

LAMENTATIONS OF THE FLAME PRINCES

FREE

VOL. 5

Nightwish



Moonspell



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Control Denied



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TIAMAT



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TOP 10 CDs OF 1999

10. Skyclad *Vintage Whine* Massacre
9. Solefald *Neonism* Avantgarde
8. Yngwie Malmsteen's *Rising Force* Alchemy Dream Catcher
7. Control Denied *The Fragile Art of Existence* Nuclear Blast
6. Primal Fear *Jaws of Death* Nuclear Blast
5. Nevermore *Dreaming Neon* Black Century Media
4. Agalloch *Pale Folklore* The End
3. Nightwish *Oceanborn* Spinefarm
2. Wuthering Heights *Within* Sensory
1. Opheth *Still Life* Peaceville

Go to <http://www.onelist.com/subscribe/LotFP> and sign up for the LotFP mailing list! For all the latest news, discussions, etc, geared up especially for LotFP readers and Atlanta metalheads. If you're in Atlanta, sign up as well for show listings and communication with Atlanta's bands!

Here are the internet web addresses to some of metal's best mail order merchants in the United States. I fully encourage all of you to buy from your local stores when you can, but online merchants usually have the imports for cheaper, and if your local retailer can't keep up now, they need to start. If you don't have the internet, you undoubtedly have a friend who does, or can get access through your local library. It's worth your time to check it out, and stop whining about not being able to find the latest releases. If you can't find something from AT LEAST one of these vendors, then it just doesn't exist. I've used most of these myself and can vouch for their reliability.

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I get shit for 'not helping out the local scene' enough... and although I think 99% of it is crap, here are some website contacts to learn more about the Atlanta heavy metal scene so you can decide for yourself. There is movement here.
www.abwhore.com (Atlanta's Metal Kings!)
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No big raging editorial this time. Obviously my monthly schedule has gone straight into the crapper but life catches up and all these unpaid bills I've ignored so I could pay for the zine can't be put off any longer. Basically the big delay is 50% my fault, 50% other people's. Basically, my personal life has gone in the shitter to the point where I'm having trouble keeping my job because I don't care about much of anything... besides the zine. And I had \$1500 in ads pledged, plus one paycheck of mine and this thing is PAID. So I got lax and even though I knew 50% of that money wasn't coming until after printing, I decided to try to cheer myself up. How? Buying CDs. Old Judas Priest, Rush, Sabbath (UK), rare Rainbow

live CDs, and expensive rare bootlegs of Blind Guardian, Gamma Ray, and reformed Maiden with Bruce. Things I WANT from metal right now rather than concentrate on the things I committed to. I know some of you look forward to the zine and I know when people whose work I admire slack off I hate it, but... At the end of the day, if the rest of my life seems to be just really dead with no hope of resurrection, this zine won't be any good if I don't keep up with being a true fan of metal. Regular readers know this is as much about my passion and ego and opinions as much as information and promotion and I can't lose that, ever. I'll do the best I can to get this thing out as often as I can, don't worry. I'm still a sorry rat bastard failure of a human being for being late though. #6 should be out by May! If I can get more regular advertisers then all will be OK, but right now this is still 50% out of my own pocket, so ya know, give me some leeway. I do want to apologize to the advertisers who paid early and still had their ads run late. Screwing up on your most loyal backers is NEVER good, but what can I do? Enough of the negative, this is still the publication with the best interviews out there and as my name grows hopefully this will all turn out for the best.

Some of you know I am attempting to bring Opheth over to the States for a show or two. Well, my financial sucker, er, partner, realized what a money pit it will be just to get them here (\$3000 just for their plane tickets, never mind hotel, food, their equipment, etc), and the venue to be used had a big fire. The early April date no longer looks feasible. Shit.

Cover background art is taken from the cover of Opheth's *Still Life*, by Travis Smith. He rules! Check him out at www.the.nl/seempieces

Thanks to: Kim Easton, Steve Cannon, plus all the usual suspects. Remember the Twirlygirl I mentioned back in issue #1? SHE HUGGED ME! Woohoo! And then when I tried to talk to her, I completely froze. DAMN IT. Why does that ALWAYS happen to me when I'm around beautiful women? ARGH! Also, remember the covergirl, Jenna, from #1? She returns to the cover of LotFP next issue! Sorry to Joker about bitching about you last issue, but it was after writing that that I found out about your health problems. DL Burrell for once again putting the cover together and scanning in all the pics. Thanks to Matt Johnsen for helping set me up with Tim Aymar and for the Psycho Scream stuff. Thanks to Russell Burgess for the Elf,

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Haggard, and Crimson Glory especially. To Ralf for the Deliverance. Bill Leidy for the Arcturus/Opheth/In Flames rarities. Chris Robin Zimmerman (www.crz.net) for the cool ass plug on Wrestline.

LotFP has been going for a year now and I've managed to put myself into the upper crust of pure metal zines. Not bad, but there's far more to do. Thanks to all of the bands, all of the labels, and especially to all of the readers that let me know I'm not completely wasting my time by giving up my whole life to make this work right now. This year will bring new records from Judas Priest, Dio, Iron Maiden, and more. 2000 is the year it will happen for everyone, so enjoy. And remember, no matter how big metal gets or doesn't get, widespread mainstream success will only be a fad, and the band you'll like most probably hasn't even been formed yet so don't forget the small bands, labels, and zines when Iron Maiden rolls through arenas, MTV, and is on the cover of Rolling Stone once again. Yeah, I'm being optimistic, but if I didn't have hope I wouldn't bother with any of this.

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Wuthering Heights • Within

Danish guitarist Erik Ravn unites with vocalist Kristian Andrén (Tod Morose, Memento Mori) to create a conceptual tour-de-force of symphonic speed metal infused with folk and classical elements. Fans of Rhapsody, Angra, and Blind Guardian will not want to miss out on this epic musical adventure!

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Denmark's Behind The Curtain create their own avant garde vision of metal for the next millenium. "Til Birth Do Us Part" is a concept album filled with dynamic contrasts of crushing guitar riffs, symphonic keyboards, and original vocals. Although complex in nature, BTC's music is often subtle and filled with powerful emotion. A challenging listening experience!

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Interlude is five songs recorded live at the Wacken Open Air Festival, four new songs, a cover of the Judas Priest classic, *Desert Plains* & a CD-ROM with live footage, pictures and more, all by power metal heroes, Kai Hansen (Gamma Ray) and Piet Sielck!

12358 Ventura Blvd., Suite 386
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You should all know about the band called Death. Chuck Schuldiner has been unleashing the metal fury since 1984 or so, starting off with primitive death metal, and being one of the first and defining bands in the genre. They progressed into being a technical metal monster. 1991's *Human* and 1998's *The Sounds of Perseverance* were absolute gems of intelligent, yet extreme heavy metal art. But throughout it all, Chuck wanted something that would recall his heroes growing up. Judas Priest, Exciter, Iron Maiden, etc. ad infinitum. The answer? New vocals. Enter 1999, *Control Denied*'s first album *The Fragile Art of Existence* hits the shelves, featuring music strikingly similar to Death's last album, but featuring the vocal stylings of one Tim Aymar. Steve DiGiorgio returned to the Schuldiner fold on bass, with ten armed drummer Richard Christy and Shannon Hamm returning with Chuck for the twin axe attack. Highly technical, definitely progressive, yet still balls out heavy metal. I rang up Tim Aymar one fall afternoon and this is what we talked about...

Why don't you tell me a little bit about yourself and how you got into the metal scene.

There was a guy I say beside in algebra class, and we used to talk about the bands out at the time. Aerosmith, Led Zeppelin, Lynyrd Skynyrd, Blue Oyster Cult.

How old are you?

36. He heard me singing in the hallway with my boom box and he asked me if I was interested in singing in a band. I had just gone to see Aerosmith and I was impressed enough by that that I didn't hesitate. We started practicing and that band turned out to be pretty good. We were 15 year old rock stars. That was a band called Sweet Destruction, we changed the name later on to Overboard. This was about 1979.

I wouldn't have any comprehension of what the music scene was like back then.

Yeah, most of the people coming up were still shutting yellow when I was getting started.

What happened with all of that?

I moved. The employment situation in Pittsburgh was really bad. The mills were all shutting down and all the training I had in school was no good. There were all these guys in their 30s and 40s released from their jobs at the mills. They were all retrained in the same fields I was. What jobs there were were crap. I moved down to Orlando to get into construction down there. I took a little break, played with a few bands down there. That was the longest I was out of a band, about 6 months.

I lived there for a few years.

Ironically years later I run into Chuck and he's living in Altamonte Springs at the time when we first did the demos. That's right down the road from where I was living.

The first I heard of your name was in Psycho Scream. How did you get involved in that and when was that?

I met Jim Dofka around 15 years ago. He had a band at the time called Screamer. He's from Wheeling, West Virginia, I was living in Pittsburgh. What we would do is share shows. We'd go down and open a show for them, they'd come up and open a show for us. We got to be friends that way. Years later I was singing for a band called Triple X, which was a pretty popular band up here, the most popular band in town for about 5 years. We had a sponsorship from Budweiser. The thing about Triple X is it wasn't heavy enough for me. It was just too happy. I wanted metal! Jim had called me when he started doing his Dofka album *Toxic Wasteland*. I had to pass on that. I regretted it. I wish I could have sang on that album but Scott did great. Jim went on to Dofka, Brick Mistress (?), 1369 was the other band. Mostly the same guys, there are only so many good musicians and you have to recycle them. So there's maybe 10 or 12 guys that make up 5 bands. I hooked up with Jim when I got tired of Triple X. He had the music ready for me, I didn't have to do anything except rehearse and get ready. We got the band out and it got over well. The album got out in Europe, Japan, South America, Micronesia, weird places. Places we

didn't expect it to go to. One of the people who got ahold of it was Chuck Schuldiner [shul-dinner, by the way]. He called Dofka and asked to borrow me. I was working with another band at the time. It was a side project of Narita and Royal Hunt, there were international players involved. It didn't work out because I went over there and got bronchitis. When I got back, Jim said 'Guess where you're going now? You're going to Florida to work with Chuck Schuldiner.' That was late '96. That's when we did the first demo. That was awesome! The first demos went great. I got down there and Chuck and I immediately clicked. I wasn't worried about that, Chuck is a great guy. We'd have our coffee and bagels in the morning, play a little basketball to warm up and then go slam out a couple songs. We spent about 4 or 5 days and we did all the demos for 3 songs. That was Believe, Cut Down, and one other one. The police showed up for the first official Control Denied practice.

How familiar were you with Death at that point?

I'm not a huge fan of death metal, but Chuck's stuff is so progressive I can't help but like it. I'm into all kinds of jazz and classical stuff and a lot of fast technical metal. There's other technical things out there besides metal. Jim Dofka used to drive home from band practice and listen to Chuck's stuff and laugh our asses off. Not that there was anything wrong with it, we weren't laughing at the

has been going on about how there's been absolutely no mixing of material between the two projects. That's a little hard for me to swallow because again they are very alike as it is.

There are some differences. But we're not going to cheapen Control Denied by doing covers of Death or vice versa. Chuck did use a couple of the songs but they're his songs. He wrote them. If he wants to sing them and use them for Death that's fine. He did catch some flak for putting some songs on the last Death album that were on the Control Denied demos. But he wrote them! What gets down with them is his business!

I don't have a problem with it, I love his writing style. It's all intellectually stimulating to me with the progressive writing. It doesn't make a difference to me, I can deal with the melodic vocals, I can deal with Chuck's growling. Whichever. There are people out there that have a problem and I don't get it. If there are differences, it's the same style anyway, it's not like he's gone off and done a Gamma Ray.

Right. How much control did you have over the vocal patterns and melodies?

He wrote all those lyrics and he sent me demos of himself singing. I had to really work hard to pick up on the way he phrases things. Totally back asswards from the way I do things. Which was cool. I don't think I'll have writers block for a long time after doing this album after seeing all these

take to mix this thing? I would like to take my time with Psycho Scream.

The one thing about Control Denied that everyone is unfortunately focusing in on is Chuck's health problems. The title *The Fragile Art of Existence*, was that created before or after he was diagnosed.

Before. The other part of it is my brother died during this album. I had to fly back to Pittsburgh and bury my brother and then come back and record the album with the guys. He title meant a hell of a lot more to me when I came back. A month after the sessions I get a call from Chuck. I was down in Jacksonville and I had been trying to get ahold of him. Nobody would answer the phone. When I got back to Pittsburgh there was a message, six of them, from him. 'I have to talk to you.' 'Tim, where are you, I really have to talk to you.' 'Tim, when you get in call me, I really have to talk to you.' The last message was 'OK, I'm going to have to tell you this way because I'm going to New York and you won't hear from me for six weeks. The headaches I've been having, I got diagnosed with a brain stem tumor and I'll be in radiation treatment.' I about hit the floor. I just lost my mother, my aunt, my grandmother, and my brother in within 5 months. In the past year I've lost 5 family members and 2 friends of the family. That title means a hell of a lot more to me than anyone right now. And to Chuck. He has to deal with. It's really hard. I wanted to be there for him, but at the time I just couldn't. Things were just so screwed up here from the family tragedies. On the same group of answering machine messages as

Chuck telling me about his brain stem tumor, I think it was one or two messages after that, it was my father telling me his friend had committed suicide. That wasn't a very fun weekend. I'm still trying to hang in there.

And here I thought I was having a crap few weeks.

Hey, anybody who thinks their life's tough can come talk to me for a few minutes. I'll play my little violin for you. What can you do? Life is life. All you can do in this situation is go on! Chuck might have a long time left. He might not. Either way he has to get the most out of it. He can't be worried about Control Denied and all these stupid little details. Whatever's going on here, he doesn't need to be bothered with that right now. He's focused on getting better. The fans need to realize that. I know everybody wants to be out touring but he has to get better.

How is Chuck doing?

Last I heard things were looking pretty positive. What I heard from Shannon is that the doctors gave him his checkup a few weeks ago. It was positive, it looks like the radiation is doing its thing, the tumor is receding or whatever they do. He's going to have another checkup in December. **Even if he does make a recovery, will he be in good enough health where down the road he can tour again?**

We'll see. That's what he wants. It has to be killing him to not be able to play these songs. Your whole life, your whole identity, you're that guitar player. Then one day you pick it up and then you can't play it. Who are you now? His whole identity is messed up. No, it's not. This experience has made him see things he's never seen before and to take the time to appreciate things he's never appreciated before or had the time because he's had his career. Now he has the time to spend with his family, time to talk walks and just be Chuck. He doesn't have to be Evil Chuck the heavy metal guitar player, he can just be Chuck.

I work in an office and there have been people who have worked in offices their entire lives and they're nearing retirement, and it's the same with putting the career before families. Everybody thinks musicians have these glamorous lives and when it comes down to it they have the same concerns with their lives doing their music.

What's wrong with giving that kind of attention or that kind of respect to an ordinary person anyway? Nothing. Face it, when that magic is there, everything is a lot more fun. If you're just Bernie Schwartz and his Band in regular clothes, if you don't have that image, it would be silly. Imagine a



baseball team, the Pittsburgh Pirates coming out without uniforms and playing baseball. There is an image, there is a uniform we wear to be amongst the ranks of the heavy metal guys.

This is the most exposure you've had on a record. Do you think this will help Psycho Scream in getting their stuff out?

Absolutely. It's one of the benefits for all of us. Shannon has a band, Richard has one going on, we all do. That's one of the great things about this project is it's brought all these musicians together. There will be offshoots of this project.

The tagline from Chuck is always 'trend free heavy metal.' Which I agree with and I can hear he's still doing his own thing. But of course coming out on Nuclear Blast in this musical climate, he's been going on about Control Denied for years now, and then of course now this is coming out and some journalists are already complaining 'Oh, this is another Nuclear Blast power metal thing!' If you could say a few words to that...

This was never intended to be power metal. Whoever is saying that must not know much about music. They don't know their ass from a hole in the ground if they're saying this is a power metal band. I've been a metal vocalist for god knows how many years. I'm a melodic singer, I'm not going to stop being melodic for anybody! I can sound awful damn ugly at times, when it's appropriate, when it's called for in the music, but I'm not limited to that like a lot of these frogs are. Oh, was that a derogatory remark? That's what I don't like about death metal is the vocals. It turns me off, and it turns a lot of people off. They love the music, but when the vocals kick in they say 'Ah, I'll listen to something else.' The whole Satanic thing has gone out. It was cool when Sabbath was doing it, I was a fan of Angel Witch, a lot of Satanic bands. But it's gotten absolutely stupid! Barney for Satan or something! Dimmu Borgir, dressed up in makeup, they can't even

play! What is this, a puppet show? And then they'll knock guys who are busting their ass like Chuck just for doing something different. They're mocking everyone but themselves. Where did they get the idea for the makeup? It's already been done. The ideas with the blood and everything. I don't know what makes them think they're so original and say 'Oh, Control Denied's not a metal band!' They tried to make this out like it's an alternative band! Imagine Chuck Schuldiner playing Alice in Chains songs. I don't think that would work. And if he made me sing that I'd blow my brains out!

<needless to say I'm been laughing my ass off since the word 'frog'> I got the Control Denied promo about the same time my friend got the new Dream Theater...

Jim Dofka came to me after he heard that and said 'I'm in love!' The last couple have really sucked and have been stale and boring. They're getting very clinical. He said there was a lot of soul in this new one. I have the new Mark Boals CD, did you hear that?

You know Mark Boals, he sang for Yngwie? He's on Yngwie's new one, it's good. What's the solo album like?

Very, very weak. Extremely poser metal. A sad attempt at metal.

Where would one go about getting a Mark Boals CD? It sounds like one of those you pay \$30 for to get from Japan.

I got it from Dofka. He's a record store manager. It's very bad metal.

Life being what it is, Psycho Scream is going to go into full gear and start doing stuff and you're going to get a call from Chuck saying 'I'm ready.' What will you do?

Drop everything I'm doing and go. Hopefully I won't be in the middle of anything. I have some things to do to keep my life going. The release was supposed to be in July. I've been just hanging

in there waiting to do this. It is my job, I get paid to do this. When something happens, I have to change my plans instead of waking up and not having a job.

So why are you not on the list of people in the band Nuclear Blast is offering up interviews for? [He wasn't at first, so I called him, but right around press time, sure enough, they're offering him up... grrr...]

I don't know. Maybe I made enemies with them in a past life. I will tell you this, there's one person at the label that does not get along with Chuck and that's the person in charge right now. There's a lot of bad things happening simply because this person doesn't like Chuck. And if you don't like Chuck you won't like me much either!

Don't you love politics in record companies?

Oh, it's great. You're busting your ass to put out this great music somebody's plotting to ruin your whole career. Great fun!

And if you went to the web, to go straight to the people instead of having a deal, even if there was this utopia of everybody having equal promotion, that means nobody would sell more than 50-75,000 records because there would be no trends or proven market strategies to breeze by on.

When the record business started, there wasn't a whole lot of competition. The music world was so small at the time. When Elvis Presley came out, how many white blues singers were there out there? None. There's a rumor that Roy Orbison was a candidate to do the same thing they picked Elvis to do. Roy is a much better singer but Elvis had that image.

I guess I don't have to ask if there's any new material in the works...

If Chuck pulls through whatever he does next will be the greatest thing he's ever done.

You might be out of a job. I can imagine Chuck might want to be screaming his head off again after all of this.

He might want to sing for joy, you never know! He seems to change colors with every new album.

He can get together and tour with Mortification! [We go off on a HUGE tangent about lion surfing, lymph node donor survival, and Dark Funeral before getting back on topic...] The one thing I like about Death and Control Denied is that the lyrics are so real.

Or surreal. You have to put your own mind into it to get something out.

But at the same time you can tell something really fucked happened to Chuck over the years.

It happens to everybody! If it doesn't you're not really living!

But that kind of thing is a lot more real than elves in the forest or Satan and hell.

Yeah. Talk about something else! I'm a big Dio fan. Dio has touched some pretty demonic subjects along his way that were really cool, but he wasn't taking it that seriously.

Let's start some controversy. Ozzy vs Dio, your opinion.

That's like Superman vs Batman! Uh, god bless them both. Ozzy kicks ass, and look at the players he's had!

That's my thing. I'm not an Ozzy fan so I say look at the players he's hidden behind!

But he writes the music. He can sing! /uhh... - ed/ And he has the character to play. Which is cool. He can't be the same Ozzy offstage as he is onstage. You can't survive that way. If I was the same idiot offstage that I am onstage, trying to live a normal life around normal people, it just wouldn't work!

What was your reaction when you saw Sounds of Perseverance and in the thanks list Chuck lists you '...Tim Aymer (I lost your number)?'

I just saw that the other day! Jim Dofka has a Black Sabbath tribute band. The singer in that looks and acts like Ozzy, totally uncanny. I mix their sound. I stuck the Death CD in and a friend

says 'Did you see the liner notes?' No, I'd never picked it up and read it! And he shows me... I move around so much from one end of town to the other it's hard to keep track of me.

How's the local scene there?

I haven't been involved lately. It's really tough for heavy metal show. Some band do well, some bands come over from Cleveland and do good. Mushroom Head has a really good sound. [Andreas, it's that fucking Mushroom Head band again!!! - ed] Slipknot really stole that whole Mushroom Head image. Scott Edgel, who sang on Jim Dofka's *Toxic Wasteland* album, he's with Mushroom Head now. Small world.

To really wrap this up, what are your top five favorite metal albums of all time?

Rage For Order [by Queensryche] is my all time favorite. *Heaven and Hell* [Dio era Sabbath]. *Crimson Glory's Transcendence*. *Master of Puppets* by Metallica. *AC/DC For Those About to Rock*. Those are the albums as far as the writing and playing and production that have really influenced the way we look at heavy metal now.

Favorite newer bands?

Symphony X, Mundanus Imperium, Clawfinger.

Last minute update. Mtv.com ran a story on Chuck, and he's in bad shape financially. REALLY bad. Here's a relevant snippet. HELP.

"Those who want to contact the family in an effort to help should send email to

tanzid@freewweb.com, and those who wish to send money,

cards, or other items can write to Schuldiner's mother, Jane Schuldiner, at 609 E. Citrus St.,

Altamont Springs, Florida, 32701."

redrival.com/control Denied/

www.nuclearblast-usa.com



Do you liked whacked out brutality? I mean Meshuggah/Strapping Young Lad styled insanity? Well, Relapse just put out one of the technically wiggered out releases of 1999. The Dillinger Escape Plan. Calculating Infinity. A disc so strong it is being recognized way outside of Relapse's normal fanbase. It's hard to describe, just technical, attacking, and insane. I had to find out a little bit more, so I hooked up with Ben guitarist (yeah just Ben) to figure it out.

How's the response been to the new record?

The response has been really good. It's been weird for us with the music we play to get any response, honestly! It's been great.

I didn't hear the *Under the Running Board* EP so this was all completely new to me.

It's very similar with the direction that the music goes in. This is just a lot more of it! *Under the Running Board* was just 3 songs. With the new one we have room to just expand more because of the length of the album. People say there was a progression but I think there was just more of an album to do stuff on.

Under the Running Board came out before I started the zine and around that time Relapse was releasing a bunch of really short EPs that I don't think was the best value for the money. What was the deal with releasing just a 3 song EP?

We had just recorded the 3 songs as a demo for ourselves before we had a deal with Relapse. We talked to Relapse and figured out we wanted to work together. We couldn't produce a full length album so we decided to put that out as a precursor to whatever else we'd be doing. An introduction to the scene.

What were you guys doing before that EP? How long have you been around, and the basic biographical bullshit.

We'd done a 6 song mini CD on a friend's label. We didn't have any intentions of pursuing a label and a friend just offered to put it out. It was his first attempt at a label and our first attempt at the Dillinger Escape Plan. It got our name out a little bit. We brought in another guitar player when we recorded *Under the Running Board*. And now we just recently recorded the full length. Our guitar player has left and we brought on another guitar player, Brian, who used to play in a band called Jesus. Our bass player was in a terrible car accident so he's out of commission so we have someone filling in on bass. That's the basics.

I haven't heard anything about the accident since it happened and I know some shows had been set up. What's the status with him?

Unfortunately, it's one of those situations that was freaky. He was in a minor car accident but the injuries were so severe he was left paralyzed. We're hoping for the best.

Enough of the negative, let's get to the positive and get people hyped up about the new record. You just got off tour with Mr. Bungle. How did that go?

It went well. Better than we expected. We were really excited to see Mr. Bungle play every night for free! There's no way we in a band of this stature could afford to see Mr. Bungle! Tickets were \$18 or something and we're all out of work. It was definitely a weird situation going out with a band like that, but it was a match made in heaven in some senses.

What kind of crowds were they drawing? I couldn't go when you passed through Atlanta.

The crowds were huge. We weren't used to having real stages, and sound systems and stuff. There were people there were your basic Mr. Bungle people who were into them for the right reasons, and those people were into our music as well. Then there were people into Mr. Bungle just because Faith No More broke up. I don't think Mr. Bungle is even too proud to have those people! They were the ones in the Faith No More shirts walking in drunk. They were an interesting breed. That's the norm of people in music.



THE DILLINGER ESCAPE PLAN

Every time I see you written up in a magazine the subject is brought up of you attacking the crowd.

I think that just has to do with our aggression and our energy on stage. We try to seize the moment. We're out there for ourselves. We live very mellow passive normal lives and it is a privilege for us to be able to get up on stage and get out our aggression. It's the time we get to not take responsibility for our actions and express ourselves. I don't think we're going out and hurting people. That's obviously. With the sharp objects like the guitars if we really wanted people hurt there'd be a lot of people hurt. You don't have to be a big guy to do that with a guitar in your hand. We really just try to play every show to its fullest and play as if it were our last.

You definitely have some unique packaging on the new album. What's the story there?

We'd gone through a lot of ideas for layouts and a lot of things fell through. The whole cover with the letterbox type of feel, we did something like that on the EP but we wanted to expand on that and bring it to the next level. We felt like we wanted our merchandise to look like a Dillinger CD every time. The way it folded up was just some sort of novelty, a fun way to do it. Something to play with.

What in the world is going on in the music? That is some intense shit going on!

That's what we do. That's what we want to hear, it's what we would want to buy. As far as heavy music goes, it's not music for the masses! It's music for ourselves. It's self gratifying to be able to create the music we want to hear.

Who out there right now would you consider your musical peers with a similar sound?

A lot of the more metal hardcore bands. Converge, Coalesce, Today is the Day. We're more likely to be grouped with bands like Cave In, Neurosis, bands that could be grouped in our genre but our doing their own thing.

It's a growth out of hardcore. I notice that every band that progresses with their music and does new things, it's not hardcore anymore and it really can't be.

It's such a weird subject because it's hard to define these things, hardcore, metal. I can't really put a label on ourselves. If I did, 100 people would disagree and 100 people would agree and 100 people wouldn't care. Some of our musical influences when we were younger were metal. The background of the scene we're coming out of is hardcore, and that's what we listened to prior to being in the band. That's the scene we fell in love with, that atmosphere. When we first listened to metal the atmosphere was very unattractive to us, how things were run. The club situations, the bands. We got desensitized to the scene quickly.

The energy was there at first but it just got very monotonous and stagnant. When we got to the hardcore scene we found that energy and excitement without all the bullshit. The kids who liked the music were taking control of the music, instead of club owners who charge a lot for tickets and made you pay to play. That's something that appeals to us with Relapse as well. They have a foot in the metal scene, but they are very into the music they put out, it has nothing to do with record sales.

It is scary that they have faith in EVERY band they put out.

It IS scary! And I can't say I do. But the fact is when they push something they're not lying.

I was going to name some bands that had elements of your sound, so see if you agree or disagree with me on this. Meshuggah definitely was one of them. I hear the energy of Strapping Young Lad, Human Remains, and then not so much the playing style but the sounds and technicality it sounds a bit like Watchtower.

I don't think we have specific influences but I think there are a lot of bands that have an affect on us subconsciously. Some of those bands you mentioned, the ways they put their music together is influential.

Who puts together the lyrics?

Our singer takes care of most of the lyrics, I've done some, we all help out but our singer takes care of most of the lyrics.

It's definitely not nice! Do you know what's behind a lot of this?

Yes I do, and I bet nobody else does!

Care to share some of that then?

Sure. This is atypical of things with a heavy sound, but a lot of our songs talk about relationships. We really like talking about things like emotions because this is an expression in this band. A lot of people don't understand what we're talking about because we're expressing a portion of a feeling or a thought that was going through our heads at a time and we don't paint the complete picture. This is definitely a band for self satisfaction more than anything. It's much more intense and works better for us if we can pinpoint a feeling or specific image. The name *Calculating Infinity* represents that even though you think these relationships last forever, they really never do. You think how much how much time you invest into things you and nothing lasts forever, but you can actually calculate the time of what you thought would be infinity. Figure out exactly how long you think that's going to last.

Why does it always seem that lyricists always have worse relationships than everybody else? I don't think they do. That's their outlet. Sometimes it's forced, who knows?

My questions about the lyrics wouldn't so much be about the lyrics themselves, but how the titles of the songs relate to the lyrics. Destro's Secret, the only Destro I know is from GI Joe.

Yep. That's it! You want to know what the secret is? The secret is, you have to promise to not tell anyone except whoever reads your zine.

I can promise that, I think.

It basically means nothing. That's the secret. The GI Joe guy.

Whose idea was that one?

It was one of those things, we're sitting around in the studio just fucking around, you know? The engineer's asking 'What do we label this one as?' We're like, 'Fuck! Uh, Destro's Secret.'

So nobody's got a big GI Joe fetish?

We were all a little bit into GI Joe. But a fetish, no?

I remember Destro being a cool one because he had that backpack that his gun could fit into.

He was definitely cool. You can definitely recognize him and that's why he was given the honor of a title.

Variations On A Cocktail Dress.

That has to do with the song itself. That's another relationship song. It's a metaphor our singer used to express what he was saying in the song. The song's about this relationship problem where this girl was two timing him and he could never really understand what was going through her head. She was definitely two faced. I know it sounds cheesy and cliché but it's something he could express emotionally, I can just give you an overview.

I can appreciate that. I'm listening to a lot of European stuff with the mountains and elves and everything. It's nice to hear something more down to Earth sometimes too.

I love that kind of stuff, but we're not going to write about demons, devils, these creatures, or faeries that run into the woods! Things that don't exist. We're not a theatrical band.

The variations title caught me because I'm listening to a lot more neoclassical type shred, and they're always doing variations on this composer's work, variations on that theme, and now *Variations on a Cocktail Dress*! Nah, it's just a weird title.

The last title I want to ask about is *Fourth Grade Dropout*.

That song is actually a nostalgic song. Feelings the guy was having when he was younger. Looking back at that time in his life. Another representation, not a literal title, just capturing a feeling of that time. It's about him being picked on at that time.

If there was a movie that somebody could watch, what movie would best represent what Dillinger Escape Plan sounds like?

Maybe Seven? I like that movie. I don't know. I just like that movie! I always imitate that end scene. 'What's in the box?' He's slipping out with the gun. It's all dark, everything's rainy, it's so depressing.

It's one of the few Hollywood horror movies I can stand.

Exactly, exactly! The whole movie had a feel to it, it stuck with you for an hour or two. A very brown film. The music is very brown.

What's on the horizon for Dillinger Escape Plan?

We're trying to get out of work and school so we can do a tour coming up with Fantomas. Mike Patton must love you guys! He's definitely a cool big daddy to have!

How old are all you guys?

22 to 25.

To wrap this up, anything to say to all the metalheads reading?

Yeah. If you thought *Under the Running Board* was a ripoff <we laugh> get it from Relapse, it'll only be \$5. Thanks for the interest.

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How can I pretend to focus on progressive metal and ignore Dream Theater? The fact is, I can't. *Scenes From a Memory* has caused quite a stir in the progressive community. At the same time, James LaBrie released his first solo album under the moniker Mullmuzzler, entitled *Keep it to Yourself*, on Magna Carta. Magna Carta was kind enough to set us up with LaBrie. LotFP got 90 minutes to talk with him. When Metal Maniacs talked to Mike Portnoy, they got 30 minutes. Who's your daddy, MM? That's what I thought. Anyhow, to get the best LaBrie interview around, I enlisted the services of my cover designer and proofreader (and Dream Theater fanatic) DL Burrell to talk to James. And for a first time interviewer, DL kicks much booty, don't you think? Enjoy.

A lot of times a singer for a group comes out with a solo album and it's a 180 degree turn from what they made their name in. Mullmuzzler has songs which are different but it stays true to the "sound" you come from as well. Was that a conscious decision on your part?

I don't think I consciously went into writing this album thinking that I wanted it to have a lot of parallels between Mullmuzzler and Dream Theater but I did go into this album doing what I most enjoy, the style of music that I most enjoy playing, and that I grew up being influenced by, and that is "progressive." First and foremost I wanted this album to have, to be a hard rock album with a lot of groove, very rhythmic, and then from there throw in some spice as far as progressive elements that would show themselves throughout the album, and, you know, that's the album that you're presented with at this point. It's everything that I wanted to do, it's how I wanted to approach it, it's exactly what I wanted on there, and so far the response has been very positive.

You worked with Matt Guillory on several of the songs on this.

Yes. A lot of comparisons have been made that Dali's Dilemma was, well, let's say highly influenced by the Dream Theater sound. I found it a tad bit curious that you would choose to work with someone, I don't know, maybe imitation is the sincerest form of flattery to the sound.

Yeah, you know with Matt... well, my first introduction to him was through Dali's Dilemma. I remember hearing this guy on keyboards. Peter Morticelli from Magna Carta said, "Hey, listen, I know you're going in to write some new material, I want you to hear this band." I had heard something of Dali's Dilemma but I had never actually sat down with it. So anyways, to make a long story short, I listened to the material and I was most impressed with Matt, I just thought, "Wow, this guy is an Exceptional keyboard player." I love his melodies, the way he plays. He sings over top of the music instead of just trying to do a million notes and trying to show off and be more or less self-indulgent. He played with a lot of maturity and I really respect that in any type player. So, with that, I called him and I talked to him and introduced myself and he was into it immediately wanting to collaborate with me. And so we actually wrote three songs on Mullmuzzler. We wrote His Voice, Statues, and Lace, that's the three songs we did. We were going to do a fourth song, but I'd already started getting involved with a few guys from Shadow Gallery, and then also Trent Gardner and myself were already immersed in a couple of songs as well. So I said to Matt, I said, "Hey, Save it, and if we do another one, let's use it then." We'd already started working on an idea and I thought that by the time we had that idea completed I will have completed all my other ideas so let's save it.

What I've listened to of the album, I don't know, 15 or 20 spins, the three songs which jump out at me are His Voice, Shores of Avalon, and of course Beelzebubba for all kinds of reasons. Which one do you think of as your favorite?

I find it very hard to be objective in that sense because I'm really happy with all of it. If I had to pick my favorite track on the whole album it would be a hard choice between His Voice and Shores of Avalon. Those two tracks are probably the most special to me, but at the same time, I really thoroughly enjoy songs like Slow Burn, and Sacrifice. They just have a completely different feel and they're very emotional and expressive, so



they have special meaning for me as well. As a Man Thinks, obviously, it was a vocalists dream to write a song like that and be able to present it as such because it's a capella, really, to begin with, and then it has all this technical side going on and programming. It's just very contemporary in that sense.

When you were going into this project were you looking to have total control? For instance, when you hear people talk about, for instance, Fates Warning, it's one person's project.

Yeah, it's more like Jim Matheos is writing everything.

Right. Did you want to have that kind of control over this? Did you take that kind of control, or how did it tend to work out?

No, I never think like that. What I wanted to do was I wanted to achieve the strongest material possible and the way I think that is best achieved is by collaborating and being very open-minded, hearing everyone's ideas, and then taking it from there, expanding on everyone's ideas. Slowly but surely you shape that into something that you feel is right. And you know that's the way I've always written, even before I met the guys in Dream Theater that's the way I wrote. I've always stuck to that, I've never been the type of person that has to... even though I had an idea of all the ideas musically that I wanted to use, I approached these guys saying, "Ok, here's my ideas, here's the riff, so here's the blueprint. Now let's take that, and I want to work with you guys. I want to work with you guys because I really like the style, the way that you guys write. Now let's see what we can do and come up with together." That's how I approached this. I really wanted the other writers' input in that sense. Obviously, when it came time to record the album I wanted certain players on the album that I thought would best, you know, that would do all this music justice in a technical sense. And that's why, I mean, Matt Guillory plays over everything except he didn't play keyboards on the two songs I wrote with Trent Gardner, Beelzebubba and As a Man Thinks. Trent played keyboards on that and also played trombone on Beelzebubba, he's an incredibly talented man. I love the guy, I think he's just a terrific guy and we got along exceptionally. He's just a true professional, everyone was just a real joy to work with. The other three guys that I got to come in and record the music: Mike Mancini, Mike Keneally and Bryan Beller, were just incredible people from the get go, very open-minded. I told them, "Here's how the songs are, now throw yourselves in. I want you to do this" you know, I had specific things I wanted them to stay stuck to, and then I said, "Now, that being said, now throw yourself all over it. I want your style of playing, your technical ability to bring it

that much further." It was a real joy to work with these people. It was like, if you don't learn something from everything that you do, every album you record and everytime you go in to write music, if you don't learn anything then it wasn't right. I learned a lot. At the same time, I guess you're aware I was producing it, so I was producing, I was writing the material, and then I had to sing on it. At that point, I knew when I wanted to go in and start singing the material that I did need an objective ear. I needed and wanted to work with someone who was an exceptionally seasoned studio maestro and that's why I gave Terry Brown a call. He was into it immediately and was just incredible to work with. Unfortunately he wasn't listed, just because of a communication breakdown, as co-producer, but he should have been, even though I produced and saw everything from day one to day done, his ears were also really important. In the moments when it came time for me to sing it and I would approach with, "Oh man I've got an idea, we've got to throw this down on the track." Because even right down to the recording of my vocals I was coming up with new guitar parts, I called in a drummer the second to last day. Originally we weren't even going to have drums on As a Man Thinks, but then I called in this great drummer from Toronto (because I recorded all my vocals in Toronto) and I knew this guy, Greg Critchley. I gave him a call and said, "I want you to come in and do this song and I want you to go crazy on it" and he pulled it off, as well as the bass player, Mike Shannon.

How was working with Terry Brown versus Kevin Shirley or David Prater?

Well for me... I mean Kevin Shirley is a very intense person. I will be quite honest and say that I think Kevin Shirley and I get along, I think, better now than we did when we were recording *Falling Into Infinity*. We just didn't really click, didn't see eye to eye on many things, but now we seem to see eye to eye on all the situations that we didn't. Kevin and I have kind of resolved our differences. David Prater is a very intense individual, an incredibly smart person, but I think that unfortunately he lacks in communication skills. His communication skills are very poor, and that's basically why we never worked with him again after A Change of Seasons, just because there were some "too close" situations in the studio if you know what I mean. Terry Brown, on the other hand, I had originally worked with when I went in to sing background on Fates Warning's *Parallels* album. I sang background on *Life in Still Water*, I don't know if you were aware of that, so if you listen to *Life in Still Water*, the background vocalist is me, it's listed there. So I went in and I did a two hour session that day and I remember meeting Terry Brown who was

producing that album. I remember thinking to myself, "Wow, this guy's a real delight." He's extremely focused and concentrated, but at the same time he really keeps what is generally a very intense, stressful environment... well, sometimes it can be, sometimes it can be a lot of fun. He seems to keep that environment very calm and cool, and I thought what better way to work when you're in a creative setting, than when you can have somebody that can keep a lid and keep everything balanced. So I kept that with me right up until the point I was thinking of going in to do Mullmuzzler and he's the first guy I thought about. I wanted to get this guy, even though I was producing, when it came time for me to do my vocals and when it came time to have an engineer and mix the album, Terry Brown was my man. He came through with flying colors, he was exceptional, and like I said earlier, he was a real delight to work with. He's filled with so much experience, he's such a vast wealth of information and just a really great guy. We'd go out and have a couple of beers every night at the end of a session and talk about what we were going to do the next day. I enjoyed working with him so much that I brought him in to be there specifically to record my vocals for *Scenes From a Memory*, the latest Dream Theater album, because we worked so well together. I thought this was the guy that I wanted pushing the buttons and pulling the best out of me when it comes time to do the new Dream Theater album. When I told the rest of the guys in Dream Theater that I wanted to bring Terry in they were like, "Wow, great man, is he into it?" and I said, "Yeah, he's into it." So we went for it.

How did Kevin react to that?

Well, Kevin didn't produce this last album for Dream Theater, we produced it, it's a self-produced album, *Scenes From a Memory*.

How did that work out?

It worked out really well. I would say that the primary producers that were really overseeing everything while we were all doing our thing would've been John Petrucci and Mike Portnoy.

How do you think Mullmuzzler compares with Ray Alder's [of Fates Warning] project Engine?

Well, I've only heard a couple of songs from Engine and I thought it was really cool. I thought it was, well, the songs that I heard were more like Nine Inch Nails meets Rob Halford on *Painkiller*. I don't know it was... I liked it. It's extremely straight forward, it's all in four-four, which is great, but the songs that I heard I enjoyed. But, I don't know what the rest of the album is like so I can't really say what I think of it. Have you heard the whole thing?

Um, unfortunately, yes.

Unfortunately?

It was not my favorite.

Is that right, um? How does he sound on there? Because the two songs that I heard he sounded like he was screaming and kinda getting a little raunchy, which is, I dunno, a little unlike Ray.

I tend to like a lot more clean vocals in what I listen to, and when they started getting an edge to them I start...

Oh, so you must've Loved what I did on *Awake*.

<laughs> But you see, you know what a lot of people don't know? I guarantee you if you go back to *Awake* and you listen to songs like Lifting Shadows, I sang that incredibly clean. If you were to listen to *Innocence Faded*, I sang that incredibly clean. If you listen to... oh, what was the other song there?

Well, *The Silent Man* obviously.

Well, Silent Man, yeah. And then there was... oh, what's the other one there?

Voices?

Voices, yeah, Voices was very clean except that one little section in the middle, you know, "Thought disorder, dream control," you know, all that I started putting a little bit of edge or grind into it. But people tend to focus more on what they hear from the get-go, you know, 6:00 [the first song on the album], and they kinda go, "WHOA! What the Hell?" It was just something I needed to do. I wanted to sing an album like with some raunch happening, and then after I'd done it I said, "Ok, great, now I've done it, now let's go back to how everybody else was introduced to me as." Have you heard *Scenes From a Memory* yet? Well, let me just say that to you, and I've said it to everyone else that I've done interviews with. It is definitely, and I have

no reservations about saying this, it is definitely our best album. I think it's the strongest material we've ever written. It's better than *Images and Words*. The interviews that I've done, all around the world, everyone is saying, a lot of journalists around the world already have reviewed it, and they're saying that about the album before I'm saying it. They're saying it's definitely our best album. Most of them are going as far as to say it's a masterpiece. I know when we were recording this we were all extremely excited because we knew what we were hearing, and we were all going, "Wow, man, we're really touching on something very special here." I think that the fans worldwide are going to be very appreciative and very excited about it. It's the kind of album we've been wanting to make for a while and I think that we've finally done it. A lot of this came from us listening to Liquid Tension material and we'd be saying to each other, I mean it was John, Mike, and John Myung would be there as well, and I'd be looking at them and go, "Guys, sorry, but this guy [Jordan Rudess, who played keyboards with Petrucci and Portnoy on the Liquid Tension Experiment albums] should be in our band." There was a synergy going on with Liquid Tension between Jordan, Mike and John that we needed to bring into Dream Theater because the guy is an incredible keyboard player. I mean, he's the top of his skills as far as I'm concerned, not just because he's in Dream Theater now, I've thought that for many years since I was first introduced to Jordan's playing. The guy just blew my mind from the first day that I heard him. And we're talking about a person who went into Julliard, was accepted into Julliard when he was nine years old. He's just an incredible talent. So we were talking about this, and we knew the kind of album that we wanted to make, and Derek [Sherinian, now ex-Dream Theater keyboardist if you hadn't guessed] is a good keyboard player, but as far as I'm concerned Matt Guillory blows Derek



away. With that being said then you have to say to yourself, "Hang on a second. Dream Theater, let's get the complete package, let's have it so that everything is exceptional." And don't get me wrong here, I'm not trying to come off sounding like a pretentious prick or anything like that, but I'm just saying that in this business there is so much competition, you have to look at the big picture. You have to say to yourself, "Who would best represent this band? What is going to allow us, musically, creatively, and in a live environment, the best possible, the strongest possible thing?" And it was like well, let's bring in Jordan and it will be complete. It will be Dream Theater as never before. It will be Dream Theater in top form and I think people are really going to see, or first hear that, when they come out to see us live around the world. I really think they're going to see something that's going to allow for us to be much more intense on stage.

How do you feel about the fact that after you made *Scenes From a Memory* available to people early that it showed up in its entirety on the internet for a little while?

Is that right? Well, you know I thought we were keeping it under wraps. Well, you know I'd heard something to that effect, that some people had started to do that, but I think they stopped, right? I think we got right on top of that and we said, "Whoever is doing this, please respect our wishes. None of this is to be had until the release date." I think it stopped immediately. The fact that it happened, though, it's just someone trying to say, as far as I'm concerned someone just wanted to be able to say, "Hey, man that was me who got you that material" or "It was me who got you a little sneak preview" or whatever. It's unfortunate

because I think eventually we got the message across that everybody had to cooperate and to please do this for us. We think it's very important to keep the album fresh and very exciting when it comes time for release. I think for the most part we've done that. I'd say for 90% of the people out there that's exactly what it's going to be.

Dream Theater went from, at least since you've joined the band, from the high of *Images and Words* to... well, when *Falling Into Infinity* came out many people didn't like it very much. Right?

Did you guys feel much pressure going into this one?

No, not at all actually, it was pretty wild.

I've heard it's your last record on this contract.

No, it's not, we have two more albums. Um, let me just say, let's just back up a bit. I think what happened here was there was a few things going on. First of all there were a lot of personal tragedies going on with the band when we were approaching the writing for *Falling Into Infinity*.

The band was going through some things, and I'll tell you some of them and I'll try and give you a quick synopsis. For me personally, *Falling Into Infinity* is not going to be a very positive memory for me. Just because I knew that the band was in a very fragile state. Mike lost his grandmother who was more like a mother to him because Mike unfortunately lost his mother, his biological mother, when he was 17 or 18, in a plane crash. And so his grandmother, his maternal grandmother, became more like a mother to him, and he lost her while we were actually in the writing stages for *Falling Into Infinity*. John Petrucci lost his father, and then John Petrucci's wife lost her father. And mother, so there was a lot of things going on. I had my own things, but I don't think it was anything near that. We all seemed to be going through things. Then on top of that, in the industry sense, Electra was going through...

we were on East-West which is all the same. We were on Atco then it was Electra, all the same, it was all the same company. We're signed with WEA, so WEA really stands for Warner Electra Atlantic, that's what it is. It was really just, departments, there were a lot of changes in things, but it was all the same family. What was happening with us was that we were losing a lot of key people, personnel people at the label who were either fired, let go, or moving on to another label. So we're losing all these very strong, key relationships at the label. We had to establish new relationships with new people who didn't know who the hell Dream Theater was or didn't care to know who Dream Theater was. So there was that stress. At the same time we were going through a huge situation with management where we were in between management and the management that we were kind of just feeling out turned out to be real... well, just turned out to not be right, I don't want to get myself in a being sued kind of thing. They were just completely wrong for the band. So there was all these elements that were really negative just eating at us, like hitting us from every angle. At the same time we had to stay focused and concentrate as a band and write material. And then the label for some reason was getting, because of these new people coming in, were really on top of us and were trying to get us to be a band that we're not. They were trying to get us to play these radio hits and radio singles and as much as we would try to say to them, "Hey, this isn't what kind of a band Dream Theater is. We're not a radio single band, a radio friendly band, we're an album oriented band. We write albums, we don't write hits." You know, in a way, Pull Me Under was a curse. It was good thing, it was a necessary evil I guess because it did

get our career off in a very global sense. But then, unfortunately, the label and the people that don't fully understand a band such as Dream Theater thought that that was the way we were going to go with every other album that came out. The thought that we needed another radio hit smash, we needed another one and another one and another one, right? And that's just not the kind of band it was. It was just a fluke, it just so happened that that song went right through the roof. So we had all these things going in, and you know Derek was, it was his first full length album with us, and... Derek's personality and flamboyance and whatever you want to call it, superficiality, really doesn't fit with the rest of the band members, you know? He's just from a totally different planet, whereas Jordan, once again, fits in really well with us. He's more down to earth and he's laid back and he's just a very cool person, very mature. So there was all these things going on. So needless to say, *Falling Into Infinity* was a very taxing and trying time for this band and I guess in a way it is a reflection of what we were going through as people as individuals and collectively as a band.

In 1995 you guys did a gig where you did all cover songs, and for a Metallica song [Damage Inc.] you brought in Barney Greenway of Napalm Death to, um, I guess the word should be Perform lead vocals. Now, why didn't you growl the vocals on that?

Well, Barney is a really good friend of the band and we just thought it would be a lot of fun, you know? We just wanted to let the people know that we're not just these serious self-indulgent people, we like to have fun and we like to bring a little lightness and humor to some of our shows. So we just thought it would be really cool to just throw this one in for the covers thing with *A Change of Seasons*. We just thought, "Why not? Let's just make it completely bizarre and have Barney sing that song." I mean, hey, I could've sung that song exactly like James Hetfield, no problem, and made myself sound just like him, but that would've been so obvious. More or less it was just a fun thing, just letting people sit back and just enjoy it for what it is.

I have the 5 Years in a Lifetime video which has that particular performance on it, and I've got to tell you that Portnoy seems like he could fall asleep while playing those Lars Ulrich drum licks on that song.

No kidding, huh? Yeah, he could do that in his sleep. Yeah Mike's a great drummer, a very incredible drummer.

Just to give some real odd things that we wanted to go over, one of the things that interviewers are traditionally asked for Lamentations is what type of hair care products do you use?

<laughs> Come on! Are you serious?

Hey, metal people have big hair, my man, and they need to know how to take care of it!

You guys are crazy. Well... I use Pantene.

I'm not sure, but I believe that's a very popular choice.

Is that right? I wouldn't know it, but I use Pantene. It's this really thick shit conditioner, I have to or I wouldn't get through my hair. It's like a three minute deep conditioner from Pantene that's amazing. Yeah, that's what I use. I'm not so picky on the shampoo, but I'm extremely picky on the conditioner, it has to be Pantene three minute conditioner, it has to be else I'd rip every hair out of my head!

It gives you that great sheen, right?

Yeah, exactly! That's it, so the lights can shine off it real well! I've grown my hair long again, my hair is once again pretty long again.

I'm sure the ladies will be very pleased.

Yeah! Hah! Like this is a ladies band.

Oh come on, there's one or two groupies out there!

Oh sure, and I think you're right, I think there's one or two!

As a Canadian, and you're going to love this one, is Bret Hart a national hero?

Bret Hart's cool. Yeah, I guess in a wrestling sense we're very proud of him, I mean Hey, the guy has charisma and he's a charmer. You know, he plays the role very well I would think. I know on the wrestling circuits or in the wrestling rings there's a lot of people that either love him or hate him, and I know that he's kind of said some stupid things about the States, but you know, that's his deal trying to create controversy and it just keeps him in the spotlight.

That's just to get heat with the crowds.

Yeah, exactly. And they buy into it, everybody is having fun with it. That's an incredible sport, it really is. I mean those guys, they are... I mean as much as you know that a lot of it is obviously planned out, still the stuff that they do in the ring, I wouldn't last 10 minutes and I think I'd have a broken back, broken leg, arms, whatever. I mean those guys are really in great shape to be throwing each other around, I mean these are big men! Not to mention the ladies that are wrestling these days could knock the shit out of us!

Do you think it would be a fair fight? Dream Theater vs. some of the better women wrestlers?

Oh forget it! Yeah, right! Maybe if you were talking to me 10 years ago I'd be stupid enough to say, "Yeah, I'll go for it." Because back then I was just, whatever, I just a wild and crazy kind of guy so I would've said sure. Now I've got to think, I've got a wife and two kids and I can't be thinking, "Well, hey, I'll go to the ring and maybe I'll sit in a body cast for six months, that should work well!"

You guys do well in Japan, correct?

Yeah, we do great! Great in Japan, great in Europe, South America, the south Pacific rim, you know, we'd like to see the States come back around for us. But even in the states, I mean, *Falling Into Infinity* has still sold 200,000 for us in the States, so... but we'd like to see it get better. I think with this album we're really set, though, because I think it really does have the potential to bring us up to another level. And that will just allow us to do this for that much longer, you know? It will help ensure our longevity.

Now in Japan, a lot of the progressive metal acts have had their music used as entrance music for Japanese professional wrestlers. Royal Hunt comes to mind obviously, but Yngwie Malmsteen as well. Has Dream Theater had anything lifted for that?

No, no we haven't. We haven't even been approached for that [sounds a bit incredulous]. Which is kind of bizarre because we are very big over there. So I don't understand why it hasn't happened, maybe because they just think that we're not interested, and I guess it would be a fun thing. We'd have to look on it just for what it is, but I think that probably some people view us as being this very serious band and our music is staying as it is and that's how it was presented, as that we want to represent it as nothing else but what our sound was the first time. I don't know.

If you had to pick one of the existing Dream Theater songs to be a wrestler's entrance music, which one do you think would work best?

What, as wrestling music? Oh God. Well, you know what I think would be a great riff coming into the ring would be the riff that starts Lie. I think that could be good. I think The Mirror would be very cool for them. I think, well, I mean obviously Pull Me Under would do something for some people. I think even songs like... like if you had The Undertaker, play him Peruvian Skies as he's coming in to the ring, something like that. Just Let Me Breathe would be kinda cool, it would kind of generate a little bit of excitement. I don't know, I think those songs would be good.

What's your favorite song that you've done?

Um... well... my favorite, from a vocal standpoint, I think probably this album is probably I think the best that I've ever done vocally because it shows all sides of me. It's a very expressive showing, very soulful, very emotional calling from a vocal standpoint. So I think that once you hear the new album that you might, I would hope that you would agree with me. I mean, aside from that, you know I really enjoy singing songs like Surrounded. I really enjoyed, you know, believe it or not... I know many of the fans had mixed feelings about Innocence Faded. I really enjoy doing Voices, and The Mirror to a certain extent I thought was really cool. I think those songs kind of step out at me. I think Lifting Shadows Off a Dream I really enjoy. Take Away My Pain I really enjoy singing.

When *Once in a Lifetime* was being put together, well, I must admit I've got some mp3's off the internet of the live show at Rotterdam for the fanclub.

Yeah, that's the video.

Well, yeah, it is in there as well come to think of it. I was wondering why some of those cuts weren't used for the live album versus cuts, versions that I don't think are as good. I guess it's six in one, half dozen the other, but...

You mean vocal cuts? Or do you just mean takes from the band?

Like, for example, *Speak To Me* and songs like that.

Yeah, well, I think just because there's just so much. I mean you sit down and you're looking at all this stuff and there just comes a time when you've got to go, "Well, let's weigh the pros and cons to putting this on an album" versus putting on at a later time and presenting it later on. I mean you really can't satisfy everyone, but I think it was just as simple as that. Those were the songs we wanted on there at that point, and then if later on we are able to present something like this in another five years then we might throw it on. Because, yeah, *Speak To Me* has been really well received from everyone, I mean everyone has thought that it was a really cool song. And then there was the other one, although I think that made it, that was... um... Oh God. I can't remember... [starts humming a melody] Oh jeez, why can't I remember the song?

Are you talking about made it onto *Once in a Lifetime* or onto the video?

It's on the video. You know, the vocals go... [sings the tune without words] Oh God! Why can't I remember the song? It's very U2-ish.

Oh, I know exactly what you're talking about, because when I heard it I was thinking, "Damn, that sounds like you ripped it off from Bono."

Not that you would rip anything off.

No, Bono ripped it off from us! He got into our heads before we thought of it and then he threw it onto *The Joshua Tree*, right? Ok, wait a minute, I'm still thinking on the other thing, it's... [starts singing - and you know it's a lot harder to transcribe lyrics than just the spoken word, let me tell you] "Feeling sick once again. I'd do anything to be back home, safe and warm inside. I can't stand the crowd, all the smell that surrounds me. [mumbles through a part] something chastity. Take me back where I can see The Way It Used To Be" That's the one! But anyways, there you go, I sang to you. Ok, now what was your question there? The Way It Used To Be, I really dig that song. That almost made it onto *Falling Into Infinity* and I wish it did. Whatever, I guess we were starting to think something else. So what was your question?

Just following that up a little, do you ever... I mean you say you wrote that back around *Falling Into Infinity*, when you're going into *Scenes From a Memory* do you ever go back and get that stuff and think, "Well, this could make it onto this new album." Or do you just want to start fresh?

Yeah, we just want to start fresh. Whatever has been written before we actually go in and start writing songs... Now, I mean, that doesn't mean, like, we do sound checks and sometimes we're fooling around with riff ideas and whatever when we're sound checking and usually we record, in fact I think we do, we record all of our sound checks, so we're able to go back and listen to ideas and then take from that. We might think, "Well that was a very cool idea. Let's expand on that or do something with that." And then we start creating from that point or from that idea and we start writing around that for new material, but I don't think we, well I don't think, I know we don't go back and take a song that was written a year or whether it be two or three years before when we go into do a new album and take that and throw it on there. Because you always have so many ideas going on at any given point, so if it's done then let's release it as a B-side and let's create some new music.

Give me some comments on these bands if you have any knowledge of them, okay? Opeth?

Who? O Pat?

O-P-E-T-H. Opeth.

O-P-E-T-H. Don't know.

Boy, Jim's not going to like you on that one, that's his favorite band... from Sweden.

Sweden, well, okay, well tell Jim that I'm sorry I couldn't satisfy him. Oh, wait, these are Jim's favorite bands? Oh, they're AMAZING! They're all amazing!

What about Cynic?

Who? Cynic? Oh, I've heard of them. I don't know if this is the same band, but a couple of

those guys played on a track when I was doing the Rush stuff, when I did *Red Barchetta*. I think the drummer and the bass player played on *Red Barchetta* and they played for Cynic. I think, but don't quote me. [Too late!]

What did you do on *Red Barchetta*?

I sang vocals.

Oh! For the Rush tribute album. Jeez, pardon me while I adjust my brain to the "ON" position. For a second I was saying to myself, "Wow, I didn't know Rush brought in people to work on their songs like that."

Right! Yeah, you know how it was, Geddy gave me a call and said, "Do you wanna sing this instead of me?" Uh, no. [laughs... Thank God]

Okay, what about *Blind Guardian*?

Blind Guardian, I've heard their stuff, kinda cool. I can't really comment on them as a whole because I've only heard a few tracks to be honest with you. You know what, to be honest with you, the kind of stuff I'm listening to right now is nowhere near that. It's more like Miles Davis, Winton Marsalis. Nat King Cole I'm getting back into again. Even like Tony Bennett and Andre Pucelli, this new singer who I think is very cool. I'm listening to more stuff like that, and I'm listening to old Police stuff right now. I'm listening to Lenny Kravitz, the new *Red Hot Chili Peppers*, you know, that's where my head is at right now. So, yeah, that's really where my head is at right now, and these are the bands that I'm listening to. And even though, like, we have a magazine up here called *Brave Words*, *Bloody Knuckles*, I don't know if you're aware of that but I'm sure Jim is. Tim Anderson, who is the senior editor of this magazine, he pretty well is an advocate for death metal, speed metal and stuff like that. That's usually a lot of the stuff that comes through his magazine, and he always puts out a cd sampler of bands here or there, and so a lot of those bands are bands that you just mentioned to me, but I've never actually thrown those cds on. Just because, and it's no offense to any of these bands, I'm sure they've got... I'm sure some of their stuff is really good, but really I'm in my own thing right and I'm listening to stuff that I think is really somehow, it's just important to me right now.

Let me throw one more band out at you, *Symphony X*.

Yeah, I've heard that. Yeah, it's cool, they're from New Jersey, are they not?

Right.

I've heard some of their stuff, it's kinda cool! It's the guitar player [Michael Romeo] and, he sings does he not?

Actually they have a separate singer [Russell Allen].

They do? Well, maybe it was just the guitar player I was focusing on.

Well, that's pretty easy to do with that band.

Yeah, I thought some of their stuff was Very cool. You know, there again, and I have to be honest with you, it's not like I'm sitting down and listening to a couple of their albums. It might be I'll listen to three or four cuts and I'll either appreciate it for what it is or I'll move on.

What kind of magazines would you suggest that cover your type of music more?

Well, there's that one magazine that is very impressive called *Progressive*. It's huge, I think it comes out maybe once a month or once every two months, but it's very impressive, and a lot of the bands that are in there are very thought provoking and at least touching on this genre of music, progressive or... more technically able, whatever you want to call it. Other mags, I mean I've done so many interviews over the last two months that there just seem to be a lot of magazines out there who are at least wanting to interview us and shed some light on us. There's *Album Network* that's always been very supportive of *Dream Theater*, there's *Hit Parader* that's been cool. There's *Metal Edge*, *Paul Gargano* has been exceptionally supportive of *Dream Theater*, we just met with him last week actually, for a big interview and a photo shoot and all that stuff, when we were down in New York, all of us together. We were rehearsing, because we start the next world tour November 8th. Aside from that I've just done a lot of interviews with people like yourself, with magazines or... well, what do you describe it as?

It's a fanzine for metal music.

Right, I've done a lot of them, and I think fanzines are very important to bring in a lot of people who would generally not go out and spend five or six bucks on a big circulation magazine. They can get just as much information from a fanzine, because they're very informative and a lot of them are written well. I guess I could just say that, you know, look in those areas and sooner or later you'd see stuff on *Dream Theater*. *Dream Theater*, let's face it, is not your flavor of the month, so you're not going to see us in a lot of your big magazines like *Spin* and *Rolling Stone*. Forget about it. Those people probably don't... well, they're aware of us, but they wouldn't give two shits to interview us. Not at this point anyways. If the next album goes through the roof and we were selling millions of albums I guarantee you that we'd start getting calls from them, because now they'd know that their readers are going to be able to identify with us.

And of course then you'd have more people admiring your hair then.

Yeah, well, hey, thank you Panteen!

Hypothetically, if *Dream Theater* broke up and you could lead either *Korn* or *Manowar*, which one would you choose?

What, if I was to go with one of those bands?

Well it would be *Korn* before *Manowar*.

Why?

Well, to be honest with you, I'm not into either band, okay? I've met the guys in *Manowar* and they're really good guys, they're really are. They're very nice guys. I've never met the guys in *Korn*, but I'm not into their music, I'm not into their music at all. I don't like them, I don't like their music. *Manowar*, I'm not into that, it just reminds me of a very early eighties heavy metal kind of taste, it almost has a... I don't know, a kind of more theatrical, comical side to it. I can't take that music seriously, I can't. I mean we played *Monsters of Rock* last year, it was *Megadeth*, ourselves, oh *God* what was that other band?

Was this the show in Brazil?

Yes. *Manowar* was there and then there was another band, a big band. I just don't remember their name. Starts with an S.

I know the one in Italy, I think, had *Deep Purple*.

No, we've toured with them, we're on the same management as they are. *Savatage* was on that show, but... it was another band, though, their stuff is like really kind of dark and evil like. The guitar player is bald with tattoos all over him, and then you got the big...

Oh. *God. Slayer*.

Slayer! Yeah, they were great. But *Manowar* was on the same bill and they went out, they were playing before us and I remember watching them and I was like, "Oh my God, what the hell is this? This is a flashback."

Did they get over with the crowd?

Oh yeah, the crowd ate them up. But anyway, to each his own.

Let me ask you one last thing, kind of going backwards. How did you feel in terms of working with *Magna Carta* versus *WEA*?

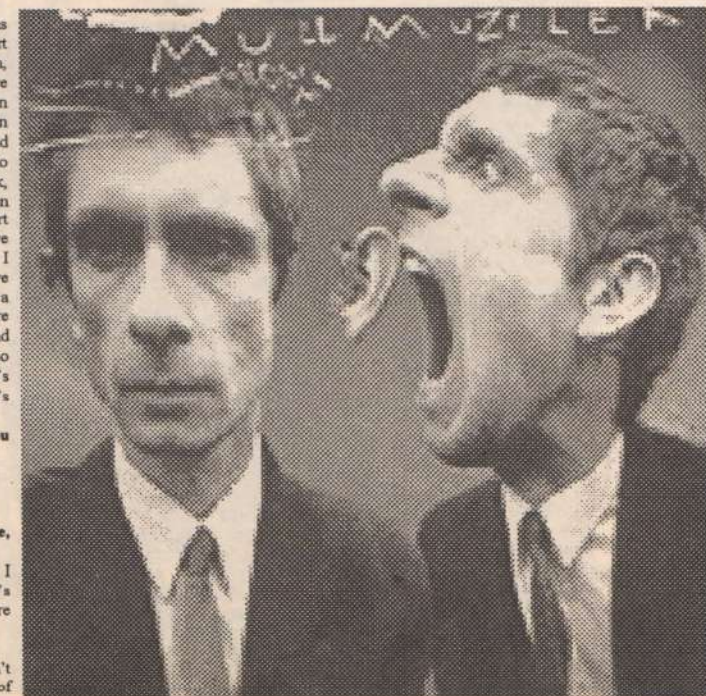
Well, *Magna Carta* as an independent label has shown me incredible amounts of faith and belief. They put me as a priority on their label and I think they've been exceptional. I think they're great. I think the kind of music they support and that they're behind totally, I think it's necessary to have labels like *Magna Carta* in existence because they really do bring high quality music to a lot of people. They're showing to people that would otherwise not be doing something, or otherwise not be getting recordings and it would just stay in the demo form. So, I think they're great and that's why I went with them because I've respected them as a label. *Electra*, *Warner Brothers*, *Atlantic*, I mean you're talking about conglomerate, I mean you're talking about a huge huge company. To them, you know, they have a huge overhead. The artists that they're going to sign, it's a completely different ballgame. They have a lot riding on each and every one of their artists, there's a lot of money being thrown into these people, and we're one of them. So you're playing in a bigger circus, you know? It's a bigger game, and you either produce for them or you don't and they just move on. It's just a difference where a smaller label like *Magna Carta* can be more focused and more hands on with their artists because it's at a smaller, more personal level. At the bigger labels there's a lot more people working for the label and there is a lot more things going on and that have to be achieved so it's more like you're in the big game at that point. You have to play both, you always have to be up top, on top of it, and look for ways to stay in the game. And that generally comes from writing the right kind of music and selling albums. You know generally when our label, *Electra*, approaches radio with what will be our first single from our album they get pretty good response, but this time they were calling our management and letting them know that the response and the reception that they were getting to this song *Home* was overwhelming. It's wild, the label are really really into it. We'll see what happens from it, you know? It's been a very positive reception so far.

Well, I wish you well with *Mullmuzzler* as well as with the *Dream Theater*. Any last things that you'd like to say out to your fans?

Well, just, really hope that you enjoy the new album, and we're looking forward to getting out and bringing it to as many people as we can in the live environment. Hope to see you there and I appreciate your loyalty and support. We'll see you soon.

www.dreamtheater.net

www.magnacarta.net



Manticora

This new wave of European power metal is exciting to some, a dreadful bore to others. While many are waving the flag of 'true metal' high and revel in the reign of Helloween's children (and make no mistake, Helloween and Gamma Ray completely rule the Earth!) others are pointing out this trend is getting tired already. Whatever. While Manticora will surely be categorized as part of this trend, one listen to their debut full length *Roots of Eternity* on Greece's Black Lotus label will let you know that they have something different to offer. A darker vibe, for one thing, as this is not your happy double bass romp through the age of vikings, or the galaxy, or to slay the dragon. Influences taken from bands such as Nevermore and Candlemass help round out Manticora into a lean, mean, heavy metal machine. Look for it in your favorite mail order merchant's catalog. Here's my chat with guitar player Kristian Larsen.

How long has the new album been out in Europe?

Roots of Eternity has been out about two months.

You're on Black Lotus over there. Can you tell me a little bit about them?

Black Lotus is a Greek label from Athens. It's a new record label. They do mostly Greek bands. It's a new thing for foreign bands to be signed to Black Lotus. There is a French band and a Spanish band, and then us from Denmark. There are 10 to 20 bands on that label, and most of them are Greek.

Are they more of a heavy metal label?

Not pure heavy metal, they have some death metal and gothic metal. Those are more the Greek bands, the international bands have more of a power metal or heavy metal flavor.

Are they doing a good job getting things out in Europe, or just in Greece?

They are doing a very good job. We are their top priority on that label. They're working their asses off for us down there. They've seen some kind of hope in us. They say we could save that label economically. That's a very good label, but it's new. The sales exploded in Athens when the first tape came to Athens with *Roots of Eternity* on it. They were pretty surprised because there is a big difference between our EP and our new album. They were shocked. That's good news.

Could you go into the history of the band?

Me and Lars, formed the band in 1994 with some irrelevant persons called Fear Itself. We had hopes and dreams of getting famous with that band, but we had a split up. Our drummer wanted to play hardcore, our bass player wanted to play death metal, and our second guitarist at that time just wouldn't play anymore. We began contacting some musicians in the underground heavy metal scene in Denmark. First we found Mads, our new drummer, in May 1996. I don't know what happened in the rehearsal room but we just agreed suddenly that this was a power metal band. We made our first track in the first two hours of our first rehearsal! In July 1996 we found Rene on bass, and before that he played hard rock and cover stuff of the Red Hot Chili Peppers. He's a good bass player. We made our first EP called *Dead End Solution* in 3 days over a weekend. We didn't have a lot of time and it was very expensive because it was a very expensive studio. It went very fast. The sound is very raw and there were a lot of mistakes made. Our statement of what we will do in the future was on that disc. That was the most important thing about that EP. That sold slow in Denmark in the beginning. But interest

in this new band, called Manticora at that time, was growing. A management company called Intramental Management called us and we made an agreement with them that they work for us for free at the beginning, and if we started making money then they started to get paid. That was cool. They worked their asses off. They still do.

We signed up with our new guitarist Flemming in 1998, and that's when we got our record deal. Someone down in Athens heard the EP and was overwhelmed by it. So we signed to Black Lotus Records. Around this time we decided we needed a keyboard player for an added dimension in the music. We found a keyboard player in the Danish underground called Jeppe. We had little time to rehearse all the tracks for the album but we made it. I forgot one thing. After our EP we had to change our name to Manticora because there was a German death metal band called Manticore. So they threatened us with a lawsuit and so on, so we changed our name. That was good in a way because that meant Germany was opening their eyes to our Manticora band. We had some pretty good articles in music magazines and that's where this German Manticore woke up and learned about us.

It was your decision to play heavy metal early on then.

In 1994 we all played thrash, that's our roots in music. Our drummer is very fond of Slayer, Metallica, and so on. We all have this thrash metal background, very Americanized. Then suddenly a change came upon us and we wanted to play this powermetal sound.

All these bands having records out, on one hand it is reaching oversaturation, and on the other hand they've all formed around 1993, 1994, 1995, and are now getting their chances at everything they've worked for. And now they're considered trend musicians just because their album comes out now.

HammerFall is basically death metal musicians who made the band. It's kind of funny. HammerFall are just riding the wave, but they have done a very good.

Now you've definitely made an excellent album, and you don't sound like you fall in directly with all of the trends. Who were your main influences in creating this music?

Other than the thrash bands, it's mostly American bands. Iced Earth, Nevermore, Savatage too, those are the kings for me. In the early days we all listened to Helloween and Iron Maiden and I guess we can't say we haven't been influenced by those bands because they are the real kings and that's where the roots are, the 1980s heavy metal scene. Are you familiar with a band called Warrior?

Heard of them, never heard anything by them.

They made a very good album *Fighting For the Earth*. But mostly it's German and British power metal that are our roots. But right now it's mostly American bands, because they understand something that many Europeans don't understand when it comes to production to CDs. There are a lot of German power metal bands with a lack of balls and I think it's disgusting. They just keep on with double bass drums, here we go, 1-2-3-4, verse chorus, and that's it. We want to make something more, exploiting our dimensions that we have in our musicians with the new keyboard player and new guitarist. We want to make it unique. That's what we are hoping for.

It's a good sign that you can't put the CD on and say you sound like any one band. You have your own sound.

Good to hear!

You seem to be a lot busier, even when you're not going full speed. There's a lot going on, and that's a good thing.

That's what we want to do. We have a motto, it doesn't have to be difficult to play to sound good. I think a lot of bands exaggerate their progressive methods and it gets very hard to listen to. We could do progressive metal too and doing difficult to play stuff like Dream Theater, but as we said before it doesn't have to be difficult to play to sound good. We want to be complex if it really sounds good that way, but we're not complex just to be complex, and we're not raw power just to be raw power. We let it flow with our music.

How do the songs get put together?

In the beginning mostly I made the skeleton of the songs, most of the riffs. Me and Lars made the lyrics. Now we are all in the music and you can hear that on the tracks of the next album. We all give our part. *Roots of Eternity* is old numbers and new tracks, with it being mostly me who has made

the riffs. We are all giving our part in the music now.

It seems there is something of a concept in the lyrics.

Yes. We are all role players. We still do a lot of that when we get the time to do it. We have our inspiration in HP Lovecraft and his Cthulu mythos. It's such a wonderful and complex world he's writing about. We love to make lyrics about it. Lars has read four books, *The Saga of the Exiles* by Julian May. We have tracks named *Nowhereland* and *The Flood* that are part I and part II of that. Parts III and IV will be on the next album. We read something in a book and we make a lyric. Or we'll see something on television that pisses us off and make a lyric out of that, but that was mostly for our EP *Dead End Solution*. A big fuck you finger! Pure violence in the lyrics on that. We have a track called *In Your Face* for example. Now we are mostly dealing with books and myths and cools stuff we read and that we want to share with the world.

What games do you like playing?

Mostly Call of Cthulu, Dungeons and Dragons, and I played a lot of Riffs. We lack the time to do it but we do when we can.

I notice people complain about 'role playing heavy metal', but you KNOW these people grew up playing these games! I can't figure out people who were so into it one day and then the next think it's stupid.

In the 80s when we had Iron Maiden I made my own stories about the lyrics in the role playing games. It was a rule, if you role played you had to listen to Iron Maiden or Helloween or something! I just made up some good stories about the big wizard and the *Keeper of the Seven Keys*. Jesus, I've got a lot of stories! <laughs> Now we're doing the same thing, making this universe. I think it's more interesting to have an adventure in the lyrics instead of blah blah I love you this, I love you there, and so on. There are three kinds of lyrics. The in your face stuff I told you about before, which we came from American hardcore bands. Then there's the pop music: blah blah, and then there's the adventuring part. You have a free hand to blend love stories in adventures, that's more interesting than I Love You pop.

What is the metal scene like there in Denmark?

Oh it sucks, bigtime! I can't say that enough! We played a gig yesterday. It was our greatest gig in Denmark. There were 200 people there. That was cool, but usually we play for about 50 people.

Those 50 people are always someone in the family, or friends. It sucks. The music scene in Denmark is MTV and nothing else. When my friends ask me what I listen to and I say I listen to a band called Nevermore they say 'What? Don't you hear Britney Spears?' Shut the fuck up! That's the music scene in Denmark. Britney



Spears and all that shit. About 2% of listeners in Denmark listen to heavy metal.

Do you get touring bands coming through?

Yeah, but now Denmark is closing all the gig places. That's more cool stuff, huh? Now we just have big sports halls. If Manticora wanted to play live in Copenhagen, we'd have to play in some place called [I don't even know how to spell it - ed] here. 3000 people can fit in there. It's a complex story. Dio, Manowar, and Motorhead are coming soon.

Oh man! Manowar just toured the States, paired with Six Feet Under! But I can sympathize with you as far as the scene. The last real touring metal band to come through was Nevermore.

Oh, man! I've never seen Nevermore play live! I hunger to see them! They are the kings! They just played Germany at Wacken Open Air and I didn't have time to go there! Last year the whole band went to Wacken and we saw Blind Guardian, Iron Savior, Riot, I don't know if you know that band. Yeah, I have their last few albums, but I'm not

familiar with their earlier stuff.

We had big expectations of Blind Guardian, Iced Earth, and Stratovarius. Iced Earth just kicked ass. Blind Guardian disappointed a lot. The lead singer couldn't sing and it was really crap. Stratovarius were pretty cool. It was OK. Riot kicked ass. It was the greatest gig I had ever seen. I'm not really familiar with them, I just have 2 records by them, but I have to say it was the coolest gig I've ever seen.

Which albums do you have?

Privilege of Power and *Thundersteel*. The greatest ones!

How do you feel now that you'll be getting at least a little exposure into the US market?

We are looking forward to hearing what the Americans think about us. It's a rare scene over there, power metal?

Yeah. How old are the crowds for these touring bands that come through Denmark?

It's basically the same guys who listened to Iron Maiden in the 80s who come to the concerts. There's no young ones.

I notice that too. When Iron Maiden did their US tour a few months back, and Yngwie just did some dates, it's all people who listened to them in the 80s. There's nobody new!

It's a few young people who come, a few new ones. I don't think the new generation is familiar with this kind of music because of the MTV influence. They don't know what it is when they hear it, they shut off their ears. It is a sad story.

We want to reach out to the young ones. We're trying to really give out free CDs to the young people. Normally they think it's pretty cool. Yesterday with our gig with 200 people there were a lot of young people in the crowd.

How old are you guys?

I'm 24. Lars is 26, Jeppe is 20, and our bass player is 27, and the drummer is 26. Flemming is 23. We're a pretty young band.

I notice most of the young ones into the music have their own bands, but they're not reaching out to their own age group.

That's a mistake.

As far as over here in America, we think

think something that helped a lot was MTV's Headbangers Ball. We need a heavy metal channel! I think that would be cool. People could choose! Today people are almost forced to hear pop music. When I'm at work I'm forced to listen to all the hits! All day long. I don't have a choice. I could turn it off, but I don't think the others at work would agree.

What do you do?

I'm a laboratory worker. I do a lot of chemistry and biology.

Not everyone who plays heavy metal is an idiot! We have brains too!

I like hearing that. I hate metal musicians who pump gas or something. It looks bad. But with a job like that, do you ever have problems taking time off when it's time to record or tour?

I'm a very lucky person. My boss is an old heavy metal guy too. That's very cool. He saw us yesterday with his wife. As far as the others, I think they do get the time off they need.

Usually, the better job you have, the harder it is to take time to promote the band. Which some sort of heavy metal amusement park. Eternity. It says you recorded some in

Germany and We traveled to the western part of Denmark, about a 5 hour journey to get to the studio. We lined up

Europe. There all our gear and made all the drum tracks, the are a lot of guitars, bass, keyboards. It came down to Lars, arrangements, our singer. And of course he became very ill. And festivals, and he had to sing. We had to go back to the eastern part of Denmark. Then the studio was occupied really working and we had to wait a month. Then we recorded all for this kind of the lyrics. Then all the digital gear fucked up and music. There's we lost all our tapes. Typical. Our producer a strong bond. laughed at it. He said 'That is statistically Now that iron impossible!' So we had to go home again and this Maiden has digital machine had to be repaired in another part returned with of Denmark and then we had to mix it again. The Bruce tracks that were destroyed were repaired when the Dickinson, I machine was fixed so it wasn't a total disaster.

think it will This machine is worth \$10,000. It just fucked up. open another That's the story behind that! Murphy's Law!

door for the Could you name 5 bands from Denmark that heavy metal people should be aware of.

scene for all Pretty Maids is a very good band. Wuthering the 80s metal Heights. Behind the Curtain is a new progressive guys who metal band. King Diamond and Mercyful Fate dropped out in were the biggest ones.

the 90s. There What do you think is the pure absolute essence of heavy metal?

interview with The energy and the balls mixed with easy listening Bruce melodies. That's the biggest recipe for heavy

Dickinson over metal. On our CD, sometimes you can hear a lot here who said of aggression, and then later on in the same track 'We're just you can hear that the story has changed. That's going to be the why I listened to heavy metal! One track can tell biggest heavy many stories.

metal band in What's in the near future for Manticora? the world.' Our contract with Black Lotus is for one album

Maybe that more and we're already making new tracks for will open some that. As for future concerns, we don't know what eyes. Who will happen to Manticora after this record deal. knows?

Has the Korn zines all around but we can't predict the future. scene caught Right now it's just concentrating on our next

album to make it an improvement over Roots of That's pretty Eternity.

big over here. Should people expect anything different next If someone time?

asks me what I Not really. Just that the new keyboard dimension listen to, I'll should be greater. Right now the keyboards only say heavy pop up occasionally which is important. It makes metal. They'll good sense not to let the keyboards destroy say 'So do it' everything. But next time there will be more I'll ask what keyboards, hopefully the American aggressive bands, and sound, and the easy listening melodies. Right now they'll say 'I the tracks are more atmospheric. We're taking listen to Korn more time to create the songs instead of just and...' Jesus! making the songs. The lyrics and the musics have That's not to fit.

heavy metal Any final words for the American audience? you idiot! If a I don't know if the Americans listen to power

young guy metal from Europe, but if not they should open opens his eyes their eyes and listen to it! There are a lot of good to heavy metal, bands that you need to hear!

it's Korn, the www.intromental.com/manticora

MTV guys.



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MOONSPELL

Moonspell is back! After 2 excellent albums, they laid a big old egg for Sin/Pecado. Wolfheart and Irreligious had been staples of gothic metal and it seemed they'd gone down the tubes with electronica and mainstream sounds. Not so. I was fortunate to be able to talk to Fernando Ribeiro of Moonspell to discuss their new epic, The Butterfly Effect, out now on Century Media.

How are things over there in Portugal?

Pretty cool. There's a Paradise Lost show in the city. I'm going there to meet the guys. It's been rainy.

When do you guys start the tour over here?

I think the first show is on the 5th of November. The Texas Metalfest.

And then you're out with In Flames for a time.

Just the east coast, then to Mexico City, and 2 dates in Canada, all in a period of 20 days.

This will be your first time in the US, right?

Yes. We've been to Mexico before, and also to South America. We never had the chance, we were offered some support slots for Morbid Angel and London After Midnight, but it always clashed with tours we were doing in Europe. But now the need to expand the band is stronger than ever because Europe is really complicated nowadays with a saturation with this kind of music. It's quite cool that we have the chance to play for fresh blood. It's really exciting for Moonspell.

I find it strange that there's a lot of bands who will hit South America and Mexico and not come into the US.

It's quite tricky for a European tour to be organized in the US, especially if you're not British. It's quite difficult to get the word spread. From South America, and even the US, Moonspell always got a lot of underground response through email and letters. South America was a little bit easier because you only play big shows. They take bands there and fans are really supportive and lots of people there listen to this music. We were waiting through 2 years of cancellations and getting flights booked and unbooked to get to South America. When we concentrated together with our agency and our management really to go do something in the States we were able to organize something more solid. It's difficult to break into the States even though we have national distribution. Playing is a little more tricky. The first time is always the most difficult time and we hope to come back before the summer.

Is it going to be you or In Flames headlining?

It's a co-headlining tour. We'll play first, then In Flames. We don't mind. We have the same conditions and the same time. It's always a challenge for us and when we play first there's always the extra kick because I believe in healthy competition between the bands.

I think it's a cool setup because Moonspell and In Flames are different kinds of bands.

It's very diverse. In Flames is a very defined style, this Swedish rock feeling with death metal and more heavy metal guitar riffs. Moonspell has changed a lot during the last years and nowadays with our new album *The Butterfly Effect* we created a dark, strong metal. We'll be fine. I saw In Flames, they rule live. I saw them in Germany with Dark Tranquillity, Arch Enemy, and Children of Bodom. It's a cool combination because Moonspell has different perspectives into the music. We're organizing the set to have songs from *Wolfheart* to *The Butterfly Effect*. It's one of the best options we'll find for the States.

The album's been out awhile in Europe. I haven't seen any of the press yet from there, so how has the response been?

Press wise, Europe is really unpredictable nowadays, as I told you earlier, there's a lot of saturation from bands and people are a little bit confused and sensitive to the trend. In Europe is what I call this puritan metal, it's according to the book, it's all the clichés there and people relate to these. Bands that try to be more avant-garde are suffering because of this. Bands like Moonspell, Katatonia, Paradise Lost, even Type O Negative seem like outcasts in Europe. But the reviews have been positive. It's an album that brought something important to Moonspell. It's respect for our musical creation. Saleswise it's going slower

than people maybe are not searching for nowadays. It's going OK in countries like Portugal and France especially, and markets that we get stronger in are the UK, Scandinavia, Benelux, etc. The slower countries are the ones that mainly listen to more traditional forms of metal such as Germany and Italy. The album is not an immediate type of music. I hope people will discover *The Butterfly Effect*. Our pre-sales were not the best from all the albums in Europe. I just think people will need a little bit more time and more criticism around metal for people to enjoy the new Moonspell album.

I'm one of these people who loved the new Moonspell album. At the same time, I'm really into a lot of the power metal out of Germany and Italy. I like both sides. I get worried when people are stuck in one kind of metal.

Fortunately, not everyone is like this. Moonspell has a very strong and solid basis of fans that probably don't come from this power metal side. People that listen to HammerFall and Helloween I don't know why they're into Moonspell in the first place. We never did that kind of music. The biggest vibe in Europe is kind of an inquisition inside metal. I'm not overreacting because I see covers of magazines with Paradise Lost calling them traitors. It's a little too much.

On the cover?

Yeah. I don't remember which magazine. I think from Italy. I think it's a little too much because this is a kind of music which doesn't have a formula or a definition because Black Sabbath, the originators, were very different from Helloween and what all these bands are feeding off of. These bands are needed because if there's an audience for them some of them have a good value. It's not the kind of music I listen to or I like, I never liked Helloween so I don't like the new generation, but they promote it in a way that tries to alienate the other side. Anybody who thinks fresh and balance, we don't need only Rhapsody and HammerFall but also Moonspell and Katatonia. But not anybody thinks like this. It would be a sad metal scene if everybody was uniform. We hope that the more power metal, I find that a strange definition, the more heavy metal orientated people could have the same respect for these bands the way they do to the more heavy metal orientated music, which is just giving the people what they want. Which is not necessarily a negative thing, but on the other hand don't alienate people that are trying to have a more spiritual risk and investment in the music. But I'm going to the Paradise Lost gig in Lisbon. I have a relationship with the band. I like what they do. In Germany they call it Depeche Metal. That's really strange. Maybe their new album is not guitar orientated but I think they were completely crucified with One Second. I bought that album and I think people are overreacting because I think it's a very good metal/rock album. At the end of the day besides all the trends and all the hype of the puritan metal magazines, metal is about being good, being genuine, and being original. I think Paradise Lost really gathered the 3 conditions. But of course a matter of taste cannot be discussed. Heavy kinds of music has always been an outlet for artistic freedom. Bands like Celtic Frost, which was a main influence on Moonspell, were experimenting with amazing records like *Into the Pandemonium* which was completely sacked and humiliated at the time but nowadays is a reference for all the people who do this kind of music and have lived through this kind of music. It's quite sad. That's why the need to expand for these bands is really cool. If the scene needs freshness, we do need it as well. At least what I gather from the States, this prejudice is not really out there. People are a little bit more openminded accepting this kind of fusion than European people nowadays that are going into a dead end. In two years when the trend stops what will people turn to?

That's what I don't like, when something gets hot there's suddenly ten thousand bands of that style and it kills everything. You guys have definitely changed from the beginning. Looking at the Under the Moonspell booklet, it says in there that you are black metal.

because Southern black metal. I have nothing against black metal and I have nothing to deny our influences which come across from a lot of black and death metal bands, especially on the new record. We always tried to separate, and if you read inside the *Under the Moonspell* booklet, it's about being different within the dark metal scene. Lots of different kinds of approach. It was maybe a late reaction on the scene. When the Norwegian boom came in Europe, it seems they were discovering something. Of course it's a music that has a proper and private style but for Moonspell we always tried to be rebellious against this uniform thing. It depresses me to see Portuguese black metal bands trying to be and copying everything from cultural forms and music and image from Norwegian bands. It's weird because we don't have anything to do with that kind of culture or approach. Moonspell always tries to deny whatever conditions show up, even from bands that showed up after us. People related for a lot of different reasons, sometimes not for musical reasons. Moonspell tried to separate themselves from black metal because I do not relate to what black metal is today, like Dimmu Borgir or whatever. I don't think Moonspell has anything to do with that, or ever has, that's why we stepped back from that scene. If we called ourselves black metal we'd be related into that kind of stuff that as individuals we do not relate to. It would be really false. I do prefer the label dark metal because I think that's exactly what Moonspell does, especially albums like *Irreligious* and *The Butterfly Effect*.

I'd first gotten into Moonspell with Wolfheart, from a feature in Metal Maniacs. The feature hyping you up was really good, and it sounded like something I'd really like. The imagery was cool, everybody with the swords drawn forming the pattern. To some degree image does count and it seems over the past couple of years you don't have an image like that.

People that are familiar with Moonspell know we always try to inscribe our albums with production in a certain context and a certain atmosphere. For both *Under the Moonspell* and *Wolfheart*, people reacted very strong to this, and we can only be happy for that. 4 years after *Wolfheart* and 5 years after *Under the Moonspell*, we are really collecting the fruits of that image orientated for marking territory. It was not a coincidence that the record was named *Under the Moonspell*, or that our first album was named *Wolfheart*. There is a strong need for marking territory, and once we'd done so it would be redundant for us to try to mark the territory again. We tried to go for a new perspective inside of us. And we also toured a lot and I think it's the best life lesson. Ever since we did *Morbid God* we always tried to have a vehicle for our emotions, which is what Moonspell stands for. I think *The Butterfly Effect* was a response to an image and I think that was shocking for people. We can't understand that because we plagued by that Irreligious image and people were calling us gods and we were reborn whatever. We tried to get away from that, maybe not musicwise but with the image. It was almost anti-Moonspell for us at that time because we were so tired of that. With *The Butterfly Effect* we have the maturity to look back and pick up what was essential and give it a dose of actuality which I think is important for us and our fans and for our generation of musicians and individuals. The biggest vibe nowadays in metal is to be nostalgic. Sometimes that is really negative because you don't evolve, you don't grow up. I think this is a belonging from the metal scene as well to have a ready definition from each record. Moonspell always tries to do this and to do this we have to change a lot of stuff. We feel people will still recognize it's a Moonspell record even with all the new stuff going around that they'll like, or not. The spiritual investment and mission and necessity of bringing different things into the band and therefore the people that listen to Moonspell.

Are you guys making a living off of the music at this point?

Yes. You have to consider that we come from Portugal and Portugal is one of the most poor countries even though it's developing. The life level is really low when compared to Germany or the United States or especially Scandinavia. So we can make a comfortable living from music. On the other hand we are a band that practices every day, rehearses every day, and we work a lot. We are always touring, or always doing an album. It's definitely a privilege having your passion feeding

you, not only with emotion, but also with material things you need for survival. We try to dignify this honor and privilege by working every day. When we go live we are well prepared. We are not doing this band as a joke. It is a very serious thing. I don't know any musician, from the underground to the mainstream, that started without even the remote wish of living off of it.

At what point did you start living off the music?

A little bit after the Type O Negative tour, so right when we started preparing *Sin*. We did a lot of tours, and when we opened for Type O Negative it was really profitable, it did a lot to sell *Irreligious* records. We had a better organization within the band as well. We split with our bass player Ares who was taking a lot of money from the band. It was the beginning of '97.

That's very cool. Almost everybody I talk to is not able to make a living off their music.

You don't talk to a lot of bands in Portugal! It's very different. All the basic needs in Portugal like rent and food is below European levels. We have a smaller economy and when we go abroad we always get foreign currency for show fees and royalties. I'm proud of the organization we have in Moonspell because we're not rich, we don't have limos or swimming pools and all that stuff, but we have at least an apartment, a car, and enough stuff. It keeps you down to Earth. It's good and it's still down to Earth because you still have to work hard, not to make a profit, but to get what you deserve from your hard work.

That last bit of ancient history for you I think I want to go into, the lyrics on the first two albums were a lot more theatrical in presentation. It seems to be less so now, it's more personal.

It's a different approach, different stories are told. In the beginning I was never addicted to fantasy or role playing. But I connected with theater, my girlfriend is an actress and I have some small experience with theater because I put on two little plays on stage. Always learning. I like when art is interactive, because you can learn a lot from other kinds of approaches to art, be it theater or literature. People sometimes think this is ridiculous. It's definitely has something in common with music. What we tried with Moonspell, with bad and good results as with any other band, was to have always a subliminal visuality in our music. Throughout the years we learn different processes not to be as obvious as we were on *Wolfheart* or *Under the Moonspell*. But this vibe is always present. It is one of the essential things in Moonspell. If there is something that draws people into listening to the music of Moonspell or going to the shows it is the dramatic approach. Sometimes when you go to much into this particular approach, it goes a bit over the top. There is a fine line between the sublime and the ridiculous. This gothic metal trend in 1996 in Europe and especially Germany that Moonspell was a big part of, and was one of the representative bands of as far as people told us, it got a bit over the top, a little bit exhausting, and even a little bit cheesy. You definitely have to come up with different styles, different blood into the music. If Vampiria was a very visual song, well the title track on *The Butterfly Effect* was also a very visual song. Nowadays, we have a lot of stories to be told. The lyrics don't have a social message. It's not what I want to do, to moralize or tell stories from a moralizing point of view. I want people to participate in them, and when you do the human factor really comes to the top. For me it is much more genuine than writing songs about vampires and werewolves. Back then I thought it was different from what every other band was doing, these days you write about something it will be filtered through a cliché instantaneously because many bands are doing this with wolves, etc. In Moonspell we were very prepared with marking territory and the visuality. It was always a goal with the band. With age you do things better and more subtle and even more difficult for the people but in the end more interesting.

Do you personally think on any of your songs you crossed the line into the ridiculous?

I never regret anything I did from *Morbid God* all the way up to the last album of Moonspell. We are always people that admitted our limitations as individuals and as musicians. We come from a country where it is very difficult to have contact with what's new and what's going around. We were very limited as we began touring. Some of

the stuff we did on shows, even though it was genuine, it crossed the line. The folk sections of *Wolfheart*, even though I don't think it's ridiculous, I don't think it's sublime. It's in a limbo. When we do albums we are not trying to avoid being ridiculous. We played this alternative festival in Spain and there was lots of rock bands and we were the only metal band that had the more dramatic approach. All these people with their alternative approach was really pissing us off and I said fuck alternative music and then we ended up getting the best reviews in the newspapers! We didn't want to prove to these people that metal was not ridiculous, but we did want to give them something stronger that doesn't have to go into this limbo. Today it's a question of opinion but everybody has the tendency to avoid the cheesy.

Here in the US the metal scene is so small, and we hear all sorts of stories about how metal is so big in Europe and it's side by side with all the other music in terms of popularity. Is that an accurate point of view, especially in Portugal?

In Portugal the metal scene is an outcast. In Portugal Moonspell is what you'd call a medium big band. Our last album was top 10 and all that stop. We're the only band from Portugal that's breaking through internationally. Metal in Germany is very big, it charts a lot. Iced Earth charted very high, and HammerFall and Grave Digger. The more avantgarde kind of metal is big in Germany but it's hard to pin down because Germany is such a powerful thing and a powerful market. Everything charts from Atrocity up to Grave Digger, or Moonspell and Paradise Lost. From our experience playing all these different types of festivals there's no one music that has fans with the dedication that metal people have. That's definitely very strong, and in Europe it allows bands to break barriers that could never be imagined 5 years ago. It's not a case of popularity, or marketing, or sales, it's a case of people into metal are strongly believing. They're living their music, not just listening to it. That's a big advantage of metal. It makes metal strong, even musically.

I have to admit I didn't like *Sin/Pecado* that much. I thought it was moving away from the better metal stuff you'd been doing. On the new one you brought back things like the growled vocals and strong guitar leads and things like that. I remember getting *Sin/Pecado* and going 'Oh my goodness', and then a few months later the *Daemonarch* album comes out and I saw a lot of reviews saying 'This is what Moonspell forgot.' I don't know if that was just an American perspective or how that was seen in Europe or if people saying that caused you to bring that influence back into Moonspell?

Not the comments themselves. But the project for me personally had the bridge between *Sin* and *The Butterfly Effect*. Some people didn't like *Sin* because music is all about emotions and some people don't relate to the emotions. *Sin* was maybe not the right timing to do this kind of album. We can't be concerned with that. When we are composing it is just ourselves and our ghosts in a garage. There's no guidelines that we have to please the audience. We don't know what they want. It's unpredictable in Europe what they really want from music. *Sin* was a very important album for Moonspell. It was a test for Moonspell and it was a test for the audience as well. It allowed us to see a lot of our melodic capacity as songwriters. It allowed us to see how elastic can our audience be. It has some of the best songs Moonspell ever composed such as *Second Skin* or *Hanged Man*, or *Mute*. We felt incomplete, definitely, with *Sin* because we forgot something that was the ugly side of music. *Daemonarch* brought this to a very deep level for me and for Moonspell. When we were composing *The Butterfly Effect* we can quote *Daemonarch* as an influence. I learned a lesson. A very personal message that allows us to bring the ugly and aggressive side of music back into *The Butterfly Effect*. It's not an album completely back to the roots. It's an album which has two very important things. The actuality, which is very important to us, and also the essential sounds of Moonspell. If the goal for *Sin/Pecado* was innovation, the goal for *The Butterfly Effect* was for people to put the record on the CD player and say 'This is Moonspell.' It was exactly our main and sole mission. Not only *Daemonarch*, but also a lot of the personal things we discovered as well

as the general reaction to *Sin* was definitely an inspiration for the record. *Sin* came at a time where people were not connected to this kind of metal music. It was not only *Sin*, it was also *Paradise Lost's One Second*, it was *A Deeper Kind of Slumber* by Tiamat, it was a lot of records that were out there. Maybe when we tour Europe people will rediscover *Sin* and get into it with a different set of ears. It's quite complicated to explain but all the stuff we experienced was important. *Daemonarch* was a very strong experience for me. In Europe it was seen a little bit as trying to profit on the black metal trend, although I don't think it had anything to do with that. It was a way stronger album than a lot of the black metal records at that time. It was cool to prove myself and to some people that we can still do music to get things out of our system. On *The Butterfly Effect* this philosophy is all over the album. That's why people are relating so much to this one.

I definitely noticed it's not just you going back and doing old stuff. There is a lot of *Sin/Pecado* in this new record. It's just integrated better into the kind of stuff I like.

I don't want to sound big headed but we came across with a good combination of the two sides of Moonspell. Without sounding like we just wanted to please the old fans. Nobody does music to piss off their fans. People don't make records and say 'Let's get people to stop listening to us.' That's definitely absurd! If any fan thinks this you need to give that a second thought. We don't want to piss people off, but we want to represent ourselves as well. Sometimes you have to measure the values of these two things. I can understand if someone doesn't like a record. I can't understand when someone feels offended by a record. That's a little over the top. I didn't like Iron Maiden with *Blaze Bailey*, but I didn't get offended! It's very good to take music seriously. I don't think metal is entertainment. Not the kind of metal that Moonspell performs. But I think a little bit of a clear mind in hand is needed to appreciate our music.

I see what you're saying. It's that fine line. Because this isn't music written for mass market, it is more emotional. People do take it seriously. If a band has what someone considers a perfect sound on a record and then the next one is something completely different, they go nuts. That's happened to me quite a few times.

To me as well. But I never go to lengths to think the band wants to piss me off! With *Irreligious*, it was strange to Moonspell because we were touring Europe and getting fantastic reactions, but we had a rotten atmosphere within the band. Some of the shows were really bad! The hype was so big and the vibe was so big it was very important for *Sin/Pecado* to calm this down. For people to understand Moonspell was not the perfect band, that *Irreligious* was not the groundbreaking record that everybody thought it was. Even though we had some of the best moments of Moonspell like *Mephisto*, or *Full Moon Madness*, on *Wolfheart* people had to discover the album. When it was first released it wasn't selling at all anywhere in Europe. When we opened for *Morbid Angel* people discovered the power of it live. Then it started getting hot and it became the biggest selling debut album ever from Century Media. It's quite strange music. It's definitely personal, it's definitely emotional. As with any personal or emotional thing, sometimes it's not very constant. It's in perpetual mutation. People have to have special attention to that. The best thing about giving interviews is not to tell boring stories, or give biographies about the band, but to see the other side, that it is not the way people think. Just because we did *Sin*, or *The Butterfly Effect*, does not mean we deny our past. Sometimes I'm approached by Moonspell fans and they ask me 'Where are your roots?' I think the roots are just a stage. If you want to be botanic, you have to look up from the roots to the body of the tree, to the fruits of the tree. It's a whole, it's not something partial. People forget about this. There's this roots obsession in metal. Sometimes it's not the most important, or not the only thing that exist.

For the publicity for *The Butterfly Effect*, the label's been playing up the scientific terminology. Is that anything that was a conscious decision to concentrate on for you when naming it?

We're not at all connected with the publicity. They do ask for suggestions because fortunately

Century Media is a label that respects very much the artistic side of the bands and they don't want to piss off bands by doing something that doesn't represent the bands. Of course *The Butterfly Effect* is a scientific theory that is a branch of the Chaos Theory which is the most interesting and fascinating kind of science that is being studied. Not only in meteorology, but in physics, applied mathematics, even statistics. But of course it's not an album about science, or as Metal Hammer in the UK puts it, it's not an album about the weather! We don't have the scientific knowledge to write about this. Even though it's an interesting topic, it's not as abstract, not as poetic as what we'd like to put into our music. Of course I am fascinated by *The Butterfly Effect* story behind the scientific approach. In Moonspell it means something completely different. *The Butterfly Effect*, the meteorologist that came up with this, besides the scientific conquests, has the importance of underlining the importance of the insignificant, the small, and the random when influencing the absolute, the big, the radical changes. When you put this against the individual human background, it is fascinating to see that your entire life can be seen as a *Butterfly Effect*. We have the tendency on the absolute and on the big, our lives are much more concentrated and much more interesting when we think about the small, the insignificant, and the random. That's exactly what we're trying to say with *The Butterfly Effect*. We don't want to teach people science. We want to represent something we think is a life principle. When people like to know about this stuff, it's good to have a general guideline that people can relate to. It's not an album about weather, it's an album about life.

It was a new production team and new studio for you guys.

Yes. We stopped using Waldemar and Woodhouse Studios, we wanted to break the routine. We used Andy Reilly, a British producer, and we recorded the album at Trident II studios in London.

How was that different than what you were used to?

It was very different. In Germany we were used to clinical, 8 to 5 kind of work. It was really like a job. In London everything was different. It was really chaotic sometimes. Everything was recorded at night, and there was an experimental vibe. The necessity of pleasing the band and expressing through the sound was a priority of Andy Reilly and the studio. It was different for the better. When people listen to the album they'll find out it has a more powerful sound.

Andy Reilly has worked with Bruce Dickinson and UFO. Worlds apart from what you do. Was he familiar with underground metal at all or did he freak the first time he heard that roar?

He's definitely not familiar with this kind of underground band. We had the chance to bring him to Portugal, and send him a demo. Metal can be separated as a kind of music, but it's really rock. Really extreme rock. It comes from rock music, so productionwise and feelingwise it was a real rocker. That was quite important, we wanted to clash this with the more brutal part of Moonspell. The most extreme band he'd worked with involved an engineering job for Cradle of Filth. Quite difficult and different from Moonspell. Also he's worked with glam pop bands like *Choir Boys* and *Asia*. What's really important is that he did an excellent job and we could see it when we were recording. I was not shocked, and he even took the band to some extremes that we did not come up with ourselves. He was so excited in doing this new kind of music for him that he was more over the top than Moonspell sometimes!

You just mentioned Cradle of Filth. On your early albums in the liner notes you mention each other. What was the relationship there?

It's strange. We got in contact with Cradle of Filth in '93. The band was quite different at that time. It was a different lineup from *Principle of Evil Made Flesh*. They were in our places, eating from our food and all this stuff. The first time we went to London it was strange because the band was only Dani and Nicholas. We were expecting more from them, like what we did for Cradle of Filth in Portugal. The bands separated directions, but we had a chance to play with Cradle of Filth in Strausburg, and we still talk with each other. There was a lot of gossip

between Moonspell and Cradle of Filth from our old bass player who had a habit of talking shit about people. In a way I'm not a fan of what Cradle of Filth are doing now. But it is a band with style and I admire them because for the black metal they are one of the best bands live. It's hard for black metal bands to be good live. There's Emperor, Marduk, Cradle of Filth, and that's almost it! It's kind of a good relationship. Some of their members respect us, some don't. We don't have much contact but we have very good memories from Cradle of Filth and I bet they have very good memories from Moonspell as well. Sometimes memories are not enough but I think we are on a decent enough relationship with them.

Will there be another *Daemonarch* album?

Not in the near future because *The Butterfly Effect* is taking a lot of my time and energy and we're going to tour a lot. What I will do with *Daemonarch* will be not musical. I'm trying to construct before the end of the year an internet site that can be a forum for people that are into artistic, philosophical, or even academic Satanism and occultism. I'm involved in this stuff and I think it is so badly represented by nowadays generation of black metal that if I can do a little bit in order to approach the people with different perspectives into this it will be a great thing for me and an interesting project. We'll see what my time allows me to do.

Which Moonspell members were in *Daemonarch*?

The only active participation in *Daemonarch* besides myself was from Pedro (Paixao, keyboards) who helped me out to compose the stuff and produce the record itself.

As a vocalist, how much musical input do you have in Moonspell?

I don't have such a musical influence as I do on the aesthetics and the lyrics. I'm a very ignorant person when it comes to music, and I think technique is very important. On the other hand I'm more of the instinct and feeling. I compose 99% of the vocal lines.

I wanted to let you know that of everything I listen to in power metal and Yngwie Malmsteen that I listen to...

I love Yngwie Malmsteen! *Rising Force* is killer! ...I don't think I've ever heard a guitar solo as majestic as that one in *Wolfheart* off of *Wolfheart*. It's so moving even after all this time and it's not even going all over the place.

That's a good compliment. I agree because it's a solo that's not virtuosic, but it has lots of feeling. If you like these solos you'll like the solos from Quorthon in Bathory. He made these scales that we used, also in *Full Moon Madness*, in *Tired*, it gives you the creeps, definitely!

That's actually my favorite part of that *Wolfheart* album. You were talking earlier about the little things being important, I'm always getting the feeling that people into that album are missing that one part because that's what people are always talking over when we're together listening to it!

I love that lead, definitely!
www.moonspell.com
www.centurymedia.com



Nightwish

In *LoFP #2* I ran a short feature on Nightwish. Usually that would be enough. Well, one year after first hearing their sophomore effort *Oceanborn* (on Spinefarm Records) and having it still be a frequent resident in my CD player, I have decided that the one piddly feature was not enough. Nightwish just isn't catching on, and that's WRONG. Heavy metal the Finnish way, with lead keyboards, a GODDESS on vocals, and songs so strong they don't leave you. I had to present the definitive Nightwish feature, so I sent keyboard player/mastermind Tuomas Holopainen an 80 question interview. He wasn't exactly as in depth as I would have liked all the time, but nobody has put together as complete an article with as much Nightwish information as what you're about to read. If bands such as Amorphis, Stratovarius, the Gathering, or ANYTHING heavy, melodic, and uplifting causes you any excitement at all, you need to hear Nightwish. Period, end of story. This is one of the better bands out there now, so read why that is...

'allo again! All I can think of to say to begin with is congratulations and thank you for the *Oceanborn* album. A lot of albums that are great at first fades. Very few actually stick with the listener over the course of a year and get played a lot the whole time! What have been your favorite albums this year, metal or otherwise?

Of my favorite albums this year I could mention Luca Turilli's *King of the Nordic Twilight*, Freedom Call's *Stairway to Fairyland*, Amorphis' *Tuonela* and the soundtrack of *Mulan*.

The first order of business has to be your situation within the US. Have you gained a licensing deal for the US yet? If not, is any in the works?

No we haven't, yet. There has been lots of interested labels, though, and *Oceanborn* will be officially released in the States in the beginning of 2000.

How much of a response have you gotten from the US? Lots of fan mail?

Very little, actually. I've received a couple of letters and there have been some comments on our internet homepage but that's about it.

Do you find that in dealing with the press that different countries have different lines of questioning? If so, how?

Well, Americans tend to make long interviews... Seriously, not that much, it depends more on the one who is questioning rather than which country is he or she from.

What is the single most frequent and/or annoying question you get asked?

I guess it's our biography, which is a natural question, of course, but has such a long answer it's annoying to go it over and over again. I did something like 150 interviews this spring and almost all of them wanted our biography... Also, I'm sick and tired of answering whether or not the song *The Carpenter* is about Jesus Christ!

And what is the answer to that question?

Yes. Everyone happy now?

I notice a trend in magazines, and even fanzines, to feature bands from the same country as the magazine more frequently, more in depth, and more favorably. You've certainly had your space in Suomi Finland Perkele (even the English edition!). Would you think this is a more conscious decision to try to strengthen the 'home town' bands, or a more unconscious 'we're better than everyone else' type of thing?

It also depends, naturally, but I think most of this has to do with the fact that magazines want to give their best support for the bands of their home country. I think it's their right, even duty. And there's nothing wrong with that.

Do you personally tend to get more excited over Finnish bands than others? (Hell, *I* get more excited over Finnish bands than others...)

Pretty much so! I honestly think that the Finnish metal scene is top class and we have some awesome bands like Amorphis, Stratovarius,

Children of Bodom and Sonata Arctica, just to mention a few. All this might have just a tad of patriotic sense in it but still, we have a scene to definitely get excited about!

Your music and especially the lyrics are definitely not the norm for the scene, so I'm going to assume there's something a lot more personal in the material. So here are some personal questions! Let's go back to the beginning. No, I mean the VERY beginning! When and where were you born?

I was born on Christmas day in 1976 in a small town, where I still live.

Did you grow up in a more urban or rural area?

I grew up in the rural area, on an old farm actually, even though we didn't have any cattle. I felt like living in the middle of nowhere in the woods, but this fit me just fine. I'm still living in the country and I love it. I never could imagine myself living in a big city.

I know musical education opportunities are more plentiful in most European countries than in the US. Is that the case in Finland as well? I suppose we have good chances of musical education. Every city has its own music schools and there are many conservatories all around Finland. Only one university level, though, Sibelius Academy.

How early did you become involved in music? What was your first instrument?

My first instrument was the piano, which I started playing at the age of seven. A year after that I joined the music school and the clarinet became my main instrument. I also attended theory classes, went to a classical orchestra, a jazz band and kept piano as my 2nd instrument.

What was the first album you bought? First metal album? What was the first band you REALLY became a fan of and why?

The first album I bought was an lp of a Finnish rock band. First metal album, I think was Kiss *Asylum*. However, it was Metallica in 1992 who changed my life to metal. I was a big fan of them. I went to their concert in Kansas City while I was there as an exchange student and after that I was completely hooked.

When did you decide you really wanted to start making music?

After having been playing two years in a metal band I decided I wanted to do something on my own. I realized that songwriting was the thing for me.

A lot of musicians in the US have really interesting stories about how their families reacted to their musical ambitions. They're mostly interesting HORROR stories, but... how was your family as far as being supportive about music? What do they think of Nightwish now that it has become 'famous'?

Our parents have been very supportive all this time. No horror stories here, sorry.

By your lyrics you're definitely something of a romantic and just a big ol' softie at heart. (How un-metal of you, Tuomas! I bet you even crack a smile now and again during rehearsals, ha ha!) So let's see if I can get away with asking these questions... how old were you when you had your first crush?

What the hell...? Ok, but you can't be serious... not old enough.

What was it about the person that attracted you? Beauty.

How old you were you when you had your first date?

16.

How did it go?

Pretty good.

What one word would you use to describe your first kiss?

Wet.

Was your first romp in the sack the utter disaster it was for me and just about everyone I know?

Can't remember...

Who would you say your keyboard inspirations are? Hell, the only notable names that stand out on their own that I can think of in this music are Jens Johansson and Vitalij Kuprij (sorry Adina, ha ha!).

Jens Johansson is a great one, Vangelis (because of his original sounds, he's a genius!), and Kitano (because of the feeling).

What do you think of solo keyboard players like Mortii and Varg (cough cough moron cough cough) Vikernes who rely more on 'emotion' and 'atmosphere' rather than real playing ability?

I think all music should be based on emotions and atmosphere, that's what music's about. I'm not really into these solo key players but I have respect for them.

Any thoughts of dressing up in bat wings and fake ears and nose and releasing solo albums?

If it's something that feels right to do, just do it. I don't mind.

Tell us what was going on in your life around the time you started up Nightwish.

I had just quit in the obligatory military and I was still playing in two other metal bands. Nothing worth mentioning was going on.

I understand Nightwish was originally an acoustic project? How does a synth fit in such a concept?

Just great. What we did was 'mood music' and synth fit into those moods perfectly. Why not?

I understand you have no intention of releasing anything from the acoustic period of the band. Obviously you must not think they're any good, but don't you think that would be an irresponsible decision when you have a growing fanbase that is interested in all aspects of the band?

Well, all that's left of that period are three (nostalgic, I must admit) songs. And I have no idea where the original tapes are so let the songs RIP.

When did Tarja become involved? Early on in this acoustic stage or was it later on after you'd become a metal band? How did the idea come about for the more operatic vocal style? It doesn't sound at all like you just put an ad in the music paper and it just so happens this kind of singer answered it... let's face it, this kind of actual quality singing is VERY rare and somewhat over-the-top in this music.

Tarja joined the band for she wanted to try something different to what she had done before (pop, soul, spiritual music...) She was a member already in the acoustic period. She will be an opera singer one day, for at the moment she's studying classical singing in Sibelius Academy, which is a university-level music school in Finland. She will specialize in opera from the beginning of the next semester. She's very professional as far as her use of voice is concerned. Before a live concert she takes two hours to 'open the voice.' It's always fun to listen to her singing these funny chords

and lalalalaas in a hotel room! The same goes for studio work.

Before I ask about you becoming a melodic metal band, I'd like some perspective of the scene at the time. Popular myth is that when HammerFall's first album was released, more traditional metal was stone cold dead, and they awakened everything. When you first decided to go with the electric guitars and everything, when was that in relation to the release of HammerFall? How alive or dead was melodic metal in Finland at that time?

We had never even heard of HammerFall when we turned to metal. It wasn't such a conscious decision that 'let's do melodic metal!' We merely started writing new songs and this is what was born. As simple as that.

When did you first release *Angels Fall First*? Is it true there were songs on there that are not on the Spinefarm version of the album? Why were those left off? Will we ever get to hear them?

It was released in November '97. The demo version of it contains two songs that are not on the actual *Angels Fall First* album. (500 copies limited edition) Again, RIP...

When you first recorded *AFF*, was it intended to be a demo to attract label interest, or as a self release to be sold in its own right?

It was supposed to be a (long) demo that we did just for the fun of it and maybe attract some labels. However, it turned out to be something we had never expected.

How did you get such a strong production recording those songs yourself?

Our friend recorded it in his studio and this guy is a wizard and a perfectionist so that's why.

When did Spinefarm get in touch with you about a record deal? Was there any other label interest?

It was right after the recording, during the tour of my other band, Nattvindens Gråt. We didn't even send that demo to anyone else, Spinefarm giving us such a nice deal.

So why is Ewo known as 'The Man'?

Because he is.

How did you find out that your first album had hit the charts? What were you doing? What was your reaction?

I was in my room when this guy from the radio called me and said if he could do an interview because our album had hit the charts. I was shocked, and veeeery excited about this. It felt great!

In my opinion the songs recorded after your signing are noticeably better, as a group, than the ones recorded before. Were you really advancing as a composer so quickly that 4 months made that much difference, or was it a matter of hearing the first batch recorded and learning quickly what needs to be concentrated on in your music?

I guess I'm a fast learner... I hated the mistakes we had done and I didn't want to repeat them. Also, our ambition to grow a great deal so we a kind of wanted to 'show off.'

The cover on *Angels Fall First*... How does it relate to the title or the material?

A beautiful photograph, calm but strong as the music on *AFF*.

As is usual for your genre, your opening track *Elvenpath* is a speedy one, and delivers everything the band is really about in four and a half minutes. However, it is the lyrics that evoke the greatest response out of me perhaps of everything you've ever done, so I have a bunch of questions inspired by this one alone.

First, the theme mirrors that of Blind Guardian's song *Imaginations From The Other Side*, yet really innocent in scope. How long have you been into fantasy?

All my life, and even longer, I think. Fantasy in all of its forms is such a huge part of my everyday life.

You make a LOT of references throughout both albums to people and places in the lyrics. From mentioning Carter in *Tutankhamen* to Shangri-La in the title song, and plenty more. I find it odd just because it's something nobody else seems to do that at all. What's the thinking behind that?

Weird thing, because I never thought it that way. No special thinking behind that, it's just a natural thing for me. Using references have the ability to make the lyrics more interesting and bring up questions rather than answers.

I first read *Lord of the Rings* when I was 8 years old, and it changed my life. Middle-Earth sometimes seems so much more real, more interesting, then the world going on around me. Are there any fictional worlds which make you feel this way?

Oh yes Middle-Earth is my home, too. I relate strongly into all the fantasy I read but Tolkien is my all-time big favourite!

Do you think the appeal of these fictional fantasy worlds is not so much the exotic and, well, fantastic occurrences, but the fact that in the end everything is resolved with a more or less 'happily ever after' ending?

For me the appeal is in the possibilities. I can do and create whatever I desire and nobody can take this away from me. I don't want to think this issue through thoroughly, fantasy does not need analyzing.

What do you think of darker fantasy authors such as Michael Moorcock (Elric, Corum, Hawkmoon, Von Bek) or Terry Goodkind (*Sword of Truth* series)?

Well, I truly enjoy more the more 'fairytale-like' fantasy, where the prince and the girl live happily ever after. The moment there is supposed to be some kind of message behind fantasy, I'm through with it.

Willow gets a mention... what fantasy based movies do you think are well made? I personally think there are very few good ones.

Conan the Barbarian, Beastmaster I, Willow, The Princess Bride, and that's it I think.

Willow is my very favourite! A kind of Tolkien rip-off, but who cares. I also liked Princess Bride, the Conan movies and the Star Wars movies, even though they are more into the sci-fi scene.

What in the world is a Home Gnome? I have no clue and to be honest the idea is a tad goofy... if you had the song to write all over again, would our little gnomish pal still get a mention?

You bet it would! I don't mind people laughing at my lyrics. I laugh at them often myself. Still, they are written honestly, about things I want to write about and never do I think whether this fits into the listeners big metal heads or not. I write what I feel like writing. A home gnome is a home gnome, what's so hard in that? This gnomish pal of mine is a mythological little creature, a miniature Santa Claus, I would say. A very charming little thing. My dear friend. I'm sure you two would get along just fine!!

And a few other ones I don't recognize... who are Tapio, Mielikki, and Sparhawk?

Tapio and Mielikki are the King and Queen of forests in Finnish mythology. Sparhawk is a character from the book series of one of my favourite fantasy authors, David Eddings.

Where did you take the voice sample from?

From the Lord of the Rings cartoon.

The title track is a slow song. What was the thought behind making this also the name of the album?

Nothing special, it sounded cool. Actually we had trouble coming up with the name for the album so we had to take a name of one of the songs.

On both albums you have a preoccupation with Egyptians. What about the sand and pyramids interests you?

The greatest mystery of mankind and the fascinating culture and mythology. That's it.

What was the inspiration behind Nymphomaniac Fantasia? Because let me tell you, castration is definitely the LAST thing I want to think about when listening to Tarja singing...

Spare me... I hate this song. You dig and I'll bury the song, ok?

There's only one thing I can think of that would make a man write a song like ...Nightgale... So who was she, and does she know she inspired a song? Or do I have it all wrong and you just have a happier imagination than I?

This song would make a great competition or something, I think, because no one has by this day understood what this song is about!

The Lappi epic... is the first part indicative of what the acoustic Nightwish period sounded like? What do Eramaa, Järvi and Etianen mean? Eramaa means 'The Wilderness Lake' and yes, it is an indicative from the acoustic period of Nightwish. Etianen is a wandering ghost in Lapland (Finnish mythology)

OK, now on to the Oceanborn album. First, the cover. It was pointed out to me that if you put your thumb on the woman's face then the rest of her looks like a crocodile. Any other almost funny or mildly interesting comments you've heard about it? What's the message that the owl's carrying?

Not really, the comments have been very positive about the cover, which is based on the Devil and the Deep Dark Ocean song. Read the lyrics and be much wiser...

Second, what is that outfit Tarja's got on? Not that I'm complaining (and not that I'm meaning to sound like a total horn dog, hehe), but she's the only one that has had her presentation fancied up since the first CD.

I'm not sure. Some kind of dress, I've heard comments that she looks like she's on her way to go milk a cow! Haha!

Actually playing the music shows a strong development. Stargazers hits me as sounding kind of Gamma Ray, but with the Finnish feeling somehow, and with the sense of high drama that seems to be running rampant throughout the Italian scene at the moment. What do you think of your development from album to album?

Oceanborn is heavier, faster and more technical than its predecessor but still very atmospheric and bombastic. I think we have grown more mature on that album in every way. The songs, the musicianship and sound quality are all better and now I think we've found our true style. *Angels Fall First* is a good album as a debut album and it has a strong feeling of honesty in it but there are

some things on it that I really don't like such as the male vocals, some lyrics, etc.

With this album you've also taken the step to being a true, out in front, lead keyboardist. I think you've got tons more leads than the guitars... obviously you don't think too much of the 'keyboards don't belong in metal' factions out there eh?

Categorizing stuff is like politics, a necessary evil. Some people categorize keys outside metal but I think they fit the music just great. And while I compose all the stuff with my keyboards, our music tends to have a lot of them but we still have a perfect balance between the instruments.

Even with much 'busier' music, Oceanborn has been a much bigger commercial success than Angels Fall First. What is your secret to success? Why Sacrament of Wilderness as the first single?

This might sound corny but I believe our success has a lot to do with honesty. We really do just what we want ourselves, musically, lyrically and imagewise. Sacrament of Wilderness became the first single because it needed to be a rather short one and it is a song that shows both atmospheric and heavier sides of Nightwish.

With the title Stargazers, I have to ask, are you by any chance a fan of Rainbow?

I had never heard that Rainbow has a song called Stargazer before the CD was out! Honestly! I'm not a big fan of them, just a nice coincidence.

You've got a song called Gethsemane, in the thank-yous you've got 'The Haunting Beauty of Gethsemane garden, this one's for you.' Once again, please, spill the beans, what's up?

A very personal song, personal subject. Need I say more?

Do you sometimes have difficulty with the lyrics seeing as how you're a male writing at times romantic lyrics when a woman's going to be the one singing them?

Never really. Tarja relates beautifully to my lyrics and it has never been a problem. Of course I need to be careful that she will not be singing 'please be my wife' etc.

Devil and the Deep Dark Ocean is the most controversial song you've done, mainly because of some uneducated goofballs. The complaints I've heard about this one have been people who wouldn't know Decide from a running lawnmower saying that there are 'death vocals' here. Obviously that's not the case but I was wondering why the choice was made to use that deep vocal style in there? I personally think it works as it creates a little extra spice in the two songs it's in. Then again, I don't mind death vocals so this is certainly nothing to get bent out of shape about...

Shit, this really annoys me. I've heard a lot of complaints that we use 'death vocals' and due to that we are satanic and blablabla. If they just bother to read the lyrics they would realize that it's the devil and the pharaoh that are speaking there as an EFFECT. The plots required a deep male voice so we used one to create atmosphere in two songs. That's it. End of story.

Moondance... WOW! But again, some people have to ruin the fun, I've seen this called 'great bar mitzvah music' in at least two different negative reviews... (don't worry, the zines were real low-grade, Cannibal Corpse worshipping stuff anyway, nothing to worry about, hehe) It sounded somewhat Russian to me, but I'll have to admit I'm pretty much an all-metal guy so 'traditional' music is nothing more than a guess to me. Could you explain the influences that went into this piece?

'Great Bar Mitzvah music...!!!' hahaha! When I read this description I fell from my chair. A very good one! I don't think I was inspired by anything special as far as Moondance is concerned. It was fun to make and fun to record.

When you write the music to the songs, are you putting lyrics to it as you write? And with Moondance, for example, at what point was it decided it would be an instrumental?

I always have the idea for the song and what it's about before composing it. It's not until final arrangements that I finish with the lyrics. Moondance never required lyrics, it's supposed to be a 'dance'.

What's the story behind Walking on Air?

The Snowman is a 30-minute cartoon which is shown every Christmas Eve here in Finland for the last 15 years. It's a beautiful tale about a little boy and a snowman, who comes alive after

midnight. This cartoon has always been the highlight of Christmas Eve for me so it is full of childhood memories. And the theme song, Walking in the Air, is probably the most beautiful song I've ever heard. H. Blake is an English composer who wrote the music just for that cartoon.

And a few more band-related questions... you're credited with the vast majority of the music and lyrics, but the band is credited as arranging. How often is it that something you've come up with is vetoed by the rest of the band? How different would you say the songs are from when you first come up with them to where they end up?

We have our fair share of disagreements but usually we work them out. We all respect each others 'privacy in his instrument,' if you know what I mean. The songs may differ a lot after arranging process but the soul in them always remains. We had a fight whether or not Moondance should be a part of the album or not.

OK, now about Tarja. Every interview I've seen, you've handled it, but every review (including mine) seemed to focus more on her as a focal point in the band. Obviously having somebody so talented and distinctive in the band is a big plus for getting attention and pushing Nightwish towards the top of the heap, but do you ever worry that she'll lose interest or at some time have other commitments to where it is impossible for her to continue in the band?

Yes, we have that fear. But Nightwish is very important to her and the situation is very solid at the moment.

I don't know opera from a cat in heat. It's obvious Tarja is a quite gifted vocalist, but that's coming from a metal/rock perspective. Her thing is opera and I have no idea how she compares with people in that genre. Could you clue us in as to how she's judged in that arena?

With continued practice and study, how much improvement can we expect out of her and how will you take advantage of that is Nightwish?

She's very young, 22 years old, and still in the early stage of her vocal development so we haven't heard it all yet. She is recognized as a talent in the professional opera genre, as well.

I understand you were recently in the States... was it your first time visiting this cultureless hellhole? What were you doing here? What places did you visit?

How in the world do you know this? Well, it doesn't matter. I visited the family I lived with during my exchange year in 1992-1993. This was near Wichita, Kansas. I also went to Walt Disney World in Florida. I'm a Disney fan and a collector so despite the commercialism, I loved it there!

What would you say are the most striking differences between the US and Finland?

US: Warm, big, diverse cultures, pollution, warm-hearted people, junk food, junk metal. Finland: Cold, small, one culture, rather clean nature, closed-minded people, good metal.

I don't know if I have this viewpoint because of my interests or what, but it seems that the European peoples have a more profound sense of history and their own cultural roots. America seems to not have any sense of anything beyond the latest pop culture sensation. How do you see it?

That's very true! During my stay in the States people asked me questions about Finland. 'Isn't it somewhere near India? Is the polar bear your national food?' I mean, no offence, but you guys don't know much about the world beyond the ocean...

What does it mean to chart in Finland? Are you on the radio? Are you often recognized on the street? What is it like to be hanging out

with friends and one of YOUR SONGS is suddenly played on the radio? Has your music been used in any car commercials yet?

Chart entry means publicity, which is a good thing. We are not that famous, actually. Very few people recognize us on the streets and the radio playing sucks. No metal whatsoever on the radio, even if we hold the top position in the charts. It's really weird. I heard Sacrament of Wilderness was played something like 5 times in the national radio during all this time.

Are you living off of the music? If not, what do you do for a living? Any problems getting time off for shows or to tour?

I'm barely living by music. But I hope we will get to the point that we wouldn't have to do anything besides music. Taking the time off is never a problem for anyone except Tarja due to her intense studies at the Academy.

How many copies of each of your albums have you sold? Charted anywhere other than Finland?

Don't know about *Angels Fall First* but *Oceanborn* has sold over 60000 copies and is still selling very good. It was also charted in Germany, somewhere around 70 at its best I think.

I saw some pictures in Terrorizer of one of your shows. Are the lights and effects a standard part of the Nightwish live experience? Depends of the place we're playing in. We think the visual aid to our shows is very important so we always try to make the lights as good as possible.

Has the band been to Japan yet? Any word of how they've received you?

Nope, maybe next year.

You'll be on tour in Europe with Rage about the time this interview hits in the US. Will this be your first extended series of shows?

In a way, yes. We did scattered touring in Finland all year, about 60 gigs, though.

I don't know the extent of Tarja's activities within the opera (or your gigging for that matter!). Has she ever been in the position where she had to perform night after night to this extent? Any ideas how she'll cope with the smoky clubs for a month?

Tarja's voice is a huge concern to us. Our biggest fear on the tour is how her voice stands up. We did 5 gigs in three days at the Midsummer's Festival in June and she was practically dying after that. I Hope everything goes all right.

When can we expect another Nightwish album? Any new material in the works? How is the music progressing?

We're rehearsing our 3rd album all the time. We have 7 new songs so far and we enter the studio in January. The release should be in May 2000.

To follow-up on a question I asked last time... I suppose Tarja is still unable to marry me, eh?

I asked her about it and she almost agreed but then her boyfriend made a firm statement. Sorry, pal.

Well, we've (finally!!) come to the end of the line. With any luck I didn't bore you/tire you/piss you off too much with the length. Anything else you'd like to say to the US fans?

These kind of interviews make any man an alcoholic. Still, thanks for the interest and support! Keep in touch and please send me the issue where this interview is! Thanks a lot.
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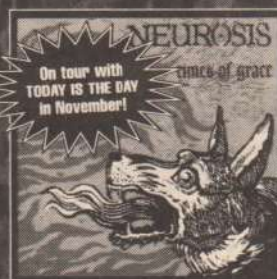
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Are you kidding me? You don't know Opeph? LotFP is the Opeph shrine because Opeph simply are THE best band to ever record music. You're not quite believing me, are you? Some would say that by pushing this band so hard I cause skepticism and doubt in my readers. Well fine, people. We'll just have to do this another way. On Blackened II there is an Opeph song. On the Firestarter and Identity 5 comps there are Opeph songs. Orchid, Morningrise, and My Arms Your Hearse are available through any music store in the USA. Still Life will be soon. Pick one. Any one. Lay back with the headphones, and LISTEN TO THE MUSIC! My hype is justified. Those who have heard already know. All I want you to do is give them a chance. You need to be patient. 10 minute plus progressive journeys of alternating beauty and brutality, complex structures, yet very accessible themes are to be had here. You can listen to this band on so many levels. It's there. It's all there! Every Opeph album has been a massive achievement for all of metal, and in the years to come Opeph's name will mentioned alongside the already established masters of metal. Buy Opeph albums. And especially buy Still Life, the new album on Peaceville in Europe. It's worth it. Promise. Without further ado, here is Mikael Akerfeldt, musical visionary and all around cool guy.

How are you today?
I'm fine. I didn't expect to do interviews today so I completely forgot about them. I was having a good time, going into town. It all got ruined. But I'm fine.

Oh great, I ruined your day!
I'm getting used to that. It's my 9th day of interviews. Maybe I did 20 interviews for the last album. On this, it's over 100 already.

That's a good sign.
It is. That's what happens with Music For Nations doing it. Everyone wants to do an interview. I've been speaking to everyone. It's amazing. At first I thought it was cool to have a response and everything but it's all boring after awhile. They all ask the same questions after awhile.

Hopefully I've got something a little different.
First off, I talked to Lazare of Solefald yesterday, and I asked him if he had any questions for you, he said he had a couple and he said he hoped you'd take these in good jest. First one was if you were aware that the melodies in Orchid resembled German drinking songs.

<laughs> That's pretty cool.
The other one was since he hadn't heard anything since Orchid, I had to bitch him out for that, he wondered if you'd learned to end a song on time yet.

No... we still haven't figured that out. <laughs>
And for my first real question. Do you have a statement for the poor saps who mistakenly believe Dream Theater is releasing the best and most progressive metal album this month [the interview was done October 21-ed]?

I don't know. I think Dream Theater is a good band but I don't count Opeph in that progressive scene. We're not into the progressive metal category that way, sounding like Dream Theater or Fates Warning. I'm not sure. I've seen Dream Theater live twice, and they are a great live band, I like some of their records as well. I wouldn't compare us to that kind of band, even though most people do. They're progressive in a different kind of way. They're progressive in the more traditional way, in that they are very talented musicians and fast solos and high pitched vocals. That's not for me.

I just remember that one song they did with the vocalist from Napalm Death.

That was the live album?

Yeah, that one with the covers they did.

Also with the guitarist from Yes, Steve Howe?

Yeah. Guys from Marillion too. A whole bunch of guests. England gets all the cool shows. Judgement call from you now. On Halloween, Motorhead is playing in Atlanta. The same day, Yngwie Malmsteen is playing down where my family lives in Florida, opening his world tour. Which show should I go to?

Yngwie, for god's sake! Have you seen him before?

No.

Then you have to go! Motorhead is a cool, legendary band and everything but it's all the same. I've seen them a couple of times and I've

never been a huge Motorhead fan. They're legendary and all that shit but Yngwie is the fucking man! Have you heard his latest album? Totally back to the roots. The three first albums are jewels in my collection. This one was a return to those albums. They even have the singer from the third album [Mark Boals is the singer, Trilogy the album-ed]. I was blown away. Fast, evil riffing! Motorhead is the same all the time. You'll have to go with Yngwie. When I have people over and we get drunk, I put on the track Far Beyond the Sun by Yngwie, and that has the best, most classic ending of all songs ever done.

[Later note: I didn't get to go. Missed Motorhead too. That was not a fun weekend. Long story. Short version: Crowbar SUCKS-ed]

What I'm seeing in the press again for you guys is the same thing that happened for the last album. Terrorizer is probably the most influential I see this in, but you're thrown into the In Flames, Dark Tranquillity melodic metal crowd. I suppose it's better than better than being thrown in with the Dark Funeral and Marduk crowd that you used to be pigeonholed as, but what's your take on being thrown in with Gothenburg metal?

It's an easy way out for people to describe the music. Everybody listening exclusively to both bands don't see the similarities. It was mainly for the first, maybe the second albums.

Now I don't see the comparisons. It's better than if we compared to a black metal. I think Flames is a great band.
Anders, their singer, called me yesterday. They're coming to Stockholm. I'm going to see them tomorrow with Dark Tranquillity.

That's with Children of Bodom and Arch Enemy?
Yeah, but Children of Bodom aren't playing. Apparently their drummer is in a soap opera. They have to go back home so he can be his character.

Arch Enemy are going to Japan I think. So it's In Flames, Dark Tranquillity, a band called CryHavoc, and Gadenian.

I wish something like that would tour the States!

Isn't Atlanta a big place where everybody goes?

No. The people booking the clubs figure even with bands like Merciful Fate that there's no interest, no money to be made. I'm like 'What do you mean?'

The States is a hard market to break through. All the heavy metal is coming back, especially here in Europe. It's amazing. But it's got to happen in the States as well. Give it a couple of years.

It's funny over here. Some states you can do some things in. Last year somebody brought over Halloween for a one off in New York and I heard it drew a good crowd. We had an Iced Earth and Nevermore tour and in some cities they drew 400-500 people and in some cities they had 20 or 30.

Most people I speak to that have toured the States say the same thing. They can have mostly disastrous gigs that nobody shows up for, and then a lot of cool gigs. I think maybe it's better to do one off gig that's secure. If you've got fans all over the entire country it's a problem if you just do one gig though.

It's impossible to get any attention in real media. Metal media is it's own ghetto. Even if something major is going on, it's impossible to get any proper media. People see it's metal, so they ignore. Anyway, what were some of the most and least pleasing things you saw in the press about My Arms Your Hearse?

We got a collection of reviews from Century Media in the US, and I can't remember the name of the mag, but he totally misunderstood. He said 'There's no grind in here. Where's the brutality, dude?' He didn't understand, he thought we were wankers. I don't care too much. If we get a bad review, 90% of them are written by a reviewer who listens to old Napalm Death and Sore Throat or something like Bad Religion. We just back a review from the Swedish magazine Close Up. The editor hates us. I think he hates me personally, I don't know. They have a soundcheck section where some of the writers get to write down a few lines about a few albums. He was really taking a piss, and I was so mad. I'd never met him before. Throughout the issue he threw in bits and pieces. His best write now, Cannibal Corpse has a new album and in his review he says 'Listen and Jeam, Opeph!'

To the new Cannibal Corpse?
Yes. I then met him at a pub and he was just as big an asshole. Some people have to be rude.

If he's actually mentioning you during other reviews, that's good. It makes you a bigger deal.

It feels like it's a case of, not jealousy because he's not a musician himself, but he just made up his mind that he has to hate this band. He has to.

He might like it but he has to write down that he

hates it.
Usually when I get a bad review I think 'Oh, that's an asshole anyway.' The good reviews are normal, you know what I mean?
So you haven't gotten that thorough, negative bad review from someone that knows what they're talking about?
No. It doesn't matter. The thing I hate most about bad reviews is when they give constructive criticism. That doesn't feel right to me. Who is he to tell me what to do? He's not in the band! What can he know? This is my band, nobody knows better than me. He's taking the piss to the extra level. That constructive criticism, I really really hate that. I actually prefer 'This band is fucking shit!', period.

So what's wrong with early Napalm Death and Sore Throat?
There's nothing wrong with it. I've listened to that stuff as well. Hammy, the Peaceville manager, he played drums with Sore Throat. I used to listen to grindcore, but if you only listen to grindcore and can't open up to other kinds of music, obviously you won't like Opeph.

Grindcrusher was basically how I got into metal.

I wanted to listen to everything extreme. That was 10 years ago. Obviously I'm listening to other kinds of music now.
That was cool in Grindcrusher, Sore Throat was the band with the cuckoo clock.
Their album had 101 songs. It was like 'Urk! Eek! Bulp!' and there's 3 tracks. It was pretty cool. Hammy was playing the drums, that's fucking classic! When I talked to him I said 'You're the Sore Throat drummer aren't you?' and he's like 'Oh fucking shut up!' He's totally embarrassed by that.

I've been reading old interviews of yours, and I've gone and bought old used vinyl copies of Camel and Bo Hansson. Unfortunately, in the 8 months I've had them, I still haven't found anybody with a turntable. What am I missing on those records?

You're missing it all, you know? It's pretty hard. Camel is pretty much the easiest band to get into. Everybody loves them. Everybody I play it to is totally blown away. Even on the first listen! I think you will be as well. You have to get yourself a record player! Bo Hansson (Hahn-sen) is very hard. It's like soundtrack music. Pretty obscure and drug infested. It's pretty cool. What Camel album do you have?

Raindances. The Bo Hansson is Magician's Hat.

Raindances has one really cool track on there. Fuck, I can't remember the name! It was their first one with a new lineup. They brought in a fucking sax player or something like that. Moon Madness is their peak, their magnum opus for me. That's the album before Raindances. Raindances is pretty much OK, but if you find Moon Madness you should pick it up.
You read all the interviews with these European bands who say 'Vinyl is the only TRUE format' and I don't know anybody here with a record player!
It's getting to be a trend, to release your albums on vinyl. I wouldn't mind, I'm a total fucking vinyl freak myself. I collect them. It would be a dream come true to have an Opeph vinyl album for me. Not to play it, just to have it. Stuck in my collection between Ozzy Osbourne and Onslaught!

You never had anything on vinyl?
I heard there should be a picture disc of the first album. It's a bootleg. I haven't seen it myself. Some limited edition.

I wanted to know how to pronounce some people's names properly. I figured you're the person to ask. How do you say your last name? Akerfeldt (OAKerfeldt, basically).

And your co-conspirators in Bloodbath?

Dan Swano (Don Zvanah), Anders Nystrom (Alunderz NEE-strom), Jonas Renske (YOANahs Rinsk).

Nobody over here has a clue. And as it turns out I've NEVER heard any of those names said properly.

Me too. When I'm speaking English I have to introduce myself as 'Michael Akerfeldt' and it's totally wrong. Otherwise people won't understand what you're saying.

Now I get to be the snob. <in a real snooty voice> 'No, you're saying that wrong!'

<we laugh>

It's been almost a year since I emailed you that monster of an interview to you last year. How have things gone for you?

Very many things happened. I can't remember where I was when I did that interview but I had a very tough time after My Arms. We didn't get any money, I didn't have anywhere to live, no food, nothing basically. When we signed to Peaceville it all happened for me instantly. I have a pretty cool place to live, I have money in my pocket. Apart from going from nothing to OK, we haven't been doing anything. No touring for that album. We just started to write a new album. Been doing nothing, hanging out basically. Just NOTHING. That's what I do, all day long. I almost have a bad conscience. I wake up at 1am and turn on the television, look at a few soap operas, fall asleep on the couch, wake up at 5.

The glamorous life of a rock star!
No, not a rock star. We have all the drunks outside and everything, so my life is far from a rock star life.

I know the Steel 7" has been out for awhile, but again, no turntable so it would be silly to get it. Any plans to put that on CD?

I don't think so. It's Dan's thing, he's the one who fixed it for the picture 7". I don't know, I don't hope so! It was just for fun. People will get the impression that both Bloodbath and Steel are 100% serious but it's just for fun. Bloodbath wasn't meant to be released. We were pissed up, we totally drank. We were invited down to Dan's place for a party, me, Jonas, Anders. We went down and he said 'Let's record some death metal tracks. Yeah, Bloodbath!' We got totally fucking hammered. I threw up an hour before I was supposed to sing. Anders disappeared the night before, out in the snow. We had to go look for him. We found him totally drunk in a staircase or something of a fucking old house. It was a disaster, that recording! It wasn't intended to be released. But after awhile, it was pretty cool! It was what death metal sounded like a couple years back. We thought 'Maybe we can make some

money out of this! Just being assholes. Century Media was interested, so...

There's an inspirational story for death metal bands. 'These guys get a worldwide record deal being pissed up drunk and we can't get anything!'

<laughs> We were so drunk! It was almost drunk I ever was! It was a guy turning 40, we didn't know him and we were invited to his party anyway. We just drank all the booze and ate all the food. Anders even made a pass on his girlfriend! It was terrible!

What are some of the highlights and lowlights of that CD?

The lyrics are really funny. We haven't sent the lyrics to Century Media. Maybe they'd delete it if they saw the lyrics! They're totally zombie! The first track is called <in a 'metal' voice> Breeding Death! It is basically just Death! The lyrics are about Death! The second track is called Omnious Blood Vomit. It's about a guy being force fed glass, and he starts to throw it up. The last track is Furious Fumorous Bug. It's about a guy being baked in an oven by zombies. There's a line in there 'Served up as a three course dinner... yuck!' It's the highlight, if you can figure them out. The bad side is it isn't that interesting after 20 listens. We listened to it a lot after we got the tape back home. After awhile it's just death metal. Nothing innovative. Just death metal from Stockholm. People shouldn't expect some brainstorm progressive collaboration between Edge of Sanity and Katatonia and Opeth. It's far from that.

I can see all the US reviews now. 'This is what all these guys should sound like!'

<laughs> It's a cool release. If it would have been released in 1989 or 90, it would have been an instant classic. It does sound very very professional. Steel sounds like it was done in 1986. It sounds professional, but it's not innovative.

And who does what on that CD?

I'm the vocalist, Anders on guitar, Jonas on bass, Dan on drums.

Did Fireheart ever go anywhere?

When I speak with Dan on the phone it's like 'What's going on with Fireheart?' He's like 'We have to do that soon!' He's always busy. If I'm invited down to their place we might record something. And I have Sorskogen as well that I want to record a few more tracks with. I don't know what's going to happen with Fireheart. We might record soon but there are no actual tracks. It would also be just for fun. It's Dan's thing, he's always doing those strange things. We're supposed to have nicknames, he's Dan Fire and I'm Mike Heart.

The joys of having a studio in your basement! I have that Odyssey CD he did and I'm thinking 'He's only doing one of these? BASTARD! Is there anything set for a proper release of Sorskogen?

I don't know. I'm personally signed to Peaceville. I can't record for any other label. I'm not sure if Hammy would be interested. It's for the future to say. I wouldn't say I'm not serious because I really like the tracks I've done, but it won't be a priority. It'll be something I do in my spare time. If it gets released it will have to be on Peaceville.

Is it material that will become dated if it sits around for a year?

I don't think so. It's not going with any trends. It's not progressive metal, it's progressive rock. It sounds very much like Camel. It's totally untrendy so I think it will survive a couple of years. It would be for me personally that it would sound stale. If I put out something, it might be new recordings of everything I've done.

You had involvement with the recording of the new Katatonia, producing the vocals. How did that go?

It was tougher. The first one, on *Discouraged Ones*, it was by mistake I was there in the studios. They didn't know what to do, and they asked me, and I ended up being there. This time it was planned. They had NO vocal lines this time either. I worked with them for two weeks just working all the time. It was tough. I got personal emotions involved. Me and Anders were arguing, and Jonas was just wanting to go to the coffee room and drink coffee and not work. It was a mess. It came out good at the end of the day but it was hard work. *Discouraged Ones* was pretty easy. I'm not sure if I'm going to do it again if they ask me.

When I hear a Katatonia album I just want to get everyone together and give them all a big group hug.

<laughs> That's nice!

It doesn't sound pleasant.

Jonas is like that. I think he's one of the best lyric writers in the world. And the music that Anders does is custom made for the lyrics. They go along so well. Jonas is my best friend in the world and I know him very personally so I understand what he means, even though he's not as miserable as he sounds. He has a very special way of thinking. He's fucking paranoid! Paranoid of everything! His neighbors! Everything.

Here's to nutty musicians!

He don't want to go out to work or do anything. He just wants to sit home and listen to lo-fi country.

Peaceville must love that! How has life been on Peaceville as compared to Candlelight?

It's been very beneficial so far. It's so fresh so I can't say too much about it but so far I'm very happy. They do everything on time, acting so professional. It's a big pressure because since they're so professional I feel I have to be professional the same way back. With

down. They're selling Cradle of Filth, Anathema, Katatonia, ourselves, and a few more bands. You can imagine that's a big deal for the States. I don't know who's putting it out.

Did you have any other options besides Peaceville that were comparable?

Yeah! I basically had the pen in my hand to sign to Earache. Then we got the deal with Peaceville. We had been talking to Earache for a month. We almost finished signing with them and then at the 11th hour we got the deal from Hammy. We had been talking to Century Media, obviously, but strangely enough they didn't follow it up. They gave me one phone call from the German office. I can't remember the guy's name, he said 'OK Mikael, what did you want for a deal with Century Media?' And then he didn't call me again. They didn't follow it up. I know the US office are Opeth freaks, but the German office, I don't know. Nuclear Blast didn't even call me. And of course there were many labels the same size as Candlelight. Candlelight wanted us to re-sign as well. There were options but Hammy and Peaceville had the best offer.

Oh man, you didn't go with Earache? We're not going to get that Mortis, Ultraviolence,

Everybody thought they were onto something when somebody pulled out the Van Der Graaf Generator lyrics and they could have fit. That's it!

I have that album. It's no big deal. It's so common. Still Life is not hyper original. I might have gotten from there. The reason I picked that title is when I sent the lyrics to Travis Smith to do the cover art, I got the picture back from him and was looking at it on my computer and I thought 'Still Life. That's it!' It was the first thing I thought of. I was messing things up coming up with more complicated titles, but Still Life was what felt right.

I understand there were issues with the artwork with Travis Smith?

There were no problems or anything. The cover picture was the first picture I saw from him. We instantly decided on that one. Then there were discussions about colors. He did 20, 30 pictures for this album. We used 3, and altered all the pictures, I had some input there. We've been working lots with the cover. I got the record yesterday. It came out really good. Very close to what I planned.

It is a lot busier than previous artwork.

Yes. We shot the cover for *My Arms* ourselves. *Morningrise* was a picture we found in the subway. On *Orchid*, we fucking imported a flower from Holland to have a photographer shoot it, because you can't get orchids in Sweden. It was very good for me this time because I didn't have time to work on the cover myself. It was really good to have an artistic eye like Travis take care of it.

Have the Europeans finally pinned you down to putting your logo on the cover?

It wasn't anyone's decision other than ourselves. The thing with the logo is basically a mistake. We tried to put the logo on the first one, the logo I had made. It didn't look good. So we didn't use it. We continued the same way through the third album. But with this, the cover looked better with the logo. I told Hammy 'The previous covers didn't have the logo on the covers. Is that a problem?' He's like 'Ah, um, would it be very bad for you to have the logo on there?' The fanatic Opeth fans are crazy, though! They react to the smallest thing. Like if the logo is on the cover they go 'Fuck! What's happened with the band?' The reason we used it on this album, the logo is beautiful, and Hammy wanted it on. He didn't demand that, though. So we were like 'OK!'

Either put it on the artwork, or they'll put it on a sticker. Your choice!

Yeah, always on a fucking sticker! With *My Arms* the sticker was awful. Low quality with the old logo. Really really awful. I'm glad we don't have to have stickers on this one.

After taking in Still Life, if you had to pick one, would you agree that My Arms Your Hearse would be least like the others?

I think so. But *My Arms* was essential for the making of *Still Life*. It was a stepping stone for us to move to different things. It was very aggressive, moving away from the twin guitar harmonies. We still have that, but we use a lot more riffing. *My Arms*, I don't know why it came out the way it did. It's just what happened. We had a new drummer, and we was just... Now I've been working with him, so he's more like Anders [Nordin, ex-Opeth drummer-ed]. He can play more aggressively than Anders could but he also can play in a very mellow and laid back way. On *My Arms* he was like a fucking bomb! He just wanted to blast! It has to do with the drumming. *My Arms* was very energetic. The material itself, it's not I had plans to change anything, it's just how it came out. Maybe I got sick of doing that kind of twin guitar melodies and that one string thing. I don't know.

There's a sense of Opeth fans, over here at least, that yes it was a very good album, but not the best Opeth album.

It's always different. Many fans have *Morningrise* as their favorite album. That's OK! But loads also have *My Arms* as their favorite. Especially Americans! Europeans have *Morningrise*. Now with *Still Life*, this may be a new favorite for many fans. It's pretty much as diverse as *Morningrise* was, with the aggressive energy of *My Arms*, also a new dimension added to it. I really hope it will be a new favorite. It deserves to be. I don't blame people to have a favorite album. I'm really glad, but it gets irritating if everything is compared to *Morningrise* all the time.



Candlelight, it was like a friend releasing our albums. They didn't have that professional edge. Still, Candlelight did many good things for us. We wouldn't be where we are if it wasn't for them. It's a totally different league. Music For Nations are distributing and promoting this one, and they are a classic label. Hammy has had a few classic releases. It's night and day basically. I liked that friendship level. I've become friends with Hammy now and some guys with Music For Nations. It's way different than how it was for Candlelight.

Ready for that huge increase in sales?

I try not to think about that. I don't know what kind of pressure Hammy gets from Music For Nations as far as what our album has to sell. He called me up yesterday to say pre-sales for this album were amazing. This is going to do good things for us. We have proper distribution and everything. Of course I wouldn't mind making a few more bucks and going out on tour more. If you have the finances, it's great. I'd be stupid if I thought something else. Of course I have to sell more records but I try not to think about that. We're not going to sell our souls or anything. We're going to continue the same way we always have. If we sell more records, cool.

Any clue as to the status for US release?

I don't know. I know they're talking to a couple of different labels. I've been discussing with our. We've been working with Century Media for our 3 previous albums and I really want to continue with them. I basically have no say though. It's all a money question. It's a big deal, a big deal going

Opeth tour now.

I'm pretty glad we didn't sign to Earache now because we've heard so many strange things about them. They are an independent label. Peaceville and Music For Nations is owned by Zomba Records, and they have Backstreet Boys and Brimley Spears. They have the finances.

I did not know that!

We're their new boy band, basically. New Kids on the Block!

Cool! I figure we should talk about the new album, Still Life. There's controversy about where you ripped the name from. The first thing people think of, but everyone hopes you didn't get it from, was the Fates Warning live album last year.

I saw that. I got a mailing list from Brave Words and Bloody Knuckles and it had Fates Warning *Still Life* on it and I said 'Fuck!' I've never been into Fates Warning. On the other hand there are so many albums out there called *Still Life*, and so many tracks too. We're just another one. They have it on an Iron Maiden album, the Van Der Graaf Generator, there was even a band called *Still Life* in the 70s that released a self titled album. I really like the title though. It's a classic one.

The Iron Maiden song...

I can't say I wasn't influenced by that. I have that track in my head constantly! I've had that record for ages now. It wasn't like when I came up with the title that I thought nobody had ever used that name before.

The new one definitely could be a favorite, but it is time that decides that sort of thing, not just saying 'Hey, that's a cool riff!' We'll see... so 4 albums and half a decade into your recording career, what do you see as your goal with Opheth?

I don't think of goals with Opheth. We achieved a goal when we signed to Peaceville and Music For Nations. That's the biggest of underground labels. I'm able to live off of the music. Barely. But I reached that goal with the music. I don't think too much about the music, I don't care, I just write. I don't plan future albums. I don't think about big orchestrations or a movie soundtrack. If it happens it happens. I don't think too much about goals. We'll continue as always. Each album we've made a different kind of album and it will continue to be that way. If I'm getting pressure to do something special, it will end up being shit! So I just have to kick back and take it easy. Concentrate on writing music I like. Just continue as I always have.

Getting records from a favorite band, it is something that should always be a pure joy. These days, it's almost Russian Roulette. I've been hearing from Queensryche and Megadeth fans lately and they are not pleased!

I haven't heard their new albums. Queensryche lost it for me when Chris DeGarmo left. I know what you mean.

You have a following where the fans are into your band. I mean REALLY into your band as THE favorite band. Do you feel you're painting yourself into a corner by releasing these four excellent but fairly consistent albums.

I don't know how that could be a bad thing! I'm a big fan of the band myself. I want to record my own favorite albums. I listen to the albums at home! We'll continue doing albums that are honest with ourselves, that won't follow any trends. There won't be any big shocking things. I don't think we've painted ourselves into a corner because our music style is so wide. We have several different opportunities with each album. I don't feel any pressure. It has always come naturally to us. It will continue like that. Always with the fans, especially if they are real fanatics like some of our fans, when they put out a new album you can expect a lot of, like 'It's not a new Morningrise album!' and all that. But I don't play for the fans. I play for myself. The fans are just a good thing that we got with us by playing music for ourselves. It will always be like that as long as we exist. The fans can take it or leave it. I can't care less about what the fans think we're going to do. I just want them to give every album that comes out a chance. They wouldn't be happy if we just played everything into their hands.

I remember when I first started posting things about the new album on the newsgroups, there was this excitement, the 'You bastard you have it early!' and this relief when it was revealed there were no electronic remixes or any of that nonsense. Things are changing so quickly in music that album to album with the same bands it's hard to have somebody to believe in.

I know what you mean. If you look back at Black Sabbath and Judas Priest, they released fucking 10 albums that have similarities with no big changes! The reason we are the same is because we were done searching for the style we wanted to have long before we recorded the first album. We've been around under this name since 1990. We started to writing the first album in 1991! We were done searching. Bands that change so radically so much between each album haven't found their style. In Opheth we all feel very content with the style because it's so wide. I don't even have the urge! That's why all the side projects are just for fun. I don't have the need to live out influences in the side projects. I can put everything into Opheth. We'll continue in our style. We're not going to be techno or anything like that. I don't listen to music like that. I'm still the same guy I was when I recorded the first album. Of course I listen to new bands all the time but I have a specific taste in music. We're not going to be Busta Rhymes on the next album.

<laughs> That is actually very good to hear. Anyway, this album I think is the first one where your voice is excellent because it's an excellent voice, and not because of the way it's used within the song. Up to this point it was great when it was put in there, but this time your voice is just strong. Would you agree with that assessment? [OK, I must have sounded

like a big horse's ass here because what I meant here, but didn't say, was his clean singing voice. He must have thought I was 10 shades of fucked up if he thought I meant his growling as well...! And let me clarify further. You know how Dan Swano on the Nightingale Breathing Shadow album had a good voice but it wasn't completely 'there' yet? That's what I meant about Mikael's voice previous to this album, so don't send me hate mail over it! -ed]

Yeah, I think so. With each recording I've been more confident with myself, even though I don't practice anything! I know the routine in the studio. I can't be embarrassed for anything. I just have to sing my fucking heart out! You have to live with the album, you can't be embarrassed. It's definitely a confidence question. On the first album I wasn't very confident, I was singing very low, I didn't have power in the voice. For this album, I wanted the best for everything.

It sounds very natural. Anyway, I just got on the internet and did a CDNow search of the title *Still Life*. There's albums called *Still Life* from the Connells, Friends Lovers and Families, the Rolling Stones, something called Charnett Moffet.

Yeah, there's a lot!

What exactly does the name mean to you will you use it?

It's not the art form. Actually I don't know why I came up with it and wanted to call the album *Still Life*. It didn't have much of a connection with the story but it had to be the right title because it was the first one I came up with. I wanted to look upon *Still Life* as *Calm Life*, or even *Dead Life*. You can create your own meaning. I didn't use it to be like the art form.

This is another concept album. Is it or is it not a direct continuation from *My Arms Your Hearse*?

It's not. It is a new story.

There's a couple places where it might be, with it beginning with somebody returning.

It could be. It wasn't written that way though.

Could you give an overview of the story?

I wanted to have simple theme. I chose good versus evil. But to make it more interesting, what people normally look upon as good, I wanted that to be the bad part, and vice-versa. The main character has no name. I don't know why, I just didn't name him. He's a born and raised Christian. After a couple of years he questions his faith because he hasn't seen any real signs that it actually exists. This is not present day, this is way back in time, by the way. But this makes him a heretic to the rest of the community. It results in him being banished from town for questioning the supreme religion. The album starts when he's coming back after several years. The reason he's coming back is not revenge or anything, but for Melinda, his old beloved girlfriend. He's coming back to take her with him. That's the storyline, but of course many bad things start to happen.

Can't have a happy story in Ophethland!

Oh no, no. It has some positive sides but it's not a good ending. When I told the story to people, they were so impressed. They were really like children around the fire and I was the storyteller. When I came to the end they were like 'No! No!' It was pretty funny.

I haven't had a copy of the lyrics for all that long, so you don't get the line by line analysis this time [I think he may have decided there is a God after all when I told him that, ha ha -ed], but for me the turning point of the album where everything happens is *Face of Melinda*, the calm song, and as soon as it hits *Serenity Painted Death* there's this big drop and everything goes straight to hell, with the music reflecting that.

Right. *Face of Melinda* is his first meeting with her after all these years. This is the first rhyming track I've done. I don't know why, I just wanted to try it out. But she's move on with her life since he left, and she started over and has a husband. During that meeting she's more or less agreed to come with him. The last line is 'My promise is made but my heart is thine.' It's not clear

but they spend the night together. It isn't written anywhere but that's what I was thinking when I wrote it. For *Serenity Painted Death*, when he wakes up she's gone. All this time he's been hunted by the council that runs the place. They've suspected that it's him, they didn't know at first because it's 15 years later and they didn't recognize him. They also knew about his past with Melinda so they start to suspect her, that she's committing adultery. So she's gone, she's taken by the council and she's executed before his eyes. That's the metaphor for *Serenity Painted Death*. Obviously he loses his mind when he sees this so it's a battle between him and the outside world, which results in him being beaten down and shackled and being thrown in the dungeons. As I said it's not a good ending, you can figure it out from there.

'The noose is tied, a murmur rolls through the crowd' in *White Cluster*. Yeah. Uplifting stuff! I figured it was something like that, with the shit hitting the fan. In *White Cluster* you have that wild soloing in the middle, I know this is absolutely the wrong term but it sounds like *Oriental or Middle Eastern* tones, it's one of those things I think was missing from *My Arms Your Hearse*, but you have a lot of things like that in this one. That's just the one that sticks out now.

I wanted to have crazy, crazy leads. The first lead on *Godhead's Lament* is one of my favorites. It's like an evil clown coming out, diddy-doo diddy-doo diddy-doo! I wrote that intentionally to be out of tune, to play two notes right next to each other. Really horrible if you know what I mean. I'm satisfied with the leads.

The production is much brighter and clearer

on this album. What went into the recording process this time?

I don't know! I don't say that much about the sound settings. We had Fredrik [Nordstrom] coming over, we recorded this album entirely by ourselves, we engineered it alone for six weeks! We recorded each other. But the recording levels were set by Fredrik. He set the guitar sounds and we recorded the rhythm guitar four times and dubbed that. We didn't put much distortion on the guitar. But at the end of the day, after three more overdubs, it would be really heavy but still clean. *My Arms Your Hearse's* production was a bit muddy, people were complaining that they couldn't hear what we were playing in some parts. This is totally different in that you can hear everything but it's still totally heavy.

Last time it was almost as if you were recording in a cave, it was claustrophobic, and now you're out in a field or something.

I wanted a clear sound because the riffs on this album are so fucking complicated that it has to be a clear sound to hear anything. This recording was the worst. Even though I wrote all the music I had some problems putting down the guitar parts. Some of the riffs, like the *Morbid Angel* riffs in *Serenity Painted Death*, the refrain, that riff is so hard to play! You needed to have a cleaner sound to have everything coming in front.

Considering you haven't played out in awhile, if this is more complicated, how is that going to play off live?

It won't be a problem. We have to start rehearsing. We'll have to rehearse for a long time. I've forgotten all of the old tracks. I'll have to listen to the albums and pick it out. I've forgotten everything! For the new material it won't be a



problem. I don't write music I don't play. Even if I have to work at it to play some riffs it's not a big problem.

I find myself comparing *Still Life to My Arms* Your Hearse more than I compare it to the earlier albums. It seems more laid back. Even the more violent elements are just building a mood instead of a Slayer type of attack.

It's more heavy, instead of fast. I wanted the aggressive parts to be fucking insane, but it's more laid back. It's a more mellow album, but not mellow in the, how do I say this, I don't think we've lost the rough edge because we still have a lot of aggressive parts, but it's not as fast as *My Arms*.

More mellow in an extreme metal sense, not mellow in the mellow music sense?

Yeah.

You have two songs, *Benighted* and *Face of Melinda*, with clean vocals all the way through?

Yes.

Is there an all-acoustic, or all clean vocalled album on the horizon?

A lot of people ask me that. I don't know. I don't want to strain myself when I write. When I play guitar, I write all the riffs on an acoustic guitar. All the riffs. It would be hard if I was only supposed to write acoustic riffs. I don't want to limit myself from aggressive material. If it was that I only came up with acoustic material, then there could be an acoustic album. I don't want to plan ahead, I just want to take the guitar down and start playing and see what comes out. I started writing for the next album. The riffs I've done, I've done some acoustic stuff but I've also done some RIPPING fucking death metal! It's pretty hard to say if we'll do an acoustic album. Maybe.

There seems to be a different mindset between bands. There are plenty that don't mind doing concept albums, they want to go for a concept album, and there are other bands that purposefully stay aware from them thinking people won't get into the records if it's a concept album. *Cradle of Filth's* last one was plainly a concept album but they kept saying 'No, it's not a concept album, we don't want to scare people away.'

It's always been looked upon as a very pretentious thing. I know what you mean. I don't see anything wrong with doing a concept album. It's easier. You can get a flow getting the same feelings throughout the album. I like that red thread. It allows you to have a mood of a single riff or song, if you combine it with a lyric. It creates a feeling different than if they were separate tracks. It's always been a dream of mine ever since I heard

the King Diamond albums or even *The Wall* [by some band that apparently sounds like *Anathema*-ed]. It allowed me to do something different.

There are a lot of concept albums coming out right now.

Yeah. That's boring! No, I'm not aware of new albums coming out. The only new albums I have are from labels I'm in contact with. They are usually promos so I don't know if it's a concept or not. There's one concept album I've heard of from a band called Metalium. About a boy into heavy metal. It's a funny story!

I'll have to re-read that booklet! I didn't realize it was a concept album! It's not too well spelled out on the booklet I have!

It's about a boy who's a heavy metal fan and wants to fight for heavy metal.

It's a good album. You said you were developing new material. It's early, but I'm always wanting to know, when's the next album coming out?

It's out in a couple weeks. <we laugh> No, we're going to book the studio for next summer and look to release something in early 2001.

How are the touring possibilities for this record?

For the States we have nothing except the gig you're trying to set up. I met up with My Dying Bride in England this summer while they were recording their new album. They told me that they are doing a tour and they wanted Opeth to come with them. It might happen in January and February. Apparently they are huge Opeth fans! They knew everything about us! I don't know of anything outside of Europe.

Have you made any progress in Japan?

Not that I know of. This album will be released through JVC. It's not settled yet. We have had one album released in Japan, which was *Morningrise*.

The Japanese are more into melodic vocals...

We have gotten big interest from Japan. I've gotten interest from Guitar Player magazine and *Burrn!* We were in the independent charts for *Morningrise*. There is a demand there I think, but I don't know much about it.

What will the bonus track be?

I don't know! Maybe a Sorsogren track. I don't like the idea of bonus tracks, especially on a concept album. You don't want to ruin the feeling with a fucking bonus track! I can't understand why they can't take what they've got. Why do they have to ask for more? It's very irritating!

I heard that import records cost less than domestic over there so they want the domestic

albums out first, with bonus tracks. I've bitten a couple times and gotten the Japanese version of things early only to find out the bonus track is a remix of a song already on there or something!

For *Morningrise* there was no bonus track. But they like to overdo everything, have a big booklet. For *Morningrise* we had a reporter's story in Japanese, then the lyrics in English, then translated into Japanese. Imagine sitting down and translating lyrics. What a fucking job! They like to do everything bigger and better than everything else.

What 5 movies out there that you've liked would Opeth make good soundtrack music for?

That one is hard! *The Omen!* That's what everybody would say. *The Shining*.

Did you see the horrible TV remake they did a couple of years ago?

No. I don't want to see it.

No, you don't. <we laugh>

Rosemary's Baby. It's all horror movies! Maybe some *Dracula* movie. The guy who plays Richard Channing on *Falcon Crest*. You know about that series?

My mother used to watch it all the time.

I have a film from 1973 with Richard Channing in the leading role. The movie is called *Night of Dark Shadows*, it's a real dark fucking scary movie. That one. Let's see. The first *Nosferatu* from 1922.

That is really weird to watch!

Instead of the piano, like on the mute movies, how about Opeth!

For old scary movies like that, a lot of them you look back on and kind of laugh. I wonder back then if they were really scary or just scary entertainment.

I think times just change. When I look back at movies I was scared of back when I was young, like the first *Elm Street* with Freddy Krueger, when I first saw that I was terrified! But now I watch that and HA! The same with *Friday* the 13th and those classic movies. Some movies like *The Shining*, *Exorcist*, *The Omen* still give me the creeps even though they're 20-30 years old.

You haven't by any chance seen the *Blair Witch Project*?

I want to see that. I saw a documentary. I thought it was real! It was on Swedish television, like a commercial, about an hour long. I thought it was for real! I was fucking terrified! After I saw that I called Jonas up and asked him if that was for real. My apartment is really really small and I felt insecure in there! I was going to the bathroom [Everyone take a moment and visualize Mikael

Akerfeldt sitting on the John. OK, thanks, back to the interview.- ed] thinking 'Now what's in there? Is it the fucking witch?' I haven't seen the movie yet, it just came out in the theaters. I was totally intrigued when I saw it on the telly. After I saw it I didn't dare even look up their web page! I was too scared! I've watched horror movies all the time, and it's very very rare that you're actually scared. But what I saw scared the shit out of me!

What bands are there right now that you'd consider your contemporaries?

I'm not in contact with that many bands anymore. Musically I don't know. *Katonia* maybe? But we have no similarities in the music. But they make music that I like. So many bands make music that I don't like. With *Katonia* I understand exactly what they want to achieve. They make my kind of music.

Doesn't hurt that you did vocals on a couple of their CDs.

No, of course not.

There's not all that many bands that do that more progressive metal. It's really good, but you almost wish for a few Opeth clones to pop up here and there.

I don't mind. I get so many letters from other bands asking for advice. One guy sent a tape and you could definitely hear the influence there. There are so many bands that are jealous of us for some reason. I just get the impression. Just attacking us. Like this guy from *Solefald*, I can tell he's not an Opeth fan, maybe they've read one of those interviews where I go completely insane. I've been an asshole. I like to read it afterwards! I'm not an asshole, but it's more fun reading *Trey Azaghoth* interviews than *Cannibal Corpse*, you know what I mean? Where people are totally big headed! Smaller, young bands that only have an album or two out are attacking Opeth.

Especially when you hear Opeth in their music! That's what I mean! Like this *Solefald* guy, he must have been blown away when he first heard *Orchard* and is too big to admit it now!

What hair care products do you use?

Right now I'm using *Wella* conditioner and shampoo. Very very good. I've never gotten asked that before.

Yet another milestone for music journalism!

What do you use?

I used to use *VOS* when I was buying my own hair care products.

That's good!

I have this friend that works in a children's hair [Kim will kill me if I don't mention her name, so here it is...] salon that gets me something now. I think it's *Nexus* that says is the best and she gets big discounts.

My sister works at the most famous hairdresser's salon in Sweden, for 15 years or something. I can get stuff from her. It's *Matrix*.

Yeah!

Oh fuck! We're discussing hair products now! But she gives me things sometimes. It's pretty cool.

Let's see how this stuff will fry my hair!

You get scared, you know? I haven't cut my hair in 5 years, not even topping it out, but it's long and that's all I care about. When it's moist outside my hair is "pool", like *Yngwie Malmsteen*!

I had to let my hair grow out because if it's short, I have an afro!

Cool!

Even now, if it's damp outside, by the end of the day my hair is twice as big as my head!

That's nice. It's like a microphone haircut! Anders, our old drummer, is from Brazil. His hair didn't get long, it got big! You don't want him in front of you in the movie theater. You get birds building nests in his hair!

<I am completely losing it at this point> That's all I got, I want to thank you very much for your time. Good luck to you, I hope you sell millions and millions of records, I hope you make so much money that you, uh, I don't know, you get rich.

I got offered a job today! I was meeting up with Peter giving him the finished albums, I know the guy who works in the best record store in Stockholm. He offered me a job on Saturdays. I think I'm going to start working there soon. I'm not going to take any money, just CDs. It's a cool job. It's my dream come true! I've always wanted to work in a record store...

www.opeth.com

www.peaceville.com



Probably the best folk metal band out right now out of Scandinavia has to be Otyg. I'd go on about description and all that, but we cover that pretty well in the feature, so I'll just say check out Otyg's *Sagovindars Boning* on Napalm Records and enjoy reading what mainman Vintersorg has to say about Otyg as well as his other band named, oddly enough, Vintersorg...

First off, can you go through the boring biographical bullshit as far as your background in music, forming Vintersorg and Otyg, and how you got to where you are now? Any other projects you have going?

Well, Otyg was founded in 1995 by me and two other guys who had played death/black metal for many years, but as we felt that we didn't make any progress we decided to return to our northern roots. We all hailed folk music so we decided to follow that path, just reflecting it through our metal souls. We wanted to do the whole thing so folk instruments were necessary as well as the normal line-up. After finding suitable members we recorded three demos and then we signed to Napalm where we've now released two albums, *Älvefärd* and *Sagovindars Boning*. Vintersorg started out in 1994 with the idea to bring new elements into black metal such as "clean" vocals, heavy riffing and acoustic guitar. Now I've released one MCD *Hednisk hjärtad* a full CD *Till Fjälls* and now the upcoming CD *Ödemärkens Son*.

Your records are being released in the US now. Do you find that odd? In the extreme metal underground there is an awareness of your work (funny since your music isn't very extreme) but Napalm Records is growing steadily in the States. How do you think you'll be able to do in the US and how do you think an American can best relate to your work?

So far the reactions have been good all over the

world. There's even an Otyg cover band in Mexico. I don't think the language is so important. It's a matter of composing good melodies, so hopefully the Americans can enjoy it as well. Aside from the differences in instrumentation, you seem to write about the same sorts of things in both Otyg and Vintersorg. What subtleties am I missing in the subject matter? In Otyg I write about our folklore with its mystical beings and obscure phenomena, such as trolls, elves, huldren and so on. In Vintersorg I praise the

fulfilment of mother nature. I write the lyrics as rhyming poems in an old tongue.

What is with the frequent jews harp, not only in Otyg but in folk metal in general?

It's just a brilliant and magical sound in that particular instrument that I really like, so it's a good compliment to the rest. It is used a lot in Scandinavian folk music, but I think you find it in every country.

I had a few Swedish people look over your songtitles to translate them but they had trouble, and came up with quite different interpretations from each other. One said you write in a very old form of Swedish. Do you write to be 'difficult', shall we say? How does this relate to your concepts in the bands?

I write in an old tongue because it is much more beautiful and poetic than the modern Swedish, and it's like a statement of my despise towards the society of today. I don't like it but I've got to cope with it in some ways.

Are your albums true concept albums with storylines running through them?

No, they are not a story which starts on track one and ends on the last one, but the topics of the stories have quite a connection. I tried to write totally concept lyrics but it was very hard to get it right, so I've decided not to.

Surely you're aware of the incredible amount of 'true metal' records coming out lately. Many of them (especially from Italy!) have the theme of elves and forests, etc. How would you say your own concepts are different from such high fantasy writing?

I think they are just writing stories right out of their minds. But I've studied the folklore for about 7 years and have also been told stories from my forefathers, just like in old times when the tales went from father to son. I don't judge the other bands, it's up to them to write about what they want.

Performing in old Swedish must be a negative as far as sales. How has your relationship been

with Napalm? Have they pressured you to write anything more accessible lyric-wise?

Napalm have given me my artistic freedom. They don't interfere with my composing and writing. This is the way I am so people have to accept it. I know that I may sell more albums if I wrote in English, but I write for the heart, not for the wallet. How would you describe your current fanbase?

We have lots of different fans, from black metal guys to 'ordinary' people. I don't see it as a problem. I think it unites people.

You have a webpage for Vintersorg and one in development for Otyg. Obviously it's good for promotion, but do you see any real conflict promoting material which is 'old' in feel with the cutting edge of technology?

I don't see a paradox in it. Through the net I can spread my message to a lot more people. My mission is to involve people out of their slumber and start caring about the nature and history. The history is a guide to the future.

While we're on the old vs. new, what do you think of artists such as Hagalaz Runedance allowing techno remixes of their decidedly old-world flavored music?

Well, it's up to yourself to decide when you're destroying the old music and when you're preserving it.

I understand you're becoming an in-demand artist in Sweden. I was told you've appeared in mainstream media features due to your music?

I don't give a fuck if it's mainstream or not. As long as I find the ethics of the particular 'zine in my taste I think it's alright.

The Holy Diver cover on *Sagovindars Boning* is brilliant! I have a few questions relating to this... what are your opinions on Dio vs. Ozzy era Sabbath? Why this particular Dio song? How come this isn't on the Dio tribute instead of that Holy Mother version?

The best Sabbath song was done with Ozzy in my opinion. I love Dio's music so I thought it would be a nice thing to do, it's no deeper meaning with it. We've never been asked to be on the tribute, so.....

I'd like to get your comments on several bands which I think have elements in common with your work...

Ulver- One of my fave bands, *Bergtatt* is brilliant. Mithotyn- A good band, and I know them personally as well. Cool guys.

Storm- They did metalized old folk songs. We write them ourselves. But the *Nordavind* CD is good.

Skyklad- Cool stuff, a great violinist.

Borknagar- They've released three killer albums.

Empyrium- Emotional and great.

Enslaved- A bit too fast for my taste.

Falkenbach- Good viking metal.

I was requested to ask you how you learned to kick so much ass?

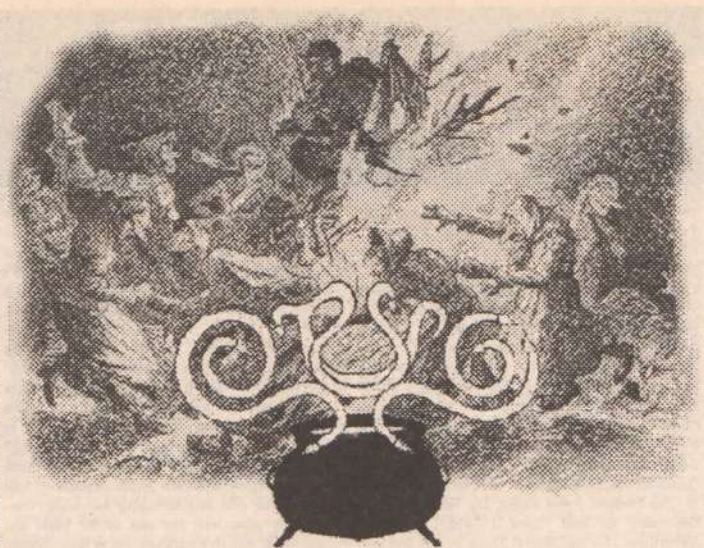
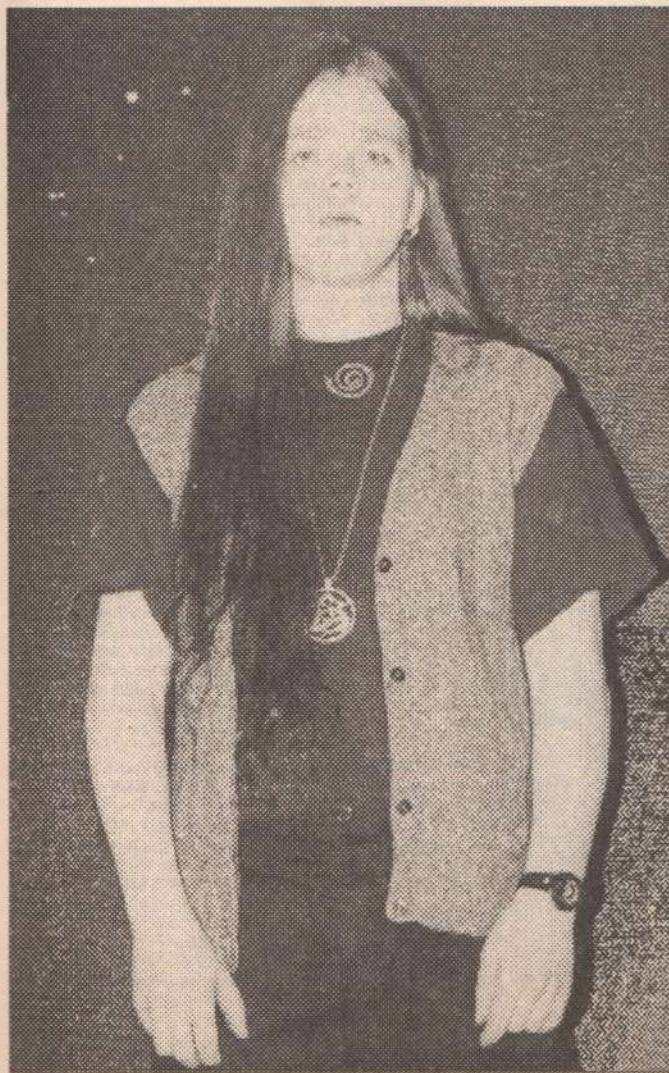
By kicking everybody in the ass! Hahaha... nah I'm a friendly man.

And with that, I'll wrap this up. Anything you'd like to say to the American audience?

Check out all Otyg releases and Vintersorg as well. The new Vintersorg album is out. Cheers brothers and sisters..... over and out.

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www.napalmrecords.com



Power Symphony

Ripper Owens
Rob Halford
HammerFall or Nocturnal Rites
Don't really know...
Ritchie Blackmore or Yngwie
Malmsteen
Malmsteen
Manowar or Mercyful Fate
Manowar

Yes, this is an Italian power metal band. And yes, the singer is a woman. Well, you need to keep reading anyway. This is different. Very different. Power Symphony is not one of these happy rah rah types of Italian metal bands, and Metal Goddess Michela D'Orlando is not your pretty prissy singer type. No. This band is dark, this band is heavy, and those vocals are metal! I found their debut CD *Evillot* in some back alley of some internet catalog. Yeah, it's on a VERY obscure label, but now they've signed to Pavement. I sent these questions off to Michela before they recorded the follow up album, *Lightbringer*, and she answered after they were done. I have her email address and you don't, so nyah! But this isn't just some 'Jim's salivating over some gallop female fronted band again.' It isn't, and when the new album hits, you'll come back to this. You will hear plenty more on this band. Promise.

The Italian scene is certainly starting to gain some worldwide recognition. However, the bands who first got the worldwide deals I do believe were Lacuna Coil, then Labyrinth... and here you are playing heavy metal with a female vocalist... not to mention the success of Rhapsody and all that. Are you worried about being classified as being part of some sort of trend? How will you present yourself in order to stand out (because, sadly, it's always the music which counts least in these sorts of matters)?

We are usually considered a power-gothic band. I don't think anybody really listening to our music can mistake us for any Rhapsody or Lacuna Coil, those bands are so different from us! We never tried to fit into any trend, but you know, there is always somebody somewhere that will put you into one. It happens when you make records! I don't think that the music really counts that little, but those not interested in the music can always take a look at the pictures... I've got something worth checking out for them too hah! You've been around a long, long while. Why did it take so long to get a demo together and start trying to get a record deal? How old are the songs on *Evillot*? What happened to material you've put together before that? Well, I've been knowing Marco Cecconi, our guitar player, for 8 years but Power Symphony is actually a few years old band. The only material we put together before *Evillot* is a 5 tracks demo tape we did in '95, which was reviewed very positively by the magazines. "Inferno Suite" on *Evillot* is the new version of one of those 5 songs called "Inferno", and it's surprising how many people are still asking us to do something like that with other songs from that demo tape. It may be, but you know, as you go on and grow as a musician you write new songs and you just look forward.

What is Northwind Records? How does a new company afford to put together such a first class digipak like that? As you said, Northwind Record is a new label, but though small it never lacked the will to do a good job. Of course they couldn't afford a big promotion or putting us on tour. I know they are growing and signing new bands.

How are sales for *Evillot*? I suppose getting the Nuclear Blast distribution never hurts... Yes, it never hurts, but you know they're so busy with their bands... Well, so far so good about sales in Europe and beyond our expectations in Italy, so we're very happy about that!

While signing to Pavement does give you access to the world's largest consumer market, it's hardly the world's biggest METAL market, and the only 'true/power' metal band they've dealt with is Metalium... do you think they can properly promote a band such as yours? What was your thinking signing to this label as opposed to something closer to home? This time we had offers from different labels and choosing it's been REALLY hard! Labels like Spinefarm and Century Media were interested in us, but Pavement offered us the best contract and we know they really believe in our music, that's

very important to us. Pavement Music also started Pavement Europe and they have good plans for our promotion... I can tell you so far we are really satisfied.

Obviously with your image and approach you're not the urban hip hop squad that's the popular trend in metal these days. Can you talk about your influences as far as bands, movies, authors, and artists for a bit, and how that relates to what you do in the band? Everybody into Power Symphony has a different metal background. Probably I've been influenced a lot by Malmsteen's first works (with great Jeff Scott Soto doing vocals) and by Candlemass (Messiah Marcolin rules!). I used to listen to a lot of Iron Maiden, Judas Priest, old Helloween and Sanctuary as well. Now I listen to lot of Nevermore (for me Warrel Dane is just the best male vocalist around!) and Blind Guardian as well. The others have different backgrounds: Marco used to be a lot into thrash metal music but also into Ozzy and Iron, and now into Nevermore, Children Of Bodom, Fear Factory; our keyboard player Marco Volpe is most into melodic metal, though our bass player Fabio and our new drummer Lino have a death and brutal background. I read lot of stuff: I'm a fantasy freak and I love Tolkien and Marion Zimmer Bradley I'm also into Anne Rice's books about vampires, into horror books and into epic poems as well. On TV I love star trek and on the big screen I like the Star Wars saga, English movies like Excalibur, and some science-fiction like Alien and its sequels (except the third one that sucks!). I also like horror movies... I really like things which are as far from reality as possible and they're often the source of my inspiration for song writing.

The Luis Royo cover is striking, to say the least... I'm assuming it wasn't a custom job specifically for you, so how did you think to use this work as the cover? I know Europe is a lot less tightass about this kind of thing (that cover would probably not be allowed on most store shelves in the US), but have you had any problems stemming from that? I like it, myself...!

As far as I know we didn't have any problem with the cover. It really wouldn't be allowed on most store shelves in the US? I can't believe it... At first it was Northwind's idea to have a Luis Royo's picture for the cover and we choose that one because it was just perfect! Fits with me and with the title: the girl is a red haired warrior with sinister sexual tastes... Like me (...oops!) and like Evillot, who is the character the title trek is about. Since you're a band it would probably be nice to talk about the music some, right? Can you describe the process you guys go through in putting together a song? We don't have a standard process. I usually come up with a melody and some lyrics and Marco start putting guitar riffs and arranging the music, then we try the song with the rest of the band and everybody is free to contribute. Some times Marco write the music first and then I work on the melody and lyrics. On the new record I wrote the guitar part of an acoustic song myself and Marco composed a beautiful instrumental. It depends, but usually Marco takes care of the music though melody and lyrics are always up to me.

OK, I have to ask, what was the purpose of the 'hidden' track with all the feedback and all at the end of *Evillot*? To scare the hell out of you! Your music has a very dark aura, definitely the opposite of a Labyrinth or Rhapsody. Let's say someone just has an instrumental version of your CD, no packaging, no vocals or lyrics. What kinds of mental images would you like to think they'd have while listening? Hey, an instrumental version of Power Symphony simply wouldn't be Power Symphony! I mean the lyrics are strictly connected to the music. I always write melody and music together, not one first or the other. Into our music vocals are big part of that dark aura. Mental images? Mmm... Your dark unknown sides shaping and taking over, whatever they may look like...

The lyrics go perfectly with the music (as they should, right), and there is a theme throughout *Evillot*. Will the lyrical subjects be expanded in the future, or is the dark-fantasy theme going to be what your band is based around? Well, the dark fantasy theme it's more what I am about. It's my way to put myself into music and lyrics, so it will probably always be there, but I am expanding its borders a lot. To me, Fantasy means a lot more than just battles and warriors and you can really hear that on the new record. Evil is more what Power Symphony are lyrically about right now.

OK, I'll go through and name pairs of musicians/bands.

You tell me which one of each pair you prefer:
Ozzy or Dio
Ozzy
Black Sabbath or Candlemass
Candlemass
Blind Guardian or Rhapsody
Blind Guardian
Iron Maiden or Judas Priest
Iron Maiden
Rob Halford or

WASP or GWAR
WASP

The Gathering or Nightwish
Nightwish

Century Media or Nuclear Blast
Have to skip this one!!!

Rage or Grave Digger
Rage

Primal Fear or Gamma Ray
Gamma Ray

Hey, I like this game!

Your website is well thought out and maintained. How has the web helped you as far as reaching your fans and expanding your fanbase? What do you think about the web's potential to eliminate the need for record labels and let bands market directly to the fans?

Being on a small label with *Evillot*, the web has been our primary way to reach people, get the band noticed and get in contact with our fans. It is a great instrument, I don't think we could be able to do without it anymore! Anyway I don't think the web is gonna substitute the label's job. Labels need good bands but bands also need good labels! I can't speak for every band, of course, but we Power Symphony are musicians and we are not interested into business work. Business is label's job... I can't imagine myself looking after distribution, sales and this kind of stuff. I can just write songs and sing them, I have my limits...!

You go into the studio very soon to record your second album. What can you tell us about it? How will it be different than *Evillot*? Well, the record is done. It's called *Light Bringer* and it will be released in March in Europe and in April in the US. Seempieces (Death, Iced Earth, Nevermore) is doing the art work this time. We are really happy about this record! Everybody involved worked really hard for this, Joey Vera did a great job and we had a wonderful time in the studio. *Light Bringer* is darker and heavier than *Evillot* but still melodic. Lyrically I expanded the fantasy themes to (well, versus) sacred subjects and lot of my personal feelings. Mmm... The songs are shorter!

Joey Vera will be producing... he'll give you a better sound, for sure, but at the same time I'm not a very big Joey Vera fan (I thought his production on the new Engage album was kinda sterile)... how much power is the producer going to have in the studio and do you think you'll successfully capture the more vibrant aspects of your music? Joey is really great! It never came to a matter of "power" with him. Everybody was really into the right vibe of cooperation and things just worked out fine. Actually he worked hard to put what Power Symphony is about on the CD and we are fully satisfied with the result. Personally, he's been an angel to me: each day before the singing session he used to make some hot tea with his hands for me and he filled the singing room with candles to get me in the right mood and many many other things... He was a bit shaken when he found out I record vocals naked (Believe me, it really works!) but he immediately regained his professional attitude saying "No problem, I can't see you below you waist!"

Pavement's brought Vader over from Poland a few times... has a US tour been part of your discussions with them?

No plans have been set for a US tour at the moment, but I think the chance is not so far. I know Pavement is probably bringing us there for some interviews after the CD is released. For sure we'll be touring across Europe after the record is out, in April or in the summer.

Any final words? A message for all our fans in the US. We thank you for your support, your mailing and e-mailing us and watch out for *Light Bringer* because we really put our souls in it!
www.powersymphony.com
www.pavementmusic.com



Judging by the sales figures Century Media had when they licensed 2 of Skyclad's records, most of you don't know about this band. Hey, America, BITE ME! Anyway, You should. You need to. This band has a history that goes further than their 1990 debut date. Martin Walkyier was a member of the mighty Sabbath with Andy Snape. Graeme English and Steve Ramsey were in Satan (later called Pariah). This band is folk metal excellence. It all started here. I haven't seen anything on their latest, *Vintage Whine*. And Massacre isn't very good at promoting outside central Europe, as we'll get into. Well, Skyclad were in between deals and I wanted this interview to happen. I tracked down Martin Walkyier and I made the transatlantic telephone call (oh gawd the expense!) one brisk morning for a very nice talk with a very, very nice man. He's cool, the band is cool, and you need to check them out.

So apart from the hangovers, how are you doing today?

Very very well, thank you! We're quite busy with the band at the moment. We're writing new material and we're just about to sign a deal with Nuclear Blast in a couple of weeks. Most of the summer we've been writing new songs and looking for the right deal. The thing for us, we've never been to the States, we've never been to Japan. Unfortunately, a lot of that has had to do with the labels we've been on in the past. We've never received any promotion in the past so part of the stipulations in the contract is whoever we sign with has to promote us in places like that. I look forward to getting out in America, I think it would be really good.

Nuclear Blast just got *Savatage* too.

I heard about that. Excellent band. A couple years ago they were just this death and black metal label.

I remember when they first started. All the stuff they put out was totally death metal, wasn't it? They've done really good for themselves.

I have over the years never read that much about your band. The only features I've ever seen have been the Terrorizer feature a couple months ago...

You see, we don't get that much press in the UK. That was the first UK interview that I've done for 4 years. The scene in England is very strange. Everyone seems to be into bands like Korn and Marilyn Manson and Coal Chamber. A lot of the stuff that is big in mainland Europe doesn't get covered over here, which is quite a shame. Our main market is mainland Europe and that's where we've been for the past 10 years. Touring around there, really. There's a lot of nice countries in the world we'd like to get out to and visit, it would be nice to actually have the chance to do that.

I can totally sympathize with you. Over here it's all Korn, it's all Limp Bizkit. It's depressing seeing some bands tour and 50-100 people show up and these are the big bands in the underground!

All different types of music should be able to live side by side, you know? That's the way it should work. But the trend bands get all the attention and all the press coverage in the magazines. People who are doing something different, trying to do unique music or develop a new style seem to get totally forgotten about. There's room for everything to exist together. That's the way it works in Europe, but not in the UK and obviously not in the States as well.

Can you go into your personal history getting into music?

Oh let me think. That's a very very long time ago, that is! I always wanted to be an actor when I was in school. How I ended up in a band I do not know. I started playing guitar, and I played guitar very badly when I was a kid. Very badly. I ended up as a singer one day because we were jamming and I started singing and everybody said 'You've got a horrible voice. You're the singer now!' And that's how I ended up doing that. I realized I couldn't actually sing and play guitar at the same time because that was too complicated. I ended up just singing and writing lyrics. I've always written poetry and stories from when I was a kid. I just followed on to do that with a band. I was in a band at school with school friends called Hydra. We were terrible! We sort of became Sabbath. That sort of clicked into place over a couple of years. I left Sabbath in 1989. I couldn't see much of a future for me in that band. I'd known Graeme English and

Steve Ramsey who were in Pariah at the time, it used to be called Satan many years ago. They were good friends. They weren't doing much at the time and one day we were in a pub and Steve says to me 'Do you want to get a band together? Do you fancy doing some music?' That's how that all started. We did demos on a 4 track, a very cheap thing. We recorded 4 songs on that and it sounded really good. We got a deal with Noise from that.

Is that the same Satan that Blind Guardian covered on *Somewhere Far Beyond*?

I believe it is. Which song did they cover? **Trial By Fire.**

I didn't know they'd actually done that on record! That's amazing! I wonder if Graeme and Steve know that as well.

It's weird that Blind Guardian has all the folk elements in their music and then where the Satan guys ended up...

They're very nice guys, Blind Guardian. We've had the chance to tour with them a couple of times in Germany. Very nice. We did a Christmas festival with Blind Guardian, Saxon, and some other guys. They played that and got Steve and Graeme up and then got Georgina, our violin player, up with them for a song.

Thank you for clearing up how to say Sabbath. (SAB-bat) How do you say your last name, by the way?

I think it's Walkyier. (walk-EE-er). I think that's how you say it. I'm not sure. My mum and dad are trying to trace where the family name comes from, we think it's from Poland or Austria. The Walkyiers all fled here about 200 years ago and ended up on the Isle of Wight, which is a little island off the south coast of England. About 100 years ago the place was full of Walkyiers, but not anymore. There's not many of us around.

I came in on Skyclad when Century Media released *Irrational Anthem*, and I've gone back as far as *Prince of the Poverty Line*. I'm wondering how the sound was before that, because it seems to be heavier the farther back you go.

On our first album we didn't have a clue as to what we were doing. I was working together with Graeme and Steve and we wanted to do something different. I had just left Sabbath which was a very thrashy sort of band. Pariah/Satan was very speed metal and power metal. We just pulled an album together trying to write the best music we could. We thought to bring a session player in to do fiddle, and a friend of ours to do piccolo. Kind of get the folk element in there, but we didn't quite didn't know what we were doing. We're happy with the way that album turned out but over the next 10 years we've progressed, we've learned to write songs and play together as musicians. The thing with Skyclad is we've done 10 CDs now and they're all very different. Some people prefer the early stuff, some people prefer the later stuff. It's very hard to please everyone all the time. For us as musicians to keep going for that long, we have to keep it fresh and keep that originality there. It's very important that your style changes and we were very fortunate to get Georgina as a violin player. She's had quite a large effect on the sound because she's such a good musician. It's enabled us to be folkier and try to do something unique.

Yesterday, I played all the Skyclad CDs, one after the other, all the way through...

Did you talk to yourself? Feeling in a masochistic mood?

...while a lot of the sounds are different, it's still Skyclad all the way.

When you go into the studio we don't have a plan. We don't think we're going to make this one more commercial sounding or turn the guitars up. We do what we feel like at the time and when we go into the studio we don't have a plan. We're far too disorganized for that. The last couple of albums we were experimenting with the folk side of

different instruments. On the new album we thought it was time to go back to the roots a little bit and just do an album that was two heavy guitars and a violin. We're far too disorganized to have a plan. We don't even know what the next album will be like. I think it will be heavy though. We plan with Nuclear Blast because I think they will invest quite a bit of money in us. We're going to release heavy albums and then do a side project that will be totally acoustic. Maybe 2 versions of the same album. We're not sure yet. We've experimented quite a lot. We're a strange band because we have so many different fans. We've got the guys who are 15, 16 years old totally into death metal, those guys at the front. You've got hippie, crusty guys with dreadlocks, punks, you get goths, bikers. The youngest fan we have is a German lad, he was 5, he came up to me and said 'Martin, you're my favorite singer!' He made me a cake and brought me some flowers. And then we get people, they must be in their 70s, bringing their children along. It's definitely a family affair.

What do the sales figures look like?

We're not sure with the new one at the minute, but I'd say at the average, around 50,000. Some of them have done less than that. The *Out Avant Garde A Chance* album did about 35,000. That was sort of an in between album. Usually about 50. I think if we could break into the States and Japan, if we could do 10,000 sales in the States and 10,000 in Japan, that could make a big difference to a band like us. Yet we've not been given a chance to do that. It's a shame. We get a lot of letters from the States. People appreciate what we're trying to do. The music business is just like any other business. It doesn't matter if you make the best kind of apple pie in the world. Unless it's advertised on TV, nobody will buy it and no one will try it. That's the situation we've been in. The people who have discovered Skyclad are the people who have wanted to. They've hunted out a band that was totally different from what's out there. It would be good to get that across to a bigger market.

What was the deal with Century Media licensing the two records?

I don't know anything about that. We weren't sure what was happening because Massacre didn't keep us informed on that side. Massacre Records, because they didn't have any distribution in the States, did a deal with Century Media but I don't know beyond that. It all fell through I think, the last album wasn't released there.

The last two haven't been, The Answer Machine? wasn't released here either. Did they do press for that?

They didn't. The only American press I've done is what I've sought out myself I did one a couple of months ago... do you know a guy called Mike Coles, from The Outcast? I did a nice interview with him, and I've received 3 or 4 emails in the last couple of days. Guys from the States who want to do interviews. I've done some Australian interviews as well. What happened is I became that disillusioned with the job Massacre was doing promoting the band that I took that on myself and went out and found people to be interested in interviewing us. The response to that was amazing, and I wonder why Massacre couldn't have done that. It wasn't a great deal of work to send some guy a CD and a nice letter. In the UK the scene is terrible. I've sent copies of *Vintage Whine* out and people have said 'Martin, I haven't heard from you in years!' I thought Skyclad had split up! The new album's brilliant! Well we've always been here. I've had to get ahold of the last four albums to send to this journalist who I haven't seen in the past 4 or 5 years. He had no idea what we'd been doing. What kind of record company allows that? These are top magazines in Britain! If people like that aren't receiving the CDs, then the fanzines aren't and the radio

things, stations aren't so what chance have you got? No chance.

Massacre does pretty well in Europe, but they don't send things to many people in the US. There are smaller labels out there that do 10,000 sales worldwide on their big releases and they do full servicing to fanzines!

That's the way it should be. We've mentioned to Nuclear Blast what we want to do and they're with us on that. A band like Skyclad, with the traditional influence we've got, we're quirky and eccentric enough. American friends I've got say that Americans are interesting in things British, the history, things like that. It would be quite interesting to see what a band like Skyclad could do out there.

Your sound, it's not something the metalheads are going to shuck off, unless they get all tough guy about some of the sensitive lyrics...

We don't bother with things like that. I don't keep a diary, my lyrics are my diary. I write what comes out of my heart. A lot of people think it's cool to sing about mass murderers and wars, and well, we kind of do but we look at it from another angle but we sing about other things as well. We don't see the point in writing pages of lyrics about cutting people up. We're not death metal, we're life metal! There's a lot more positive things we have to say. If you're making a CD, if you're involved in any sort of media, you're communicating with young people. What's the point of some of the lyrics bands write? I don't understand it! Maybe I'm just old fashioned.

I agree with you 100%. It drives me nuts when there's a great band, of whatever style, and they have these throwaway lyrics. You call them on it, and ask the fans what they are getting from this, and they respond that it's just all about the music.

Young people are very impressionable and people are influenced by this. All these bands with the faces painted white and the vampire teeth, some of them are quite good and there is a place for that kind of music, but a trend comes along and everyone jumps on that bandwagon. Now you have a million bands out of Scandinavia that all look the same. They might as well all be the same band. A lot of them are good musicians but...

I started reading at a real early age and I love well put together words...

Words are brilliant things! You can paint a picture, you can convey emotions. To just write throwaway lyrics, I couldn't do it! I'd be letting myself down, and letting the fans of the band down. All I'm trying to do, my ambition is for someone to look back after 100, 200 years and read my lyrics and know I actually had something to say. That's a little bit of immortality, isn't it? I'd like to think I wrote something positive and contributed in a small way to making the world a better place. Rather than 'We are vampires and we will rip your throat out', you know?

Does your main fanbase get your lyrics considering English isn't their first language?

A surprising number of them do. When we play in places like Italy where people have learned all your lyrics... We did the Gods of Metal festival in Milan. That was an amazing experience. We did a whole weekend traveling around in a minibus with no hotel because Massacre wouldn't give us any budget, and the very last show we did was 25,000 people at this Gods of Metal festival. We played in Italy a couple of times before but we had no idea what the response would be. These kids just went ape, it was absolutely brilliant! These people were singing along with songs off of *Vintage Whine*, a brand new album. They knew the lyrics better than people here in Britain.

How does that make you feel that the people who could appreciate what you're saying more aren't into it?

I won't say that's Massacre's fault because the scene right now sucks. It's really quite bad at the minute. Unfortunately the press... I have good friends that work for these magazines and they say they'll give Skyclad whatever coverage they can. But it's obvious they're limited by their market. Kerrang! magazine, which used to be absolutely brilliant, 1980 is now Year Zero. Anyone born before 1980 doesn't exist to them anymore. That means they don't write or put anything on bands that would be of interest to anyone older than 20 years old. What kind of attitude is that? Their sales, they've gone weekly, the sales have dropped from 60,000 to 15,000 I heard. I don't know how true that is, but obviously something's

wrong! They won't put Skyclad in there because we're old people's music or something. I have no idea. If sales have dropped by vast amounts like that something's wrong, they need to change. It's a crying shame. Some of the bands that get a lot of press unfortunately at the end of the day have nothing to say. I fully understand the music business and the way it works and it's just a shame, to be honest. If you believe in what you're doing, it's an absolute nightmare. People like yourself and the people I speak to that do self financed fanzines and radio shows, to my way of thinking you people are the stars. If it weren't for people like you Skyclad wouldn't have an outlet for getting press.

How aware are you about how influential both Sabbath and Skyclad have been to new bands?

I see that when I see bands that are around. We rarely get credit for that. There's a whole thing happening in Germany the past 3-4 years where there's a trend called folk metal. I don't know if you've heard of In Extremo, Subway to Sally, there's a hell of a lot. A whole kind of trend and I think we've had a hand in that. The thing is a lot of these bands sing in German.

Metal Blade released the In Extremo album over here.

It's really good.

There wasn't much press over here, I actually tried to get an interview and was told they don't speak English too well.

They don't speak English at all! We played Wacken with them in Hamburg earlier in the year. There was a Japanese girl there that wanted to do an interview with them and I was the interpreter. She spoke English but no German and they don't speak English. You definitely don't want to interview them, you wouldn't get a lot out of them!

What do you think of the kind of work Andy Snape is doing these days?

It's very good, very heavy. I don't know if you've heard a band called Kill II This?

I've heard the name.

They're a British band, they're very new and trendy sounding, but it's very good and the production's amazing! I've actually had a chat with Andy and there's a possibility he might work with Skyclad in the future. It's an idea we've toyed with.

He's definitely a good producer.

Very good.

But the problem from my perspective is he's been working with the trendier bands.

I don't know if Andy's style would work with a band like Skyclad. A lot of the drum sound is very sampled and that wouldn't work for Skyclad. We're a bit traditionalists when it comes to that. We like real instruments and real sounds and not too many samples going on. Andy's sound is very clicky and punchy and modern. It would be interesting to work with him. I don't know what he thinks of that. He said 'Eeeehhhh, maybe.'

The only pictures I've ever seen of him are from 1989, and I have a feeling he's cut his hair, has tons of piercings and lots of tattoos.

Oh no, he's exactly the same. Just older. He still has the long hair, it's gone a bit thin like mine. It's still there. Nice guy, Andy. Terrible to be in a band with. We didn't get on when we were in the band together but when I don't have to work with him he's great!

The one thing I want to dig into, because it's the focal point of Skyclad to me, is the lyrics.

To a lot of people, me included, you are the best lyricist in heavy metal.

Well thank you very much. I try my best. It's my way of expressing myself. I realized a very long time ago that I wasn't cut out to play an instrument. I'm the most unmusical singer in the whole world and it's only after being in bands for 15, 16, 17 years that I have a clue about what's in tune and what isn't. I sort of occasionally think of a harmony and think 'Wow, that's a bit clever.' I do words, that's my thing from when I was a little kid. I've always enjoyed writing and telling stories and showing off and doing plays. I wanted to be an actor, but it all went a bit wrong! All I'm doing is writing about things around me. People I meet, things that affect me in some way, A book, a film. Trying to write a little documentary about what it's like to be a small human being alive at the end of this century. The way that I think things are right in the world, the way things are wrong in the world. It has to come out.

Are you ever worried that you have this trademark for being clever with the wordplay, and it will be time for an album and you're just not as clever?

I don't know. I wouldn't say it's clever, really. Words are great things because you can twist them around and play jokes with them. I've got about 50 titles for the new album all written down. I could be sitting on a bus, or brushing my teeth, or making a cup of tea, anything, and a lyric will come out. I always write down a title or an idea I have because I have a memory like a sieve. I forget things. I've never had writer's block, touch wood. It was quite difficult to get some of the lyrics to actually come out. *Vintage Whine*, those weren't written to be Skyclad lyrics. Those were songs I'd written over the last 2 years to be therapy for me because of emotional bullshit. I went out with the daughter of Satan for about 6 months. She tried to break my nose and things like that. It was an experience! I wrote all these things down and it came time to get lyrics and get music together for the new album. I tried to write lyrics and nothing happened, it didn't feel right. I just happened to look through all my therapy lyrics that I'd done and the first 3 just fit perfectly with the music that was on the tape. Actually singing about that was quite tricky sometimes because it was quite a personal thing. It's not hidden in any way, it's in there what it was all about. There were a couple of songs that I had a bit of trouble in the studio to actually sing. None of those lyrics were ever intended to use as songs. That's why it's called *Vintage Whine*. It was all bottled up for 2 years. I just thought yeah, let it all out! It helps. It keeps me sane. The friendship, the support of the fans, actually being able to write my problems down and sing it and get it out, it helped me because I've been able to share it with other people. When I feel sad or depressed, it's helped me to listen to lyrics by other bands. To know that you're not alone, the way you're feeling is really shitty and really bad, but if you can read someone's lyric and associate with that you realize this happens all the time. It's helped me, and that's how I justify being so self indulgent writing about 2 years in my life. I can't imagine it's something people particularly want to know about, but when they do it's really flattering.

Actually, the lyrics of yours that hit me the hardest was Jumping My Shadow.

I was going out with the girl... do you know the band Atrocity? It was Alex's half sister Yasmin who sang on Calling the Rain. I was going out with her and we were having a nice time and we were together about 9 months. That sort of all fell apart because of the job I do, traveling around. I was traveling in Germany on a train and I wrote that. I'm a miserable little bastard! That's the thing, I manage to keep a sense of humor in life because I do get to write all that down. It's saved my life a couple of times. It's a useful thing to do because I am positive in my life and try to keep cheerful but if people read the lyrics they must think I'm suicidal! He won't live to record the next album, he's going to blow his head off!

The bands that I consider inspirational with the lyrics, the two primary ones are both British. The first is Skyclad, I can't stress that enough, I don't know if you get your ego stroked enough about that but you should.

You're definitely making me feel better today. I had a really bad hangover and your flattery is very kind. It makes me feel a lot better.

The other band that gets to me, and this will sound weird, is old Napalm Death.

I've never really heard any, to be honest.

That's the band that got me into underground music. The album, *Utopia Banished*, is pretty much a 40 minute blast beat but the lyrics with the political and emotional, hit me just right at that point in my life.

It's cool when that happens. If you can find an album that's just right at a certain point in time. I'll have to check them out and have a listen. I think I'll read some lyrics. It was the grunting that put me off of them, I didn't think the lyrics could be good. You couldn't make them out at all! My style of singing is extreme at times but that was really the limit for me. I was never into stuff like that. If you recommend it I shall check it out. The New Model Army, have you heard them?

I have not heard them.

Check them out. If you like good lyrics check them out. They're very good. They are a big influence on Skyclad in a lot of ways. They're not

heavy, they're alternative and punky but if you like Skyclad you'll like them.

You said you do the lyrics after the music's done?

It can work different ways. I've got a few lyrics lying around waiting for the right song to come along. It all depends on the track. I've become a bit more involved in the writing of the songs and the melodies and things like that. I've learned what a melody is after all these years! I really enjoy getting a tape of music and sticking it on late at night and seeing what that makes me think of and want to write. I'll write a lyric and send it off to the guys, they live in Newcastle and I live in Nottingham, we meet up quite a lot, and it will depend. It's all very different.

Let me interrupt your train of thought here, I'm looking through the *Vintage Whine* booklet right now and the artwork is brilliant.

That's a very nice man called Duncan Storr, our artist. He's going to be doing a page on our website. Basically the budget the record company offered for the artwork on the last album would have just paid for the front cover. That would have been it. Duncan said just have all this other stuff I have as well. The whole album was done on a very low budget. The last album for a record company scenario.

It does sound a bit raw...

That's what we wanted. With *The Answer Machine?*, that was the most money we'd ever spent. We spent a hell of a lot of money. It was very polished, very smooth. That lost a bit of the Skyclad energy. The new album, a lot of the stuff was recorded live, just bashed out in the studio. It keeps the freshness, it has the energy there. It actually has some balls to it. *The Answer Machine?*, we're very happy with that, it turned out great, but to me there is a bit of that rawness lacking.

From *The Answer Machine?*, what is Catherine at the Wheel about?

It's probably worse in the States, but it's a scenario when you see women broken down at the side of the motorway and some guy comes along to give them a lift, and he's a rapist. Or some little girl's in a park and a guy comes along and rapes her. It's an idea I had for a girl named Catherine, she's a vampire, but she doesn't like feeding on people. She's quite a nice sort of vampire. What she's decided to do is feed off of these scumbags. She waits for the side of the road with the bonnet, the hood of the car up, some truck driver comes along and if he tries anything he's dead meat. And she hangs around in a park like a little girl and does the 'I'm lost, where's my mommy?' sort of thing, and if some pervert comes along, dead meat, again. Catherine at the Wheel, she's in control, it's a women's lib kind of song and also my opinion of the kind of people who can rape children and defenseless women.

I've read a lot of your lyrics about the music industry. Obviously you've had your run ins with the business side.

Oh yes. We've had everything done to us! We've been self managed now for about 4 years. Definitely the way for us to work.

Wasn't one of the guys in Venom managing you before?

Yes. It was a pleasant experience. When you're self managed you have control over the money and you make sure the money goes to the people

who are actually doing the work, which is us! When you have a manager who is taking 20% of your money for I don't know what a lot of the time, there's a lot of money floating around in this industry. It's magic money. You see it floating in the air, tens of thousands of pounds, but if you try to grab it it disappears in a puff of smoke. There's so much money wasted and passed around. The little bits that trickle down to the musicians, who are the people making the music, is such a small amount. We try to redirect that money a little bit more towards us. A lot of people think when they're young and in a band that you have to have a hit to make money. There's a whole world of musicians out there who sell enough records to earn the same kind of living they could be being a mechanic or truck driver or working a regular 9 to 5 job. It's good if you can get to the stage of making that kind of money from something you love. It's a privilege, really. Skyclad is never band to ever have a hit and if we ever do make money I think we'll appreciate it and use it very wisely. Sometimes if a band's first deal is with a major they get millions plowed into them and they never seem to last very long. I'd rather do what we've done with Skyclad which is to sell a few records for a very long time than sell a lot of records for a very short time. Michael Jackson records one album and sells 50 million copies. We're going to record 50 million albums and sell one copy of each! It's a different approach. There is a way to make money from music without having a hit. It's an important thing for musicians to bear in mind. AC/DC hit the nail on the head when they say it's a long way to the top if you want to rock n roll. It's taken us 10 years of hard work and suffering to get to the point where we're making a basic living. We must be insane!

Another big lyrical topic is politics and the plight of the common man.

Politicians are wankers! You see things about how governments and politicians rule this world and it's absolutely disgusting. I watched a program about how the British government are indirectly condoning the sale of arms to countries that have the worst human rights records you can imagine! Our country will say these things are terrible, politicians will go on TV and say how these things disgust them, and then you find out they're shareholders for a company who sells anti-personnel mines to these countries! You watch things like that and it's absolutely terrible. There's a lot going on in Britain, you probably don't hear about it much in the States, with the corruption where people are swindling money left right and center! Bill Clinton, how can this man still be the President of America? This man is a liar! I don't understand it! Here's the most powerful man in the world. He can kill us all in the next 10 minutes with the right phone call and right authorization code. What's he going to do? Say 'Sorry, I didn't mean to push the button.' 'I didn't inhale.' It's terrible. Most people do not care, and they are not interested in politics. These people use that to their advantage. People say 'I've got my TV, my can of beer, my Playstation.' Unfortunately these people are making millions off of our apathy. I'm sure there are good politicians out there but they're probably like the good bands. They don't get any coverage. Nice people don't seem to get anywhere because you do have to be a bastard to make it in that industry.



In Atlanta we have a controversy going on with the police detail that guards the mayor's house 24 hours a day. It turns out that they run license tag checks on every car that visits the mayor's house. You want to protect the mayor, that sounds reasonable. Well one of the mayor's son's friends drives up in a stolen car. They run the tags and find that out. So the mayor's reaction is to command the police to no longer run the license checks on anybody that comes to his house.

They make the laws that rule the rest of us and they don't even follow these laws. The conservatives, the last government we've had in Britain were very conservative as the name suggests. Victorian family values, Great Britain's not great anymore, stop pornography and really tighten down on the people. And then you find out they were involved in all sorts of stuff! People dead with fat things just stuffed up their butts! Hey, what's going on here? They are the people preaching to us, holier than thou, live by these standards. Well these people don't! It's all happened again in recent months. I'd don't think there's many trustworthy politicians.

All the time the Republicans were trying to take down the President over the sex scandal, the Speaker of the House had a mistress the entire time! It's depressing. If Bill Clinton's going to lie about things like this that have nothing to do with running the country to protect his own butt, what is he going to say about things that are really important?

Exactly. That's exactly the way I feel about it. Once someone has proved they can lie that effectively, he swore that nothing had happened with totally a poker face, what will he lie about next?

Where the apathy comes in is that lots of people say it doesn't matter just because they're political allies, that it doesn't matter what kind of person he is as long as he can run the country. To me that is so ass backwards! And then the people trying to say this is wrong are doing the same damn things!

Adolf Hitler did a very good job of running Germany. And not a very nice man. But the roads got built and the cars and things like that were efficient but it doesn't make one a nice person. If that happened in Britain I'd hope he'd be out, and I was really hoping Clinton would be out. The States have a very big influence on what happens in Britain and Clinton is the most powerful man in the world. It frightens me that the most powerful man in the world is a bare faced liar. It really does. For our children and their children, what is the world going to come to? The way I see it our planet is dying. The end of the world's happened only nobody's noticed it yet. You won't be able to go outside without being wrapped up because the hole in the ozone layer will be so big you'll get cancer after 10 minutes. The air will be unbreathable, the water will be undrinkable, and nobody's bothered! There's things in the newspaper, the World Health Organization talking about the effect global warming is going to have on the planet and it's going to be terrible! Your article on that will be one column on page 6 of the newspaper and on the front page will be what the Queen's wearing! This article is basically saying in the next 60 years we won't be able to live on the planet anymore. What are we going to do then? I'm sure the people creaming off the millions have some spaceship. I'm afraid for the rest of us. It might happen in our lifetimes but I'm afraid our children will have a very different world to live in. It won't be a picnic. Why can't we see we can't just keep taking from the world without giving something back? It's just common sense. I'm not the world's most intelligent man and I can see this. Why can't these people? They can, but they're just covering it all up. The Mad Cow disease in Britain, things like that. British meat is poison! The reason I'm vegetarian is I watched a documentary about slaughterhouses undercover. Not just the cruelty side, but the hygiene side. I'm not eating that muck! And nobody knows! The tobacco companies managed to tell everyone the worst thing you can get from smoking is a smoker's cough for about 50 years. All of a sudden, it's the most deadly thing in the world! How have the y managed to get away with this for so long? Because the governments were making so much revenue from the taxes.

At the same time the government is cracking down on tobacco over here, they're subsidizing

tobacco farmers. It's hilarious. Well it's not, but it is.

Western culture's drugs of choice are tobacco and alcohol. You have a government here that supports someone who wants tobacco or alcohol but if someone wants to smoke a joint they're a social deviant! I've never seen anyone smoke a joint and go out and start a fight. It chills you out and makes you relax. Unfortunately the government can't make enough revenue in taxes so they're not interested.

I have a weird perspective, I'm 25 years old now and have never had a drop of alcohol.

A drop touched me last night! Hit me over the head with a huge hammer!

Sinful Ensemble was interesting, the idea that these horrible dictators aren't unusual people, that anyone could be like that.

It's a song about a pub in hell and if you can imagine it's Saturday night and I tried to imagine all these people like Hitler and Caligula and the like, evil people from history, behaving in a way the typical British beer hooligans would behave on a Saturday night. They're drinking pints of beer and arguing and that's the mentality you get when you're in certain bars in Britain and I'm sure everywhere in the world. A very, what would you say, redneck kind of attitude. I thought it was a funny idea for a song. All these dictators and murderers and evil people in hell and they've got their own pub and they're doing their thing.

You have a big family theme in many songs.

Oh yes. Quite a few! Family is a very important thing. Constance Eternal was done for my grandmother. I wrote that the morning she died. I was over in Germany and I got a telephone call. I sat down and wrote that. There's also No Deposit No Return which is a thank you to my parents for supporting me and giving me a chance to do this career. Even though I'm sure my mother thinks I'm insane! Absolutely poverty stricken and living off of tins of baked beans and potatoes for 10 years! When she sees things like magazine articles and being on the covers of magazines, it shows my mum it is worthwhile after all. Then I borrow money off of her and can't pay her back! I don't think she feels the same then.

If you played something like the Milwaukee Metalfest, how do you come up with a set list?

We talked about that with Nuclear Blast, we've got to get out, so I'm sure we'd do that. We can put on a killer 30 minute set with all the songs we have the luxury of choosing. For the last album we actually did an unplugged tour of Irish pubs in Germany, that showed a completely different side of Skyklad as well. We took a lot of the old songs, really heavy, and rewrote them as folk songs. We went out last year about Christmas and did that. We didn't make any money but we didn't lose any either. We had a month of going to a different pub every night in Germany!

Mornings must have been hell!

It was. My liver was about the size of a walnut by the time we were done. It was a good laugh, we were cracking jokes onstage, doing standup between songs. Some of the heavy songs rewritten as folk songs was good.

How long is your regular headlining set with all these albums out?

Until we fall over. Generally we do an hour and a half, three quarters. A lot of it is limited to how long you can keep going. A lot of the drums are quite intense. Some songs off of *Vintage Whine* are easy for the rest of us but for the drummer, this guy's building a house all the way through! He needs extra arms and legs!

What kind of films do you enjoy?

I like all kinds of things. I like quite a bit of science fiction. Horror. Everything really. I don't like these romantic films, Titanic sorts of things. I've never seen that one so maybe I shouldn't leap to conclusions but that sort of thing has never appealed to me. Soppy romantic stuff is a bit saccharin sweet to me. Clockwork Orange is one of my favorites. It's absolutely brilliant! That film inspired a lot of other films like *Trainspotting*. It was years ahead of it's time. *Excalibur*.

Oh yeah! That was excellent!

Highlander, the first one! I'm not sure about the others, they kind of lost the plot a little bit. The first one is brilliant the way that one is done.

The Renegade version of the second one, where they take out the planet Zeist, wasn't bad. The third one I shut off after 10 minutes.

The second one to me was like a completely different film. It was quite good as an action

swordfighting sort of film but not on par with the first one.

What about books?

Again, all sorts. Bits of philosophy. The best books I've ever read... have you read any of the Flashman books?

No.

By George MacDonald Fraser. Really brilliant. In Tom Brown's School Days, the bully was called Flashman. The author took him about of the school and put him into the Victorian British army, when Queen Victoria was in power in the last century. This guy is a total coward and a cheat and a liar and a womanizer. He always comes out smelling the roses but he's a total coward and he wants to run away from every battle. Things like that, but he always ends up being the hero and getting all the honors. It's set in this historical environment that's very accurate. You can actually learn about history. If you read a textbook, the history would be very boring. But because it's in the context of this story, it's brilliant. It's really good. Check some of them out, there must be 10 or 15. I cry with laughter! This Flashman with the scrapes he gets himself into, and how he gets himself out, it's really cool! It's got a good sense of humor.

My current kick on authors are Terry Goodkind and Michael Moorcock.

Michael Moorcock is very good. I haven't read anything from him for a very long time. One of the best books I've ever read was *Mythigo Wood* by Robert Holdstock. It's a series of three books, the rest aren't quite so good but the first was brilliant, really good. The Way of Wyrd, by Brian Bates.

The Dreamweaver album was based on that one?

Yep. What am I reading right now? Are you familiar with a guy named Kenneth Williams, from the Carry On films? He's the guys with the big nose and he sounds like he's talking with a mouth full of plumbs. He kept a diary all his life until he killed himself. A very interesting man, he lived through a lot of things. He worked with a lot of people, comedians like Tony Hancock and people like that. He had a very sad life because he was gay when that wasn't allowed to be gay. He felt guilty about that. He wasn't a happy chap, he had a sad life really. The last entry, the last line was 'What's the bloody point?' before he killed himself. I think a lot of comedians, it's interesting that a lot of these people that are so happy on the outside are actually very sad people.

The last few questions are general interest questions about Britain, and you seem aware of what goes on, so...

The political scene is in an uproar, everyone is lying and cheating all over the place. I don't know. Britain's changing very quickly, it's catching up with Europe with being part of the European Community. There's still a lot of people who think of Britain as an island which is a sad and narrow minded way to look at it. We're very insignificant here in a lot of ways. There's this mentality that Britain's best and the football hooligan sort of mentality. I hate that about Britain. It's very backwards and very insular. It's not something I admire. But there's a lot of good here as well. A lot of very nice people, friendly people, thinking people. I'm happy that I was born in Britain and grew up here, really.

He main British influence here we get are the TV comedy series. Monty Python is really popular, we get *Fawlty Towers*, *Are You Being Served?*

A lot of the old stuff is really good. They're making a lot of rubbish now. Total garbage.

One thing that has a cult following is Red Dwarf.

That is brilliant! Have you seen any of them?

Yes.

That's REALLY good!

Blackadder.

Blackadder is really good. There's one called The League of Gentlemen. I think British people do have a good sense of humor, it's one of our good points. The British make good comedy. I must admit I'm not a big fan of American comedy. Although I watch *Frazier*, that makes me laugh a little bit. I definitely think there are things the British are good at and comedy is one of them. We've got a good eye for the absurd. In a way with the Skyklad lyrics, they're very, I don't know, a few things are more Monty Python and I think it is very important to be able to laugh at

yourself. I try to do that with the lyrics. I think that is a very British thing, to look at your situation, look at yourself, and have a good laugh about it.

The American version of Whose Line Is It Anyway? is popular.

That's very good. I've not seen the American one. I'm not sure of their names but there are a few American guys on the British one. They're very funny guys.

Two of them are on the American version too. It's almost not fair, hey, they know how to do this better!

It's very clever. They must rehearse that a little bit or they'd have to be geniuses!

Especially the songs.

It really is good.

I don't know how much American TV you get over there...

Quite a bit, but not so much of the good stuff, probably.

There isn't much! But we get all these comedies over the years, so what are some of the less goofy things we've been missing out on?

Good things that have come out of Britain? If you're into science and nature, we have a brilliant documentary, *Walking With Dinosaurs*, it's made with the guys from *Jurassic Park* together with the BBC. It's a nature documentary but they've computer generated dinosaurs and put them in real backgrounds. Very well done, with bits of animatronics. There's one called *Universe* which just finished. We are so insignificant on this planet, really. We're a grain of dust.

Over here, it's a big deal of course with the American Revolution in 1776 and yay, we fought off the evil British, rah rah rah. What is the slant on that over in England? How is that taught in the schools?

To be honest, it's not really. It's covered, but... for you guys, it's a big thing but it is played down over here. They mention the War of Independence and we lost, but... it has been a very long time since I've been to school! I personally never learned about it. It's the birth of your nation, it's a big deal, but it's played down here, the same way the slave trade and all the atrocities the British did in Africa and India. You get programs about that now, black, colored, and Asian people who have looked into it and made documentaries about it. Before the last 10 years, you never knew the things the British did in India and Africa. It was on par with Nazi Germany in many ways.

You brought that up... in the US, racism and racial issues are still a big deal. How is that in England?

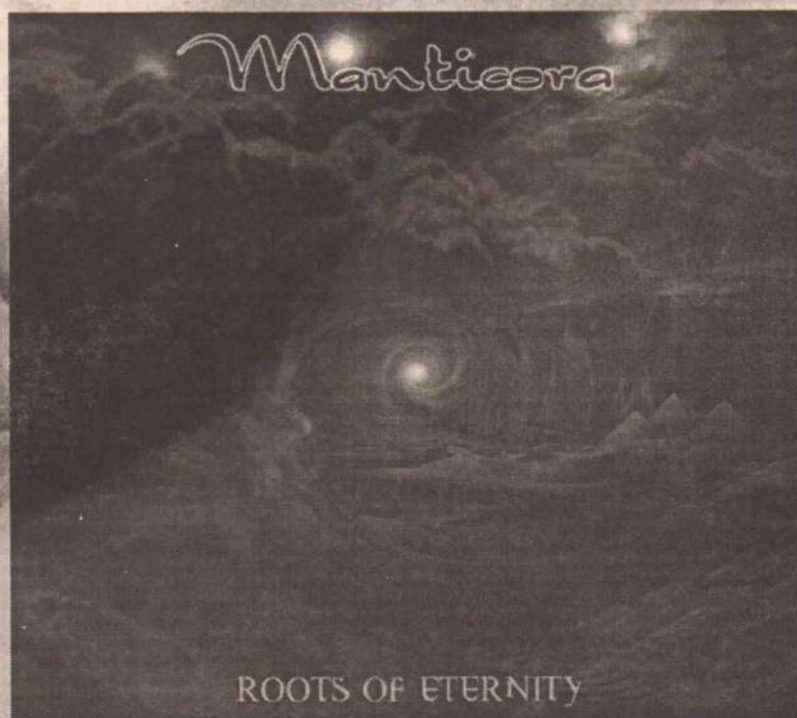
We have that here. You get a lot of racism. To get back to the pub situation, there's a lot of pubs you won't go into if you're black, or if you have long hair, things like that. There are a lot stupid mind minded people who don't like black people, foreigners, things like that. Same way there's a lot of black people living here who don't like the British very much. It's sad and stupid really. What you realize watching that documentary about the universe is that you see how small and insignificant our world is in the cosmic scheme of things. And you think how someone could hate someone who comes from the next village or somewhere that seems far away, or because of the color of their skin. I have good friends who are black, but I also know total idiots who are black. I know white people who are total idiots as well. It only matters what's in your heart at the end of the day. If I have a prejudice, I'm stupid. I have stupid people, I hate ignorance. It really is an evil thing. Ignorance of other people and their situations. That's where all the wars get started. You see documentaries about wars and all the things people are fighting over in Eastern Europe, they're obviously crucially important to those people, but it's really worth all that carnage and mass murder? For a couple of kilometers of dirt? The best thing that could happen is if the aliens landed tomorrow and we could realize how insignificant we are. Whether you come from the States or Britain or Africa it wouldn't make a difference.

Well, that's about all I got. I'll probably think of more things 10 minutes from now...

Well thank you very much! It's been really nice talking to you, you got rid of my hangover!

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Manticora



Manticora - Roots of Eternity

BLR/CD-012

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Denmark's newest hope is already breaking through big-time in Europe with their true heavy power metal, and now it's time for America as well to succumb to this great metal band. Manticora's music will appeal to all fans of huge guitar- and drum-based metal in the vein of Blind Guardian, Gamma Ray and Iced Earth.

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I don't even know where to start. My vocabulary is too small to describe Solefald. Their debut on Avantgarde, The Linear Scaffold, was weirdshit fucked. I loved it! The new one, Neonism, is even more so. And I love it! From a black metal base to Calvin Klein? Oh my... let's have half of this nutty duo, namely Lazare, explain this... he can't obfuscate things any more that I already have...

So how are you doing today?

I'm OK. A bit tired. I've been working all day.

What do you do for a living?

I work as a researcher and reporter for a TV show. It's called Metropolis Live.

I'm always worried with people in bands like yours that you pump gas or something. That takes away from the mystique. The first thing I really wanted to talk to you about is the attention this album's been getting. It seems to be a lot more than the last one. That one I just saw a few reviews for. For the new one you have articles in Terrorizer and Metal Maniacs, the main magazines for the English speaking countries...

Which is nice for us of course! The main reason it's gotten so much attention is that it's slightly out of the normal. It's not an ordinary black metal album. A lot of people when they listened to our last album thought 'Well, there's some interesting stuff with new things.' When they heard Neonism, it became clear that we have our own thing that we do. We don't settle for compromises when it comes to making music. It is really nice to have that attention around the album. It seems also that attention has been more divided than on the last one. People either love it or hate it. I have spoken with a few people that really hate it as well. Which is really cool. As long as music wakes up feelings in people, it doesn't matter much to me whether it is good or bad feelings. As long as it triggers something in you. So it's interesting to see how people react. I have one great fear and that is mediocrity. I'm really afraid of making a mediocre album. I hope I never do that.

You've avoided it so far. What were the sales figures for the first album?

I'm not really sure. The last time I spoke to Avantgarde about the sales figures was quite some time ago. I think it totalled 6000 to 6500. It's not a lot, but it's OK for a debut album.

Do you know how the response from the actual buying public is for this one?

Actually I do. We printed our email addresses inside the cover or Neonism. I get tons of mail from people who have bought the album. They are either really impressed with it and want to tell me that, or really pissed off with it and want to tell me that as well! It's very interesting. I'm saving all those mails. We're having experiment with people. Neonism is experimenting with how people react to things outside the norm. The black metal audience is really conservative. A lot of Norwegian bands try to do something not like that, for instance Ulver (ool-ver), Arcturus, bands like that. Reactions are very varied. It's really interesting to see. Most of the reactions have been really positive.

With the expanded publicity and attention you're receiving, how do you think that is going to clash with the natural popular limitations of your music? It's definitely not something your everyday metal fan is going to pick up and go 'Yeah!'

To be honest with you I'm not quite sure. It's going to be interesting to see. When we make music we just sit down and make music we want to make. We don't have any limitations. If we want to make a flamenco song, we make it. If

we want to make pure black metal songs, we do it. Our music has the potential to be liked by quite a lot of people, and the reactions we've gotten towards Neonism show that as well. Lots of people not normally into metal music are really into Neonism. People that don't listen to metal and don't read heavy metal magazines are starting to listen to our music and enjoying it. They are having problems with the harder parts and songs like Fluorescent and Speed Increased to Scaffold. They really like songs like tracks number seven and eight, for instance (Backback Baba and Third Person Plural), without the harsh vocals. It's interesting to see that it is breaking borders between musical styles and audiences, which is really positive for us.

With someone that plays music like yours, I have to ask. What does your record collection at home look like?

Oh Christ, I have 1500 CDs! It's everything! I'm a really huge fan of the progressive movement of the late 60s and early 70s. King Crimson, Gentle Giants. Also I'm a big fan of the really early Norwegian black metal movement. I kind of enjoy Venom and Bathory as well, but that's not really my cup of tea. I'm a really big fan of Mr. Bungle. I also really love Anglagård, a Swedish progressive band. They released 2 albums in the early 90s. Fabulous albums! There's also a Swedish jazz group called Esbjörn Svensson Trio. That's really nice music. Loads of different stuff. A lot of breakbeats. Squarepusher. Do you know Squarepusher?

I'm a die hard metal fan. I like a lot of the more off the wall metal, so I have these problems when I talk to you guys and you name all of this other stuff! I just like it when it has the harder edge and moves into the realm of metal. Like the last Death album, totally progressive...

Yeah! Yeah! Have you heard of Aphex Twin? I have heard of them, but not too much by them.

I really love them, or him I should say, as well. The videos are brilliant as well, made by Chris Cunningham, who used to do special effects for the Aliens movies. I'm inspired by lots of different music, which is why Solefald sounds the way it does.

How did you get together with Cornelius to do this kind of music?

I actually met Cornelius in Paris! We went on the same trip and I got to know him in Paris. We found out we had the same interests when it came to music. Back then we were both die hard black metal freaks, so we decided we wanted to do black metal as well. We got together to record a demo and we discovered we wanted to do more than just black metal. In many ways the die hard black metal had already outdone its role. That would have been 94 or 95. We wanted to incorporate something else into the black metal. We had the same ideas when it came to that, and that's how we started developing this musical companionship.

How old are you guys?

I'm 23, and Cornelius is 21.

This is a problem. Everyone making the music is younger than I am! I'm going to be turning 25 in a couple of months. That's one of the things that kicked me into starting the zine, reading where all these people are 18, 19, or whatever and they're doing something and I'm not!

In Norway, it's like that. People start really early with the music. If you're into music, you usually play in a band before you're 14 years old. It's really easy to be playing in a band in Norway. It's quite easy to find a place to rehearse. It's not too expensive either because you have this arrangement that the state has for you. I guess that's why there are so many bands in Norway. Same thing in Sweden actually.

Is it the same as in Sweden where there are so many bands that there aren't any actual fans

and it's tough to play shows?

That's the weird thing about Norway. We have a population of 4.5 million people. Which is nothing, that's the whole country! And we have all these bands. Anyone who likes black metal plays in a band! That's also why everyone plays in each other's bands as well. If you look in different Norwegian albums, there's always somebody that plays in another band. In that other band, there's another guy who plays in another band. Everything is intertwined.

So when there are actual shows by Norwegian bands in Norway, is it the kind of the thing where people sit there with their arms crossed?

It depends on who's playing. If Mayhem is playing, the audience is going crazy. If it's one of the smaller bands, then there's the audience standing there with the arms crossed, judging if it's good enough. It's getting kind of big. We've had black metal bands playing national TV shows! It's getting up there.

Wasn't Covenant up for some music award this past year?

Yeah! I was actually in the jury. I've been working as a music journalist for the past 4 or 5 years. This is the biggest music award in Norway, like the Grammys. There's this metal category and usually it's been handed out to bands like TNT for instance, bands that are kind of metal, but not very hard. This time it seems they wanted to change that so they elected a jury of people who are really into metal. People like me! We had Covenant and Dimmu Borgir fighting for the main prize.

When the Grammy nominees were announced here last year it was a big surprise that Judas Priest was on the list! Wait a minute, they really are a metal band!

Then you start thinking, it is a metal category, maybe it should be that way! This is real metal, this is the true metal!

I'm just getting tired of seeing all of the Alice in Chains, Nine Inch Nails, heavier stuff but it really isn't metal. Hey, let's actually talk about your band while I have you on the phone! How do you put your songs together? It just doesn't seem like you just do a riff, build around that, and there's a song...

We make songs with Cornelius playing guitar and me playing the keyboard. We make them at my place. I have a 4 track recorder and we just make riffs and record them, we listen to the different riffs and we start with one and we try to develop it. Many of the guitar riffs are kind of simple standard riffs but when you put the synthesizer on top it's getting twisted! We usually just start with one riff after we've made a whole bunch and develop it from one riff to another. We always have this other riff that we are supposed to end up with. Then we just take it from there. We have no boundaries when it comes to using riffs we like, so that's why you have this twisting and turning in the music. On Speed Increased to Scaffold we found out we really wanted to have an electronic part in the middle of it, so I just sat down and programmed it and tried it out. We thought it worked. We just did it. We're just jamming! We have tapes and we try to construct vocals on top of it, and we exchange the tapes. It goes back and forth until it's finished.

Are there any specific elements one of you favors over the other?

No. If the riff is good, if the music is good, we'll use it, no matter what. If we want to make a classic album, or an album with flamenco songs, we do that. But right now I don't think you have to worry too much about that! We've made some new songs for a new album, we're entering the studio again in the summer of 2000. Cornelius just moved to Paris to study philosophy, so we had to make the basics of the new songs before he left. That's what we did! We wrote 10 new songs.

10 new ones already?

Yeah!

Wow. How are those going to be as far as being related to your sound now?



More metal related, actually. More straightforward metal. That's concerning the drums and guitars. There will be more synthesizers and of course the vocals haven't been made yet. We're still sending tapes and CDs back and forth.

How advanced with all of these ideas was your demo compared to *The Linear Scaffold*?

We definitely had the same ideas. For instance on one song we had a bagpipe solo! We thought about this idea of incorporated red music in all the black, which is where we came up with the idea of the 'red music with black edges' explanation for our music. We had the ideas, but they're not as apparent there as they are on *Neonism*. It's normal to develop afterwards from the demo and each album. But we're still really pleased with the demo. It was recorded during one weekend in a barn. A friend of ours had an 8 track. We're actually releasing that on CD in March or April, together with 1 completely new song that we recorded during the *Neonism* sessions. It's quite different from the other ones so we saved it. There are also going to be quite a few songs remixed by other people.

Are these going to be the electronic remix types.

Yes. **Ahh. Not exactly my favorite.**

The artists will be quite different from the other ones that black metal artists have used. We'll have a remix made by Monumentum, there will be one remix done by the Cranes. I play in another band called GodCom together with Mark from the Cranes. That's a side project. I asked him to remix a tune and he said yes! There's one remix done by Ildfrost, on Cold Meat Industries. It's kind of gloomy, the things he does for Cold Meat Industries. Soundtrack music from the middle ages, basically. He's doing a remix of CK II Channel #6. It turned out to be a totally frenetic drum and bass song. Really cool and really hard! It'll be interesting.

I hope so. I can only promise to give it an open ear.

That's one of the funniest things because on the same album we'll have all these techno remixes and we'll also have the 4 songs from the demo which is the raw black metal side of Solefald. And then the 1 totally new song. I guess we'll have 11 or 12 songs on the album. It's meant to be a service to everyone writing us and asking for the demo. We only printed 300 copies and we sold that demo out in 10 weeks or something. We didn't print any after that. We are getting tired of answering everyone saying 'No, we haven't had that demo in 3 or 4 years!' And we thought it would be great fun to have the remixes as well on the same album, just because we wanted to. I do techno on the side, I have a project called djij [yes, that's how he spells it - ed], which is more drum bass related music. I'll release an EP under that moniker in the spring, only on vinyl. Limited to 100 copies! Just for the fun of it.

that a lot of Norwegian bands, especially ones that come from black metal, seems to be going in the electronic direction these days?

I don't really know! I spoke with Chris from Ulver, you know, Garm, who's a good friend of mine. I spoke to him about the electronic movement with the black metal scene in Norway. It seems many people just grew tired of the metal expression it seems. Other people want to experiment and try mixtures. The thing with Ulver is they just turned into a techno band. Garm doesn't listen to black metal anymore. It's another thing with me and Cornelius. I still love black metal, I listen to black metal a lot. I would never give up black metal for techno but I don't think there's anything wrong with mixing the two expressions. Techno can be extreme too. If you mix two extreme expressions like drum and bass and black metal, it creates really interesting results. For example, the Arcturus remix album. I see what you're saying, but Hagalaz Runedance just put out an EP with several remixes on it, and to me the idea with the techno and what original material meant in the first place, that's a clash in the spirit of things. I know a lot of black metal is concerned with the ancient cold past.

I think it depends on the band. With a band like Ulver, it was a really weird turn after *Nattens Madrigal*, which was the rawest black metal album they released. And they went straight into the techno stuff with the *William Blake* album. That was weird. With a band like Arcturus, it is

kind of natural. They had that in their music all the time. Since the first EP, they've had that aspect of the music. It's kind of the same thing with Solefald, we've had the opportunity to have the electronics in the music all the time, and it seemed really natural for us this time. But the 10 new songs are very much more metal because I do a lot of techno on the side so it split things off. I concentrate a little more on the metal parts with Solefald. I don't see the harm in mixing them. Perhaps it depends on the band. If you play in a black metal band, singing about the mountains and forests and the fjords of Norway it does seem kind of weird to jump on the electronic wagon. But if you do like we do in *Neonism* singing about the lights of the city basically, it's more natural.

I understand you're joining Borknagar?

I have joined them, actually. We're working on new material with Oystein (oy-stine). We were supposed to go into the studio in December but it's been delayed until January. Peter (Tagtgren of Abyss Studios) called us and asked us if it was OK to come in January instead of December. It actually is quite OK with us. It gives us more time to prepare. I sent Oystein a tape today with suggestions for synthesizers on 4 new songs.

I saw them when they were here with Emperor a couple of months ago. I thought they just blew everybody off the stage.

That's cool to hear! **Borknagar is one of my favorite bands. The last two albums have just been amazing. So you better not screw them up!**

The new stuff is even better. It's going to be really cool. We're planning on coming back to the States in about a year's time for another US tour, with me on keyboards! The keyboard parts will be there live.

The packaging for Solefald is definitely unique.

We hope so, that was the intention at least. The first album had a painting by a contemporary Norwegian painter called Odd Nerdrum. A really special style because he's a naturalist. He's kind of abstract, which is why we wanted to use one of his paintings. We got his permission. On *Neonism* we used a well known Norwegian fashion photographer, and we just spoke with him about ideas we had for the cover and band pictures and we developed the ideas with him. What you see on the background of the front cover is Times Square. The little girl is a lovely little 5 year old girl called Heidi. She was the little sister of the stylist. We had to keep her in the studio for 5 hours before she looked like that. It was a little mean but it worked.

Poor kid! What's the deal with all of your eyes?

The idea of the band pictures is that we wanted to have as much conflict as possible. You have a conflict between fantasy and reality. A conflict between earthlings and aliens with removing the eyes and just having black in the eyes. A conflict between peace and violence, a conflict between new and old with the knife and the hidden gun. We just wanted to make a picture that makes you stop and wonder. That's the basic idea behind the picture.

How did you manage the special boxes for your debut when you were an unknown commodity?

It was Roberto from Avantgarde who suggested it. I'm not quite sure where they print their albums but they have all these special kinds of cases. I know one other band that used the same packaging once, and that's WASP on *Kill Fuck Die*. Apart from that I don't know anyone using that box. It's a digipak basically, but with a plastic frame. We thought it would be a nice trademark for Solefald. It's worked so we're really pleased with it, and it looks good as well.

Definitely. It stands out. Now about your vocal style. You're responsible for the black metal vocals?

No, that's Cornelius. I do all the clear singing. **How do you work out the vocal melodies? There's a lot of multitracking going on.**

I use the 4 track. We always make a demo before going into the studio. I have all the music on one track and I have 3 tracks to experiment with the vocals, so I try and fail and write different vocal lines and make them fit. My style is kind of inspired by 2 vocalists, basically. Mike Patton and Simon LeBon. I really love Duran Duran for some strange reason, and I've always really liked his vocal style. I wanted to have clear passionate singing and special harmonies. I think it works.

I have to ask, on both of your CDs, the one thing that stands out and blows me away is one

the last album, When the Moon is On the Wave, the end where it's just the piano and the screaming going on, that's it! That's different! Who's idea was that?

The story of the ending of When the Moon is On the Wave is we recorded *The Linear Scaffold* in 7 days, which is not a lot of time. Cornelius did all of the harsh vocals in one day. His voice was kind of tired when it came to the end of the day. We just came up with this idea that it would be interesting to just have the piano to represent the melodic side of Solefald together with the screaming. His voice is really worn out. You can hear that! This is him giving everything he's got left in those text lines in the end. We thought it would be a nice ending with the melodic side and the harsh side, stripped down to just the basics. That's it.

Most albums make sure they start strong but not many end on something memorable as well, and that does do that. As for *Neonism*, I'll admit I've only had it for a week so I'm still listening entirely on repeat, or skipping around, so the beginning to end flow hasn't hit me yet.

I think it will. We sat down and put down the album very carefully when it came to what songs were supposed to go where. We have the same ideas for that one as we did for the *Linear Scaffold* as well, just executed in a different way.

How do all of the vocals work when you play live?

He has no problems. I have no idea how he does it. He can scream and scream for hours without getting hoarse. None of our albums have effects on his voice other than echoes. Most other bands use effects to have a harsher roar. Cornelius doesn't need that. It's just echoes and reverbs.

How do you do your vocal parts live?

I just do the basic lines. We have one voice live. Our music is hard to do live so we had to strip it down live. The keyboard arrangements can be really hard to do live. Sometimes there are 3 or 4 lines of keyboards and they're all doing different stuff. I have to extract the basics and play that and do that live. We don't do very many shows with Solefald. It's basically a studio band. We have 3 live musicians we can bring out on tour if we want to but since I live in Oslo in Norway and Cornelius lives in Paris in France it's hard to do pull things together like that. I'll also be on tour with Borknagar quite a lot now, so I don't see very many live Solefald performances in the near future.

The lyrics on *Neonism*, reading through, are you embracing pop culture or mocking it more?

It's more mocking. CK II Channel #6 is the fashion industry taken one step further. We compare Calvin Klein to Charles Darwin. The way we see it Calvin Klein is one of the foremost representatives of fashion culture. He is kind of a modern Darwin in many respects. It's like Darwin preached the survival of the fittest rule in Origin of the Species, and what Calvin Klein does is the same thing, except what he preaches is social survival. Of course, fashion is the main thing you have to keep up with socially speaking. That's why you have so many girls starving themselves to death because they want to be thin like everyone in commercials. It's an attack on the fashion industry and the system surrounding it and what it has done to us. With our other lyrics, *Neonism* is a very urban album in many respects.

Solefald is an urban band, which is quite uncommon for black metal bands. Most black metal bands sing about forests and trees. And Satan. Which is kind of ironic since most black metal people live in cities and have all their lives. What they see of nature is when their parents have taken them to the cottage in the spring during Easter or something. We want to be honest with our audience and our fans. We don't preach things we don't believe in or say we do things that we don't do. I love the city. I'm not very fond of nature. I'll probably be shot for saying that as a Norwegian! If I have to travel out of town I have to bring with me a piece of asphalt or city air in a box!

Yeah, I'd like nature more if it was inside.

Yeah! <laughs> Same thing with me. I hate bugs, I hate rain... I don't like that part of it.

Give me the cool breeze and the picturesque mountains and leave the rest somewhere else.

I agree! Most black metal bands preach this very romantic view of nature. This is where we come

from and we should honor nature. In Norway we have these huge mountains and the fjords, blah blah blah. Black metal bands are doing a Norway commercial!

Whoa, whoa... commercials?

Many black metal bands, singing about the nature. **Oh, like tourist announcements with the nature!**

Yeah. In Oslo, we have a black metal tourism. People come, especially from Germany, they come to Oslo to see the churches that have been burnt down and meet the people who play in black metal bands. It's really funny.

Especially Germany. How many bands do they have on their own? It's like in the Lords of Chaos book, there's this picture, frozen-over branches with the caption 'The frozen landscape of Norway.' Well this is relevant to what's in the book!

What did you think about that book?

I wasn't familiar about the author beforehand, but I learned about him afterwards. I was actually kind of shocked with his right wing affiliations.

Yeah, Blood Axis. When I read it, I was really pissed. It's not portrayed in the right way. If you read Lords of Chaos, you don't get the right impression of what happened here. On the other hand, it's so clear that the guy who has written this is supporting Varg Vikernes (varg VEEK-ernez). He looks up to him in many respects. I was really pissed by that. I've written in a Norwegian newspaper about it that people shouldn't buy the book and they should be aware of what this author does on the side with Blood Axis and the right wing.

It surprised me because when I read it I got the impression, I don't know if it was just my revulsion of the political mindset of Burzum, it seemed to me it was more exposing that this guy's an idiot.

It might be different. I know everything about everything that happened in Norway. I've been in the middle of this thing. I know these people. What I saw was it was done in the wrong way. He left his right wing philosophy showing through the book. I can't stand the book. He had a Norwegian co-writer, 'Didrik Soderlind, he's always been fascinated by right wing politics and fascism. It's not my kind of book, put it that way. What it does is it gives you a general idea of what has happened, and the relationship between the harsher parts of black metal and the fascist movement. But oh well.

That pretty much does it for me. It's been pleasant talking to you. Most people from Norway, it's like pulling teeth trying to get them to talk.

I know. It has to do with the way Norwegians talk to people in everyday life. We're not big talkers usually. You have the exceptions. Like me! It's harder to make me stop talking! Thanks for showing interest in Solefald.

One last question. I'm interviewing Mikael from Opeth in the morning. I thought it would be interesting if you could come up with a couple of weird questions for me to ask him.

Opeth? Let's see. I haven't been listening to Opeth since the first album.

Shame on you!

<laughs> About the first album, I think a lot of the melodies are reminiscent of melodies from German drinking songs. Ask him if he's inspired by German drinking songs.

Uh... will do.

Try to make it sound positive! <laughs> I think it's a brilliant album, don't get me wrong, but some of those melodies are reminiscent of German drinking songs. Ask him if he's having a hard time finishing songs because all of his songs are 10-12 minutes! <laughs>

OK, will do. Hopefully I won't get hung up on for that one!

Again, make it sound positive!

Well I'm going to blame it completely on you anyway!

Of course! No problem!

OK, once again, thank you. Good luck with everything, and I'll definitely be looking forward to the Borknagar album.

Brilliant! Maybe I'll see you on tour then.

www.uio.no/~arnecb/solefald.html

www.avantgardemusic.com

VIRGIN STEELE

time,
it's
not

The

resurgence of melodic metal has done some real good the past couple of years. For me, personally, the cool thing is that great American bands such as Virgin Steele are starting to get their proper due. They've been around forever, releasing their epics of great heavy metal for mainly European consumption. For most of the '90s, one David DeFeis (De-FAY) has been in charge, and Virgin Steele has been all about creating grand epic concepts within their albums. The House of Atreus Act I, out on Noise Records, is the current masterpiece out on the shelves. Check out what David has to say, then go get yourself some musical education and find out what epic REALLY means.

So how are you doing?

Still hanging out at the studio, working on the second half of House of Atreus.

Any idea when that half will be out?

Probably the same time next year that Act I came out this year. There might be a prerelease single in May.

I'll have to admit I got Invictus in July and that was my first introduction to Virgin Steele. You guys have been around a long, long time and I'm coming along pretty late in the game. Care to go over some history?

Virgin Steele was formed in October of 1981. About 3 weeks later we were in the studio recording what became our first album. It was done in less than a week, live in the studio, it cost under \$1000 to make. We began sending cassettes of it out to various metal magazines such as Kerrang! and Metal Forces and so on. The response was quite favorable so we said 'Hey, there might be a market for this,' so we pressed our own vinyl, 5000 copies, and sold them out quickly. We pressed another 5000 and before those were sold out we had gotten our deal in Europe with Music For Nations and in the US with a company called Mongol Horde. We were MFN 1, actually, the very first release on Music For Nations. Before Metallica, before WASP, before Manowar, before Mercyful Fate, before Ratt, those came later. That company was first called Food For Thought and their logo was two sunny side eggs so we called them Over Easy Records. They changed it to Music For Nations. Then followed Guardians of the Flame in 1983, then 84 was the EP, in Europe it was called Cry in the Night, in the US it was Waste in the Night with a different tracklisting. Then Noble Savage, Age of Consent, Life Among the Ruins, Marriage of Heaven and Hell Parts I and II, then Invictus, and now House of Atreus Act I. 1982 was the year the first album actually came out, but we recorded it in December 1981.

You've certainly been at this a long time. The last few records haven't had a US release. When did that start where it was a European only thing?

After Age of Consent came out. Life Among the Ruins to House of Atreus Act I it was just on European import, but now we have Act I released in the States again. We'll see what that brings Europe has always been very very good to us. We tour there regularly. We're hoping to duplicate that in the States, the environment seems more conducive to that now.

How does that feel for most of the 90s being shut out of your own country?

At first it was quite a big drag and frustrating. Then, who gives a shit? They really like us in Europe and we have the opportunity to go there and play there so hey, nothing against the people, it's the way the business works here. When they want to get hip and get back to what's going on, then we shall return. Meanwhile the people in the know in the US would get the import and get them directly from us. It's OK, there's always been fans in the States. Fans are the same all over. There's just this blind insanity of the way the business works here. You had to be Guns n Roses, or Def Leppard, or that whole Seattle thing. We never fit any of those things.

You're definitely unique. You can hear hints of this band or that, but there's no one band you can point to and say 'Virgin Steele sound like them.' What was the evolution of the sound over there years?

In the early stuff, the first album had these big epic songs like Children of the Storm or the title track Virgin Steele, and Danger Zone. Then there was more of sort of a Van Halenish thing, a hot rod type of sound. It was somewhat more chick orientated in some spots. So it straddled both in the early days, because living here and being influenced by Van Halen as well as the whole European schtick and Led Zeppelin too. We always had our foot in both worlds and even in later albums like Life Among the Ruins it's more leading towards bluesy Zeppelin kind of thing. But the epics were always there from the beginning. The second album had Guardian of the Flame, Redeemer, these big, grandiose tracks. We gradually, as I started taking over more and more of the writing, I'm very much at home with that dramatic big epic style. The songs take on more of that with each release and get more and more epic oriented.

The last few records you've had this big concept going.

Yeah! The Marriage of Heaven and Hell Part I, II, and Invictus is one big story. They are separate albums and each is self contained but they are a trilogy concerns two characters and their incarnations throughout history. The male character is Endymion and the female character is Emalaith. The war of humanity against the Gods is what those three records are about. The House of Atreus Act I and of course Act II is based on 2000 year old Greek myths. They've changed, I've altered them along the way quite a bit. It's still pretty faithful to the story of a Greek writer called Eschylus. There's quite a conceptual theme going. Even Noble Savage and Age of Consent, they didn't have an obvious concept, there isn't a story through those albums like Atreus, but there is an overall arching concept, that architecture that keeps things cohesive.

When did you first get started getting interested in mythology?

When I was a little kid I lived in a theatrical household. My father has a theater company here in Long Island, probably as far back as I can remember I saw rehearsals of Greek tragedies and comedies, Shakespeare, contemporary work, all kinds of stuff. So it always sparked the dramatic side of me and I took to reading myths like water! This particular story that House of Atreus is built on, in all my wandering through the lands of myth, those people and that story stays fresh in my mind, probably because the characters are very human. It's a very real story. It's a timeless tale. It could happen today, it could happen 5000 years from next week. It's the kind of thing that's always there. I was drawn to it for that reason. It's this dramatic work of love, hate, it has aggression, and a very supernatural quality with the gods and goddesses.

There's a struggle going on, there are four murders that happen. It's heavy stuff for metal, for opera, for music in general.

The whole thing with mainly fantasy metal, things like Rhapsody with the big sound, I hear people compare some of your concepts to theirs, and it's not the same thing.

That stuff is more Tolkienesque, Lord of the Rings kind of thing. When you

see the the adverts, the imagery, it's all Lord of the Rings. The lyrics are all elves and things Freddie Mercury was singing about on Queen I and II. March of the Black Queen, songs like that.

Do you think the American metal community can take to this? Most of them are still into death metal and can't stand proper singing.

Some people have an aversion, they're into that gruff death thing and they don't want to hear anything else. But I think people go through things at particular ages. At one point in your life you're into this, then you move on. As you experience more genres over time you tend to be openminded. Virgin Steele fans, if you're into Virgin Steele, you tend to be more openminded anyway because there's so many elements to the thing. You wouldn't like the band if you're only into one thing.

What is the basic age category of the fans in Europe?

It's like 14 or 15 to 50. People who liked metal when they were young, or even rock like the Beatles, those people are still there. There are people that are 40 to 50 years old at the shows, with their kids! It's amazing. It's a broad thing. It's mixed female and male, with us. It's quite cosmopolitan.

I have this habit when listening to things of listening on two levels... how I like it, and then wondering how everyone else will like it. For most people in the US, Greek mythology is probably more of a high school English topic. I'm wondering if you think metal fans would go for something that exists only in high school classes?

I don't think it matters. It's not a history lesson you're getting here. It's emotion. The tale is timeless. It doesn't matter that it's set 2000 years ago in Greece. It could be set today in New York City or Detroit. The characters are very familiar, the events are very familiar, it's happening every day when we open up the news. I do give a synopsis in the record of what's going on if you want to delve into the myths. That's there. Go to the library, go to the internet, check it out. But the overall feel of the thing, it isn't necessary. It's like Invictus, if you didn't pick up Marriage I and II, you wouldn't be aware of the story but it doesn't matter, you get the emotion, you sense what's happening. It's not crucial to follow line by line, word by word, as long as you can get that emotion. It's something you grab pieces of over

something you grab right away and the flavor wears out like gum. It stays with you.

On the new one, it seems that there's a lot more of the piano parts between the metal songs, that there's not as much of the metal epics on the CD.

This is the first act. It sets up a lot of the action for things to come. There's a bit more focus on how the story should come off, for example the part with Cassandra, I wanted that to be delicate. Not as abrasive as some of the other tracks. On the second record there's more aggression as the plot thickens and things get hairier. There's a logical development. It was supposed to come out as a double album and things would be better understood if you had the records side by side. Act I while it is complete it does leave you hanging. If you do follow the story you realize nothing is resolved, it leaves you at a crisis point. The second act wraps things up and there are more tracks like Through the Ring of Fire. Being an opera, I wanted it to be true to both worlds, metal and classical music. I didn't want to hold back and say 'It needs more guitar and less piano', this is what it is, these are the songs, take it or leave it. Under the banner of what it was supposed to be, a heavy metal opera, there is the freedom to do that. Some people who only want to hear crunch, crunch, after crunch crunch, might be put off with other moments. But that's not my problem. I'm into music, I'm not into being pigeonholed into this one area. Under the banner of what I call metal, the delicate moments are metal, because of the harmonic vocabulary, the phrasings that I use.

If you're a student of metal and of music in general, you can distinguish between the genres, not because it sounds like this or that, but really knowing what you're dealing with as far as harmonic vocabulary and rhythmic framework. It still is metal. It's deep shit, you know? You have to wade in deep! You won't get it at the first listen, and you shouldn't!

How have the typical Virgin Steele live shows gone?

They're very much high energy affairs. We prepare many, many songs from the releases for the tour, so the shows are never exactly the same every night. We're not a band that does 15 songs every night, over, done, same show every night. It doesn't happen. We jam, we strip some songs out, we shorten others, we change the set list nightly. It's in the vein of how Zeppelin would tour. Dazed



and Confused could be 20 minutes! Not that we go that indulgent on any of the tracks. But there is a spontaneous quality. I'll write a set list and then I won't look at it all night. I'll just call them out based on what I feel the audience is responding to and what our mood is on any given night.

How has the opera been set up?

There's a theater company that is presenting the opera. There are 11 actors and actresses on stage live. What they are singing to are early mixes of the record, minus my lead vocals. It's like Virgin Steele playing behind the curtain, but it's on CD. The actors and actresses do the vocals live, that's how it's working. I didn't have time to finish both records and mix them and rehearse and perform them. This thing was performed for the first time June 3rd, and we were still recording and mixing.

Just the idea of that, it does sound a little strange. We all hear about Germany being this metal heaven, but has anything like this been done before?

No. Not to my knowledge. We definitely broke new ground. A lot of people have talked about it before, but nobody had gotten it from the thought stage to where you could go see it. It was performed 18 or 19 times in one theater, and it was the most success they'd had in 38 years! Then it went it on tour in 22 different German cities. It'll start again in December for another run. It's quite successful. It's so successful we're doing another one in the Spring of 2001. In the same theater, we're doing the *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* as an opera. Most people talk about things but I'm already working on my second one! Don't let the grass grow under your feet. Keep on, keep moving. My philosophy is I'm young, I got energy on my side, while I have it, let me do what I do. There will be a time when I have to sit down and rest but that time is not now so I want to do what I can do. I don't want to wait until the right time, it's got to be the right moment, the planets have to be aligned. Fuck that. I'm aligning the planets! That's how it's going. Move that stone! Get my chariot ready! Yeah, we're off!

Have there been discussions about shows in the US?

Now that the record's been released, we do want

to play here, yeah. We're not doing shows at the moment, I'm still in the studio finishing up *Act II*. As soon as *Act II* is done, we're going to prepare the reissue of one or two of the early records. As soon as that is ready and done, we'll go on tour for quite some time. We'll do Europe, we'll do shows in the States, Australia, South America, and then I think we'll do a live album. Before we get too far ahead of ourselves, we should look back, recap, and present all of these things in a live application. We do different things to them, they sound different live.

Has there been any talk of doing the whole House of Atreus show in the US?

I'm in discussion with a few people.

It would probably be someplace like New York, right?

Probably, although it could tour like the German company.

Yeah, but you'd skip the Southeast. I get tired of having to consider road trips!

In Europe, people think nothing of traveling 6, 8 hours to do a show. You're in Germany and people will have traveled from Italy, the Czech Republic. It's getting a bit messy over there, with so many bands being signed, but it's still cool.

Yeah, but the bottom dwellers there can still sell 10,000 copies. Here the bottom dwellers don't do 1000.

Yeah, and this is a big country. It's weird. The labels just have to work it more. You know, over here I'm on an American division of a European company. They have a European mindset but it's a different market. They have to get more into the head of how business is done here and how bands get broken out.

How big are you in Europe? Are you at the point you make a living?

I live off of this, I don't do anything else. It wasn't always like that. It's only been in the past 5 or 6 years.

That's cool. So many people have to hold down full time jobs.

And then have to quit when they go on tour. A lot of it is really down to selling enough records, and keeping your overhead not so high. It's worked out for us through sheer hard work and being in

people's faces.

How's your following outside Germany?

South America is really good. Australia is just starting to happen now. Japan is OK. The States, we started off with a bang. It's been building through the imports and the internet now. It grows once again.

You mention the internet. You have a website going, right?

Yeah. We have the home of Virgin Steele, the official website, and then Noise Records has their site, and then there are many sites that fans have done. There's the Invictus site that is done by this guy Nicolo in Italy. It's quite cool. Stefano Ronzoni has a cool site. There are sites from all sorts of countries. I sent the official sites all the information and photographs to get them started and I send them things from time to time. I don't do the work but it is done by the Australian record company. I check it out and read the guestbook. Some of the quotes are pretty amazing. If ever I feel like I can't go on, if I hate the engineer and want to kill him, I'll read that and see that people are really into it, they're behind it, they're expecting more. I can't let them down, I've got to keep going.

As someone who has experience with both, what is the real difference between the American and European markets?

There's a lot more magazines and the business works more on print and live performances in Europe. There's more exposure with MTV and the radio here. Over there you don't have that except in places like Spain and certain parts of Italy. Largely, bands gets broken through touring and through the magazines. The European mindset is different. And what we do appeals to them. It appeals to something innate in their psyche and their spirits. But it's more radio and video here.

One thing I absolutely have to ask. Have you seen the movie Clash of the Titans?

Yeah but it was a hundred years ago I think. I remember it was a cool movie, it had the guy who played Penguin on Batman, Burgess Meredith.

What did you think of old movies like that with those special effects like Jason and the Argonauts?

Great stuff! I like the old movies about that time. Spartacus, Last Days of Pompeii, Ben Hur. I like chariot racing, that gets me going! Also, the old witchcraft movies like Blood on Satan's Claw, Horror Hotel, I loved the first Highlander, I loved Excalibur. That was all very very appealing to me.

Just because of the imagery, I think I associate Jason and the Argonauts and that stuff with your band. There aren't a lot of Greek myth bands out there!

I've been exposed to a lot of that. Maybe I'm an honorary Greek along the way! We've played there. It's enormous! They have this passion for us. It's over the top. It helps that I had this theatrical upbringing. It's natural for me to walk around in that headspace. I've been walking around with the gods! It's natural. Not just the Greeks, there's the Romans who stole a lot from the Greeks. Sumerian myths, Celtic myths.

The last couple of records you seem to be sounding a bit more like Eric Adams when you sing.

I don't know, I've been singing this way my whole life. To me it sounds the same. The first record had higher, screechier stuff so that was different, but I don't know. I have tapes of my cover bands doing Robert Plant and Freddie Mercury and it's always sounded the same to me. I sing to what the song calls for, whether it is to be aggressive, tender, or high, midrange, whatever it will fit. I don't try to sound like anyone else and when I was in the cover band I was never particularly successful in copying anyone else's sound. My voice is my voice.

Anything else you wanted to add?

I'm just happy to be back, and have the record out in the States. Hopefully all will continue to go well here as it is in Europe. We're going to do a film, a video for the House of Atreus. We're going to compile footage from the performances. We'll finish up *Act II* and then be out to a town near everyone soon. Time to take to the highway again! Listen to/virginsteel

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wuthering heights

That I put this album at #2 on my 1999 Album of the Year list should be all you need to know about it. Hell, I even put it above *Opeth* on one poll online just to give them a boost. They deserve it. Imagine Rhapsody's arrangements, (not sound or cheese, even if Rhapsody is SO yummy cheese) with more of an Amorphis sound filtered through a very metal melodic framework (think a more flowing old Helloween sound) with very progressive structures and you'll approach Wuthering Heights' genius. And the lyrics are SO GOD DAMNED GOOD that Wuthering Heights has matched Katatonia and almost Skyclad in my book of inspiration. And you'll throw the disc on and you'll STILL be surprised. Eric Ravn, head mastermind (notice most good bands are the brainchild of one guy?), called one blustery day to discuss *Within*, the grand poobah of progressive power metal, out on Sensory Records, which you CAN find in US stores. If you don't see it, DEMAND it!

So how are you today?
Basically OK. I read your review online. It was the first time I've ever been compared to pepperoni.

And clean bums on the street instead of all the dirty ones.

I think it was quite nice.

You've been sitting on this recording for about a year.

The cover artwork was delayed. We tried for a long while to get a license deal with Japan which fell through. The label didn't want to bring out the album just before Christmas, but we ended up doing that anyway this year. And then they didn't want to release it in the summertime. I don't know, I'm not into all this business. I just went along, and now it's been a year. Two years since we did the first demo version.

It has to drive you absolutely nuts!

Yeah, I'm getting stranger and stranger. <laughs> It's finally out. I know our local metal magazine has it now for review so I'll have proof that it actually exists! I haven't actually received a copy myself. It's taken a year to get this far, what's a couple of months more.

It doesn't sound dated or anything. It sounds fresh.

Some of the songs are from the beginning of the 90s. The Wanderer's Farewell has been on every demo recording I've ever done.

What label is it coming out on in Europe?

Different distributors in different countries. In Scandinavia it's Voices of Wonder. Point Music in Germany, not so sure about the other countries. I guess Laser's Edge in the States.

How did you start coming up with this musical style?

I wish I knew. Just a mix of my various influences. I started off in the late 80s just listening to metal. I was influenced by Helloween and all this speed metal. We just started to do that. It came out a bit strange. I couldn't make my songs fit into standard verse-chorus stuff. A couple years later I began listening to progressive stuff like Dream Theater, and the later Riot stuff. I was very taken by them. I totally fell in love with Irish folk music and it took off from there. I listen to a lot of different music, almost all genres. I try to do what I think I like the sound of. Hopefully it will work.

The songs are years old, it has to drive you nuts seeing all these Rhapsody references, even in your press bio.

We did melodic speed, when Helloween was just out, and we did gothic viking metal before there was any black metal scene, and we did orchestral stuff before Rhapsody even existed! Not to say I'm very innovative, but it's strange that people beat you and get their albums out quicker.

Do you think it helps that someone else has already gotten out there and gotten big to pave the way?

Probably.

It's not like you sound like a copy.

We have certain elements in our music that maybe other bands have the same elements. It doesn't mean that we copied them. For the symphonic stuff, I copied classical music. Rhapsody copied classical music. It's not like I copied Rhapsody!

Do you play out live?

Every so often. It's a bit complicated with the vocalist in Sweden. There's not very many places you can play this music here. We've only done a couple of gigs. When we do get a gig we get all fired up and blow it all away. We've had a few fiery gigs!

Have you kept the lineup together?

It's been stable for a couple of years now. The last lineup change was when we did the demo CD for *Within*. We had a deal with Prophecy Productions, we did the record, and then they didn't want to release it. So we were stuck with a finished record. It sounded terrible because of the studio. We had to make changes. The vocals didn't work, the drums didn't work. Our vocalist became our drummer and got Kristian Andren for our vocalist. Prophecy thought we were a gothic thing. I've never hidden what we were but I understand why they did it. They signed us on a demo tape that had a very dark sound. They believed it was something else. I never hid anything from them! Laser's Edge came in and saved the day.

With material like yours, you definitely have a good production.

It was a very nice experience being in the studio for the second time. We knew what was to be done, we'd already recorded every detail. We had a different way of working, everything worked, we came at a scheduled time, we left at a scheduled time. It was not like when we did the first version. We were scheduled to begin at 11am and we got to work at 4am the next day! It was a different experience. Of course, with very good producers who understood what we wanted. Also the new lineup worked. Very professional.

That always helps. At what point in time did Intromental get involved?

Just after we'd signed to Prophecy. Intromental had just started up. I've known the guys since way back and when they started it was natural for us to join them. We've been with them since the beginning. They've really been able to help us. They have a lot of connections.

For the album itself, there is a concept going on?

I've always cared a lot for the lyrics. It's my main inspiration for the music. I write the lyrics first. It revolves around experiences from my own life. You could call them autobiographical fairytales. It's not the Rhapsody type fantasy type story. It's based on reality but presented in a mythological kind of way. It's a journey, a quest for insight and a quest for peace of mind. A quest to retain sanity. The music itself is kind of therapy for myself when writing. It's not a continuous story. Each song is a chapter in my life. It's planned as a trilogy, three steps on the journey to evolving. Each of the songs can be enjoyed on their own as well. There are recurring themes like the wanderer and so on.

I don't talk to that many bands that work with the lyrics first and then build the music around that. I don't know if it's because I'm not a musician, but I read a lot of novels, I read everything I can, and I appreciate good lyrics a lot more. I hate bands that make music and just throw in lyrics just to have some there.

I've discovered that people usually write music the reverse way than me. If I don't have the

lyrics I don't know where to get inspiration for the music. If you want to be sincere in your expression the music has to fit with the lyrics. I appreciate good lyrics. I don't think very many bands live up to the standards I at least try to reach. Of course, Skyclad is the ultimate goal for mastery of lyrics.

Oh yeah!

Martin Walkyier is god! He's the master poet of time! He's a huge inspiration. I'm a big fan of Tolkien, he's another master of words. Big inspiration. If one day I can do one lyric that would live up to the Martin Walkyier standard I'll be a happy man!

I read some of that stuff and I'm blown away by his lyrics. The last things released here were Irrational Anthems and Oui Avant Garde A Chance, and it seemed to just die. Nobody cared. That just sucked!

It's a very small band in Europe as well. They're always struggling. That's part of their appeal. They are true working class heroes! They don't sell very many records at all. They haven't played a gig here in Denmark for five years. The last time they were here 30 people showed up. You can't live on that. The people who know them respect them deeply. There's so much crap out there and the best band in the world doesn't get any recognition! It's a strange business.

That has to be frustrating. One of your main

inspirations can't get anywhere and now here you are trying to make a go of it. Hopefully they'll get a new a new label that can push them better.

I thought they'd do something when they got on Massacre. Part of the problem is they are so original, you can't put them in any genre, really. But what would we do without the progressive bands? They are truly a progressive band.

Where are you from originally?

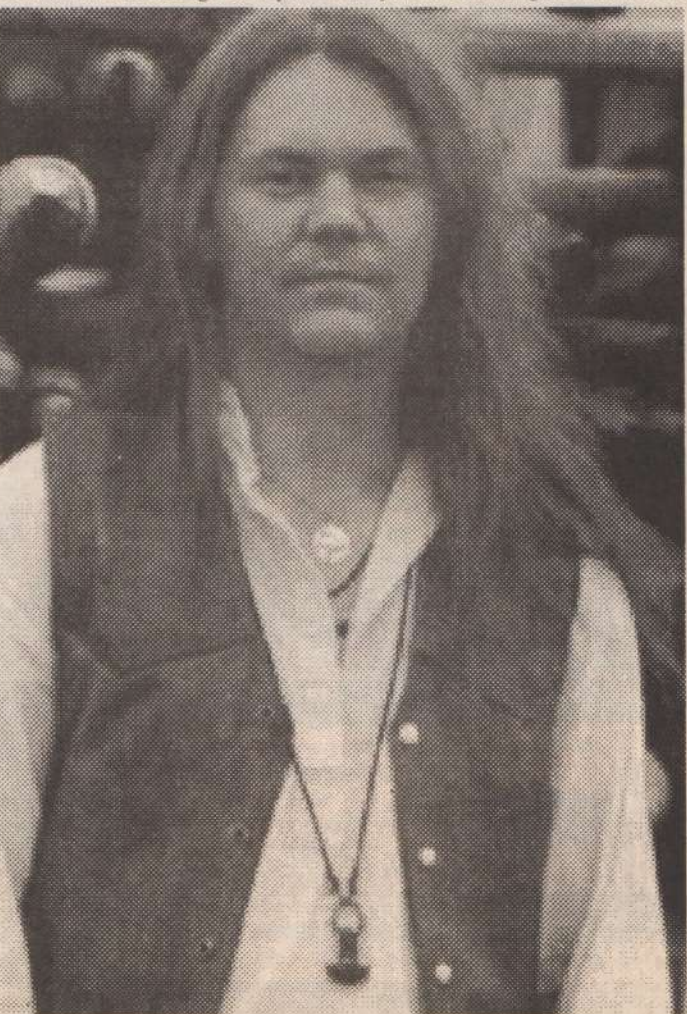
From here, a suburb of Copenhagen.

You write English very well, you speak English very well, I wonder what foreign language education is like over there.

Usually we're quite good at English. We have to learn other languages. Nobody in the world understands Danish! From TV and everything, language education is quite good as well. For me personally, it's a hobby of mine. I love language. I'd like to speak more languages than I actually can. It started with Tolkien. Of course I've read his main books like *Lord of the Rings*. Then I started reading the reissues of old manuscripts in old English. Totally exciting stuff! It took off from there. I try to experiment with writing in archaic styles. I just fell in love with words more and more. It's very important to me to have this high standard in my lyrics. With this kind of music, this symphonic and progressive stuff, you can't have Anthrax style street language. Things have to fit. I drive people crazy saying strange things and making long elaborate sentences. It's a bit of fun.

Throughout the CD, almost everything is completely yours, music and lyrics. There are a few songs where other people make contributions. How does that work. Are you the musical dictator?

I've never set out to be a dictator. It started when I formed my first band in high school. Nobody else could come up with anything. It came out that way. I started off writing and felt I could do this so I just kept on doing it. I've never prohibited anyone from contributing but it's never been that



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much. It has to do with the way I write. I don't show up at the rehearsal room saying 'Hey, I have a new riff, let's make a song out of it!' The other guys each are the master of their instruments, so for instance the drummer will invent a better drum pattern than I ever could. The whole structure and feel of the song is my work.

The name Wuthering Heights, how did you decide on that?

We've had a lot of names. Every time we come up with a really good name someone has stolen it! That's the way it goes, someone has always released a record before we have. It had to say something about what we were doing. I was against all these new so called progressive metal bands, you know, Dreamscape Theater, Labyrinth, I found it to be cliché. I wanted something to be a little different. I've always known the book and the Kate Bush song. I was just listening to the Angra version so I said let's go with Wuthering Heights! It's the only thing we could agree on. There's no deep meaning. It fits with the way I see the band. Not that intellectual, we want to entertain and pull off a big show with lots of lights and bombs and stuff. It fits the music.

The symbol you've got?

It's the old English letters for W and H. It's for fun. It's nice as a little thing for teenage fans to write all over their papers and things. I remember that, drawing pumpkins and things.

How old are you?

I'm 25.

I'm going to be 25 next month, but I didn't get into Helloween until 2 years ago. To me the things you'd draw on your notebooks would be like the TS for Twisted Sister.

I got into metal quite late. I started out with Europe and The Final Countdown. If they hadn't done that I would never have played metal for sure. That was the start of it all. Two years later I started listening to the old stuff like Ozzy and Iron Maiden. When I heard Helloween I was totally sold. Now I want to do heavy metal! At the moment I'm rediscovering things from before my time like old Deep Purple and Rainbow. To do music like Deep Purple, these guys rule! If I ever become 50 years old I want to be like Jon Lord! I'm listening to a lot of old stuff.

I've been going back and getting the old Dio and Rainbow stuff. I was two months old when the first Rainbow album was recorded, but holy shit! I can see some people's point when they talk about how good the old days were and how much crap comes out today, but a lot of that is that have only the good stuff from the old days and they are hearing EVERYTHING that's coming out now.

There was probably a lot of crap in the 70s but you forget about them because you only have the good records left. I have a huge record collection. I like getting a lot of stuff. Especially now that a lot of it is on CD you can get a lot of those old records. I've done that. Bought all these 70s bands. I really like the pomp groups of the 70s like Styx, that's why I like this huge sound. I've never understood the grunge scene. Lets get together in a garage and play boring music very loud with three instruments. I don't get it! If I could do quadruple vocals on everything, you know? I don't get it. I guess it's the same way when punk started as a reaction to this symphonic stuff. If it sounds good, what the fuck?

When grunge hit death metal was also really big. I guess there was two ways to go to get away from pop metal. Luckily I found death metal because if I found grunge that would probably have led to Korn and all these things. I've never been able to catch up on everything. I've never been able to tell Red Hot Chili Peppers from all these other bands, Nirvana, Rage Against the Machine. I don't know any of the stuff, it all goes over my head.

Since 1992, I've been effective cut off from the real world of music. Which is great when writing reviews! That sounds like something I heard on the radio but I have no idea what it was! In the US we have this idea of what metal is in Europe and how popular it is. Is it in any way connected to music in general or is it an underground thing like in the US where if you're into metal you're probably cut off from everything?

It's on a lower level than what it was before but it's still recognized as a genre. From time to time there's a good metal album and people recognize that. Denmark is a poor metal country. We've

never had big metal bands and not many people come to the concerts. In Sweden and Germany they have a metal 'scene' where you can tell by how a person looks if they're into metal. I don't think Denmark is a good example but definitely metal lives. Also in Spain and Italy and Greece it's bigger than it's ever been with cool bands. Maybe the scene has moved to different countries but in Europe in general the scene is a lot bigger than what I believe there to be in the US. There are still a hardcore following here in Copenhagen that keeps to the old values, so to speak. We have one hard rock place with live music, we have a metal record shop, and those are the centers of the scene in Copenhagen. Most metal bands in Denmark are harder than Wuthering Heights. They are death metal, black metal. Possibly the only band in Denmark we can be compared to is Royal Hunt. They are really unknown in Denmark but they're huge in Japan. It's part of the Danish mentality, you're not supposed to be too good or too famous! In Denmark it seems things have to be mediocre.

A lot of people in metal are into mediocrity.

The biggest success in Denmark right now is Manticora. They're with Intromental as well. They are on a Greek label and they're huge down there. They've sold a lot of records. We share a rehearsal room.

Is there a division between the death and more traditional scenes there?

Because there are so few metal fans we stick together. We get along fine. It's not like Norway with all the different directions of black metal making war. It's a little more calm in Denmark. We want to listen to a little metal and drink some beer. Not all that serious.

The one part on the record that sticks out on the record is the middle of Sorrow in Memoriam. It's almost a death voice going on there.

That's actually myself singing there. It's an old song. Sometimes I write these parts with too many words for the real vocalist. I have to pretend I'm Martin Walkyrie and do it myself. It works. In the middle of all these symphonic beauty stuff, here's this burst of rage.

I was wondering how you'd get Andren to do that. You didn't! Who comes up with the vocal melodies, you or Kristian?

That's me. So far. The songs were more or less finished when he joined. The melody lines were designed to go along with the song. It's not like you can improvise the vocals. To get the harmonious choruses you have very certain ways the vocals have to be. I write in melody lines. The music is more or less the backing of the melody. It's more a pop thing, really. <laughs>

How did you get hooked up with Kristian?

Through Intromental. They searched for vocalists and chose Kristian. It turned out great. He's a very professional guy. He really boosted the band to another level. In Denmark there are no vocalists. That's just a fact. We had to go abroad. There are probably 2 or 3 vocalists in this genre in Denmark, period. There's one of the previous guys from Royal Hunt but he's not in music anymore, and I can't think of anyone else, so we had to go abroad. I wanted to avoid the typical progressive metal vocal. A lot of new bands sound the same vocal wise. I like vocalists with a certain degree of individualism. Every really great band has a vocalist with a very distinctive voice. Not necessarily the technical best vocalist, but I'll always prefer Peavey Wagner or Martin Walkyrie over these very technical, high pitched singers. The vocals have to go along with the sometimes evilness of the lyrics. That was a problem with the first version of the record, the vocals were too nice for the lyrics. I really think it works.

Is it weird having someone else singing these things that you wrote?

Yeah. In the earliest days I sang them myself. To no great success, really. So now I only do the growling and high pitched screaming. Kristian suits the lyrics very well.

Does he still deal with the other bands he's been in?

He still in Fifth Reason. They're trying to get a label deal. He has this project with Mike Wead called Hemisfear. I guess that's just a recording project. Just Fifth Reason then.

Half of everybody in Sweden has a project with Mike Wead.

You have 20 musicians and 100 bands! I like a lot of Swedish stuff. I was a huge Hexenhaus fan, as

well as Memento Mori and Candlemass. It's the same people in all the bands, it's funny. I visited Kristian in Stockholm and met a lot of them. Meeting your idols and drinking them under the table! We had drinking session with Fifth Reason when they were down here. 4 out of 5 members of Fifth Reason ended up puking the same night. It was a beautiful thing!

Definitely not the usual progressive metal talk! No highly trained classical musicians here!

<laughs> It's all just a bit of fun.

One thing I like about you guys is a lot of progressive metal bands forget the metal part...

I never set out to be progressive really. It's so strange, I don't know how much you have this true metal thing in the States, but here it's 10 bands every day making records and calling themselves true metal and wearing spikes and leather. I don't know what the true bit is. I don't think being true should prevent you from being innovative and progressive. I just want to play heavy metal! And I want to do it originally. There's so many subgenres, I don't know what to do with them. If it sounds good, I like it. If not, who cares? People need to label their music. It must be because they have nothing to offer!

So what's in your future?

I've written the next three albums already.

<laughing> Oh god!

The next album we've already played several of the songs for a couple years. So it's just the last adjustments and then to the recording. It's going to be a little more technical, more progressive but with the same basic elements like strong melody lines and the folk bits. Symphonic sounds. Of course lyrically it's the next step of the journey, a bit darker. Perhaps more strange. I really like some of the new songs. It's the same thing but I've learned better ways of composing. I've found my own way of doing things.

How long before you get caught up with your writing and album releases?

I've never stopped writing throughout all of this. If getting record deals would stop you from writing... I have lots of ideas. I took a week off for the first time in two years and I wrote a new album! I'd like to do totally different things on the side. For so many years I've concentrated on the heavy metal band, I'd like to do some other stuff too. It's all a matter of time really. To get the time to do it all. As long as you have to keep a day job

it's tough to rehearse enough and to compose. It's quite nice to have a lot of material already.

Any touring possibilities or fun stuff for this record?

Practically, it's quite difficult to fit into our schedules. And we have no money! If the label wants to pay us then we'll do a tour but we can't afford anything. I don't think there will be any large touring.

What do you do in your day job?

I work for the city of Copenhagen collecting taxes. We have a wide variety of jobs in the band. We still have one guy in high school! The drummer is a chef. That's nice! Our keyboard player is an engineer for Nokia mobile phones. Kristian installs security alarms for old people. We have a new guy in the band too, a new rhythm guitarist, the younger brother of our manager, to be able to reconstruct our sound live.

What are your three favorite movies?

Star Wars I-III. No. Willow, a Danish movie in the Middle of the Night, and everything by Monty Python. Wait a minute. My favorite movie, of course, Braveheart! That's the greatest movie of all time. How could I forget that?

Three favorite books?

Lord of the Rings, Silmarillion, and the Hobbit.

What do you think of the movie they're putting together?

It sounds interesting. I really feared it would be some Disney Hollywood crap. That would piss me off. I can't imagine how they can make Lord of the Rings, but OK. I've heard a rumor that Blind Guardian will do something for it.

Have you seen any of Peter Jackson's previous work?

I'm not sure. He did Brain Dead?

One of the bloodiest horror movies ever!

That fits better than Steven fucking Spielberg! I'm thinking this is either going to be a disaster or anyone who can make a movie like that is obviously tweaked enough where he probably grew up on Tolkien too!

There's a lot of places you can go wrong there. It could be terrible. Let's hope not!

Any final words?

Let's hope people check out the record! That would be nice. I struggled for a decade for it. And then of course, as always, ugly people have a right to sex as well.

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ENCYCLOPEDIA CHAOTICA

I said to Warrel Dane directly that I loved everything he's done except that Sanctuary's *Refuge Denied* 'sucked.' Well, a year later, I've finally gotten ahead of it and given it some serious listens. Warrel, my man, you ARE excessive on the window shattering shrieking, which is where I went wrong on the CD in the first place. Other than that, good stuff! Fates Warning's first three albums kick my ass. John Arch is annoying in the same way Warrel was on *Refuge Denied* (in fact, Arch never, EVER leaves the stratosphere...), but the music... WOW! If only Ray Alder, singing as he does now (and not pretending to be Arch as on *No Exit*), would somehow rerecord the vocals over that early, METAL, music. Whew. I'm going to go so far as to say *Night on Broken* is one of the better records I have EVER heard. If Arch had been coming up with serious lyrics and not just witches and covens and moonlight, would Matheos have gotten tired of the whole style? *Savage's Dead Winter Dead* may be the most powerful metal album of the 90s. Justly. I don't understand people going all gooey over Dream Theater yet the 'Tage only achieve success through the platinum selling side project Trans Siberian Orchestra. Say what? I now have 9 of the 11 Savage albums... and I know where to find those other ones! I mention all of these for a reason. Fates Warning's first 3 albums, both Sanctuary CDs, and at least 8 of the Savage CDs are all bargain priced. I found many of them for \$10.99 at Tower, and some for as little as \$6.99. Check into your local record shop or CDNow and go for it. American metal in the 80s (and 90s for that matter) was far more than Megadeth, Slayer, Metallica, and whatever else. And a hell of a lot better too.

TO ALL BANDS, WEBMASTERS, AND EVERYONE ELSE: When setting up your website, I understand getting your own domain name is a pain in the butt, and it costs money. Go to http://come.to and get a FREE domain name, such as come.to/swano. That way, your URL may still really be www.freehost.com/freebie/x642-hg/music/band/mainpage/index.htm but you'll be able to give people an address they might actually want to keep track of.

ALBUM OF THE ISSUE

OPETH (SWE) *Still Life* PEA
 \$\$\$\$

Fredman-Nordstrom-7-62-29
 Like there was any doubt in the world what was going to be in this space this month. First thought was that the production is better than My Arms Your Hearse. Maybe even better than Mornignise. Mikael's singing voice improves tenfold each album, and no exception here. Yes, he's now 1000x the singer he was on *Orchid*. This album is basically a refinement and perfecting of the My Arms Your Hearse style of writing much in the same way Mornignise was compared to *Orchid*. The cover art isn't simple anymore which is shocking that I notice something like that. Still, a truly striking Travis Smith art job is hardly a negative. I've had this only a matter of hours as I write this first part of the review so you're getting just some thought blasts. I feel fortunate to have Opeth as a favorite band because the past couple of months I've been hearing from Megadeth and Queensrÿche fans who were, ah, less than pleased with the developments Risk and Q2K (a very shortsighted title that only Skyklad could ever get away with using) had musically. Nevermind the millions who feel shit on by Metallica. Within 30 seconds of throwing this on I felt relief, then joy as yes, this WAS Opeth as I love them, and they have hit another home run. I knew within 30 seconds. It starts off with acoustic guitars and the magic conjured when acoustic guitars are recorded correctly can NOT be matched. They do lots of acoustic over distorted guitar combinations. A lot more changing up between the clean singing and the VOICE growling. I'm sorry, Mikael's growls are the fiercest, most powerful, and distinctive in metal. PERIOD. Lots more guitar leads in here too which makes me smile as air guitar to leads is a lot less limp wristed than air guitar strumming like I end up doing to MAYH. I just realized Opeth could do an all acoustic album (a la Ulver's *Kveldssanger*) and I wouldn't be worried about whether they could still be Opeth. Shortest song is 5:01 and four songs are 9:00 or longer, one reaching 11:28. The longest songs are the opener and closer. Right here I'll stop writing for the first night I own this. At this very early juncture with 5 weeks (HA! -ed's later note) to go to press I still can't imagine anything knocking this off as Album of the Month. Well see... OK, some time has now passed and this album is no less amazing. In fact, the talent that lies within this band is simply... no, not 'simply.' The talent within this band is incredibly vast. So monstrous is this work of art that if making albums were a competition, then Opeth has clinched the championship spot because this is IT. While it would

be arrogant of me to declare this amongst the best albums ever (not that arrogance has ever stopped me before), I do realize only time can make that determination. This blows away any album presented in these pages in the past year. Easily. There is a reason that Opeth is my favorite band. Several actually. I can say with great confidence that in comparison to Opeth, your favorite band sucks. And swallows. I feel like a very, very bad writer since I lack the ability to convey the utter divinity, importance, and enjoyability that this CD just purveys. I daresay if you don't like this album or Opeth then you're in some way mentally impaired because this sets the standard of what music should be. Emotional, skillful, and with purpose. Time to face facts, people. Brutal death metal and unholy black metal are as much status quo filler as NSync or B*Witched. Yeah, some of them can play guitar. NSync can sing. What's your point? It lacks conviction and soul either way. Yes, I am pissed at each and every one of you because while the 2nd and 3rd Opeth albums have been the best metal has to offer, sales haven't corresponded with that. To every fan that does not have Mornignise and My Arms Your Hearse in your collection... EAT ME. But there is still time to repent and join Opeth's mighty legions. Go pick up *Still Life*. Why should you? Why do I think this is great? Dynamics, my boy, dynamics. Opeth's acoustic passages are not the most serene or folksy out there. The more brutal parts really aren't especially brutal (in fact, this album has a laid back vibe compared to the first 3). Force them into a head on collision, and you have perfection in music. Serenity interrupted by chaos interrupted by serenity etc. It keeps your attention. IT DEMANDS your involvement. It engages your intellect and still manages to satisfy your darker instincts. Produced perfectly. Written wonderfully. It tells a story. I'd wager the entire thing is a sequel to My Arms Your Hearse as it is another ghostly concept album, starting off in summer and on the search for a loved one left behind. It isn't necessarily the sequel but god damned if it is... this is entirely emotional and every time I hear it and read it there is so much more to find... and English isn't Mikael's first language? I defy anyone to remain unmoved after the 1-2 punch of the acoustic Face of Melinda and the entirely death metal assault of *Serenity Painted Death*. I could go on forever. Every page of this zine filled with my thoughts on Opeth's *Still Life*. Every riff, every space left empty on disc, every drum beat. But I'm probably belaboring the point as it is. If nothing I have ever written has ever moved you to explore a new band, please, just this once, listen to me. Without this band we're all nothing. Support Opeth. Buy *Still Life*.
 www.opeth.com

ABADDON INCARNATE (IRE) *The Last Supper*

SOM
 \$\$\$
 7-7-11-40-25

Explosive, violent, chaotic death metal. I can't deny the energy and power but I can deny the relevance of it all. I'll have to go ahead and give the nod for you brutal death heads who skim through this thing to check out what I'm hating lately. Actually, you know what this reminds me of? Brutal Truth's last album if they had spent more than \$20 to record it. This actually really seems CHAOTIC. They keep up with the pep and energy for 40 full minutes and they don't lose me once. Morbid Angel with the sick odd leads over the soaking distortion rhythm guitar style feeds into my brain when I listen to this too. OK, so this isn't brain dead. The cover is a comic book rendition of a demonic last supper, and there are songs named Temple of Rancid Filth, Forced Osculum Infame, and The Sharing of Truths with the Dead. Yes, it said 'laughs.' So yes, while I have to say I am impressed with the execution and pure SOUND of this thing, in concept it remains entirely retarded. Better than Suffocation, Decide, Internal Bleeding, Broken Hope, and 10 more US death-metal bands you can think of in terms of pure oh-my-fucking-godness. If Strapping Young Lad were orthodox death metal, they just might sound like Abaddon Incarnate.

AGENT STEEL (USA) *Omega Conspiracy* CAN

\$\$\$\$
 Bill's-Versailles & *-10-51-11

No, John Cyrus is not here. Yes, this is an old ass band reforming. Yes, Bernie Versailles has the immortal shame of being on that awful fucking Engine record. So what exactly does this record have to offer then? Ten songs of ass kicking, sci fi, power-cum-thrash metal. Ten years older, and for once wiser, they temper their aggression with not-so-aggressive (but certainly still metal) parts, arranging those so when they DO kick it in, what's kicked in is your face! This

BAND NAME (Nation)- Title- Label

Money Worth Scale:

\$= This band should not exist

\$\$= Weak and useless record

\$\$\$= OK, but there's so much better out there

\$\$\$\$= Best-of subgenre, should appeal to all metal fans

\$\$\$\$\$= Essential, masterful metal for ANY metalhead

Studio- Producer (band-produced denoted with *) # of tracks- Time of CD

Contact information for the band will be given when known. Contact the label if you're interested and information is not given. Finding good music shouldn't be difficult, but while it is, please do your best to search it out.

Some of these reviews were to be run in issue six and are further organized.

In these reviews, the writing is broken up into M (music), V/L (vocals/lyrics),

P (production and packaging), IB (Info Bits), N/C (Notes/Comments).

kicks ASS. Vocalist Bruce Hall tears shit UP with his clear, powerful, non whiny tone. But when he goes up for the notes... YES! YES! YES! If thrash metal had sounded like THIS back in the 80s instead of Kreator, Voivod, or Slayer, then I wouldn't have been such a metal latecomer. I feel soooo sorry about putting ANOTHER \$\$\$\$ rating in these reviews, but the amount of great stuff the labels put out before the holidays was humbling. The only thing holding this back is that while each and every single song kicks ass, they all tend to kick ass in the same way. A common formula is soft verse, THRASH chorus, soft verse, 'lets show these stupid children how its done' solo breaks, wild finish. But who cares? AWAKEN THE SWARM! (I've already completed a 2 hour interview with Hall that will run next issue. (First thing out of his mouth... 'So Jim, what's up with the Twirlygirt?' Aaaaah!))
 PO Box 1043; Sierra Madre, CA 91025-4043
 www.msstate.edu/~teh2/agentsteel/agentsteel.html

AMON AMARTH (SWE) *The Avenger* MB

\$\$\$\$1/2

Abyss- *-7-36-11

Do you like the idea of all of those 'viking' bands (Falkenbach, Einherjer, Thyrfing), but thing all those ice skating keyboard melodies and full belled Odin clean vocals are a bit much to swallow? Hmmm... Amon Amarth is the answer to your problems! Amon Amarth (Mount Doom) from Tolkien... I swear that looking through the glossary at the back of the Silmarillion is like unlocking the secrets of all heavy metal! gives us songs about things like the Naglfar, Ygg, Oden, the Rainbow Bridge, Thor, etc. Song titles like Metalwrath, God His Son and Holy Whore, North Sea Storm, and The Last with Pagan Blood tell you what's going on lyrically. Musically? True Norwegian Crap Metal (tm) did do something useful... that widdly riffing style automatically brings 'Norway' to mind. That is useful for scenery in a viking album. Make no mistake, this is a death metal styled album, but instead of your monotonous chugga hugga US styled takes-not-almost-just-practice song filler, we have that black metal widdly traveling up and down the fretboard. Much more interesting, and heavy metal, things happen around that. Some of the prime riff patterns do quite rule. Vocally it's that scream-y Gothenburg style but the mix is proper so he won't get on your nerves. The cover and packaging just RULE as well. In the end, a solid, SOLID album, definitely at least as good as their debut full length, but at the end of the day it's just another good solid metal album.
 www.amonamarth.com

ANAL CUNT (USA) *It Just Gets Worse* EAR

\$

Headroom- *-39-32-35

I have every Anal Cunt CD ever made. They suck shit. But they are so fucking awful they're good as camp. Songs on this one are You Robbed a Sperm Bank Because You're a Cum Guzzling Fag, Chris Barnes is a Pussy, I Lit Your Baby on Fire, Easy E Got AIDS From Freddy Mercury, I Fucked Your Wife, etc etc. Lyrics included this time. AC are a big zero musically, but I can't stop laughing my ass off at this, and if they hadn't sent it, I would have gone and bought it.
 PO Box 650101; W. Newton, MA 07465

ANCIENT (NOR) *The Halls of Eternity* MB

\$\$\$

Flying- *-11-61-30

Ancient's last album, Mad Grandiose Bloodfiends, was a spectacular album that was also highly controversial. About half of the reviews I saw HATED it, the other half thought it was quite adventurous and different. I liked it, myself, even if it was good as theater and not as anything 'important.' Well, ah, the band pretty much broke up, but then again they seem to do that EVERY album, and Aphazel went back home to Norway and got some new people. The result? A more straightforward album that reminds me more of the Cainian Chronicle, but with a lot of the MGB 'spice.' Black metal, yes, but not blazing unholy darkness from the pits of hell bluuuuaargghh! type of stuff. Of course there's the female vocalist ('Deadly Kristen, if you can believe it), a drummer named Kngise, and the returning (for one song which he does completely) Jesus Christ! And a bass drum sound that is BEYOND bad, but everything else sounds good, so

what the fuck? Anyway, this ends up sounding like Caliban Chronicle... not at all bad, but you just want to hang yourself after 60 minutes of it.
www.ancientband.com

ANGEL CORPSE (USA) *The Inexorable* OLY
SSS1/2

Morissound & Audioblab - Morris - 8-34:29
I'd like to randomly point out here that I just threw Voivod's *Nothingface* onto the stereo for the first time in a couple years. I've always hated that CD but with recent, ah, revelations I've had I decided it was time for another go. Too many smart people love that band for them to be as bad as I remember. And sure enough, Belanger's vocals are still pretty naff, twice, or whatever Terrorizer inspired adjectives I could nick to say 'suck', but musically it is pretty fucking cool. So what does that have to do with Angel Corpse? Haha, not a fucking thing! About Angel Corpse, I must mention that the release of *The Inexorable* on Olympe Records is a great big fuck off to the Osmose 'American office'. Angel Corpse is still on Osmose but after 2 years Osmose USA is incapable of fuck all. And I do want to point out how annoyed I am that this stuff gets Mercury distribution, and bands like Sculptured don't. But anyway: Fast, pounding, just driving death metal, with heavy Morbid Angel sound choices combined with some frantic riffing and Motorhead parts in there. Completely effective, actually, and TONS better than when I saw them open for Cannibal Corpse. The live sound lost the subtleties and made it sound like a big wash, which isn't. The big negative with me of course are the vocals, which are a powerful black rasp, but completely uniform throughout the entire CD, offering little variety in pace, delivery, anything. Still, for your brutal maniacs, this is a perfect CD for ya. Oh, and about Joe Petagno. He DOES do some good stuff, but for the most part his work (including his cover art here) is just more realized versions of stuff I used to scribble on my notebook at school.
PO Box 273797, Tampa, FL 33688-3797
come.to:angelcorpse

ANGEL DUST (GER) *Bleed* CM
SSS1/2

Woodhouse - Bemmi - 12-65:08
I won't bullshit you people. I can't! Century Media advertises a lot, and frankly saves my ass almost every issue. So I give their CDs more of a chance than I do from a lot of other labels. Let's face it, there's a lot of music here for me to sift through. My priorities are finding the incredible bands and making sure their CDs are pushed in this zine. If I gloss over a good CD because it didn't catch me on one of its three listens (actually 'ambient' CDs get 1 listen, sometimes not even that... I don't know/care enough about the genre anyway so what could I tell you?) then oh well, my zine isn't the only thing you read anyway, now is it? You're not going to buy 20 CDs because I say so anyway so guess ahead over 5 instead of 10 is probably giving things more focus. That is very underground to say, eh? In the end I piss all over as many CM bands as anybody else's so it averages out. Of course, there comes a time when Century Media wins out because of the extra time I give them. Angel Dust's *Bleed* is one of those winners. Originally I dismissed this thing as a rather plain example of heavy metal, but multiple listens was indeed the key to finding the special qualities within. You see, this isn't a 'power' metal band with screaming guitars all over the place. This is an old school style (without being oldschool, even though the band is about 15 years old... confused yet?) heavy metal CD where there's nothing that couldn't be on the radio (including slow sappy ballads...!). There's also a strong keyboard presence which I guarantee will cause some lamebrains to cry 'progressive' when this certainly is not of that ilk. Lots of piano and other sounds that give this a much more sensitive, listener friendly approach than a HAIL METAL one. All in all a CD of consummate quality... problem is, if it is all 'song' based, it shouldn't have taken a half dozen listens to find something to snag onto...

ANNO DAEMONICUS (USA)-INDY
SSS

Cryptic - Crowell & Fogge - 9-53:48
This is another one of those reviews that I lost when the computer went blah... So here it is, very short and very sweet. Completely unoriginal. They look stupid in corpsepaint. They have schmoey names like Glocksenspil and Elris Daemon Warrior. The clean vocals need some help. On the plus side, when you're being completely unoriginal sounding like Arcturus' *Aspera*... album, then you're doing well, you're worth listening to, and you show much promise for the future if you can put your own voice into an already cool framework. The schlock may go over well for live shows, and if so go with it, but sitting here with 50 CDs on my desk and looking things over, cheap gimmickry just doesn't cut it for me. Old Arcturus fans, take note.
697 Sawyer Rd, Greene, ME 04236

AS DIVINE GRACE (FIN) *Supremature* AG
SSS1/2

7-7-10-45:28
Downbeat, female fronted gothic rock out of Finland. Like most Finnish bands, it has that certain something that makes it stand out and at the very least be not crap. I don't know what's in the water up there. Maybe nothing. Maybe it's just a Finnish thing to hate bullshit. I doubt that though. As neither a listener or fan of this atmospheric, laid back rock, I can't give you references to their sound, but the word that immediately springs to mind and does somersaults is 'classy'. An interesting array of production choices makes this sometimes sound like something out of the 40s, and the entire thing is haunting. The vocals of Anna Kalske are just, well, very tasteful, and she's quite good at things, coming across sounding like a cross between a lounge singer and somewhat like Annieke van der Grinten (from generic stupid comparisns 101: Female Fronted Groups chapter). Cool.
PI 2; 21570 Sauvo Finland
Listen.to/asdivinegrace

AZTEC (ISR) *Loss of Our Final Pride* RAV
SSS

Muskat - Tananbiom - 10-41:27
No, I have no clue why there is an Israeli band called Aztec either. As far as the music, what we have here is some Gothenburg flavored metal with more doom influence in some parts and more blast in others with a completely guttural female singer. The booklet is nice and thick but there's no lyrics so I have no idea what songs like *Abused in the Future*, *Until the Holocaust*, or *Wolf's Dirge* are about! And there's no excuse with a booklet that fucking big! OK, 8 pages isn't a novel but yeah, it might as well be when you don't use them! Aside from that massive peeve things aren't that bad, but it sounds like a broken record when I say that having a good sound and good ideas (and that they have) are not enough if after it is finished playing you're more excited by the idea of the band than any of the actual songs you heard. Potential out the fucking wazoo here but unrealized.

BAL SAGOTH (UK) *The Power Cosmic* NBA
SSSS

7-7-8-40:29
M- I've never heard Bal Sagoth's first 3 albums. And as I listen to this for the first time, I have only one thing to say. HOLY SHIT! There goes my money as I buy Bal Sagoth albums 1 through 3. This is beautifully expansive as keyboards and guitars share importance equally in a celestial combat of mystical powers and fierce swordplay. For the most part uptempo, speed metal collides with the Conan the Barbarian soundtrack as a van full of old Arcturus and Savage records slams into their sides. Theatrical, dramatic, huge, pompous, and complex yet dark, magical, and fast. METAL! I don't have the proper vocabulary to properly expand upon this so you'll just have to trust me. It is to my shame and disgust that this is the first I've heard of these guys.

V/L- Perhaps the weakest link of the Bal Sagoth formula would have to be the vocals. There are two main voices: Byron's deep speaking voice that comes across almost as narration but with a rhythm that tells you it's some sort of chanting singing, and his mid range Cradle of Filth wannabe tone. On one hand neither is particularly impressive, but on the other hand I barely notice either voice when the music is in full tilt because it is just OVERPOWERING. Lyrically we have atypical fantasy tales being told as band leader Byron (Is that Byron? Who does he think he is? Madonna?) is a complete backword and sucker for the works of many, many excellent writers and he's taken that inspiration and made something not at all cheesy out of them. It won't be mistaken for intellectual, philosophical importance, yet well crafted stories are worthy in and of themselves.

P- Perhaps the only shortcoming of the album is that individually, you can hear that the sound on the instruments is kind of thin. Yet the sound is so thick with layer upon layer of guitar and keyboard and more guitar and keyboard the weight and density of the whole covers up any weakness that could possibly be heard. The only CD I can think of with a similar multilayered numerous tracks of doom pomposity would have to be Blind Guardian's *Nightfall in Middle Earth*, and Bal Sagoth wins the sound stakes there as it's all crystal clear. NIME had the tendency to be at times 100 recorded tracks of almost sludge when the thick guitars slammed all over the place. Bal Sagoth has one of those mixes and quality of sound that one can only dream of.

IB- The Power Cosmic is their first album on Nuclear Blast after 3 on Cacophonous. I own the exact same dragon blade sword that Byron had in his promo shots for *Battle Magic*, and I'm pictured with it in LotFP #2. Bal Sagoth is endorsed by a medieval arms manufacturer for use of items in promo shoots, live shows, and videos.

N/C- There is so very much to take in here. It truly lifts my heart to hear musicians... no, artists of such caliber and musical accomplishment that still have it in them to sing about sci fi and fantasy topics, that do promo shots carrying swords and wearing armor and have big power armor knights on their cover. Any band that owes their existence to RE Howard, HP Lovecraft, Michael Moorcock, and JRR Tolkien will find appreciation in my house. Those of you 'tired of' or 'too mature' for fantasy based lyrics can fuck off and become bankers because imagination, soul, and drive are all that sets the wolves apart from the sheep and to shut off your creativity or work that celebrates it is nothing less than suicide. Bal Sagoth are embodiments of the past, present, and future of metal and it's time we all woke up to that.

BEHIND THE CURTAIN (DEN) *Till Birth Do Us*
Part SEN

SSS1/2
Aabenraa - Hansen & - 9-55:21
As the piano melodies of the intro, I Believe come out of my stereo speakers, and then the startling start/stop of Snap begins, it is time for the official LotFP rant on what progressive metal is. Opeh is. Death's *The Sound of Perseverance* is perhaps the very definition of progressive metal. Can you believe I left that off my top 10 of 1998? I'm an idiot! Cynic's *Focus* for sure fits. Fates Warning is not. It used to be, but isn't now. I've come to the recent conclusion that Dream Theater... is NOT. I've decided that metal is 50% sound, and 50% urgent spirit. Metal is something that NEEDS to be let out, not something that is calculated in delivery. What does a slow crawl of almost-not-happening like Skepticism, 'happy' power metal like Labyrinth, and the 'evil' of Marduk have in common... that Dream Theater or, say, Behind the Curtain lacks? The answer to that is metal spirit. Now that we've decided that, let me say that the heavy progressive rock of Behind the Curtain is just killer. I mean this is real brain food. And it IS heavy enough to sonically be prog metal. This is pretty heavy... and pretentious enough to deserve respect as this is a higher class of art, and not some jump-on-the-trend. The sound is great, with Jacob Hansen having produced bands such as Without Grief, Aurora, Illdisposed, etc. This ain't pussy shit. I feel once again entirely inadequate as the bio says the band is influenced by, and people who have heard them say they sound similar to, Psychotic Waltz (Hi guys! I know at least one of you is reading. Send me something so I can include you in my January Decade in Review issue! Hell, send me EVERYTHING... Mike G says you can use it for a tax writeoff!). Of course now I get to actually turn into a REAL reviewer and REVIEW the music instead of saying 'ah, this sounds like that' and moving on. Let me take a breath. I mean everyone knows interviews are my strong point. OK. First point is that I wouldn't waste this much space on a shitty band. Oh, you want more? These guys are real craftsmen in putting their music together. Using what I can only call tender melodies, they weave a web of slower paced melancholy... without being doom. Their slower, REALLY non metal moments are what bring this down that \$1/2 it's missing so I'll gloss over those saying it sounds just too sappy and dare I say, commercial. Zero of interest there. Luckily the majority of the CD contains more adventurous material, alternating between guitar and keyboard driven. It's not often used, but the appearance of start/stop rhythms occurs often enough and is striking enough to be the most memorable portions of the CD, especially when the guitars and drums are going off mini-Meshuggah but the soft keyboard parts are rambling along overhead unscahed. As a matter of fact there is a general disjunction going on between the guitars/rhythm section and what the keyboards are doing. In a good way. In an artistic way. Different. Interesting. When they all go together they HIT like a hammer, and you're swept up by the current, for sure, no questions asked and no answers given. The guitar leadwork is for sure almost on the level of 'dark heroics'. Batman was a superhero but had no super powers... get it? Subtlety even when diddlydoocing off... I guess this is why I complain during the 'calm' moments because when everything gets behind the roaring keyboards it all sounds way too normal, and I'm aching for them to get back to scraping my face off with genius. Vocally, it's different as well. The guy's singing, but not SINGING. He reminds me of Roy Orbison or Tom Petty in approach (NOT in style or sound... don't kill me!) in that he's not trying to shatter glass or even really draw from the gut, but he's effective and emotional nonetheless. Hey... THAT'S what I've been trying to think of. This is like a prog metal take on the atmosphere of those seriously twisted Tom Petty videos. Oh, did I say prog METAL? Well, uh, I guess I do have to admit it. This is

www.1981.telica.com/~u19810397/

BEYOND DAWN (NOR) *Electric Sinking Machine*
PEA

SSS1/2

Var- * & fwp- 10-48:27
I saw a catalog somewhere misprint this as 'Electric Sucking Machine', and, uh, sorry Einar... but the name fits. The best way I can describe this is if REM of today wrote all the songs they write today but use the instrumentation they did back when they started. Can you believe the drummer here is also in Inferno? Anyway, I don't know what emotional buttons Beyond Dawn wish to push with songs like *Hairy Liquor*, *Pop 1st Verboten*, and *Certain Qualities*, but really, I don't have those buttons.
esjurso@online.no

BLOODBATH (SWE) *Breeding Death* CM
SSS

Sanctuary- * - 3-13:14
This is Mikael from Opeh, Dan Swano, and Anders and Jonas from Katatonia fucking around drunk one night and creating something that rivals any death metal from the early 90s. Well, not the elite, but early Death, Massacre, Grave, etc has nothing on this. It is a fun little thing with songs like *Omniscious Bloodvomit* and *Furnace Funeral*. Probably something for the Opeh, Katatonia, and Swano fan library (and that is the Holy Trinity, make no mistake), but to me all it really succeeds in doing is pointing out how bloody dumb the entire brutal death genre is. I wonder if the musicians of 2010 will just be fucking around and drunkenly record Opeh quality albums...
http://come.to/swano

BLOODTHORN (NOR) *Onwards Into Battle* SOM
SSS3/4

StudioMega - Silver - 8-49:40
Oh hell fuck yeah! I had bought the first Bloodthorn CD on a lark almost 2 years ago and it was quite the package... story, digipak, artwork out the wazoo. Season of Mist had begun its onslaught and on to today we find that this label is really growing and taking off with a good many high quality bands... and Bloodthorn was deserving, if maybe a bit unready, then, and now this CD is as high quality as you're going to find these days. I haven't seen the full packaging but I hope the quality remains high. I do know the music is no less than magnificent. At its most focused of times it sounds like Dimmu Borgir in the synth lines, or less manic Emperor with the guitars... but most of the time it creates this medieval soundscape, an atmosphere, that you can get lost in. The engineer needs a medal for keeping this all coherent because I would guess there was lots of opportunity to lose this. The chaos HAS been captured, however, and I'd have to call the production very good overall. There are some wicked guitar leads. Vocally we have this monstrous (surely enhanced) bestial voice, with instances of female vocals (that sound great) here and there... I don't have the lyrics in front of me but I get the feeling that the warrior woman and the great beast on the cover are more than just meaningless ornamentation. This isn't a quickie CD, it takes some time and patience to delve through the layers. Not very song oriented, either, this is an all-or-nothing experience. Old Theatre of Tragedy meets Emperor wouldn't be so far off the mark (as long as you don't expect constant female vocals!) and to me that is one killer of a combination. Get this.

BLO.TORCH (DEN) *Blo Torch* EAR
SSS

7-7-9-53:29
The first thing that greets me are samples and electronic noises. That doesn't last long, thank all the dark gods! What follows is an *At the Gates* clone that is speedily fifthappy. Remember when bands like this were on Earache proper and not Wicked World? Not bad but puh-lease, may we have some original ideas, or at least something that indicates this is a band making music for a reason other than getting to hang out and play metal? I blow my nose with Blo.Torch.

BREAKER (USA) *Accept* AUB
SSS1/4

Var- Var- 7-30:00
No prizes for guessing what this one will sound like. Breaker, and Auburn Records, are back from the dead. I was familiar with neither but DAMN did the ears perk up on several 80s metal aficionados when I told them I got this in the mail. This EP is basically a teaser for the full 2CD rerelease of *Get Tough*. As it is this EP has 4 songs recorded in 87-90, 1 demo from 1982 (that doesn't sound bad even if the material is extremely elementary). 3 of these songs are unreleased elsewhere. The cover of *Accept's* *Breaker* is a brand new recording and apparently the band is back in business. The band has definite talent and rocks all over the place with that 80s American integrity heavy metal. With lots of Accept, but thankfully no Udo voice. Cool songs from a cool band. We'll see how their new material stands up...

BROKEN HOPE (USA) *Grotesque Blessings* MAR
SSS

Qualitone - Griffin - 9-38:55
M Would you believe me when I said that Broken

Hope is at the forefront of the progressive death metal movement? I swear to you the first thing I thought when I turned this on was 'a death metal Liquid Tension Experiment!' Of course it doesn't keep up that level at all, but the arrangements and playing are definitely very changed up and complex. At the base it still sounds like Immolation and Cannibal Corpse, but they're exploding with creativity musically. The downside of that is that these more progressive minded releases have a hard time creating song definition, but when the playing is this good I let it pass. Don't worry as the focus is still maximum brutality, they just go about it all wanky like. No problems there from me.

V/L It's Broken Hope, and Joe Ptaek is still shoving the mic down his throat. This is what kills the band for me. Completely guttural vocals completely devoid of emotion. And with songs like Necro Fellatio, Chemically Castrated, and Internal Inferno, you know we're still talking the most ridiculous of the death metal lyrics. Except the lyrics aren't printed! Ack! I don't like this 'lyrics available on the website' bullshit that bands are pulling. It's OK for demo bands needing to save on printing costs, but for signed bands, we'd like to keep up on what your songs are about wherever we're listening to the CD!

P I've come to the conclusion that Brian Griffin's production skills aren't going anywhere. He gets a basic, solid sound, yes. You can hear everything, yes. But nothing jumps out at you as exciting! It's like watching a Steve Regal vs Mike Rotunda wrestling match. It will be technically perfect but you'd better like nothing but headlocks, leglocks, and armbars.

IB Broken Hope information? Ahh... they've been around forever, over 10 years I do believe. One of the first over the top gore bands, they unfortunately got their deal after Cannibal Corpse and with a smaller label so they've always been thought the duplicitous when they actually came up at the same time. Broken Hope are far more advanced musically but Metal Blade couldn't get behind them and here we are today. N/C What to say? They keep it interesting musically but they keep themselves firmly in one subgenre fanbase with their presentation and vocal attack. Broken Hope are VERY pigeonholed. Yet this is what they do. If you're a brutal death fan this should be right up your alley. If not...

12564 W Dorothy St, Beach Park, IL 60087
www.brokenhope.com

CANDIRIA (USA) *Process of Self Development* MIA \$\$\$

Purple Light - * & Barille- 13- 68-27

As if deadline fever wasn't bad enough, this piece of shit computer I'm working on now locked up and I lost 2 hours of writing. That's about 10 reviews. So there goes professionalism because all these bands I saved for last I could give a shit about anyway. Whatever. You've undoubtedly heard very good things about Candiria as they have chops from hell and a most unconventional way of writing songs. They are a head trip and that's good. They switch between hardcore, metal, jazz, hip hop, and whatever else. Their style is at the same time all of those, and beyond those. Cool, if you like hardcore, metal, jazz, hip hop, and whatever else. To many this pure jazz and any hip hop influence just kills a band. I like when bands use jazz structures (Cynic, Atheist, Pestilence), but just jazz in its own right? And hip-hop... but I do know there are plenty of metal fans who branch out elsewhere, and this is for them. Very progressive, very far minded. But for those who like their metal to be less street, like me, the urban influences just can't be ignored. Why does it seem every band with a black guy has to have groove, rap, or whatever? Where are you black guys that break the stereotype? White guys listen to rap and there are serious white rappers. Where the fuck are the black metal guys?

PO Box 10-0931, Brooklyn, NY 11210-0931
www.candiria.com

CANNIBAL CORPSE (USA) *Bloodthirst* MB \$\$\$/2

Village Prod-Richardson- 11- 34-35

This is a short CD, eh? No problem, so are Arch Enemy CDs and I love those. But here we are back at another Cannibal Corpse CD. I don't like them. I really don't. I maintain that this band has but 3 actual songs throughout their previous 6 albums: Stripped, Raped, and Strangled, Mummified in Barbed Wire, and Hammersmashed Face. Chris Barnes is a fucking idiot I should mention and there are STILL people that say George Fisher isn't as good. If that's the case, YOU'RE AN IDIOT! He may not have much texture in his delivery but his lower growls and especially the higher screams have MUCH more power. Can you god damn believe that this band is on album NUMBER SEVEN? Kudos for them for that at least. Production this time at Village Production in Texas (you KNOW Pat O'Brien and his stint in Nevermore had something to do with that) with Colin Richardson at the helm. Paul Mazurkiewicz is still the worst drummer in death metal. He knows two beats: Fast and kinda fast. At least he does those two well but he leaves the band

with nothing to work with on top. In terms of quality I'd put this below The Bleeding and Vile but above all their other ones. The lyrics are absolutely brain dead to the point of being humorous. Cannibal Corpse is the favorite band of a good amount of people. Is there really enough substance in this band to qualify as a 'favorite'? Too Many Twinkies award of the issue goes to George Fisher. He's certainly not a starving artist. Cannibal Corpse is in real trouble as they aren't even in the same league of brutality or insanity as bands like Dying Fetus and the entire United Gutteral roster, but they aren't making up for it with killer songs either. I read an interview where Cannibal Corpse were recording some of their mind blowing technical stuff for Vile and Brian Slagel told them to tone it down. I think that was the beginning of the end right there. Back in the day songs like Skull Full of Maggots and Shredded Humans were extreme and insane. These days Ecstasy in Decay and Hack Saw Decapitation are almost PC gore. Cannibal Corpse: Dinosaur Rock? PO Box 291826, Tampa, FL 33678-1826
welcome to/galleryofsuicide

CATHEDRAL (UK) *In Memoriam* TMC \$\$\$

Var-Var-9- 72-18

This is Cathedral's demo (4 songs) plus a 5 song live set from before their first album was released. It says 'unreleased' but I bought the demo on CD at Best Buy 5 years ago. Basically this is completely fucked up emotional wretched doom metal. Early Cathedral is better than Kataotria at reflecting absolute desolation. No shit. The live songs are rough around the edges, and the demo tracks are lacking the oomp that they captured on the album, but this is mandatory for anybody who thinks Sabbath are the be all and end all of doom. Cathedral was one of the first 3 metal bands I really got into. No wonder I find the Sabs to be irrelevant. Lee Dorrain is the one that inspired me to grow my hair out in the first place. Cathedral fucking rules.

www.cathedralcoven.com

CEASERIN (USA) *Exhibition MCMXCIX* INDY \$\$\$/2

4- 32-05

And so new I must write up something about Ceaserin. This is the last thing I'm writing in the reviews and really, what to say? That material of this quality is unsigned is mindboggling. This CD just rips and how can I describe this? I've been describing this as a mix of Symphony X and In Flames, but that is so very vulgar in its inadequacy. This is progressive metal through and through, but once again I have to point out, not in the Dream Theater sense (I know I point that out tons but at the same time if you say something's black metal you point out if it's not of the Darkthrone school, ya know?). That sound IS there at points, but they seamlessly mix those points up with some brutal death metal parts as well and I'm scratching my head. I think it's really creative in Holy Mother the ways the riffing does not change but the drumming and vocals completely change the complexion of a verse. I usually don't point out bits like that but it is something so elementary in concept and executed at such a tight level of proficiency it strikes out at me and demands that I mention it. This new breed of American metal (which I'll throw Litmus and Abhor into as well) is going to be part of a new wave in the not too distant future and it shows how bringing in many elements into a band can work like magic and it isn't the Europeans who can be brutal AND classy at the same time. Did I mention the sound on this thing is really crisp? The only complaint I would have is that the other flawless, human sounding drum programming is given away by the at times silly sounding cymbals. So there's your 1/2 off. Otherwise, this is perfection. Vocally, this is godly as well. Moving from a clean voice that reminds me of Jeff Scott Soto (a lot of the guitar work SCREAMS Yngwie as well!) to a thrash/hardcore yell down on to those Cradle of Filth/Solefild pterodactyl screams (not very many of those) to those Pestilence/Atheist 'you know this is progressive death' type vocals, this keeps you on guard. But it sounds so natural! This CD is so cool it hurts. Support this band! (note: Apparently I got an initial pressing of this thing... the CD is now officially known as Chiaroscuro... not to be confused with the band of the same name from Seattle)... Apparently this is ONLY available through www.mp3.com/ceaserin for \$6, so go!

147 Cockerham Rd, Denham Springs, LA 70726

www.angelfire.com/me/ceaserin/index.html

CENTVIRIAN (HOL) *Choronzonic Chaos Gods* FMP \$\$\$/4

7- 7- 9- 42-46

I'll admit to being a hypocrite here. With extreme black metal and death metal, I approach a CD with an 'impress me dammit' attitude, whereas power metal I put it on ready to rock. If you haven't noticed that you're not reading close enough. So here we have Centvirian (not to be confused with the Judas Priest inspired CentvriOn featured last issue) playing a 1999

take on 1990 Florida style death metal. Do they capture the sound? Yes. Do they play well? Yes. Reference Morbid Angel in riff structure, Decide in rhythm and vocal style, and fill it out with a dozen other various death metal bands around the edges. Is death metal dead? Hell no. Is there plenty of meaty stuff here for the death metal die hard to love? Damn right. Do they have song titles such as Let Jesus Bleed, Blood For Satan, and Hail Caligula? You bet. When will I listen to this after writing up the review? Never again.

Wallenbergstraat 27, 3882 H Putten HOLLAND

CLANDESTINE BLAZE (FIN) *Fire Burns in Our Heart* BM

7- 7- 8- 37-34

The line 'lyrics available by request' gets a big old Suck My Willy. With songs like Children of God, Vatican in Flames, and Native Resistance I am thinking I may be glad there aren't any lyrics here. Well, the song Clandestine Blaze is here. Ah well, the great Finnish spirit of songsmanship will save this, right? Let me put the CD in and press play... oh dear. This, uh, how do I put this? This sucks. I mean, really. Production I wouldn't accept on a rehearsal tape, songwriting so monotonous it makes Dark Funeral seem like Sade, and all around just not what I'd be proud to write, record, or release. I will bet money these guys aren't NATIVE Finns. I can see how CDs like this inspire hatred and rage. I sure would be pissed if I bought something that sounded like this, too!

PO Box 21, 15141 Lahti FINLAND
clandestineblaze@hotmail.com

CONTROL DENIED (USA) *The Fragile Art of Existence* NBA

\$\$\$

Morrisound-Morris & Schindler- 8- 50-49

I am a moron, an idiot, and a deaf worthless fuck of a music critic for not having Death's Sounds of Perseverance in my Top Ten of 1998 (issue #2). In fact, switch Nile and Witchery, HammerFall and Helloween, put Death in at #6, and bump everyone at that place down one, and you have my current feelings. Well, I'd put the Rhapsody in there at #7, but I didn't have that one at the time and this is already confusing enough! Anyway, The Fragile Art of Existence, is Death's 8th, and best album. Yes, you read that right. Control Denied *IS* Death. Here's what happened. (I haven't interviewed Tim Aymar yet, so if this all ends up being highly repetitious, or wrong, blow me) As early as 1993, Individual Thought Patterns era, Chuck Schuldiner, the mainman (and in some ways ONLY man) of Death, expressed interest in having real singing as his 80s heroes had. After 95's Symbolic, he decided enough was enough, it's time for it. He also realized how fans react to such drastic changes, and became one of the most honorable men in music by actually DECIDING TO CHANGE THE DAMN BAND'S NAME! So he put together a demo of his Trend Free True Metal, and shopped it around. No takers. Son of a bitch! This is in no way substantiated but I suspect Chuck signed to Nuclear Blast AS Control Denied, but they wanted a Death album first, for financial security or some such. The Sounds of Perseverance band was Control Denied. Simple as that. BECAUSE CONTROL DENIED AND DEATH ARE THE SAME FUCKING THING! Get it yet? Songs that were scheduled to be Control Denied songs were now Death songs. Chuck is a very insecure person. He is. It's all over his fucking lyrics! I have more theories but it's all just vague interpretations of things Chuck would deny anyway. He's a monster virtuoso musician and songwriter so who cares anyway, right? So he's pissed about Control Denied being denied release in it's own right. He's sensitive about it. That's probably why he denies the songs were written for this band or that... when IT IS THE SAME BAND ANYWAY. THEY JUST GOT A NEW SINGER! Oh, and Steve DiGiorgio on bass, I guess he's new. Musically, this is NO DIFFERENT than Sounds of Perseverance. Very technical progressive heavy metal. Everything Dream Theater would be if they had any balls. So the variable factor... Tim Aymar, vocalist, I interviewed him so I won't go into too much shit background-wise, but he masterfully sings, SINGS, Chuck's vocal lines here. You can tell Chuck still did all of the writing. You can almost hear Chuck's snarl gracing the music, that's how obvious the writing is. Then again, Death/Control Denied is completely Chuck's baby, as Manowar belongs to DeMaio and Symphony X belongs to Romeo. Aymar is not one of these 'my balls are in a vise' singers like Andre Matos of Angra, or Michael Kiske. He sings in a deeper register, with balls, but also with great range (which I'm told he doesn't show the half of here...), and almost no floaty vibrato. Death fans, you WILL jazz all over yourself listening to this record. Would-have-been fans of Death, this is your chance to catch the brilliance. This is Chuck's trend free contribution to metal. Yes, it's being hyped as a 'power metal side project', but it is not power metal, it is heavily technical progressive heavy fucking

metal. It is not a side project, it is his main band. Remember Chuck saying in this very zine that Death was done and Control Denied was the future? I've heard some snickering that he says trend free, but this is the trend now! Remember this is 3 years in the offing, and if last year's record wasn't 'trendy', this one isn't either. As far as the quality, this album IS ABSOLUTELY FLAWLESS. Perfect. If not for Opeth, this is Album of the Month, and even so I've flip flopped a few times about it. In the meantime, Chuck battles a cancerous tumor and his prognosis is still uncertain. This record deserves your support on so many levels. 'Laugh at my words. You fools! Soon they will become living truth!' IF YOU DO NOT OWN THIS RECORD, IF YOU DO NOT LIKE THIS METAL. Some CDs are powerful enough to not be subject to petty 'opinion'. This is one of them. Buy several, give them to your friends.

CONVERGE/AGORAPHORIC NOSEBLEED (USA) *The Poacher Diaries* REL

\$1/2

Var-Var-15- 35-01

Agoraphoric Nosebleed sounds like all the bad Grindcruiser tracks all together under one name. Converge is a dreadfully uninteresting metallic hardcore band that tries some brutally atmospheric bits (ala Neurosis Through Silver in Blood). In other words, this whole thing is a gigantic waste of time. At least there's still Deceased, Nile, and Amorphis on the label.

COOPER, DC (USA) *DC Cooper* IOA \$\$\$/4

House Audio-Ward- 12- 53-16

OK, DC Cooper is the ex-vocalist of Royal Hunt. The fans knew he was kicked out before he did. THAT'S classy. But he gets the last laugh, at least in the US (where it matters least, actually). His album kicks the SHIT out of the new Royal Hunt. Are the songs as progressive? No. Are they more aggressive? No. Do they have more bite? Yes. Are these songs memorable? Yes. Not too unlike Royal Hunt in the regard that this remind me of mature 80s rock/metal with synth (I'm thinking Journey or Europe for some reason, mostly by rep as I never exactly was a big Journey or Europe listener...). these compositions are undoubtedly simpler. And I know I'm a weenie comparing this to Royal Hunt but it's an easy angle so fuck off Cooper's voice is a goody, nice and clear and powerful and of a very pleasing tone. He's cool. Interesting to note the most ardent fans of DC Cooper's I've heard of so far have been women totally struck by his looks and voice. I was going to go to town on that but then I realized there would go all my Nightwish fandom credibility. Ahhh, life sucks sometimes. But DC Cooper doesn't. Metal Edge would call this a cool upbeat rocker, whatever THAT means. Not especially metal but not pussy shit. Cool guitar leads. Cool enough for a thumbs up if you're into that sort of thing.

CRIMSON GLORY (USA) *Astronomica* SPI \$\$\$/2

7- 7- 10- 48-29

I have never heard Crimson Glory's first 3 albums. Never have, sorry. [I've gotten a copy of Transcendence in the meantime. Holy shit, I see why old Glory fans are freaking out on Astronomica. Transcendence just rules. But I stand behind this review anyway.] I've been highly interested in doing so because of Jeff Wagner throwing their name around every so often, but never intrigued quite enough to go through the trouble as the CDs are NOT entirely easy to track down. However, a NEW Crimson Glory I sure as hell am not going to miss. I've heard from some longtime Crimson Glory fans and they HATE this. 'The magic is gone' they say. I, being impartial concerning their back catalog, tell you there is something here and this is a good, not great, but good album. Understood? Thou shalt not mock Crimson Glory's new album or I shall beat thy ass. My first comments are about the singer. Apparently he's no Midnight but everything I hear about Midnight makes me think I'd like the new guy better anyway. His lower vocal tone reminds me of a Kill Em All era James Hetfield with some actual singing talent. (and no hate mail for that please, I love that album but don't you dare tell me Hetfield was anything at all of a real 'singer') When he starts crooning he doesn't sound like that anymore and when he starts screaming his head off he's up there going whooahhahah like half the people in the 80s did and he's never better. Ever. The production is absolutely FLAWLESS. A strong, strong bass sound is present, almost prominent, but have no fear this IS a METAL record! About the songs... this album lives and dies by the song as there isn't too much in the way of a unified vibe to be found here. The only retard songs to be found here is The Other Side of the Midnight because for a more serious, slow ballad of a song, it sure does sound like they are playing it with an accordion and xylophone before the guitarists kick in. The theme to the whole album seems

to be space and aliens (look at the title, plus songs like War of the Worlds, New World Machine, Cydonia, etc etc) which matches the music as there are more futuristic industrial TOUCHES such as the CD's intro and several songs have introductory samples. I haven't described the music to you very well have I? Heavy metal, no doubt. Not speed, power, thrash, progressive. Just heavy metal, there is no reason for any of these songs not to be on the radio, and they throw in quirky little touches that keep it interesting. Interested?

www.crimsonglory.com

DARK THRONE (NOR) Ravishing Grimness MF
 \$\$\$/2
 7-6-37-40

M Black metal is fuzzed punk music OR dark ambient with guitars, deal with it. If the Misfits had fuzzed out and Danzig growled instead of whatever the fuck that is that he does, Dark Throne would have been 15 years behind the times. Nah, it's not THAT bad as you can't hear some skin shouting '1-2-3-4!' anywhere. Think a combo of some old punk cliché mixed with that almost traveling kind of repeating riff pattern you've heard from Satycon, Gorgoroth, and a million more during the non-kill!! parts. Not a single blast beat to be found here. There is a lot of repetition here so that ambient effect takes over here and there causing one to doze, but overall either the beat or the riffs stays fast enough to not make this sound like a Great Relaxing Buzzing Guitars sleep aid. Still, this is an ugly thing, even if what everyone else in the world calls a 'cold sound' I consider very warm. Whatever. You realize those guys could be Yngwie level musicians for all we know and just choose to be rather simplistic.

V/L Moonfog was gracious enough to throw in a printout of the lyrics with the promo. Bravo! This is mostly primal hate and attacking spirit, which I guess is what's required here. The refrain of Lifeless will spell it all out for you... 'Lifeless, deprived, lifeless, in hatred.' The one thing that I found truly disappointing about this CD is that the vocals are almost safe. No out of control howling, no primal screams. Just that 'standard black metal croak' (as opposed to the standard rasp) that I guess would be stupid to blame them for considering they were among the first. Still, way to under control for what this should be.

P My biggest beef with Dark Throne has been their beyond garage production. I'm a hypocrite because the Napalm Death CDs I broke in on were HORRIBLE sounding things, but hey, poli-sci viewpoints will win over 'I'm evil, see me make devil hand signs!' any time. I'm happy to report that this CD does not sound like shit. Somebody spent a few hundred dollars to produce this or something! Seriously though, what made many 15 year old rebellious kids think Transylvanian Hunger was some sort of classic was precisely what made it a grand piece of dung. Intentionally being substandard just to show you can't be held to standards is fucking dumb. Period. Ravishing Grimness isn't any sort of clean sounding thing by ANY means, but it is MUCH more cleanly produced than the last Gorgoroth or especially Ulver's Nattens Madrigal, for instance.

IB Dark Throne are a former Entombed style Swedish death band turned garage black metal. Interviews with the members have shown them to be so overly clever they come off as morons. Still, they are the first band to release a 'Norwegian Black Metal Album.' EVER, even if Mayhem still has a greater reputation for being 'true.'

N/C To the surprise of dozens, probably, the final verdict is that the new Dark Throne just isn't all that bad. I'll freely admit that I don't 'get it' when it comes to being evil and atmospheric and grrr and shit. But so what? Black metal works on a musical level as well, and that Dark Throne have grown and gotten listenable (gasp!) probably pisses a lot of people off but I wasn't at all offended to be listening to this. It'll never be in my CD player again, mind you, but I'm sure it had fun while it was there.

DARKKANE (SWE) Rusted Angel REL
 \$\$\$/4

Dug Out- Bergstrand- 10- 40:42
 NOT ANOTHER GOOD ALBUM! I'M LATE! I DON'T HAVE TIME TO DO A PROPER REVIEW! Slut. Darkane is a killer, KILLER band. Every journalist I talk to raves about these guys but there's no street buzz. What's WRONG with you people? Wrapped in beautiful artwork that reminds me of a pseudo warname cyberGeiger but still original enough to not be cheesy shit, this thing rips and tears at you. This is Peter Wildoer's band, and I don't know what happened on the Armageddon CD and Arch Enemy's Stigmata, but he's brilliant here! They take the Swedish sound and turn it upside the fuck down and stuff it in a barrel full of nails and shake the sumpbitch up until it's all gored and bloody. Did I mention how furious these goddamn drums are? Pure fury mixed with otherworldly guitar harmonics and you're thinking At the Gates? You'll think that more than a few times, which is good. Because they have so much more to offer as well. How about a string quartet and a

nifty little choir that's strategically placed. All out aggression but very smart as well, this one is an EASY thumbs up.

darkane@innocent.com

DEAD SILENT SLUMBER (SWE) Entombed in the Midnight Hour HHR
 \$\$\$/2
 7-7-7-39:16

Naglfar has a pristine reputation in the underground. Maiman Jens Ryden now has a solo project, and Dead Silent Slumber is it! The guy's got awesome hair and that death metal guitar god pose on the back of the promo (and I assume the CD itself...) is at once inspiring and humorous. I imagine most that will get into this will be so anti-Yngwie in attitude when in reality this is the same sort of thing, just with a different approach. No, this is not a big guitar wank fest, it's not like THAT at all. But the idea of 'this is my work and no one else will touch it' is right there. And to Jens credit the album has a good variety of good, solid, interesting songs that as a whole is BETTER than Naglfar. That's cool to me because while there are so damn many great musicians in metal, there aren't many SONGWRITERS so many of these 'bands' just fucking suck. Ryden proves himself a songwriter. I'm not sure (funny, you clean your apartment for the first time in six months and now you can't find any of your bio sheets...) but I do believe Ryden plays EVERYTHING. Much of this is the cool death/black hybrid (non blast... yeessss!! I TOLD you this guy writes SONGS!) with some tasty and catchy guitar, and keyboard stuff. He gets WAY cool with the title track with the female vocals and slow, clean guitar focus, which breaks the album up right in the middle and gives this whole thing so much character. The slower Lick the Wound stands out as it well thanks to a close, clean guitar approach. And it works. If I were to have one complaint about Ryden, it would be his vocals. He has a more focused Ishanlian w/out scream which has absolutely no character in delivery. He does an evil whisper too. Ooooh, I am scared. I'm sure there are plenty of good screamers that could have spared a week to help out on this! Come on Jens, even Yngwie uses vocalists. But overall, a surprisingly strong album!

DEFENDER (SWE) They Came Over the High Pass
 NEC
 \$\$\$/4
 Sunlight- Skogsberg- 8- 42:56

M I honestly thought this was a practical joke when I received it. After all the talk that this isn't some damn HammerFall limp metal release (their tone, not mine), I put this in and... it is dirty. Ormen style heavy metal like you'd expect out of Necropolis? Perhaps somewhat in style, and here and there it does get down and dirty. But this is built on melody and no matter how rough it tries to make you think it is this is a pretty classy piece of metal. The material rises above attempts to run itself, if that makes any sense. This is actually pretty unique in that it achieves all of this without sounding remotely like Helloween. The rougher rhythms help that out I think but the guitar work is still too fluid and flashy and as the two collapse in towards each other, it's quite the peppy and entertaining look at heavy metal. This isn't pussy shit but come on, generation HammerFall is going to lick this up.

V/L Oh, here we go. Here's the rough edge. Michaels van de Graaf can't sing. He has two effective styles: a rather tuneful shout, and a more viking metal wail. When he does either of those two he's fine. When he tries to actually croon, it is pretty nasty sounding. Hello, I'm talking to you track 3, also known as High Himalayan Valley. Don't worry, I do notice how stupid that song title is. Surrounded by good friends such as City in the Clouds, Dragon, Maze of the Minotaur, and the title track... come on. There is fun cheese and plenty of safe havens for the old AD&Ders amongst us, but when people seem like they're just flipping through ye old mythology book and saying 'Minotaur sound metal, let's sing about that!' we're in danger here! Iron Savior, Rhapsody, shit, even Power Symphony and such will never be unearthed 1000 years from now and taken as great 20th century literature, but they're at least functional at telling a story.

P Sunlight studios has many sounds, and this sounds like none of the clichés. Not a slick production but again the actual songwriting and guitar playing overcome that and it sounds a lot sweeter than it is, if that makes any sense. The tones seemingly come from some astral plane, as it's far out at times. But very strong production values all around.

IB Members of Cranium (retro much, Philip?), Mork Grynning, and the singer of Afflicted's second failed album Dawn of Glory. It is common myth that said Afflicted album died for being heavy metal when heavy metal was dead. I haven't heard it. But if it sounds anything like this, then the explanation is something more basic...

N/C That album title is kinda porno, isn't it? Anyway, it does sound like I am pissing all over this thing five

ways til Friday. The main problem is that this CD is stuck in midpaced mode. It plods along, fine enough, and it does avoid the current happy speed metal feel. Mission accomplished there. But it ends up with this sounding like 43 minutes of effective transitioning tools but that's it. Very little in effective songwriting. Tons of potential here but I think right now before they go any further they need to write some real songs...

DEKAPITATOR (USA) We Will Destroy You Will Obey BM
 \$\$\$

Sound Temple- Murphy- 11- 33:48

From our friends over at Blackmetal.com (an excellent, excellent mailorder service for your underground styled metal needs... even if it is funny as all hell that they are all Hail Satan! and 'we're against the 'corporate metal element' yet they were selling Metallica's Garage Inc... haha! No shame in making money doing honest business but don't pretend to be so underground while still selling everything everybody else does...) comes Dekapitator. Old styled thrash if the name didn't tip you off. I'm no retro thrashhead by ANY means but I do have to admit Dekapitator comes across just cheesy enough with the right amount of speed metal and great guitar solos that all this does it bring a smile to my face! Yes, it is completely retarded. Songs such as Hell's Metal, Release the Dogs, and Possessed with Damnation (err...) have choruses consisting of yelling the title four, six, ten times or so... I'm not up on the 80s Eurothrash scene enough to know if these guys are, ahem, 'borrowing' riffs from the big names of that time, but either way this isn't a CD you get for the cutting edge of metal into the millennium. Cheesy lyrics with good playing, decent production, a VERY Knaf cover drawing (evil hangman with morning star and machine gun...), but with 200% metal spirit that can't be argued with, no way no how, and this makes me want to put on my leather and spikes, raise my glass of milk high (remember, I don't drink alcohol...), and bang my friggin head! dekapitate@aol.com

DEVILYN (POL) Reborn in Pain LIS
 \$\$\$/2

Spaart- 12- 48:57

Yeah, it's death metal and besides the accent on the vocals (not unlike countrymen Vader whose growls aren't complete vocal wipeouts) this sounds very US inspired with Carnal Corpse, Suffocation, and a hint of Morbid Angel being very evident. Solidly produced and played, there's just nothing interesting, new, or exciting going on here. Nothing earthshattering in a subgenre that in many ways continues to sink due to either wild extremities which preclude creativity, or stagnant scene following that leads straight into oblivion.

33-100 Tamow; ul. Lesna 16A/88 POLAND

devilyn-black-art.pl

BRUCE DICKINSON (Vaz) Scream for Me Brazil
 AIR RAID
 \$\$\$

Live- Roy Z- 12- 69:32

Granted, this is pretty cool to listen to. But talk about a WASTE of money to a Bruce Dickinson fan. 10 of the 12 songs are from Chemical Wedding or Accident of Birth. Just go get those two! I mean, yeah!! And the crowd banger... Bruce's call for someone to close a door is now immortalized forever! The songs are basically run through with a minimum of crowd interaction. I give a thumbs up to both Accident of Birth and Chemical Wedding (upgrade my issue #2 score to 4 out of 5), but please, people, believe me no matter how much you love Bruce's solo work or are getting restless for that new Maiden record, your money is better spent elsewhere. Or save it for Maiden's big to-do, because frankly I have a feeling we'll all be in need of a few bucks around that time... www.bruicedickinson.com

DILLINGER ESCAPE PLAN (USA) Calculating Infinity REL
 \$\$\$/5

Trax East- Evetts & Weinman & Penzie- 11- 37:31

Somewhat I don't think I did them justice in my feature, but oh well. This is INSANE, technical, break your ass material that just blows my mind. Post-hardcore insanity, without any hardcore bullshit. I made some comparisons in the interview, but how about if I said Cymic without any new agey jazz? This is just BRUTAL and insanely technical and son of a bitch if this does not leave all amazed. The production is punishingly crystal clear, and for these forty minutes you won't do a damn thing other than take in all that the Dillinger Escape Plan has to offer. You are warned.

DISMEMBER (SWE) Hate Campaign NBA
 \$\$\$

7-7-11-33:32

Dismember were never any great shakes (Remember Chris Maycock's exaltation in Maniacs? DEATH METAL! Scream it to your parents! DEATH METAL! Cool writing. Misplaced enthusiasm!) but they do what they do. Most notable for being the only band ever named Dismember that didn't sound like Discharge. Hate Campaign is a total farce. This is a band with an album out because they have a record deal. Simple as that. If Nuclear Blast didn't have a deal with them, this band wouldn't be going. Period. No songs, no ideas, and they have toned down the ferocity to let in some of that Gotherburg melodicism. Not a lot, but please. Putting on a Dismember CD made me want to go listen to Entombed. Every single time. Now all I want to listen to is The Jester Race when I throw this on. Tsk tsk boys. The killer tones are now on probation. A shut sandwich. Watch to see how all the old Dismember heads won't believe it and herald this as a great new record from a band staying with the times.

DOUBLEDRIIVE (USA) 1000 Yard Stare MCA
 \$\$\$/4

Audio Art- 7- 87-54:11

They're from Atlanta and I've never heard of them. OK, it's not metal. It's on a major, what did you expect? Well, shit, I'm like Ill Literature now, getting all sorts of crap. Ha ha. I listen to "NO" radio (besides talk radio), watch "NO" video shows, so I have "NO" knowledge of music in the real world after about 1992. All I know is what I hear when I'm riding in someone else's car, or if someone has a radio on somewhere. And this sounds like it would be comfortable on the radio. It's straight up rock n roll without any real bullshit, so I'll respect them for that, and I'm unable to extrapolate any more. Some of this stuff is pretty catchy too. But they don't make any sort of connection with me so I won't tell you to 'go check out this great band.' I WILL tell you if you DO like no bullshit rock music and checking out new bands you might as well get this one as a small show of support for the labels and PR agencies that support LoTPP with promos... oh, and keep in mind if this gets THIS rating, imagine how utterly SHITTY 'real' metal bands with lower ratings really are.

www.doubledrive.com

DRAWN (NOR) A New World? PRO
 \$\$\$/4

7-7-8-65:08

This is a moody little atmospheric metal release from members of In the Woods. It sounds like... wait... wait... In the Woods! Not exactly. The music is more structured here (not saying much though... not necessarily a bad thing) as it meanders around. Sometimes it is WAY soft, sometimes not. The vocals can best be described as harsh whispers interchanged with holed Attila wanna be croaking frog vocals. Although this sits in the same genre of music as In the Woods, early Ulver, early Katatonia, Agalloch, etc, it's neither as engaging nor as good. Potential not yet realized.

EBONY LAKE (UK) On the Eve of the Grimly Inventive CAC
 \$\$\$/5

Academy- Mags & 7- 48:42

Imagine if Meshuggah, Peccatum, Gorguts, the guy who wrote the Ormen soundtrack and the Darkest of the Hillsides Thickets had a hot, sweaty orgy, and afterwards decided to head to the rehearsal room for a jam, the result just might sound like Ebony Lake. This shit is SICK twisted. How they remember their music is far, FAR beyond me. Keyboards, chanting, sick syncopeation, start/stops-ha-ha-you-didn't-see-THIS-coming are all arranged as if in a micromaster and laid out on CD. I fucking love this shit. Why? This is different, this is art, and these people are incredibly talented. Lyrically on some of these things they literally say enough to fill up a small book as these aren't lyrics so much as stones laid out, such as in The Author of the Burning Flock and The Music and Woe Between Horse Thieves. Shorter numbers such as A Voice in the Piano and Within Deepest Red are no less haunting. Even the instrumental An Autumn to Cripple Children feeds the prose of the other compositions. These six musicians are to be commended, and Mags is to be given a medal for keeping this all together soundwise. I don't even want to know what their demo sounded like. Lyrically, and image-wise, this is steeped in old horror, sort of giving me impressions of Lovecraft, Poe, and Dickens in mood and feel. (yes, Dickens. Fuck off.) I have to mention somewhere that vocalist Amber is the hottest little vixen I've seen in metal in maybe forever. mmmmmmmmm-ow! I can imagine that long red hair matted with gobs of thick... er, ah, back to the CD. OK, really, you owe it to yourself to hear this because this is one of those how did a human being ever think this shit up? CDs that just doesn't come along very often. Vocally the black metal type rasp is definitely in the forefront but everything and the kitchen sink is behind him. So why, I hear you asking, is this only \$\$\$/5? A couple reasons. The production is perfectly

clear but doesn't have that all-star depth. You hear the piano but can't feel the hammer on the strings, you know? Also, every so often the main vocalist decides he needs to sing clearly. Not very often, and thank Chulu for that! He sucks! And lastly... as the title says, they are on the eve of their grim inventions. This is but a first step... I smile with gleeful fear that the horror has only begun. Marvellous.

ELECTRIC WIZARD (UK) *Supercoven* MIA

SS

Var-Var-4-50-49

It's still wwwwaaayyy too fucking much Sabbath supersludge.

ENOCHIAN CRESCENT (FIN) *Omega*

Telocovim-AG

SSS3/4

Tico Tico-7-9-40:16

Now here's something a little bit different. The first thing that strikes me is that the guitar tone reminds me of Cannibal Corpse when they do their 'creepy crawling' riffing. You know the sound. But aside from the tone, this has nothing to do with Cannibal Corpse. This is some primo dark metal, accentuating the brutal and with very little of the 'atmospheric' trappings a lot of Finnish bands come up with. I don't believe there are any keyboards on here, but I call this dark metal rather than death metal because the atmosphere they create with just their guitars... wow! I'd thought they were a black metal band previous to actually hearing them but their riffing and structures are thick like death metal. Vocally there's some spiffy effects making it over the top brutal and interesting. Strong doom metal overtones on this thing. Some interesting songwriting makes this a thumbs up for your brutal music minded people who want some cool interesting things in here, with no 'pussy shit.' What they're going on about I don't know, but some of the song titles are Oceanus on Dry Land, Tis the Sound of Tempest That Drowns Us Out, and Grey Skin. karri.suoraniemi@sonera.com

ENTWINE (FIN) *The Treasures Within Hearts* SF

SSS1/2

Asia-Kippo-8-36:50

Again, a good solid band playing completely unoriginal metal. Originality isn't always the biggest issue with me (I eat up European power metal like it was chocolate, remember) but with these My Dying Bride, Paradise Lost (oldstyle) gothic metal bands, I have a problem. You can play True Heavy Metal and sound just like Gamma Ray and still MEAN it and have that 'Metal, YEEESSSS!!' emotion very sincerely. Gothic metal to me isn't, or should be, just about a sound. 'Dash a little heavy guitar, some trinky keyboard, a violin, some moony vocals, some female singing and viola, a band!' No. Because the emotion of the music isn't 'gosh, I'm feeling so gothic and emotional', the emotion is 'yes, I'm really a fan of all these bands' TRUE SERIOUS emotion can NOT be achieved through plagiarism. But if you're a fan of just the pure SOUND then there's plenty to eat up here. Keyboards are NOT the upfront instrument. Guitars are. And the production on this thing... it's not perfect, but it is SO fucking HEAVY. Lead heavy. This is Beached Orca. CHUGGA CHUGGA CHUGGA... DAMN. The vocals are all clean. There is a cover of Depeche Mode's Enjoy the Silence, which is actually quite nice. All in all, this isn't going to be the CD I throw on if I'm wanting to hear this style... but if you like this style you could certainly do a lot... and I mean a LOT, worse. I look forward to their development and hope they come back with another CD next year... keeping this massively HEAVY sound, but with a little more of THEMSELVES thrown in. Aleksanterink 29 B, 15140 Lahti FINLAND

EYEHATEGOD (USA) *Southern Discomfort* CM

S

Var-Var-9-42:21

Eyehategod is the first band whose live set I ever walked out on. Slow, dirgy, shitty N'Awlins core. This is a rarities collection of shit that should have stayed rare. Is this a good time to mention how bad Crowbar sucks, too?

FATAL LIQUIDATION (USA) *Surrender Your Soul* INDY

\$1/2

Love Juice Laboratories-Swanson & *-4-15:37

Yet again, a half assed band's music is just KILLED stoner cold dead by halfassed stupid lyrics. Musically this sounds like a slightly more advanced Sex Feet Under, and the vocalist sounds like Chris Barnes. Are you shitting yourself yet? The songs are called Prisoner of Gore, Bits and Pieces, Ancient (2012), and Body of Knowledge. The first two, if you can't guess by yourselves, suck. PoG features lyrics like 'Coming from behind in the pouring rain, I drove my syringe through her jugular vein.' Bits and Pieces has 'They fucked with me and they all died. Yes they all died. Fuck with me and you will die like they all died.' And they say 'I'm* arrogant? I make fun of records, these

people proclaim mastery over life and death. Ancient (2012) is at least imaginative with I think an Aztec twist of our modern age coming to an end at the hands of cults. Who is Sibouba? Body of Knowledge is some sort of Hypocrisy subject reject, dealing with men in black, aliens, and stolen ejaculate. This band's best left back in the garage. PO Box 51388, Riverside, CA 92517-1388 sfufox@aol.com

FINALXIT (USA)-True Nature-INDY

SSS1/2

Digital Concepts-*5-31:14

A not too shabby EP that combines the thrashiness of an Iced Earth or And Justice... era Metallica with some tasty old Queensryche moments. Sounds good, huh? This band is making a nice name for themselves out there in Texas, and after getting a sound like this I don't know why they aren't signed. Actually, that's because while the powers that be (ha ha, FUCK YOU Russo, you got what you deserved!) want you to think that traditional metal is 'in.' Not so. What is 'in' is quite 90s styled takes on Euro 80s metal. The US faction is being left out for the most part. Face with me, but in Finalxit's case, you can't complain because it is that good! Check 'em out. \$6 to PO Box 751835, Houston, TX 77275-1835

FINNTROLL (FIN) *Midnattens Widunder* SF

SSS

7-7-9-30:00

This Spinefarm sublabel is doing a masterful job of airing all of Finland's dirty, stinky musical laundry. My main complaints about the label aren't that the bands aren't good, but they ARE highly derivative and likely why the bands haven't gotten proper deals overseas or with Spinefarm proper. Of course, something DOES have to be said about Spinefarm promoting Finland, and by proxy itself, for all it's worth. Here we have Finntroll. If the name isn't warning enough, we have the press release... Trollish howdown polka folkmetal! I mean Jesus fucking Christ. I can't even make fun of them any more than they've done it to themselves. And it's not even that goofy! The music is actually a quite entertaining mix of, say, Dimmu Borgir metal and the Finnish traditional music that can be found all over Amorphis and Nightwish material. When they styles happen at the same time there is that 'whoa, that is different!' effect. All the lyrics are in Finnish and the vocals are mostly 'grim' so this is not your average folkmetal release. Even if it DOES have a little bit of the boingy boingy Jews harp. And all the lyrics are in Finnish. But I've been rendered unable to get into this because I'm thinking of a bunch of Finns in overalls with their banjos having a 'howdown' and it's an image completely disconnected to what they're playing. I pray to everything mighty that 'howdown' means something at least 25% respectable in Europe. Oh gawd. Recommended to folk metal nutcases and naught else. finntroll@hotmail.com

FOREST OF IMPALED (USA) *Demonvoid* RED

SSS3/4

Sheffield-9-30:19

Well, last issue I reviewed their debut CD and I remarked that I thought they were on to bigger and better things. Well, they have a real label now, and while they didn't achieve what I was hoping for, Forest of Impaled have delivered a rock solid black metal album in the vein of Nernesis Divina style Satyricon. The production is nice and clear, the songs have a build and meaning, and I'm impressed. This, out of the midwest? Who knew? Well, lots of people obviously as I'm usually the last to be on in this kind of stuff. Doesn't that make you feel good reading about it? But really, if that earlier Satyricon vibe (minus the folksy bits) was your thing, and you can't stand Rebel Extravaganza... well... check this out!

FORGOTTEN SILENCE (CZE) *Senyaan* RBL

SSSSS

Var-Medved & *-16-98:11

Brilliance in music. I had heard great things about this band for years, but had never ordered their material. Would a Czech band have a good sound? Would the material be in English? All sorts of stupid thoughts came into my head. Well, one day this arrived in my mailbox. WOW. A double CD lasting over an hour and a half, and I have to say that this band is extremely, overwhelmingly, and thoroughly awesome. Original? Powerfull? Czech. Cool as shit? Czech! I don't know how many bands can go through, masterfully, influences such as 3rd and the Mortal (Tears Laid in Earth days), 3rd and the Mortal (In this Room days), Opheth, Katatonia, Ulver, NYC Death Metal, FL death metal, Gothenburg style metal, old British doom, Theatre of Tragedy, and more I don't recognize, and have the thing FLOW, have this just scream out I AM ART! The entire 2 disc affair is a story, a narrative. This band has no need of lyrics.' The story is told in plain English, and very well too considering their origin. Buy or be ignorant. Machova 487, 665 01 Rosice u Brna, CZECH

REPUBLIC

GANDALF (FIN) *Deadly Fairytale* EAR

SSS1/4

Asia-Kippo & *-10-46:45

In Flames meets Sentenced. Good, but come on guys... PO Box 52, 00941 Helsinki FINLAND www.sit.fi/~kriha

TheGATHERING (NET) *Superheat* CM

S

Live-7-10-65:34

Does anyone really want to hear How to Measure a Planet (How to Measure My Penis? With a yardstick!) live on CD? Sure don't. That's pretty much what this is. 6 out of 10 songs off of that one, 2 off of Nighttime Birds, 2 off of Mandylion. Plus a CD Rom clip of a Mandylion song. Pathetic! I understand on a tour you focus on the latest album but a live album needs to be more equal. Strange Machines was caught better live on the May Song single anyway. Doing Nighttime Birds live is a funny prospect considering the vocal harmonies made this song a great one. Live, there's only one Arneke. This is for fans of their last album and nobody else. This is about as enjoyable as a bootleg of their Colorado show. www.gathering.nl

GODS TOWER (BEL) *Ebony Birds* PRO

SSS1/2

Var-Var-9-65:14

I'll try to restrain Andreas and Sergey from attempting to behold the Prophecy guys as they bill Gods Tower as 'Russia's most famous metal band.' I've got to tell you guys, the production values on all of the CDs in this first batch of Prophecy release has shocked me. Simply incredible. Anyway, the material to be had here is either a rerecording, or a compilation, of songs from their 3 demos and/or 2 albums. I'll lean towards rerecording because of the sound quality but I don't know for sure. I'll get the negative out of the way first, and the reason this isn't SSSS+ is that this vocalist just sucks. He barks his way over most of this material but when he sings, he isn't as bad but that isn't to say he's any good. A shame because if someone with a real voice was singing some of those phrasings and melodies we've got a candidate for album of the year. There. Now for the music, it is completely original as I've never heard anything quite like it. Not original as in they rebuilt everything from the ground up, but original in that they take the familiar groundwork and their embellishments take me down paths nobody else has come across yet. That Russian Think Tank that Metal Maniacs ran a few months ago was execrable for several reasons (I don't think being an impartial journalist is a good thing when it comes to racist, fascist, terrorist thugs) but it did point out that we may be on the verge of a creative avalanche. All 9 of these compositions stand alone as they take somber, almost-but-not-quite dirgy feelings and set them to slower (but not snail's) paced melodic, doomy metal. Somebody restrain Andreas and Sergey from beholding ME as I believe this is far more effective at evoking the same atmospheres Mental Home attempts, without half the keyboards. A breath of fresh air in many ways, but they need to sack that vocalist, and yesterday.

GOOSEFLESH (SWE) *Chemical Garden* Digital

Dimension (no idea on address)

SS1/2

Oral Majority-Laghi-12-45:21

Another case study for bands. How many demos did these guys get out there? How many people cringed at the stupid, shitty name? Yet a band that busts their ass will get rewarded. Especially when they play trendy-ass, groove riff oriented, faceless metal like this. Not Korn style, really, but Fear Factory at their crappiest bounce is a sure fire reference. Pass. hem2passagen.se/gooseweb

GRABESMOND (AUS) *Xenoglossie* NRA

SS

Hemix-7-15-44:42

Ambient mood music. OK, not that bad as there are actual instruments being played but the overall effect is the same. Think 3rd and the Mortal's zaniest moments from their later work and you'll have a clue. I don't know. This is probably me just being closed minded again, but there's nothing here that I can grab onto or relate to, although actually I COULD grab onto Lucia Faroutan, the very cute vocalist whose picture appears on the back of the promo. Bad sign when that's what I focus on most of all. I can hear what's going on, but I don't know why, I don't know where they are going, and frankly it's really starting to annoy me. Where's that Yngwie CD I picked up today?

HAGALAZ RUNEDANCE (NOR) *Urd-That Which*

Was HHR

S

Akkerhaugen-Akkerhaugen & *-5-27:11

Now this is going to be a big car wreck of a review because questions about musical appreciation are brought up so don't expect this to be the smoothest read of the section. Now, first of all, I don't know if I screwed this up in issue #3... but Andrea Haugen, the person behind Hagalaz Runedance, is the wife of Samoth. Iriel, of Peccatum, is the wife of Ihsahn. I may have confused the issue because I read in Terrorizer that they were one and the same, and they are NOT. Scuse me for believing little factoids I read in professional, glossy national metal magazines. I must also point out that I have never heard this act before except for a song or two... so it's pretty much all new to me. The first two songs are what I'd assume are 'standard' HR songs. Folky, tribal (in the Norse sense, of course) with the one woman's voice which actually sounds very nice. Musically and vocally somewhere between Kari Rueslatten's demo CD and Atrocity's Calling the Rain. All the lyrics are in English which for some reason caught me off guard. Zero metal content, if you're wondering but it's well conceived and marvelously executed and produced so what can I say? Now for controversy: As an artist, Haugen has 100% authority to say what she wants done with her work. On one hand you can say who am I to second guess her or flush her music down the toilet for it... but on the other hand taking that attitude means that no music critic can EVER say anything negative about any music, and that is bullshit. My problem is that the last 3 songs on this CD are remixes of songs from the previous CD. Techno, hip hoppy, break beating electronic treatments are given to songs that I just know had NONE of that. The Hagalaz style and techno to me are diametrically opposite on the musical spectrum. This is an abomination and a total piece of shit. Somehow I don't think these songs were meant to inspire people on a dance floor to bust a move. The artist formerly known as Gamm has done it again... running perfectly good music. I doubt painters would allow a 'retouch' artist to smear feces all over the canvas, yet that is what Andrea has allowed people to do to her music. I see no connection between the two musical forms. If you want to do dance techno, fine, all good and well. But stop raping good music. Hopefully this is merely an aberration and the next full length will get back to Hagalaz Runedance the way it SHOULD be. members.xcom.com/runedance/hagalaz_runedance.htm

HATE ETERNAL (USA) *Conquering the Throne* EAR

SS1/2

7-7-11-33:26

I have this mondo cool demo CD that Erik Rutan was selling on the last leg of the Morbid Angel tour to pull through Atlanta. It had both of his projects, Alas and Hate Eternal. I thought Alas was really, REALLY wonderful. Hate Eternal, less so. And which got signed to the worldwide deal? I blame the metal fans (THAT'S YOU THAT'S READING THIS, YA IGNORANT SHIT!) who will buy this in numbers thousands greater than would have bought Alas. I'm not pleased with you people. Saying this sounds like Morbid Angel and Suffocation mixed up and put at hyperspeed would be too easy considering the guitar players are Erik Rutan and Doug Carrino... but that's about accurate. The drumming is whacked, especially those impossibly fast kick drums... which sound so sampled I'm wondering if the drumming credits should read Tim Yeung, or ProTools. Rutan gets the Obsessed I am exactly half bad with long hair award this issue. Anyway, you're going to pick this up because it is 'cool.' You're going to be sitting around listening to this admittedly well done, but utterly pointless display of extremity, your mother is going to tell you to turn that shit down, and you'll be putting on the headphones and cranking it up and killing your eardrums thinking 'Why doesn't anybody like metal?' Because bands like this are synchroing off the intelligence of the scene, that's why! The Gods of Heavy Metal shall pass harsh judgement over those who buy into this kind of thing. Beware.

HECATE ENTHRONED (UK) *Kings of Chaos* PHD

S

7-Coleman-11-33:13

Oh fuck. Instead of 4th rate Cradle of Filth suck music, Hecate Enthroned is now onto 3rd rate death metal. No more corpsepaint, no more high screech. Atmospheric keyboards remain, and some trebly guitars. But this is a big clusterfuck and no matter what this band does they are utterly, completely, and massively useless. I mean really. Gawd. If Opethicity = everything that makes you listen to music, then Hecate Enthroned is everything that makes you want to turn off the stereo and go read VCR instructions or something. Avoid like a penis ripping maniac.

HELLCHILD (JAP)-Bareskin-HBA

SSS3/4

Sound Crew-*10-35:13

Hellchild Rules! This sounds like Arch Enemy's new

one with a tad more old Entombed rawness. Yes, it is cool! Yes, they are Japanese! Yes, this thing makes you want to BANG YOUR HEAD! The material is pretty samey throughout the disc but the riffs are almost universally killer, and this vocalist is pissed off something fierce...

IN MEMORIUM (USA) *An Ancient Word* INDY \$33/4
Campbell - * - 4 - 29:29
Unholy infernal black metal. Yeah yeah yeah. It's not bad, really, but this drummer needs a bit of work and all. If you accept the this is essentially nothing new in a genre that has a supreme glut of nothing new, then you should be able to get into this. The sound isn't bad at all, and within the confines of being nothing but Evil Black Metal™ they do keep everything fairly interesting. A successfully dark, broody (but fast!) sound in that respect... but neither the music itself nor the lyrical concepts particularly move me. I know I'm being harsh on a band that is perfectly serviceable but on top of everything else after 3 straight spins I don't remember anything their basic sound. Not a good sign!
4220 Eastern Ave N, Seattle, WA 98103
www.geocities.com/sunsestrip/garage/5668

JUDAS ISCARIOT (USA) *Distant in Solitary Night* MOR \$55
7-7-7-50:53
I'm an unfair son of a bitch, and you all know that. Anyone who currently jizzes to old Savatage, Watchtower, and Manowar is going to have a problem with 'simple and barbaric' riffing structures. Right? Not necessarily. Whether by accident or design, the production of this album allows Akhenaton (this is a one man band) to actually for once achieve his goal: ambient, trancey, 100% METAL structures that utilize atmosphere over technique, and makes it WORK. There is skill in that. So goddamn many of these bands try this and sound like a buzzsaw, like noise, like nothing. Judas Iscariot succeeds. Of course, there are a couple drawbacks to the style. I don't care if this IS split up into 7 tracks, this is effectively just one long ass song when it comes down to it. And a 50 minute ambient journey is a tad excessive. And problem #2, they 'combine anti-Christian concepts with superior Nietzschean ideologies, creating visionary images for a new era of Übermensch.' Spelling aside, we should realize that while the entire CONCEPT of the superman and the individual as god is a good one, in practice it is quite something else entirely and leads us all straight to hell...
breathoflight@hotmail.com

KARMA TO BURN (USA) *Wild Wonderful* Purgatory MIA. \$55
7-7-12-51:08
Give these guys credit for having stainless steel NUTS for A- Not having a vocalist, and B- Therefore just naming their songs numerically. They HAVE to keep it interesting. Band instrumental albums... dig it? No? Well, this southern fried Sabbath inspired hard rock is something you have to see live. Really. I saw them recently and they put on one hell of a show. Really! Three guys just having great fun calling out 'This one's called 28!' 'We call this one 31' and just rocking away. If these guys come to your town, I'm seriously telling you to check them out. It was worth my time. They're fun, the songs are swinging, and seeing all the trendy yuppies in the crowd (they opened for CoC when I saw them) piss themselves at the song titles is reward enough.

KEEP OF KALESSIN (NOR) *Agnen: A Journey Through the Dark AGM* \$5
Brygga - 7-8-50:53
It's loud, it's fast, it's hateful black metal, and it's something to avoid. Not to sound stupid or anything but I keep referring to these guys as Carpathian Forest. Arggh! The very essence of 'non descript' fly to:kalestin

KOVENANT (NOR) *Animatronic* NBA \$
7-7-10-51:10
This month's big 'This band sucks giant donkey dicks' award, AND the 'this press sheet sucks' award, Kovenant's Animatronic is quite possibly the turkey of the year. By itself, a bad album is excusable (err, NOT), but considering last year's Nexus Polaris made my top 15 best list, I am more than slightly pissed off. For 18 months now I've been deflecting criticism away from this band from 13 year old eevvillvill posers who said the band was a sellout and that they played pop. I thought Nexus Polaris was a monster of a prog metal album... but this? Oh gawd, strap in folks, because I'm about to go to town. The label calls this 'commercially explosive', which is a warning sign right there. Visually, all I can ask the band is 'Marilyn Manson much?' The labels calls this presentation 'impressive.' Kind of like the impression the protogeloid is making

as he's shoving some freezing cold metal device up one's anus, I'd guess. I am not exaggerating, I am not overstating. I am not in any way misleading when I say this is stuff that could very well be hot in the dance club scene. This is offensive. Nagash and Blackheart have changed their names to, prepare yourselves, Lex Icon and Psy Coma. I swear I am not making this up. If they'd asked me, I would have suggested Eye Suck and Ee Tzcht. When you hear mental midgits proclaim the sellout, pop nature of Cradle of Filth and Dimmu Borgir and you wonder what album they were possibly listening to... guess what? It's this one. I'm listening to an electronic dance album that tries to be edgy by having the occasional catchy 'metal' hook riff. We've got the newest addition to the Jim Rose Circus... the band that REALLY sucks.' OK, so that was lame. But not NEARLY as lame as this friggin' shit. I can not adequately express my displeasure, my disgust, my utter contempt for the imbecilic, syphilitic, anal probes of human beings that were behind the making of this album. Vocalist Nagash (sorry, I forgot, it's Eye Suck) had throat problems, delaying the album's production. What, you thought you could suck this bad and not get infection causing foreign matter in your throat? The press sheet tells us they took THREE MONTHS to make this album. Excuse me? I know I preach about metal needing to be in the mainstream, and you people all tell me that destroys metal integrity... well, these guys got a Norwegian Grammy or the equivalent of... and look what it did for them. Fans 1, Critic 0. All I can say is pray for a tour bus accident... these people can't be allowed to live. Sucking this bad should be a capital offense. What perishes.

KREATOR (GER) *Endorama* PAV \$55
Var - 12-50:07
I have never listened to a Kreator song (not that I've heard very many... but several from a wide span of years) and thought 'Hey, this is awesome!' And I certainly don't do so now. I see a whole lot of 'Kreator's gone goth!' reviews on this album, but those people are lying to you. I hear a half assed Sentenced clone. I don't care what history Kreator has, I don't care how they evolved. This is a step for them, and Sentenced took this step years ago, and they do it better. If Kreator sounding like Sentenced (who is a godly, and influential band) sounds appealing to you, then here you go. If it sounds like a reeking piece of shit, then here you go. If you're somewhere in the middle, then here I am.

LOCK UP (Var) *Pleasures Pave Sewers* NBA \$5
Abyss - 12-27:21
M Remember the band Terrorizer? Good. This might as well be the same fucking band 10 years later. Don't know Terrorizer? Look back deep in your Earache catalog, young man. Pure nihilistic blast beating grindecore of the filthiest kind. The mid paced (OK, still fast but not quite as) parts show that modern Napalm Death chunk but mostly this just blurs by with deadly force. The irony and comedy of Nuclear Blast making a big deal out of a CD with no keyboards, no whiny goth vocals, and zero effects is mighty considering that's 75% of their roster these days. V/L Scream, growl, howl, yeah! Yeah, that's about the size of it. The lyrics are 'nothing to be taken seriously' by the band's own admission.
P Supposedly the drums and vocals were all done in one take. Music such as this isn't exactly an exact science and it's all down on tape as clean as it should be so they did good here.

IB The band defines Lock Up as 'The art of stiffening the arms during drumming for the execution of an elongated blast beat.' The band consists of Napalm Deathers Shane Embury and Jesse Pintado (ex-Terrorizer, by the way), Dimmu Borgir and ex-Cradle of Filthy Nick Barker, and the vocals are done by Hypocrisy's Peter Tägtgren.
N/C Warning, the CD I have says that the final tracklisting will be different than the advance copy us lame-o media types get. Hopefully that means the version people buy will be longer than 27 minutes. As it is, this CD offers nothing new if you were a fan of late 80s/early 90s grind and frankly if you are going to get turned on by this sound, take your ass over to Relapse where they have tons of bands that aren't just a star studded wankjob sideproject doing this kind of thing, mostly better. Nasium comes screaming to mind.

MALIGNANT ETERNAL (NOR) *Alarm* NRA \$51/2
7-Refines-9-42:15
Industrial sounds within metal don't do much for me at all. And what this is is electronics pseudo-metal. So right there this review is shot. On one hand I'm surprised Napalm deals with a band such as this but on the other hand I really shouldn't be seeing as how hippy-hoppy electronic shit is all the rage within the formerly 'true' Norwegian scene. I don't know which is worse but at least they are actually producing their works as I've yet to hear a poorly recorded album of

this style. Still, I have no frame of reference for a band of this type that would be useful to everyone. So this is basically a useless review if you like technologically enhanced music and want to know more, right? Well... sorry. That is why I put the contact information everywhere I can...
members.xoom.com/katos/immortality.htm

YNGWIE MALMSTEEN'S RISING FORCE (SWE) *Alchemy* Dream Catcher \$55\$1/2
308 - * - 13-68:22

You DO realize Yngwie is one of those people that for YEARS all I read was how stupid he was, how horrible and pointless his 'wanking guitar style' was, how out of touch Yngwie was with the listening audience. It's that sort of attitude that kept me away from a lot of good music for a long time. Hey, everyone, FUCK YOU! Yngwie is the among the best guitar players on this goddamned planet, PERIOD. If you don't agree then you must be listening to his music with your asshole because you're certainly not using your ears. I've gone back as far as his Rising Force album and gotten some of his albums. Beginning to end, Yngwie OWNS the guitar. He's gotten his best production ever on Alchemy. Is he pretentious? Does he 'wank' on his guitar? Why, yes. Because he can. If you're a guitar player, don't give me this shit about Yngwie not being 'song' oriented, don't tell me he shows 347234832 notes into a solo but has no emotion. You're jealous and you're too cool to admit it. If you've avoided Yngwie, find this. Tape a cushy pad to your chin so you don't hurt yourself when your jaw hits the floor. You want shred? There are instrumentals on here where Yngwie will melt your face if you stand too close to your speakers. You want songs? Check out Leonardo (as in, Da Vinci) and how coherent it is as a SONG with the doomy riffing, before the lead break where you'll again not believe your ears. Sure, when in the lyrics it says 'When will you ever learn/the true depths of my work' reputation makes me wonder who Yngwie's REALLY writing about, but again, the man flies all over the fretboard and he cannot be denied and to overlook him is to deny the importance of talent. Why not just go listen to Korn then? Wield My Sword also works EXTREMELY well, in that some-Italian-band-could-have-written-these-lyrics-kind of way. Also here are Hangar 18 Area 51, Voodoo Nights, Playing With Fire... OK, so Yngwie could well use a more gifted lyricist. There's your 1/25 off right there. Mark Boals returns as vocalist and he just rips as well. Killer, strong clear voice, and when he goes up for the notes, he goes UP for those damned notes. Maybe he's not as good as Jeff Scott Soto, but he fits and I won't complain. Don't be like me. Don't listen to everyone that says how unnecessary Yngwie CDs are to your collection. Talent is ALWAYS relevant, talent is ALWAYS necessary, especially in a musical form that discourages ingenuity and pride in one's work. No, Yngwie isn't reinventing the wheel... he's doing what he's always done, but I do think this is the best presentation of his work yet. If you like GUITAR music, and want to hear where talent and proficiency ultimately leads to, pick this up. If you like epic songs such as Helloween, Judas Panzer, and Rhapsody deliver, pick this up. If you've read about Malmsteen and found him arrogant, or believe the descriptions of him as such... pick this up and tell me he doesn't have plenty of room to be. Metal people always talk about 'trends', well, talent is one trend that should never fade so get your ass to your local CD outlet, or your friendly mailorder merchandiser, and get this and all other Yngwie CDs in your hands. There's a reason I say the word talent so many times in this review. If the term means nothing to you then I don't even know how you've made it this far into the zine. I can't believe this guy only has 2 hands and 10 fingers...
PO Box 5032, Tallahassee, FL 32314
www.yngwie.org

MOONSPELL (POR) *The Butterfly Effect* CM \$55\$
Trident-Reilly-12-57:29
Sin/Pecado sucked big huge hairy reptile nuts. You know it, I know it, and I was too chickenshit to put it that way when talking to Fernando. (Funny how everyone who has ever liked the band still calls him Langsuyar...) So I liked this, so they must have trashed the Sin/Pecado sound, right? Ohhh no. Not by a longshot. Lots of electronic trickery, lots of electronic percussion... but it works. GREAT. Remember that unique percussion has been part of Moonspell since day #1. Electronic beats were found on the godly Wolfheart, and the great Irreligious. On Sin/Pecado, they just forgot that they were metal musicians and not the Beatles or something. One Dæmonarch kick in the ass later, they take all the (failed) experimentation (I told you I hate that album) of Sin/Pecado and integrate that into what it really means to be Moonspell Dark, gothic, moody metal. And they didn't forget any of the metal this time. Fernando's charisma, even just on the CD, comes across so powerfully, or as he would say, passionately. He still sounds like Peter Steele with his

clean singing... and he's brought back the growl. This is an incredible album. What brings it down are the times it tries to be too cute, to throw in things that just DON'T fit, like the so not good drum n bass of Can't Bee most spectacularly. However, the doomy POWER of songs like Soulsick, Lustmord, and so much more. The epic passages that made them such a strong band in the past aren't completely back in place, but close enough to make the songs work.
PO Box 61061, 2700 Alfamelos PORTUGAL
www.moonspell.com

MY DYING BRIDE (UK) *The Light at the End of the World* PEA \$
7-7-9-71:09
My Dying Bride has returned! They've dumped all the bullshit from their last album and gotten back to the roots! Turn Loose the Swans, baby! Alternating between the whining singing and clean vocals! They even have Sear Me III on here! Long songs! The violin (OK, no...!) The problem? This album fucking SUCKS! Christ almighty, I KNOW there's no god above because albums like this are allowed to be made and released. To be fair, for a band going through the motions, they do it quite well. If you're into the SOUND of the early My Dying Bride albums, then hell yeah pick this up because it's got all the trappings. If you're into sincere, emotive songwriting this thing is a hollow void of trumped up depression. I can see these guys getting drunk at a party and laughing and puking and somebody picks up a guitar and writes a riff and they all howl and high five about how depressing it sounds. Good execution, zero integrity. Of the original British Trinity of Majestic Doom (MDB, Anathema, and Paradise Lost), My Dying Bride is the only one of the bands to now be doing the same style yet they are the ones that are the most fake, the most plastic, and the most irritating. It's good that they recognized that 37.whatever% was a total piece of shit captured on disc for all time. That's good. Unfortunately they actually did what all of us have wished Megadeth, Metallica, etc etc would do and go back to their roots. We have to face it that when the people change, we as fans are just completely fucked. If you like music in this style, go for November's Doom, a completely fresher, and much more honest, take on it. Don't order this through the mail. If this comes out on Metal Blade early next year, leave it on the shelf. Do NOT be tempted. It doesn't SOUND sucky, but believe you me, The Light at the End of the World deserves to die a slow, painful, low-sales death.

NATRON (?) *Negative Prevails* HOL \$55
7-7-10-40:00
Complete and total destructive power. Death metal the way a lot of you weirdos out there like it. Blast, blast, kill, destroy, yeeeahaarggh! Very, very busy drum work that still blasts. The production on this is incredible. This isn't something I like to listen to but I'd be an idiot to say it isn't done well. Straightforward crushing death metal start to finish. If you're absolutely fed up with shit sounding death metal like Suffocation or Decide's last CDs and are more impressed with awesome sounding grinding death like Cryptopsy or Nile, then add this to your shopping list.

NDE (USA) *Fix* INDY \$55
Mars-Korecky-8-38:41
A healthy helping helping of deathcore is what we have here, folks. They slow it down to a sludge every so often. I scratches, it bleeds, but for my money, it does little else. You know who this reminds me of? The Haunted at about 75% ferocity. So maybe it's not SO horrid, but still, songwriting improvements would be quite nice...
PO Box 2297, Streetsboro, OH 44241
members.aol.com/nde4chrns/nde.html

NIGHTSTICK (USA) *Death to Music* REL \$
Iguana - * - 9-60:33
It's quiz time, folks! What do the words 'fuck' and 'you' mean when they are consecutively arranged. That's right FUCK YOU! Jesus Christ, where do we start? Fuck you Nightstick, for writing this music. Fuck you Relapse for releasing this music. Fuck you Padonka the mother fucking clown. Do we REALLY need a goddamn clown who performs 'improvisational movement and interpretive dance'? I dumped all over Goddess of Desire last issue for having useless shit women running around and the clown sure as hell doesn't even have a nice rack to look at. So fuck you. In the insert we have a picture of guitar player Cobie (Cotie? What the fuck were your parents on, boy?) naked. We see his dick. A man's photographed penis is in the booklet of this CD. The words 'ugh', 'eat shit', 'this necessary', and 'go fuck yourself' spring to mind. Little Bobby Williams is holding a gun. Ain't he spiffy? The tray insert has a picture of that which was in all the Gorguts ads. The back is a bleeding Christ crucified on a musical note. Wow, that's

creatively controversial. Maybe you'll get protesters, and your album sales will increase to 5 or 6. Not 5 or 6 thousand, but 5 or 6. This is also a concept album. They try to create the sonic definition of SUCK. OK, so you want me to describe the music? Fine. Sometimes it sounds like a 3rd rate Music Cartel Sabbath ripoff. And sometimes it's a punky type Discharge band (Williams used to be in Siege 1 do believe) band. Sometimes it tries to be both. Sometimes I think the guys at Relapse sit around a table and test the market just to see if people will buy just any old shit. Any more of this shit and even I'll believe Iommi was a musical talent. Holy shit. Did we really need to see that guy's dick? CDs like this make me really, really tired of my job.

NOCTURNAL WINDS (FIN) Everlasting Fall AFT \$\$\$\$1/2

7-7-04

Holy shit. (You know it's either really good or really bad when the first thing I do is swear) This thing had the utter misfortune of arriving the same day Opheth did, so it sat and collected dust for a week or two before even being opened. Uh, my mistake. This wacky Finnish quartet take on Gothenburg styled death metal, and basically eat the lunch of In Flames, Dark Tranquillity, and the rest. Original? Innovative? No. A brilliant example of expanding the capabilities of a style without leaving it? Damn right. A clear production, active, interesting songs, phenomenal guitar players, and a clever drummer make this a must buy. Even when they turn on the speed the pure melodic content just drops my fucking jaw and the guitar breaks are awesome. Whether being sickly sweet, or downright depressing, they are communicating with their guitars, not just playing them. The vocalist is uniformly harsh, but he's perfect in the mix and spends plenty of time keeping his mouth shut and playing his guitar. If you are a fan of heavy metal of the Gothenburg strain, and want an album that is more melodically active than ANYBODY who plays that music, then this is a must have. Period, end of story. Buy or die.

NOTHING (USA) Nondescript... ROAE \$\$\$1/2

Perfection of Silence - 7-42-26

Now this is one of those atmospheric-not-played projects that I'd usually ignore. However, this is done by Jason Walton of Sculptured and Agalloch fame so I thought I'd say a few words. The first words are that I can't understand how I like Agalloch and Sculptured so much when nobody in those bands (same guys, pretty much...) listens to current metal these days. How friggin odd. Anyhow, this is more interesting than any half dozen of these types of things, with atmospheric keyboards being the predominant element, but a track or two sounding like Mortal Kombat fight scene music. PO Box 14121; Minneapolis, MN 55414 www.mythosmedia.com/nothing

PARRY, IAN (Var) Ian Parry's Consortium Project IOA \$\$\$1/2

Var-Var-13-54-30

YYYYAAHHHHOOOO!!! Remember that embarrassing, EMBARRASSING ignorant interview I did with Ian Parry in LoTP #2? Well, I don't feel so bad anymore. In his thanks list was "Jim Raggi (Lamentations of the Flame Princess)". MY NAME IS IN A CD!!!! I'M FOR REAL!!! Yeah, OK, it's not this review is going to be objective? Yeah, right! But what we have here is some melodic heavy metal by an allstar cast, only some of which I can identify. There's guitar maestro Patrick Rondat (have you HEARD his solo album Amphibia? Whew!), Kamelot's Thomas Youngblood, Vanden Plas' Stephan Lill, Ayreon's Arjen Lucassen, Dirk Bruennberg and Martin Helmantel of Elegy, people like Barend Courbis, Tamas Szekeres, Jan Vayn, and Tommy Newton that I have no idea where they're from, and of course Elegy's vocalist Ian Parry heading up everything. The songs here are something that would be highly commercial back in the 80s, but these days this lighter kind of heavy metal (and it IS metal) is something completely 'round the bend. It's not all HAIL GLORY double bass guitar madness of a Gamma Ray, it's not heavy as hell obnoxious as Manowar, it's not so proggy as Elegy for that matter. Just some fairly straightforward, catchy metal songs. I can't name 80s bands for you to compare to, but after all the grunge, Korn, NIN, and who knows what else being the 'metal' of the 90s, 2000 looks like having something better planned for us. It's cool stuff, check it out in more considered metal is something you like to hear... next issue will have a great interview with Ian Parry, done before this went to press but as you can see, there was no room for it! PO Box 604; 2400 AP, Alphen aan den Rijn NETHERLANDS www.gatewaytorondat.force9.co.uk www.herion.nl/ian_parry

PAZUZU (CAN) The End of Ages AGM \$\$\$

7-7-15-45:42

More soundtrack music. It's evil, folks! Seriously, though, this does sound like a movie soundtrack. Which means it reminds me of music that you're supposed to listen to when other things are going on. Seriously, 45 minutes of music with a base consisting of a low moaning wind in a cave just doesn't do it for me. It all sounds medieval and everything. Lots of spoken passages which makes me wish this WAS a movie soundtrack so I could tell what the hell was going on in the movie. I didn't start a metal fanzine in order to aggrandize people who liked the Conan the Barbarian soundtrack a little too much. I'm not a 'professional' music journalist, I don't claim to be, I don't understand the appeal of this kind of music at all, I have many bands I'd rather try to shove down your throats so that's all the analysis you'll get from me about this one... as a matter of fact, this might be the very last CD of this type I ever do bother to review. It's just not fair to the artists as it is a completely different thing than I know or understand and I can't tell the good from bad anyway... (well, unless it's something very obvious like Mortis or a release like the Hagalaz Runedance that has definite 'issues') But at least it's not the American Pazuzu, so lets all be thankful for that at least. Next! pazuzu@cgocable.net

PEGAZUS (OZ) Breaking the Chains NBA \$1/2

7-7-10-50:05

Another victim of the post-Sinergy I can't stand crap power metal victim. OK, Pegazus aren't THAT bad. They do have their catchy moments. So did Wings of Destiny. But that's all. A few catchy moments on a 50 minute CD just can't cut it. The music is all retro 80 type heavy metal with hard rock roots that just never jumps out as anything spectacular. Not bad, but not spectacular, and after awhile you realize HammerFall and Nocturnal Rites take these ideas and do things 100 times better with them. And the songs... Metal Forever, Queen Evil, Breaking the Chains, Apache Warrior (you're fucking AUSTRALIAN, guys!)... these songs are neither serious, clever, or especially fantastic. You just don't need this.

PHOBIA (USA) Destroying the Masses PES \$\$\$1/2

For the Record- Miner & - 10-17:10

Grindcore! Grindcore about self improvement and shitty people and yahoo, yaha, etc etc! No frills, no spills, just some great fucking grindcore of the sort Napalm Death, ENT, and others were doing a LONG time ago from a band that's been around a long, long time. Not really much else to say. Thumbs up...

POWER SYMPHONY (ITA) Evilot NW \$\$\$1/2

Flying - 7-52:00

This is \$\$\$\$1/2 easy if not for the production. Dark, epic, Italian power metal with a female vocalist. Michela D'Orlando is the real fucking deal and this band is going to be HUGE. She is a battle angel from the depths of hell and I say bring it on. The band lays out long, epic sword n' sorcery tales, dark in nature and amazing in scope. Not so technical, but their songwriting selection and instrumental choices more than makes up for it. Imagine Blind Guardian at their least complex, give it that Candlemass mood, and the aura of the Conan the Barbarian soundtrack and you're halfway there. Musically this rules as it is catchy, it is METAL, good ideas are brought together to keep it fresh. I could go on about the story of the album, I could go on about the AWESOME digipak it comes in (including the incredibly erotic Luis Royo cover art). I could go on about Michela's voice some more. It is THAT good. Expressive and clear, accent noticeable but not distracting. When they multitrack her to create those fleeting harmonies, BAM, this is metal heaven, right here, right now. Unfortunately, the production is an issue. It isn't BAD, it just leaves the drums and guitar way low, leaving Michela's voice, the synth lines, and guitar leads up front and you have to concentrate to keep it all together in your head. The good news is they have signed to Pavement and will be releasing a new album early in 2000. The bad news is that it will be produced by Joey Vera, who will improve the sound but if he leaves it as sterile as he did the Engine album I'm going to boot him in his ass. But again, you might want to track this one down because it IS going to be a rare collectors item from a band that is going to hit big (in Europe and Japan...). www.powersymphony.com

RAPTURE (FIN) Funtle SF \$\$\$3/4

Walltone-Valtone & - 8-46:51

Well, WOW. Did you love Katatonia's Brave Murder Day? Did you? Well, you're in luck because so do these guys. A LOT. I'd say this could be Brave Murder Day outtakes, that's how close it is. And I guess Akerfeldt's vocal distortion secret's out. I don't

know what else to say. The lyrics are similar to but as PERFECT as Jonas Renske's are, but who can live up to that? And there are a very few times when they turn up the intensity and speed to break it up and make you think these guys are different. But they're not. But in this case it just isn't a bad thing because Brave Murder Day and Sounds of Decay just was NOT enough for me. Rapture is fucking excellent. Derivative as all fucking hell, but very excellent.

REBAELLION (BRA) Burn the Promised Land HHR \$\$\$

7-7-9-35:02

Well they're certainly not BORING, that's for sure. The drummer is interesting. This is just total intense speedy deaththrash that reminds one just a little teeny bit (OK, a fucking bunch) of Slayer. If Slayer had come up AFTER death metal, they'd sound like this. The solos are sick sick SICK! And for that I give \$\$\$.

Otherwise, this is Slayer with a death metal growler and I'm not interested in songs like Hell's Decree, Flagellation of Christ, and Killing For the Domain!

ROOT (CZE) The Book RBL \$\$\$1/2

Shaark-Blackie-11-56:10

Didn't they have some obscure 80s album rereleased a few years ago on Cacophonous? Well if that's the case where this band hasn't existed for 15 years, kick me in the ass because this is one pretty special disc. It's got a good powerful sound, it's highly original, and it's just all about ruff! Built on what I can only call doomthrash or slower dark heavy metal or whatever, the music features other niceties as frequent acoustic guitar passages, a very creative and interesting drummer, and song arrangements that ensure this hour of darkness never gets boring. The vocals are all clean, but largely sound like gimmick singing instead of real singing, if you know what I mean. They either sound like 'I'm trying to be an evil baritone', or something like Samoth when doing those viking things on the opener of Emperor's Anthems... But they kinda fit the atmosphere so they don't tank the disc or anything. Some parts reach almost folkiness without being folksy, if that makes sense, and there's even some Opethness or Agallochness roaming around in here. It is awful sweet, to tell you the truth. I love listening to these original bands but goddamn it showcases just how glad I am that my interviews are good because I realize reviews like this just suck. Sorry. Very occult literally (look at me ducking the issue and soldiering on with the review... I'm so cool!), I don't think its really saying much that way. Still, this would be a good The End Records type of band to give you an idea, and I think you should contact Redblack at the email address at the start of the section because I haven't a clue where you'd find this stuff. But it wouldn't be a bad idea to try, that's for sure!

ROYAL HUNT (DEN) Fear RON \$\$\$

North Point-Anderson-7-49:10

M How to describe this? Super slick melodic hard rock by musicians who have tons of ability, a definite sense for melodies, and absolutely no inner fire. This sounds like it was designed for Japanese charts. It is a very 'mature' work, and the thing is just melody on melody. Quite nice to listen to, but it's quite, what's the word, neutered. No bite. The main guy is a keyboard player and he's quite good at creating a backing orchestra with horn section with his little electronic box, but what we end up with is something as inoffensive as, say, Nelson. The songs don't work for me on a pleasing listening level either, as aside from Voices, this just washes by in a blur of sugary melodies. No hooks, no particularly interesting bits, just some admittedly good flowing playing and a gawdawful ballad.

V/L A Danish band using an American vocalist. He's not bad, but again, he's a smooth, very unurgent singer. You used to be able to turn the radio on in the 80s and hear dozens of singers like this. That real singing is no longer in style makes John West all the more commendable, and he IS a talent, no denying that. But his voice is also very milquetoast and I can imagine him doing public service announcements telling kids to drink their milk and listen to their parents. Lyrically they get too sappy, too poetic without being literary, and just way too Journey sounding.

P The sound is immaculate. You won't find a better recording on very many discs these days, that's for sure. The keyboards go up front so there is a definite lack of crunch, and in many cases heaviness, which is what spells the end of the appeal, I think. Too slick, too polished, with the guitars on Attack Factor 1. The cover looks like crap and that's a shame. I wonder how having a snazzy epic art piece on the cover would change perceptions. Royal Hunt has always had crappy art, come to think of it. But everything's in the booklet so what the hell, who cares what the cover looks like?

IB Andre Andersen has a solo album, Changing Skin,

out around this same time. I'm sure it's just as pointless. Vocalist John West used to be (still is?) in Artesian. Massa Chono's theme music is Martial Arts off of Paradox. That two minute instrumental is the best thing this band has ever done. N/C There's absolutely nothing wrong with this CD. It just doesn't jump out at me on any level. Mature musicians making mature rock music is boring as all get out. For all I cry out about slick production, flawless playing, and listenable songs, the metal I like needs to sound like it NEEDS to be let out, it needs to escape. Royal Hunt's music sounds like it was tagged, kept in a warm pen, nursed back to health, let out in the wild with a standing invitation to come back at any time. Neither urgent nor emotional. There's a place for this band but Royal Hunt is not one the Flame Princess Laments for. Thumbs down. PO Box 22179; Great Neck, NY 11022 www.royalhunt.com

SALLY (UK) Sally TMC \$

Magic Garden - 7-26-67:37

Check this shit out. No, not the record, my review. PLEASE don't check this record out. It fucking blows! There is a drummer named Dirty that thanks Boba Fett. There are songs named Kentucky Fried Motherfucker, Monkey Steals the Peach, and Monolick. The guitar player thinks lap dancing. The band is named after the sole survivor from the Texas Chainsaw Massacre. They sound like tenth rate Black Sabbath wannabes. If this band ever comes to town, you know what I am going to do? I am going to eat lots and lots of chili that afternoon. I am going to go to the store and buy lots of Combos. When Sally takes the stage, I will go to the center of the floor, turn my ass to them, pull my pants down, bend over, and insert Combos into my ass. By this time I should have plenty of built up gas so my ass should be a cannon bombarding Sally with shit splattered Combos snacks. My ass will be a weapon fighting for right. My ass will be a pillar of the community. Women will flock to my ass to have their picture taken with it. Word will get out that if you suck and you play in Atlanta, then you'll have to deal with Jim's Ass. I might even get a comic book licensing deal. My ass might make it on TV! You know, I'd let my ass write some of these reviews except my ass' grammar is pretty shitty.

SAMAEL (SWI) Eternal CM \$\$\$3/4

7-7-12-47:23

The one and only band I can think of that combines metal with that electronic vibe that is listenable and GOOD. No longer very evil or Satanic, but sure as hell dark, these 12 tracks are a trip through the cosmos and blah blah blah, otherworldly. The problems: More time than I would like, they have a problem of burying the guitars beneath the beats. The do keep the sound going so there's not anything very annoying and everything here is just an expansion (in every direction) of what they'd already done on Passage or Exodus anyway. Not very helpful, but they are moving into areas I haven't explored so what do I tell you? If you could hang with those previous CDs you'll be able to hang with this one. It IS good, if not as direct as I'd like (therefore I'll give the nod to Passage as the superior album). OK, now that I've told you what's wrong here, now is the time to give you all the strong points and let you know why this is a very good CD. First off, Samael have more than proven they are massively talented and they didn't spend the past three years sitting around with their thumbs up their ass. They toured heavily for Passage, figured out what worked, what didn't, and decided their course of action. Samael are an example of positive progression, of how a band can album by album add elements into their sound but not lose track of their original base. Xy's work with the drum programming is highly effective because the keyboard lines (and the keys are PLAYED, not an atmospheric extra) weave in and out of the beats, creating an actual web of intricacy that just isn't there on most recordings that have that electronic feel. This isn't so much 'cold' as very, very precise and they hit every target they aim for. They just got done with their tour of the US (headlining, even!) with Dimmu Borgir so there's even odds you've seen how they handle this live. Trust me, Samael go off the beaten path but they're still within sights of the road.

SATYRICON (NOR) Rebel Extravaganza NBA \$\$\$

7-7-10-60:39

Oh my, this sucks. Not because it's BAD, but because Satyr's attitude has taken a bad turn and he's been affected by this 'trip-hop' is cool! bug that these friggin' Norwegians have caught. Arrgh! So the question is, why am I so perturbed by the recording when none of that shit is on this? I mean, this sounds like Nemesis Divina, minus any 'cultural' sonic references. I read a few Satyr interviews and suddenly I can't look at Satyricon in quite the same way. Why? Am I so weak minded that a press interview clouds my ears when I

listen to an album? Well... yes it does. Sorry. Whichever Frost is still inhuman on the drums, just completely insane. The riffing is still quickly catchy in parts, just like it's always been. Everything is like it's always been... except... well, the medieval feeling is quite gone. I'm still sorting out whether I feel that way because it really is or because Satyr's made it so with his statements. I don't know. An effective artist not only creates effective art but also can change the perceptions of that art before and after the fact. Satyr has done so as no matter how I search, I can't much find much musically different with Satyricon. Which should almost be a good thing, considering how good Nemesis Divina really was. However... I dunno. I don't have the lyrics so I don't know where he's REALLY coming from. No matter. This isn't a big wanking fuck off like the new Tiamat or Kovenant... this IS black metal, you see... but I fear for the future of metal when the power brokers (Satyr is in charge at Moonfog) no longer look to metal as their musical inspiration. Argh.

SAXON (UK) Metalhead SPV

55

KARO- Byford & Bauerfeind- 11- 50:34

Explain to me why I was excited to see a record called Metalhead from a bunch of 60 year old guys in a record store? Am I stupid? By the numbers heavy metal by guys who have been around what, no joke 25 years? Stale. FUCKING STALE! I've had year old bread I've fished out from behind the fridge taste fresher than this shit. And this isn't even stale oldschool! This is stale stuff that could very well have been by uninspired young dullards! I'm not too familiar with Saxon's past work (although I'll skip on anything named Denim and Leather, thank you!) and I won't be when people are calling this a good Saxon album. Oh god. Biff looks old. I mean, age takes its toll, especially to people who live on the road, but Biff looks OLD. And what self respecting retirement aged man goes by the name of Biff? BIFF? I don't get it. Maybe he wouldn't look so ancient if he didn't have bleached blond hair and big thick bushy BLACK eyebrows. Oh, I BOUGHT this! No! NO! Shit. Oldschool can be cool, but when you're old AND stinky, it's not so cool. Thumbs down, but I'll volunteer to spring for a credible day job on Biff. They have songs named Pass Off and Song of Evil on this album.

<http://tinpan.fortunecity.com/electric/256/>

SEETHERIAL (SWE) Hell Eternal NRA

55

Abyss- Tagtgen- 7- 40:43

The word 'yawn' comes to mind. I'm one of these black metal 'posers' you see because I like (old) Covenant, Borknagar, Dimmu Borgir, etc rather than this uncompromising, blasting, raw, harsh black metal style. To me there just isn't much variety to be found within the style. Yes, it's fast. Yes, it's tight. Yes, it is even very well produced. But it is all the same. This sounds like Marduk's little brother. So I suppose there's supposed to be cold, harsh atmospheres created with this style of black metal. Nah. Just fast metal that they probably would claim to be 'true', 'ferce' (well it IS that...), blah blah blah. The title track promises to be different with the howling wind intro. (that's different from the rest of the songs, not different than anything else you can find out there on the market) but give it a second and it too conforms to the norm. The cover has two guys in corsepoint and carrying medieval weapons. Nothing 78 wrong with it at all, it has it's interesting moments here and there, but it doesn't stand out. So thumbs down.

SEVEN FOOT SPLEEN (USA) Enter Therapy MIA

55

Waveline- Little & Probst- 12- 73:58

A more exciting, more blurgly vocalled EyeHateGod. They have artwork that has a shotgun penis pig. Recorded in 3 days. Ugly shit for ugly people. Not bad. (yes, another... deadline special...) But 73 minutes?? Gads, man! PO Box 1474, Carrboro, NC 27510

SHADOWBREED (NET) The Light of the Shadow

HH

\$\$\$1/2

Harrow- Weyerns- 5- 21:00

This has THE coolest sell-sheet I have ever seen. 'High quality package and design, no cheap shit.' 'Simply high quality musicianship, no crap here!!!' And they're right. And further than that, the Unleashed and Bolt Thrower companions made are right on as well, but I can detect a melodicism and catchiness that some might find trendy in that Swedish way yet in this context this band really has something to offer. Impressive wild soloing in places as well make this a firm 100% metal release of great quality. I haven't been hearing much Dutch crap music lately so maybe we're on the verge of a big breakout. Good songs, good ideas, good deal. Here's hoping that there's an upcoming full length of this quality, and that the booklet uses a not quite so effusive font. listen.to/shadowbreed

SHADOWS OF STEEL (ITA) Twilight US

\$\$\$1/2

Zenith- Andiver- 10- 39:26

Italian true metal labels have too much money to spend. This latest from the power metal band Shadows of Steel is a digipak with TWO half-length CDs. Excellent packaging for the fan, yes (it sells for as much as a full length CD... fair enough since it is a total of 10 songs, 40 minutes) but the label must be taking a beating. Anyway, this is a slick, well produced band and the first reference you're going to think of is Labyrinth. Original Labyrinth drummer Frank Andiver produced this and Rob Tyrant is doing backup vocals. Duh, Jim! Disc 1 has 4 originals, they sound good, but nothing out of the ordinary. Disc 2 has nothing but cover songs, including Agent Steel, Crimson Glory (not that they Midnight much or anything...), and some songs by guys named Logue, Breeze and Sakowski, and Gardiner and Kennedy and La Volpe. I know, I'm an idiot for not knowing who those bands are but if the band could have been bothered to list them... anyway, these guys aren't exact Labyrinth clones but they're close enough to say that you need to check out Labyrinth first, and see if you like them before going near these guys. If that doesn't sound bad, and it shouldn't, this is something you might want to consider picking up because hot damn this is a nice little collector's package. This band is also getting some coverage in Japan, and it has the media hook: Vocalist Wild Steel (I don't want to hear about it...) wears a mask, as does their new keyboard player (get ready for it...) Golden Hawk. The gimmick fits. Why not? Via Lichene 47, 17100 Savona ITALY sdest@tin.it

SINNER (GER) The Second Decade NBA

\$\$\$3/4

Var- Var- 15- 74:33

Did you like The Nature of Evil last year when it was released by Nuclear Blast? Yes? Then pick up this compilation of their 90s work. Did you hate it? Did you miss it altogether? Then forget this because it's nothing but average hard rock/metal that's not bad at all but completely uninteresting. And frankly the next band that does Balls to the Wall will have their balls kicked off and splatted against a wall by myself. Geez. Comes in a spiffy silver case.

SKYLARK (ITA) Divine Gates I: Gate of Hell US

55

7- 7- 11- 49:33

Somewhere along the way I heard that one power metal album that just made me sick and now it's open season on all the shubags I was in wonderment of 6 months ago. Blame that useless shulohole cut-fronted Sinergy for sucking so bad it made me objective about this whole genre. I paid \$22 for this monster which came in a double-sized case. Part II, Gate of Heaven, is due in the spring. It's Italy's next Next Big Thing, so booya, I'm on top of it! Well FUCK! If Rhapsody were really, REALLY cheesy, they'd be Skylark. And that's a fucking mouthful. This is SO cheesy I refuse to do the big review format, this is so cheesy I have anal blockage. As a pure instrumental album this would have worked because synth player Eddy Antonini and guitar wiz Vic Mazzoni are quite talented... but we run into a load of problems. The vocals are BAD. I don't mind accents and at times they can help, but when the accent destroys melodies, fuck them. And this concept... eh, what? You know the little pointless snippets in Blind Guardian's Nightfall in Middle Earth? Imagine if you couldn't differentiate between that shit and the real songs and nothing has a real identity. Just say no. www.skszservices.com/skylark

SODOM (GER) Code Red PAV

55

Var- Johns- 13- 40:29

Oh give it UP already. Pretty much 13 of the same song, blah blah blah fucking blah. Deathly thrash metal. The best moments are guitar leads supplied by the producer of the album, and not a band member. DUD.

SOLEFALD (NOR) Neonism AGM

5555

Sunlight- Petterson & Skogberg & Solefald- 10- 50:16

I'm lazy. REAL lazy, and REAL behind deadline. Lazare's interview should tell you all you need to know. If you don't think so, then count on it when I say this is very weird, very avant metal, and most of all, very good. Extreme metal and dark pop collide in the best ways possible. Get it. www.uio.no/~amecb/solefald.html

SONATA ARCTICA (FIN) Ecliptica SF

5555

Tico Tico- Kortelainen- 10- 47:19

M You know how last year I said Stratovarius was spiffy? Destiny WAS an OK record but since then I've

found the happy keyboard metal scene to be far better than that. Enter Sonata Arctica. This band just blows them away. From the pure speed attacks of Blank File and Unopened, to the pure catchy yet totally heavy Kingdom for a Heart and Letter to Dana, this thing is just amazing. And it's just a debut record! Your 'I'm an evil idiot!' crowd will bemoan the happy nature of the music, but that's as valid as complaining that metal is dark sometimes. There's room for all types, as long as it is good. Sonata Arctica is VERY good. This is Stratovarius to the 10th power. It has that Finnish trademark inventiveness and quality poured throughout this. Where are these world class keyboard players coming from? Remember back in the day when somebody used a keyboard and it was a BIG DEAL? Remember when Enslaved first used a synth for super stupid single notes here and there? Mortuus making albums with half a dozen sounds overall? Meanwhile Dream Theater was going gold in the US in 1992 as a metal band with a keyboard. HELLO? People that don't like the keyboards complain that it takes the heaviness away. OK, so this is not at all downplayed, but this is some heavy shit! And the guitar and keyboard as equal instruments (especially in solos and leads) tells you that the keys are not an atmospheric instrument but are being PLAYED. And played VERY well. Between the speed and the power, the catchiness, and the overall quality, this disc flies by. Even the sappy ballads aren't all that bad.

V/L This guy can SING. Powerfully, melodically, and he chooses his melodies in a most awesome manner. His Finnish accent is present but not overpowering. He's cool. Where you're all going to trip up on this is that the lyrical content is all love songs or equally 'pop' topics. Blank File is about turning to the internet instead of real life friends. Replica is about some guy coming home from a war a changed man. 8th Commandment should piss off all your 'metal should be satanic' types. Other than that, all love songs. And because they're foreign, the English has it's weak moments here and there. For the most part it's EXCELLENT but with songs pulling on your heartstrings, even the rare slipup magnifies itself. But I've been a vulnerable pathetic mess lately and songs like My Land, Kingdom for a Heart come across as way too real right now. As for the 'pop' nature of these lyrics, well, the music's metal and it's not at ALL glam 'come suck me baby' cute sex euphemism type stuff. And Letter to Dana, while being almost ridiculous in its Irish ballad qualities (from a Finnish band?) is still pretty devastating. Ack!

P Beyond perfect. I mean they have a BIG sound, powerful, and in your face, yet capturing all of the subtleties and 'tender' moments as well. Clean and slick yet never lacking for heaviness. This isn't the production method every band needs, but with current technology I don't see how this type of band can sound better. Cool cover too. And the best logo I've seen for quite some time.

IB Average age: 20. Pushed to the MOON by Spinefarm. I have a feeling you'll see this band's name EVERYWHERE in the foreign mags. And it's going to be bands like this that get the chance in the US because of the non threatening nature of the band. And if a sappy band with a real metal sound gets the chance, don't bitch. Someone has to turn the tide and we need to realize in Flames or something won't sell 5 million copies now or ever!

N/C Seeing that this band is so young as is already being cutsey with the lyrics and is being pushed to success already... if they're still this metal, or metal at all, in 5 years, I will eat a full set of my own toenail clippings. But for now? Fucking awesome! My underground pedigree shouts at me that this isn't nearly as mean or dark as it needs to be. My recognition of quality and technical excellence tells me to fuck all of that and give this high recommendations.

STUCK MOJO (USA) Hwy1 CM

555

Live- Snaap- 18- 70:15

There's a couple of important things you need to know about Stuck Mojo. First and foremost, Rich Ward is a guitar GOD. Not with Mojo mind you, but he has this side project (along with Mojo players Bed Fontene and Dan Dryden) with Chris Jericho called Fozzie Ozzbourne and they're basically an 80s metal covers band. Dio, Priest, Maiden, old Crue & Scorpions, etc. Jericho has a voice for it, let me tell ya, and Rich can handle the axe as well as any man alive. I shit you not, I was amazed watching him from right against the stage. So he's kind of wasting himself in Mojo I guess. The second thing is that Stuck Mojo are all set to leave Century Media after their next CD (set to record in January if everything is still as planned) for a major label. So be aware of that before getting pumped up about the two new studio tracks here. Anyhow, this is a live album, recorded at the Masquerade in Atlanta back in March. I was in attendance, watching this from the side of the stage. The interview with Rich that ran in LFP #3 was done this same night. What can I say, a live record featuring songs off of the 3 studio CDs. It IS good to hear some of these songs off of Snappin

Necks with a decent production (and at times the sound seems a little too good to be true if you know what I mean...) but the reality is that there IS NO way to get the energy of Stuck Mojo live onto a CD. Trust me, even if Stuck Mojo's brand of music isn't your thing, go see them at least once. Just as listening to a Blind Guardian CD makes the music of 90% of the bands of this world seem amateurish and halfassed, the pure energy of a Mojo show makes 99.9999% if the bands out there seem REALLY, and I mean REALLY, fucking lazy.

www.stuckmojo.com

substance d (USA)- Addictions- NOI

\$\$\$1/4

grAnd mAsTer- pArmin- 17- 73:32

whAt is it with All of noise uSA's bands? this bouncy groove HeAVy mEtAl is Almost predictable from the roster. thAt sAid, subStAnce d is the best of the bunch. they mAnAge to sound like feAr Factory insteAd of kOrn. they keep the Aggression up, the mEtAlness up. And the hip hop wAY the fuck down. And the mAn guy used to be in tuFF, donChA know.

www.substAnced.com

SUMMONING (AUS) Stronghold NRA

555

Nachtschatten- *- 9- 64:25

This album has been officially declared 'Some Good Shit' by sources as diverse as Metal Maniacs, Satan Stole My Teddybear, and more... I just got it, I haven't yet listened to it, but looking through the 8 page booklet we have a bunch of pictures but no lyrics. Can I get a fuck you? OK... so, to Summoning. The pressure is on. I've been threatened with detestularization by many sources if I do not like this. That tempts me to say I hate it just on general principle but I have to keep honest. There just isn't much going on during the course of this CD. 'Minimalist' philosophy, scream the Summoning supporters! Ah, to hell with that. After 5 years and how many albums, "I" could do this. Bottom line. This is almost maddening in that we're in no rush, just moseying along' pace, the simplistic, simplistic, SIMPLISTIC arrangements and playing... someone said this is pretty much ambient music that just happens to use guitars. OK, fair enough, but click out elsewhere what I say about ambient bands. Maddening. I tell you! I have screamed more than once at my stereo... DO SOMETHING! But they still just mosey on at their own pace...

SWORDMASTER (SWE) Moribund Transgoria OS

\$\$\$1/2

Los Angered- * & La Rocque- 8- 35:36

Tick, tick, tick. Remember when these guys debuted everyone thought their thrash roots were so denim and leather cool? Tick, tick, tick. This trend was silly by the time their debut was gone, isn't it? Anyway, this is pretty cool deathly thrash with some old school breaks and solo stylings. It has song titles like TowardsErotemech Eye, Sulphur Skelethrone, and Doom at Motordome. Hmmm... I'm guessing if you want to get drunk and puke on yourself, you will like this band. Tick tick tick. And not to kill credibility or anything, I wrote this review before listening to the CD. 2 spins of Moribund Transgoria later, either I'm psychic or this band is WAY too predictable. Other than that, this band is cool. Tick tick tick. OK, Swordmaster, you time of coolness is up.

TENHI (FIN) Kanan PRO

\$\$\$1/2

7- 7- 8- 52:22

This is definitely not one for everyone as there isn't a single electric guitar to be heard on this recording. I had a hard time rating this because this isn't my kind of music yet the positive aspects and overall quality are almost overwhelming. The recording is of itself wonderful to listen to as the vibrant qualities of the prevalent acoustic guitar strings are captured to perfection. There are some piano sections and synths (that always simulate 'natural' instruments) and far from being a boring-to-tears new age folk thing, there are plenty of upbeat passages which I just love. Why do so many other bands bring things to a crawl when they whip out the acoustics? The vocals are highly competent, of a 'singing chant' nature, but everything is in Finnish (either that or this guy needs some enunciation lessons BADLY) so I can't make heads or tails of it. For all of the enchanting qualities found here, I do find that this is a more 'atmosphere' based project than a song oriented one. Not a problem for some, so have at, but for myself this seems more a presentation of an idea but not much development beyond the basic concept. I prefer this kind of music as being one ingredient of a greater whole (and things like this appeal to me when applied to other things by bands such as Primordial, Opeth, Agalloch, and Ulver) rather than being the thing itself. Still, calm mood music of supreme quality and I can't argue with it. Not a million miles away from things like Pazzini and Grabesmond in this issue's reviews, but by utilizing the more percussive qualities of the guitar rather than

passive synth overload, we have a more 'played' recording to be listened to than ambient to be 'absorbed.' An important distinction.

TENN JINN (USA) *As On a Darkling Plain* IOA

\$\$\$1/2

Babbaji's Cave - 14-72:07

Quality music. A light progressive rock. Too light. Nothing remotely heavy about this. But it's quality. It reminds me of listening to Billy Joel on the radio with the constant peppy piano backing. This doesn't suck this doesn't suck... but damn it, something's very off when a bunch of 30-40 year old guys get together to create an epis based on the works of Anne Rice. Really. This remind me of a bunch of 80s rockers who over the years developed their musical skills and 'matured' and wanted to get together and rock out again... but there's no fire. No drama (and it sounds like there should be). There is a market for this somewhere, maybe. It's way too intelligent to be played on 'soft rock' radio (and that's where it would fit), the subject matter is darker, yet in terms of heaviness this makes Dream Theater look like Dying Fetus. I don't think anyone would hate this but it's certainly nothing I ever imagine myself listening to... www.loop.com/~tenjin

THY INFERNAL (USA) *Satan's Wrath* MOR

\$

7-7-9: 29:45

This band has members calling themselves Slut (and it's not a woman... argh!) and Rapist (on 'lead chainsaw'). I'm sorry... do people take this seriously? Is there ANYONE out there who will listen to this and discover a new favorite band? This is reasonably well produced, well played, but nothing-new black metal. And that's all that needs to be said, right? I won't argue that these guys believe in what they are doing. I won't argue that there are people out there that like this sort of thing. I won't argue the validity of the style as I've done in the past... I'll just not like it and that's that. What I will argue is the need for Thy Infernal. I can literally find NOTHING new or creative. They are a 'scene following' band, not a 'scene leading' band. This style of black metal is anti-catchy so you can't grab onto 'songs' as you can with trend following power metal bands. You either like the buzz or you don't, and if you do you end up with 40 CDs that sound alike. I don't get it. To fans of this style, good for you, but I defy you to logically argue that I've said anything incorrect in this review or that this review fails to 100% accurately describe this release! Nice penis on that demon on the cover. They do claim to have an outrageous live show, though, so if they're ever down in this neck of the woods, I will check them out.

TIAMAT (SWE) *Skeleton Skeleton* CM

\$\$\$1/2

Woodhouse- Draeger & Edlund- 10-45:34

Just... no. Electronica rock that absolutely rapes the legacy of masterpieces like Clouds and Wildhoney with a pointy barbed poisoned prick. I am thoroughly convinced that Johan Edlund was kidnapped by Martians sometime in 1995, easily nabbed while he was off in some field hallucinating on shrooms. They replaced him with a clone Johan that was exactly the same except instead of making good music, he made really crap shit. A Deeper Kind of Slumber featured a cool cover, and not much else (well, a pretty girl on an elephant in the video...) worth noting. The aliens decided that they had not emotionally tortured us poor souls anymore so they programmed CloneEdlund to create something even friggin' worse! An 'urban' Tiamat album! Somewhere, in some spacecraft in orbit, the real Johan Edlund is in great pain and distress as alien Elvis and Bigfoots stomp great big anal probes up his heiny (think Arnold pulling that thing out of his nose in Total Recall)... but believe me, that's nothing compared to the anal intrusions you'll experience if you pick up this album.

DEVIN TOWNSEND (CAN) *Infinity: Christeen Plus Four Demos* HDR

\$\$\$3/4

Red Stripe - 5-29:54

Last issue I gave Infinity perfect marks. Devin Townsend is a genius. Here's a complete and total fucking genius. And here is the EP associated with that album. Christeen you shouldn't need an introduction to as you should have Infinity already! The 'four demos' are NOT demos, but fully completed and produced songs left off the album itself because Devin found they weren't perfect in his mind. Of course his tastes are much tweaked and I can't see why there weren't there, and you should get with the program easily as well. The EP nature of this release makes it inherently less in value than the album itself but all you Devin maniacs will find this a monster purchase. Those who aren't Devin maniacs need to order the Infinity album (and the Ocean Machine album, and all the Strapping Young Lad albums...) and become Devin maniacs immediately. Once you hear the material, you won't have a choice, actually.

For those of you completely unfamiliar, just keep in mind this is honest, bare emotion put to a fucking TIDAL WAVE of guitar heaviness. Infinity is far more 'composed' and under control than SYL, but the intensity gets pretty thick anyway. He's so original I (and a growing number of others) call this genre Devy Metal and leave it at that.

\$10 for the EP or \$15 for the full length Infinity album to PO Box 44116; Burnaby BC; V5B 4Y2 CANADA

TRISTANIA (NOR) *Widow's Weeds* NRA

\$\$\$5

SoundSuite - * & Refines- 9-53:08

I feel bad giving all these \$\$\$5+ marks this issue, but there are TONS of CDs hitting my mailbox lately. Now this isn't a new album, and Tristania does have a new album, Beyond the Veil, out soon, so I'll make this quick. Oldestyle Theatre of Tragedy beauty and the beast doom metal with piano and violins and dreary melodies. Excellent for the genre, easily surpassing ToT's last 2 albums, easily overtaking such pretenders as Within Temptation, and just ruling this little area of metal. A funny aside, looking at the band photo, the woman s GORGEOUS (check out the pic, if it turns out...), and you wonder how many cows died so all the men in the band can have pants.

Geitaskjaer, 4120 Tau NORWAY

www.tristania.com

LUCA TURILLI (ITA) *Kings of the Nordic Twilight* LMP

\$\$\$1/2

Paeth-Paeth- 11-50:16

M Do you know Rhapsody? No? Shame. This is Rhapsody Jr, or Rhapsody to the next power, depending on your point of view. Overblown guitar heroics, classical arrangements with choir and orchestra, total speed power metal with alternating lead guitars and keyboards with a renaissance feel. Where in the hell are all these synth players coming from? Two years ago I was still stuck in this 'Do keyboards really belong in metal?' debate and this year I've discovered more keyboard heroes than guitar. In metal. Wow. Anyway, if Thorion gave up idolizing Yngwie Malmsteen instead of Celtic Frost, they might have gone off in this direction. Very, VERY happy sounding, very orchestral. Epic with a capital EPIC.

V/L This is part one of the 'Virtual Odyssey Trilogy.' Believe me, as a pure Dungeons and Dragons fanatic, that this is total unadulterated cheese. Maybe not on the level of Blind Guardian mentioning Peter Pan in Imaginations From The Other Side all those times, but the big single 'The Ancient Forest of Elves' chorus goes like this. 'To the wind I will sing the tale of the King that reigned in peace and love/Of the one of the man who crossed the path of the ancient forest of elves.' It doesn't get any deeper than that so that's the concept. This vocalist, Olaf Hayer, is very competent and goes up for notes CONSTANTLY. But he's no Fabio, whose stronger accent and more diversified delivery gives Rhapsody its exotic qualities and why I think this album is a step down from Symphony of Enchanted Lands. Bigtime melodic singing where everything is so overblown it's either entirely over the top singsongy, or it has choirs, or wind whipping through your hair on the snowy mountains, you get the idea. And even when you realize the words are just dumb, the melodies are SO strong that you'll sing along anyway.

P This CD has the best packaging in the history of the universe. Get the limited edition as it comes not in a jewel case, but in a hardbound book format the size of a jewel case. I mean THICK. The booklet inside is a HUGE full color deal with tons of photos (and everyone is wearing capes, crowns, carries swords, etc), lyrics, an introduction by Luca, stories about the making of each of the songs, a story of the plot, and then the credits and thank yous. Even if you HATE this kind of music, this is something that shouts out BUY ME to every collector of quality things.

IB Luca Turilli is Rhapsody's lead guitar player and co-songwriter. Other members come from bands like Treasure Seeker and Heaven's Gate. Sascha Paeth has worked with bands such as Gamma Ray before becoming Italy's production savior. Turilli is one pretentious motherfucker. 'As a servant of light and defender of life...' he writes in his introduction. Not as part of the tale, but as Luca Turilli, composer, talking to his fans. Compare the latest Yngwie with this and you tell me who's a musical snob? But the material holds up to such pretension so I don't mind. But you might.

N/C I didn't go as gaga over this as that last Rhapsody for some reason. Mainly the vocals. They're not bad, they're awesome in fact, but that's technique and melody rather than having this voice that is in itself sounding like it's from some alternate fantasy world. Fabio brings it ALL to Rhapsody. I should check out Athena... And the other thing I don't see the need for a solo project that's effectively the same thing as the main band but with different lyrics. Whichever. Even with all that, even with the incredible amounts of cheese and pretension, if you're a Rhapsody fan you

should already have this. If you're a fan of melodic metal at ALL, you need this. It's excellent. Just not mindblowing like Rhapsody is.

PO Box 779, Occidental, CA 95465

TWISTED TOWER DIRE (USA) *The Curse of Twisted Tower INDY*

\$\$\$51/4

Neptune- JP- 8-? (they sent a fucking promo TAPE. Argh)

The year is 1980. Saxon, Diamondhead, Iron Maiden, and other such NWOBHM luminaries are hanging around having a beer somewhere in London. The talk is full of the usual happy crap, as the bands are full of exuberance as they are just beginning to realize what they are doing is not just rock n roll, but the genesis of an entirely new, limitless form of music- heavy FRICKIN' metal! Steve Harris of Iron Maiden muses 'You know, music trends come and go and things get lost. Even if we all get big and famous, things change. Bands change. What we are doing here is important. We need to insure our music is heard by the future.' Bruce Dickinson, of Samson, thinks that's all a load of bollocks. 'Oh yeah, what can change? Iron Maiden is perfect! You, Murray, Di'Anno, and the rest. Any major change is going to mess up Iron Maiden.' Harris, as always, gets pissy with Bruce and they all leave, heading down to an old, broken down and seemingly haunted house. Some spritely lads named Cronos, Abaddon, and Mantas are messing around with magic. Black magic. 'What are we doing here?' queries Saxon's Biff Byford. These guys don't know what they're doing. They'll never amount to anything, with all this really dark and evil stuff! Those that dabble in the darker arts, however, do have access to even more dangerous powers. 'We need to show the future who we really are, without the fog of time clouding the images.' Venom is told. A plan is decided. They will send musicians into the future, playing their 1980 heavy metal. But who? It can't be British... they'll be missed. How about American? Yes! An American band would work great! They copy everything! But who? Everyone there seems to be perps with this one guy, Lars Ulrich on the West Coast. 'Nah, he's a dork.' So the search is on. Under the pretenses of a US tour, the Brits scour America looking for a band playing that 1980 British Heavy Metal. Near the end of the tour, they find themselves in Virginia. They've had no luck. So they settle in for their final show, and see this opening band... Twisted Tower Dire. Complete and total British style, that NWOBHM as it's been coined. So TTD are kidnapped, brought back to England, and by evil Venomous powers, are to be transported to the 1990s. But When? 'When Iron Maiden sucks bad, then they will come into being,' says Steve Harris. Mid-1990s, here come TTD. But of course all the prophecies were true and the way of 1980 heavy metal has long been lost. TTD do their best but can not give their message to the masses, too much shitty metal has deafened the world! Yet a Britagender of the old ones, now in Solstice, receives his secret signal. 'When Iron Maiden regains its throne, then it is time.' Dickinson rejoins, and the ancient, venerable, and brand new Miskatonic Foundation contacts the very confused throwbacks in Twisted Tower Dire. 'It is time.' And now it is up to you, the listener. Do you want to hear brand new, 1980 styled metal band? The music, the lyrics, the vocals, the production... straight from 1980 but it's a new band, a new album, a new recording. Go for it, despite this exceedingly LAME attempt at a review.

c/o Scott Waldrop; 10021 Scenic View Terrace; Vienna, VA 22182

twistedtower@earthlink.net

UNRUH (USA) *Setting Fire to Sinking Ships* PES

\$\$\$

Minds Eye- Elyea- 8-23:29

Say what you will, Pessimiser has some brazen testicular fortitude coming up with just these grindy punky bands. Less garagy than your average Relapse band but about as good.

PO Box 357, Tempe, AZ 85290

www.angelfire.com/azunruh1

VINTERSORG (SWE) *Odemarkens Son* NRA

\$\$\$5

7-7-9: 44:04

Another \$\$\$5 CD. Wow. All these pre-Christmas albums are pretty good. Anyway, Vintersorg is a cool viking/atmospheric metal band that emphasizes the vocals. This guy (same one as in Otyg) is VERY damn good. Reminding me at times of Borknagar, hints of Otyg of course, and Enslaved, a few things need to be pointed out. The vocals are predominately clean. But he rules so who cares? In fact, the vocal arrangements are AWESOME. I mean, REALLY. He has his shit together. It may be 'un-metal' to be vocally oriented but this guy deserves the spotlight. And the harmonies, and when there are multiple melodies... beautiful. The lyrics are all in Swedish. The music isn't 'brutal', but the riffing is quite thrashy life. But this is still full on balls out METAL. Folky in arrangement, not in sound, see? There are NO ice skating keyboards as bands like

Falkenbach, Thyrfing, etc use. If you're in the mood for some cool stuff that's definitely different, check these guys out, and check out the interview.

VIRGIN STEELE (USA) *House of Atreus Act I* NOI

\$\$\$5

Media Recording- DeFeis- 22-74:01

That David DeFeis has composed a heavy metal opera will put some of you off right away. These people are fools! As much as I cry about how metal needs commercial success, how much I want to see bands like this tour, the very fact that this has been composed (by an American!), that this has been released (in America!), shows that there really aren't any limits anymore. And that it is done well...! Virgin Steele has always had a mythological stance to them, but this takes that to the 10th degree as this is a fully realized Greek tragedy. Yes, a concept album and finally no 'but you can enjoy the songs individually' bullshit. Virgin Steele is going to have an elite audience anyway so fucking go for it, people! The booklet details the story in both the lyrics and in story form. The music is completely epic (make that EPIC) heavy metal. David DeFeis is no all time great player but his composition are involved, interesting, and the more basic approach of the individual parts point that out as by playing what is here marvelously, the sum is much, MUCH greater than its individual parts. Not a note out of place. And in between the heavy fucking metal are the interludes, usually piano lead, but no less epic and they allow the story to flow without disrupting the music (I wish Blind Guardian had figured this out). DeFeis has a definite Manowar vocal point to him, but this is so far above Manowar IQ wise I find the difference actually humorous. Basically, this clings to all of the familiar cliches of heavy metal but does it in a way that is intelligent and that expands on what heavy metal is while clinging to what it always been. This CD fills me with the pride of all of the Heavy Metal Gods and I have been humbled before its grandeur and skill. You will be too.

PO Box 2431, North Babylon, NY 11703-0431

www.home-of-virginsteele.com

WESTWORLD (USA) SPI

\$\$\$1/2

Millbrook- Orofino- 10-45:49

If you can get by the fact that the world needs a Riot side project like I need a fatter ass, then maybe you can enjoy this. Mark Reale from Riot, Tony Hamell of TNT, Bruno Ravel of Danger Danger (are you fucking KIDDING me?), and John O'Reilly (Blue Oyster Cult, Rainbow... whoah. Rainbow? OK, this project now has credibility and a couple extra points, thankyouverymuch!) teaming together to make some chuggy hard rock with cool ass solos. Every single song has music written by Mark Reale (and this doesn't sound like a missing Riot album somehow) and lyrics by Mr. Hamell. If I were to judge Tony's character by his lyrics, 'shallow' would be how I'd sum him up. It's all stuff you'd expect from 80s 'feel good' while feeling down' kind of plastic emotion stuff. I mean fuckin' blow me mister, who do you think you are? George Michael? If so, err, ignore that invitation. Unnecessary wandering around in what this is, just good enough to not get shit on, ordinary enough that I don't fear you picking it up anyway.

WILLOW WISP (USA) *Dehusion of Grandeur: A Gathing of Heretics* FMP

\$\$\$1/2

7- Davis & Roman- 12-67:42

Well this is certainly, um, odd. One part death metal, one part Cradle style black metal, one part gothic, one part Marilyn Manson. I get the feeling musically they're going for something Archetypus but of course it doesn't stand up to that. Not that it's bad at ALL because they do meld a great number of things together and effectively, but you know... I think this is more gothic with metal textures than anything else and they do have a strong image. Lyrically they are anti-Christian (this IS Full Moon, people!) and boy do they have a mouthful to say. So to sum up, this pretty much is an interesting release for those of you not full out METAL, definitely something different for Full Moon, and something I hope they can expand on in the future.

PO Box 9352, North Hollywood, CA 91609

www.willowwisp.com

WUTHERING HEIGHTS (DEN) *Within* SEN

\$\$\$51/2

Aabenraa- Hansen- 7-47:38

Add this to your shopping list if you like good music. Those damn Danes have done it again! Wuthering Heights (crap name I'll admit) are like Rhapsody and Amorphis mixed up with hints of Skyland (tell me Dreamwalker isn't an ode to Martin...) and Mercyful Fate. If you're not drooling at that then you're new to the metal world and I welcome you to find out about this band because it's on the cutting edge of the metal art without being out in left field and foreign to what metal is all about in the first place. Sensory and Intramental Management need to be people you check

out on the web if you haven't already (www.laserd.com and www.intremental.com) because even if everything they do isn't to my exact tastes, they are of massive quality top to bottom. Wuthering Heights is definitely my favorite to come out of either of their camps as I am SUCH a sucker for this kind of symphonic, progressive, yet very, very METAL kind of sound. Make no mistakes, you can hear their influences but Wuthering Heights sounds like no other band and they follow no trends. At the moment I am struggling to comprehend the absolute GENIUS of the song Sorrow in Memoriam. I dare you to listen to it. You WILL NOT SURVIVE the experience. It is so completely fucked arrangementwise that brilliant is the only thing I can call it. Holy shit. How do people come up with this? My mind has been officially BLOWN. This album is a journey of visual sound, medieval in feel, folksy in texture, progressive in scope, and if you like Blind Guardian's 'bard' mode, you will be lost in this CD. I've seen this touted as better than Rhapsody (I'd agree in that it is more serious and lasting but it won't give you that WOW feeling Rhapsody does), Blind Guardian (okay on that one... Within is stronger than any Blind Guardian album as a whole aside from Nightfall, but they don't touch the Guardian's selective high points), and whatever, but one album doth not a legend make. However, it DOES make for a mandatory purchase. Flawless production. Diverse instrumentation. More tempo changes than me trying to run a marathon. A concept story. That jam meets meticulous arrangement magic. And fabulous clear vocals supplied by the noted Kristian Andrien (Memento Mori, Tad Morose, Fifth Reason...). People say metal with 'traditional' roots is lacking creativity and true ingenuity, that it's all been done, and better, in the 80s. This album says fuck that. People say that 1999 has been a weak year for metal. MANY records, just this issue, and especially this one say fuck that. There are albums that are perfect for this group, there are albums that are perfect for that philosophy. This album is perfect for people who like music.

www.intremental.com/wuthering

ZIMMER'S HOLE (CAN) Bound By Fire HDR

Slack- Dr. Skinnny- 15- 34.38

This is Byron and Jed of SYL's side project, produced by Devin Townsend himself. Now while this is not crap, this IS pretty much a joke band. So to me that reduces the 'importance' of the thing, and certainly wastes what is a lot of good music. I don't know if it's the producing or what, but a lot of this riffing is definitely Devy Metal all the way. Which means there is pure brilliance here, and some of the humor is SPECTACULAR. (I'm not putting your sweaty cock and balls near my cunt box!) Rent a Cop, Two Headed Anal Bait, and another anti/pro metal anthem 'Metal' (I'm storming the castle, I have my sword, it's METAAAAAALL!!), and some hilarious pisskates on 'real' songs (I about dropped my shit when they went into God of Thunder). It's mostly heavy, at times BRUTAL, but always flowing. Once again, I can't describe it other than if you know Devin Townsend's work, your opinion of this will be the same because it's just a death metal oriented version of it and I find myself unable to see a REAL fundamental difference in the playing styles of the SYL players and Dr Skinnny himself. The jokes keep coming, the music's so cool you wish it was in a serious project, and this is just all around great. But I can't give full kudos and recommendations because as humor based as this is (although lets face it, it is no less silly than Cannibal Corpse lyrics), you'll listen to it twice, laugh your ass off, and then never pick it up again.

\$15 to PO Box 44116; Burnaby BC; V5B 4Y2 CANADA

DEMOS

AZAZEL (USA) Order of the Fly

6 song tape

Well, it is good sounding, standard issue keyboardless thrashy black metal from Laveyan satanists. As good as half of the signed stuff out there, I'll at least say that for them. Not much else to say, really.

http://redirect.to/azazel

BLIZZARD (GER) Hellish Rock n Metal

4 song tape/T"

The band is HEAVILY influenced by Motorhead, Venom, Bulldozer, and Warfare. The songs are called Rock n Roll Terrorist, Firefighter, Lumberjack, and The Metalting. The sound is good and the style is every bit what you'd expect it to be after all this. It isn't necessary for me to say one more word, is it? Well I will anyway. Beer and bulletproof metal, for sure!

Tape: Balor, Albst 36; 72663 Grossbottlingen GERMANY

7" (vinyl is METAL, doncha know!): Iron Bonthead, Brunnenweg 9a, 36160 Dipperz GERMANY

ENSOPH (ITA) Les Confessions du Mat

3 song tape

Well, one can't argue, this is frilly shit music to the max! Subtitled 'Allegoric Notes About the Phenomenology of Nothingness in Three Chapters', I

could stop this review right now and you already know if you want it! This is completely done, the sound is strong (even if the recording is a bit muddy... but you hear it), and they take a journey through this watery, flowery, almost piano led metal music. Not evil, brutal, or menacing but still firmly metal and quite stimulating stuff. The compositions are quite involved to where they lose definitions as 'songs' and you get lost in them... which I believe is the point of such an artistic, arty thing. This actually reminds me, a LOT, of the Servants of the Twilight Lilitu demo. Intellectual Gothic Metal! The tape and j card are printed, quite nicely, and this whole thing is brought to us by LotFP's friends at Odiosus Larvae zine in Portugal, via their cassette label Oroframe Muzik.

\$6 (if you're in the US), \$5 (if you're in Europe) to Fernando Manuel Pereira Reis; Rue Firmino Rebelo, no 15, rich ditor, 2780 Porto Salvo PORTUGAL. Also ask about Odiosus Larvae zine!

Band contact: Cristian Luise; via Puotti 54; 35010 Villanova di CSP (PD) ITALY

Tesklo@spiro.fisica.unlpt.it

LOVE HISTORY (CZE) Galileo, Figaro, Magnifico

17 song tape

Signed to The End Records, Love History should be releasing their debut album perhaps midyear. This is what they got signed on. This tape is basically 3 demos, the GFM, Desires, and The Astral Silence of Blooming Virgin Beauty. The sound quality of course is worse the further back you go (Astral Silence... being the oldest), but on the GFM areas it is actually quite good. The style here is artsy dark metal, which should be of absolutely ZERO surprise if you've been keeping up on The End. Love History is immediately going to be right there with their best bands because frankly this shit just rules. With one foot firmly planted in the old Paradise Lost 'utempest death doom' style (including vocals), and one foot in the classical folk arrangements, plus a decent amount of mooding and other such delights, Love History is attention grabbing, interesting to listen to, and very in depth as far as being quality music. Melody and composition take the fore, while the heaviness and some brutal bits add spice. Great, great stuff and I look forward to the album.

Richard Chrobok; 26 dubna 219; 725 27 Ostrava 27 CZECH REPUBLIC

MASQUE OF INNOCENCE (POR) Take O

4 song tape

After the quite nice piano introduction (which was so nice I knew I was in for either a real classy treat or a real shit sandwich with no in between) this thing kicked in, and I admit one thing came to mind: Moonspell. All of these songs could fit comfortably on either Wolfheart or as a more metallic song off of Irreligious. The meandering pace, the vocal style, the backing piano and synth, the guitar soloing style (attempting to capture the feel of Wolfheart), they obviously lack the midperiod of their famous countrymen. Of course they throw in a curve ball and sound like modern Metalica, which is an intriguing mix. Is this a bad thing? Not at all. That a band's first demo sounds this together is awesome. Not that these guys are ready for a worldwide deal as they haven't yet found their own voice, but this is already better than many of the atmospheric death metal bands with deals out there. Give these guys another year or two and we'll see where they are. But if they're this good right out of the gate, again, when they expand on elements that are their own while at the same time using the best devices of already established bands... we'll hear more from these guys I think. A LOT more. If the aforementioned Moonspell, Tiamat's Clouds area, or middle period Anathema or Paradise Lost catch your fancy, here's a chance to catch guys with real potential at the ground floor.

\$4 should cover it... send to: Apartado 6004; 2701-801 Amadora PORTUGAL

A15862@iscie.pt

ZINE REVIEWS

And now, the LotFP Pisses off His Peers section by pretending his own shit don't stink:

BATTLE HELM #3

BIG improvement for Battle Helm writing wise this time around. Still carrying the true metal standard, this time we have talks with Merciful Fate, White Skull (ugh!), Power Symphony (spring!), Primal Fear, Otyg, In Flames, Witchery, Virgin Steele and more... gee those names seem familiar! They're also into ambient over at Battle Helm HQ which I find odd. The one complaint that remains is that the whole thing is laid out in this truly humongous font. Very easy on the eyes, but I'm biased because of how much I try to overcam into each LotFP. And 24 reviews in a quarterly mag seems a bit thin...

\$3 to Josh Cook; PO Box 175; Chaska, MN 55318 www.battlehelm.com

DOOMHAULED: THE CHILDREN ISSUE

Kevin Stewart-Panko, Terrorizer scribe, is one sick fucker. His totally soviething 'this band sucks' style rules, but each and every issue he has a theme. This being the Children issue, we have photos of dead kids, violently dead kids, that is, interspersed with the metal coverage. Also the story of corrupting a young girl

into a black metal demoness. And a totally SICK Dennis the Menace porno spoof. Worth it for the writing, and the pictures will make this a marvelous conversation piece.

\$3 to PO Box 30115; 1027 Finch Ave West, Downsview, Ontario M3J 3L6 CANADA

JAZGOT #5

I have no idea what Jazgot means, but Jazgot is a good glossy magazine from Poland. There is a lot of text, of course all in Polish so less than 1% of 1% of you are going to care, but bte me, OK? This looks like quality stuff and they interview bands from Behemoth, Nile, Lilitu, Metal Church, on down to Anathema, Sisters of Mercy, Machine Head, etc. Pretty much looks to be a Terrorizer styled mag as far as being a wide appeal sort of mag. If you read Polish, go for it...

PO Box 2121; 40-528 Katowice 35 amjagot@box43.gnet.pl

LAST JUDGEMENT #8

If I had been able to keep my promises and make LotFP a 16 pager (doh!!), it might look like Last Judgement. Tiny, TINY font, interviewing bands like Skitzo, Fallen Empire, Siuister, The Crown, Witchery, etc. At 16 pages and a good number of interviews and reviews there isn't much substance, but it is all well written and Shane's got a head on his shoulders. His next issue will be 32 pages so hopefully things will be fleshed out more.

\$1 to Shane Tolle; PO Box 692; Arkansas City, KS 67005

tolle@terraworld.net

METAL NIGHTMARE #5

Take 1 metal fanatic. Add in prime influences of Black Sabbath, Iron Maiden, Venom, and Motorhead. Stir with current scene. Unleash in 16 page zine. Metal Nightmare! Continuing with the 2 interviews with unknowns (Posthumous and Hobbs Angel of Death) and reviews, this is a pretty good read. He's Mr. Metal in the reviews which at once is refreshing but also hilariously bad when he gets to things like Tenhi and Amen. Not that I'm any more dignified, but still, this is my mag and I can be a world class hypocrite if I want. Metal Nightmare is pretty much a must read, send ONE FUCKING DOLLAR already. And check out this Pazzuzu review, in its entirety: 'Hey, this isn't the American Pazzuzu! Who needs you then! I'm not a fan of Mr. Wells' work either, but I am sick and fucking tired of people acting like Chicago's own Mr. Potato Head walks on fucking water. Just fucking nuke Chicago and get it over with I'm in trouble now!' \$1 to Tom Wren; PO Box 420195; San Diego, CA 92142

deadmetal@aol.com

METAL RULES! #5

Metal Rules rules! It is a fun, breezy read with interviews you can't believe. Lots and lots of coverage of the March Metal Meltdown (including multiple writers noticing that Barney Greenway must be color blind judging from his attire), pictures of editor Jeff and cohorts, and interviews you won't believe. Last issue we had a guy from Stryper, this issue is Vanilla Ice. No shit. It is an interesting read and when Jeff turns it on there isn't a better interviewer anywhere. Of course, he also goes off lots. LOTS and LOTS of thorough zine reviews. Jeff strikes the hammer down on many bands in the reviews too... I may not agree with him but I see where he's coming from so thumbs up in the reviews. There's a Hades interview. WHY THE HELL IS EVERY HADES INTERVIEW THIRTY YEARS LONG? Where #4 had TOO much personal stuff to be a good 'metal' read, MR #5 is almost a must read as an example of a zine being original, fun, and best of all, GOOD. Basic Color Homosexuals welcome.

\$4 to: Jeff Rappaport; 2116 Sandra Rd; Voorhees, NJ 08043

www.haddons.com/metalrules

METAL RULES #6

Glossy cover! Woohoo! And more metal insanity. Jeff's nuts. He interviews his mom, Testament, Godsmack, Mike TV (the actor from Willy Wonka... no shit!), King Diamond, etc. LOTS of shit in this 100 page monster. More reviews than you can shake a stick at (including over 100 zine reviews! HOLY SHIT!). Plus tons of clowning around. Great read and worth the money. Big report on the Ozfest. My one complaint is that the interviews are cluttered with the 'What was that, I didn't hear you' type exchanges. Yes, they print EVERYTHING from an interview! I swear, half the King Diamond interview is 'This connection sucks. I didn't hear you.' Ah well. The substantive half is worth it. Good fun in all, something missing from the metal scene...

Ordering info same as above.

SATAN'S CANDY BASKET #4

Burt Wolf is a scene cheerleader, and that's fine. Interviews with bands as diverse as Sepultura, Reseche, The Great Kat, Nasum, Nile, Solient Green, Disarray, and far more. The problems are many, however. The interviews are pretty much cookie cutter, ask the same 20 questions to everyone. Hatepazzine zine and the band Arghosilent are completely racist entities. I don't like that shit. And Burt wonders why people haven't picked up on them?

As ay ay... There are probably hundreds of reviews here. I defy anyone to find a negative review. Aside from those qualms, this is good as a 'scene overview' for more underground types (the only power or heavy metal here is from the bigger metal labels).

\$3 to Beowolf Productions; PO Box 1236; Pottstown, PA 19464

SHORT WAVE WARFARE #3

A 2nd rate Worm Gear, basically, with hardcore thrown in. Featuring Malevolent Creation, Gorgoroth, The Protagonist, and much more. Worth the money if you're into the dirty shit but can your margins be any wider, man?

\$3 to Dave Adelson; 5433 K Clayton Road; Clayton, CA 94517

members.aol.com/inthorns

UNRESTRAINED! #9 + #10

A real magazine out of Canada, comparable to Pit but much much much, as in LOTS, better. Reviews of CDs, demos, zines (LotFP got a thumbs up, YES!), plus features out the wazoo. Not very critical as is typical of glossy 'magazine' publications, but excellent as an overview of the scene. #9 has Six Feet Under, Dark Tranquillity, Machine Head, Taake, Solefald, Andre Anderson, etc etc etc. #10 has Samael, Brutal Truth, Satyricon, Type O, etc. Well written, varied, and should be on your shopping list before Pit or Metal Maniacs as a magazine of its type. Too bad it's quarterly and not monthly.

\$4 each to Unrestrained! Production; 3150 Spring Creek Cres.; Mississauga, ON; L5N 4S2 CANADA

macabre@interlog.com (note I didn't fuck up the email address, ha ha!)

WORM GEAR #8

Marty was a saint in praising that piece of shit LotFP #1 in Metal Maniacs. It didn't deserve it due to my ignorance. But Worm Gear is an amazing piece of work with VERY intelligent writing, in depth interviewing, etc etc etc. The guy deserves the Metal Maniacs gig. The problem? Well, not a problem, but a viewpoint of liking the 'dirtier' side of metal and extreme music as evidenced by features with Carpathian Forest, The Chasm, Mysticum, etc. There's also an ambient side to the publication, about 40% of the space dedicated to these kinds of 'bands.' I find myself wondering about people who put 'Darkthrone-AIF' in their playlists. Do they have ears? (this bit was written a month before I saw the Metal Maniacs lists) To me music on some level is communication and to me going through the trouble of writing music and producing albums just to pretty much say 'The world sucks, go away and kill yourself and that's IT...' what's the point? Yes, I like pretty music and Marty sure doesn't. Is that a complaint? From my musical taste standpoint, yeah, but from a reading standpoint, no. The writing is brilliant. King Fowley's review contributions are HILARIOUS. Unintentionally so. I hope I didn't write this up somewhere already, but Mr. HammerFall are Posers is somewhat a hypocrite. So former death metal musicians forming a heavy metal side project and signing to a big label is being posers? What the fuck is October 31 then? Anyway... my 1 man complaint is the inclusion of Judas Iscariot. Akhenaton spouts these words of, ah, 'wisdom': 'As we are extreme philosophers we must also inevitably become extreme politicians. Hail Reactionary belief. Hail totalitarianism!' I hate rednecks with bulletbelts. And Akhenaton saying having an audible production = life metal. What are these people smoking? Of course this does go to show Worm Gear to be a worthy read as something profound, or anti-profound, is to be found on every single page. A definite cornerstone of the metal journalistic community. Check it out for an almost anti-LotFP point of view.

\$2 to Marty Rytkonen; PO Box 426; Mayfield, MI 49666

www.cronicmind.org/wormgear/

HOLY DIO, BATMAN! AN IN-DEPTH LOOK

AT THE TRIBUTE TO THE VOICE OF METAL

I've been picking my brain for a few weeks trying how to tell you that this is the greatest tribute album of all time' without saying such a trite and ignorant thing. But alas, no go. The plain truth is that Dio completely rules, nobody today will acknowledge it, and this brings you 19 acts, many of them worthy of their own tributes down the road, performing Dio's songs. You may remember the Judas Priest tribute that Rock Hard magazine and Century Media put together a couple years ago. This is at least as great package-wise, and Dio and his bands are better than Priest anyway so this is definitely an A+ acquisition. We get a quote from Dio, notes from the guy at Rock Hard who coordinated all of this, and for each song we get information on the band (lineups, record company, etc etc), a quote from the band about the song being covered, and photos. Again, A+. The US version will be different. Get the Euro edition, if just for Swans/Tagträn! This tribute isn't perfect by any means. Several of the bands included are suspect (more on them as we get to the individual songs, but this isn't a Dwell job by any means), and vast periods of time are just left out. The complete Dio discography

is listed in the booklet, but that just makes it more obvious that periods of time are missing. Nothing from Dio's period with Elf (3 albums from 1972-1975) is represented, thank GOD. And if this tribute was any indication, Dio retired after 1984's *The Last in Line*. The last 5 (or 6... what the hell is intermission, anyway?) Dio studio albums don't exist. Now I understand that more recent material won't have had as much an inspirational impact on most of these guys just because they weren't the albums the bands grew up with. The last 3 Dio albums have been 'not well received' by Dio-heads, but are these people telling me that *Sacred Heart and Dream Evil* are not excellent albums? Blow that notion right out of your anus. One thing you can't deny is that this project pays tribute to the guitar players that Dio has been blessed with just as much as to the Mighty Dwarf himself. Ritchie Blackmore from Rainbow, Tom Iommi from Black Sabbath, and Vivian Campbell from the early Dio albums (who later went on to greater fame and fortune, but NOT artistic achievement, with Def Leppard). By count, Dio (and by proxy Campbell) has 6 songs represented, Rainbow and Blackmore have 8, and Sabbath and Iommi have 5. The European bands are more into the Rainbow period, the Americans more into the Sabs, and they split on the Dio band. I'd try to make a point about Rainbow and Blackmore being much more influential than Sabbath and Iommi to metal, but you all disagree with that (you're wrong, though) so I'll skip it. Going by this, *Long Live Rock n Roll* is the king of all Dio albums... a notion I wouldn't argue with. I have all of the albums that have songs represented here (except the live Rainbow album) and that too points out some things. I'm not as stupid as some of you think I am when it comes to old stuff (especially when I was less than 1 year old when Ritchie Blackmore's Rainbow hit the shelves), and NONE of these fucking things had full lyrics included. <groan> All of this serves one important purpose: Dio's *Imagika*, said to be a throwback to his Holy Diver period, is released early next year. One can hope he caps off an outstanding, prolific, and definitely tribute worthy career with a killer album. This tribute should create a Dio awareness and anticipation for the new album. **BLIND GUARDIAN** "Don't Talk to Strangers" from Dio's *Holy Diver*, 1983 Pretty cool opening up, it's interesting but frankly whenever I hear this I want to go throw on *Forgotten Tales* or

Imaginations From the Other Side. **PRIMAL FEAR** "Kill the King" from Rainbow's *Long Live Rock n Roll*, 1978 THIS RULES! It's already on Jaws of Death, which you had BETTER already have! Strong, METAL, awesome! **DORO** "Egypt: The Chains are On" from Dio's *The Last in Line*, 1984 Yeah, yeah, you're a babe, you're all sultry, you're singing about Egypt and chains and shit. Next! **JAG PANZER** "Children of the Sea" from Black Sabbath's *Heaven and Hell*, 1980 **FATES WARNING** "Sign of the Southern Cross" from Black Sabbath's *Mob Rules*, 1981 I think it's somewhat sick that a mad progressive band like Fates Warning delivers its most exciting recording in 10 years with a fucking Tom Iommi written song. Talk about EMBARRASSING. Yikes, you bastards! Anyway, really cool cover. **CATCH THE RAINBOW** "Rainbow Eyes" from Rainbow's *Long Live Rock n Roll*, 1978 Fuck this whole idea. Why not just give us Helloween? Nooooo... the damn one eyebrow drummer puts together a Rainbow tribute project. And frankly, I'm not a fan of this song in the first place but putting a covers band on a tribute album seems really, really weak. **GAMMA RAY** "Long Live Rock n Roll" from Rainbow's *Long Live Rock n Roll*, 1978 In 10 years Kai Hansen will deserve one of these tribute albums himself, you know. Gamma Ray has always had some good fun (*Free Time* from the latest Ray album and Heavy Metal Universe from the latest should prove that!) and this is a good fun song. And they give it that panache that lets you know this is both a party AND an all time classic. Wow. **SWANO/TAGTGREN** "Country Girl" from Black Sabbath's *Mob Rules*, 1981 Or, God and the guy with bad teeth and sunken eyes. In 2015 when Swano's well deserved tribute album is being put together can you just fucking imagine what THAT is going to look like if they try to make it a comprehensive career retrospective? Talk about an ARTIST. Anyway, Swano is probably the only guy on this entire thing that can blow in-his-prime Dio out of the water. Not the song I'd have picked for these guys, but they OWN it and give the song a greater presence and credibility than I think it ever had. Absolutely belongs, absolutely should not be ignored. That Rock Hard thought that these two were of the caliber to be on this thing says oodles about how much better Rock Hard is than US media. If this was the US, Metal Maniacs would be presenting Roadrunner's tribute featuring Slipknot,

Coal Chamber, Deftones, Candiria, and yeah, some real metal band or something. **YNGWIE MALMSTEEN** "Gates of Babylon" from Rainbow's *Long Live Rock n Roll*, 1978 Jeff Scott Soto gives me the willies when he sings. He's awesome. Yngwie is Yngwie. He's also Blackmore Jr. so he's just not going to fuck this up. Mandatory. **GRAVE DIGGER** "We Rock" from Dio's *The Last in Line*, 1984 Each Dio album was prefaced by a retarded rock anthem type song, so fitting that disc 2 was headed off by a retarded band covering one of these retarded songs. Do Grave Digger belong? No doubt, as they have a long history. And they are a good band with a horrid singer. Chris Boltendahl, how do I put this kindly, really really sucks as a singer. Granted, he has a better and cleaner voice here than on Grave Digger's normal work ("Knights... knights of the cross! Murder! Murder!" Oh shut up!) but somehow I don't see this making the US version and I don't see anybody caring. **HAMMERFALL** "Man on the Silver Mountain" from Rainbow's *Rainbow*, 1975 You already have your opinions on HammerFall. If you like them, you'll love this. If you hate them, you'll loathe this. Oh, and if you hate them, then I give you the MIDDLE FINGER OF DOOM! **HOLY MOTHER** "Holy Diver" from Dio's *Holy Diver*, 1983 Apparently Holy Mother has some talented people in the band (bassist Randy Coven is Yngwie's touring bassist don't you know) but this just seems too ordinary, TOO close to the original. I'm not impressed. Give me Otyg's version. **STRATOVARIUS** "Kill the King" from Rainbow's *On Stage*, 1978 Stratovarius are a big name in Europe, and deservedly so. But Primal Fear cleans with this same song and frankly this one shouldn't be on here. The interesting take on the open of the song highlights keyboard whiz Jens Johansson. Why not do Rainbow in the Dark from Holy Diver, which highlighted keyboards and which Stratovarius could have delivered a superior version than Dio himself due to the BADLY outdated synth technology on the original. The problem here is not only Stratovarius outclassed on the same song by Primal Fear, but Dio is a VOICE. Stratovarius' weakest point is the voice, whether current singer Timo Kotipelto, or the singer from the Episode era (when this was recorded... come on guys, you couldn't do something NEW?) main Stratoguru Timo Tolkin himself. **AXEL RUDI PELL** "Still I'm Sad" from Rainbow's *On Stage*, 1977 No

doubting Pell is of a caliber to be on here, but this song itself was a cover that Rainbow did. Paying tribute to someone by covering a cover song they did is way, WAY weak. Especially to be inspired by the LIVE version. Eek! Good song, even with its dubious qualifications to be here. **ENOLA GAY** "Heaven and Hell" from Black Sabbath's *Heaven and Hell*, 1980 Good enough rendition, but who in the hell is Enola Gay, do enough metal fans know exactly what the Enola Gay was so this band doesn't seem queer to them? Hint: think big bombs and lots of dead Japanese... these bands do well in Japan but I'm wondering how they react to this band, ha ha ha! If this band wasn't on Century Media, would they even have been considered? This band better be big to make this an early special thingy. **STEEL PROPHECY** "Neon Knights" from Black Sabbath's *Heaven and Hell*, 1980 Again Steel Prophet show their real potential. The absolutely SLAY on every cover version I've heard them perform, but their own album (well, the latest anyway, I haven't heard their previous stuff) just bites. Or blows goats, if you will. They belong, they hit the song perfectly, and the key to the song, 'Circles and rings, dragons and kings' gets the proper oomph. This song is special to me because it makes me giddy that this is the first song on a Sabbath album where the public got to hear a real singer from the band. I can imagine the relief everyone felt. Dio collaborated with skilled musicians... he did not ride their coattails to success. Absolutely great. **SOLITUDE AETERNUS** "Shame on the Night" from Dio's *Holy Diver*, 1983 Go John go! This is a tasty doomer which shows exactly why Solitude Aeternus are one of THE best doom bands going today. Robert Lowe's vocals are impeccable, as absolutely always, and this band does not deserve to have the song buried down at the bottom of the second disc. **DESTINY'S END** "The Last in Line" from Dio's *The Last in Line*, 1984 Eh. Good band, good song, but... eh. No magic here. **ANGEL DUST** "Temple of the King" from Rainbow's *Rainbow*, 1975 See Enola Gay notes. This song just fucking RULES in its original form, and not because the vocals are all slick and smooth like Dirk Thurisch lays down. Dio was dark, ominous, forlorn in his performance of this ballad. I'm not one to complain about accents in singers, but on a slow, vocally driven song such as this, the German accent just does not cut it.

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