SLOTH 'ZINE DIGITIZATION PROJECT

ISSUE #2

Introductory Notes

Work began on the second issue of Sloth immediately after publication of the debut in the spring/summer of 1995. Record labels began putting the zine on their promo lists and soon a steady trickle of CDs arrived in the mail. I also conducted band interviews for the first time, both over the phone with the likes of Meshuggah and Kataklysm, and also in person at shows.

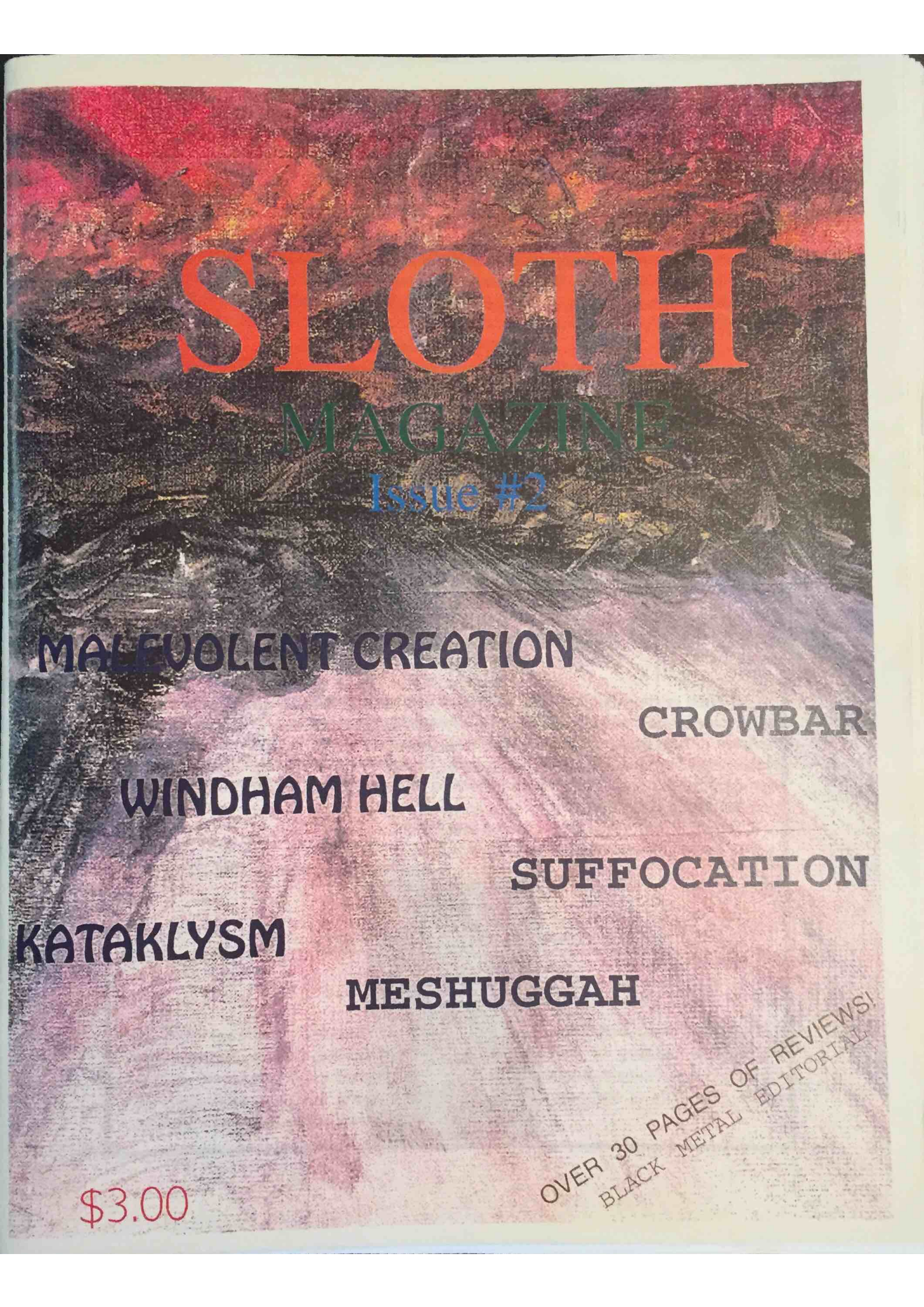
The album reviews section took a strong step forward as my ability to articulate concepts improved and I slowly began to synthesize all of the musical data I had ingested over the past several years. Granted, there is still that aggressively sophomoric tone plus a number of small grammatical errors, but by the time this issue came out in February 1996 it was evident that my passion for writing about underground metal was bearing real fruit.

I took the first steps into exploring graphic design via a prehistoric version of Microsoft Word, and included band photos in the interviews (some of which I had taken at the shows). The full-color cover was painting I had done which, while not standard "metal" fare, was an improvement over the giant toothy worm drawing from the first issue!

You should remember that this was all written by a 16-year-old who was as brash as he was unworldly, so read it with a sense of humor and don't give my blatherings any undue credence. It may be hard to remember what life was like back before the internet had sucked us all into the hive mind, but back in the mid-90s life was a lot slower and seems pastoral in hindsight considering all that we've gone through in the past 14 years alone.

A couple reviews I regret (about 10 years later I finally "got" what Demilich was doing), but for a kid who was quaking in his sneakers while doing his first ever interview with the members of Crowbar, and just a couple months later was somehow able to get the "scoop" on Malevolent Creation's short-term breakup from guitarist Phil Fasciana—all in all, Sloth #2 was not a bad showing.

-Phil Alterman
December 19, 2015


SLOTH
MAGAZINE
Issue #2
MALEVOLENT CREATION
CROWBAR
WINDHAM HELL
SUFFOCATION
KATAKLYSM
MESHUGGAH
OVER 30 PAGES OF REVIEWS!
BLACK METAL EDITORIAL
$3.00

Hello and welcome to the second issue of *Sloth* Magazine!

For most of you, this will be your first glimpse of this mag, as the first issue had limited distribution. It consisted of 25 pages of reviews and marginal artwork. (Hey, we're tryin' here, folks!) We knew that if we wanted to expand our readership, we had to improve the product, so we did. *Sloth* #2 features interviews with Crowbar, Suffocation, Windham Hell, Meshuggah, Kataklysm, and Malevolent Creation, and more reviews than before...not to mention a thought-provoking editorial from yours truly about the black metal scene.

Our primary purpose at *Sloth* is to keep you apprised of your favorite death/doom/black bands, what's out in the music stores, and, of course, have fun in the process. If you like what we're doing here--and even if you don't--please send us your feedback. We're trying to make *Sloth* your favorite 'zine. Any advice and suggestions you might have will be graciously accepted. And we may even publish your letter in the next issue so you, too, can have a shot at your 15 minutes of fame.

Finally, I wish to extend thanks to everyone who's helping to make Sloth a reality. Thanks go out to our understanding "marketing staff" (they passed around *Sloth* fliers and have been spreading the word about our 'zine), to England's Hard RoxX magazine for advertising space, and to the bands for putting up with my camera flash at the shows! I especially thank Dan Lambert (MetalMan!) for all of the time and effort he put in to make this a reality. Thanks to all.

Next issue, look forward to more of the same good stuff. We already have interviews planned with Mindrot, Desolate, and Deeds Of Flesh, and reviews of new releases from Exit-13, Medusa Oblongata, Oppressor, and Nailbomb, to name a few. With any luck, we'll also have received a lot more demos from the smaller bands out there to review. SEND 'EM IN!!!! We'll give you the press you deserve.

So until then, enjoy *Sloth* #2!

--Phil Alterman, Man At The Helm



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AN EDITORIAL

By now, we're all pretty much acquainted with the whole "black metal scene." We know the characters, the plays, etc. Ever since Euryonous was killed two years ago, the underground music community has kept its eye on Scandinavia. There have been arrests and convictions for murder, church burnings, and other similar crimes. The people behind these atrocities admit to being cold-hearted and to the power of their people. After one reads a number of articles and reports about this, he gets to wondering. Wondering if it's all true, and why people would do it at all in the first place. How are we to find out what the truth is? I went to the source, gleaning valuable information in my interview with Marten Hagstrom of Swedish band **Meshuggah**. Using a bit of common sense can also aid us in our quest to find out what's *really* going on.

One misconception to which I have fallen, or at least I hadn't been otherwise informed, is the overall size of the "movement." People, like Count Grishnackh of **Burzum**, have been able to reach the masses worldwide via the press, which is primarily interested in discussing their crimes. But these criminals have another agenda to push, and after answering the questions they've been asked many times before, they start to go on a preaching/bragging rampage. Like the Count's remark, "...we exist in most countries of the world. Only in small, isolated countries like Albania have we not yet been able to establish a foothold." That means that I should be shakin' in my boots, because they have a foothold on America! What does he consider a foothold anyway? A couple of kids in Iowa like to dress up in Middle Age attire, lighting black candles in the barn when their parents are asleep? Yes, they're spreading "chaos and destruction" alright!

I recently read of **Algaion**'s vocalist Marten and his frenzy back home in Atvidaberg, Sweden. He burned an ancient cultural building, and before he could successfully kill himself, was apprehended by the cops (yes, there are *some* law-abiding citizens in the lands that are "under siege"). He was then in jail for four weeks after being treated at the psychiatric hospital. Though his label INFORTUNIUM folded, Algaion continues... And we wonder why crimes are repeatedly being committed over there! People know that if they break the law and get caught, their daily lives won't be altered much, or for very long. Soon, they have the press kissing their asses, begging to know who such evil "people" hate. Who is it this interview? Tell me, I'd really like to know. Are the Jews at it again, or are the blacks now the problem? No, dammit, it's the selfish brats who can't conceive for one second that other people may be right. Their Nordic blind-pride forbids them to believe that maybe, just maybe, race has nothing to do with it, and we are all the same. (Incidentally, Count Grishnack's hair doesn't look blond like the pure Norsemen and Germans he claims to be descended from. Perhaps he's "tainted.")

Speaking of the Count, for stabbing Euronymous about ten times, he received a sentence of 21 years in prison. A result of a "highly biased trial" complains the Count. You murdered a human being, don't you get it??? What am I saying? If the trial were *unbiased*, I suppose they would have bought him a luxurious mansion for his great deed. But then again, he doesn't have it so bad; he is allowed his instruments in prison. And what do you think he learns from his acts of church burning and murder? Nothing. The instruments are what he thrives upon, and he said this while still in jail: "When I go to prison I will get my instruments. Here in jail I have nothing." He told of the one thing that would make his prison sentence truly meaningful, yet it went ignored. If he were in America and did this-- actually, if he were here, he'd have grown up with different races and either killed himself (darn!) or learned the value of tolerance. Finally, fellow Norwegians **Hades** also had their founding member get into deep trouble, but a new eight song album is on the way! JOrn Tunsberg burned an ancient church, and though he's in jail, the band will somehow go into the studio! With or without him, I'm not sure, but they'll manage. Wouldn't it be great if all the imprisoned black metal stars started a band called "Jailhouse Black?" They might have songs like, "21 And Life," "All I Want From The Forest Are My Two Black Capes," "Dis Fükgang Zucs," and "U Can't Burn This" (with bonus, "2 Satanic 2 Quit.")

In my opinion, the Norwegian and Swedish justice systems have to take some of the blame for allowing such lenient punishments, though I admit that I'm no expert in matters pertaining to their laws. The culprits' brains seem to be running on empty as they continue to commit the crimes for which their counterparts have already been punished. Until these insane raids cease, we'll be seeing more blasphemous reunion recordings from the fiery pits of Cell.

-Phil Alterman

CROWBAR

and

SUFFOCATION

I had the pleasure of talking to **Crowbar** and **Suffocation** at a local show that also had three other bands playing. I arrived with my friend, Eric, midway through local band **Oppression**'s set. (That was ironic; last October my band opened for *them*!) The few dozen or so people that were there were enjoying themselves, and I thought it was an okay set. I did the following interview with **Crowbar** just before local act **Spine**'s awesome show. Next came true New York/**Biohazard** style hardcore, **Shank**. (I was so deaf by this point that I had to sit in a booth to save my ears for later.) **Shank** had a number of good moments, but I'm really not into that stuff.

Crowbar had by far the night's best sound and show overall. The thick guitars had that distinct **Crowbar** sound and the songs were great. Besides playing some of their newer songs, **Crowbar** also played everyone's favorite, "All I Had I Gave." The entire evening was an exhillarating experience, and I was not disappointed by the "fulfilling climax."

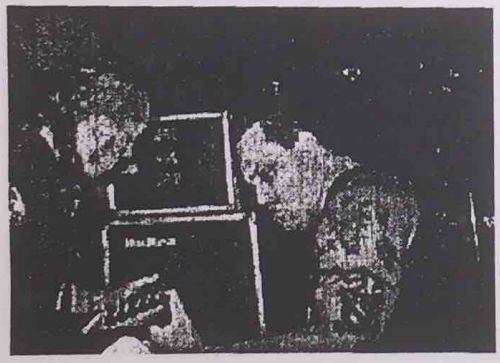
The following is our conversation with **Crowbar**. (In case you're wondering, the **Suffocation** interview appears afterwards.) It took place in the "hang out" room upstairs, where the tables are forever covered with coolers full of beer and Snapple...



Sloth: Considering I really don't know a lot about the band, give me a basic synopsis.
Kirk: Um, we started in 1989, in New Orleans, kind of trying to just do somethin' different. Everybody else in our area was doin' a thrash type thing or something, (because) that was real popular then. We wanted to do somethin' equally as heavy, but somethin' different, so we tried fuckin' playin' slow. You know, everybody was playing fast, technical shit, so we started playin' slow, heavy shit, and it kind evolved into what it is now. It started with me, Jimmy, Todd, and this guy Kevin who also played guitar. And Matt took his spot, and Jim's our original drummer, we got him back.
Jimmy: We were listening to shit like **The Melvins**, **Carnivore**, y'know?...**St. Vitus**...Because that's when thrash was in it's heyday, and we weren't into that. We wanted to do something different.

Sloth: Craig Nunenmacker appeared on *Time Heals Nothing*, but is not touring with the group. What led to the separation?

Todd: AIDS!
Kirk: No, he quit. It kind of had been coming for a while. His brother (Stevie Blades) plays guitar also. He and his brother had been doin' a **Sabbath** tribute band on the side just
for fun. And he was, like, basically, "Look, I want to start a band with my brother." So we called up Jim and told him Craig was gonna leave and asked him if he wanted to do it, and he said, "I'll do it!" So that was that. We didn't think about it or nothin', he was our original drummer anyway and it worked out killer. And we didn't want him (Craig) to quit, but he moved. It's not like we got in a big fight or nothin;' Craig just wanted to do his own thing. We're glad to have Jim, 'cause we think he fits the band better anyway.



Sloth: What led to your decision to *sing* on this album?
Kirk: Instead of scream?
Sloth: As well as scream.
Kirk: I don't know, I always could sing, you know, a little bit.
Todd: The operation...
Kirk: Yeah, the throat implant shit. No, I always could sing. I sang on the first album. *Obedience Through Suffering* has a lot of singing on it, not just so much screaming like on the last album. There's only a couple songs that I sing in, but I just felt it needed that to be a different. It gets old doing the same thing every song, so we just changed it a little bit.
Jimmy: It seems to me that a couple of the songs called for it, you know what I mean?
Kirk: Yeah, some of the slower, melodic stuff is more like **Sabbath**, (and) needs that kind of vocals, where Ozzy would sing on it. It's not necessarily gotta be a hardcore song or a real all-out song.
Jimmy: It gives it that real feel, you know? Like...Like...yeah...(the guys laugh)

Sloth: Tell me about your involvement with Grind Core (Records) way back when? How'd they get in touch with you and all that good stuff?
Kirk: We had given one (tape) to Scott Paul Debo (?) who was working for Relativity Records in Chicago, and Grind Core was right down the hall from him. I'd played in a band with him years ago, and I gave him our tape and he presented it to a bunch of labels. Grind Core called and said, "You know, we'd like to do something with it." (Burps) Really, we were doin' something different, and we thinkin', "Nobody really wants this because there's not really a market what we were doin,'" but they gave us a chance. So that's why we went with them.

Sloth: Are they still in business?
Kirk: No, they're out of business.

Sloth: Your lyrics on the album carry a tone of loss. What

inspired/caused/influenced you to take this approach?
Kirk: Basically a couple of the songs are about my ex-hag girlfriend, and some of 'em are about drinkin' and shit. We do all the music first, and usually I'll come up with a melody or a pattern or what I want to do on vocals. Then I'll just sit at home, drink some beer, and write down whatever I'm thinkin' about. It comes out, you know? It's not any big, "trying to save the world" message or anything. It's just what I'm feeling at the time when I'm writin' the lyrics down.

Sloth: I thought it could have been better, but nonetheless, who did the cover?
Kirk: Uh, the same dude who did the other ones, Mitch Nuahr. I thought it could have been better, too, but what happened is the dude honestly has some kind of rare stomach cancer or some shit, and he had kind of finished it up. We never really got a chance to go, "Look, we want you to change it and do this and this and this." The dude was already in the fuckin' hospital gettin' chemotherapy and shit, so we didn't have much of a choice.

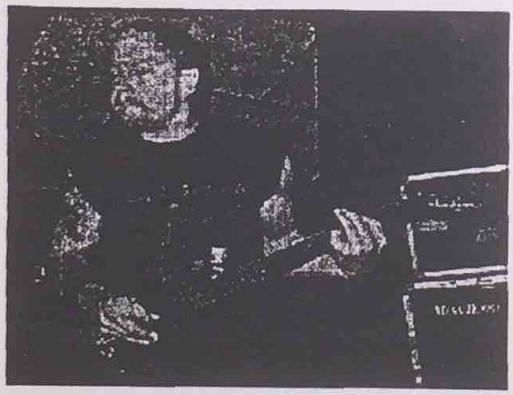
Sloth: Beavis and Butt-head have their names in your "thank you" list. Do you think they had that great of an impact on (your) sales?
Kirk: No, but it really does help bring out the name of the band. It doesn't really help sales, because people that watch that program for the most part... people who listen to **Crowbar** rarely even watch MTV. You know, it doesn't do anything. All it does is like, my mom's friends (say), "Oh yeah, saw your son on the video!" You know, like the name of the band is a little more known, people have heard of it from that type of exposure. But my mom's friend that saw me on there ain't gonna go buy the fuckin' record, so it doesn't help...but it doesn't hurt at all.
Todd: (MTV) reaches a more mainstream audience, for sure.



Sloth: You're one of the few (bands) that didn't get trashed by them, unlike **Cannibal Corpse** and **Morbid Angel**.
Kirk: They fuck with us, but that's funny, that's the whole idea. Basically, when I watch the show, I want 'em to trash everything because that's why it's funny! It doesn't make a difference as long as they don't say you suck!!!
Jimmy: That's what it's about.
Kirk: That's what it's about, cuttin' down everything. So it's okay.

Sloth: What the hell is the "New Orleans Sound?" Is it the underground's answer to the "Seattle Sound?"
Jimmy: It's the exact fuckin' opposite! (They laugh)
Kirk: Like he (points to Jim) plays in **EYEHATEGOD** also. He plays

guitar in that band, which is from New Orleans. They have a different sound than we do, but it's still heavy and slower for the most part. We're really the only two, like, still...
Jimmy: ...That have that sound.
Kirk: That have that sound and are still around. Like **Stressball** and **Graveyard Rodeo** and a couple other bands that had stuff out and (then) broke up. There's a band called **Acid Bath**, that's not from New Orleans; they're from Oklahoma. They're a real good band. They kind of have similar stuff here and there, to what us and **EYEHATEGOD** do. Basically, I don't know what to call it. We really made it up, me and Jimmy...
Jimmy: It's not really a sound, it's more an influence, you know?



Kirk: Yeah, we were just like sick of, you know, thrash or whatever, and everybody was doing the same thing. There was a real good band from New Orleans called **Exhorder**, and you couldn't touch 'em! They were killer at playin' thrash. And everybody was an **Exhorder** wanna-be, second rate. There was **Exhorder** and then there were all these other bands tryin' to play like they did. And we were like, "We can either try to do what they do, (and) be second rate at it, or do something ourselves, that we know we can do, that's us."
Jimmy: We weren't really into that style of music anyway, you know? We were into it, but that's not what we wanted to play. We'd rather play slow shit.

Sloth: **Suffocation** seem such unlikely tourmates. How did you hook up with them?
Kirk: Uh...
Todd: We bought a bag from 'em. (They laugh)
Kirk: Basically, we just contacted an agency like, "Hey, we want to get a tour goin'," and (the guy) said, "**Suffocation** is getting ready to go out if you're interested in doin' it." We and **Suffocation** both feel that it's a good idea to tour with bands that are opposites, because it helps draw more people. Like our crowd, for the most part, is completely opposite of them, but it works well. There are people who may come see Suffo, who are death metal fans and shit, who might stick around and watch a couple songs or whatever, and it might go over well. They'll say, "Hey, I thought y'all were good. I used to think y'all sucked." We toured with **Morbid Angel** last year and a *lot* of people would come up, kids goin', "I thought y'all sucked and shit until I saw y'all. It was fuckin' heavy." Dudes who were kinda close-minded or somethin', or listened to death and shit, so it was kinda good to have that.
Jimmy: It turns people on, you know? Same thing with them (**Suffocation**).

Kirk: You know, they want to carry over to a different audience. It doesn't do them any good to play with other death metal bands all the time, 'cuz everybody already knows about 'em. They need to broaden their audience, and same thing with us. We want to play with as many different bands as possible. As long as they're heavy, it's cool!

Sloth: What's coming up after this tour? More music, more tours, etc.?
Kirk: We've got three new songs right now. We're writing right now. And, uh, we go to Europe for a month.
Jimmy: We're goin' on tour with another band we play in, called **Down**.

Sloth: Well, that's about all the questions I have.
Kirk: Cool.

Sloth: Thanks a lot!
Kirk: No problem, thanks.



#####

Suffocation went on after **Shank**, their Roadrunner Records labelmates, but I was kind of let down. The new disc is great, but the show was plagued with bass-heavy drumming that diminished what could've been a great set. (Who the hell was running the sound board?) The bass was so loud that one could *see* the drummer hit his cymbals, but not hear them! Everything else appeared to go well, thank goodness.

After the show I approached guitarist Terrance Hobbs and said, "The bass could've been lighter." Misinterpreting what I said, he replied, "Yeah, I thought we could've been tighter myself. The sound and everything else was just messed up." We continued...

Sloth: So, can you tell me how the tour's been going?
Terrance: Uh, actually it's been going pretty well, man, it hasn't been bad at all.

Sloth: Where've you been playing?
Terrance: Actually, this is only our third show.

Sloth: What happened about Mike, the old drummer?
Terrance: He's in a rap band.

Sloth: Rap band! Did he quit or get kicked out?
Terrance: Well, basically it's the usual thing. He got sick of it, you know?

Sloth: How's the new album doing?
Terrance: It's doing okay. I don't know exactly how it's selling. I really couldn't tell you. We're doing alright, I suppose...It's been selling, (but) we're probably not gonna know for a few months anyway. Europe is like six months behind us,

so we're not gonna know about there for another year.

After our brief interview, Terrance told us he had to go help put gear away, so we went over to talk to lead singer Frank Mullen. He was much more laid back than Terrance, who was always hustling about, surrounded by people. Eric and I had a nice chat with Frankie, surviving the occasional interruption of some guy yelling, "Great show, man! Rock 'n' Roll!" So here is the rest our our "I-had-no questions-prepared-but-I'll-interview-you-anyway" meeting with **Suffocation**.



Sloth: When did you guys form?
Frank: Uh, 1989. We started out with a couple different members. We had Josh then, we had a guy named Todd Jeremy, we had Mike Smith on drums, and then got Terrance.

Sloth: How'd you hook up with Relapse for the first EP?
Frank: What happened was we put out our demo, and not too long after that Relapse got a hold of it. They liked it, so they wanted to do something, and we did the EP.

Sloth: I already asked Terrance what happened to Mike. He's rapping now?!?
Frank: Yes.

Sloth: Quite a transition! What do you think of that?
Frank: I'm still friends with him, you know... I guess it was his own preference. I can't look at it and say, "This sucks! He did that?"

Sloth: I really liked his work on *Breeding the Spawn.*
Frank: Oh, yeah, yeah. He's always done an excellent job, all the way up to the time... You know, he just had different musical interests, and he lost interest in the whole death metal scene. He didn't like watching bands anymore, and he started getting more and more into the hip-hop and stuff. You know, that's what he wanted to do, so we knew we couldn't turn around and tell him, "No, you can't do that!"

Sloth: So what's next? Any more tours, any new songs written?
Frank: Nothin' new written yet. At the end of October or November we're going to Europe with **Deicide**.

Sloth: How do you keep your voice in shape? I growl for like five minutes with my band and I'm already sore! And here you are, coughing up a lung!
Frank: I guess it's totally broken in now. I'll probably lose my voice in ten years, but, y'know, I don't care.

Sloth: (In a macho voice) You don't care!
Frank: (laughs) No, no, no.

Sloth: How does the songwriting work for your band? Do you guys just practice for hours on end or does somebody come in with a song written?
Frank: Well, basically what happens is Terrance and Doug wil write a bunch of rhythms, and then they come in and we try to fit them together. We say, "Ah, we don't like this...we don't like that...Maybe we should shorten that a little bit..." It just kind of blends like that. I usually write the lyrics *after* the songs are done.

Sloth: What influences your lyric writing?
Frank: Stuff, stuff...
Sloth: Your wife?
Frank: Yeah, yeah, my wife.

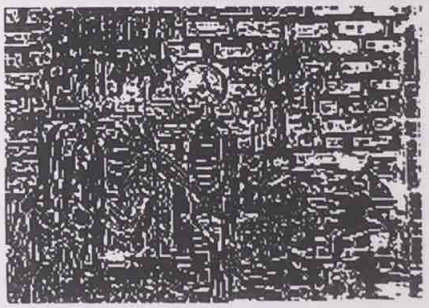
Sloth: So, have you been killing people a lot?
Frank: (laughs) Not lately! (laughs again) I'm fascinated with death, though.

Sloth: How come you decided to redo "Breeding The Spawn" for the new album?
Frank: Basically, we did "Breeding..." because we figured that the production it got on the entire album wasn't that great. We wanted to give "Breeding The Spawn" a real production with a really good sound and everything.

#####

Things continue going in the right direction for **Suffocation**. They're possibly one of the few death metal bands that I know of that are not only successful, but who are treated well by their label, Roadrunner Records. I hope that Frank *doesn't* lose his voice so that we can do another interview the next time the band comes to town.





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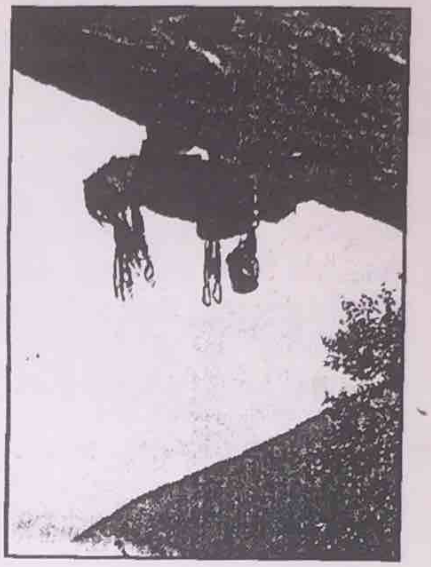
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WINDHAM HELL

Climbing to the Depths...

I conducted a mail interview with Leland Windham of the two man project, **Windham Hell**. His answers were interesting and amusing, and we're reprinting them here exactly as he wrote them.



His Moribund Records debut CD, *South Facing Epitaph*, is full of so much experimental material it's amazing. An enthusiastic rock climber, Leland spends much of his time hugging the cold stone, inching closer to the top. Maybe it's from these intense, solitary moments that he draws his diverse influences. Where else can you find speedy classically inspired solos next to tracks with a woman discussing how "tomorrow you're going to die" other than *SFE*? (His forthcoming album!)

Leland started out by himself back in 1986, and only recently his project has been gaining recognition. In 1993, Eric Friesen joined Leland, and you'll find out all about him in the interview. The pair recorded *South Facing Epitaph* in the Northern forests of Washington state, which goes to prove that Scandinavia alone doesn't have all the Northern forests...

Sloth: You've got a wide variety of styles on *South Facing Epitaph*. Who/What has influenced your style?
Leland: The darkness of future's past and the melancholic bliss enhanced by the fast.

Sloth: For having recorded at someone's house, you sure got good sound! What kind of system and equipment does Eric have?
Leland: He has an old cheap Fostex eight track. He is able to get good sound from it because of all his years of recording experience. All our instruments are in really bad shape. Eric's been playing the same cheap guitar for fifteen years and I've had the same one for ten. The bass we use I bought used for twenty dollars and everything else we borrow.

Sloth: *South Facing Epitaph* is quite a long album with few vocals. And with the vocals you did use, they weren't focused on as much as the music. Explain your views on vocals' involvement with the music.
Leland: I'm one of those people who likes a lot of music but often the vocals will ruin it. I'm just not a huge fan of the human voice.

Sloth: What is a "south facing epitaph?"
Leland: It's the granite tombstone under the green chair.

Sloth: While Moribund Records appears to be a label that only supports Satanic groups, and many of these blatantly express their views, Windham Hell keeps me wondering. What are your personal/religious beliefs?
Leland: If I didn't want people to wonder I wouldn't do Windham Hell. It just doesn't get any more simple or as complicated as that.

Sloth: Have you been in any other bands besides Windham Hell?
Leland: I was in another band called **Nodrums** in 1985 through 1987. There really isn't much to say about that.

Sloth: How has the addition of Eric Friesen benefited your once solo project?
Leland: Eric has helped out a great deal with his drumming and guitar playing ability and also his experience with recording. He had also been doing solo recording projects when I teamed up with him in 1993. In 1994 I found an interesting contusion on the ring finger of the left hand on the girl under the fan.

Sloth: Have you ever thought of getting a full line up together and try to play shows or tour?
Leland: We thought about it but so far I haven't touched a goddamn thing.

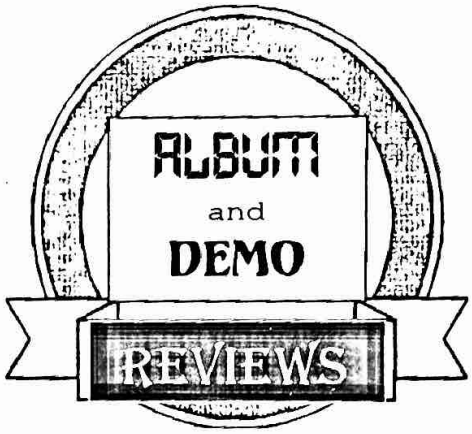
Sloth: I see you're an avid rock and mountain climber. Is this a priority thing, or do you take time away from the music to do it?
Leland: I've been guiding professionally this summer so I'll have to take time away or I'll have no money. Climbing and music are equally important.

Sloth: The sound bits from your album are quite disturbing. Where did you find them, and what convinced you they were meant for Windham Hell?
Leland: Most of them are from people who've asked to remain anonymous. The rest we recorded in Snoqualmie, which is my hometown, when David Lynch was here filming. I'm not sure they were meant for Windham Hell.

Sloth: Being fairly close to Seattle, have you ever felt the urge to be "cool" and play grunge?
Leland: Not to my knowledge.

Sloth: What new material can we expect from you, and when?
Leland: We are currently recording our second CD which will be out some time in '96.

Sloth: Thanks for your time and good luck with the band!
Leland: Thanks for the interview. Engulf your soul...



Algaion: *Ominai Algaiou* (Full Moon Productions, 948 Callahan Ct., Lakeland, FL, 33801, USA) I had a bit of trouble figuring out this band's name when I first got their CD. It wasn't in a case, and was taped front-side to **Hades**'s album. When I separated the two, I was greeted by that stupid diploma style print that all the bands are using these days. Yeah, this is cool. A two-piece from Sweden, **Algaion** have a basic formula that most of their songs follow: The guitar will play a fast, technical rhythm which is mimicked by the bass, and the drummer will happily play his repetitive high speed beat. Sorry that I sound so pessimistic, because I actually *do* like this, though the songs sound a lot alike. Some little things here and there do make this album stand out a bit more.

A marathon seven song attack that exceeds 45 minutes, *Ominai Algaiou* is much more than a simple routine. Drum fills lurk throughout, and the band is *always* together. A creative intro that *is* a bit long (four minutes) has a mini-symphony playing in a mystical world, and clanking sounds persist in the background. It ends and then the real stuff begins. Songs like "On The Reach Of Zaphonia" and "The Last Delusion" have great moments, but the time in between them is long.

One thing I did notice is that **Algaion** has the same type of production that many other black metal bands have. The only problem with that arises when they try to play a heavy rhythm with chords involving the sixth string. It doesn't have the bottom a death metal band gets, and I want to hear it! This is most evident on "Kratos," even though it's still a good song.

So there you have it. Fabulous technicality and orchestration done with positive results. Yet another black metal band that has come up with a good blend of melody and speed! Hopefully, much more diversity will be present on album two, which is already recorded, though member Marten appears to be headed for prison. **Hypocrisy's** Peter Tägtgren is on drums, which is a good sign after his work with **The Abyss**! 𝅗𝅥𝅗𝅥𝅗𝅥 1/4

B-Thong: *Skinned* (Pavement Music, 17W703A Butterfield Road, Oakbrook Terrace, IL, 60181, USA) With a rip-off song like "Power Ranger," it's evident that **B-Thong**

take many influences from American Midwest bands like **Mutha's Day Out**, but do it in an unconvincing fashion. Hard as it is to believe that a Swedish band isn't playing death metal, it's true. The music is simplistic, boring, and reeks of sell-out.

The guitar "riffs" are about as catchy as genetic disorders, and the singer does a bad version of all the singers from the Metal Edge bands similar to **The Cult**. Accessible this is, commendable this isn't. I liked *one song*, "My Opinion," but the rest of the album is plain uneventful monotony. Just trust me. 3/4

Baphomet: *Trust* (Massacre Records is now out of business in the US. I don't know the German address.) This is Germany's **Baphomet**, not to be confused with the American one, now called **Banished**. I got this cheap, and "Betrayed," the first song, has a technical little intro that was fitting to the price! As for the rest of the disc, the opening foolishness was overcome. The band's style is so odd and ever-changing that it's hard to compare it to another. From the technicality of **Atrocity** to hardcore overtones, **Baphomet** are full of frustrated emotion and convey it without using pianos and sopranos.

While not instrumental virtuosos, the members of **Baphomet** do possess the knowledge necessary to incorporate the various styles into their songs. An odd intro on "Everlast" that leads into an **Atrocity**-ish rhythm further embeds into the listener's mind what a creative bunch of guys **Baphomet** is! An almost silly sounding chorus on "Mind The Doubt" is at the same time addictive and the highlight of the song. The title track is by far the most thought out and powerful of the nine offered. With a whispered "conscience," a prelude to the main character's cries for trust in others, the song creates a somber mood that strikes hard. An odd group of effects that sound like a phaser gun combined with the sound that comes from spraying a hose against siding on a house are layered over drums and bass to close out the album. Trust me.

Because these guys aren't maestros, the songs come off as simple, but thin sound production may also play a part in this. All in all, this band is definitely going to improve with each album they release, so keep an eye out for them. 3/4

Beats The Hell Out of Me: *Rolling Thunder Music* (Metal Blade Records, 2345 Erringer Rd., Suite 108,. Simi Valley, CA, 93065, USA) You know, I could be really stupid and ask some nifty question that would leave room for the response of, "Beats the ___ out of me, hyuk, hyuk." Of course, every other reviewer does that so a reader, somewhere out there, who's been outside four times in his life gets a laugh. But I know my readers have even left their yard before (yikes!), and wouldn't be very amused. But I digress. **Beats The Hell Out Of Me** plays catchy, non-metal tunes that a friend of mine said "sounds like **Stone Temple Pilots**." I wouldn't go that far, but this is pretty accessible stuff. No growls invoking the full moon, nor are there any searing solos from the woods. Despite that fact, I can't say that it's not a good change, besides the endless and abominable tracks "G-

nite Lee Van Cleef" and "19.5." Track one, entitled "Track," has an invigorating *and* soothing chorus, with vocals that are a combination of Scott Weiland (STP) and a British pop singer. Excluding the aforementioned crappy tunes, all the songs have soul and emotion, and the beginning of "Oar" sounds like it came from **Collective Soul**. The group draws from the styles of **Faith No More** and **Korn**, and while not of that caliber yet, I believe it will come within a very short time. So if you are willing to put down the **Severed Left Buttock** CD momentarily and make a stretch, it just could be worth your while...♂*♂*♂*

BENEDICTION: *The Dreams You Dread* (Nuclear Blast America, P.O. Box 251, Millersville, PA, 17551, USA) Unfortunately, this is not a dream, and it is the album I dread. The many possibilities that seemed available after 1993's *Transcend The Rubicon* album have not been capitalized on, and no amount of positive Relapse descriptions can save this. Where are the thick, layered guitars? Where is the intense energy that drove songs like "Unfound Mortality" and "Night Fear" into our hearts? I don't know where it went, but it's all gone.

Original drummer Ian Treacy has been replaced by some faceless nobody, and Dave Ingram's vocals have just gotten silly. Along with shouting at the completely wrong times, he'll give the annoying "Hey!" or "Yeah!" to insure we die laughing. His growl has become thinner, making it sound like it could be his speaking voice!

The pace of the songs never really picks up, letting this listener down. Sure, the band keeps time, with the exception of Ingram, who's off somewhere in the stratosphere, but that's only half of it. The songs are lifeless; they're just present to fill a quota. Unlike **Malevolent Creation**, who screwed up but came back strong, **Benediction** just seems to have fizzled out. The loss of Barney Greeenway to **Napalm Death** years ago couldn't kill them, but to actually release *The Dreams You Dread* is suicide. ♂*

Bolt Thrower: *...For Victory* (Earache Records, 229 Lafayette St., Suite 915, New York, NY, 10012, USA) Voices yell and suddenly the sound of an artillery blast is heard. Thud. Once again, the voices yell, then another shell is hurled behind enemy lines. A second chilling thud, then silence.

These are the closing seconds of **Bolt Thrower**'s amazing fifth album, *...For Victory*. Preceding this sobering outro, there are ten songs of carefully written, well-executed death metal.

From the moment a music store patron catches a glimpse of the album's cover, he is immediately beckoned closer. Unlike previous covers that have been full of violence, **Bolt Thrower**'s most recent pair of albums have a sense of taste, while still incorporating effective images. Here, nine soldiers on the edges of a body of water continue their journey toward the mountains ahead, silhouetted by the setting yellow sun.

With a certain mood already set by the somber cover, the unsuspecting listener pops in the disc and is slowly drawn in by the momentum building, instrumental opener, "War." "Remembrance" blazes in with fury

and energy, soon giving way to a series of complex tempo changes. Another noteworthy song is "Lest We Forget," with its jogging-style pace and hopping drum beats.

The title track is by far the best song offered. The guitars hold a rhythm resembling that of a person full of pride and virtue, on the edge of breaking down, but still able to maintain his composure. Karl Willets' vocals are emotional, easily conveying the song's message of appreciating those who sacrifice it all "for victory." And in the dramatic closing passage, which comes to terms with being one of the fortunate survivors, Willets twice says, "We will remember them."

On the whole, *...For Victory* is an improvement of great leaps and bounds by **Bolt Thrower**. It is much better than *The IVth Crusade* and its three predecessors, *Warmaster*, *Realm Of Chaos*, and *In Battle There Is No Law*. But some problems still linger from their previous efforts. The band's insistence on using the same song structure undermines their otherwise improved songwriting skills. First, a series of low notes is played, immediately followed by some fiddling around on the fourth and fifth strings. Every song! Somehow, they manage to come up with different rhythms, but the structure can be very tiring, making the album a challenge to listen all the way through. Willets's vocals, while powerful at times, are mostly faceless and cloudy. It is apparent that while he does have a strong throat, he lacks the will to exert himself fully. Therefore, it is of no surprise that he is now out of the band, though it did take a while for him to leave!

Veteran vocalist Martin van Drunen, who has lent his wailing skills to **Pestilence**, **Asphyx**, **Comecon**, and **Submission**, recently added **Bolt Thrower** to his resumé, and appears to be quite happy in his new position. Also a bass player, maybe he'll help diversify the repetitive behavior of his new band's music.

My mixed emotions about **Bolt Thrower** give way to one overpowering feeling: With each album the band gets better, and "*...For Victory*" exemplifies what progress a band can make if it just keeps working at it. 𝅘𝅥𝅮𝅘𝅥𝅮𝅘𝅥𝅮 3/4

Broken Hope: *Repulsive Conception* (Metal Blade Records) Last issue I raved about this band's sophomore effort, *The Bowels Of Repugnance*. This being the near-identical sequel, I shall not do so. One of the few differences between the two are increased song lengths. Thanks a lot guys; *REALLY*, I wanted to hear the same riffs played a minute longer fifteen more times! The first track, "Dilation & Extraction", an anti-abortion song, sets the stage for the boredom to come. I find it odd, though, that they are against abortion, but think it's okay to *eat* aborted fetuses, as proclaimed on last album's "Hobo Stew."

In time, I've gotten sick of *The Bowels...*, but with this, I'm just plain sick. The lyrics of Jeremy Wagner are completely disgusting and childish, with lots of big, scary medical words that are supposed to authenticate his tales. **Carcass** did that years ago! Joe Ptacek's guttural growls are identical to those of before, and they're so boring! Even Chris Barnes, ex of **Cannibal Corpse**, changed his style.

Only on "Pitbull Grin" are there several seconds in which it works. (That's when he's barking along with a dog.) In the music department, the sound is the same, and the drums of Ryan Stanek are simple and repetitive. That is evident on the catastrophic song, "Engorged With Impiety." It starts off with the porno sound bit, followed by a good fast beat, but it's ruined by the awkward time change that Stanek just can't handle. The instrumental "Essence Of Human Pain" is quite pleasing, but since it's in between "Into The Necrosphere" and "Internal Twin," you'd think it was another group.

Broken Hope also lack emotional conviction. Some songs can make you sad, while others are played to incite anger and aggression. The fifteen songs on *Repulsive Conception* are the antithesis of this, and the emotions felt by the listener are of frustration and irritation. This monotony, along with no accomplishing rhythms, insures defeat on the sales charts. 1/2

Burzum: *Burzum/Aske* (Misanthropy Records, P.O. Box 9, Hadleigh, Suffolk, IP7 5AU, UK - available through Full Moon Productions) It's been two years since Count-Varg-Vikernes-Grishnackh-whatever-the-hell-he's-called stabbed Euronymous to death. Since then, everybody has wanted to interview him from his cell in prison. During this time, I've seen two reviews of his music and heard no talk of it. That's where I come in. I will review this album with complete disregard for the fact that he is a fascist beast.

Who would've thought that Mr. Murder from Norway, with his inflated ego, could actually write music?!? We wouldn't have heard it from the press, because all they care about is getting the exclusive interview! This CD is his eponymous debut combined with the *Aske* EP, and, I must say, it's much different than any other black metal band I've heard. There's no incessant and thin speed sections amidst chants flooding the background. Nope, this one man band is not atmospheric, but it still creates a mood that is, for lack of a much better word, melancholic. The production is excellent. Crisp guitars and drums that sound live highlight the excellent musicianship that the Count has wasting away in prison. Vocally, he's got the shriek, and sometimes he even sounds like a parrot! It's not enjoyable, as it takes away from the music, and the only good side is the songs focus mainly on the instruments themselves.

Since I didn't get a song list, I will refer to each song by number. The first song has a three-second spaceship sound which, if any longer, would frighten the listener into thinking **Burzum** is yet another cheesy black metal band. But it is interrupted by a speed beat that effortlessly blends into a series of time-changing rhythms. The warm guitar sound reminds me of the opening credit song on **Nickelodeon**'s "Welcome Freshman," not that I've ever watched it or nuthin'... ☺. At seven-and-a-half minutes, it explores many tempos without losing the listener. And that's good, because song two is brilliant! It starts with hopping drums, which are joined by an upbeat, but sobering guitar rhythm. When it comes to creating moods with his guitar, Grishnackh is the man! Of the eleven

tracks on this 58-minute disc, four and eight are just completely pointless efforts that do nothing but take up time. Because of this, a penalty must be incurred! His expertise shines through on tracks five, seven (amazing!), and eleven. With none of the "songs" being poor and our ability to skip the "dreaded pair," **Burzum**'s *Burzum/Aske* album should very inviting to more than just black metal fans. 3/4

Hey, kiddies, now you, too, can drop the Count a line as he rots in prison! I bet he'd really like to see some Holocaust books, because, according to him, "The Holocaust is a lie." With that in mind, it really makes all the bullshit he says in his "candid conversions from the cell" soooooo believable. Write him at: Varg Vikernes, OKF, PB 9393, 0134 Oslo, Norway (And send no IRC's so he'll have to pay the postage!)

Communion: *Their Despair in Gentle Things* (Communion: (703) 734-0110; Arcane Nocturne, 4668 King Street #208, Alexandria, VA, 22302, USA) First off, let me say that I was unable to endure the 90 minutes of this tape. I am not a fan of sound effects played over and over and over. Because I'm not into this stuff as a whole, I suggest that people who favor sound experimentation should look to others and judge for themselves whether this is "good" or "bad." I'm always going to say it's bad, and that's just the way it is.

Crowbar: *Time Heals Nothing* (Pavement Records) Not to be mistaken with the *Time Does Not Heal* album put out by thrash legends **Dark Angel** back in 1991, this is the new one from a band that plays *just* a bit slower. I didn't care much for their previous effort, a self-titled sophomore release that only had me liking the song everybody liked, "All I had I Gave."

This new release never really creates such an aggressive vibe, but it wasn't a sludgefest of snail-like proportions either. Check out the awesome jam session at the end of "Still I Reach," definitely the highlight of the album. The depressed lyrics are a match with the music, and muscleman Kirk Weinstein's addition of singing, like on "Time Heals Nothing," makes the "ballads" much more effective than if he were to use his usual constipated yell. It's a shame to hear that drummer Craig Nunenmacher has since left the band, because his drum fills greatly demonstrated his expertise. The addition some up-tempo guitar work breaks up any possible monotony, and since none of the songs are really bad, (besides "The Only Factor" getting annoying), this is bound for success. 3/4

Darkness Enshroud: *Ancient Kingdoms* (Moribund Records, P.O. Box 77314, Seattle, WA, 98177-0314, USA) With an inverted cross and a pentagram flipped over as well, the logo of **Darkness Enshroud** looks, well, pretty damn stupid. This is the side project of **Black Funeral**'s Baron von Abaddon from the evil-inspiring city of Indianapolis, Indiana. The story behind this tedious, non-musical hour-plus of keyboards and screeching is this: The Baron sat down one night in his apocalyptic attire with evil candles

burning and came up with it, unrehearsed. Moribund signed him after 1000 copies of his demo had been sold...HOW?!?!? This is a grown man wearing make-up, (who wishes that he could influence people to suicide), seeing what scary sound effects his keyboard has! You can hear him make mistakes and the static coming from his amp is piercing. Plus, there are five bonus tracks because he'd had a lot of caffeine that day and couldn't fall asleep. One song, "Evil Lords Await," has some horrid guitar that sounds like a person with two fingers is trying to play it, and let me tell you, that cardboard box blast beat in the middle is quite an accomplishment! This is the pits.

Decoryah: *Wisdom Floats* (Metal Blade Records) Zzzzz...huh...wuh? Oh, sorry, I must've dosed off. This music takes as much time to do anything as **Dead World**. Sure, there are lots of instruments layered over each other, but there just is no life to them! It's all slow, ballad tempo, and the vocals are a deep, gothic speak. Boring is a *nice* way to describe this.

Yeah, I know these are all high school kids, and Jukka Vourinen "should be admired as a genius," but I'd have to have just found out my best friend died before I could get into this disc. But then, too, I'd probably be releasing so may emotions I'd just end up breaking it, which I might do anyway...

Depression, cold winters, and who knows what else (the woods?) influenced this drudge of endless, momentumless sorrow. Wait a minute! Maybe there's something wrong with me! I can't appreciate **Tiamat**, this is worse than being sedated, and I happen to like music with a pulse. No, it can't be me, because how many "brilliant" young bands do you know about that are doing this?

If **Decoryah** would inject some speed into their veins, maybe set the metronome above 60, possibly I'd stay awake. Then I could appreciate the melancholic moods set by our wonderful prodigy, and I wouldn't be so damn pessimistic. For creative effort, and because the singing on "Circle Immortality" isn't really that bad... ♂♂

Deicide: *Once Upon the Cross* (Roadrunner Records, 536 Broadway, New York, NY, 10012 USA) Three years! Three years! That's how long it's been since *Legion*, **Deicide**'s second full length album, came out. You'd think they were **Metallica**! Well, they have certainly haven't wimped out, but with nine songs reaching less than thirty minutes, I think they had plenty enough time to come up with more. With this in mind, I first popped in the disc anticipating 28 minutes and 14 seconds of the most awesome death metal I'd ever heard. It wasn't quite like that. Sure, Scott Burns gave them fabulous production and the band was tight as ever, but something lacked.

Steve Asheim's drumming, which was crisp and rawly pounded on *Legion*, now is robitically churned out. His feet barely ever stop double-bass pedaling and his sound is not a bit live. I read that he wrote most of the material for the album, which is weird when you think about it. When he came up with something, did he say: "Hey guys! I came up with this

awesome part! I play my bass drums as fast as I can, and you guys play real fast, too!" It just could be.

Anyway, Glen Benton's vocals are guttural and strong, yet I miss that trademark "Yaaaaahh" that he'd patented. The brothers Hoffman, Eric and Brian, have some pretty good rhythms going but their soloing is horrendous as ever. Some things never change.

"So is there anything positive on this album?" you ask. Sure. The chorus on "Behind The Light Thou Shall Rise" is good, and so is the one on "Trick Or Betrayed." "Kill The Christian" is a pretty powerful song, but when these are heard alongside the abrasive "To Be Dead" and the lyrically similar to **Demonic Christ** "Confessional Rape," the listener opts to stop being one.

So what about the artwork? For those that haven't heard, **Deicide** have taken it upon themselves to show a painting of Jesus dissected in the booklet. On the cover, he's covered by a silk sheet. I preferred when their image followed the music, which is vice versa today. Their covers were simple, and the scariest thing they could think of was to stand in front of a statue of Jesus with their tuff leather coats on. I've been let down.
♪♪♪ 3/4

Demilich: *Nespithe* (Pavement Music/Necropiolis Records, P.O. Box 14815, Fremont, CA, 94539-0927, USA) Having heard great things about the extremely guttural vocals possessed by Antti Bowman, I was very eager to give this disc a spin. My expectations of hearing a "volcano" were left greatly unmatched. Possibly the whole hollow effect of the album had to do with it, but the blatant attempt to have the be-all, end-all of deep vocals sacrificed actual listening enjoyment.

Not to lay all of the blame on poor Antti--he was just trying to up the ante--because his guitar work, and that of his cohort Aki Hytonen, is as bad as the vocals. They're playing is either very discombobulated scales, or just aimless fiddling around. In either case, the production is very thin. The occasional melody will pop up, but is soon discarded for the nonsense that you can't hear or discern anyway.

An interesting cover and funny song titles do nothing to help out a poor listening experience. I mean, that's what it's all about, right? So just stay away from this one. The vocals are no good, coming off as if the growler has excess saliva in his mouth, and since no aspects of the songs stick in your head, it's like listening to **Nokturnel**. ♪

Demonic Christ: *Punishment for Ignorance* (Moribund Records/ Morbid Granny Records, P.O. Box 572241, Modesto, CA,95337-7291, USA) Inspired by the evil that seeps from Charlotte, North Carolina are **Demonic Christ**. (You didn't hear this from me, but that's where the ancient blood flows into Ghostbuster Slime River.) With Satanic imagery and attire from the dungeon, this three-piece with a female vocalist provide a generous half hour, seven-song set. What a bunch of "demonic chrap" this is! The songs go nowhere, sluggishly focusing on squeezing in all of their pointless lyrics about demons and how they hate Jesus. Ever notice how

most of the bands that are obsessed with image can't play worth a damn? But labels just seem to get the impression that Satanism sells. *Well, I'm ordering you not to buy this!* The songs are slow and repetitive, and the few ideas the band presents are used to death. Vocally, Dana Duffy is mostly at the mic, doing a weak gurgled shriek, and occasionally Jon Vesano will give his clouded woof. The drumming of Duane Brown is simplistic, lacking fills and the desperately needed life this band doesn't possess. The outro, "Eve's Descent," is a feeble attempt at creating some sort of evil mood, but is just one repeated false-harmonic, stretched and whammied until the guitarist had no more skin on the side of his thumb.

In this CD's package I counted 11 inverted crosses, 2 inverted pentagrams, and a whole lot of spikes 'n' leather. *NOW* they're cool. 1/4

Dismember: *Massive Killing Capacity* (Nuclear Blast America) Taking a more restrained approach this time around are Sweden's **Dismember**, who have once and for all put to rest the comparisons to wimped out **Entombed**. While retaining a strain of the "**Dismember** sound," the band has let up on the ear shattering distortion that has been a turn off in the past. This, plus the incorporation simpler riffs in a more orderly fashion made a couple listens necessary to stomach this, but it's worthwhile.

Although "surprising new elements" aren't added into the scope, there are some great moments. Like the simple passage on the album's opener, "I Saw Them Die," or the beautifully sculpted instrumental, "Nenia," that utilizes their trademark soloing. An almost sentimental riff on "Collection Of Blood" has the same timing as **Bruce Springsteen**'s "Dancin' in the Dark(!)," and "On Frozen Fields" will take you back to **Dismember** tunes of old.

Matti Karki thought better of using that awful yell he beat to death on previous occasions, rounding off an album that surprises you with its "likability" despite its simplicity. 1/2

Full Circle: *Negative* (Leviathan Records, P.O. Box 745, Tyrone, GA, 30290, USA) Oh, I can think of so many ways to begin this review. I could say: At first glance, you wou

ld find it amazing that about ten months or so would be enough time for a band to form, practice and write songs, send in a tape for labels, ink a deal, *and* record a full length album for immediate release. But when you observe that the songs were already written by **Pantera** and **Prong** the only amazing aspect is how they could get signed. Granted, the band does have it together, playing in sync and with a fair amount of conviction.

I could also have started this review with: **Full Circle** cites one of their many influences as **Pantera**, which is not much of a surprise since many bands these days follow this trend. But what gets me is how many times they pay homage to one particular song from Phil Anselmo's crew. On *four occasions* the "ultra-heavy slow riff" from "This Love" is rehashed. It's a shame they had to do this, because the beginning of one of

these songs, "Coal Black Eyes," is actually quite pleasing.

No matter how I might have started the review, I still arrive at the same point: The problem with this band ultimately lies in its leeching off its influences. The album is heavy, the riffs are played well, and I can feel the energy! The ideas are there, as evident from a few passages of originality sparingly distributed throughout. So even if the vocalist tries to sound like Phil Anselmo, but only comes up with a higher pitched version, and the guitar sound has been used like a prostitute, seeing them live would probably be the only time I'd like to hear these songs. The future looks fairly bright for this young midwest quartet, though I doubt they'll be very popular overseas. ♪♪ 1/2

The Gathering: *Mandylion* (Century Media Records, 1453-A 14th St., Santa Monica, CA, 90404, USA) Slightly similar to **Moonspell**, but lacking the intensity, are Holland's **The Gathering**. Flowing melodies and musical skill present soothing, tranquil songs.

Anneke van Giersbergen's soulful vocals are reminiscent of **Heart**, but her range is much more extensive. It is a very attractive voice and compliments the music that backs her up.

The music doesn't focus on any particular instrument, as guitars, synthesizers, drums, a bass, and the occasional flute are fused together smoothly. Almost too smoothly. There is absolutely no rage or intensity that would inspire someone to jump around and act stupid. This is emotional music for emotional times.

You'd have to be a person who sleeps on a bed of nails not to feel *some* emotion while listening to *Mandylion*. Anneke's voice will eventually have some effect upon you, and the guitars on "Strange Machines" and "Fear the Sea" are quite enjoyable. How ironic it may seem, though, that my favorite song is the instrumental title track, which contains soulful drums and calm sound effects.

An original release that I would hesitate to call "metal," as that is the category of bands like **Pantera** and **Slayer**, *Mandylion* is a good listen in moments of solitude. Driving along the highway at 65 mph is not a good time for this; but maybe after your pet chinchilla dies... ♪♪♪ 1/4

Gorefest: *Erase* (Nuclear Blast America) **Gorefest**'s most recent album, *Erase*, is a letdown of such gigantic proportions that you'll probably want to go hide in a car trunk with *Mindloss* and *False* after hearing it. (The all-out fan would also be clutching his live disc, *The Eindhoven Insanity*.) Why such distress? Because *Erase* is not a melodically brilliant triumph, not to mention that Jan-Chris de Koeyer's gutturally salivated throat culture has given way to an out of place yell nearly as bad as that of Dave Ingram of **Benediction**!

The guitar sound is very restrained, with simplistic rhythms that take some talent, like the way new **Megadeth** is, though I can't stand that either. Fake sounding drums similar to the robotic antics of **KMFDM** are worsened by the absolute plainness in which they are played. It's as if one of those wind-up monkeys somehow snuck into the studio and did some

random banging that ended up on the album through some technical oversight.

Any "positives" I detected were overshadowed by the complete catastrophe that this album turned out to be. I'm a big fan of the old stuff and tried very hard to get into this, but I couldn't. No actual rhythms or powerful riffs churn along on *Erase*, and "Seeds of Hate" is the only proof that maybe some of the old **Gorefest**--the **Gorefest** that proudly flew it's distorted logo abreast--remains. I sure hope so. 3/4

Grip Inc.: *Power of Inner Strength* (Metal Blade Records) From the few radio cuts I'd heard from this album, I assumed this to be just one of the new thrash bands incorporating the 90's feel. Well, pierce my navel and give me a pair of Birkenstocks, because I was only half right. From the opening seconds of "Toque de Muerto," one sees that is not the case: it's a drum solo with various drums from around the world. Just Dave Lombardo saying he's back. The other ten songs do that pretty well, too. His outfit is a solid bunch, each appearing to not only know what he's doing, but also aware of the others. The vocals of Gus Chambers are like those of the guy from **Forbidden**, without the annoying high-pitched "Yaaaaaah!" At times, his approach is out of place, but mostly it works well. Waldemar Sorychta's guitar work is technical and his sound is a good combination of crunch and clarity.

The package itself is well done, with a nice cover and easy to read lyrics. All the lyrics are easy on the stomach, as Gus Chambers is socially conscious and is aware that gore gets you nowhere.

This album may take a couple runs through to fully enjoy, but it is worth it. Welcome back Dave! Well done! 3/4

Hades: *...Again Shall Be* (Full Moon Productions) I find this to be an improvement on the black metal of old. The bands like **Immortal** and **Samael**, who really put out some crappy stuff back when they started. **Hades** isn't playing the hyperspeed type of black metal like **The Abyss**, where individual notes are played in rapid succession. This is more full, as chords blend with the drums and cymbals, giving a more universally appealing effect. Fans of both death and black metal will like this.

The album thrives on cool, mid-paced rhythms that morph into something else without stumbling. Though the vocals are in fact of the black metal vein, they never get as annoying harsh of **Burzum**, hence the tolerability.

Many of the songs resemble each other, but little quirks, like in songs four and six, do manage to set them apart. The "ah-ing" in tracks one and three are also impressive new elements, not to mention the acoustic fun on tracks seven, eight, and nine! The final track is a reminder that we *are* dealing with a Norwegian band here, and the wind, breathing, keyboards, and thunder pay homage to the "dark souls below," or something.

Hatred: *Daze of Darkness* (Hatred, P.O. Box 10264, Alexandria, VA, 22310, USA / $5.00 USA, $6.00

international)) After a number of listens this release actually becomes quite enjoyable. The vocals are the reasons why adjustment is necessary. A screech of the highest pitch is Tim Clayborn's claim to fame, as well as the occasional low growl that sounds like **Carcass**' backing vocalist on the song, "Tools Of The Trade." The guitars were a little over-produced, leaving a sound for the listener to decipher that is similar to **Nokturnel**. Drummer Carl Short isn't a standout, and we'll have to wait until the next demo to hear what his replacement, David Castillo, sounds like.

The band presents nothing original on *Daze of Darkness*, but the songs aren't sloppily thrown together. The demo's closer, "Pulling The Reigns," is an emotional song that ends furiously. Their roots being in thrash, like most of the metal bands in the DC area, **Hatred** also incorporate classic death and heavy metal influences with enough conviction to sell themselves.

I regret having to miss their live set, as it would have been very intense. As for the bouncer who said otherwise, what does he know? All he likes to do is beat the crap out of kids for moshing! For us to really see if **Hatred** is going to be a force in the future, we'll have to wait for their next demo. 1/4



Illdisposed: *Four Depressive Seasons* (Progress Red Labels, Vindegade 101, 5000 Odense C, Denmark) This is the debut album from one of the best young bands around, who are now taking the throne away from aging veterans **Benediction** and **Sinister**, who just don't have it anymore. An added bonus is the album cover of "the guy with a mouth on the top of his head." Musically, the vocals hadn't quite developed into the individual style that Bo Sumner now has, and are guttural without the "crack" found in the growls of Chris Barnes of **Cannibal Corpse**.

The guitar work has similarities to some of **Hypocrisy**'s heavier material, but the unique soloing style accompanied by better drumming separates the two. The guitar sound is also more cliché, though very thick and heavy! The drumming of Michael Enevoldsen was not spectacular, but it *was* highly above average. The only problem was how the snare wasn't as well blended as it is now. Too much bass, though I couldn't even hear the instrument itself, plagues the entire album, but it is tolerable.

If you want an album from a band that was still budding when it released this, go for it! There are a number of touches throughout that do point to the great things to come. 3/4

Speaking of which, I just happen to have the album that came with great things! It's more of a seven song EP, and opens up with a **Bolt Thrower**-esque beat with amazing drumming, complemented by less bass-ridden sound. This blows *Four Depressive Seasons* away! I look forward to <u>every</u> song, my favorites being the title track (which is the total package: Great opening riffs, chorus, effective use of female vocals, and a spectacular rhythm that brings back

the glory days of **Entombed**!) and the opener, "Depersonalisation."

A bit of emotion never hurts, and **Illdisposed** capitalize by adding touches of melody to the pounding riffs. The band has simply improved in aspect, from salivated growls to excellent drumming to mastering the recording studio and getting perfect sound. Take "Withering Teardrops," the song that appears on **Death Is Just The Beginning III**, for example. A melodic and depressive opener is climaxed with a solo, and just seconds later, you're banging your head furiously with the crushing pounding. They skip their way into a female narration, followed by Lisa Patrick singing, and then more of the good ol' "gurgrowling."

A plateau has been reached, so let's just hope they enjoy the view. 💣💣💣💣💣

Infester: To the *Depths, In Degradation* (Moribund Records) With a riffing style similar to that of old-timers **Massacre**, and a heavy sound resembling that of **Killing Addiction**, **Infester** is ready to go! I appreciate the band's attempt at molding together a wide variety of death-related musical influences, but somehow things seem to get lost in the shuffle. There's a little **Deicide** feel here. The vocals are barked similar to, but not as well as, the **Kataklysm** low growl. I can also sense some attempts at varying the song tempos like the Canadian greats. The group is at least fairly together, and this is evident on the song, "Chamber Of Reunion." I don't like it when **Infester** slows the tempo down, because when the guitarist is left to try some odd riff, the drummer seems to get confused. The last, "hidden" track, is some evil narration that is supposed to be the "Infernal Lord Himself" telling of how progress is meaningless and we must show "remembrance."

If you're unsure about what to remember, don't worry: neither is the band's drummer. His photo has him standing in front of a huge inverted pentagram that has a faded swastika in the middle. Shirtless, DJ D. stands behind a podium with his eyes looking off to the side as if to say, "Do I really have to do this?" Jason O.'s photo has him standing in all his cross-eyed glory, for what it's worth. Either they're not too into the evil bit, or they're still the "confused teenagers that nobody understands." The lyric sheet is in infinitesimally small diploma print, so it's hard to tell what's going on.

The album is nearly an hour long, and because all the songs sound the same, it's next to impossible to listen all the way through. **Infester** can at least play in sync, and if only they'd come up with memorable and catchy riffs, the listener wouldn't lose focus. 💣💣 1/2

Inner Thought: *Worldly Separation* (Dwell Records, P.O. Box 39439, Los Angeles, CA, 90039, USA) I've never heard the "classic" **Slaughter** before, but if **Inner Thought** is any example of what Bobby Sadzak has to offer, I'll pass. *Worldly Separation* is a truly boring album that uses many undesirable techniques. This is demonstrated on the album's closer, "Ethnic Cleansing," as a hollow vocal effect is used as the vocalist growls and whispers word pairs amidst simple, slow rhythms. That pretty

much defines the whole album: very simple and empty.

A drum machine was used, and in the booklet notes, the band thanked technology for inventing a drummer who doesn't talk back. (Hello! Drummers know when something sucks!) I only felt two parts at all were good: the female vocals on "Drowning In Sorrow" and the chorus of "Forever Distant." I have to be honest and tell you that the first song is a winded narration over an organ, and it's followed by dull song after dull song. Not to take away from the capable musical skills of the band, but they are just *terrible* songwriters!

It's good **Inner Thought** embrace anti-war ideals--the booklet's pictures will have you thinking twice, too--but maybe they should turn off the amps and join the Peace Corps. ♪* 1/4

In The Woods: *HEart of the Ages* (Misanthropy Records/Full Moon Productions) This is one of the hardest types of albums to review. So many style changes, ranging from black metal ferocity to symphonic keyboards to odd sound effects. The vocals also vary, at times sounding like a gothic singer, while at others resembling an Indian--excuse me, Native American--raging into battle.

The production makes the guitars sound distant and the drumming one-dimensional. That's just on the songs that do have those. The first of seven tracks starts off with a long, repetitive mystical sound piece before finally incorporating actual instruments. Song four is a mellow symphonic tune led by female vocals, and song six is a somber piano, keyboard, and string ordeal.

A plus comes from the diverse action, as the listener will experience different moods while listening through each lengthy song. The heavier tunes, like five and seven, incorporate their own forms of melody and are relaxing in their own rights.

Great songwriting ability overshadows any average drumming, and the moody members of **In The Woods** seem to have found a good niche to explore in. ♪*♪*♪* 1/2

Just one question, though: Is being "in the woods" the Norwegian equivalent of getting in trouble and being "in the dog house?" Just wondering...

It Is I: Evolve (Dwell Records) "Total crusty buildup" is all I can call this. Repetitive, pounding beats that barely move along come to a point where a speedy interlude would be great, but the moment is ruined by a new, and even more boring, beat. Occasionally the tempo will pick up, but the drums, especially the toms and snare, drown out the guitars.

J.A. Coelho, III's lame voice holds no weight and lacks any form of conviction. You'll find that listening to *Evolve* for the first time is actually all right, until maybe the third song rolls around and you realize that it's not going to be any different, whether you listen to "Total Eclipse" on side one or "H.G. Venus" on side two.

The big clamor is about guitarist Thomas Choi, who used to be in "the legendary" **Asbestos Death**. Maybe he's just a has-been, like ex-**Slaughter** and present **Inner Thought** leader, Bobby Sadzak. The whole group prefers to play one-dimensional, Beavis and Butt-head "duh-duh" riffs,

rather than produce actual rhythms, and boredom soon sets in.

The sound mix is quite good, excluding the drums, with the thick guitars being crunchier than most cereals. The vocals are a bit distant, but that turned out to be a good thing!

If you're into that whole crust/grind/repetition thing, behold, for **It Is I**...♦♦ 1/2

Kataklysm: *Sorcery* (Nuclear Blast America) The agony I went through waiting for this album to come out! I got it just as the premier issue of *Sloth* was about to hit the stands, so a review was impossible. But alas, time has been friendly to this disc, and I still love it as much today as I did the day I got it. Taking a more mature, less rage-filled approach than on the EP *The Mystical Gate of Reincarnation*, **Kataklysm** prove why the skeptics are all wrong about the fading life of death metal. Five conceptual chapters with nine songs of forty-plus minutes (still with me?) of complex, thickly produced musical bliss will have you hooked. The eerie buildup in the title track sets the stage for the impending ferocity. "Dead Zygote" is like a rollercoaster ride, and the simplistic mood set by the middle of "Whirlwind Of Withered Blossoms" will stay with you.

Max Duhamel is a different drummer than the guy who appeared on the previous EP's trilogy, and I can't say I like either one more than the other; they each strike me differently. The first guy's sound is better, though Duhamel's speed-cymbal work stands out. The vocals of Sylvain Houde have more bass, but do not lack any of the intensity of his previous efforts. He and the bassist, Maurizio Iacono, have so many different voices that it never gets dull. Riff 'n' rhythm man Jean Francois Dagenais is full of time-change mastery that sets him above the majority of metal guitarists.

The instrumental at the end of the album builds up spectacular momentum, reaching a climax with some energetic soloing. Feel the power of the vocals on "Elder God" and get tangled in the superb sound meshing of "Mould In A Breed." This is album has it all! ♦♦♦♦ 1/2

King Diamond: *The Spider's Lullabye* (Metal Blade Records) Absolutely knowing this was going to suck, I dreaded the thought of having to listen to it. Besides, I'd already heard the pathetic fourth track, "Dreams," and some other unsavory King Diamond tunes of the past. After giving *The Spider's Lullabye* numerous listens, I came to this conclusion: While I never will love this style of music, it is competent, and if it happens to be in the CD player, I'll think twice before deciding I don't want to hear it.

Everything here is at least tolerable, and King's ability to find a good batch of musicians helps separate this effort from the rest. Granted, I'm not crazy about his ever-rising vocal range, but if it doesn't shatter a window and can give me a laugh at the same time, I'll live. The music that backs King Diamond up is in the 80's realm, but the technical abilities displayed here show that *some* progress has been made. This is demonstrated on the chorus of "Killer," and parts of "The Poltergeist" which resemble the **Fates Warning**

song, "Outside Looking In." The whole group got a little silly on the title track, from the odd vocal harmonies and the foolish lyrics to the jumbled song structure. "The Spider's Lullabye" was also the first of four songs in a mini concept piece that closed out the album. It's about some guy who's afraid of spiders, so he goes to a sanitarium, but ends up getting killed by spiders there anyway! So it's safe to say I was surprised to find this bearable, but having your finger severed can be "bearable" as well... 1/2

Macabre: *Behind The Wall Of Sleep* (Relapse/Nuclear Blast America) Before their tribute to the late Jeffrey Dahmer comes out, this EP was released to tide us over. Well, *one* of the four songs is about him anyway, so why complain? "Freeze Dried Man" is a mid-paced, upbeat tune about Dahmer's attempts to freeze dry one of his victims. It gives the same impression that the whole EP does: **Macabre** is trying to amuse us. None of the songs show off Dennis the Menace's blasting drums skills, and even though "Fishtales" is about child eater Albert Fish, they're not trying to be scary. Lines like, "Shiver me timbers...Ahoy there mateys..." followed by "baaaahing" like a sheep point to the silliness involved. The cover of Black Sabbath's "Behind The Wall Of Sleep" is as simple as the original, unlike many other bands who try to elaborate on songs they cover. The vocals are just as you'd expect: Corporate Death trying to sing with his high voice. It ends up sounding like Pee Wee Herman when he "huh-huhs." "Slaughter Thy Poser" is an amusing song with vocals alternating between high and low. Upbeat all the way through with trademark simplicity, it highlights the strong soloing skills of Corporate Death. So this wasn't typical **Macabre**, but it *was* pretty funny. 3/4 The band's true talents appeared on their previous release, the twenty-one song *Sinister Slaughter*. So many aspects of this album make it a classic. From the clear sound quality, to the addictive high and low vocal attack, to the hyper-speed double bass drumming of Dennis the Menace. He literally can do it as fast as the guitarist can pick! Though **Macabre** are definitely death metal, and they do talk about the most gruesome of killers, their material is fun to sing along with, and their high speed rhythms are very memorable, and at times danceable! Examples you want? Every time I listen to this I sing along with the adorable choruses of "Zodiac," "Edmond Kemper Had A Horrible Temper," and "Vampire Of Dusseldorf." "Mary Bell" is an acoustic ballad that asks the eleven-year-old girl who murdered two boys where she is today. The awesome screams on "White Hen Decapitator," the intensity of "Nightstalker," the addictive simplicity of "Gacy's Lot" and "There Was A Young Man Who Blew Up A Plane," the list goes on. Every song can be called good at the very least, and the ones that aren't "over the top" still have something memorable to offer the listener. An enthusiastic for this one.

Malevolent Creation: *Eternal* (Pavement Music) I view **Malevolent Creation** with utmost respect. Coming off *Stillborn*, one of the worst albums of

all time, the band appeared to be a goner. They ended up with no record label, long-time vocalist Brett Hoffman was given the boot, and they had a revolving door for a drummer's stool... And skeptical fans saw their demise in the cards. Now, however, their struggle can be hailed as one of the greatest comebacks ever.

As opposed to Mike Tyson's wimpy comeback, which was like the USA fighting a war against Greenland, **Malevolent Creation** took the hard road. Instead of relying on the successful traits of their first two albums, *The Ten Commandments* and *Retribution*, they carried on in a new direction. The songs have a less stop-and-go feel; they just go!!

The speed-riffing is fast and tight like the days of old, but the drumming of Dave Culross separates this album from the others. Though he may be a little more conventional, but adept at what he does, he relies less on the bass drums, and his toms are tighter than those of Alex Marquez.

The epic songwriting output of *Retribution* is stripped down, as **Malevolent Creation** seem to be focusing on writing simpler, yet more memorable songs.

An impossible pair of shoes to fill are those of Brett Hoffman. His original style was showcased on the group's first two offerings. Now bassist Jason Blachowicz mans the mic. His bellow is distantly related to the aforementioned Hoffman, but I miss the old voice. Furthermore, Blachowicz uses the echo effect! Despite my nostalgic longings, the vocals are good enough for me to enjoy them along with the entire package.

It's been a long road to travel since they took a fall in 1993, but in 1995, **Malevolent Creation** is working hard to prove that their music shall remain eternal. 3/4



Medusa Oblongada: *2 Song Demo, 1994* (Medusa Oblongada, c/o Bryan Jaeger, 66077 Whitnall Edge Rd., Franklin, WI, 53132, USA) Great stuff from an underground band sure to go far. Two amazing tracks full of sound samples and a whole lot of aggression. "Ventilator" opens up with strange electronic noises, but soon the music kicks in with chomping guitars and vocals that are a distorted version of Jonathan Davis of **Korn**. Energy and Scottish drum effects further layer the song. "Hopeless" starts with a simple, but addictive groove that is interrupted, but not hurt, by vocals that sound like a *truly* angry version of Trent Reznor of **Nine Inch Nails**. Damn this is good! Both songs flow, are carefully layered, and well thought out. The end of the heavy section of "Hopeless" is muting at it's best. The tape closes with an odd clean guitar part, with the sound of a crying baby in the background. Confusing, but better than hearing Satan read a prophecy like at the end of **Infester**'s album. I suggest you contact this band and get a hold of this tape! 1/2

Late-breaking news! **Medusa Oblongada** was recently signed by Megalithic Records! Plus, they just released a self-titled EP.

Meshuggah: *Destroy Erase Improve* (Nuclear Blast America) I was unimpressed with this band's previous effort, the EP *None*, but this is much better. Comparisons to **Pantera** no longer hold any weight as these technical fiends weave together some pretty weird song structures. The utterly mesmerizing "Soul Burn" is a perfect example. Vocalist Jens Kidman is absolutely ferocious, shouting his lines with harsh conviction. Though his voice is solid and has great sustain, it does not delve into the low range.

Many of the songs subconsciously build momentum that increase in power as the drums and guitars accelerate. One could still say the guitar sound remotely resembles that of **Pantera**, but I believe the tightness of the breaks and bends are too sophisticated to label **Meshuggah** as just another clone. Also incorporated are slower, more melodic guitar passages in songs like "Acrid Placidity" and "Sub Levels."

Not having been an all out fan of ultra-technical thrash--and I hesitate to call it that--**Meshuggah**'s *Destroy Erase Improve* brings me closer to my conversion. 3/4

Moonspell: *Wolfheart* (Century Media Records) I hated this for the first five minutes I listened to it and had to turn it off. But I came back to it the next day, and it was as if I was hearing something completely different! I now put **Moonspell** at the top of the list in the "avant-garde" category (how I hate that term!) The production is absolutely crystal clear--very critical when you're trying something so drastically new.

Unlike many of the "black metal" bands that broaden their horizons, such as **In The Woods**, **Moonspell** does *not* retain the really harsh vocals. Langsuyar has a variety of appealing voices, including a gothic narrative and a raspy, emotional yell. Either way, they're well-blended and contagious.

In this nine-song effort, the true epic songs really start to appear halfway through. Take the traditional influences found on "Trebraruna," which has tribal clapping and is sung in the band's native Portuguese tongue. The next song, "Vampiria," is a cross between **Cradle Of Filth** and **Pyogenesis**, and tells a story like **Type O Negative**, but all with a feel of its own. "An Erotic Alchemy" follows with its addictive and soothing symphonic keyboards, while still retaining its metal edge. Saving the best for last, **Moonspell** unleash "Alma Mater," possibly one of the most compelling black metal songs ever. Keeping at a skipping pace, it carefully avoids crossing the line when the vocals get more abrasive, and is relaxing despite its energy. It'll tingle the top of your spine!

The first half of the album, while not as brilliant as the rest, still is very good. Little things, like occasional female vocals and narrations resembling "The Monster Mash," did not go unnoticed here. If you want to give your support to a band that can do more than play a three-note speed pattern for seven minutes while the singer screeches like a homicidal parrot, **Moonspell** are it. 1/2

The Organization: *Savor The Flavor* (Metal Blade Records) Who

would've thought that out of the '80's thrash band **Death Angel** would come such a change is such a short time? This is similar to **Planet Hate**'s accessibility, never imposing on the listener. Feedback-free guitars with a clean, live feel are just as shocking as the even cleaner vocals of singer Rob. On the ballads he sounds like Sabastian Bach of **Skid Row**, just not as overbearing. The bass is very audible without clouding up the sound, and the drumming is "alive."

You may not like *Savor The Flavor* if death metal is your thing, but it certainly won't be torture your ears, unlike some other non-death bands. The album focuses on catchy melodies throughout, with ballads like "By The Time" and the lively "Had A Long Today" also popping up.

I'm not going to lie and say I hate it just because it's not death metal, but I know that it's not going to get lots of play on my stereo, either. However, I *can* see that this *is* an exceptional release for the hard rock genre. 1/4

Planet Hate: *Mother Are You Mad?* (Energy Records, 545 8th Avenue, 17th Floor, New York, NY, 10018, USA) Though there are the heavy guitars, this is very accessible "heavy rock" (another term I'm not too fond of). Because of this, the songs don't really stand out. They're all upbeat, and the vocals a deeper tone of Dee Snyder's. Similar to the way I feel about this band, everything is fairly emotionless. They go through the movements, occasionally soloing to say, "Yeah, we're here!"

Able musicians, **Planet Hate** suffer from "Same Song Syndrome;" you have trouble differentiating between many of the songs. This may have to do with the identical sound of each song, as well as the vocal stresses at the end of each line by Michael Caronia. The opener, "Monster," and the good soloing on "The Pressure's on Greg" show that the future may just be brighter than we think.

So while I can take **The Organization**, who are similar in style, I feel that **Planet Hate**'s downfall lies in their failure to mix it up.

SINISTER: *Hate* (Nuclear Blast America) The opening song, "Awaiting The Absu," pretty much says it all. **Sinister** has lost it. Midway through, there is the beginning of a rhythm that could've been so soothing, leaving the listener floating when it ended. But in fashion similar to **Brutality**, who never really had it to begin with, **Sinister** opt to interrupt it with some vocals and an annoying tempo change. The guitar work of André that made *Diabolical Summoning* an immortal classic was done by bassist Bart, and it just doesn't feel right.

No, this is not detestable crap. It's sad to see a band with so much promise lose out because of internal shake-ups. "The Bloodfeast" could almost be a song from *Diabolical...* because it allows the warm rhythms to form and flow. It, unlike the rest of the songs, is *not* filled with identical blast passages that only exist to help Mike get the winded vocals out and over with.

A good song, "To Mega Therion" also has a couple points of interest, including the fact that it is the title of a 1985 **Celtic Frost** album... yet

this sounds like a **Sinister** song. The album credits say, "All music and lyrics by **Sinister**." Maybe it was never a song before, and just an album title? Did somebody goof?

My opinion of this release boils down to the songs' monotony and lack of creativity. It's okay, BUT... Typical listeners have a plethora of bands from which to choose, so why would they waste their time on has-beens? They, like me, would pop in their copy of *Diabolical Summoning* and "boogie down." 💣💣💣

Six Feet Under: *Haunted* (Metal Blade Records) This is the long-awaited record from the side project of singer Chris Barnes of **Cannibal Corpse** and guitarist Allen West of **Obituary**, and it's pretty much what you'd expect from these two joining forces. Barnes sounds just like he did on **Cannibal Corpse**'s last offering, *The Bleeding*, and West's songs and sound resemble those of **Obituary**.

I thought the **Meat Hook Seed** project done by Trevor Peres and a couple of the guys from **Napalm Death** was a much cooler route to travel; at least they experimented with some new ideas. Here, the guitar sound is a little cleaner than that of **Obituary**, and all of the eleven songs stay within a walking to jogging pace. Not to say that there are any horrendous mishaps here... I mean they even have Terry Butler of **Massacre** fame on bass! I just feel that all the hype is a bit much. Newcomer Greg Gall can hold his own, playing generic drum rhythms over simple guitar tracks.

I don't see a lot of original ideas in *Haunted*. Then again, because so many of the songs have similar timing, there was bound to be *some* good stuff. "The Enemy Inside" opens the album with the fastest riff of all, and it's quite catchy. "Lycanthropy" starts well, but tapers off soon thereafter. Barnes does well on the choruses, something he'd never really been able to do with his speedier main band. He demonstrates this on the title track, "Human Target," and the tricky "Tomorrow's Victim."

So, like I said before, this is a slightly above average album, but considering the all-star lineup, I personally was let down. If you're a fan of either **Cannibal Corpse** or **Obituary** and would like to hear a mid-paced combination of the two, give this a shot. Any which way, no one can really hate *Haunted*, nor can they claim it as a necessity. 💣💣💣 1/2

Late-breaking news! Chris Barnes has left **Cannibal Corpse** due to "creative differences." This is not a joke; Barnes is out! **SFU** is now his permanent band. Rumor also has it that John Tardy has left **Obituary**, essentially breaking the band up and leaving West in **SFU** as well!

Soilent Green: *Pussysoul* (Dwell Records) With a fun attitude like **Skeletal Earth**, **Soilent Green** incorporate styles like crazy. A throaty growl, a distant banshee shriek, and the NY hardcore metal shout made famous by the guitarist of **Biohazard** are the voices found on an album worth the few listens required for the listener to take it all in. But I have mixed emotions about this album.

I used to really get into this stuff, but now when I hear it I'm kind of bored. While there are some

particularly good parts, there are times when the music doesn't go anywhere. These cons are more prevalent on side two, but once **Soilent Green** decides to get the tempo going, things start to happen.

"Falling From A 65 Story Building" and "Needlescrape" are my favorites, as they bring forth the best of what **Soilent Green** has to offer. The rest of the album has its moments, but the average guitar work is barely saved by the thick drumming and the occasional speed section. ♦*♦*♦*

Souls At Zero: *A Taste For The Perverse* (Energy Records) I regret having to say to this, but **Souls At Zero** are boring me. I wish that weren't so, because I used to really like them under their old moniker, **Wrathchild America**. The thrashiness is gone, and basically the only thing that sounds the same is Brad Divens' yell/wail.

"Thrown Down" is the best song overall, with upbeat rhythms and well-blended soloing, and a few others have their moments. Despite some good guitar work throughout, especially on "My Fault" and "Undecided," this album doesn't hold my interest for long. I find myself returning to my **Illdisposed** and **Therion** CD's.

When an album fails to excite, it's hard to force oneself to get into it. Believe me, I've tried many times, but the same lackluster results are produced: *A Taste For The Perverse* does nothing for me. Maybe *you'll* like this '90's style, guitar driven, light metal. ♦*♦*♦*

Spine: *X-Generation: 3 Song Demo* (Spine, 10301 Cardinal Flower Ct., Upper Marlboro, MD, 20772, USA) One of the few local bands around here that can break up the monotony of rehashed '80's thrash. This is **Biohazard**-esque metal with a heavy edge. I saw this band live and this tape doesn't do them justice. The vocals are high, like **Pro-pain**, but at the show, the singer was growling like mad, and he had some pumped up back up singers doing the same.

The bass sound at the live show was really amazing. It was intensely powerful and played extremely fast, but on the tape it's barely audible. (Who mixed this thing?) A good idea the band utilized at the show to keep the crowd interested in between songs was to have constant sound bites playing. A member of the band's job was to keep them going (some excerpts appear on this tape as well), and when he wasn't responsible for anything, he'd jump all over the other **Spine** members.

Getting this tape isn't a dire necessity, but you *must* see their live show. The tight speed with which the band plays seems effortless, and the New York Hardcore influences are done well. This tape gets a solid ♦*♦*♦* 3/4.

Strapping Young Lad: *Heavy As A Really Heavy Thing* (Metal Blade Records) Unlike every other person who's reviewed this band, I did *not know* that main man Devin Townsend ever sang for Steve Vai, and after hearing this, I found it unimaginable. This is heavy, industrialized metal that never really delves into straight ahead death or industrial for long. The

diversity on this album is worth applauding and also makes the listening experience more enjoyable.

"S.Y.L." starts off the festivities as one of the most aggressive songs ever. Layering of sounds over metal guitars amidst angry shouts of profane anger make up the body of the song, while the middle section is much more than just filler material.

The ferocity of "Happy Camper (Carpe B.U.M.)" almost equals that of "S.Y.L.," and "Critic" has guitar playing like **Slayer**'s "War Ensemble" and so much more. The personality that each of these songs possesses is distinct and left me in awe. The lack of accomplishment in songs like "Cod Metal King" and "The Filler-Sweet City Jesus" lies in their slower tempos and less diversity. When one considers that few albums have ever been "perfect," a couple duds are tolerable, and I didn't say they were terrible.

Another detail that sets this album apart from others in this genre is the sense of humor Townsend was able to squeeze in. It's similar to the "fun" of **Skeletal Earth**'s album, *Eulogy For A Dying Fetus*. Whether Townsend is acting like a disgusted drive-through attendant or using amusing sound bites, nothing tops the bonus track, "Drizzlehell." With its pianos, a happy bass, and obnoxious singing...it's a good time. If this can't make you to put away the spiked leather underwear for at least a little while, nothing can. But then again, there is a hilarious sketch of a guy giving "thumbs up" from the comfort of his favorite green toilet seat...♫♫♫♫

Suffocation: *Pierced From Within* (Roadrunner Records) Oh yeah! The plague of poor production is over for **Suffocation**. All the little things you notice show that this band really worked hard through their break between albums. *Breeding The Spawn* went overboard with the technicality, yet it seems that this quintet has combined the speed elements of their debut EP, *Human Waste*, and the album *Effigy Of The Forgotten* with *Breeding The Spawn*'s qualities to form quite a "catchy" release. Catchy best describes the smooth transition from mid-paced parts into the running technical beats of their previous work, this time done better. New drummer Doug Bolm has taken the job Mike Smith left *without missing a beat.*

The beginning of "Thrones Of Blood" and then entire "Thorns Of Enthrallment" are perfect examples of **Suffocation**'s commanding return. Doug Cerrito and Terrance Hobbs team up once again on guitar with great success, and Chris Richards can in fact be heard on bass! Leads are handled by both Cerrito and Hobbs, though their style doesn't differ.

A vast improvement of the whole **Suffocation** spectrum has resulted in an album that any band would be proud to call their own. Now all the clones have really fallen far behind...♫♫♫♫

Tiamat: *Tour Sampler* (Century Media Records) Okay, their last album, *Wildhoney*, made them a success worldwide. Now touring with **Black Sabbath** all over creation, **Tiamat** are really tearing things up. And to celebrate, they've released a sampler of remixes from the disc. I

really can't find that many differences that would merit this as being purposeful. There are the video edits of "Gaia" and "Whatever That Hurts," as well as two more versions of "The Ar" (which I thought was fine anyway), and the remixed long form version of "Visionaire." Being that the songs *are* the better ones from the album, I'll be nice. 🎸🎸 1/2

Along with the tour listing for the band and a recap of its activities was a little note to us press people. It read in parenthesis, "...and if you already pawned off that promo disc you received late last year, don't you think it's about time you swallowed your pride and requested another? We guarantee you'll get one promptly...no questions asked!" Now what would I do that for? Should I suddenly realize, "Hey, this is popular! *NOW* it's good." Is that the kind of mindset people in this business are in? That's like saying, "Well, I saw it on MTV, so it must be good." **Foo Fighters** forever, man!

Ultrahead: *Definition: AGGRO* (Shiro Records, 8228 Sunset Blvd., Ist Floor, Los Angeles, CA, 90046, USA) I was first taken aback by this band when I heard the ferocity of the album's opener, "Face Down." An energetic hardcore tune about killing people (you don't say!), it had me hooked and I bought the CD when I found it in a store. Of course, I *knew* that none of the other songs could hold weight against the first one, and for better or worse, I was right.

"Hardcore without the driving low end" is the best as I can describe this. A split between fairly upbeat passages and slower, repetitive rhythms is what this album is made of. A highlight is the conviction of Doug Carrion's fierce vocals. It made up for some the slower tunes, but his simple guitar playing was in the end unsuccessful in complementing the deep emotions he tried to express. His picking style is a simpler and sloppier version of that found on **Hypocrisy**'s *The Fourth Dimension*, though no comparison can be made between the two with regards to their musical style.

Overall, I was disappointed by the walking pace of most of *Definition: AGGRO*, though "Eye Crusher" had a great upbeat section in the middle and "Motionless" at least started off fast. But when I have to nit-pick individual sections of certain songs, especially when there are eleven to choose from, it doesn't seem worth my while to listen. By the time the album winds down, all the energy that a hardcore album is supposed to help you vent still remains trapped inside. Perhaps the next album will be better. **Ultrahead** has potential. 🎸🎸 3/4

Windham Hell: *South Facing Epitaph* (Moribund Records, P.O. Box 77314, Seattle, WA, 98177, USA) . With a knowledge of scales similar to that of the abominable thrash act **Rosicrucian**, but a style all of their own, comes **Windham Hell**, a two-piece consisting of Leland Windham and Eric Friesen. I've had this album for a while now, and to this day, it's still a challenge to listen to. Now I have to review it.

What I like most about this release is by far the skilled leads played by both of the two members. Obviously, they've been playing *and*

studying for years, as these leads are just breathtaking. "Esiccation" is a fine example of such, and it also has a nice acoustic section.

Much of the album also focuses on being "eerie," or at least odd. The echoing guitars on "Wrapped in Plastique" are quite foreboding. "Tomorrow You're Going To Die" is a narration that is both amusing and chilling, but some of the album's lyrics like, "...Hot water, Harold..." and "...Suffer immense joy, under the ceiling fan..." give assurance that **Windham Hell** is far from lyrically serious. "Garmonbozia" has a voice-over that might be from the film, **Twin Peaks, Fire Walk With Me**, and "Human Foot" is a horrific tape of some physical family fight with the sounds of pigs in the background! I think somebody needs to get out more often...

Between some of the better, and more musical, songs I found myself not paying attention to the single experimental sounds; they ceased to grip me.

South Facing Epitaph is probably not for everybody, but fans of ambience and classical solos might want to check this out. 1/4



Witch-Hunt: *Darkened Salvation* (Witch-Hunt, c/o Erik Sayenga, 13915 Lynhurst Dr., Woodbridge, VA, 22193, USA) One of the few local death metal acts that actually hold some weight, **Witch-Hunt**'s latest demo is above-average straight forward death metal. The sound is thick, but clear, and the instruments are well blended.

The guitars sound similar to **Soilent Green** at times, though the "riffage" itself is better. Smooth soloing that actually fuses with the rhythms in the background further the enjoyment. The band is quite tight when it comes to the fast parts, with no one getting lost in the shuffle. The vocals of Brian Straight are a muffled version of Chuck Shuldinger's (**Death**) screech/growl.

There are only four songs here, so **Witch-Hunt** has yet to prove that they can sustain this quality with an entire album's worth of material. Still, I sense I glimmer of hope emerging from a sea of DC-area atrociousness.



Lacking capes and candles...



MESHUGGAH!!!

Anyone who read last issue's review of **Meshuggah**'s song, "Aztec Two-Step," which appeared on the *Nuclear Blast 100* compilation, knows that we did not take favorably to the band. When we got *Destroy Erase Improve*, we were pleasantly surprised by the technical ability and speed of the band, as well as their new sound. Naturally, we were glad to have the opportunity interview Marten Hagstrom, one of the guitarists from a band that has really turned things around for themselves. The interview turned into more of a conversation than anything else, but he gave *Sloth* the lowdown on what's going on over in Scandinavia.

Sloth: Being from Sweden, you've been surrounded by death metal bands throughout much of your existence. What brought you guys together to do something different?
Marten: Well there's a lot of death metal bands around, but we were never into that stuff. We knew a lot of guys who played in death metal bands, but we never did ourselves. We grew up in an environment where we listened to a lot of different music, like way back we listened to **Anthrax** and stuff like that, and well, that pretty much shaped us in the way we are, because that's when we discovered the heavy metal riffing. That was a turning point for me at least. I could really say that we come from a lot of different backgrounds musically, because we listened to a lot of

different stuff between ourselves. So we have a lot of different influences.

Sloth: You couldn't tour after your debut for N.B., *Contradictions Collapse*, because of a couple accidents, one of which was a severed finger! How did this happen?
Marten: Fredriks (Thordendahl), the lead guitarist, he went to work and cut his finger off in a saw. There were a lot of troubles, but they managed to sew his finger back to the joint where he cut it, and he took a year to try and rehabilitate, and that worked out, but it took a whole year! After that we started to try to produce some new stuff for the *None* album, but it took a while because Thomas (Haake) the drummer also hurt himself, so it was...

Sloth: Not a good year!
Marten: Yeah, exactly!

Sloth: Your new album, *Destroy Erase Improve*, has great, crystal clear production. Who produced it and where?
Marten: We produced it along with a guy called Daniel Bergstram at his studio, which is in a town just outside Stockholm, called Soundfront Studios. We had met that guy earlier and really liked his ideas, and he had really like our ideas about how we wanted it to sound. So we worked together with him and, well, we were really happy with the production.

Sloth: The song titles on the disc all point to a similar theme, like revealing cover ups and lies. Who wrote the lyrics and what inspired them?
Marten: Thomas writes 90% of the lyrics, and rest are by Jens (Kidman), the vocalist. It's not a concept album, but there's a lot of stuff dealing with, as you say, lies and being betrayed, and finding out life really isn't what you think it is. What it really boils down to is that they're really free for you to interpret any way you want. We have pretty vague lyrics. Some of them have topics, like "Terminal Illusion" is about religion, and "Catatonic Transfixion" is about media's power over people. Apart form that, we've got really vague lyrics which are up to you to interpret.

Sloth: I sense many styles incorporated in your music. Who would you credit as influencing your style?
Marten: The musician I personally look up to and has influenced me the most is **Sting**. We've got so many different influences it's hard to pinpoint any.

Sloth: Since you're in the states and have no touring plans, are you just going to go back to Sweden?
Marten: Yeah, because I'm the only one over here right now. So, I will head back Sunday but we have plans to tour, but there are no dates set and there's no band that we know we're gonna be on the road with. The Relapse guys are really working hard at getting us out, so I hope that will happen.

Sloth: How was the **Machine Head** tour over in Europe?
Marten: It was great. Great response, great crowds, and **Machine Head** were really great, and we got along really great with them.

Sloth: Would you like to tour the states with them?
Marten: Why not? If we get the opportunity we would love to.

Sloth: The Relapse Records/Nuclear Blast labels appear to me as the most powerful of the underground labels. Problems arose for bands signed to Earache and Roadrunner once those labels started going big time. Have the labels' support of Meshuggah been satisfactory?
Marten: Yeah, for this album definitely! We have seen the work Relapse has been doing for us, and we're really satisfied with that. For this time around Nuclear Blast Germany has really put out some great support for us. Paid tour support for the **Machine Head** tour, good budget for the record, promotion, everything's been good. Early on, on the first album, *Contradictions Collapse*, they didn't really support us because they really didn't believe in us. We thought, "Why the hell do they keep us?" But now, they've really changed all over, so it's really great for us.

Sloth: When I saw the band's name for the first time on the *Nuclear Blast 100* compilation I was shocked not to find another **Hacked Bowels** or **Rotting Puke**...
Marten: Yeah?!? (laughs)

Sloth: Being that the word "meshuggah" is Yiddish, are any of the members of your band Jewish?
Marten: No. It turned out that way because Jens the vocalist figured that, "Hey, every fucking band has a name in English, or if it isn't in English it's in Latin." So he figured, "Why don't we try this one?" It's a good description of our music, because it's crazy!

Sloth: The new album is much better than your previous EP, *None*. Things just seem to really click now. Is it because of "tireless hours of endless dedication" or was this a natural progression for the band?
Marten: It's a natural progression because, as I said earlier, we were able to do something that was representative of our band. We felt that this time around we could concentrate on really getting something across that we would feel proud of, because *None* was real hasty work. It was just something we put out (because) everybody was screaming, "What the fuck are you guys doing? You haven't been releasing anything lately!" So that was just like, "We gotta get something out." This time around we had the opportunity to put a strong effort into making the album.

Sloth: Explain what an "Excedrin Headache #69" is.
Marten: I have no idea!

Sloth: On all the Meshuggah ads and promos it says, "...grinding grooves pound you temporal lobe like Excedrin Headache #69."
Marten: Yeah, I saw that, too. But I haven't got a clue.

Sloth: I live in the states and I've never been over to Europe, and I read some of the underground magazines like **SOD** and **Pit**, and I get the impression that the whole society over

there is taken over by the black metal and the death metal; and what is your impression? I mean, you live over there. Tell me what life is like. Is it really like you're living in fear because of all the black metal people or not?
Marten: No. Basically, it's like this: We've got a lot of bands, especially in Norway, Sweden's not that bad- Norway's got a lot of bands that I don't know what the problem is with them. They try to be something they're not. They try to inspire fear. They're fucked up, I think, because it's just a lot of propaganda. I know a couple black metal bands back in Sweden, and those are great guys. Not violent at all, and they don't go around hating people all day. Also, the black metal scene is really working to make it out like it is prevailing all over Scandinavia, which it isn't. I mean, there's a lot of bands coming out of Sweden, and the ones who do best aren't the ones playing black metal. I mean, there are death metal bands like **Entombed** and **Dismember** and different style bands like **Misery Loves Co.**, **B-thong,** and **Clawfinger** who are successful and aren't black metal at all.

Sloth: Your band's name is Yiddish; have any black metal bands threatened you?
Marten: No...not yet!

Sloth: Being that they're racist-
Marten: I know about that.

Sloth: Especially the guy from Burzum, who's in jail now.
Marten: Luckily he's in there, because I think he's really fucked up.

Sloth: I got his CD the other day, and I like it...It's just too bad he had to go and kill some guy!
Marten: I don't know what's up with those guys. I mean, if you want to do music, do music, but if you want to kill people, join the army!

Sloth: It's all image.
Marten: Yeah, it's all image. But that's why it's getting so propelled out here and back home, because it's so blown out of proportion. You hear of the black metal guys burning churches, it's because they want the publicity.

Sloth: So we won't be seeing you guys wearing apocalyptic armor anytime soon?
Marten: No. (laughs)

Sloth: It's like they're preparing for a Middle Age apocalypse even though it's the 20th Century, with nuclear weapons.
Marten: Exactly. It's not good, though.

Sloth: You seem a lot more down to earth than many of the other bands I've heard about.
Marten: Look at it this way: There's a lot of bands coming out and when they do the interviews, they think that they've gotta show something. Gotta prove something to the people that don't know who they are. And get an image to show they're different than everybody else. Sweden is a nice, clean, calm, non-violent little country. It's 8 or 9 million people, and there's a lot of forests and very little problems. The people are shy, and everything else you hear is just fuckin' bullshit.

Sloth: Growing up in the states, we're brought up with different cultures around. I mean, I go to school and half of it's black, a quarter is Hispanic, and the rest are either of Anglo, Oriental, or Arabic descent. I have no problem with that, and when I hear the guy from **Burzum** say how he hates Jews and blacks I'm left thinking, "What for?"
Marten: We've got a great deal of people coming into Sweden now, from Bosnia and countries like that, and there are problems because we've got neo-nazis. They're really fucked up, but I think that's an anger which they're pointing in the wrong direction. They're angry and frustrated about something else. They have no, absolutely no reason to hate these people. Take everybody as an individual, that's what I say. If you meet a guy and you don't like him, well fair enough, but don't judge him if he's white or whatever, because there's a lot of reverse racism also. Back home, if you're talking about racism, and even if you say it's wrong, people tell you, "Well shut up, you're white!"

Sloth: I go to high school, and I get called "Headbanger boy with long hair. You're stupid," yet I'm on the honor roll and put out this **Sloth** magazine all by myself. If people see me they don't know that.
Marten: It's so funny you should say that. Sometimes I talk to people back home and I sit around just relaxing, having a beer, and then after a while somebody goes, "I'm really surprised at you." I ask why, and they say, "Well, you seem like a pretty decent guy." Why wouldn't I be? "Well, you've got long hair and you've got a ring in your nose. I thought you would hate everybody and want to fight."

Sloth: That's the stereotype.
Marten: Yeah, exactly.

Sloth: But it's our "duty" to overcome and show that we're not gonna go kill some guy just because he's gay.
Marten: Exactly my sentiments.

Sloth: I read about the guy from **Emperor** who was saying he saw a gay guy and *knew* he had to kill him. Why?
Marten: Well, that guy's twisted. He's just proven how stupid he is. If you can't accept other peoples' opinions, then just go some place where there are no people. Be a hermit! You've got to deal with people everyday, and the only thing you are not allowed to do is interfere with other peoples' lives against their will. They've got to be free to express their opinions...

Sloth: And not be afraid to!
Marten: Exactly. It doesn't matter if you're gay or black or whatever; you should be able to feel the way you feel, and express it without being afraid of getting beaten or killed.

Sloth: I'd like to thank you for your time and wish you and the band lots of luck as you continue to do that "Meshuggah thing."
Marten: Well, thanks a lot for your time, it's been great!

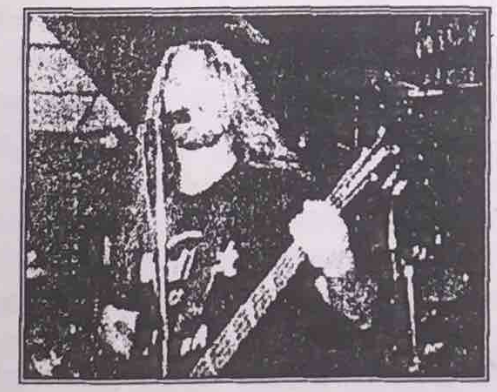


MALEVOLENT CREATION



The Return No One Thought Was Possible...

Malevolent Creation. Just the name itself is powerful. The music had backed up this name all the way from 1987, when to band formed, through its second LP, *Retribution*. Then Malevolent Creation stumbled. 1993's atrocious *Stillborn* had critics like myself on the verge of writing them off, or having already done so. Even the band was not pleased with it. But I knew that if a band can take the world by storm as Malevolent Creation did with their debut, *The Ten Commandments*, and then follow it up in a more impressive style, one off album is not the end. This year's comeback *Eternal* put my fears to rest, and when I spoke with lead guitarist and founding member Phil Fasciana, I expected to hear cheery tales of triumph. But when I asked him about the problems of *Stillborn*, he made it clear they were happening all over again.



"It's like a problem that's with the band now, man. I get fuckin' stuck havin' fuckin' to write everything, 'cause everyone in my band is a slacker!" (laughs) I pointed out how most bands that put out very unsuccessful albums are never heard from again. I needed to know what the driving force of such a powerful comeback was. "Me! (laughs) I always fuckin' strive to do good, man. I have to have the right people to do it. I can't put out a good album unless I have people who are willing to give 100%. And unfortunately, throughout all our albums, I've never been able to get that from everybody else! On this album, man I tried. This is the closest I came to what I wanted."

On the new album, "They Breed" is a song that had a racial slur: the use of the word "nigger." The band has been taking a lot of heat for it, and obviously they did have time before entering and while in the studio to decide whether or not to include it. Phil said, "It's only a word. The song doesn't point a finger at any race or color. The word nigger means scum, a slacker. The epithet is said so much that it's not a bad thing. It's kind of trendy, (laughs), you know what I mean? I know black

people, they call each other fuckin' niggers, they call me a nigger..." I said that we (white people) can't call them that, but he said, "Well, I do. I do it to the ones I know and it's not a big deal, it's like a joke. If they were to call me a fuckin' cracker, I wouldn't be offended. It's only a word, and some people might take it the wrong way, but for me, I use it for what it's defined as." Any member of today's society knows that the word "nigger" is predominantly an anti-black term, but if he and the band truly believe what they say the word means, then I can't say they are racists.



Most recently, Malevolent Creation toured in support of *Eternal*. I asked Phil what was next for the band, sensing the answer to come. "I've done this band forever, man. It's getting really aggravating trying to fuckin' deal with people that are totally unprofessional. I don't really know what to say, this is the first interview I'm saying this in, but I probably doubt there will be another album with the name Malevolent Creation...I can't work with fuckin' idiots! That's the bottom line: I ain't gonna ever be happy until I can find people to work with that are better than me and make me play better...It's no fun to have to fuckin' do everything. I played bass on *Eternal* and half the fuckin' *Stillborn* album. I shouldn't have to do that. I'll play guitar, I'll write the songs, but then I end up having to almost do the fuckin' whole album! I need some guys to give me fuel to throw on the fuckin' fire!!"

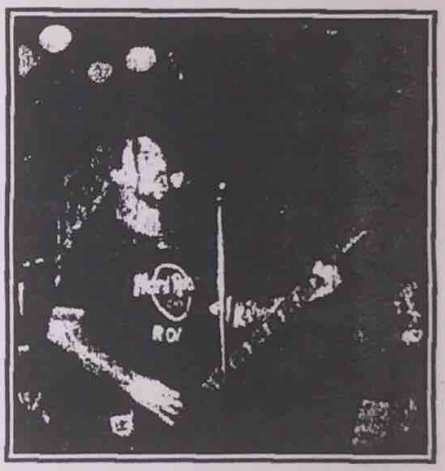
Despite the pessimism that Phil vented, only a slight damper was put on the evening, as he seemed to be having a good enough time. There was always a cigarette in one hand, a beer in the other, and a smile on his face. Their set was strong, though I noted that most of the newer songs they played sounded very similar, and I can't recall hearing any songs from *Stillborn*. Cries from the crowd for classics were greeted by "Multiple Stab Wounds" and "Slaughter of Innocence." Still, I kept an eye on Phil, and he, like the others, were basically glued to the floor. Possibly this is because of the "no mosh" rule which meant a big angry guy who hated this type of music would put you in a headlock if you tried to have some fun. Still, Jason Blachowicz was able to rile the crowd, sticking his tongue out and cussing at us and the security guard who was "bigger than us and could kick our asses." I had to leave a few minutes early, but I heard first hand that Jason threw is bass at the security guard and it hit him in the face!! Not condoning this in the least, I still can see why Jason would be pissed at him for throwing out people who were moshing. When I first arrived, I asked the security guard if the opening act, Hatred, had played. After saying they just went off, he added, "You didn't miss much either." Say that was my



favorite band, and this guy had said that, I would've been really angry! I guess the guy had it coming...You can only be an asshole for so long until someone stands up to you! One of the evening's highlights was when Jason called to the stage the guy who had Malevolent Creation abbreviated on his license plate. The crowd urged him to surf, and it took the security guard at least three minutes of ankle grabbing before the crowd let go of the surfer. Earlier, when the second band, Pessimist, was on, a little announcement was made. It seems that their light man, who'd done over 100 shows for them, decided that he'd rather see Van Halen that night. Pessimist's singer said that they were recording the show, and to give a message to the guy. In unison, everybody yelled, "Fuck you, Jerry. You're a dick!" Oh what fun it is to make a fool out of a Van Halen fan...

The disbanding of Malevolent Creation was a reality the night of the show. They were going to appear at the CMJ convention, and as Phil put it, "I'm gonna be there, and I'm gonna play, and I'm gonna drink, and I'm gonna leave." But the band was so upset that night they abandoned the tour and went home. Recently, Tammy at Pavement told us that Phil and Jason "love each other again and will do another album."

Another sign of hope comes in the form of former ex-vocalist Brett Hoffman. Phil says Brett's now in drug rehab, and when asked if he'd consider rejoining forces once Brett's clean, he said, "Maybe...The guy, he's one of my best friends. Before, I couldn't work with him musically because he was too far gone, but you never know." No matter what the fate of Malevolent Creation may be, they certainly have left a legacy of powerful albums that will remain in our collections for years to come.



UNDERGROUND
RADIO EXPOSURE

The Metal Cage is a well-known radio program that has been on since 1986. The Metal Cage deals exclusively with the true underground Metal scene, from Atmospheric and Black Metal, to the most corrosive of Death/Grind. WRIU has a 5000 watt signal and reaches 4 states in the Southern NewEngland Area. Bands interested in getting radio exposure can send tapes/disks and band info to the following address.

The Metal Cage (WRIU)
John Dwyer
446 Paradise Ave.
Middletown, RI.
02842-5771 USA

CURSED FANZINE

Issue #2 of Cursed 'Zine has been unleashed! In this issue you will find interviews w/ Deceased, Deteriorate, Pyrexia, Internal Bleeding, Corpsevomit, Nuctemeron, Parricide, Adnauseam, Lestregus Nosferatus, Morkeum, Fermento, Lividity, Crimson Moon, Ancient, Usurper, Hellwitch, Gotterdammerung, Tyrant Trooper, Enforcer, Necrosis, Ceremonium, Mendacity, and more. You'll also find scene reports on Malaysia and Milwaukee, an artricle on the Black metal scene that'll set all you fakes straight, and about 100 demo/LP reviews. The cost of this is $4 (US) $5 (WORLD).

Bands: Send in your demos for a definite review and a possible interview. You will also be considered for a spot on one of my up-coming compilations! All bands that send in demos will recieve a reply! Other 'zines: Let's trade, just write first! No fucking rip-offs!

Cursed 'Zine
c/o Justin Flynn
50 Winthrop Avenue
West Warwick, R.I. 02893 U.S.A.

DEATH...IS JUST THE BEGINNING III

BY PHIL ALTERMAN

It was almost two years ago that I first bought a product from Relapse Records in Pennsylvania. Hiding my $12 in some scrap paper, I sent away for the *Corporate Death* compilation. Since then, they have established a reputation by serving me with quality products, promptly filling my orders, and having reasonable prices. Who else stocks such a wide variety of material *and* pays postage when you buy it? They are my source for shirts, CD's, and for confidence with whom I'm dealing. (What an obvious plug! Call now, operators are standing by!)

I was one of the first to order *DIJTB3*. I also own the *Death...is Just the Beginning II*, *Nuclear Blast 100*, and *Five Years Nuclear Blast* compilations, so when *DIJTB3* was announced, I ordered it promptly. I was so prompt, in fact, that I became one of the twenty-one people to get messed up song listings on the back! Now I have a collector's item that will be worth hundreds of cents in just a few years...

Death...is Just the Beginning III is the ultimate death metal compilation, also branching off into songs of black metal, industrial, punk, etc. There are 38 songs to choose from, most are good, and a double CD that costs $14 with free shipping is always going to be a bargain.

Read and enjoy the reviews and decide for yourself if *DIJTB3* is your kind of myu-zäk.

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Disc One begins with the title track from **Benediction**'s new one, *The Dreams You Dread*, but the whole album is reviewed elsewhere. Go ahead and read it-- might save you about fourteen bucks!

Pioneers of the field **Amorphis** returned from their successful *The Karelian Isthmus* with an even more amazing album, *Tales From The Thousand Lakes*. "Forgotten Sunrise," the song on the compilation, has excellent soloing and amazing rhythms, making it one of my favorites. The strong, clean vocals in the middle of "Into Hiding" help diversify the album, which still remains true to the band's death metal roots. Effective keyboards and memorable guitar harmonies further help **Amorphis** rise above. The album gets: 1/2

A band that's been with Relapse/Nuclear Blast for a long time is **Dismember**. Their "Justifiable Homicide" is included on this comp, but the review of their new album, *Massive Killing Capacity*, is in the main review section.

Meshuggah presents "Vanished," but you should check out the review of *Destroy Erase Improve* also in the review section, and their interview after that .

With a danceable tribute to Tony Montana (**Scarface**), **Pungent Stench** return. "Tony" has voice-overs amidst the great sound th' **Stench** achieved in the studio. Nice 'n' crunchy with powerful drums. Can't wait for a new album! 3/4

An intro of drums playing alongside symphonic keyboards didn't have me expecting much from decade deathsters **Deceased**. But the dramatic tune that I'd expected arrived shortly in the form of "The Creek Of The Dead." The fabulous drum sound here could only be achieved by King Fowley, and on another song from their *The Blueprints For Madness* album (but not on the comp), "The Triangle," they sound 100% live! His wail is in fine form, though it has become a bit deeper. Of course, the guitars are raw and in perfect synchronization. A violin outro is unique as well. 3/4

A death metal band with touches of hardcore and punk, **Mindrot** is one of the best up and coming bands around. "Anguished" from *Dawning* starts off with awesome power and emotion, but drains smoothly into a melodic section. The song regains some of its previous momentum, but it's intention was not to start running again. Because of **Mindrot's** many different styles, the production is a bit blurry, but that's easy to overlook with a such talent as this! 1/2 If you like Mindrot, be sure to check out our interview with them next issue.

"Embodiment of Chaos" appears on this disc, but since I have **Sinister**'s whole *Hate* album, why not read that review?

Pioneers in their own way are veteran talents **Pyogenesis**. Back in the days of *Pyogenesis* through their *Waves of Erotasia* EP, they were more of a slow, doomy death band. They'd utilize female vocals and many instruments, creating very unhappy songs. They also had mediocre sound quality, but today it seems that things have turned around. On *Sweet X-rated Nothings* and this compilation's unreleased "Son Of Fate," they utilize vocal harmonies and the usual instruments a "rock" band would use. The drums are very alive and the whole songs are crisp and clear. The album has some of the most beautiful, yet depressing melodies and I can't stop listening to it. Fans of grindcore might as well forget about this, but if your mind is open to a whole new approach of epic rock, then let me introduce you to **Pyogenesis**...

My heroes **Kataklysm** have the song "Eternal, I Reach Infinity" exclusive to this compilation. Since I already own all their material, loving each piece to death, I was dying to hear a new song. "Eternal..." has the same sound as their latest release, *Sorcery* (which has its review elsewhere), but lacks a great deal. While all the songs on the album had something interesting to offer, the sections of this song are anti-climatic and average for a band as brilliant as **Kataklysm**. It just doesn't hold my interest. I know they'll bounce back. 3/4 My interview with bassist Maurizio is at the end of this issue .

Heavy, crusty guitars amidst blatantly fake drum programming are most noticeable in the beginning of **Enemy Soil**'s one-minute anthem about something, called "Common Ground." The insane vocals are harshly yelled with overwhelming conviction, which definitely outweigh the song's odd structure and annoying drumming. If you like hardcore/punk-induced grind, this is for you. 3/4

"Black" off of *Lepaca Kliffoth* is much different than what **Therion** used to put out. The song never achieves the blazing speed that was once their norm, and the guitars aren't as crunchy and distorted. But this is still very good. The solo is

absolutely amazing, and the song manages to keep the tempo going while still suspending the listener in awe with the inclusion various symphonic instruments. This is fine orchestration! 3/4 I knew way back when, way back on the pure death metal album *...Of Darkness*, that something about **Therion** was different. On *Symphony Masses: Ho Drakon Ho Megas* (Pavement Music), the annoying **Immolation**-esque vocals are gone, and there is greatly improved musicianship. Everything is excellent, from the speedy solos to Christofer Johnson's varying, but pleasing, growls. There's even an Arabian solo on "The Ritual Dance Of The Yezidis!" Also great are "Dawn Of Perishness" and the climatic drumming and keying on the closer "Ho Drakon Ho Megas." (Incidentally, these songs remind me of the band with the blue elephant that played for Jaba the Hut in **Return of the Jedi**.) I beg you to get this!

Okay, so I really enjoyed **Exit-13**'s *Don't Spare The Green Love*. Well, I got tired of it, and their newer stuff I plain dislike. I preferred when the guitars had a cloudy sound as opposed to the extreme fuzz that now emits from the speakers. "Oral Fixation" from *...Just A Few More Hits* is looted with overdubs from adult films and draws away the listener's attention from a poor song. Not a bad idea, but it doesn't help the song. 3/4

I reviewed **Convulse**'s "The Rite Of Sunshine" from *Reflections* in the last issue because it was on the *Nuclear Blast 100* compilation. Not awful, and quite musically competent, it's more rock 'n' roll than death metal. It's upbeat, it won't hurt anybody's feelings, and it sure won't be on my top ten list. 3/4

What starts off like a chaotic grindcore song but then molds into a rhythmic and tolerable tune is **Blood Duster**'s "Albert." Lots of growls and shouts layer over the music that has a **Dismember/Exit-13** sound. Their album, *Fisting The Dead*, is available from Relapse but I wasn't released on their label. Not bad. 1/4

Embalmer play the kind of cheesy death metal that **Mortician** only wish they were capable of. Taking their **Cannibal Corpse** vocals combined with a number of other agonized sounds, **Embalmer** have created quite a powerful one with "Rotten Body Fluids." The guitar sound is raw and I can feel the intensity as the drummer pounds along. Look for the *There Was Blood Everywhere* EP out now. This is old school for the ages!

I've heard the new **Brutality** release, *When The Sky Turns Black*, and it's just like their first album, *Screams Of Anguish*. The drummer loves to pound as fast as he can at the most inappropriate times. I feel that the band worries too much about playing technically than producing good rhythms. Take the song on this compilation, for example. (The listing says it's the title track, but it's really the second song on the album). It begins with a warm, dramatic and simple couple of chords, but the mood is ruined by the speed section that interrupts it. At times, this style works, but mostly I can only take them in small doses. I'm fond of the instrumentals they come up with, like "Esoteric." 1/2

See the review of **Macabre's** EP *Behind The Wall Of Sleep* elsewhere. The song, "Fishtales," is on it and just happens to be on this compilation, too.

Cloudier than a day in London is **Incantation**'s sound and their short, but bad, "Blissful Bloodshower." It's very fast and accomplishes *nothing*! Everything is so jumbled you can't tell what's going on. Get *Upon The Throne Of The Apocalypse* if you must. Incidentally, only one original member of the band now remains...I guess the others new it was time to get out. 1/2

Mortician returns from the basement with yet another short, repetitive song of blast beats and simple, boring rhythms. The one minute "Blown To Pieces" from "the heaviest death metal band on the planet" displays this two-piece act's complete lack of musical and production skills. It'll make your speakers sound like there's an earthquake going on! *The House By The Cemetery* EP is out, and *I sure can't wait* for their album, *Hacked Up For Barbecue*, to come out. Drum programming never sounded so abominable. 𝅘𝅥𝅯

I find it odd that **Hypocrisy** would use the name of their side project band for a song for themselves. Maybe the band came from the song...whatever! "The Abyss" was recorded in singer/guitarist Peter Tägtgren's home just after the latest album, *The Fourth Dimension*, was released and is exclusive to this disk. It's in the same vein and it stays slow and simple the entire song. Hollow voices and guitar melodies further the song along, but all in all, this is not one of **Hypocrisy**'s best. Emotional it is, and is good for times when you want to relax you senses. 𝅘𝅥𝅯𝅘𝅥𝅯𝅘𝅥𝅯 1/4
The seldom-mentioned EP that came out before *The Fourth Dimension* was *Inferior Devoties*. It was Tägtgren's first vocal attempts since the early demos back in '92. Though not at his full vocal potential on these five tracks, he does much better than former vocalist Mässe Broberg. I was undecided about this disk, so I put my player on "random" and listened to its seventeen minute set for about an hour. During this time I did other things, but I'd subconsciously start picking things up. Soon enough, I was hooked. I'd already heard "Symbol Of Baphomet," arguably the best song here, and was familiar with "God Is A Lie" from the first album, *Penetralia*. The thick drums and "climbing" guitars of the title track and opener makes me want to "shake my booty," but the first solo is bad. Their cover of **Slayer's** "Black Magic" isn't as powerful as the original, but it holds its own. 𝅘𝅥𝅯𝅘𝅥𝅯𝅘𝅥𝅯 3/4

Disc Two starts off on a sour note because of the industrial band **Purge**. They suck! This style of music does nothing for me; there is no sense of order and/or purpose. The drumming here is similar to that of Dead World, and all the words on "Stained" are tape excerpts. Repetition is a given and the song seems longer than its four-and-a-half minutes. Soon enough, *Malignant Soul Punisher* will be out and I will kill myself. 𝅘𝅥𝅯

With such a cliché name as **Human Remains**, the average death metal Joe could write these guys off as just another band to avoid. Think again! This band shows immense creativity and the beginning of "Weeding Out The Thorns" is mighty hilarious, yet amazing to hear. Best described as "stutter-step" guitar, it pours into the true meat of the song quickly. It too manages to hold its own, and offers a couple enjoyable ditties as well. *Using Sickness As A Hero*, should be out by the time you read this. 𝅘𝅥𝅯𝅘𝅥𝅯𝅘𝅥𝅯𝅘𝅥𝅯

Divine Eve's chalky sound is unpleasant, even if it *is* "the Swedish sound." Big deal, they ripped off someone else's sound. I mean, the musicianship isn't bad, and the vocals are tolerable, even if they *do* sound just like those of non-Swedish sounding Swedes, **Disharmonic Orchestra**. The low end clank of the drums is also quite a turn off. "Velvet Of The Godless" is from *As The Angels Weep*. 3/4

I recently learned that **Disrupt** broke up! That's a real shame after hearing the great "Lack Of Intelligence." Many shouting voices and momentum that never ceases, even with the rhythm changes! Hardcore/punk with a touch of death will make *Unrest* a desirable listen for fans of such.

Black metal without incessant pianos is what **Dissection** play. But if you're going to use that for your name, it's kind of hard to imagine using keys. Instead, they use the superior guitar skills and warm production to make "Night's Blood" (sic?) a memorable experience. A beautiful chorus melody that they don't use much until the end, along with an acoustic section in the middle, both add up to listening pleasure. *The Somberlain* was recorded for Necropolis Records, but is available through Relapse, too. 1/2

Absolutely crushing is the only way I can describe **Morgion**'s sound once they get the tempo going. It controls you! But they also can play melodically, which is necessary for a band to attract a diverse audience. The sound is a bit cloudy, but it does add some weight as well. "Relics Of A Dying Past" is a lengthy eight-and-a-half minutes, but it doesn't manage to bore. The vocalist resembles ex-**Incantation** singer Chris Pillard, even getting a bit more guttural. Now that that's out of the way, let me say how unoriginal the name "**Morgion**" is. The prefix "morg-" and the suffix "-ion" are used too much, and to combine them is to plant oneself in a sea of faceless bands. Somehow, **Morgion** has garnered some success, and you should look out for *Among Majestic Ruin* before the new year. 3/4

With Peter Tägtgren shrieking, playing bass and drums, and Lars Szöke and Michael Hedlund on guitars, the transformation from **Hypocrisy** to **The Abyss** is complete. Outstanding speed black metal on "Psychomantum" is an amazing rush ferocity that has left me winded. One feels a charging army of guitars blazing with the full and tight drumming. Catchy, repeated rhythms are the focus, as opposed to wind, the way true black metal should be. You *will* get *The Other Side*! 1/2

Now that they've remastered **Incubus**'s 80's thrash/death *Serpent Temptation* we can further stray from the progress new bands are making. That's smart! Let's start the next thrash revolution! "The Battle Of Armageddon" is full of old school riffs and the vocals are an awful phlegm-throated rasp similar to those of **Brainstorm**. The production is hollow and the drumming is sloppy and falls behind. This will be hailed as classic just because it's a few years old, but that doesn't make up for the progress others have made and for which they aren't being hailed.

Ooooh-kaaay...This is *kind of* weird. No, this is mental institution weird. I didn't know disco interludes could fit so well into sloppy grindcore, but I guess it does, right? Well, it isn't really sloppy, just very, um, odd. **Monastat 7**, formerly **Monasplat 7**, put a disco beat in the middle of "Lunch Warz," and to top that, they start to "La" like drugged up Smurfs! The solo that follows is nice and discordant,

but the drum machine persists to be annoying with the cymbals. The vocalist sounds like a rugrat, but a few classic growls are added here and there. *Now Available Without A Prescription* is now available and I know I need it. 3/4

Six very sad people make up the tasty **Celestial Season**. "Above Azure Oceans" from either *Forever Scarlet Passion*, the *Flowerskin* EP, or *Solar Lovers* is a seven minute song of depression full of violins and piano. Brilliant molding together of at least six instruments deserves highest praise and justifies why companies all over would try to sign them. The violins are absolutely piercing to the heart and will leave you weeping on the floor--well, maybe you just won't feel like baking a cake for a while.

Phobia's "Degrading Humanity" sounds live, and because of that, what would be exciting guitar rhythms are a struggle to identify. Lifelessly growled vocals are made up for by the competent drums. Look for a new album soon. This isn't bad, nor is it fantastic.

Konkhra unleashes a great one in the form of "Chaos To Climb." Thick, churning guitars with odd timing are accentuated by simple, but enjoyable, vocals. Recently, I had an opportunity to listen to a couple songs off their new album, *Spit And Swallow* and they, too, are great. High praise goes to **Konkhra**.

"Withering Teardrops" from *Return from Tomorrow* is **Illdisposed**'s contribution to *DIJTB3*. Go check out that double review!

Reduced to a one man band, **Dead World** continues to suck just as much as before. "Lamia" is industrial the way it was meant to be played: repetitive and annoying as hell! Yep, I get sick every time I hear this one, and the cloudy production make this as bad as **Incantation** or **Mortician**.

A cross between **Disrupt** and **Incantation**, **Abscess** is the aftermath of **Autopsy**'s break up. Crusty like a good apple pie, "Die Pig Die" is death metal's answer to **Body Count**'s "Cop Killer." A rising "bah-bum" section reminding me of classical music is the highlight of this intentionally crowded and sloppy tune. Crazy vocals of all kinds appear throughout, at times even interrupting each other! There are good drums, but the guitar solo is out in left field, and by the time it's all over, even the band seems a bit tired. 1/4

"Fear" from **Gorefest** appeared on the compilation, but the whole *Erase* album is torn to shreds in the review section.

An organ, a female orator, and the candlestick maker helped out on "To Eve The Art Of Witchcraft" from **Cradle of Filth**'s debut album, *The Principle Of Evil Made Flesh*. Though some will tag them as just another black metal band, they do so much more! There's one part of the song where the drummer and the organ player are involved in a duet, and I can just picture the "organ man" hunched over, hopping around to the drum beat and tapping out his notes. The energy possessed and conveyed by this band is immense. It doesn't let up, even during the slow sections of the song. **Cradle of Filth** also powerfully express great emotion through the conviction with which they play and by *what* they play. The vocals sound a bit distant, but that's not all bad because they don't overpower the rest of the sextet. A soul-freezing conclusion will mesmerize you.

Why the poseurs took flight from the CMJ in fear and in desperate need of their coveted "Alternative" CD's...

KATAKLYSM IS HERE!

One of my favorite bands of recent is Canada's **Kataklysm**. Having followed them since the EP *The Mystical Gate Of Reincarnation* was released by Nuclear Blast, I almost died waiting for their full length album, *Sorcery*, to come out. And when Jeff Wagner at Relapse said he could schedule an interview within a week, I exercised the urge to jump around the house with giddy glee.

Then the day of the interview arrived...and passed with no interview. Sniffing back the tears, I called Jeff the next day. I learned that Nuclear Blast in Germany wanted **Kataklysm** to record a couple of the new songs, thus they were unable to call me. The interview had to be postponed for a couple days. No problem...right?

Two days later, bassist Maurizio Iacono called. I happened to be very busy, and the fact that I was doing an interview barely lingered in my head. Before I knew it, it was just 45 minutes before I would be "Slothing" with **Kataklysm**. Nonetheless, I put it out of my mind and proceeded to do something else.

The call came in, and I absent-mindedly picked up the receiver and answered in my wildest hick accent, "Hello? Hello?" After a couple seconds of silence, I spoke normally, and heard, "Hey! This is Maurizio from **Kataklysm**!" (Let's pause for a long "Duhhhhhhhh.") In a partial panic, I switched phones to the one connected to the recorder, only to momentarily blank on how to work the damn thing! Next it dawned on me that my list of questions was nowhere to be found! After a few minutes of stalling, I got the situation under control. Maurizio reacted to my apologies for acting so unprofessionally by saying, "That's okay." That was it. I would have felt really bad if he'd hung up on me, but he hung in there. I was grateful and thanked him for being tolerant. He wasn't a dick, though he sure could've been. (I could write a book about what *not* to do in an interview because of this.) After that, things settled down, and what follows is what transpired...

Sloth: Is there a real Canadian "scene?"
Maurizio: It's doing good, I mean it's going, and it's getting bigger everyday. As long as the bands are there to play the music the people want, the people come to the shows. A lot of bands stop by here every three months and there'll be a pretty big show. Bands like **Morbid Angel** play and get like 2,000, and we played with **Cannibal Corpse** and got 1,200. The scene is there, even for local bands, like **Cryptopsy**. You get good promotion when you play here and a lot of people show up. You get good support. The scene is good *here*, but on the West side of Canada, it's not doing that well. And that's why our distributors in Canada are trying to get us a tour to the West side to get something happening there. It's selling over there, but it's like no bands go there and play. It's too far, you know?

Sloth: How old are the members of **Kataklysm**,
Maurizio: Sylvain, the singer, is 23, and Jean is 19, that's the guitarist. The drummer's 19, too, and I'm 21.

Sloth: And what do you guys do besides the band itself?
Maurizio: Answer mail, man!

Sloth: You guys don't need to hold jobs to stay afloat?
Maurizio: Well, we need it, but it's like hard to find, 'cause we get a job, and like next thing you know, we're gonna go on tour or record a new album or this and that. And you just lose all this time from the jobs. I mean, we just came back from this US tour, and we're kind of looking for a job. We're in a country where it's not that bad getting a job, it's easy enough, and it's not like shit or anything; you *can* get some good jobs. And we're not quite surviving. We're making a little bit of money, but not a lot. Other than that, we just really concentrate on music. We go out, we party a lot of the time. Not doing anything that's really special, more that we are really concentrating on music.

Sloth: I saw an old band photo on a Nuclear Blast compilation, and there were six of you! What's the deal?
Maurizio: Six?!?

Sloth: Yeah. You guys were in a stairwell...
Maurizio: Okay, okay. No, we were five.

Sloth: You did have a five piece?
Maurizio: Yeah, we were five when we started off on our demo. I don't know if you've heard about *The Mystical Gate Of Reincarnation*, our EP...

Sloth: I have that. (Editor's note: Damn I'm smooth.)
Maurizio: Okay, on that one, the trilogy, that's another drummer from the drummer that we have now, and we had another guitarist. So we were a five piece back then, but the guitarist left because it didn't work out between us, and the drummer just left for a job.

...One of the strong points of this band is our live set. It's something very different than other bands; we move a lot...And people that watched us liked us, and we got very good reviews.

Sloth: How did all the various tours go? Such as the Milwaukee Metalfest, and in the Midwest, and New York City, and Europe?
Maurizio: I think we had a very good experience, and one of the strong points of this band is our live set. It's something very different than other bands; we move a lot and when we're playing live it's totally different, and people dig us a lot. When we went to Europe we had a very good tour. We got people who were there for **Deicide**, so they're already a pretty big band, and **Brutal Truth**, too. We got from 800 to 1,000 people a night in Europe. And people that watched us liked us. We got very good reviews. Promotion went well, and the album is selling a little bit better than it was. The US was a pretty good tour, too, not as many people showed up as in Europe. You know like the scene is not that great right now in the US, but we're trying to build it up a little bit. We ranged from 150 to 350 to 400 people a night, which wasn't that bad. It was a very good tour for us, we got a lot of new fans. The Milwaukee Fest went really well for us, we got a lot of exposure

Sloth: Any new music or tours coming up?
Maurizio: Yeah, actually we're working on that Canadian tour right now with **Brutal Truth**, something like a 2-3 week tour through Canada. We're working on something else maybe for the US, and maybe another tour in Europe before we finish promotion for *Sorcery*. We're just working on some stuff right now, and the main thing now is we have to work finishing off our second album, composing the songs, just getting everything ready to record the album at the end of the new year.

Sloth: I urge you guys to come play down here!
Maurizio: I'd like to, man. They don't book any shows down there. And gas money'll cost us a bundle. Next tour we probably will pass through there. Last tour, we really didn't do the East coast. We did the West and the Midwest, and Northeast. We're doing one in Detroit called the Michigan Deathfest and the CMJ in New York...

Sloth: You're doing the CMJ?
Maurizio: Yeah!

Sloth: That's where all the Alternative bands play!
Maurizio: Yeah, I don't know how we got picked. Five death metal bands got picked.

Sloth: And who writes the band's material?
Maurizio: Well, all of us actually. We all do the music together. The way we work is my singer will do the lyrics and we just take it all from there. He'll do the lyrics, and we'll just put them with the music after they're done.

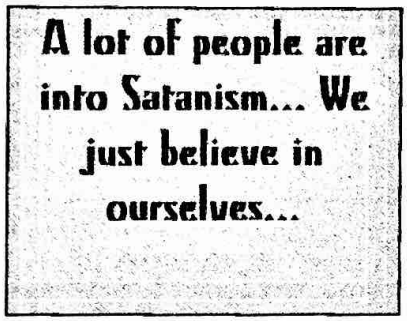
Sloth: So the lyrics aren't written to suit the songs?
Maurizio: It's contrary for us. If we have a message to the lyrics, you want to get the music to be the background of what the lyrics mean. It may be opposite of what the other bands do. We get the lyrics, do a paragraph and a paragraph, just get the music done. I think that's why there's a lot of tempo changes and different moods in our music.

Sloth: What inspires the songs' lyrics? And what religion, if any, does the band promote/worship/pay homage to?

Maurizio: We don't worship any religion. A lot of people are into Satanism, but we're not into any religion. We just believe in ourselves. I think somebody's weak to worship anybody that's higher than them. Why should we worship something that doesn't exist? For us it doesn't exist--for *me* it doesn't exist--and even if it was there for me, why should I worship something? It just makes me weaker. I think it's better for you just to believe in yourself. The topics of the lyrics are more dealing with the wars between the good and evil, and my singer believes in that. Like the Necronomicon, "What's this all about?" What he does is picks the wars between the good and evil, and creates an old storyline and puts the examples into that.

Sloth: There are a variety of voices used on both of your releases. Who does which ones?
Maurizio: My singer will do the high-pitched and the real low one, and I have my kind of "gargling," high-pitched vocals. Sometimes it's hard to distinguish me and him when we do the highs.

Sloth: How do you and Sylvain keep your voices in shape?
Maurizio: Drink water! Gasified water... what do you call it?
Sloth: Seltzer water.



Maurizio: Yeah, seltzer water. That's the only way man!

Sloth: You were down in Pennsylvania recently at Relapse headquarters. What was the trip's purpose?
Maurizio: We wanted to buy off Relapse! (Laughs) We had some days off from our tour and just decided to visit our record label that takes care of us, which is Relapse. We had a good time, met all the guys there, they helped us out. Just hanging out, seeing how the album's doing, just see what's up. We were real close, figured we'd just check it out.

Sloth: How has Relapse/ Nuclear Blast been handling your affairs?
Maurizio: They're doing okay, it's just they have a lot of bands to think about, and not a lot of people work in the office of Nuclear Blast in Germany. That's really our record label. Relapse is just helping us out, but we signed to the ones in Germany. They're okay. They work hard for their bands, but sometimes they don't do enough. That's the thing that I don't like. And when it comes up to paying bands, I think they're like every other label; they just try to get away from that. I don't think its fair. Other than that they're doing a good job. They're getting us the tours and promotion, but sometimes you just want a little bit more, to get more exposure.

Sloth: To me, your albums rank up there with **Illdisposed** and **Seance** for originality that does not sacrifice intensity. Who would *you* put in such a prestigious club?
Maurizio: I would put **Morbid Angel** in there. I think they're original. Every album they do is totally different. Like you, I've always liked **Seance**. I think they're fucking gods. I like **Dismember**, too. I think **Dismember**'s got its own sound. And **Brutal Truth** too, they're just crazy.

Throughout this chat, Maurizio was upbeat and cheery, and why not? His band was successful and he's enjoying what it's accomplished. Recently, I learned that their drummer, Max Duhamel, has a medical condition that forces him out of the band. Apparently the kick drumming affects one of his knees to the extent that if he continues to play this style of music, he won't be able to walk by the time he's 30. To Max, we at Sloth thank you for what you've done and wish you the best.

For now, the remaining members will continue and we hope to hear many more **Kataklysm** albums in the years to come.



"HEY, MATT! HAVE YOU SEEN THE NEW ISSUE OF SLOTH?"