-editor in the Israeli reviews website "The Blind Janitor"



Jonny Lignano

enfant terrible of reviews, stories and interviews

Favorite guitar chord: e
Favorite letter: l
Favorite addition: c + l = d

currently developing a dictionary of imperatives that are no real imperatives (i.e. Drehtüre)



James Slone

Lost Wages, Nevada -
now lives in Seattle,
Washington (USA)

reviews and stories

Freelance writer, film
blogger, radical activist,
performance artist, ama-
teur guitarist, lover of the
good things in life



Polygon

Bamberg (Franco-
nia/Germany)

reviews and interviews

Sound-wizard of the Ger-
man Black Metal
collective Membaris –
currently returned from
an academic exchange in
Riga



Tentakel P.

Germany- Hamburg,
pearl of the north

*reviews, stories and in-
terviews*

-Drummer of Todtgelich-
ter
-Lover of literature
-Watcher of weird movies
-Player of retro-games



revon

Hungary

reviews and interviews

Dives into: Origins of the
Avantgarde movement,
dadaist/surrealist movies,
literature, photography,
painting, astronomy



Suleiman Ali

Pakistan

*reviews, stories and in-
terviews*

Planning Engineer by
Profession & family man
by calling - mastermind
of the weird musical ex-
perience Burzukh



Trident

Southern Germany

Reviews

The mystery of life is not
a problem to be solved
but a reality to be experi-
enced



Ulv

In the middle of Croatia

*reviews, stories and in-
terviews*

A thought: "Gold is to
give silence a form"
Favorite addition:
d + c = Lignano
The meaning of life is to:
.... create



MvH

born in Wiesbaden, Ger-
many – now living in
Virginia (USA)

reviews

Musician, Military History,
Astronomy, Photography,
Philosophy, Reading,
Writing

More information about us can be found in the "about" section of www.avantgarde-metal.com. If
you'd like to get in contact with a crew member you also can find our email addresses there. Your
messages are warmly welcome!

ABOUT AVANT-GARDE METAL

"Avant-garde" is the French term for "advance guard" or "vanguard". It refers to people who venture into the unknown. Sometimes they find the shining shores of the future there, the visions and ideas of tomorrow. Sometimes they get lost in the forests of insanity, in the whirls of chaos and confusion. But it's always new worlds that they discover. Sometimes the avant-garde of today will become the mainstream of tomorrow. But most avant-garde will always remain absurd and strange to the masses.

Avantgarde-metal.com is dedicated to the pioneers of metal, to those bands and musicians who incorporate new and innovative elements into metal, who break conventions, tear down walls, violate borders. They build new worlds. They surprise.

More than for any other term in metal, the characteristics of avant-garde metal are hard to specify. What's fresh, innovative, new, surprising? The answer to this question lies in the eye of the beholder.

Some say avant-garde metal is the art of creating deep and strange atmospheres by experimenting with new instruments and sounds, strange vocals, unconventional song structures, rhythms and harmonies, unusual lyrics or uncommon artwork. Others describe avant-garde metal as progressive, psychedelic, surrealistic, phantasmagoric, expressionistic, dissonant or extravagant interpretations of extreme metal. But what do such words really mean? We don't care, because...

...DEFINITION IS THE DEATH OF INDIVIDUALITY!

Avantgarde-metal.com was created to provide a home for all those metal bands that try out new things and create their own, individual paths. It was created for everybody who is bored with the petrified spiderwebs of cliché, commerce and convention.

Anyway, avant-garde metal is freestyle. We don't want to judge whether a band or an album is avant-garde or not. All artists who claim to be avant-garde will be featured here. Some of them might seem like ordinary, conventional metal to you. About some others you may think that they are not metal at all anymore, that they are something completely different. We won't participate in such controversies about categorization. Decide for yourself if a band inspires you or not.

If you know any weird artists that aren't featured on this site yet, don't hesitate and send us an e-mail! And if you are a musician and have produced some weird music, then your CDs are always welcome here.

ENTER THE WEIRD SIDES OF METAL!

BETHLEHEM

Dictius Me Spectare

By Katja Honeywine van de Barrel

Bethlehem is not only the name of a city where Jesus was born and the whole insanity of Christianity came to life. It is also a hyper creative bunch of young/old, partly good looking musicians creating sounds that wanna make you jump off the bridge or some skyscraper, that make you wanna cut yourself with a knife, that make you partly wanna masturbate or even cook rotten eggs with horse worms and mouldy bread.

Bethlehem always went their very own way. In 1994 they released their debut album called "Dark Metal", which nowadays is a synonym for a whole new sub-genre. Their albums are considered to be idiosyncratic masterpieces with weird and enigmatic lyrics.

Jürgen Bartsch, creative head, bassist, lyricist and electronic technician of Bethlehem, a band which has accomplished so much since the formation in 1991. Jürgen Bartsch, a fantastic interlocutor who talks as long and much on the phone as my mother at the hair dressers.



"Mein Weg" has already been released 3 years ago. What has happened in the meantime? Will Bethlehem disciples ever get new fodder?

Sure, in the meantime I am preparing another long player together with "Herr Morbid of Forgotten Tomb" which is planned getting recorded at late summer 2008. The recordings should be done at the Priory Recording Studios in England, since I and Greg of "Esoteric" are in contact since the early 90s; we ever wanted doing something together and so will do soon. Later on, the tracks will get their final mix + master in my own mastering studio. It seems like "Kvarforth of The Shining" & "Théry Jonathan of Ataraxie" will be responsible for the vocals then, specially Théry's vocals could be best described as the original "Landfermann" kind of style, coz they totally sound similar to

those ones. Pretty much extreme. Other musicians surely will be "Olaf Eckhardt" for the second guitars again and of course "Stevo" on the drums. A very nice line-up we hopefully also can play life a bit with.

In the last years I more cared bout my side-project called "Stahlmantel", I did different demos for since I started with this shit back in 1999. Stahlmantel is kinda electro thing, ourselves do call it, Dark Industrial Elite Suicide = D.I.E.S. This description of course is totally bollocks like nearly all of em are somehow, but anyway. Without stupid crap like that no one is taking you so serious, right? So give you guys some bone, hope you gonna feel comfortable with.

In 2007 we finished the recordings for our latest demo "Satan Snuff Machine". I again wrote all the music for this, some dark, disturbing and cold mixture of industrial elements in combination with pure metal riffing. A friend of mine from Seattle/USA, known as

"Nihilist" wrote all lyrics this time and was responsible for all vocals as well. Pretty disturbing black metal vocals I again have sent thru some distortion effects to let it sound more brutal and cold. Nihilist btw also is singing in "In Memorium" and "Abazagorath", both US bands. "Satan Snuff Ma-

chine" already was released in China as a limited edition of 500 CDs and also will be in Poland thru "Metalrulez Prod." with some new layouts + two bonus tracks, this or next month too.

I at the moment also am working on a vinyl re-release of "Dictius Te Necare" for that polish label, which will be done as a very special edition of 66 copies with a T-Shirt and some other crazy shit, and also as a normal release limited to 500 copies or so. All songs are re-mastered and do sound way more brilliant now like on the original version. Check out, personally I wont promote things like that a lot, also wont with Stahlmantel. Prolly check the Stahlmantel website or try at MySpace.

The music on "Mein Weg" has been pretty commercial compared to all your other releases. Could that be a direction for further Bethlehem albums?

I don't think so. The "commercial" aspect mainly is depending on the different musicians who became part of those recordings. My song writing still is the same one like in the past, never changed anything special with it. But the new guitarist does coz he is playing another guitar style than e.g. Matton once did and surely because of Meyer de Voltaire who brought in something different with his special way of singing. Another difference compared to former albums was, that with "Profane Fetmilch lenzt elf krank" I started to produce Bethlehem releases by myself coz more and more felt so uncomfortable with those wannabe "producers" from the past who basically had no fucken clue how to let it all sound the right way. Still in our re-room we always had a more powerful sound like on any of those 90s albums; specially Landfermann was such a pain in the ass with his digital bullshit productions, never ever will give those things out of hand again.

Guess, a new Bethlehem album will sound different again, surely wont become some "Mein Weg" copy or so, more will become something cold, depressive & disturbing thing again like on the 90s albums, but with a more powerful sound than in the past. I honestly dunno yet, and surely wont care bout this never before "arranged" things too much, no album ever was "planned", all ideas behind always are coming pretty spontaneous, since we wont do this for money, we always do what we wanna. Without any compromises.

The album before was a fascinating mixture of metal music, weird sound collages and a radio play. Can you tell us more about "Schatten aus der Alexanderwelt"?

"Schatten aus der Alexander Welt" originally was done for the "Filmstiftung NRW" and planned as some short movie for the "Das kleine Fernsehspiel" TV series. I wrote the short story as well as the script. But coz of different personal problems, I don't wanna mention here, it could not be realized like this and therefore was used for Bethlehem some months later.

How satisfied are you with the realisation of this album, especially concerning the narrators? Sometimes it is hard to transfer own ideas into someone else who is speaking them out, but with another intention than you probably would have spoken... Would you rather have spoken yourself?

Basically I am not quite satisfied with the result to be honest. This surely has many reasons, since my health wasn't at a good state during the recording sessions; I somehow wasn't so concentrated as well as motivated like I normally am if working in a studio. Another reason surely was, that things like a new record company, as well as finding actors or narrators in general for that thing, re-writing everything for a more musical concept, the huge pressure caused by people like e.g. Matton who shortly before studio again decided to leave the band, totally disturbed the whole process. We did not had a singer and Meyer de Voltaire came in only two weeks before entering the studio, so there wasn't time for practising etc. The complete Chaos! And a complete new situation for me,

coz it was the first time in my life that I had to work as a director, specially those professional TV actors who spoke the main parts of this radio play were used to work like this. Beside, we also had uninitiated persons who also weren't used doing things like that before.

So everything became some strange experiment which basically wasn't planned like

that before and although I also spoke one character "Archangel Gabriel", I somehow could not transport nor direct my personal point of view into the whole radio play. Therefore, the once very dark & disturbing mood behind, was destroyed by myself and artistically seen surely became some failure. And surely Prophecy also wasn't able to pay money for once wanted speakers like e.g. the German voice of Robert De Niro, as well as others who probably would have brought in some more professional touch in general. Anyhow, I wont look back, the album was done the best I could do at that period of time. Specially with all those circumstances working against me.





I know questions about lyrics and their meaning are always stupid, especially when it concerns such an enigmatic poet like you. Still I think that the lyrics are kind of the quintessence of Bethlehem. So I'd like to talk a bit about it. Though I am a native speaker in German I have to admit: I don't understand the lyrics at all. But somehow they have a very strong effect. At first my brain loses its anchors and begins to spin - it's all so strange and distorted. And then your words evoke very strong pictures in my head. So one thing I'd like to know: Do you try to consciously build a meaning in your lyrics? Or are they more transporting an irrational stream out of the sub consciousness? Or do they have a special meaning, but a very personal one that just Jürgen Bartsch can understand?

Not really. All lyrics ever done not only should have some exclusive meaning only for myself. Since I am using a very metaphoric style, everybody who is more interested in some deeper themes than some stupid, metal-cliché oriented crap, surely will find him-/herself back in those ones. Although every lyric or poem is telling a pretty personal story for me, I sometimes also experienced my

words more as some spiritual landscape, some mood, feeling or atmosphere, telling me some different story like the original meaning did. Therefore, everybody who can let these words come close to his/her mind, also will find his/her own very personal meaning behind em. This is wanted but varies a lot on the momentary mood of each human, I personally sometimes found myself at a wonderful place in a wonderful space but also in some dark and horrible cave, known as my sometimes own sick mind.

I remember well your description of the Alexander world in an ABLAZE interview long time ago. This has been years before the release of "Schatten aus der Alexanderwelt". Are you still there sometimes? Or has it become a shadow of your past?

Haven't been there for a while but this won't mean anything. Because the last time I visited my sub consciousness before I started writing about it was when I was a 7 year old child. And there was a break for around 20 years then. So, I am sure that one day the enormous door again will open for me. Can't await it.

Could the Alexander World be described as the dark part of your sub consciousness, your resort out of the boredom of the real world? Maybe a parallel world where strong morphines like heroin are the key for entrance?

I honestly don't think so. Like I said, it first happened when I was a child and be sure I had no fucken knowledge of drugs during that time. It surely has something in common with my sub consciousness, or could also have with my mental disease. When I was a child I first started escaping from reality, coz the real one did not offer me so many positive things in general. Since I already have read some very personal things about my past in the internet, spread by some jerk I should know personally, I don't wanna comment on those things any longer, somehow wanna keep my personal experiences from the past exclusively for myself. Hope you do understand? Fine.

In the mid 90's there was a picture taken of you giving yourself a shot with the needle. Did you consume drugs at the time? What kind of drugs, did they help to write the music and what is your opinion on drugs today?

Drugs? I am not so sure yet Missy, but aren't some of em forbidden? Well, I still am a follower of all Christian rules, only eat bread, only drink water and have no sex.



What about the parts in the radio play where the lobster is cooked? Is this a personal memory of you? Would you describe your father as cruel?

Yes its a very personal memory and I don't wanna comment on this too. Although I already have done in the past. Shame on me.

Many of your lyrics deal with suicide. Can it be a solution?

Totally! Still met many different people in my life who somehow acted very wise by killing themselves instead of go on torturing themselves and their surroundings for further years again. Surely this opinion isn't wanted so much, coz people say there "always" will be some other "solution". I personally am thinking that this might be right in some cases but in others this surely might not work and instead of suffering in pure pain for the rest of your life, mentally or physically, one better should have the strength to kill oneself.

We also have received many, many letters of folks who somehow found back to life with our suicidal interpretation of music and art and surely this made us all real proud. But personally, I never would see Bethlehem as a "solution" but more as only one aspect for a way out of one's own misery. Kinda help in suicidal questions, not more. As kinda last resort before killing thyself.

Because of these lyrics you also had problems with the police. How often have the police come to your house to shake you down for "bad material of any kind"? Have they ever found anything they could buttonhole you for?

If I get it right, they "visited" me four times. The first two times they mainly came to my house for interviewing, all other times they took nearly everything with em they could find here, letters, mainly letters, flyer, tapes, drawings, lyrics, CDs, LPs, all that. Nearly got it all back except some records like a Mayhem bootleg with the dead Dead on it, some pics showing me naked, completely covered in blood, some letters with stupid swastika etc. bullshit drawn on em, some old VHS stuff showing early black metal bands during their live shows, or more personal ones. Also never got back the "Sid Vicious" movie on VHS, which damn was shown on TV as well. And surely more stuff I cant remember yet. In the end I was accused of doing some Terrorist-Network which was based on the worldwide fan-letters I received to that time, as well as some of my lyrics which would spread some "violent theories" in their opinion.

The result was that Bethlehem could no longer play shows in the area we lived in, and that Red Stream has to change an album title + the booklet photos. My lawyer said it would be wise doing, otherwise they surely would accuse me again and I surely would get some nice sentence for this shit. The original accuse was smashed at the court, fortunately the judge was pretty "open-minded" and it somehow was possible to explain the artistic concept of Bethlehem and Heavy Metal in general.



You have had many line up changes with Bethlehem. Are you difficult to work with?

I dunno. Am I folks? Personally I won't think so, but this surely depends on whether other musicians ever were comfortable working together with me. Coz me, I sometimes wasn't and better decided to fire some people coz of e.g. not coming to rehearsals for months, or bringing their personal problems into the band, or acting like real "rock-stars" like Landfermann once did, or did not come to the studio while recording a record, or any other reason.

Some other members fired themselves coz they e.g. were afraid of the success, or wanted to dictate their own silly musical point of view, or whatsoever. Surely this caused many, many problems in the past but since I know that I could work with so many different people these days, I never would care about again.



You've been with Redstream for quite a long time, then signed with Prophecy and went back to Redstream. Why the change of label?

I honestly have no clue! Like I said, I wasn't so comfortable with myself in that period and therefore picked up interests of other band mates too damn quickly. Today I know it was some very huge mistake doing, specially coz I of course had to care bout everything again by exclusively myself although once it was said, that "others" would take more responsibility too. But anyway, guess too many things already were said bout the "partnership" of Bethlehem and Prophecy. So I better wanna close that book forever.

I realized your new haircut on your new Website and I realized further the use of third Reich symbols such as the Reich eagle but without the swastika symbol. Why are you using fascistic metaphorical language? Are you showing sympathy with the National Socialism or do you want to provoke? And why the hair cut?



Well, the "haircut" was done coz I haven't cut my hair for a long time and they started to more and more "break" at the peaks. Other than that I was bored by always cleaning my flat which was covered with those long, brown hairs everywhere. Somehow it was like I would have a bunch of hun-

dreds of dogs at home. This totally pissed me off. So one day I took some machine and cut em all off, which somehow was like paradise. Meanwhile they still are growing and became longer again although I am not so sure yet whether I again wanna have em hanging around my knees. This sux alot. I am a German Patriot, no doubt. But being a Patriot not directly means being a Fascist. Those "Fears" exclusively are typical German fears dictated by different foreign countries and their interests keeping Germany controlled. All Germans once in their lives, - mainly at school where one has to study the "right" history written by people who have won the II. World War -, were brain-washed and were manipulated to believe that every thought coming to your mind, whether it's the idea of the so-called "III. Reich", or some symbols, or maybe clothes, boots, music, art, whatsoever, best can be described with something pretty criminal. Exclusively done to start another World War or to rot everybody who is not e.g. "Arian" or whatever. The brainwash is working really good, you also directly asked me whether I would "sympathize" or "provoke", which is soooooo typical getting asked over here. Specially over here. But also in nearly all other European country coz people over there also are brainwashed with those subjects. Instead of feeling too guilty they are forced hating us.

So basically whole Europe is manipulated by e.g. the United States of America or Israel. Be sure they are following their own interests and surely won't give a damn, whether this will become traumatic for a population or not. Basically this totally is wanted. Whether I sympathize with National Groups or not, surely won't become a theme here. Using "fascistic metaphorical language" definitely is an interpretation or yourself and I also will

not comment on those things here. All I can tell you is, that I am a proud German man who really enjoy living in Germany which for me personally is the best country in the whole world, I have great respect for my Godfathers and Mothers and to no time would deny my cultural and also historical roots, whether they were good or bad.

So if e.g. using symbols of my own culture, I definitely wont feel guilty doing and whether I gonna follow some "political" aspect with this or wont, well this always depends on the things I mentioned here before. I by the way stripped off the chains of mental slavery long time ago, no longer feel guilty of being German and therefore, see myself as some strong, self-assertive, individual, and free member of the global community.

Some years ago I did an interview with you where you disliked the internet and tried to avoid it as much as possible. And now you are having your Stahlmantel.com and MySpace Page going. Was that the reason for the haircut? You changed your opinion about the internet completely?

What the heck? Hahahaha, great imagination! Cutting off your hair because of the Internet? Somehow cool idea, wow! No I haven't changed my mind bout the Internet, it surely still is some control system for the dumb, but one also can use it to spread the word around a bit more. Ever used it for e.g. writing emails around the world, which definitely is more comfortable than doing the "writing letters" stuff from the past which on the one hand was expensive doing and on the other got lost so many times. My "Stahlmantel" website wont be visited by people who are interested in Stahlmantel itself, it more is used from a handful of guys, who gonna meet there on the small "Bethlehem forum", I once have opened there.

The Bethlehem MySpace profile at the moment has around 13,000 clicks in a period of four months, but basically this wont mean anything. Never sold any records there, so basically this network is done for really nothing. The Stahlmantel profile was dead since the very beginning. Those new and free "possibilities" only are some other tool of the momentary "Zeitgeist" which totally is impressed by personal prostitution and global

entertainment of mainly useless crap. Sure, I would be an idiot if not using this for my own crap too, specially coz I pay for this and also use it for the most important thing in my life, being in a closer connection with my girlfriend who is living in Barcelona/Spain, but it never was the revelation for me in general. Sorry to say.

Just recently you've told me about your new job, similar to Käthe Kruse and Schildkröt, on creating fetish dolls for dominatrix studios etc. Can you send me some pictures for agm.com and tell me how you got the idea of making such dolls? Do you own Käthe Kruse dolls?

No, I don't and though I somewhere heard this name before, I honestly know nuthing bout "Käthe Kruse dolls". Unfortunately I cant send you photos

at the moment, coz my new creation of real seize Fetish Dolls isn't yet finished. I am sure I will finish the new series till end of December, so if you would agree, I could send new photos to a later date? Thank you. Well, the idea was born together with a Dominatrix back in 2006, she wanted to open a special studio where beside getting e.g. whipped or humiliated, you also could buy some Fetish Wear or Fetish Latex clothes, fitting you like a second skin.



Schildkröt Doll



Käthe Kruse Doll



Fetish Doll

Since I am experimenting with those materials for many years now, I thought it would be some cool idea also doing some more artistic kinda things which surely isn't exclusively done for Studios or Scenes, but also for people who follow some morbid taste. So, since the end of 2006 I experimented alot with this

idea but always failed coz of many, many handicraft- and also copyright problems.

Meanwhile I progressed with my techniques and therefore decided to step away from the original idea and better open my own company called "Body-Drop" which is specialized on creating those special artworks for a wider crowd as well. Like in music, I don't wanna limit my art to only some special scenes, everybody who wants em, can buy em of course. If you folks should be interested, please contact me under "info@stahlmantel.com".



In 1994 you've called your debut album "Dark Metal". Now many years later a whole scene has developed around this term. It's even mentioned in online encyclopaedias like Wikipedia as a special subgenre of metal. What do you think about that? Can "Dark metal" be seen as an own metal genre? How would you define?

Bethlehem = Dark Metal. Ever was, ever will be. Of course it can be seen as an own genre now, coz it is. Although in my opinion, some bands did not get the original meaning behind and just called it like that although playing just e.g. usual black metal.



On the other hand bands like The Shining, Silencer, Forgotten Tomb, Abyssic Hate and many, many more somehow understood the intension behind and since they call it "Suicidal Dark Metal" which basically is the same term, they all interpreted it in a very special, unique and grateful manner. Which of course honours us a damn lot, specially coz we are the original creators of some new sub-genre, followed by so many people these days?

So basically, beside some old German bands like e.g. "Can" or "Kraftwerk", also "Bethlehem" created something not known before and therefore helped to progress a worldwide musical genre. This is more than we ever expected. Amen.



VICOTNIK

(DØDHEIMSGARD, VED BUENS ENDE)

An Odyssey Of Lost Teeth

By Olivier Côté

As I don't really believe that I could actually come up with an introduction as interesting as the man I'm about to introduce to the avant-garde hyper famous hall of music, I had the idea to let his own friends speak out. Vicotnik aka Viper aka Mr. Fixit aka Osama Bin Askeladden aka 498 aka Vicon-Tiki has been around for at least fifteen years, and throughout his multiple projects and personalities, he obviously carried a strong artistic statement up every musical scene's tiny asshole, whatever impact that might have had. Ved Buens Ende, DHG (Dødheimgard), Endwarfment, Aphrodisiac, <CODE> and Den Saakaldte represent some parts of his past and present catharsis. Nevertheless, my only true concern, during our written conversations, was to give him an opportunity to freely think through his own mindset. I can therefore only hope that you're all going to enjoy the final transmissions. Directly from outer space, please welcome Mr. Fantastic Deceptionist, the great Indian psycho terrorist Yusaf Parvez...

The man is uniquely intelligent. – Carl-Michael Eide

Vicotnik, a remarkable friend and individual... Always manages to surprise you either with his ways or his creativity in music. Clever as hell, devoted in everything he is doing... Definitely one of the most interesting, in every way, people I have ever met and an honor for me being his friend! – Michael Sykelig

Yusaf is a visionary in the true sense of the word... He has a singular dedication to his music, and an unflinching desire for it to be the best it possible can be. When he plays you a new riff, you can instantly recognize his trademark sound and style, but despite how familiar you are with that style, you will never fail to be amazed by the new and unconventional ways he contorts the strings to fit his purpose. He is one of the few musicians I believe has truly crafted a world of their own and no one can touch it. – Andy Aort Mcivor

Vicotnik is stubborn as fuck!!! – Apollyon

When I met Vicotnik in 1999 his arm had been bandaged. I asked him what happened. He replied that one day he suddenly thought that his arm shouldn't belong to him anymore.

So he tried to smash it. – Christof Niederwieser

Well, I've known this character for about fifteen years now, and what can I tell you, Yusaf has been a good friend, probably the closest thing I have to a brother. He's a very reliant person, always there to back you up. He's most honest and doesn't necessarily say exactly what you wanna hear in a troubled situation, but you get to hear what he means is right. He's a stubborn man and probably the most enduring bastard I've ever known ha ha! Think I haven't seen him submitting to anything without giving it all his best. He's a man with strong characteristics, and a will of his own!!! He tends to become a bit unstable in some situations (especially the alcoholic-influenced ones), he's a bit moody, and you don't always know where he's at or what he is thinking. Anyway, I sincerely love him and wish him only the best. – Bjørn Aldrahn Dencker



Well hi there, Vicotnik! Congratulations for your killer comeback within a sometimes excessively much sterile metal scene, *Supervillain Outcast* is for sure an amazingly refreshing take on Black Metal! You must be aware that truckloads of people have been impatiently waiting for DHG to give them a new blast, because as we all recognize it, *666 International* had a huge impact on everyone involved in appreciating Black Metal's historical evolution back in 1999. It has been such a long time since your last musical appearance as DHG, and I would like it if you just tried to introduce us to the realm of these seven years that went by in between the release of *666 International* and your actual state of mind regarding music. Basically the question burning on everyone's lips is: in retrospect, why in the hell did it take so long to bring this new album to a life of its own?

Hey man. Cheers for the praise. I was not very happy when I read your first question

(laughs). If I ask you what you believe is the most frequently asked question nowadays, what do you say? You guessed it, this one. Nevertheless, I will do my best to venture down this road once again. I started planning this album already when we were in the studio recording *666 International*. Some songs in some form or another date back then.

After touring in relation to *666 International*, I went to Spain to either finish writing the new album or drink myself to death. I went far south and rented myself a little house. As I was sitting outside my door, drinking bottles of wine with braids in my hair, the Spanish kids ran by me pointing and laughing. This appealed to my sense of cosiness, so I put myself to the abuse everyday. I also tracked down a place the locals referred to as a really bad neighbourhood. So every night around eleven or twelve, I filled up my pockets with all the money I had and ventured up and down the neighbourhood. It soon became clear to me that these criminals and robbers thought I was CRAZY, and therefore did not touch me. Other nights I ventured down to bars where the macho men and the bimbo women were courting each others and I pretended to be homosexual, grabbing the guys' asses, and asked if they wanted to spend some time with me. This did not really sit well with the guests. Funny enough, I was never asked to leave and I never got kicked in the ass, they probably thought I would like it. One day, I was standing in the shower and brushing my teeth, and I could feel the teeth bending backward. I stopped brushing and tried yanking my teeth with my fingers. It turned out every single one of them was barely sticking in my gums. It was time to go home. I had in fact been able to create something of a blue-print for most of the songs.

Well back home, I started gathering people to get them involved, and for a long time it was only me and Czral whom rehearsed. Members came and went as we went along and in the end we had our guys. In 2003 I believe, we entered the studio to record our mess. Here everything started going wrong, both technically and with the line-up of the band. Half the band suddenly left and left their work for me. It was like having a birthday inside a straight-jacket. Here started the real process of finding a new vocalist, getting new lyrics, making effects, editing, recording, mixing, etc... Then I believe I took a pause while working with <CODE>, and I now and then worked as a studio engineer. But I have more or less worked with the album since we en-

tered the studio to now. It's very time demanding when you have to learn the things you are going to do. The time spent though, gave me the opportunity to get a new band on its feet and rehearse simultaneously as I was working in the studio with various things. In the end, I'm very happy with all our efforts and I'm very proud of the album.

Now that was a mind-trip! Back in 2003, many fans were shocked by what appeared to be some deeply depressing news. Your all-time colleague and only original line-up member, lyricist and vocalist Aldrahn, suddenly left the building, and so did computer mind Zweizz and experimental drummer Czral. What went wrong between yourself and these high-quality, really unique musicians, since we all can appreciate how essential their roles were in the shaping of *666 International*?



I want to point out that Zweizz was never the computer mind in DHG. He did not make the effects on *666 International*; he played the synth and the piano. The guy responsible for the effects on *666 International* is Ginge from the Electro act SUB-GUD. Seeing Aldrahn leave was definitely the hardest of the three. I

had felt for many years that I kinda made music for me and for him. Aldrahn is still on top of my list of friends and I am sure we will do something in the future as well. He quit because he was to become a father and could not be so devoted to the band anymore.

Now, some years later, it's been proven that his exit was not really necessary. On the other hand, I think that all of us guys that have held each others hands for the last 15 years made a wise decision to let go. I believe we all benefited from this, and as a result of it we can become better artists and performers. Czral had been my main cooperation partner since the Ved Buens Ende days, so the desire to break free from each others and develop on our own was really strong. Zweizz was more a result of a mutual decision. He wanted to start making songs; I did not want to compromise my life's work for something I probably wouldn't like. So that one was not very hard.

One has to remember as well that DHG had not really been a band since we rehearsed for *Satanic Art*.



© Martha Lewicka

666 international is mainly my musical catharsis. I wanted to rid myself of every theme I had made that I could remember and did so. This is mainly an album that came out of the close work between me and my producer at the time, Bjørn Boge. Of course others contributed as well, but as for the hard work, sleeping, eating and shitting, that's me and Boge. Aldrahn contributed a lot in the sense that he performed well and wrote the lyrics. He is one of the best vocalists this scene ever nurtured. Zweizz biggest contributions are the piano interludes; all the synth and piano in the songs were either arranged by me or by the producer. *666 International* is a constructed idea. I am its father, but it has a life of its own.

Alright man, thanks for clearing up this issue. Would you then mind revealing to us who are the new DHG band members, in regards to personal anecdotes, to their musical talents and to their particular personalities? I would think that you have chosen each one of them for specific reasons; could you then please expose at least some of these reasons?

The single greatest thing with these members is that prior to joining the band they were like the biggest fans. The practical value of having members that love the band is that it's really easy to pull in the same direction. The guys I have been playing with in the past are all great,

but they were very conscious about their own careers. Picking the new guys was really easy because of the fact that I've known most of them for a great number of years prior to them joining. When it comes to anecdotes, I am not sure if it's fair of me to put my members in a predicament. We have seen each others in about every fucked up situation you can image. A year ago or so I and Kvohst were trashing around the apartment, when my heart suddenly acted up, and as I thought I was dying, Kvohst was running around not knowing how to handle it. He is a British guy, so he didn't even know the number to the ambulance. I imagine how useless he felt, running around with the phone in his hand, while his band mate was getting less and less conscious. The world really gets small in a situation like that.

The members involved right now are Kvohst on the vocals, Thrawn on the guitar, Clandestine handling the bass, Darn playing drums, Jormundgand taking care of the synth and of course yours truly.

Well, how do you personally comprehend your musical evolution within an important metal sub-genre such as Black Metal, which has now become kind of a trend in many over-intellectualised indie magazines and so-called experimental circles? Do you think that you belong to any scene at all, or in other words, are you consciously contributing to the establishment of one particular musical ideology? Your first two albums were obviously connected to old-school black thrash metal, whereas with *Satanic Art* and *666 International*, everything became much more blurred and abstract when it comes to genre aesthetics. What is now DHG's artistic agenda?

Opinions in that sense are not very important to me. Even Black Metal will die, but then there will always be all the old albums, so the spirit of Black Metal will never die. There will always be good music around. What I do hope though is that people know what they are doing and why they are doing it, that there is some sense of honesty to their craft.



from left to right: Thrawn - Clandestine - Vicotnik - Kvohst

I don't get mad if some band from the underground scene makes it real big. It's basically none of my business. I try to be conscience about myself, I try to grow, improve on all levels and basically lead a beneficial life where pre-ordained dogmas or principals have no value unless they are my own. The same way it's not really interesting either to throw my wisdom upon the world, so to speak. I think people will benefit more to listen to their hearts than to listen to me. I have chosen to have my contact with the outside world through music. It's not to prove a point; it's just putting my experience into a kind of endless format. As to what I hope it achieves? I hope it inspires people to create, to be better people, to take better care of themselves, to get more in touch with suppressed areas of their emotional life, or something completely different: basically, what I hope to achieve is up to you...

Our artistic agenda will always change, like human beings change. Even though we don't want to, we do. So since *Satanic Art* we have become more blurred for the reason that we have become more organic in a way. It's not just infantile fantasies or metrological report of some kind. It's a whole life inside our records. Even the old albums are records of life, in a simpler, more one-sided sense.

All my albums tell me something about myself. I have faith, I think anyone would benefit of having a belief system. It cannot be for selfish reasons generated through fear, redemption, hypocrisy, career, etc. Faith is not about getting, it is about achieving. Faith has to be the model for your personal ideal. I cannot understand all the interest people put into other people's life, don't they find themselves interesting enough? For me, I do want people to be close to my music if they feel it, but I have no desire about them obsessing about me.

I think there was a scene once that sort of shared ideals, or to be more eloquent, a scene where you shared a lack of ideals. I mean come on, all of us were just kids, and let's face it: we weren't much different from any other teenagers growing up at the time, except that we had somewhere to vent our desires and our frustration. This argument is thoroughly strengthened by the fact that if you go take part in the Black Metal scene here in Norway nowadays, you will quickly see that it's all about spending time together and the shared interest in the music is what draws the people together.

When it comes to me personally, I did not start to listen to Black Metal and then got interested in the occult. The passion was already there. I have also grown up with

many different religious paths around me as I have an Indian background. This is why Black Metal put my butt in the seat as soon as we were acquainted, because the flare for the contents in Black Metal already resided inside me.

Now let's talk about DHG's sick-to-the-bone homemade library. Aldrahn's lyrics and performances on *666 International* were basically all over the place and quite out-there, so to speak, absorbing elements from mythological narratives as well as taking kind of a post-modern twist on absurdist poetry - in one word, it was downright unique. What about Kvohst's writing and singing, and how would you say that they are directly connected to the music found on *Supervillain Outcast*?

I think Kvohst writes a lot better technically and in a much clearer narrative. It's easier to write in an absurd fashion, because you are not really revealing anything. "Gobbling numbers to safety, aerobic stance un-blurred. Focus rendering motion, tears crackling strong hostile limbs." I am basically talking about eating breakfast and training, who would ever think that? It's easy to hide the fact that you don't have much on your mind if you write in a way that in the end is 100 % up to the interpreter. I am not saying Aldrahn has nothing on his mind, but artistically Kvohst's lyrics suit me a lot better. Because it's not about shying away, and at the same time they are kind of written from the viewing point of the observer. I think it becomes a bit bogus when your genius is dependent upon other people's interpretations. I feel our lyrics now have the edge they previously missed.



His performance on the album was kind of a three way effort, Aldrahn's obviously, but also our producer and my own. *666 International* was not a rehearsed album, it was a plan and a vision I had, which I put into commission with contributions from friends and a whole lot of work together with my producer. I needed a kind of catharsis, getting rid of all the material I had collected over the years. It's kind of like a crossover between music and cabaret. So Aldrahn's lyrics worked like hand in glove. But this time around, I wanted to take a big step to the next level

You were saying that with *Supervillain Outcast*, you had to learn everything "technical" from scratch, including programming, sampling, making effects and so on. Listening to the way you present Black Metal, I get the feeling that you're a fan of many other forms of music, like for instance techno, noise or whatever. I also know that back in '96, you took part in the dark ambient noise band Aphrodisiac. Therefore I'm curious to know if that's a kind of musical output you'd like to explore once again, now that you can more thoroughly handle electronic devices.

I was a little bit learned on the making loops and effects bit. Not much but a bit. On the other hand I knew nothing about being an engineer and there is really a hell lot to learn. Yes, I do listen to a lot of different forms of music. In my estimation you only have good or bad music, I am not that genre-oriented. Different genres emphasize different emotions. What happens with me musically is nothing I really plan. We just have to see what I jump into. Right now there is a lot going on though, and I think in relation to doing my very best, I have to stay concentrated on the tasks ahead. Aphrodisiac was making insane music without rock-oriented music instruments, and it was a great dive into the sordid psyche.

In a previous answer, you mentioned that your interest in the occult was already there, even before you discovered Black Metal as a musical form. Let's guess that this interest has ever since then very much expanded in space and time. At the present, what do you mean by "occultism" - is that some kind of a life philosophy connected with any known or unknown traditions in particu-



lar? And how is your definition of occultism affiliated together with your musical impulses?

When I previously said occult, I used it as a general label of anything being related to spiritual phenomenon. I was brought up in a Muslim family, and in this day and age Muslims are probably the group of people whom take their faith the most seriously. My upbringing was subjected to all the Muslim traditions and customs. I was even supposed to marry my cousin. For most people subjected to this, it's natural just to adopt the belief system of your father. But for a small group of people this upbringing creates quite a

strong consciousness from a really early age. Not far into my existence I came on odd edge with my family. Being on my own opened even more doors in my mind. I think all the situations that put you at risk in some way, either physically or mentally, are the most beneficial. Faith-systems are a God ideal that's theoretically you, if you fulfil your potentials and live in order to reach your capacities. Finding your own nature is a lifelong dedication. In order to do so you have to emancipate yourself from basically everything you know and start redefining, using yourself as the tool to do so. True religion does not concern everybody else, true religion only concerns the man or woman who subjects him/herself to it.

I do regard myself as a Satanist; this means that I support self-indulgence. I seek for personal truth and freedom, simplicity and efficiency. It's merging your soul with life's fabric. It's a system of representation. We create our own damnations and rewards. When I became an outcast, the world suddenly expanded. I made two decisions concerning the years ahead. Number 1 – Get acquainted with the world's vast portions of philosophy and religion. That's the best way to understand our history as well. In other words you dive into all the world's opinions and see that's basically what the fabric of the world is – opinions. Number 2 – Was subjecting myself to every kind of subjective experience I could think of and later view them both objectively and personally. All kinds of situations were interesting, even the ones that did not benefit me materialistically or in some other form. The dirtier and darker the experience, the happier I was. Processing information in every thinkable angle and at the same

time living it; it's kind of being an observer of society. Not in a critical or naive way, but just observe to become more knowledgeable and powerful. Of course all this is very general, but so is the question.

Part 2: A Dance Between Chaos And Order

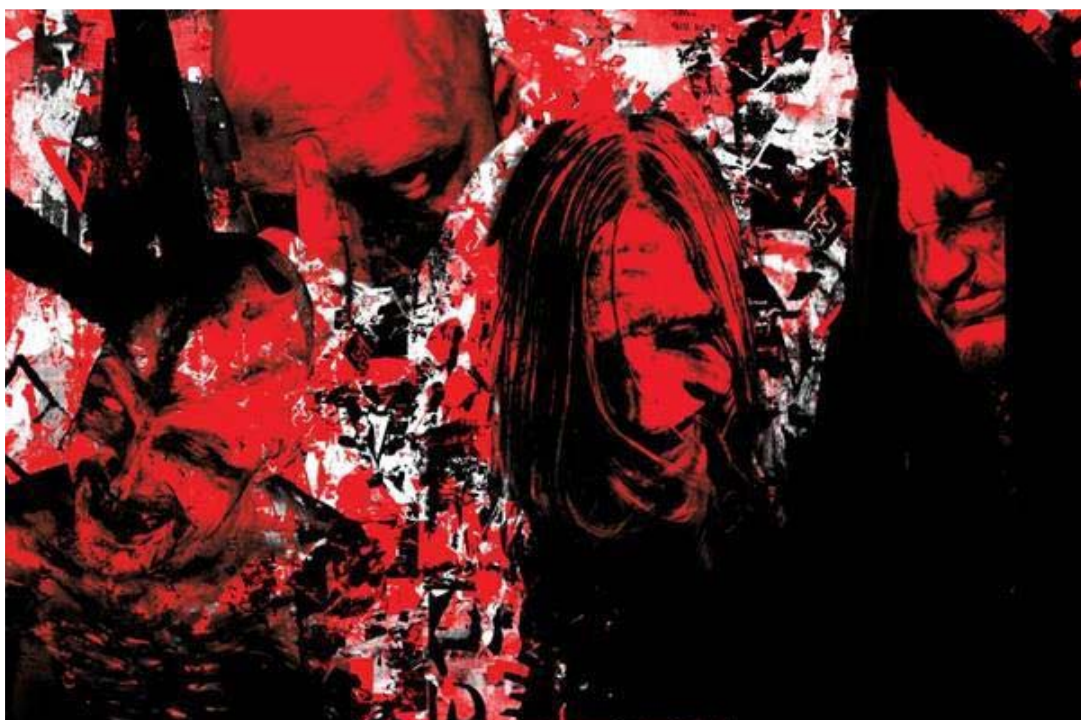
You said somewhere else that the new DHG album is already composed. I know it's a bit early to start thinking about that, but I would guess that throughout all these years you've been giving shape to at least a vision of DHG's future. Is there something you've not been exploring on *Supervillain Outcast* and would like to try out next time? Not to speak against Kvohst, as of course his vocal performances are quite intense, fully accomplished and perfectly well-executed, but is there any chance to bring Aldrahn back to your musical madness? I know you guys are good friends, so that's basically why I'm asking.

No, unless Kvohst quits there is no chance of that happening. His style, range and ability suit my ambition a lot more. Aldrahn has a lot of heart, but also has a lot to learn technically. I think he is content with what he possesses, so it's better that he does bands that do not demand a clinical execution as well as bringing along the heart into the equation. Aldrahn has a great voice and he is by no means finished with his career. I guess both a Thorns album and a The Deathtrip album are not ages away from being presented to the public. I am also happy about the fact that Kvohst is British; it gives a deeper exploration of the English language. Now the lyrics

are as I want them, more accessible but multi-stylistic. We can now thoroughly write about certain themes, atmospheres, ideas, etc. and keep a red thread from one lyric to another, without being conceptual.

Most of DHG's fans know how long both the mixing and the mastering of *Supervillain Outcast* took in order to get completed. In comparison, some bands only spend perhaps one or two months mastering a whole album. Would you mind introducing us to what was so hard to balance within your sound particles? Was there something specific you had a hellish time to drive into perfection? What was the most challenging part of the mixing/mastering process? Without going into too many technical details, it would be highly interesting to read about the sound-picture you were aiming for and finally had the pleasure to achieve. I believe that Thrawn was helping you out throughout the whole adventure, is that right?

I don't think everybody in this scene is an artist. A lot of people just want to play carbon copies of the bands they like. I am ok with that, it's not my point. My point is that if I wanted to make a Celtic Frost sounding album, I would know exactly how long every aspect of the production would take, and could therefore make a realistic time-line. When your idea is something that lives in your brain, and wants to manifest itself physically for the first time, things like time do not exist. A wise man once said that great art is never finished, only abandoned. This is very true. I did not want to abandon my mu-



sic before it fitted the profile I created for it. In doing so I ensured that a lot of my personality went from organ to plastic. DHG is not only about recreating a mood, like battery albums sound and look cool, lets do this. DHG is about pushing boundaries, both personal and musical.

I'm sure most of us all discovered with great pleasure your stunning approach to bass playing on < code >'s first album *Nouveau Gloaming*, as at last it was possible to feel and hear prominent and intricate bass lines within a dreamy Black Metal context. I understand that you also are the producer of the band. So how's the new album coming along; what do we have to expect this time around? And as the producer, will you try to bring Simen's voice to new, unexplored territories, as I feel that within Dimmu Borgir's area of sound, his singular potentialities are somewhat restricted to a more epic-sounding style of singing?

I would very much want to take Simen's talent in another direction. His talent is enormous, but his Borknagar or Dimmu Borgir style would not become < code > that much I am afraid. I would like to take Simen in a much darker direction. Glad you like the bass playing; I think the album turned out very well. The new album is a bit delayed due to other priorities. Me and especially Simen are busy characters. I produced the *Nouveau Gloaming* album, but Andy had really put in the direction and the context with his songwriting. Hopefully we will be finished with the new < code > album this summer. It's not easy when both DHG and Dimmu Borgir have had new releases this year.

Please enlighten us regarding the new band you've recently joined, I'm speaking of Den Saakaldte. Is that only a side-project or a full-time band where your contributions are of a great importance? And after having played together with Czral for such a long time, whose drumming skills were quite impressive to say the least, how does it compare with Hellhammer's technical capacities? Any preferences?

Hellhammer is the more technical drummer and hard worker. Carl is a pure artist. It's

never about his mind or limbs, it's his heart. Carl is one of the most talented people I know. Not because he is the best, but because he is so honest in his work. Den Saakaldte is a friend's project, what it will become is yet to see. Right now, Den Saakaldte means helping out a friend, but I am sure that as the material surfaces, I will get really dedicated to that specific expression. I have contributed with a riff here and there. Michael does not really need my help on making songs to his vision so to speak. I am sure my main contributions will reside outside the sphere of instruments.

Since some of your musical output comes out sounding rather psychedelic and soul-bubbling so to speak, I would be curious to know if there have been any legal or illegal substances that somehow had an impact on the way you

handle your music in DHG, or on how you perceive it as a composer. There are a few mind-expanding drugs out there that share some elemental qualities with DHG's bursts of emotional explorations; what do you personally think about drugs when they are absorbed in relation with musical composition?



© Martha Lewicka

I leave that speculation up to you. What do you think? I have not made any music under the influence of drugs, but I do

think that what you put into your body also comes out in expression. It's already something there that relates to the mind. If you are a workout alcoholic, obviously that would work better for you if you eat and sleep right, but also if you ordain your mental discipline in accordance to what you want to achieve. That goes for every human being. If you are a careless person, that will be apparent in what you eat, when you sleep, what you talk about, who your friends are, etc. Drugs are not important in my life, exploration is. Nothing is fixed in black and white, even though we are thought to fit into that dualistic way of thinking. Our world is made up on an antagonist\protagonist relationship. The way we have chosen to develop as a collective is just a possibility. It is born out of an idea.

Even in our modern history things could have looked very different right now. If Hitler would have won two world wars (not very realistic, but indulge me), our education sys-

tem would have been very different, as Darwinism would fill up our schooldays. We would teach more about differences than similarities. Our cultural life would have been dead. Sense of pride and honour would have a different meaning. This isn't any less fixed than how we live today, but it illustrates a general world work on other values in pursuit of truth and happiness.



Back to drugs, I think anything you can conquer benefits you, not necessarily in the eyes of our state or your mother, but those two institutions base their relationship to it on concern (yes, I call motherhood an institution).

I think if one really is to see some things worth, one has to base the right emotion or deed to the right context. That's why knowing yourself is so important. I know a lot of people think they have come to this next level just by wishing so. But as soon as they are struck by something really trivial by the outside, like for example owing taxes, girlfriend breaking up, etc., they tend to act programmed. Defining self-worth from an outside standing point. How would you react if your girlfriend fucked some other guy?

Probably like most in your male demographic. Why is that? Why is shifting blame and responsibility suddenly such a welcome creed? Why is it suddenly poor little helpless me, and you dirty whore? I understand it on an emotional level, and I have nothing against people reacting in this manner. That's a really interesting point. Too many people have the luxury and time to sit and define themselves with words that practically rarely are tested. To achieve this lifelong longing for experience you cannot have the luxury of being comfortable all the time. People rarely live up to

what they represent themselves to be when their balls are against the wall.

There's no wonder why we sit on pubs drinking with our friends, while we define ourselves as these big, great, important idealists. Ha, what a laugh! From great strife rises the Phoenix. I got a bit side-tracked. I could sum up why drugs in 99 percent of all cases are bad: because most people use them to escape, not to form.

What happened to Czral back in march 2005 must have been such a shock, since he had been your main jamming drummer and friend for all these years prior to his tragedian jump. Then Ved Buens Ende resurrected from the tomb, but you guys have lately once again disbanded, since as I understand it, Czral wanted to mainly concentrate on his riffing style and therefore refused to share the composing content of the band. Are you going to be linked, in some way or another (for example in the studio work) with the upcoming Virus album? And what will come out of the riffs you made while Ved Buens Ende was still being alive; perhaps more songs in the vein of *All Is Not Self*?

What happened to him is his business. What happened to us is just as you say. Carl wanted to make our project his project. Thus I said: your thing is Virus, make that band the best in the world. I understand that he wants to do his own thing, and I wish him all the luck in the task at hand. It would be great to produce Virus, but I guess that after 15 years of band playing, communication has become a bit unnatural. So I am unsure if it really would benefit Virus. I will probably use the Ved Buens Ende parts I made, that can be taken in another direction, in DHG.

Let's now regress in time; we're in '93-'94, when Black Metal's second wave was arising, leading up to many new unknown paths. Back at the time, you were forming what is now considered to be an all-time cult band, Ved Buens Ende, together with Carl-Michael Eide and Hugh Mingay. You guys were one of the first to explore the more unconventional, psychedelic and experimental side of Black Metal. In retrospect, how do you

think Ved Buens Ende had or hadn't a musical impact on the scene? Were you a respected band back then? And from your perspective, what do you think happened to Ved Buens Ende in 1995-1997? I'm sure many old fans have been wondering about that.

I think it's a bloody shame that Ved Buens Ende never outlived its potential. If we made an album today with the experience we have gathered over the years, I am sure it would be something special. It's not all lost though, as Carl-Michael has his *Virus*, which in many ways is Ved Buens Ende's younger cousin.



We were not a respected band back then, but we were respected individuals within the scene. I think Ved Buens Ende was way ahead of its time, having our genre in mind. The interest in the band today is awesome; the few releases we put out are pure cult in people minds. I remember critics from Germany back in the heyday (around 1995) even claimed that we could not handle our instruments, that we were shitty musicians. Then those very same magazines would hail bands like Martyrium and Graveland. I have nothing against these two bands, but they were never, what should we say, really clinical when it came to their instrumentation. That's a nice way of putting it I think.

Ved Buens Ende was a deeply misunderstood band, because it was difficult to connect with. You know, some bands are really an instant satisfaction, whereas with Ved Buens Ende, you have to explore the music, its craved of you as a listener. What happened to us? Well,

the same thing that happens to a lot of bands, namely EGO. Carl-Michael and I should have given Hugh more power in the band, because he would have managed to keep it together. Another thing is that Ved Buens Ende was neglected because our other projects took most of our time. I do not think Ved Buens Ende will resurface in the nearest future, but never say never. Maybe we just need a couple of more years to mature as individuals before we can re-animate this joint venture.

Is it ironic for you to consider that the only time you went out on tour was in 1999 with one of the most popular bands from Norway, namely Dimmu Borgir, in order to present such a fucking challenging and unpopular album? You seem to have been in touch with that particular band from the very beginning, as you were singing on their first album *For All Tid*, and even had their guitarist Galder on *Satanic Art*; is that a band you are particularly fond of, music-wise? Now to the ultimate question: both of you have released a new album almost at the same time this year, so why in the hell didn't you go out on tour together once again?

I think if we went on tour this time around, it would actually be more successful. Dimmu Borgir is not really my cup of tea. I think they have great things going on here and there, but they do not really nurture the feelings I want to be in contact with when listening to extreme music. I have tremendous respect for their hard work and their fucking awesome dedication. One of the, if not the hardest working bands in this country. If you don't get inspired by their music is one thing, but you really have to be blown away about their dedication. I wish them the best of luck, even though they seem not to need it at all.

Yes, I did some vocal work on their first album, and a long scream on the second one I believe. The reason for this is plain and simply kinship. They are friends, and we have really grown up in this scene together. Galder played a little bit guitar for us back in 97, before he was a part of Dimmu Borgir. At that time his ambition resided in Old Man's Child, so the affair was brief. He is a fucking great guitarist, both playing-wise and when it comes to melody and arrangements. Gene Hoglan once said he was the best guitarist he ever worked with. That's some testament of your abilities. Maybe Dimmu Borgir and DHG will do something in the future together, it's a difficult call. Practically it would not be much of a problem, but I think our fan bases are probably miles apart. All the best to them.

Earlier in our conversations, you were touching the subject of observation, experience and individual empowerment. While reading another interview of yours, I noticed how much you were being critical towards capitalism in general, especially regarding the fixed state of things, and how man, now that he seriously believes that everything is as it should be, isn't able anymore to picture himself up to another level of reality. Having now in mind Theodor Adorno and his famous phrase - "the task of art today is to bring chaos into order" - I would guess that *Supervillain Outcast* is not only a path you've found leading to self-growth and self-realization, but also, somehow, your personal statement against the actual forms of social order. Maybe I'm all wrong here, but I just want you to comment on the possible power of artistic idealism and freedom, when it comes to their impact on our system's economical and human total decadence? Is that something you are conscious about when you start thinking about how DHG is linked with the world where its music is conceived? In other words: how does a supervillain outcast relate to the city that first nurtured himself?

Those two things you mentioned above are no contradictions; they are flip-sides of the coin. Yes, I despise a lot of things, but I am content over everything's brief moment in history. So I am content despising. It takes one big change for the whole world to be affected by it. This in turn will change what made the change in the first place, and there you have the process all over again. This is the pulse of the world; all energy is an always constant thing. Yes, I am the observer, not the meddler, I meddle with people who are within my sphere here in life, and they go inflicting their life on someone else. The importance of self-growth is really simple; without it, there is nothing. You yourself have to value your ideals and your words worth through practicing your disciplines under conditions you don't control to really understand who you are. Reading books does not cut it. That's basically smooching off somebody else's valuable life earnings. Prac-

ticing while being unchallenged will most probably mean that your mental projection of yourself is manifested in what you would like to be, not what you are.



Humans are funny; I think if you would have asked ten people to define an intelligent person, 99 percent would build up a character very much like themselves. People tend to call people they agree with for smart just based on agreeing. I think it's very easy for humans to be drawn to what they want

to represent themselves with, so they can get and project their answers from their companionship. You can really see the weakness in the human race through their habits. This is an element that shows how tired and lazy the human being has really become. Always striving for this outside validity, and confirming themselves through their group, partner and constructions. The dance between Chaos and Order works as much on a cellular order as on a galactic scale. We are very much part of this dance, we can even momentarily disturb the equilibrium of it. Holding

on to our false structures of truth will only make the process of failing more painful. The human race is really part of something completely different, but we tend to put absolute truth into what we ourselves have created, that's why we cannot let go, and probably why the human race will mean absolutely nothing in the end. DHG is part of my practice; one could transform all of my efforts in life endeavour into relating to DHG on a smaller scale. Success is a key word, but you have to measure success yourself, so you really understand what it means.



I am not from a specific City; I was born in Oslo, raised in Stockholm and New Delhi area and have also lived in places like Askim and Malaga. I feel love for cities, but what I love is what I have experienced there. The experience is mine, not the City's. For me as an idealist, I must craft myself to just as comfortable in a castle as in a coffin.

Thanks a lot to Mr. Parvez for his precious time. I hope that you all had a good time reading through his mind. Maybe to be continued...

ABIGOR

Inside The Fractal Lab

By Tentakel P. & Chrystof

There are many people out there who have hoped for a resurrection of the beast ABIGOR, and it seems Satan has answered their prayers and unleashed it upon the earth once again. Six years after "Satanized" ABIGOR have released a truly satanic masterpiece named "Fractal Possession", and with that they should finally manage to claim a place in the Black-Metal pantheon. ABIGOR have been a force to reckon with in BM since a long time. Yet "Fractal Possession" is - while still maintaining the coldness, brutality and the spirit of BM - experimental and innovative to a point where it even leaves most avant-garde metal acts behind.

This trip into cosmic insanity can hardly be compared with anything else, not even their previous releases – Reason enough to shed some light on the creative people behind it. PK and the freshly returned TT share thoughts with Chrystof and Tentakel P. about the mechanism behind ABIGOR, Black Metal, MP3's and our satanic pope

Ch: Peter and Thomas, you've been out of the metal scene for quite some years. Now you're back with one of your best albums ever. What has changed most in the music scene since your departure? Has it become easier or harder for you to spread your works?

PK: Hard to say, I never really cared about "what changed", but each coin has two sides, so we definitely benefit that it all grew up throughout the years, on the other side it's a shame that it all watered down and the entire genre (Black-Metal) is based on false images and sell-rates while leaving the important attitudes behind. But also new bands rose, new labels, new forms of distribution and promotion, so I won't paint it all black, I guess it still undergoes its natural selection and with *Fractal Possession* we opened new ways for ABIGOR, some might dislike it, but *Fractal Possession* is a new chapter in ABIGOR's history, it reflects ourselves, and the spirit of the time we currently live in – cold, nihilistic, death-trap.

TT: Spreading our work is not the major concern basically, but of course, one or another thought at the time an album is (artistically) done appears. If it is easy or not these days – it's too early to give a well-founded analysis about the present market and our position.

Remember, my departure was at the turning of the millennium - things and technologies changed and the net and MP3 may have a negative influence and affect the quality for the listener as well as the artists alike. With people loading a hundred different tracks on their player the whole thought of an album, a self contained piece with a concept that includes artwork and lyrics, slowly seem to fade. Artists get reduced to "that great track nr. 12 on my iPod", and not to forget the people's acceptance of shitty converted MP3s gets bigger and bigger, most people don't even get irritated when they hear this shitty flanging low-bit rate MP3 sound in the background somewhere. I could freak out every time I hear it. So, I haven't released music for 6 years and I don't know if all this has already affected our field of music. As for the Black Metal scene, where we obviously spread most of our albums,

I just can say there's many serious artists and bands out there that create mature extreme satanic art, while in the 90s, when we peaked in terms of sales and "popularity", Black Metal was in its teenage years. With *Fractal Possession* we clearly defined our position again, we don't belong to the "Lord Supersilentultraevil" forest castle fantasy

type, and we don't belong to the old bands that once sold much and now just produce uninspired Black Rock'n'Roll either. End All Life/Norma Evangelium Diaboli is the perfect partner in crime, the most respected label hence our first choice to execute and spread our works.

I would go that far to say EAL/NED rise above the Metal market with many or even most of their releases and can be viewed as label for

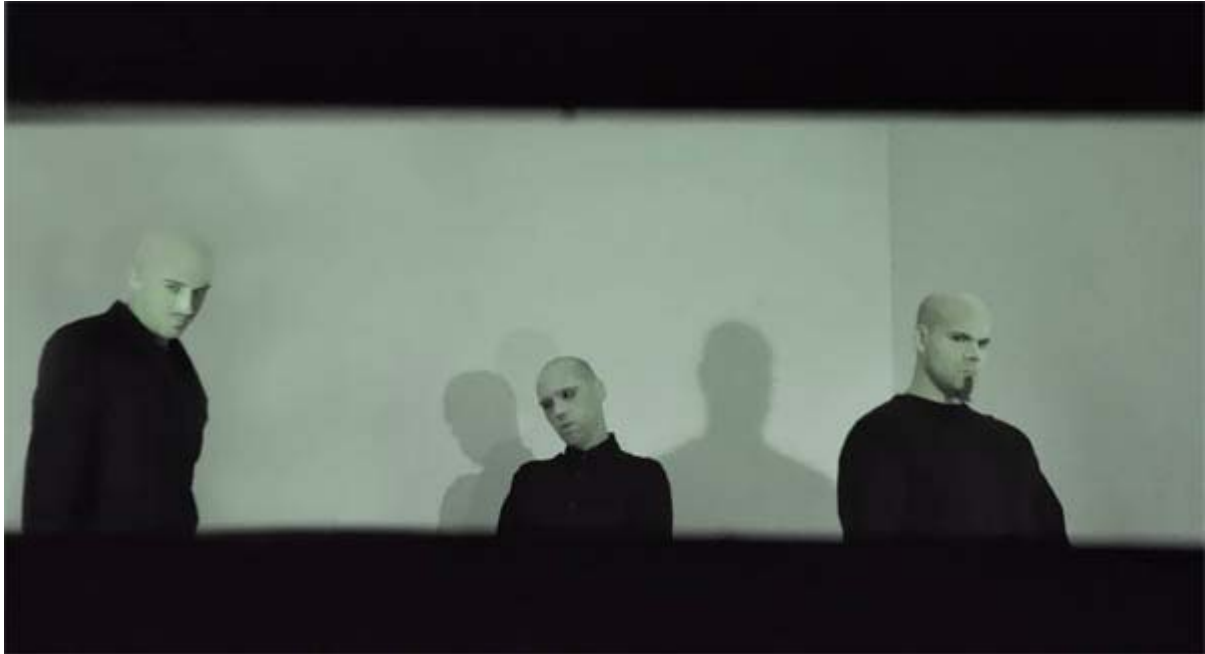
extreme satanic art without any boundaries of the average (B)M scene, which sadly often sticks to the Metal stereotypes that were conceived in/for the 80s and 90s, and falls into ridiculousness instead of really offering something more (or at least be REALLY extreme).

TP: So what are your thoughts on the future of (metal) music then? People starting to buy or download only MP3's; making CD's, LP's and such obsolete? Or could there be a recollection to the "old" ways- There is a vast number of reunions these days, many bands from the 70's/ 80's returning to the stage with varying success, even Led Zeppelin are rumoured to reunite from what I have heard. Could these bands manage to infuse interest for the past into today's MP3-consuming youth? As you said, six



years are a long time- People listening to metal nowadays might not even have heard of ABIGOR before. Do you think you could be one of those bands to ignite interest for musical history in a new generation?

but it was state-of-the-art. What I want to say is that people easily adapt to something, not too long ahead on this way and we arrive at the point where people accept shit and think it's all good, where they lost the ability to judge about quality.



PK: Now you download MP3s, back in the 80s you got a tape, so there's no real difference, nor do I think, especially in (Black-)Metal, bands, labels not distributions suffer from the "illegal" downloads, if one likes the album/samples the album will be bought. At least none can foresee how it all turn out, time will tell...

TT: The MP3 problem is not only one concerning the "(music-)business" side, or not only one how to handle a piece of art. It simply affects how people perceive quality – and I think soon they don't give a fuck. A well converted MP3 played on a good stereo is not what I'm talking about (as it sounds quiet ok if you don't compare it), but today people accept everything, as long as it's free. I hear so many shitty converted flanging/phasing MP3s around me everywhere, in people's cars, in shops and cafes/restaurants etc, that I sometimes ask myself if I'm the only person with ears around.

The threshold of what people can take, of what they're used to listen to in terms of average quality gets lower and lower. You know, back in the days as T. A. Edison presented his early wax "turntable" (a roller of wax where you could record e.g.. a voice and then play it back, the precursor of the phonograph and the turntable) to the public they were all stunned "how realistic it sounds" – you can imagine how crappy that sounded,

But apart from the quality issue, especially in Black Metal, music, layout, lyrics – everything should be viewed as one piece of art, not just the sound that's coming out of a studio in whatsoever form, be it vinyl, CD, a file (originating "from the connection in the wall", that's the horizon teenagers have these days. They don't care and they're not as informed as we were – when we liked certain albums back then we knew the lyrics, could draw the logo and knew every dot on the cover or who was in the thanx list. Today it's about a track in the MP3 playlist only, albums matter less and less). An MP3 player can't capture, it simply isn't, such a piece of art. People tear individual tracks out of the album context to an MP3 playlist and the music loses its meaning and also its value. How much is such an MP3 worth? Nothing. And therefore people lose respect of the artist's work as well. They forget that this sound file actually has a history full of sweat and blood, and that some people put in a lot of money before the first cent comes back from sales, all this seems like a long lost echo when I hear people talk about their MP3s. People that talk about their record collection have a different access. You almost feel the value and history of a respective recording when you have a great album in your hands, but take a file on your MP3player and you easily forget 1. why you should pay for music and 2. what this music has to say.



There are so many aspects why to strictly fight the MP3 culture at any costs, economic, artistic, sound-wise, etc. the perversity on the other hand: people pay 700€ for several old EAL releases, it's mad. Back to your question, EAL/Noevdia definitely has the right answer to this: high quality vinyl releases where you know there's people that try to get the best out of what they do, where the quality of the releases, how they're executed, command respect.

You are able to look back on a vast number of releases so far, and obviously your style has developed away from what it has been in the early days to what it is now. Now, imagine anyone would have shown you *Fractal Possession* at the time you released, let us say *Nachthymnen*; telling you that this is what you will sound like in twelve years-what would have been your reaction? Have you even expected or planned to release albums for so long?

TT: Without a shadow of a doubt I always thought to release albums for at least a very long/unlimited time in the respective times, and at the moment do so as well of course – if you aren't completely convinced that what you do at the moment is artistically totally relevant for your own spiritual health, then better stop. That's valid for Black Metal and

other spiritual/religious art forms, not what I expect of every artist in the world – there's many forms of and topics in art which are only relevant (for the artist) for a certain time, and that's not a bad thing, but when you create Black Metal you should be militant and uncompromising in your conviction as well as execution, you should be able to capture a glimpse of infinity and therefore also believe (at least in that moment) that you will do what you do forever, because it's so relevant to you. The reaction if you played FP to us back then would have been a kick of motivation obviously. Back in the 90s we never tried to reach absolute perfection – not out of laziness but we simply couldn't imagine how, with our old working method (technical knowledge and skills included), in the old recording studio and with the old label/budget.

Would you say that outer circumstances slowed your progress, and if you had better resources back then we would have gotten something like, for example, *Fractal Possession* much earlier from you?

TT: You can't separate the circumstances on one hand and our own view about how to create albums on the other, but if we had a studio and engineering skills and a label like EAL in the last century then why not, something like *Fractal Possession* in terms of musical skills and sound could have been made in the 90s. Also in terms of style, because as I always point out, there are no new influences, we have always listened to a broad spectrum of music. Just on the lyrical side and the concept, this is something that had to be developed and sharpened through the years that needs experience and time.



In the 90s we accepted other inputs and topics as well, stuff that seemed "dark and evil" to us and worth writing about while these days we are much more focused. It is natural that the religious/spiritual side (of the music) is bound to grow with your experience and personal development, while the technical (playing and engineering) could advance really quick, especially if you have help, if someone shows you how to record and mix, and if you rehearse a lot.

The sophistication of ABIGOR has progressed enormously through the years. Even though one could recognize unique melodies and style in your first outputs, *Fractal Possession* works with breaks, rhythms, sound effects and song structures which are worlds apart from what was in the past; yet ABIGOR have- at least to me- always been true to themselves. How would you comment on that development? Have there been any catalysts at one point or did this evolution come naturally?

PK: Seen from my point of view, TT turned out to be a real sound-freak, and he's responsible for so much that has been created/recorded, ideas we simply weren't able to realize on the past recordings. Beside all that we recorded at his Hell-Lab studios, so working without pressure of time and money makes it all much easier at least. I guess the longer you play your instruments the better you become, so there's no hidden story behind all that, it's a natural development that makes working more effective and easier than in the past years, also that "not being involved" with the scene caused a change/difference in my opinion.

TT: Natural progression, totally, no moment of artistic/technical enlightenment. We have been deadlocked in the 90s because from the very first album on we found a way (to write, record and release albums) that worked really well. I mean, until and incl. *Channelling The Quintessence Of Satan* (I didn't participate in *Satanized*) we progressed constantly, true to our understanding of the musical conception of Abigor which is bound to development/changes/progress, but I couldn't imagine a single fucking step further with 4track-composition/Napalm/Hörnix.

I think *Channelling...* is one of our best albums (except for the vocals maybe which are good but not that original – Thurisaz only had a few days back then because Silenius left right in the middle of the vocal-recording session), but after *Channelling...* I was burnt out. I couldn't imagine what to do next, and this was utterly frustrating – another "symphonic" album (like *Supreme Immortal Art*),

another raw genuine album (like *Apokalypse*), another one including acoustic instruments (like *Orkblut*), or another album with a constant 3rd guitar (like *Channelling...*)? In the years without Abigor we developed our technical skills, broadened our horizon and opened up our minds to find new and sharper ways and means to create art that truly worships the devil, not just copycat Metal with satanic imagery.

The break and development was absolutely necessary and natural, not a point where we suddenly threw everything overboard and found the (un-)holy grail. Hard work on ourselves, as characters and musicians, is the reason why we do what we do now.



TP: This might be harder to grasp maybe for someone who can only judge your progression through the various releases, but I think I understand. Nevertheless, I remember Peter stating when ABIGOR split up that he had material already which was far too advanced for the ungrateful BM-scene as it was back then. And now you say development has been progressed through the years between *Satanized* and *Fractal Possession...* Which leads me to the thought that ABIGOR never really split up, more laid on ice... Am I totally wrong to assume *Fractal Possession* seethed beneath the surface all the years, growing steady- or have there really been years without

ABIGOR and *Fractal Possession* is a recent outburst?

PK: No, ABIGOR was dead, not laid to ice! I only used a few selected riffs from that "old" material I wrote from 2003-2005 on *Fractal Possession*. I wrote different riffs and songs of course but not with the idea of the return of ABIGOR in my back, that all just developed after I met TT again, back in late 2005...

TT: As I said, *Fractal Possession* was more or less composed and recorded in about 8 month, but also incorporated stuff that PK wrote over a longer period of time. This doesn't mean anything, we could have also used new material exclusively, but these riffs and lyrics were great so why not using them – what I want to say is it doesn't matter if we used some "older" riffs or not, at this stage we do such an album in about 8 month, that's the point. And, what's the difference at all? If we needed 10 years or 2 weeks, what the fuck does this change?

Ch: Concerning image and attitude ABIGOR always have been Black Metal to the core. You never wanted to be anything else. Now many people see *Fractal Procession* as one of the best Avantgarde Metal releases of this year. Can you live with such a definition or do you still strictly prefer Black Metal? Or don't you care about such categories at all?

TT: We are Black Metal and nothing else, definitely – music that operates within the or at least uses many stylistics of Metal and has satanic lyrics is Black Metal. Call certain BM albums Avantgarde Metal, why not, the avantgarde of Metal music can include Black Metal, and if you look what's called avantgarde in (post-) classical and Jazz then you're perfectly right with your definition, it doesn't seem cheesy or inappropriate at all. Airbrush-images, sheet metal swords and a few other relics of the teenage years away and I view Black Metal as a whole in a larger context – which is art in general. With objective measurements, take a Dimmu (as example, not to point out this band, there's thousands alike!!!) album and you won't find much music/lyric/artwork-wise that truly matters, nothing relevant – funny stylish pictures with millimeter-exact makeup (that has nothing to do with corpse paint) and embarrassing clothes, cheesy visual artwork and cheesy music.

It may be executed in a next to perfect way, it may be the best Metal album of the century, but as a piece of (satanic) art it's worthless. It isn't even conceived to be something else than a Metal album, I doubt those people worship the devil and try to do something

uncompromising. Many Black Rock'n'Roll and Fantasy Metal bands are just in it for the fun, it's their hobby, or because they're professional musicians, a "cool job" so to say. In our case it's different. Let me point out I don't talk about ridiculous art-school standards (!!!), but when you hand out an album to non-Metal people you get a good reaction. Be sure, they will laugh out the average forest-Metal cheese. But take a Deathspell Omega album, take the latest works of Katharsis, Diapsiquir, Blacklodge, Clandestine Blaze etc – that's not funny or cheesy, that's mature, uncompromising, extreme – not only for Metal standards (Metal people can take a huge portion of cheese) but to people beyond this scene as well, got my point? Let's take a stupid example to make my point completely clear: Take (your) parents, imagine we're all early teenagers. Show them a Cradle Of Filth album, chances they take it serious in any aspect are zero. Show them a DSO album and if they understand what they have in hands they will most likely be worried or anxious. Serious mature Black Metal is just one form of (satanic) art, but as such it **MUST** reek of danger. Otherwise it becomes ridiculous at a certain age. I named Dimmu and Cradle as random example, but it's definitely not better in the self-proclaimed true Black Metal underground!

PK: ABIGOR is still Black-Metal, and always will be! The problem is that people are less open-minded and mainly need strict definition how it all has to sound, while we don't. The essence of our music is Black-Metal, it's based on spiritual values, not on musical limitations and images of "black-leather-corpse-painted want to be like Satanists."



TP: So, if ABIGOR's priority is to create satanic art- could you imagine to record something NOT metal under the name ABIGOR? Even if you, PK, state that the base of ABIGOR will always be BM, wouldn't you be intrigued by the thought to do some non-metal intermezzi?

PK: Personally I can't imagine ABIGOR exist-

ing on a "non-Metal-based" form because it's the essential for me, a main part of ABIGOR.

TT: For me, the field of Black Metal leaves enough space to experiment, we will emphasize this with our coming releases even more than we did in the 90s, where we also moved through a wider range of musical concepts from album to album – this tradition will definitely be continued and strengthened. But Abigor has a certain definition and a reason why we do what we do - it's not just a tag, a name. We want to achieve something, realize something. It would have no sense to do a Neue Musik or Electronic album and call it Abigor. From my point of view after so many years of Black Metal, and at the same time after so many years of my interests in other musical styles I think I have a long enough musical history (as listener and musician) to be sure what the musical frame for Abigor can be. If I wouldn't be so widespread with my personal listening taste then you could assume that maybe some day new musical interests have a direct influence on Abigor. But why should I want to do an electronic Abigor album after 15 years of Abigor and more than 15 years of listening to electronic music? Got my point? PK is totally right when he says the base of Abigor will always be Black Metal, I can fully agree (and as different as our personal musical preferences are, as close are our vision of how Abigor has to be).

TP: Fractal Possession in its entirety is very complex, there is much to discover even after several listenings - How do you arrange these songs, especially the elements which can't be rehearsed? Does a song appear as a whole in your minds or does it grow?

PK: The main fact is that we don't rehearse; we even don't have a rehearsal room. I compose a lot of basical riffs/song-structures/ideas, the rest is done in the studio. There was some kind of pre-demo-production but there've been so much changes and it all came to life during the studio work...

TT: We never rehearse anyway, so we can do whatever we want. No thought wasted on live-practicability. So far the songs "grew", but for our next album we have a certain



concept where the pieces have to subordinate in length, tempo and mood – unlike Fractal Possession where each song is about as long as the other and contains every element and tempo. On the next album, every track has a different musical purpose.

Ch: That sounds very enthralling. So you're aiming to write a kind of concept album? Will it not just concern the music, but maybe also the lyrics? Can you tell us a bit more about it?

PK: I can't, and if we work similar to "Fractal Possession" it's not possible, even I've different songs and ideas finished/and still work on, it'll be different, that's for sure...

TT: The concept has been developed for quite some time now, but it's AR's mission to write the actual lyrics now. We need to "synchronize" lyrics and music for this album, they won't be interchangeable track-to-track, and all I can tell you so far is: angels and demons vs. human soul. Ungracefully because cautiously said now, as this topic will actually be



presented and treated like it never has been before (in music, outside a purely theological background) but if I tell you too much about my personal approach to this it wouldn't be a good idea because AR has the final say about what it will cover and what not. How I or PK or even AR would describe it to you

now could be quite different from the final shape as it's too early. But of course it will be written to hopefully receive a glimpse of insight to Satan's mysteries again, and it will be based on a strict catholic background (which incorporates more than enough anyway if you follow the roots of Christianity, where it comes from, what it adapted).

Ch: Once you described the cooperation among you as "Data Exchange". Both of you used to write riffs and arrangements alone. And then you met to make songs out of your single works. Has it been like this also for "Fractal Procession" or did you sometimes compose together for it?

PK: It is data-exchange, but in my opinion that makes our co-operation to something really special, because none ever knows how it all will sound when it's finished. ABIGOR's songs undergo some kind of evolution, and

no, we never composed together for the album...

TT: Even more on FP than on the old albums, you're totally right. In the 90s we didn't write but at least rehearse the tracks together, meaning that we met and played guitar. Now we don't even do this, we just exchange CDs. For me it's the only possible way – you can go right to your musical limits when you don't have to play and remember all of it, you can loop a sophisticated/complex part and work as long as you reach perfection, on as many tracks as you want. That's a completely new working method. In a rehearsal room this would hardly be possible.

More and more I like to see myself as a composer, not as musician – playing instruments is necessary but not what I really like to do. If PK could look into my mind, read my ideas and play my parts then I would stop playing instruments. Yet there's no such thing like a head-to-MIDI converter that really works.

TP: What should one experience when listening to ABIGOR? Have your intentions to deliver a certain impact on the listeners changed over the years?

PK: Expect nothing, the more intense is the experience while listening to ABIGOR.

TT: The listener should get a certain rush of emotions, like I also have when I listen to our music. You can't be more specific than this, because 1. music is 100% connected to the composer, meaning it's utterly personal and 2. the history and (personal as well as musical) experience of the listener determines his/her listening sensation to a certain degree. Yet there are universal feelings, a collective sub consciousness, and the obvious predictable reaction to certain sounds, noises, harmonies, dynamics – I mean, in a dissonant fast part one wouldn't be relaxed and let the mind drift. You can increase intensity and excitement, that's what we consciously do of course. Of course you can try to influence the listener, but that's not the case with our music which we write exclusively for ourselves at the moment of it's creation. After the work is done of course we think about the listener as well. I value the support of our listeners (and I do appreciate it a lot!), but I can't "waste" a single thought during the composition. If you intended to get a comment about the "war against Christianity" with your question, well, no comment, hehehe... By the way: the pope just proclaimed in an interview that he doesn't see the future of Christianity as a

"folk religion"/religion of the common man, but a deterministic force that shapes Europe's culture. Think about this, I like it – it would shock the average Sunday-church-visitors to the core if you tell them what the pope really means with it. I think he, as an intellectual theologian, scorns his own followers, which is quiet a satanic thought.



TP: No, I didn't intend to get comments on Christians but nevertheless an interesting thought on the pope, hehe. If people would start using their heads they would maybe come to the same conclusion as you. It IS satanic to scorn someone who doesn't want to think for himself, being led by someone instead of using his own given freedom. And the pope would

do that by using his followers as instruments in politics through his given power. A satanic pope- I guess I like that, too.

You have made a statement on "Nachthymnen" which I believe to be a measure to separate these people from your music: "The music of ABIGOR is a weapon and shall haunt all those who try to discover something beautiful in it!" Yet I see a contradiction in this statement as I try to understand it. Obviously, if someone only seeks beautiful and happy music he/she would stay away from ABIGOR, not labelling you as "beautiful". But, if anyone sees beauty in your dark and hostile atmospheres, wouldn't the weapon ABIGOR fail to haunt this person for he/she gains exactly the pleasure from these twisted moods in your music you want to deny him/her? So, how was that meant? Or has this statement become obsolete nowadays perhaps?

TT: People that pinned down the sound of Abigor to the "beautiful" elements of Nachthymnen were confused (to say the least) as they bought Opus IV and Apokalypse - the albums that were weapons that haunted the Goths that only loved Nachthymnen (out of all our works), you see what we meant.

Ch: Back in the year 1994 your debut album "Verwuestung – Invoke the Dark Age" has been the very first bestseller of Napalm Records. Without Abigor probably the fast growth of Napalm in their early years wouldn't have been possible. You released around 10 albums on this label and have been quite close friends with labelboss Max for a long time. What can you tell us about your relationship

with Napalm? Why did you decide to leave them?

TT: Yes, I respected and liked Max a lot back then. I was involved with Napalm as much as it gets over that distance (Vienna – Eisenerz), you surely remember those times. But Max changed, and although I had a quite unsteady and unreliable time and haven't been the best business partner, he changed in a way that's not acceptable in my opinion, on a personal as well as artistic (a label deals with art/music) level. It's a pity, those times back then were a pleasure – recently I have seen the With Us Or Against Us album at someone's flat and read the statements and looked at the booklet, a nostalgic moment, but there's no looking back.

Max operates on another level now, he does music business and has nothing to do with Black Metal or art, I mean Napalm and EAL/NED are two completely different worlds, even the reason why each label releases albums.

Finally we found a way to clear up our problems to a degree where both parties can live with it and continue to work with Napalm for our back catalogue. My main concern is that we get high quality vinyl releases of our old albums.

PK: There's no relationship anymore, they've their "label-philosophy", we've ours, our ways separated, there's no more to say about it, nor are we allowed at the moment...

Ch: Thomas, you left Abigor in the end of 1999. In the meantime Peter has done two more Abigor releases and worked on several projects like Hellbound and St. Lucifer. What have you done music wise during these years?

TT: 2 more? In Memory was put together when I still did Abigor (although I was gone by the time it was released when I remember right) and the 7" includes a track from Channelling on the B side, so I thought Satanized is the main release that PK did with other people.

I released nothing, I concentrated on audio engineering, did some recordings but mainly to learn all the new technology and equipment. I didn't have the plan to release anything, or even create something where I could fully identify with it that would stand for my heart and soul in public. I did some

electronic tracks, the best way to learn software and mixdown, because 50+ audio-&MIDI-tracks of all kinds of synthetic and acoustic sounds teach you to do a proper mixdown and use your hardware right.

Ch: TT, you have become a real expert in audio engineering and also built up your own studio. Can you tell us more about it? What gear do you use? What kind of bands / music have you produced there so far?

TT: Studer 963 console, Neumann M149/AKG C414/EV RE20 as the most often used mics, mainly outboard gear to "create the sound" (Focusrite Red 3 compressor, Universal Audio 6176 channel strip, Culture Vulture valve

processor, TLA EQ 2, several all-analogue effects like tapedelay, phaser, chorus, filter etc) and about 200qm for a relaxed working atmosphere with one side of the rooms having many windows on the first floor of an old factory. A dark cellar would sound appropriate for Black Metal but really, for full days of concentrated engineering I prefer daylight and enough space. Asmodeus & Vobiscum recorded and/or mixed there, I did several "mastering" kind of works (although I usually don't offer mastering as I work with a professional hi-end mastering studio and a recording/mixdown studio can never offer what a 100% mastering

studio with specialized mastering engineers can offer), and of course all kinds of "jobs" like voices for adds, recording and mixdown for all kinds of music, not Metal.

I didn't see it in connection with my artistic work, the studio is open even for the most stupid Schlagermusik, I make no difference. I try to make the best out of the job, if that's HipHop (which artistically I can't stand, a style I utterly scorn) or Metal doesn't matter to me – I just hear frequencies and see settings on my gear, and improving the source with my engineering work is my job, and if I did (make something sound good) I succeeded, I don't have to like the music at all.

Ch: Now after recording "Fractal Procession" in your own studio, could you ever imagine to record in the infamous Hoernix Studio again? I mean you've recorded plenty of albums there and also brought lots of metal bands to this place. Still Hoernix has never been a metal studio at all...



TT: Hörnix was good and fast in recording drums, but the engineer gave no input at all – and we surely acted stupid as well, we thought we know how it MUST be, we wanted to say how the guitar mics are positioned, how to EQ something etc although we had not the slightest clue about audio engineering. And, we destroyed the often ok recordings in the mixdown altogether (band and engineer) in the end. So, I can't blame the Hörnix guy alone if something sounded bad – if we didn't say a word and let him record and mix alone the result would have been better maybe, that's my view today – and I see the same in my studio, young bands come and want things so and so and not a millimeter different.

But a skilled engineer can show people why and how it would be better NOT to do it completely the band's way. The Hörnix guy at least was guilty of letting us do what we want and didn't show us how to get a better result. Anyway, of course I have completely different equipment and learned like mad to be a serious engineer, so I can't imagine ANYTHING else. There's no alternative anyway, I couldn't book another studio because composition and recording is one blurred process, I need months "in the studio" for an album (to compose/improve as well as record/mix)...

Ch: Back in the 1990ies you didn't like side projects at all. Now you are working together with Zweizz for some songs and also rumours about cooperation with Mikael of Den Saakaldte are around. Can you tell us more about it?

TT: I don't remember that we were against collaborations at all in the 90s. Both contacts were made by PK. PK always had side projects, even in the demo period and later with Heidenreich.

PK: ABIGOR / ZWEIZZ is no side-project at all, Sven just sent us some weird electronic sounds(noise) we'll use on the upcoming ABIGOR/BLACKLODGE 7"/MCD. Concerning DEN SAAKALDTE I'll maybe do a few riffs, or 1 song for an upcoming album, it's no project, just an experiment, as I already did for BLACK-FLAME for example. So at least, there're no side-projects, experiments and co-operation between old friends, yes.

Ch: Okay, the interview is nearly finished. Thanks a lot, TT and PK, for this splendid view into the world of Abigor. Before we close, could you please dedicate a few words to your future? Did you already start the work for the forthcoming album that you've mentioned? Are you going to

shoot out new masterpieces as fast as you did in the 1990ies? Any last words?

TT: Yes, the work for the next album already started and we could imagine a multitude of interesting ways how to achieve steady excitement for us concerning the music of Abigor, so the next few albums won't need centuries to be written and released - but how many albums this will be is not what I can tell you at this stage. There's no doubt about the lyrical/conceptual continuity which is guaranteed as long as we care about spirituality, as long as we worship the devil (this means the lyrical and conceptual side of Abigor can be continued for centuries no matter what our personal musical state is). But the music will end when there's nothing more to say. If that's in 5 albums or in 50, who could say... in humbleness I pray to be granted inspiration.



FLEURETY

Far Away From Any Messianic Complex

By Olivier Côté

Well, well, here I am, interviewing one of the most underrated and underground pioneering metal bands, whom were always mostly known by name and reputation but almost never through their one-of-a-kind musical quality. Listening to the actual ever-expanding avant-garde metal scene, one has to admit to the fact that they actually had an impact on its development as a genre. Soon enough I got in touch with their band coach singer, drummer, lyricist, synthesizer and piano man Svein-Evil Hatlevik, a most honest, laid-back and intelligent everyday journalist. Along the way I was even given a chance to hear a post-1998 recording of a new Fleurety song, which is aptly called The Animal of the City. I immediately sat down deep into my sofa, plugged in my headphones and started the song at a very high volume. What a shock! Could this be Fleurety at all? It most certainly is! However, once I got used to it, this experience made me remember that ever since I discovered this band, I've truly never been able to predict what would be their next



disguises. For now, have a seat and discover the unstable world of Fleurety.

Hey Svein-Egil! Let's hope everything is fine on your side of the European ground; anyway, wherever you are, a sunny and warm summer is always a welcome treat, right. Well I would like to take this opportunity to explore in details such a delicate subject as Fleurety, the now cult experimental band you and

Alexander Nordgaren both gave birth to. Ever since the year 2000, just after the release of *Dept. of Apocalyptic Affairs*, an album that took everyone by surprise with its refreshing twists of mind, absolutely nothing seemed to happen in your camp. The momentum slowly faded away so to speak. Why was that?

Any hurt feelings about that last album? No more inspirations? Of course we probably all know how Hatlevik kept on going with DHG and Zweizz, but Nordgaren all of a sudden musically disappeared, heading off to India and other exotic parts of the world. Between 2000 and 2005, what were then your feelings about Fleurety and its artistic accomplishments thus far?

Well, first thing is that summer here in Oslo is the rainiest ever since they started scientific measurements of the amount of rain in 18-twenty-something. Anyway, I was a little surprised to see that nothing happened with Fleurety after the *Department of Apocalyptic Affairs* album. I was still making songs that I intended to be Fleurety songs, but nothing really happened. So it took me a while to understand that the band was in a hiatus.

In fact, both the songs of the Zweizz 7" *Black Necrotic Obfuscation* (Vendlus Records 2004) were originally intended from my side to be Fleurety songs when I started making them. I programmed some beats and some synth stuff, and I did nothing more about them, since I assumed that Alex would add some guitars. Then all of a sudden three years had passed, and there were still no guitars, so I decided to finish the songs myself. Anyway, I was very happy about the *Department of Apocalyptic Affairs* album, but lately (last five years or something) I've come to the understanding that Alex wasn't too happy with that album. So well, I have no problem with that.

Now it's more like I continue one thread with Zweizz, the electronic experimental one from *Department of Apocalyptic Affairs*. But as I see it Fleurety as it works these days is following another thread that goes back to our very first demo, and the years that followed, with *Min Tid Skal Komme*. That kind of material, that kind of mentality. That's OK with me

now, but I don't think I would have felt too comfortable about this in, say, 2004. I was a little embarrassed about the old Fleurety stuff at that time, like *Min Tid Skal Komme* and *A Darker Shade of Evil*, but in recent years I've started enjoying that stuff. I can very well put on *Min Tid Skal Komme* today and enjoy it. (But not too often, mind you!!!) I wouldn't have been able to do those five years ago.

You appear to be preparing a special comeback with the release of a 7" on Duplicate Records which will basically only contain re-recordings of two older tracks. I always thought that, as an artist, going through material from the vault was like admitting to some sort of a lack of inspiration regarding your present-day creativity. Was this an easier way to get back on track after all these years, in order to get a grasp of what Fleurety once has been and therefore should be nowadays?

Hm. We had to find another label to release this 7", because of all the usual reasons. Fleurety is cursed with label complications, we've been since 1993, so well. We actually made a deal with our very first record label Aesthetic Death Records, who released our *A Darker Shade of Evil* 7", EP in 1994 and co-released *Min Tid Skal Komme* with Misanthropy Records in 1995. This label is also releasing the vinyl version of *Min Tid Skal Komme* this autumn. We might be talking November. This version will feature the *A Darker Shade of Evil* EP and our very first demo *Black Snow* that we released in 1993. So let's see what happens and when it happens.

Anyway, when it comes to your question about "going through material from the vault was like admitting to some sort of a lack of inspiration regarding your present-day creativity", I agree. But I don't think that kind of thinking applies to Fleurety. If we were an active band, like Darkthrone or whatever, it would be an entirely different situation. But for a lot of years (1998-2005) we weren't really an active band, so re-recording old material is more like a way to get back on track, some kind of way to reawaken the dead. But as I said: Fleurety got lost, I guess in some kind of fog of experimentation, where the members of the band kinda lost sight of each other.

So I think it is better to keep things clear, and fuck all that experimental shit. I make experimental music all day, so I don't really need Fleurety to fulfil that function. We're never going to sound like your usual metal band anyway, no matter how hard we try. So it's more important to keep the band alive, I

think, than being all visionary and shit. I mean, it's cool to be visionary, but we need to keep this band a social unit as well, that brings people together. We've been doing this as two people all these years, and we need to keep doing this as at least two people. Otherwise it wouldn't be Fleurety.



Let's return for the last time ever to your almost entirely unknown and unpublished last album, *Dept. of Apocalyptic Affairs*. One could obviously argue that this was a total commercial nightmarish fiasco, as I do remember how impossible it was to get my hands on it back to the day of its official release. Now what was Supernal Music's initial reaction to the musical compositions that you guys gave them? And nine years after its conception, are you sometimes still able to give it a few spins?

Last time ever? That sounds kinda dramatic. As far as I know, the guy who runs Supernal Music really liked the album, but I assume that kind of music is not so easy to sell. On the other hand, I don't really suspect him of having tried. The album has been out of print for more than five years, and Supernal still hasn't released that second edition that he's been talking about for years. And in a way, that's fine by me. The problem is that he doesn't want anyone else to release it either, which by my standards makes him a capital-pig.

Could you please present the line-ups that you're going to use for your upcoming 7", and just say how you think that they might have altered the way you both compose together? Why did you specifically choose these guys to play with?

There are two different line-ups for the songs

from the 7": One consists of Runhild Gammelseter (Vocals), Alexander Nordgaren (Guitars), Necrobutcher (Bass), Hellhammer (Drums) and me as more or less a producer or band coach. The song is a re-recording of a song off our *Black Snow* demo. The reason we chose to do this song with Runhild is that she's the only woman I know who was really around when the Norwegian black metal underground existed and who would know how to do that kind of vocals. I initially asked the pretty well known Norwegian singer Maja Ratkje, and she was about to say yes, but she wanted money - she does these things for a living, whereas Runhild works as a biochemistry engineer, so she's pretty well off. And she was really enthusiastic about this project too.

And somehow I have this notion that black metal should not be made by professionals. I honestly don't think that black metal should be someone's way to put bread on the table. It might have worked in a non-capitalist society, but then again I doubt black metal would ever come into existence in a non-capitalist society. Or to be more specific: I have yet to hear a great black metal album made by people who play black metal for a living. Except, perhaps, *Ordo Ad Chao* by Mayhem. But I'm not sure yet if that album is really soooo great. Time will tell.

But as things turned out, I'm really glad we ended up doing this with Runhild, because for her it seemed like it was a journey through the time gate back to 1993. I didn't have to explain anything to her; she already knew what we were looking for intuitively. I remember I called her on the phone, asking if she wanted to do some vocals for us, she said: "Yeah, sure. I used to listen a lot to that demo back in the days." It was that Stephen O'Malley guy who made that tape for her. Now he's some kind of rock star, and we're still a well kept secret. Things really do change in ten years.



Anyway, I'm digressing here: So then we met a couple of times, discussing back and forth to make sure that my intuition was correct: That she knew how to do exactly what we needed her to do. When it comes to Hellhammer and Necro Butcher, they are old buddies. They are Alex's buddies first and foremost, since he used to play with them in Mayhem, so that was more of the typical "Guy comes back from some faraway place, wants to meet up with his buddies and have a jam".

The other side of the 7" has Petter of Audiopain and Virus playing the bass and Bjørge from bands such as Yurei and Rex playing the drums. This song has a more punk attitude I guess, so I think Fleurety is in its most testosterone phase ever these days.

Considering where you guys come from, I see Fleurety as at least one of the first Norwegian black metal related bands to have somewhat introduced a humoristic, twisted colorful touch deep into the usually black-and-white, down-to-earth world of despair and suicidal teenage aspirations that black metal came to be associated with. I'm of course not saying that Fleurety was a joke in itself, far from that actually – but do you think that, in a sense, a good laugh in your case functioned as a first-hand antidote to step out of the black metal rigid and authoritarian structures?

Well, if there is something we learned from the nineties, it was that it's no problem being tongue in cheek and dead serious at the same time. That's what the nineties were all about, at least in Norwegian popular culture, and I guess a lot of other places. If you see it this way, Fleurety is a typical child of its time. That said, we were dead serious all the time way into 1995, and perhaps even longer. Hm, it's hard to remember really. But we've never had an expressed agenda of "bringing humor into black metal". I mean, we don't suffer from a messianic complex.

But sometime after 1994 all the makeup, social intrigues and talking about hate and darkness began sounding hollow. And it still does. So in 1996 we were all about leaving the sinking ship and make some other kind of music. I'm really glad we never made any black metal in the late nineties with Fleurety. In my opinion there is only one good black metal album from the late nineties, and that is *666 International*. I don't think we would have made a black metal album with Fleurety that would have been even half as good as that.



You've collaborated before with both Czral-Michael and Yusaf Parvez from Virus and DHG fame, be it on a lyrical or a musical level, and by my standards, both Virus (VBE) and Fleurety do share at least a few similarities in atmosphere. What were your relations back in 1995 and were you guys all perceived as some sort of pariahs by the overall "scene"? You seem to be good friend with Czral-Michael in particular; would it therefore be possible that either you or he collaborate with the other and vice versa in the future? I'm obviously pointing my fingers towards the next Virus album...

I remember very well the day when Yusaf played the entire *Those Who Caress The Pale* tape over the telephone. That was in 1994, I think. That's one thing nobody would do these days. There were close relations between Fleurety and Ved Buens Ende back then. At one point we discussed whether Yusaf should join Fleurety as a permanent guitarist. Ved Buens Ende had good relations with all of the other bands around, with some very few exceptions. We were less popular. So I remember Yusaf in particular being somewhat of a devil's advocate on our behalf. Yusaf and Carl-Michael were also a part of the Fleurety live line-up for a show in 1995 or 1996, can't really remember which year exactly. When Tiziana who ran Misanthropy Records came over to visit us in 1994, we played the *Those Who Caress The Pale* tape to her, which led to Ved Buens Ende releasing *Written In Waters* on said record label.

These days, relations are less intimate, but yes: I will play some minor role on the new Virus album, participating with some lyrics and possibly more stuff as well. Czral also borrowed some photos I had lying around,

and they might be used in the layout of the new album. I assume you'd want me to reveal more details about the upcoming Virus album, but I don't really know much more.

Oh and now that we're exploring your cult past, what did really happen between you and Ulver back in 1993-1994? I remember reading in their *Vargnatt's* liner notes how you Fleurety were nothing. Quite rude to say the least! Now what was wrong with the G-Man?

I don't think there is much to say about this. If I were to explain this, I would get it all wrong, because I don't remember the details or what was the reason for anything. We've been good friends for at least ten years now.

Fleurety, the band's name, not only is connected to the actual name of a demon, but also concerns the psychedelic substances he's known to be giving a form to. Would you dare claim that the more psychedelic bands of Norwegian black metal, at least in the nineties, somehow came to experimentation through the use of chemicals and other sense-expanding substances?

I'll confine myself to talking about hallucinogens here: I'm not really sure about how much of this went on. I don't know too much about other people's use of these kinds of substances, though I know certain members of DHG used to be very heavily into that. I took some substances like this on various occasions, but that wasn't until the very late nineties, like around 1999.

You said somewhere else that Fleurety will be taking a more stripped down approach to music on your (for now only) hypothetical next sonic adventure, going as far as to claim that an upcoming *low-fi* sounding full-length album wouldn't be out of place. What is so appealing about that kind of minimalism? Do you believe that you could regress to a one-dimensional, sordid black void world of sounds, or are you once again taking the piss at us? Jussi Lehtisalo from Krypt Akeripper fame recently said that "regressive is tomorrow's progressive". Is that a musical philosophy you'd like to explore further within Fleurety?

Dunno who Jussi Lehtisalo might be, but I've never liked statements about how "X is the new Y". Experimental is the new mundane. Silent is the new loud. Nerd is the new black. Bread is the new cookie. Old is the new new. Obesity is the new plague. And so on. Fucking trendspotters. Obviously, if you're interested in exploring new ground, you'll know that as soon as someone identifies whatever it is you're doing as the "new cool thing", it's time to move on to something else. Otherwise you'll risk being run over by all the clowns who have just jumped on the band wagon. Not a pretty sight, I can assure you.

So well, as I was talking about earlier: At the moment Fleurety works in an entirely different way than it did ten years ago. These days Fleurety is more or less a time portal that opens once every year when Alex comes back from England or India or Canada or Rumania or wherever he might be working at the time. That means we have to work quickly. We don't have any time to hesitate, no time for discussions. We would typically have one day to record a song, that's it. So if there's anything we planned to do, that we didn't get time to do, and that would usually mean that you'll have to wait another year until the time portal opens once more. So how do you solve this? We make the kind of music we know best: Simple primitive black metal. It's a question of survival. If we had insisted on being "experimental", "avant-garde" or "sophisticated", we'd be dead.

But I don't think we'll ever enter a "one-dimensional, sordid black void world of sounds". I just put on our first recording of new material since 1998, a song called *The Animal Of The City*, and yes, it is in fact recorded on a Tascam Portastudio, the same type of equipment that we used for recording our first demo way back in 1993. But it is in fact also an electro-acoustic experiment with old school recording equipment, rather than just two thirty year old guys trying to be teenagers again. So in some sense I'm contradicting myself here. Or to be precise: I'm demonstrating why this new Fleurety material is not one-dimensional. Because what might be correct along one axis, is not correct along some other axis. Thus our music is *at least* two-dimensional.

Oh yeah, I can clearly hear that this stuff has got a multiple personality symptom

going on. You guys are now less messing with tricky progressive riffing and more playing with layers and layers of white noise through what sounds like a static but massive wall of guitars. You mentioned Stephen O'Malley earlier on, and I would like to know your opinion about what he and his label mates are doing with (black) metal in general. Is that the genre's future gateway?

Hm. As a person who used to study digital signal processing at the university, I always end up feeling somewhat uncomfortable when people use the term "white noise" about signals that aren't white noise. White noise is energy distributed evenly all over the frequency spectrum, and is quite possibly the least interesting kind of noise there is. It sounds very much like the sound you get when you turn on your TV without it being tuned in to any specific channel. The noise you'll hear on that song comes from computer processing, from sending the song through a portastudio several times and some of it is differences in signal phase that turns into noise when it's layered a certain number of times. So that was today's lecture.



You'll not gonna hear me talking about who is "the future of the genre", I don't like that kind of speculations. But I know for sure that bands that work hard get somewhere. SunnO))) have been working hard, therefore they've come somewhere. Fleurety, by contrast, never really used to work that hard. That is, we took our music very seriously, but none of us really had any serious ambition of becoming "rock stars". So we hardly ever used to play live, we never toured, but we seized the opportunity to get our music out to people on CDs. And I guess that's as far as our ambitions went.

My experience with SunnO))) is through their live performances, which I think are very good. They played here in Oslo a couple of years ago, and I got the feeling that their tour was a black mass on wheels. Most black metal bands would die to do a concert as powerful as that, but they're stuck with the rock concert format, not being able to think outside of the box. I have some records with them too, but I never really came to the point where I would listen to them more than once or twice. But I like the way these people make the music more physical, in the sense that it appeals not only to the ears, but to your gut as well. But I guess I'm more inter-

ested in this stuff because of their ideas than because of their music. If I want to listen to people who work frequencies with their music, I tend to prefer more typical noise acts such as Lasse Marhaug or Kevin Drumm.



And by the way, what is Alexander doing around the globe? Is that a matter of a job-related mission, or is the man only very keen on exploring as many countries as he possibly can?

These days he works in Rumania with some computer game developing company. Other places he's lived have been either education or work.

Have you ever heard anything of his I Left The Planet side-project that we've all read about but unfortunately never were able to listen to? Was it any good?

I think the I Left The Planet recording came out quite successful. They recorded three songs in 1997, I think. But this recording has not yet been released. It would be cool if it were to be released some time. I guess that interested labels ought to get in touch with Alex about this. He has a MySpace profile, and there is a link to it from the Fleurety profile.

Being the prime lyricist in the band must be a handful job to go through. What are you nowadays trying to say when using the pen? Is there a field of thought and of styles that you *fleuretilly* feel at home with? What's on your mind, man?

I don't write that many Fleurety lyrics these days. I was really active ten years ago, but now I make a living out of writing as a journalist. Therefore I rarely sit down and write in my spare time like I used to. The Fleurety lyrics are to a great extent influenced by 20th

century writers such as Samuel Beckett, William Burroughs, Franz Kafka and Virginia Woolf. At that time (1992-1999) I was pretty much fucked up mentally, and the last thing I wanted was to write lyrics about how fucked up I felt. But in fact that was more or less the only thing I was able to write about. So in some lyrics I go to great lengths trying to make the lyrics be about absolutely nothing, but more like an abstract painting made out of words, and also play on the musical aspects of each word. This may sound like a very obvious thing to do if you're into literature and poetry, but my impression is that this way of working is not so usual if you write song lyrics for a metal band.

But if I would try to visualize the Fleurety lyrics, it would look like maybe the entrance of the emergency room on a hospital, where each new patient is the lyrics for one song. The Fleurety lyrics I've written recently have been put together by samples from things I've written as a journalist. I take a phrase here and a sentence there from articles I've written in magazines or newspapers. And if you put that together you get some kind of distorted image of what's happening in the world today.

Would you now say that after having released the new 7" EP, Fleurety has enough material to potentially start the recordings for a new album?

Hahaha. No way.



© Brian Olguin

Since we are driving this interview for a webzine primarily concerned with avant-garde metal in general, I've got to ask you one thing: how do you feel about the actual metal scene? Is it diversified enough to your own tastes or is there still a whole lot to do in order to reach its full potential? What is avant-garde and what is not for both the composer and the listener inside you?

The last couple of years I've been listening more and more to new metal acts. And through MySpace I've had the pleasure of having been in contact with a good number of them as well. I was surprised to hear the new Abigor album, for instance. I really liked that. I've also been checking out bands such as Joey Hopkins' Midget Factory, Bergraven, Blackdrone Inc., Yurei, Execration, Vrolok, Organ: and lots more that I can't remember right now.

I had this very interesting experience a couple of years ago. I was sharing an apartment with a couple of friends, and one guy moved, so we needed a new guy to move in. So it appeared that this new guy who'd just moved in was playing in a band called Nidingr. So he gave me a CD with his band and wanted me to listen to it, and I thought "Oh no, this is probably gonna suck". And that wouldn't be the best way of starting living together. I mean, I had a huge problem with taking the guy who had previously been living in that room seriously, since he liked all the wrong Metallica and Megadeth albums. I was prepared for the worst.

So those of you who know Nidingr very well know that their album *Sorrow Infinite And Darkness* rules soooo hard, and after hearing that, I started to check out more black metal bands and stuff from related genres. And I was so surprised to find out that there was so much cool shit around. You know, I gave up on the entire metal thing around 2000. I'd been losing interest ever since 1995, but in around 2000 I just gave up finding decent bands. At that time there was more or less only crap coming out, or at least: All the metal stuff I ever got to hear was crap. But these days I'm checking out new metal bands with a huge appetite, and I'm constantly surprised that there's so much kickass stuff around. After a while I also started a new band with this new flatmate. He's better known as Teloch, and our band is called Umoral.

I've seen that you've been having this discussion about "avant-garde metal" on your web site, and my answer to what "avant-garde metal" would be is that it is an aesthetic ideology. You know, in most other disciplines like painting or video art or installations and whatever, it's usual to say that the avant-garde is dead, in the sense that the wish to break the rules and try to push boundaries and all these things that are commonly associated with avant-garde have become the *de facto* norm. These days, if you want to break the rules in the art world, you'll have to be reactionary. Or you can just plainly suck. But metal is much more conservative than that. Metal must be one of the most conservative fields of artistic practice in the world, second only to punk rock (perhaps). So metal is a field where it still makes sense to be avant-garde, in the sense that your aesthetic ideology is to make music that's more than just average metal.

Very interesting remark there, I've just started wondering what metal music being always *de facto* avant-garde will try to sound like when it will start to re-break the new rules, for example, as you

suggested, by seriously wishing hard to be reactionary. Now isn't this what you in Fleurey are doing nowadays? Well, I guess time is running out, right... I'd like to say thank you very much, Svein-Egil, for taking your time to answer my questions. I honestly wish you all the best with Fleurety: you guys ought to become the next rock stars! Now what are you doing nowadays? Any upcoming releases from your part that you'd like to share with our avant-garde metal enthusiastic crew?

I don't think Fleurety will ever become rock stars. There will be cold winds of funeral frost in Hell the day that happens. These days I work and make music, sometimes getting shitfaced on days off. Fleurety will be featured on some strange compilation CD that comes out next year with DIY black metal recordings. We are working in getting our debut album *Min Tid Skal Komme* reissued, but it seems to take forever. After that we're releasing that new 7" EP I was talking about earlier, which features some re-recordings of material from 1993/94, with a more updated twist, I guess. We're also hoping to record material for another 7" this winter. This will be all new material, so this will be our first proper recording of new material since 1998, when we did the recordings for the *Department of Apocalyptic Affairs* album.

Also: Thanks to anyone who ever reads this far and to all the people holding that avant-garde metal flag high.



Yeah, I guess that was a nice chat with a pretty cool man, don't you think so? Now let's all do Fleurety a favour and browse through their back catalogue all at once and together for a few days, hoping this is gonna send inspiring and ass-kicking signals out to the mysteriously slow-moving, Fleuretean miasmas of cold and dark Norway.

KOROVAKILL

How To Transform Pressure Into Treasure

By Olivier Côté

Explorers of the mysterious and of the supernatural, Austrian KorovaKill should be known to you by now. Ever since 1994, they have been disturbing the most underground of undergrounds with their three mind-bending albums, all of which never made it to commercial proportions but nevertheless investigated many new forms of metal expression. Now that we can evaluate their historical importance, it's quite easy to realize that they were one of the few real avant-garde artists whose passion and creativity always have pushed further the great art of music. Call them dreaming spacemen, neo-baroque thrash orchestras, astro-oceanic divers from unknown worlds and dimensions! I say whatever, they're basically here to expand your sensory systems. And that's what matters the most, or isn't it? So for the last few months, I had an ongoing conversation with mastermind Christof Niederwieser, in order to clarify what's going on with his daily projects. And here it comes, for your own pleasure...



Cheers Christof, I hope you're doing pretty well nowadays. Ever since you released your last Korovakill album, namely *WaterHells*, approximately six years have passed by, without any subsequent information to be found regarding the band. Therefore most of your fans, including myself, are starting to wonder if Korovakill is still alive and active as a musical entity. There aren't many bands out there equally pushing the boundaries of music like you've been doing it since 1991, so I had to ask you: what has personally kept you away from composing and releasing new music throughout all these years?

Thanks a lot, Olivier! Yes KorovaKill are still active, though nothing new has been released since *WaterHells*. There are many

reasons for this break, and it would go too much into detail to name them all.

One important point is my emigration to Berlin in 2002. This makes regular rehearsals very difficult. Another one is the fact that Moritz and Renaud have several other bands and projects that are far more successful than KorovaKill. So of course those activities have priority. Especially Moritz is touring permanently all around the world. And when he's back in Austria he also needs his time to regenerate and to be a private man.

Nevertheless I never stopped building music in all those years. Many hours of new material have been composed since *WaterHells*. But it still will take a while before all these fragments will be a complete entity that can be released as an album. Actually we hope that it can be finished in 2008.

Discovering *WaterHells* back in the day was a delightful experience, mostly because finding an experimental, boundless metal band merging itself with real watery musical themes and ambiances, astrological imagery and a fishermen narrative story is such a rare gem. Can you still listen to this album for what it is, or has it become only a musical step that you have now surpassed as an artist? And in retrospect, how do you understand *WaterHells* particular textures and colors, when you compare these with your personal growth within the spheres of experimental music?

I don't spend too many thoughts on our former albums. And I wouldn't say that there is a huge progression or "growing" between *A Kiss in the Charnel Fields*, *Echowelt*, *Dead like an Angel* and *WaterHells*. They all just try to explore different worlds in different ways. But I wouldn't put one over the other.

The only point where you can see a progression is the quality of production. *WaterHells* was the first album that we did with an excellent producer. Markus Stock has conjured a marvelous sound. So *WaterHells* definitely is our most professional release so far. But I am sure that all the other albums are on the same level music-wise. They just were recorded in bad studios with very small budgets.

In some ways *WaterHells* is our least experimental album. There aren't tons of different parts, rhythms, harmonies and languages like on *Charnel Fields*. It's much more homogeneous and repetitive. The reason for this is the very strong concept orientation. The great Ocean cannot be acoustified with lots of breaks and complicated metrics. It just has to flow like the waves and tides. So the single songs are very homogenous in themselves. The variety just happens between the songs, within the course of the album. It starts with

repetitive heavy mid-tempo songs, goes on to soft acoustic and orchestral tunes and ends with high speed, furious staccato hymns. So the flow of this album starts with water and ends with fire - *WaterHells*...

I also think that *WaterHells* has been your least experimental album, but only if you compare it to your own discography, because once you start observing the whole metal scene back in 2001, experimentation wasn't at its peak to say the least. Is experimentation something you would like to rediscover and push further next time?

You never can say what will come out. It just happens. For example with *Echowelt* we tried very hard to make a very catchy, commercial album. When we had finished the songwriting we thought that it was much more simple and direct than *A Kiss in the Charnel Fields*. And I still think so. Actually, everyone else thinks that *Echowelt* is by far our most experimental and innovative album. No record company dared to release it. The listeners decide what's experimentation, not the songwriter. So maybe we should try to write a very experimental album now. Then people will probably find it very commercial and buy it...

In your listening case, and I know you've been concerned with the question of avant-gardism in metal lately (smile), what defines the experimental, avant-garde and furthering nature of metal? If only listeners decide what experimentation is, does it mean that the whole avant-garde culture only is a biosocial phenomenon that could be reduced to an always-changing herd fashion?

It depends. On an individual level there are thousands of musicians trying to create something innovative. And there are thousands of listeners perceiving it as experimental or conventional due to their personal listening experiences. If you sum up all these activities you get the construct of a collective level. Just take all the different bands featured on www.avantgarde-metal.com. A few of these bands may be perceived as avant-garde by 90 or more percent of the readers. And there are many bands where maybe just 20 or 30 percent of the readers think: "Wow, this band really surprises me with their innovative sound!" It's very relative.

The more experimental bands you have listened to, the fewer albums really are able to surprise you.

Personally I never tried consciously to be progressive or experimental. Songs come out of the feelings, not of the brain. You can do what you want, but you cannot want what you want.



I always had a feeling that within Korova's earlier releases, from *A Kiss in the Charnel Field's* more uncertain, nervous approach to *Echowelt's* total blasting force, you certainly had a flirt or two with complete mental confusion and pure musical strangeness, while some sort of a rebellious bizarre malaise was carried on the whole time with your uniquely troubled, if not broken vocals. As a performer and composer, did it have any link with your own personality back then, whereas with *WaterHells*, a

certain peace of mind had been found, thus the more relaxed, laid-back atmospheres?

Like I already said in earlier statements: the songwriting is just an act of self-defense. So of course it's connected to our personality in some way. Although I don't think that there is such a thing as personality – we have countless and none. It's not personality. I would call it "decision" – decision to act in a special way, to wear a certain mask, to choose a certain shape, to let a certain spirit flow through you for a period of time. That's all.

After *Charnel Fields* and *Echowelt* more extreme, more bizarre, more dissonant and eccentric would have been very boring. It wouldn't have added something new to our sound anymore. So already with *Dead like an Angel* we headed towards the opposite direction. There are some mysterious ballads and even pop-like songs and parts. Maybe it's not so obvious on that album, because the production is pretty bad and hence doesn't sound commercial. And also *WaterHells* partly went into this calm, relaxed direction. Here it's more obvious due to the excellent sound. So most of all the reason for this changed performance was the wish to explore further terrains of expression yet undiscovered by our former songs.

Self-defense, alright – but what is the self defending itself against here? More specifically: how is musical creation taking shape in your case?

When the flood of inner pictures has reached a certain amount of pressure there are two ways: The destructive one where you get totally overwhelmed by it or the creative one where you canalize it into songs or writings. Only the latter way is able to transform the pressure into treasure.



Already in *Dead like an Angel's* booklet, there was a special mention about *Katalypse 2025*, an album you were supposedly working on back in 1998. What was that all about? There seemed to be quite a complex, sci-fi and philosophical scenario written down for this new record, but what about its musical content? Why did you finally abandon it in order to complete *WaterHells*?

Katalypse 2025 was a futuristic scenario for a book and for an album. It was about the massive expansion of human senses by the means of technical progression - biomechanical sense-transplants, massive omnipresence of information, mind drugs, etc. It starts with two world epidemics of schizophrenia and telepathy. In the end all individuals merge into a single collective being. The whole globe transforms into a single eye with view all around in all directions, receiving all waves, atoms, movements, stimuli at all scales and zooms at the same time - vision, sound, smell, taste and sentiment, even thoughts and feelings all melt together as one – the All...

But when you look at history there's nothing more old-fashioned and worn-out than former future scenarios. Trying to write about the future always catches you in the present zeitgeist, in fashions and trends. It catches you in time. I didn't want to step into this trap and preferred to choose a more timeless concept.

That's the reason why I decided to complete *WaterHells*. People 5000 years ago can understand its deeper meaning and people in 5000 years will still understand it. Not so with the meaning of *Katalypse 2025*...

It's possible to frequently read from your writing hand, as much in lyrics as in interviews, words such as the Great All, the One, the Hidden Force, the Ocean, the Eye, the Sea, the Total Sum, the World of worlds, the Entity, etc. Despite the multiple word identities you're using here and there, I get the feeling that all of these could be in fact boiled down to one pulsing phenomenon.

Tao, Brahman, Apeiron, Hyle, Quintessence, Bosenazelo, Hunabku, Manitu, Orenda, Wakonda, Wakan, Mana, Ain Soph, Central Monad, Substance or also Primal Force and Great United Energy in modern physics... There are countless words for it. It took

me quite some years before I realized that all these are just words, nothing more...

Nothing more, nothing less as we say... I would even go as far as to say that most words are just words – right! But being the lyricist and should I say, your own band's great writer, is there something one can do to push up the words to something more involving so to speak? So that they are indeed "just words", yeah, but they can also achieve maintaining kind of an evocative or emotional power when you do sing yourself through them. To which degree of importance are your lyrics accomplished within Korovakill?

Lyrics always have been very important for us in the past. Maybe too important, because the lyrical flow always has been much harder and slower than the musical flow. So 95 percent of my compositions always remain unfinished, because there aren't enough words to finish songs out of them. It's very easy for me to create music. It's also quite effortless for me to develop lyrical ideas and concepts. But it's heavy like a stone to catch them into the shapes of words. On one hand the sound and rhythm of the words must fit the music and the atmosphere perfectly. On the other hand the meaning of the words should create a perfect flow of visions and pictures in the head of the listener. It's very difficult to

achieve this perfect unity of sound, rhythm and meaning.



I think that you have nowadays started mentioning an upcoming album for 2008. It's probably a bit early to work out a whole prognosis regarding your own future, but if you do consider the already composed material at hand, do you have an idea about what the new album will become like? Will it be another concept album? What's on your mind, Christof, this time around? Are you Korovakill's sole and only composer when it comes to the arrangements and the sound-shaping?

More than half of the new material is already completed. The overall vision is fixed. In my head the album is finished. But it's still a lot of work to put everything together and to do the whole recordings. Somehow it will be a mixture of our first four albums and something completely different at the same time. Let's get surprised...

On our former albums I did most of the song-writing alone. When a song was finished we went to the rehearsal room and the others arranged the lines for their instruments. With our drummer Moritz Neuner it always has been much more. His rhythmic creativity is enormous. I conceived the songs. But his drum lines gave birth to them and made them live. On our last album *WaterHells* also the work of Renaud Tschirner had a huge impact. He did many additional arrangements and orchestrations. And he took care of all the electronic sounds. At the moment both are extremely busy with their other bands (Elend, Leave's Eyes, etc.). So I will probably do it completely alone this time.

Do you have any lyrics already written, or some sort of overall conceptual indications? Any particular themes you'd like to work with this time?

Yes the whole concept is finished. But of course it will remain my secret until the release... Afterwards it will be your secret.

Well I can only wish that the tasks ahead will not leave you completely dead! By the way, how did you meet Renaud Tschirner? Both of you seem to know each other pretty well. I understand he already was there with you on Korova's first album, playing violins and pianos if I remember well. Should we think that he always sort of was a second-ear friend when it came to your personal compositions?

We know each other from The Village. He was number 7. I was number 29. We were neighbors for many years. In 1992 we started to enjoy music together. When he formed his first metal band I helped on guitar sometimes. And he also helped on violin and keyboards at several Korova concerts and recordings.

Making music with Renaud always has been a big pleasure and very inspiring. Sometimes we listen to the newest compositions of each others. It helps a lot to decide between several possibilities, though a second ear doesn't change much in our creations.

Boring question but, are you going to stay with Red Stream? I thought you had a better distribution, at least in America, with this label.

I haven't spent thoughts on that yet. But Red Stream is definitely a great label, very reliable, dedicated and honest. Doing *WaterHells* with them has been a big pleasure.

A while ago, there were some rumors around that Korovakill would re-record the whole *Echowelt* sessions with a much improved sound-picture. Has that been put on ice indefinitely? If it's never going to be done, why aren't you releasing the songs to your hungry fans via internet?

Yes, I am really sorry that you have to wait so long for *Echowelt*. Already more than 10 years have passed now since the demo got rejected by more than 50 labels. But we definitely will do it! The first test recordings already were realized this summer. At the moment I am very busy reconstructing the whole original midi tracks with click and basic keyboards. We used a pretty stupid midi format back in the 1990ies. And it's pretty difficult to integrate that in current programs. But I am sure we'll manage that.

We won't release the original *Echowelt* demo recordings, because we already were totally dissatisfied with them during the recordings in the summer of 1997. It was a 100 \$ production in a small amateur studio with a totally drunken producer who didn't know his gear at all.



Who was the Echowelt Man and what were his purposes in life?

Was there an Echowelt Man? I really don't remember... Aren't we all Echoworld men, living in our pictures and imaginations of the world without knowing at all what's really going on out there? Who knows will understand...

Now to something different. I know you have been working very hard with your scientific career in the past few years, even publishing a book out of your results, *Über die magischen Praktiken des Managements*. I just would like you to say if you can see any functional similarities between your work as a Ph.D. and your work as a musician and composer. Do you sometimes get musical ideas out of your studies and vice versa, are you acknowledging any research ideas out of your Korovakill activities?

In both areas I try to experiment and create new ways of thinking. In both areas just a small circle of people enjoys to dive into it. These are the only similarities. When I am a scientist the musician is dead. And when I am a musician the scientist is dead. Scientific work most of all means reading a lot of books and papers. It means filling your brain with countless thoughts of others. In contrast creating songs means totally

rejecting any others thoughts. It means freeing your mind completely from the outer world. So during the times when I wrote *WaterHells* University had to rest. And when I wrote my last scientific work *Prognosis in Magic and Modernity* (800 pages), I wasn't able to create full albums for several years. There's no synergy at all.

For the German readers, when will *Prognosis in Magic and Modernity* be available in a book format? In a few words, can you present what it is all about?

It's the history of prognosis from Babylon to Wall Street, from Marxist-Leninist society prognosis to market research, from culture cycles to genetics, from science fiction and utopias to futurology, from astrology to technical chart analysis, from African necromancy to macroeconomics. The first 600 pages contain the different methods of prognosis – visionary methods, methods based on reading signs and methods based on patterns in the timeline. The last 200 pages contain the different philosophic and psychological aspects of forecasting, the second oldest business in the world...

It hopefully will be released in four books over the next couple of years.



Were some of your university colleagues aware of your music? I mean, it could have been funny to hear during a seminar classroom someone whispering to his right-placed friend: "Before coming to our meeting, I did some internet research on this Dr. Christof Niederwieser, and I got to listen to some of his music. Well, I don't think we really know who this man is!"

I never made much fuss about my musical activities at University. Anyway it's already some years ago that I've attended seminars. Something like internet research wasn't common in these days.

Artistically, I believe you were much more active before, for example in numerous musical side-projects, writing lyrics here and singing there. Then only recently you've surprisingly worked with (in)famous bizarre director Bill Zebub on his 2006 dolls movie, *Dolla Morte*, lending your voice to one of the characters. Can you

please present what was the role you had to fulfill in there? And is this something you'd like experiment with in the future?

After *Charnel Fields* I was involved in a couple of other bands and projects. But one day I realized how much energy this takes away from Korova. So I stopped all foreign obligations by the end of 1999. Actually there have just been two engagements that I really enjoyed – the vocal work for ANGIZIA and the electro songs that I did together with Renaud.

The voices for the Bill Zebub movie were much fun for an afternoon, no big deal. I had to talk English with hard German accent. Probably there will be more narrator work in the future. It's a good possibility to push vocal expression further. Some radio plays in German language are loosely planned. And if a young movie maker needs strange voices for his next film, feel free to contact me.



Speaking of cinema and of theatrical voices, when listening to your music and extravagant performances, I imagine you must have been (and still would be) quite a special live act. How did that go in the past, and why in the end did you stop playing live?

Yes, our concerts always were pure madness. I don't think that my old body would still be able to do it. It was so exhausting. We stopped to play live in 2000. It just became too much organizational work. I love organizing. But in the case of our live concerts I just had the feeling that I could use my energies more effectively. With KorovaKill I want to create music, not spend 95 % of the time with management activities.

Our live line-up for a gig consisted of 6 to 10 people – musicians, guest musicians, light and sound engineers... and I had to work out

the whole performance with each single of them and organize everything.

So at the point where my scientific work intensified a lot we decided to quit the live line-up and regular rehearsals and just continue with a very small studio line-up: Moritz on drums, Renaud on keyboards and sounds and myself for the rest. This helps a lot to concentrate very effectively on our musical creations.

Are you at least kind of proud to have participated in the awakening and pioneering phase of experimentation within the metal world? I personally think that what you're doing now with avantgarde-metal.com is a direct continuation of that and a pretty cool gesture in itself. At least from what I know, I guess it's fair to say that you're quite a modest and reserved man, but I say there should be more creative individuals like you in every artistic and scientific field. I honestly hope that the inner floods of pictures are going to keep you boiling deep inside, Christof.

Yes, I really enjoy seeing what came out of our activities started in the early 1990ies. When we released *Charnel Fields* in 1995 most reviews have been very negative. The metal scene was quite narrow-minded in these days and hated experimentation. But we needed the mainstream magazines and labels, because otherwise nobody would have been able to experience our work. Probably there already were many people interested in avant-garde metal. But it was extremely difficult to reach them.

The internet has helped a lot to democratize the music scene, to connect people who love the same kinds of music. So some years ago I was very positively surprised that avant-garde metal is more and more becoming a widespread term. More and more weirdos are enjoying the experimental sides of metal. And they can get cool albums very easily without fighting through the big walls that were built by labels and mass media in former days. I hope avant-garde-metal.com can help to cultivate the styleless styles a little, the metal beyond borders and to support all freaks and weirdos, scientists and philosophers, libertines and mavericks of metal music.

DOL AMMAD

The Kings Of Space Metal Opera

By Chrystof

Did you ever wonder how it would sound if epic progressive metal unified with exquisite synthesizers and electro sounds in the vein of 1970ies pioneers like Jean Michel Jarre or Vangelis? And instead of a lead singer there was a whole classical choir performing the lyrics? Then DOL AMMAD definitely will become one of your greatest favourites ever. When I first listened to them one year ago I was totally blown to another dimension somewhere in the mighty depths of space. DOL AMMAD create unique, innovative music, epic landscapes of crystallizing sound. At the same time they manage the legerdemain of writing very catchy songs with big hit potential. The 21st century of metal has begun now. And DOL AMMAD show how the future may look like. So enter the intergalactic spaceship and beam to the planet of Thanasis Lightbridge, creative head and visionary of these mighty towers reaching up to the stars...



Thanasis, you've just returned from military service two months ago. Despite being at the army you found your own label Electronicartmetal Records and released your second masterpiece "Ocean Dynamics". How did you manage these musical activities during this whole year as a soldier? Was it difficult for you to promote "Ocean Dynamics"? Has military been an important experience for you personally or just a waste of time? How short is your hair now?

The last year has been hard for me, both with the problems with our previous record label going bankrupt and with my imminent army duties.

I am afraid the military service is still obligatory here in Greece and although now it lasts 12 months (it used to be 3 years in my father's days), it is still a distracting factor in a man's career and life, an obstacle that if you aren't willing to take your chances by wearing a blonde wig and act gay, you have to go through the hard way ; -P

As an experience it makes you test yourself under strange situations, living without your comforts, away from your music, sleeping in a room with 60 unknown smelly guys, etc. It basically forces you to respect and appreciate all the tiny things in your everyday life that you take for granted. Thankfully throughout my service I met a lot of new friends and this for me is the only thing that made this time worthwhile. I hope Greece will start investing more money on education and social welfare than the military.

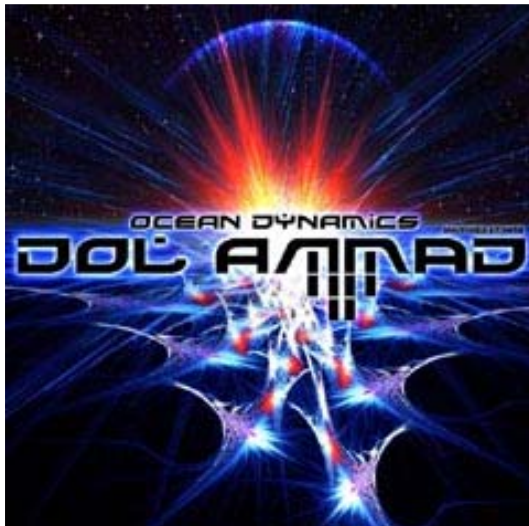
I miss my hair, I was long-haired for about 10 years and cutting it short after all this time was a strange experience! I scare myself every time I look in the mirror ; -P Thank-

fully my hair grows back quickly, it is all over my eyes now already! Through all this craziness of the last 12 months I had prepared our second album with Dol Ammad and was very anxious how and what to do to promote it. I suppose forming a personal record label was always in the back of my mind since this music is so unique and "different", it requires total artistic freedom and an innovative vision that very few labels display today. So once again I chose the hard way, formed "Electronicartmetal Records" and never looked back! It may be TONS of more work to do but it is really worth it. I have direct contact with the fans, the distros and the media and it is a very satisfying experience. Due to the limited free time I had in the army I couldn't explore my new label to its full potential, but now I am back, I am psyched and working as hard as possible to expand its capabilities.

"Ocean Dynamics" is one of the most visionary albums I've ever been able to enjoy. On one hand it's very innovative and independent. On the other hand it's extremely catchy and has got a big hit potential. Can you imagine that Electronic Art Metal could become music for

the masses one day in the future? How have the reactions of the media and fans been so far?

Thank you for your kind remarks, I am honoured that you feel this way about my music! It's true that although I try to create something really different and experimental, at the same time I don't want to end up with music that is inaudible and would only serve as an experimental salad in a museum :-P I don't know however if Electronica Art Metal will ever be music for "the masses" but that doesn't really concern me as I rarely seem to agree or act in conjunction with what "the masses" think and do. I make music basically for my own pleasure and for other adventurous co-travellers that I discover along the way! Only with these devoted friends is this journey of music discovery worthwhile and doesn't end up being just some shallow music with lifestyle-strings attached.



Can you tell us more about the lyrical concept of "Ocean Dynamics"? In her review Katja speculated that it could be a Journey from outer space into our solar system and finally descending into the oceans of planet earth. In other articles I've read that it's a science-fiction concept about a water planet. What's really the story behind? Is it somehow connected to the concept of your debut "Star Tales"?

Yes, just as in "Star Tales", the lyrics of "Ocean Dynamics" are science fiction stories but this time theme-based around the liquid element, the power of the seas. I live in a sea-dominated country and city so the liquid element is vital for my life. I really can't imagine myself living away from the sea. The "Thalassa Dominion" story that mainly dominates the album is about an aquatic race living in a water planet. They are the spores

of an ancient space tribe whose actions resulted in the devastation and corruption of the liquid element through the eras. This time I worked together with a good friend who writes these kinds of short-stories and we had a great time coming up with aquatic space themes! I like to have a different "theme" for each album although I must confess that I am not such a fan of lyrics in general. I rarely read the lyrics in bands' booklets; I always focus on the music no matter if the band speaks about cosmic epic battles or how to make a cheesecake :-P However, I am a sucker for all things sci-fi related so I think that my music will always have a space flavour.

DOL AMMAD is a huge collective consisting of a 14 member classical choir, 2 session members on vocals and drums, 2 band members on guitars and bass and finally Thanasis Lightbridge, yourself, as the mastermind. To what extent would you call DOL AMMAD a band? How much are the others involved in the creative process? Are you doing all the songwriting and arrangements alone or do the others take part in that?

Dol Ammad is not a band in the typical form. I don't distinguish members as "session" or "band" members. It is true that I compose all the music and control everything in the creative process but this doesn't diminish the role of any of the participants. I like to think of Dol Ammad's albums as movies where I am the director and the rest of the guys and girls are actors and technical crew! I have a personal dream and vision with my music, but you need people to make the dream come true. I am grateful that I work with such talented personalities.

Is it difficult to work with so many musicians? You have to do lots of coordination and motivation work. Is this something that goes easy for you?

It can be difficult to coordinate all those people and arrange all the parts but I like the challenge. Through this process I have learned a lot and already in "Ocean Dynamics" I used experience I had gained in "Star Tales" to make the job better and easier. However I do plan to use a more compact group of people for the third Dol Ammad album.

The choir consists of 7 women and 7 men. Do they sing exclusively for DOL AMMAD? Or are they a professional choir that also does other performances?

Most of them are professional choristers and soloists in various choirs and solo acts in

Greece. Some are even teachers of solo and choral singing and most have participated in the biggest opera and symphonic events in Greece. I am privileged to be surrounded by such great musicians.



Great musicians and also very good looking, at least when it comes to the women. Did the optical aspect play a certain role in your choices? Or did you spice up the band picture with some photo models ;-P? Or is it just that Greek women look very beautiful in general for the eyes of North Europeans?

Hehe, of course Greece has very beautiful women and the band picture actually depicts the singers and not some models! LOL! But I understand your point of view since when I visit Northern Europe I think that all the women are amazingly beautiful there! You see we are more used to brunette – brown eyed beauties and feel that blue eyes – blonde hair are more "exotic" , so this must have the vice-versa effect on you ;-P But to get back to the music, beauty has and should have nothing to do with singing skills and music nature of a person and a band. I am totally against the countless bands seeking pretty faces to front their band. I mean why should I buy a musically shallow CD just because they have a great looking girl on the covers, videos etc? This is targeted to brainless listeners and shares the same principles as all those advertisements that display babes and sexual innuendos in everything from yoghurt to car tyres! I want nothing to do with that and I wish the same for our listeners too.

You came into contact with drummer Alex Holzwarth (Rhapsody, Sieges Even) through a common friend. What made you choose him, especially since you are a drummer yourself? Was it difficult to convince him for DOL AMMAD? Will he also play on your future releases?

Especially since I am also a drummer and drums are my second biggest passion after synthesizers, I wanted the best possible drums for my music. Alex Holzwarth was a hero to me for many years and didn't think twice when I had the chance to get in contact with him. It wasn't difficult to convince him; he just requested to check the music first. I was honoured by his participation and I hope to work again with him in the future as he is a great person and phenomenal drummer!



Some people see similarities between DOL AMMAD and Rhapsody, because the drumming of Alex is so characteristic. What do you think about that?

It is true that in the power metal songs of Dol Ammad there are similarities in the playing style of the drums but this can be said for any power metal band. We are also often told that Dol Ammad has similarities with Therion due to the use of a choir. I am a fan and respect both of these bands but I think that Dol Ammad is doing something totally different. What will always distinguish us are the use of electronics and the adventurous compositions, things that I don't ever plan to compromise.



For "Star Tales" the drums of Alex Holzwarth have been produced in Germany's Gate Studio. In the photo album on your webpage you are drinking a Kakao in Porschestrasse 1 in Wolfsburg and also have some fun with the bears of Berlin. How did you like Germany?

Haha! Oh yes, I had a great time in Germany! I stayed there for 2 weeks and it was

awesome! I visited Wolfsburg, Gifhorn, Berlin, Hamburg and Hanover. I have lots of friends there, I cooperate with German musicians and German companies, and I feel very close to this country! If only I had the time to learn the language...! As for the Kakao, people who know me are aware that I drink more milk than water ;-P

So the next DOL AMMAD album probably will become a concept album about a milk planet ;-)?

LOL! Great idea! In fact I always look for something to honour the great existence of milk. Maybe I should write a song like "Calcium" or "Dominion of the Holy Cows" (In 14 parts) ;-P

Can you tell us how you manage the whole recording process? For "Star Tales" you've recorded some parts in Germany. For "Ocean Dynamics" did you do everything in your own studio – recording, mixing and mastering? Has the choir been recorded as a whole with some stereo microphones or each singer separately?

Yes, in "Ocean Dynamics" all the production took place in my studio in Thessaloniki, Greece. I used various techniques for the choir and for this album I think it is easy to notice that the recording quality is better than the debut. I like to record both the whole and each voice separately (3 to 4 people at a time). For the third album I plan to use some new techniques I have come up with.



The sound of "Ocean Dynamics" is marvellous. Do you have lots of high-end technique in your studio? Or are you one of those clever producers who manage

to create excellent sound with small and cost-effective technical means? How does your studio look like?

Thanx! I have some high-end equipment but they are nothing compared to huge commercial studios. In my studio I work together with my good friend Argy Stream with whom we share a common passion for detail and fidelity. We take care of every little detail and use various techniques that in the end give you a great result without having to sell your house just to buy that special esoteric pre-amp! Having said that, the studio is always expanding and upgrading and we are now open to creative bands or musicians who'd like to use our experience and equipment for their work. I get this request a lot so I will soon also post photos of the studio in our website.

You are influenced by the great synthesizer pioneers of the 1970ies like Jean Michel Jarre or Vangelis. Do you use some original analog gear from those times like Arp or Moog? Or do you mostly work with software plugins? What do you think about all the new software emulations of analog gear?

I have analog and virtual-analog synthesizers which I love! I am not a big fan of plugins and soft-synths although I do use them a lot also. I think in the recent years the quality of soft synths has been greatly improved but I believe more in the power of software libraries than just software for analog emulations. If you've grown up with MIDI and hands on control of a synthesizer I don't think you'll ever be fully satisfied by a plugin and a mouse or even with a controller having to map everything and create scenes etc. Although I do use all the latest technologies and stay up to date with the music tech progress, I witness that I tend to go back to simpler and older techniques the last years. I think that it is easy to lose control with technology and to miss the whole point of music making.

Yes, that's absolutely true. Many musicians are losing themselves in gearslutting and drown in the new possibilities that modern technology offers them. But even if you are using your gear wisely it can rob you much time. You told me that you had a computer crash in your studio that blocked your work for weeks. Do you sometimes wish to make music purely without having to dig between countless cables, plugs, knobs and electronic labyrinths? Maybe like in the past when composers had a piano, some sheets of paper and then gave the scores to an orchestra? Or like in the future

when the head-to-midi-converter (a vision of TT/Abigor) makes the music stream directly from your head out of the loudspeakers?

LOL! Head-to-midi?! I would prefer Head-to-CD-Factory but we'll have to start from somewhere ;-P Seriously though we as mankind are really in our very early baby-steps in technology and have a lot way to go. Yes, I had an unfortunate and simultaneous crash in 2 of the 3 computers in the studio and I had some difficult 3 weeks trying to save the work and bring back order into chaos. Thankfully nothing was lost except for the time delay and some thousands nerve-cells in my brain. It is true that I push these machines to their extremes but you should never count and rely 100% on them. I think back-up and restoration plans should be top priorities in computer environments. I am not sure if the composers of the past were always fully satisfied by the way their "tools" performed their music, a "crash" in an orchestra would be maybe a drunken violinist ;-P

I do sometimes wish I could make music more easily and every time I play on a classical piano I am amazed by its purity and natural form. However I am afraid I am trapped forever in my electronic labyrinths and there is no turning back now...

You also like Mike Oldfield. I think you both share this peaceful, positive mood in your songs and also the catchy melodies. Did you ever think about experimenting with folk or classical instruments like him? Maybe not for DOL AMMAD, but for other projects?

Oh yes, in Dol Theeta! There is a lot of experimentation with ethnic instruments, mainly bagpipes, violins, flutes. I love the sound of bagpipes it is the most captivating folk instrument in the world. I also plan to make a sample library of a great Greek folk instrument when I have the time. It is an instrument that few people know in the world and of course there are no libraries for it. I have found a great player of this instrument and when I have time we will meet in the studio to construct a virtual instrument for it!

Can you tell us more about DOL THEETA? You will also play drums for it. And your homepage says that it will concentrate on your meditative and atmospheric

sides. When can we expect the debut album? And what can we expect?

Yes I also play the drums in Dol Theeta and it is turning out a HUGE album! I thought it would be an easier production compared to Dol Ammad and everyone was like "ok, now you are 3 people only, this production will be shorter" but the songs are very lengthy, deep in emotions and feelings and have tricky orchestrations. I am not even sure what to expect of the debut album... Just like with "Star Tales" we will start from somewhere to try to find ourselves through it. The plan for Dol Theeta was conceived when I started infusing lots of meditative and softer/ambient parts in Dol Ammad and didn't feel satisfied with it... I mean I want Dol Ammad to be in one word "EPIC"! So I decided that electronica-art-metal must be portrayed by more than one band and thus Dol Theeta was born. I am really happy with the result and also very anxious to see what the final outcome will be. The music is so narcotic, you dive into the songs and sometimes you dive too deep it gets scary...It is an electrifying inner journey that defies limits and structures.

You are going to do a video clip for it. Can you reveal anything about it?

Yes I think I can now reveal the first steps of the Dol Theeta world. I have decided to release a single before the full album. The single will be for a song called "Goddess" and it will also include our first ever video clip! We are currently working on the Graphics for the video with the help of my greatest friend who is an expert in Computer Programming. I am really excited to see the final result!

And did you ever think about creating a "negative twin" of DOL AMMAD with a dark and dissonant basic mood? I mean you already had some dramatic, furious and dissonant parts on "Ocean Dynamics". But in general the mood is very positive and makes you feel good and optimistic even in dark hours.

Of course! It is the third "Dol" in the world of Electronica – art- metal, a third project that will appear in the near future! There was an innuendo about it in my message on our website when I announce Dol Theeta but few people noticed it ;-P Anyway, yes I have a VERY darker side which I can't wait to ex-



press and share with our friends. It is when this third "Dol" project comes out that our listeners will finally have the total picture of my music and understand my vision. All I can say now is that it will be something really extreme, an audio-violence experience that will amaze and shock you!

Will this probably go a bit into the direction of "Thalassa Dominion IV"? There are several very dramatic and dissonant parts in this song and also some hyper-speed blastbeats?

Yes there will be inhuman blastbeats in this darker project but it will be nothing like Thalassa Dominion IV, you really haven't heard anything like this before... If Dol Ammad sound unique, then this is ages more alien to the ears. It is an audio violence that scares the hell out of all my friends when they visit me while I work on this stuff ;-P Imagine the cruellest grind-gore death metal band but with an electronica speedcore instrumentation! But that's for the future to come... ;)

You seem to be a very spiritual man. I read somewhere that you are practising Yoga and also have a certain interest in topics like astrology. What do you think about so called esotericism? Of course you can also choose another word for it, since "esotericism" has been misused a lot within the past decades.

I am a man that thinks a lot, in every second of my life my brain is in constant thoughts and ideas and in day-dream-imaginings. I often suffer from insomnia, megalomania and lack of concentration into what is known as "real life". I always compare everything that happens to mega-cosmic and micro-cosmic scales and this can be very tiring sometimes especially when you try to relax. I am very interested in Yoga but not so much in astrology. Maybe you confused it with astronomy which is a fascinating science. Regarding esotericism, as in knowledge that few can grasp and remember, I think we are heading towards ages of esotericism since the huge clueless masses are undereducated in a world where knowledge is so freely and easily available. You can see it in all aspects of life,

music – art – politics – society. An elite-few in a world of zombies...

With mega-cosmic and micro-cosmic scales to you mean thinking in fateful analogies? Like e.g. bears escape from the zoo in several American cities and at the same time a bear market arises at the New York Stock Exchange? And you think there may be a secret relationship between those coincidences, an analogical relationship between microsphere and macrosphere?

Yes and no at the same time. Even the words "Yes" and "No" which often carry the result of a decision can be a microsphere and macrosphere respectively. My mind drifts helplessly through thoughts like when I make a cup of coffee at the same time a supernova blasts a star into shock waves of energy. This fusion was the result of years of the star's aging under which star a centipede on earth is devouring a rat or a mother scorpion is carrying its first scorplings on her back. It's this constant zoom-ins and outs that go on inside me...I can't know if they mean anything or if there is a secret relationship between them... It would be scary if there was.

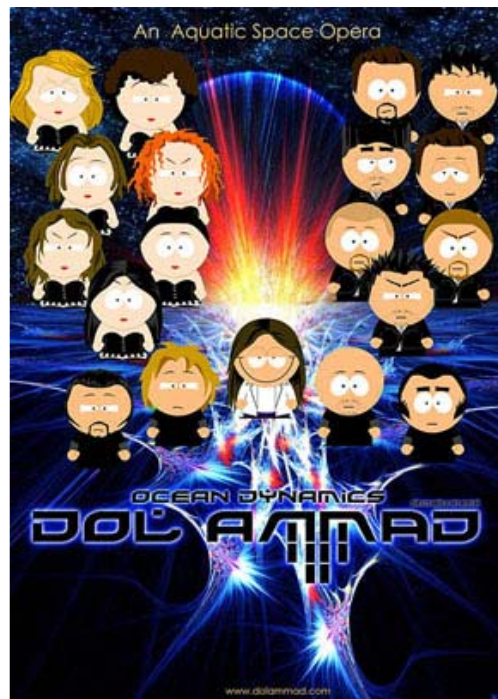
Can insomnia be an inspiring state of mind for you? Do you often create music while being sleepless and overtired? Or is it more a state of mind where you cannot concentrate on proper musical work anymore?

Yes I am creative when I am tired and stressed. But it starts to have an impact on my health, I can't remember the last time I was relaxed mentally...

You said you aren't a big fan of song lyrics. What about books? Do you have any favourite authors? Or do you prefer sound over word in general?

Oh no, I love books! My favourite authors are Douglas Adams and Phillip Pullman. I just don't pay that much attention to words when I listen to music. It is a whole different experience. I do prefer to listen to music in my free time but I often try to steal some time for a good book also.

The South Park version of the famous DOL AMMAD band picture is great. Are



you a South Park fan or did you just like the idea of having a funny caricature of DOL AMMAD? Which musician's cartoon do you like most? I think DC Cooper is portrayed very well.

Yes I love South Park! Our good friend Ntennis Papakostas had this idea to do a South Park version of Dol Ammad using online software that someone has created. Ntennis sent me an email asking for my permission and for some details of the members! Like who have blue eyes etc! I think he did an amazing work and reproduction of the entire band but I can't stop laughing with Alex Holzwarth and his bongos! I also like my lightsaber ;-P

Okay, Thanasis, thank you a lot for the very pleasurable conversation. I am sure we'll talk again soon on your forthcoming works in 2008. The last words belong to you.

Thank you Chrystof and the rest of the AGM crew for the amazing support and pure friendship! It was an honour and one of the best interviews I've experienced. I would also like to thank all our fellow music travellers and to ask their patience for the upcoming Dol Theeta releases. Various reasons beyond my powers made it impossible for me to make a 2007 release. What I can promise is that in the first months of 2008 you will be presented with a massive album. A huge music adventure of space melodies and inner emotions that I am sure you'll love. To my ears it feels like the best music I've written so far in my life. I wish you all the best for the New Year, may you live free and happy and may you never stop dreaming! Space on!



ANGIZIA

A World of Their Own

By Jobst

Only the name itself should make your mind rumble. Saying Angizia is unique and border-shaking is to say the least. Let alone the words, the music stands for itself, a wacky world to dive in. In order to try and solve some of the mysteries behind all of this, I called upon the mastermind behind this ensemble to investigate some more. Welcome to the bizarre world of Michael Haas and Angizia.

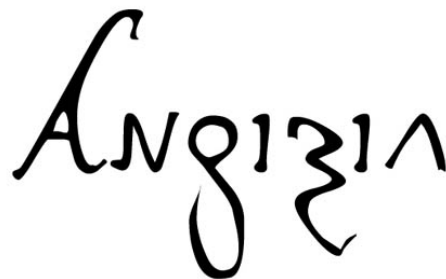


I think that Angizia is an indescribable project. When I introduced it to people, they naturally asked me, "what the hell is it?" and I replied: "well, it's... theatre metal", so that plain mortals can understand, and they've said, "Oh, so it's a rock Opera!" and afterwards I haven't managed to explain, nor define Angizia. What do you think of people's efforts to define Angizia? Can you define it? Do you even want to?

The main problem in describing Angizia for other people is connected with the matter, that we didn't pursue a certain musical style in the course of our 10 years and 6 albums lasting existence. For many Angizia friends our last album "Ein Toter fährt gern Ringelspiel" was a brilliant radio play with morbid demands, for others it was a special kind of "musical theatre" with many figurative and narrative moments and for others it was a rock opera with influences from jazz, circus

music, dramatic musical, classic and klezmer. I am not that satisfied with all these tons of simplifications, which many of so called "original labels" use to explain the music of their bands in magazines or for promotion flyers. Believe me, I hate proclamations such as "They sound like the old Dark Funeral and the new Dimmu Borgir!", "They are the musical brothers of Cradle of Filth" or "They sound like Burzum and Darkthrone!". The principle is very simple. Labels wish to inform, that their new signed band sounds like all their other bands. But that's the point and for sure a "music-economic" problem for music such as Angizia, Devil Doll or Korova, which is not reducible to one simple word or a trashy compare. Bands such as Angizia, Devil Doll or Korova have defined and invented themselves and are not to categorize in shitty drawers, which are necessary to guarantee full and fat label wallets. I am sure: All these bands are not appropriate for labels of these "modern times", which just search for bands that have a very similar style, but a different name. That explains, why Angizia is not that interesting for money horny labels. From an economic and profit-oriented view Angizia is really uninteresting.

Angizia was always bound to my special visions and influences and my ideals to tell bizarre stories with bizarre singers and instruments. The bizarreness of Angizia could be explained with 20 or 30 words, but nevertheless so many people react the same, nearly boring way: "What the hell is that?" I don't like all these well meant bold and eye-catching terms such as "theatre metal", "rock opera", "classic metal" or "metal with classical influences". To say it much easier: I don't really like to explain Angizia for the masses.



Angizia is done to express original and unrecoverable music. If Angizia dies, a whole musical drawer is lost. That's it.

Speaking of definitions, I had the impression that you're some sort of super-artist: write music and plays, sing, conduct the ensemble etc. How do you capture yourself, within and out of the Angizia complex?

Well, all these things you have mentioned are neither difficult, nor supernatural or out-

standing. That's a normal thing for so many artists. It's a circumstance that comes with my certain urge to realize my own plays. That gives kind of "supervitality" and Special Forces for all these creative works and tasks. Singing, realizing and performing my own figures is really easy, also making music to a theme which I have fired in my brain or explaining special intentions to other musicians and singers.

Conducting the ensemble for sure is the most difficult job, because there are so many different dates, persons and characters to handle, that I often had to spend 3 or 4 hours a day for telephone calls and about 20 hours a week to canvass all the musicians, singers and painters with my car for improving all these details, which are necessary to make the whole thing perfected. Yes, indeed - that's the most difficult job in Angizia.

Stressing out your point on Angizia being "unprofitable" for labels, that might explain why only the two first albums delivered through Napalm Records roof', while all the others came to the world by your own label? Was it your decision, breaking to a label-free road, or the "market demands" led to let go? Along the way, did another labels pursued interest or did you wanted to keep Angizia forever independent, in Speight of possible signing?

Well, keeping Angizia independent in retrospect for sure was the best decision for "39 Jahre für den Leierkastenmann" and "Ein Toter fährt gern Ringelspiel" (our last two albums). I am absolutely convinced of that.

We had the absolute and unrestricted power to make unalterable and uncompromising music, epic and in general INDIVIDUAL ART. Suddenly there was no "know-it-all"-label boss with daffy ideas and continual improvement suggestions, neither related to music, nor to layout, promotion and distribution. If I compare Angizia to times, where we had been signed to Napalm/Records, we now really had the unique possibility to escape from this compacted and "always the same and in one direction"-thinking of Napalm, which certainly wasn't the best thing for Angizia itself.

Napalm was an interesting label for Angizia, when they had been smaller and "(in the full sense of the word) more "independent". This time (1995-1996) they supported many original bands of the 90ies (Angizia, Korova, Abigor...) - and they really had "soul", time and will to encourage there "beloved music". But as soon as they have seen their chance to have a big slice of the suddenly existing and expecting money with "underground-music" by promoting uncomplicated, flat and "naked-wife-and-tits"-music they lost all their privileges and forgot all their bands from the "starting area". That's a phenomenon they share with many other labels worldwide. So many labels wished to grow or "expand" and really shared any trend, a wife with big tits on oafish covers could originate. Angizia and other bands all of a sudden became "most unwanted", but ought to have get a special promotion for a different segment of music and music listeners. Of course we didn't join these shallow trends and of course we hadn't been ready for musical compromises with efficient simplifications and boring chords or



arrangements, which became a trend throughout all music styles in this new millennium. On the contrary, we have developed our music in an incomparable direction and improved our work day for day - a long way of music, which was announced by suddenly omnipresent (but once individual oriented) labels in the years 2000, 2001 or 2002.



But I have to compliment Napalm for their (it seems so) successfully economic development. In this regard Angizia and Napalm went different paths in music - and both Napalm and Angizia did a respectable job, I think. Of course I couldn't comprehend their new orientation - "to keep with the time and every possible trend", but to be honest Angizia after "Das Schachbrett des Trommelbuben Zacharias" didn't match with Napalm's label policy and all these gothic similar releases.

Angizia is deep, bizarre, morbid and unconventional music and has included very interesting impulses (polka, klezmer, jazz, rock, metal, classic, radio plays, modern theater, circus music...) which weren't that optimal for "angry or pure erotic music". "Gothic metal", such as Napalm pursued after Angizia, Korova and Co. I have disliked for its basically flat and simple outputs. I never felt thoughtfulness in this music, but of course, it was very easy to consume after 8 hours work a day or especially for relaxation. Angizia in

no moment of a 10 years lasting existence was done for relaxation.

So Irene Denner and I had to discuss a new situation in 1998, shortly after Napalm/Black Rose had released our last album ("Das Schachbrett des Trommelbuben Zacharias") in this co-operation. And we decided to keep Angizia alive without the financial support of an interested label and without a functioning distribution or sales network. "I did it my way - and it was an important way for Angizia." - Independent from many money hungry labels of nowadays.

Of course we all the time searched for suitable labels, who would share and support our ideals and this very special "bizarre music style" (the whole shebang) - first and foremost because of the fact, that we would have got anymore possibilities for our albums and much more time and money for our studio work. I really had the slight hope, that there will exist a few labels, which are really ready for Angizia, ready for our music and ready for our intentions - but of no avail.

We really experienced hard (not to say "very hard") times while being absolutely independent. In this situation you are independent from everything and we managed every step ourselves with no financial help from any label or distributor. Angizia - that means 12 or more professional musicians, which we had to finance. No one in Angizia was kind of "non-professional". This luxury - collecting professional artists for Angizia - had cost much money, which we had to pay ourselves, but it's a most important thing of Angizia to convey my plots and stories for you listeners with brilliant musicians.



Today I am really tired of all these labels who "love our music", but have no courage to release this "beloved and special stuff". In process of all these years (especially in the new millennium) I became really disappointed from many people, working in this "so original and non-commercial underground", because they once proclaimed "that Angizia is one of the most outstanding bands ever" and with this thinking they also promised "all the world and his wife" to support

Angizia - adequate and extensive. And what happened - many of them forgot their thoughts and jumped on all these trendy wagons, which have driven in another direction.

Many of these self-appointed "trendsetters in underground music" of today destroyed various original bands from the past by supporting this special plagiarism of crappy and shitty bands, which flooded countless magazines, fanzines and websites and beyond that all the brains of magazine readers and music listeners. THE SIMPLIFICATION OF MUSIC WAS AN ATROCITY AND FOR SURE "THE DEATH" FOR THE FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF QUALITATIVE AND ORIGINAL UNDERGROUND MUSIC. Sure I have respect for the financial success of some underground labels and it's indeed legitimate to earn money with superficial music, because that's the will of some 100.000 listeners. But it's sad enough, that many original bands disappeared as a result of "craven label policy".



Even an interesting narrow segment of interesting labels has missed the chance to present really original music (and beside Angizia I could name 10 other bands with a similar destiny). To be honest: For me it's an inconceivable outrage, that bands such as Devil Doll, Korova or Angizia couldn't be supported from one of these "great, new and original labels, which much more than other labels support individual art and especial music!" O yes, I "haunted" the label strategies of some labels and all their pseudo-artistic stuff, which they released in the last 4 or 5 years. All in all meaningless music - and many bands out of this "new generation" proudly announced in interviews, that they have been big fans from Angizia, Devil Doll or Korova. That's very ironic.

Regarding Angizia's unique blend of influences, can you describe the main artists that gave you inspiration and spiritual guidance, if so? Moreover, I must ask you about the Jewish influence, both

in music and in some epical motives - well, as a Jew that somehow connect to this cultural world, I was a bit astonished within the first listening and it remained quite an enigma for me. Can you shed some light upon it?

I think there are not really special artists which influenced me in my work for Angizia. I have written my plays with the intention to launch an absolutely new "music style" for a serious audience. I had so much inspiration to do that, but there also have been so many elements in Angizia, which descended from artists such as Irene Denner, Cedric Müller, Emmerich Haimer or Gabriele Böck. Of course I had the last word, but with all these mentioned artists, especially with Irene Denner and Gabriele Böck I always felt united for the same aim - "presenting a completely unusual and inimitable musical creature." We pulled together and have worshiped our own creation.



In the last years Angizia was a small firm, consisting of Irene Denner and me in economic and artistic belongings. I also think, that there had been so many irreplaceable artists for special Angizia albums - for example Christof Niederwieser for "Das Tagebuch der Hanna Anikin", Aliosha Biz for "Ein Toter fährt gern Ringelspiel" or Krzysztof Dobrek and Jochen Stock for "39 Jahre für den Leierkastenmann" - cause they have surrounded basic Angizia elements such as the singing of Irene Denner or the authoritative piano play with unique individual singing, acting or playing (an instrument).

In the last years I personally found inspiration in Klezmer, Circus Music, Classic (especially Russian composers such as Kabalewskij, Schostakowitsch, Tschaikowsky, Rachmaninow, but also Schumann and Brahms), mostly perfected Jewish music and Russian folklore. I absolutely admire incomparable spoken voices (Otto Sander, Klaus Kinski, Ignaz Kirchner, Meret Becker...) and absorb

special soundtracks and in particular scores from John Williams (MEMOIRS OF A GEISHA, SCHINDLER'S LIST, MUNICH). I think, there exists just one leading violinist - namely the Jewish musician ITHZAK PERLMAN - who is able to transport such an emotional power for the score of a movie such as "MEMOIRS OF A GEISHA". If any other musician would play the solo for the leading theme of "Memoirs of a geisha", you would definitely hear that. Watching and feeling Perlman's intensive violin play makes me highly infected - in this case I watch special movies sequences 100 times. In such moments I go in trance.



Well, for Angizia in special it was not difficult to dip into special (musical) cultures. Our 3rd album "Das Schachbrett des Trommelbuben Zacharias", but also "Das Tagebuch der Hanna Anikin" have been very Russian oriented. "39 Jahre für den Leierkastenmann" and "Ein Toter fährt gern Ringelspiel" on the other hand had been dedicated to the Jewish soul in music in main parts of our compositions. I think, from 2001 to 2004 I felt like a Jew because I was interested in so many Jewish themes, superficially "Jewish music and films", that I felt the decision to involve similar elements for "39 Jahre für den Leierkastenmann" and "Ein Toter fährt gern Ringelspiel". Jewish music touched my soul - and I have enjoyed it to compose Jewish themes for my own plays. The clarinet and violin solos for "Ein Toter fährt gern Ringelspiel" have been transported by mostly perfected instrumentalists, thus they became so much vigorous and emotional.

Remaining in the influences area, aside from the musical characteristics, Angizia is also correspondent with the great tra-

dition of theater in Austria, as I see it. Do you agree with that? Can you point other (theatrical, lyrical) influences on which the concept of Angizia was conceived?

Angizia is not really corresponded with the traditions of Austrian theater. Maybe it was pure chance that some parts of "Die Kernenaten scharlachroter Lichter" sound like Austrian operettas, but although the theater itself maybe is the most important vigour in Angizia, we are not comparable with typical "musical plays" or "Austrian dramatic art". Angizia is a very lively project with very wacky and extraordinary voices and instruments. I think, they would be too wacky to include them in repertoires of our opera houses here in Austria. The medium "Theater" is obvious in so many sequences of Angizia's music, but the "Austrian theatre tradition" especially is connected with a conventional, classical and proper idea of "Theatre". Angizia is neither conventional, nor proper. Lyrically I tried to create non-typical librettos for non-typical plots. I don't think that Angizia follows a certain tradition, neither in music, nor in lyrics, but we surely embodied a special type of "crazy theatre" for almost 10 years.

Lyrically, how did you get the ideas for the plays?

I think I am much more cinematic than epical thinking and working - thus my lyrical work is bound to many theoretical pictures and paintings I set together to the whole thing, while searching for the most perfected conception.



I am a critical cineaste and really intrigued with so many different films and theatrical plots - therefore my main inspiration is cinematic and not really lyrical. Possibly I pro-

ceed much more like a film director and not like a dramatic adviser. In any case I first of all complete my plot and in the course of the finished plot I write my libretto. Furthermore I am not in permanent search of new ideas, while creating a new Angizia play. Lyrically (and I speak from the libretto itself) I always think in theatrical monologues and dialogues. This way enables a more dramatic orientated art and allows most lively and omnipresent figures. Angizia plays are typical for its (social and vocal) interaction between central characters of a story. And they are only well done with different and interesting figures. Before a story is ready, I need my honest faith in interesting characters such as a weird Jewish organ grinder or a chess playing Russian drummer boy. It's for sure my most important aim to develop and process unaided and independent ideas, figures and stories. This is the first step in creating something special. I never glom ideas from other plots, plays or stories. That's idiotic and boring!

The main theme behind "Ein Toter fährt gern Ringelspiel" is the tightrope walk between death's conscious melancholy and its ironic sarcasm. I wished to create a surrealistic story with bizarre figures and their lively characters in the scenery of Königsberg's cemetery after the 2nd world war. I believed in the force of a metaphysical world and a more satirical access to "death" and its related themes. It's one author's most interesting "role", when he has the possibility to show one figure in two lives: Elias Hohlberg, organ-grinder and protagonist of "39 Jahre für den Leierkastenmann" came to death within the story of our 4th album, but relives a really dreadful, but characteristic existence on devil's foggy and marshy cemetery within our 5th album "Ein Toter fährt gern Ringelspiel".

I wrote his bony stature and corpse in a bizarre story round black puppets, childlike themes such as rocking horses, marionettes, children rhymes, but also wished to create a stage for the protagonist's nostalgic and sorry view on his earthly living and existence. Thus the drama of this story is a classical one, but associated with lots of shudder, evil, sarcasm, irony and morbidity. I think, the morbidity of "Ein Toter fährt gern Ringelspiel" is the most characterizing specification of this 5th Angizia album.

The main inspiration for "Ein Toter fährt gern Ringelspiel" was the third and surrealistic act of "39 Jahre für den Leierkastenmann". I

wished to create a whole story round a dead and buried organ grinder, which shouldn't be too severe or serious in the sense of "Dead is cruel and evil!" or "A cemetery is always calm and certainly a place for eternal rest!" The story is always written with a certain wink and I always had the intention to hide many nostalgic and cunning elements behind the main story line, which have to be discovered from the listener when devouring this 75 minutes. Of course THE DEAD itself is a main and omnipresent figure, which has place in each chapter of this play. But it's the same in love songs, or not? Here "love" is the main parameter of the lyrical approach. So a listener shouldn't knock against the partly doomed and sarcastic lyrics of "Ein Toter fährt gern Ringelspiel".



Every Angizia work had to do with dying, the death and his consequences. With the first albums we have shown a more limited and poetic access to the death of protagonists such as Konstanz Bürster ("Die Kemenaten scharlachroter Lichter"), Hanna Anikin's mother ("Das Tagebuch der Hanna Anikin") or Elias Hohlberg ("39 Jahre für den Leierkastenmann") – and I have to repeat a statement of the Austrian actor and theatrical director Paulus

Manker in this connection, who once meant: "Every serious artist needs a proper relation to death and its soul!"

Always a hard and tricky question - what's your favorite Angizia album, and why?

Definitely "Ein Toter fährt gern Ringelspiel". It's the most courageous and intractable album, because of the fact, that the plot itself is more controversial, peculiar and narrative than other Angizia plays. It's so difficult to stage and experience a figure in calm and quiet moments (only voice or voice and piano...) during a musical work with aggressive and "rhythmical rock-jazz-and-circus" music - the interesting opposition to enable an album with bizarre and quiet narrative elements and figures on one side, but also loud, florid and very lively sequences on the other I implemented with "Ein Toter fährt gern Ringelspiel". I know it's kind of untypical, unpopular and "non-commercial" to offer different spoken voices between complex, dramatic music - but "Ein Toter fährt gern Ringelspiel" I did in the thought of a completely inefficient and uneconomic musical existence. It took so much time, money and energy to realize this album that I am really proud of the 76 minutes lasting result with which I can identify in

every single moment while listening. Maybe it's a common principle of an artist to identify with the latest work best. Well, I think every Angizia album has raised different expectations and there are really various opinions concerning the favorite Angizia album of our listeners. I noticed that within a questionnaire in our website's guestbook (www.angizia.com).

Personally I am convinced, that "39 Jahre für den Leierkastenmann" was the most important Angizia album, because of the fact, that we pointed the way, which we wished to go in the new millennium (more crazy elements, very eccentric voices...). More than that we experienced in new studios, with new musicians and arrangements and a more theatrical and "circussed" way of (musical and lyrical) thinking - independent from any label or label strategy.

"Die Kemenaten scharlachroter Lichter" for sure was one of the most audacious debut albums of an upcoming band. It was such a complex and baroque styled play with a fantastic 17 years old piano player, who was able to transport every single thought of my extensic baroque plot. It was a fantastic work with so many idealistic musicians and artists. In this connection it shouldn't be forgotten, that we had been no 20 years at all at this moment. And many contemporaries in the 90ies released Seattle-Rock or in any case music in honor of their big paragons such as Pearl Jam, Paradise Lost or Metallica. "Die Kemenaten scharlachroter Lichter" however was an independent release and so many musical journalists couldn't comprehend what we wished to implement with this "new-kind-classical music-rock". O yes, I remember really strange Angizia-reviews in this time. I also enjoyed "Das Tagebuch der Hanna Anikin", which especially in Mexico was the most beloved Angizia-Album ever, because I often evoke the fantastic cooperation with Christof Niederwieser, an outstanding singer and one of these great personalities in the avantgarde-metal underground.

"Das Schachbrett des Trommelbuben Zacharias" itself was Angizia's most beloved album in Russia and Ukraine. In 1998 I dedicated

Angizia's music to the Russian soul of music. It was my personal approach to a Russian motivated plot and the symbolization of Russia's society thinking with a simple chess board. And Angizia sounded so special and rare on this album. "Das Schachbrett des Trommelbuben Zacharias" was a very important chapter in our own era.

In general I have to say, that I always searched for new and exciting musical and lyrical elements with every new Angizia album, which should contrast pleasantly from former works. But in any case a listener had to feel: This is (a hundred per cent) ANGIZIA - and nothing else. So I have to stress, that no Angizia album was done to compare it with other Angizia works in "quality" or to locate a special "improvement" as we always worked for the intention(s) of a play and the individual story itself. I loathe the poor fact, that so many bands just release modifications of their last works (the same ideas, the same sound, the same lyrics...) to have a constant audience and a steady inquiry. That's really mind-bending and artistically uninteresting.



I've understood that the band is currently frozen. Any particular reason for this status? Any intentions of bringing another score? Are you active in other musical / literary / theatrical frames?

Angizia is currently frozen, because of many different things, but in general familiar, economic and temporal reasons. I don't know if I should like, love, deny or refuse this status, but it's a fact, which was brought with the problems of independent existing. I am proud of having released intensive albums through my own small label "Medium Theater". But I

reached the point, where I had to say: My next work would be once more a very costly, extensive and for sure outshining release, which I am not really standing at the moment. In Angizia in process of time all became bigger, larger, more intense and expensive and for sure more energetic. It's nearly impossible to release a 6th Angizia-album with own financial resources and it's less promising to find a label, which has will and courage to realize a similar project. It's much more unimaginable to find a label in the nowadays, which we couldn't find in the past. Otherwise I am not sure, if I am ready for dealing with one of these money-horny people, which present their stuff as "pseudo-original" instead of more or less well done plagiarism. I am not active in other musical, literary or theatrical frames at the moment, but I have some conceptions for more literary orientated projects (with or without musical participation). In fact I don't mind, if 100, 1000 or 10 000 people listen to my plays. Angizia albums wouldn't be less good or professional if it would be just 10 listeners world wide. CD sales have nothing to do with musical quality. But that's an attitude I won't share with any label boss of the nowadays.

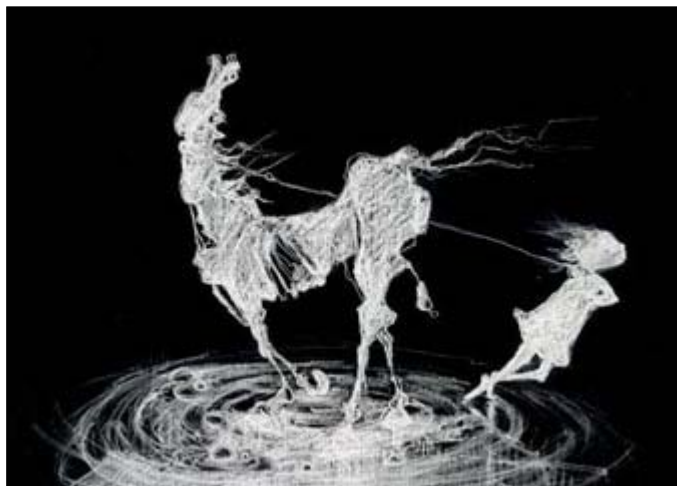
How did the Austrian metal scene accept Angizia?

In the 90ies the Austrian metal scene consisted of Abigor, Summoning, Korova and Golden Dawn... and maybe we had been part of this scene. But that wasn't really important for our own development. In fact Angizia was accepted from all these bands, especially from Korova, Abigor and Summoning - and otherwise we also appreciated all these bands and projects, which all had been part of Napalm Records. I really had pleasant contact with Christof and Moritz from Korova, Thomas, Peter and Michael from Abigor/Summoning and Alex from Amestigon, with which we released a split album for Napalm/Records in 1995. At the end of the 90ies I found deeply friendship with Jochen from Dornenreich, which today most probably is the most popular Austrian metal band.

The Austrian underground "lived on" important personalities and many interesting and very different projects. Each of these projects has given this underground an individual note - and it's sad enough, that bands such as

Korova do not exist anymore. Today it's for sure impossible to speak about a "scene". There are so many meaningless bands, which often disappear shortly after being founded. Angizia and Korova especially often had main problems to convince thousands of Austrians with their really eccentric music, as both collectives still had been busy to pull their original ideas through a "no original" music scene.

To be honest: Angizia has much more fans in Mexico, Russia, Greece or Canada than in Austria itself. Angizia's music is very provocative, sulky, obstinate and thoughtless original - and more than that our music demands serious musical empathy and precise listeners. That is all in all reasons enough for many conventional listeners to buy more shallow music instead. Angizia is strenuous, but qualitative and most professional. I never felt to be part of a "metal band". Angizia in no time of a 10 years lasting existence was a "metal band".



Since we're dealing with Avant-garde metal, can you describe what this concept means to you? Who are your favorite acts within the genre?

I think Angizia is a logical representative of a project "beyond the border". Our unadjusted self-centeredness and the conscious distance from musical

categories developed our music much more "avant-garde" than adapted to musical trends or standards - above all we used instruments in a nearly unusual way. We stressed classical instruments in rock-like musical sequences and connected classical singing with eccentric voices. My plots are as good as inappropriate in every METAL context and our arrangements have nothing to do with any other existing musical project. They are peculiar and unadapted. Some people say they are out of place in a musical "pseudo revolution" which is full of sex, Satan, gothic, evil and in general clear and simple words (for the masses). That's mainstream and I don't know how to shape "mainstream music"!

"Avantgarde" in any case is a conscious distance from traditional listening and composing habits. An Avantgarde musician evokes discords and dislikes every fuckin' search for more harmony in an arrangement to sound more plausible for 100.000 listeners. Avant-

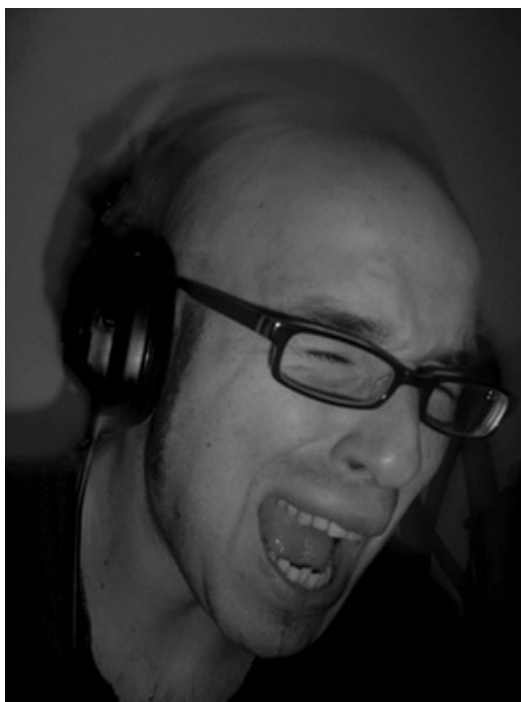
garde (metal) bands need courage for atonality and have to be provocative, innovative and stylistically confident. That's it.

Angizia is AVANTGARDE MUSIC, but no avantgarde metal band. Metal is a category, which we didn't belong in 10 years of our existence. Metal is dominated by guitars - and we used e-guitars at best differently and consciously neoteric or "non-metal-like". My ultimate Avantgarde metal bands had been ARCTURUS (in the first place), ULVER, VED BUENS ENDE, possibly THE KOVENANT (in times of "Animatronic"), DEVIL DOLL (in very special moments of their fantastic music) and for sure KOROVA. From all present "Avantgarde metal" substitutes I just honor FANTOMAS and DORNENREICH.

Most of so called "Avantgarde metal bands" of the nowadays cannot touch my soul at all, although there exist of course several well done projects with great musicians and interesting music. I always prefer the original - and all mentioned bands and projects are unique and unrepeatable. Even this is a very important fact of AVANTGARDE MUSIC.

I really appreciate the intention of Christof and Katja to forward a conception for avantgarde music and I deeply support the whole idea of "avantgarde-metal.com" It's an important platform for all these bands that can or could meet the requirements of "avantgarde music". It's a collection of the most significant "avantgarde-metal-bands", which themselves could bear up against this so fuckin' boring and adapted music hype, which apparently is and was so much interesting for the commercial orientation of music labels and managers in the last 10 or 12 years.

But I am sure: The underlying quality of Avantgarde (metal) bands and many appreciable projects beyond the border the major part of mankind will comprehend in 20 years at the earliest. The fixation of many labels and magazines on catchy tunes and all these transparent trends perhaps is understandable in cause of economic strategies, but it's dissembling and laughable at the same time, in which determined manner all these labels and magazines have destroyed the "real quality" of music and underground: - THE AVANTGARDE.



www.hasharat.co.il

MANES

Outside Of Dogmas

By Jegger

Manes, one of the most outstanding musical collectives in the world of such heterogeneous subcultures as metal, industrial, electronics etc., is back with an extraordinary record full of different artistic elements. 'How The World Came To An End' is the title of this absolutely mind-blowing new album which does not fit any musical category or genre. There is a special reason why the members of Manes can be called audio scientists or why their music can be called art. But what is Manes? That's obviously a question which cannot be answered at all. But we can try to get a little bit closer to these guys by asking them a few questions. So let's dip into their musical and artistic understanding of "omni directional deconstruction"/destruction by talking to Manes members Cern and Torstein:

First of all, how would you describe the style of music Manes is playing at the moment?

cern: varied audio, outside of most genres and dogmas

Torstein: We've never really had a need to define our music in any easy way, and at least not find a crowded genrebooth to rot in. It's fun to read what other choose to call our music (and some people certainly should be awarded medals for their creative tags), but we prefer to let the music talk for itself when it comes to defining what it is, if anything at all. One of the worst ones is Rock/Pop, so let's go with that...

Would you say, all the musical elements, you integrated into your sound were part of a master plan to escape from all the stereotypes, dogmas and rules, which are included, when a band in general is playing traditional metal or especially Black Metal or was the reason for your musical diversity something like a natural development in praxis to become an artist (in your meaning of being an audio-scientist?) on a different level of musical expression?

cern: not really. it was mainly "wow, this and that idea is cool, let's use it on the album". but, our attitudes and inspirations are extremely varied and different, and when we join forces to make something more proper than just ideas and themes, we all have too many ideas, and we have to juggle everything, mix, mash, cook, stew, until we all say "yes!".



Torstein: We haven't had any voiced grand plan to avoid stereotypes, no, but it's a part of what Manes is about and who we are. We don't measure what we do up against other bands, we just do what we do. We don't try to be untraditional, because the traditional isn't a part of our equation when we make music. We have no such goals.

Could you please try to recapitulate your steps and phases of musical progression from the beginning of your career until now and is there a special reason why you started out as a band with a black-metal background in the 1990ies?

cern: oh shit... manes started in '92 as a side project. I was playing in atrox back then, but wanted to do something a bit darker and more intense, so I formed manes. first as a one-man band/project, but shortly after joined by sargatanas (from perifa). the two of us did three demos, the debut album in '98?, and some demo-re-releases. the current incarnation has been going with only minor modifications to the core-setup since 2000 or something.

What do you think could be the reasons, why people call you a progressive or avantgardistic band?

cern: it probably has something to do with the current, extreme narrow-minded-ness. thou shalt not do something anybody might dislike, play it safe.. which is exactly the opposite of our main interests and motivation?

Torstein: The safe and well-documented route is more often than not the path to commercial success, so many bands seem to find this the smart way to go to achieve their ambitions. Money and fame. We actually try to focus on the music, and that may certainly

qualify for a quick avantgarde label, wouldn't you agree?

Let's talk about your last record 'How The World Came To An End'. What is the lyrical concept behind this album or the songs and what are the lyrical differences to your other former records Under Ein Blodraud Maane (1999) Vilosophe (2003) and [view] (2006)?

cern: the first album were quite traditional, lyric-wise, mostly in Norwegian, one in English, topics like suicide, death of everything, desolation. vilosophe became more philosophical and mental, more varied topics. how the world is a bit more focused, perhaps a mixture of both, darkness, suicide, fear, but in a metaphorical and abstract wrapping.

Torstein: Negativity and nihilism is something that can be found as the essence in most of Manes' lyrics. As Cern points out, the first album might have had a more direct expression, but it's not like it's miles away from what we write about today. I guess we could say it's drawn down to a more personal level now.

What are the different styles of music, you where operating and playing with while recording your last record and which types of music are included into the current sound of Manes to get your own style when you think about 'How The World Came To An End'?

cern: we incorporate the elements we like, and don't think too much about what other styles having this or that as more common elements. there is no sign saying "never do this" or "always do this" around here.

Torstein: We don't go looking for genres to combine or foreign elements to incorporate, we just let things flow free as much as possible. Nor do we include any special types of music into anything. It's just one type.

Three words and your own construction: avant-gardism – post-modern – progression – 'omni directional deconstruction'. How could they fit into your – in my opinion – open understanding of music?

cern: let loose your imagination, drop all imagined rules and dogmas, do your thing, and people start to call you things like that.

Torstein: Tags like that is not relevant nor interesting for us. We don't strive to be progressive or avantgarde, it's more of a drive to do something that excites us and keeps our enthusiasm fuelled. Omni directional indeed, but maybe more destruction than deconstruction.

Would you say, your music is art, or is this a label, Manes does not want to get in contact like a lot of other bands in the metal and rock genres?

cern: yeah, I feel manes is more 'art' than band. things like that have a tendency to sound very arrogant and stuff, but that's not our intention. we want to express something, our own things, not compete with anybody on some others terms. the 'art' word is a bit biased, but I think it kind of fit.

In an interview with another webzine called 'voices from the dark side' I've read that Manes have no singular concept and that you describe your band more like a hydra which is an interesting picture to describe the inner structure of a band. What was the idea behind this metaphoric statement?

cern: hm, who said that? Torstein probably... anyway, interesting analogy. interviews tent to be very there-and-then, spur of the moment, etc, so things get said without thinking too much, etc, but...

Torstein: That might have been my statement yeah, and it's true. We are very different people involved in Manes. We have different tastes in music, we have different views on recording and concerts ... quite a lot, really. But our common ground is Manes. We have a chemistry that boils down to our output, be it as albums or gigs or anything. We focus on what we think is cool to do as Manes, and open up for what we all think is good shit.



Is your band more something like a collective of many artists with a democratic approach or are there special members in the band, who could be called musical dictators and art directors?

cern: so far, I've been handling most of the underlying electronics, and perhaps some of the main structures, but when it comes to actually transform those loose, sporadic and meaningless ideas into 'proper' music, we are all on equal standing. not really democratic or anything, but nobody is more 'important' than anybody else.



Would you say, that there is a progressive scene with rock and metal growing in Norway at the moment (I'm thinking of bands like Extol, Red Harvest, maybe Gåte, Thorns, Ulver, etc. by the way) in which musical diversity is in the foreground or is your country still the land of Black Metal?

cern: for such a small (and Christian!) country, Norway has a bunch of interesting bands. perhaps people up here are more split in opinion, and dare to do their own things, perhaps belonging to this or that clique isn't too important here? don't know.

Torstein: Norway hasn't been the land of black metal for a long time now. We may still have a few really good black metal bands here, but it's not very visible. Well, unless you count bands like Dimmu Borgir and Satyricon as black metal (which I don't). Anyway, as some people seem to forget, diversity was a major part of the Norwegian black metal boom in the early 90ies too. I can mention Emperor, Mayhem and Darkthrone as examples. None of their defining moments sounded very similar in expression. They may have had lyrics dealing with somewhat the

same subject matter, but all three of them had a sound of their own. Anyway, we have as much diversity here as most places, I guess, with some hip-hop, jazz, prog, metal, pop, country etc.

Is it hard for you as an innovative band with a metal background to be accepted in the different parts of the music press?

cern: yes and no. we haven't worked too hard with expanding anything, so there hasn't been any lack of response, he, but, as both our history and our label candlelight is safely anchored to metal, I guess we'll be 'stuck' here forever... don't know, don't care too much.

Torstein: Acceptance isn't something we care too much about. We see a few reviews coming in from magazines of various shapes and sizes, but for me personally it gets a bit abstract and hard to view as anything besides just reviews. I don't know what we're considered to be, as some sort of general stance... nor do I know if "How the world came to an end" is generally viewed as a successful album, a flop, a statement,

a piece of art or total sell-out, true or untrue or what the fuck else. We have moved on.

Are there any future plans?

cern: a lot! remixes are a-coming, there will be a remix compo coupled with some software endorsements, some internet projects, expand into different ways of expression (not just audio), even more cooperation and collaborations

Torstein: Yes, we're working on a lot of new stuff already. We are well underway with the pre-production of our next album tentatively titled "Be all / End all", and slowly also starting to see the outlines of some other smaller releases/projects too. We'll probably do a few gigs here and there as time goes too, we'll see what happens. Hopefully, our brand new website at www.manes.no will be done this year, but you can check at www.myspace.com/manes to get news and updates.

Thanks for your time and space.

SATANOCHIO

Metal Threat Anonymous

By Suleiman

The Satanochio management and the band were kind enough to promptly provide detailed answers to all my queries. Here then, in all its madness (mostly uncorrected from the original transcript) are words and ideas of a metal killing machine. The interview was conducted via email with Satanochio (vocals / guitar).



First of all kudos and congrats for producing one of the finest slabs of innovative black / death metal in recent years with *I am Satanochio*.

Hello and thank you so much man, we really appreciate your words. It's nice to meet open-mind metalheads, hehe!

Kindly elaborate on your pre-Satanochio musical backgrounds? What bands were you in before forming this insane outfit?

Before Satanochio we were playing in different bands, all metal-related...but, unfortunately I cannot mention their names. Nobody knows who we really are, and believe me, this is our philosophy and I don't wanna change that. So, before Satanochio each one of us was trying to make something with his band...but none of us succeeded very much. We had all kind of usual guys around us, with usual ideas, playing and composing usual riffs and we didn't like that way. We had enough of "usual", "traditional" and everything that can be considered "good" by usual people.

We wanted something else, something different, we wanted to search beyond the traditional metal, and even we are talking about heavy metal, black metal or death/grind metal. That's the way I did Satanochio, to make the music that I want to hear, not to copy some "great satanic true black metal" band. We are all listening to all kinds of metal, we have all the most honest respect possible for the traditional metal, but we are all very interested in making something fresh.

How did Satanochio form? Where did you guys meet up?

At the beginning was just me and Satan Imparat, a strange guy that I knew from my childhood. Together we wanted to build the sickest metal band from Romania. We had some rehearsals in late 2004, and in January 2005 we recorded the crazy tracks for "The First Strike Of The Possessed", that was released in march, same year. After a short Satan Imparat fell into a deep depression and some severe mental problems and he left the band. In May I think I had a jam with one of my best and old friends, Grui Sanger. After that rehearsal I knew that he is the right man for this band and from that day he remained the second guitar and bass player in Satanochio. He is the best guitarist I know from these lands and he has also some great vocal touch (he recorded the backing vocals for "I Am Satanochio" album), also he has a unique style to compose drums (he programmed shot by shot all the drums for the "Daemon" maxi single, the "I Am Satanochio" album and the "Heihaiheihai Caini" single). In spring of 2007 we found this guy, Nimenea, a great drummer from our town, and had a rehearsal with him. Like Grui he remains in the band as our drummer. So I can say for the first time that now Satanochio has the perfect line-up...and with this line-up we recorded the new material called "Vagrant Matter Heritage". So, after all these stories, we are all good friend, we are like a big great family, surrounded by devoted friends. This is what we are, haha!

What inspired the relentless and quite brutal nature of the music?

When you ask me about inspiration for brutality, the first thing that comes through my mind is Romania, with all the problems and middle age mentalities from here. Let me tell you a short story: yesterday I did a great mistake. Something that I really don't do usually...I watched TV for 15 minutes. I think that last time I did something like that was 2-3 months ago. Yes, I watched TV and I remained shocked when I saw what was on the main news. A bunch of big farmers that demonstrated in the front of the residential yard

of the Agriculture Ministry, dropping milk over a small mountain of animal fecals...I don't judge their acts, I just think about the simple image of them doing this, with that horrible faces, that toothless large smiles, and about the reason that makes them acting in this way. For me this is like a sick piece of brutal middle age, and it gives me the total inspiration for making a track like "You Deserve To Die!" or "The National John Doe". I cannot take this anymore, I just can't! This madness must stop and the only weapon I have to fight with is my music. I cannot stay back home and leave all the bastards throwing their lies over the poor mindless crowds!



We are not free. Look around...just look very carefully around and see how many of us are the slaves of some stupid philosophy. I cannot take anymore a generation of whores that teach their daughters to act like whores; I cannot take anymore generations and generations of religion-related minds and acts! If I'll stop doing this, there will be no difference between me and a sheep. And I'm not a sheep, I am a human being that can think, that can dream that can grow and evolve, that can explore everything, that can do everything!

In your opinion, what separates Satanochio from the current hordes of extreme metal?

I don't know for sure, because I'm too much into this...the guitar playing mode, the notes, vocals, sound, message, lyrics, production,

drums composition, combination of styles...everything, I guess?

There is an undercurrent of humor in the songs and the imagery, that makes it fresh compared to a lot of so called kvlt bands. How did this come about? Will this bloom further in the future?

Yes, I must admit, we had a strong cynic humor in our lyrics. I don't know, this just came out naturally, I guess... It's just the reflection of this world. It's like a mirror that reflects macabre jokes... everything that we hate we consider as a brutal joke. Church, State, Democracy, Freedom ... big words, small inventors with big bank accounts and big powers. When you want to build something serious, when you are thinking about the human progress and evolution, the mindless crowds are the last people that will admit you as someone serious. And it's more than possible that they will admit this only when they will feel a benefit coming in their lives based on your work. Only then...maybe.

This has to be asked. Why the masks?

The masks are very important for our message. It's not about Satanochio the masked guys that make strange metal music. Satanochio represents the revolted human, we are just a metaphor, our real faces are not important in this story. The revolted human is also intelligent, that's the way he is revolting with a mirror over his face. He is cynic, ironic, considered evil by default of the herd of sheep. His only chance to find his freedom is to use this mask. It's the only way that he can make the words of revolution audible. Otherwise the eyes of the crowds will never fall over him...otherwise he will remain always just someone in the crowd.



How do the song structures come about? Is it a main composer led effort, done in layers or a result of jamming?

Yes, I usually compose the basic song, but after that I work on it with Nimenea and Grui Sanger and it just happens...a new song is done only when every Satanochio member is 150% satisfied with it. This is our way.



Do you play live often? If so, do you plan to expand the line-up to re-produce the density of sound onstage?

We have never played live. Even though we had a lot of offers for this we didn't accept. In the future, maybe this will change. Anyway, for the moment we are just working on our stage looking effects, and this will take a while. You know, I cannot imagine Satanochio playing live as a usual metal band, because we are not. We want to offer to the fans a great show, with a great scenography, something never seen before. But for this we will need some serious time.

Why has there been a switching of record labels between your releases?

The first time when we switched the record label was this year, in January, when I and Grui wanted to auto produce our "Heihaihei-

hei Caini" single. It was for the first time when Axa Valaha Productions was not into our stuff, because we wanted to see how we can manage our things using other methods. In August Twilight13media became our new official label and that way was released our "Dark Visions From the Fog" DVD. For "Vagrant Matter Heritage" we found another label interested in our stuff, so the new E.P. is a co-release of these 2 labels, Twilight13media and Krudd Promotion & Booking. I guess these new arrangements will remain for a long time, because we are all good friends.

What sort of progression can be expected on the new EP *Vagrant Matter Heritage*?

Vagrant Matter Heritage is a conceptual E.P. based on the symbol and connotations of number III. It's the first material recorded in our new line-up. These are the first tracks composed at the rehearsal room with our new drummer. The sound is much better, the lyrics have more substance, the insanity is stronger, the compositions are better...*Vagrant Matter Heritage* is our heritage to the world, is the summary of our lives, beliefs and experiences. It's the best material we ever did and it is showing the actual Satanochio: stable and certain on its way.

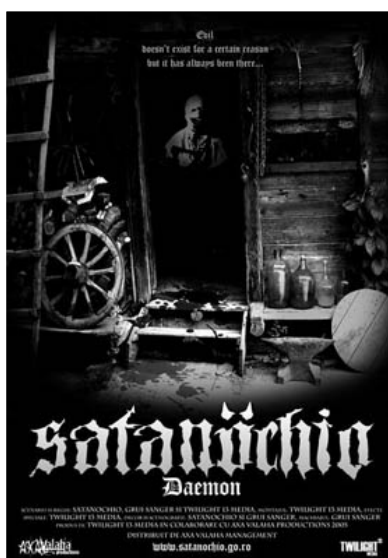
When can the next full-length album be expected?

Next album...in 2008 for sure! It will be something much more beyond, I can assure you! Hahaha!

Are there any other (musical) projects by the members that we should know about?

Yes, Grui has his own band-project that is called Grui Sanger. You can check it at www.myspace.com/gruisangeband.

It's really fantastic what Grui works there! He has a unique story behind his concept and he is working on a fantastic record! He also had another brutal project called Hang Him. Really, just listen to the compositions of this guy, how he plays the riffs and how he composes his drums; really, I am a fan!



What's the metal scene in Romania like, and are there others pushing the boundaries like you?

I just saw a few good bands here, maybe because the crowds here are more traditional bands unfortunately. If they are not traditional, they are based on a very clear style for sure (death metal, heavy metal, metal-core, etc). I really don't know a real boundaries-pushing-metal-band from Romania. We had all kind of problems caused by our style and image over here, where a big part of fans respect only the traditional values of metal.

Even if it was very hard for us, we understand also that it was very hard for them to accept an unusual band like Satanochio in a country where a tribute band has a bigger value than one based on it's original stuff...but I saw that in the last period we didn't have problems like before, so I think that maybe people begin to accept us in a way or another. Though this aspect is actually good, we want to be satisfied first by our records. I really don't care if the entire country hates me or loves me; all I care about is my passion and its results. Now, when the number of fans is growing day by day, I'm glad too see people feeding their souls with our works!

Last but not least, who is the hacker who spread the disinformation about the Satanochio's breaking up and made it seem like your official website?

A bastard and a full...what can I say? This story shows very clear how the low-minds over here can act sometimes, how some guys dedicate their abilities only to the destruction of creation. I really don't care about that website; we have a new one, much bigger and more beautiful. I care just about the work of a man that was destroyed by another man only for pleasure.

What makes me very sad about all this shit-story is that I heard this guy is from another Romanian band....that is, from my point of view, a dramatic situation.

Thank you for your time. May you rock loud and true!!!

Thank you for spending your time asking a madman about his reality.

All The best!



BERGRAVEN

A Small Chat About Death

By aVoid

Interview performed and translated by aVoid. OK'd by Pär himself (May 27th 2007)

I have paid my friend and musical colleague Pär Gustavsson a visit on this calm Day of the Pentecost, at the warm end of May. He the sole member of Bergraven, responsible for the black beast of an album called "Fördärv" ("Ruin"), released in late 2004. We are listening to Leaden's "Monotonous Foghorns of Molesting Department" spreading its bleak misanthropy, a suitable frame for the discussions about his new album, musical methods and the beyond to come.



The second Bergraven album, Dödsvisioner ("Deathvisions"), was released in the United States May the 22nd, through HydraHead Records, and will be released in Europe through Total Holocaust Records. How would you describe this new record? What are your thoughts behind it?

I would like to describe it as the journey between dying and being dead, set to music. The music is based on lyrics based on the ideas and thoughts I have about the moment of death. Stories of near death experiences, and the way religion looks at death and dying. It's not easy to make music out of it, but I have tried. Musically it's quite sombre, but

then again, so is death. However, I am only an observer, these are only my thoughts, not my opinions. The only self-criticism I have is that I maybe shouldn't have made it as raw as I did, but I suppose that came natural. It is hard to restrain yourself when dealing with these subjects.

So where do you find inspiration for your creations?

The lyrics come from my own thoughts and ideas. I often get stuck on certain subjects very intensively for periods of time... for example the thought of the moment of death long enough to write Dödsvisioner. Bergraven is the part of me that are these thoughts.

Musically, I'm inspired by my lyrics, which I always write first. I try to shape different sounds and atmospheres into music, even images and sceneries at lengths, to capture visual feelings. How does the house of a plague-infested man sound in G minor? Other's music also inspire me, of course. The emotions of Burzum is unavoidable. I listen to a lot of black metal, but other genres as well. Sprawling gloomy music in general; Angelo Badalamenti, Joy Division, The Cure, Chris Isaak... Musicians who manage "dealing with feelings" inspire me.

Do you believe in a reality beyond our senses - before and/or after death?

Yes, somehow. I cannot - and have no reason to - rule out that there are energies beyond our senses. I have no reason to prove that there are, either. Death itself is such a thing - people may claim to have seen and experienced death, but I haven't in any concrete way. But I do think many have.

Can it be experienced? How?

If you can reach beyond our senses, then yes, it can be experienced. A few can feel certain things other can't, but I'm not one of them. It would be a shame if we couldn't contact a spirit world, if there is one. I haven't tried though.

What lies beyond the grave, do you think?

(...a long silence.) I have thought a lot about it, naturally, but what I believe... that is a good question. There are many theories of what happens, but I haven't died yet, so I don't know. I'm actually surprised that the suicide statistics aren't higher, considering how curious people usually are. I cope with life, with my curiosity growing bigger and bigger. It is the biggest mystery of life, you know... Whether you end up in heaven, hell or a big black void. You can only speculate, as everyone should. Or maybe not, it is quite anguish.

What does the word Bergraven mean?

Berg means mountain, and raven is, well, raven, in Swedish as well. A black mountain. It is a metaphor for all the dark thoughts that are ventilated more seldom than other. That black mountain within me is Bergraven.



Why do you only sing in Swedish?

P. It's how I express myself the best. My knowledge of the different angles and interpretations of the other languages I know is too poor. I sometimes refer to old Swedish proverbs and such, that aren't translatable. It's strange that people don't use their mother tongues more often, seeing how many bad lyrics there are. I mean, compare Rob Darken to Dani Filth. Need I say more?

You are the only member of Bergraven. Is this because a), you want total control, or b), the lack of appropriate musicians?

A little of both. I want to have control of Bergraven of course, but it springs from the absence of like-minded musicians. I need musicians who are creative, who compose and write as much as I do, not just going along playing what I tell them to play. And those are hard to come by.

Dödsvisioner was recorded at the infamous Necromorbus Studio, with Tore G Stjerna recording and Perra Karlsson (from Nominon, In Aeternum, etc) playing session drums. How did they affect the final product, what input did they have?

Well, we all worked on the arrangements, how long different parts should be played and other small details. Perra and Tore go back a long time, so there weren't any conflicts as to what should be done and what shouldn't. We weren't three individual wills, but worked together as one combined will. To have a second opinion from musicians as experienced as them means a lot to the process. Will this or that work? And they of course brought their own individuality to it.

How do you think Dödsvisioner will be received, and who will listen?

I am sure that many who are into Black Metal will be broadminded enough to allow my non-Satanism, deviated harmonies and many clean guitars. I also hope that a wider mass can grasp and identify themselves with the emotions. And hear the screams and distortions as amplifying the emotions, not me trying to make angry and heavy music. I think that music is moving towards what it was in the 1980's, with many more accepted genres, equally popular, as opposed to the late 90's. I make the kind of music I would like to hear, that I think is missing, and I hope other thinks it is missing as well.

Do you have any side-projects?

Yes... a lot of them, with or without names. Infernal Hellfire is a tribute to the extreme metal of the 80's, mostly to develop my technicality as a guitarist. I make a lot of music; my focus isn't only on Bergraven.

What is then the future for Bergraven? Will there be live performances?

I have a new album finished, that I hope to record eventually. It is a natural continuation of Bergraven. And I have been trying to put a live line-up together. If there is a will to realize Bergraven on-stage, then it would be very welcome. I will continue to think and develop Bergraven; it isn't a project I will cancel anytime soon. I make music for myself, so whether there is any interest from the outside or not, Bergraven will still exist.

And so, we reach the end of this interview. A question to conclude; what are your thoughts and views on the state of extreme metal today?

I think that the scene is filled with less inspiration than it was years ago. If you're into extreme metal it's not just playing the riffs everyone else has been doing before, you have to have inspiration and do something new. Darkthrone have done their albums and concerning black metal there is no need for people trying to sound like them.

So you can say that there is a big inflation going on and that is something I at least try to change. I think this is something that has happened since everyone can record their own record without any big amounts of money. You don't have to try very hard and you sell some records, but you sound like everyone else. Today Extreme Metal has also become really big and I don't know actually if I like it or not, mostly because the biggest band don't seem to have any inspiration or energy, in my opinion. I don't see the "demo-energy of darkness" that I find in old records. A band that has been able to uphold these things is Trelldom.

They just put out a new album that sounds exactly the same as they sounded 10 years ago BUT with new riffage, and amazing vocals. They also have a very ambient feeling that really haunts the listeners and not being focused on sounding too extreme with double kickdrums clicking your ears out for example. To get the sound of darkness there is big need for listening to other genres and mix it with a good sense of feeling. I do not mean in the way Mr. Bungle does it, but more in the way of Lurker of Chalice. I think that'll wrap it up for you Andreas, and hope that you will be able to express your wants for new sounding extreme metal in the future.



SOUNDS UNDER THE SURFACE is a superb online magazine written by truly dedicated top journalists from Germany. Though Thor and Marcel are rooted in the Metal scene since many years, this mag knows no genre borders and features lots of exquisite bands from all directions. Sounds Under The Surface is published as a free PDF. The second issue is out now, focusing on "woods, krauts & sprouts".

This magazine is a must for all lovers of pure and deep music.

KEKAL

The Light At The End Of The Tunnel

By aVoid and Chrystof

Despite having a leading role in their native scene, producing six albums of highest quality extreme avantgarde metal in over ten years, Kekal is still one of South East Asia's most well-kept secrets, having yet to conquer the West. Intrigued, aVoid and Chrystof hunts down mainman Jeff Arwadi, now residing in Canada, to shed some light on this obscure Indonesian trio...



A: KEKAL have released six albums over the last decade. Still you are a tip for insiders within the metal scene. So maybe you could start with a brief introduction of KEKAL to our virgin readers. How did it all begin? What does the name Kekal mean?

Well, Kekal has been around for 12 years now. We just celebrated our 12th anniversary, silently and quietly. We came from Jakarta, the capital city of Indonesia, entered the scene in late 1995 and released our first official demo tape in 1996 to spread our name and music locally and regionally, then we recorded our debut full-length album independently in 1997 and licensed it to various labels.. After 2 albums then we got some exposure within the European underground scene, first within the Eastern part of Europe, and then in Germany and BeNeLux after Fear Dark released our 3rd album, and we continued to record another album in 2003. We toured Europe in 2004 as the first Indonesian

band that played shows outside Asian territory, and our 5th album was released in 2005. We just got our 6th album out few months ago, called "The Habit of Fire" which is also our first album who entered the North American market. So far, we've been known as an independent band who never wants to get signed by record label, to maintain our independency and control over our artistic freedom, and also to own our recording masters and copyright. Instead of band signing, we always prefer to license our finished albums to record labels. One of the reasons why we haven't been known that well. As far as our band name goes, Kekal means 'immortal' or 'eternal' in Indonesian language..

A: Over the last five years or so, you have become less and less traditional concerning composition and concept. How has this progression been received by the press & the audience?

We started to switch into the new direction when we recorded our 3rd album "The Painful Experience" in 2001. We lost many of our old fans back then, especially those who were into melodic black and death metal. We got mixed responses; they were either love us or hate us, nothing in between. But we moved on and continued to do music like this. However, since our 4th album "1000 Thoughts of Violence", people were used to the fact that Kekal is no longer the band they knew from our first 2 albums, and we started to gain new enthusiasts from many different musical backgrounds.



As for the press, mostly we get very positive reviews, despite a very few reviews who told us that we suck because we're not metal enough in the eyes of these reviewers, but we always ignore that kind of reviews.

I think if people are open minded enough to accept different musical styles, then they will like Kekal. Right now, our enthusiasts and loyal supporters came from many musical backgrounds, not only metal but as broad as jazz-fusion, punk, hip-hop, experimental, and electronic-dance music backgrounds.

A: Were there any particular circumstances that made you leave the metal behind? A growing boredom with the genre, or just a desire to break free and find new listeners? When you're stuck inside the metal genre, I suppose it's hard to reach outside of it.



We didn't leave the metal behind. Our decision was intentionally to break its limits. Metal music was not originally invented with the vision of creating a tight box with exact size, let alone to create walls inside the box called sub-genres. But then when it was established as a part of the genre and moreover as a part of rock subcultures, people then tried to put limits and now it seems that it can no longer be expandable if we don't try to tear down these walls. It happens in electronic music as well, it happens even in jazz too. Music styles become genres and then genres becomes subcultures.

I hope you don't see music in genres, because it's how 95% of people see music nowadays, and it's not an avantgarde way of seeing the music. It's the MTV and pop culture way of thinking. That was a part of major labels and MTV campaign, to create boxes so they can target the music to the specific audience and build the number of audience in each box, because it was a lot easier to control and manipulate when they were pooled. What we are tired with is the limits, like all these tags and sub-genres that people always associate them to us. Kekal has a unique position, that if we are being promoted and marketed only to music fans within one or two sub-genres, we won't survive. So what we do nowadays is to find more and more new listeners everyday, while continue fighting to tear down all these limits. It is beyond boredom. It's a method of survival.

A: How has the KEKAL sound evolved throughout these six albums? How much has been "forced" to reach a set idea, and how much has come naturally?

Everything comes out naturally. We just don't want to limit ourselves whether in listening to music as well as writing the music. We listen to any kind of music, and most of our favourite musicians and bands nowadays are out-

side metal. And since we don't want to limit ourselves in writing and playing it, these influences would come naturally when we write the music. We never want to become a unique band. Uniqueness must be genuine, must come from the heart, otherwise it would sound fake. Also, our instrumental and song writing skills have progressed throughout the years, so right now we are able to write and play more complex music, in terms of musical structure and arrangements.

A: Is there any band or artist that has influenced you more than others throughout the history of Kekal?

When we just started out until we released our official demo tape in 1996, I think Bathory and Iron Maiden influenced us more than others. But after the guitarist Leo came in, he brought his influences to the band, and I started to listen to prog rock and electronic stuff.

A: You are one of the few bands I have come across that actually place themselves in the avantgarde metal genre. Why is this appropriate tag for KEKAL?

I really don't know. Honestly, while I don't mind with the term avantgarde metal, but I think this term should not be used to establish a sub-genre. I believe these kinds of bands try to make fresh music by putting many of their outside metal influences into their music, with the idea of limitless creativity, but when another sub-genre has become established, it would create nothing but limits, and I don't think it's wise if we try to establish sub-genre that limits creativity and expression. Back in the early 80's, when thrash and death metal weren't established as sub-genres, I heard many original bands came up with their own interpretation of what is fast and brutal music, but during the 90's when all these stupid sub-genres started to emerge, we saw more and more bands copying each other, because there are no space left but they had to conform to the scene, so they could not get away from limits.. I believe that music should not be limited at all when it comes to an artistic expression.

C: Your latest work "The Habit of Fire" has been released some months ago. How have the reactions been so far?

It is still hard to tell at this stage, as not many album reviews from the media showed up yet, especially in Europe. Perhaps we aren't important enough, I just don't know. Last album, it needed about 6 months or so for the review to appear in a printed magazine. But so far, we've got very positive responses. Same with the individual responses

from listeners that we've received through e-mail and myspace. Mostly they told us that they had to give "The Habit of Fire" some more spins before they got hooked by the music, but once they got hooked by it, they told us that this is the best Kekal album, or at least one of the best.

C: For "The Habit of Fire" you also changed label. Your last 3 outputs have been released by "Fear Dark Records". Now you have licensing deals with "Whirlwind Records" (Germany) and Open Grave Records (USA). I've heard you aim to reach people outside the extreme metal scene with this approach. Are you still satisfied with this strategy?

I guess you read that from the Fear Dark website..? Actually, we left Fear Dark because of various reasons that are one of the reasons, but not the main thing who made us to switch label. The licensing deals with 2 record labels came out because it was the best thing to do, unless the album being licensed to a bigger label that operates 2 offices in both USA and Europe, it is better to have 2 smaller record labels who release the album to their own separate markets. Our friends told us that we should release the album through a U.S. record label too because there is a growing trend for the kind of music we do and more and more new listeners being introduced to it.. So we took their words seriously, while maintaining the European market that we already had. Fear Dark as a record label is very strict to the extreme metal territory, but Whirlwind Records has somewhat more diverse as they have non-metal bands as well. It is better for us to be placed into a more diverse field because of the nature of our music.

A: "The Habit of Fire", is a conceptual album, dealing with the urbanized modern world. What are your opinions on the state of our World?

What we always believe is that human tends to corrupt. It is in our blood, our hedonistic human tendencies that control or influence us to make decisions, but by doing that, the result is that we are always heading to something called destruction. I do believe that what we do is always to gain short-term benefits. I don't have all the answers to those problems in the world, but first thing we need to be aware, that when we make a choice, the tendency is always been hedonistic rather than altruistic. It is becoming more and more complex when these things are done in the name of security, nation, God, and religion. People should be aware and critical of this, otherwise they would be easily being de-

ceived by those who have power or who are in control.

A: If you had the power, how would you turn this hedonism towards altruism? Is there any "magical solution", or is it up to evolution to sort things out?

I would say that better to leave the "if I had the power" words to all those politicians who are running their campaigns. I will keep continue making music. I mean there are different ways to create awareness to all these wrongs that happen in our world. Michael Moore's documentary movies are good example of creating awareness, and they get huge impact on the society, but he's not a politician himself, well at least for now. He is doing that in capability as a documentary filmmaker. But I must add that creating awareness doesn't always have to be connected with the politics within human group interactions such as in governmental, corporate or religious institutions. Awareness to oneself is also included.



A: Faith and Religion is always a hot topic when dealing with underground music. Considering your previous affiliation with so-called "white" metal bands on tours and splits (Crimson Moonlight, Slechtvalk, etc), what importance does faith have for Kekal as a band? I'm not trying to stigmatize you as a religious band, I'm just interested.

For me personally, faith is something that motivates and drives you to live the life as human being. People might have a faith in oneself, as well as faith in God or higher power, or might have faith in many other things from an amulet to a broken tooth. As a musician, it is important to maintain drive,

and faith helps creating the drive needed to write music, especially if the music acts as the songwriter's medium of expression. I happen to believe in something good, that's why I am always looking for better life and try to improve health, for example. But it does not have to be associated with religion whatsoever. You don't have to be religious to ever believe that there is light at the end of the tunnel, and you don't have to be religious to have a good diet and workout some exercise.



A: Since you started in the mid-90's, how has the Indonesian metal scene evolved? How socially accepted is it today to play extreme metal in Indonesia?

When we started out, the scene was in its early stage as not so many bands back then who had their own songs and released demo tapes. Most of the bands were still playing covers of well-known metal bands. But it has progressed and improved both in quantity and in quality. As long as whether it's socially accepted, I don't think the scene ever encountered something like a brick wall. Metal has always been underground over there, and it hasn't been known enough in the mainstream market and mainstream music industry, but I think in Indonesia, there are more independent channels for metal bands to become more and more known to the masses.. I'm speaking about quantity, because there are TV shows that accept videos from independent bands, including metal bands, and also there are bigger music festivals which metal bands can share the stage with mainstream pop bands too.

A: Are there any certain Indonesian bands you can recommend?

It is hard because I don't listen much to Indonesian bands nowadays. But I would recommend a band called Cranial Incisored. I helped mixed and mastered their new promo CD, so in this case, I am familiar with their music. They are one of few bands in Indonesia who are trying to blend music styles alto-

gether.

A: How does a Kekal song come to life? Who does what (especially now when the Pacific Ocean is in the middle of the band)?

"The Habit of Fire" is already recorded before I came to Canada, so there was no ocean between us, only concrete walls and flooded streets. But for the future material, we haven't talked about how we deal with our current situation yet. Let's see what will happen. But Kekal will continue no matter what the situation is.

A: Both you and Azhar are vocalists. Who is responsible for the clean vocals and the screams respectively?

We didn't split our vocal jobs specifically based on which type of vocals. Most of the clean vocals are sung by me, but that's not because I'm the one who responsible to handle the entire clean vocal department. It just happens.

A: Why have you chosen to use programmed drums (except on Acidity); for practical reasons - everyone in a band know how frustrating drummers can be, especially when recording - or aesthetic?

Actually not all drums are programmed. Since "The Painful Experience" album, used real-time human performance and combined it with the mathematically-programmed ones while doing the editing on the real-time part.. The real-time performances were done with MIDI drum pads. And other than that, we also put electronic beats and loops. Because of the current technology of music production, which in many cases producers use triggered drums and manipulate the performance data as well as the sound in the studio, there are no separation between what is real and what is programmed.. They are blended together, so if you asked me if Kekal drums are programmed, I would say not really. I call our approach of drum production as "hybrid drums". It's a mix between human performance and matrix editing, and all was done by the help of the sophisticated digital technology.

C: You've moved from Indonesia to Canada one year ago. What have been the reasons for this big step? Did you already adapt yourself to your new environment? How do you like Canada so far?

Well, the reasons are personal, both for me and my wife, since she also came with me to Canada, and it's nothing to do with Kekal

actually. I can adapt myself quite fast here for the culture and such, maybe weather was the hardest part since I never experienced as cold temperature in Canada as in Indonesia. There is no winter in Indonesia, and winter in Canada is quite extreme. I like Canada for being more open in any aspect of civilization, compared with my home country. It's healthier for me to be at the more open environment.



A: How do you think moving to Canada will affect your creativity?

I don't think it will affect creativity in terms of the quality of my song writing, because that depends more on motivation, drive and will. Maybe the emotion would be different, I'm a bit

more calm and laid back right now, and that would definitely give something different to Kekal's music in the future.. I'm not as angry and uneasy as when I did "The Painful Experience" or "1000 Thoughts of Violence", for example.

C: You've been one of the very first Asian metal bands touring through Europe in 2004. I guess this has been a great experience for you. Can you tell us more about it? Has it been the first time you left Indonesia? Did this tour influence your decision to move away from Indonesia?

No. This tour didn't influence anything about my personal decision in life.. It did help to test and get used a bit on the winter, because when we were in Sweden it was about minus 6 or minus 7 degree Celsius. When I came to Canada, I was already prepared for the minus 20 degree something. The tour was great, and because we didn't have very tight dates, it was about half doing job and half having a holiday. It wasn't the first time I was travelling outside Indonesia or South East Asian region, I was in Australia before, and lived there for about a month.

A: Being Swedish, I'm curious... What was the response from the crowd when you played in Linköping?

It was very good overall. The response from the crowd was great, one of the best crowd responses we got on the whole tour. There was a little problem, but we already anticipated to that kind of thing which would pos-

sibly happen to us, we weren't surprised when it did happen.

A: Will you do live shows again? Your songs seem to become increasingly harder to perform on stage.

I wish. It's too early to say yes or no as it all depends on the situations. The truth is that we are unable to do shows to support "The Habit of Fire" at least for a year, as I am the only member who's in Canada and the others are in Indonesia, but who knows in next couple years.

C: Okay, Jeff, now we finally come to the last question. What will the future bring for KEKAL? What are your current plans? In what direction do you think your further work will evolve?

Right now I'm working on the remix of some Kekal songs. I can't really go into details at this moment as things haven't been finalized yet, but we will post the updates on our forum as well as our myspace blog once everything is done. We do also have some plans for the next year, but once again they are still at the early stages and things might be changed, so I don't want to speculate for right now. However, Kekal will stay and keep moving forward in the current path, that means that we will continue to progress within this direction, in which evolution is a part of the progression.



C: Thank you a lot! Any last words?

Thanks a lot aVoid and Chrystof for this interview. We appreciate that. To anyone who might not be familiar with Kekal, feel free to visit our myspace page www.myspace.com/kekal to check out our songs online as well as getting the information on where and how to obtain our new album "The Habit of Fire", as well as our previous albums. And you are more than welcome to leave a comment or send us a message. Cheers!

THE AMENTA

A Virus For Dissidents

By Jegger

What would Oswald Spengler do if he was born in our times? Would he dig himself deep into historical books to search evidence for the decline of the western culture? Maybe. But maybe he would also go to Australia and form a band like THE AMENTA. Extreme music, alien outfits, monumental futuristic artwork and a dissi-dental philosophy (means dissidents with sharp denture) – this is THE AMENTA. Jegger, at the moment on holidays in Sicily, sends us this Interview with keyboarder Chlordane – enjoy!

In the world of metal music The Amenta is known as a dark extreme metal band. Could you please describe the style of The Amenta to our readers?

Chlordane: We consider ourselves to be Extreme Music. We have never considered ourselves a Death Metal, Black Metal or Industrial Metal band, though people do try to classify us as such. Our music is the result of experimentation and trial and error. We have never sat down to write a death metal song or black metal song, we try to create MUSIC. I don't think that a band should be classifying itself. It is way too fucking limiting. When you have classified yourself as a "Black Metal" band before you have even started writing then you are setting yourself limitations. The Amenta has no limitations. We make music that pushes the boundaries of music, therefore it is Extreme. The only words that I feel comfortable using to describe The Amenta is extreme, uncompromising, ugly and dark. Any other classifications or adjectives are irrelevant and irritating.

Are there any bands, which influenced you musically and are there any special music-styles, which are important for The Amenta beside metal?

Chlordane: We try not to be influenced directly by other bands. I think the best way to approach music is to listen to as much music as possible, from a variety of sources and

genres, take it all in, appreciate it and when it comes time to write a song, lock yourself away and don't think about anything other than what sounds good in the song at the time. As soon as you start thinking "I want to sound like this band or that riff" then you have lost the fucking battle and you might as well just release a shitty Darkthrone rip off.

If anything inspires us, rather than influences us, from other bands it would be their experimental spirit. Musicians those are unafraid to take huge risks musically. Musicians that are trying to invent their own musical language. They are the inspiring musicians. And it isn't my fucking job to point them out for you. I don't care enough to educate people on what I believe is correct about music. As far as I am concerned, if you want to listen to shit then you get what you fucking deserve.

As far as listening to other musical styles other than metal, of course we do. We find MUSIC interesting, not some bullshit false "brotherhood", meat headed, close minded shit. We listen to pretty much anything and everything. If it's interesting and I haven't heard it before then I will listen to it no matter what genre it springs from.

Does The Amenta accept any musical boundaries?

Chlordane: Of course not. As I mentioned previously, to accept boundaries is to lose the battle before you have started. We are musicians. We can do what ever the fuck we want to express ourselves. As listeners you have the right and opportunity to decide if you want to listen to it or not, but either way it will not change how we create and appreciate music. I like to think that anything is possible for us. When we create music we are trying to keep ourselves excited, and it isn't exciting to create music with restrictions because you are afraid to take a risk. It is the risks that create the excitement.

How is the line-up at the moment and do you play live?

Chlordane: The line up is solid at the moment. The Amenta has a very strong core and as long as that core stays solid then The Amenta will stay strong. We do play live. We are just



about to undertake an Australian tour with The Berzerker and Akercocke.

Our live shows are fucking stressful and expensive for us. It takes a lot of technology and is a logistical nightmare to re-create what we do on record in a live context. But according to the reviews, we pull it off. The new material is going to be even fucking harder. Not only is it harder to play in the sense that it isn't grounded in any "metal" technique but it is also very layered and intricate. It will be exciting to bring into a live situation, I think. But it's going to cause a shitload of stress.

Let's talk about your record *Occasus*. It's one of the most outstanding records in the heterogeneous subgenre of Industrial-black-death-metal. Do you feel that there is a lot of positive feedback coming back from the metal scene, or do you have problems with your sound to be recognized?

Chlordane: Feedback for *Occasus* has been great. We got many perfect score reviews in zines and websites all over the world. There are always detractors, but that is the nature of the beast. Perhaps an album shouldn't appeal to everyone as that means it is appealing to the lowest common denominator in people. An album should challenge people. I think *Occasus* did that. That's something that we hope all our releases will do. Of course it would be nice if everyone bought *Occasus* and appreciated it intellectually as it was meant to be appreciated, but we know that this is impossible. Not everyone is going to appreciate a new intellectual idea. And we are not fucking dumbing down our music to appeal to idiots.

Is there a difference between the reactions of your listeners (or if you want: "fans") and the music media?

Chlordane: Not really as far as I know. Of course you would like to think that the music media is made up of fans but this is not always true. Everyone was very positive about the album, I guess the only difference between the "fans" and the media was that the media had to express themselves in 300 words of a review where as the listeners usually have a more visceral reaction.

The production and the song writing of *Occasus* are fantastic. Who came up with this idea to create such a wall of sound and how do you write songs?

Chlordane: Thank you very much. Our song writing is something at which we work very hard. The wall of sound came from our writ-



ing techniques and the techniques we used to record. Our song writing is based in improvisation. It is very rare that a member will bring in a riff or part that they have written at home. Generally our writing sessions involve brainstorming an idea first, finding an idea that we find interesting enough to pursue. Then we might all pick up a guitar or keyboard or whatever comes to hand and play until something clicks. The idea is then recorded and we play over it, finding new chords or rhythms.

I like to think that we have created our own musical language. We do not write using conventional harmonies or keys. Our musical language is based more in the timbre of a sound. We have got to the point where we are all able to understand the musical qualities of noise and this assists us greatly in making our music.

Would you describe yourself as a democratic band or are there any members who play a leader role in The Amenta?

Chlordane: I don't believe that any successful band is really a democracy. A democracy basically means that everyone's opinion is given equal weight. Which is great in principle but it never works out that way, politically or musically.

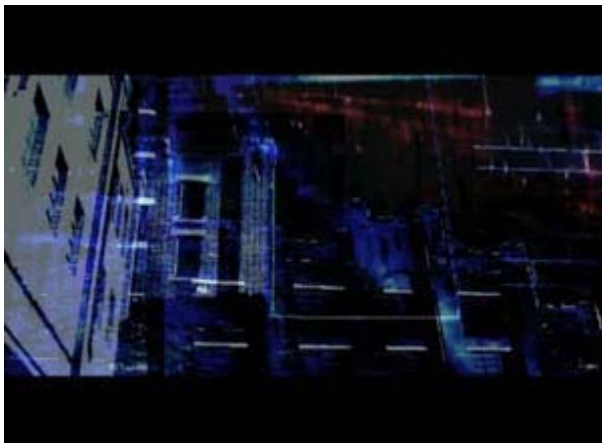
Musically, I think it works better to have an open forum where everyone expresses their ideas. These can then be discussed and de-

bated but the ultimate decision must be made by a much smaller group of people, exactly as it is in a political "democracy" where politicians are voted into place and then decide an idea amongst themselves without consulting the man on the street. We are very lucky in The Amenta, because we have a very strong writing and ideas team. It is this team that makes all the ultimate musical and artistic decisions for the band.

What is the lyrical concept behind Occasus?

Chlordane: Lyrically, *Occasus* deals with the decline of the western world. It is my belief that consumerism, weak government, advertising, and religion have made a very weak western world. Globally the west is the spoilt, hypochondriac kid at the party. He is weak and vulgar.

Occasus posits the idea that western humanity has made its own trap and refuses to free itself because it is comfortable. Western Humanity allows itself to be led blindly. It doesn't have the strength anymore to fight. It is decaying. We are in endtimes.

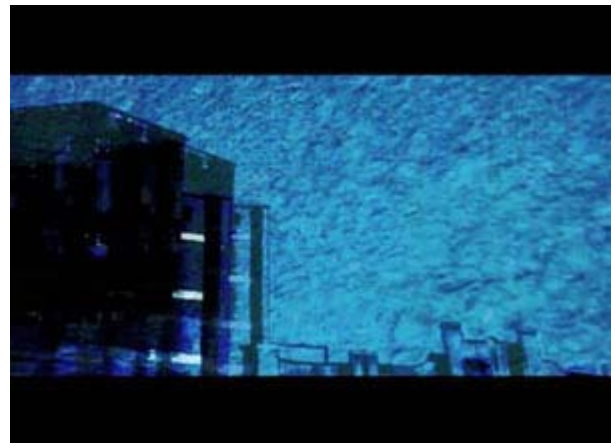


Your last album *Occasus* was re-released in June 2007 and you've opened a discussion platform called "*Virus*", which is in your words "an antidote to primitive thinking." Can you tell us something about these activities?

Chlordane: *Occasus* has indeed been re-released. It has been issued as a limited edition CD/DVD pack. It has the full original album plus our 2002 MCD *Mictlan* and an extra new track. The DVD contains the *Virus* film cycle, the film clip for the track *Erebus*, the first official release of the Soundtrack to the Hidden Earth, which was an experiment in sonic texture from 2004. The release comes with all new artwork. We just received the package two days before I am writing this and they look fucking amazing.

The *Virus* Discussion platform is an extension of the *Virus* film cycle. The idea is that humans, by nature, think primitively. For example they will see a symbol and immediately associated other stimuli and prejudice with it. They do not think deeper into context or intent. There is not attempt to understand. Humanity merely reacts when they should be sitting back and analysing.

The *Virus* films aim to show extreme imagery constantly juxtaposed against its opposite. It is propaganda without an agenda. The idea is that people will HAVE to sit back and think about what it means. The discussion platform is there for people to discuss, debate and above all to think beyond surface reactions. Check it out at virus.theamenta.com. It is still in its very embryonic stages but we are in the process of building it up to something truly amazing.



The Amenta has an extraordinary aesthetic style. What are reasons to choose such a visual concept?

Chlordane: That was what suited the release at the time. As you will soon see we are not defined by that image. Things are constantly changing. It's not a matter of reinvention but showing other facets. Our new album will show another side.

Your record label 'Listenable' posted the message: "THE AMENTA IS THE HIDDEN EARTH FORMED IN A FALTERING NEW MILLENNIUM EMBODYING A NEW AGE IN EXTREMISM." Could you please describe for us your general lyrical and musical concept of your band?

Chlordane: The new age in extremism is us reclaiming the term extreme. People are under the misguided idea that extreme music is defined by speed, technicality and absolute bullshit such as the pitch of the vocals. This would make me fucking laugh if it wasn't so depressing. We use the term extremism to

represent extreme IDEAS. An idea is extreme when it challenges people. Any new idea by that nature is extreme. This is reflected in the lyrical and musical concept of the band. We are constantly looking for new ideas to challenge ourselves and our listeners. I have no interest in being part of what modern metal considers extreme. I wouldn't listen to that shit and I sure as fuck don't want to play it. It's boring, pointless and frustrating.



Three words: avant-gardism – anti – progression! How could they fit into your understanding of music?

Chlordane: *Avant-gardism* is an excellent idea when used correctly. It translates roughly to vanguard or advance guard. So therefore it represents the artists who are pushing boundaries. Going first and forth to create the paths that others follow. I think it is extremely important in order for music to progress and ultimately for me to be interested. However, I do NOT believe that most of the bands considered avant-garde are truly so. It seems in metal that anyone who does something slightly *weird* is considered avant-garde. Unless you are pushing music forward then this term cannot apply to you. Just using classical music in heavy metal is not avant-garde for example. It has been done. It is not new. It offers nothing.

Anti- A first bastion of the primitive thinker. You should never approach something determined to be against it. A knee-jerk reaction to be against something is proof that you are not an evolved human. Truly evolved humans will approach an idea neutrally and allow their logic to determine whether it is of worth or not. To be instantly anti-anything is pathetic. This has NOTHING to do with my music. *Progression* is extremely important and is tied to the idea of avant-gardism. Mu-

sic must progress or otherwise it will decay, exactly as the western world has done.

Would you describe The Amenta as art?

Chlordane: Of course. Art is self expression packaged for outside appreciation. That is what we do. We are expressing ourselves and allowing you to see it. Therefore The Amenta is art.

Your next record will be released in October 2007. Can you tell us something about the musical and lyrical direction of your upcoming album?

Chlordane: Our next album is entitled *nOn* and we are in the process of recording it now. It is a very different animal to *Occasus*. This album is very dark and odd. It's stitched together from radio chatter and extremist political speech. The guitar work is much more abstract. Less typical metallic riffage, more noise based. Synth-wise we have rejected all the typical pseudo-orchestral junk that other bands use to live out their Dimmu Borgir fantasies. The synth sounds are all designed by us. They are uglier and nastier than other band's guitar sounds.

Lyrically it deals with Media, Prostitution, Politics, Junkies and Simpletons. Basically the world is sick and this is a list of its symptoms. This is a very different album. We refuse to repeat ourselves. We may make friends with this one, we may lose friends. We don't really care. This is the best album that you will hear this year. If you are interested in something new and exciting check it out. If you prefer music that is stale, repetitive and obvious then I am sure you will find something else to fill your vacant little lives.

Any last words?

Chlordane: Check out virus.theamenta.com and www.myspace.com/theamenta for updates. Buy the *Occasus* re-release.

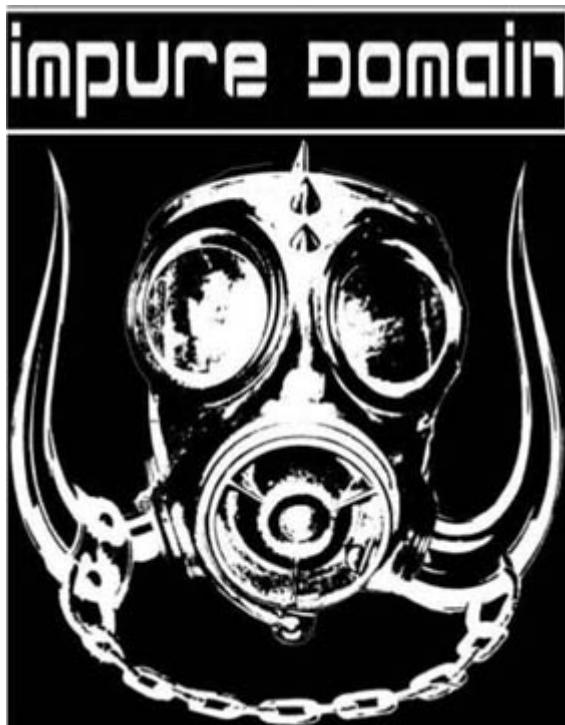
Stop being so boring. Stop allowing yourself to be led. Start thinking beyond your prejudice. Start thinking instead of reacting. Step away from things. Take a look. Decide if you want to be a part. Don't believe everything. Don't watch TV. Believe something strongly enough to kill for it. Prepare for nothing and expect everything. Embrace a chaotic lifestyle. If it feels safe, it's probably killing you. If you are comfortable then you are complacent. If you feel you have succeeded then your goals aren't high enough.

The Amenta – music for dissidents.

IMPURE DOMAIN

The Ultimate Frontier Of Sound As An Auricular Torture

By Jegger



Wow!!! Impure Domain is one of hottest extreme-metal acts Italy has to offer. These guys have left the orthodox path of trivial metal-boredom a long time ago by mixing Industrial-Death Metal and Electro- Trance with Black Metal. Do you think Aborym is heavy? Do you think Diabolicum is extreme? Listen to these guys and you will hear what the term "Storm-Detonation" should stand for!!! Angy Impure, vocal-extremist of this outstanding band, tells us something about the Impure Domain collective, their music, avantgardism and their future plans!

Jegger: Yo Angy, can you tell us something about your band Impure Domain in general (history, sense of the bandname, discography)? Please introduce yourself!

ANGY: Well, we were born in the beginning of '99. In 2000 we recorded "Progression to impurity", in 2002 "Vivere di Male/The Evil within", while we were playing some gigs with important acts like Aborym and Undertakers. In 2004 "HIV Parade" was out, and now we are making the "Universal murder promo" and search for a serious label with a widespread distribution. The band name IMPURE DOMAIN at first was mainly referred to an anti-moral, anti-religious concept, while

now it has a more nihilist meaning, a sort of "promised land=land of shit".

Jegger: Could you recapitulate the different phases of your musical progression?

ANGY: On our first record we played a sort of hyper fast black metal with an attitude influenced by acts like Bathory, Venom, Dark-throne. Since our second release we started adding some various electronic/industrial elements in order to increase the dynamic range of sound itself, arriving to mix with our new promo death/black metal with industrial/harsh soundscapes, the planet autopsy in notes. Obviously this mutation also involved the lyrical aspect, since the themes became influenced by nihilist literature as Cioran, Celine, Artaud and so on, till reaching the use of W. Burroughs' "cut-up technique" on HIV Parade.

Jegger: I want to go a little bit deeper into the lyrical aspects of your work. What do you mean by using themes of nihilist literature such "as Cioran, Celine, Artaud and so on, till reaching the use of W. Burroughs"? Can you please explain this a little bit more?

ANGY: Regarding nihilist literature, I adopted some themes such as "anti-humanity", "despite", "cynicism", the futile existence of a "moral code"...instead, about W.Burroughs, the technique he adopted consists of a free association of mental images and words and in a sudden writing-act, and in this way I wrote the lyrics for HIV Parade.

Jegger: What is your lyrical concept in general?

ANGY: The lyrical concept that could contain all this is APOCALYPTIC ART.

Jegger: How's the feedback of the media so far?

ANGY: The feedback was very good, mainly about "HIV Parade", that is the CD that had a bigger distribution/visibility.

Jegger: How would you describe the style of music, you're playing at the moment, and what is your musical background?

ANGY: I'm not a lover of classifications, man, hehehe, but if someone puts a gun into my mouth to make me say what we play, I'll answer him: apocalyptic extreme metal. We have different backgrounds, in fact Psykoblaster (guitars) is more into death/black metal, Nevropathic (synths/ pro-

gramming) is a die-hard electro/industrial maniac...I am a mix of them, listening to extreme metal and industrial randomly, lol.



Jegger: Ok, which types of bands do you like?

ANGY: We all listen to different types of band/sound: Nevropathic is deeply into the techno/industrial scene; Psykoblasters is a fanatic of death/black metal, and I listen from extreme metal to industrial, from movies' soundtrack to punk '77.

Jegger: Are there any bands, which play extreme metal in a progressive way at the moment in Europe?

ANGY: I could mention DODHEIMSGARD, TRISTWOOD, ARCHON INFAUSTUS, AK-ERCKOKE, THE AXIS OF PERDITION five bands I esteem so much.

Would you describe your band as avant-gardistic?

ANGY: Why not, in an extreme sense, yes... we always tried to rape the genres, to fuck the boundaries, to menace "the structure"; we are aware to have the weapons to do that: the "will to dare", in a Luciferian sense of the term, man.

Jegger: Hmmm, you mentioned "the will to dare", in a Luciferian sense of the term". Are you working with the traditional lyrical elements of rock-metal-black metal, or would you describe your music as something like modern and provocative art?

ANGY: We feel surely modern and provoca-

tive, but obviously with apocalyptic themes and sound...Lucifer is to be intended as a metaphor of our will to break boundaries and clichés.

Jegger: How is the music scene in Italy? Is your country still the land of Glory, Power and True Metal?

ANGY: Hehehehehehehe, we don't give a fuck to those disciples of the fuckin' light, with their fuckin' dragons and fuckin' swords useful to satisfy their anal desires: the "metal music" is the only TRUE thing in their imaginary life. But we have also great bands, such as YCOSAHERON (necro/ industrial/ ambient), ABORYM, HATE PROFILE, while among new acts I could suggest you A:MADE (Nevropathic industrial/techno side/project) and KINETIC DEAD OF UNIVERSE (alternative rock/ industrial).

Jegger: What do you think of bands like Ensoph, Aborym, Malfeitor, Ephel Duath?

ANGY: I really like and respect ABORYM and MALFEITOR, two different conceptions of HIGH QUALITY BLACK ART. I don't know very well the other two acts, so I cannot judge, sorry.

Jegger: Would you call these bands typical for Italy by doing something special or is it true, that Italy loves trivial metal stuff?



ANGY: I consider these bands "non-typical", cause in Italy there is still an insane passion for dragons, swords and female whispers, fuck.

Jegger: Your homepage shows me that Impure Domain needs and wants to have a strong and unique visual concept. What's the idea behind that? Art or something else?

ANGY: Yeah, you're right, behind that there is our passion for EXTREME ART in all its forms (movies, literature, exhibitions) and actually Nevropathic is providing for visual concept,

since he is a maniac of video-art and installations.

Jegger: Could Impure Domain be described as [extreme] Modern Art?

ANGY: Absolutely yes, the ultimate frontier of sound as auricular torture.

Jegger: How do you write music?

ANGY: I write excerpts after seeing a weird movie, while reading a book, at late night during the hangover/time, so I have often lyrics at hand...Psykoblaster starts playing some guitar riffs and Nevropathic put his noises and mental perversions among the notes: they two often compose during a movie/sight or alcoholic rituals.

Jegger: Yeehaa....Alcoholic rituals? Do you mean you are cooking pasta, drinking grappa and immolate a true Italian Mermaid?

ANGY: Hehehe, my band mates in Rome often practise rituals with alcohol, also in a composing phase; my favourite alcoholic ritual, instead, is drinking wine and red beers together with my woman during AC Milan soccer matches, invoking the incarnation of the Mighty Lord of the Goal, F.Inzaghi.

Jegger: Why do you play this sort of music? Is it for the ladies?

ANGY: A precise reason doesn't exist. We are conscious we do our best (and reach our personal satisfaction) when we play so extreme and we could feel bored playing metal music in a "normal way". My lady likes it, so it's enough for me, but our music is mainly for aliens, deviated priests and alcohol-addicted.

Jegger: Hahaha! Good answer! Ok, Code 666, Scarlet Records, Avantgarde Music, Cruz del Sur. Which label would you prefer and why?

ANGY: I respect all these labels, but let me say now it's their business to value our proposal as original and interesting, hehehe...by now, get ready for the re-issue of "HIV Parade" by the Scottish label CDG Records. So stay tuned...

Jegger: What are the main differences between "HIV Parade" (2004) and "Universal murder"(2007) (music, lyrics and visual concept)?

ANGY: About music, the new tracks are more

death metal oriented (see vocals and guitar riffing) and the industrial traces mark the songs and fit into them in a perfect way, according to me. Lyrically speaking, they are more sadistic and "religious" in a mocking way. The visual concept now is made by Nevropathic, so it will be surely better than in the past, more steel, grey, blood, shit.

Jegger: You're using a lot of industrial elements. What's the reason behind putting this together with Black and Death metal?

ANGY: We all think they increase the coldness, the violence, the fury and the clinical relax of an autopsy... they paint exactly the decaying scenarios we mean to show.

Jegger: Do you play live?

ANGY: If in the future there will be cool opportunities, why not, even if it isn't our main purpose...

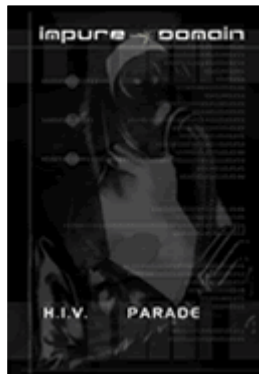
Jegger: Are there any future plans?

ANGY: Recording the remaining tracks for "UNIVERSAL MURDER", waiting for the re-issue of "HIV PARADE" by CDG Records, increase our knowledge and feed our will, to try being always "one step ahead" in the conception of extreme music.

Jegger: Any last words?

Thanks for this interview, really nice talking to you, bro... For all the readers of "Avantgarde Metal", please check out our websites:

www.impuredomain.net
www.myspace.com/impuredomain



VENDLUS
R E C O R D S

DEKADENZ

The Beauty And The Machine

By Polygon

Quite unnoticed the German [D]ekaden[Z], who are around the underground culture since 1998, have released their debut album "Elektronoid" last year. The longplayer features electrifying extreme metal with dozens of weird electronic/industrial decoration and an interesting lyrical concept. Over the last decades the work with ingredients of extreme metal and electronica has become a challenge for musicians, who want to go a few steps further than the typical drums+guitar+bass+disgusting vocals concept. Symptomatic for most "industrial-metal" releases (beside very few exemptions like ABORYM's "With No Human Intervention") was their half-hearted realisation and artistic weakness.

I have to admit that I don't see in [D]ekaden[Z] the revolutionaries of any genre nor is their debut a classic, but at least with "Mechatronik" and "Vom Untergang" they created two pounding and cold roboter-symphonies that made me just want to grab my digital pen to do an interview and learn more about their weird cosmos. Singer L.O.S. and machinist "@noize" were so kind to answer my questions.



Hello guys, greetings from Latvia. How is good old Germany doing these days?

@noiZe: Hi there! Can't say what's going on here these days as we are currently too busy working on our next longplayer to recognise it. But things are going very well for us. Thanks for asking.

When I was a teenager I sometimes used to work in some factories in my city. I really hated it, but it was good and fast money. However, in these days I felt what "human alienation" was all about. Being part of the machine, the merciless system of money accumulation. According to your biography, "Elektronoid" deals with the consequences of the technical

and digital revolutions. What exactly are the outcomes of the last two decades development for the evolution of human being?

@noiZe: That's a good question, as we just installed our 750GB divX player, full of porn in our studio, 5min before.

L.O.S.: ...and two zombie movies

@noiZe: No doubt, the Internet is a huge step in evolution. When we grew up, there were only analogue wired telephones, and now the I-phone in our pocket connects us to a world-wide collective 24h a day. We've all become small cyborgs. We take what the wire gives us.

L.O.S.: and what if this wire will be cut one day?

@noiZe: And of cause Laboga guitar amps are also a great invention in our century.

Your overall concept, e.g. lyrics, outfits and music has an obvious connection to the "Brave New World". The way how you create your music, by using sound software, programmed drums and synthesizers, wouldn't be able without the rapidly developing technical skills of mankind. On one hand you have a critical eye on our today's situation; on the other hand you don't miss to use present advantages to create your own visions. How does that fit? If there is an alienation of human being that should be criticised, wouldn't it make more sense just to sit in the woods and smash some acoustic drums to the melodies of

a flute?

L.O.S.: That's easy to answer as the question is wrong. We don't criticise the technical revolution at all. If it all leads to the destruction of us, that's the way it has to be, and that's fine with us.

@noiZe: Art shouldn't be critical in my eyes. We are just painting pictures. Yes of course, our paintings are not the nice looking ones. Expressionism 2.0 maybe.

As you may have noticed our webpage deals with vanguard art exclusively. Since the launch of avantgarde-metal.com there has been a lively discussion about what this term really means and how one should define this

style (not to speak about its musical genesis). My dictionary tells me that "avantgarde" is originally a military expression, which stands for the soldiers in a battle who fight in the very first row and who are supposed to die first. Do you feel sometimes like a warrior of the first row and how do you define "avantgarde metal" for yourself?

@noiZe: I simply don't want to define it. For the warrior in the first row the whole terrain is undefined. We are not making music to be industrial, avantgarde or whatever metal. I hate bands that are hiding behind a genre. Definition leads to routine and routine means death to the art.

L.O.S.: Those who put us into these genres are the listeners. That's OK....you may do that if you want to, but we are only making music.

What music had an influence on "Elektronoid"? Do you have any idea where this journey might end?

@noiZe: Puh...can't remember anymore. Of course we are influenced by other bands, feelings, weather, guitar amps, drugs, sex or whatever, but you don't think about a why....that's why we make music. If you say: "Hey maybe in this song, you must have been influenced by this or that?", I would say: "Yeahh...maybe, but it's not important to me. Important is: There is this song and it sounds good to us, and it makes us feel like we wanted to feel, when we wrote it." L.O.S.: exactly...

Let's go once more back to the digital revolution. The Internet offers a lot of possibilities for musicians like you and me. Platforms such as mp3.com or



Would you consider [D]edaken[Z] to be part of this movement?

@noiZe: No, I don't think we are. Maybe a lot of our fans are part of this movement and we like a lot of bands that are put into this genre (Ram-Zet or Dagoba for example), but music does not have to be in a special genre to be interesting for me and the most of our fans. Music should create impressions and play with our feelings.

L.O.S.: It just has to feel good. Some feel comfortable when they receive pain, some when they fuck with groups of teenage students and some when they are listening to our music.

As far as I know, you started as more or less common melody Black Metal act.

MySpace provide a meta-level between artist and fan, where nobody really is dependent on a record deal to spread his or her ideas and visions. It's possible to reach a lot of people in different countries all over the world. This might be seen as the total freedom of expression. Anyhow, I have very negative feelings about music as "User Generated Content". The value of art is decreasing as it is available at the push of a button. For me one should invest some effort in order to get music. One should walk out into the city, or at least call a mail-order and wait for something someone worked hard for with pure devotion. At least something should rotate when I listen to music and it shouldn't just exist of bits and bytes.

What are your feelings towards the invention of mp3 and "innovations" like MySpace? As far as I know you published your album before the regular release on CD in the Internet. Why did you do that and what was your experience? Will you continue to first provide the music of [D]ekaden[Z] online?

L.O.S.: Yes you are right. I also prefer having music on a real CD with nice jewel case and booklet, but we have just entered the next generation. Most people of our generation have never seen a gramophone, those of the next generation will maybe never own a tape. The kids, growing up today are downloading their music via itunes on their ipod (we are not sponsored by apple!!!) or their mobile and nobody knows what comes next. We won't change that. Everything old will die one day and something new will be created. That's evolution.

When I saw your live appearance at the Nebelmond-Festival in Germany (with avant-garde godfathers ARCTURUS – lucky bastards!) after the concert some of you guys were sitting lazy on chairs to enjoy some of the other bands. I remember thinking "These guys take their concept very serious". Is there any esoteric idea behind the name [D]ekaden[Z]? What does this word mean to you and how does decadence influence your lifestyle?

@noiZe: Decadence does not only influence our live, but the live of everyone in this time. It is the headline of our time somehow. Just think how much money you spent to stay alive and how much you spent to live.

Do you get any inspiration from philosophy and/or literature?

L.O.S.: You want me to say something like Nietzsche, right? No I'm sorry. Reality is the cruellest author. Of course we like philosophic literature but philosophy teaches to make your own thoughts, not to copy the ideas of other people. This is called religion.
@noiZe: Would you ask a philosopher if he is inspired by music?

What is the difference listening to your songs being on angel dust or in a sober condition?

@noiZe: Well, "elektronoid" was not written to be used with angel dust. It was written for LSD, but we realized that LSD is no more up to date, maybe we will produce our next longplayer for angel dust too. As limited edition maybe.

L.O.S.: Just try it out, you only need angel dust, sold by your local dealer, and "elektronoid", sold by us.



What is the reason for being before death's salvation?

L.O.S.: We are the once who asked this question. It is my job to ask it!!!

@noiZe: Maybe the question, maybe there is no reason, but only the fact that we are here.

What is there going on nowadays in the [D]ekaden[Z]-camp? Are you working on a new album? Please give us a short overview about your future plans.

@noiZe: After we just deinstalled some of our band members, we are now working hard on our second longplayer. I've mixed down some previews of our preproduction for you and the community, and you will think that "elektronoid" sounds absurd compared to it.

L.O.S.: [D]ekaden[Z] are currently only @noiZe and me, and I really have to say things are working much better now. No compromises any more, no more discussions, the music we make is just what comes directly out of our minds. @noiZe is now playing guitar, and that's why we are writing our songs with guitars, drums and vocals first. The synths are added later. That has the amazing effect that we just add parts to our songs that are sounding like the sense of my lyrics, even if they are only played on guitar. We always tried to achieve this by using synths, in the past. When we now add the synthesizers, the orchestra or the digital drums, everything sounds so extreme, that you know what the song is about, even without vocals.

@noiZe: After we have finished song writing and preproduction, we will record the album. This will be around spring 2008. We are happy that we got an endorsement with Laboga for guitar amps. Also we are looking forward to have a real drummer for the recordings. We are currently looking for musicians (2nd guitars, bass, and drums) for live performance.

GIRE

The End Of A Dream

By revon

This Autumn kicked off with a sad announcement, Gire has split up due to guitarist/vocalist Zolcsi's will to stop all his musical activities. But for Gire still there was another gig to be held - and for me another journey and concert to go and enjoy. On the 22nd of September, after 12 years Gire ends its career with a concert held at the II. Hódstock Festival. But before their very last performance I had an interview with keyboardist/lyricist/programmer Tamás in the backstage talking about past, present and future.

What have you been doing before joining Gire, Tamás? What other musical projects did you have that time and which are the still-existing ones among them?

I joined Gire and around that time created my one-man project, Thy Catafalque which is still active. Before Gire there was Darklight, but nowadays it isn't necessary to release albums as Darklight and now I use my own name. Later Gort came which can be considered as the child of Catafalque and Gire. Oh, I have nearly forgotten Towards Rusted Soil which is used to be a black metal band.

How did you become a member of Gire? How old were you that time?

Well, it was in 1996, so I was around 20. The others were my friends. They recorded a demo and wanted a keyboardist in the band afterwards. They were thinking about having samplers and industrial effects in the music like Prong had.

How have you been feeling yourself in Gire at the beginning as a new member?

Oh, we knew each other from our childhood we were friends since then, so it was easy to fit in. Those who liked this music in the '90s all knew each other. I was a bit older than the others but we were attending the same school so there wasn't any problem with it.

What was your way of thinking about life and everything?

(Laughs) I hadn't been thinking about this, I was attending a teacher trainee college, later

got graduated but didn't really like it, and it's not my profession today either.

What ideas did you bring to the band? We can't deny that you were the one who brought new, revolutionizing ideas.



The first song we wrote together was "Törjön testünk!" and it was full of samples. There were industrial clicks and cracks, similar to the sounds of clashing iron, Necropsia featured something like this on their album "Mélység". So in the first version of "Törjön testünk!" you cannot find ordinary keyboards and synths, just samples. As the time went by I had been playing a lot, trained myself and managed to play new, more complex melodies and such. So as I improved, much more keyboards came into the music but they were not effects and samples anymore, but real keyboard playing.

Never wanted to go for the vocals?

In Thy Catafalque I'm the vocalist.

Yeah, I know, but in Gire?

Oh, no, I didn't want to perform the vocals here (laughs). There has always been a vocalist. There wasn't a need for another and in concerts I can't do them while simultaneously playing on my instrument.

When did you start to write poems?

Around the age of seventeen, everybody starts it around that time.

Did some poets influence you?

Oh, yes, sure, some of them actually did.

Can you name some who had this impact on you?

Yes, the poets and writers of Nyugat, all the three generations but one of my favourite is Radnóti, I like his works very much.

Do you still write new poems?

Yes, but not that often as in the past.

Will these new ones be published in the future?

Yes, when there will be enough to bring out a new volume. The first volume contains poems from the past 8 years, so the new release

won't come out tomorrow. Frankly, I'm not that type which sits down and thinks; "Yes, I'm about to write a poem", no. When inspiration comes I write it down, but that's all. It's a slow progress now. It was faster and more productive in the past, because I was in bad mood.



And how did the idea come to use your poems as lyrics?

Well, there wasn't anyone in the band who wrote lyrics. However, the first demo featured lyrics of Zolcsi. But later he stopped writing and they knew I had poems. So we tried whether they can fit in the songs, and actually it worked. So this is it, we use them since then.

Where does the inspiration come from? From your fantasy or are they based on your real life?

Based on my feelings, that's all. I don't think it should be propaganda-like or connected to political or social happenings, but must mirror my feelings and thoughts.

How do you create music? I'm sure you are responsible for the keyboards and the drum machine.

Yes, I am. Zolcsi does the guitars, imagines it, then plays it and after all we discuss whether it is good or not. But I wrote the main part of the songs recently and he played guitars for it, despite the fact that some time ago he brought his ideas first, and then I put on the keys. Balázs also came up with good themes.

What was the main path to follow during the band's career? To make something

new, something more colorful? Was there anything like that?

There was, probably in the beginning. Around that time in Hungary every second band played modern brutal metal (as they were called that time) covering Pantera, Machine Head, Korn, so did we. Then we figured out we should play something that differs from it, using the keys more intensely. But later it disappeared and we didn't mind it, we just did what we liked, so the will to play music differently had gone, we didn't care for more what the others played.

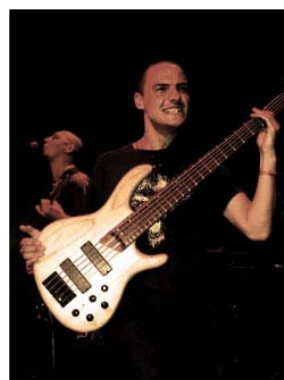
What is your opinion about the Hungarian metal and the world's Avantgarde scene?

I think there are good metal bands in Hungary, I like Watch my Dying, Isten Háta Mögött - actually they are really respected in certain circles, but I also listen to Aebseence, Wackor, and to some old ones such as Necropsia, Subject, The Bedlam, Korai Öröm, Másfél and VHK. But I like those strange bands that are playing something different.

And what about the foreign acts?

Well, I really like Sleepytime Gorilla Museum, UnexpectT, Arcturus... I also like the new Ulver album.

Wow, I have only listened to one track yet.



There's a Black Sabbath cover on it, did you know? It's great.

Yeah, I knew, but I've never really listened to Black Sabbath.

Oh, but that song is one of the best on the album. Anyway, I'm not really into this, I only know a few bands, but I don't look for new ones on the internet, I already have too much music at home, and have no time to listen to them.

Any of them influenced Gire?

Yes, their way of thinking, the way they look on music. It is possible to create music in a different way. I think it is good to hear what they figure out, their crazy attitude to music; breaking the rules, this inspires me too. But on the other hand I don't like when it's just mixed together and directly for to differ. In my opinion there must be a certain image of a song. It doesn't matter whether it is created in an ordinary or in a progressive way.

How did Gire feel in this scene? Are there bands you had good relationship with?

Yes, sure, we never had arguments with the bands we played together with - during the 12 years we didn't play too many times either, we only had 82 or 83 concerts, it's not much I think. Personally I haven't got any problems with the scene.

We could say that the Hungarian metal scene is responsible for Gire's disbanding but no, that wouldn't be true. We could say they don't admit the talent and it's hard to break out as well, but no, the reason for splitting up is not this. I think we are well respected

in the press, as well as in certain circles. We felt really good ourselves.

Yes, we arrived to the concert questions. So which ones were the most memorable ones in the past 12 years?

Probably one of them was the support gig for Ektomorf at the A38 Ship in January. We liked the place. Another one was performing before Soulfly at Petöfi Csarnok. This was a great thing really. We also liked giving concerts at the Nightbreed Festivals, as well as in Marco Polo.



You have a Marco Polo video on youtube, Zöld Zivatar, right?

Yes, we have that one.

Have you ever been invited to play abroad?

No.

Never?

Once we played a gig in Senta (Serbia) supporting Watch my Dying.

Never wanted to make music abroad?

Hungarian language could have been a problem. In this case I don't want to translate the lyrics. Anyway, the whole band travels to abroad in the near future.

But you don't, do you?

I do.

Really?

Yes.

Wow, that's new for me. And where will you go to?

To Scotland.

You too?

Yes.

And what are you going to do there?

Nothing, I don't know. (laughs) Okay, I will definitely do something but have no idea at the moment. I have many friends living there, for instance Imre, the ex-vocalist of Gire. I will travel to him. Balázs, our bass player lives in Scotland as well; Zolcsi will go to Tamás Rozsnyai, the ex-guitarist/vocalist of the band who lives in London. But this doesn't mean that we will continue playing in Gire.

Zolcsi won't do it anymore. We are still good friends as we were always, no matter what happened in the band...imagine that our ex-drummer Gábor took us here.

How much did you usually rehearse for a concert? And how did it go?

For this one we practiced 3 times of this week and we managed to play the songs well.

Do you personally go to concerts?

I used to go many times but in this year I don't even know where I went to. (laughs) I remember I wanted to see Cynic but actually I didn't go. However I've been to a festival organized by a broadcasting company but it was a piece of crap...at least it was free of charge. Actually I don't want to pay for concerts or anything. I don't buy CDs either. I have no money at all. This is why I move to Scotland, this is the reason why I leave Hungary. Here

in Makó, there isn't any possibility for a good job.

So you leave the hospital? (Current place of job)

Of course, I do. Look, I get the minimal wage in every month and it's simply not enough. I only have money to go to job to Szeged Hospital on the every next day, nothing more. That's the problem. This is why young people are leaving Makó.

Oh, I see.. Let's have a look on your side projects. What about your ambient one headlined by your own name, Kátai Tamás? Will you continue working on new material?

It's the matter of my mood. The album "Erika szobája" was a really special one. It has its story...I need another story like that to make another album.

Is there any chance that you will feature covers of poems written by other poets on the new Thy Catafalque album like you did on "Tűnő Idő Tárlat"?

No, not really, mainly because of the copyrights. Last time it was a big problem, I don't want that procedure again that I had with the poems of Radnóti and Weöres. Fortunately I had no problems with Ady because he died much earlier.

What can we expect from the music? Will there be rough, heavy songs and light, soft ones as well?



One will find tracks in both of these styles. It will be more extreme in variety. 10-15 minutes are already done, and there will be a song which is similar to "Héja-Nász az Avaron" concerning the atmosphere. It will be a 4 minutes slow, doom-like song. However, I don't want to mix too many styles like a maniac if it's not for a good cause.

And what about the lyrical themes? Will there be changes? You told me in an e-mail that it will contain more songs that have something to do with Autumn. But there is the cosmology, time and space as a theme in your lyrics.

Oh, well, there were songs already featuring Autumn, have a look at "Héja-Nász az Avaron" or "Zápor", but yes, there will be new ones, like "Őszi Varázslók", which is obvious ("Őszi Varázslók" is "Autumn Wizards" in English). I'm not sure about the themes yet but time will tell.

Will it be a digipack release?

Well, first the songs must be completed, and here's my problem. We are planning to move to Scotland in the middle of January. So I have to finish the master CD at least. I won't have time abroad to write music and such, I can't bring out my PC there. So it will be waiting for my return.

How much time will you spend out there?

I don't know, nothing is in shape yet. Currently there are so many changes in my life that I cannot tell surely. Permanent things are also changing, so does the view I look on music. It won't be the most important. But I really try to work every day on this release, Nikoletta comes tomorrow to record some female vocals for two new songs but I don't want to mess up the whole thing, so the album will come out when it has to.

Do you think the band managed to achieve the most it could or not?

No, no...I don't know. We succeed to record the CD. I'm really satisfied with the album. I'm proud of it. And in my opinion we had much more in ourselves, so I would continue with Gire. But we all know what the situation is. Recently Zolcsi suffered from a lack of creativity and I

didn't want to create it all myself because then it would be Thy Catafalque material. Gire wasn't about just me, but the three of us. But we cannot continue in a situation like this. There isn't any point to run this band for more. We aren't sad about it. Okay, I am, but we must admit that this was the right decision.

ANSUR

Mad Max, Cognac And Postapocalyptic Cigars

By Jegger and Chrystof



Ansur is a young Black/ Death Metal band from Norway, which is nothing special, as we all know. But Ansur is different. Is this the new Norwegian avantgarde/ extreme metal phenomenon after bands like Emperor, Zyklon, Thorns or early Myrskog? Due to the band their last record Axiom incorporated "stronger progressive elements in addition to the black and death metal styles to create something more characteristic and unique". Indeed these fresh guys are very promising to become a new progressive extreme metal sensation. Jegger and Chrystof met Espen A.R. Aulie (EA - vocals, bass, and lyrics) and Torstein J. Nipe (T - guitars, programming and composition) for a glass of cognac and some illegal Havanna Cigars...

C: Torstein, you've just returned from holidays in Sicily. Any weird stories about that? Donne with moustache? Mafia trade with body parts? Men mistaken for women at the nightly beach? Or just the typical Scandinavian debaucheries with Italian wine and grappa?

T: My cover was to go there on vacation with the family, but I was really doing a secret mission for the mafia. I came there to sell six legs, four arms and one moustache. Because I was mistaken for a woman at night, no one could see what I was up to, and it all turned out a success!

C: Your Debut "Carved in Flesh" (2004) seemed to be influenced by Darkthrone very much. It was raw Black Metal with some little innovative elements. Just two years later you released your killer-album

"Axiom", a masterpiece of avant-garde metal. What was the reason for this radical change in style? Drugs or drug withdrawal?

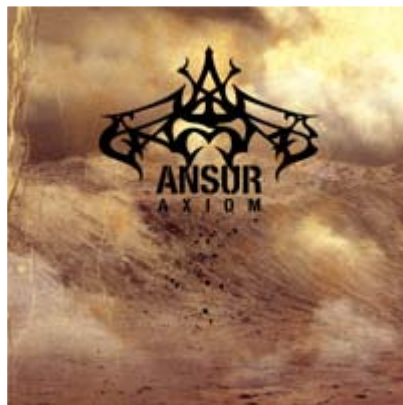
T: Thanks, hehe. Well, I was about 15 or something when "Carved in Flesh" was recorded in my cellar, and I guess we just matured a great deal since then. I've grown up with progressive rock of the 70's, which is true of all members of the band; my first meeting with a guitar was when my father taught me the riff of "Breathe" (Pink Floyd) when I was 5. So instead of nerding around like the other kids, listening to 90's trance, I was playing guitar. OK, maybe Scooter was really cool (still is actually), but you get my point! So I guess we "went back to our childhood roots", by throwing in progressive elements. It's really important for us to play whatever we want, regardless if we turn into a Scooter cover band (not that this is planned in near future!!). I have no relationship with drugs at all, but I can only speak for myself of course. But my favourite bands would probably not be what they are if it hadn't been for the 60-70s drug-frenzy.

C: How did the Norwegian Black Metal Scene react to "Axiom"? Do you feel like lost sons now? Did any BM-lunatics threaten to punish you for this "untrue" album?

T: The scene reacted amazingly well (if this "scene" of today could be defined), and to my big disappointment, we got NO hate mail. NONE! No death threats or pub-beatings for being uNtR00 or anything. People in the metal scene have only given us compliments here, and we got no bad reviews in Norway at all. It's always nice for a band to get to the point where followers of the genre know who they are. By the way, I hope our new album will hit all minimalist old school losers like a kick in face! The old school fans actually seemed to like "Axiom", so that's a little strange.

J: I know you don't like to talk about that so much. But can you give us some hints about the concept behind "Axiom"?

EA: The thing is. I really don't know how we came up with the idea of mixing an alien invasion with unsolved, biblical mysteries into an "Axiom." My guess is either loads of alcohol or too much of the shit Erich Von Däniken writes. The writing gets a lot easier when you have a red line to go after, and I think the listeners



get more into the album with these mood-switches we include in the lyrics. And if not, fuck it. We tried right?

I won't give you any hints I'm afraid, but if you check out what an "Axiom" is, and if you read the lyrics on Axiom and eventually our upcoming release I'll bet you'll figure it out (if you're a smart, capitalistic, up going, young man)

J: What is a Post-Apocalyptic Wasteland? Could you describe that a little bit clearer and what do you mean with your musical definition: A journey through peculiar soundscapes?

T: That quote was from one of the first reviews we got of "Axiom". I think it fitted pretty well. A Post-Apocalyptic Wasteland in our case is a barren terrain destroyed by a nuclear disaster. Just watch the Mad Max-movies, which also served as inspiration for the concept of the album, both visually and musically.

C: You mentioned Erik Van Däniken. Do you believe in UFOs? If yes, do you think they come from outer space or from another dimension?

E: I believe that every "proven" alien visitation in our time is made up. The thing about Däniken is that it's either bullshit, or "semi-facts." Unlike others he presents hypothesis's that I find interesting and sometimes logical. Some of those hypothesis's are included in the background of our "fictional universe," and I doubt that anyone has understood it. YET!

C: "Axiom" has been recorded in your own studio. What equipment did you use?

T: Everything was recorded on a computer. We play only stylish instruments, and that means Fender Stratocasters and Marshall Amps. The Rolls Royce and Rolex of music equipment!

C: Fifteen Years ago bands had to record their songs on 4-track tape recorders. For bigger productions you had to go to expensive studios. Nowadays it has become very easy to make good and extensive productions at home. Do you think you could have done an album like "Axiom" back in the 1990ies? How much

did the process and possibilities of recording influence your songs?

T: We broke a little mental barrier when we decided to do it at home. I've only recorded an album in another studio ONCE, and I decided to never do it again. I think influence and opinions from other people sets a mark on the product, and we want things to sound as much as us as possible. People can be sure that everything is done by us, and we don't have to think about things as time pressure for example. So we thought "why not do it ourselves?" It is also very important for us to drink cognac and smoke cigars while we are in the studio.



EA: So by lowering the production costs we are able to buy more expensive cognac brands and illegally imported Cuban cigars. Increased quantity and quality. Win/win right?

C: I know this is a boring standard question. But what does "Ansur" mean?

EA & T: Wow, that's like a boring and standard question! Anyway, it's like a rune or something. Google is your friend.

J: You are working with Nocturnal Art at the moment. How is the relationship with this company? Is Samoth a nice chief and do you feel sometimes like a Zyklon-Cover band?

T: Samoth knows the music industry and business, and we have learned a great deal from him, plus good advice etc. Working with Nocturnal Art is great, if they hadn't picked us up, we probably would be signed to some shitty underground label from Eastern Asia.

EA: We actually tour as Zyklon sometimes, so they can sit at home and smile. It's funny;

we earn more money that way. Zyklon last Inferno festival that was us! No seriously, no one thinks we sound like Zyklon at all.

J: What do progression, individualism and avantgardism mean to you? Do you feel like a band that redefined the extreme metal genre?

T: The traits you mention there is very important to us. Maybe we haven't redefined the genre yet (or genres), but we will! Besides, no other extreme metal band play concerts in suits and ties. So we have already redefined style with our exclusive appearance!



C: Suits and Ties, Cigars, Cognac, Rolex, Rolls Royce...Aren't you afraid to loose ground under your feet sometimes? I mean many young Bands do...It starts with fun and ends with hybris.

T: You forgot limousines! I'm afraid we have already lost touch with reality, and the ground under our feet disappeared last year. Seriously, if we're talking about our music, I would with all my heart see that it never touches the ground. I wouldn't like it at all if we ever made stuff that was "down to earth". Actually I would like it to be as far away from the ground at possible, we want it to sound spaced, unearthly and kind of "dreaming".

C: Yes, it's the privilege of artists to create their own worlds beyond the common world. But imagine you would have to be a politician. You would have the power to let the world in your head become the common world. What would you do then? What would you like to change?

T: I can't really say to you what I'd change. That would really be giving away my plans for world dictatorship! Otherwise, I hope that no one gets that kind of power. Particularly scary, with communism on the rise again (at least here and in Russia). What would you like to change?

C: I would make an ANSUR song the new national anthem of Uruguay. By the way, into which new musical territories will you flow on in the nearer future?

T: The new album will be a mingle of progressive metal, 70s progressive rock, 80s prog-pop, extreme metal, blues/jazz and a whole variety of different stuff woven together in a very special way. The arrangements are taking up most of the time, but I'd say the album is about 70% percent finished when it comes to writing. There are pre-productions recorded also. It's more melodic and dramatic than Axiom, kind of a "larger scale". There are little synths on the album, but a lot of Hammond organ to get that 70s progressive rock feels, you know? There are also choruses in the songs, in opposition to Axiom, which was a little unorganized when it came to the arrangements.

C: Choruses? So maybe you will end up in the Billboard Charts one day?

T: I'd like that very much.

E: Why not?

C: You've done lots of concerts in Scandinavia. Are there any plans that you will also tour through the rest of Europe?

E: We'll tour the entire world for that matter, but that thought isn't just realistic yet. When we have the time and resources at disposal, we will.

T: Yeah, we would very much like to play gigs abroad, but the opportunity hasn't come yet. We talked to some arrangers, but nothing was planned.



C: Many bands complain about bad and unprofessional conditions on tour. Do you think groupies can compensate for that? Or are you in the tight hands of girlfriends?

EA: Why make a commitment when you can get laid without it?

T: Girlfriends are bad for the creativity, the music comes first. When a girl starts to take up my time so I can't make music, she instantly gets dumped.

C: Okay Espen and Torstein. Now we'll change rolls. You can ask me a question.

T: Okay, this is part of the lyrics of which song by which famous 80s artist? "There's a concert hall in Vienna where your mouth had a thousand reviews. There's a bar where the boys have stopped talking they've been sentenced to death by the blues"

C: I guess FALCO, right?

EA: Who's the 31st president of USA?

C: Internet says my good friend Herbert C. Hoover. And now you can ask yourself a question - one that you always wanted to answer, but nobody has asked it so far.

T: Do your amps go to 11?

EA: Yes.

C: Okay guys, thanks a lot for this very cool interview! It was fun to meet you. You are definitely one of the most promising young acts of the whole scene! So never stop the madness!

We won't! Thanks for the interview. Looking forward to reading a review of our NEXT album here on AGM.com!

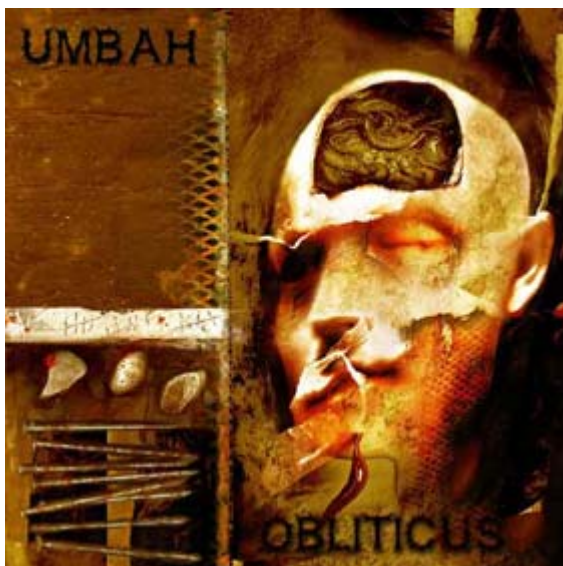


UMBAH

The Tech-Grind Anti-Band Aesthetic

By Suleiman

Finally here is an interview with the insanity that is Umbah aka Cal Scott. This man is single handily pushing industrial-cyber extreme metal into new and strange realms with each new release, all without proper distribution. Therefore he remains very much a true underground phenomena, not to mention completely DIY in action and philosophy. So open your ears, eyes and mind to the sound of the beyond.



When did you start mangling the axe (playing guitar)?

I was 15 and picked up a homemade shark fin.

What were the main forces behind Necrosanct's break-up?

The rhythm guitarist left then we carried on for a while as a 3 piece but it had lost its momentum so it just wound up.

What was the original idea behind Umbah's inception?

After recording some riff ideas to mates drum machine I just thought that is a cool thing to do. So I got a 4 track and just started. It was different from being in a band, it was more rewarding. With every new track I discovered I could do something better and different, things that a real band couldn't do. So the idea behind it was to see where that could go. I was and still am very curious to find out.

Inspirations for Umbah?

All the mysteries, complexities and weirdness and insanity of life.

What convinced you to go the DIY route, instead of the standard studio/label contract and distribution shebang?

Never had money for studio time for Umbah so the default route is DIY. Anyway I prefer recording alone when I have a good head on. Of course having a label and distribution would be great, cause more people would listen.



Who is / are the primary influence(s) in your guitar playing?

Originally inspired by the old death metal scene, but when started listening to guys like King Crimson and Mahavishnu it opened my eyes to other awesome styles.

Your all time favourite bands and artists?

So many including Cynic, Meshuggah, Suffocation, Gorguts, Ulver, Roni Size and some weird classical shit as well.

Your current play list favorites?

Monstrosity, Dillinger Escape Plan, Origin, Morbid Angel.

What does Umbah recording rig consist of?

I have been using a Shark fin guitar, and now

have the old bass guitar from Microcosm... cheers Ben. Also a fantastic Digitech GSP2101 guitar preamp. But have been experimenting with some GuitarRig for the last few tracks. I used a Rode NT2 mic for vocals on most Umbah tracks.

Always record with AcidPro these days. I used it since V1 now its on V6 so I know it inside out, its got rewire capabilities so now I can run softsynths and drum software inside Acid, a true symbiosis. And the various fx come from either plug-ins or a rather fine Chaos Pad II.

Is playing live ever going to be an option with Umbah?



That would be total dream... can you imagine. If I could find the right drummer and bassist I would love to, but so far not been that lucky.

Where do the gothic overtones in Umbah come from i.e. is Bauhaus or Killing Joke responsible for inspiring some of this?

Not sure really cause I never had much gothic in my collection, Tristania are good, and I liked some of The Fields of Nephlim stuff (the cover of Elysium does weird things to my head), and also had a cool Killing joke tape once.

What does the future hold for Umbah?

... a journey into new worlds, imagine what it will sound like in 10 years time, I guess I have to continue or we'll never find out.

Any chance of more conventional distribution, because this sound deserves to be heard by as many as possible? Err.. Its something I have not really looked into yet, and I do no promotion/distribution so I guess its no surprise Umbah is a complete unknown.

What is the idea behind Microcosm and are their any other projects underway?

Microcosm was a 3 piece group back in the mid nineties, I played guitar and did vocals. It was one of those cool rare vibes, we played with no rules. Did some gigs and after one

demo we moved to different places so it finished.

Live stuff is always a laugh so I always have side projects with mates, at the moment I play drums in a more psychedelic band and play guitar for a local hardcore band. Also engineer some demos each year for local bands for a bit of fun.

What is your view of the current metal scene and the future?

There are always a lot of bands I keep discovering fresh music and don't see that ever changing.



Last but not least the ever helpful Cal has uploaded the complete Umbah discography of the last 10 years in mp3 format on his web-site.

Run now to the site <http://www.umbah.co.uk/> to get the goodies.

This is music to disintegrate in hyperspace, and it's yours now for FREE.

Truly an icon making music for art's sake. Respect.



**AVANTGARDE METAL
RECOMMENDATION:
13 exquisitely weird albums of
Cal Scott's
UMBah
DOWNLOAD FOR FREE at
<http://www.umbah.co.uk>**

BRACHIALILLUMINATOR

Communicate As If It Was 1899.

By Jonny Lignano

Coincidentally Bozkovich, the mastermind of Brachialilluminator and executor of the Mighty himself and Sgt. Lignano were working for the National Austrian Post this summer. Whilst he was working in a small post office somewhere in Vienna, I was dutiful working in a small post office in Kötschach-Mauten [don't bother looking that up, it is between the middle of nowhere and the end of the world].

Whilst work itself was boring [as hell, for the Satanist readers among you] for both of us, we were in communication-heaven and able to (mis)use the available resources without knowledge of any superiors [besides the Mightiest, of course]. Before we started what might be known in 'The Great Book of Music History' as the first "telegram-interview", we sent a sheer enormous amount of telegrams between our two offices. The one I remembered most was his telegram, citing the entire lyrics of Frank Zappa's 'Valley girl' in an envelope that played some Dadaistic electroclash when opened.

In case you wondered: telegrams are still in use, and yes, they are awfully expensive for puny non-post office-workers. Fortunately we did not have to morse the questions and answers back and forth, these days there is machinery that does the real work.

So after excessively testing we used telegrams to make this interview. Occasionally we sent each other images via the teleprinter (funniest day with the teleprinter was, when we sent each other all the national flags of all the UN-countries). What you are about to read is a collection of the best telegram-dialogues that were sent between June 15th 2007 and July 26th 2007. To enhance readability I left out all the technical yada yada that accompanies this technology from the centuries that brought you trains, Nietzsche, electricity, world war I and II, Snickers, Ghadaffi and Dr. Who.



Lignano: Are you playing a Kramer guitar?

Bozkovich: Sure. Heavy as Heavy Metal can be (in the 80s, at least!).

Lignano: How many guitars do you have?

Bozkovich: Including the basses and the mandolin - five.



Lignano: Was your song "Liberia" influenced by Michael Jackson's "Liberian Girl"?

Bozkovich: More by a Liberian girl I used to know.

Lignano: Can you send me an image of that Liberian girl over the teleprinter?

Bozkovich: No, but I can send you an image of "Sons of southern parkness".



Lignano: There is this awesome part in "06 - Dept. of Psychonautics/New World Order" where you sing "I think you are brainwashed" forever, do you have any idea what the M. might have wanted to tell the world with that?

Bozkovich: Actually it's "Brainwashed but never dried" - the state of many humans before the Dept. of Psychonautics started its work.

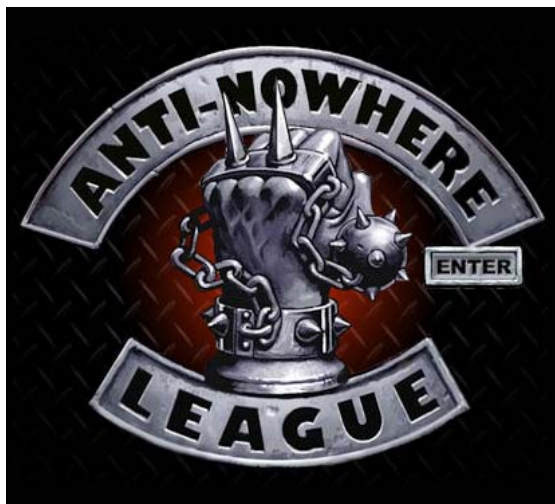
Lignano: Oh, I must have misheard.

Lignano: Were you ever not allowed to enter former Yugoslavia?

Bozkovich: I was not allowed to enter former Yugoslavia once. That must have been in 1993. Had to go back to Budapest to get a Visa. They didn't like Austrians and Germans too much at that time - all of them were sent back. The Japanese who were with us got their visa on the spot.

Lignano: Did you play there?

Bozkovich: No, I have never been in the Anti-Nowhere League.



Lignano: But you did play in/with Malignom, Mandragora, Die Leber Vs. Screaming Sisters, When Yuppies Go To Hell, Spiess und Schwarz and Gebrüder Göd ft. Stefan Weber.
Bozkovich: Yes.

Lignano: When did Falco leave Brachialilluminator?

Bozkovich: This must have been when he decided to work with Wickerl Adam.

Lignano: Are you tattooed?

Bozkovich: I don't have tattoos.

Lignano: Are there people with Brachialilluminator-tattoos?

Bozkovich: I haven't seen any so far. But I like the idea. I once found a "Brachialilluminator"-song on a "Soukuss-International" site. So anything can happen.

Lignano: Do you still have the link for that site?

Bozkovich: Can't find it now. It was a Russian site. Might have gone offline.

Lignano: Tell me more about your poem indonesian teddy bear.

Bozkovich: It developed when I was in Indonesia (surprise!). Actually it was three times longer but I had to delete the most obvious parts.

Lignano: So most of your lyrics are written while being abroad?

Bozkovich: I often get inspired while being abroad. For the rest of the lyrics, nowadays, they are forced out. I mean, I find a topic and then I force myself to write down my thoughts on that topic within ten or twenty minutes. I wrote many more lyrics in my punk-phase. Most of them were useless, anyway. My last lyrical inspiration in Austria turned out to become "HackIn is fian Oasch" ["Working sucks balls"; transl. lig].
Lignano: That was on your first release 2001?
Bozkovich: First CD release - yes.

Lignano: Would you like to tour Japan?

Bozkovich: Screaming teenagers, expensive food, drunken office people and maybe meeting Melt Banana or Ex-Girl or The Ruins? No question...

Lignano: This was actually just a test question whether you are real musicians, because all real musicians want to tour Japan.

Lignano: What are the travel plans for the next album?

Bozkovich: I suppose the next album will deal with health. Bodily or spiritual health. Details have still to be confirmed with the Mightiest.

If it were meant to deal with spiritual health, it would of course become collaboration with the Dept. of Psychonautics.

Lignano: You are singing about six departments on "new world order", is this all there is, departmentwise?

Bozkovich: These are the departments that should most necessarily be known by the citizens. Of course there are other ones, as well. You can't run a whole "New World Order" with only six departments. But the Mightiest tries to keep the government slim. Not like in (former, but it is still known as) Malawi, where they have 54 ministers.

Lignano: Are you ready for the famous avantgarde-metal.com word rap? Rules: I give you one (or maximum two, or maximum three) words and you must answer with one, maximum two or maximum three words.

Bozkovich: Shoot!

Lignano: Peter Gabriel Bozkovich: Geneses. Games.

Lignano: Star Trek

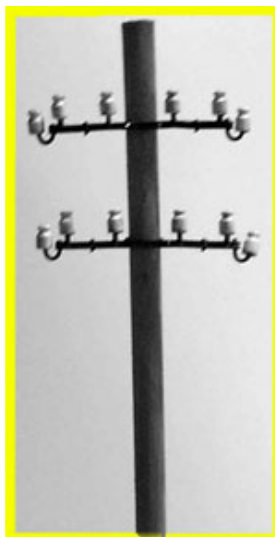
Bozkovich: Ears. Black woman.

Lignano: Jochen Rindt

Bozkovich: Austrian!!!! Death.

Lignano: Columbo

Bozkovich: Mad magazine.



Lignano: Klaus Eberhartinger
 Bozkovich: Dance star.
 Lignano: Joschka Fischer
 Bozkovich: Brutal youth.
 Lignano: Slayer
 Bozkovich: offended easily
 Lignano: Loddar Matthäus
 Bozkovich: -
 Lignano: Los Lobos
 Bozkovich: Espanol. Don't know.
 Lignano: Ephraim Kishon
 Bozkovich: Funny. Racist.
 Lignano: Beer
 Bozkovich: Great. Motörhead.
 Lignano: Elvis Presley
 Bozkovich: Dead.
 Lignano: Fritz the cat
 Bozkovich: Pornographic. Hells angels.
 Lignano: Perfect!
 Bozkovich: More than good.

Lignano: I assume you have seen Gwar live - what was your preferred distance to the stage when seeing/hearing them "perform"?



Bozkovich: About 15 meter [~15 feet] - far enough for not getting overrun by the newcomers when the blood is spilled the first time but still near enough to find it funny.

Lignano: Do you still have cloth with Gwar-bloodstains?

Bozkovich: That's a great joke of theirs. They sell expensive white t-shirts for people to get them stained during the concert. But the colour is risible...

Lignano: Did you buy one?

Bozkovich: Haha, nope.

Lignano: In what relationship stands the M. and Gwar?

Bozkovich: I have seen a documentary on "shock rock" once. There the Mentors told the audience that they are real and Gwar is just show. So I suppose, in neither.

Lignano: Is he pointing to the Mightiest?

Bozkovich: The Mightiest is really very political. Before this interview I never thought of him being to do with religion. No, I don't think he cares about that stuff.

Lignano: So the M. is rather materialistic and aural?

Bozkovich: Materialistic sure. My job is to get the aural message done; I suppose he has other employees for dealing with different sensual areas. But I don't ask too many questions.

Lignano: Who is your favourite porn star?



Bozkovich: If Geri Halliwell were one, I'd say - her.

Lignano: What is your favourite figure in chess?

Bozkovich: Magma.

Lignano: Huh?

Bozkovich: I am listening to them right now.

"De Futura" from the album "Üdü Wüdü".

Predecessors of the Mightiest - or Brachialilluminator, I'm not quite sure if they were the masters or the means.

Lignano: Oh, those. Sorry for my lack of musical knowledge!

Lignano: What is your favourite song by Morrissey/The Smiths?

Bozkovich: Sorry for my lack of musical knowledge!

Lignano: Who is your favourite author?

Bozkovich: R.A.Wilson, Crowley, Kapuscinski, Ken saro Wiwa.

Lignano: The Unabomber?

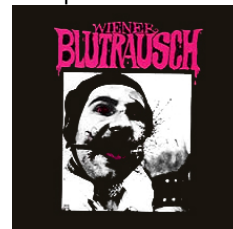
Bozkovich: I think that's Kazcynski.

Lignano: Oh. True that.

Lignano: What's your favourite Manifesto?

Bozkovich: Probably the Roxy Music album. Although I don't fancy them too much...

Lignano: Do you own the well-famous vinyl-sampler "Wiener Blutausch" from 1979?



Bozkovich: Unfortunately I only have it on MC. I had never been willing to pay 500-1000 (Austrian) Schillings or more for one record.

Lignano: I think even more...

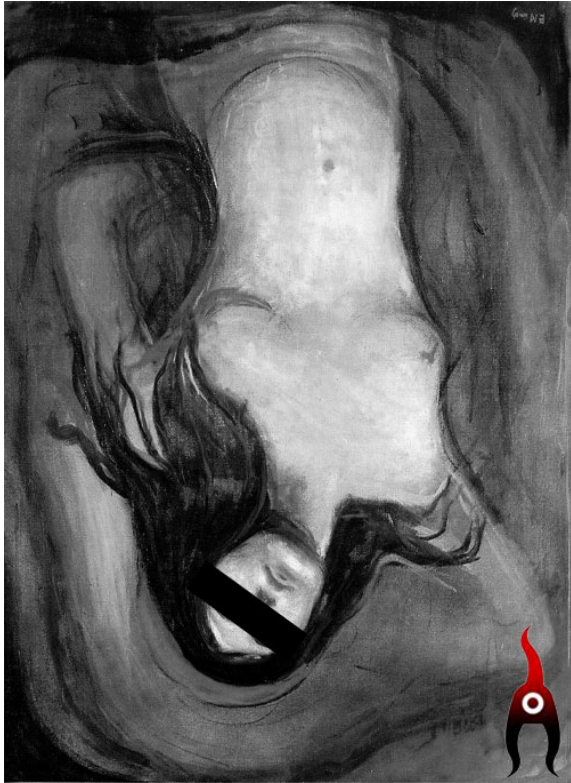
Bozkovich: At that price I'd rather buy a car than an album.

Lignano: Or hookers!

Bozkovich: Even better.



Lignano: What's the most offensive thing in this picture?



Bozkovich: Offensive? I don't know. Where do you come up with that stuff?

Lignano: Post-office-boredom. Most of the stuff floats in the interweb. Some in my head. This might be easier:



- Do you think he listens to Avantgarde Metal?

Bozkovich: I think he prefers Jello Biafra.

Lignano: Are you aware that your domain name brachialilluminator.com will expire at the end of august 2007? For how much would you sell it?

Bozkovich: I get frequently reminded by the "domain registry of America" or what ever the name of these suckers is. A warning to everybody.

Lignano: Do you think that "Diplomatie ist die Fortsetzung von Krieg mit anderen Mitteln" or that "Krieg ist die Fortsetzung von Diplomatie mit anderen Mitteln"?

Bozkovich: "Fußball ist die Fortsetzung von Politik mit anderen Mitteln". Or the other way round, can't remember. Actually there once has been a war cause of a football match (see Kapuscinski, Richard. The Soccer War. Translated William Brand. London: Granta Books, 1990).

Lignano: Why should our dear readers rush to www.brachialilluminator.com and not to www.niddl.com after reading this interview to buy CD's?

Bozkovich: Because there's gonna be a re-launch of the Brachialilluminator site as soon as the further projects get into shape.

Lignano: I think Niddl and Brachialilluminator could produce great stuff as Niddlilluminator.

Bozkovich: Brachianiddluminator.

Lignano: Would you like to write a review on a niddl CD for avantgarde-metal.com?

Bozkovich: Definitely. But I would need the CD first.

Lignano: Pure Awesomeness! I will organise a niddl album for you.

Bozkovich: It will be my pleasure.

~ ~ ~

The whole telegram interview (/I imitate Bugs Bunny voice: "Remember kids, you've seen it first here on avantgarde-metal.com!") was a whole new working experience for me; and please don't tell it to those boys.



ABSTRUSE

Transgressing The Veiled Substants

By aVoid

Greek duo Abstruse - now reduced by 50% - is one of the strangest entities I've come across so far since the genesis of this site. Enthrallled by their hallucinating singularity and wicked cerebral compositions, I had no other choice but to make first contact and explore deep into the Universe that is Abstruse...

Good day to You sir(s), and thank You very much for agreeing to do this interview. Abstruse is for most readers - me included - a very new name. Tell us a bit about this entity. Which musicians does it contain? When and where and how and why did Abstruse begin?

Substant: Abstruse was created in 2002. I, Substant, and Veiler were the duo on the first unreleased demo "Neuronal Paths" (2003) and on the recent one, "Transgression". We started this project as a mean to materialize obscure, mysterious or eerie if you wish, musical ideas, and it all happened in a suburb of Athens. The musicians that have helped as so far are all drummers with a specialization to different styles of music: Kostas Daskalias (Jazz-swing), Bill (Prog-rock, metal) and Shapeshifter (Extreme metal). Now Veiler is no longer involved in the project and it became a one man band (temporarily?).

As I wrote in my review of Transgression, you have pretty bold ambitions. You succeed none the less to truly transform your ideas into music. What is the ultimate goal of your musicianship? What compelled you to combine these elements (the visuals, especially)?

Speaking for the future I would like to explore and expand the order-based system that I am working on and also -something that we started from "Transgression" - to work on the analogical relationships between different senses such as visual to sound combinations to odour-producing smokes, lights etc. This holistic approach is a part of Abstruse's philosophy. It may also bring to mind some works of Kandinsky back in the 1900's. Also the gestalt theory gives some hints about how does this 'work'. There is also a hope to give new air to

breathe to these relationships by a program (working on) that decodes motion properties into sound properties.



You are definitely very skilled musicians. What background do you have as musicians, conservatories or autodidacts? And for your visual artworks, do you have any formal training? Tell us about the "Secret Order" part of your website, where the interested can find enlightenment in the obscurity of your tonality... (As a musician and musicology student I found this particularly interesting.) Is the "Majestic scale" your own invention?

Basically we are autodidacts. Although, I am very interested in studying the 20th century and contemporary music. Thus a minor in music back in the university along with some good courses and "extracurricular" books really helped. For the visual part now Veiler

founded his own forms in digital art and he is still studying graphic design. My specialization back in the university was film studies with two senior projects in Video Art.

Now for the secret order part...It speaks about.uhm..orders! These are patterns of intervals or motifs that are used in Abstruse's music and represent different musical characters to give a short description. Order also is a musical language that counts intervals as digits (such as semitones) thus departing from conventional scores.



The most important thing about them is that you can see very clearly the numerical relationships of the intervals with the characters produced and thus construct new ones by combining their properties. Also the patterns have an identity on their own without the need to refer to modes or scales.

Majestic scale is the order of [1-3-2-1-3-2] series (counting in semitones from the root note and then from the next one). In a way it's 'Abstruse' invention though to tell everything it can be derived from the diminished scale (half-tone, tone...), but there is an effort for a 'tonal majestic' system that uses hierarchical relationships between the notes such as in major or minor systems.



Do you use all the methods of Schönberg's Twelve Tone System - inversions, retrograde, etc? What other methods of modernist composition do you use?

In reality the most 'Schoenbergian song' that uses the techniques, including a retrograde in vocals, is 'Avid Saith', one that was not complete in 'Transgression's demo release. (It can be heard on MySpace) Moreover 'Alliance Optimum' or others partly have to do something with the techniques but rather with the not full use of the series or the rules of Schoenberg. 'Entropy. In Order' as its title implies is aleatoric or random music that later was put to pieces together or ordered with a conscious effort. The lyrics here too are what is known as automatic writing (surrealism). Many different orders, modes and a whole-tone coda, in 'Neuronal Forest' which has an unmetrical rhythm and together with the whole-tone arpeggios or [-4-2-6-] orders give a sense of floatation... 'submerge' as the theme opening phrase provokes.

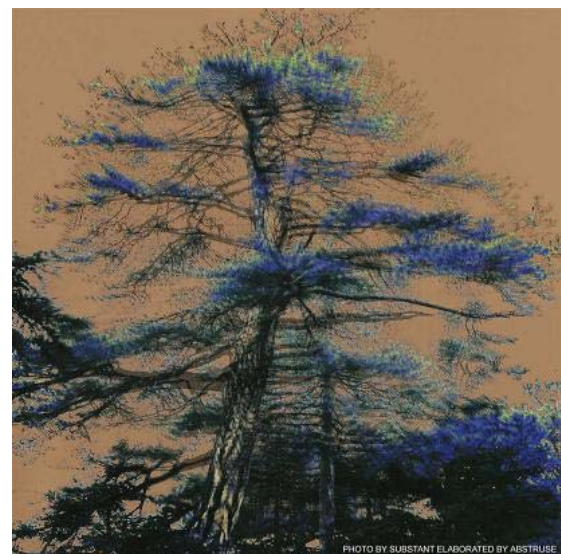
There is also a need for new methods to be found... Such as the new possibility of the 'float scale'. This one uses virtually every possible frequency-sound and in order to be systematized and thus to be functional is taking ratios from other forms of art. For

example color ratios or geometrical ratios make sound frequencies and new harmonies are breaking into music, but this time from outer artistic forms.

You let digitalized programmed parts of your compositions interact with analogue parts that are "really played"; what is the reason for this and what effect does it have on the music? Do you reach the desired effects?

Well, the main idea is that "it's all an illusion" referring to the conventional common reality. By combining live-played drums with drum-machines or human played guitars with programmed ones in a way that it is not easy to comprehend (also a definition of abstruse). What it is real and what is artificial is not easy to distinguish and sometimes the artificial is confused for the real one and the opposite. But, man, what the hell does it mean for something to be natural or artificial? I believe that is the human intervener that decides for that. The desired effects were mostly reached in 'Transgression'... but for future projects maybe other ways will be useful.

What have the reactions been to you rather compelling and difficult compositions? From critics (like me), labels and ordinary listeners? The complexity you describe above might be hard to grasp for someone who haven't studied musicology at University level; how important do you think understanding the cerebral aspects of Abstruse is to truly enjoy your works?



The reactions so far are varied as expected. Some critics were very interested and made very positive reviews and also asked for interviews while there were a few that were totally negative as they could not 'digest'

either our peculiar instrumentation or the complexity of our music. So far a Greek label was interested to distribute some stuff for free (promotion), and labels such as Metal Blade answered saying that 'you have some very strong points, but the style you play is not what we are interested right now'. I think the problem here is to find the right label that is willing to take more risks. We got very good feedback from MySpace listeners, some played songs of ours into their pages or asked for the demo. I liked the fact that people from different backgrounds grasped our music.

Now about the complexity of the music I believe that it is well balanced between straight riffs to more chaotic ones in a way that is not demanding for the ordinary listener. This is also strengthened by the fact that most of the people gave attention to the mood that is created and not so much to the techniques or the forms. Though many songs have to be heard several times to be 'absorbed' and maybe celebrated.



Both you and Veiler were in a band called SHADES OF DARKNESS. What became of it? Do you have any projects (music or other arts) beside Abstruse that one should be aware of?

This is a funny story from our teenage years. Back then we have formed a band with another guy that knew me and Veiler, and we got to know each other from him. We realized that we had similar views then, by having black metal influences at that period and by preferring dark melodies. Thus, we started something that would produce only one written song, not very aptly named: D.U.C.O.T.O.C. (dark underground cells of tormention of Christians). These teen age years... I remember them and they seem so fucking funny with their naive ness and their primitive expression of opposition. Veiler has his own project band under his name and I have a project that is intended to be more psychedelic: 'The Netherealm' (yes, some diminished influences are actually from Mortal Kombat!). Also, I do research in the Media Technology field for finding new ways of artistic expression or combinations of different already established forms.

What general musical background do you have - did you pick up a guitar as a teenager playing metal riffs, later to discover the magnificence of the last two centuries of art music? Or the other way around?

As a teenager I was more into the dark metal stuff, so I bought a BC Rich Warlock guitar, I plugged it into the amp and started playing whatever was coming out of my head, trying to play as many different fret combinations that I could imagine. We both though never tried to make a cover or learn big parts from other bands in the genre. Maybe there was so much a need for a personal expression. After the narrow teenage years passed, new musical horizons opened: electronic music, 20th century classical and contemporary, flamenco and whatever seemed to cling to Abstruse was taken in a thorough account. The need for creating personal means of expression and ones own associations indeed was strengthened by these influences, too.

What subjects do your lyrics touch? How do they relate to the name of the band (a pretty uncommon word synonymous with, correct me if I'm wrong, "obscure" or "hidden") and the overall theme of your creations? Does the visuals relate to the general mood or message of the songs?

Basically Abstruse' lyrics are united by a concept that will always be there: The need of finding these weapons that will release the human animal from its bounds. Several styles of writing to produce that are used, as humans use different forms of writing to express their entities. Scientific writing for clarity and method, symbols to bring on relations

from their unconscious, surreal automated writing and bizarre cohesions and raw angry words filled with the desire to wake up as the value of freedom is one's consecutive alertness. Sometimes coded words are used to force someone to study the hidden relations between these phenomenally unrelated literary worlds. Everything is related to that in Abstruse' concept: photos, visuals and any means of the human experience, to present that reality is not one single picture but has many different shades. And there are shades that are yet unknown to us, beyond the limits of a sleeping-decepted consciousness.

What's up with the scorpions?

I believe you don't mean the band right? Ha! Ha! OK. There is a song on 'Transgression' which is called 'Brontoscorpion' and it belongs to Veiler. By regarding his very interest in the Evolution theory, this song is a symbol of power and by using the magnificent characteristics of this ancient monster. That it's 'seeds strive till nowadays', the symbolism is accented more.

What does the future hold for Abstruse? Releasing albums, staying independent and underground... live performances? I can see how the latter would be quite a spectacle, given you holistic views on your art (no sense left untouched!).

Several concepts are planned for the future. There is a chance that this will be under a new name but if this happens it will be announced under the Abstruse MySpace. Would like to stay underground but under a sympathetic label and the live is of course a very seducing option (as already some festivals wanted to include Abstruse in their program), but is one that has to be considered after all previous issues are resolved.

I hope everything works your and Abstruse's way. Thank you a thousand times for this very interesting interview. Stay bizarre, to the Death!



RETROSPECTION 2007

For summaries and conclusions there's no better time than the cold month of December. It is also the half-birthday of the Avantgarde-Metal website. This panoramic survey's aim is to bring in mind again the albums and events of the passing year. Maybe we feel the absence of a homogenous line, when judging and defining this year's musical products. After all we had newcomers and veteran bands from other 'scenes' that came into second being with the element of surprise. We also had veteran bands of the so-called underground that conquered us once again.

In some way, the yield is eclectic. Of course, maybe it's too hasty to crown this musical-inspired gathering as a 'sub-genre' or 'scene', as confirmed in the ongoing debate on our website's forum. Where the substance of the new albums is coming from, lies in the eyes of the beholder / definer / musicologist. It is quite impossible to find an agreement about what avant-garde metal is. We are in an environment which leans on definitions of all sorts. A consensus about albums is impossible. Yet, we can point to some key albums that were most important for our website's participants.

In spite of that, many of this year's albums (and the ones that I've lend my ears to, in a personal perspective) can be characterized by innovativeness and also by the lack of it. Valor is the rooftop of the musical acts – and it is the heart and mind of this website.

On the subject of people's choices, we can track down several names which reappear over and over again. The quite-new and much anticipated grandmaster ULVER's "Shadows of the Sun", together with another anticipated album of their maniac neighbors DÖDHEIMSGARD - "Supervillain Outcast". Unlike the metallic sharpness of DHG, Ulver represent a group of bands that are "metal-have-beens", but still manage to win over the "scene". Bands like ELEN and their absolute masterpiece "A World in their Screams" or THEE MALDOROR COLLECTIVE with "Pilot" reflect the very unique blend of innovativeness and valor that I was talking about. What about bands like SLEEPYTIME GORILLA MUSEUM and "In Glorious Times" or MANES' "How the World Came to an End", with lighter metallic edges, but oh-so-very innovative minds? Art-metal jive continues with HELLA's "There's no 666 in outer space".

In this 'scene', all is all. And indeed, we had much of it this time around: from the blackish depths rose two ancient, yet shaped anew giants – MAYHEM and ABIGOR. The first, tackling avant-garde borders some years ago, came back with a creation so deep and profound. It is avant-garde by itself. However, a very interesting album belongs to Abigor – a resurrection with new skin. "Fractal Possession" stroke many of the followers in amazement, breaking all known and unknown borders that were indeed a blast from the past. Moreover, the mysterious French duo DEATHSPELL OMEGA reached hazy and harsh dimensions with the new epos, "Fas - Ite, Maledicti, In Ignem Aeternvm". Other bands with black roots are SIGH that delivers us the great "Hangman's Hymn" and BLUT AUS NORD with their "Odinist".

From nearby borders of more traditional-craved metal genres, creations like BERGRAVEN's "Döds-visioner" and Swedish SHINING's "Halmstad" shook a little bit the acceptable avant-garde metal definitions. They are crafted with deep and bare emotions, sometimes more than the average metal-listener can tolerate.

One can also find a fair amount of debut albums and other continuance releases, hailing from new and less-fresh bands. Starting with "The Green Walls" of BLACK ALBATROSS, Luxembourg's LE GRAND GUIGNOL with "The Great Maddening", the "Pelopia" EP from operatic Finns ABERRANT VASCULAR and the MCD "Nova Persei" from the French black-dreamers SMOHALLA.

In a sad manner, this year two unique bands come to their ends – French wackos CARNIVAL IN COAL and Hungary's GIRE (who released their debut earlier this year). It'll definitely be interesting to meet those band's refugees in other musical frames. Meanwhile, we still have audible memories. On account of all this, I reckon that 2007 was a hell of a year. Oh, and if I missed anyone, I deeply apologize – keeping all in mind isn't so easy.

Jobst

TOP 10

AVANT-GARDE METAL ALBUMS 2007

The year 2007 is almost completed. So we asked you, our honourable readers, to tell us what impressed you most this year. An overwhelming amount of answers came in. So thanks a lot to everybody who has sent us a list with your five favourite avant-garde metal albums of 2007!

Each mentioning of an album has been given one point. These points were summed up to your overall ranking. And here are the final results:

- 01. DøDHEIMSGARD - Supervillain Outcast**
- 02. ABIGOR - Fractal Possession**
- 03. ULVER - Shadows Of The Sun**
- 04. MAYHEM - Ordo Ad Chao**
- 05. BERGRAVEN – Dödsvisioner**
- 06. SIGH - Hangman´s Hymn**
- 07. SLEEPYTIME GORILLA MUSEUM - In Glorious Times**
- 08. MANES - How The World Came To An End**
- 09. DEATHSPELL OMEGA - Fas - Ite, Maledicti, In Ignem Aeternvm**
- 10. UNEXPECT - In A Flesh Aquarium**

On the top of the list there's no surprise. ABIGOR and DøDHEIMSGARD are leading head-to-head with a big distance to the rest of the field. For a long time it seemed that Abigor would win the race. But in the very end Dodheimsgard overtook them and landed on the peak.

Astonishment arose about the third place. Ex avant-garde metal grand signors ULVER manage the legerdemain of reaching this high position although their masterpiece "Shadows of the Sun" doesn't contain any metal elements at all. That's really avant-garde! And the second surprise is UNEXPECT on position 10...because this album already has been released in August 2006. So it really seems to impress you a lot.

We also would like to congratulate BERGRAVEN for shooting up to position 5 with their debut album "Dödsvisioner". This promises much for the future.

So thanks a lot once more to everybody who participated in this ranking! And here your favourite albums are again in the music of words:



DØDHEIMSGARD - Supervillain Outcast

(Moonfog, 2007 – Norway)

Avantgenre: Supervillain Metal (Of Course!)

This album only lost a pubic hair's width to being my favourite release in 2007 to ABIGOR's "Fractal Possession". Now, I could go on why this is so and what "Fractal Possession" has what "Supervillain Outcast" has not, but that would be unfair to this ambitious, refreshing record which announces DØDHEIMSGARD's return after a long absence. And how they return: "Supervillain Outcast" is a weird, strange soundtrack to all perversions, abominations, anomalies; to everything disgusting, sick, and twisted the 21st century has to offer.

While on "666 International" DØDHEIMSGARD's new style was something which did not quite went together well in my opinion (that is, the cold technical Black Metal with industrial elements), DØDHEIMSGARD seem to have found the perfect way to put everything (and more) together to make it whole. "The Vile Delinquents" for example starts with heavy riffing, only to explode into an ultra-fast blastbeat with shredding guitars, catching breath in one of DØDHEIMSGARD's typical, groovy mid-tempo beats and ends in a blast-inferno; vocalist Kvohst spitting pure hate the whole song, sounding as if he would turn his throat inside-out to scream out what he has to. The next song, "Unaltered Beast"- weird beats, supported by rhythmic guitars, strange electronic machine choirs and industrial elements. There is "Chrome Balaclava", an a-capella choir song. "Ghostforce Soul Constrictor", straight Black Metal with a nearly danceable rhythmic intermezzo. "The Snuff Dreams Are Made Of", the second regular song surprises with a clearly arabian touch, introducing an instrument I do not know the name of but which has to be some kind of an arabian flute... "All Is Not Self", a calm, melodic song with clean vocals not unlike to what Kvohst did in <CODE>. Melodies are mainly in the background, more supporting the drums and leaving room for the uncountable other instruments, soundscapes and effects which make this album sound like some hatefueled drug-trip.

Nearly everyone should have guessed by now that the days of true Black Metal like on "Kronet Til Konge" are over for DØDHEIMSGARD, and for good. I do like good ol' Black Metal the way it should be, but even this narrow- minded (or maybe...) genre has arrived in the 21st century, as hordes like ABIGOR, MAYHEM, ABORYM, SECRETS OF THE MOON or DØDHEIMSGARD have proven successfully. And DØDHEIMSGARD have set a high stan-

dard for the next releases labeled as this "modern" style of Black Metal, that's for sure. If you like it straight, old school and raw, do yourself a favour and do NOT listen to this.

Tentakel P.



ABIGOR - Fractal Possession

(End All Life Productions, 2007 - Austria)

Avantgenre: Satan's Technical Department

"The music of ABIGOR is a weapon and shall haunt all those who try to discover something beautiful in it!" This statement is found on the "Nachthymnen"-Album; taking them literally I'll try to convert most of their outputs so far into- weapons. Here I go.

Verwüstung / Invoke the Dark Age: A spiked club
Orkblut - The Retaliation: Same as above
Nachthymnen: A sharp falchion
Opus IV: A rusty bastard sword
Apokalypse: A war hammer
Supreme Immortal Art: A pike
Channeling the Quintessence of Satan: A guillotine
Satanized: Absorbent cotton with chloroform
Fractal Possession: ?

Yes, finally it has arrived. A new ABIGOR- Album. I thought Reunions were only for members of aged norwegian Black-Metal Bands fearing to sink into oblivion, and I am glad I was wrong there. You can't speak of austrian BM without mentioning ABIGOR, and with this album they have proven that once again. I do not think that it is necessary to waste words on ABIGOR's biography here, for 1) it should be known to most of the metal scene anyway and 2) for the unlucky individuals that have missed this band so far may check the link to their site above.

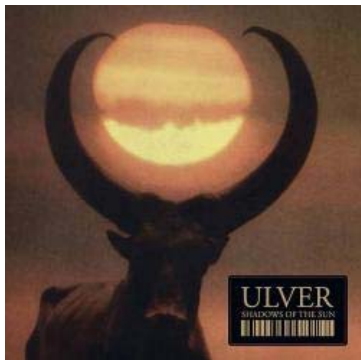
First, let's set things straight : This album has by far the best sound of all their albums and can easily withstand international competition as well. Everything is clearly audible; from the eerie guitars to the once again hammering drums to the new singer to the fitting embedded soundeffects. Speaking of soundeffects: there are plenty of them here, and sometimes it's hard to tell if it is a real effect or some freaky guitar sound. Oh, and Thomas Tannenberger has returned to the drumchair of ABIGOR where he belongs. I don't think one has to argue about the skills of Moritz Neuner, who has played drums on "Satanized", but at least I had the feeling that his style did not fit ABIGOR too well. Now, hearing Thomas on this album there can be no doubt that his style is exactly what ABIGOR

needs. This guy was and is simply one of the most groovy, tightest and most dynamic Black-Metal drummers, period. And the new singer A.R. takes ABIGORS vocals to a new level: Mostly snarling like MAYHEM's Attila, this guy manages clear, spoken passages as well as growling and screaming.

The songs: A perfect symbiosis of the last two albums. The cold, precise riffing of "Channeling..."; combined with the strangeness of "Satanized". A good balance of infernal blasts, technical parts, and slow, melodic parts. Although you can't really compare ABIGOR to them, the created atmosphere is not unlike the last two MAYHEM- outputs, to give you at least a diffuse picture. I'd have a hard time which songs I would recommend to listen to, each one is unique but bears enough elements to recognize ABIGOR. My personal favourites are "Liberty Rises A Diagonal Flame" which brings up nostalgic memories of glorious "Nachthymnen"- days and "The Fire Syndrome" which, with an eerie, aggressive atmosphere, opens gates to demonplains somewhere beyond the stars and briefly, riffwise, mentions "Opus IV" (as does the start of "Injection Satan").

ABIGOR have topped themselves here, easily achieving top grades in creativity and innovation. The songs are unbelievable complex and at the same time straight; there is a huge amount of breaks, effects and samples involved, but what sounds like too much works out fine in the end. So, what weapon is "Fractal Possession"? I can't get the picture of a machine-armed with surgeon scalpels and killing with deadly precision- out of my head somehow...

Tentakel P.



ULVER - Shadows Of The Sun

(Jester Records, 2007 – Norway)

Avantgenre: Sad Aurora Sublime

Soon after the release of the wildly colourful and adventurous *Blood Inside*, a record with which Ulver, it seems, unleashed all of their aural quirkiness through many shifting cut-up, eccentric post-rock big band styles, silence came haunting us once again. What were they doing? Where would they go? Pro-evolutionist gentlemen Rygg, Sværen and Ylwizaker kept their growing new piece of art as secret as most natural arcanes; and then, not only have they invited along the way an Oslo String Quartet, a very talented trumpeter, a feedback guitar player, but also got on board none other than Christian Fennesz and Pamela Kurstin respectively playing supplemental shimmer and theremin.

With such a diverse and impressive crew, everything was possibly imaginable!

Now to the music. Well, *Shadows Of The Sun* is pure beauty and sadness enveloped in their most exquisite aural expressions. The whole album is a floating and etheric experience in itself, and a very delicate one at that, where you are invited to contemplate your own emotions being transformed into sound pixels. Stylistically, there are some of the most honest ambient tracks Ulver have ever composed; for example, once you drown yourself deep into both *Eos* and *Funebre*, two of my favorite cuts here, it is hard not to get fascinated by the obscure, almost aquatic and submerging overall feeling at play. More beat-oriented parts also are present now and then throughout the record, and with a natural, acoustic drum sound, they somehow display cool, laid-back jazzy patterns as a backing-up for the more romantic, shadowy moments.

At first, it may appear that Ulver have simply gone back to the more glitches and epic eras of their glorious past, but I don't think that back then, firstly - so much attention was given to sonic details, and secondly - neither was the atmosphere as sombre and deep as this. Indeed, as in everything else, experience allows you to go further and that's certainly what Ulver are doing with *Shadows Of The Sun*. To me, they are now up there with the masters of the piano-ambient genre, including inspiring artists such as the Fennesz & Sakamoto collaboration, Elegy, Machinefabriek and Circle (Miljard era).

Only to give you an idea: microscopic particles are painting the smallest corners of the sound-picture, heartbreaking piano melodies subtly evolve around, Rygg's vocals are bass-heavy enough to sometimes leave a warm droning side-effect, drums are splashing against symphonic cuddles... I would say it takes a couple of listening sessions before the whole thing reveals itself to you. The textures are so rich, so involving, so warm in sound that they keep a perfect balance between the acoustic instruments versus the machine drones, and that must have been one of the hardest challenges to go through, while giving form to such a "complete" record. Even a certain pop sensibility comes out of a few songs, but never in a cheesy way - this music is for sure honestly sad and beautiful, whereas it's not melodramatic and candy-pink at all. For example, they're covering Black Sabbath's *Solitude* and turn it into a most sensitive sweetness that I can't get enough of - *my future is shrouded in dark wilderness* - so sensual...

Even though she's playing on only two songs, a special mention has to be made about thereminist Pamela Kurstin, because she seriously creates amazingly flowing and real emotive passages - and I can only wish Ulver would have used her talent a little bit more. As a whole, the album, just like its cover representation, is one reflective, sympho-grandiose dusky affair, and the more I listen to it, the more it sends bio-vibrations down my primary and secondary peristaltic waveguts. Now how's that even *only* possible?

Olivier Côté



MAYHEM - Ordo Ad Chao

(Season Of Mist, 2007 – Norway / Hungary)

Avantgenre: Abysmally Surging Blackest Metal Of Truest DEATH

A whirling shapeless thing, clawing at you from the deepest pits and abysses of the human soul and the voids outside of our understanding... Scorched black tentacles with chainsaws attached shredding your mind... Dissonant chords strung over chaotic, aimless riffs, devoid of any kind of normal progression or musical shape... The hellhammers float around, disjointed rolls abruptly cutting off the crackling rumbling beats... (nowhere to be found is the trademark Hellhammer sound, fortunately, the percussion sound surprisingly acoustic.)

The prodigal son Attila is the deranged scientist/sorcerer, who gazed a bit too long into the Abyss, seeing too many unspeakable things therein to regain his sanity... Tormented shouts turning into maddened laughter... From barytone proclamations of impending doom to ghastly inhuman squeals and howls to the deepest chants and growls from the maw of Nihil... Voices speaking of humankind's littleness against the forces of the universe; apocalyptic magick spells and mythological chaos-salutations... Praising the fall of civilisation in anti-religious misanthropy and exhaustion of grief and wrath... The guitarwork may be fierce and menacing, but this creation is still thoroughly vibrating with melancholy; like a saddened deity longing for warmth and understanding, only able to spread disease, turmoil and strife to the world in its desperation.

After the clinical sound of its most recent predecessors, Ordo Ad Chao is draped in a filthy damp production, which may deter some listeners. To me, this is preferable, the production (by Mr. Knut Valle) forcing you to really listen and fall into the music. Not easily accessible, as extreme metal should be. For the first time in over ten years, can the Blasphemer step out of the ominous shadow that is the legacy of Euronymous; Ordo Ad Chao is a darkness so complete and possessed that it can compete with the swansong of the Prince of Darkness and Death. For the first time in many years can Mayhem truly claim their name and title. This is nothing but the True Mayhem.

aVoid

The anticipated and well publicized album harkening the return of Attila as the voice of Mayhem. Now although this is a band that firmly resides within the realm of Black Metal as opposed to avantgarde, this is an album that takes a step in

every direction. Where Chimera (previous album) was a more straight forward (comparatively speaking) Norwegian styled Black Metal release, the aptly titled Ordo ad Chao could very well reside on the other end of the spectrum from its predecessor. What Chimera lacked in spirit and individualism, Ordo ad Chao makes up for with sheer daring and reckless abandon.

The song structures and overall writing are audacious indeed, sounding like the members locked themselves in a room with their favorite hallucinogen, hit the record button, then played and wrote it all at once. Like a roller coaster to hell it dives and ascends with use of numerous stops and starts within many of the songs and no chorus' or conventional writing. It does not play like a collection of singular songs but more like one song split into parts, and when listening to the album on repeat it is sometimes hard to know which track you are on. It compiles aspects of the chaotic movement and technical prowess of Grand Declaration and fuses it with a kind of free flowing playing style, wrapped within the atmosphere and darkness of De Mysteriis. It is an evolutionary step forward into the primordial ooze from where they came. If the universe collapsed again and then a new earth formed this would be the soundtrack of such a neo-sphere.

With Atilla back make no mistake this is not, as some may have hoped for, a repeat performance, a De Mysteriis Part II. Atilla's voice is of course a trademark but on this album he brings more than that to the proverbial table. At times psychotic but always dynamic and dark, this is his Oscar performance as the narrator for Chaos. This is also a personae embraced in a live setting as his stage performance seems to be a perfect compliment to the chaotic insanity of the music.

The drumming is as expected from a drummer with a resume such as Hellhammer. His timing is tight but the playing is almost loose, more like a jam session than a studio recording. On his forum he stated that the drums are all natural except for the bass drum which had to be triggered in order to have the clarity when going 300 bpm (you read that right). It's no wonder that the American tour was cancelled due to his inability to perform, cause no one else could have done it.

Apparently the bass was recorded by guitarist Blasphemer ostensibly in order to see his complete vision to fruition.

Now although a phenomenally written and performed album understandably some may be taken aback by the production and its very low muddled sound. That is to say that the mixing of the album is great but that the CD does not sound as if it was mastered, or at least not very well. So one can either enjoy it as it is presented, or turn the treble up on your listening format of choice, or download a music editing program and turn up the treble on each individual track and then burn your newly remastered CD. Whichever method you choose this is a piece that dares you to take a step within and requires above all an open mind, a dark room, and if necessary, a mental enhancement of choice.

MvH



BERGRAVEN - Dödsvisioner
(Hydra Head Records, 2007 – Sweden)
Avantgenre: Dante's Cold Inferno

When one begins his departure towards death, this journey is bound to open in deep silence, of reckonings to come. Cleaning mind and soul is highly necessary before diving into this faraway yet incredibly close realm. In this manner opens one of the best albums I've lend my ears to this year.

First of all I'd like to stress out the point that this album isn't "proper" avantgarde. It's original among the elusive genre called "dark metal". Alas, one can try hard to stuck the avantgarde needle and come with dry hands, yet declare that what counts in this case are the feelings the music leaves behind. The borders Bergraven's music crosses on and off are not so common as one might think. I tend to believe that albums like these are not so common, when the music clings to the heart and refuses to go, when it begs for life – the listener's life. This music is located in the wide term of a man's creation, that dares to be deep, sometimes deep like one sees in it the first times of revealing music.

"Dödsvisioner" ("Visions of death" – thanks to aVoid for the translations) is an excellent example of the dark metal genre – drizzling from some elite genres into an ice-cold mélange. Instead of rat's eyes, there's mid-tempo doom metal. Bat's wings are removed to the benefit of Swedish black metal aesthetics, preferring melodies over irrational speed. Bergraven, as I see it, is a part of a group of metal acts (who nourish on the weak definition of 'dark metal') such as Shining, Forgotten Tomb or even Void of Silence, who imbibe their main point from the monumental Katatonia album "Brave murder day". Bergraven is not different according to the experience of carving unforgettable emotions within few songs. Also song structures and distortion settings go as far as this peak of metal.

The first glance into the second album of the one-man act of Pär Gustafsson is located at the cover. This meticulous and elegant photograph gives an adequate shade to the world introduced throughout the music – a gothic and gloomy hall with closed doors. In a quick gaze one can almost miss a person (of unknown gender) lying on its back, its spirit already gone underneath the soil. On the left side, there's a man peeking, one cannot tell if it's a painting on the wall or the inspector of the underworld domain assuring departure. This is the very start of a deathly journey.

The opening track, "Döende" ("dying"), is a real spirit-blower. After the silent beginning hazy voices

burst slowly out of nowhere, under the listener's feet, standing on a firm soil, underneath lays only netherworld. When the music comes forth, after almost three minutes of serenity killer silence, the listener finds out that all this exposition was actually an elevator. He's already deep down. The fleshy guitars bite, with them come synths in the costume of bells. As the name implores this is the ultimate dying experience according to Bergraven.

From this moment on the listener becomes Dante, soaring over different netherworld rooms, all with the same texture based on the beautiful combination between the rough distortion and the clean strumming, and giving right away the creeping shuddering. And yet, each room is another vision of the same phenomena. The clean guitars, hauntingly hurting, illustrate the void, this absolute vacuum of the underworld domain. Simultaneously, the distorted angry guitars remind that in the same domain there isn't necessarily blood, fire and sulfur feasts, but loneliness and stagnation. Basing on the genre outfits, the combination 'clean-harsh' isn't that overwhelming with surprises. However, Bergraven manage to load unto this much clever riffs and movements, keeping the songs with lack of boredom and moreover, high chills.

Another enthralled song is "Ondkall", tearing apart the 'clean-harsh' duo and zigzagging between these torn entities, eloquently speaking the language of the dead. The utter zenith of the song is at the last minute, when a shivering yet ordinary solo hits a clean riff, struggling over with a sneaky bass line, showing once again that the "heaviness" on which we fed isn't all distortion grounds. This plain solo is spine-tingling and terrifying with its simplicity. It surely left its mark on me. This is no peak of innovation, but god-darn-it, this is so touching and exciting. This is everything I need: emotion and atmosphere, smart musicianship with a twist and the ever-rare ability to leave a taste for more.

This is an album of long songs (accept the second one, a short instrumental track), curving through themselves, jumping from softness to harshness and vice-versa, from a bewitching melody to another. The production is tight – every instrument gets maximum resonance and only Pär's voice is coming into being every song anew, may it be as its spearhead or as it's a second trumpet for the guitars. In between barrages of sad guitars, piercing through long ambience sequels, echo this bluntly gentleness and become a pause from the netherworld journey – there are benches for resting along the troubled way.

Bergraven outline his death cycle – the first song keeps mid-tempo throughout its end and becomes slow until fading out in the last song, "Döende (an Avslutning)" ("dying (an ending)"), saying all begins and ends (of course) in death. This track is a proper ending for the album, a snail-slow and treading echo of the beginning, setting fire to cold flames. In this sounds crawling, the album dies into the silence after, of the listener yet again breathing deep inside and his searching eyes – what now? For me, it's quite easy – I'm clicking the "repeat" button.

Jobst



SIGH - Hangman's Hymn
(Osmose Productions, 2007 – Japan)
Avantgenre: Mirror Avantgarde

I am going to spoil my own punchline this time by telling you why I label this release "Mirror Avantgarde": Because it is not Avantgarde. And by that, it is so much Avantgarde it hurts. Why is that? If you have a bunch of Avantgarde-bands, and one of these bands decides to leave Avantgarde behind, to become (or to return to something) straighter and simpler, this band does something that the other bands do not. And that pushes it *avant* the *garde* of Avantgarde. Understood? No? Well, me neither. But what I do understand is, that SIGH have delivered their most straightforward, their less experimental, their (maybe) simplest album yet. Luckily it is not, by far not, their worst.

Bad tongues (may they forever suffer in heaven) allege SIGH to be just a Japanese CRADLE OF FILTH-clone. Although it would seem that these foul-mouths haven't heard anything else from SIGH, I can see why someone thinks that way. Not unlike COF with their last album, SIGH have returned to their very roots - pure Heavy Metal. You'll find riffs on "Hangman's Hymn" that could have easily managed their way onto an IRON MAIDEN-album (listen to "In Devil's Arms" to see what I mean). Another band comes to mind if I had to compare SIGH's latest album to something, and that is THERION (from which they have "borrowed" a riff, undoubtedly - compare the beginning of "Inked in Blood" to THERION's "Wine of Aluqah" from "Vovin").

Due to the nature of this album (which was meant to represent a homage to German opera composers of the romantic era) you will find choirs and orchestration, the other side of the coin that is "Hangman's hymn". Straightforward Metal and classic composers - a mix which makes this album sound epic and devastating. The new drummer Junichi Harashima (Satoshi Fujinami has taken over the bass) adds a more aggressive and faster note to SIGH than ever before (his blastbeats get near the 200 bpm-mark, which is not exactly fast when compared to some Swedish blast-orgies, but which is pushing the monumental compositions forward), although he refrains from doing more than the standard 4/4 Thrash pattern as much as the previous drummer did.

Though I was a bit disappointed by hardly getting any experimental parts on "Hangman's Hymn" this time, especially after the ingenious "Gallows Gallery"; after a few rotations

I didn't care anymore. Great orchestrated and composed Heavy Metal with Mirai's unmistakable voice, catchy melodies with an aura of grandeur and the new (female) member Mikannibal on sax and backing vocals is enough for me to put "Hangman's Hymn" into my top five for this year. Just keep in mind, if you are looking for something overly experimental and avantgardish, maybe this time you should look another way.

P.S.: In case anyone wonders why I list SIGH in "Top 5 albums beyond the border 2007" and not in "Top 5 avant-garde metal albums 2007" - that is how I feel "Hangman's Hymn" should be placed. Yet this was often labeled as Avantgarde elsewhere, so we decided to put it up as such. For this album somewhere between Avantgarde/not Avantgarde I suggest that everyone should judge for him/herself. But then it always comes down to that, doesn't it?

Tentakel P.



SLEEPYTIME GORILLA MUSEUM - In Glorious Times
(The End Records, 2007 – USA)
Avantgenre: Grim Street Theater

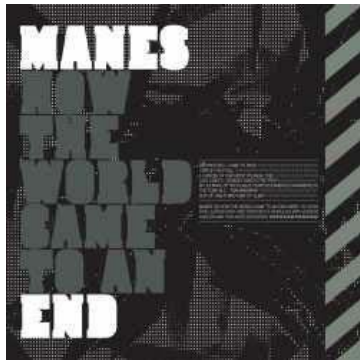
"In Glorious Times" churns, slithers, and grinds its way through a psychotic array of moods and sounds, with songs ranging from anguished paranoia to grimly amusing misanthropy. The experimental rock/metal collective Sleepytime Gorilla Museum carved out a niche over the years playing extremely heavy and spastic hard rock and metal with a vaguely jazzy dissonance straight out of Henry Cow and the Art Bears. Here, they're a little more spacious: less dense, more textured than bludgeoning.

The songwriting is still unpredictable- torchy pop next to rattling percussive passages, death metal violence riding shotgun with noise rock, found sounds and morbid violin solos hovering over jagged RIO rhythms, swinging New Orleans dirges paired with groove metal breakdowns by way of Primus and Meshuggah- but the overall thrust is a little more accessible than prior work, more melodic and less heavy handed. As in the past, the whole band contributes vocals, percussion, and fret time on an array of specialized instruments, making it a team effort, with communal composition and performance taking center stage and all emphasis on workmanship.

As usual, the overriding tone of the work is grim and morbid, indigenous American Gothic with a

shade of forlorn immigrant misery, a kind of re-imagining of 19th urban malaise for the age of gentrification. With a more diverse array of moods and a crystal clear production, "In Glorious Times" is a good introduction point for anyone interested in exploring this band's strangely quixotic sound.

James Slone



MANES - How The World Came To An End

(Candlelight Records, 2007 – Norway)

Avantgenre: Dark Triphiphop

Nobody wants the truth. Imagine a dark cave where water runs down the walls and the neon light reflects some people doing weird things on weird electric machinery including a Commodore 64 (or 128) equipped with a Final Cartridge, digital Super 8 projectors and gadgetery like that. Imagine there's no people but Manes in their cave. Imagine there were no wars. Imagine John Lennon posing for Nike and doing photoshoots in the central park, posing with his exclusive John-Lennon-Ipod (see figure 1) and talking about yoda, yo-yos, generals, generals in wars and wars in general.

Imagine a world full of sounds that were produced by Manes exclusively. Nobody wants the truth. Imagine crossing the street, where the street lights inform the pedestrian with spanish children tunes and when a car breaks it sounds like a hammer that is dropped onto a pillow. Imagine a world full of images that were produced by Manes exclusively. Imagine crossing the street where there are no zebra crossings but real zebras fixed to the traffic light post, cars that don't look like cars but srac and drive backwards. Imagine there was no song called 'imagine'.

The beeps in #5 at ~3:00 are the greatest beeps I heard in a long time. One of the dreams of a reviewer is that one of his sentences is used by the record company in an ad for the album, similarly to those weird slogans at the end of movie previews, you know the "Remarkable. Boldly great. The New York Times." So I will try my best to find some slogans for this album that can be used by their label for advertising:

"This is the 'Srgt. Pepper' of the 21st century.", "Good. Better. Manes.", "This is sex for the ear.", "Iresistible. Without the spelling mistakes.", "Beyond beyondness.", "If we had 2005 one would think we had 2007.", "Imagine nobody wants the truth."



Figure 1: the nitzschean ipod

Jonny Lignano



DEATHSPELL OMEGA - Fas - Ite, Maledicti, In Ignem Aeternum

(Norma Evangelium Diaboli, 2007 – France/Finland)

Avantgenre: Sophisticated Black Metal Art

This album has been in my possession for a mere week, and I am the first to admit that this review is premature. A complexity like this need months of digestion before realization of it's immensity is complete. But I must write this.

This is the second part of Deathspell Omega's unspeakable trinity, beginning in 2004 with masterpiece *Si Monumentum Requires, Circumspice*, followed by appendices *Kénôse*, "Mass Grave Aesthetics" and "Diabolus Absconditus" (the latter two songs from split releases). Roughly translated (my Latin skills are puerile and laughable at best), the title means "The Divine Order - Thus Cursed, in Eternal Flames/Forever Burning". The chaos of the forerunners is here taken to a new level of extremity unheard; the sulphuric violence is breathtaking. These French diabolists have opened a gate, and through it came a satanic Beast screaming and throbbing, in spite and fury spastically clawing and tearing at the light. Then, as it's abysmal seizures have ended, a calm besets your mind, letting you breath and contemplate upon the aural rape you just suffered. Deep in the ambient silence, a choir and it's orchestra is silently incinerated... listen closely, and hear the beast breath... It awakens, dances with you, mid-pacing through disharmonic ballrooms in the deepest circles of Hell, in disjointed improvisations... Only to plunge back into rabiate madness, raping you over and over again, tearing your flesh and soul into shreds and dust.

Fas tells of how mankind is doomed to Perdition and Damnation from the beginning, and it is much more personal and poetic than it's disputational precursors. Mikko Aspa's sore growls sound older and harsher than before, and yes, the Lord of all Perdition and Madness is truly speaking through him, as He is working through the always so obscure musicians. They are truly possessed, and "evil" satanists like Watain are but a candle in sunshine to these orthodox theologists. The music, in it's compositional trinity, is more complex than ever, tonally and rhythmically closer to Alfred Schnittke, Ved Buens Ende and Gorguts than Dark-throne. In this flurry of blastbeats, orchestral samples and disruptive dissonances there is a profound darkness I cannot describe. It must not only be heard, but felt and realized. This is more than metal, whatever prefix you choose. This is art.

Note: The official translation of 'Fas: Ite, ...' is "By divine law, go, you cursed, into the eternal fire!". I wasn't that far off. (aV., 2007-09-17)

aVoid



UNEXPECT - In A Flesh Aquarium

(The End Records, 2006 – Canada)

Avantgenre: Hyper-technical Metal Gang Bang

In A Flesh Aquarium, the most emblematic album of the seven-piece musical, theatrical avant-garde group named unexpect came out last year. The music of these freaks cannot be compared to any other band. It is "coreless" - meaning that there isn't a main musical style. Considering that they mixed at least 15! different musical styles together on their infamous 2006 album, the "corelessness" isn't surprising, but the music is.

These weirdos manage to blend black metal with tango, death metal with jazz, circus music with ambient, medieval music with trip-hop. They have three vocalists who are able to sing, growl, shout in super wide ranges, from soprano to high shrieks and deep growls, from glorious choirs to narrative speaking and clean singing... and much more. Most of the time their vocal style is more similar to a crazy, psychotic theatrical presentation than a simple performance.

The structure of a heavy metal song is just as easy as $1+1=2$. Verse, bridge, chorus, verse, bridge, chorus, solo, chorus, chorus. However in the case of unexpect the situation isn't that easy, sometimes $1+1$ happens to be 3. You will feel your brain

aching and you will hit on "stop", screaming blue murder to those who created this. But before you do something you will definitely regret, please calm down and listen to it ten times more. What will be your first word after it? I wouldn't be surprised if you would say "fascinating" or "stunning". But it's much more. The band incorporates the law of large numbers which gives their music a unique feature: you won't ever find this album boring. To sum it up: you have to listen to a song at least ten times to feel the same vibrancy of the rhythm you feel while listening to heavy metal. Then you would probably be bored. The only problem is that you are a limited human with limited qualities and cannot adapt a one hour long song. So what remains is pure excitement during each single listening. These guys are (the) true masters of avant-garde music. With their astounding, outstanding creativity, technicality and complexity they surely have brought something abstract, surreal, "ultra-planar" to this world. The lyrics are exclusively written in metaphors by syriaK (except "The Shiver" by CaotH) and every listener will find different truth in them for himself.

This release should (must) change every listener's way of thinking about the whole world. This album shows that there is a new, differing angle to look on things, on life, on music, on feelings, on impressions, on relationships, on past, on future, on your role in the universe. Hope I'm not the only one who's having this album as a cornerstone of his life and musical taste. This flawless masterpiece is a must in the collection of those who consider themselves as open-minded avantgardists.

revon

Listening to this album for the first time brought a totally new experience to me. I had to switch it off after two minutes to avoid a massive brain overload. I just needed a little rest before diving totally into the raging whirlwinds of mania. Such an excessive Gang Bang of all Metal genres wildly criss-cross I have never heard before. Those Canadian bastards describe themselves as "black, death, (*)core, symphonic, progressive and melodic metal; classical, operatic, medieval, goth, electro, ambient, psychotic, noise and circus music with an occasional jazzy touch." And this is really a litotes, because it's much more.

There are lots of technical virtuosos out there in the Metal scene. But just very, very few are able to make catchy, atmospheric songs out of it. Unexpect manage it to play two different guitar-solos, a solo on a 9-string E-Bass (!), a violin-solo, a drum-solo and a duel of three different voices at the same time – and it still remains a catchy song! Unexpect definitely are masters in songwriting. And their Nomen est Omen. There are countless different parts in a song. And you never know what will happen in the next second. Furious staccato dismemberment with BM-Screams and DM-Growls follows calm ambient-sounds. Groovy Metal-riffs mix with dissonant Free-Jazz, proud Tango and epic Hit-Melodies. There are no limits! You have to hear it to believe it! Each second of this album is unpredictable and surprising. If we had ratings, this would be a 11 out of 10.

Chrystof

MORE COOL NEW AVANT-GARDE METAL ALBUMS



AGALLOCH - Ashes Against The Grain

(The End Records, 2007 – USA)

Avantgenre: Naturally Epic Blackened Metal

With four years since their last release (not to include a few hard to get EP's) this album sees them return reinvigorated and moving forward almost as if no time had passed. To a certain extent this album picks up where their previous efforts left off. By taking the blackened folk-metal from their first full length "Pale Folklore" and mixing it with the more acoustic oriented "The Mantle" this album is a perfect illustration of what exactly Agalloch is musically.

The greatest disparity between this release and its predecessors lay in the mixing and mastering of the album. The guitars continue, as before, their interplay creating the musical foundation of the album, both mournful and uplifting. With the distorted guitars coming across slightly heavier and more omnipresent in the mix, while the acoustics intertwine within and without to make up an overall full and fluid sound. However, the real strength of this recording derives from the driving power of the bass and drums that carry each song forward with a forcefulness of purpose (instrumental interludes excluded, of course). The bass being very low in frequency, but well mixed, provides this album with its heaviness and wall of sound, not completely found on the two previous full length releases.

The black metal vocals are brought to the fore on much of this album, their raspy style giving it forcefulness and a smattering of angst while still keeping the overall mood of melancholia in its entirety. The clean vocals are again used to great effect, interweaving emotional emphasis into each sorrowful and exultant piece that one finds throughout this tapestry.

This is an example of a band maturing without a loss of identity. A band who possesses an individualistic identity in an industry and world which is becoming more a vacuum for musical individuality and personality every day.

If you have not yet heard this band (one wonders why) then this would be a great place to start. For

those of you who have heard their previous efforts and do not yet own this, then by all means what are you waiting for, you will not be disappointed.

MvH



AGHORA - Formless

(Dobles Music, 2006 – USA)

Avantgenre: Buddha Progressive

The first time that "Formless" collided with my ear drums I can't say I was impressed. As I listened the first time through the album I even reached the state of occasional disappointment and thought to myself: "There it is, the first negative review I'll have to write for avantgarde-metal.com." But by the time I listened to all the songs I began wondering: Did the band have a creative drain by replacing the rhythmic section? Did Santiago Dobles invest so much creativity in "Aghora" that he had no more to offer? How comes that seven long years aren't enough to replenish your resources? And how does that work with all the mind and body balancing activities he goes after with great dedication? Aren't those supposed to bring out more and more creativity? I concluded for myself that the answers lie in front of me and that I have to listen to this quite a few times before making my final personal judgement about it.

My perseverance was well rewarded! It's not that "Formless" is more complicated than its predecessor or that you have to access a new and higher level of spiritual enlightenment in order to appreciate it. It just depends on what you expect from this follow up.

I was quite surprised to hear that the metal dose has been noticeably raised on this one! Don't let the Intro make a fool of you. "Aghora" started with a crunchy riff while "Formless" initiates its listener to the beating that is to come by gentle psychedelic, indian tunes that will give you a truly wrong impression of the pace of the upcoming journey. It's not like the songs are now completely built around the concept of acoustic mass destruction but there is so much more of it now that I wondered where the calm interludes went to and when I will be allowed to breath. Well there are just better hidden

and distributed in a manner that gives the song a stronger live edge.

I mainly liked "Aghora" for the epic blasting like in "Satya". Now I got a whole lot more of it, but at first it sounded simpler to my ears which has unsettled me a bit. That impression was quickly dissipated by the time I lent the harmonies more attention and enjoyed the fact that the vocals were given more room to expand and carry the song in a more angelic manner.

All in all I advise anyone who doesn't enjoy this album by its first listening to spend some time on it. Otherwise you are on your way to deprive yourself of a truly enjoyable and fascinating album. Let's hope that it won't take another seven years for the band in order to assemble the next, hopefully just as great, album.

Trident



BLUT AUS NORD - MoRT

(Candlelight Records, 2006 – France)

Avantgenre: Detuned Psychosis Black Metal

For a long time Blut Aus Nord have been darlings of the "true" black metal scene. Their productions have been raw. Their music and their lyrics have fulfilled every cliché. But one day Satan came to them with a special mission: "My dear disciples! Black metal has become a trend for kids. You have to invent a music even darker, scarier, much more evil than anything else! Drown them in fear, nightmare and psychosis! Take away their sanity, and then take away their souls!" And Blut Aus Nord got lunatic eyes and a frenzied smile. They took the frets out of their guitars. They erased all time-codes and bars out of their drum computer. And they put all reverbs on ten. And Satan was proud and saw that it was evil!

MoRT creates naked landscapes filled with bizarre sculptures of total death. It draws you down into the deepest spheres of rotting nightmares and skeletal delusion. Slowly your blood flows out from your veins. Your head begins to spin. You lose all orientation and sink down to the very bottom of bare existence.

MoRT is so different from everything else you've ever heard before. It's the purest essence of black metal and something completely different at the same time. The guitars are extremely detuned and cold. The raspy vocals are many miles away. The drums are drunken and meander slowly in their own vomit. And a blurred delirium covers all. Check

out this masterpiece from a parallel universe's hell! You won't be the same anymore!

Chrystof



BLUT AUS NORD - Odinist (The Destruction Of Reason By Illumination)

(Appease Me Records, 2007 – France)

Avantgenre: Liquid Black Drone Metal

Well first of all, I have to mention that I haven't been a die-hard black metal fanatic for a few years already, mostly because I believe it's not really an expanding genre anymore. But to every general law there always are at least a few exceptions, and indeed Blut Aus Nord ought to be mentioned here. Weirdly enough, I didn't know much of this band when I suddenly bought their new record out of a pure coincidence. As a matter of fact, I'll never regret doing that!

It could be because black metal has now become out of my usual interest, it could be boiled down to the most honest fact that I've always enjoyed the strange emotional effects that both atonality and dissonance can induce me into, it could be that I love letting my mind drift out to imaginary floating soundscapes... Well, many reasons can explain every single human experience, but I believe that Odinist is an extremely well-done heavy voivodesque drone metal album. There, I said it! But why am I writing this? Because in every song presented here by Blut Aus Nord, I can clearly hear massive waves rising high and falling deep down only to recycle themselves again, and again, and again, in slow-motion lavas of sounds. In its entirety, the album is surfing on these kind of aural shores. Another good point to mention is that the vocals have almost been mixed within an enveloping ambient and noisy atmosphere which follows like a bio-plasmatic aura most of Odinist's compositions. They are inherent to the sonic textures and never in front of it.

As an all, it's quite repetitive, sure, and almost linear and without any explicit dynamism, you're right about that - but I've got to claim that in this case, that's the whole point! I'm saying this because I know some people have been complaining about how uneventful this album really is. But please listen through the subtle riffing mastery displayed here - there's so much atmosphere and feeling deep inside every note and at the heart of every tone. It's not about rhythms, it's not about

technicalities, neither is it about blast beats and earth-shattering evil stormy passages. The guitars rather are fluid-like, heavy-foggy, crawling underneath while reaching out for the stars. When my roommate heard only a few moments of a song, his initial reaction was to mention how cool and laid-back the guitarist seemed to be. Of course it's dark music, but in a relaxing, borderline somnolent and dreamy way, as if they wanted us to find some sort of a hidden beauty into apparent creepiness and fear.

I don't really know how to explain this further other than by informing you that it sucked me in its spirals right within a few minutes of playing. Let me sum it up with only a few expressive words - mesmerizing, mysterious, stellar, eerie and magical. Yeah, I can only wish all black metal records could contain at least half the flowing e-motion that Blut Aus Nord have summoned here. Thanks for the massage, guys! I have been illuminated...

Olivier Côté



DOL AMMAD - Ocean Dynamics
(Electronicartmetal Records, 2006 – Greece)
Avantgenre: Electronic Art Metal Aquatic Space Opera

When I looked at the album cover I first felt like a beaten dog, which then was slowly and carefully nosing the CD until realising it was a friend and not a foe.

"Ocean Dynamics" is a continuous concept starting in outer space, represented by the powerful first four tracks of "Thalassa Dominion I-IV". The journey moves on into the solar system and "Solarwinds" is tied on with fast and fantastic drums which really sound like solar winds. This is musically so amazingly well done, that you could distinguish between a storm and a wind. The wind here even carries the cries of dolphins into the atmosphere very softly. Further, continuing from "Descend", descending to earth into "Lava" where the fire from the sun liquefies slowly, to then finally ending in the ocean (last three tracks). Here you can listen to more water sounds when you were missing them in the first parts.

One has to listen to the entire album to develop an understanding of the whole idea musically as well as lyrically, because after several minutes of each song completely new parts appear in a sudden and make the album very fluctuating; with plenty of tempi and arrangements, sounds and partly differ-

ent styles of music, from Funk-Jazz to extreme Black Metal- like drums and percussions, mostly somewhere in between all these genres in the up-and-mid-tempi.

What makes this band unique is the combination of Metal and 70's electronic music with distinctive synthesizer sounds similar to Jean Michel Jarre and Vangelis. It seems like the marriage of Berlin Love Parade with some Rock Festival. The Metal music to some extent reminds me of Luca Turilli and Rhapsody, certainly because of Alex Holzwarth (Drummer of Rhapsody of fire), who seemed to find asylum in this project with his characteristic way of drumming.

The second cherry on the top constitutes the choir of 14 people (seven women and seven men). They represent the operatic bombast throughout the album and also "flow" with DC Cooper (Ex-Royal Hunt) in "Aquatic Majesty". Therefore, "Ocean Dynamics" is the perfect symbiosis of electronic music, operatic music and Metal. It can be seen as a complete art work with its wonderful orchestration, lyrics and also with its amazing cover art work that was designed totally coherent.

You have to decide whether this is your cup of ocean dynamics or not. I find it to be a fantastical album, where ocean meets universe with a lot of atmosphere in between. All my thumbs, including big toes up!

Katja Honeywine van de Barrel



FURZE – UTD
(Candlelight Records, 2007 – Norway)
Avantgenre: Black Furzing Metal

"Furze" is the name of the Blade on the Reaper's scythe - the one and only trademark of the one and only Reaper, made "music". Woe J. Reaper, sole member of Furze, began back in 1996 (when black metal, according to the Reaper, died). HE is the only one who knows the Truth. *UTD*, which is the third Furze volume (excluding demos, a 7" and a 10"), is not an album but a split cd, with Furze and Furze. The two sides are called *Beneath the Odd-Edge Sounds to the Twilight Contract of the Black Fascist* and *The Wealth of the Penetration in the Abstract Paradigmas of Satan* (consider the taste of the titles, that is the taste of the Furze). Again taking up the black flame of metal from Trident Autocrat (2000), rather than the doomier aspects of Necromanzee Cogent (2003) - though

slowing down a couple of times - this is some violent stuff.

What is? Harsh scrawny sound, horrifyingly necro, though not at all unprofessional and bedroommy but rather elaborate, like a mix of ULVER's *Vargnatt* and *Nattens Madrigal*. It is at many times a hard listen; at low volume incomprehensible, at high volume unbearable (especially if you're a cat, it seems), always confusing - I still don't get many parts of it, despite a dozen sit-throughs. Is this negative? For some, probably. Furze means many obstacles. But obstacles mean rewards for the persevering.

UTD envelops several facets of black metal art (yes it is art). Spite and hateful, melancholy and solitude, fierce and in grief, tearing parts from the Reaper's soul and showing us, as someone put it. But still something you have NEVER heard before (yes, never heard before). Woe J. Reaper longs for the days when black metal was "alive" (1986-96), but takes black metal to strange places it has never seen before. Maniacal dancing of ghouls eating mushrooms and nasty witches with bad teeth boiling frogs and herbs into strange concoctions. The scary visions of a deranged mind drinking tea (the TEA is of UTMOST importance) and listening to BLACK SABBATH and HELLHAMMER, calming down after pounding Feeble Christian Cre-tins with a hammer from hell at a black Sabbath.

Woe's vocals are... unsettling. Hysterical screams, retarded murmurs, ghostly whispers, the nasty drool of something wanting you really unwell - not satanic but folkloric and very old. Like a pissed-off little demon trapped in a rusty cage, or a ghost from the deepest pit of your soul (or from beyond) beckoning to you in a feverish jimsonweed-induced dream... What is also interesting and unusual: he actually PLAYS the bass, against all black metal traditions - and in a peculiar fashion too, moving about with a mind of its own (as does every instrument the Reaper molest). Furze is not self-consciousness, not artsy pretensions, just the chaos of unhinged creativity and obsession with a non-intellectual dark side - raw black energy vibrating through the whole of the Reaper not because he WANTS to but because he HAS to. And it's quite mesmerizing too, the whole of the Entity of the Reaper - the Truth and the Blade. The Completeness of the Creations. Need. To. Be. Heard. ...and Seen and Smelt And Felt and Tasted.

*To Torture Them Beyond Death Is The Heaven
They Deserve
Shadowstench, Deathpace; we're on course!
On the behalf of Eternal Pride; I shadowcast the
Very Map of it*

[Note: The cover shown belongs to "Beneath...". The cover for "The Wealth" - appearantly painted by Woe's father in 1975 - is not for me to find online. And the Name of the Blade probably refers to the Plant, rather than the Gas, you Germans.]

aVoid



HELLA - There's No 666 In Outer Space

(Ipecac Recordings, 2007 – USA)

Avantgenre: Post Thrash In Opposition

From Sacramento, California, comes the ever-changing art of a very daring band, I'm indeed speaking of Hella. Mind you, There's no 666 in Outer Space, released on Patton's Ipecac Recordings, was my first real exposure to their musical craft and already within the first listening session, I became utterly fascinated by the way these guys turn the most confrontational multi-tracks riffing ever into some of the catchiest art-metal tunes I've heard in a great while. Having two prominent guitarists and one loud-fingering bassist fighting against and with each others, if you carefully pick out all of the riffing elements one by one and in itself, everything is overly technical, deconstructed, meltingly abstract and therefore always on the borders of being just too much. You've probably heard, at least once, from one of these masturbatory jerky-proggy bands whose main concern is always to show off more, and more, and more, forgetting all about the rules of head-banging insanity. Well, that's really not the case with Hella, please do not worry.

Instead, the music here is warm in textures, deep in sound, and even within its last-minute changing patterns and structures, long build-ups of atmospheric climaxes can always surprise you. There's also a certain feeling of blood-boiling urgency throughout the entire album's duration: this is dangerous stuff, folks, no kidding. You're holding a bomb in your head at each passing second. Call it post-thrash-jazz, I say whatever – this is a fucking intense ride!

Every pretentious (or not) extreme jazzy metal drummer definitely has to hear Zach Hill behind his machine-gun bashing kit. This is what artful rhythm constructivism is all about. Even tighter than a blasting Czral on speed, this man is exploring a frenzied drumming style I had never heard prior to experiencing Hella's unique approach. No typical blast beats nor double-bass attacks are to be found here; it's just so much more extreme than that. Without such a solid backbone, I would even go as far as to say that Hella's music couldn't be that metal-oriented. Hill certainly is aggressive and groovy like none other.

Nasal-filtered acid vocals are graciously layered all over the music, and let me tell you that singer Aaron Ross has an amazing palette of squealing throatings to spit forth. It really sounds as if

Megadeth's very own Dave Mustaine came back to his old-school sessions of excessive cocaine snorting, while Voivod's Snake embarked upon an occult bathing into unknown liquefied planets, only to give the great sarcastic guru Jello Biafra an opportunity to make his critical madness shine through. And I'm serious here.

Upon feeling concrete traces of an immense enthusiasm, I immediately started tracking down reviews on the web, but soon enough got turned off: most of them mentioned how crappy this new album is. Keep in mind that this is Hella's first record as a full band, reconstructing from scratch, maybe without even knowing it, the whole metal genre. If 666 represents, as a symbol, the sterile and limiting rules of a down-to-earth take on metal, and if outer space is the infinity of experimental possibilities, then I've got to admit that there's no 666 at all in Hella's quest for outer space. Bravo!

Olivier Côté



JESU - Conqueror

(Hydra Head, 2007 – UK)

Avantgenre: Love Inducing Drone Doom

Who would have thought that one day a founding member of Napalm Death would create something so pleasant?

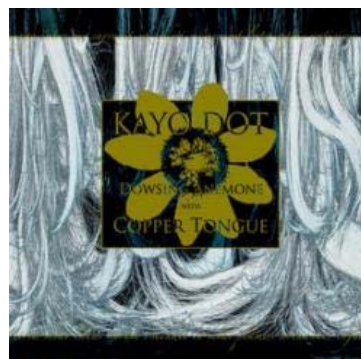
Despite its tough metal title, "Conqueror" is actually comparatively subdued next to the bone crushing weight of the debut album and the wide open production of the "Silver" EP. Its lightness has less to do with any significant compositional choices and more to do with its softer production, though the songs are a little sparser and often catchier, leaning closer to the warmth of shoegaze and dream pop than the cold plodding heaviness of industrial doom.

There are more vocals and songs contain actual choruses, though they're still winding epic affairs, perhaps more psychedelic and drug friendly than in the past. Consider the inspired "Mother Earth." The core of the song is recognizably doom metal, but the watery synths and waves of reverb and feedback, not to mention the dreamy lyrics, are pure acid dropping granola hippy ecstasy, but in a good way! It's the heaviest head music outside of Japan.

"Mother Earth" is the best example, but every song on the album virtually pours over the listener, forming a warm, inviting cocoon of distortion and

love. Justin Broadrick might take exception, but this is very agreeable, very agreeable indeed.

James Slone



KAYO DOT - Dowsing Anemone With Copper Tongue

(Robotic Empire, 2006 – USA)

Avantgenre: Violinistic Naked/laced Disney Pop

Have you ever listened to Laibach all day long and then tried to write an album review? Well I have, and this is what I heard thereafter. The album has got five windows that are between 7:44 and 18:00 minutes:seconds long and use a lot of curtains (curtains in music are i.e. keyboards that stick to one or more tones for a very long time) that they successfully interrupted with raw guitars or violins, sometimes drums and a presumably male singer. Sometimes one of the musicians is a bit more angry than the other and then he or she gets his or her moment to express him or herself. I sometimes wish there was only one sex on the planet or single-sex-bands only because writing about bands would be way easier. On the other hand (I will trick you because I will not tell you what is in my unmentioned other hand) if there would be only one sex/genre in the world or single-sex-bands only, one would never have been able to enjoy those castrated opera singers or the fabulous Transvision Vamp (W-W-W-endy!).

If I were asked if I preferred to eat, to drink or to listen to music for the rest of my life I would not only wonder who asked such a dumb question, but I would also respond that I would prefer to "LIEANK", 'a pen', which is, as you probably knew right from that moment which I marked with 'a pen', a mixture of the three verbs. If I were hungry or thirsty I would listen to this album all day long. If I were deaf I would put the album on my record player, cut off my nose in hope some waves would enter my head via those holes.

Jonny Lignano



KEKAL - The Habit Of Fire

(Whirlwind Records, 2007 – Indonesia)

Avantgenre: Urban Avant-Garde Metal

This is vibrant interesting metal of a decidedly experimental nature. From the first track "The Gathering of Ants" it has you hooked. Ripping melodious but heavy guitar work compliments a variety of rhythmic and vocal approaches all coated in an atmospheric sheen (benefit of background synths/samples as well as a great production). The sheer tonal arsenal at this band's disposal is an aural pleasure, especially coupled with song-writing (a concern often un-addressed by a lot of AGM). The second track features vocoder parts, adding to the decidedly unearthly ambience. Coupled with the growls and the progressive musicianship, there are shades of Cynic as well as later Septic Flesh here, without copying the sound of any one act. And what chops they have!! The axe-work is some of the tastiest I have heard in a while.

Over the course of the album, the band's trademark becomes more clear: trippy guitar parts coupled with strange clean vocals, and very occasional industrial growls. "Manipulator Generals (Part I of Dictatorship)", shows how far the band has progressed from their more traditional metal roots, with the haunting melodies and alternately eerie arpeggios and dissonant guitars moving forward on the backbone of samplers and drum machines as well as live percussion, going into totally bizarre ill-bient midway, and ending with a truly strange sludge-funk freak-out outro.

Strangely the album gets spacier as it progresses. The lyrical and thematic content deals with the political and personal (as far as I could make-out). The eerie vocals couple with the heartfelt motifs to tell the tale. It is original (showing clearly a unique vision from a unique culture, closest reference being some of the more experimental Japanese metal outfits) and emotional (as exemplified by "Our Urban Industry Runs Monotonously"), making for a truly satisfying listen. The heavier more extreme metal elements are few and fluidly interspersed in a sea of musical vitality, the chord changes showing a jazzy flavour as indebted to 70's fusion outfits as to 90's metal (check out "Part II of the Dictatorship"). In places it's like a prog metal band that has matured enough to let go of the hair/shred metal retentiveness and reaching for the outer limits. The last 2 tracks round off the album with a serenity (the almost BM trip-hop of "A Real Life to Fear About") that can only be born of burning in discontent. In fact the closing epic (almost 15 minutes) may molecularly re-arrange the awareness of the listener into an avant garde metal

revolutionary, what with its thematic gist and bizarre twists and turns.

All in all, this is genius (a word used too easily, but here completely justified) and is on my personal top-ten list for 2007. And yeah, a big thanks to Chrystof for sending this one my way. Also, don't forget tot checkout the interview on this very site.

Suleiman



LE GRAND GUIGNOL - The Great Maddening

(Maddening Media, 2007 – Luxembourg)

Avantgenre: Fin-De-Siècle Metal Grotesquery

This fancy promo, carrying misplaced Kris Vervimp-cover artwork, was sent to me a couple of weeks ago, and it immediatly clinged to my mind. Apparently this Luxembourgian band was up until last year known as Vindsval, and it was under that name this album's 1999 predecessor "Imperium Grotesque" was released. Now in 2007, they unleash "The Great Maddening", after reaching a new spiritual level of conceptual insight and thus changing the orchestra's name. The info sheet (extra-fancy!) claims that the band shares their name with a French genre-theatre about a hundred years ago. Being aware of the climate of entertainment during that period and in that region (think Moulin Rouge - yes, the movie - but darker, without Nicole Kidman), you can probably guess at the esthetic approach of L.G.G. (The official website translate the name as "the Big Buffoon")

Anyhow! Consider for a minute or six these following madmen's general output and esthetics during the end of the last century: Rhapsody, Devil Doll, Covenant (the Norwegians, with Sverd & Astennu) and Bal-Sagoth. Add to that a sprinkle of Arcturus heading of to a masquerade, Anna-Varney of Sopor Aeternus feeling kinda cheery reading Poe when recording the Sarabande albums plus Dimmu Borgir and Cradle of Filth going to see "The Return of the King" at the movies, holding hands and kissing with Blind Guardian as an apron. Seriously pompous marches, circusesque (new word!) buffonery, overly theatrical vocals (shouting screaming crying howling et c)... Solemn brass sections, female quasi-opera vocals, spaced-out synths, folky and neoclassical guitar riffs and leads, symphonic keyboard string sections... Nothing new per se, besides the fact that this kind of music isn't made anymore. It's too dark and growly to be

power/fantasy/whatever metal, and way too cheery and pompous to be black/death/etc metal. So devoid of distance, so exuberant and silly, I just can't help but loving it. They combine all the bands I loved when I was like 15-16 years old (OK, not all of them, and I wasn't that fond of Rhapsody and Blind Guardian, but you get the point), all bands people couldn't help but laugh at. The performance here is terribly solid and skillful, actually losing the imperfections that made the abovementioned bands so impeccable. This is more of a mirror without that much personality - very beautiful and florid, but equally easy to forget about. And it is slightly too long, even though at least three of these eleven tracks are instrumentals. Cake upon cake, as we would say in Sweden.

But, if you're into any of the mentioned bands (as I know you are!), you should check this out. If I had heard this 6 years ago, I probably would have ejaculated all over the soundsystem. And some additional kudos for the following...

-Silly Frenchy pronunciation is always good entertainment (perfect English is nice but not fun).

-Great and suggestive song titles, it's just a shame I didn't get the lyrics as they seem to be quite important for the Great Maddening Experience.

-Marvellous orchestrations (who needs an orchestra when you have midi? It's as cheesy as it comes, and bloody fantastic).

-And finally, powerful vocal performance - he actually carries all the strengths of the bands above (except that German goth-transvestite...).

Fancy!

aVoid



SMOHALLA - Nova Persei

(God Is Myth, 2007 – France)

Avantgenre: Ambient Symphonic Dream Metal (weird)

French Smohalla is a pretty singular three-piece. There are times when I can't make myself listen to them, there just isn't anything there for me to enjoy. Then it turns, and I can't keep myself from listening to their otherworldly harmonious chaos. There is something in their strange sound (which I described in my review of their masterful debut demo *Smolensk Combustion* some months ago,

read that one after this, the foundations are still the same). I can't put my finger to it, but it's as captivating as it is oppressive. Which is pretty amazing seeing how this is only their second release since their formation early 2006!

Nova Persei is the latest instalment of record label God Is Myth's H.P. Lovecraft series, a series of 3" cds inspired by and dedicated to the horror writer of all times, the gentleman of Providence. Haven't read? Do so, then come back feeling a little embarrassed. On this EP Smohalla has reached into the strange story of Joe Slaader as told in "Beyond The Wall Of Sleep", a primitive hillbilly peasant going crazy because of unwholesome dreams of stellar battle - he has, in fact, within him the residing spirit of Nova Persei, a nova exploding (for real) in 1901 only to fade again some weeks later. Rather than focusing on the horror aspects, Smohalla brings out the grandeur of the cosmic chaotic battle between Nova Persei and the demon star Algol (track 4 and 5), the beauty of Slaader's otherworldly dreams (track 3), and his inevitable fall (track 2 and 6) - that is, no Cthulhu here. Being an avid Lovecraft enthusiast, I was very pleased with the prospect of musicians focusing on other facets of this master of the weird and stellar horrors, rather than the pretty used up monster worship one is usually facing when dealing with Lovecraft-inspired metal. Does Smohalla succeed? Yes, they do.

Jazzy beats, proggy mellotrons and otherworldly choirs, explosions of avant-black savage dissonance as chaotic as luring... and something very hard to pinpoint. It is indeed very dramatic and cinematic, with horn sections at times turning my mind to Bal-Sagoth's *Battle Magic*, and an omnipresent cold feeling of space, being lost and quite alone in space, not at all dissimilar to what the better parts of Marilyn Manson's *Mechanical Animals* did to my teenage self back in the days - especially the chord sequence of the epic 'Extinction' touches the soul same way 'The Last Day On Earth' did. That kind of cold, but in a completely different way - but then again, not at all. Surges of post metal/rock/whatever, framed and ornamented by very black tremolo lines, the most icy of synths, and Slo's ever-changing vocals - ghastly distant howls, clean singing (in both French and English - bilingualism rules) which the mob would deem as "operatic". This is... wonderful. The future, at least parts of it, is Smohalla's. And note that, while writing this, I'm listening to *Nova Persei* for the first time in about a month, not even wanting to listen to it the past weeks. Smohalla does that to you, or at least to me, in a way I've actually never experienced before. Strange. Really. And by the way, it was sold out on November 11, so chances are probably pretty slim of getting hold of a copy. Unfortunately.

(...and an additional THANK YOU for NOT programming the drums...)

aVoid

HIDDEN TREASURES 2007



ABERRANT VASCULAR - Pelopia

(self-released, 2007 – Finland)

Avantgenre: Electro Ethereal Opera Metal

This is a three-piece suite EP, the latest effort from the Finnish band. Already at the inside cover, the band stages itself as "operatic avantgarde metal", and this claim has a lot to do with both, subjective and objective truth: start from Vladimir Lumi's vocals, which are pure opera and finish with the epic feeling hanging from the ethereal synths, giving a final result, a curtain of a mighty strangeness. Unfortunately, this strangeness, a world waiting to be deeply explored, ends within 15 minutes long. But I'm reaching the end too soon.

As stated before, three tracks are presented within good, but not superb, production. The first song called "Shto oni zasluživat" (Russian anyone?) opens with a gentle stroke of synths, falling into somehow-weak guitar burst, which reminded me of the start of "Kinetic", the opener of "The Sham Mirrors". As I wondered about the source of this comparison (and the conclusion pointed to something regarding the distortion depth), Lumi's voice comes forth, all might and glory, sounds so assure and decisive and blend uniquely with the electronic beats. Indeed, Lumi is a professional opera singer, an impressive tenor who provides the cachet for the band's self definition. His vocals are lucid and strong, sometimes aching and whispering (there's even some sort of blackish scream, style the late Michael Haas vocals) but mainly traveling easily and skillfully through scales and phrases. Tracing the vocals only is fascinating, for this is singing. He gives the EP almost the solemn touch of the elusive avantgarde seal. But yet again, there's the music. The constructions are the eternal duel between guitars with average distortion and also the general place in the whole production and highly interesting and changing synths work, which claimed to be the musical highlight of this EP. The synths combine clear electronic influences (as they've heard best in the guitar-given sheath), classical piano flickering (another statement of the operatic attitude) and tiny electro samples, coming directly from the industrial world. They slide gently into one's ear upgrading the songs a few levels. Therefore, another listening should be done carefully, giving those little "friends" the rightful attention.

Aside from few interesting riffs, the guitar work isn't stirring. It absorb from some major genres, such as Doom, Black and even Heavy metal. And

yet does not succeed to stand at it's own as contra to the prominent synths and of course, as steady foundation to Lumi's vocals, which swallows it all as a storm. The drumming also deserves attention and slides along with both electronic beats and human touch.

The best song in this EP is the second one, "Dorei", which leaves the listener mesmerized, due to the combination between the synths and the vocals. They take the listener's ears to somehow familiar journey, thanks to the heavy influences of Arcturus and The Kovenant. One might say that this EP is a mirror of the sham... However, after some listening, it becomes obvious that the band has much talent to withdraw those roots to places of their own. The last song, "Paradigme / quintessence", sung in French and clearly in the veins of its ancestors – leading synths and guitar scratches under the dependable vocals conducting.

As said earlier, the trouble with this effort is that it's over too soon. Once the listener had a glimpse inside this odd Finnish world, he'd like some more of digging in. When one regards that as another demo, it stands as a great ticket for the band, although I recommend strengthening the guitar department. In an overall look, Aberrant Vascular created an EP, that surely leaves taste for more, and this time, for a full album by this talented band.

Jobst



ABSTRUSE - Transgression

(self-released, 2007 - Greece)

Avantgenre: Cerebral Death Experiments

Transgression is the first release from this ambitious Greek duo, formed back in 2002. Veiled and Substant, sharing the vocal, visual and musical duties, states a pretty bold mission objective - to fuse extreme metal's eerie darkness, the strange tonal systems of modern art music (serialism, atonal and tone scales et c) and psychedelic visual art, in order to walk down a new musical path. Indeed, pretty ambitious for a band's first release, and before listening it mostly seemed pretentious and rather silly. But... I was very, very wrong.

The music of Abstruse (a synonym of "obscure", it seems) is extremely experimental, though it rarely leaves a metallic context. Their claiming of using the disharmonic scales of 20th century avantgardist composers is definitely no ostentatious bullshit, among the dark metal riffs (a fair reference should

be early progressive death metal) I can hear not only traces of Schönberg's Twelve-tone technique, but a distinct use of it; programmed melodies intertwine with guitar sweeps, melodies are turned inside out, played in reverse, everything those Germans did back in the angst ridden 1920's. The dreamy whole tone scales of Debussy add a misty surreal veil to the chaotic dodecaphony... But still, they never leave the metallic course. Bloody awesome? Indeed! The opener hints both to the crazy electrojazz of Last-Minute Lies-era Fleurety and to the playfulness of the Atrox guitarists. The slightly slower "Ceremonial Torches" brings to mind a dark mix of Karl Sanders mythological solo works and The Residents (!!!). The guitar lines at points resemble the works of Carl-August Tidemann before joining Winds (i.e. Arcturus)... but enough references. Is it strange? Yes. Great? YES. Few can achieve music as technically stunning as this, without simultaneously losing my interest. Very cerebral. I like that.

The vocals are pretty strange, deep half-roared whispers most of the time. The programmed drums might annoy some, but they merge naturally with the overall technological sound; only the blastbeats sounds plastic. What I also like is the visuals accompanying some of the songs on a DVD. Psychedelic as hell, blurry shots of nature flowing into each other in many pretty colours (a lot of colour inversion and that kind of stuff). I'm an ignorant when it comes to video art, but I know what I enjoy. This, for example.

If you are in any way interested in experimental, groundbreaking or just highly technical music, you want to hear this. This will definitely not be the last you'll hear from Abstruse.

aVoid



AVERSE - Scolopendrian Perception Haze

(Independent, 2007 – France)

Avantgenre: Progressive Black Metal

I must say that it is quite an honour for me to be writing for this site, getting in contact with all these interesting and creative unsigned bands. This time I have gotten the first release from the handsome French quintet Averse, the concept EP Scolopendrian Perception Haze.

Led by Tim (keys, voice, guitars and words), they claim the genre "progressive black metal" as their own, which I cannot deny them. Opening with the

dark ambient experiment "Eveil, Grondement", they swiftly move on to a twelve minute opus, taking the appropriate amount of turns a band of these ambitions should during that amount of time. They cite (among others) Enslaved, Opeth and Solefald as influences, and well, you hear that. The song starts of with a proggy acoustic intro, soon exploding into a grinding fury akin to Solefald first four albums. The growled vocals sound professional, but the clean ones have a few steps to go before competing with... well, the abovementioned sweetsingers. Prog-wise, Averse have chosen the right path; that of the British 1970's. All that is lacking is a mellotron, but I would rather hear some more eerily Crimonesque dissonants in the guitars for the releases to come.

Did I mention the violinist? Yeah, they got one of those, he's classically trained and really adds another dimension to Averse, giving both an air of folk music as well as chamber music. Unmetallic instruments are sovereign, and should always be promoted. The instrumental third track consists mostly of a forlorn acoustic guitar, well played but quite faceless - some more structure and perhaps a violin of two would definitely get me off. The second of the "real" songs (I guess you can see this as a five-track EP or a massive single with pre-, inter- and postlude) is also twelve minutes long, sung in French this time. It is slightly more traditional black metal in a Norwegian sense. Still a fine track, though lacking some of the experimentalism that made "Thus Grant Matter" a hit - most notably the passage at about 4:30 where the violin ostinato gives this debut its apex.

Keep it up. Integrate the electronic sounds, acoustic experiments and the violin even more into your metal, move a bit further away from your influences, and you'll be eating many signed bands for breakfast within no time. And keep singing in French! English is terribly overrated as a growled language.

aVoid



BLACK ALBATROSS - The Green Walls

(self-released, 2007 – Pakistan / USA)

Avantgenre: Post-Drone Narcotic Space Rock

The first album proper (self released that is) from a meeting of young yet prodigiously talented minds, this is indeed as avant garde as they come. Starting with a backward guitar melody that morphs into the opener "In a Garden", here is some seriously

eerie and trippy music. It is essentially Saqib Malik's soundscapes and strange textures married to Howard Eichenblatt's stream of consciousness poetry. From the opener onwards, the agenda gradually unfolds to demonstrate reverb laden guitars and drums, creepy drones, disturbing samples all topped by vocals recalling a teenage Morrison on crack. Reference points touched upon include modern drone masters (Sunno, Boris et al) to indie (old Sonic Youth, Velvet Underground) to experimental black metal (Blut Aus Nord), but without resembling any one band or genre. The production is intentionally lo-fi, keeping clarity of instruments and vocals without sounding immediate at all.

Infact, the mixing of the distant reverb laden sound with the odd lyrical and vocal gist makes this the very epitome of narcotic post rock/metal. Thankfully this completely avoids the Grateful Dead-with-Distortion structuring or the chugga-chugga generic chunks of many post-metal luminaries. Instead it delves into the underside of rock (and no I don't mean the sleazy redneck kind either), and comes up all aces. Very occasional touches of a more extreme metallic element (witness "At Dusk We Returned" and "Dark Language") show metalheads swimming somewhere in the murk.

This is cosmic music but its the very anti-thesis of what "cosmic" usually means when applied to metal. Instead of rage and pomp this is the moan of a feeble, drugged out and decaying cosmos. Honestly speaking, after the first 6 tracks I lost conventional consciousness and was floating away blissfully on a narcotic cloud. And I have not used any mind-altering substances in a long time.

This is to post rock and metal what Radiohead's Kid A was to modern indie pop rock. I am scared of thinking what these guys would do with a bigger budget and a slicker studio.

Suleiman



BUG - Split With 27

(Inter Stellar Records, 2007 – Austria)

Avantgenre: Dark Chaoscore Rock

The cd goes for the throat with opener "Grubenhund". A thorough slice of chaoscore (for want of a better description), this is loud ugly music with that extra something. And that is the intensity of the clean parts. In place of the typical emo schlock we are introduced to some near gothic (or dark hardcore) sounding vocals and haunting licks.

There is a clear preference for distortion (including the screeched vox) and a rather doomy feel to the proceedings. It touches all the right bases : edgy hardcore and extreme metal along with sludge (where the distortion seems apt) and rock. Its one of the few releases from the hardcore camp I have had the pleasure of reviewing for AGM.com and as such just maybe I'm cutting it a little slack because god knows there are a million bands doing something similar since the days that Botch and Cave-in broke-out. Its just that an average chaoscore band is still around 50 times as intense as an average metal one, and this shows in the band's violently funky jerking grooves, haunting riffing, spite-filled vocal attack (mixed up with that 'insane gothic man' voice) and feedback. The musicianship is top-notch on this thing.

The mixing of elements is used to great effect on the riveting "Something Wrong with The World Today" as well as the discordant yet emotional pounding of "Lainzer Tiergarten". The album rests briefly for the first half of "Excitement is a Girl" and the clean sections share their secret in detail: the unique calmer segments owe as much to the geographical location of the band as to apt composition. Namely, there is a Teutonic element prevalent in the proceedings, and what would have been cringe-worthy in american hands is here strangely enjoyable. Thank heavens its miles away from the sickness knows as screamo/emo.

This is one of those bands that can eventually progress beyond their chosen genre onto something much more transcendental given enough time. At present they are a name to impress with, showing you are hip to the cutting edge of new hardcore. It is avant-garde only if you think of Biohazard and Sick of It All as all that hardcore offers. And a word of advice to the lads : easy with the distortion pedal !

Suleiman



BURZUKH - Orion

(self-released, 2007 – Pakistan)

Avantgenre: Astral Retro Groove Psychotic Machine

Sometimes you never know what will hit you before you listen to a new acquired peace of music. We're all quite familiar with the music coming from Europe or America, but what about Asia?! Pakistan, particularly, has a small but quite a strong scene which started blooming in the mid nineties after Dusk was formed. One of the most interesting

animals from this scene is actually Burzukh, a one man band active since 2001, led by Suleiman Ali. "Orion" is Burzukh's fifth full-length effort, released only through internet (for now). It's not a long output, but people say that poison is kept in small bottles. From the first listening I knew the whole thing's going to be pretty weird. The album starts out with a crazy electronic beat, something mr. Zweizz himself would do. Later it's covered by a quite gloomy guitar sound and vocals which could not be described as screams but rather as some kind of grim high pitched moaning and grunts, very interesting any way. The greatest surprise is the variety of stiles found on this album: it ranges from some weird black metal outputs to very dreamlike, cleanly sung miniatures. One can feel old prog rock influences, especially in the simple, yet mooving psyhadelic atmosphere of some songs, most notably "Goth Machi". This combination of influences gives the album an interesting variable structure one could compare with a chess board: constant shifting of two main influences forming a visually (in this case audibly) dynamic and recognizable pattern. The overall atmosphere is somehow dreamlike, moody and in some points quite disturbing. The track "Lying" is a mindgame for itself: filled with electronics and dominated by screams and those long clean moans it pushes you into a room full of hyperactive thoughts jumping around the whole place, bouncing of the walls and hitting your ears.....

The instrumentation is very good: simple but expressive. The use of keyboards is very insane on some parts because of the weird, almost irritating sounds that were chosen. It all blends with the sometimes quite dissonant (great!) riffing and the very dim bass sound. Tremolo pickings like found on "Awaken Orion" combined with all the crazy sounds is...well one cannot describe that feeling they produce without using the sintagma astral-industrial, it works for me at least. The only thing I regret is the lack of a drummer...why? Well the fact is that the drums are great, just that they can't cope with the loose, psychedelic atmosphere of the whole album, or maybe they lack some expression, I am not sure, but the fact is that it's not easy to programme drums and do all the things by yourself, so it seems Suleiman did a good job here.

When it comes to efforts like "Orion" one should remember that you never know what is going to hit you next: whether it is going to be a boot in the face or a pleasant surprise depends on your attitude and the will to consume great music made with a different view on the world. Just keep in mind that "Orion" was recorded in a home studio. Don't expect a Dream theater production with mr. Portnoy holding your hand while listening.....this is real fresh and raw sound. It's not my problem if you miss things like this....one can always give it a chance! Soon, it seems, we will have another notable name hailing from Pakistan. Until then enjoy the soundscape of the astral underground!

Give it a try...no drugs and sugar added: ORION!!!

(I would like to dedicate a few nice words to the victims of the terrorist attack in Karachi....but alas none can describe those people's pain...silence becomes gold)

Ulv



ETERNAL DEFORMITY - Frozen Circus

(self-released, 2007 – Poland)

Avantgenre: Cristalized Submental Dream Manipulation

Before I start writing how this is a great album, I would just like to state how much I hate circuses...not that it has much to do with this great band and album, but the word circus immediately reminds me of those poor tortured animals which are forced to do tricks to amuse people- that is sadism. Those animals should be free, they should be loved, and not transported in those small charts like some deadmeat.

As I said, this above does not reflect my love to the band. On the contrary from the first minutes this album was spinning in my CD player I was wondering how such a great band like this could have remained unknown to me (and a number of people). Why is it so that nobody (no label) cares about great polish bands as Frozen Deformity or better known Lux Occulta. My new audible friends are no worse than other rather more known ones. I interested myself for some earlier releases and found out that the band's sound today evolved from some earlier great and atmospheric doom releases.

"Frozen Circus" starts off with a short but sick piece of "circus music", it just gives me the chills: the annoying circus melody becomes very hypnotic, very weird. The rest of the album is very clearly produced, the sound is firm and clear, of course the keyboards stand out quite a lot- that gives a great balance between the solid riffing and the weird atmosphere that was achieved. As for the vocals they range from good clean lines to a magnificent black a la Vintersorg voice (just an association), maybe a bit more dim. One of the freakiest moments of the album is when the track "Crime" is suddenly interrupted by a circus announcer speaking the German words: "Meine Damen und Herren, Herzlich willkommen in unserem Zirkus, Eternal Deformity...", the announcer is backed by that annoying circus organ....I don't know if it's just me but I feel like screws being driven into my head when I hear that sound, a great idea it was to introduce such a sound. I really don't know which song I could mark as the best on this album, but the last track, "Lovelorn" is certainly one of the greatest moments of this album. It seems that with the chorused guitars and cello, this track unveils the band's doom background in the best possible way. I don't want to be misunderstood, the track itself isn't doom at all but at some moments you

can catch a glimpse of it, just as in the rest of the album.

Everybody who has ever tried to write a review must know how difficult it is sometimes to describe with words that which you can only experience by your ears. Maybe the best thing is to give a listen to the album and try to create your own atmosphere of a frozen circus. This album is just a snapshot of a circus which is brought back to life for just a few seconds, but the sounds are so multiple and intense it seems much longer. Just as suddenly as it has been brought back to life it became frozen again, and there remained only silence....so one can imagine that this album actually lasts forever.

"Red finger tips
Red water
Spinning down and deep
To unknown
To cold dark sleep "

Ulv



GIRE - Gire

(self-released, 2007 – Hungary)

Avantgenre: Deep Journey Into Fall And Death

What I'm holding in my hands right now after a long wait and six demos is Gire's first, self-titled album which is definitely deserves some spotlight. Although being "sunk" in the metal-for-masses metal scene of Hungary Gire succeeds to reach the ones with sophisticated taste for the original and the creative.

The brain of the Gire-system is Tamás Kátai, one of the most respected people of the Hungarian (underground) Avantgarde scene. He writes the lyrics, they are Kátai's poems in fact, he loves the Fall, so the lyrics are (in Hungarian of course) mostly about anything which can be connected to Fall in an impressionist, an expressionist, a symbolic and of course a decadent way, so it's not just writing about the yellow and red falling leaves. Frankly, it's hard to understand the real meaning behind his lyrics even for a Hungarian. (Kátai also has a poem-collection printed and sold out.) Every song has its own story and there are some about culture and the mankind too. Almost every song provides a more than five minutes long journey into a gray and green, rainy day of Fall and in some cases into shiny, warm but the last days of summer. A couple of translations of tracks to illustrate it: Green Shower (Zöld zivatar), Golden Dawn (Aranyhajnal), Seven Birds (Hét madár), Run of the Deer (Az özek

futása). By the way, there is a covered song on the album called Trans Express originally played by a forgotten Hungarian band, Necropsia. For "further feeling" check the video clip of Az özek futása on youtube.com. By now we know a bit of what it's about.

The music of Gire characterized by the heavy, death/thrash metal like guitar playing and the various ambient sound effects, folkish instruments, like Jew's harp, violin, tilinkó and kaval (these two are Central-European wind instruments) and mainly by the programmed drum machine's sound which is now the brand mark of Gire, the band is almost unimaginable without it. On the album one can find growled, shouted vocals and clean, narrative like vocals as well.

The album is available only in digipack edition with the most beautiful cover and artwork I've seen in my whole life. The booklet is just so amazing (most of its pictures are taken by Kátai himself) and they really mirror the feeling of the songs and the whole album.

In my opinion it's the best album of 2007 till now. It's really had to be felt, not listened.

revon



SMOHALLA - Smolensk Combustion

(self-released, 2006 – France)

Avantgenre: Ambient Dreamstorming Black Metal

If bands were only the sum of their influences and references (not necessarily intentional), then Smohalla would be among the greatest bands on Earth. I can easily trace elements from BM/AGM luminaries as Arcturus (melodies), Emperor (riffs), Ved Buens Ende (melodies), Ulver (electronics), DHG (riffs), Maudlin of the Well (emotions), et al, in Smohalla's music, and I could easily leave it at that. But that would be unfair, wouldn't it? Because, even if Smohalla turns my mind to mentioned bands at different points during Smolensk Combustion, they never ever sound like copycats. I definitely shouldn't have judged them in reference to those bands, for Smohalla is above mere reference. They do what few bands succeed at - they sound unique. Not just mashing together their eclectic influences, as many bands do today trying to get away as "avant-garde", but creating a sound of their own. Smohalla sounds like Smohalla, nothing else. Quite an achievement for a band that didn't exist before 2006!

Smohalla, led by multi-instrumentalist visionary Slo (guitar/vox/drums, aided by bassist Camille and A.L. responsible for electronics), twists and turns in some kind of surrealistic dreamland. High-paced storming grind with intricate technic riffing falls into trippoppy ambiances with distant operatic female vocals and eerie samples, beautiful string and glockenspiel melodies with epic clean vocals... There are too many elements to write them all down, you should hear them yourself. It all sounds like played behind a curtain of sleepy mists, the sound is low and at great distance, giving an ambience similar to Leviathan (US), but cyan and deep blue and violet instead of pitch black. It takes some listens to penetrate these veils, but for those persistent enough awaits sapphires and emeralds of the most beautiful extreme music released for quite a while. Smohalla carries a legacy of ephemeral sweetness in metal that few dare these days. For the escapist who long for something else.

(Note: the 2nd Smohalla release, 3" cd Nova Persei, based on the H.P. Lovecraft tale "Beyond The Wall Of Sleep", will be released this summer through Vendlus/God Is Myth.)

aVoid



SYMPTOMS - Symptoms That You Are Alive

(self Released, 2007 – Italy)

Avantgenre: Death-Industrial Dream Metal

It begins beautifully with a strange wisp of a synth that explodes in a full-bloodied metal harmony, and then the groove locks in. The vocals and riffing place this firmly in the extreme metal camp, but it is the drum machine (which may have benefitted from a better kit sound), strange feedback noises and those bizarre synths that truly propel this beyond into something else. This is way ahead of the Obituary meets Ministry via Killing Joke stylings of the debut. It has a strange atmosphere: obviously apocalyptic yet somehow enchanting, kind of like post-black death metal without resorting to any of the clichés of that much flogged dead horse. Do not get me wrong - the sound is too wholesome to be black metal. Just the mood is wistful, anemic and magical in places. And when it's coupled with the more typical disjointed death metal riffing and vocals it just gets unstoppable. Instead of going for the everything-but-the-kitchen-sink-trick of most modern bands of this ilk, Symptoms stay true to a strong songwriting tradition, while utilizing the avant garde tendencies as hooks to great effect.

The interludes are plain bizarre, going much further than the standard few samples and beeps, to actually be complete entities in themselves, with totally involving atmospherics and intricate rhythms at play. There is even a strange gap in the opener "Dead for 30 Seconds" that I'm still not sure is intentional.

But the way the dreamy soundscapes are ripped apart by brutal death metal guitars is strange juxtaposition and may even be too much for some. When it all comes together (the aforementioned 'hooks' of the songs) there's just plain jaw-dropping: the choir-synth-guitar /double bass culmination in "City Lights" or the way the outro of said song leads right into the harmonic intro of the manic, driving "Mental Disorder". You really will drift off to strange places as the album progresses. There is this truly unique sounding lead (synth or guitar?) that is overlaid over the more traditional aggro-riffing in a lot of songs that puts the entire thing into a new perspective.

All in all, this is a welcome addition to a growing army of new cyber-avant bands that are pushing the boundaries of metal into inner and outer space. Do yourself a favour and get it now directly from the band.

Suleiman



TECHNY-CAL X - Start The Process

(self-released, 2007 – France)

Avantgenre: Dark Dance Metal

Cruising out of France on the wings of technology and a cold rage, this is a solid effort from the beginning to the end. By the second song the style of the band is immediately recognizable. It is a dark, aggressive and danceable sound, full of atmosphere and groove. The quality of the material holds up to repeated listens. The songs have a definite club friendly feel without catering to the base denominator. That means it reminds you less of goth club scene in a Hollywood flick and more of an actual dance floor full of antagonistic cyborgs. Thankfully the riff stylings and synth sequences place them firmly in the Euro scene as opposed to the post-NIN abominations of America. And the vocals do that dark, slightly distorted almost-growl, filled out with a gothic baritone. Imagine a mix of darkwave and Exodus era Samael with a hint of Red Harvest. Electro Metal fans should definitely give this a try.

It is too short even for an EP, and you just wish there were more songs here. There are very occa-

sional traces of the cheesiness of Deathstars and Pain. But they are so sparse that it adds to the vibe. The EP achieves the (desired) effect in that the listener wants more. What wonders will the full length bring? Surely it cannot be an entire CD full of mid-paced dark dance metal. But if there is someone capable of pulling it off, it is these guys.

And that is about all I can write based on 3 songs (and 1 intro).

Suleiman



TRISTWOOD - The Delphic Doctrine

(Sound Riot Records, 2006 – Austria)

Avantgenre: Industrial Death Black Metal

Aaaaah !! Finally!! After reviewing all manners of insane sound forms that are often at the very edge of metal, here is one assigned to me that is as metal as beer, sacrificed virgins and spiked studs. This here is some seriously brutal atmospheric death metal. And atmospheric I don't mean doomy or slow; I mean reeking of evil darkness. I don't have a lyric sheet or a CD sleeve even but somehow I wouldn't be surprised if the themes were cosmic, satanic, hermetic or plain murderous (even a combination of some/all of the above).

It starts with a very short intro and then its blasts all the way, with a few more similarly short synthy intros scattered through out.. The riffing and song-writing is straight forward and lightning fast. The growls are done in the classic demonic death metal vein (think Massacre, Septic Flesh and mid-period Behemoth) with an occasional dashing of a more mid-ranged rasp (no ultra high pitched shrieking, than you very much). There is a dark almost cyber sheen to the material, courtesy of the background but ever present synths (which occasionally come forth as per requirement), and the too precise drumming (is it or is it not a drum machine?), as well the perfect production.

I know it sounds like a million other bands, but there is something about the songs that just stick. The riffing knows where to stand out, without going into wankery, and the stuff is catchy. There wasn't a single part where I thought 'I wish they hadn't done that' and that means its damn near perfect as a slice of metal brutality. For those into the heavier end of the spectrum check this shit out. Hail !!!

Suleiman



UNHEALTHY DREAMS - Doloris Corpus

(self-released, 2007 – France)

Avantgenre: Synthetic Industrial Mayhem

Wow!.....no, not "World of warcraft", but a real "wow!". Before I write anything about the "Body of pain" (Latin. doloris corpus) one has to be aware that France started giving us quite a lot of great and weird bands (the invisible giants- Deathspell Omega, Smohalla, the growing audible chaos, and some that yet have to be discovered like Dreams of the Drowned). Unhealthy Dreams is one of the most brutal deities of the fast rising scene. The band creates the pain of modern humanity through their chaotic music. When you take a look at the cover of "Doloris Corpus" you can expect somekind of a chaotic industrial mania, but when you put it into the stereo, it will just hit you in the face, you won't see it coming! Why?!

The production is very clear, but nevertheless the audible mayhem is colossal, ranging from the bass lines up to every electronic squeak. The tracks tend to be very fast, but they are often broken apart by some pure electronical passages, the second track even features a charming flute. The contrast is interesting as the electronical parts are sometimes quite calming, while the rest of the music is very fast and nervous, one could compare this with a behavior of a person suddenly struck with waves of dementia. Just like the instrumental parts the vocals vary very much, from an ofu-khanish style in the beginning to a more high pitched black screaming style. I am not sure if this is my impression but somehow the album tends to get more and more electronical as it is closer to its end. The vicious and nervous guitars become more steady, but not softer, don't worry. Electronica and the samples used on "Wolves torment" is purely great, the track being filled with distorted beats and raw industrial samples.

The atmosphere of the whole album is very cold, razor-sharp and solid. This is an example of a great industrial production (or destruction) and mastering, not being too loud so one can absorb all of the elements, and not being too noisy as Red Harvest sometimes manages to be. Nevertheless this is one of the best surprises in the industrialized sphere of our weird music this year. I hope Unhealthy Dreams shall get all the attention a promising band like that deserves. Now I recommend that you get lost in this swirl of pain you can hear on "Corpus Doloris".....get lost.....

Ulv

1st Print Edition of
Avantgarde Metal Magazine
23rd December 2007

Imprint:

Chief editor:
Chrystof Niederwieser

PDF design and layout:
Katja Honeywine van de Barrel

Webmaster:
Bernd Grünwald

Articles written by:
aVoid, Olivier Côté, Jegger, Jobst,
Jonny Lignano, James Slone, Polygon,
Tentakel P., revon, Suleiman Ali,
Trident, Ulv, MvH,
Katja and Chrystof

Contact:

www.avantgarde-metal.com
hq@avantgarde-metal.com
Chrystof Niederwieser
Peter-Siegmaistr. 29
A – 6176 Völs
AUSTRIA

Visit the “about” section of
WWW.AVANTGARDE-METAL.COM
to get in contact with the crew members!